

History of the Shi'a in the Time of Imam Sajjad

(a) Part 2

History of the Shi'a in the Time of Imam Sajjad¹ (a) Part 1

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Abstract

Part I of this series offered a biography of Imam Sajjad (a), a brief history of the events after 'Ashura, and his endeavors in reviving the Muslim community through teaching Islamic principles, emphasizing on the concept of Imamate, resisting moral corruption, and caring for the needy. In this part, Imam Sajjad's devotional and political activities are examined in terms of his efforts to enjoin good and forbid evil, divulge the Umayyad's crimes, and resist against oppressive rulers to bring about social and cultural changes.

His interactions with rulers such as Yazid, Mu'awiyah II, and Marwan ibn Hakam as well as the notable uprisings that occurred during that period have been studied. The social disorder and intense fear instilled in the people by the Umayyads prevented the Imam from revolting. His accomplishments of political change were instead achieved through social change.

1. Devotional Activities

The Hajj

The hajj was considered with utmost importance by Imam Sajjad (a) during his 34 years of Imamate. Imam Sajjad (a)'s presence among the pilgrims was crucial in delivering the message of Islam and defending the Shi'a position in spite of opposition.

These pilgrims included the elite, such as the officials, jurists, narrators, the religious, political and

socially distinguished men, sometimes the caliph himself, as well as the general public. Imam Sajjad (a) directed the people's attention to the spiritual depth of Hajj through prayer, talks, etc. The report of a meeting of Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik with Imam Sajjad (a) and the epic poem of Farzdaq in praising the Imam are famous, and the Imam's inattention toward the Umayyads is considered as an example of declaration of guiltlessness.

Friday Prayers

Imam Sajjad (a) also took part in Friday prayers in which he recited in the form of congregation prayer. Although this act allegedly meant he was a supporter of the current ruler, and refraining from it meant not officially recognizing the government, the Imam would participate in it because the danger of being absent would result in giving an excuse to the enemy. In Mu'awiyah's era, anyone who was opposed to the ruling party was rejected or punished. Friday prayer plays a significant role in the political sphere. The withdrawal of the Imam from this political-devotional gathering would have labelled him a corrupt mischief-maker. These labels and accusations were harmful to the Shi'a and the Imam. Thus, by participating in the Friday prayer, he would not give the opponents an excuse to label him, but after Friday prayer he would re-do his prayer on his own, since Friday leader was not religiously qualified.

Reciting the Salawat

The recitation, "Oh God, bless Muhammad and his household" (*Allahumma Salli 'ala Muhammad wa al-i Muhammad*) was a prayer encouraged by the Imam because the Umayyads insisted upon the assassination of the Ahlul Bayt and to erase them from the people's minds. To struggle with the enemy's policy, Imam Sajjad (a) continued to revive the name of the holy Prophet and his descendants by reciting the salawat. Hence, all or most of the prayers of *Al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah* (The Psalms of Islam) contain the salawat.

2. Political Activities

Imam Sajjad was involved in many political activities during the period of his Imamate. The objectives of his activities are as follows:

To explain the status of Imamate and the authority and political role of the Shi'a Imams

Examples of this subject are especially found in *Al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah*. Key and crucial points in clearly defining the Shi'ite political teachings include:

- Imamate being a divinely appointed position
- Infallibility of the Imams and their immunity from sin and error

- To introduce the Imams as religion guards
- To define Ahlul Bayt (a) as the descendants of Lady Fatima (a) and establishing their significant role
- To introduce the Imams as the vicegerent of God on the earth.³

To revive 'Ashura

Through various justifications and interpretations, the Umayyads wanted to distort and remove the event of 'Ashura from history, while Imam Sajjad (a) strove to revive it. In spite of such tense circumstances, the victory of Imam Sajjad (a) was remarkable.

The Imam's expressive conduct

Continuous weeping of Imam Sajjad (a) during his Imamate for his father, Imam Husayn, the Lord of Martyrs (*Sayyid ash-Shuhada*), demonstrated the oppressed state of the Ahlul Bayt. By mourning for Imam Husayn, Imam Sajjad (a) evoked the people's feelings to recognize the truth and continued to revive the event of Karbala, which included Imam Husayn's courage, suffering, and oppression on the day of 'Ashura. He also encouraged the people to visit Imam Husayn's holy shrine. Imam Sajjad (a) was the first one who prostrated himself on Imam Husayn's soil and encouraged Shi'a to do so as well.

Political conduct

After the event of 'Ashura, Imam Sajjad demonstrated his bravery throughout his captivity and during the aftermath. In Kufa and Damascus and in the presence of Yazid and 'Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad, he stirred the conscience of the people with his unequivocal speech and replies, revealing the Umayyad's contemptible; furthermore, he revered the Infallibles, and narrated the legitimacy of Imam Husayn's path which led and guided the misled and deceived society.

Imam Husayn was martyred with the wish that the message of Karbala was never to be forgotten. Imam Sajjad (a) – along with Lady Zaynab– carried this message and reminded the people of Yazid's crimes in Karbala; moreover, they spoke of the altruism and courage of Karbala's martyrs.

Effort to Enjoin Good and Forbid Evil

As mentioned in hadiths, all religious duties are performed through enjoining good and forbidding evil. Imam Sajjad (a) said, *"Anyone who refrains from enjoining the good and forbidding the evil is like a man who disregards the Book of God unless he lives in the condition of taqiyyah (dissimulation and that is when one is threatened by an oppressive ruler and is forced to hide his beliefs)."*⁴

Divulgence of the Umayyads' crimes

History has witnessed that Imam Sajjad (a) fearlessly revealed the crimes of the Umayyads and

reproached them for their corrupt acts. For example, when Nafi' ibn Jubayr, a well-known jurist in Medina, praised Mu'awiyah for his "silent patience" and "intellectual communication," Imam Sajjad (a) countered, "*Nafi' is lying. Mu'awiyah was a person whose power and monopolism silenced and drunkenness and pleasure triggered his speech.*"^{[5](#)}

In a conversation with Minhal ibn 'Amr, a companion of Imam Sajjad (a) from Kufa, Imam Sajjad (a) described the crimes committed against the Ahlul Bayt (a):

