THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF LEGITIMIST SHI‘ISM
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ROLE OF THE
IMAM JA‘FAR AL-ṢADIQ

by

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This study is an attempt to trace out and recon­struct those earliest tendencies and ideas which result­ed in the sectarian consolidation of legitimist Shi‘ism in Islam.

The thesis is divided into five chapters, dealing in sequence with the events which took place from the death of the Prophet till the time of the Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq. From these events have been elucidated those aspects which link up the Shi‘ite ideas to form an unbroken chain.

In the first chapter it has been shown that the Shi‘ite tendency in its rudimentary form started immediately after the death of the Prophet, mainly on religious grounds, and manifested itself in the Saqīfa. During the wide-spread discontent which prevailed in the reign of ‘Uthmān, religious Shi‘ism also embraced a large political following, but the original Shi‘a maintained the religious nature of their partisanship for ‘Ali in distinction from his political supporters.

The second chapter explains the ideas and activities of that small group of the Shi‘ites who, in spite of al-Hasan’s abdication in favour of Mu‘āwiya, remained persistent in their religious feeling regarding the leadership of the community. In part B of this chapter the tragedy of Karbala has been studied at length and the Shi‘ite’s ideas and viewpoint have been elucidated from the speeches and rajaz material pronounced by the companions of Husayn. After Karbala the Tawwābūn move­ment was another step further in Shi‘ite sectarian tendency.
Chapter three deals with the split among the Shi'ites after the death of Husayn and the emergence of the legitimist Shi'ite faction who gathered round Zayn al-‘Abidin. Muhammad al-Baqir further advanced legitimist claims within the Shi'ite movement.

The fourth chapter surveys that religio-political background which provided Ja'far al-Ṣādiq a propitious time to establish a firmly legitimist branch of the Shi'ites.

The last chapter examines the theory of the Imāmate expounded by the Imām Ja‘far and his circle. In part B of this chapter, an attempt has been made to examine the personalities of some of the most important adherents of Ja‘far who are frequently cited as the authoritative source of the legitimist Shi'ite dogmas and legal practices.

On the whole the thesis suggests that Shi'ism was originally a religious and not a political movement, and that the legitimist faction never ceased to make its existence felt among the different groups of the early Shi'ites.
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ABBREVIATIONS

BM - British Museum.
BN - Bibliotheque Nationale (Paris).
BSOAS - Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.
EI (Sh) - Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, Ed. by Gibb and Kramers, 1953.
JRL - John Rylands Library, (Manchester).
JRAS - Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
REI - Revue des Etudes Islamiques.
RSO - Rivista degli Studi Orientali.
SOAS - School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.
ZDMG - Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.

Note: Abbreviations used for books are given in the bibliography.
Chapter I

A. THE BEGINNING OF SHI‘ISM

The beginning of the disagreement which gave rise to the term Shi‘a, leaving aside any question of the latter’s origins and sources, whether Arabian or Persian as suggested by a number of scholars, is to be found as far back as the death of the Prophet. Hardly had the founder closed his eyes for the last time when the first open clash among his followers broke out over the leadership of the community. The

1. The word Shi‘a in this chapter is used strictly in its literal meaning as party, group, associates or in a rather looser sense the 'supporters'; and not in its applied meaning as a particular religious designation for the followers of ‘Ali and the people of his House as a 'Sect' against the 'Sunni'. In the latter elaborate meaning the word Shi‘a was used quite late. However, for the etymology of the word Shi‘a see Tāj al ‘Arūs, V.405. Lane, Lexicon, IV, 1632-1633. Sale, Translation of the Qur‘ān, 277-279-302. The word occurs a number of times in the Qur‘ān with rather varied and unprecise meaning; e.g., XIX, 69. XXVIII, 4-15. XXX, 32. XXXIV, 54. XXXVII, 83 and LIV, 51.

vital question of a successor for Muhammad quickly revived the old inter-tribal jealousies and revealed the temporary nature of the unity that had been achieved. The rise of this question of succession marks the beginning of the most radical and long continued division in Islam. The stage where this first conflict among the Muslims was manifested was the 'Saqîfa Bani Sā‘ida, a meeting place in al-Madīna for deciding crucial issues. What happened in Saqîfa at that critical moment sowed the seeds of bitter feelings which resulted, in due course of time, in the everlasting schism of the community.

Therefore, when it is intended to investigate the very beginning and root of the Shi‘ite 'feelings' in Islam one has to go in detail to the earliest possible incident which originated its first cause. The history of a people in every branch, be it political, cultural, religious or constitutional, is an unbroken continuity. No religious or political organisation or a sectarian development can be fully understood without due reference to the earliest point from which it was germinated. The 'Event of Saqîfa' is inextricably connected with the conception of Shi‘ite tendency and, therefore, to ignore it in tracing out the causes and origin of the later development of Shi‘ite sectarianism in Islam would certainly lead to misunderstanding.
and wrong conclusions. Thus it seems imperative to look into the proceedings of the Saqīfa and try to ascertain the points which ultimately found expression in determining the Shi‘ite discipline in Islam.

But, before we try to draw an outline of the Saqīfa a characteristic historiographical problem has to be seriously faced. One can well question the authenticity of the reports in ascertaining the exact details of what happened in the selection of the first successor to the Prophet. No doubt the controversial character of the subject itself and the difficulty inherent in the source material makes the task of this investigation far from easy. This doubt becomes still more serious when we note that the earliest report on the event extant to us was written down not before the first half of the second century.

1. Some of the scholars try to trace out Shi‘ite origin from the Umayyad period or more precisely from the conflict between ‘Ali and Mu‘awiya when the latter resisted the title of the former: e.g. Hodgson, The Order of the Assassins, p. 3, and Watt, Islam and its Integration of Society, p. 104. I find it rather difficult to agree with this approach. My study of the sources leads me to suggest that the origin and beginning of Shi‘ite 'feeling' should be sought from the Saqīfa event; and that the inclination of some of the companions of the Prophet towards ‘Ali at this occasion had its roots in a number of events which took place during the lifetime of the Prophet which led them to consider ‘Ali as the best candidate after Muhammad. We shall see those guiding events in brief in this chapter in order to have a clear picture of the origin of the Shi‘ite idea in Islam. It does not necessarily exclude other social, political and economic factors which crept in and mixed together in the later years of the Shi‘ite sectarian consolidation.
and during the reign of the first two 'Abbāsid Caliphs. This was the time when the division of the Muslim community into Shī‘ite and Sunnite denominations had set deep in the hearts, and both camps were accusing each other for their contrary affiliations. In these circumstances it seems quite possible that the different reports describing the proceedings of Abū Bakr's election would have been circulated from different quarters in their respective interests. One can also suspect the reports of the historians of Shī‘ite sympathies like that of Ibn Ishāq, al Ya‘qūbī and Mas‘ūdī as being biased in Shī‘ite favour; and similarly the writings of Ibn Sa‘d, al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī as reporting in orthodox colour. Nevertheless, a close scrutiny of all the early sources named above shows that the 'event', at least in its broad outline and essential points, is strikingly close in each source with, of course, some differences in detail. These differences, which certainly show a tendency or inclination of the writer or his informant towards one side or the other, can be discerned, though not without some difficulty.

For a fact finding study of this nature it will often suffice to excerpt and treat the earliest known coherent tradition as a definite source. Now, the position of the sources is this. The earliest work extant, relating the Saqīfa episode, is by Ibn Ishāq (d. 151 AH.). His report though concise and short, gives all the necessary information about the event. The shortness of the report from Ibn Ishāq can be explained, in that his work deals mainly with the life
of the Prophet and he mentioned the Saqīfa episode just as the closing words in connection with the events of the death of Muhammad. Ibn Ishaq's chain of transmitters is direct and short; and based on the authority of persons like ‘Abdullah b. Abī Bakr, al-Zuhrī, ‘Ubaydullah b. ‘Abdullah b. ‘Utba b. Mas‘ūd, ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abbās, ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr, Mālik b. Anas. All the reporters given by him are prefixed with the verb of certainty and personal contact, i.e., 'Haddathānī', "he told me".

The second writer of note in order of time is Ibn Sa‘d (d. 230/845) who, to a great extent ignores Ibn Ishaq and investigates himself from other sources and gives a more detailed picture of the event. He records most of the speeches made on that occasion by different speakers in favour of their candidates. Ibn Sa‘d's interest in details is quite natural as he was more concerned with this period than his predecessor Ibn Ishaq. But Ibn Sa‘d reporting the Saqīfa episode, like Ibn Ishaq, depends wholly on Medina informants, and does not like to use Kufa or Basra sources. His Isnād, though lengthy, are direct and very often go back to a contemporary witness. His honest traditional technique and loyal quotations of the evidences of both parties preclude to a considerable extent any tendentious attempt on his part.

Then comes Ibn Sa‘d's younger contemporary al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892) who goes still further in his investigations and besides incorporating Ibn Sa‘d's material which he invariably quotes with the direct verb 'Haddathānī' (he told me), collects all possible
versions of Saqīfa tradition from divergent sources. He frequently quotes al-Madā‘inī who takes up a kind of middle position between Kufan and Medinan traditionists. He also narrates from Ibn al-Kalbī and Abū Ma‘shar, and thus does not keep up with Medina tradition. The picture, however, given by al-Balādhurī would seem to show that Abū Bakr’s election went rather smoothly, without any noticeable opposition and controversy, and that it was instantly accepted by ‘Ali himself admitting the superior claims and merits of the former over him. Though he does not shrink from recording quite a few traditions favouring the cause of ‘Ali, on the whole his treatment of his material seems to be somewhat tendentious.

These three early writers, however, cover almost every point of view and leave little to be added by their younger successors — al-Ya‘qūbī (d. 284/897), and al-Ṭabarī (d. 311/922). Ya‘qūbī, however, with some additions from some independent sources, depends more on Ibn Sa‘d and al-Ṭabarī, in addition to his own informants, relies basically on Ibn Ishāq. Nevertheless, the details and certain traditions given by al-Ya‘qūbī, which were omitted by his three predecessors,

1. To me the tendency of a writer means only the doctrinal inclination or the attachment of the author himself to a particular school, as Mu‘tazili, Qadari, Shi‘I or ‘Uthmāni; and not as it is often said that all the writers being under ‘Abbāsīd rule gave a distorted and wrong picture of the Umayyads.
are of immense importance and historically cannot be ignored. Specially it is so when we see that these additions of al-Ya‘qūbī are taken and accepted by his successors like that of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Qutayba and many others. It is also interesting to note the sharp contrast between al-Baladhurī and al-Ya‘qūbī in the presentation and the treatment of their materials regarding the Saqīfa. We may well ignore Masʿūdī (d.344/956) who mentions the Saqīfa in passing and Ibn Athīr (d.630/1234) who only follows what Ṭabarī has recorded. Among later Sunnī writers, for example, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, depends completely on al-Ya‘qūbī and thus on Ibn Saʿd; and the later Shi‘ite writers like al-Mājlisī (d.1700 A.D.) who gives a very picturesque version in the favour of the Shi‘a, carry no historical value at all.

In this historiographical complexity, however, what best we can do is to take as a basis Ibn Iṣḥāq whose work reached us in the recension of Ibn Ḥishām (d.218), a die-hard orthodox himself and comparatively earlier than any other writer mentioned above. We frequently discover in the pages of the 'Sīrah' that Ibn Ḥishām never hesitates in his task of editing Ibn Iṣḥāq's work to correct or comment on anything with which he disagrees and often inserts some additional information he thinks was omitted by the author. But we do not find any assertion or comment by Ibn Ḥishām as far as the Saqīfa tradition goes in the 'Sīrah'. This leads us to

1. A. Guillaume, translating the Sīrah, collected all assertions and comments of Ibn Ḥishām in one unit and put them collectively at the end of the book, under the heading "Ibn Ḥishām's Notes". There are 922 notes of various length, some of them are short and some as long as covering about a page or even more. See, A. Guillaume, The Life of Muhammad, 690-798.
suppose that the tradition of Saqīfa in the 'Sīrah' is a unanimous testimony by a writer of Shi‘ite learning and an editor-critic of orthodox Sunnite belief. For other necessary details left by Ibn Ishaq we should draw from Ibn Sa‘d and compare it with al-Balādhurī, Ya‘qūbī and Ţabarī. If a given report is found common in all these four works and also stands our own judgement and criticism then it should be accepted, otherwise it must be rejected.¹ In this way a most careful version of the eventful election of Abū Bakr is as follows.

1. Nevertheless, when we read Ibn al-Nadīm's and Tūsī's Fihrist and Najāshī's K. al-Rijadi, we come across numerous early writers of the second and third centuries who are said to have written separate books or treatises (Rasā'il) on the Saqīfa which did not come down to us; e.g., all these three early Fihrist works attribute a K. al-Saqīfa to Abū Mikhnaif's authorship and when we read the Saqīfa tradition in Ţabarī, which runs into many pages, we find quite a number of traditions are quoted by Ţabarī on Abū Mikhnaif's authority. This leads us to believe that Abū Mikhnaif must have written something on Saqīfa which reached Ţabarī who recorded it in a usual form 'Qāla Abū Mikhnaif'. Ibn Nadīm also cites many treatises written on the Saqīfa by the circle of the theologians, who gathered round the Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, such as Nu‘mān al-Ahwāl and Highām b. al-Ḥakam. A modern scholar of note, Aghā Buzurg al-Tehrānī, in his voluminous and scholarly work, al-Dhāri‘a Ilā Ta‘āníf al-Shī‘a cites a number of works written down in early centuries on Saqīfa. I, however, could find out only one by Abū Bakr Ahmad b.‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Jawharī, (d. 322), who wrote a book 'Al-Saqīfa' and was incorporated by Ibn Abīl-Hadīd in his Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha Vol.2. pp.44-59.
'The Prophet's corpse, still warm, was lying in his chamber. 'Ali b. Abi Ṭalib, his cousin, ward, son-in-law and a possible candidate from the family of Muhammad and the former priestly clan of Banū Hāshim, along with some other family members, was busy with his funeral rites. The Anṣār of al-Madinah, perhaps afraid of Meccan's domination, hastily assembled in the Saqīfa to elect a chief from among themselves. At the same time some prominent members of the Muhājirūn, Muhammad's followers from Mecca, were holding another meeting to deliberate on the critical situation which now arose regarding the leadership of the community owing to the death of the Prophet. Apparently, all these three groups were unaware of each other's activities. The council of Muhājirūn was, however, interrupted by two informants who rushed and told them what was going on in the Saqīfa.

1. See infra, part B of this chapter.
Hearing that, Abū Bakr, 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and Abū 'Ubaydah b. al-Jarrāḥ rushed to the assembly to prevent any unexpected development. When they reached the scene they saw Sa‘d b. ‘Ubāda sitting on a cushion, with a special turban on his head and an orator speaking in his favour. Sa‘d b. ‘Ubāda was apparently the only candidate of the Ansār, although many of them were inclined to recognise ‘Ali as the rightful successor to the Prophet.

Abū Bakr taking the lead of his party, however, demanded seriously to know what the Ansār were doing. They replied that they wanted to elect an Amir and began to set forth their claims and virtues. On that Abū Bakr said, "We do not deny the Ansār their merits, but the Quraysh take precedence over you; they are the noblest

1. Ibn Hishām, Sirah, II, 259. Baladhurī, Ansāb, I, 581, Tab., I, 1322 f. 1837 f. Ibn Sa‘d and Ya‘qūbī mention in detail the Ansār’s arguments in their favour but do not mention Sa‘d b. ‘Ubāda’s name in particular. I think here we must accept Ibn Ishaq, Baladhurī and Tabarī’s version in favour of Sa‘d b. ‘Ubāda. Also see al-Imāma wa’t-Siyāsah, loc.cit. which mentions Sa‘d’s candidacy and presence in full detail; Ibn Abī’l-Ḥadīd, op.cit. 24 ff. and Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihī, op. cit. 258 f.

2. Ya‘qūbī, Ta’rīkh, II, 103 ff. Tab., I, 1818. Both Tabarī and Ya‘qūbī mention this report repeatedly with different Isnād, whereas Baladhurī does not mention this tradition but states that a number of the companions did not pay homage to Abū Bakr instantly and asked ‘Ali to rise and assert his candidacy. See Ansāb, I, 586 ff. Ibn Sa‘d and Ibn Hishām also do not mention it specially with the name of the Ansār. Under the circumstances of the Ansār I am inclined to accept Ya‘qūbī and Tabarī in this connection.
of all Arabs in descent and are settled in the centre.
So, here are two worthiest men from among them: one
'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, for whom the Prophet prayed, 'O
God confirm his faith;' and the other is Abū 'Ubaydah,
whom the Apostle declared, 'a leader of the people.'
Choose one of them whichever you like and pay homage
to him." But both the men named exclaimed, "Indeed
we will not take advantage of you, for you only were
second to the Apostle of God."1

A critical examination of these proposals and
secondments of each other strongly suggest that Abū
Bakr and 'Umar had formed an alliance long before, possibly
with Abū 'Ubaydah acting as the third of them.2 It
is also probable that the Ansār knew this situation and
thus acted quickly and tried to safeguard their position
against the Muhājirūn.3

1. This account is common to Ibn Highām, Ibn Saʻd,
Balādhurī, Yaʻqūbī and Tabarī all loc.cit. with
some differences in Isnād and wording but with the
same meaning and sense. Also see Ibn Abīl-Hadīdā,
Sharh, II, 24 ff. and Ibn 'Abd Rabihi, 'Iqd al-
Farīd, IV, 257 ff.

