

The Role of the Imams in the Shiite Underground Activities and their Influence upon the Evolution of the Ghayba

1. Al-Sadiq's Attitude towards the new Regime

It appears that the members of the 'Abbasid family who became part of the revolutionary movement against the Umayyads adhered to the belief, in common with the various groups of the Shi'a, that the first lawful caliph after the Prophet was 'Ali¹, and that the caliphate must belong to the People of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*).

The 'Abbasids preached against the Umayyads by calling for reform and justice. They invited the people to rally around the most suitable person from the progeny of Muhammad (*al-Da'wa li-l-Riṣa min Al Muhammad*). Many Shi'ite thought that this slogan referred only to the descendants of Imam 'Ali. Thus they joined the 'Abbasid movement².

Some of the Shi'a, such as Abu Salama al-Khallal, reached high rank in the 'Abbasid movement without cognizing the fact that the 'Abbasids were the founders of the movement, and they aimed to monopolize the caliphate for themselves.

When the propagandists overthrew the Umayyads in 132/749, Abu Salama al-Khallal, having discovered the reality of the 'Abbasid's goal, endeavoured to transfer the caliphate to the 'Alids by corresponding with Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, 'Umar al-Ashraf and 'Abd Allah al-Mahd, offering it to each of them, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq rejected the offer bluntly by burning Abu Salama's letter, and he warned 'Umar al-Ashraf and 'Abd Allah al-Mahd against accepting it³.

Al-Sadiq had already held a secret meeting with the leading personalities of the 'Abbasid family, such as al-Saffah and al-Mansur at al-Abwa', near Medina, around the year 120/737, to discuss the situation of the People of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*). At this meeting the attendants wanted to form an underground

collusion to bring about the downfall of the Umayyads.

A proposal also was made to support the Hasanid claims put forward by ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd on behalf of his son Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya⁴, but al-Sadiq refused to have anything to do with it. Although the ‘Abbasids present at this meeting made a nominal pledge to Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, al-Sadiq seems to have been aware of the possibility that their involvement with the revolutionaries, particularly the Kaysaniyya or its Hashimiyya branch; would be successful and that they would replace the Umayyads.

Also al-Sadiq knew he was the true divinely appointed Imam of the Muslims and he achieved the Imamate by the testament of his father, Imam al-Baqir. Thus people should rally around him to recover his right in the caliphate. Al-Sadiq's view did not please the ‘Abbasids, so, they carried out their underground activities against the Umayyads without his participation.

When the ‘Abbasids succeeded in seizing the reins of power in 132/749 they were naturally aware of the danger from their kinsmen, the ‘Alids, whose claims to succession would be greater than their own if ‘Ali's right to the caliphate were to be accepted by the general populace. As a result the ‘Alids now faced ‘Abbasid oppression more severe than that of the Umayyads⁵.

The motives for this oppression seem to have been first of all doctrinal. The early members of the ‘Abbasid family, such as ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abbas⁶, had confirmed ‘Ali's right to the Imamate (the political and religious authority) by relating many traditions attributed to the Prophet supporting it. They had also supported ‘Ali against the first three Caliphs and participated in the Caliphate of ‘Ali, and they gave some support to his son al-Hasan.⁷

In the eyes of the ‘Alids by taking over the Caliphate the ‘Abbasids became usurpers of the political authority of the Imamate. Hence the ‘Abbasids became suspicious of the ‘Alid attitude toward their authority. Secondly there were economic motives for the ‘Abbasid oppression since Imam al-Sadiq continued to collect the *khums* secretly from his followers⁸, an act which the ‘Abbasids considered as a preparatory step towards some conspiracy to overthrow them.

These two factors obliged the ‘Abbasids to keep al-Sadiq in Medina and to hold his followers, especially in Iraq and later in Egypt, under close scrutiny as measures to ensure the security of the state.

Thus al-Sadiq maintained an externally quiescent policy towards the ‘Abbasids. Yet at the same time he spread traditions amongst the Shi'ite narrators of traditions stating that the Imamate was a prerogative bestowed by God upon one of the descendants of al-Husayn, who, before his death and at the Prophet's order, had transferred it to his successor by a clear stipulation (*al-Nass al-Jali*)⁹.

Al-Sadiq held that it was not necessary for the divinely appointed Imam to rise in revolt immediately in order to recover his rights to political authority. He should be satisfied with the spiritual leadership and perform its duties until the time when the community is sufficiently aware of his right to political power.

Then God will assist him in his quest¹⁰.

In accordance with his quiescent policy al-Sadiq announced openly that *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* and not himself would achieve political power¹¹.

Al-Sadiq's quiescent policy did not satisfy a considerable body of his adherents. Their political ambitions caused schism amongst the Imamites. The instigator of this political movement was called Abu al-Khattab. At first he was trusted by al-Sadiq and nominated as agent (*wakil*) of the Shi'ite group in Kufa.

But al-Sadiq then repudiated and denounced him because of his extremist theological view¹², which he had endeavoured to enforce by militant means. It seems likely that Abu al-Khattab wanted to circumvent the influence and the interference of al-Sadiq by propounding his political and revolutionary ideas to al-Sadiq's son Isma'il, who was more inclined to such thoughts than his younger brother Musa. Thus Abu al-Khattab hoped to give his revolutionary ideas religious legitimacy under Isma'il's name.

Although the rebellion of Abu al-Khattab was easily subdued at Kufa, his failure and al-Sadiq's continued insistence on a quiescent policy forced Abu al-Khattab's followers to resort to underground activities under the leadership of Muhammad b. Isma'il. This event led the adherents of al-Sadiq to split into the Isma'ilis and the Musawiyya.

After his death, they split into Musawiyya, who held the Imamate of Musa al-Kazim, al-Fatthiyya, who held the Imamate of the eldest son of al-Sadiq, Abd Allah al-Aftah; al-Muhammadiyya, who held the Imamate of Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq, the Waqifa, who thought that al-Sadiq had not died but was *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*; and the two Isma'ili sects who held the Imamate of Isma'il and his son Muhammad respectively¹³.

2. The Imamite activities during the period of al-Kazim **(148–183/765–799)**

As a consequence of al-Sadiq's death the Imamites became so weak that even if military rebellion might have been possible during his lifetime, there was little chance of it now. The rise of the Isma'ilis during al-Sadiq's lifetime, followed by the rise of the *Fatthiyya* sect, which included most of the Imamite *fuqaha'*,¹⁴ made the position of al-Sadiq's successor, Musa al-Kazim, very weak, and obliged him to follow the quiescent policy of his father.

For this reason al-Mansur(d. 158/774) did not take any action against him or his followers during his lifetime. However he continued his pursuit of the representatives of the revolutionary branch of the Hasanids¹⁵.

The regime of al-Mahdi, who was installed in the Caliphate after the death of his father al-Mansur in 158/774,¹⁶ was distinguished by his "orthodox" policy. He encouraged the traditional *muhaddithun*,

pursued the *zindiqs*, and oppressed the People of the Book¹⁷. However, "this policy could be described as less religious policy than a political weapon. The promotion of the Surma by the 'Abbasids was, in fact, a means in the struggle against the religio-political enemies or opposition movements"¹⁸.

This statement is illustrated by al-Mahdi's attitude towards the Imamites. When he came to power in 158/774, the followers of al-Kazim became active and more powerful than the Fathiyya and the Isma'ilis¹⁹.

Al-Mahdi thought that the religious and intellectual activities of al-Kazim's partisans might endanger his regime, especially as there was a report indicating "that an important body of opinion had been turning towards the 'Alids and away from the 'Abbasids or rather, had been insisting that the Hashimite charisma was not equally spread through all the clan, but was peculiarly present in the 'Alids alone²⁰.

Perhaps for this reason, al-Mahdi summoned al-Kazim from Medina and imprisoned him in Baghdad. But in so doing he neither reinforced the legitimacy of his rule nor changed public opinion towards the charismatic character of al-Kazim²¹.

Therefore, he decided to follow a policy which depended on bribery and the intimidation of the Shi'a. Al-Kazim was released in 159/775, after he had sworn that he would not rise in arms against al-Mahdi or his successors²². According to al-Tabari, al-Mahdi simultaneously approached the Zaydites in order to gain their assistance in monitoring the activities of the 'Alids and their followers.

For example, he made overtures to Ya'qub b. Dawud, who belonged to a family which had worked in the secretarial affairs of Khurasan during the Umayyad period²³, and made him his "brother in God". Then, in 163/799, al-Mahdi made him his vizier and vested him with full powers to handle all the affairs of the Caliphate, whereupon Ya'qub gathered together the Zaydites and appointed them to the high offices of the state²⁴.

Al-Mahdi may have been motivated by the fact that the non-revolutionary Zaydites (*al-Jara'riyya*) believed in the Imamate of the Inferior (*al-Mafdul*) as long as the Superior (*al-Afdal*), was present, and such dogma might give a legitimate foundation to his Caliphate which could be used against the 'Alids.

During al-Mahdi's regime the claim was put forward that the lawful Imam after the Prophet was not 'Ali but al-'Abbas, and that therefore the Imamate belonged to his family²⁵. In fact Ya'qub b. Dawud brought many jurists together from Basra, Kufa and al-Sham and organised them²⁶ so as to further this claim. Al-Kashshi reports two transmissions to support this.

He says that the Zaydite Hisham b. Ibrahim wrote many Zaydite works, one of them entitled "The Confirmation of the Imamate of al-'Abbas", and he adds that another Zaydite, called Ibn al-Muq'ad, wrote a heresiographical work illustrating the dogmas, places and activities of the pro-Imamites, such as *al-Ya'furiyya*, *al-Zurariyya*, *al-Ammariyya*, and *al-Jawaliqiyya*, and submitted his work to al-Mahdi. This work was then recited together with a warning by the Caliph at the gates of Baghdad, Medina and

other cities²⁷.

The recitation of this work was the first step to al-Mahdi's pursuit of the other factions of the pro-'Alids. Some of these pro-'Alids were obliged to flee from Kufa to remote provinces, like Yemen²⁸, while al-Kazim spread instructions amongst his adherents for them to follow his quiescent policy carefully. Al-Kashshi's report seems to indicate that the tense relationship between the 'Abbasids and the pro-'Alids continued until the death of al-Mahdi in 169/785.²⁹

Although some of this tension seems to have been alleviated with the accession of al-Hadi, the Hasanids were closely watched and their salaries cut. They began to increase their propaganda in Khurasan and the other provinces in a new Zaydite form, and they contacted the leading personalities of the Hasanids in Medina, encouraging them to revolt³⁰.

