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Shi'ite Authorities in the Age of Minor Occultation

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During the minor occultation, several Shi'ite scholars engaged in religious, political, and cultural activities. For example, Abu Sahl Nawbakhti wrote thirty seven books and treatises and had debates with opponents of Shi'a Islam1. Also, some of the Four Specifically Appointed Deputies (al-Nuwwab al-Khassah) of the Imam Mahdi (aj) were among the scholars and the narrators of hadiths.

However, amongst the numerous Shi'a scholars, only some held the position of religious authorities. Others were not referred to as religious authorities and in the case of the Four Specifically Appointed Deputies, they more often acted as intermediaries between the people and the Twelfth Imam (A). This means that they did not answer people's letters personally, but they received the responses from Imam (A) and passed them on to the people2.

Therefore, in what follows, we will study the life and socio-political role of two well-known Shi'ite jurists i.e. Ibn Babiwayh Qumi and Mohammad ibn Ya'aqub Kulayni who were referred to by the people in the age of occultation and resolved people's religious problems according to the Qur'an and Sunnah.

The socio-political situation during the Minor Occultation

The caliphate of Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad al-Mu'tamid Billah (256-279 A.H):

After Al-Muhtadi, the 'Abbasid caliph, was killed in 256 A.H., Mu'tamid, the son of Mutawakkil, succeeded him. Al-Mu'tamid changed the capital of Iraq from Samarra to Baghdad3. Historians report that al-Mu'tamid spent much of his time in chasing after pleasure4.

Therefore, his brother Talha, known as al-Muwaffaq, took control of the affairs. With Muwaffaq's assistance, the caliph cruelly established his power. With the rebellion of the dark-skinned people in

Basra, ‘Ali ibn Muhammad, known as Sahib al-Zanj, claimed descent from Zaid ibn ‘Ali (A), assembled the slaves of Basra, led a rebellion against he caliph in 225 A.H, and took control over the southern part of Iraq, including Basra.

In this invasion, they killed many people and robbed their properties. They were also at war with the rulers and generals of the caliphs for 15 years. They defeated the caliphs' armies several times and killed and pillaged the Muslims. Finally, Al-Muwaffaq heavily defeated Sahib al-Zanj in a place near Ahwaz. He was killed while escaping.

At this time, the Sogdiana region was captured by the Samanids, Egypt by Tulunids, Hyrcania by ‘Alawis, and Sistan, Khorasan, Kerman, and Fars were captured by Saffarids[5]. Accordingly, all the mentioned regions were no longer under the control of the ‘Abbasid caliphs.

The Karmathians, as a branch of Isma‘ilite sect, also emerged from the second half of the third century A.H to the late fourth century. They killed and plundered with great brutality[6]. Their wrongful acts led the caliphate government to arrest the Shi‘ites and torture them on the charge of being like the Karmathians.

Like his father Al-Mutawakkil, Al-Mu‘tamid was hard-hearted. According to Suyuti in Tarikh al-Khulafa’, Al-Mu‘tamid killed three hundred thousand people in one day[7]. Among those he murdered was Imam Hasan ‘Askari (A)[8].

Ibn Babiwayh and Kulayni lived during this time period. After murdering Imam ‘Askari (A), he ordered that the properties of Imam's (A) inheritors be inspected and any pregnancy in Imam’s house to be checked. All such measures portrayed his fear of the Imam (A) since he shuddered to think of the existence of Imam Mahdi (A)[9].

During this time, since the caliphate government was actively investigating to find out about the birth of Imam Mahdi (A), the Shi‘ites and the Network of the Agents (wakils) kept his birth hidden and the Imam’s (A) representative would even prevent Shi‘ites from asking about his name, so that the government would suppose Imam ‘Askari (A) left no successor[10].

During his twenty-three-year caliphate, Al-Mu‘tamid continued his pleasure-seeking habits until he died in 279 AH as a result of excessive wine drinking[11].

The caliphate of the ‘Abbasid Al-Mu‘tadhid (279- 289 AH)

After Al-Mu’tamid’s death, his nephew Al-Mu’tadhid succeeded to the throne. At the beginning of his caliphate, a messenger came to the caliph with some gifts from ‘Amr ibn Layth. Consequently, his emirate of Khorasan was reinforced[12]. ‘Amr then asked the caliph for the ruling of Sogdiana and the deposal of Samanid Amir Isma‘il. Out of fear, the caliph accepted though he secretly intrigued Amir Isma‘il against him so that in 287 AH, a bloody war broke out between them. ‘Amr was defeated, sent to the caliph in captivity, and died in the caliph's prison[13].

Al-Mu'tadhid brought the oppositions and the Turks under his control with a better policy. The caliph had a slave named Badr who helped him suppress the rebellions. Rulers obeyed him, though his only problem was the disobedience of the Karmathians who had intensified activities. Even Abu Sa'id Janabi threatened Kufa and Basra in 286 AH after forming the first Isma'ili government in Bahrain[14]. During the second deputy's time, the Twelver Shi'ites lived in fear and taqiyyah[15].