They treated us, the family of the holy Prophet, like the Children of Israel under Pharaoh's rule; they killed our men while keeping the women alive. Although Arabs feel superior to non-Arabs because Prophet Muhammad(s) was an Arab and Quraysh feel superior to other tribes because Prophet Muhamamd (s) belonged to them, we the family of Prophet Muhamamd (s) are treated with aggression and injustice, our blood is shed and we are forced to leave our homeland. "Indeed we belong to God, and to Him do we indeed return (2: 156)."^{[67](#)}

Resisting against the unjust rulers

Imam Sajjad (a) considered obeying a tyrant as a transgression: *Anyone who says "There is no god but Allah" (La ilaha illa- Allah), his confession will not reach the Kingdom of the Heavens unless he completes his speech with good deeds. Furthermore, the one who submits to a tyrant is impious.*^{[8](#)}

Encouraging struggle and martyrdom

Imam Sajjad (a) described the true Shi'a as "...someone who strives for our aims and resists against the oppressor and their oppressions till God takes [our] rights from oppressors."^{[9](#)}

The Imam has narrated from the holy Prophet's description of struggle (jihad) and martyrdom:

There are two actions liked by God more than anything else – One is the step taken to join a row formed in the name of God (for jihad or salah); the second is the one taken to extend a hand of friendship towards kith and kin who want to break relations... And no drop is more favored by God than these two – one is a droplet of blood shed for God's sake and the teardrop shed for fear of God in the darkness of night.^{[10](#)}

Political tactics

In his political struggles to protect the Shi'a from the enemies, the Imam adopted and employed various methods:

Advising patience and confidence

These two subjects were considered as the two fundamental principles in the struggle, especially given that the Shi'a were vulnerable in these areas. Their impatience was due to the political, economic, and

social problems caused by the rulers, and they often spoke of their grievances to Imam Sajjad (a), to which he responded: *“I swear by God, I would give my flesh, hands, and arms so as to eliminate the two features; impatience and uncertainty among the Shi’a.”*¹¹

From the above statement, it is apparent that the Shi’a committed mistakes that caused the Imam to express his worry and reproach them.

Hidden struggle against the oppressors

One of the essential principles in all struggles is the principle of hiding. Imam Sajjad (a) states about this principle: *“One of the rights of Imams on the people is that they follow him secretly and publicly. They must also obey him and take their sayings seriously, but the right of caliph on the people is that they do not publicly oppose his order.”*¹²

In fact, the guidance of the Imam describes a tactic and not a strategy.¹³ At that time, the Shi’a did not have open and armed struggle. The Imams ordered them to live in dissimulation and the order of apparent obedience to the caliph did not mean to stop struggle for the sake of God (jihad). History witnesses that in the honorable history of the Imams (a), struggle has never been stopped.

3. Imam Sajjad (a) and interactions with rulers

Imam Sajjad’s period is divided into two phases: the first phase included the Umayyad rule, the collapse of the Sufyanis, and the ascending power of the Marwanis. The second stage includes the rule of the Marwanis. Imam Sajjad (a)’s Imamate was simultaneous with the governorship of Yazid ibn Mu’awiyah (60–64 AH), ‘Abd Allah ibn Zubayr in Hijaz (61–73 AH), Mu’awiyah II (64 AH, 2–3month), Marwan ibn Hakam (65 AH, 2–3 months), Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (65–86 AH), and Walid ibn Abd al-Malik (86–96 AH). All with the exception of ‘Abd Allah ibn Zubayr were among the Umayyad’s rulers. Thus, a fundamental question is posed: what was the position of Imam Sajjad (a) vis-a-vis the rulers and how did he confront their governmental system?

Imam Sajjad (a) and Yazid

Imam Sajjad’s (a) Imamate began six months after the commencement of Yazid’s caliphate. Yazid’s rule lasted three years before he died in 64 AH. Along with the captives of Karbala, the Imam had been taken to Yazid’s palace in Damascus. Although the symptoms of disease and fatigue triggered by the tragedy of Karbala were evident on the Imam’s face, he delivered a sermon in the Umayyad mosque which shook the pillars of Yazid’s government. This resulted in placing Yazid in a defeated position which forced him to apologize and compensate for the loss.

Considering the circumstances of time and place, while everything was in favor of the Umayyads and against Ahlul Bayt and their followers, Imam Sajjad (a) followed the message of Karbala and awakened

the conscience of the people by proving the legitimacy of Ahlul Bayt. Yazid, who had praised God for killing Imam Husayn blamed 'Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad for the event and said, *"May the curse be upon the son of Marjanah who killed Husayn! I did not order such an act."*¹⁴

Imam Sajjad (a) was not involved in the Hirrah uprising in Medina for reasons described later in the article. Despite the order of Yazid, Muslim ibn 'Uqbah did not rise against the Imam. However, he compelled the people of Medina to pledge allegiance to Yazid, and ordered against the pledge of allegiance to Imam Sajjad (a).

Imam Sajjad (a) and Mu'awiyah II

After Yazid, his son Mu'awiyah II took the throne for no more than 40 years when he resigned and died soon afterwards. There is no report about Imam Sajjad (a)'s allegiance to Mu'awiyah II or of a position taken against him. Moreover, during that time, no significant events occurred, nor are there records of his attempts to support the Ahlul Bayt. Although Mu'awiyah II criticized his father's and grandfather's beliefs and actions, no order was issued in favor of the Shi'a and Alawids. The cause of his death is unknown.¹⁵

Imam Sajjad (a) and 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr

'Abdullah ibn Zubayr declared independence in Mecca and asked for the people's loyalty to himself to increase his realm from Hijaz to Yemen, Iraq, and parts of Iran. No rejection or approval was announced regarding his uprising, declaration of independence, and claim of being caliph although the Imam did not show any support. Ibn Zubayr benefitted from the event of Karbala, which included the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and captivity of Ahlul Bayt to direct attention of people and provoke their feelings to achieve his goals. Imam Sajjad (a) condemned Ibn Zubayr's acts of removing the recitation of the blessings (salawat) upon Muhammad and his family from the Friday sermons, knowing too well that the Imam strongly encouraged it in his teachings and prayers. 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr was killed in 73 AH.