As a part of al-Hadi's precautionary policy the Hasanids of Medina were forced to come to the office of the governor every evening. They exploited a gathering of their followers from numerous provinces during the Pilgrimage and made their ill-treatment by the governor an excuse to rebel in 169/785. But their uprising was easily defeated and resulted in their being massacred in the battle of Fakhkh³¹.

However the Caliph accused al-Kazim of provoking the rebels and decided to kill him, but died in 170/786 before he could put his decision into practice³².

The battle of Fakhkh and the commitment of al-Hadi's successor, al-Rashid, to the anti-'Alid policy of his predecessors only served to entrench the political strategy of the three 'Alid parties, the revolutionary Hasanids, the Isma'ilis and the Imamites.

The Imamite group under Imam Musa al-Kazim became stronger and more organised, and insisted on a gradual movement towards their political goal, but the Imam rejected any bid to rise in arms because he considered this the task of *al-Qa'im*³³.

His adherents, most of whom were originally from Kufa, were scattered throughout the Islamic state and used the rite of Pilgrimage to communicate with each other. They succeeded in maintaining an important body of followers in Akhmim in Egypt, which became a centre for communication between the Shi'a in Kufa and those in Egypt³⁴. They had other followers in al-Maghrib³⁵.

Al-Kazim permitted a few of his adherents to work in the 'Abbasid administration, especially in the offices of *al-wizara* and *al-barad* (governmental mail), so that they could help to save their fellows in times of danger. Hence several Imamite families held office, such as that of 'Ali b. Yaqtin ³⁶ and that of al-Ash'ath, including Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Ash'ath and his son al-'Abbas, who became the governor of Khurasan, and Waddah (or Wadih), who worked in the *barid* of Egypt³⁷.

The enlargement of al-Kazim's party increased his wealth, for there is much evidence to indicate that he collected secretly from his adherents³⁸ the *khums*, the *zakat*, gifts and other taxes enjoined in the

Shari'a as part of what was due to his Imamate.

The second Shi'ite party was the Isma'ilis, who had already disassociated themselves from the quiescent policy of al-Sadiq and his son al-Kazim by adopting the Imamate of Isma'il first and then of his son Muhammad, both of whom were more inclined toward more actively revolutionary underground political activities.

They learnt from the repeated failure of the Hasanid uprisings, which were initiated without political preparation, and they decided to struggle for power through a gradual political process.

This decision encouraged them to adopt ideas from beyond the circle of Islam, and their adoption of these ideas may have "liberated" their minds from the limits of *Shari'a*. They put forward new interpretations of the Islamic texts, according to which each passage had an esoteric and an exoteric meaning³⁹.

For example, a tradition attributed to the Prophet says that the *Mahdi will* appear when the sun rises from the place of its setting. According to them, this meant not the rising of the real sun, but that of *al-Mahdi*, who would appear in al-Maghrib. Therefore, they became more interested in preaching their doctrine in al-Maghrib and encouraged their followers in the east to emigrate there⁴⁰.

Nawbakhti's reports suggest that the relationship between the Isma'ilis and al-Kazim's followers was tense, since the Isma'ili leaders allowed their followers to assassinate the Imamites who supported al-Kazim⁴¹. Moreover the Imamites accused the Isma'ilis of being implicated in the arrest of al-Kazim⁴².

In the Hijaz the situation of the third Shi'ite group, the Hasanids, was very difficult following the total defeat of their second revolt in Fakhkh in 169/785. The 'Abbasids discovered that the notion of *al-Mahdi* had been in circulation amongst the Hasanids and that they believed that he might rise in Mecca.

It was such a notion that encouraged two Hasanid leaders to rise in arms, first al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in 145/762 and then al-Husayn b. 'Ali in 169/785, each of whom hoped that he might be the promised *Mahdi*⁴³.

Thus the 'Abbasids continued to restrict the movements of the Hasanids and forced them to present themselves to the governor (*al-Wali*) every evening."⁴⁴ This critical situation made it impossible for the Hasanids to take any militant action in the Hijaz, so two of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya's brothers left Medina after the battle of Fakhkh to promote their claims elsewhere.

The first of these was Yahya al-Mahd, who went to the province of Daylam and preached his ideas there, winning considerable support from the native princes and the people of Daylam, whom he provoked to rebellion against the caliph al-Rashid in 175/791.⁴⁵

The second brother, Idris, fled to Egypt, where he already had a large body of partisans, and, with the assistance of a certain Wadih, a Shi'ite working in the bared, managed to escape from there to al-

Maghrib. It seems most likely that his partisans in al-Maghrib had already spread much propaganda against the 'Abbasids, because within three years Idris succeeded in rebelling against them and establishing the Idrisid state, in 172/788.[46](#)

The numerous Shi'ite activities mentioned above seem to have been the causes of al-Rashid's anti-'Alid policy, which covered most of his Caliphate. In 171 /787 he became suspicious of the loyalty of the 'Alids in Baghdad, and decided to gather all of them together and exile them to Medina[47](#).

He followed this step with the appointment of Bakkar al-Zubayri, a descendant of 'Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr, as governor of Medina and he ordered him to put the 'Alids under close watch and to restrict their movements[48](#). As for the rebellion of Yahya al-Mahd in Daylam, al-Rashid sent an army against him (fifty thousand according to al-Tabari) under the leadership of al-Fadl b. Yahya al-Barinaki.

Through diplomacy and promises of amnesty he managed to persuade Yahya al-Mahd to end his uprising and to surrender, after giving him a guarantee of security from al-Rashid. But the Caliph was not satisfied, so he had al-Mahd arrested in Baghdad and killed [49](#).

As for the revolt of Idris al-Mahd, al-Rashid followed the policy of his father al-Mahdi by using the Zaydites against the other 'Alids. He sent a Zaydite scholar called Sulayman b. Jarir to kill Idris. In order to hide his secret target, Sulayman pretended to be a Shi'ite partisan who had escaped from the 'Abbasids' oppression. He became one of the courtiers of Idris and managed to poison him in 177/793.[50](#)

However the assassination of Idris did not bring about the disintegration of his state, as the Berber tribes installed his child, Idris II, after his death. For this reason al-Rashid vested Ibrahim b. al-Aghlab with the government of Ifriqiyya and, four years later, encouraged him to establish the Aghlabid state, possibly to counteract the danger posed by the Idrisids[51](#).

In the meantime the Imamite scholars were active in the intellectual field in Egypt, Yaman, Iraq and Khurasan[52](#).

Hisham b. al-Hakam, for example, attempted to prove the legitimacy of the Imamate of al-Kazim, which means that he considered the 'Abbasids as usurpers of al-Kazim's rights[53](#).

The Hasanid uprisings in Daylam and al-Maghrib and the underground activities of the Imamites and the Isma'ilis worried al-Rashid and made him think that al-Kazim, whom he already knew to be receiving the *khums*, the kharaj and gifts from his followers; was behind all these activities and had prepared a conspiracy to overthrow him. Therefore he initiated a campaign of arresting the Imamites[54](#).

He started by arresting al-Kazim in Medina in 179/795, and sent him to prison in Basra and Baghdad[55](#). Furthermore, Ibn al-Mu'tazz reports that al-Rashid ordered the Zaydite Abu 'Isma to kill the Imamite poet Mansur al-Nammari[56](#).

It was this campaign of persecution that forced the Imamite missionary Hisham b. al-Hakam to hide in

Mada'in, from whence he escaped to Kufa, where he died two months later⁵⁷.

However al-Rashid's arrests did not deter the Imamite underground activities, especially in Basra. Therefore, according to the Imamite narrations, al-Kazim was poisoned for al-Rashid in 183/799 at the instigation of Yahya al-Barinaki⁵⁸.

Al-Rashid also put to death sixty 'Alids who were in his prisons⁵⁹.

The death of al-Kazim led to another schism amongst the Imamites. The first group, which represented quite a large body, was called the *Waqifa*. They held that he was *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*, but they differed amongst themselves concerning his death and split into four sub-groups, three of whom maintained that he had died while the fourth denied it⁶⁰.

A few anecdotes mentioned by the *Ithna' Ashariyya* suggest that the cause of the denial of al-Kazim's death was that some of his agents, like 'Uthman b. 'Isa al-Rawasi in Egypt, and Ziyad, al-Qindi, 'Ali b. Abi Hamza, Hayyan and al-Sarraj in Kufa, possessed a large amount of money (more than a hundred thousand dinars) which belonged to al-Kazim. Since they had used this money for their own benefit, they denied his death and rejected the Imamate of al-Riqa in order that they would have an excuse for not returning the money⁶¹.

However, it is hard to agree with al-Kashshi's view concerning the reason behind the emergence of the *Waqifa* sect. Most of the traditions concerning the occultation and the rise of *al-Qa'im* are attributed to al-Sadiq, who did not indicate explicitly which of his descendants would be *al-Qa'im*⁶².

Therefore it is very likely that a considerable number of the *muhaddithun* thought that the Imam had indicated his son Musa and hence stopped at him, contending that he was *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* and was in a state of occultation.

The second group resulting from the schism after al-Kazim's death held that he had passed away and the Imam was his son 'Ali al-Riqa, who, according to al-Kulayni, assumed the Imamate by the designation of his father⁶³. Al-Riqa faced many difficulties in proving his right to the Imamate, not only to his father's prominent followers, but also to his brother Ahmad.⁶⁴

However, between the years 183–199/799–814, he managed to maintain a considerable number of followers, and administer an underground system of communication to carry on the religious functions of his Imamate⁶⁵.

Moreover his preference for the religious dimensions of Islam, rather than its political dimensions, made him a magnet for many individuals, including the precursors of the sufi movements, especially in Khurasan⁶⁶. But many Imamites who had accepted his Imamate were not satisfied with his quietist attitude and involved themselves in the underground activities of the revolutionary Zaydites, probably without his permission⁶⁷.

3. The Attitude of al-Riḡa towards the 'Alid Revolt against al-Ma'mun

When al-Amin became caliph, Iraq was the centre of his power. It was here that he maintained the support of the Arabs, and especially that of the Murjilite scholars (*al-amma*, later called the Sunnites), while his brother al-Ma'mun was governor of Khurasan and gained the support of its military leaders and senior administrators, especially the Persian vizier al-Fadl b. Sahl and his partisans, who eventually helped him to overthrow al-Amin⁶⁸.

Al-Ma'mun's success in gaining the caliphate was contrary to the political and economic interest of al-Amm's supporters. Therefore many regional revolts took place in Syria, al-Jazira, Yemen and Iraq, headed by the local 'Abbasid governors⁶⁹.

At the same time the 'Alids used their underground propaganda which was influential in the Yemen, Hijaz and Iraq, to exploit al-Ma'mun's difficulties in Iraq and to cause a revolt in Kufa in 199/815. Thus these regions fell out of al-Ma'mun's control.