According to Tarikh-e Tabari, the caliph, unlike his predecessors, expressed his interest in the descendants of 'Ali (A) and ordered that Mu'awiyyah be cursed. He drafted a charter about it based on a version that Ma'mun had written in his time on the legitimacy of the immediate caliphate of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A) and ordered that it must be read, the Umayyad family must be cursed, and the virtues of the Household of the Prophet (A) must be mentioned on the pulpits[16].

This action was the result of activities done in taqiyya by the Network of Agents to convince the caliph that Imam Hasan al- 'Askari (A) had passed away leaving no successor for himself, in a manner that this belief was spread among the Sunnite scholars like Abu al-Qasim Balkhi d. 300 AH. In a report on his doctrine of Imamate, he wrote:

In our time, Hasan ibn 'Ali (A) passed away and he had no son[17].

In such a situation, the caliph adopted Ma'mun's policy of expressing devotion to the Household of the Prophet (S) in order to gain the trust of the Shi'ites and the followers of the Household (A), and he pretended to be devoted towards the Household (A). Mu'tadhid's amiability towards the 'Alawites did not last long because the ill-intentioned companions had him worried that the Sunnis might revolt against him and the 'Alawites might take the reins of government from his hand. Therefore, his pretense was over after a while[18].

The caliphate of Muktafi Billah (289 - 295 A.H)

After the death of Mu'tadhid, the prime minister secured allegiance for his son, Muktafi. At the beginning of his government, Muktafi ordered that all prisons be destroyed and some mosques be constructed in their places. During Muktafi's time, the Karmatians[19] rebelled in Syria and captured some parts of it. Then, they went to Hejaz, killed many of the pilgrims (haajis)[20] on the Day of 'Arafah, and plundered their properties. They also blocked the route to the Kaaba in order to prevent the pilgrims from going there, but ultimately they were defeated and killed by the caliph's army[21].

At this time, Shi'ite movement had great power and influence. The Fatimids[22] took the political leadership role of the Shi'ites and the Hamdanids disobeyed them in Mosul.

The caliphate of the 'Abbasid Muqtadir (295-320 A.H)

At the time of his role as the prime minister, Munis was considerably influential. During the caliphate of Muqtadir, the country was completely chaotic because of interference of his mother, wife, and servants

in affairs of the state while all affairs of the caliphate were managed by the same people.

Their influence increased to the extent that a lady-in-waiting of the caliph's mother, known as Athmal Qahramana, was appointed as the head of court of justice[23]. Incapability of state officials gave rise to the people's discontent. In 316 A.H, a conflict arose between Harun ibn Gharib, Muqtadir's famous commander and the head of police officers of caliph's palace in Baghdad and many followers of the head police officer were killed.

The servant Munis entered Baghdad from Syria and in 317 AH, expelled Muqtadir from the caliphate and chose one of Mu'tadhid's sons, nicknamed al-Qahir Billah, as the caliph. His caliphate lasted two days and he was confronted with the uprising of the people. However, the hostility between Munis and the caliph increased, and in 320 A.H, Munis and a group of army generals went to Mosul out of his fear of the caliph and after reinforcement returned to Baghdad where the caliph was killed in a war.[24]

The Karmatians took advantage of the political crisis and in 318 A.H, they entered Mecca on the Day of Tarviyah, killed many pilgrims, plundered their properties, threw the dead into the Zamzam well, took the Black Stone of the Ka'bah to their territory in Bahrain and kept it for longer than twenty years until the caliphate of al-Muti'u li'llah in the year 339 A.H, they returned the stone to Mecca[25]. Then it was put in its place by the very respectable Shaykh Ibn Qulawayh Qummi, Shaykh Mufid's teacher, who was making pilgrimage to Mecca that year.

These actions of the Karmatians led the 'Abbasid caliphs to be more sensitive toward the activities of the Network of Agents and led the Twelvers' leaders to face some difficulties in their activities.

Political hardships of the network of Agents in the age of minor occultation

The 'Abbasids were informed of the existence and the activities of Imam Mahdi (A). They intended to find his place by discovering the contacts between him and the Shi'ites and martyr him. Therefore, the Twelvers were subject to attacks by the 'Abbasids. It was among the duties of Imam 'Askari's (A) agents to conceal the name and residence of Imam Mahdi (A) not only from the enemies, but also from the Shi'ites. However, it was the representatives' duty to prove the blessed presence of the Imam

(A) to his true followers, who were trustworthy. Kulayni narrated that one day 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far Himyari asked the first agent whether he had seen the successor of the eleventh Imam (A) or not. 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri confirmed that he had seen him (A). But he added that people are prohibited from inquiring about his name for if the regime discovered his name, they will certainly try to arrest him (A).[26]

The second specific agent of Imam Mahdi (A) was Muhammad ibn 'Uthman, to whom the Imam offered his condolences for the death of his father, through a letter in which Imam expressed his good wishes for him and entrusted all responsibilities of the agency to him. Like his father, he was among the trustworthy

ones and intimate companions of Imam al-'Askari (A). It is narrated from Imam 'Askari (A):

Amri and his son both are trustworthy and reliable. So whatever they conduct is on my behalf and whatever they say is my word. Listen to them and follow them, since they are the trustworthy and loyal ones of mine27.

