

The Regency

Immediately after setting the firm foundations of government and his becoming the sole caliph, al-Ma'mun, according to the tradition started by Mu'awiya who secured the oath of allegiance for his son Yazid to succeed him on the throne, had to name his successor, and he had to be extremely careful about this weighty matter due to the precarious circumstances he underwent during his collision with his brother and thereafter.

It was not easy for him to select just anyone from his immediate family or from others; rather, he had to subject each step he undertook in this regard to precise calculations linking past outcomes to future expectations and taking into consideration the sentiments of Shi'a Alawides who dominated Khurasan and the territories under its control. Among the latter party may be included men such as "Dhul-Riyasatayn" and his brother al-Hasan ibn Sahl who were among the most powerful elements that paved the way for him to survive the dangerous stage during his confrontation with his brother al-Amin, although we doubt such an inclusion which we will discuss later.

Al-Ma'mun, however, did not find the idea of taking caliphate out of Banu al-Abbas and giving it to others, Alawides or non-Alawides, easy for he, despite his ideological inclination towards Shi'aism which lacked a practical implementation, would spare no effort to safeguard the legacy which he inherited from his forefathers in its framework and context. We can be acquainted with the accuracy of this theory if we research the plausible reasons which led him to force Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) to accept regency.

Regency Between the Imam and al-Ma'mun

While researching the motives which prompted al-Ma'mun to force Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) to be his heir to the throne, we will find out that they were far-sighted political motives al-Ma'mun hoped thereby to achieve selfish gains for both himself and the Abbaside caliphate, for al-Ma'mun was quite an intelligent man in selecting Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) for this post since he represented the opposition group.

But Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.), upon rejecting his selection for this post, proved to be more aware of al-Ma'mun and his aims than al-Ma'mun had thought. Al-Harawi quotes the Imam saying: "By God! Ar-

Ridha' did not accept this matter willingly, and he was transported to Kufa against his wish, then he was taken from there, passing by Basrah and Persia, to Marw." [1](#)

Why the Imam Rejected the Regency

The reason we understand as to why he rejected it is that the Imam realized that al-Ma'mun, by selecting him, aimed at using him as a bargaining ticket between him and the Abbasides on one hand, between him and the Alawides on another, and between him and the Shi'as of Khurasan and other areas on yet another hand; otherwise, what is the wisdom in the insistence of al-Ma'mun that ar-Ridha' (a.s.) should accede, and why did he even threaten him if he insisted on his rejection?

Al-Irshad narrates that al-Ma'mun discussed the subject of regency with ar-Ridha' (a.s.), saying, "I have decided that you should be my successor." The Imam said: "Exempt me from that, O commander of the faithful, for I have neither the ability nor the strength for that." He said: "I have decided that you should be my successor." The Imam said: "Exempt me from that, O commander of the faithful." Al-Ma'mun responded with a statement which was more of a threat than anything else; he said to him: "Umer ibn al-Khattab entrusted six persons to consult regarding caliphate, one of them was your grandfather Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.), and he preconditioned that anyone who went against their decision should be executed; therefore, you will have to accept what I have decreed for you, for I see no way that I can ever change my mind." [2](#)

The Imam, therefore, had to agree. [3](#) It is also narrated that a lengthy discussion went on between both men in which al-Ma'mun offered the Imam to be the caliph and the Imam refused to accept, then he offered him the regency and he refused too, so al-Ma'mun said to him, "You always say what I hate to hear, and you think that you are safe from my might; therefore, I swear by God that you should either accept the regency willingly or I shall force you to do so; therefore, accept out of your own will; otherwise, I shall certainly strike your neck with the sword." [4](#)

Al-Ma'mun Reveals His Intentions

Al-Ma'mun himself revealed to us the far-sighted implication of his choice for regent in a letter to Banu Hashim answering their objections regarding the promise of regency to the Imam in which he said: "As regarding my intention behind choosing Ali ibn Musa (a.s.) as the regent, although he is qualified for it, out of my own selection of him, the reason for that is my desire to safeguard your lives and protect your properties by establishing permanent friendly ties between us and them, and it is a method I employed to honor the descendants of Abu Talib and to heal their wounds with very little of what they are entitled to. You claim that I desired that they would be the recipients of benefits thereof and to be in charge, while I have in mind the interest of your posterity and children after you even while you are unaware, blindly stumbling, not knowing what plans others have in store for you." [5](#)

He does not wish to transfer the government from Banu al-Abbas to the descendants of Abu Talib, as

the Abbasides imagined; rather, he aimed by such an action to contain the consequences which might cause a great deal of trouble for the government. In other words, he aimed by taking such a political action, to retain a position of strength for the Abbasides.

Al-Ma'mun and the Astronomer Nawbakhti

What proves the fact that al-Ma'mun was not serious in his offer to the Imam to be the regent is a narration stating that al-Fadl al-Nawbakhti, who was an astronomer thought to be Shi'a, wanted to test al-Ma'mun's intentions, so he wrote him saying: "The order of the stars indicates that naming ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as the regent at this time cannot be done; otherwise, the person named will suffer a catastrophe.

Therefore, if al-Ma'mun's intentions agree with what he proclaims in public, he ought to postpone this matter till a more conducive time." To this, al-Ma'mun answered him warning him against discouraging Dhul-Riyasatayn from contracting that agreement at that time, and that if he did not, he would know that the postponement was instigated by al-Nawbakhti. He also ordered him to return his own letter back to him so that nobody else would come to find out about it.

He then came to know that al-Fadl was aware of the fact that time was not ripe for contracting the regency because he himself had knowledge of the science of the stars; therefore, al-Nawbakhti feared that the change of mind of al-Fadl ibn Sahl was because of him personally, and he would thus be killed by al-Ma'mun, so he rode to him and convinced him through his own knowledge of astronomy that time was indeed ripe for it, contrary to the reality, because he was more knowledgeable than him about astrology, and he kept confusing him till he finally convinced him.⁶

This leads us to conclude that the offer of regency to the Imam was nothing more than a trap al-Ma'mun had set for him to achieve some political gains that would save his government a great deal of trouble, and he certainly was not sincere in his conduct towards the Imam; rather, that was only a transient stage he had to go through with precision in order to achieve his anticipated objectives.

Al-Ma'mun's Objective Behind Regency

As regarding his request that the Imam should accept to be the caliph after he himself abdicates, his objective was more than just proving to the public that the Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) were certainly after the glory of this life, coveting it, and that their asceticism and distancing themselves there from was only because they were unable to reach their worldly goals as some stories claim ⁷ and on which yet other conclusions are based.

The Imam, in fact, did not underestimate the power to rule nor did he willingly stay aloof from its responsibilities; how could he do so while viewing himself as more worthy of the post of the supreme ruler and more capable than him in managing its affairs with equity? The fact is that he was confident that such thing would not happen for him, and that the whole matter was a clever political trick performed

by al-Ma'mun which he wanted to carry out by using Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as a ploy.

When al-Ma'mun offered to abdicate the throne for the Imam, he was calculating the matter to end up with one of two cases: either the Imam would agree, or that he would refuse, and in either case, he would gain for himself and for the Abbaside government a victory, for the Imam's agreement would be preconditioned upon accepting that he, al-Ma'mun, would be named the regent, thus securing the legitimacy of his own caliphate after the Imam before all parties; otherwise, al-Ma'mun was not so naive or short-sighted to the extent that he would offer his own post on a silver platter to the Alawides and become a subject dealt with as such.

If al-Ma'mun came to be a regent, it would be easy for him to put an end to the life of the Imam in order to succeed him without anyone finding out, thus satisfying the ambitions of the Alawides for the government while convincing their Shi'as of his own legitimate caliphate. Al-Ma'mun had his own particular methods in eliminating his political foes, and we will mention the mysterious method he employed to put an end to the life of Dhul-Riyasatayn al-Fadl ibn Sahl and his murder of those who killed him despite their admission that he was the one who incited them to assassinate al-Fadl.

As regarding the case of the Imam refusing to accept the caliphate, this, al-Ma'mun calculated, would cause him to be very widely criticized by his own Shi'a followers and companions due to their own belief that caliphate was rightfully his and he had to accept it, but the Imam's companions were endowed with a great deal of political awareness to the extent that they would not be tricked by a trick like that carried out by al-Ma'mun. Also, he would be excused by various Shi'a factions for not accepting it for himself and his family, and that he tried so but could not succeed and thus would silence those who might dispute with him in this regard from Shi'a opposition groups.

Forcing the Imam to Accept the Regency

Having failed to convince the Imam that he, al-Ma'mun, would abdicate the throne for him, al-Ma'mun requested him to accept to be the regent and to name him the succeeding caliph after him, but the Imam again insisted on refusing, so much so that al-Ma'mun had to seek the assistance of some of his best aides despite the fact that they themselves were not convinced that it was such a good idea, thinking that al-Ma'mun was serious. *Al-Irshad* states:

"A group of historians and court biographers who were contemporary to the caliphs say that when al-Ma'mun wanted to name Ali ibn Musa (a.s.) as his successor, and having thought seriously about the matter, he ordered al-Fadl ibn Sahl [8](#) to come to him and he informed him of his intention, ordering him to seek the assistance of his brother al-Hasan ibn Sahl in this regard, and he did just that. So they met with him, and al-Hasan kept pointing out the magnanimity of the consequences of his idea, acquainting him with the outcomes resulting out of taking his family out of it and affecting his own life.