Although reports about the ideological identity of the 'Alid uprising and the events surrounding it are confused, apparently it was a Zaydite revolt⁷⁰ maintained with the support of some Imamite sects. These included the followers of Ahmad b. Musa al-Kazim and the *sabtiyya*, the followers of Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq⁷¹, along with some of the Imamites, but without the direct order of the eighth Imam, al-Riḡa⁷².

The spiritual leader of this revolt was Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Tabataba, while its military leader was Abu al-Saraya. It broke out under the slogan "We invite people to rally around the most suitable leader from the progeny of Muhammad and to practice the teachings of the Qur'an and the sunna"⁷³ in Kufa on the 10th Jumada 199/26th January 815, where the rebels had the support of the people of the environs of Kufa and of the bedouins. Abu al-Saraya minted coins in his own name in Kufa, managed to defeat three 'Abbasid armies and occupied Mada'in⁷⁴.

Moreover he dispatched many successful campaigns under the leadership of al-Riḡa's brothers and relatives to extend his authority in Iraq, al-Ahwaz, Fars, the Hijaz, and Yemen. They fulfilled their tasks and became the governors of these regions.

For example, Zayd b. Musa al-Kazim became the governor of al-Ahwaz and Basra, Fars came under the control of Isma'il b. Musa al-Kazim, and Yemen came under the control of his brother Ibrahim, Wasit was ruled by Husayn b. Ibrahim b. al-Hasan b 'Ali. Abu al-Saraya appointed Sulayman b. Dawud in Medina, and nominated al-Husayn al-Aftas as governor in Mecca, authorising him to be the leader of the pilgrims and to provide the *Kaba* with a white kiswa⁷⁵.

The authority of Abu al-Saraya increased after the mysterious death of the spiritual leader of the revolt,

Ibn Tabataba on the 1st Rajab 199/15th February 815, and the refusal of the eminent 'Alid, 'Ali b. 'Ubayd Allah, to accept the position of Ibn Tabataba. Abu al-Saraya, in order to evade the interference of any strong spiritual leader, nominated for this post a young 'Alid called Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Zayd b. 'Ali⁷⁶, and monopolised all affairs of the leadership of the revolt.

Abu al-Saraya's full control in Iraq did not continue, because the 'Abbasid army defeated him at Qasr b. Hubayra near Kufa and forced him to withdraw towards Basra along with 800 horsemen. But news came to him that his governor in Basra, Zayd b. Musa al-Kazim, had also been defeated after hard combat and had been captured by the 'Abbasid troops.

Thus he went towards al-Ahwaz, but was defeated by the 'Abbasid governor of that city and his followers dispersed. A few months later the troops of al-Hasan b. Sahl captured him at Jalawla' and on 10th Rabi' I 200/18th October 815 they beheaded him, after which his body was impaled in Baghdad⁷⁷.

It is worth mentioning that the failure of this revolt caused some Imamites to hold that Musa al-Kazim, the seventh Imam, was *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*. They had considered his son Ahmad' as the lawful successor of his father. But since he had participated with Abu al-Saraya, they rejected his Imamate and denied the death of al-Kazim⁷⁸.

This fact reveals the general attitude of the Imamites towards any militant action and indicates that they had *Hadiths* concerning the rise of an Imam with the sword, whose uprising would never be defeated, for he could not die without establishing the government of the People of the House. This may be the reason behind the quiescent attitude of those followers of al-Riqa who did not take any open or active part in the revolt of Abu al-Saraya.

On hearing of the military defeat of their comrades on the Iraqi front after the death of Abu al-Saraya, the rebels in Mecca, who had full control of the Hijaz and the Yemen, made overtures to Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq, asking him to be their leader and finally persuading him to accept their offer. They swore the oath of allegiance to him as their caliph and called him *Amir al-Mu'minin* on 6th Rabi' II 200/13th November 815⁷⁹.

He himself claimed that he was *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*, and based his claim on prophetic traditions⁸⁰. But the eighth Imam al-Riqa denied his claim, although he endeavoured to save him from a military defeat by advising him to postpone his revolt against the 'Abbasids⁸¹.

The installation by the rebels of an 'Alid caliph in Mecca with the epithet *al-Mahdi* threatened the authority of al-Ma'mun. Having failed to subdue the revolt by force, al-Ma'mun decided to resort to political methods, by conciliating the eighth Imam al-Riqa. He dispatched an army under the leadership of 'Isa b. al-Juludi to Medina for this purpose⁸².

But this army was badly defeated at the hands of Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq. Therefore al-Juludi asked al-Riqa to contact Muhammad and ask him to end his resistance, but he rejected al-Riqa's

mediation and insisted on continuing his rebellion. This led to skirmishes between the 'Abbasid troops and the rebels until the end of the year 200/815, when the 'Abbasid army captured Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq and forced him to renounce his claim publicly⁸³.

Because his arrest did not return the areas of revolt into the hands of the authorities, al-Juludi returned with him and al-Riḡa to Merv. According to al-Kulayni, al-Ma'mun welcomed al-Riḡa and offered him the caliphate, but he refused. However, after a few months of negotiation with al-Ma'mun, al-Riḡa agreed to be his successor⁸⁴.

The caliph announced his acceptance. on 5th Ramadan 201/28th March 817 and called him "*al-Riḡa mini Al Muhammad*". At the same time he ordered his soldiers to wear green clothes instead of the black which was the emblem of the 'Abbasids. Then he strengthened his relations with al-Riḡa by marrying his sister Umm Habiba to al-Riḡa⁸⁵.

The installation of al-Riḡa was in reality a political step arranged by the Persian vizier al-Fadl b. Sahl and associated with other policies aimed at consolidating his Persian support and harming the interests of his Arab opposition in Baghdad. This can be concluded from the points mentioned below:

Firstly, the fact that al-Ma'mun continued to reside in Merv caused complaints amongst the military and administrative groups in Iraq, who had been the courtiers of Al-Amin (193–198/808–814) and who then had to struggle for their economic and regional interests against the Persian vizier of al-Ma'mun, al-Fadl b. Sahl, and his brother al-Hasan b. Sahl⁸⁶.

Because he was busy with this conflict, al-Ma'mun failed to subdue completely the 'Alid rebellion in the Hijaz and Yemen. Therefore, with the encouragement of his vizier, al-Ma'mun installed al-Riḡa as his successor to the caliphate in order to divide the rebels by gaining the support of al-Riḡa's adherents and those who were hoping for the appearance of an inspired 'Alid leader⁸⁷.

Secondly, al-Ma'mun changed the colour of the 'Abbasid emblem from black to green. The latter colour was associated with the Sasanids, whereas the 'Alid emblem was white⁸⁸.

Such a step suggests the influence of the Persian vizier al-Fadl b. Sahl.

Thirdly, by installing al-Riḡa as his successor, al-Ma'mun succeeded in splitting the rebels by gaining the support of al-Riḡa's brothers, who accepted the conciliation of al-Ma'mun and mentioned his name in the *khutba* along with the name of al-Riḡa. According to al-Tabari, al-'Abbas b. Musa al-Kazim accepted the governorship of Kufa on behalf of al-Ma'mun, a fact which encouraged some of the rebels to mention the names of al-Ma'mun and al-Riḡa in the *khutba*.

But the majority of the Kufans insisted on mentioning only al-Riḡa's name or that of any prominent person from the descendants of 'Ali⁸⁹.

Such attitudes indicate the Zaydite inclination of the Kufans. However, the leader of the rebels in Mecca,

Ibrahim b. Musd al-Kazim agreed to mention both his brother al-Rida and al-Ma'mun in the *khutba*. For this reason, al-Ma'mun confirmed his office and authorised him to lead the pilgrimage in Mecca⁹⁰.

But a year later, in 202/817, the caliph gave the governorship of Mecca to an 'Abbasid leader, 'Isa al-Juludi, and dispatched Ibrahim to Yemen to subdue the rebellion there. He also granted him Yemen's governorship. After he had fulfilled this task, Ibrahim set out for Mecca, but during his return he was arrested, as was his brother Zayd, and sent to al-Ma'mun⁹¹.

Moreover, al-Nawbakhti mentions that a considerable body of the *muhaddithun* and Zaydites (the non-revolutionary branch) became Imamites after the installation of al-Riḍa. But the accounts of al-Kashshi and al-Saduq suggest that these same people, for example Hisham b. Ibrahim al-Rashidi, had been used by al-Ma'mun to watch the partisans of al-Riḍa, and this might explain why they returned to their previous faith directly after the death of al-Riḍa in 203/817.⁹²

Fourthly, after he had quashed the 'Alid rebellion, al-Ma'mun decided to go to Baghdad, taking with him al-Riḍa and Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq. During his advance, his vizier, al-Fadl b. Sahl was assassinated, then al-Riḍa died in Tus, probably of poison⁹³, and Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq passed away and was buried in Jurjan⁹⁴.

Their mysterious deaths seem to indicate that al-Ma'mun, having used them to fragment the 'Alid opposition, was now moving on to a more rigorous anti-'Alid programme.

Fifthly, the numerous measures initiated by al-Ma'mun after his arrival at Baghdad on Rabi' I 204/819 revealed the political aim of his previous policy. He cast aside the green banner and ordered his subjects to wear the black colour of the 'Abbasids⁹⁵. He granted al-Riḍa's successor, al-Jawad, two million dirhams⁹⁶, and gave back the 'district of Fadak to prominent 'Alids, Muhammad b. Yahya b. al-Husayn and Muhammad b. 'Ubayd Allah b. al-Hasan⁹⁷.

Furthermore, the land-tax (*al-kharaj*) of the *sawad* was adjusted in favour of the tax-payer. The share of the treasury was to be two-fifths instead of half of the produce⁹⁸.

Through these actions, al-Ma'mun wanted to cut the support given by the prominent 'Alids and the peasants of the *sawad* to the revolutionary 'Alid activities, which, according to Abu al-Fida, he had brought to an end. He was also endeavouring to work against his Arab opposition in Baghdad. When he entered the city everything there returned to normal as if the uprising had never occurred.⁹⁹

Finally, in 205/820 al-Ma'mun started to hold symposiums between the Imamites and the Zaydites, and encouraged them to discuss the question of the *Imama* in his presence. It is worth mentioning that the non-revolutionary Zaydites believed in the Imamate of the inferior (*al-Mafdul*) in spite of the presence of the superior (*al-Afdal*).

This view was based on the belief that even though 'Ali b. Abi Talib was the most excellent of the

community after the Prophet, he fully recognized the caliphate of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Because of this belief of the Zaydites, in the discussions with the Imamites, al-Ma'mun often agreed with the viewpoints of Zaydite scholars such as 'Ali b. al-Him, as regards the Imamate¹⁰⁰.