Studying the life of the second agent shows that there has been an atmosphere of terror created against the Twelvers, and the second deputy was trying to keep the blessed existence of Imam Mahdi (A) hidden from the 'Abbasids until the early years of Mu'ta28. "Samman" conducted intense activities in secret through his agents and visited them in different villages of Baghdad.

During the caliphate of Mu'tadhid, the agents from remote provinces such as Qum got in contact with the second deputy and sent him money and goods through merchants who knew nothing about what relation existed between the senders and Abu Ja'far, the second deputy of Imam (A). So they transported the goods to Abu Ja'far from Qum29.

The second deputy was very careful about his contacts with his agents not to give government officials any clue and in order to guard his and the Imam's life against danger. Abu Ja'far did not have direct contact with the agents from the remote provinces. He ordered those who brought him goods and money to put them in a particular place and did not give them any receipt in return30.

Within the complicated system of the agency between him and other agents from the Shi'ite regions, he communicated by symbols and secret codes in a way that even the messengers were not aware of its content31.

According to Shaykh Tusi, Abu Ja'far had some pieces of writing on hadiths which were received by Husayn ibn Ruh and later by Abu al-Hasan Saymuri.32

The role of other Shi'ite groups during the Minor Occultation

During the Zanj rebellion between 225 and 270 AH, the condition of the Twelvers deteriorated. The rebellion leader, 'Ali ibn Muhammad, descended from Zaid ibn 'Ali, the brother of Imam Baqir (A). A large number of 'Alawids joined him in his rebellion in 257 AH33.

Officials of the government considered this rebellion linked to the 'Alawids as a whole, and according to Tabari, the suppression of the Zanj rebellion34 in 270 AH was followed by government propaganda against the 'Alawids.

The other factor in the straining relations between the Twelvers and the 'Abbasids was discovering subversive activities of the two Isma'ilite parties35 – the original Isma'ilites and the Karmatians.

Like the Twelvers, Isma'ilites narrated some hadiths from the Holy Prophet (S) as:

Mahdi (A), the Upriser, will hide to be prepared for the uprising.

However, they gave an explanation for some hadiths so that they could confirm their attempts of gaining immediate access to positions in Morocco. They also applied other Twelvers' hadiths about Imam Mahdi (A) to their hidden leader who had organized his followers in an effective hidden movement and ordered them to extend their activities to new regions by means of military forces to prepare for the rising of the Mahdi (A).

On the other hand, according to Sa'd Ash'ari's report, the number of Karmatians was increasing in the villages adjacent to Kufa. According to Nawbakhti, they recruited around a hundred thousand partisans in those villages. After using their propaganda in the western coasts of the Gulf and in Yemen, a large number of Arabs responded to their invitation and consequently their uprising occurred in Kufa villages in 278 A.H.36

The Karmatians allowed their followers to kill their opponents and to confiscate their properties37. Since the Twelvers and the Karmatians both were counted as Shi'a from the 'Abbasids' point of view, and both expected the advent of Imam Mahdi (A), then it was likely that the Bani 'Abbas accused the Twelvers of the manner of Karmatian and simply eliminated them. The Twelfth Imam (A) intended to keep the Shi'ites away from the Karmatians' influence and to impel the government to distinguish between the Karmatians and his adherents. Perhaps for this reason he (A) cursed Muhammad ibn Abi Zaynab and his followers in a letter to his second agent. The second agent spread the Imam's letter among the Twelvers through his agent, Ishaq ibn Ya'qub38. Kulayni also wrote Refutation of the Karmatians39.

Mu'tadhid carefully inspected the Shi'ites' hidden meetings and in 282 A.H discovered that Muhammad ibn Zayd, the head of the Zaydi government of Tabaristan, annually sent 320,000 dinars to Muhammad ibn Ward al-'Attar to distribute among the 'Alawids of Baghdad, Kufa, and Medina40. Mu'tadhid's constant inspections led to the arrest and assassination of many 'Alawids. According to Abu al-Faraj Isfahani, they were not at all Karmatians, though they were wrongly convicted for this claim.

As the result of these actions, the governmental authorities ascertained that the Twelvers had an organization of their own. According to Kulayni, the spies who worked for 'Ubaydullah ibn Sulayman, the prime minister, discovered that the Twelvers still had an Imam who led their activities in secret. Kulayni narrates:

Husayn ibn Hasan 'Alawi says: "The two intimate friends of Badr Hasani (the caliph's courtier) were speaking with each other and one of them said: Why does he (the Twelfth Imam) collect money and have agents? Then they mentioned names of all agents and submitted this information to 'Ubaydullah ibn Sulayman, the anti-Shi'a prime minister, who was attempting to arrest Imam (A). But Mu'tadhid told them that they must search for his (Imam's) place, because it is an important issue. 'Ubaydullah ibn Sulayman said: "Let the agents be arrested! But the caliph said: No, send some secret spies among them in order to give money to the agents; then arrest whoever would accept the money." After his

failure in obtaining information from the spies, the caliph inquired the pilgrims of the shrines of Imam Husayn (A) and the other Imams (A) in order to determine the place of the Imam of the time (A) through them41.