Al-Ma'mun, thereupon, said to him: `I pledged to God that if I lay my hand on the person who deposed

me, I would hand the caliphate over to the best person among the progeny of Abu Talib, and I do not know anyone better than this man on the face of earth.' So, when both al-Fadl and al-Hasan saw his determination to carry out this matter, they stopped opposing him and he sent them to ar-Ridha' (a.s.). They offered him caliphate, but he refused, and they continued pressing him till he finally agreed, so they went back to al-Ma'mun and told him about his approval whereupon he was very pleased."[9](#)

Abul-Faraj al-Asbahani stated something similar to the above with this variation: "He dispatched them to Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha' (a.s.) and they offered it to him, and they continued pressing him while he was refusing till one of them said to him, 'If you agree, let it be so, but if you do not, we shall surely harm you,' and he threatened to kill him. Then one of them said, 'By God he ordered me to strike your neck with my sword if you go against his wish.'" [10](#)

Imam's Awareness of al-Ma'mun's Schemes

Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) knew beforehand about al-Ma'mun's intentions through his knowledgeable foresight of the circumstances which led al-Ma'mun to vest the regency upon him, and he was contented that he would not actually accede to the throne in the future. Al-Madaini quotes one of his sources saying: "When ar-Ridha' (a.s.) was seated during the regency celebration, with the orators and poets surrounding him and the flags fanning him, one individual who was present there and then said, 'I was close to him that day, and he looked at me with an optimistic smile on his face regarding the event, and he beckoned for me to come close. When I did, he told me while nobody except me could hear him: 'Do not let this excite you, and do not be overly optimistic, for it would never materialize.'" [11](#)

With Ahmed Amin

Before I present the actual reasons for the story of regency, according to the historical understanding of its circumstances, I would like to point out the superficiality of comprehension, or sectarian prejudice, which is more likely, of some researchers that led them to render the reason why al-Ma'mun pressured Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) to accept his nomination as the regent to the following:

"Alawide Imams claim that if they get to rule, they would rule with absolute justice, but there is always a difference between claim and reality. Al-Ma'mun complained about this and observed how the Imams disappear from public eyes to commit sins without being seen and recognized by the public for what they really are; therefore, he said, 'It is for the good of the people that these Imams should come out and people should know their liability to falling into sins so that they would not respect them anymore, nor would they hold them as holy, for when they appear on life's stage, and people clearly see how they rule and how they commit what God has ordained as prohibitive, they would no longer be respected by the public. But if they continue to be persecuted, hiding from positions of prominence, satisfied with preaching, people will maintain their sympathy for them,' he, therefore, decided to appoint Ali ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as his successor..." [12](#)

The above is what professor Ahmed Amin states. This statement is not unusual coming from a man like him who is very well known for his prejudice and fanaticism and opposition to the concept of Shi'aism and allegiance to the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.).

Comments

1. The experience of the Alawide government which was lived by the Muslim umma during the caliphate of Imam Ali (a.s.) proves that Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) are more worthy of ruling the subjects than others because their goal behind ruling is to establish a just and equitable society, and to rule the nation with the policy of absolute justice as brought forth by the message of Prophet Muhammad (S).

2. When Shi'as say that the household of the Prophet (S) are more worthy of being the caliphs, they mean only the Twelve Imams and nobody else.

We have the right to ask here: What sin or prohibitive act did any of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) commit away from public eyes? Where are the historical facts which support such a claim? Does Ahmed Amin consider the stance of Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) towards the Umayyad and Abbaside dynasties and their opposition thereof a sin and a prohibitive act?

3. Al-Ma'mun appointed Ali ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as the heir apparent to the throne; what sins did this Imam commit, and what prohibitive acts was he guilty of and which caused him to lose public respect?

And what did Ahmed Amin and his predecessors discover of the deeds done by the Imam after becoming the regent which Ahmed Amin tries to project in a negative way out of his hatred for the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) and in support for the Umayyads?

4. As regarding the example he tries to use and upon which he tries to build his conclusion regarding the conduct of the Fatimide government in Egypt, or regarding other intermittent Alawide governments during the various Abbaside periods, and the fact that they were not any better than other governments, Umayyad or Abbaside, in line or in scope, such an example is not realistic simply because Shi'as do not consider such governments to be legitimate, and they do not have any allegiance to them as long as they were distant from the pristine line of the Prophetic message called for by the Prophet (S) and his Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) after him.

Whatever the case may be, statements like these made by Ahmed Amin are not considered out of the ordinary, for his degrading fanaticism and his deviation from the line of Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) give him plenty of excuses for saying what he says...

Imam's Contempt for the Regency

The Imam (a.s.) expressed his contempt for the regency through statements he made which express his inner bitterness and pain and during times when he was suffering from emotional irritation. He was unable to do anything in the face of the stubborn insistence of the government to accept its designs

without enjoying the freedom of choice, of expression, and of movement. Moreover, the Imam (a.s.) knew beforehand that the regency was only a transient step undertaken by the Abbaside government and dictated to it by circumstances of that period.

And when the government achieves its end objective, the beginning starts, and the Imam (a.s.) feels psychologically irritated for such disguised use of his own person, and such irritation is spelled out during times of extreme bitterness. Yasir the servant said: "Whenever ar-Ridha' (a.s.) returned home from the mosque on Friday, his face washed with his sweat, stained with dust, he would raise his hands and supplicates saying, 'God! If my deliverance from my suffering is by death, then I plead You to please hasten that hour,' and he remained distressed till he breathed his last, blessings of God be upon him." [13](#)

The companions of the Imam (a.s.) could not easily understand why he accepted the post of regent, although inwardly they were satisfied with the soundness of the Imam's stance and at the same time fully aware of the psychological agony the Imam (a.s.) was suffering from. The Imam's answers to their repeated questions were exciting in their way of expressing the political necessity which caused the government to force him to be the regent. Muhammad ibn Arafa narrated saying that he once asked the Imam (a.s.): "O Son of the Messenger of God! What caused you to be involved in the regency issue?" The Imam (a.s.) answered: "It is the same that caused my grandfather the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) to be involved in the *shura*." [14](#)

A man, who seemed as if he was finding fault with the Imam's action, once asked him, "May God make you godlier, what forced you into this arrangement with al-Ma'mun?" Abul-Hasan (a.s.) in turn asked him, "Who is better, man, the Prophet or the *wasi*?" The man answered, 'Well, of course, it is the Prophet." The Imam (a.s.) asked again, "Who is better, a believer or a disbeliever?" The man answered, "A believer, of course." The Imam (a.s.) then said: "Al-Aziz, Egypt's vizier, was a disbeliever, whereas Yousuf (Joseph) was a prophet; al-Ma'mun is a Muslim whereas I am a *wasi*, and Yousuf asked al-Aziz to appoint him as a governor, saying, 'And appoint me to take charge of the wealth of the land, for I am protector, knowledgeable,' whereas I was forced to accept it." [15](#)

Yasir, his servant, is quoted saying, "When ar-Ridha' (a.s.) became heir to the throne, I heard him saying after having raised his hands to the sky in supplication, 'Lord! You know that I am forced to accept; so, please do not hold me responsible just as You did not hold your Servant and Prophet Yousuf when he took charge in the government of Egypt.'" [16](#)

These narratives suffice us to highlight the Imam's viewpoint regarding the issue of regency, for he at times depicts his ordeal to us by invoking the Almighty to remove his distress and anguish from him even by death, and at another time he compares his situation with that of Prophet Yousuf (a.s.) who accepted a post under the government of Egypt's Pharaoh while, at the same time, he reveals to us the difference between the two situation: While Yousuf gladly accepted his post and clearly requested it, he, on the other hand, was forced to accept.

After all this, no doubt remains in our mind about the Imam's conviction that the whole matter was a

farce, and that he did not agree to it in principle.

Political Motives Behind the Regency

We can summarize the causes which forced al-Ma'mun to decide the issue of regency in the following:

1. In order to please the Shi'a public opinion in Khurasan and its territories which were credited with paving the road for al-Ma'mun's accession to the throne and for a victory over his brother al-Amin, thus he would secure a legitimate stamp for his government when the Imam (a.s.) agreed to be his successor, since the Imam's agreement meant a recognition of the legitimacy of al-Ma'mun's caliphate. Such recognition would guarantee for him the loyalty of his subjects in those regions, and I personally think that this is the most significant reason which caused al-Ma'mun to do so because it would put an end to the argument of traditional opponents to the Abbaside government who used to always criticize such government and consider it illegitimate and baseless. For this reason, we can find no public discontent with the regency; on the contrary, it was a cause for elation and joyful endorsement in various circles.

It is not unlikely that al-Ma'mun may have felt that some underground movement was preparing to assault his throne, snatch the government from him and hand it over to the Alawides; therefore, he tried to encircle that movement by making the Imam (a.s.) a partner with him in the forefront of the government by naming him his regent.