Then al-Ma'mun managed to capture the 'Alid rebel 'Abd al-Rahman b. Ahmad b. 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad b. 'Umar b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, who rose in arms in Yemen. By subduing this rebellion, al-Ma'mun ended the last military opposition of the 'Alids during his rule. Finally, in 206/821 his real attitude towards the 'Alids was revealed when he ordered them to wear black, and announced that all the descendants of Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib and their close kindred (*al-Talibiyun*) should be prevented from entering his palace¹⁰¹.

4. The development of the Imamite organization (al-Wikala) during the time of al-Jawad

Despite the well-developed status of the Imamite organization during the last period of al-Riḍa's Imamate, he died, leaving a successor only seven years old, thus causing further splits amongst his followers. Al-Mas'udi mentions that because of the age of Muhammad al-Jawad, the ninth Imam, al-Riḍa's followers were confused as to whether or not he possessed the requisite qualifications for the Imamate.

Therefore eighty leading personalities from various provinces, among them al-Rayyan b. al Salt, Safwan b. Yahya, Yunis b. 'Abd al-Rahman, Muhammad b. Hakim, 'Ali b. al-Hasan al-Wasiti, and Ishaq b. Isma'il b. Nawbakht, gathered together at the house of 'Abd al-Rahman b. al-Hajjaj in Baghdad to discuss the validity of al-Jawad's Imamate.

They decided to test his knowledge during the pilgrimage. Two groups concluded that al-Jawad's age precluded his being qualified for the Imamate; the first group supported the Imamate of his uncle, Ahmad b. Musa al-Kazim, whereas the second group, including Ibrahim b. Salih al-Anmati, joined the *Waqifa* and held that the seventh Imam was *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*¹⁰².

But the rest were satisfied that al-Jawad's knowledge was exceptional and held that he was well qualified in spite of his age¹⁰³. Hence they continued with the affairs of the organization, and sent propagandists from Kufa and Medina to various provinces. According to *al-Najashi*, many Kufan *muhaddithun*, such as Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Ash'ath, Ahmad b. Sahl, al-Husayn b. 'Ali al-Misri, and Isma'il b. Musa al-Kazim, moved to Egypt and carried on their activities there.

One of these activities was to circulate the traditions of the Prophet concerning *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* and the fact that he would be from the progeny of al-Husayn¹⁰⁴.

A narration mentioned by al-Kulayni suggests that they gained considerable adherents there, namely, that 'Ali b. Asbat al-Kufi came from Egypt to Medina to see al-Jawad so as to describe him to the

Imamites in Egypt¹⁰⁵. Throughout the land of the caliphate the Imamite system of sending out agents (*wukala'*) became more developed and managed to save their organization from certain disintegration.

The Imam's agents spread in many provinces, like al-Ahwaz¹⁰⁶, Hamadan ¹⁰⁷, Sistan, Bist' ¹⁰⁸, Rayy ¹⁰⁹, Basra¹¹⁰, Wasit, Baghdad¹¹¹, and the traditional centres of the Imamites, Kufa and Qumm¹¹².

They allowed their partisans to work in the 'Abbasid administration. Thus Muhammad b. Isma'il b. Bazi and Ahmad b. Hamza al-Qummi occupied high ranks in the vizierate¹¹³, and Nuh b. Darraj was the qadi of Baghdad and then of Kufa. Because his relatives were the agents of al-Jawad, he hid his faith during his occupation of this post¹¹⁴.

Other Imamites became governors of some 'Abbasid provinces, such as al-Husayn b. 'Abd Allah al-Nisaburi, the governor of Bist and Sistan, and al-Hakam b. 'Alya al-Asadi, the governor of Bahrain. Both of these men paid the *khums* to al-Jawad while hiding their allegiance to him¹¹⁵.

At this stage the underground activities of the agents only aimed at controlling and carrying on the religious and financial affairs of the Imamites, not at endangering al-Ma'mun's rule. However in the year 210/825 the people of Qumm, most of whom were Imamites, appealed to the caliph to reduce their land-tax (*al-kharaj*), just as he had reduced the *kharaj* of the inhabitants of Rayy, but he ignored their appeal.

Therefore they refused to pay the *kharaj* and took control of the affairs of Qumm¹¹⁶.

As a result al-Ma'mun dispatched three regiments of his army from Baghdad and Khurasan to quash their revolt. The leader of the Abbasid army, 'Ali b. Hisham accomplished his task. He demolished the wall of Qumm and killed many people, amongst them Yahya b. 'Umran, who, according to Ibn Shahr Ashub, was the agent of al-Jawad¹¹⁷.

Moreover al-Ma'mun collected seven million dirhams from Qumm's inhabitants as a *kharaj* instead of the normal amount, which had been two million dirhams before the uprising. The reports of al-Tabari and Ibn al-Athir indicate that some of the leaders of this revolt were exiled to Egypt, among them Ja'far b. Dawud al-Qummi¹¹⁸.

But these measures did not end the military activities in Qumm. According to al-Tabari, Ja'far b. Dawud escaped from Egypt and rebelled in Qumm in 214/829, but his revolt was subdued and he was arrested and banished again to Egypt¹¹⁹.

Unfortunately the Imamite sources are silent about these military actions in Qumm and their relationship with the Imamites' organization. But al-Ma'mun linked these activities with al-Jawad. Thus he endeavoured to end them through the Imam. According to al-Azdi and al-Tabari, during his march to invade al-Rum, al-Ma'mun summoned al-Jawad and welcomed him in Tikrit in Safar 215/830, where he married his daughter Umm al-Fadl to him.

He asked him to celebrate his marriage in Baghdad, then to go back with his wife to Medina¹²⁰.

But this marriage neither gave al-Ma'mun the support of the Imamites nor stopped the revolts in Qumm. Ja'far b. Dawud managed to escape again from Egypt and rebelled in Qumm in 216/831, where he defeated the army sent by al-Ma'mun and killed its leader 'Ali b. 'Isa. He continued his resistance until the end of the year 217/832, when the 'Abbasid troops ended his uprising and executed him¹²¹.

But afterwards the underground activities of the 'Alids increased on a wide scale. Therefore al-Mu'tasim, who succeeded al-Ma'mun to the caliphate in 218/833, was obliged to summon al-Jawad and Muhammad b. al-Qasim al-Talqan, so as to investigate their role in the underground activities.

The latter, on hearing of al-Mu'tasim's decision, escaped from Kufa to Khurasan¹²², whereas al-Jawad was arrested in Medina and taken along with his wife, Umm al-Fadl, to the caliph in Baghdad, where he was put under house-arrest. He died a few months later in Dhu al-Hijja 220/835. Some Imamite writers claim that his wife Umm al-Fadl poisoned him at the instigation of al-Mu'tasim, but al-Mufid thinks that he died naturally¹²³.

In the last few years of al-Jawad's Imamate the system and the tactics of the Imamite agents were highly developed. The Imam's followers in Khurasan allowed themselves to be recruited into the 'Abbasid army and participated in subduing the rebellion of the *Khurramiyya*. According to al-Tusi, in 220/834 they seized a large amount of booty from the rebels, so al-Jawad ordered them to pay the *khums* either to him directly or to his agent¹²⁴.

Al-Jawad himself, on hearing of al-Mu'tasim's command to present himself in Baghdad, asked his representative Muhammad b. al-Faraj to hand the *khums* to his son 'Ali al-Hadi as a sign that he was to be his successor¹²⁵.

5. The 'Abbasids' Attitude toward the activities of al-Hadi

According to the Imamite sources; the bulk of the followers of al-Jawad accepted the Imamate of his successor 'Ali al-Hadi, who was then seven years old. His age presented no obstacle to their accepting his Imamate, since they had faced the same problem with his father, who had also been seven years old when he took over the office.

A few of al-Jawad's followers, however, supported the Imamate of his son Musa, but after a short time they rejoined the rest of the Imamites, accepting the Imamate of 'Ali al-Hadi¹²⁶.

At this stage the Imamites concentrated their efforts in reorganising the activities of their followers. This was especially necessary considering the fact that the flourishing state of the 'Abbasid economy had decreased the 'Alids' opportunities to obtain supporters for further military action¹²⁷.

Perhaps for this reason the caliph, al-Mu'tasim and his successor al-Wathiq (227–232/841–846), were more tolerant towards the 'Alids than al-Ma'mun before them or al-Mutawakkil after them. According to Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, the descendants of 'Ali b. Abi Talib and their close kindred (*al-Talibiyyun*)

assembled in Samarra where they were paid salaries by the caliph al-Wathiq¹²⁸.

The latter also distributed a large amount of money among the 'Alids in the Hijaz and other provinces¹²⁹.

After the death of al-Wathiq certain events had serious consequences for the 'Abbasid attitude towards the activities of the adherents of the tenth Imam, al-Hadi. Al-Mutawakkil was chosen to the caliphate in 232/837, ¹³⁰ and his installation was seen by the narrators (*al-Muhaddithun al-amma*) as a major setback for those who favoured the 'Alids.

The majority of the latter were from the ranks of the Mu'tazila and the Shi'ites, who formed the progressive and indeed radical element in society. Recognising this, alMutawakkil carried out certain measures with the aim of destroying the economic and political foundations of both the Mu'tazila and the Shi'ites.

Firstly, he abandoned the "inquisition" (*al-Mihna*) against the narrators of the *amma*, which had been implemented by al-Ma mun with the support of the Mu'tazilites, and he encouraged these narrators and their adherents to openly adopt anti-Shi'ite slogans¹³¹.

Secondly, al-Mutawakkil discharged the vizier, al-Zayyat, and his staff from their offices and appointed instead al-Jarjara'i and Ibn Khaqan, who were more inclined to go along to with his anti-Shi'ite policy¹³².

Thirdly, he decided to rebuild the whole structure of the army in two stages. First he began to gradually weaken the power of the Tahirids, who were in charge of ruling Khurasan and of policing Baghdad and the Sawad. He did this by nominating his three sons, alMuntasir, al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad, as his successive heirs apparent, and then appointing al-Muntasir as governor in *Ifriqiyya* and al-Maghrib, al-Mu'ayyad as governor in Syria, and al-Mu'tazz as ruler of the eastern provinces, in particular Khurasan.

Simultaneously the caliph divided the army in the capital among his sons and sent them to the provinces to which he had appointed them, so as to prevent any direct conspiracy on the part of the leaders of the army. His second move was to begin to build a new army called alShakiriyya, recruiting people from areas which were well-known for their anti-'Alid attitudes, particularly from Syria, al-Jazira, al-Jabal, Hijaz, and even from the *'Abna*, who had rebelled against the "inquisition"¹³³.