2. This observation is strongly strengthened by a
number of traditions recorded by Balādhurī, in
Ansāb I, 579-580, to the effect that immediately
after Muhammad's death, 'Umar and Abū 'Ubaydah
went to Abū Bakr and asked him to accept their
instant allegiance. The same traditions are also
recorded, with different Isnād and wording, by

3. This idea is supported by a number of events which
took place between the Muhājirūn and Ansār especially
in the last two years of Muhammad's life at Medina,
see Ibn Highām, Balādhurī and Tabarī.
However, it was not before a number of hot and bitter arguments and dialogues between the Ansâr and the Muhâjidûn, setting forth their claims and suggesting different prospects were exchanged that 'Umar snatched an opportune moment and swore fealty to Abû Bakr. Abû 'Ubaydah followed his example, and the majority of those present also paid homage to him.¹

There were, however, some of the Ansâr who said, "We will not give our allegiance to any one but 'Ali,"² and one of them, al-Munzir b. Arqam, rose and said, "We cannot fail to appreciate that there is one whose rights none can dispute, if he seeks this authority. And that man is 'Ali b. Abî Ta'lib."³ But this and some other similar voices were lost in the tumult; Sa'd b. 'Ubâda was trampled down by the unruly mob,⁴ and thus Abû Bakr secured the nomination as the successor to the Prophet of God in the assembly hall of the Ansâr.

The task was still far from being complete, however.

The victorious party then came to the mosque where a large crowd of the Muslims from all quarters of al-Madîna rushed to find out what was happening. 'Ali

1. Common to all sources mentioned above.

2. Ṭab., I, 1818. فقالت الانصار أو بعض الانصار لنبأبي الأعلى.

3. Ya'qûbî, II, 103. وان فيهم لرحلا لو طلب هذا الأمر لم ينزعه فيه احد يعني على ابن اي بطلاب.

too, unaware of what had taken place in the Saqīfa, when he heard the tumult from the mosque went there along with those of the Hāshimītes with him in the house; and was joined by his close friends and associates. ‘Umar realising the critical situation immediately proclaimed with his characteristic sternness, "Abū Bakr has been selected the Caliph of the Prophet. Henceforth if anyone shall presume to take upon himself the title of the Caliphate let him suffer death; as well as all who may nominate or uphold him." This measure was instantly adopted by ‘Umar and thus a bar was put to the attempts of any other candidates. He then demanded every one present in the crowded mosque to pay homage to Abū Bakr.¹ The situation seems to have been utterly confused and extremely critical.

Clannish rivalries among Quraysh or the Muhājirūn themselves found it easier to accept the leadership of Abū Bakr — a man of an insignificant branch. They were also very much afraid of the everlasting domination of the Mēdinans in case they should fight among themselves.² The Banū Aws found it much better to submit themselves to a Qurayshite leader than to allow a member of the rival tribe of Banū Khazraj to rule over


2. See many references in Ibn Hīshām, of the conflicts between the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār ensued in Muhammad’s lifetime. Also see, Tab., I, 1683 f.
them. The Banū Khazraj saw their position as far too weak in case of a united front of the Muhājirūn and the Banū Aws - their old rivals in city politics of al-Madina; and found it unwise to lag behind in gaining the favour of the ruling authority which was nearly agreed upon. Thus the result of group politics enabled Abū Bakr to exact the homage of almost all the factions of the infant community. But 'Ali with his close associates and some of the Hāshimites did not comply with the demand of 'Umar and quietly left the mosque. He then, with his supporters and friends assembled in his house and held a council. Abū Bakr and 'Umar, who perhaps were aware of 'Ali's pretentions and the respect he commanded in a certain group of the companions of the Prophet, feared there might be some outbreak on his and his partisans' part, and thus summoned them to the mosque. They refused to come. 'Umar with his cut-and-thrust policy


2. There is hardly need of any proof or reference to demonstrate the rivalry between the Aws and Khazraj.


4. See part B of this chapter.
decided to act promptly before it was too late. He, therefore, with an armed band marched to ‘Ali's house, surrounded it and threatened to set the house on fire if they would not come out and pay homage to the elected Caliph. ‘Ali however, came out and attempted to remonstrate, alleging his own claims; but ‘Umar proclaimed the penalty of death decreed to all who should attempt to claim the leadership. The scene soon grew furious and violent, the scimitars flashed from their scabbards and the band tried to pass on through the gate. Suddenly Fāṭima appeared before them in a furious temper and cried reproachfully, "Before God, I say, either you get out of here at once or, with my hair dishevelled I will make my appeal to God." This made the situation most critical and ‘Umar left the house with his band without achieving his task of getting ‘Ali's allegiance.¹

There were also a number of ‘Ali's partisans among the companions of the Prophet both from the Ānṣār and the Muhājirūn who delayed for some time in accepting the Abū Bakr's succession, insisting that ‘Ali should have been chosen.² They were, however, fain to yield

1. See many versions of this whole tradition in Balādhurī, op.cit., 586. Ya‘qūbī, op.cit., 105. Tab., I, 1818. Abū Bakr Jawhari, in Ibn Abī’l-Hadīd, Sharh, II, 45 and 56. Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihī, al-‘Iqd al-Farīd, IV, 259 f. Abū’l-Fidā', annals, I, 156. Ibn al-Athīr Kāmil, II, 221. al-Imāma wa’ll-Siyāsa, 1, 12-13. The last gives a very detailed version of it, and agrees in outline with al-Ya‘qūbī. Also see L.V. Vaglieri, El (2) art. Fāṭima, who, commenting on these events, says, "Even if they have been expanded by invented details, they are based on fact."

2. Refer to all sources mentioned above; Ya‘qūbī loc. cit. is the best detailed on this point. Also Tab., loc. cit. and al-Imāma wa’ll-Siyāsa, loc.cit.
and gradually one after another were reconciled to the situation and swore allegiance to him. But ‘Ali held himself apart in proud and indignant reserve until the death of Fāṭima which happened after six months.¹ In this way, however, Abū Bakr b. Quḥāfa from the Qurayshite clan of B. Taym succeeded in becoming the first successor to the 'Seal of the Prophet' and messenger of God.

Thus accepting this more probable outline of the fateful event of the Saqīfa we can infer how dissension arose in the Muslim community on account of the question of succession to the Prophet. Who was to be viceregent of Muhammad? Had he, as the Shī‘ite tradition asserts, designated ‘Ali, his son-in-law, the son of his guardian and protector Abū Ṭalib², and the father of his two grandsons? Or, did he expect his successor to be chosen by the leaders of the people in an assembly of some kind? These were questions that rent Islam in twain, that led eventually to civil war, and that, ultimately, furnished the historical setting for the evolution of the doctrine of the Imamate. The task remains to be investigated in this study how the minority party or defeated group after the death of Muhammad organized their sectarian opposition, preserved its entity and developed the doctrine of 'Imāmate', with all its subsequent requirements, as against the principle of election for the leadership of the theocracy. The arguments in Saqīfa put forward by Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and Abū ‘Ubayda for each other's fitness of the Office, which should be accepted as historically of some merit, will help us

in understanding the later theological argumentation from both groups. In fact the arguments advanced by Abū Bakr for ‘Umar and Abū ‘Ubayda, and in return by these two for Abū Bakr - e.g., being the Qurayshite, by virtue of being early converts to Islam, and their long companionship with the Prophet, their services to the cause of Islam and lastly their nearness to and the esteem with which they were held by Muhammad - are of the same nature as ‘Ali before Abū Bakr,¹ and later on his partisans put forward in far greater degree and detail to support his cause.

It would be helpful if we here assume at the outset, founded on our study of the Saqīfa, that the conflict between the supporters of ‘Ali and the victorious majority at this stage was somewhat of the nature of 'WHAT OUGHT TO BE'. and 'WHAT IS DONE IS BINDING'. This 'what ought to be' in course of time created an infallible Imām and the Institution of Imāmate; 'what is done is binding' established a mighty and sweeping caliphate empire, though by necessity on the principle of theocracy, at least in theory.

1. Besides other sources, the unknown author of al-Imāma wa’l-Siyāsa, 1, 10 ff. mentions in detail ‘Ali’s arguments with Abū Bakr for his claims to the Office when the latter asked ‘Ali for the homage. This account can be compared in outline with al-Ya‘qūbī, Ta’rīkh 11, 103 ff.
B. THE FIRST SHI‘A PARTY OF ‘ALI AND ITS FOUNDATIONS

The division of the newly emerged community of Islam has generally been explained in terms of purely political differences, as being simply a matter of partisanship in regard to the leadership of the community on the demise of its Founder. Shi‘ism specially is characterised as merely a political faction of the whole community. This appears to be an oversimplification of a complex situation, and those who thus emphasize the political nature of the Shi‘a controversy in Islam are perhaps accepting too readily a separation between religion and politics in the Arabian society of that day, out of which Islam emerged. Islam in its very birth is both a religious and a political phenomenon as its founder was at once a religious teacher and Prophet as well as a temporal ruler and statesman; and thus the whole Islamic movement as proclaimed by its founder has always been both political and religious. It is political because of the environment and circumstances in which it grew; and religious because of the status Muhammad claimed as the messenger of God appointed and sent by Him to deliver His message to mankind. Likewise, Shi‘ism too in its inherent nature has always been both religious and political, and these co-existing aspects are found side by side throughout its history. It is therefore difficult to speak at any stage of its existence about the political Shi‘a as

distinct from the religious one. On the other hand, when we analyse different possible relations which the political constitution and religious beliefs in Islam bear to one another we find the claims and the doctrinal trends of the supporters of 'Ali more inclined towards religious aspects than the political ones, whereas the upholders of Abū Bakr were bent more towards the political side than the religious one. And thus, it seems paradoxical that the party whose claims in its rudimentary stage were based chiefly on spiritual and religious considerations, as we shall examine in detail presently, should be traditionally named as merely political.

The nature of the support given to 'Ali manifests that the victory of Abū Bakr and his supporters on the 'day of the Porch' was understood, by one group of the closest and most important companions of Muhammad, as a break in the religious and spiritual succession after the Prophet. The manifesto of Abū Bakr's election and the arguments put forward by his opponents, the Ansār, as expressed by the speeches made on both sides in Saqīfa, clearly show that the decision of his appointment was, to a great extent, based on social, political and tribal grounds, partly if not wholly neglecting the spiritual claims on which Muhammad had basically founded

1. See below
2. See the account of the Saqīfa given above in part 'A' of this chapter.
his mission. On the other hand the claims of ‘Ali appeared to be based on the incomparable services he had rendered to Islam, his renowned and perhaps undisputed knowledge in religious matters, the love, special consideration and confidence in which he was held by Muhammad and, lastly on a wide-spread idea of the hereditary sanctity of the clan of Hashim.

To trace the hereditary sanctity attributed to the Banū Hashim by Muslim historians requires a detailed study of pre-Islamic Mecca. Our present work, however, does not allow us to go very deep into details of the religious and political set-up of the Arabian society before the advent of Islam. Nevertheless, a word is necessary to point out that the inclination of some of the Arabs from among the ‘Companions’ was partly a natural corollary of the already existing ideas among the Arabs of the day who combined together constituted Muhammad’s ‘Ummah at al-Madina. In the first place we must necessarily keep in mind that the Muslim community which emerged at Medina under the leadership of Muhammad was not composed of one social background or origin. This ‘Ummah consisted of the Meccans, both from the Quraysh al-Bitaḥ (those who

1. See very many verses in the Qur’ān in which Muhammad declares his being the messenger and the Apostle of God to deliver God’s message to mankind, and purify them, e.g., 11, 99, 151 etc.

2. Veccia Vaglieri, El, (2) art “Ali.”

3. See below.
inhabited the district immediately round the Ka‘ba) and Quraysh al-Zawāhir (those whose quarters were in the outskirts); of Madinans, who were divided into Aws and Khazraj, both tribes of South Arabian stock, still preserving many of the characteristics of their original land; of the desert Arabs and even some of the Arabs and non-Arabs from far off places.\textsuperscript{1} All of them together made a common society under Islam and therefore when we consider a problem common among them we have to take into consideration the different temperaments and inclinations of each group, and not those of one people, group or place. In this way, however, we can presume that the Arabs of different origin and social background understood Islam, at least in its early stage, according to their own social and moral ideas. With this necessary background in mind let us have a glance at the Arabian society in general.

Arab society, both nomadic and sedentary, was organized on a tribal basis, and of all the social bonds, loyalty to the tribe was considered the most important.\textsuperscript{2} Thus the religion\textsuperscript{3} of the Arabs was originally

\begin{enumerate}
\item Like Bilāl of Abyssinia and Salmān of Persia.
\item This is what is called al-Asabiyya - the feeling of mutual loyalty. Most emphatic expressions of this feeling are excessively evident in pre-Islamic poetry.
\item Even the word religion, or the degree in which it was held, cannot be applied equally to all the Arabs who inhabited different parts; to some it was a more strong and deep-rooted phenomenon while to some others it was less important.
\end{enumerate}
the worship of tribal symbols, which later became identified with certain forces of nature, often represented by numerous deities which they used to worship. The tribal deity, symbolized in the sacred stone (Anṣāb), was called the Lord (rabb) of its temple. Thus Allah the supreme deity of the Meccan sanctuary was described as Rabb al Ka‘ba, or Rabb Ḥāḍha al-Bayt.¹ The word Rabb, however, often referred not to the deity but to the person in charge of the tabernacle.

There was no organized priestly hierarchy, but certain clans acted as guardian of the sanctuaries. This guardianship passed from one generation to another, together with the reputation for hereditary sanctity.² This sanctity which had its original source in the magical power attributed to the idol which they served, was strictly connected with the idea of nobility of race (Sharaf) synonymous with "the pride of descent from noble ancestors". The nobility of race being thus hereditary, the priestly clans of long standing represented the highest aristocracy of Arabia. Traces of this sort of aristocracy are to be found in the belief of the Arabs (especially of the South) that members of certain families have a Charisma or spiritual power - Sharaf.³ The guardianship of a sanctuary, a 'House' (Bayt), and 'Honour' (Sharaf) came to be understood as being inseparable.⁴ As

1. The Qur'ān, CVI, 3.
3. R.B. Serjeant, BSOAS, XXI, 10 f.
4. Ibn Durayd, Isht., 173 and 283. Also see R.B.Serjeant, "Ḥaram and Hawtah, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia", in Mélanges Taha Husain, 42 f.
a result priesthood in Arabia was very often combined with tribal headship, even with kingship. We may go even further, by stating that political leadership there was originally of a religious and priestly nature. The South Arabian monarchical institution of the **MUKARRIB** is a clear proof of the office of priest-king who embraces at once religious and temporal authority.

The clans of political rulers could have attained the status of great nobility after first acquiring power by political means, but nevertheless they could not equal the sacerdotal lineages. Thus, for example, the Kings of Kinda ranked only after the four most noble priestly houses.¹

It is apparent that priestly status not only was the foundation of political leadership, but when the latter was attained by men from non-priestly clans, it imposed upon them religious functions. They were also mediators between men and deities. As a result, the idea of tribal leadership and service to the God became synonymous. Those who led the tribe were, of necessity, the guardians of the tribal **Bayt**. They were the 'Ahl al-Bayt',² 'the people of the House' or 'the Bayt of

¹ Ibn Durayd, Isht., 238. Agh., VII, 105 ff. These four houses were: Al-Zurāra b. 'Udās of the Banū Tamīm; Al-Hudhayfa b. Baḍr of the Fazāra tribe, the confederation of the Qays; Al-Madān of the Banū Ḥārith b. Kaʿb in Yaman; and Dhuʾl-Jaddayn b. 'Abdillah b. Humām of the Bani Shaybān. Also see, Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, 'Iqd, III, 331 ff.

² Agh., XX, 42, and XI, 89. Ibn Hishām, Sīrah, I, 112.
such and such a tribe". Together these leading clans formed the noble estate of Arabia: 'the Buyūtāt al-Arab'.

Even later when the meaning of the Ahl al-Bayt became limited to the descendants of the Prophet, the term Buyūtāt al-Arab survived into later centuries in the sense of the tribal aristocracy and nobility.

It is against this background that we have to consider the status of the Banū Hāshim, not only among the people of Mecca but in a wider circle because of their vast contacts with the people of different places through the yearly fair of 'Ukāz and the pilgrimage of the Ka'ba. Some western scholars have sceptically questioned whether the ancestors of Muhammad were really as important in dignity, nobility and influence as the sources suggest or whether their importance has in fact been grossly exaggerated. The basis of this doubt is that the 'Abbāsids were descendants of Hāshim, whereas the rivals whom they ousted, the Umayyads, were the descendants of 'Abd Shams; and that they have been treated unsympathetically by the historians who happened to write under the 'Abbāsid regime; and that because of this reason Hāshim and his sons and grandsons, the ancestors of the 'Abbāsid caliphs, had been given greater prominence in extant histories than they really possessed. This whole hypothesis is, however,

2. A.S. Tritton, El (2) art "Ahl al-Bayt."
3. Ibid. Also see R.B. Serjeant, "Haram and Ḥawtah, The Sacred Enclave in Arabia", in Mélanges Taha Husain, 43 ff and "The Saiyids of Ḥadramawt, (An Inaugural lecture, SOAS, 1957)5f."
naive, and to a great extent open to criticism. Scrutiny of the sources suggests that this has not happened to any appreciable extent, and that there are no grounds for supposing any serious falsification or large scale invention in presenting Muhammad's ancestry.\(^1\)

There is no need to go as far back as Qusayy, father of 'Abd al-Dār and 'Abd Manāf, about whom an unanimous historical testimony is this that he was the unrivaled supreme authority of Mecca both in religious and political matters.\(^2\) After the death of Qusayy, 'Abd al-Dār inherited his father's authority but he died early and his sons were too young effectively to maintain their rights. 'Abd Manāf, the younger son of Qusayy, had been the powerful rival of his elder brother and ultimately concentrated some of the chief offices of his father in his person\(^3\) after the death of 'Abd al-Dār. Eventually the sons of 'Abd Manāf inherited their father's influence; and among them Hāshim, though the youngest, was entrusted with the


3. Azraqī, Akhbar Makkah, 1, 63, states that 'Abd Manāf possessed not only al-Rifāda and al-Siqāya but also Qiyāda, leadership of Mecca. Also, see Ibn Sa‘d, Ṭabaqāt, 1, 74.
most honourable offices, pertaining to the Ka‘ba, of al-Rifāda and al-Siqāya, i.e., providing food and water to the pilgrims. There are no serious grounds to doubt the accounts given by the early tradition that Hāshim achieved a great success and glory in his lifetime by his acts of public welfare and by his splendid hospitality extended to the pilgrims visiting the Sacred House from all parts of Arabia. When Hāshim died he was replaced by his brother al-Muttalib. For a short time, it seems that the fortune of the family, under the leadership of al-Muttalib, was declining, but was soon recovered by Hāshim’s son ‘Abd al-Muttalib who had been brought up in Medina with his mother and was brought to Mecca by his uncle al-Muttalib.