Such an action may win him the sympathy of the Khurasanis especially after all the suffering they had to put up with and the persecution of the Abbaside caliphate which murdered them and pursued them throughout the country as fugitives in a manner which caused bitterness and agony. What supports this cause are some paragraphs of a letter al-Ma'mun wrote to Banu Hashim in which he said: "You claim that I desired that they would be the recipients of benefits thereof and to be in charge, while I have in mind the interest of your posterity and children after you even while you are unaware, blindly stumbling, not knowing what plans others have in store for you."

What these ambiguous statements imply, especially after the writer admitted that the nomination of Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) was something the man rightfully deserved due to his qualifications, is that al-Ma'mun sensed the danger of the precarious political situation around him, and he feared losing his grip on the reins of government since the popular base was faithful to the Alawides. Add to this the fact that many leading elements in the political and military establishments were strong supporters of the Alawides. We can appreciate this fact by evaluating the extent of the public acceptance of the nomination of the Imam (a.s.) for the regency, and if there was any opposition, its voice was so weak it vanished amidst the tumultuous voice of overwhelming support.

Al-Ma'mun did not wish the Alawides to take charge; rather, he only wished to preemptively encircle the crises which might uproot the Abbaside government if he let events shape themselves on their own.

2. To avoid a clash with the Alawides who always threatened the Abbaside government by their rebellions and uprisings during various epochs, presuming that the Abbasides had usurped the government from them, having stated that their call to uproot the Umayyads was on behalf of ar-Ridha' (a.s.), descendant of the Progeny of Muhammad (S), especially since al-Ma'mun wanted his government to be stable and to avoid disturbances and crises which might weaken his position as the supreme ruler since he was still engaged in a political struggle of survival with Baghdad, the capital of the caliphate, and it was not a coincident that the issue of regency took place at the outset of that struggle.

But the Alawides had already succeeded in winning the sympathy and public support of the Islamic world and were able to maintain that to their credit. An excellent proof for that was the wide response their revolutions won among various Islamic circles. All of that was due to the violent persecution and merciless pursuits, to the murdering and banishment, and to the norms of torture and retribution from which they suffered at the hands of the ruling apparatus, so much so that even al-Ma'mun testified to that in his letter to Banu Hashim quoted above.

But al-Ma'mun in his afore-mentioned letter to Banu Hashim supports our argument in making this one of the causes of his decision regarding naming the Imam (a.s.) as his successor; he says, as we quoted above, "... The reason for that is my desire to safeguard your lives and protect your properties by establishing friendly ties between us and them which is a method I employ in being clement to the descendants of Abu Talib and to heal their wounds with very little of what they are entitled to."

When he ties the knot of regency for the Imam (a.s.), he wishes to put out the fire of rebellion in the souls of the Alawides and their followers and to keep the ghost of danger away should they oppose the Abbasides and try to compete with them in their bid for the government, and he did, indeed, achieve what he wanted.

3. To warn the Abbasides about what they had already done to him and how they reneged on their oath of allegiance to him, by their rebellion against him and removal from regency, that all of their actions would not disable him from overcoming them and subjecting them to his authority and, moreover, take the caliphate out of their dynasty and hand it over to their Alawide adversaries.

It is possible that the tense psychological atmosphere between al-Ma'mun and the Abbasides in Baghdad posed a real challenge, and al-Ma'mun found no way to force them and stir their deeply rooted sensitivities better than sending them a threatening signal that he was going to take the caliphate out of their court and throw it into that of their Alawide adversaries who constituted a point of weakness in the Abbaside psyche. Al-Ma'mun found no better weapon to threaten them with stronger than that in the face of their challenges which almost uprooted his position when they all agreed to depose him in response to the call of his brother al-Amin.

Abbasides Defy al-Ma'mun

The effect of that violent challenge stamped the behavior of the Abbasides since then, for they deliberately and for the second time decided to dethrone him in a counter challenge, warning him that it would not be easy for him to get the caliphate out of their hands and hand it over to their adversaries, and that they could seat on the throne anyone they wanted from among themselves even if he had been the least qualified. In fact, they went ahead and did just that; they appointed Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi who was nicknamed "Ibn Shakla," and who was one of the most famous singers during the entire Abbaside dynasty rule. They swore the oath of allegiance to him and others followed suit.

The Abbasides Treat Caliphate Lightly

It is very regrettable what the Abbasides did. It is an act of the most horrible nature to take so lightly the sacred institution of Islamic caliphate, and a flagrant sin committed against the most sacred divine post after Prophethood. It only shows the terrible extent of apathy reached by the Muslim masses when they accepted the nomination of such a promiscuous person as the caliph to whom they would pay homage and whom they would obey.

Al-Ma'mun Backs Off and Apologizes

Such a reaction stirred the reservations of al-Ma'mun as seen in a letter he wrote after the death of Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) and during his march to Iraq. Ibn al-Athir writes:

"When he (ar-Ridha' (a.s.)) died, al-Ma'mun wrote al-Hasan ibn Sahl informing him of Ali's death and his calamity of losing him, and he wrote to the residents of Baghdad, to the Abbasides and their subjects informing them of his death and inviting them to enter into his loyalty, and they wrote him back in the most rude manner."¹⁷

Such a violent challenge in which the Abbasides reacted to al-Ma'mun and the latter's fears that they might persist in their rebellion lead the historian to conclude that al-Ma'mun used one of his tricks to eliminate Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) in order to put an end to the anger of the Abbasides and other residents of Baghdad who were outraged because of the nomination of ar-Ridha' (a.s.) which was the reason why they terminated their loyalty to him.

Doubt in al-Ma'mun's Sincerity

Had al-Ma'mun been sincere in his intention to bring justice to the oppressed, and had he been serious in his handling of the issue of succession to the throne, why did he not name Muhammad al-Jawad (a.s.), son of Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.), after the death of his father and who was regarded as his father's successor and who was praised by al-Ma'mun for his knowledge and piety and superiority to all other Hashemites? Or did al-Ma'mun desire not to enter into a similar experience which might undermine his position and drag him into his downfall and collapse? Or did al-Ma'mun then fulfill the purpose from

which he named the Imam (a.s.) as his successor and there was no need any more to enter into another such scheme?

4. By restricting the movement of Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) and forbidding him, after forcing him to accept regency, from demanding caliphate for himself, thus al-Ma'mun secures the strangulation of the element of competition from whose nightmares his preceding caliphs used to suffer and which explained their cruel and oppressive conduct towards the Imams.

Al-Ma'mun Places the Imam Under Surveillance

Al-Ma'mun was not satisfied with all of that; he went ahead and subjected the Imam (a.s.) to a strict surveillance whereby he was closely watching all his internal and external movements, and he indirectly defined the extent of his contacts with others; al-Rayyan ibn al-Salt narrates the following:

"Hisham ibn Ibrahim al-Rashidi was the closest person to ar-Ridha' (a.s.) before he was taken to the caliph's palace, and he was a courteous and brilliant scholar. Ar-Ridha' (a.s.)'s contacts used to be transacted through him and under his supervision, and he used to collect all monies on his behalf before he, Abul-Hasan, was taken away. When he was taken away to the palace, Hisham ibn Ibrahim contacted Dhul-Riyasatayn and he tried his best to win his favor and started informing him and al-Ma'mun about ar-Ridha' (a.s.)'s movements, thus he won their confidence and did not conceal anything regarding the Imam (a.s.) from them. Al-Ma'mun, therefore, appointed him as the Imam's chamberlain, and nobody could have audience with the Imam (a.s.) except whoever he liked, and he enforced a tight surveillance over the Imam (a.s.), so much so that none of his supporters could reach him without Hisham's approval, and he used to inform al-Ma'mun and Dhul-Riyasatayn of anything and everything ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said at home." [18](#)

Al-Ma'mun's Motives Behind Enforcing Surveillance

What prompted al-Ma'mun to take such a harsh measure was his great apprehension that the Alawides who predominated Khurasan, encouraged and directed by the Imam (a.s.), might move to topple his government, which is something we do not think it was logically improbable.

Strictness of Followers of the Imams

Al-Ma'mun was probably aware of how followers of the Imams measured their own movements and transactions according to the prior instructions of their Imams so that their actions would be legitimate. For this reason, al-Ma'mun did not need to enforce surveillance over the movements of the Alawide popular base which paid homage and allegiance to the Imam (a.s.), as much as he needed to enforce a strict surveillance over the Imam's actions and contacts. In order to verify this conduct which Shi'as have always undertaken in their practical dealings with their Imams, we ought to quote what al-Rayyan ibn al-Salt stated.

He mentioned that one Abbaside, Ibrahim ibn Hisham, used to defame and degrade the Imam (a.s.), so al-Rayyan told ar-Ridha' (a.s.) about that and sought his permission to silence that man for good, whereupon the Imam (a.s.) strongly forbade him from doing so. Then he said to him, "This Fadl ibn Sahl is dispatching me to Iraq to carry out errands for him and this Abbaside man is leaving three days after that for Iraq. What do you say if I should instruct your followers in Qum to dispatch twenty or thirty men and disguise as thieves or highway robbers and when he passes by them they would attack and kill him, and people would say that he was killed by highway robbers?'