Imam Sajjad (a) and Marwan ibn Hakam

Marwan ibn Hakam ruled for a short period in 64 and 65 AH. After 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr's murder in 73 AH, the clan of Marwan ruled and took advantage of chieftains such as Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. Thus, the change of government from the Sufyanis to the Marwanis took place during the second phase of Imam Sajjad's period.¹⁶

Marwan's participation in the battles of Jamal and Siffin against Imam Ali, his insistence on Walid to murder Imam Husayn during the beginning of Yazid's caliphate, and his father's exile from Medina up until the time of 'Uthman earned him a disgraceful reputation. The rule of this powerful enemy was the beginning of the distressing era for the Shi'a. He continued the anti-Shi'a policy implemented by Mu'awiyah and Yazid. Marwan's rise to power was a sign of religious and political decline in that period.

In order to stabilize his government and caliphate, especially against a rival such as Ibn Zubayr, Marwan faced many obstacles and he himself did not have the chance to heed Imam Sajjad (a) and the Shi'a.

Imam Sajjad (a) and 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan

'Abd al-Malik ruled from 65 to 86 AH. During his caliphate, he faced enormous problems including the sedition of Ibn Zubayr, the uprising of "The Repentant" (Tawwabin), and the revolution of Mukhtar. However, he was able to stop several riots with the assistance of his loyal commander, Hajjaj Thaqafi. The policy of 'Abd al-Malik was dictatorial and ruthless. He described himself as follows:

"I am not a humble and downtrodden caliph like 'Uthman, nor am I lenient like Mu'awiyah and unprincipled and foolish like Yazid. I will cure the people's pains only by sword so that they bow to me..."

The period of 'Abd al-Malik was a very difficult period for the progeny of the holy Prophet (s). He not only hurt the prominent members of Ahlul Bayt such as Imam Sajjad (a), but also deprived them from physical and financial security. Imam Sajjad (a) was under the strict control of the caliph's spies who were aware of the Imam's political activities as they felt threatened by the Imam's power and popularity. Hajjaj Thaqafi's suggestion to 'Abd al-Malik to murder Imam Sajjad (a) indicated this fear, but Abd al-Malik disregarded his opinion in order to avoid future seditions. 'Abd al-Malik had witnessed how the former caliphs who engaged with the descendants of 'Ali had been destroyed. He wrote to Hajjaj:

*"Keep me away from shedding the blood of Hashimis and do not shed their blood because I have realized that the rule of the family of Abu Sufyan did not last long after shedding their blood."*¹⁷

The conversations held between Imam Sajjad (a) and 'Abd al-Malik

1. While 'Abd al-Malik was circumambulating the Ka'bah, Imam Sajjad was in front of him without heeding to 'Abd al-Malik. After circumambulation, Imam Sajjad (a) was presented by 'Abd al-Malik's order. 'Abd al-Malik said, *"I am not your father's murderer. Why do you not establish a relationship with us?"* The Imam replied, *"The one who killed my father destroyed my father's worldly life, but my father destroyed his killer's hereafter life; if you want, you can try the same."*¹⁸

2. 'Abd al-Malik attempted to take the Prophet's sword – which was one of the deposits of Imamate – from Imam Sajjad (a) to keep for himself. Having this sword had spiritual merits for the caliph, as it would confirm the legitimacy of his caliphate and succession to the Prophet. 'Abd al-Malik requested the sword in a letter to Imam Sajjad (a), and the Imam replied in the negative. He wrote the second letter and threatened that the name of the Imam would be deleted from the treasury. In reply, Imam Sajjad (a) wrote:

"O' Abd al-Malik! Be aware God has given a guarantee for His servants to release them from difficulties and provide their daily bread in ways they would not expect, but be aware that God also states in the holy Qur'an:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ

Indeed God does not like any head strong disloyal.

Now think about who this verse refers to, me or you?" [19](#)

3. One day ‘Abd al-Malik wrote an open letter to the Imam Sajjad (a) criticizing the Imam’s marriage with his maid, saying that marriage with a maid was not worthy of him. In response, Imam Sajjad (a) considered this marriage to follow the Prophetic way of life (Sunnah), as the holy Prophet also had this type of marriage. The Imam intended to carry on a forgotten custom and knew this act, supposedly the cause of people's disgrace, to actually be an act of honor and magnificence. Thus, he condemned ‘Abd al-Malik for his false and ignorant beliefs.[20](#)

‘Abd al-Malik and his agents, especially Hajjaj, displayed inappropriate conduct toward the Shi’a; behaviour which they did not direct even toward the unbelievers. They exerted all types of punishments, torments, and assassinations toward the Shi’a. In that difficult time, those among People of the Book had more security than a Shi’a. Of course, the knowledge and wise leadership of Imam Sajjad (a) protected many of the Shi’a from ‘Abd al-Malik’s assault and reduced their danger as much as possible.

During the period of Abd al-Malik, the Shi’a were severely repressed in Iraq, Iran, and Hijaz.

Imam Sajjad (a) and Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik

After ‘Abd al-Malik’s death, his son Walid became the ruler and continued the anti-Shi’a policy of his father. Hisham ibn Isma’il was the agent of caliph in Medina (82–86 AH) and during his rule, he oppressed the people of Medina, especially Imam Sajjad (a). When Walid became the caliph, the complaints and protests were brought against Hisham to Walid. He deposed Hisham after five months and appointed ‘Amr ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz instead and announced to those who had a complaint against Hisham to speak out. Hisham feared Imam Sajjad (a) since he had oppressed the Imam more than others, but the Imam generously forgave him and advised the Hashmis to not complain about him.

There have not been reports about the special contact between Imam Sajjad (a) and Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik except that the Imam was martyred by his order.[21](#)

4. Imam Sajjad (a) and uprisings

During the time of Imam Sajjad (a), a number of uprisings took place and the Imam treated them in different ways. In this section, we address the following issues:

- Criterion for determining the identity of uprisings;
- Determining the political, social, and religious identity of uprisings;

- Examination of the causes, goals, and qualities of uprisings;
- The position of Imam regarding uprisings;
- Why the Imam did not rebel;
- Why the Imam did not support the uprisings.