‘Abd al-Muttalib took charge of the family affairs. This is not the place to discuss whether or not the family of Hāshim at that time was as prosperous and influential in Meccan internal affairs as it used to be. The same sources which are too often suspected of being

1. Ibn Hishām, Sīrah, 1, 135 f. Tab., 1, 1089 f. Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqat, 1, 75-80. Azraqī says after ‘Abd Manāf the offices of the Rifāda and Siqāya came to Hāshim and Qiyāda was given to ‘Abd Shams. See, Akhbār Makkah, 1, 63.


3. Ibn Hishām, Sīrah, 1, 137 f. Tab., 1, 1082 f. and 1088. Ibn Sa‘d, 1, 82-83.

4. The other sons of Hāshim died without leaving male posterity and so the term Banū Hāshim and Banū ‘Abd al-Muttalib became synonymous. See Al-Zubayrī, K.al-Ānsāb al-Quraysh, 15 ff.
biased in presenting Muhammad's ancestors in unduly favourable circumstances do not hesitate to tell us that in the beginning of his career 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib faced serious set-backs. But, the grand offices of al-Rifāḍa and al-Siqāya secured for the House of Hāshim a commanding and permanent influence, and we can well assume that by the virtue of these offices a widespread fame abroad must have kept it at least of some regard at home. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib personally, however, seems to be a man of initiative and energy which was necessary to become a man of consequence in the Meccan merchant aristocracy. He greatly enhanced his position by restoring the ancient well of Zamzam. In course of time, however, he became the chief custodian of the Ka‘ba and was also regarded a renowned judge of the customary law. Eventually, because of his being the sole person in charge of the main services pertaining to the most respected sanctuary of the peninsula he became the most or one of the few most prominent figures.

1. Watt, Muhammad at Mecca, 33.


in Mecca.  

After 'Abd al-Mu'ttalib his eldest surviving son Abū Tālib inherited his father's place. True, Abū Tālib did not prove himself of that calibre and energy as his father and grandfathers were, and consequently the family lost much of the power and command in the inner circle of Meccan aristocratic society. Nevertheless, we should not allow ourselves to be confused that the downfall of the family in material aspects should have necessarily at once deprived it in the minds of the people of the memory of their immediate past. The regard for a successor of three or four illustrious generations could not have waned so soon, especially among the people abroad. The sanctuary of the Ka‘ba was of extreme antiquity and was a highly important and popular centre of worship in the peninsula.

1. Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqāt, 1, 85, says — "Wa kāna Sayyid al-Quraysh Hatta Halaka." He was the leader of the Quraysh until his death. Ibn Hishām, Sīrah, 1, 142. says: وشرف في قومه شرف لا يبلله أحد من آباؤه، وأحبه قومه وعظم خطره فهم.  

Tab., 1, 1088. We can, however, infer that because political leadership in Arabia in general was originally considered of priestly nature, Abū Tālib must have enjoyed a widespread political influence too. His concluding a defensive league with the powerful tribe of al-Khuzā‘a and his being the only representative of Mecca at the time of Abrahā‘s abortive attack are pointers towards his considerable influence in political spheres along with his religious prerogatives.

2. Watt, El (2) art "Abū Tālib," and Muhammad at Mecca, 32.
3. Watt, El (2) art "Abū Tālib," and Muhammad at Mecca, 32.
4. The best references can be numerous verses of the Qur‘ān describing the Ka‘ba: e.g. 11, 125-127.
The offices of al-Siqāya and Imārat al-Bayt (Keeper of the Ka‘ba) are taken notice of by the Qur‘ān also.¹ Supplying the pilgrims with water must have been a lucrative job in Mecca where water is so scarce and the water of Zamzam, which soon shared in the sacredness of the sanctuary, was required not only by the yearly pilgrims but also by the huge trade caravans halting at Mecca.² There are many early writers who give us detailed accounts of the universal influence of the Ka‘ba, of the vast contacts of the people of Mecca due to its being a centre for the trade caravans from Yeman in the south, Dūmatu’l-Jandal in the extreme north and from other far off places, and of the ‘Ukāz being the greatest of all the Arabs’ yearly fairs. It is, therefore, natural that the honorific services, attached to the sanctuary, rendered by the House of Hāshim for such a long period, must have extended the family’s fame and prestige to a very wide area as taken home by all the people of far and near who had ever visited Mecca. We can thus conclude that at the time of Muhammad’s emergence, though, his family was at a low ebb in material and political aspects but still had the glory and memory of the longstanding sacerdotal lineage of Hāshim. Psychologically at least, the works and deeds of three generations cannot be washed out from the hearts of the people abroad by the sudden decline in wealth and political influence, of the present generation, at home. They were, however, commonly recognised,

1. The Qur‘ān, IX, 19.
by the Arabs, as guardians of the Temple, the Ahl al-
Bayt of Mecca.¹

It is in this family background that Muhammad
arose claiming to be the messenger of God, and then
strongly and successfully supported his claims as being
the true restorer of the religion of Abraham and Ishmael.²
Abraham was not only acknowledged by the Arabs as their
tribal father³ but was also believed, in popular legend,
to be the founder of the sanctuary of Mecca. This legend
was no Muslim fiction but the popular belief long before
the time of Muhammad. Otherwise, it could not have been
referred to in the Qur'ān as an acknowledged fact;⁴ nor
would certain spots around the pre-Islamic Ka‘ba have
been connected, as we know them to have been, with the
names of Abraham and Ishmael.⁵ Muhammad, however, made
the full use of this popular and deep rooted legend of
Abraham attached with the Ka‘ba to which the Arabs in
general and his four generations in a special prerogative
were so closely connected.

All the facts which have been discussed above, com-
combined together make an inseparable background against
which the problem of succession to Muhammad has to be
considered. Again, we should keep in mind, as has already

1. Ṭab., l, 2786 f.
2. Qur’ān, ll, 136.
3. Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqāt, l, 68.
4. Qur’ān, ll, 126-127.
5. Qur’ān, ll, 125.
been pointed out, that the problem of the succession should not be considered only from the Meccan point of view because the 'Ummah of Muhammad at the time of his death was composed of the people from almost all parts of Arabia with somewhat different approaches, backgrounds and ideas. It is, therefore, natural that different people saw the problem from different angles.

Indeed, the way in which the problem of succession was solved, immediately after the death of the Prophet, had also its roots in the pre-Islamic customs of Arabia. The Caliphate was understood to combine both political and religious leadership (Imāma). Such combinations were well known to the Arabs, but of course with different degrees of emphasis on one or the other.

The majority of the Muslims, who readily accepted Abū Bakr, paid more attention to the political side in accepting the customary procedure of succession to the chieftainship in its new interpretation given by Abū Bakr, and largely disregarded the religious principle and the old idea of the hereditary sanctity of a certain house. This assumption is strongly supported by the statement made by 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb when he said to Ibn al-‘Abbās: "The people do not like having the prophethood and caliphate combined in the Banū Ḥāshim."¹

¹

Tab., 1, 2769 and 2770. We must assume that both Abū Bakr and 'Umar were well aware of the importance which the principle of inherited sanctity held in the Muslim community. At the same time they must have realised that should the election of Abū Bakr be open to doubt, the unity of the 'Umma would be seriously endangered. So, personal feelings apart they had to dissociate the caliphate from the priesthood of the Ka'ba; and thus the statement of 'Umar to Ibn 'Abbās, is a clear expression of this new idea henceforth attached to the caliphate.
There were some other people, specially from other parts of Arabia, who used to think that in Mecca leadership together with priestly prerogatives, were inherited in the clan of 'Abd Manāf by the Hashimites, though after the death of 'Abd al-Mu'ttalib they were overshadowed by the Umayyads in political matters. The victory of Muhammad again brought the Banū Hāshim to power, and this was ultimately recognised by Abū Sufyān, when he surrendered to the Prophet. In the normal, customary turn of events, Muhammad on his death should have been replaced by another Hāshimite to rule the 'Ummah brought into being by Muhammad. And thus, the widespread idea of the inborn holiness of the Banū Hāshim meant, to some of the companions, that the problem of succession to the leadership of the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet was not only political but also based on deep-rooted religious considerations. These were the people, whom we can describe as the more legalistically minded, who could not agree to the interpretation given by Abū Bakr and his supporters, for they understood the leadership of the community as above all a religious office. To them Muhammad was the restorer of the true religion of Abraham and Ishmael, and so in him the hereditary sanctity of his clan attained its highest level. When he died, his successor could only be a man endowed with the same qualities on the principle of hereditary sanctity.

Neither Banū Taym b. Murra, the clan of Abū Bakr, nor Banū 'Adī b. Ka'b, the people of 'Umar, had ever been

1. As we shall see presently that most of the supporters of 'Ali at this first stage were of South Arabian origin.
the recipients of hereditary sanctity, and so to those who laid stress on the religious principle they were not rightful candidates to succeed Muhammad – the Prophet of God and the son of ‘Abd al-Mu’ttalib, Hāshim and ‘Abd Manāf. According to the legitimists, therefore, the candidate could only come from the Banū Hāshim; and among them they could find no one else other than ‘Ali. He, too, was the grandson of ‘Abd al-Mu’ttalib. He was the son of Abū Ṭālib, Muhammad’s uncle, the guardian and protector, who gave him the care and love of a father whom Muhammad had lost before his birth. He was the nearest and closest associate of Muhammad, almost a son, for the Prophet acted as his guardian during the famine of Mecca, and subsequently adopted him as a brother both before the Hijra and again in Medina. He was the first

1. Muhammad’s uncle ‘Abbās could also be a candidate, but as he was only a late-comer to the fold of Islam, and betrayed no particular qualities of character nor rendered any appreciable service to the cause of Islam, there was never any question of his candidature. Moreover, ‘Abbās himself never claimed or proposed himself as successor but supported ‘Ali’s candidature. As ‘Ali’s other three brothers, Ṭālib, the eldest of them, fought at Badr against Muslims, and embraced Islam very late. Ja’far, though an early convert, was killed long before the Prophet’s death. ‘Aqīl also fought at Badr against Muslims and became a convert to Islam during the conquest of Mecca.


3. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, Istī‘āb, 11, 473, and also commentaries of the Qur’an by Tabarī, Ibn Kathīr and Tha‘labī, under the verse 214, ch. XXVI.

man to embrace Islam, Khadija being the first woman. He was also the husband of Fāṭima, the Prophet's only surviving and beloved daughter; and he was the father of the Prophet's two grandsons, al-Hasan and al-Husayn for whom Muhammad's love was profound.

It seems plausible that these inherent personal qualities and virtues of 'Ali secured him a unique and advantageous place over all other family members and companions of Muhammad and earned him a band of friends who were devoted to him with a special zeal and consideration even during the lifetime of the Prophet. Perhaps it is because of this that the Shi'ā claim the existence of Shi'ism even in the lifetime of the Prophet; and the earliest heresiographers, Sa'd al-Ash'arī and al-Nawbakhtī, tell us clearly that the Shi'ism (in the sense of a particular regard and appreciation of 'Ali's personal merits) had already been started in Muhammad's lifetime, probably

1. Ibn-i Hishām, Si̇rah, 1, 245. Ibn Abī’l-Hadīd, Sharh, IV, 116 ff. Also, see L.V. Vaglieti, El, (2) art.: “Ali.”

2. The births of al-Hasan and al-Husayn increased Muhammad's affection for both 'Ali and Fāṭima, and enhanced the position of the boy's father. For Muhammad's love for his children, especially male, was extreme, and having lost his own sons, he showered boundless affection upon his grandsons. (Al-Hasan and al-Husayn were born three and four years after the marriage of 'Ali and Fāṭima, or five and six years after the Hijra. Some authorities assert their birth took in the third and fourth year of Hijra. See Abūl-Faraj Isfahānī, Maqātil, 33 and 54.

from the very beginning of his Medinan period. And then, this idea of ‘Ali's superiority, over all others around Muhammad, was greatly strengthened by a series of events which took place during the Prophet's life in which he showed some special consideration for his cousin and son-in-law. A few of them should be pointed out as important to illustrate this assumption.

1) At the outset of his mission, when the verse "Warn your tribe, the nearest Kinsmen,"¹ was revealed, Muhammad gathered all the Banū 'Abd al-Mu'ttalib and informed them about his mission. Explaining his task he asked them who would volunteer himself to become his minister and deputy to help in furthering the cause. No one, however, came forward but ridiculed him instead, except ‘Ali who volunteered himself enthusiastically and was accepted by the Prophet as his brother, minister and deputy.²

This commonly reported tradition in its inherent nature and the form in which it is presented seems to be a later adjustment and projection based on ‘Ali's early conversion and association with the Prophet and cannot be given any credit. Nevertheless the spirit of the tradition as revealed by its component points can be of some value. When we analyse the tradition three main points are apparent: Muhammad's invitation to his kinsmen for the participation and help in the task he had undertaken; the Qurayshite's refusal, as an example of the

1. The Qur‘ān, XXVI, 214.

2. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Istī'āb II, 473. A.J. Wensinck, Concordance, I, 34. Also see Commentaries of the Qur‘ān by Tabarî, Ibn Kathîr and Tha‘labî under the verse 214. ch., XXVI.
common conservative response to a new idea; and lastly ‘Ali's support and co-operation due to his close association with his guardian Muhammad from his very childhood. All these three points, however, seems to be quite natural, and on these grounds, therefore, early Shi'a found it convenient to put a few words in the mouth of the Prophet to support the cause of ‘Ali.

2) Then comes the matter of the religious brotherhood between ‘Ali and Muhammad. The Prophet adopted ‘Ali as a brother in faith (*Ukhuwwah) both before the Hijra and again in al-Madina.¹

3) Next ‘Ali's position was further elevated in the eyes of the companions when he was appointed by Muhammad as the standard-bearer, both at Badr and Ḧaybar, and in other wars.²

4) The nomination of ‘Ali by the Prophet as the acting head of Medina during the expedition to Tabuk³ was another important record to ‘Ali's credit.⁴ Perhaps later a tradition was added to this occasion that the Prophet said to ‘Ali: "You are to me what Aaron was to Moses except that there will be no Prophet after

1. See Ibn Hishām, Sīrah, 1, 504. Balādhrī, Ansāb, 1, 270, and Ibn ᪦abit, K. al-Muḥabbār, 70–71. For the sake of brevity in references I would keep up with Ibn Ishāq who is repeated by the majority of later writers like Tābarī and others.

2. Ibn Hishām, Sīrah, 1, 613, and 2, 73.

3. In the year AH 9/630 A.D.

5) Yet another very important event was the com-
munication of the chapter of al-Bara'a. First the
Prophet dispatched Abū Bakr to deliver the Sūra to the
people of Mecca. He was on the road to Mecca when sud-
denly the Prophet called ‘Ali and ordered him: "Go
immediately, overtake Abū Bakr and send him back to me,
and you go to Mecca to deliver the message." ‘Ali acted
thus. Abū Bakr in great surprise returned to the prophet
and asked whether anything wrong had transpired concern-
ing him. The Prophet said nothing had happened except
good, but he had been commanded by God that this message
should be delivered either by himself or by a nearest
relative of his. ¹

1. Ibn Hishām, loc.cit. Sa’d al-Ash’arī, Maqālāt, 16.
Nawbakhthī, Fīraq, 19. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, Ḥisti’āb,
ll, 473. Muslim, sahīh, VII, 120. Ibn Hanbal gives
another more emphatic version, see Musnad, 1, 331.
This tradition along with the event of Tabūk has
been recorded by the majority of historians and
traditionists. Furthermore, when we see that
Muhammad was referring to many similarities in
his person and mission with other great Prophets
of the past, we find no difficulty in accepting
this tradition. His comparison of himself with
Moses would have been incomplete without an Aaron,
and obviously no other person in his family context
could serve him as Aaron but ‘Ali.

2. The Qur’ān, ch., IX, also known as Tawba.

3. Ibn Hishām, Sīrah, ll, 545 f. Repeated by the
majority of historians and most of the traditionists
too.
All these events\(^1\) may have been taken by some of the Prophet’s companions as indicative of his inclination towards ‘Ali, though he did not or could not nominate him explicitly perhaps because of the old Arabian practice that a leader should be selected by the people. Thus, we infer that because of the events which took place during the lifetime of the Prophet in favour of ‘Ali, because of the idea that the question of the succession was primarily religious, not merely political, and, because of the popular notion of the hereditary sanctity of the Banū Hāšim, all these factors combined together, made a group of Muhammad’s followers think that ‘Ali was the most suitable person to keep the Covenant intact.