The Imam (a.s.) kept silence; he neither said 'Yes' nor 'No; therefore, he went to the inn-keeper and hired a horseman to go to Zakariyya ibn Adam with a letter informing him that there were matters he could not possibly include in the letter and that he would disclose them to him if he met him at such and such a place on a particular day. He said, "Leave me and the man alone," so he bade him farewell and left. The man went back to Qum where Mu'ammār had just arrived, so he consulted the matter with him, whereupon Mu'ammār said, "We do not know for sure whether his silence meant he is ordering us to do it or not. He did not explicitly order you to do anything; therefore, it is not wise to harm the man," so he changed his mind, and Zakariyya abstained from going to meet him. He passed by the Abbaside man without harming him in the least. [19](#)

Despite the fact that the Imam (a.s.) the second time did not explicitly tell al-Rayyan what to do and remained silent, having first strongly forbidden him from doing it, which gave him the impression that he approved of the plan al-Rayyan had suggested to eliminate the Abbaside man because of his silence, Zakariyya ibn Adam did not do anything except after consulting Mu'ammār in this matter who told him not to do anything since the Imam's silence could not be interpreted for sure as an order or not. This shows us the degree of precision in following the orders and instructions of the Imams.

These are the realistic reasons, within the historical understanding of the period through which the government was passing, which can be used, in part or as a whole, to realize exactly why al-Ma'mun named the Imam (a.s.) as his regent.

Naive Analyses of the Regency Issues

It is naive to say that the incentive for the regency was al-Ma'mun's desire to fulfill his pledge to God to hand the caliphate over to the best person among the descendants of Abu Talib if he was able to regain his post, as al-Saduq (R.A.) concluded, for such a statement, if it was indeed said by al-Ma'mun in his answer to al-Fadl and his brother al-Hasan ibn Sahl, was said only to confuse the matter to others. Equally naive is that which alleged that the reason for it was to expose the reality of the Imams and their pretense of asceticism and that their pretense was only due to their inability to attain it. But al-Ma'mun was more keen and more knowledgeable than others of the reality of the Imams. He knew that such posts would not in the least affect their stance and the public's regard towards them. Yet acceding to the post of caliph would not be in the eyes of the nation in conflict with the principle of asceticism if the

objective is to establish an equitable society and to rule the nation by the principle of absolute justice.

The Imams and their followers, however, regard government as one of their rights which was usurped from them by others; otherwise, how can you prove that there is a conflict between one's asceticism and his acceptance of a government post? Did it undermine the asceticism of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.) and that of others who became caliphs and who were known for their asceticism?

These, finally, are the reasons which we can mention to clearly show us the other face of al-Ma'mun revealing the real background of his politics which were ambiguous in dimension regarding his regency arrangement.

Queries

If al-Ma'mun had really been serious in his offer for Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) that he should accept the post of caliph while he himself would abdicate, or even in his offer of regency, we still have to answer some queries without the answers to which we cannot take al-Ma'mun's offer that seriously; they are the following:

1. Why did al-Ma'mun send a messenger to Medina to bring the Imam (a.s.) to him escorted by a police force?
2. Why did he specify that the route he should take would pass by Basrah, al-Ahwaz, Persia, and then Marw?
3. If al-Ma'mun was truly convinced that the Imam (a.s.) was most qualified for caliphate, why did he not address the public on his behalf without forcing him to take such a hard journey to Marw under such specific route arrangement?
4. Why did he forbid him from leading the Eid prayers after insisting repeatedly that he should do so?

These questions may seem to some as naive and superficial, but they are deep enough to be considered in the calculation of the historian who aims at evaluating the event and its intricacies.

Al-Ma'mun Was the One Who Suggested It

What appears to us after observing the general political circumstances and from discerning al-Ma'mun's political awareness which was adulterated with both caution and precision, that al-Ma'mun was the one who came out with the idea of the regency as the above quoted narratives indicate. Al-Fadl ibn Sahl tried to dissuade him from doing so when he was magnifying for him their consequences, but he finally had to yield upon facing al-Ma'mun's insistence.

Al-Fadl Could Not Have Suggested It

It is far-fetched to suggest that al-Fadl ibn Sahl was the one who came with the idea especially since he was a lackey and a recipient of the cash of the Barmakis and of their followers' who were all very well known for their open deviation from the line of the Alawides; so, how could it be possible that he would recommend to al-Ma'mun to choose ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as his successor except if the general political atmosphere of the caliphate necessitated that it should bypass the sectarian issues?

Ibn al-Athir goes beyond this in his *Tarikh* to suggest that al-Fadl was actually Shi'a and that he was definitely the one who suggested to al-Ma'mun to choose Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as his successor.²⁰ He may even have narrated this in some of his narratives; for example, Abu Ali al-Hasan ibn Ahmed al-Salami writes in his book *Tarikh Khurasan* (history of Khurasan) saying: "Al-Fadl ibn Sahl suggested to al-Ma'mun to name Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as his regent²¹, and this view is adopted by a group of historians."

Al-Salami also narrates saying that al-Fadl ibn Sahl, when one day al-Ma'mun was discussing how he successfully transferred the caliphate with some of his very close friends (among whom al-Fadl was present), he wondered, "How would you compare my action in this regard to that of Abu Muslim [al-Khurasani]?" One of them answered, "Abu Muslim transferred caliphate from one tribe to another, whereas you have transferred it from one brother (al-Amin) to another, and there is a difference between the two cases of which you are aware." Al-Fadl said, "If it were up to me, I would rather transfer it from one tribe to another," and he suggested to him to name Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as his regent, so he secured the oath of allegiance for him and thus dropped that of al-Mutamin Billah.²²

Abdullah ibn Tahir is quoted saying: "Al-Fadl ibn Sahl suggested to al-Ma'mun to seek nearness to the Almighty God and to the kin of His Messenger (S) by naming Ali ibn Musa (as successor) in order to wipe out the harm they had received at the hands of al-Rashid, and he could not easily reject a suggestion he made; therefore, he dispatched from Khurasan Rajaa ibn Abul Dhahhak and Yasir the servant and ordered them to seek the company of Muhammad ibn Ja'far and Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja'far (and go to ar-Ridha', A.S.), and that was in the year 200 A.H."²³

Al-Ma'mun Asserts the Idea Was His

In contrast with the above, al-Rayyan ibn al-Salt says: "There was a huge multitude of army leaders and civilian dignitaries as well as huge crowds of commoners assembled to witness the nomination of ar-Ridha' (a.s.), and they were saying that that was due to the arrangement of al-Fadl Dhul-Riyasatayn, and al-Ma'mun came to know about it, so he sent for me in the midst of the night, and I stood before him. He said, 'O Rayyan! It has come to our knowledge that people say that the nomination of ar-Ridha' (a.s.) was the arrangement of al-Fadl ibn Sahl Dhul-Riyasatayn.' I said, 'O commander of the faithful! They indeed say so.' He said, 'Fie upon you, O Rayyan! How dare anyone come to the caliph, after his subjects are completely loyal to him and so are his leaders and he is well-seated in his post, and tells

him to hand over the caliphate to someone else? Is this conceivable?' I said, 'By God, no, O commander of the faithful! Nobody dares to do that.' He said, 'No, by God! What they say is not true, but I shall tell you of the reason for that.' Then he mentioned the reason to be his pledge to God that if he regained his post and became in charge, he would conduct regency the way God wanted it to be."[24](#)

Historical Analysis of Its Attribution to al-Fadl

If we observe the Imam's conduct towards al-Fadl, his view about the Imam (a.s.), and his warning to al-Ma'mun against giving him the reins of leadership of his government, we cannot help endorsing the view which says that the choice of regent was something al-Ma'mun thought about and politically calculated. Al-Fadl was not ignorant of the status of the Imam (a.s.) and the power of his influence should he side with al-Ma'mun, and he was not naive to the extent that he would jeopardize his powerful influence by getting involved in al-Ma'mun's apparatus in a confrontation with a more powerful influence.

As regarding what others have stated that it was he who suggested to al-Ma'mun to do so, this may be attributed to the fact that if any event happened to the ruling apparatus, its credit was often given to the person with the strongest influence in that apparatus, the one who was strong enough to face the public opinion bearing full responsibility for any action taken by the government.

Abul-Fadl, according to public opinion of the time, enjoyed the widest influence and the strongest word with the caliph al-Ma'mun, and when al-Ma'mun was about to make a decision regarding the appointment of the Imam (a.s.) as his successor, people would think that al-Fadl must have been inspired the idea.

It was held that he must have been the one who subjected al-Ma'mun to his views in all his political measures, enforcing a complete control over them. For this reason, we see that when the letter of al-Hasan ibn Sahl reached Isa ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid, in which he was informing him that al-Ma'mun was getting ready to nominate ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as his successor and that he had already ordered him to remove the official black government uniforms and substitute them with green ones and ordered the army and its commanders as well as Banu Hashim to swear the oath of allegiance to him as such and to require all the residents of Baghdad to do likewise, some people said they would swear allegiance but would not wear green while others said that they would do neither and that they would not let the descendants of the Abbasides lose their grip over the government, adding that it was a "conspiracy" inspired by al-Fadl ibn Sahl.[25](#)

The accusation of the people of Baghdad of al-Fadl was inspired only because of his having the strongest influence over the government, and we think it is not too far to believe that the publicity of the rumor that the idea was suggested to al-Ma'mun by al-Fadl was actually the doing of al-Fadl himself in order to safeguard his own status in public opinion since he did, indeed, have the strongest influence over the caliph's actions.