The above questions are important in assessing the uprisings and revolts during the advent of Islam and identifying their religious tendency. This feature helps researchers carefully analyze the political and social currents and factional-popular movements.

Criterion for determining the identity of uprisings

The following are some criteria to determine the Shi'i and non-Shi'i underpinning of the uprisings:

- a) The central axis of uprisings in the Shi'i school of Islam is Imamate and the Imam himself. Any uprising led by an infallible Imam or his representative, or one who leads an uprising with the blessing of the Imam, is considered a Shi'i uprising.
- b) If the leaders, governors, or participants of an uprising have aims and use slogans that encompass a Shi'ite underpinning, it is considered a Shi'ite uprising even if it is not led by infallible Imam or his representative.

With the exception of above-mentioned cases, other uprisings and rebellions are non-Shi'ite and considered as illegitimate uprisings.²² Therefore, upheavals can be divided into two types:

- 1) Uprisings which are motivated by satanic aims such as gaining power, although they were apparently claiming to be the adherents of Ahlul Bayt, such as the Abbasids' uprising. This type is condemned.
- 2) Uprisings which are motivated by divine aims and struggles against oppression and tyrants. Participants are aware of human rights and its owners, and they strive to return the right to its real owners, such as the uprising of Zayd ibn 'Ali. This type is confirmed.

The first uprisings began at the time of the first Islamic caliphs; that is, rebellion of the people of Medina against its governor, rebellion against 'Uthman, and Hujr ibn-'Uday' uprising against Mu'awiyah.²³ The turning point of the most important uprisings was the 'Ashura movement, which became a pattern for Islamic revolutions.

Uprisings during the period of Imam Sajjad (a)

a) The uprising of Medina (Hirrah event)

The uprising of Hirrah occurred on the 27th of Dhil-Hajjah, 63 AH.²⁴ A delegation along with 'Abd Allah

ibn Hanzalah was sent from Medina to Damascus, and upon their return to Medina, they presented a report of Yazid's corruption to the people. They declared that they concealed themselves from him and refused to obey him. Moreover, they called the people to struggle and people paid allegiance to them.[25](#)

'Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah, the leader of Emigrants (Meccan Muslims who emigrated from Mecca to Medina), and 'Abd Allah ibn Muti', the leader of Helpers (citizens of Medina city who helped and gave refuge to the Emigrants), and Ma'qal, the leader of various sects of non-Quraish, took charge of the leadership of Medina's forces against the army of Damascus.[26](#)

The most significant factors in the uprising of Medina's people against the Umayyads in 63 AH included a) the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, b) the murder of the Ahlul Bayt, c) the report of delegation of Medina from the court and government of Yazid, d) the people's awareness of the corruption of the ruling government, and e) announcing Yazid's incapability of leadership. In the beginning of the uprising, they expelled 'Uthman ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Sufyan, the ruler of Medina, and all the Umayyad governors from the city and by joining Zubayrids independent government in Mecca, they hoisted the banner of struggle. Their slogan was calling to consent and consultation.[27](#)

Soon after, Muslim ibn 'Uqbah, the commander of the Umayyad army, surrounded Medina and repressed the uprising by terrible massacre in the region of Hirrah in Medina. When they emerged victorious, they plundered the property and chastity of the people of Medina for three days and left the same at the disposal of the soldiers of Damascus. After the end of killing and plunder, they obtained the allegiance of captive men and companions as slaves for Yazid and the captives were marked on their neck, as slaves were marked.

In this event, Imam Sajjad (a) seemingly did not play any role in the struggle of the people of Medina because the main reason for uprising was to support the rule of 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr in Mecca and to pay allegiance to him. 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr was known for his and his father's vengeance against the Ahlul Bayt. Imam Sajjad (a) did not pay allegiance to Ibn Zubayr because he knew his caliphate illegitimate.

After attacking Medina, the army of Yazid did not harm Imam Sajjad (a) because of the Imam's careful behaviour in refusing to pledge allegiance to Ibn Zubayr and in giving shelter to the family of Marwan ibn Hakam, the expelled ruler of Medina, in preventing the Hashimis to take part in the sedition. This was why Yazid ordered his people to act diplomatically with Imam Sajjad (a).

b) The uprising of the Repentant (Tawwabiin)

From 61 AH, the people of Kufah deeply regretted their failure in supporting Imam Husayn (a) in the event of Karbala and many prominent figures of Kufah repented as a result of their disloyalty. They made hidden movements and prepared themselves for an uprising until they heard the news of Yazid's death.

The Tawwabiin gathered around the holy grave of Lord of the Martyrs, Imam Husayn, and while weeping, they made a treaty to revolt against the Umayyads until they suffered martyrdom in the hope that this would wipe off their sin of not assisting the Imam. From there, they proceeded toward Damascus and waged war with the army of 'Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad in 'lin al-Wardah. The Tawwabiin were led by Sulayman ibn Surad along with five thousand Kufan Shi'as and opponents of the Umayyads. Among the Tawwabiin, who were one thousand, under the leadership of Rufa'ah ibn Shaddad, were able to escape and return to Kufah.

The star of the uprising of the Tawwabiin set out in 'lin al-Wardah and rest of them joined with Mukhtar. The Tawwabiin considered the Umayyads and the traitors of Kufah as the criminals in the event of Karbala. The uprising of the Tawwabiin was a social-political movement and can also be considered a Shi'a uprising, because its leaders were among Shi'a, the movement was inspired by the event of Karbala, and their objectives had a Shi'i underpinning.

The leaders of the Tawwabiin had no relationship with Imam Sajjad (a). They did not call the Imam, nor did they pay allegiance to him. Also, there is no record of Imam Sajjad's approval of them or warning against them. This could be that after the event of Karbala and martyrdom of Imam Husayn, the people of Kufah felt embarrassed to contact Imam Sajjad (a), since they had breached their treaty. Moreover, the Tawwabun saw themselves closer to martyrdom to atone for their sins as opposed to being victorious. Therefore, it was natural for them not to want to endanger the life of Imam Sajjad (a) by involving him in their movement.