1. There are no serious grounds to doubt the authenticity of these events which have been recorded by the writers of all schools of thought and also seem plausible in their context. But, if we have to be extremely cautious and sceptical, even then we cannot ignore the fact that these events in favour of ‘Ali were so widely in circulation that majority of historians had to record them. In this series of events, however, I have intentionally ignored the famous tradition of Ghadīr al-Khum on which Shi‘a put much stress and is recorded by a number of historians like that of Ya‘qūbī and others. According to Horovitz the oldest evidence of Ghadīr are the verses composed by al-Kumayt, d. 126, and which are proved to be undoubtedly genuine, see, Horovitz, El (1) art, Kumayt. The Shi‘ite sources claim that the oldest evidence is the verses of Ḥassān b. Thābit composed on that occasion. cf. Amīnī, Ghadīr, II, 32. Vaglieri, (El (2) art, Ghadīr Khum) accepting Ya‘qūbī’s report suggests that there was some kind of event at Ghadīr in which Muhammad would have shown some favour to ‘Ali, and that this circumstance provided the Shi‘a a suitable ground on which to weave an elaborate story of ‘Ali’s nomination by the Prophet there.
A commonly suggested obstacle in the way of 'Ali is said to have been his comparatively young age at the time of Muhammad's death. Nevertheless, we hear of the pre-Islamic Mecca that though the Senate House was a council of elders only, al-Azraqi and Ibn Durayd assure us that the sons of the chieftain Qusayy were privileged to be exempt from this age limit. In later times more liberal concessions seem to have been in vogue and we hear, for instance, that Abū Jahl was admitted to the Senate although he was quite young, and Hákim b. Hazam was admitted when he was only fifteen or twenty years old. Furthermore, Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi tells us: "There was no monarchic king over the Arabs of Mecca in the Jāhiliyya. So whenever there was a war, they took ballot among chieftains, and elected one as King, were he a minor or a grown man. Thus on the day of Fījar, it was the turn of the Banū Hashim, and as the result of the ballot al-'Abbās, who was then a mere child, was elected, and they seated him on the shield." Taking into consideration these practices of pre-Islamic times, the mere age factor of 'Ali, it seems, did not mar his credit in the eyes of those who had the ideas of the hereditary sanctity of the Banū Hāshim.

When, however, Medinan requirements or politics took a different course and selected a man who could not

2. Ishtiqāq, 97.
satisfy the ideals set in the mind of a group of the community, this group, though very small, showed its resentment at accepting him. How serious was this opposition or resentment to Abū Bakr before it became reconciled with him is almost impossible to ascertain because the Shi‘ite sources exaggerate it to the extreme whereas the Sunnite sources try to ignore or minimise it as much as possible. Thus according to the Shi‘ite assertions a large number of the Muslims refused to pay the poor tax (Zakāt) to Abū Bakr because they refused to accept him as the successor of the Prophet. The Shi‘ites allege that all those tribes who rebelled against Abū Bakr are conveniently named by the Sunnis as apostates and their movement as the Riddah (apostasy)¹ and that part of the so-called apostates were in reality the sympathizers of ‘Ali and not the denouncers of Medinan rule.²

1. See Riddah movement in Tab., under the year II A.D., which is the best comprehensive account.

2. Prof. B. Lewis very ably observes the real cause of the Riddah movement as follows:

"The refusal of the tribes to recognise the succession of Abū Bakr was in effect not a relapse by converted Muslims to their previous paganism, but the simple and automatic termination of a political contract by the death of one of the parties." The Arabs in History, 51 f.
In this they include the followers of Malik b. Nuwayra, the head of a section of the apostates, who with some other apostate tribes continued to perform prayers and followed the precepts of Islam. They only refused to acknowledge Abū Bakr as the head of the 'Ummah and thus to pay him the poor tax. In fact, this assumption that they rebelled because of their consideration for the family of Muhammad is a projection back into the past on the ground that these apostate tribes helped 'Ali later on at the battles of Camel and Siffin. Thus, it is evident that the story that a part of the Riddah movement was in favour of 'Ali is the result of the wishful thinking of the later Shi'ites to show that the

1. Shi'ite sources even go to the extent of saying with certainty that Abū Dharr had already warned Abū Bakr that if he did not resign the Caliphate in favour of 'Ali a group of the Arabs would apostatize, and that Malik b. Nuwayra spoke harshly to Abū Bakr and even scolded him for depriving 'Ali of his rights. See Tabarsi Ihtijāj, 40-50. We cannot give any importance to these reports. S.D. Khulousy "Shi'ism and its Influence on Arabic Literature", SOAS, thesis 1947, p. 51, very strongly holds that all the Riddah tribes were Shi'a and they apostatized only to support 'Ali. I have found no sources to support this statement.


3. This is very clear from Sa'd al-Ash'arī's Maqālāt, 4, and al-Nawbakhti's Fīraq, 25, when they report that some of the tribes said, "We will not pay the Zakāt to Abū Bakr until we are sure to whom the right of succession belongs." If this report is true it would suggest that these tribes had their doubts about Abū Bakr's rights to the leadership of the community. Yet, whether this doubt was in favour of 'Ali is still not clear.
cause of ‘Ali was so widespread even at that early stage.¹

Historically, however, a definite and clear opposition manifested itself within Medina when a considerable number of the notable Companions upheld ‘Ali’s cause and resented paying homage to Abū Bakr. The names of individual supporters vary in the different sources, but the most commonly accepted are recorded as follows:²

Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yaman,³ Khuzayma b. Thabit Dhu’l-Shahādatayn,⁴

1. Leone Caetani has thoroughly studied the Riddah movement and finds no evidence that the Riddah tribes apostatized to support the cause of ‘Ali. Caetani also observes that in reality only the Arabs of Central Arabia fell away whereas the rest of Arabia was conquered for the first time by Abū Bakr. See, Annali dell’ Islam, 2, II, 85 ff.

2. In the footnotes below, for their biographical references, I have tried to give a short note for each of them to show their position and standing in the community. The list of this group has been presented here mainly from Ya‘qūbī but sources like Ibn Sa’d and Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr are also consulted and are, in most cases, in agreement to that of Ya‘qūbī. II, 105 ff. Another detailed account of the persons who opposed Abū Bakr is given by Ibn Abī’l-Hadīd in Sharh Mahj al-Baladha, 44–58, who quotes "Kitāb al-Saqīfa" of Abū Bakr Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Jawhari as his authority.


4. So called because the Prophet placed his testimony to be worth that of two men. Ibn Sa’d, IV 378 ff.

1. A distinguished companion and the host of Muhammad in Medina until his house was built. Ibn Hishām, Sīrah, 1, 498. Ibn Sa‘d III, 484 ff. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, Isti‘āb, II, 636.


4. Az-Zubayr was the most energetic supporter of ‘Ali, and no doubt sincere in his whole-hearted attitude, it was only later that ambition made him strive for the Caliphate. Ya‘qūbī, II, 105. Ibn Hishām, Sīrah, II, 656. Ibn Abī’l-Hadīd, Sharḥ, II, 56.

5. The young Bara’ and Ubayy b. Ka‘b, Medinan aristocrats, represented pro-‘Ali Ansār. Their loyalties to ‘Ali were stronger than that of their fellow tribesmen. See Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqāt, IV, 364 and III, 498. Also see Ibn Abī’l-Hadīd, Sharḥ, II, 52.


These, however, formed the nucleus of the first ‘Alid party or Shi‘a. It cannot be said that all of them were equally enthusiastic and warm supporters. We may surmise that some of them were lukewarm supporters who recognized ‘Ali’s position as the most worthy for the office of the Caliphate because of his personal merits, but nevertheless paid homage to Abū Bakr without much resentment. The attitude of Salmān al-Fārisī, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, Ammār and al-Miqdād seems to have been a bit different from that of other supporters, for these men are regarded by all the Shi‘a as "the Four Pillars" (al-Arkān al-Arba‘a) who formed the first Shi‘a of ‘Ali. Naturally after ‘Ali’s compromise with Abū Bakr the reason for further opposition on the part of his

1. Abū Dharr b. Jundal al-Ghifārī was one of the earliest followers of Muhammad, an ascetic and extremely devoted to the piety. Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqāt, IV, 219 f. Ya‘qūbī, Ta‘rīkh, II, 105.

2. Ya‘qūbī, Ta‘rīkh, II, 105. He was south Arabian affiliated to the Quraysh and an early convert to Islam. See Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqāt, III, 246.


supporters ceased to exist and this elite of the first Shi'a dwindled away physically. But can ideas, once propagated, ever die out? The later years in the history of the development of Islamic thought provide an answer to this question.
C. THE PERIOD OF SHAYKHAN^1 AND THE PROBLEM OF SHURA

What has been said before in parts A and B of this chapter will suffice to show our view that the beginning of the Shi'ite feelings and inclinations had their basic elements and roots in the old conception of the inborn holiness of the Banū Hāshim, in the special consideration with which 'Ali was held by Muhammad who was, above all, fully conscious of his family's traditionally priestly nature and exalted position, and lastly, in the events which took place during Muhammad's lifetime in favour of 'Ali. These convictions found their first open expression at the episode of the Saqīfa and thus, we may accept that the Saqīfa was the starting point which ultimately developed into Shi'ite Sectarianism. However, after the initial defeat of 'Ali's supporters and 'Ali's own recognition, after six months, of Abū Bakr's administration, circumstances were such that active Shi'ism lost much of its open manifestation. Therefore, the period between the Saqīfa and the Shūra should be taken as a temporary pause in the history of the development of Shi'ism.

Nevertheless, a close scrutiny of the early sources and especially a careful comparison of the Shi'ite and the Sunnite early records give an investigator the feeling

1. Abū Bakr and 'Umar are usually mentioned by this title.

2. See Supra part B of this chapter.
that two different undercurrents were going on throughout this period: (1) 'Ali's passive attitude towards the ruling authorities and (2) Abū Bakr's and 'Umar's constant attempts to displace Banū Hāshim and specially 'Ali from their prerogative claims to the leadership of the community.

The first point can be illustrated by comparing 'Ali's active life during Muhammad's period with his absolutely inactive life in the period immediately following the Prophet's death. We see that 'Ali, who had been, throughout Muhammad's life, the most active and enthusiastic participant in all the enterprises in the cause of Islam and was in the forefront of all the battles fought under Muhammad, suddenly changed to leading a quiet life, almost confined to the four walls of his house. On the one hand, he declined to make use of the whole-hearted military support offered

1. See Veccia Vaglieri, El (2) art. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.'
2. Ibid.
3. For the details of 'Ali's active life in the cause of Islam, during Muhammad's lifetime, at once the best and most reliable work is Ibn Isḥāq's Sirah in the recension of Ibn Hishām.
to him by Abū Sufyān to fight for his rights, for he considered that such action would lead to the destruction of the infant Islam. The character of ‘Ali as presented by both the Sunnite and the Shi‘ite sources suggests that his love, sincerity and loyalty to the cause of Islam was beyond any doubt above personal considerations. On the other hand, the co-operation given by him to the ruling Caliphs appears to be of the same nature as any opposition leader, in our modern times, gives to the ruling party in order to maintain the solidarity, security and integrity of a nation or country and, at the same time, he tries to correct what he regards as the mistakes of the government and criticises the policies from which his party standpoint differs. That was the attitude of ‘Ali. The points of difference between him and Abū Bakr and ‘Umar in religious and political matters are difficult to ascertain because the source material on both sides, Shi‘ite and Sunnite, is extremely tendentious. The earliest Sunnite sources in this connection are Ibn Sa‘d, Balādhrī and Ṭabarī respectively who wrote in the period when the conception of “orthodoxy” with the basic idea of recognising the first four Caliphs as the ’Rāshidūn’ was firmly established. Naturally every effort was made to show as much agreement as possible at least between ‘Ali, 

1. Ṭab., 1, 1827. Balādhrī, *Ansāb*, I, 588. This statement is commonly repeated by the following historians; e.g. Ibn Athir, *Kāmil*, II, 276.

Abū Bakr and 'Umar, though to some extent with the exclusion of 'Uthmān, in religious and political matters. On the other side the Shi‘ite sources give a completely different and extreme view of 'Ali's disagreement, not only with 'Uthmān but also with Abū Bakr and 'Umar, on almost every matter whether religious or political. The extreme nature of these reports from the Shi‘ites and the exaggerated tone and form in which they are presented speak for themselves and made their authenticity more than doubtful and cannot be given any historical value. In short, according to the Sunnite sources 'Ali was a valued counsellor of the Caliphs who preceded him; according to the Shi‘ites he was the person who, dominated by his heroic love and sense of sacrifice for the Faith, and disregarding his personal grievances, saved the Caliphs from committing serious mistakes to which they were often prone and which would otherwise have been suicidal for Islam. These Shi‘ite sources even go to the extent of making 'Umar often declare: "Had there not been 'Ali, 'Umar would have perished." From the individuality of 'Umar's character, however, this sort of statement is altogether impossible to make.

1. Even the reason of the serious differences between 'Ali and 'Uthmān has been put on Marwān, 'Uthmān's notorious secretary; and thus attempts were made to save, as much as possible, the position of 'Uthmān too.

2. See, for example, Majlisi, Bihār VIII, Ţabarṣī, Ḥtiţaj, Mufīd, Irshād, etc.


4. "Law la 'Ali La-halaka 'Umar", see Majlisi, Bihār, VIII, 59, Ţabarṣī, Ḥtiţaj, 1, 103.
result, therefore, is that from these two extreme reports we are quite unable to ascertain the exact points of disagreement between ‘Ali and his first two successful rivals. The truth, however, seems to have been, as Veccia Vaglieri suggests, that ‘Ali was included in the council of the Caliphs, but although it is probable that he was asked for advice on legal matters in view of his excellent knowledge of the Qur’ān and the Sunna, it is extremely doubtful whether his advice was accepted by ‘Umar,” who had been a ruling power even during the Caliphate of Abū Bakr. Further evidence of ‘Ali’s opinions not being taken on religious matters is manifested from the fact that very seldom did his decisions find authority in the later developed "Orthodox" schools of law, whereas ‘Umar’s decisions found common currency among them. On the other hand ‘Ali is a frequently quoted authority on matters of law in all Shi‘ite branches. On political and administrative matters his disagreement with ‘Umar on the question of Diwān and his absence from all the wars fought under ‘Umar can be well cited. Thus without going into further details we can assume, as stated above, that his attitude towards the Caliphate of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar had been somewhat passive and withdrawn.

There now remains the second observation made above

2. For the ‘Ithnā ‘Asharites, see Kulaynī, Usūl al-Kāfī, and Furu‘al-Kāfī; for the Ismā‘ilite, see Qādī Nu ‘mān, Da‘ī‘im al-Islām.
4. Ibid.
to be examined: i.e., Abū Bakr's and 'Umar's attempts to disown the Banū Hāšim in general and 'Ali in particular from his prerogative to the leadership of the community. The first and the most important step in this direction was taken by Abū Bakr on the day following the Prophet's death when Fāṭima came to claim the estate of Fadak. She asserted that this estate was given to her father unconditionally as his share of the spoils of Khaybar. Abū Bakr flatly refused her claim, quoting Muhammad's words: "We (the prophets) do not leave as inheritance, what we make legal alms." He maintained that Fadak belonged to the community as a whole, and that Fāṭima was entitled to the usufruct, but could not hold the right of ownership.

This question of inheritance soon became one of the most debated problems in the conflict between the Shi'ites and their opponents. As a matter of fact, Abū Bakr's refusal was a calculated move of high policy, by which he wished to prove that 'Ali and his family had no claims to any legacy from the Prophet. He thought


2. This tradition is given in many versions slightly differing one from another — see Ibn Sa'd, II, 314 ff. Bukhārī, II, 435. A comparison of these traditions from the Shi'ite point of view is made by 'Amīlī in his A'yān al-Shī'a, II, 461 ff. Also see Ya'qūbī, Taʾrīkh, II, 106.


that to accept the rights of the family of 'Ali to the inheritance of Fadak might be regarded as equal to admitting their rights to the succession of the Prophet in all spheres spiritual as well as material. This fear, perhaps, was based on the ground that Muhammad as the leader of the community was entitled to one fifth of the spoils of war (Khums), and by this special right he became owner of the Fadak. To inherit a property token of exalted position and prerogative was somewhat different from an ordinary inheritance. It is reported that after this event Fāṭima did not speak to either Abū Bakr or 'Umar until she died, which took place after six months, and was buried at night.

The Caliphate of Abū Bakr was short-lived and lasted only for about two years. On his death bed he explicitly appointed 'Umar, "already a ruling power behind him," as his successor. To counteract any possible opposition Abū Bakr summoned 'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Awf and 'Uthmān b. Affān, who were among the early converts and men of consequence in the community, and entrusted them with the charge of wholehearted support for 'Umar.

This, in all probability, must have been on the suggestion of 'Umar himself who designed to counterweigh


any likely opposition of the Banū Hāshim by appealing to this branch of the Quraysh,¹ who in the past had been rivals of the 'Ahl al-Bayt.¹ The emergence of these two companions was very characteristic in many ways, especially for the formulation of the later history of the Caliphate for they represented the wealthiest circles² of the Muslim community. However, 'Abd al-Rahmān was brother-in-law to 'Uthmān and the two men could be expected to uphold one another. The former also had wholehearted support of his kinsman Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās.³ In this way the direct support and also the influence of the most important elements among the Muhājirūn was secured to oppose any possible activity from the Banū Hāshim and the partisans of 'Ali.

However, the dominating personality of 'Umar and his most realistic understanding and grasp of the tides of the time were strong enough not to allow any manifestation of discontent during his reign which was continuously occupied in conquering rich nations and giving the poor Arabs a new zest for life. The occupation of Abū Bakr with quelling the Riddah tribes and of 'Umar in conquering foreign lands, consciously or unconsciously, kept internal feuds at rest. After reigning successfully

1. 'Abd al-Rahmān belongs to the Banū Zuhra and 'Uthmān to the Banū Umayya. Both the tribes were rivals of Banū Hāshim before Islam.

2. For the new classes of the rich which arose during the early times of Islam see Mas‘ūdī, Murūj, II, 222 ff.

3. Also from the Banū Zuhra, and a cousin of 'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Awf.
for about one decade, however, the powerful Caliph met his end by the dagger of a Persian slave and died on 3rd November, A.D. 644.  