When al-Ma'mun asks one of his close friends about his own opinion regarding the comparison between what he did and what Abu Muslim had done, he brags about transferring the caliphate from one tribe to another just as Abu Muslim had done in order to boast to his listeners of having the ability to do with the caliphate whatever he pleased, and that the arrangement of the regency issue was done according to his own instructions rather than those of anyone else.

Al-Fadl Sows Mischief Between the Imam and al-Ma'mun

Al-Fadl actually did try to transfer the caliphate from one tribe to another in order to satisfy by so doing his own personal conceit and in pursuit of his own personal ambition to be a second Abu Muslim, so he enters the residence of ar-Ridha' (a.s.) accompanied by Hisham ibn Amr to say: "O son of the Messenger of God! I have come to you to speak in private; so, please clear the place," then al-Fadl brings out of his pocket an oath sworn by the sanctity of emancipation, divorce, and whatever has no *kaffara*, and both men say to him, "We have come to you to say a word of truth and honesty, and we know that your word is most effective, and the right belongs to you. O son of the Messenger of God! What we say with our tongues is attested to by our own conscience; otherwise, we would emancipate all that we have, and all our women are henceforth divorced, and I shall be required to perform the pilgrimage thirty times on foot... that we shall kill al-Ma'mun and put you in charge so that right goes back to you," but he did not listen to them but cursed them and said, "You both have proven ungrateful to the blessings God has blessed you with; therefore, you will not be safe from what you have said, and I shall not get what you promise even if I were to agree to what you say."

When al-Fadl and Hisham heard the Imam (a.s.) say so, they realized that they were mistaken in their calculations; therefore, they went back to al-Ma'mun after telling ar-Ridha' (a.s.) that they were only testing him. Before leaving, they were told by the Imam (a.s.), "You have lied, for your hearts certainly relish what you have just said to me, but you found me not exactly as you had hoped." When they entered al-Ma'mun's court, they said: "O commander of the faithful! We have just visited ar-Ridha' (a.s.) and we tested him and wanted to sift his mind about you, so we said what we said and he said too," whereupon al-Ma'mun said, "You have done well." So when they came out, ar-Ridha' (a.s.) went to see him and they remained by themselves and ar-Ridha' (a.s.) informed him of what they both had said and enjoined him to protect himself from their mischief. When al-Ma'mun heard that from ar-Ridha' (a.s.), he knew that the Imam (a.s.), not those two men, was the truthful.

Subjective Analysis of the Dialogue

Should this story be true, it would be a proof showing us the precise political dimension of a dangerous move whereby al-Fadl tried to score a victory for himself and strengthen his own position which was being weakened by his being distanced from the power nucleus after the nomination of Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as the successor. Al-Fadl, by so doing, was either serious in his offer or a pretender.

If we suppose that he was serious, what would then his objective be? What we can understand as an

interpretation of the situation is that al-Fadl was trying by so doing to involve the Imam (a.s.) in the plotting of a conspiracy to assassinate al-Ma'mun, and when caliphate was to be transferred to the Imam (a.s.), since he was the heir to the throne, al-Fadl would be in a position to hold the reins of government and enforce his control over its authority, making the Imam's participation in the plot as a blackmail against the Imam (a.s.) whereby he could threaten him should he try in any way to restrict his influence. Or, after eliminating al-Ma'mun, it would be easy for him to eliminate Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as well through a little help from groups opposing the Imam's caliphate.

Had al-Fadl been truly honest in his offer to transfer the caliphate to the Alawide dynasty and to eliminate al-Ma'mun, and had he been confident of the practicality of the idea, what made it necessary for him to consult the Imam (a.s.) regarding all of that since caliphate would be transferred to the Imam (a.s.) automatically and without any obstacle after the elimination of al-Ma'mun since he was the appointed successor?

If we suppose that he was a pretender in his offer, as al-Fadl tried to assert after the Imam's rejection of his plot, then the goal he was trying to achieve becomes quite clear, for he would then desire to disturb the standing relationship between the Imam (a.s.) and al-Ma'mun and, at the same time, prove to al-Ma'mun his loyalty to his government and concern about its security.

Imam Foils al-Fadl's Attempt

The Imam (a.s.) foiled his attempt to achieve his goal in either possibility, and Imam ar-Ridha's assertion to al-Ma'mun that al-Fadl was quite serious about his offer is a strong reason added to the other reasons which caused al-Ma'mun to eliminate al-Fadl at a later time. Having absorbed all the above, we can be easily satisfied that the regency concept was due to al-Ma'mun's conviction of the persisting need for it in order to achieve some political gains the government was concerned about achieving.

We can also be satisfied that the publicity al-Fadl ibn Sahl awarded that arrangement cannot be proven even when many historians insist it could, for attributing Shi'aism to him was due to the rumors which said that al-Fadl was the one who offered al-Ma'mun the most encouragement to name ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as his successor, but we opt for the opposite due to the lack of evidence after having analyzed all situations as stated above.

Al-Ma'mun Calls Imam to Him

Having evaluated the general status of the political policies of his government, which were surrounded with tumultuous events starting with Baghdad going back against its promise of support to him and passing by the Shi'a Alawide throngs surrounding his base of government in Khurasan and ending with the Alawide rebellions in Iraq, Hijaz and Yemen, al-Ma'mun thought of curing this weak point by a brilliant acceptable political move which would be something to divert the attention of the Alawides and

the Shi'a residents of Khurasan and, at the same time, a terrible threat to the Abbaside throngs in Baghdad that would guarantee influence for his position and control over all parties, and this could not be achieved without naming Imam Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as the successor to the throne. And so it happened; he sent letters to the Imam (a.s.) ordering him to go to Marw.

The Imam (a.s.) refused, and a great deal of correspondence ensued between both men till al-Ma'mun convinced him finally and through his own special ways to go there, sending him a special force to escort him on his way which included al-Dhahhak, or, according to al-Mufid and Abul Faraj al-Asbahani, al-Jalloudi. History books do not say much about that trip except small bits and pieces which do not provide us with a clear vision of its nature and mission.

Al-Ma'mun Determines Imam's Route

Al-Ma'mun had already ordered his messenger to take a group of dignitaries who were descendants of Abu Talib to the Basrah highway, then to al-Ahwaz and Persia, keeping in mind that the alternate route, which was Kufa-al-Jabal-Kerman Shah-Qum, was mostly inhabited by Shi'as and it has their strongholds, and they might be carried away by their enthusiasm upon finding out that the Imam (a.s.) was among them and might decide to keep him there and thus involve the government in dangerous consequences which might cause its weakening and collapse.

Imam in Nishapur

When he entered Nishapur, he stayed at a neighborhood called al-Qazwini where there were crowds of pigeons, the pigeons which they call today ar-Ridha' (a.s.) pigeons, and there was a spring there the water of which had receded, so he hired workers who repaired it till its water became plentiful. He had a pool built on its outside where stairs were also built according to his instructions leading to the low level of the spring water, so the Imam (a.s.) went down, made his ablution, came out and said his prayers on the outside.

Story of the Gold Chain

According to *Tarikh Nishapur*, as quoted in *Al-Fusool al-Muhimma* by Ibn al-Sabbagh the Malekite, when the Imam (a.s.) entered Nishapur on his way to Marw, he was inside a dome with curtains conveyed on a gray mule, and he went through Nishapur where the two Imams who memorized the *ahadith* of the Prophet (S) and the students of the Sunnah of the Prophet (S), namely Abu Zar'a al-Razi and Muhammad ibn Aslam al-Toosi, with countless scholars and seekers of knowledge, traditionists and critics, and they both approached the Imam (a.s.) saying, "O most honorable dignitary and the son of the master Imams! By the rights of your purified forefathers (a.s.) and your glorious ancestors, could you please let us see your blessed face, and could you narrate for us *hadith* from your forefathers quoting your grandfather Muhammad (S) whereby we can remember you?" So he ordered to have the mule halted, and he cooled the eyes of the throngs with his blessed sight. He had two locks of hair on his

shoulders, and people from all classes were standing and looking at him, some loudly crying and rolling in the dust before him while others were kissing the hooves of his mule. The noise became much louder, and the leading scholars loudly called upon people, "O folks! Listen and learn! Listen to what benefits you and do not harm us by your loud screams and cries!"

The person who requested permission to write down then was Abu Zar'a Muhammad ibn Aslam al-Toosi. Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said: "My father Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) narrated to me from his father Ja'far As-Sadiq (a.s.) from his father Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) from his father Ali Zaynul-Abidin (a.s.) from his father, the Martyr of Karbala (a.s.), from his father Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.) saying: `My loved one, and the pleasure of my eyes, the Messenger of God (S), narrated to me once that Jibrail (Gabriel) told him that he had heard the Lord of the Throne, Glorified and Praised be His Name, saying, `The kalima of LA ILAHA ILLA-ALLAH is My citadel; whoever said it would enter My citadel, and whoever entered My citadel was safe from My retribution.'" Then he let the curtains loose on the dome and went away while the scribes outnumbered twenty thousand.