The 'Abbasids' hostile attitude towards the agents of the second deputy of Imam continued after the death of 'Ubaydullah ibn Sulayman in 288 AH. His responsibility was entrusted to his son Qasim. Qasim was well-known for his hostility towards the Twelvers and towards Shi'ites in general. During his office, he followed his father's policy and showed even more hostility

towards them. According to a story narrated by Shaykh Tusi, Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah Qummi, who had an inclination towards the Shi'a and had visited the hidden Imam (A), was sued by Qasim and fled to Egypt42.

Because of the influence of his family, Bani Nawbakht, in the 'Abbasid government, Ibn Ruh (the third deputy of the Imam) gained popularity. However, armed conflicts of other so-called Shi'a groups, especially the Karmatians, put him in a critical situation. His opponents linked these actions in order to arrest him. In 311 A.H, after the Karmatians attacked the pilgrims' caravan, in which a few relatives of the caliph existed Shi'a enemies such as Nasr Hajib linked this action with the Shi'a and used it as a powerful weapon against the Shi'a prime minister, Ibn Furat. In 312 A.H, Ibn Furat and his son Muhsin were disposed and killed on the charge of provoking the Karmatians into that attack43. In 312 A.H, Ibn Ruh was arrested on the charge of conspiring with the Karmatians in their attempt to occupy Baghdad. He spent five years in Muqtadir's prison and was released in 317 AH44.

Kulayni and his pupil Nu'mani narrated some signs for the rising of the Mahdi (A). These signs led to the denial of claims of an Isma'ilite leader who called himself Mahdi after the revolt in 296 AH. These signs also led the Twelvers to avoid engaging in those activities in which the network of Agents was not involved45.

'Ali ibn Babiwayh Qummi

His scientific status and social services

Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn Musa ibn Babiwayh Qummi (d. 329 AH) was a Shi'ite jurist, a narrator of hadith, and a religious authority leading the people of Qum46. It is quoted from Abu 'Ali, son of Shaykh Tusi, that:

His [ibn Babiwayh] status in jurisprudence and narrating hadiths was so high that Shi'ite scholars referred to his opinion in the Sharayi'e book (religious laws) when there was no associating hadith available or there were doubts in the text of hadith47.

Some scholars considered his opinion as authentic as the text of traditions themselves, and presupposed that he must have had a hadith which has been the source of his opinion.

There is no information about Ibn Babiwayh's life except but a few cases. Other than those cases, the information about his life is limited to Imam Hasan 'Askari's (A) letter to him, Ibn Babiwayh's meeting with Husayn ibn Mansur Hallaj (d. 309 A.H), and his travels to Baghdad.

To find out about his social position, it would be enough to know that when he met Hallaj in Qum, Hallaj introduced himself as the agent and deputy of the promised Imam Mahdi (A) and claimed that he has special dignities and marvels. This angered Ibn Babiwayh and since he was not truthful by his claim, Ibn Babiwayh banished him from Qum[48].

At least three of his journeys to Iraq have been reported. The first journey was apparently shortly after the death of Muhammad ibn 'Uthman (304 or 305 A.H). As reported by Tal'ukbari, his second journey was in 326 AH. In his last journey to Baghdad in 328 AH, he gave permission to Abu al-Hasan 'Abbas Kluzani to narrate from all of his books[49].

When the Abbasid dynasty sought to block the Twelfth Imam (A), Ibn Babiwayh held discussions on the wilayah of the infallible Ahl al-Bayt (A) and tried to promote Shi'a education. Reliable authorities have narrated a treatise from him in which he debates Muhammad ibn Muqatil al-Razi in Rey over proving the Imamate of Imam Ali (A). 'Ali ibn Babiwayh established the facts for him in this debates, and this discussion led Muhammad ibn Muqatil to convert to Shi'i Islam[50].

'Ali ibn Babiwayh's writings

Ibn Babiwayh was a scholar who had many written works. Ibn Nadim has seen a manuscript of Shaykh Saduq (Ibn Babiwayh's son) in which he had granted permission to someone to quote a hundred pieces of his father's books[51].

Najashi mentioned his books like: Al-Wudhu', Al-Salat, Al-Jana'iz, Nawadir Kitab al- Mantiq, Kitab al-Ikhwan, Kitab al-Nisa' wa al-Wildan, Kitab al- Sharai' which he sent to his son, Kitab al-Tafsir, Kitab al-Nikah, Kitab Manasik al-Hajj, Kitab Qurb al-Asnad, Kitab al-Taslim, Kitab al-Tib, Kitab al-Mawarith and Kitab al-Mi'raj.[52]

In the book Al-Fihrist, Shaykh Tusi wrote about 'Ali ibn Babiwayh:

... He was a great and trustworthy jurist and compiled many books... Muhammad ibn 'Ali (Shaykh Saduq) narrated all his books and his traditions to me, Shaykh Mufid, Husayn ibn 'Ubaydullah al-Ghadha'iri from his father.[53]

'Ali ibn Babiwayh was in the same position as Shaykh Kulayni, Safwani, Tal'ukbari, and Muhammad ibn Quluwayh. He quoted from Shaykh Kulayni's teachers such as Muhammad ibn Yahya al-'Attar, 'Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi, Ahmad ibn Idris al- Ash'ari, and from other individuals such as 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far al-Humayri, the author of Qurb al-Asnad and Sa'd ibn 'Abdullah al-Qumi et al.[54]

His spiritual qualities

Before the age of occultation, ‘Ali ibn Babiwayh lived in the age of Imam Hasan ‘Askari (A) for a while and had a high position before the Imam (A). One of his received honours was a letter that Imam Hasan ‘Askari (A) wrote to him and honored him with some advice. The letter is as follows:

Bimillah. O’ The honorable and my trustworthy one! Oh jurist. Oh Abu al–Hasan ‘Ali ibn al– Husayn Qummi! May God bless you to do praiseworthy deeds in his sight and may God generate from you – out of His mercy – pious children.