The task 'Umar started from the time of the Saqīfa which was to break the theocratic principle of succession, he completed from his death bed. Before his death he appointed a special council to elect his successor. The most startling point is that this consisted only of the Muhājirūn with the complete exclusion of the Ṭanārī. The members of the Shūra were: 'Uthmān, 'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Awf, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās, 'Ali, Zubayr, Ṭalḥa and Abdullah b. 'Umar. It is not intended to repeat the events but it is necessary to recall what has a direct bearing on the development of Shi'ism. It is reported that 'Umar himself laid down the regulations for the council according to which they had to act. The regulations were that (1) the new Caliph should be one of this committee, elected by the majority vote of its members; (2) that in the case of two candidates having equal support the one backed by 'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Awf was to be nominated; (3) that if any member of the council shrank from participating he was to be beheaded instantly; and that when a candidate was duly elected, in the event of one, or two members of

2. Perhaps because of the pro-Ṭalib sympathies of the Ṭanārī and secondly, he wanted to eliminate any possibility of an Ṭanārī being suggested as candidate as well.
the conclave refusing to acknowledge him, this minority, or in the case of equality the group opposed to 'Abd al-Rahmān, were to be slain.¹ To enforce this order 'Umar called in Abū Ťalḥa al-Anṣārī, commanding him to select fifty strong men to stand by.²

There is room for doubt about the report that 'Umar imposed these regulations on the members of the committee. We can only try to assess this kind of report with the help of other possible guiding factors or circumstances. Thus when we compare 'Umar's characteristic sternness dominant in his personality and his cut-and-thrust policies evident throughout his career, with the nature of the regulations said to have been imposed by him on the members of the electorate council, we find it possible to accept them. Secondly, the way all the historians record this story makes it clear that 'Umar was sure that only one of these six Companions³ could become the next Caliph but he was afraid that they would oppose each other in order to take the opportunity for themselves which would result in the destruction of the community.⁴


3. فَقَالَ (عَمَّ) أَلَيْنَ نَظَرَتْ فَوْجَدْ تَكُومُوُسَاءُ النَّاسِ وَثَقِرُوْتُهُمْ وَلَا يَكُونُ هَذَا إِلَّا مَرَارًا فِيكُمْ. See, Tab., I, 2778 and Balādhurī, Ansāb, V, 18.

4. Tab., I, 2778, and 2779.
Thus motivated by his sincerity he laid down such conditions to save the 'Ummah from serious split. Thirdly, these regulations are recorded not only by Ya‘qūbī, Ṭabarī, Dhahabī, but also by al-Balādhurī who is very careful in reporting anything which may harm the personalities of the first two Caliphs. Finally, five different chains of Ḥadīth from whom this report is given include Ṣāḥīḥs of all schools of thought and inclinations.\(^1\) Thus, taking into account all these points we may consider these regulations as being laid down by 'Umar himself.

However, analysing the rules set by 'Umar as mentioned above it can be said that 'Abd al-Rahmān was in fact made the arbiter and the final authority of the whole committee. And, as he was most unlikely to vote against his old friend and brother-in-law,\(^2\) the nomination of 'Uthmān was certain. Moreover, 'Abd al-Rahmān could rely on the support of his cousin Sa‘d. In this way, however, 'Umar gave a final blow to the priestly claims of the Banū Ḥāshim by giving their old rivals, the Banū Umayya\(^3\) a new lease of power.

Brocklemann\(^4\) doubts whether in reality 'Umar appointed the council, which tends to suggest the existence of


3. Naturally Banū Umayya considered it as a golden chance and Abū Sufyān in particular regarded the Caliphate of 'Uthmān as the return of the whole Umayyad clan to power, and he advised them to hold it by all means. See Aghānī, VI, 98–99.

4. History of Islamic Peoples, 63.
"free elections" among the early Muslim community. This seems to be nothing more than a farfetched conjecture which raises more questions than it answers. For it is almost certain that 'Ali, wrongly or rightly, was convinced as to the certainty of his rights, and would never have agreed to make them the subject of debate in a self-instituted council of electors. Also, had there been no superior Will and had the most careful arrangements not been made by the dying Caliph, a great dissension would have broken out immediately. Although both al-Zubayr and Ṭalḥa nourished great ambitions, 'Umar knew full well that only two candidates could be taken seriously, 'Ali and 'Uthmān, each being backed by his own clan, the Hashimites and the Umayyads respectively. At the same time, perhaps, he also knew that 'Ali stood a much better chance than 'Uthmān (because of all those reasons given above in part B). Obviously, 'Umar could not openly deny the rights of 'Ali, and had he not appointed him to the Shūra, he would have left a way open for him to oppose the election of 'Uthmān.

Al-'Abbās is reported to have warned 'Ali not to take part in the Shūra, and that he could reserve freedom of action for himself but, as we have seen it was not possible on account of the provisions made by 'Umar.

1. See 'Umar's conversation with the members of the Shūra in Tab., 1, 2779. Balādhurī, Ansāb, V, 16 and 22.

From the accounts of Balādhurī, who is not always sympathetic to the cause of ’Ali, it appears that ’Ali yielded only under direct pressure, when threatened by force of arms if he declined to abide by ’Umar’s will. When we recall that twelve years before, immediately after the death of the Prophet, ’Ali had protested against the nomination of Abū Bakr, it is not difficult to suppose that he would have been extremely disappointed to see that again, on a third occasion, ’Uthmān was given preference over him.

It is by no means easy to ascertain what exactly happened in the deliberations and debates of the council which resulted in the appointment of ’Uthmān, as our sources are utterly confused and often contradictory. But, in the mass of material handed down to us there is a tradition at once very important and most revealing. It is said that after long debates and wrangling which lasted about three days, when the Muslims gathered in the mosque to hear the decision of the electoral body, ’Abd al-Rahmān b. ’Awf first offered the Caliphate to ’Ali on the condition that he should govern, besides the Qur’ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet, in accordance with the precedent established by the two former Caliphs. Accepting the first two conditions, ’Ali declined to comply with the third, declaring that in all cases respecting which he found no positive law of the Qur’ān or

1. Tab., 1, 2795.

2. See Balādhurī, Ansāb, V, 21-22, also Tab., 1, 2779-2780. Kamīl, III, 35 ff.
decision of the Prophet, he would rely upon his own
judgement. Then ‘Abd al-Rahmān put the same conditions
to ‘Uthmān who readily consented to them\(^1\) — and where­
upon he declared him the Caliph. We shall see presently
that this point was later made the basis of the differ­
ences between the Sunnite’s and the Shī‘ite’s legal
theories and practices, and the Shī‘ites rejected the
decisions of the first three Caliphs.

The authenticity of this commonly reported tradi­
tion has often been questioned by some of the scholars.
The present writer, however, holds strongly, and not
without a good many reasons, that the tradition, in all
probability, is genuine and should be accepted. The tra­
dition bears the testimony of both the Sunnī and the Shī‘a
historians alike and only the Sunnī theologians tried
to ignore it, simply because of the fact it was damaging
to the newly established concept of the Jamā‘a accepting
the first four Caliphs as the Rāshidūn, and their pre­
cepts as precedents for the formulation of the so-called
"Orthodoxy". Apart from this historical evidence the
most convincing reason in support of this view lies in
‘Ali’s own independent nature and in the marked indivi­
duality of his character. If we try to delineate ‘Ali’s

\(^1\) Balādhurī, Ansāb, V, 22. Tab. 1, 2786; more clear
version see on p. 2793 f. Ya‘qūbī Ta‘rīkh, II, 139­
140, says that the same conditions were put before
‘Ali and ‘Uthmān three times by ‘Abd al-Rahmān and
every time the answer was the same, i.e., ‘Ali
rejected the third condition and ‘Uthmān accepted
all conditions without any hesitation. See also
Ibn Abī’l-Hādīd, Sharḥ, I, 188 and 194. Ibn ‘Abd
Rabbīhi, ‘Īqd, IV, 279.
Ali's character from the beginning until his death, the following main characteristics emerge. He was uncompromising in his opinions, straightforward, and above all too stern in his religious outlook. These three features are found to be predominant throughout his career. It is not possible here to go into details of his biography in order to support this view but the following examples can be forcibly cited in support of our assumption of his character. There is his total refusal when he was advised not to expel Mu'awiya and other Umayyad governors until he became firm and strong enough in the capital; his insistence that Hadd punishment should be carried out on 'Abdullah b. 'Umar for the murder of Hurmuzān and also the fact that when all others refused to administer the flogging punishment on Walīd b. 'Uqba, he took on this task himself. Moreover, we cannot deny the fact that there were points of disagreement between him and Abū Bakr. We also know with certainty that he did hold a view entirely opposed to that of 'Umar regarding Divān and recommended the distribution of the entire revenue without holding anything in reserve, which 'Umar did

1. which was obviously one of the reasons of his failure during his own Caliphate.

2. Ţab., 1, 3083 f. Dīnawarī, Akhbār, 151. Masʿūdī, Murūj, II, 240-241. Yaʿqūbī, Taʾrīkh, II, 156. Kamīl, III, 101. The first thing 'Ali did after assuming office was to expel all the governors appointed by 'Uthmān. See details and 'Ali's reply or stand thereon, in Ţab., 1, 3085 f.

3. Balādhurī, Ansāb, V, 24 Ţab., 1, 2796.


5. See El (2) art "'Ali."
not accept. This was not an insignificant difference because it involved so many administrative and financial questions. In addition, there must have been many more points of serious difference. Moreover, al-Minqarī, an important writer on Siffin, who died in 212 AH, preserves for us a letter of Mu‘awiya, which he wrote to ‘Ali accusing him of being responsible for the murder of ‘Uthmān. In this letter, however, among the charges levelled by Mu‘awiya against ‘Ali, is one that he did not even co-operate with Abū Bakr and ‘Umar during their caliphate, and maintained his disagreements with them.¹

‘Abd al-Raḥmān knew these differences full well and at the same time he also knew equally well ‘Ali’s independent and uncompromising nature. Now, at this time, perhaps with the death of the most dominating personalities like Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and Abū‘Ubayda b. al-Jarrāh, it was not so easy to put off ‘Ali without any serious excuse because his possible rivals (or rival in the person of ‘Uthmān) were much inferior to him at least as far as their services to Islam were concerned. Therefore, he put such a condition he was sure ‘Ali’s self-reliance would reject and this would give him the excuse he wanted.

‘Uthmān was a weak man. Apart from considerations of family relationship and personal friendship and also other reasons, ‘Uthmān’s weakness was probably one of the reasons why ‘Abd al-Raḥmān supported him as he was desirous to have a man who would rely on his advice and serve his interest – the interest of the Qurayshite’s

aristocracy and the rich. 'Ali belonged to the poor ascetic-minded class, whereas 'Abd al-Rahmān and other members of the Shūra were all very rich people whose wealth is reported to have run into millions. So, apart from group politics and party partisanship, it was quite natural for them to elect someone who represented their own class.

However, 'Uthmān was proclaimed the third Caliph. Nevertheless, his selection did not go without serious

1. He is often reported to have said "Yā ṣafrā'u wa yā Bayḍā'u ghurri ghayrī," "O, gold and silver try to tempt someone else other than me." Ibn Khaldūn, Muq., 542.


3. 'Uthmān is reported to have left after his death 100,000 Dīnārs and one million Dirhams, and his estates at Wādī al-Qurṣā, Hunayn and other places were estimated to be worth 200,000 Dirhams, in addition to a number of horses and camels. Ibn Khaldūn, Muq., 542. Besides this immense wealth he also combined in himself old nobility of the Umayyads.
opposition\(^1\) from ‘Ali himself and some of his old and ardent partisans. ‘Ammār and Miqādād are reported to have been loud in their protest against the election of ‘Uthmān.\(^2\)

In short, the notable declaration made by ‘Ali declining to follow the precedents established by the two former Caliphs forms the most important and perhaps the earliest theoretical points which ultimately gave rise to the later development of two different and separate divisions of law under the pretext of Shi‘i and Sunni.\(^3\) An exponent of the ‘History of Ideas’ will tell us that it often takes a considerably long time for a given idea to present itself in a complete form. And, we shall see that the idea expressed by ‘Ali in the Shūra took at least fifty years to manifest itself in a distinguishable form.\(^4\)

To conclude this phase, however, we can remark that the selection of ‘Uthmān was very largely based

1. Under the tribal rivalries, we can very well imagine that the Banū Hāshim must have been bitter on the rise of their rivals the Banū Umayya.


4. At the earliest, perhaps, at the time of the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq.
on economic, social and tribal considerations. On the other hand, the protest launched against it, from men like 'Ammār and Miqdād, was very largely based on religious aspirations. The arguments put forward by these supporters of 'Ali were almost the same as were sounded at Saqīfa against the nomination of Abū Bakr, i.e., 'Ali's relationship with the Prophet and his unsurpassed services to Islam.3

1. See in Tab., 1, 2785, the speeches in favour of 'Uthmān made by Ibn Abī Sarh am and Umayyad, and a chief of the clan of Makhtum, a strong ally of the Umayyads.


and the statement of al-Miqdād in op. cit. 2786.

فقال عمار بيا الناس أن الله عز وجل أكرمنا بينه واعزنا بدينه فأثنا تصرفون هذا الأرعن اهل بيت نبيكم.
The period of sixteen years, beginning from the Caliphate of 'Uthmān until the termination of the Caliphate of 'Ali by his assassination, is at once extremely important and hopelessly confused. It is confused because of the fact that the source material is, to a great extent, stamped with the political or religious tendencies of the early writers, and is often contradictory. It is important because firstly, it created an atmosphere which encouraged Shi'ite tendencies to become more evident; secondly, the events which took place gave an active and sometimes violent nature to the hitherto inactive Shi'ite movement. Thirdly, the circumstances which prevailed involved the Shi'ite outlook, for the first time, in a number of political,

1. For example see the great difference between Ṭabarī and Ibn Ṭabīr on the one hand and Yaʿqūbī and Masʿūdī on the other. The first two suppress many events which the last two mention with great emphasis, the story of Abū Dharr can be cited as a good example in this connection which is omitted by both Ṭabarī and Ibn Ṭabīr saying that they do not want to record unpleasant things, but Yaʿqūbī and Masʿūdī record them with full details. I feel that Balādhurī is a well balanced and the best source on this issue who does not suppress any report and, though a die-hard orthodox himself, speaks freely of the misfortune of 'Ammār and Abū Dharr. Another work of 7th century writer Md. 'Īnā Yaḥyā Ibn Ābī Bakr al-ʿAṣhrārī, al-Tambīd waʾl-bayān fi maqtal al-Shāhīd 'Uthmān, has recently been published from Beirut. But it is nothing more than a reproduction of Ṭabarī with few additions clearly biased in favour of 'Uthmān.
geographical and economic considerations. The following pages are intended to show, without going into great detail, that the whole period was one in which the urges of the first Shi'ites to express their ideas on the succession of 'Ali, the religious zeal of the Companions, personal hatreds, provincial and economic interests, political intrigues, and the discontent of the poor against the rich were all mixed together. This confusion, however, not only provided a new sphere of activities for the Shi'ite movement, but also widened its circle for those who wanted an outlet for their political grievances, especially against Mu'awiya who represented the Umayyad aristocracy and Syrian domination. They, accidentally, became supporters of 'Ali and saw in him the champion of the political independence of Iraq, and in this sense accidentally they were, for the time being, of the same mind as the religious supporters of 'Ali who believed in his right to the Caliphate based on the theocratic principle. The emergence of the political Shi'a is characterised both by the increase in its sway and number, and also by the sudden rapid speed with which it grew from now on. In this part, however, we will examine the events which led to the murder of 'Uthmān, the succession of 'Ali, the rising of Mu'awiya, and, ultimately to a clearer view of the "Shi'ite Attitude".

Abū Bakr and 'Umar did not give their respective clansmen any particular share in the rule of the Muslim community, nor were their clans politically of much consequence. It was different with 'Uthmān. His clan
had, after Muhammad's victory, taken second place to the Hashimites, but nevertheless preserved much of their old importance. When 'Uthmān was elected, they regarded it as a triumph for the whole clan, not solely his personal success. Also the Umayyads considered it natural that the Caliph should give them a share of the profits. They were too powerful for 'Uthmān to dare to refuse, and swarmed round him, avid for power and greedy for gold. The weak Caliph, who perhaps thought that his strength lay in the support and goodwill of his clansmen, did what he could to satisfy their appetites. The people were painfully disillusioned when 'Uthmān showed himself inherently disposed to have a special regard for improving the lot of the members of his family and his tribe.

It is a historical fact that within a few years of 'Uthmān's accession the Umayyads claimed among themselves the governorships of all the important provinces.


2. 'Uthmān even made no secret of bestowing favours on his kinsmen and found an excuse for it by saying, "The Prophet used to bestow offices on his kinsmen and I happen to belong to people who are poor. So I let my hands a bit loose in regard to that which I have been entrusted with by virtue of the care that I take of it." See Ṭab., l-2948-49 also see Baladhurī, Anṣāb, V, 25 and 28. Ibn Saʿd, Ṭabaqāt, 3, 64. Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, Ṭidā, IV, 280. Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd, Shark, 1, 196.
of Basra, Kufa, Syria and Egypt. These Umayyad governors in turn relied on the support of their own kinsmen whom they pampered and allowed to dominate the counsels.