Abu Na'im said in *Hilyat al-Awliya*, after quoting the narrative above, "This is a firm *hadith* famous in this way of narration through the line of narrators from among the Purified Ones (a.s.) who quote their forefathers, and some of our predecessors who were traditionists used to say whenever this tradition was narrated that if this narrative was narrated to a madman, he would come back to his senses."

Imam Continues His Trip to Marw

The Imam (a.s.) after that continued his trip till he finally reached Marw where al-Ma'mun had prepared a comfortable place for him and surrounded him with excellent manifestations of respect and veneration and all means of honoring and glorification. It was then that al-Ma'mun started to execute the plan he had planned for the regency.

Imam Preconditions

Finally the Imam (a.s.) bowed his head with the agreement to be the caliph's successor, but it was not before he had taken from the government an excitingly negative stance; he preconditioned that he would not be required to bear any responsibility, general or specific, related to the government and its ruling systems, and al-Ma'mun accepted the condition quite reluctantly, but he did try at times to involve the Imam (a.s.) in such responsibilities, and the Imam (a.s.) kept refusing, reminding him to honor his condition.

Having been convinced to accept, the Imam (a.s.) said to al-Ma'mun: "I also agree not to name anyone in a post nor remove anyone from a post, that I do not cancel any decree or tradition, and to stay as an advisor," and he agreed to all of that.[26](#)

In another encounter, al-Ma'mun tried to pressure the Imam (a.s.) into participating in the state affairs; Mu'ammarr ibn Khallad said that Abul-Hasan ar-Ridha' (a.s.) had said to him, "Al-Ma'mun said to me, `O

father of al-Hasan! You may consider some of those individuals, whom you trust to be governors of the areas where corruption is manifest,¹ and I said to him, `If you honor your part of the agreement, I shall certainly honor mine. I agreed to what I agreed on the condition that I do not issue orders or overrule others, nor depose anyone or appoint anyone, nor do I go anywhere except wherever God sends me. By God! Caliphate was something I never desired, and I used to live in Medina where I go through its alleys on the back of my animal, and when its residents or others ask me to do them a favor, I do them a favor, and thus they become like my own uncles. My letters still carry weight in various lands and you have not increased me in whatever blessing God has bestowed upon me.¹ So he said, `I shall honor it."[27](#)

Analyzing Imam's Negative Stance Towards Such Responsibility

We have no choice here except to clear some of the ambiguity which encompasses this negative stance of the Imam (a.s.) towards the government, for why should he refuse to cooperate with al-Ma'mun in carrying out the state affairs?

Before doing anything, we have to evaluate the Imam's viewpoint towards the government and its "legitimacy" under the leadership of al-Ma'mun and the counsels of al-Fadl ibn Sahl and his views regarding its leaders and heads.

Of course, his viewpoint was not positive due to his belief that a government was not legitimate as long as it remained distant from his own leadership in his status as the pristine Imam (a.s.) named so by the Messenger (S) himself according to a series of instructions conveyed by one Imam (a.s.) to the next. For this reason, we see how his companions unanimously disagreed that he should accept the post of regent which carried an implied recognition of the then caliphate. We can see the only justification they accepted was that the Imam (a.s.) was forced to accept it, and that that post which was forced on him would not change his stance towards the government one iota, for he did not enter into it except like that who entered to exit [28](#) and that what caused him to agree was the same that caused his grandfather the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) to agree to be part of the *shura* committee.[29](#)

Had Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) wished to share the burdens of government with al-Ma'mun, it would have been regarded as his recognition of the legitimacy of the makeup of that government, and an endorsement of all its actions undertaken by its higher authorities, but he preferred to assume the role of an advisor who kept his stances in order to safeguard the interests of Islam the safeguarding of which was his own very mission in life.

But the Imam (a.s.) did not want to grant al-Ma'mun the status of a custodian over his behavior and actions, nor would he be the executor of his will and the person to fulfill his every ambition, for he did not have the ambition to achieve a stronger ruling status, or the one who controls the government apparatus, so that he would provide al-Ma'mun similarly to what al-Fadl ibn Sahl and others provided. Those individuals used to press to win his favor, flatter him, and carry out his desires whatever they might be so that they would be the first to win a stronger position in the government vehicle.

Let us suppose that the Imam (a.s.) had accepted the principle of taking part in managing the state affairs. That would mean his exposure to an overwhelming and fierce opposition by others who consider Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as an element differing from their systems in conduct, program, framework and context, and he might push them away from the cycle of government especially since he could not accept all their actions most of which may go beyond the limits legislated for them. Or such a confrontation may expose the Imam's stance to dangerous repercussions which may historically affect his being and personality even if through cheap means and methods they plot behind the scenes to accuse him in order to incite the wrath of the government against him and also distort the sacred halo with which others surround him.

Do these persons lack special means to cast a shadow of doubt on the movements of the Imam (a.s.) and misinterpret his behavior to the caliph al-Ma'mun? Take the case of that person who raised al-Ma'mun to the throne after turning the tables upside down on the government in Baghdad, removed al-Amin from his throne through whatever political and military means he had, was he then not capable of plotting to eliminate the Imam (a.s.), or hurt his reputation, in order to secure for himself to remain in the center of power?! In fact, despite the generous amount of intelligence al-Ma'mun enjoyed by forcing the Imam (a.s.) to accept regency, the Imam (a.s.) was likewise aware of his situation, keen to the consequences when he practically distanced himself from the areas of responsibility.

Regency Celebrated

When the Imam (a.s.) accepted regency, al-Ma'mun wanted to celebrate the event in a grand style, so he conducted a meeting with his closest aides on a Thursday, then al-Fadl ibn Sahl went out and informed the public of the decision al-Ma'mun had made regarding Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha' (a.s.) and that he chose him to be his successor and named him "ar-Ridha'" and ordered them to wear green and come on Thursday to swear the oath of allegiance to him as such and take a year's allowance from the state treasury.

On that day, people in their various social classes, leaders, chamberlains, judges and others, all draped in green outfits, rode to the designated place where al-Ma'mun had seated himself, putting for ar-Ridha' (a.s.) two huge pillows. He even spread the carpet in person for ar-Ridha' (a.s.) and seated him on it near him while wearing a turban and carrying a sword. Then he ordered his son al-Abbas ibn al-Ma'mun to be the first to swear allegiance. Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) raised his hand, with its back facing his face and its palm facing them. Al-Ma'mun said to him: "Stretch your hand so that people swear allegiance to you."

Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said: "The Messenger of God (S) used to put his hand like that before accepting people's allegiance." People swore the oath of allegiance to him while his palm was thus facing them. Tens of thousands of dirhams were brought in; orators delivered speeches and poets said their poems exalting the merits of ar-Ridha' (a.s.) and the status to which al-Ma'mun had chosen him for.

Then Abu Abbad called upon al-Abbas son of al-Ma'mun. He stood and came close to his father and kissed his hand. His father ordered him to sit, then Ali Muhammad ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammad was called upon, and al-Fadl ibn Sahl said to him, "Come up," and he did till he was close to al-Ma'mun. He stood there but he did not kiss his hand. He was told to go and take his money. Al-Ma'mun then called him and told him to go back to his place, which he did. Abu Abbad kept inviting one Alawide and one Abbaside to take their money till all cash was depleted. Then al-Ma'mun asked ar-Ridha' (a.s.) to deliver a sermon.

The Imam (a.s.) praised God and glorified Him, then he said: "We have over you a right designated by the Messenger of God, and you have a right over us as well; so, if you perform your obligation towards us, we will be bound to perform yours."

Historians do not record any other sermon he delivered besides this one on that occasion. Al-Ma'mun ordered a new dirham currency to be minted with ar-Ridha's name on it. Ishaq ibn Musa ibn Ja'far married the daughter of his uncle Ishaq ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammad and ordered him to accompany people to the pilgrimage, and sermons were delivered at ar-Ridha's home town mentioning his name in them as the designated successor of the caliph.³⁰ Al-Ma'mun ordered that all countries must mention ar-Ridha' (a.s.) during their sermons and pray for him in his capacity as the successor of the caliph of the Muslims.

Poems in his Praise

Poets praised him in a most excellent way. Among such poems were verses composed by Abu Nuwas which are considered the best, for people blamed the poet for not praising ar-Ridha' (a.s.), whereupon he said:

It was said to me that mine was the best rhyme,
Articulate in arts of brilliant speech and chime,
That I have pearls of beautiful speech
Bearing fruits in the hands that can reach;
"So why did you leave the praise of the son
Of Musa, and equal to his merits is none?"
I said how could I possibly praise and be fair
To one whose father Jibreel did serve and care?

Al-Ma'mun said: "Very well said," and he paid him as much as he paid all the poets combined and considered him as a close friend. The school of thought of Abu Nuwas was Shi'a, and myths of promiscuity were narrated about and attributed to him regarding which we have our own view which dissociates the poet from what was attributed to him.