The slogan "O helpers of Husayn!" ("Ya latharat al-Husayn!") and words that indicated revenge were a strong and effective motive among the people. The event of Karbala influenced the uprising of the Tawwabiin more so than other uprisings. Some factors influenced the people of Kufah, such as the closeness of time and place to Karbala and 'Ashura, reminding and speaking about afflictions and tragic scenes of the event of Karbala, the intense feelings of shame, sin, and fault in the tragedy Karbala, and the presence of criminals and murderers among the people. More than 4000 people were martyred in this uprising.

As every movement or revolution produces some effects, the uprising of the Tawwabun influenced the uprising of Mukhtar. Those who remained alive in 'lin al-Wardah and those who had made treaty with the Tawwabun, but did not participate in the uprising and those who were angered with the killing of Tawwabun, all joined with Mukhtar.

c) The uprisings of Mukhtar

Mukhtar was a pious and brilliant man known for his politico-religious awareness. He was also known for his intense love for Ahlul Bayt. He was in prison while the Battle of Karbala took place; therefore, his aim was to defeat the murderers of the Prophet's family and his companions during the event of Karbala, and he gathered the Shi'a to revolt against the opposition. Before the beginning of the Tawwabun

uprising, Mukhtar, a rival of both the Tawwabun and Sulayman ibn Surad, called the people and the Shi'a toward himself in Kufah, as Kufah was considered the center of rebellion and revolution.

Two opposing groups were formed: one led by Sulayman and the other by Mukhtar. Mukhtar threatened Sulayman's followers of being defeated and murdered. He also accused the chiefs of the Tawwabun of lacking political perception and military experience and introduced himself as being more capable.²⁸

Because of the presence of several powerful rivals like Sulayman, Mukhtar could not attain a special status; however, after the defeat of the Tawwabun, he became an unrivalled contender in Kufah. He sped up his movement after attracting Ibrahim ibn Malik Ashtar and seized Kufah.

Who was Mukhtar?

Mukhtar was born in Ta'if, near Mecca in Hijaz in 1/622, the year of the Prophet's migration to Medina.²⁹ He went to Medina with his father, Abu 'Ubayd Thaqafi, during Umar's caliphate. Umar had appointed Mukhtar's father as head of the army when Mukhtar was thirteen years old³⁰ and grew up under the guidance of his uncle, Sa'd ibn Mas'ud, who was one of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (s).³¹ He and his sons, Wahab, Malik, and Jibr were martyred in the battle of Qas al-Natif.³²

He was not present in the battles of Jamal, Siffin, and Nahrawan, and when his uncle went to pursue the Kharijis, Mukhtar became his successor in Mada'in. There is no accurate report on his activity about the peace treaty of Imam Hasan (a) which was concluded in Mada'in.

Regarding the uprising of Imam Husayn, Mukhtar collaborated with Muslim ibn 'Aqil in Kufah. But because of this collaboration, he was imprisoned by 'Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad and was freed after the movement of 'Ashura through the mediation of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, his sister's husband. Afterwards, he left 'Iraq and set for Hijaz.³³ He was well-known primarily because he gave shelter to Muslim ibn 'Aqil in his house and because 'Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad, when informed of his influence, detained him during that difficult period.³⁴

There are no sayings from historians about the role of Mukhtar in political currents and the main battles during the time of Imam 'Ali and Imam Hasan up until the uprising of Karbala, although he spent a short time in 'Iraq and in Mada'in with his uncle, Sa'd ibn Mas'ud. Few historical records are available regarding his life, thoughts, beliefs, and political tendencies during these years.

In 61 AH, Ibn Zubayr opposed Yazid through referring to the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, Umayyads' crimes, Yazid's corruption, and by declaring his political incompetence. Ibn Zubayr's companions pledged allegiance to him in secret. Mukhtar arrived at Hijaz and remained there until he waged war along with Ibn Zubayr against the Umayyads. Consequently, he became renowned for his capability and competence in politics and military.

After Yazid's death and breaking the siege of Mecca, Mukhtar remained there for five months,³⁵ but

because he and the Zubayrids held opposing beliefs, 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr did not heed to him and assigned him a duty. It was their common enemy, the Umayyads that united them. Soon afterwards, Mukhtar parted with them and went to Kufah to benefit from its suitable space. His entrance to Kufah was concurrent with the political activities of the Tawwabun.

Six months after the death of Yazid, Mukhtar entered Kufah on Friday, the 15th of Ramadhan in 64 AH.³⁶ The movement of the Tawwabun had created extreme excitement in Kufah, although Mukhtar did not support them, claiming that their leaders lacked political insight and army experience.³⁷

After the defeat of the Tawwabun, he introduced himself as the representative of Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah by gathering defeated penitents under the banner of seeking to revenge the Lord of Martyrs, Imam Husayn and fought against the murderers of the martyrs of Karbala. He became the leader of the Shi'a of Iraq and the leading figures, and Ibrahim ibn Malik al-Ashtar, as courageous as his father, joined with him. Soon after, Mukhtar seized Kufah³⁸ by expelling 'Abd Allah ibn Muti',³⁹ the governor of Kufah.

After he entered the governor's palace, each person paid allegiance to him. He dominated the entire city in 66 AH.⁴⁰ Using the slogan of implementing fundamental reforms, Mukhtar was able to gather non-Arabs, slaves, and the oppressed around him. He would equally divide booty between slaves and the nobles and this caused disappointment among the nobles of Kufah who were secretly interested in Ibn Zubayr and were irritated with the political and social positions Mukhtar had granted to slaves:

*Mukhtar rules over us without our satisfaction. He has made slaves close to and seated them on the mounts, granted our share of booty to them, and fed them by our booty; now the slaves refuse to obey us.*⁴¹

The nobles felt danger and sent a delegation to Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah in order to investigate the validity of Mukhtar's association to him.

Among the measures taken by Mukhtar was the revenge of the murderers of Karbala's martyrs and others who participated in the event. Ibrahim ibn al-Ashtar, along with an army, fought with 'Ubaydullah and eventually killed him. Mukhtar sent his head to Imam Sajjad (a) in Medina, and through this act, he consoled the heart of the Hashimis.