What really mattered in this connection more than anything else, however, was not that the Umayyads dominated all positions of power and vantage, but rather the indisputable fact that they were allowed latitude enough to use their powers arbitrarily and unfairly for the benefit of themselves and their kinsmen, and thus incurred the dissatisfaction and hatred of many of the Muslims. 'Abdullāh b. Sa‘d b. Abī Sarḥ, who administered Egypt, was an extremely unpopular man, one whom the prophet during the conquest of Mecca ordered to be


2. See Tab., 1, 2932 ff.


4. See Balādhurī, Ansāb, V, 26 ff. and Ṭab.; and Kāmil from the years 33 to 35.
Al-Walid b. 'Uqba, 'Uthman's half brother, was even more heartily hated by the Kufans whom he treated in brutal fashion. He divided lands among his favourites and finally disgraced himself by drunkenness. 'Uthman was obliged to recall him and appointed another close relative, Sa'id b. al-'As, who infuriated the local notables by his high-handed treatment, and then frightened them by declaring that the Sawad of Kufa would become "a garden of the Quraysh." The result was that a group of the Qur'an Readers, mostly Yamanites such as Malik b. Harith

1. Tab., l, 2871. Baladhuri, Ansab, V, 49. We can however, recall Ibn Abi Sarh's enthusiastic support given to 'Uthman at the occasion of the latter's election in the mosques of the Prophet; and his quarrel with and harsh replies to Ammar when Ammar insisted that Ali, being the nearest kinsman of the Prophet and by virtue of being a Hashimite, should be elected. Then in support of Ibn Abi Sarh some one from the tribe of Makhzum, an old rival of the Banu Hashim, said to Ammar, "This is a matter to be settled between the chief clans of the Qurayshites, who are you to interfere in our disputes." See Tab., l, 2785. Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, 'Id, IV, 279. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh, I, 193-194.


al-Ashtar al-Naḥḥa‘i, Sulaymān b. Ṣurad al-Khuzā‘i, Ḥujur b. ʿAdī al-Kindi, Sharīḥ b. ʿAwp al-ʿAbsī and others protested in vain against saʿīds' behaviour. Instead of making proper inquiries, ʿUthmān ordered the agitators to be sent to Syria for Muʿāwiya to deal with. This clash with the Qurra‘ set the seal on ʿUthmān's unpopularity in religious circles as well.

Apart from appointing many of his clansmen to lucrative posts, ʿUthmān also made large gifts to others. At the same time he treated some of the Companions of the Prophet very harshly. Thus ʿAbdullah b. Masʿūd, then in charge of the treasury in Kūfa, was recalled after a quarrel with al-Walīd b. ʿUqba, and the Caliph allowed him to be manhandled in his presence.

1. Balādhurī, op.cit. 41. These names should be taken seriously as they afterwards appeared to be the leaders of the Shi‘ite sectarian movement in Kūfa and were never reconciled with Muʿāwiya.


3. Balādhurī, op.cit. 43. Tāb., 1, 2909 ff.

4. These fanatics even made the full use of the event when ʿUthmān burnt all the compilations of the Qurʾān after the new recension had been made, and they later accused him of having removed certain passages from the Holy Book. See Balādhurī, Ansāb, V, 62. The Shi‘ite sources are unanimous and emphatic on this point.


Even worse was the treatment 'Ammār b. Yāsir received, when he came from Egypt with a letter of complaints against Ibn Abī Sarh. He was reviled and beaten until unconscious. But perhaps worst of all were the sufferings of Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī.

During the last few years of 'Uthmān's reign the whole population was seething with discontent over the spectacle of Umayyad aristocrats seated in high offices, rolling in wealth and luxury, indulging in debauchery, lavishly spending the immense wealth which they appropriated to themselves illegitimately. Naturally enough, the resulting disequilibrium in the economic and social structure, was bound to arouse the jealousy of various sections of the population, and provided combustible material for an explosion. There were various manifestations of this discontent, for example, Abū Dharr, the fearless and uncompromising partisan of frugality and asceticism, who violently protested against the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few and demanded distribution of lands among the community. 'Uthmān, who did not like the idea of Abū Dharr thundering against

1. Balādhurī, op.cit. 48.
2. Ibid.
4. Masʿūdī, Murūj, II, 227. for details see Ṭabarī's accounts of the last years of 'Uthmān's Caliphate.
5. Masʿūdī, op.cit. 222 ff.
the wealthy in the mosque of Medina, sent him to Syria. Not long after, the Caliph received a letter from Mu‘āwiya, complaining of Abū Dharr’s insidious activities. ‘Uthmān ordered that he should be sent under escort, bound to a wooden camel-saddle, so that he arrived in Medina half-dead and with the flesh torn off his thighs. After a few days the Caliph exiled him to al-Rabda, where he soon died. His misadventures were broadcast widely throughout the provinces, awakening an echo of bitterness against ‘Uthmān and the class of the rich simultaneously with the propagation of ‘Ali’s claims to the Caliphate.

We must strongly dissent from the viewpoint of those writers who have laboured a good deal to represent the rebellion against ‘Uthmān as being due only to the evil machinations of some mischief-mongers, and that the grievances they manipulated as being all faked and artificial. Such writers ignore the fact that these mischief

1. Abū Dharr also declared that ‘Ali was the legatee of the Prophet and the inheritor of his knowledge. Ya‘qūbī, Ta’rīkh, II, 148.


4. Balādhurī, loc.cit. Ya‘qūbī, loc.cit. Neither Tabarī nor the later Ibn Athīr give these details saying that “I do not like to mention many unpleasant things which occurred in this connection.” See Tab., 1, 2862 and Kāmil, III, 56-57.

5. Vide n. 5 above.

6. See, for example, Abū Dharr’s speech, recorded by al-Ya‘qūbī, Ta’rīkh, II, 148.

7. Like, for example, al-Ash‘ārī, al-Tamhīd, and to some extent, even Tabarī and Ibn Athīr.
mongers, if such they were, had real grievances to work on and the tacit support of the Sahaba to provide the necessary sanction. It must be remembered that to work discontent into open rebellion, two things are essential. First, leadership, and leadership must come from those who command respect in society. Second, time and opportunity to organise and concert action. And both of these were present.

The attitude of the Sahaba, prominent among them being 'Ali, Talha, and Zubayr, is quite clear. There is ample material to prove that almost all of them, especially these three, were equally loud in their opposition to the ways of 'Uthmān. Even if we do not agree with the reports that they wrote letters to the provincials or actually incited them in an active and systematic manner, the fact remains unchallenged that they made no secret of their views and moral support for the rebels.  

1. See Baladhurī, Ansāb, V, 26 ff and 60 ff. Tab., 1, 2955.

2. See their behaviour in Baladhurī, Ya‘qūbī, Tabari, Mas‘ūdī, and Kāmil. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf (d. 32 AH) who played an all-important role in the election of 'Uthmān, is also reported to have hinted long before the outbreak of disturbances that he held 'Uthmān's actions to be a violation of the pledge given by him at the time of his election. See Baladhurī, Ansāb, V, 57. Tab., 1, 2980. Ibn 'Abd Rabbihī, 'Iqd, IV, 280.
There is an important point for our purpose in the story of the punishment given to Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī. When ʿUthmān ordered Abū Dharr to be exiled he strictly forbade that anyone should see him off except Marwān who was to escort him out of Medina. ‘Ali accompanied by Ḥasan and Ḥusayn and his partisan ʿAmmār b. Yāsir went along with him for a long distance. When he was reminded of the Caliph’s orders by Marwān, ‘Ali replied by hitting the head of Marwān’s beast with his stick and cursing him. When it was time to part, Abū Dharr wept and said, “By God whenever I see you, I remember the Prophet.” Marwān reported the whole matter to ʿUthmān who became very indignant at such a breach of orders. When he questioned ‘Ali, the latter replied that he was not supposed to obey orders that were not compatible with common sense and justice. “My merits and excellencies are far beyond yours, I fought at the battle of Badr, while you stayed peacefully at home. I was present when allegiance was sworn to the Prophet at al-ʿAqaba. When you were not.”¹ Later, these points were more commonly argued by the supporters of ‘Ali; and we see that Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī, the Shīʿite poet, availed himself of these points and gave vent to his ultra-Shīʿite views.²


2. For the verses al-Ḥimyarī composed thereon see Agh., VII, 134.
However, though al-Zubayr and Talha had quite a large following in Basra and Kufa respectively, they were far less important than 'Ali. Thus we find that 'Ali was often surrounded by the protestors, gathered in Medina from the provinces, to support their cause, and at the same time he was approached and appealed to by the Caliph to intercede with the rebels. 'Ali, perhaps compelled by the demand of justice, now stood in defence of the injured Companions, and demanded punishment for the blameworthy. He himself protested against the rich gifts made by the Caliph to his kinsmen. Soon he adopted the role of the spokesman of the Readers; and ultimately he became a much stronger champion of the cause of the agitators than they would have found among themselves.

After 'Ali paid homage to Abū Bakr, and the first party of his supporters dispersed, he kept aloof from all the activities until the end of 'Umar's rule. The protest raised after the election of 'Uthmān showed that 'Ali's candidature had many partisans, but they did not form any particular group and acted only as individuals. Once the Caliphate of 'Uthmān became accepted by the

7. Ya'qūbī, Ta'rikh, II, 140-141.
community, the spontaneous opposition of men such as al-Miqdād or 'Ammār ceased. When with the course of time, the Caliph began to lose popularity, the old partisans of 'Ali immediately took the opportunity of giving rein to their long suppressed desires to see 'Ali as the Caliph and started to collect new supporters. Now two different groups, but with the same end, were working simultaneously, serving each other's purposes consciously or unconsciously. One, the poor and lower section of the population, which was the hardest hit by the disequilibrium in the economic structure, and the other was the partisans of 'Ali making best use of the situation.  

The second group, led by men like Abū Dharr, al-Miqdād, 'Ammār, Ḥudhayfa and several of the Ansār, enlisted some new active supporters like Abū 'Amra al-Ansārī, al-Husayn b. Mundhir al-Raqqāshī called also Abū Sasān and Shutayra b. Shikl al-'Absī. This circle also included the Ḥāshmites, as well as 'Ali's clients and servants. Among them were Qambar b. Kadam, Maytham

2. Ibid.
b. Yaḥya al-Tammār,¹ and Rushayd al-Ḥujarī.²

The most important figure who has been described by later writers was ‘Abdullāh b. Wahb b. Saba’, also known as Ibn al-Sawda, a former Jewish rabbi converted to Islam. He is described as having become ‘Ali’s principle supporter, travelling from place to place in order to sow discontent against the rule of ‘Uthmān.³

‘Ali al-Wardī suggests that ‘Abdullāh b. Saba’ never existed and the activities attributed to him were carried out by ‘Ammār b. Yāsir.⁴ Modern scholars of note seem to agree that ‘Abdullāh b. Saba’ is a legendary figure and a projection into the past.⁵

It is an interesting phenomenon that, in the years which followed, both the hatred against ‘Uthmān and the number of the supporters of ‘Ali were growing side by side. The pious opposition to Umayyad aristocracy became eagerly involved with partisanship for ‘Ali.⁶


2. Executed by Ibn Ziyād in Kufa in AH 61/680 A.D. See Kash., Rijāl, 50 ff. Ḥa’irī, Muntaha,134. He is said to have been called by ‘Ali Rushayd al-Balāya (i.e., one who suffers trials.) This is a typical example of projection into the past by later Shi‘ites; see Majlisī, Bihār, IX, 629.


Not only did the partisans of 'Ali conduct propaganda but Ṭalḥa and Zubayr worked against 'Uthmān too. Thus when Muhammad b. Abū Bakr1 and Muhammad b. Abū Hudhayfa reached Egypt2 to rouse the people against the Caliph, they met Muhammad b. Ṭalḥa sent there by his father for the same task. Even the widows of the Prophet opposed the Caliph,3 particularly 'A'isha, who was loud in her denunciations of 'Naʿīthāl' as she nicknamed him.4

The revolt reached its climax in the year AH 35/656 A.D. when the rebels marched on Medina under the leadership of the "Readers". The contingent from Kūfa was led by Mālik b. al-Ashtar, that from Basra by Hūkaym b. Jabala al-ʿAbdī, while the Egyptians had four leaders, Abū ʿUmar b. Budayl al-Khuzāʿī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿUdays al-Balawī, Kināna b. Bishr al-Tujībī and 'Urwa b. Shayyim al-Kināní.5

1. The son of the Caliph Abū Bakr, Muhammad, was a devoted follower of 'Ali and a bitter enemy of 'Uthmān. See Tabari under the years 33, 34, 35 and during the Caliphate of 'Ali. Also Hodgson, op.cit. p.2., and El (1) art. "Muhammad b. Abū Bakr."
2. Balādhurī, Ansāb, V, 49.
The purpose of recording these names is only to point out that all of them, except the last one, are Yamanites. Some of the pro-Alid Medinese, both Muhajirun and Ansar, such as 'Ammar b. Yäsir, Rifä‘ā b. Rāfi‘i, al-Hajjaj b. Ghaziyya and 'Amir b. Bukayr also joined them.¹

The events that led to the murder of 'Uthmān are outside the scope of this study. The assassination of the Caliph, however, exceeded the desires even of those of the leading Sahāba who were openly against the Caliph, for they wished only to depose, not to kill him. There seems no valid reason to doubt the report given by our sources that 'Ali dispersed many times the unruly mob who wanted to hurt the Caliph and during the siege he even appointed his sons Hasan and Husayn to protect him from the hands of the angry besiegers.²

Out of the confusion which followed the murder of 'Uthmān, one thing was certain that the only candidate acceptable to the rebel Qurrā was 'Ali;³ but now he was reluctant⁴ to accept the office which is said to have been claimed by him after the death of the Prophet and again at the time of 'Uthmān's nomination. It was,

1. See Baladhurī, loc.cit. Jahshiyārī, al-Wuzarā wa’l Kuttāb, 14. Ṭab., and Kāmil, under the years 35.
2. Ṭab., 1, 2988 f. Baladhurī, op.cit. 62 ff and 69. Also Kāmil, III, 72 ff.
perhaps, because of the problems which 'Uthmān's successor would have to face at once. But at last, pressed by the demands from almost all quarters, except of course the Banū Umayya and the close adherents of 'Uthmān, 'Ali is reported to have agreed to take the responsibility with the explicit declaration that he would rule, besides the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet, according to what he would think right and to enforce law and justice, regardless of any criticism or clash of anyone's interest. There is little historical evidence to support this statement though it seems in accordance with 'Alī's independent nature. Ṭalḥa and Zubayr, though the rebel contingents from Başra and Kūfa respectively are said to have been their supporters, knew that they had no chance, and were the first to swear allegiance. Only a few

3. See Shi‘ite sources like that of Ṭabarsi, Iḥtiyāj, 102. Mufīd, Iḥhād, 93.
4. It is commonly reported by all historians that Ṭalḥa had a large following in Basra and Zubayr in Kūfa and the contingents which came from these two cities were largely under the influence of these two Companions. See Taḥb., 1, 2955. Kamīl, III, 80. al-Asḥā'īrī, Tamhīd, 107.
individuals declined to pay him homage, and some of them fled to Syria to join Mu‘awiya carrying ‘Uthmān’s blood-stained shirt.

Apart from these, and Mu‘awiya with his following, who preserved a non-committal attitude, ‘Ali was acclaimed by the community as the fourth Caliph. But he was the first among the Caliphs who, because of the circumstances of his birth, combined in his person both the dynastic and theocratic principles of succession.

‘Ali, however, inherited very great problems indeed which none of his three predecessors had to face. The murder of ‘Uthmān was not a simple assassination committed by an individual to settle his personal grievances, as was the case with ‘Umar. It was a revolt in which religious fanaticism, personal animosity, political intrigues as well as justifiable complaints and discontent of the poor against the rich all had their part. Leave ‘Ali alone, who, due to the rigidity in his ideals was lacking in the political practicability required for the harsh conditions in Arabia, the situation was not easy to deal with even by a seasoned politician and a shrewd realist. True, the actual murderers fled, and it would have been impossible for the moment to find them, but Malik b. Ashtar and the other Readers around ‘Ali were nearly as responsible, yet they were not the actual murderers. On the other hand, he himself was convinced that their movement was based on just and right demands,

2. See Supra, ‘Ali’s role as the spokesman of the Qurrā’.
but was taken over by some unruly extremists who were now beyond his reach. In vain, however, did he try to find a peaceful solution. He cursed the slayers of ‘Uthmān, and yet surrounded himself with their associates.

Before long, however, his election was questioned and his authority challenged. Even ‘A’isha, one of the main instigators against ‘Uthmān, when she heard the nomination of ‘Alī on her way back from the lesser pilgrimage, refused to enter Medina and went back to Mecca.

Some time later, Ṭalḥa and Zubayr saw an opportunity to dissociate themselves from ‘Alī, and asked permission to perform the ‘Umra. He understood what they planned, but did not refuse their request. They joined ‘A’isha in the Holy City and announced that they had been forced to

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1. See ‘Alī’s answer to Ṭalḥa and Zubayr that "the murder of ‘Uthmān was an act of the days of ignorance", I am not indifferent to what you demand but at present they are beyond my power. As soon as I get hold of them I will not hesitate to punish them." Ṭab., 1, 3080. Kāmil, III, 100. Also see Ṭalḥa and Zubayr’s speeches before the people of Basra in which they say...

2. Ṭab., 1, 3080 ff. Kāmil, III, 100 ff. Dīnawarī, Akhbar, 156.


4. Ṭab., 1, 3112. Also see B. Lewis, The Arabs in History, 60.

5. See the full account of it in Ṭab., 1, 3112. Kāmil, III, 105. Ya‘qūbī, Ta’rīkh, II, 156.

swear allegiance under duress.¹

Now ‘A’isha, once foremost in condemning ‘Uthmān, assumed the role of his avenger.² Zubayr and Ṭalḥa were individuals of small calibre, both schemers and intriguers, but not really leaders of the masses. Jealous of each other, they would have never concerted their efforts, but inspired by ‘A’isha they found a way to make a bid for power. Though the real commander of the armed forces was ‘A’isha, the triumvirate marched from Mecca to Basra in October 656 A.D. ‘Ali, though reluctant³ to take arms, was nevertheless obliged to act. He went to Iraq, where he succeeded in collecting an army from among the Kufans and ultimately defeated ‘A’isha, and her associates in the ‘Battle of the Camel.’ Ṭalḥa and Zubayr were slain and ‘A’isha, fell prisoner, but ‘Ali treated her generously and sent her safely to Medina.⁴

After the battle of Jamal, ‘Ali then had to deal with the much more dangerous party of Mu‘āwiya, who displayed the blood-stained shirt of ‘Uthmān,⁵ calling for

3. For the hesitant attitude of ‘Ali see Dīnawārī, Akhvār, 151, Ṭab., 1, 3082 ff. and 3092 ff.
5. See in Ṭab., 1, 3255. Agh., XV, 71.
revenge. Mu‘āwiya knew full well that if ‘Ali consolidated his authority he would dislodge him from his position in Syria and the only way to hold it was to question the validity of ‘Ali’s title to the Caliphate, which was not difficult, considering the circumstances in which he was installed. The Qurāʾ were against any compromise with him and Mālik b. al-Ashtar advised ‘Ali not to enter into correspondence with the Governor of Syria. Nevertheless, ‘Ali tried peaceful means. Only when those failed, and it became obvious that Mu‘āwiya had resolved to fight, did he march with his forces to meet the Syrians.

