

The Role of Traditions in the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam

After the martyrdom of al-Husayn, the Imamite Imams from 'Ali b. al-Husayn to al-Hasan al-'Askari followed a quiescent policy towards the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids. But they expected that all their suffering would be terminated by *al-Qa'im*, whose rising in arms they were awaiting.

The Imamites based their expectations on their interpretation of certain Qur'anic verses and on numbers of traditions attributed to the Prophet concerning the political and religious role of *al-Qa'im*. So it is essential to discuss some of these Qur'anic verses and traditions in order to see their effect upon the attitude of the 'Abbasids towards the Imamites, and consequently their reactions to the question of the occultation (*al-Ghayba*) of the Twelfth Imam.

1. The early usage of the term al-Mahdi

The term *al-Mahdi*, which means "the one who is guided by Allah", is the passive participle of the stem *hada*, "to guide". A term that occurs twice in the Qur'an is the active participle of the same stem, *al Hada*, the Guide. The first verse states,

"Allah is surely the Guide of those who believe" (*al-Hajj, 22:53*)

while the second states,

"But the Lord is a sufficient Guide and Helper" (*al-Furqan, 25:33*)

In the usage of the Qur'an the eighth form of the same stem, *ihmada*, "he accepted the guidance for himself", is used strictly as a reflexive passive, whose participle is *Muhtada*. So Man, who is guided by Allah, is not simply guided, but reacts himself to the divine guidance (*hidaya*)¹, either by instinct or intellect. Through these two means he can acquire knowledge of Allah, which leads him to worship Him

by following His laws on earth.

However, Allah's laws cannot be discovered through these two sources of knowledge, so throughout the course of history Allah has revealed His knowledge and laws to a group of people who have been divinely guided to lead mankind towards His straight path. These people are called "Prophets" and possessed charismatic qualities which enabled them to implement the commands of Allah and to lead the people without error. Hence they are called in the Qur'an *al Hudat* (sing. *al-hadi*), because they were already rightly guided (*muhtadin*) by Allah².

The term *al-Mahdi* (the guided one) has the same meaning as *al-Muhtadi*. However, it has been applied to certain individuals in the early Islamic period as an honorific title, while also being applied to *al-Qa'im*. Many examples can be cited showing that the term *al-Mahdi* was used in these two senses. For example the poet Hassan b. Thabit (d. 54/673) applied the term *al-Mahdi* to the Prophet in a *qasida* when he says³:

تَأْوِيّاً أَصْبَحَ الْمَهْدِي عَلَى جَزَاءِ

تَبْعِي لَا الْحَصَا وَطَأَّ مَنْ خَيْرِ يَا

Sorrow for the Mahdi who is buried!

O best of those who walked on Earth, be not far!

The poet Jarir applies this term to Ibrahim, the prophet⁴.

The Sunnites often applied it to the four caliphs after the Prophet, who were called *al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun al-Mahdiyyun*, the divinely guided caliphs.⁵ Sulayman b. Surd called al-Husayn, after his martyrdom, *Mahdi b. al-Mahdi*⁶.

As for the theological usage of this term, according to Rajkowski, Abu Ishaq Ka'b b. Mati' b. Haysu' al-Himyari (d. 34/654) was the first individual to speak of *al-Mahdi* as the Saviour⁷. But it is worth mentioning that the second caliph, 'Umar b. al-Khattab, had spoken of occultation before Ka'b.

When the Prophet died in 11/632, 'Umar contended that Muhammad had not died but had concealed himself as Moses did and would return from his occultation. 'Umar's claim, however, was refuted by Abu Bakr, who reminded him of the Qur'anic verse revealing the death of the Prophet⁸ which states:

"Surely you shall die and they [too] shall surely die. Then surely on the Day of Resurrection you will contend with one another before your Lord" [al-Zumar, 39:30-31].

The follower of Ibn al-Hanafiyya (d. 81-4/700-3)⁹, al-Mukhtar, who was in revolt in Kufa in 66/685, named him as claimant to the Imamate and called him *al-Mahdi* in the messianic context¹⁰. Later the name of Ibn al-Hanafiyya became associated with the Kaysaniyya sect, which denied his death and held that he was the promised Mahdi, who had concealed himself in Mound Radwa, and who would rise in arms to eliminate injustice¹¹.

The Kaysaniyya dogma played an important role in Islamic political history during the Umayyad period, since the 'Abbasid propaganda, which brought about the collapse of the Umayyads, was in fact derived from this sect¹².

The dogma of al-Kaysaniyya can be seen in the poetry of Kuthayyir (d. 105/723) and al-Sayyid al-Himyari (d. 173/789). The latter had followed this sect, but it is said that he became an Imamite after a discussion with al-Sadiq, who clarified for him that the concealed Imam mentioned by the Prophet was not Ibn al-Hanafiyya but the Twelfth Imam from the progeny of al-Husayn¹³.

The Zaydites also applied the term *al-Mahdi* in its eschatological sense to their leaders who rose in arms against the 'Abbasids, such as Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya (d. 145/762), Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 203/818), and Muhammad b. al-Qasim al-Talqan, who disappeared in the year 219/834.¹⁴

An example of the Zaydite usage of this term is recorded by Ibn Tawus¹⁵, who states on the authority of Ibrahim b. 'Abd Allah b. al-Hasan, the brother of al-Nafs al Zakiyya, that the latter had rebelled hoping that Allah might make him the Mahdi promised by the Prophet:

ذكر يحيى بن الحسين الحسيني في كتاب الامالي باسناده عن طاهر بن عبيد عن ابراهيم بن عبدالله بن الحسن عليه السلام، انه سُئِلَ عن اخيه محمد أهو المهدي الذي يُذكر؟ فقال: ان المهدي عدة من الله تعالى لنبيه صلوات الله عليه وعده ان يجعله من اهله مهديا لم يمسه بعينه ولم يوقت زمانه. وقد قام اخي لله بغريفته عليه في الامر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر. فان اراد الله تعالى ان يجعله الذي بذكر فهو فضل الله يمن به على من يشاء من عبادو والا فلم يتركى اخي فريضة الله عليه لانتظار ميعاد لم يُؤمر بانتظاره.

As for the Imamites, a considerable body among them applied the title of *al-Mahdi* in its messianic sense to each Imam after his death. This can be seen in the claim of *al-Nawusiyya*, *al-Waqifa* and the followers of al- 'Askari, the eleventh Imam. After the death of al-Sadiq in the year 148/765 the Nawusiyya group held that he was *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* and that he did not die but went into occultation¹⁶.

The Waqifa group applied this title to the seventh Imam Musa alKazim (d. 183/799) and denied his death, contending that he was *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* and that he would rise to fill the earth with justice after it had been filled with tyranny¹⁷.

Other Imamites held that the eleventh Imam al- 'Askari was *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*,¹⁸ whereas the last important usage of this term was given to the Twelfth Imam, who became the magnate of the Imamites' hope in their struggle for justice and equity.