Abu Nuwas went out of his house once and noticed that there was a horseman who was riding beside him. He asked who the man was without seeing his face, and he was told that he was Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha' (a.s.), whereupon he instantly composed these verses:

Had the eyes sought you for a goal,
And the mind doubted you and the soul,
The heart would surely you recognize
Even when not seen by the eyes.
If people wish to see you but do not know,
Your fragrance will tell them where to go.

Once he saw the Imam (a.s.) leaving the court of al-Ma'mun and riding his mule, he came close to him, greeted him and said, "O son of the messenger of God! I have composed a few verses about you and would like you to hear them." He said, "Let us hear them," so he said:

Cleansed and Purified they are,
When mentioned, they are sanctified,
Wherever they may be, near or far;
When roots and lines are identified,
If not Alawides, they indeed are
With nothing to boast or pride
In their lineage, in their deed;
For when God created man and eyed
You He selected and favored indeed
And raised above the rest and all
With the knowledge of His Qur'an
And of its verses you stand tall.

Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said, "You have composed verses nobody else beat you to them before," then he asked his servant how much spending money he had with him, and the servant told him it was three hundred dinars. The Imam (a.s.) said, "Give it to him all," then he ordered him to hand him his mule as well.[31](#)

As regarding Da'bal, the poet of the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.), I did not come across his poetry in praise of ar-Ridha' (a.s.) on the occasion, but I have come across his poetry as recorded in books of history which have brought us his famous poem rhyming with the `t' in which he depicted for us the horrible tragedies from which the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) suffered the bitterness of injustice and oppression at the hands of their contemporary caliphs and their oppressive rulers. Da'bal seems in his poem to aim at stirring the sympathy of the nation in order to wake up the sense of loyalty to the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) and to support them against their enemies who usurped their rights by his magnificent narrative style of the bloody tragedies whereby they were terrorized during various epochs of the Umayyad and Abbaside dynasties. The poem begins with:

They answered each other with an echo and sighed,
Mourners in non-Arab tongued wailed and cried...

Then he explains the facts the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) went through since the demise of the Prophet (S), passing by the incident of the saqifa and the nation's stance towards the caliphate then, and ending with the calamity that befell Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.). After that he dedicates the rest of the poem to praising the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.), highlighting their particular merits and qualities. Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) was moved particularly by two verses of the poem, and that was reflected clearly on his face, when Da'bal said,

I find others share their share,
Their hands of what is theirs are bare...;

The Imam (a.s.) cried and said, "You have said the truth, O Da'bal..." And Da'bal had indeed struck on the Imam's sensitive chord of the dilemma from which the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) were suffering when he said:

When they were pulled taut, they did stretch
Tense hands that couldn't their muscles touch,

The Imam (a.s.) kept making a motion with his hands and repeating, "tense, indeed; they are tense..." The poem is considered one of the best in Arabic poetry in its ease of expression, the reality of exposition, the craftsmanship of its organization, and the excellence of its performance.

When Da'bal finished, ar-Ridha' (a.s.), according to the author of *Al-Aghani*, rewarded him with ten thousand dirhams of the ones minted with his name on them, and gave him one of his own shirts which some residents of Qum offered to buy from the poet for thirty thousand dirhams but he refused; therefore, they waited till they had a chance to take it away from him by force. He then said to them, "It is meant to be for seeking nearness to God, the Exalted, and it is prohibited from you," and he swore that he would never sell such a relic except if they agreed to give him a portion of it to put in his coffin, so they gave him one sleeve which was later put inside his coffin.

He wrote his poem titled *Madarisu Ayatin*, as is said, about a garment (from the Imam) which he wore as the ihram robe, and he ordered it to be put in his coffin upon his death. Da'bal was feared for his tongue, and caliphs used to dread his criticism. Ibn al-Mudabbir said, "I met Da'bal once and said to him, 'You have more guts than anyone else when you composed these verses about al-Ma'mun:

I belong to the people whose power and might
Killed your brother and honored you with your right;
From its long apathy they made your status bright,
And lifted you from the deepest pit and plight.

So he said to me, 'O Abu Ishaq! I have been carrying my cross board with me during the past forty years without finding anyone to crucify me on it!'"[32](#)

An Interesting Anecdote

One of the interesting and often narrated anecdotes says that Da'bal left Marw after Da'bal had already said his famous poem rhyming in the `t' and passed by the watering place belonging to Fawhan when highway robbers intercepted his caravan and took it all as a booty after tying its men including Da'bal. The robbers took possession of all the wares of the caravan and kept dividing it among themselves when one man, quoting Da'bal, said:

I find others share their share,
Their hands of what is theirs are bare...

Da'bal heard him and asked him, "Who said that line?" The man answered, "A man from the tribe of Khuza'a called Da'bal ibn Ali." Da'bal said, "I am Da'bal who composed that poem, and this verse is one of its verses," whereupon the man leaped and rushed to their chief who was saying his prayers on top of a hill, and he was a Shi'a. He told him what he had heard. The chief came and asked Da'bal if he was the man and Da'bal answered in the affirmative, so the man challenged him to recite the entire poem. When he did, he untied him and untied all the other men in the caravan and returned all their belongings back to them just to please Da'bal.[33](#)

This story, although we are not sure if it is true, expresses anyway the implication this verse carries.

Opponents of the Regency Arrangement

The regency arrangement was the source of horror mixed with outrage and anger of the Abbasides and their followers, and this became manifest by their removal of all political influence of al-Ma'mun from Baghdad and by reneging on their pledge of allegiance to him which caused him a great deal of political disasters.

There was also a group of men among his closest courtiers and leaders who refused to endorse his decision and spoke of their disagreement with him and insisted on their disagreement till he found himself forced in the end, according to some reports, to arrest them for fear of foiling his plan. Among those arrested were three men, namely al-Jalloudi, Ali ibn Abu Imran, and Ibn Munis. Al-Saduq narrates saying that they were killed after being arrested[34](#), although some historical facts conclude that this was not so, for both Tabari and Ibn Athir, discussing the events of the year 205 A.H., say that al-Ma'mun appointed Yazid ibn Isa al-Jalloudi to fight al-Zatt in Yemen[35](#), and so does al-Yaqubi.

Researching History

We find it hard to believe that the al-Jalloudi whom al-Ma'mun killed was not the same al-Jalloudi who fought al-Zatt, and it is possible that he was not killed because of the intercession on his behalf by ar-Ridha' (a.s.).

It is strange that those leaders should revolt against the wish of al-Ma'mun and insist on their rebellion and dissension to the extent that they were executed, and here we have no choice except to endorse the authenticity of this story according to the common books of criteria in understanding history. Al-Saduq narrated the story of their execution in a way which was closer to a stage play, in which he used precision to distribute the roles among it cast, than anything else. It is likely that Ali ibn Abu Imran whom al-Saduq named among those three men was actually Abdul-Aziz ibn Imran who will be discussed later and who was killed with others by al-Ma'mun after having been accused of taking part in the murder of al-Fadl ibn Sahl.

Silent Opposition

There were other elements of dissent who did not relish the nomination of the Imam (a.s.) as the successor and to the possibility of taking caliphate out of the Abbasides, but they submitted to reality while hiding ill intentions just to avoid a clash with the government in which they are not strong enough to oppose its will. But they could not keep it to themselves for too long; instead, they expressed the bitterness they felt towards such an "irresponsible" act, according to their way of thinking, of the caliph.

Ishaq ibn Musa ibn Isa ibn Musa accompanied a group of people for the *hajj* where he prayed for al-Ma'mun and for his successor Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha' (a.s.), whereupon he was challenged by Hamdawayhi ibn Ali ibn Isa ibn Musa ibn Isa ibn Mahan who leaped at him and called for a black (Abbaside color) robe to wear, and when he could not find one, he took a black flag and wrapped himself in it saying: "O people! I have now conveyed to you what I was ordered to convey, and I do not recognize anyone other than the commander of the faithful and al-Fadl ibn Sahl," then he descended.³⁶

This incident leads us to believe that there was a silent underground opposition which did not wish to enter into a struggle to define its position regarding the government, in addition to the opposition which had already and publicly taken a stance contrary to the will of the government as had happened in Baghdad and elsewhere.

At any rate, those who rejected the regency arrangement did not realize what prompted al-Ma'mun to bring it about during those shaky political circumstances which the Abbaside government lived, and al-Ma'mun was not naive enough to reveal to these parties the secret which he had very well kept to himself till he reached the final destination point of the plan he had planned.

Eid Prayers

One of the manifestations which was not destined to finalize of the regency celebration was the Eid prayers which al-Ma'mun insisted that the Imam (a.s.) should conduct in person because he himself had caught a very bad cold, or he may have had another excuse. Al-Irshad quotes Ali ibn Ibrahim who in turn quotes Yasir the servant and al-Rayyan ibn al-Salt saying that when the Eid approached, and ar-Ridha' (a.s.) had already been named as the caliph's successor, al-Ma'mun invited him to ride to the

place where the occasion was to be celebrated and to say the prayers and deliver the sermon, and ar-Ridha' (a.s.) sent him a word saying, "You know what terms exist between both of us; so, please exempt me from conducting the prayers to people." Al-Ma'mun answered saying, "My intention is that people's hearts must rest at peace regarding you and they should come to know your excellences."