I advise you to be wary for sake of God, pray, and give alms –since prayer is not accepted from those who do not give alms.

I also advise you to overlook the others' sins, control your anger, observe bonds of relationship, sympathize with your brothers and to fulfill their needs, either in difficulties or at ease, acquire knowledge, think deeply and understand religion and learn it, and be determined in your duties, take an oath to the Qur’an, be open–hearted, and enjoin the good and to prohibit the evil, because God, the Exalted states: ***“There is no good in much of their secret talks, except him who enjoins charity or what is right or reconciliation between people…”*** (***4: 114***) and to avoid all the evil.

You should perform the midnight prayer, as the Holy Prophet (S) advised Imam ‘Ali (A), saying: "Oh ‘Ali! You should practice the midnight prayer! You should practice the midnight prayer! And you should practice the midnight prayer! Those who consider the midnight prayer trivial are not among us. So put my advice into practice and direct all my Shi‘ites to act accordingly.

You should have patience and expect the deliverance (faraj) [of the Imam (A)] because the Holy Prophet (S) said: “The most preferable deed of my Umma is the expectation of the deliverance.” My Shi‘ites will constantly be in sorrow and grief until my son who the Prophet (S) has promised about, returns, where he said: “He (A) will fill the earth with justice and equity, as it is full of injustice and cruelty.”

Then, Oh great [scholar]! Be patient and direct all of my Shi‘ites to have patience:

“The earth indeed belongs to Allah, and He gives its inheritance to whomever He wishes of His servants, and the outcome will be in favor of the Godwary” (***7: 128***).

May God’s hail, mercy, and blessings be upon you and upon all our Shi‘ites! God is sufficient for us. He is an excellent help, the best master, and the best helper…55

‘Ali ibn Babiwayh had a special position before Imam Mahdi (A). He got in contact with Husayn ibn Ruh Nawbakhti, the third deputy of Imam, in Iraq and wrote a letter to Imam Mahdi (A) asking him to pray to grant ibn Babiwayh children. The Imam (A) responded, saying: “I asked God and He shall give you two sons.” After a while, God granted ‘Ali ibn Babiwayh two sons who became great jurists. One of them

was Shaykh Saduq. Thus, Shaykh Saduq felt proud of the grace of his birth and used to say: “I was born by blessings of Imam of the age (A).”56

The day when ‘Ali ibn Babiwayh passed away in Qum in 329 A.H, ‘Ali ibn Muhammad Saymuri, the forth deputy of Imam (A), was sitting with a group of people in a meeting in Iraq. Then he suddenly turned to them and informed them of the passing of ‘Ali ibn Babiwayh. They recorded the time of his passing and 17 or 18 days later, they received news from Qum that he had passed away right in the recorded time.57

Ibn Babiwayh originated a lineage of scholars whose members were well-known until the late six century, and the last scholar of this family, Muntakhab al-Din had the same nickname and name of Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Babiwayh. Bahrani has written biographies of the members of this family in Fihrist of the Buyid wa ‘Ulama al-Bahrain.58

1. Cf. Iqbal, ‘Abbas, Nawbakhti Dynasty, pp. 116-123.
2. Cf. Muhammad Sadr, Tarikh Al-Ghaybah al-Sughra, p. 372.
3. Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Husayn Mas‘udi, Al-Tanbih wal Ishraf, pp. 317- 318.
4. Mas‘udi, Murawwij al-Dhahab, vol. 5, p. 126; Al-Tanbih wal Ishraf, p. 318.
5. Muhammad Javad Mashkur, Farhang-e Feraq-e Islami, pp. 292- 294; cf. Sayyid Ahmad Khezri, History of ‘Abbasids Caliphate from the Beginning to the End of Buyid Dynasty, p. 115.
6. Muhammad Javad Mashkur, ibid. p. 358; cf. Jalal al-Din Suyuti, Tarikh al-Khulafa’, p. 416.
7. Suyuti, op cit. p. 413; actually this number seems to be exaggerated.
8. Cf. Abu al-Qasim Sahab, The Lives of ‘Askariyayn (A): Imam ‘Ali al-Naqi (A) and Imam Hasan ‘Askari (A), p. 101; and Sayyid Ahmad Reza Khedri, op cit. p. 115.
9. Muhammad Sadr, A Research in the life of Imam Mahdi (AJ) and an Approach to the History of Minor Occultation, pp. 202-203.
10. Jasim Husayn, ibid. p. 145.
11. To know more about the events of Mu‘tamid's time, refer to Tabari’s History, vol. 9, continue after page 474; ‘Iz al-Din ibn Athir, Al-Kamil [fi Tarikh], vol. 4, pp. 429- 559; Mas‘udi, Murawwij al-Dhahab, vol. 5, pp. 107- 136; Ya‘qubi History, vol. 2, pp. 541- 546; ‘Aziz al-Allah Bayat, History of Iran from the Advent of Islam to Deylamites' time, p. 134; ‘Ali Akbar Fayyaz, History of Islam, pp. 229- 230.
12. Tarikh-e Tabari, vol. 10, p. 30.
13. Hasan Pirniya, ‘Abbas Iqbal, History of Iran, the chapter(s) of History of Islam, p. 211.
14. Al-Kamil [fi Tarikh], vol. 4, pp. 592-594.
15. Dissimulation of one's belief in the event of danger.
16. Tarikh-e Tabari, vol. 10, pp. 54- 62.
17. Cited from Jasim Husayn, ibid. p. 146.
18. Cf. Tabarsi, op cit. p. 63; and Fayyaz, op cit. p. 231.
19. Qarmatah, the founder of the Karmatians, whose name and origin were matters of dispute is mostly known as Hamdan al-Ash‘ath. It is said that he was nicknamed by the mentioned name because he was short and walked stepping his feet near each other. This sect is a branch of the Isma’ilites which emerged around 280 AH. Among the Da‘is or missionaries of this sect are Zakaruyah ibn Mahruyah and Abu Sa‘id Janabi.