It is worth mentioning that all these claims relating to the eschatological usage of the term '*al-Mahdi*' were based mainly on Prophetic traditions concerning a future restorer of Islam. Hence it is essential to discuss the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams, especially these traditions which concern the Twelfth Imam, so as to see their role in the question of his occultation.

2. The Occultation of *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* in the Qur'an

In Shi'ite exegesis many Qur'anic verses are regarded as references to the role of *al-Qa'im* and his occultation.

The most important is the following verse:

O, but I call to witness the planets, the stars which rise and set (al-Takweer, 81:15-6)

According to Imam al-Baqir, this verse means that an Imam would go into occultation in the year 260/847; then he would reappear suddenly like a bright shooting star in the dark night¹⁹.

Ibn al-Furat, *al-Kafi* and al-Saduq interpret the following Qur'anic verse:

"Say: Have you thought: If (all) your water were to disappear into the earth, who then could bring you gushing water" (al-Mulk, 67:30)

They maintain that this verse is a metaphor for the concealment of the Imam, whose presence among people is like the water they need to drink²⁰.

The Isma'ili writer Mansur al-Yaman (ca. 4th century A. H.) agrees with al-Kulayni that some Qur'anic verses which apparently deal with the Day of Judgement actually concern the appearance of *al-Qa'im* after his occultation. According to al-Kulayni the verse

"And those who sincerely believe in the day of Judgement" [al-Mi'raj, 70: 26]

refers to those who believe in the reappearance of *al-Qa'im*²¹. Mansur al-Yaman gives a similar esoteric interpretation of another verse:

And of mankind are some who say, we believe in Allah and the Last Day, when they believe not. They think to beguile Allah and those who believe, but they beguile none save themselves; but they perceive not. [al-Baqara, 2: 8-9]

Mansur al-Yaman states that the Last Day (*al-Yawm al-Akhir*) in this verse is the "Commander of the Age" (*Sahib al-Zaman*), that is *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*²².

Al-Kulayni interprets many Qur'anic verses with the same kind of approach and links them to the future role of *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*. In his view, when *al-Qa'im* reappears he will establish the political state of the "People of the House" (*Ahl al-Bayt*) that is, the Imams, upon the ruins of the state of inequity. This is

al-Kulayni's esoteric commentary on the verse: **"And say: The truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Surely falsehood is a vanishing thing."** [*Banu Isra'il, 17: 81*]²³

Al-Tusi follows in al-Kulani's footsteps in commenting on certain Qur'anic verses. Take, for example, this passage:

And We desired to show favour unto those who were oppressed in the earth, and to make them Imams and to make them the inheritors. And to establish them in the earth, and to show Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts that which they feared from them. [*al-Qasas 28: 5-6*]

Al-Tusi holds that the above verses predict the establishment of the state of Justice by *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*, who would inherit what had been in the possession of the wrong-doers²⁴.

Other Imamite scholars maintain that the fifth Imam, al-Baqir, said that Allah's promise of victory to an Imam from the People of the House is mentioned explicitly in the following verse:

And verily We have have written in the scripture (al-Zabur), after the Reminder My righteous slaves will inherit the earth. [*al-Anbiya', 21: 105*]²⁵

Other verses have also been interpreted by the Imamites to be connected with the role of *al-Qa'im*, after his rising from occultation, such as the verse:

Allah has promised such of you as believe and do good works that He will surely make them to succeed (the present rulers) in the earth even as He caused those who were before them to succeed (others); and He will surely establish for them their religion which he has approved for them, and will give them in exchange safety after their fear. They serve Me. They ascribe nothing as a partner unto Me. Those who disbelieve henceforth, they are the wrong doers. [*al-Nur, 24: 55*]

Al-Qummi and al-Tusi report that the People of the House mentioned that this verse concerns the *Mahdi* because he would live during his concealment in a state of fear, would appear after the removal of fear, and would certainly become victorious²⁶.

3. The traditions concerning the Twelfth Imam and his occultation

A) The traditions concerning al-Qa'im al-Mahdi

There are many traditions attributed to the Prophet in the books of tradition concerning the identity of *al-Mahdi*, his family, his epithet (*kunya*) and his character. The conclusion of these numerous traditions is that *al-Mahdi* is a descendant of the sons of Fatima²⁷, the daughter of the Prophet; and more particularly, that he is of the progeny of her son al-Husayn.

His colour is similar to that of the Arab, and his body is like the Israelite, and his name and *kunya* are similar to, the name and *kunya* of the Prophet²⁸. Moreover some traditions claim that the Prophet said that *al-Mahdi's* father's name is like the name of the Prophet's grandson, al-Hasan. Below are a number of these traditions.

i) We, the family of 'Abd al-Muttalib, are the Masters of the inhabitants of Paradise: I, Hamza, Ja'far, 'Ali, al-Hasan, al-Husayn and *al-Mahdi*²⁹.

ii) *Al-Mahdi is* from my progeny. His name is similar to mine and his epithet is similar to mine. In his physique and character he looks exactly like me. He will be in a state of occultation and there will be confusion (*Hayra*) in which people will wander about. Then he will come forth like a sharp, shooting star to fill the earth with justice and equity as it was filled before with injustice and inequity³⁰.

iii) *Al-Mahdi is* from my family (*'itra*) from the sons of Fatima. It is worth mentioning that this tradition was reported on the authority of Umm Salama by 'Ali b. Nufayl, who died in 125/742.³¹

iv) On the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, the Prophet is reported to have said, "How shall Allah destroy a nation whose beginning is myself, whose end is Jesus and whose very centre is *al-Mahdi*, who will be from my family?³²

v) The name of *al-Mahdi's* father is similar to the name of my son al-Hasan³³.

The conclusion of Osman concerning these traditions seems to be rather forced. "All these *hadiths* are weak and contradictory (*mutadarib*), therefore their attribution to the Prophet Muhammad is to be very much doubted³⁴.

For the use of the epithet *al-Mahdi* by numerous Islamic groups, particularly the Zaydites, in their struggle for power during the Umayyad period shows that these traditions were well-known among the Muslims of that period. Moreover, many traditionists from different Islamic sects transmitted these traditions before the downfall of the Umayyads in 132/749, and later they were collected in the books of tradition (*hadith*).

The earliest of these books was *Kitab Sulaym b. Qays*, attributed to Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilali, who died between the years 80-90/699-708. He reports many Prophetic traditions concerning *al-Mahdi*, his occultation and his reappearance³⁵.

It appears from these two points that Osman's judgement is somewhat hasty, particularly if one takes into account the fact that Prophetic traditions regarding *al-Mahdi* were narrated by twenty-six companions of the Prophet. On their authority thirty-eight traditionists recorded these traditions in their collections of *hadith*³⁶.

The evidence suggests that from the earliest times in Islam there was a belief that the Prophet had given his followers a promise about a man from the progeny of al-Husayn, who would rise in arms in the future

to purify Islam from innovation. But political rivalry amongst the Muslims encouraged some people to exploit this hope and to distort these Prophetic traditions in order to use them in their struggle for power³⁷.