While carrying out these measures, al-Mutawakkil turned towards the opposition to deal with the organised underground activities of the 'Alids in general and the Imamites in particular. The intellectual activities of the Imamites in Egypt, which had been encouraged by Isma'il b. Musa al-Kazim, had borne fruit and expanded into the sphere of underground political activities, even penetrating into remote parts of North Africa¹³⁴.

The system of communication of their organization (*al-Wikala*) was highly developed, particularly in the capital Samarra, Baghdad, Mada'in, and the districts of the Sawad¹³⁵.

Furthermore al-Yaqubi's report seems to indicate that the Imamites had hidden the name of their Imam to the extent that the caliph was not sure exactly who he was¹³⁶ or if he had direct links with Shi'ite underground activities.

Al-Mutawakkil instigated a campaign of arrests against the Imamites in 232/846, accompanied by such harsh treatment that some of the agents of the Imam in Baghdad, Mada'in, Kufa and the Sawad died under torture, while others were thrown into jail¹³⁷.

By these measures the caliph caused serious damage to the communication network within the *Wikala*. In order to fill the vacuum left by the arrested agents, the Imam had to appoint new agents instead, such as Abu 'Ali b. Rashid, who was nominated to lead the activities of the Imamites in Baghdad, Mada'in and the Sawad, and Ayyub b. Nuh, who was appointed as the agent of Kufa.

Al-Hadi also provided them with new instructions concerning their duties during this critical situation¹³⁸.

Despite all the Imamite efforts to save their organization, the investigation of the governor of Medina, 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad, led to the discovery that al-Hadi was in fact behind these activities. He informed al-Mutawakkil, warning him of the danger of al-Hadi's presence in Medina. So the caliph summoned al-Hadi to Samarra in 233/848, where he kept him under house-arrest¹³⁹.

Two years later the caliph discovered that Egypt and the areas near the tomb of al-Husayn in the Sawad were the strongest centres of the underground communications of the 'Alids. Therefore he ordered that the tomb of al-Husayn and the houses nearby be levelled to the ground. Then he ordered that the ground of the tomb be ploughed and cultivated, so that any trace of the tomb would be forgotten. Furthermore he issued an order prohibiting people from visiting the tombs of any of the Imams and warning them that anyone found in their vicinity would be arrested¹⁴⁰.

Al-Mutawakkil also waged another campaign of arrests. Among those taken prisoner was Yahya b. 'Umar al-'Alawi, who was accused of conspiracy and held in the jail of *al-Mutbaq* in Baghdad¹⁴¹. At the same time al-Mutawakkil ordered the governor of Egypt to deport the *Talibiyyin* to Iraq, and he did so. Afterwards in 236/850,¹⁴² al-Mutawakkil banished them to Medina which had been used as a place of exile for the 'Alids.

Several remarks suggest that al-Mutawakkil went even further in his policy, aiming in the long term to destroy the economic and social status of the 'Alids, and issued many orders so as to achieve this end. He confiscated the properties of the Husaynids, that is the estate of Fadak, whose revenue at that time, according to Ibn Tawus, was 24,000 dinars, and granted it to his partisan 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar al-Baziyar¹⁴³.

He also warned the inhabitants of the Hijaz not to have any communication with the 'Alids or to support them financially. Many people were severely punished because they did so. According to al-Isfahani, as a result of al-Mutawakkil's measures the 'Alids faced harsh treatment in Medina, where they were totally

isolated from other people and deprived of their necessary livelihood¹⁴⁴.

The caliph also wanted to remove the Shi'ites from the 'Abbasid administration and to destroy their good standing in public opinion. Al-Mas'udi gives an example of this policy: he mentions that Ishaq b. Ibrahim, the governor of Saymara and Sirawan in the province of al-Jabal, was discharged from his office because of his Imamite allegiance, and that other people lost their positions for the same reason¹⁴⁵.

According to al-Kindi, al-Mutawakkil ordered his governor in Egypt to deal with the 'Alids according to the following rules:

- 1) *No 'Alid could be given an estate or be allowed to ride a horse or to move from al-Fustat to the other towns of the province.*
- 2) *No 'Alid was permitted to possess more than one slave.*
- 3) *If there was any conflict between an 'Alid and a non-'Alid, the judge must first hear the claim of the non-'Alid, and then accept it without negotiation with the 'Alid.*¹⁴⁶

By these measures, al-Mutawakkil managed to prevent the Shi'ites from plotting against his regime, but he failed to end their underground activities. Reports indicate that al-Hadi continued his communications with his adherents secretly, receiving the *khums* and other taxes from his agents in Qumm and its districts¹⁴⁷.

According to al-Mas'udi, al-Mutawakkil was informed about this, and he also heard that in al-Hadi's house there were arms and letters from his supporters indicating a conspiracy against him. Therefore the house was searched by the caliph's soldiers, but they did not find any proof, and so al-Hadi was set free¹⁴⁸.

The suppression of the Imamites decreased after the assassination of al-Mutawakkil, who was succeeded by his son al-Muntasir in 247/861. He was more tolerant toward them than his father. He issued an order to stop the campaign of arrests and the oppression of the 'Alids and their adherents, and permitted them to visit the tombs of al-Husayn and the other Imams.

He also gave the properties of Fadak back to them. But this new attitude on the part of the caliph ceased with the succession of al-Mustain in 248/862.¹⁴⁹

According to al-Kindi, the Imamites in Egypt were persecuted by its governor, Yazid b. 'Abd Allah al-Turki, who arrested an 'Alid leader called Ibn Abi Hudra along with his followers. They were accused of carrying out underground activities and deported to Iraq in 248/862.¹⁵⁰ Al-Kulayni also states that the campaign of arrests and pursuits affected the followers of al-Hadi in Egypt.

For example, Muhammad b. Hajar was slain and the estate of Sayf b. al-Layth was seized by the ruler¹⁵¹.

Meanwhile in Iraq some of the followers of al-Hadi in Samarra were arrested¹⁵², and his main agent in Kufa, Ayyub b. Nuh, was pursued by the qadi of the city¹⁵³.

It appears, however, that the 'Abbasid oppression did not deter the Shi'ite ambition to reach power. Many historians like al-Isfahani report that 'Alid revolts broke out in 250–1/864–5 in the areas of Kufa, *Tabaristan*, Rayy, Qazwin, Egypt and Hijaz.

These might have been directed by one group, or to be more accurate, by one leader. It is beyond the scope of this work to deal with the details of these revolts, but it is worth mentioning that the rebels employed the Prophetic traditions concerning *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* and the signs of his rising to achieve immediate political success.

According to Ibn 'Uqda, the leader of this uprising, Yahya b. 'Umar al-'Alawi, was expected to be *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*, because all the signs and events predicted by the sixth Imam, al-Sadiq, regarding the rise of *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* occurred during the course of that revolution¹⁵⁴:

قال ابو عبدالله لا بدان رجل يخرج من ال محمد ولا بدان يمسك الراية البيضاء. قال علي ابن الحسن; فاجتمع اهل بني رواس و كانوا قد عقدوا عمامة بيضاء على قناة فامسكها محمد بن معروف وقت خروج يحيى بن عمر. و قال ابو عبد الله في هذا الخبر. و يجف فرائكم فجف الفرات. و قال ايضا; يحونكم قوم صغار الاعين فيخرجونكم من دوركم. و قال علي ابن الحسن. فجاءنا كنجور و الاثراك فاخرجوا الناس من ديارهم. و قال ابو عبد الله ايضا; و تجيء السباع الى دوركم. قال علي; فجاءت السباع الى دورنا. و قال ابو عبد الله; و كاني بجناءكم تحفر. و قال علي ابن الحسن. فراينا ذلك كلة. و قال ابو عبد الله; يخرج رجل اشقر ذو سبال ينصب له كرسي على باب دار عمر بن حريث , يدعوا الناس بي البراءة من علي ابن ابي طالب عليه السلام و يقتل خلقا من الخلق و يقتل في يومه , فراينا ذلك كلة.

This document indicates that the Imamites were expecting the establishment of their state by *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* in the near future. Despite the uprising's Zaydite facade, many pure Imamites participated. According to Ibn 'Uqda, the holder of the rebel standard in Mecca was Muhammad b. Ma'ruf al-Hilali (d. 250/864), who was among the eminent Imamites of the Hijaz¹⁵⁵.

Furthermore, the leader' of the rebels in Kufa, Yahya b. 'Umar, who was assassinated in 250/864, attracted the sympathy and praise of al-Hadi's agent, Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari¹⁵⁶.

In addition al-Mas'udi reports that a certain 'Ali b. Musa b. Isma'il b. Musa al-Kazim took part in the revolt in Rayy and was arrested by the caliph al-Mu'tazz. Since this man was the grandson of the Isma'il b. Musa al-Kazim who had preached the Imamite doctrine in Egypt, it seems extremely probable that the revolt was essentially Imamite¹⁵⁷.

Moreover, al-Tabari gives information concerning the underground activities of the Imamites and their role in this rebellion, which the authorities considered purely Zaydite rather than Imamite. He also reports that the 'Abbasid spies discovered correspondence between the leader of the rebels in *Tabaristan*, al-

Hasan b. Zayd, and the nephew of Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Khalf al-'Attar. Both of these men were adherents of the tenth Imam, al-Hadi¹⁵⁸.

This led the authorities to the conclusion that the Imamites had direct links with the rebels. So they arrested the leading Imamite personalities in Baghdad and deported them to Samarra. Among them were Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Attar, Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari¹⁵⁹, and the two sons of al-Hadi, Ja'far and al-Hasan al-'Askari, later to be the eleventh Imam¹⁶⁰.

One can link these 'Abbasid precautions to the sudden death of al-Hadi in Samarra in 254/868, because the authorities believed him to be behind all these disturbances, and felt that his death would bring them to an end¹⁶¹.

The cautious attitude of the authorities towards the Imamites continued during the short Imamate of the eleventh Imam, al-Hasan al-'Askari (254–60/868–74). He was put under house-arrest and his movements were restricted, since he was obliged to present himself at the palace of the caliph in Samarra every Monday and Thursday¹⁶².

Despite these restrictions, al-'Askari managed to communicate with his agents by secret means¹⁶³.

It appears that the continuation of the rebellion of the 'Alids, who extended their penetration into new areas, was behind the restriction of the Imam's movements. According to al-Tusi, the caliph al-Muhtadi arrested some Imamites in 255/869, accusing them of the assassination of 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad al-'Abbasi, who had been murdered by the rebels in Kufa. Al-'Askari was also arrested, but was set free soon after the death of the caliph, al-Muhtadi¹⁶⁴.