He also sent an army to Mecca and freed Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah from the prison of Ibn Zubayr.⁴² Ibn Zubayr dispatched his brother, Mus'ab, in order to repress Mukhtar in 'Iraq. Thus, the star of Mukhtar's life set and the famous scroll of one of the Thaqafis closed who had engaged with himself the people of Iraq and Umayyads for about 3 years. The time of his death is either in 67, 68, or 69 AH⁴³ in Kufah.⁴⁴

The uprising of Mukhtar had a Shi'i underpinning and his relationship with the Ahlul Bayt has a long record. During the time of Mu'awiyah, although the Thaqafids were among the nearest persons to the

court of Umayyads, the Umayyads treated Mukhtar unjustly as he did not hold any position or office. Factors such as the Shi'i's long record of Mukhtar, his intense interest in Ahlul Bayt and his goal of seeking revenge for the murderers of Imam Husayn (a) made him closer to the Ahlul Bayt.

The relationship of Imam Sajjad (a) with the uprising of Mukhtar

In that difficult condition, it is unreasonable to expect an open relationship between Imam Sajjad (a) and Mukhtar. The Imam refused to accept the leadership of the uprising in person, but gave the guardianship to his uncle, Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah, to assume the spiritual leadership and protection of the uprising. Mukhtar called people to pay allegiance to Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah. This measure secured the Imam from danger and kept the enemies and their spies preoccupied, thus diverting their attention from harming the Imam.

The Imam encouraged the people to collaborate with Mukhtar:

يا عمّ، لو عبداً زنجياً تعصّب لنا أهل البيت لوجب على الناس موازرتة و قد

وليتك هذا الامر فاصنع ما شئت، فخرجوا وقد سمعوا كلامه و هم يقولون أذن لنا

زين العابدين و محمد بن الحنفية

“O my uncle, if a black slave rises for us, Ahlul Bayt, it is obligatory upon the people to assist him. I appointed you for this affair. Do what you want.” They went out after hearing the Imam’s speech saying: Zayn al-‘Abidin and Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah permitted us.” [45](#)

In fact, the Imam’s approval of Mukhtar was displayed by accepting the gifts which Mukhtar had sent. In some cases, it has been reported that the Imam had made a benevolent prayer for Mukhtar.[46](#) Moreover, Ayatullah al-Khu’i says, *“It can be understood from hadiths that the uprising of Mukhtar took place with the Imam’s permission.”*[47](#) Also, when they returned to Kufa, and when Mukhtar asked about their discussions with the Imam, they said, *“He commanded us to assist you.”*[48](#)

Considering the analysis regarding the measures Imam Sajjad (a) took, the following questions are posed:

Reasons why Imam Sajjad (a) did not revolt

Why didn’t Imam Sajjad rise up and lead a revolution? The importance of this question and the answer given determines the history of Shi’ism.

- Did the Imams want to establish a government? Was it the duty of an Infallible Imam to establish an Islamic government grounded on Islamic principles?
- What was the priority of the Shi'a Imams? Political struggles or cultural and scientific activities?
- What are the measures to determine the form of political and cultural activities?
- Is the different accomplishments of the Imams justifiable or not? How?
- From a historical view, is the history of Shi'ism apparent enough for the Shi'a to find the way of struggle and its pattern in determining political and cultural activities?

The reasons as to why Imam Sajjad did not rise are as follows:

- 1) The political conditions were not prepared for the Imam. The people faced intense apprehension and fear of being killed and were not able to revolt.
- 2) The Imam strove to protect the Shi'a from death; hence, he did not want to involve them in unknown rebellions. This was similar to Imam Hasan's peace treaty aimed at defending the Shi'a.
- 3) A suicide-based movement was not an admirable act. The Imam showed a new approach to cultural activities to save religion from deviation and instability.
- 4) The scientific movement proved to be a logical replacement for the political movement which was condemned to defeat.
- 5) Because no one was better informed on public interests than Imam Sajjad, he took the position by considering the consequences of the conditions and performed according to the circumstances of the time.
- 6) The decisions of Imam were intellectual, not emotional. Sentimental movements were temporary and condemned to defeat; thus, the Imam refused to encourage or participate in such decisions.
- 7) Uprisings and revolutions which are undertaken to achieve political changes are successful when they are combined with social changes; hence, a movement that triggered both political and social change was required.

During the time of Imam Sajjad (a), the social circumstances were declining; any type of revolution was useless. Thus, through cultural movement and scientific revolution, the Imam brought about social change and established an Islamic society by 'enjoining right and forbidding wrong' (amr bi al-ma'roof wa nahy 'an il-munkar). He called the people towards One God, and displayed utmost wisdom in his discourse and accomplishments to rouse the slumbering conscience of the community. Therefore, considering the circumstances, the Imams did not rise up because the grounds were not yet paved for a revolution.

5. Martyrdom of Imam Sajjad (a)

According to narrations, Imam Sajjad (a)'s martyrdom was in 92⁴⁹, 94⁵⁰ or 95⁵¹ AH and the day of his martyrdom has been recorded as 12⁵² 22⁵³ or 25⁵⁴ Muharram. He was poisoned by the order of Walid ibn Abd al-Malik⁵⁵ and is buried in the Garden of Heaven Cemetery (Jannatul Baqi') in Medina, Saudi Arabia, where other renowned Islamic figures are also buried.