These traditions only mention that *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* will be from the progeny of the Prophet. But there are also other traditions attributed to the Prophet which state that *al-Mahdi* will, in fact, be the Twelfth Imam.

It is true that Montgomery Watt objects that,

*Until al-'Askari died on 1st Jan. 874, there was nothing to make people expect that the number of the Imams would be limited to twelve or that the Twelfth would go into occultation. It follows the theory of the twelve Imams was worked out after 874.*³⁸

Nevertheless, there is ample proof that traditions claiming *a-IQa'im* would be the Twelfth descendant of the Prophet were in circulation before 874. It is thus necessary to throw light upon these traditions, which were transmitted by Sunnites and Zaydites as well as Imamites, so that one can see to what extent these traditions were used by the Imamite scholars to support the belief that the Twelfth Imam had not died but was in a state of occultation.

B) The traditions of the Sunnites (Ahl al-Hadith)

The Sunnite books of tradition report three Prophetic traditions pertaining to the twelve Imams who would be the successors of the Prophet. These were narrated on the authority of seven companions of the Prophet, namely Jabir b. Samura, 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud, Anas b. Malik, 'Umar b. al-Khattab, Wa'ila b. Asqa', 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar and Abu Hurayra.

i) Jabir b. Samura narrates that he heard the Prophet say, "There will be after me twelve *Amirs*. "Then he mentioned something which I did not hear, so I asked my father, who was sitting beside me, who said, "All of whom will be from Quraysh."³⁹

ii) 'Umar b. al-Khattab reports that he heard the Prophet say, "The Imams (*al-A'imma*) after me will be twelve, all of whom will be from Quraysh."⁴⁰

iii) 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud was once reciting the Qur'an in the mosque in Iraq, when a young man came and asked him if the Prophet had informed them about the number of his successors. Ibn Mas'ud replied, "The Prophet informed us that his successors will be twelve caliphs, whose number is similar to the number of the leaders (*al-nuqaba*) of Banu Isra'il."⁴¹

These traditions have been related by the traditionists and considered authentic. Ibn Hanbal narrates the first with thirty-four chains of transmitters (*sanad*), all of which are on the authority of Jabir b. Samura⁴², although there are slight differences in the versions. Some of the narrators used the words *Amir* and

Khalifa instead of *Imam*.

But these traditions, as reported by the Sunnites, indicate only that the Prophet would be succeeded by twelve successors; none reveals that the Twelfth would go into occultation, nor that he would be *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*. But the Zaydite and the Imamite narrators relate the same traditions with phrases which indicate that the Twelfth Imam would be *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*⁴³.

C) The Twelfth Imam in the Zaydite traditions

The Zaydite sect, the Jarudiyya, narrate many traditions attributed to the Prophet and al-Baqir concerning the political role of the Twelfth Imam. One of their distinguished scholars in Kufa was Abu Said 'Abbad b. Ya'qub al-Rawajini al-'Asfari (d. 250/864)⁴⁴. He wrote a book entitled *Kitab Akhbar al-Mahdi*⁴⁵.

Al-Dhahabi reports that 'Abbad was a Rafidite propagandist, and was awaiting the rise of *al-Mahdi* in the near future. He used to carry a sword, and once said that he kept his sword ready in order to fight for *al-Mahdi*⁴⁶. It is worth mentioning that 'Abbad held this view before the occultation of the Twelfth Imam in 260/874, since he died in 250/864.⁴⁷ He reports three Prophetic traditions concerning the Twelfth Imam. Below are two of them:

- i) The Prophet is believed to have said, "From my descendants there will be eleven leaders [who will be] noble, receivers of tradition [and] possessed of knowledge, the last of whom will be '*al-Qa'im bil-Haqq*' who will fill it [i.e. the world] with justice, just as it was filled with tyranny⁴⁸."
- ii) The Prophet is reported to have said: "I and eleven of my descendants and you, O 'Ali, are the axis of the earth, that is, its tent pegs and its mountains. By us Allah has secured the world so that it will not sink with its people. For when the eleventh of my descendants has died the world shall sink with its people without warning⁴⁹."

These traditions along with other sayings predicting the historical circumstances and the signs which would precede the rise of *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* were used by the Shi'a in their struggle for power. This can be seen in the events of the general 'Alid uprising which occurred in 250-1/864-5, when many Shi'ites applied the Prophetic traditions concerning the signs of the rise of *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* to the historical circumstances surrounding this revolt. Ibn 'Uqda (d. 333/944) reports that al-Sadiq said:

*A man from the People of the House of the Prophet will rise in arms in Mecca holding a white standard in his hand: the Euphrates will become dry, and, at the same time, a group of people, whose eyes are small, will advance towards you from the East and will force you to leave your houses. Moreover, the graves of your dead will be opened and predatory animals will attack your houses. Afterwards a fair-complexioned man will install a chair in Mecca calling people to curse 'Ali b. Abi Talib, and killing many people, but he will be killed on the same day.*⁵⁰

According to 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. al-Qasim al-Kharraz (d. ca. 250/864) all these signs occurred during the revolt of Yahya b. 'Umar in 250/864. As a result, some Shi'ites, particularly the Jarudiyya, believed that the leader of this revolt, Yahya b. 'Umar, was himself *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*⁵¹.

D) The Twelfth Imam in the Imamite traditions

The Imamite traditionists are distinguished from the Sunnites and the Zaydites by their claim that the Twelfth Imam mentioned in the Sunnite and the Zaydite traditions is in fact Muhammad the son of the eleventh Imam al-'Askari, and that he is *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*. Moreover they have written in more detail about his occultation, and his political role, the signs which would precede his reappearance and the social and political conditions which might pave the way for it.

a. The traditions concerning the Twelfth Imam

The Prophetic traditions concerning the twelve Imams related by the Sunnite and the Zaydite traditionists were also narrated by the Imamites⁵².

They applied these traditions to their twelve Imams and added traditions of the Imams themselves which indicate explicitly that the successor of the eleventh Imam was *al-Qa'im*. The traditions attributed to the Prophet do not indicate explicitly that *al-Qa'im* would be the successor of al-'Askari, the eleventh Imam, whereas the sayings of the Imams do.

The earliest reference to a Prophetic tradition concerning the Twelfth Imam is recorded by the Imamite traditionists on the authority of Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilali. He was a companion of five Imams, 'Ali, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, 'Ali b. al-Husayn and al-Baqir, and died in 90/701.⁵³ The Imamites regard his work as the first Shi'ite collection of *Hadith*⁵⁴.

He reports numerous narrations concerning the twelve Imams and the political role of the last Imam. The first of these narrations is attributed to a Christian monk who met 'Ali after his return from the battle of Siffin. He informed him that he had found in the Gospels that the successors of the Prophet Muhammad would be twelve; the last of them would fill the world with justice, and Jesus would perform the prayer behind him⁵⁵.