Despite the fact that the eleventh Imam managed to carry out his activities without the knowledge of the authorities until his death in 260/874,¹⁶⁵ the policy of housearrest, which had been imposed upon the Imams by the caliph al-Ma'mun and had been continued until the time of al-'Askari, seems to have led him to search for a method by which he could prevent 'Abbasid surveillance being imposed on his son, the Twelfth Imam, so that he could disguise his identity and carry on his activities in secret¹⁶⁶.

6. Conclusion

From the death of al-Husayn onward, the Imams of the Shi'a followed a more or less passive policy towards the ruling caliphs, but this did not indicate their acceptance of the rights of the Umayyads and then the 'Abbasids to the caliphate. Rather they believed that, since these families had come to power through natural means, their downfall would also be according to the will of Allah, that He would indicate their imminent downfall to them and assist them in carrying out His will when the appropriate time had arrived.

Towards this end they were always prepared to rise and take their rightful position, because any Imam could be ordained by Allah as *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*. This can be noted in the statement of Imam 'Ali b. Abi

Talib,

البيت اهل منا يشاء من الله يجعل والمهدي

*"Allah will choose the Mahdi, whom He wants, from among us, the People of the House."*¹⁶⁷

Thus al-Sadiq, who was strong and capable of leading an uprising might have risen against the caliph if his followers had adhered to his instructions, but schisms appeared amongst their ranks and the Imam's aspirations came to naught. A considerable body among al-Sadiq's followers were not satisfied with his political methods, and disassociated themselves from him in order to struggle for power without his interference.

This was manifested in the emergence of the Zaydites and the Isma'ilis, who put forward a new interpretation of the traditions (*Ahadith*) concerning *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* and his rising and used it in their struggle for power. This can be seen in the Zaydite and Isma'ili revolts between the years 145–296/762–908, which ended with the establishment of an Isma'ili state and the installation of an Imam with the title *al-Mahdi*.

The Imams, however, denied the claim of any 'Alid who claimed that he was *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* promised by the Prophet, but they sympathised with some 'Alid rebels who were loyal to them. This might encourage us to assume that the Imams had two methods designed to help them reach power.

The first was the scholarly, cultural and religious activities which they fostered amongst the people without openly involving themselves in any political activities. Secondly, they secretly supported some Shi'ite rebels who were loyal to them, hoping that they would hand the power over to them after their success.

The military activities of the various Shi'ite groups confused the 'Abbasids and led them to believe that the Imamite Imams were behind them or at least that the result of their intellectual activities would be militant action. Therefore the 'Abbasid authorities forced the Imams to reside in the capital from the year 202/817 under house arrest.

This policy was imposed upon the Imams al-Riḍa, al-Jawad, al-Hadi, and al-'Askari, and led them to develop the underground system of their organisation (*al-Wikala*) so that it could function under these difficult conditions.

At the same time this critical situation forced the eleventh Imam, al-'Askari, to search for a method by which he could prevent 'Abbasid surveillance being imposed upon his son, later to be the Twelfth Imam, so as to enable him to disguise his identity and carry on his activities beyond the careful watch of the authorities.

1. Ahmad b. Abi Ya'qub b. Widih al-Ya'qubi, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi* (Najaf, 1964), III, 90; Ibn Khaldun, *al-'Ibar wa-diwan al-Mu'tada wa-l-Khabar* (Cairo, 1867/70), III, 173, Tabari, III, 33-4, 37; al-Hilali, op.cit., 186.
2. Ahmad Ibrahim al-Sharif, al-'Alan al-Islamif al-'Asral-'Abbasi (Cairo, 1967) 19-25; Watt, *The Majesty that was Islam*, 28-30, 95-8. According to al-Najashi, amongst the Imamites who participated in the 'Abbasid propaganda was Yaqlin b. Musa, who was their propagandist in Kufa; al-Najashi, 209.
3. al-Jahshayari, *Kitab al-Wuzara' wa-l-Kuttab* (Cairo, 1938), 86; al-Ya'qubi, III, 89-90, 92; Tabari, III, 27, 34; Ibn al-Taqaqa, al-Fakhri fi al-Adab al-Sultaniyya (Cairo, 1927), III, 2; Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh, 1973), 153-4.
4. al-Masudi, *Ithbat al-Wasiyya* (Najaf, 1955), 181-2; Maqatil, 209; Omar, F., "Some Aspects of the 'Abbasid-Husaynid relations during the early 'Abbasid period (132-193/750-809)," *Arabica*, XXII, 171.
5. Kashif al-Ghita', *Asl al-Shi'a wa-isulaha* (Qumm, 1391), 51; Ahmad Amin, *Dhuha al-Islam* (Cairo, 1956), III, 281-2; al-Isfahani, *Kitab al-Aghani* XI, 300.
6. 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas b. 'Abd al-Muttalib was one of the companions of the Prophet. He was born three years before the Prophet's emigration to Medina and in the year 68/687 in Ta'if. He was famous in his deep knowledge about the interpretation of the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition. Thus he acquired the title Hibru-l-Umma, the learned man of the nation. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalam, *al-Isaba*, II, 330-4.
7. Muhammad Riqa al-Muzaffar, *al-Saqifa* (Najaf, 1965), 69-70. An example of the cooperation between the 'Abbasids and 'Ali during his regime: he appointed Quthum b. al-'Abbas as governor of Mecca and al-Ta'if, 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abbas in Yemen and Bahrain and 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas in Basra. When 'Ali died 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas associated with al-Hasan as a leader in his army. Tabari, V, 64-5, 137, 141-3, 155, 158-9; al-Suyuti, *Tarikh al-Khulafa'* (Cairo, 1964), 205; al-QarashT, *al-Imam al-Hasan* (Najaf, 1973), 49-54.
8. al-Kafi I, 203-4, 545-6, 516. Several sources report that the other Imams received the khums and voluntary gifts from their followers, some of whom were working in the 'Abbasid offices, such as Hasan b. 'Alya al-Asadi, who was the governor of Bahrain. According to another report, the ninth Imam, al-Jawad, ordered his followers to send him his share of the booty which they had seized from the Khurramiyya. al-Tusi, *al-Istibsar* (Tehran, 1970), II, 58, 60-2; Maqatil, 333.
9. al-Kafi, I, 279-81.
10. Omar, op. cit., *Arabica*, XXII (1975), 175-6.
11. For a full account of al-Sadiq's statements concerning the future Mahdi see Kama'l, 333-59.
12. Ikhtiyar, 290-3, 321, 323, 326. For detail about Abu al-Khattab's activities see al-Shibi, K. M., *al-Sila bayn al-Tasawwuf wa-l-Tashayyu'*, Baghdad, 1966, 141-6; Ivanow, *The Alleged founder of Isma'ilism* (Bombay, 1946), 113-51; B. Lewis, *The origins of Isma'ilism* (Cambridge, 1940). 32, 39, 66. B. Lewis, "Abu al Khattab", E. 12
13. N. Firaq, 56-66, al-Shibi, op. cit, 206-31; C. Huart, "Isma'iliyya" E 12
14. N. Firaq, 65. For an account of the Fathiyya see Watt, "Side-lights on Early Imamite Doctrine", *Studia Islamica*, MC MLXX, vol. XXXI°, 293-5; al-Hasam, op. cit., II 369-77.
15. Tabari, III, 261-3, 377-8; Mizan, IV, 211.
16. Muruj, VI, 224; Shaban, *Islamic History* (C.U.P., 1976), II, 21.
17. al-Kafi, I, 478; Muruj, VI, 227.
18. Omar, F., "Some observations on the Reign of the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdi (158-169/775-785)", *Arabica*, XXI, 139.
19. Sa'd b. 'Abd Allah al-Ashari al-Qummi, *al-Maqalat wa-l-Firaq* (Tehran, 1963), 89.
20. Watt, *Formative Period*, 155.
21. al-Kafi, I, 484.
22. al-Khatib al-Baghdad, *Tarikh Baghdad* (Beirut, 1931), XIII, 31; Tabari, III, 533; Ibn Tulun, *al-Shadharat al-Dhahabiyya* (Beirut, 1958), 96.
23. Tabari, III, 506-7; al-Fakhri, 136.
24. Tabari III, 508; al-Saduq agrees with al-Tabari about the persuasion of Ya'qub b. Dawud, but he mentions that he was converted to the Imamite school about 179/795. See 'Uyun, 60. However, Ya'qub belonged to a Shi'ite family from Merv. His father and uncle helped promote 'Abbasid propaganda in Khurasan. Later Ya'qub himself was associated with al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in his revolt in 145/762, after which he was imprisoned until 158/774-5. Shaban, op. cit., 21.