The Karmatians believed that Muhammad ibn Isma‘il was the seventh Imam and the Lord of the Time. They believed in rising with swords and killing their opponents from other Islamic sects. To go on pilgrimage, to kiss the stone of the Kaaba, and to have faith in the external aspects of religion were prohibited in their sect. As for religious law, they believed in special type of interpretation and their motto (like the Isma’ilites) was the white flag (On this subject, refer to Ibn Khaldun, Al-‘Ibar Tarikh Ibn Khaldun, vol. 3, p. 14.).

When the first Isma'ilite Da'is settled in Ahwaz and began their Isma'ilite mission (eg. da'wa or invitation) to summon for the Imamate of Muhammad ibn Isma'il and his descendants, they sent one of their missionaries, named Husayn Ahwazi, to the rural district of Kufa. There, he met a man named Hamdan ibn al-Ash'ath known as Qarmat. Hamdan soon responded to the Batinis' invitation and helped him with this cause. He put such an effort into this work that Husayn Ahwazi left his da'wah activities to him in the rural district of Kufa.

Then he chose "Kilwaza", a suburb in Baghdad, as the centre of his da'wah which was spread and responded in 276 AH so quickly that he engaged in buying weapons and forming an army. They soon began bloodshed and killing of their opponents, and struck utter terror in the hearts of Iraqi Muslims.

Fearing their lives, many people responded to their call. In 277 AH, Iraqi Karmatians built a great castle named "Dar al-Hijrah" for their own in the suburb of Kufa. Thereafter, Hamdan proceeded to make financial regulations and social rules expedient on his citizens and obligated everyone to buy their own weapons. Hamdan's son-in-law, named 'Abdan Katib, was one of his adroit da'is. In around 280 AH, a disagreement occurred between Hamdan and 'Abdan with the Isma'ilite centre of mission in Ahwaz.

Consequently, a new sect by the name of Karmatian was formed (cf. Mo'in Dictionary, vols. 5 and 6, proper names and places section, under the title of Karmatians and Hamdan al-Ash'ath; and Farhang-e Feraq-e Islami by Muhammad Javad Mashkur, p. 358).

20. The pilgrims of Mecca.
21. Cf. Bayat, op cit. p. 135. On this subject, cf. Khezri, op cit. p.123. Cited from Petroshevski, et al. Islam in Iran, p. 311.
22. The Fatimid caliphs, the 'Ubaydi caliphs, the 'Ubaydite and the 'Alawi caliphs (from 297/909 to 567/1171 AH/AD), were a great dynasty which founded a powerful empire in Egypt, and subsequently expanded it in Syria and a part of Africa. This dynasty was called Fatimid, because its caliphs traced their ancestry to Lady Fatima (A), the daughter of the Prophet (S).

The Idrisids, who also claimed descent from Lady Fatima (A), paved the way for the Fatimids to advance their cause because during their time, numerous da'is influenced the Barbarians (residents of North Africa) and spread Shi'a doctrines among them. When 'Ubaydallah called himself "Mahdi" and gave himself the title of Caliph and Amir al-Mu'minin, these earlier actions facilitated his advance.

In 297 AH/ 909 AD, he eliminated the last vestiges of the Aghlabid rulers and quickly took possession of North Africa except the regions possessed by the Idrisid rulers in Morocco. The Fatimid caliphs are called 'Ubaydid', because of their family relationship to 'Ubaydallah. The son of 'Ubaydallah, named Muhammad ibn 'Ubaydallah, who the Sunnites know as a descendant of 'Ubaydallah ibn Meymun Qaddah and the followers of the Isma'ilites know him as a descendant of Isma'il ibn Ja'far al-Sadiq (A). He is considered to be the original founder of the above-mentioned dynasty.