All the other narrations in Sulaym's work are attributed to the Prophet. The most important of these is quoted on the authority of the companions 'Ali, 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far al-Tayyar, Salman al-Farisi, Abu al-Haytham b. al-Tayhan, Khuzayma b. Thabit, 'Ammar b. Yasir, Abu Dharr, al-Miqdad and Abu Ayyub. They narrated that the Prophet gathered his companions together at Ghadir Khumm and said to them:

*O people, the legal power (al-wilaya) is granted only to 'Ali b. Abi Talib and the trustees from my progeny, the descendants of my brother 'Ali. He will be the first, and his two sons, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, will succeed him consecutively. They will not separate themselves from the Qur'an until they return to Allah.*⁵⁶

Sulaym adds that the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, told him, "O brother, son of Hilal, the *Mahdi* of my nation is Muhammad, who shall fill the earth with justice and equity as it was filled with tyranny and injustice. I know who will pay the oath of allegiance to him.[57](#)"

Sulaym states that he met al-Hasan and al-Husayn in Medina after the assassination of their father, 'Ali, and related to them this tradition on 'Ali's authority.

They confirmed that they had also heard it from the Prophet. Sulaym adds that he informed 'Ali b. al-Husayn, the fourth Imam, in the presence of his son al-Baqir about this tradition, and they also confirmed its authenticity. Moreover Abban b. Abi 'Ayyash reports that he met al-Baqir during the rite of pilgrimage and mentioned Sulaym's tradition to him, and that he confirmed its authenticity[58](#).

But al-Mas'udi doubts the authenticity of this tradition claiming that this tradition was transmitted only through Sulaym[59](#).

Despite the fact that this tradition is related on the authority of Sulaym b. Qays by many Imamite scholars, such as al-Kulayni, al-Nu'mani, and al-Tusi[60](#), it was related and confirmed by others as well[61](#). In addition al-Saduq relates the above tradition on the authority of 'Ali[62](#), and he narrates another prophetic tradition on the authority of Abd Allah b. 'Abbas:

I am the master of the Prophets and 'Ali the master of my trustees, of whom there will be twelve; the first one is 'Ali, and the last is al-Qa'im.[63](#)

Moreover the Imamite scholars relate numerous traditions attributed to their Imams, which confirm that the Twelfth Imam will be *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*[64](#). It is worth noting that al-Hadrami (fl. 3rd/9th century) reports a tradition which gives the Imam who will rise in arms the epithet *al-Qa'im*[65](#).

At the same time other narrations employ the epithet *al-Mahdi*, particularly in the works of al-Saffar (d. 290/902)[66](#).

The use of these two terms caused such confusion amongst the followers of al-Jawad that some were not sure whether *al-Qa'im* and *al-Mahdi* were the same individual or not. Therefore, according to al-Saduq, al-Jawad was reported as having said that *al-Qa'im* is from "us" and that he would be *al-Mahdi*; he must be awaited by his followers during his occultation and obeyed at his rising and that he would be his descendant in the third generation[67](#).

The Imamites of the fourth/ninth century called the Twelfth Imam *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*. Al-Mufid states that he was called *al-Mahdi* because he would guide people to a forgotten dogma and law[68](#).

b. The political role of al-Qa'im

It has already been pointed out that the Imams from 'Ali b. al-Husayn onwards adopted publicly a quiescent policy towards the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids. Accordingly, they stressed the propagation of their teachings, which they expected, would result in religious and political awareness among the

people and would prepare the ground for the task of *al-Qa'im*.

Al-Nu'mani reports that al-Baqir advised his partisan Abu al-Jarud to keep quiet at home, and not to implicate himself in the militant activities of some 'Alids against the Umayyads, since the Umayyad state had a natural lifespan and the moment of its downfall had not yet come⁶⁹. He added that any 'Alid who rebelled against tyranny before the rise of *al-Qa'im* would inevitably fail⁷⁰.

Al-Sadiq and the later Imams followed the same policy. They ordered their followers not to allow despair to find a place in their hearts and to wait for the rise of *al-Qa'im* in the near future⁷¹. This policy enabled the Imamites to spread their doctrine and at the same time to organize themselves – during the period between 132–260/749–874 – into a well-established political and financial organization (*al-Wikala*).

It seems probable that this underground organization was preparing for the rise of *al-Qa'im*. For they expected his rising⁷² and placed important political and religious duties upon his shoulders.

Several narrations suggest that the quiescent policy of the Imams was established after their followers caused two abortive rebellions. According to al-Kulayni, al-Sadiq once said:

*This matter (al-Amr), that is, the endeavour to reach power, was hidden until it reached the hands of the Kaysaniyya. They revealed it on the roads and circulated it among the villagers of al-Sawad*⁷³.

According to al-Numani the Imamites endeavoured to rise in arms twice, first in the year 70/689 and second in the year 140/758, but their followers spoiled their plans by revealing the name of their leader to their foes⁷⁴, an act which resulted in the arrest or the assassination of the Imams. In this connection a conversation between al-Baqir and his partisan 'Abd Allah by 'Ata al-Wasiti is revealing. Al-Wasiti said to the Imam:

*You have many followers in Iraq and there is no one among your family who has the merit for leadership but you. So why do you not rise in arms? Al-Baqir replied: O 'Abd Allah, do not listen to the masses, because none of us has his name mentioned by the people nor a hand pointing at him as the Imam, without soon facing inevitable death. So search for him whose birth is concealed from the people, because he will be the one who will manage such an affair.*⁷⁵

Moreover al-Sadiq was reported to have said:

*This matter (the rising in arms) was vested in me, but Allah delayed it; He shall do with my progeny whatever He wants*⁷⁶.

These sayings indicate that the Imams had suffered the consequences of revealing the fixed dates of their militant endeavours to reach power. Hence the later Imams did not reveal explicitly to their followers which Imam would be *al-Qa'im* with the sword. At the same time they encouraged their followers to follow their instructions⁷⁷, for this would pave the way for one of the Imams to reach power under the title of *al-Qa'im*.

Several traditions reveal that the establishment of *al-Qa'im*'s political state will occur through the "natural" course of events. A Prophetic tradition states that a group of people from the east will start underground activities and pave the way for the installation of al-Mahdi by military means⁷⁸.

The latter will struggle for power without any miraculous aid and will face difficulties and opposition against the propagation of his teachings, similar to the opposition which the Prophet faced with Quraysh⁷⁹. Furthermore he will not take any militant action unless he has at least 10,000 partisans⁸⁰.

According to al-Baqir the main goal of *al-Qa'im* will be to establish an Islamic state and to apply Islamic law as it was revealed to the Prophet. Al-Sadiq asserts that he will follow the Prophet's policy by eliminating and demolishing all the innovations which derive from a situation of ignorance (al-Jahiliyya) and apply Islam in a new form⁸¹.

Other narrations indicate that he will apply the law of David and Solomon along with the Islamic law⁸² and apply the rules of the Torah to the Jews and the rules of the Gospel to the Christians. According to al-Nu'mani, his state will include, in addition to the Islamic lands, the territories of Rum, Sind, India and China⁸³.