- [25.](#) N. Firaq, 43; Watt, *Formative Period*, 155; according to al-Balkhi this claim was invented by the Rawandiyya after the death of al-Mahdi. However, it appears that the Rawandiyya had held this claim at the instigation of al-Mahdi himself. Al-Qadfi 'Abd al-Jabbar, op. cit., II, 177
- [26.](#) Tabari, III, 486–7.
- [27.](#) Ikhtiyar, 265–6, 501. All these groups derived their names from various companions of al-Sadiq: i.e. Abd Allah b. Abi Ya'fur, Zurara b. A yun, 'Ammar b. Mnsa al-Sabati and Hisham b. Salim al-Jawaliqi respectively. al Najashi, 132, 157, 223, 338; T. al-Fihrist, 141–3, 235, 356.
- [28.](#) Ikhtiyar, 335.
- [29.](#) Ikhtiyar, 269–70.
- [30.](#) al-Ya'qubi, III, 142. It is clear from the prominent persons who took part in this revolt that it was Zaydite, for example Yahya, Sulayman and Idris, the brothers of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, who rebelled in the year 145/762 against al-Mansur. Moreover Ibrahim b. Isma'il Tabataba was the father of Muhammad b. Tabataba, the spiritual leader of the Zaydite revolt which took place in Kufa in 199/814 (Maqatil, 297, 304). It is worth mentioning that al-Sahib b. 'Abbad considered the individuals mentioned above as Zaydite; al-Sahib b. 'Abbad, Nusrat Madhahib al-Zaydiyya (Baghdad, 1977), 222.
- [31.](#) Tabari, III, 552–3, 557–9; Muruj, VI, 226–7; Maqatil, 298.
- [32.](#) 'Ibar, III, 215–6. Al-Isfahani mentions two narrations about the attitude of al-Kazim. The first one reveals that he refused to participate in the revolt, while the second shows that he ordered Yahya al-Mahd to rise in arms; Maqatil, 298, 304. There is evidence showing that al-Kazim did not take part in this revolt but encouraged the rebels to fight the 'Abbasids vigorously, al-Kafi, I, 366.
- [33.](#) al-Galbaygani, op. cit., 219, quoted from al-Khazaz al-Razi al-Qumi, Kifayat al-Athar fi al-Nusus 'ala al-Imam al-Thani 'Ashar.
- [34.](#) al-Kafi, I, 494. The Imamite activities in Egypt may have started in Akhmim during the time of al-Sadiq, because some people of Akhmim such as 'Uthman b. Suwayd al-Akhmimi and Dhu al-Nun al-Misri were students of Jabir b. Hayyan al-Kufi, who was a student of al-Sadiq (al-Qifti, *Tarikh al-Hukama'* [Leipzig, 1903], 185; al-Shibi, op. cit., 360). Among al-Kazim's Kufan agents in Egypt were 'Uthman b. 'Isa al-Rawasi and al-Husayn b. 'Ali al-'Uyun, 92; al Najashi, 52, 230.
- [35.](#) Ikhtiyar, 442.
- [36.](#) Ikhtiyar, 433. For a full account of other names see al-Najashi, 104, 158, 254–5.
- [37.](#) Tabari, III, 561, 609, 612, 740; al-Ya'qubi, III, 166; al-Kafi, II, 224–5. Al-Kashshi mentions that the family of Banu al-Ash'ath sent the zakat (30,000 dinars) to the agent of al-Kazim in Kufa, which seems to confirm their Imamite inclinations; Ikhtiyar, 459
- [38.](#) Uyun, I, 18, 24, 25–6, 92; Ikhtiyar, 405, 468; al-Fakhri, 145–6; al-Haythami, al Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa (Cairo, 1312/1894), 101.
- [39.](#) N. Firaq, 63– 64.
- [40.](#) Ivanow, W., *The Rise of the Fatimids* (Bombay, 1946), 49–52, quoting from an Isma'ili Ms entitled *Zahr al-Ma'ani*.
- [41.](#) N. Firaq, 64.
- [42.](#) Al-Kulayni mentions this on the authority of 'Ali b. Ja'far al-Sadiq. His narrations states that Muhammad b. Isma'il met his uncle al-Kazim in Mecca and asked him to allow him to go to Baghdad. Al-Kazim did so and gave him 300 dinars and 3000 dirhams for the expense of his journey. Then he warned his nephew not to bring about his death by giving the authorities information concerning his activities. However, Muhammad contacted the caliph Harun al-Rashid and informed him that his uncle was considered the real caliph by the people who had visited him; al-Kafi, I, 485–6. Also see Ikhtiyar, 263–5; Ibn Hazm, *Jamharat Ansab al-'Arab* (Cairo, 1971), 60.
- [43.](#) al-Fakhri (Gotha, Greifswald, 1860), 195–6, 227–8; al-Kafi, I, 366.
- [44.](#) Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh* (Leiden, 1866–1876), VI, 61.
- [45.](#) Tabari, III, 612–3; al-Fakhri, 231; al-Kulayni records a correspondence between Yahya al-Mahd and al-Kdzim, which indicates that the latter had nothing to do with this revolt; al-Kafi, I, 366–7.
- [46.](#) Ahmad b. Khalid al-Misri al-Salawi, *al-Istaqsa li-Akhbar al-Maghrib al-Aqsa* (al Dar al-Bayda, 1954), I, 67–9.
- [47.](#) Tabari, III, 606.
- [48.](#) Tabari, III, 614, 616.

49. Tabari, III, 613–16; al-Ya'qubi, III, 145–6; Ibar, III, 218; al-Kamil, VI, 85.
50. Because Sulayman succeeded in killing Idris, the Caliph al-Rashid appointed him to the barid of Egypt, and had the previous official Wadih, who had helped Idris in his escape to al-Maghrib, killed; Tabari, III, 561
51. Tabari, III, 561, 649; al-Kamil, VI, 106–8.
52. Osman, op. cit., 300; Q. Maqalat, 88; Ikhtiyar, 598–9.
53. Ikhtiyar, 258–63.
54. al-Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj (Najaf, 1966), 161; Ikhtiyar, 262. Some of the Imamites accused the Isma'ilis of provoking al-Rashid against al-Kazim. They mentioned that Muhammad b. Isma'il informed al-Rashid about al-Kazim's underground activities (al-Kafi I, 485–6). Whereas the arrest of al-Kazim was part of the general plan of the Caliph which he carried out against the Imamites, several remarks suggest that the viziers Banu al-Marmak were behind al-Rashid's plan, in order to bring about the fall of their Imamite competitors in the 'Abbasid ministry, the family of Banu al-Ash'ath; al-Kafi, II, 224–5; Ikhtiyar, 258.
55. al-Kafi, I, 476; N. Firaq, 71–2.
56. Ibn al-Mutazz, Tabaqat al-Shu'ara' (Cairo, 1956), 244.
57. According to al-Najashi and al-Tusi, Hisham's death occurred in 199/814. But it seems that he died before that. Al-Kashshi associates his death with the arrest of al-Kazim in 179/795. In that year Hisham attended a theological symposium in the presence of al-Rashid and Yahya al-Barinak'. Later al-Rashid issued an order to arrest al-Kazim and his partisans. Hence Hisham escaped to Madain, then to Kufa where he died two months later; al-Najashi, 338; T. al-Fihrist, 355; Ikhtiyar, 255–6, 258–62.
58. N. Firaq, 67; Ikhtiyar, 258; al-Kafi, I, 258–9; al-Ya'qubi relates that the 'Alid underground activities were probably quite strong in Basra. The increase in the activities of the missionary of this group, Ahmad b. 'Isa al-'Alawi, who spent sixty years hidden there, finally caused al-Rashid to pursue them. Ahmad b. 'Isa was imprisoned, but he managed to escape to Basra in 188/803. Then 'Abbasid spies detected the missionary and the agent of his group, Hadir, who refused to reveal the place of his leader; so they killed him and impaled his body in Baghdad; al-Ya'qubi, III, 160.
59. Uyun, I, 89–90, II, 143.
60. N. Firaq, 67–8, 70; Q. Maqalat, 89–91; al-Najashi, 61, 258, 230–31. It seems from the report of al-Kashshi that Muhammad b. Bashir and his followers applied the term al-Mahdi to al-Kazim, whose death they denied, giving him the epithet al-Qaim al-Mahdi (Ikhtiyar, 478). Such evidence indicates that the Imamites already knew about the rise of one of their Imams under the title of al-Qa'im al-Mahdi, but they were not sure who this would be.
61. al-Saduq, 'Ilal al-Shara'i' (Najaf, 1966), I, 235; Uyun, 91–2; Ikhtiyar, 459–60, 467, 468, 493. The leaders of the Waqifa were Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. Shammun and 'Ali b. Abi Hamza; Ikhtiyar, 444; al-Najashi, 230–1.
62. al-Kafi, I, 333–43.
63. al-Kafi, I, 312; Q. Maqalat, 89
64. Ikhtiyar, 464–5, 472.
65. Ikhtiyar, 591–592.
66. Most of the eastern Sufi movements trace their origins to Ma'ruf al-Karkhi (d. 200/815), who was a companion of al-Riqa. They regarded al-Riqa as of the Sufi movement, but at the same time they did not believe in his Imamate. For an account of this relation see al-Shibi, op. cit.
67. Uyun, II, 234–5.
68. Watt, Formative Period, 176; al-Fakhri, 159–61; al-Kamil, VI, 227.
69. Ibn A'tham al-Kufi, op. cit., VIII, 312–3. The most dangerous revolt was the rebellion of Nasr b. Shabth in al-Jazira. Another serious revolt was the protest of the populace (al-Amma) of Baghdad against the installation of al-Riqa as heir-apparent by al-Ma'mun. Thus they installed Ibrahim b. al-Mahdi as a caliph there; Bidaya, X, 280–2; al-Kamil, VI, 230.
70. It is clear from the reports of al-Tabari and al-Najashi that the rebels did not believe in the Imamate of a specific 'Alid Imam, but they supported the Imamate of him who would rise in arms in order to establish his rights to this office (Tabari, III, 979, 1019; al-Najashi, 194). They wrote on the coins which they mined in Kufa a Qur'anic verse (al-Saff 51: 4) revealing their, revolutionary inclination. Al-Isfahani and al-Sahib b. 'Abbad considered it a Zaydite uprising; Maqatil, 347, 350; Uyun, II, 235; Ibn 'Abbad, op. cit., 222.

[71.](#) Muruj, VII, 56.

[72.](#) A considerable body of the followers of al-Riḍā participated in this revolt without his instruction. Perhaps they noticed that the brothers of their Imam were prominent leaders of the revolt, and thought that al-Riḍā was behind their participation. Hence they joined it. There were men like Muhammad b. Muslima al-Kufi (Tabari, III, 989), who was regarded by al-Najashi as trustworthy (al-Najashi, 286; 'Uyun, II, 234–5). It seems from al-Riḍā's interpretation of a dream of one of his partisans concerning an expected uprising that he already knew of the activities of his kinsmen; al-Kafi, VIII, 257.

[73.](#) al-Da'wa li-l-Riḍā min Al Muhammad wa-'Amal bi-l-Kitab wa-l-sunna.

[74.](#) Tabari, III, 976–79.

[75.](#) al-Kamil, VI, 214–16; Maqatil, 355; Tabari, III, 981–3, 988. Al-Azraqi reports that Abu al-Saraya sent a kiswa of silk to the Ka'ba in two colours, white and yellow, the former of which was the colour of the 'Alids' standard. Between the two parts was written: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. May God bless Muhammad and his progeny, the noble descendants, the pure, and the best of the human race. Abu al-Saraya, he who invites people to rally behind Al Muhammad has ordered that this kiswa be made for the holy House of God." al-Azraqi, Akhbar Makka (Mecca, 1965), I, 263, 264.

[76.](#) al-Najashi, 194; Maqatil, 354; Gibb, H. A. R., "Abu al-Saraya", E.I2

[77.](#) Maqatil, 363–6; Tabari, III, 985–6.

[78.](#) Al-Kulayni reports several traditions on the authority of 'Ali b. al-Husayn and al-Sadiq regarding this point, al-Kafi, VIII, 264, 310.

[79.](#) Tabari, III, 990.

[80.](#) Maqatil, 359; Uyun, 155.

[81.](#) al-Kafi, I, 491; Maqatil, 360.

[82.](#) al-Kafi, I, 488–9; 'Uyun, II, 146; Tabari, III, 1000.

[83.](#) Maqatil, 360; al-Yafi'i, al-'Iqd al-Thamm, I, 444–5.