Half a century later, the Fatimids annexed Egypt and Syria to their territory. In 356 AH/ 969 AD, Jawhar, their commander, took the reign of Egypt from Amir Saghir Akhshidi's hand and built Al-Qahira castle in the Nile valley. This castle became the origin for the present-day city of Cairo. At the same time, South Syria was also conquered and Aleppo was annexed to the Fatimid dominions in 381AH/ 991 AD. During this time, their state was extended from the Syria Desert and Al-'As River to the coasts of Morocco.

The Fatimid capital first was Mahdia city near Tunisia, and was then transferred to Cairo. Though this resulted in losing possession of their western dominions, the Fatimids held the power in Egypt and Syria for years and extended their range of wealth and trade to domains on the sides of Mediterranean Sea. The Fatimid dynasty of Egypt was overthrown by Salah-al-Din Ayyubi in 567 AH/ 1171 AD (Mo'in Dictionary, vol. 6, p. 1298, the entry of the Fatimids in proper names and places section).

23. Mas'udi, Al-Tanbih wal Ishraf, p. 328.
24. Cf. ibid. p. 327, and 'Azizullah Bayat, ibid, p. 135- 136 and 137; cf. Fayyaz, ibid, p. 232. Bani Hamdan, the family of Hamdan, belonged to the Taghlab tribe, who lived in some region neighboring Mosul. In 260 AH/ 873 AD, Hamdan ibn

Hamdun, their grandfather was greatly influential in political events that occurred in Mosul, in 281 AH/ 894 AD. Muhammad ibn Hamdan took possession of the city of Mardian though he was exiled by Mu‘tadhid .

In 292 AH, Abu al-Hayja Abdullah ibn Hamdan was appointed to rule Mosul and its suburbs. From this date on, the Hamdanids had a great period of prosperity. The Hamdanid rulers were Shi‘ite and respected Sayf al-Dawla, the Egyptian Fatimid caliph. They ruled until 369 AH/ 979 AD (Mo‘in Dictionary, vol. 5, under the entry Hamdanids). It is said that in 234 AH/ 935 AD after a long period of conflict with his paternal uncles, Abu al-Hayja's son named Hasan ibn Abdullah ibn Hamdan (Nasir al-Dawla) was issued to the ruling on Mosul and Jazira (the Bakr, Rabi‘a, and Mudhir territories) by the order of the caliph al-Radhi and his brother ‘Ali (Sayf al-Dawla) also assisted him in protecting these territories.

Taking his seat of power in Jazira, Nasir al-Dawla rose to support Amir al-Umara Ibn Ra‘iq and the caliph al-Muttaqi in opposition to Baridids of Basra. He finally killed Ibn Ra‘iq, and in 330 AH/ 942 AD, seized his office. He ruled for about a year, until a man named Tuzun raised in rebellion. Nasir al-Dawla withdrew to his capital in Mosul and attempted to support al-Muttaqi, but after a while submitted to it. Mu‘iz al-Dawla imposed his power on the Hamdanids who were insubordinate peasants. Finally, Nasir al-Dawla was withdrawn from the caliphate by his sons and two years later died (Joel, Corms, Cultural Revival in the time of Buyid Family, p. 138).

25. Fayyaz, ibid. p. 233.
26. Shaykh Tusi, Al-Ghayba, p. 244; cf. Tarjomat ul-Ghayba, Muhammad Razi, "The Blessed Gift in the Signs of the Promised Mahdi (A)", p. 283.
27. Shaykh Tusi, ibid. p. 243; and Shaykh Hurr ‘Amili, Wasa’il al-Shi‘a, vol. 18, ch. 11, sections on The Attributes of Judges, hadith no. 4.
28. Abu al-Fida’, ‘Imad al-Din Isma‘il, Al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbar al-Bashar, vol. 2, p. 69; and Shaykh Tusi, Al-Ghayba, p. 192.
29. Shaykh Tusi, Al-Ghayba, pp. 294- 296.
30. Ibid.
31. Cf. Shaykh Saduq, Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni‘ma, p. 498; Jasim Husayn, ibid. p. 175.
32. Cf. Shaykh Tusi, Al-Fihrist, p. 189; his biography, cf. Mamaqani, Tanqih al- Maqal, vol. 3, p. 149.
33. Tabari, vol. 3, pp. 57, 18, 1857, 2024 and 2109; cited from Jasim Husayn, op cit. p. 175.
34. The rebellion of Zanzibari slaves occurred between 255 and 270 AH. An Iranian man named ‘Ali ibn Muhammad from Warzanayn led this sedition. He claimed descent from ‘Ali (A) and at the beginning introduced himself as the spiritual leader and officially declared his Azariqites belief (a branch of Kharijites). Soon he sought protection from the slaves and promised them freedom, plunder, and robbery. He occupied the outskirts of Basra, including the lower grounds of the Karun valley. Thousands of African slaves and a large number of the Bedouins joined together under his flag.

The caliphate armies were defeated many times by him, until Basra was conquered by the Zanzibaris. They plundered and massacred until they left Basra and scattered along the Persian Gulf on the north and the south coasts and after occupying Wasit, pillaged Ahwaz. The caliph Muwaffaq could not invest in all his efforts to suppress this rebellion until the death of Ya‘qub. But he finally gathered a huge army and dispatched to repel the Zanzibaris.