Conclusion

Without a doubt, the Umayyads lacked social justice and a fair judicial system. They denied Islamic teachings and distorted them to their own benefits (bid'ah). The spread of ignorance among the people proved to be the most viable means to protect their power. The Umayyads' policies included lowering the status of Imam 'Ali by downplaying his virtues, frightening the Shi'a through use of threats, and punishing those who narrated the Imams' virtues. The economic policy of Umayyads weakened the Shi'a, the Alawids, and the followers of Ahlul Bayt. Indeed, Imam Husayn had spoken about the circumstances and the people of that time:

النَّاسُ عِبِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَالدِّينَ لَعَقَ عَلَى السَّنَنِمْ يَحُوطُونَهُ مَا دَرَّتْ مَعَائِشُهُمْ فَإِذَا

مَحْصُوا بِالْبَلَاءِ قَلَّ الدِّيانُونَ

The people are the servants of world and religion is only on their tongue, they turn around it as long as it suits their livelihood, but when they are entangled with difficulty, those who remain pious turn out to be very few. ⁵⁶

Thus, the 'period of catastrophe' is the most comprehensive name for the period in which Imam Sajjad (a) was living. People observed how Yazid was determined to maintain his rule even to the extent of killing the grandson of the holy Prophet. The period of losing hope of victory through armed movement was the result of intense fear created by the Umayyads. To destroy Mecca and Medina from being the center of religion, high social standards, and holiness, the Umayyads policy was to turn cities into centers of corruption and prostitution. The prevalence of prostitution in the community could distance people from uprising, politics, and government.

Thus, the tragedies did not end after Imam Zayn ul-Abideen patiently bore the events of Karbala. He continued to live in a society faced with absolute turmoil under the Umayyad rule. The rulers fearfully struggled to seize the Imam's rightful leadership by snatching the people's economic, political, and social rights through various oppressive measures. They cut pensions and salary, exerted severe punishment, fabricated narrations (hadiths) in their favor, spread prohibited amusements to pacify the people, and

limited freedom of thought and expression on the leadership (wilayah) of the Ahlul Bayt.

Imam Sajjad struggled with these movements as he strove to resist immorality, educating the people on Islamic law, principles, and ethics. His devotional activities included encouraging people to recite the salawat, attend the Friday congregational prayers, and being present during the Hajj pilgrimage.

His political activities included the revival of the 'Ashura movement, enjoining good and forbidding evil, divulging the oppression of the Umayyad regime, and firmly rising up against any oppressive ruler. Without question, those who were acquainted with the Imam were deeply fond of him and yearned for his presence, knowledge, wisdom, and piety.

1. This paper is a translation of Chapter Seven of The History of Shi'ism, vol. 1: The Period of Shi'a – Imam's Presence, Qum: 2005, Hawzah wa Daneshgah and Samt Publishers.

2. M. Heidari Aqaee, Q. Khanjani, H. Fallah Zadeh and R. Mohammadi under the supervision of Dr. Sayyid Ahmad Reza Khizri.

3. For example, Imam mentions the collection of these topics in his prayer of 'Arafah:

رَبِّ صَلِّ عَلَى أَطَائِبِ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ الَّذِينَ اخْتَرْتَهُمْ لِأَمْرِكَ وَجَعَلْتَهُمْ خَزَنَةَ عِلْمِكَ،
وَحَفَظَةَ دِينِكَ، وَخُلَفَاءَكَ فِي أَرْضِكَ، وَحُجَجَكَ عَلَى عِبَادِكَ، وَطَهَّرْتَهُمْ مِنَ الرَّجْسِ
وَالدَّنَسِ تَطْهِيراً بِإِزَادَتِكَ، وَجَعَلْتَهُمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ إِلَيْكَ وَالْمَسْلُوكَ إِلَى جَنَّتِكَ...

My Lord, bless the best of his Household, those whom Thou hast chosen for Thy command, appointed the treasurers of Thy knowledge, the guardians of Thy religion, Thy vicegerents in Thy earth, and Thy arguments against Thy servants, purified from uncleanness and defilement through a purification by Thy desire, and made the mediation to Thee and the road to Thy Garden.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ أَيَّدْتَ دِينَكَ فِي كُلِّ أَوَانٍ بِإِمَامٍ أَقَمْتَهُ عِلْماً لِعِبَادِكَ وَمَنَاراً فِي بِلَادِكَ، بَعْدَ
أَنْ وَصَلْتَ حَبْلَهُ بِحَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْتَهُ الذَّرِيعَةَ إِلَى رِضْوَانِكَ، وَافْتَرَضْتَ طَاعَتَهُ، وَحَذَرْتَ
مَعْصِيَتَهُ، وَأَمَرْتَ بِأَمْتَالِ أَوَامِرِهِ وَالْإِنْتِهَاءِ عِنْدَ نَهْيِهِ، وَالْأَيْتَقْدَمُهُ مُتَقَدِّمٌ، وَلَا يَتَأَخَّرُ
عَنْهُ مُتَأَخِّرٌ

O God, surely Thou hast confirmed Thy religion in all times with an Imam whom Thou hast set up as a guidepost to Thy servants and a lighthouse in Thy lands, after his cord has been joined to Thy cord. Thou hast appointed him the means to Thy good pleasure, made obeying him obligatory, cautioned against disobeying him, and commanded following his commands, abandoning his prohibitions, and that no forward-goer go ahead of him or back-keeper keep back from him.

4. Kashf al-Ghummah, vol. 2, p. 299; Tadhkirah al-Khawas, p. 294.

5. Ibid, p.304.

6. Shushtari, Qadi Nurullah, Ihqaq al-Haq, vol.12, p.121.

7. This Qur'anic phrase is normally said after reference is made to a great tragedy or calamity.

8. Mufid, Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Nu'man, Amali al-Mufid, p. 109, Bahar al-Anwar, vol.78, p. 152.

9. Qanduzi Hanafi, Sulayman ibn Ibrahim, Yanabl' al-Mawaddah lazil-Qurba, p. 276.

10. Amali al-Mufid, p. 5; Bahar al-Anwar, vol. 75, p. 152.

11. Kulayni, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub, Al-Kafi, vol.3, p.314.

12. Ihqaq al-haq, vol. 12, p. 117.

13. Imam Sajjad Jamal Niyayishgaran, p. 146.

14. Tabarsi, Ahmad ibn Ali, Al-Ihtijaj ala Ahl al-Lijaj, p. 310-311; Tarikh al-Tabari, vol. 7, p. 378.

15. cf. Muriij adh-Dhahab...,vol. 3, p. 73; Al-Kamil Fi al-Tarikh, vol.4, p.133; Tarikh-e Ya'qubi, vol.2, p.254; Tarikh al-Tabari, vol.4, p.386.