[84.](#) al-Kafi, I, 489, VIII, 151; 'Uyun, 138–40; Tabari, III, 1012–3.

[85.](#) Khatib, X, 184. Concerning Umm Habiba, al-Tabari thinks that she was al-Ma'mun's daughter (Tabari, III, 1029), but Ibn Tulun reports that she was his sister. The age of al-Ma'mun at that time was 30; therefore one is inclined to accept Ibn Tulun's report; Ibn Tulun, op. cit., 97.

[86.](#) al-Ya'qubi, III, 185; al-Kamil VI, 227.

[87.](#) Watt, Formative Period 176. Al-Kulayni reports that al-Ma'mun asked al-Riḍā to write to his followers in the areas of revolt, asking them to stop their support of the rebels; al-Kafi, VIII, 151.

[88.](#) Several anecdotes indicate that the 'Alids' standard was white. The followers of Abu al-Saraya were called "al-Mubayyida" in reference to the standard of 'Ali (al-Azraqi, op. cit., I, 263–4). Na un b. Khazim, an Arab advisor of al-Ma'mun, warned the latter against adopting the advice of al-Fadl b. Sahl in installing al-Riḍā. He pointed out to him that his vizier was not sincere to the 'Alids, because he suggested the green colour, the sign of his ancestors, the Sasanids, instead of the white, the standard of 'Ali and his sons (J. Wuzara', 313). When al-Ma'mun asked al-Riḍā to perform the Friday prayer, the latter wore a white turban and white clothes ('Uyun, II, 149). Finally the Imamites narrate that the banners of the followers of al-Qaim al-Mahdi would be white (Najm al-Din al-'Askari, al-Mahdi al-Maw'ud al-Muntazar [Beirut, 1977], I, 177).

[89.](#) Tabari, III, 1019–20; also al-Kamil, VI, 242.

[90.](#) Tabari, III 1029; al-Kamil, VI, 248.

[91.](#) al-Ya'qubi, III, 184, 190.

[92.](#) N. Firaq, 72–3; Ikhtiyar, 501–2; 'Uyun, II, 151–2.

[93.](#) Ibn Hibban, Kitab al-Majruhin (Halab, 1976), II, 209–10.

[94.](#) al-Kafi, I, 486, 490; Muruj, VIII, 57, 61; 'Uyun, I, 186, 188; Shaban, op. cit., 47.

[95.](#) al-Kamil, VI, 253; Ahmad b. Tahir b. Tayfur, Tarikh Baghdad (Cairo, 1949), 10.

[96.](#) 'Uyun, II, 188.

[97.](#) al-Ya'qubi, III, 204; according to the account of al-Kulayni both were Imamites and the father of the first, Yahya b. al-Husayn, supported the Imamate of al-Riḍā (al-Kafi, I, 316). Al-Najashi reports that the grandson of the second, Yahya b.

Ahmad b. Muhammad, was a prominent Imamite in Nishapur; al-Najashi, 345; Abu al-Fida, al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbar al-Bashari, II, 32.

[98.](#) Tabari, III, 1039; al-Kamil, VI, 253.

[99.](#) Abu al-Fida, op. cit., II, 25–6.

[100.](#) Tabari, III, 1040.

[101.](#) Tabari, III, 1062–3; al-Kama'l, VI, 269.

[102.](#) N. Firaq, 85–7; Q. Maqalat, 93–5; al-Najashi, 19.

[103.](#) Ithbat, 213–5.

[104.](#) al-Najashi, 21, 67–8, 141, 294.

[105.](#) al-Kafi, I, 494.

[106.](#) al-Najashi, 191.

[107.](#) Ikhtiyar, 611–2; al-Najashi, 265.

[108.](#) al-Kafi, V, 111.

[109.](#) Bihar, L, 44–5.

[110.](#) Ikhtiyar, 487; al-Najashi, 180.

[111.](#) Ithbat, 213, 215.

[112.](#) al-Kafi, I, 548; T. al-Ghayba, 227; Bihar, L, 37–8.

[113.](#) al-Najashi, 254.

[114.](#) al-Najashi, 80, 98; Mizan, IV, 276.

[115.](#) al-Kafi, V, III; al-Tusi, al-Istibsar, II, 58.

[116.](#) al-Azdi, 368.

[117.](#) Ibn Shahr Ashub, Manaqib Ali Abi Talib, IV, 397; al-Azdi, 368.

[118.](#) Tabari, III, 1092–3, 1102; al-Kamil, VI, 264, 293.

[119.](#) Tabari, III, 1102.

[120.](#) Tabari, III, 1103; al-Azdi, 399.

[121.](#) Tabari, III, 1106, 1111; al-Kamil, VI, 286–7.

[122.](#) Muhammad b. al-Qasim was the Imam of the revolutionary Zaydites during al-Jawad's period. When al-Mu'tasim endeavoured to arrest him, he escaped from Kufa and revolted in al-Talqan. But al-Mu'tasim captured him and imprisoned him in Samarra. Then he disappeared from jail mysteriously. Thus a considerable body of the Zaydites in the districts of Kufa, Tabaristan, Daylam and Khurasan held that he did not die but was alive and would rise in arms to fill the earth with justice after it had been filled with tyranny; Muruj, VI, 116–7.

[123.](#) Ithbat, 220; Bihar, L, 15–17; al-Irshad, 297, 307.

[124.](#) al-Tusi, al-Istibsar, II, 60–2.

[125.](#) Ibn Shahr Ashub, Manaqib, IV, 389.

[126.](#) Maqalat, 99.

[127.](#) The flourishing state of the 'Abbasid economy can be noted in al-Mu'tasim's ability to recruit a new garrison, mainly from the Turks of Caucasus, and to establish a new capital, Samarra. His successor al-Mutawakkil followed in his footsteps, establishing another garrison, which he called al-Shakiriyya, by recruiting people from the western provinces of the empire. Later al-Shakiriyya garrison was enlarged by al-Mutawakkil until it became his official army. Furthermore he established a new capital called al-Ja'fariyya. According to al-Mas'udi, after his death he left four million dinars and seven million dirhams in the treasury. Muruj, VII, 276–7; Shaban, op. cit., 76.

[128.](#) Maqalat, 394; al-Fakhri, 176.

[129.](#) al-Yaqubi, III, 216.

[130.](#) Tabari, III, 1368.

[131.](#) Shaban, op. cit., 73; al-Tikriti, al-Mutawakkil boyn Khusumih wa-Ansarih, Bulletin of the College of Arts, Basrah University, 1976, 113.

[132.](#) Tabari, III, 1373–5; see also al-Kafi, I, 498.

[133.](#) Shaban, op. cit., 72–5; 76.

- [134.](#) Al Mas'udi and Ibn Hazm mention that Ja'far b. Isma'il b. Musa al-Kazim was killed by Ibn al-Aghlab in al-Maghrib during the caliphate of al Mu'tazz (Muruj, VII, 404; Ibn Hazm, op. cit., 64), which suggests that Ja'far may have been sent there by his father to preach to the people concerning the 'Alids' rights to the caliphate.
- [135.](#) Ikhtiyar, 513–4.
- [136.](#) al-Yaqubi, III, 217.
- [137.](#) Ikhtiyar, 603, 607; T. al-Ghayba, 226–7; Bihar, L, 183.
- [138.](#) Ikhtiyar, 513–4.
- [139.](#) Ithbat, 225–6; Bihar, L, 209.
- [140.](#) Tabari, III, 407; Muruj VII, 302. Many early sources represent the 'Abbasid view, and contemporary scholars claim that the reason behind the demolition of al-Husayn's tomb was that the Shi'a had made it an alternative centre for pilgrimage (Maqatil, 395; al-Tikriti The Religious Policy of al-Mutawakkil 'Ala Allah al-'Abbasi [232–47/847–68], M. A. Dissertation [McGill University, Canada, 1969], 58, 63). But all the narrations espousing this view are attributed to a single narrator called Ahmad b. al-Ji'd who was a loyal supporter of the 'Abbasids. Perhaps he gave this interpretation to excuse the action of the caliph, whose aim was to stop the underground activities of the Shi'a, who used their visit to the tomb of al-Husayn as a means of communication. In addition the caliph wanted to eliminate any sign of the grave, which might revive the revolutionary trends amongst the Shi'a.
- [141.](#) Tabari, III, 1404.
- [142.](#) al-Kindi, Wilat Misr, (Beirut, 1972), 177–8.
- [143.](#) Ibn Tawus, Kash al-Mahajja (Najaf, 1950), 124; al-Sadr, Fadak fi al-Tarikh (Najaf, 1955), 23.
- [144.](#) Maqatil, 396.
- [145.](#) Muruj VII, 238–9; al-Kafi, I, 500.
- [146.](#) al-Kindi, op. cit., 230.
- [147.](#) Bihar, L, 185.
- [148.](#) Muruj VII, 207.
- [149.](#) Ibid, VII, 302.
- [150.](#) al-Kindi, op. cit., 229.
- [151.](#) al-Kafi, I, 511, 513.
- [152.](#) Manaqib, IV, 416.
- [153.](#) al-Arbili, Kashf al-Ghumma, III, 247. The qadi of Kufa at that time was Ja'far b. 'Abd al-Wahid. The caliph al-Musta'in removed him from this office and exiled him to Basra where he died in 257/780; Mizan, I, 413.
- [154.](#) Ibn 'Uqda, op. cit., f. 74–5.
- [155.](#) Ibn 'Uqda, op. cit., f. 75; al-Najashi, 280–1. Ibn 'Uqda, Ahmad b. Muhammad (249–333/863–944) is a kufan Muhaddith. He belonged to the Zaydite sect, al-Jarudiyya. Al-Nu'mani relied on him in writing his work al-Ghayba. Buzurg, Nawabigh al-Ruwat, 46–7.
- [156.](#) Tabari, III, 1522.
- [157.](#) Muruj, VII, 404.
- [158.](#) Tabari, III, 1362, 1683; Ikhtiyar, 68.
- [159.](#) Tabari, III, 1683–4.
- [160.](#) T. al-Ghayba, 141, 226; Bihar, L, 206–7.
- [161.](#) The majority of the Imamite scholars believe that al-Hadi was poisoned at the instigation of the 'Abbasids; Manaqib, IV, 401; Bihar, L, 206–7.
- [162.](#) T. al-Ghayba, 139–40.
- [163.](#) Manaqib, IV, 427–8; Bihar, L, 283–4.
- [164.](#) T. al-Ghayba, 147, 226; Bihar, L, 303; Tabari, III, 1709
- [165.](#) . al-Kafi, I, 503.
- [166.](#) This will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter
- [167.](#) al-Kafi, I, 450

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