Some functions attributed to *al-Qa'im* indicate the unrest and disappointment felt by the Imamites in the face of the political and economic situation of the time. Al-Fadl b. Shadhan (d. 260/873) and al-Kulayni report that *al-Qa'im* will rise with the sword as God's avenger against those who caused troubles to 'Ali and his wife Fatima.

He would also take vengeance against those who were responsible for the suffering of the Imams and their followers⁸⁴, particularly against those who assassinated al-Husayn. Al-Sadiq considered al-Husayn's assassination the main reason for the rise of *al-Qa'im* as an avenger⁸⁵.

Other functions of *al-Qa'im* depict the political annoyance of the Imams towards the allegiance of the Arabs, and especially towards the clan of Quraysh who had monopolized political authority since the death of the Prophet. Al Nu'mani mentions a tradition attributed to Imam al-Sadiq: "When *al-Qa'im* rises he will deal with the Arabs and Quraysh only by the sword⁸⁶.

The Imamites also vested *al-Qa'im* with another task which reveals their dissatisfaction with the economic system of the 'Abbasid state. According to al-Himyari, al-Baqir stated that when *al-Qa'im* rose all the feudal systems would be abolished⁸⁷.

Al-Kulayni agrees with al-Himyari and adds that *al-Qa'im*, after carrying out this operation, may allow his partisans to administer and cultivate the lands with the condition that they pay the legal land-tax⁸⁸.

In the light of these hopes and the repeated failure of the Zaydite uprisings, as had been expected by the Imams, the Imamites concentrated all their hopes on the uprising of *al-Qa'im*, whose state had been awaited since the time of al-Baqir⁸⁹. Al-Nu'mani reports that when the 'Abbasid revolution broke out in

Khurasan and black banners were raised, Abu Bakr al-Hadrami and Abban went to the Imam al-Sadiq, and asked his opinion about participating in the revolution.

He warned them against it saying: "When you see us follow a man, then you must join us with weapons."⁹⁰

Although the Imam did not reveal the identity of the man to be followed, he confirmed that he would struggle for power by militant means and eliminate the rule of his opponents⁹¹.

It appears that because of the militant role of *al-Qa'im* the Imams refrained from giving any explicit statement of his identity. However, they did indicate that since the rulers, first the Umayyads and then the 'Abbasids, had reached power by "natural" means, their fall would also occur by "natural" means.

There is a good deal of evidence to indicate that some of the Imams would have taken militant action if they had had strong and faithful partisans. But they delayed this task indefinitely until the intellectual activities of their followers could bear fruit and be converted into a political awareness which might enable one of the Imams to gain power by militant means.

The Imams also wanted their partisans to be more optimistic in gaining immediate success, and not to leave the task of propagation of their teachings to *al-Qa'im*, whose military uprising relied on the outcome of the activities of the Imamites themselves. Finally, it seems most likely that the uprising of the Imam who would be *al-Qa'im*, was later attributed to the Twelfth Imam, because the Imamite propaganda reached a developed, political stage during the life-time of the Tenth and the eleventh Imams, and this might have enabled the Twelfth Imam to reach power.

c. The signs of the rise of al-Qa'im

The early Imamite traditionists delineated five signs which would precede the rise of *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*: first, the rise of al-Yamani, then the rise of al-Sufyani, thirdly the assassination of the Pure Soul (al-Nafs al-Zakiyya) in Mecca only fifteen days before the rise of al-Qa'im, fourthly an outcry in the morning from the sky in the name of *al-Qa'im*, and finally the sinking of an army into the earth (al-Bayda') during its march on Mecca⁹².

Despite the fact that al-Nu'mani, al-Saduq and al-Tusi differ as to the chronological occurrence of these signs, they all agree that they will occur in the same year⁹³.

It seems that the delineation of these signs along with the expectations of the Imamites and al-Jarudiyya that *al-Qa'im al Mahdi* would rise in the near future⁹⁴ caused the 'Abbasid authorities to be suspicious, since some of these signs were connected with their regime and indicated that *al-Qa'im's* uprising was directed mainly against them. The fact that the Imams had the 'Abbasids in mind can be seen in the discussion between al-Riqa, the eighth Imam, and his adherent al-Hasan b. al-Jahm⁹⁵, who said to him:

"May Allah make you prosper! The people are saying that al Sufyani will rise after the fall of the 'Abbasids." Al-Riḍā said: "They lie. He will rise while they are still in power.[96](#)"

This statement has been confirmed in other traditions attributed to al-Sadiq. For example his companion Ya'qub b. al-Sarraj asked him:

"When will your Shi'a gain their release from suffering?" He replied, "When conflict occurs amongst the 'Abbasids, and their power begins to decline. Then their partisans and their subjects will be encouraged to threaten the authorities. Thereafter al-Sufyani will rise from the West, while the Yamani will advance from the East, until they both reach Kufa, where they will destroy the 'Abbasids. At the same time the Hasani will start his rebellion. Then the Master of this matter, al-Qa'im, shall advance from Medina towards Mecca to rebel.[97](#)"

According to al-Nu'mani, al-Sadiq added that because of these events, the fall of the 'Abbasid regime was inevitable. Its fall would be similar to a piece of crockery dropped from the hand of its possessor, which then splits into pieces.[98](#)

In the light of these statements attributed to the Imams it is clear that from the time of al-Sadiq onwards, the Imamites awaited the political uprising of one of their Imams, called *al-Qa'im* while the 'Abbasids were still in power[99](#).

Indeed the spread of these traditions caused the 'Abbasids to fear the Imams, who might have been behind some 'Alid revolts. Perhaps this is why the 'Abbasid caliphs became suspicious of the Imams. Even the caliph al-Mansur himself related a tradition on the authority of al-Baqir stating that *al-Qa'im* would be from the progeny of 'Ali[100](#).

He restricted the movements of al-Sadiq and his followers and made it a policy to discriminate against them. Moreover he invested his successor Muhammad with the epithet "*alMahdi*" (158-169/775-785) in order to turn the attention of his subjects from the 'Alid family toward the family of 'Abbas[101](#).

Despite the fact that the movements of the seventh Imam, Musa al-Kazim, were also restricted by the authorities, so that he died in prison[102](#), the Shi'ite propaganda for the rise of an Imam in the name of *al-Qa'im* and *al-Mahdi* spread on a wide scale, particularly after the rebellion of Ibn Tabataba in 199/814.

Probably because of this situation the caliph al-Ma'mun devised a new policy towards the eighth Imam al-Riḍā. He made overtures to him asking him to be his heir apparent. By this means he hoped to split the 'Alids some of whom were in rebellion and to keep al-Riḍā within the 'Abbasid palace under close watch[103](#).

Al-Ma'mun followed this same policy with the ninth Imam, al-Jawad, marrying him to his daughter Umm al-Fadl, and keeping him under house-arrest[104](#). Thereafter housearrest became the cornerstone of the

policy of the caliphs towards the Imams. It obliged the Imams to stress the idea of the occultation as the means the Imam would employ to avoid the 'Abbasid restriction, which increased from the time of al-Mutawakkil onwards.