The conflict of Ṣiffin has been thoroughly and critically studied by a number of scholars and there is little left to be added to it. However, as the immediate result of Ṣiffin another fanatical group henceforth called Khārijites emerged and remained a consistent

1. ‘Ali denied the right of vengeance to Mu‘āwiya, stating that the sons of ‘Uthmān were more entitled to claim it. See Mubarrad, Kāmil, I, 285.


3. Ya‘qūbī, Ta’rīkh, II, 163.

4. See Wellhousen, Arab Kingdom. B. Lewis, The Arabs in History, 62, though very brief conveys the whole situation with full grasp of the situation.

5. In this study I will confine myself to the Shi‘ite movement only and will avoid as much as possible touching upon the Khārijites.
cause of ‘Ali’s weakness. On the other hand, the arbitration at Adhrush turned out against ‘Ali and further weakened his position. Eventually when he was preparing for a final struggle against Syria, a Khārijite fanatic, ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Muljam struck him with a poisoned sword at the mosque of Kufa. Before he breathed his last he entrusted his heritage to his eldest son al-Ḥasan. He died on the 17th of Ramadan AH 40/25th January 661 A.D., after a reign of four years and nine months. He was then sixty-three years old.

Now with this brief outline of the major events which took place during the short-lived Caliphate of ‘Ali, we will try to analyse their causes and consequences. In the first place it must be kept in mind as a historical fact that his succession was greatly resisted by some of the Companions of the Prophet and resulted in the first civil wars in Islam. But at the same time his so called ‘failures’ proved to be epoch-making in the history of the Shi‘ites. The bitterness of the supporters of ‘Ali created by his defeats and disappointments, provided a historical foundation for them to move towards a Sectarian tendency, and the


destruction done to him gave the later Shi‘ites enough material for the construction of a separate Discipline within the body of Islam.¹

An attempt to grasp the situation as a whole shows that the selection of ‘Ali was at once a triumph for a particular view of succession hitherto unable to succeed, and a great shock to all those who had successfully set up a new idea of leadership devoid of the principle of hereditary primacy after the death of the Prophet.² With the succession of ‘Ali these two rival views for the first time came into physical clash, crystallizing into definite forms – the former view, soon defeated again, was to find its expression in a separatist tendency towards a sectarian organisation; the latter re-emerged victoriously and more vigorously and shaped itself in such a way as to become "The Centre of the Islamic 'Ummah", Jama'ā.³

Ya‘qūbī records for us those speeches with which ‘Ali was hailed by his enthusiastic supporters, mostly from the Ansār, on the occasion of his installation, and which contain those tendencies and sentiments with

1. See the following chapter.

2. See part B of this chapter.

3. I am intentionally avoiding here the term orthodoxy which is a later conception.
which he was viewed by this group. For example, Mālik b. al-Ashtar pledged his allegiance with the words that 'Ali was "Wāṣī al-Awṣiyā" and "Warīth 'Ilm al-Anbiyā". Hodgson doubts whether these terms were really used for 'Ali at such an early stage. In the first place, as one of the guiding principles, we must keep in mind that Mālik b. al-Ashtar was of a Yamanite origin. South

1. Ya‘qūbī, Ta’rīkh, II, 154-155. There is a tendency among scholars to suspect any report given by Ya‘qūbī which could support the Shi‘ite cause, because of his Shi‘ite leanings. If Ya‘qūbī can be suspected of his being biased in favour of the Shi‘ite then why cannot all other historians of opposite affiliation be suspected for suppressing all those reports which can serve the Shi‘ite purpose. We know with certainty that all extant histories were written when the division of the community into the Shi‘ite minority and the so-called "orthodox" majority was clearly established, and it was natural for the historians belonging to the "orthodox" majority to suppress anything in favour of the Shi‘ites. In this situation, however, I personally feel, that Ya‘qūbī's reports should be considered as a precious historical document which survived from the tendentious attempts of the historians of the majority party. See, Petersen, 'Ali and Mu‘awiyah in Early Arabic Tradition, 169 ff.

2. For the speeches of Thābit b. Qays al-Anṣārī, Khuza‘yma b. Thābit al-Anṣārī (see and compare the support given by these two to 'Ali at the Saqīfa in part B of this chapter) and Sa‘sa‘a b. Sawhān, see Ya‘qūbī, loc.cit.


Arabia was a land of ancient civilisation where for a thousand years Kings had succeeded one another according to a dynastic principle and had been regarded as having superhuman qualities. Even if the seventh-century Arabs had no personal experience of Kingship, they must have been influenced by a continuing tradition. Thus the words like 'Wasi' and 'Warith' from a man of Yamanite origin seem to be a natural and spontaneous corollary of the deep-seated cultural background.

In the second place, there are numerous references in the contemporary poetry which reflect the same spirit. For example, Abū 'Aswad al-Du'ali sings the song when praising 'Ali, "Thou art the noblest of the Quraysh in merit and Religion," "I see God and the future state through my love to 'Ali," "Ali is the Aaron, 'Ali is the Wasi". Strothmann agrees that there are distinguishable religious honours accorded to 'Ali in the poetry of al-Du'ali. Thirdly, the term Warith is frequently used in the Qur'an especially in connection with the family of 'Imrān and Ismā'īl, and Muhammad was using

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4. E.g., XXXVI, 32.
these prerogatives to his advantage to attract mainly the "People of the Books". It is then very likely that some of the partisans of 'Ali would have used the same terminology to strengthen their views.

Fourthly, when we read the accounts of the battles of Jamal and Šīffīn we come across plenty of war poetry exchanged between the combatants of both sides, in which the word Wasī and the like expressions are frequently used from 'Ali's side. It is, however, not possible to quote here all these verses; we can only give the names of the reciters and references where they can be found. Thus in the battle of Jamal those who uttered verses in which they described 'Ali with the titles of Wasī or the expressions of this sort are:


3. Ibid, 146.

4. Ibid. 144.

5. Ibid. 144.

6. Ibid. 145.

7. Ibid. 147.
ourselves to referring to a few of the most explicit: they are: Mughîra b. Hârith,1 'Abd al-Râhîm b. Dhû’ayb al-Aslamî,2 Ash’ath b. Qays al-Kindî,3 Hujr b. 'Adî al-Kindî,4 Nu’mân b. ‘Ajlân al-Ansârî,5 Zafar b. Hudhayfa al-Asadî and Khuzayma b. Thâbit.6

Apart from all these historical facts, we have already seen that there had been a devoted party from the very beginning who had a personal enthusiasm for 'Ali largely based on religious considerations,7 and thus it was not unlikely that at the time of his accession it would have expressed its allegiance in these terms.8 It is of little importance to mention here that the Shi‘îte poets of the next generation like al-Kumayt, Kuthayyir and al-Sa‘îyid al-Himyarî used abundantly the

1. Ibid. 149. Nasr b. Muzâ‘îm al-Minquari, Waqâ‘at Siffin, 438. Both of them refer to Abî Mîkhmafs’ Kitâb al-Siffin, Ibn Nadîm, 93, mentions this /Fihrîst, work too.
5. Ibn Abî’l-Hadîd, op.cit. 149.
6. For the last two see Askâfî, Naqd al-‘Uthmâniya, 64.
7. See part B of this chapter.
terms wasī and the like \( ^1 \) for ‘Ali especially when describing the battles of Jamal and Šīfīn.

However, the purpose of producing all this evidence was to show that there was a party who looked at ‘Ali’s accession to the Caliphate from quite a different angle from the other Muslims. This then, at once solves the problem that his election did not have the same meaning for the rest of the Companions or the other Muslims as that of the first three Caliphs; and at the same time it also answers the question why ‘Ali was immediately forced to face serious opposition from different quarters.

The first serious resistance, as we have seen, came from ‘A’īsha, Šālḥa and Zubayr. The triumvirate raised the claim for the blood of ‘Uthmān and took upon themselves the responsibility of taking revenge. But the question is whether it really was the only reason for their rising? "Was only ‘Ali really responsible for the murder of ‘Uthmān?" Had Šālḥa and Zubayr not been equally responsible \( ^2 \) in sowing hatred and propagating rebellion against the murdered Caliph? Was ‘A’īsha not

1. For these three poets see their Dīwāns and also Mubarrad, Kāmil, III, 935. Abū‘l-Fadl Ahmad b. Abī Ťāhir al-Baghdādī, Balāghat al-Nisē; 67 ff. Also see J. Horovitz, EL (1) art: Kumayt; C. Van Arendouk, EL (1) art: Kuthaiyir; and Brockelmann, EL (1) art: Saiyyid al-Ḥimyarī. Perhaps still later poets reflect their predecessor’s expression, thus al-Khādījī says: "Their reddish mother came riding on a camel, intent on fighting the wasī, backed by a huge army of death. Thus the War of the Devil against the Believers began." Khādījī, Dīwān, MS. 655c. See Cat. JRL. col. 748 c. foll. 136/a-b.

2. For the role of Šālḥa and Zubayr precise references are frequently given above.
an equal participant in arousing people against 'Na’thul'? No student of Islamic history can ever deny the fact that all of them were partly, in one way or another, responsible for the bloody-handed treason in the capital.

A deep study and a careful effort to capture the real tendency and spirit of the whole period would show that the blood of ‘Uthmān was made an easy excuse, by the triumvirate or later on by Mu‘awiya, to check the obvious danger of the rule of the ascetic group in Islam, supported by the lower classes of society and by the Ansār of Medina of which two groups ‘Ali happened to be the representative. The emergence of these groups, however, was a real threat to the Meccan

1. Even the verses of Ibn Umm Kilāb, also attributed to ‘A’isha the responsibility of the murder of ‘Uthmān, see Tab., 1, 3112.

2. B. Lewis very ably remarks "Talha and Zubayr, two disgruntled Meccans, ‘Amr,...and ‘A’isha the widow of the Prophet, formed centres of intrigue and conspiracy against the Caliph... ‘Ali's role is not clear. Though himself an obvious candidate for succession...he does not appear to bear any direct responsibility for the murder." See The Arabs in History, 60 f.

3. I think that the best approach towards understanding this complicated period is to make an overall assessment out of the detailed study of all possible sources. To depend too much on the different reports and events separately often leads to confusion and wrong conclusions.
aristocracy and to the Syrians who adopted Islam in order to derive the greatest material advantages from it. A brief explanation of this whole theory is this.

With the beginning of 'Uthmān's caliphate Islam was rapidly moving towards an "Umayyadism". The term "Umayyadism" is invented here to represent a phenomenon of a growing tendency of "Arab Aristocratism" which emerged from an old aristocracy of a vital faction of the Qurayshite clan of Umayya. This aristocracy was first suppressed by Muhammad's victory and a new concept of society, and this suppression was maintained by Abū Bakr and 'Umar. But at the same time, ironically enough, Muhammad's experiences of a new concept of unity and organization under Islam gave a new impetus and fresh blood to the old conception of Arab aristocracy, which could only find its way during 'Uthmān's rule. However, during

1. Thus, for example, the battle of Siffin is described by the historians as the battle of Badr in which the newly converted Anṣār of Medina showed a great zeal against the infidel Qurayshites of Mecca. Thus Ukrusha bint al-Atrash, one of the women agitators of Ali's side, used to call Siffin, Badr al-Ṣughra, the lesser Badr, and al-'Aqaba al-Ukhra, the second pledge of al-'Aqabā'. Ibn al-Jawzi, Mīrāt, Paris, Ms. No. 6131, fol. 96a.

2. See in Ṭab., 1, 2917 Mu‘āwiya's address before the agitators of Kufa who were sent to him by 'Uthmān. In this speech Mu‘āwiya clearly mentions the superior rights of the Quraysh in general and of the clan of Umayya in particular. He then especially mentions the name of Abū Suфyān saying that he was the noblest and the son of the noblest of the Qurayshites. Ṭab., 1, 2917.

وقد عَرَفَتْ قَريشَةّبَاياسفَیْانَكَانَ اکرمًا واَبَنَ اکرمًا...
'Uthmān's life Ṭalḥa and Zubayr1 played an important role against him but only because of selfish ambitions and for personal reasons. After 'Uthmān's murder, when they failed in their ambitions, they were of the same mind as Mu‘āwiya in Syria to revolt against 'Ali, for the sake of the same ideals.2

The conflict at the battle of the Camel brought about a serious split in the Islamic 'Ummah. Ya‘qūbī records for us that the supporters of 'Ali were at first called "the people of 'Irāq" (Ahl al-'Irāq)3 as well as the party of 'Ali (Shī‘at-'Ali) or al-'Alawiya.4 Their opponents were called Shī‘at al-'Uthmān or more

1. As far as 'A‘īsha is concerned the reason for her hatred for 'Ali can simply be explained by the latter's attitude towards her when she was suspected of an affair with Safwān b. al-Muattil al-Sulamī, for 'Ali advised the Prophet to question her slave girl. See Bukhārī, III, 103 ff. 'A‘īsha's quarrels and rivalries with Fatīma, and 'Ali's questioning of her father Abū Bakr's election also contributed to her bitterness towards 'Ali. See 'Umar Abū Naṣr, 'Ali wa ‘A‘īsha, 25 ff.

2. This theory, if elaborated, will easily explain the problems such as (1) the development of Shi‘ism from now on under the leadership of men politically, economically or otherwise absolutely unimportant and (2) often even without any leader; (3) the success of Mukhtār's movement among the Mawāli; (4) the emergence of the idea of Mahdism; (5) the importance given to the persons of the House of 'Ali as the infallible Imāms; (6) the emphasis on their piety and self-denial and lastly the constant need felt by a group of the Muslims to find a leader who could satisfy their spiritual aspirations.

3. Ya‘qūbī, Ta‘rīkh, II, 234. Also see the verse of Ka‘b b. Ju‘ayl in Mubarrad, Kāmil, 1, 282.

commonly al-‘Uthmāniyya. They included the faction of ‘A’isha, Ṭalḥa and Zubayr or "the companions of the camel" (Aṣḥāb al-Jamāl) and the Syrians (Ahl al-Shām), also known as Shī‘at Mu‘āwiya. But, according to the tendency of the epoch their positions were described in religious terms (Dīn) either for ‘Alī (dīn ‘Alī) or of ‘Uthmān (dīn ‘Uthmān). Another way of expressing this was to say that one held the ‘Alawī or the ‘Uthmāni opinion (Rā‘y al-‘Alawiyya or Rā‘y al-‘Uthmāniyya respectively.)

Until the battle of Jamal, however, the term Shī‘a was only occasionally used for a small personal following of ‘Alī, who from the very beginning regarded him as the most worthy person in the community after the Prophet. After the battle of Jamal the name Shī‘at ‘Alī was used for all those who stood with him against ‘A’isha and from now on the original Shī‘a were confusedly mixed up with the political Shī‘a. It is in this wider sense that the term Shī‘a was used in the document of the arbitration at Siffin.

Our sources give us some useful information on how the later Shī‘ites classified different groups of ‘Alī’s supporters at this stage. They are named as: al-‘Aṣfiyā,

4. Tab., 1, 3196 and 3199.
5. Agh. XIII, 38.
7. See al-Minqārī, Waqāt Siffin, 578, and Tab., 1, 3337.
the sincere friends, al-Awliyā, the devoted friends, al-Āshāb, the companions and Shurtāt al-Khamīs, the picked division. ¹ To whom the first three terms refer is not quite clear, though various Shi‘ite sources indicate the group of earlier followers (Miqdād, Salman, 'Ammār, Abū Dharr, Ḥudhayfa, Abū Ḥamza, Abū Saṣān and Shutayr) as belonging to the al-Āshāb.² The idea of these classes is certainly of a later date. Nevertheless, we must make some distinction between those followers of ‘Ali who put more emphasis on the religious side of his succession as Wāsi, and those who supported his cause mainly on political grounds, especially after he made Kufa his capital.

However, right from this point of conflict at Jamal we find frequent use of Shi‘at Ahl al-Bayt or Shi‘at ʿAl Muhammad with which the followers of ‘Ali, and afterwards those of his successors, called themselves. Occasionally the nickname al-‘Turābiyya was also used, their adversaries endeavouring to give it a sense of contempt. This was derived from the Kunya of ‘Ali, Abū Turāb, 'the Father of Dust', given to him by Muhammad.⁴

2. For this different outlook of the followers of ‘Ali in his support see the following chapter.
On the other hand, the followers of ‘Ali nicknamed their opponents, the ‘Uthmānites al-Na‘thaliyya. They also called them al-Qāsitūn (those who act wrongfully); al-Nākithūn (those who break their allegiance); and al-Māriqūn (those who missed the Truth of Religion).

The name Shī‘at Mu‘āwiya was later replaced by the more general al-Umawiyya.

Let us close this chapter with the conclusion that the Shī‘ite tendency in its rudimentary form started immediately after the death of the Prophet mainly on religious grounds and manifested itself in the Saqīfa. Then it apparently disappeared during the Caliphates of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. When widespread discontent prevailed in the reign of ‘Uthmān against the Umayyad oligarchy all those directly or indirectly affected found their outlet in the whole-hearted support of ‘Ali. The original Shī‘a took this opportunity promptly and fully exploited the situation to satisfy their long suppressed desire to see ‘Ali as the successor of the Prophet. In this way, religious Shī‘ism embraced a large political


following. But this, as we shall see, could not go on very long and was reassimilated by the ruling powers. Nevertheless, besides this political following ‘Ali left behind him a zealous personal party who had sworn to him that they would be "friends of those whom he befriended and enemies of those to whom he was hostile." They believed that ‘Ali was in "accordance with truth and guidance" (‘ala’l-haqq wa’l-huda), and his opponents consequently in error. In short, they insisted that he, by the circumstances of his birth, was specially qualified to bear supreme authority in the community. Their belief in his rights remained unshaken even though he was hated by the Khūrijītes, resisted by the Syrians and the party of Mu‘āwiya, unloved by the supporters of Zubayr and abandoned by the neutrals of Adhruh.