Messengers kept going between both men carrying messages and when al-Ma'mun insisted on his suggestion, he sent him a message saying, "If you exempt me, I would appreciate it, and if you do not, I shall come out just as the Messenger of God (S) and the Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.) did," whereupon al-Ma'mun said, "Come out however you please," and he ordered the leaders and chamberlains and the public to go early to ar-Ridha's house. People waited to see Abul-Hasan ar-Ridha' (a.s.) in the alleys and on rooftops, and women and children too gathered waiting for him to come out.

The army commanders and their troops stood guard at his door mounted on their horses till the sun started rising. Abul-Hasan washed, put on his outside clothes and wore a turban made of cotton, leaving a portion of it drape down on his chest and a small portion of it between his shoulders. He rubbed his hands with some perfume and took in his hand a cane and told his servants to do likewise. So they all came out, and he was barefoot, and he raised his trousers up to half the leg and his clothes were hanging loosely on him. He walked for a short while, raised his head above and made the *takbir* and his servants did likewise.

Then he walked till he reached his doorstep. When the leaders and troops saw him looking like that, they all alighted in the speed of lightning, so much so that lucky was the one among them who happened to have a knife to cut the leather stirrups so that he could jump faster than others, take his sandals off and remain barefoot just as the Imam (a.s.) had done. Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) made *takbir* again, and everyone else did likewise, so much so that it seemed to everyone as if the sky and the walls echoed with him, and Marw was shaken with the noise of weeping and hassle when its residents saw Abul-Hasan and heard him say *Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!...*

Sending Imam Back

Al-Ma'mun came to know about all of that. Al-Fadl ibn Sahl Dhul-Riyasatayn said to him, "O Commander of the faithful! If ar-Ridha' (a.s.) reaches the mosque in such a condition, people will be fascinated by him and we all will have to fear for our lives; so, send him a messenger and tell him to go back." Al-Ma'mun sent him a message saying, "We have over-burdened you and wore you out, and we do not wish that you should suffer any hardship on our account; so, go back home, and let people say their prayers behind whoever they have been praying." Abul-Hasan, therefore, asked for his sandals back, put them on and went back. People on that day differed regarding their prayers, and he did not participate in their prayers.

Analyzing Imam's Handling of Eid Prayers

Thus did the Imam (a.s.) desire to give the Eid prayers their great spiritual meaning and separate them from the fake appearances which were attached to them by ruling caliphs who were using them to make a display of the power they commanded and to secure the sense of awe and greatness in the minds of the public. Such a splendid show whereby the Imam (a.s.) tried to bring the legislative system back to its pristine genuineness was something with which the public were not familiar at all, and it was a magnificent surprise that the emotions of the masses were amalgamated with the Imam's position which was rebellious in nature against the traditions followed by the caliphs on such occasions.

People lived during those moments a supreme spiritual outburst which deepened within their souls the sense of belief and distanced them from artificial and fake appearances. Such an objective stance the Imam (a.s.) took was an open invitation to the nation to reevaluate the ruling apparatus that played havoc with their lives and properties, and inspire to them to see how fake the government apparatus was and how distant from the reality of the Islamic message. This is why al-Fadl was swift to warn al-Ma'mun about the embarrassment of the situation and alert him against people falling in love with the Imam (a.s.) and turning in hatred against the government if he did not send the Imam (a.s.) back. Al-Ma'mun was moved by al-Fadl's warning; therefore, he had to send someone to ask the Imam (a.s.) to go back home.

Some of the Imam's Dawah Methods

The Imam (a.s.) had his own particular method in promoting the dawah, for he took advantage of some exciting situations in order to open people's eyes to see how corrupt the government and its ruling system was, having no freedom of movement due to the restrictions al-Ma'mun and his minister al-Fadl ibn Sahl had enforced on him of strict surveillance over all his actions and speeches.

Among such situations which were dictated by the nature of his mission was his conditional acceptance of the regency that he would not have to issue orders nor cancel the orders of others, that he would not depose or nominate anyone, nor have anything to do with the state affairs. All in all, this indicates that he did not feel that the government was legitimate enough for him to cooperate with and which would raise some questions by people around him.

A final note. This is the story of the regency issue. I have tried while writing it to be faithful to history in discussing its complexities and developments without having any goal except to clear the Imam (a.s.) of the accusations against him which may still be raised by some people who have a particular way of understanding history within the frameworks of texts without examining the main subject-matters while studying history. These include: the evaluation of the general circumstances, the political impacts which stamp the nature of a government, the social pressure which may have something to do with defining some situations and taking a few steps dictated by the necessity of coping with a government. How nice

it would be if the long story of history were researched on the basis of analyzing the situations and evaluating the circumstances! It is only then that the cloud would be removed from a great deal of scenes and pictures, and we can be more realistic in our judgment of events.

- [1.](#) Uyoon al-Akhbar, chapter on ar-Ridha', Vol. 2, p. 141
- [2.](#) Al-Irshad, p. 290. Also Maqatil al-Talibiyyin by Abul-Faraj al-Asbahani, p. 375
- [3.](#) Al-Maqatil, p. 375
- [4.](#) Ilal al-Sharai', p. 266
- [5.](#) Al-Bihar, Vol. 49, p. 208 quoting Ibn Maskawayh's book Nadeem al-Fareed
- [6.](#) Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 2, P. 148
- [7.](#) Ilal al-Sharai', Vol. 1, p. 226
- [8.](#) It appears that al-Hasan ibn Sahl was al-Ma'mun's ruler over Iraq at that time, and we cannot explain why the name of al-Hasan is mentioned in this story except in the case al-Ma'mun had called him to meet with him to consult him regarding the issue of selecting Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as the regent as presumes Sayyid al-Amin in his work A'yaan al-Shi'a, But al-Fadl's letter to his brother al-Hasan regarding regency, as Ibn al-Athir and Tabari and other historians indicate, negates all that, and the addition may have been the action of the narrator who was ignorant of all of that which constitutes a major problem inflicting narratives.
- [9.](#) Al-Irshad, p. 291
- [10.](#) Maqatil al-Talibiyyin, p. 375
- [11.](#) Al-Irshad, p. 291
- [12.](#) Al-Mahdi and the Mahdis, "Iqra" series, pp. 61 & 62, by Ahmed Amin
- [13.](#) Uyoon al-Akhbar, Vol. 3, p. 141
- [14.](#) Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 2, p. 167
- [15.](#) Al-Ayyashi's Tafsir, Vol. 2, p. 180 of Surat Yousuf, verse 55
- [16.](#) Al-Sadooq's Amaali, p. 72
- [17.](#) Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 5, p. 193
- [18.](#) Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 2, p. 153
- [19.](#) Qurb al-Isnad, p. 200
- [20.](#) Ibid.
- [21.](#) As quoted in Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 2, p. 165
- [22.](#) Ibid., p. 147
- [23.](#) Ibid., p. 147
- [24.](#) Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 2, p. 151
- [25.](#) Tabari, Vol. 8, p. 555, under the heading "Events of the Year 201."
- [26.](#) 'Ilal al-Sharai', Vol. 1, p. 226
- [27.](#) Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 2, p. 167
- [28.](#) Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 2, p. 139
- [29.](#) Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 140
- [30.](#) Al-Irshad, p. 291, and Maqatil al-Talibiyyin, pp. 375-376
- [31.](#) Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 2, p. 143. Some may doubt that these verses were actually composed by Abu Nuwas since he died at least three years before Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) was named as the regent, for it is said that he died in 195, or in 198, whereas others put the year of his death quite differently from either. The regency event is supposed to have taken place in the year 201. If this is accepted, then he could not have been present there nor could he have composed verses on the occasion. There are two possibilities here:
 1. The first is that the poet was indeed Abu Nuwas, the renown poet, but he composed them at a different time, which is quite possible since he is known to have composed verses in praise of the Imam;
 2. The second is that it was said by another Abu Nuwas who was known as Abu Nuwas al-Haqq who was a follower of Imam al-Hadi (a.s.), and his name was Abu al-Sari Sahl ibn Ya'qub, and he used to behave in a morally loose manner and

flatter people and even pretend that he was a Shi'a in order to save his skin. When Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) heard that about him, he called him the true (al-Haqq) Abu Nuwas, according to Al-Kuna wal Alqab (nicknames and titles) by al-Qummi, Vol. 1, p. 170.

What ought to be verified is the claim that the "true" Abu Nuwas lived long enough to be contemporary to Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.), and we have no evidence that that was the case. It is possible that he was counted among the followers of Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) by someone who did not actually live during the time of the Imam (a.s.) which proves the contrary; therefore, the first possibility seems to be more likely, and God knows best.

[32.](#) Al-Aghani, Vol. 2, pp. 69–81

[33.](#) Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 2, p. 264

[34.](#) Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol 2, pp. 159–164

[35.](#) Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 5, p. 197

[36.](#) Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 2, p. 44

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