Because his agents discovered connections between the underground activities of the Imamite agents in Baghdad, Mada'in and Kufa and the Imam al-Hadi, al-Mutawakkil followed the policy of al-Ma'mun. He wrote to al-Hadi a letter full of kindness and courtesy asking him to come to Samarra where they could meet. Afterwards al-Hadi was summoned to the capital in 233/848,¹⁰⁵ where he spent the rest of his life under surveillance.

As a result he was prevented from meeting most of his adherents. He was only able to meet a few of his associate agents (*wukala*) in secret¹⁰⁶.

In fact al-Mutawakkil's policy managed to prevent the 'Alids from rising in arms against his regime. However it failed to destroy the system of the *Wikala* or to end the underground activities of the Zaydites and the Imamites. These spread throughout the empire to the extent that they were capable of causing a revolt.

Between the years 245–260/859–874 the Imamite and Zaydite traditionists were relating traditions stating that *al-Qa'im* would be the Twelfth Imam and urging people to join his side when he rose. The Zaydite al-'Asfari (d. 250/864)¹⁰⁷ and the Imamite Ahmad b. Khalid al-Barqi (d.274–80/887–93) both related such traditions. For example, in 250/864 al-Barqi passed on a narration attributed to 'Ali b. Abi Talib and the Prophet al-Khidr, which states explicitly that *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* would be the Twelfth Imam¹⁰⁸.

The spread of such narrations encouraged the Imamites to expect the rise of *al-Qa'im* in the near future and to link his rising with 'Abbasid rule. Some of them applied these traditions along with others concerning the signs of the rise of *al-Qa'im* to the circumstances surrounding the 'Alid revolt which broke out in 250/864. Ibn 'Uqda relates that the leader of the rebellion, Yahya b. 'Umar, was expected to be *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*, since all the signs concerning the rise of *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi* related by al-Sadiq occurred during the revolt¹⁰⁹.

Although Yahya b. 'Umar died in 250/864, the 'Abbasids' fear increased because of the continuation of this revolt and al-Hasan b. Zayd's (250–270/864–884) success in establishing a Shi'ite state in Tabaristan. This fear is not surprising if one bears in mind the fact that there was a well-known Prophetic tradition which stated, "A people will appear in the East who will pave the way for the Mahdi's rise to power."¹¹⁰

This tradition, at that time, might seem to refer to the establishment of the 'Alid state in Tabaristan, which would prepare the way for the rise of *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*. Other factors supported the 'Abbasid fears. According to al-Tabari, 'Abbasid spies discovered secret correspondence between the founder of the 'Alid state in Tabaristan, al-Hasan b. Zayd, and the nephew of Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Khalaf al-'Attar,¹¹¹ a follower of the tenth Imam al-Hadi.

Moreover many pure Imamites took part in the 'Alid revolt of 250/864, such as Muhammad b. Ma'ruf, who held the banner of the rebels in Mecca,[112](#) and 'Ali b. Musa b. Isma'il b. Musa al-Kazim, who joined the rebels in al-Rayy and was arrested by the caliph al-Mu'tazz[113](#).

It seems that the 'Abbasid authorities linked these factors with the activities of al-Hadi. Therefore they imposed tight restrictions upon al-Hadi and his followers, and arrested prominent figures in Baghdad, such as Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari, and Muhammad b. 'Ali al-'Attar, and sent them to Samarra[114](#). This campaign of arrest also included al-'Askari and Ja'far, al-Hadi's two sons[115](#).

Another reason the 'Abbasids' feared the position of al-Hadi and his successor, al-'Askari, is the traditions of both the Prophet and the Imams concerning the series of the twelve Imams, the last of whom would be *al-Qa'im al-Mahdi*. This series could only be interpreted as applying to the Imamites' tenth Imam, al-Hadi, and his successor al-'Askari. So it was plausible that the successor of the latter would be the Twelfth Imam, about whom so many traditions were being related.

Moreover further traditions, attributed to al-Hadi and al-'Askari, themselves appeared around this period emphasizing the important political and religious role of al-'Askari's son[116](#).

For example, Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari (d. 261/875), the associate and follower of al-Hadi, reports the latter as having said,

"The successor after me is my son al-Hasan but what will you do with the successor of my successor?" Al-Ja'fari said, "May Allah make me your sacrifice! Why?" The Imam said, "Because you will not see his physical body and it is not permissible for you to reveal his name." Al-Ja'fari said, "How shall we mention him?" Al-Hadi said, "Say 'The proof [*al-Hujja*] is from the family of Muhammad.'[117](#)

It seems from al-Kulayni's report that the Imamites considered al-Hadi's statement as applying to *al-Qa'im*. Moreover, they felt it explained a statement by the eighth Imam, al-Riqa, who had said that the body of *al-Qa'im* would not be seen and his name would not be revealed.[118](#)" Perhaps al-Baqir and al-Jawad's interpretation of a Qur'anic verse, referred to on page 15, may be linked with the above two statements. For as we have seen, he stated that an Imam would go into concealment in 260/874, and would later rise like a bright, shooting star in the dark night[119](#).

On account of the spread of these Imamite traditions and the 'Alid underground activities, the eleventh Imam, al-Hasan al-'Askari, was forced to stay in the capital under house-arrest and had to report to the 'Abbasid court twice a week[120](#).

The authorities hoped that through these measures they would be able to prevent the appearance of any danger from the Twelfth Imam.

[1.](#) EI 1, art. "al-Mahdi", 112.

[2.](#) Sachedina, op.cit., 6-7.

[3.](#) Ibn Hisham, Das Leben Muhammads (Wustenfled, Gottingen, 1859), II, 1024.

[4.](#) Goldziher, al-'Aqida wa-l-Shari'a, tr. Muhammad Yusuf (Cairo, 1378/1959), 327-8, 376-8.

5. D.Sunan, IV, 201; Ibn Maja, Sunan, I, 16; Ibn A'tham al-Kufi, Kitab al-Futuh (Hyderabad, 1972), V, 31, 34.

6. Tabari, II, 546. Ibn A'tham reports a letter attributed to the Kufans, sent to al-Husayn b. 'Ali encouraging him to rebel against the Umayyads, in which they used the title al-Mahdi for al-Husayn as an honorific adjective:

سديداً مباركاً مسروراً فرحاً ألبنا فاقبل
مهدياً عيناً خليفة إماماً مطاعاً أميراً وسيداً
Ibn A'tham, op. cit., V, 47.

7. Rajkowski, op. cit., 166–7. There is evidence which supports the claim that Ka'b narrated traditions attributed to the People of the Book which predict the rise of al-Mahdi. It is obvious from a line of poetry attributed to the poet Kutayr that those who applied this term to Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya were influenced by Ka'b. This can be noted in Kuthayyir's saying: Huwa al-Mahdi Akhbarnahu / Ka'bun Akhu al-Akhbar fi al-Huqab al-Khawali; al-Zubayri, Nasab Quraysh (Beirut, 1953), 41.