Consequently, these rebels surrendered in the swamp area and their leader was killed after fifteen years of bloodshed and the rebellion was put down (Mu‘in Dictionary, vol. 5, under the entry of Zanj).

35. Isma’ilite is a sect of Twelver Shi‘ism, which branched as a result of a difference over the imamate of Isma‘il ibn Ja‘far al-Sadiq (A) and his brother Musa ibn Ja‘far (A). Those who maintain that imamate must be kept in the family of Isma‘il are known as Isma’ilites or Batinis.

They believe that after the departure of Imam Ja‘far (A), since his son Isma‘il died before his father, the imamate was passed to Muhammad ibn Isma‘il, who is (ending to seven) and seventh era ends at him and after him, imamate remains in his family; the succeeding imams after Muhammad split into two groups: one group were hidden imams who went undercover around the city, while their da‘is were openly promoting their invitations.

After the hidden imams, it was the time of ‘Ubaydullah Mahdi, who manifested his invitation and after him. His descendants were imams, one by one and [they believed] everyone who dies while he is in opposition to them, "has died in ignorance of being like pre- Islamic atheists". Among the da‘is who were actively promoting the Isma‘ili faith and establishing the foundations of this sect during the Imam's (A) occultation, there was Maymun ibn Daysan known as Qaddah.

He and his descendants engaged in activities in Khuzestan, Iraq, and Syria for a while and their da‘is were active in extending the Isma‘ili invitation. Among these da‘is, was Abu ‘Abdullah Hasan ibn Ahmad, known as Abu ‘Abdullah Shi‘i who gained great power in the western cities and overthrew the Aghlabid government in that region. In doing so, he freed ‘Ubaydullah Mahdi, who was imprisoned in Saljamasa and believed that he is the same anticipated Mahdi from the family of ‘Ali (A), and that the Imamate belongs to him. Accordingly, the Fatimid government was formed in North Africa (297 AH).

The Fatimid invitation was quickly extended to Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Palestine, Iran, and North Africa (on this subject, cf. Ibn Khaldun, Al-‘Ibar, Ibn Khaldun History, vol. 3, p. 13).

The Isma’ilites observed some stages in their mission and their da‘is were entitled based on their ranks. The highest rank of the believers of this sect was known as "Hujjat". Only a limited number of da‘is from among them could hold this rank. Among Iranian da‘is, Nasir Khusrow and Hasan Sabbah had this rank. For each of their imams, Isma’ilite da‘is assigned twelve Hujjats who were spreading the invitation in twelve districts and in their invitation, they believed the numbers of seven and twelve to be important.

For all of the da‘is, there was a head named da‘i-al-du‘at who had office in the caliphate government. The Isma’ilites believed that there are hidden aspects behind superficial appearance, of which only imams are aware, and one must learn them through him or through those who have been taught by him. This led this group to direct their attention from outward aspects of religion to inward and esoteric aspects. (Mu‘in Dictionary, vol. 5, under the entry of Isma’ilite, and for further information: cf. Farhang-e Feraq-e Islami, p. 47).

36. Tabari, Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk, vol. 8, p. 159; cf. Jasim Husayn, ibid. p. 177.
37. ‘Ali ibn Isma‘il Ash‘ari, Maqalat Islamiyayn, p. 85; cited from Jasim Husayn, ibid.
38. Cf. Shaykh Saduq, Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni‘mah, pp. 483- 485; cf. Jasim Husayn, op cit. p. 178.
39. Shaykh Tusi, Al-Fihrist, p. 327.
40. Ibn Athir, Al-Kamil, Beirut, vol. 4, p. 577.
41. Cf. Muhammad ibn Ya‘qub Kulayni, Al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 525; Jasim Husayn, op cite. p. 179.
42. Shaykh Tusi, Al-Ghayba, p. 255.
43. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Maskuya, Tajarib al-Umam, vol. 1 (from four volumes), p. 137; Jasim Husayn, p. 199.
44. Cf. Al-Ghayba, p. 200; Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn ‘Uthman Dhahabi, Tarikh al-Islam wa Mashahir al-A‘lam, vols. 1- 4, footnote 132a, cited ibid.
45. Jasim Husayn, ibid. p. 182.
46. Najashi, Rijal, p. 261; Shaykh Tusi, Al-Fihrist, p. 219.
47. Mirza Muhammad Baqir Musavi Khunsari, Rawzat al-Jannat, vol. 4, p. 275.
48. Shaykh Tusi, Al-Ghayba, p. 318.
49. The Encyclopedia of Islamica (Farsi version), vol. 3, p. 61.
50. Khunsari, Rawzat al-Jannat, vol. 4, p. 274.
51. The Grand Islamic Encyclopedia, ibid.
52. Rijal Najashi, p. 261; cf. Shaykh Tusi, Al-Fihrist, p. 219.
53. Shaykh Tusi, Al-Fihrist, p. 218.
54. Khunsari, ibid. vol. 4, p. 278.
55. Mirza ‘Abdullah Afandi Isfihani, Riyaz al-‘Ulama’ wa Hiyaz al-Fu
56. Op cit. cf. Tohfih Qudsi, (translation of Al-Ghayba), p. 255.
57. The Encyclopedia of Islamica (Farsi version), vol. 3, p. 61.
58. Ibid.

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