- [16.](#) The time of his caliphate has been mentioned two months, Dinwari, Abd Allah ibn Muslim ibn Qutaybah, Al-Ma'arif, p. 353; Al-Kamil Fi al-Tarikh, vol. 4, p.74; Ibn Athir, Asad al-Ghabah fi Ma'rifah al-Sahabah, vol. 4, p. 384.
- [17.](#) Mas'udi, Ali ibn al-Husayn, Ithbat al-Wasiyyah, p. 146; Kashf al-Ghummah..., vol.2, 311; Ibn Sabbagh, Ali ibn Muhammad, Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah fi Ma'rifah al- A'immah al-Athna 'ashar, p. 240.
- [18.](#) Ithbat al-Hudah, vol.5, p. 234–235; Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 46, pp. 120 & 121.
- [19.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 7, p. 140.
- [20.](#) Ibn Sa'd, Muhammad ibn Sa'd Hashimi Basri, Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, vol. 5, p. 158; Ibn 'Abdarabbah, Ahmad ibn Muhammad, Al-'Aqd al-Farid, vol.7, p. 140.
- [21.](#) Al-Ithaf Bihub al-Ashraf, p. 143.
- [22.](#) It is possible that legitimacy in political custom means consent, protection, and cooperation of the people which is not related to our discussion.
- [23.](#) Rebellions of Kharijis are among these uprising and hence they are not considered legitimate uprisings. (F: please check if this is the intended message.)
- [24.](#) Tarikh Khalifah ibn Khayyat, p. 155.
- [25.](#) Ibid. p. 181.
- [26.](#) Ibid., Ibn Hazm Andulusi, 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Sa'id, Jamharah Ansab al-'Arab, p. 158
- [27.](#) Ibid.
- [28.](#) According to some sources, Mukhtar was supported by Imam Ali's son Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah and introduced himself as his representative. According to Britannica, Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah was the fourth son of Imam Ali (a). He was retiring and inclined to avoid partisan strife; he acted with much caution despite the support of various factions that would have made him caliph. [editor's note]
- [29.](#) Tarikh al-Tabari, vol. 2, p.402.
- [30.](#) Biladhari, Ahmad, Ansab al-Ashraf, vol.6, p.376.
- [31.](#) Al-Isti'ab fi Ma'rifah al-Ashab, vol. 2, p. 602.
- [32.](#) Al-Futuh:, vol. 1, p. 163–170.
- [33.](#) Tarikh al-Tabari, vol. 5, p. 570. Ibn 'Umar supported Mukhtar because Mukhtar's sister was the wife of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar and also Mukhtar's daughter, Umm Salamah, was the wife of 'Abd Allah ibn Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, the son of Abd Allah ibn 'Umar. Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, vol.8, p. 345; Tarikh al-Tabari, vol. 10, p. 459.
- [34.](#) Ansab al-Ashraf, vol. 1.6, p. 377. Mukhtar ibn Abi 'Ubayd Thaqaqi along with an armed group went to assist Imam Husayn, but in that time 'Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad apprehended and imprisoned him and hit him with wood, such that his eye was split. Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 201.
- [35.](#) Tarikh al-Tabari, vol. 5, p. 577.
- [36.](#) Ibid, p. 560.
- [37.](#) Ibid, vol.4, p.212.
- [38.](#) Ansab al-Ashraf, vol.6, p. 394; Tarikh al-Tabari, vol. 6, p. 6.
- [39.](#) He was the leader of Quraishi Emigrants [Mecca's Muslims who emigrated from Mecca to Medina] in the event of Hirrah. When he was faced with the army under critical conditions, he escaped from Medina to Mecca and was appointed as the ruler of Kufah by Ibn Zubayr. The presence of him in the center and leadership of the Hirrah uprising is one of the reasons for considering Hirrah uprising as a non-Shi'a uprising. Mukhtar saw Ibn-Muti' as an obstacle in the way of his own uprising and expelled him from Medina.
- [40.](#) Tarikh Khalifah ibn Khayyat, p. 164.
- [41.](#) لقد تامر هذا الرجل علينا بغير رضى منا، و لقد ادنى موالينا فحملهم على الدواب و اعطاهم و اطعمهم فيئنا، و لقد عصتنا عبيدنا.
- [42.](#) Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 261.
- [43.](#) Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, vol.5, p. 79; ;Ansab al-Ashraf, vol.7, pp.8, 86;Tarikh al-Tabari, vol.6, p.93; Tarikh Khalifah ibn Khayyat, p. 164–165.
- [44.](#) For more information about Mukhtar, see cf. Dhahabi, Mul;ammad ibn Ahmad ibn 'Uthman, Tarikh al-Islam wa wafiyat al-Mashahir va al-A'lam, vol. 4,p. 21–67, 226– 329; Al-Ma'arif, p. 400; Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol.2, p.258–267;

[45.](#) Ibn Nama Hilli, Ja'far, Dhub al-Nadar fi Sharh al-Thar, p. 96; Bahar al-Anwar, vol.45, p. 365; Khuii, Sayyed Abu al-Qasim, Mu'jam al-Rijal al-Hadith, vol. 18, p. 101.

[46.](#) Imam Sajjad did prostration of thanksgiving for killing 'Ubaydullah and prayed for Mukhtar as:

جَزَاهُ خَيْرًا

May Allah reward him for the good.

Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol.2, p. 259; Tusi, Muhammad ibn Hasan, Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah al- Rijal, pp. 125, 127; Qadi Nu'man, Sharh al-Akhbar, vol.3, p. 270 .

[47.](#) Mu'jam al-Rijal al-Hadith, vol. 18, p. 101.

[48.](#) Dhub al-Nadar fi Sharh al-Thar.

[49.](#) Kashf al-Ghummah, vol. 2, p. 101.

[50.](#) Ibid.

[51.](#) Al-Kafi, vol.2, p.368.

[52.](#) Ibid., p. 89.

[53.](#) Kashf al-Ghummah, vol. 2, p. 101.

[54.](#) Al-Irshad fi Ma'rifah Ifujajallah Ala al-Ibad, vol. 2, p. 185.

[55.](#) Al-Ithaf Bihub al-Ashraf, p. 143.

[56.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 44, p. 382.

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