8. Kama'l, 30–2.

9. Al-Nawbakhti thinks that Ibn al-Hanafiyya died in 81/700 (Firaq, 24), whereas al-Saduq puts his death in 84/703; Kama'l, 36; Ikhtiyar, 126.

10. B. Firaq, 33–4.

11. N. Firaq, 25–6; Milal, 111–2; B. Firaq, 17, 27–8, 38.

12. N. Firaq, 29–30, 42–3. For a full account of the fact that the 'Abbasid propaganda was the outcome of a branch of the Kaysaniyya movement, see al-Ansari, Madhhib ibtada'atha al-Siyasa fi al-Islam (Beirut, 1973), 152–8, 199–214.

13. Kama'l, 32–4; al-Zubayri, op.cit., 41–2.

14. N. Firaq, 54; 'Uyun, 155; Maqatil, 359; B. Firaq, 44.

15. Ibn Tawus, al-Iqbal, 53.

16. N. Firaq, 57; Kama'l, 37.

17. al-Hasani, Sirat al-A'imma al-Ithna 'Ashar (Beirut, 1977), 370.

18. Kama'l, 40.

19. al-Kafi, I, 341; Kama'l, 325, 330; N. al-Ghayba, 75.

20. Ibn al-Furat, al-Tafsir, quoted by al-Majlisi in Bihar, LI, 50; Kama'l, 351.

21. al-Kafi, VIII, 287.

22. Ibn Hawshab, Kitab al-Kashf (London, Cairo, Bombay, 1952), 6.

23. al-Kafi, VIII, 287.

24. al-Tusi, al-Tibyan, VIII, 114–6.

25. al-Tusi al-Tibyan, VII, 250; Sadr al-Din al-Sadr, al-Mahdi, (Tehran, 1358), 11.

26. 'Ali b. Ibrahim al-Qummi Tafsir al-Qummi (Najaf, 1387), II, 68, 84, 205–6; T. al-Ghayba, 120; al-Tusi, al-Tibyan, VIII, 404

27. Ibn Maja, Sunan, II, 519; Abu Dawud, al-Sunan, II, 208.

28. al-Tirmidhi, IX, 74, 75; and the Cairo edition, IV, 505–6

29. Ibn Maja, Sunan, II, 1368.

30. Kama'l, 286–7. Al-Tirmidhi mentioned the same tradition on the authority of Ibn Mas'ud without any details concerning the occultation of the Mahdi. Al-Tirmidhi, IV, 505–6; al-Darimi, Sunan, IV, 151.

31. Mizan, III, 160; Ibn Maja, Sunan, II, 1368; al-Musannaf, XI, 372.

32. al-Thalabi, 'Ara'is al-Majalis, 363; al-Kanji, op.cit., 327.

33. al-Haythami, al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa, 100.

34. Osman, Mahdism in Islam, Ph.D. Thesis (Edinburgh, 1976), 204.

35. Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilali, Kitab Sulaym b. Qays (Najaf, n.d.), 56, 159–62. Although this book has received some criticism with regard to its authenticity, a careful examination of its contents which show that it was regarded as a source by such writers as al-Kulayni in al-Kafi, al-Mas'udi in al-Tanbih wa-l-Ishraf and al-Nu'mani in Kitab al-Ghayba.

36. 'Abd al-Muhsin al-'Abbad, 'Aqidat Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Athar fi al-Mahdi al-Muntazar, al-Hadi (Qumm, 1971) I, part 1, 33–5; al-Tabasi, al-Shi'a wa-l-Raja (Najaf, 1966), 36–54.

- [37.](#) For the Umayyad and the 'Abbasid use of the epithet al-Mahdi so as to gain political success, see al-Ishfahani, al-Aghani, XVI, 88; al-Darimi, Sunan, IV, 152.
- [38.](#) Watt, The Majesty that is Islam, 169–170.
- [39.](#) al-Bukhari, al-Sahih (Cairo, 1355), IV, 175; M. Sahih, III, 190–3; al-Tirmidhi, IV, 501; Ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad (Cairo, 1313), V, 294.
- [40.](#) al-Kharraz, Kifayat al-Athar, quoted by al-Galbaygani, Muntakhab al-Athar, 28.
- [41.](#) Ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad, I, 398; al-Karajuki, al-Istibsar, 12.
- [42.](#) Ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad, V, 86–90, 92–101, 106–8.
- [43.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 48–9; Kama'l, 270–3.
- [44.](#) For the biography of 'Abbad and his Shi'ite sympathies see Ibn Hibban, al-Majruhin, II, 172; Mizan, II 379–80, IV, 149; al-Najashi, 225.
- [45.](#) al-Hilli, al-Idah, 176; al-Galbaygani, op. cit., 5
- [46.](#) Mizan, II, 379–80
- [47.](#) Ibn Hibban, al-Majruhin, II, 172.
- [48.](#) al-'Asfari, Asl Abu Said al-'Asfari, Ms. f. 1–2.
- [49.](#) al-'Asfari, Asl Abu Said al-'Asfari, f. 2. Al-Kulayni includes these traditions in his work al-Hujja but, according to his transmission, the Prophet mentioned twelve Imams from his descendants and not eleven. Thus the number of the Imams along with 'Ali would be thirteen. Because al-Kulayni transmitted his narration on the authority of al-'Asfari, it appears that the latter's version is more accurate. al-Kafi, I, 533–4.
- [50.](#) Ibn 'Uqda, Kitab al-Malahim, f. 74–5.
- [51.](#) EI1, art. "al-Mahdi", 112.
- [52.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 7,48,57–61, 31, 45; al-Saduq, Khisal, 436–45; 'Uyun, 323, al Karajaki, al-Istibsar, Ms. f. 11–12; al-Kafi, I, 534; al-Tabsi al-Shi'a wa-l-Raja (Najaf, 1966), 129–30; Kama'l, 279.
- [53.](#) al-Barqi, Kitab al-Rijal, 4,7,8,9.
- [54.](#) Ibn al-Nadim, al-Fihrist, I, 535; N. al-Ghayba, 47.
- [55.](#) al-Hilali, Kitab Sulaym b. Qays, 135–7.
- [56.](#) Ibid., 109–10, 124–5, 165–6, 201, 204–6.
- [57.](#) al-Hilali, op. cit. 94; Kama'l, 285.
- [58.](#) al-Hilali, op. cit. 95.
- [59.](#) al-Mas'udi, al-Tanbih, 198.
- [60.](#) al-Kafi, I, 529; N. al-Ghayba, 38; 46, 274–8; T. al-Ghayba, 99.
- [61.](#) al-Tirmidhi, IV, 505–6; al-Darimi, Sunan, IV, 151.
- [62.](#) Kama'l, 259–61.
- [63.](#) Kama'l, 280. Another narration has been narrated by the companion Jabir al Ansari, which confirms that al-Mahdi would be from the progeny of 'Ali b. al Husayn (al-Tusi, al-Amali II, 251), but al-Sahib b. 'Abbad doubts its authenticity; Nusrat, Madhahib al-Zaydiyya, 208–9.
- [64.](#) al-Kafi, I, 531–3; al-Irshad, 393; Dala'il, 236–8, 249–51.
- [65.](#) al-Hadrami, Asl Ja'far b. Muhammad b. Shurayh, Ms. f. 32b; for other similar traditions see al-Kafi, VIII, 167, 536; Ibn Tawus, al-Iqbal, 431.
- [66.](#) al-Saffar, Basa'ir al-Darajat, f. 19b, 49b; for similar traditions see al-Kafi, I, 243, 281, 338, 372, 411, 496, 536.
- [67.](#) Kama'l, 377. Al-Tusi reports another narration attributed to the tenth Imam who stated explicitly that the Twelfth Imam would be al-Mahdi (T al-Ghabya, 92). However, it might be that such narrations were not common among the Imamites. When the traditionist al-Fadl b. Shadhan (d. 260/874), talks about the role of al-Qa'im al-Mahdi, he does not attach this epithet to the Twelfth Imam; Ibn Shadhan, al-Idah, 475–6
- [68.](#) al-Irshad, 411; see also al-San'ani, al-Musannaf, XI, 472.
- [69.](#) See Chapter II.
- [70.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 104, 107, 159; al-Hadrami, op. cit., f. 48a; al-Kafi, VIII, 264
- [71.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 106–7; al-Kafi, VIII, 264, 310.

- [72.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 94, 96.
- [73.](#) al-Kafi, II, 223.
- [74.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 158
- [75.](#) al-Kafi, I, 342; Kama'l, 325.
- [76.](#) T. al-Ghayba, 278.
- [77.](#) al-Kafi, I, 368-9; Bihar, LII, 212.
- [78.](#) Ibn Maja, Sunan, II, 1366; al-Kanji, op. cit., 314.
- [79.](#) al-Kafi VIII, 225; N. al-Ghayba, 106, 160; al-Tabsi quotes a statement from Ibn A'tham attributed to 'Ali which states that the partisans of al-Mahdi will start their activities from al-Talqan in Khurasan; al-Shi'a wa-l-Raj a, 141.
- [80.](#) Kama'l, 654
- [81.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 104, 122, 123. Al-Saffar reports that al-Qa'im will apply Islamic law according to the books of 'Ali which he related directly from the Prophet; Basa'ir al-Darajat, f. 124.
- [82.](#) al-Saffar, op. cit., f. 50; al-Kafi, I, 298.
- [83.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 124, 125-6; al-Tabsi, op. cit., 218; 'Ali b. Tawus, al-Malahim wa-l-Fitan (Najaf, 1367), 53; Najm al-Din al-'Askari, al-Mahdi al-Maw'ud al-Muntazar (Beirut, 1977), II, 10.
- [84.](#) Ibn Shadhan, Ithbat al-Raja, quoted by al-Tabsi, op. cit., 221; al-Kafi, VIII, 233; al-Saduq, 'Ilal, II, 267; al-Majlisi includes in his work al-Bihar a book attributed to al-Mufaddil b. 'Umar which deals with the occurrence which will take place after the rise of al-Qa'im; Bihar, LIII, 1-38; Dala'il, 239, 260; N. al-Ghayba, 148.
- [85.](#) al-Kafi I, 465; al-Tusi, al-Amali, II, 33; al-Saduq, 'Ilal, 229; Ibn Tawus, al-Iqbal, 186.
- [86.](#) N. al-Ghayba, (the second edition), 308, 319.
- [87.](#) al-Himyari, op. cit., quoted by al-Galbagani, op. cit., 305.
- [88.](#) al-Kafi, I, 407-8.
- [89.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 103.
- [90.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 105
- [91.](#) al-Kafi, I, 240, 281, 370-2. Di'bil the poet recited a line of poetry concerning the militant role of al-Qa'im in the presence of al-Riqa; the latter confirmed this by saying that al-Qa'im would be from the progeny of al-Husayn. Di'bil, Diwan. 73,76; Kama'l, 327-4.
- [92.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 134, 139-40; Kama'l, 649; T. al-Ghayba, 286; al-Kafi, VIII, 225, 310.
- [93.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 136; T. al-Ghayba, 286; Bihar, LII, 232.
- [94.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 94.
- [95.](#) For his biography, see Ibn Dawud, Kitab al-Rijal, 104.
- [96.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 163-4.
- [97.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 135, 138, 144-5; al-Kafi, VIII, 224-5.
- [98.](#) N. al-Ghayba, 137; Bihar, LII, 232.
- [99.](#) al-Hadrami, Kitab Ja'far b. Shurayh, f. 39.
- [100.](#) al-Kafi, VIII, 209-210; al-Irshad, 404.
- [101.](#) It is reported that the Prophet said, "The Mahdi is from my progeny. His name is similar to mine" (al-Tirmidhi'. IV, 505). According to Abu Dawud, the Prophet also added, "And his father's name is similar to my father's name" (Abu Dawud, al-Sunan, IV, 106-7). According to the last phrase the name of al-Mahdi is Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah. Perhaps al-Mansur took this point into account when he called his son, "Muhammad al-Mahdi" (al-Bidaya, X, 89). For a full account see Osman, op. cit., 266-9.
- [102.](#) See Chapter II.
- [103.](#) Ithbat, 205.
- [104.](#) Ithbat, 205.
- [105.](#) Ikhtiyar. 603, 607; al-Kafi, I, 501-2; T. al-Ghayba, 226-7.
- [106.](#) Ithbat, 262.
- [107.](#) Kama'l, 46. For examples, see al-'Asfari, Asl Abu Said al-'Asfari f. 1-2; Mizan, II, 379-80; Bihar, L, 185; al-Kindi op. cit., 229

[108.](#) al-Kafi, I, 526–7, 338.

[109.](#) Ibn ‘Uqda, Kitab al-Malahim, f. 72. According to al-Mufid only the Zaydites denied the death of Yahya b. ‘Umar and held that he was al-Mahdi (al-Fusul al-’Ashara, 30). But incidents seem to indicate that there was a common belief among the Imamiyya and the Jarudiyya from the years 245–60 onwards that the Twelfth Imam would be al-Qa’im al-Mahdi, but they were not sure about his identity, and whether or not he would be the son of al-’Askari.

[110.](#) Ibn Maja, al-Sunan, II, 1368.

[111.](#) Tabari, III, 1683.

[112.](#) Ibn ‘Uqda, Kitab al-Malahim, f. 73.

[113.](#) Muruj, VII, 404.

[114.](#) Tabari, III, 1683–4, al-Kafi, I, 500.

[115.](#) T. al-Ghayba, 141, 226; al-Kafi, I, 508.

[116.](#) T. al-Ghayba, 98.

[117.](#) Kama’l, 381; al-Kafi, I, 328, 332–3.

[118.](#) al-Kafi, I, 333.

[119.](#) Kama’l, 325, 330; al-Kafi, I, 341.

[120.](#) T. al-Ghayba, 139– 140.

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