1. Tab., 1, 3350 f. see also Watt, "Shi‘ism under the Umayyads", JRAS, 1960, 160 f.

2. Watt, loc.cit.
Chapter II

A. ABDICATION OF AL-HASAN

Though during the last year of 'Ali's Caliphate Mu‘awiya had under his military subjugation a large part of the Islamic state, and despite the authority vested in him by 'Amr b. al-'As at Adhrâh, he could not claim the title of Amîr al-Muminîn while 'Ali was alive. He was content to be styled as Amîr only. As soon as his rival fell he found the road open to the ultimate goal of his ambitions. Favourable circumstances and the weakness of al-Hasan coupled with Mu‘awiya's characteristic shrewdness made it easier for him to complete the task he had started after the death of 'Uthmân.

al-Hasan, the elder son of 'Ali and Fâtimâ, was acclaimed the Caliph immediately after the death of his father, by the Kufans while the people of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina were not against his


2. Ṭab., II, 5.

3. As most of the writers assess him, see Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom and its Fall, p. 138.

Nomination. Weak, and inexperienced, Ḥasan had little of his father's personality to his credit. Nevertheless, the nomination of Ḥasan to the Caliphate shows, though somewhat vaguely, the feelings of the people of Iraq for the House of the Prophet and their inclination towards the legitimate succession in the line of 'Ali. The factors leading to his nomination were not only political but also those of religious aspirations. The respect and consideration of the people commanded by him were not only because of his being a Hashimite and also not only because of his being the son of 'Ali, but his being the grandson of the Prophet through Fāṭima was also taken into account. All that did not work in favour of al-Ḥasan, however. Apparently he had an army of 40,000 at his command, collected

1. I have closely examined all early sources to find a single voice raised by the people of the holy cities against the nomination of Hasan, but I could not find one, which leads me to suggest that the inhabitants of Mecca and Medina were not at least against Hasan, while they had been lukewarm in "their loyalty to the representatives of the Sufyanids". Hitti, History of the Arabs, 189.

2. This is well indicated by the reply, for example, given by Sa‘d b. Mus‘ūd al-Thaqafi, the governor of al-Madīna, to his young nephew Mukhtār when the latter suggested to his uncle, when Hasan took refuge in his castle, to capture and hand him over to Mu‘awiya and get honour and wealth from him. Said Sa‘d, "Curse of God upon you!" "How can I arrest the son of the daughter of the Prophet; you are indeed a bad man to suggest me such a wicked thing." See Tab., II, 2. Kāmil, III, 161.
by his father to make a final attack on Syria, but not all of them were completely loyal even to ‘Ali himself, and now by his sudden death their morale was sunk. al-Hasan suspected or even witnessed disaffection, treason and fickleness among some of his troops. The strength of Mu‘awiya, the unreliable attitude of the majority of Hasan’s supporters and above all the lack of energy and courage in his nature made him inclined to accept a peaceful solution with Mu‘awiya. The mild-tempered new Caliph who had a horror of shedding Muslim blood, vainly hoped that if he ceded the Caliphate to Mu‘awiya, he would in time succeed without an armed struggle, for his rival was much older. On the other hand, Mu‘awiya tacitly recognised the rights of the son of ‘Ali (by entering into an agreement with him almost on equal footing) and preferred to obtain their cession by peaceful negotiation rather than by force. al-Hasan defeated, or even killed, still represented danger, unless he resigned his rights, because another member of the Hashimite


4. Tab., II, 1.

5. Hasan was 37 or 38 at the time of his abdication while Mu‘awiya was 58 years old in AH 41 when he obtained Hasan’s allegiance.
House could claim to be his successor. But should he give up his claims in Mu‘awiya's favour this would defeat any such claim.

Nevertheless, at the news of 'Ali's death Mu‘awiya moved quickly with an army towards Maskin. The purpose of this quick action was twofold. First, by his demonstration of arms and strength Mu‘awiya wanted to compel Hasan for terms, and secondly, if that failed, then to attack the Irāqī forces before it was too late. Hasan was thus compelled to take the field before he had either strengthened himself in his position or organized the administration which was now thrown into confusion by the death of his father.

Receiving intelligence that Mu‘awiya had already taken the field, and was advancing to meet him, Hasan sent Qays b. Sa‘d b. 'Ibāda, a trusted friend of his father, in the advance, with 1200 troops to hold the enemy in check, while he followed with the main army. At Maskin when Qays encountered Mu‘awiya, the latter offered him a sum of one hundred thousand dirhams to defect from Hasan and join him, which Qays rejected in disgust. Mu‘awiya's agents were actively working all

1. Ṭabarzī, II, 2. Ya‘qūbī, Tārīkh, II, 191. Also see Wellhausen, who calls Mu‘awiya on this occasion, an aggressor. Arab Kingdom and its Fall, 104.


over Irāq and trying to rouse Hasan's forces against him. Thus when Hasan reached the suburb of al-Madā'in someone spread the news that Qays was defeated and slain. An affray took place among the ranks of Hasan followed by a fierce tumult in which one soldier was killed, and he himself, attempting to interfere, was jostled and wounded, and obliged to retire into the citadel. He had taken refuge from the violence and was in danger of treason. some of his army chiefs even wrote to Mu‘awiya to come to Iraq and that they would seize his person and make him over to Mu‘awiya. Mu‘awiya dispatched these letters to Hasan to make him realize his weak position, and proposed to make peace on any condition which Hasan should suggest. It seems that under these circumstances Hasan, disheartened, had no other way except to withdraw his claims. He was apprehensive of disastrous consequences in an armed conflict with Mu‘awiya for himself, his family and his handful of trustworthy followers. He saw that he had an active and powerful enemy to be counted with, and fickleness and treachery among his own people. Ultimately

1. Ibid., Dīnawarī, Akhbār, 230.
5. Tab., II, 3.
he decided in favour of a peaceful settlement.¹

Terms of peace between Hasan and Mu‘awiya were agreed over.² Apart from the financial arrangement³ which he secured for himself and his brother Husayn, the other conditions on which he resigned the Caliphate were: (1) that Mu‘awiya should rule according to the Book of God and Sunnah of the Prophet;⁴ (2) that the lives and property of the companions and followers of ‘Ali (Shi‘at ‘Ali) wherever they were in the Islamic world would be secured and they would not be molested.


2. Surprisingly enough, except for Ibn Hajar al-Haythamî, in his Sawâ‘iq, 18, our early sources do not mention all conditions collectively and we have to collect them at one place from different sources. It is strange to note that historians like Ya‘qubî and Mas‘ûdi do not mention the terms of peace at all, whereas Tabarî mentions some, Kâmil some others and Dinawarî still others. Tabarî splits them at different places, for example, the first condition regarding financial arrangement he described directly in connection with the abdication of Hasan under the events of AH 40, 11, p. 31, but the condition no. 2, (see next page) about the general amnesty for the followers of ‘Ali, he mentions far away on p. 13, in connection with Ziyâd. I have, however, tried to collect them in one unit from all possible sources.

3. See Ṭabarî, II, 3–4. Dinawarî, Akhbar, 231. Hasan received 500,000 dirhams which were in the State treasury of Kufa and the income from the land tax of Darabjird.

in any way, that Mu‘awiya would desist from cursing of ‘Ali at least in Hasan’s presence; (4) that Mu‘awiya would not have the right to nominate his successor; (5) and finally that Hasan would be entitled to resume the Caliphate on the death of Mu‘awiya. The last condition, though not mentioned by all sources and if we are to be extremely cautious in accepting it as having been genuinely made, nevertheless we must accept it as a tacit understanding without which the treaty, in all probability, could not have existed.

It is by no means easy for a student of this phase of Islamic history to make a clear assessment of Hasan’s action; whether it was only due to his fondness of ease and comfort, or he did it as the only course left to him. But a close analysis of the events which took place before and after his abdication does not fail to indicate that had he acted otherwise it might have meant a complete destruction of the House of ‘Ali. Yet al-Hasan’s surrender was extremely...

4. Ibid. Ibn Athir, Usd al-Ghaba, II, 13. al-Imama al-Siyasa, I, 163. In fact the conditions 4 and 5 are in effect not very much different from each other.
5. To support this hypothesis I propose to refer to the tragic fate of Husayn and his followers 20 years after Hasan’s abdication. There is no valid reason to doubt that had Hasan acted like his brother he would have met the same fate.
distasteful to those of the Iraqians who had been supporting ‘Ali and then al-Hasan chiefly because they bitterly hated Syrian domination;¹ and it was equally disappointing to those of the Khārijites who gathered round Hasan to find an opportunity to fight against Mu‘āwiya.² There was still another group represented by men like Ḥujr b. ‘Adī al-Kindī, who also disliked al-Hasan’s action, but for quite a different reason. Undoubtedly, this was the party of ‘Ali (Shī‘at ‘Ali, as distinct from the political supporters of ‘Ali)³ who believed in his legitimate

1. Wellhausen, The Arab Kingdom and its Fall, 177.
2. Dīnawārī, Akhbār, 231.
3. I stress the point that the term Shī‘at ‘Ali or the party of ‘Ali should be divided into two distinct groups: (1) political supporters of ‘Ali who saw in him the champion of the political independence of Iraq, and in this sense accidentally they were, for the time being, of the same mind as the (2) religious supporters of ‘Ali, who uncompromisingly believed in his right to the Caliphate. The first kind of group scattered when the grip of Mu‘āwiya became irresistible. See in Ibn Tab., II,3-4, the reply of the troops under the command of Qays b. Sa‘d when he asked them whether they would like to fight either without an Imam or submit themselves to an Imam of Error. The second group remained persistent in its view. See in Jab., II, 140, replies of those who were beheaded with Ḥujr.

¹ Bayān Fāris b. Sā‘d in tab. in要说 باييد أبا أفلاس إستغلال الدخل في طاعة أمام، الامام العبادة他们在 طاعة أمام طالفة إذ يعذرون. The second group remained persistent in its view. See in Ibn Tab., II, 140, replies of those who were beheaded with Ḥujr.

² قال لهم رسول معاوية اننا قد أمرنا ان نعرف عليكم النهاية من علي وهم مبتنين فان فعلتم تركناكم وان أبينتم قتلناكمATED

³ قالوا اللهم انا لانفسنا فاعلي ذلك.
succession to the Caliphate and were not ready to reconcile with any other alternative. It seems that they were disappointed in Hasan but still remained persistent in their ideas regarding the leadership of the community. They did not lose their identity as an opposition to the rivals of the House of the Prophet; and refused to accept what the majority had willingly or unwillingly accepted.

Later on, not only the Shi'ites but Sunnite historians too explained Hasan's actions as meritorious, saying that he reconciled the opposing parties. The year of his abdication became known as "'Am al-Jamā'a, and a tradition was put in the mouth of the Prophet saying that "this son of mine is a Lord, Sayyid, he will reconcile the two branches of the Muslims." The tradition is certainly forged, and the whole idea to attribute Hasan's action to a meritorious deed is undoubtedly a fabrication of the following century when a

1. Dinawari, Akhbār, 222.
2. Ibid.
3. Compare the behaviour of Hujr and his companions with those 1200 troops under Qays b. Sa'd quoted in n. 2 above p. 112 above.
"Central Body" in Islam was emerging from a tangled situation and thus reflects the tendency with which this "Central Body" was formed. The Shi'ites explained Hasan's action thus to safeguard his position which was the characteristic tendency of the later Shi'ites. On the other hand, the Sunnites accepted it thus to fulfill the need for the formation of a "Central Body" to reconcile the two opposing groups; that is, the party of 'Uthmân and that of 'Ali. This "Central Body" later on received the title of 'the Orthodox congregation', or Jamā‘a, in Islam, leaving behind and branding as a sectarian body those who could not and did not agree to reconcile.

Though by his abdication al-Hasan prevented Muslim bloodshed, he did not heal the split in the community. In fact, his abdication had far-reaching consequences. Previously he had been, at least nominally, the head of the Jamā‘a. Now the events developed in the opposite direction, and the al-‘Uthmaniya branch became the "Central Body" of Islam with Mu‘awiya at its head, while Shi‘at ‘Ali was reduced to the role of a small opposition

1. The idea of orthodoxy came very late. There is, however, a great difficulty in choosing a proper terminology. At this point there was no idea of orthodoxy attached to any one group. What we can best do, as Montgomery Watt suggests, is to use the term "Central Body" because of its having the majority of the people under its sway.

2. The tradition, for example, "Inna‘ummatî lā tajtami‘ū ‘ala ġalālatin", My community will not agree on an error, (Wensinck, Concordance, 97) is the outcome of this tendency. The word ‘Ummâh here signifies the Jamā‘a or majority of the Muslims.
party, and thus was thrust into a sectarian role. The spokesman of this opposition, however, was not al-Hasan himself but Ḥujr b. 'Adī and his party. Supported by a number of fellow Kufans he never ceased to protest against Muʿawiya and the official cursing of 'Ali from the pulpits, which had been imposed by Muʿawiya as a propaganda measure.

The period of nine years, between al-Hasan's abdication in AH 41 and his death in AH 49, is one in which Shi'ite sectarianism was passing through a stage of, so to speak, fire underground, with no conspicuous activities above the surface. A historical survey of this period for the Shi'ite sectarian growth is very difficult as our early sources are almost silent. Nevertheless, it is not completely free from the voices raised in support of the House of the Prophet and against the rule of Muʿawiya. We hear now and then of individuals or small parties, mainly from Kufa, visiting Hasan, and also Husayn, asking them to rise in action to which they did not agree. However, this silence of the Shi'ites in this period might have been because of two reasons. First, Muʿawiya's grip, mainly through his trained, loyal and skilled Syrian forces, was too strong to allow any rising, and secondly, Shi'ite sectarianism was not organized enough to raise its head. But it was passing through a natural process of evolution

until it could register a widespread support and then translate itself into action.

al-Hasan, however, had only deluded himself with the idea that he might become successor to Mu‘awiya. But he died long before his rival. The cause of his death is said to have been poison, administered by one of his wives. Some of the early sources mention Mu‘awiya as the instigator.

Immediately after the death of Hasan, however, the Shi‘ites of Kufa held a meeting in the house of Sulaymān b. Ṣurad al-Khuza‘ī and wrote to Husayn inviting him for rising against Mu‘awiya. But Husayn honoured his brother's treaty with Mu‘awiya and asked them to keep quiet as long as Mu‘awiya was alive. But the more enthusiastic among them could no longer remain idle. Ḥujr b. ‘Adī al-Kindī, who had been active in his opposition to Mu‘awiya, with his fellow Kufans, revolted openly against him. Their stand was not only to protest against the

1. Mu‘awiya died in Rajab AH 60/April 680 A.D. He was then seventy seven years old. He was 58 in AH 41 when he obtained Hasan's allegiance. Hasan was only 37 or 38 at the time of his abdication.

2. See Abū’l-Faraj Isfahānī, Maqātil, 52. Ya‘qūbī, Ta’rīkh, II, 225.


cursing of 'Ali but that the right of Caliphate is only for the house of 'Ali and Mu‘awiya was a usurper.\textsuperscript{1} We do not know very much about the strength of the movement at this stage but we are told that even for a stern hand like that of Ziyād it was not easy to capture Hujr and his companions.\textsuperscript{2} Ziyād, however, captured Hujr and fourteen other active Shi‘ites, but not without difficulty,\textsuperscript{3} and dispatched them to Syria with a charge-sheet attested by some of his sycophants.\textsuperscript{4} Mu‘awiya, who normally preferred diplomatic means to extreme measures, could not tolerate any rising in support of the house of 'Ali. He immediately ordered their execution. They were put to death at a place called Marj ‘Adhrāh.\textsuperscript{5}

Hujr and his companions should not be considered as a few extremist revolters. They were representatives of, or strictly, forerunners of a growing movement of the Shi‘ite cause. Those who were arrested and executed did not belong to one tribal group but represented different social affiliations.\textsuperscript{6} The reaction to this persecution was serious enough.\textsuperscript{7} The

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{1} See Tab., II, 123. \textit{Kāmil}, III, 187, 188, 189.
\item \textsuperscript{2} \textit{Tab.}, II, 128.
\item \textsuperscript{3} \textit{Tab.}, II, 131. \textit{Kāmil}, III, 191.
\item \textsuperscript{4} \textit{Tab.}, II, 131. \textit{Kāmil}, III, 191.
\item \textsuperscript{5} \textit{Tab.}, II, 138 ff. \textit{Mas’ūdū}, \textit{Murūj}, III, 12.
\item \textsuperscript{6} For the complete list of their names and tribes see \textit{Tab.}, II, 143. \textit{Kāmil}, III, 191.
\item \textsuperscript{7} \textit{Dīnawarī}, \textit{Akhbār}, 237.
\end{enumerate}
Shi'ites of Kufa once again made a representation to Husayn to lead an armed revolt against Mu'awiya which was again turned down by him with the same advice as before. Mu'awiya was not completely unaware of these approaches to Husayn and was alarmed by the consequences. He wrote a threatening letter to Husayn and in his reply Husayn adopted a negative attitude.  

Excepting the revolt led by Hujr which resulted in a cruel persecution, the period between the death of al-Hasan in AH 49, and the death of Mu'awiya in AH 60, is again a quiet one in the history of the Shi'ite sectarianism. A general impression which we get from rather hazy accounts given by the early sources is nothing more than of fear and caution from both sides. Extreme measures against Hujr and his meagre revolt taken by Mu'awiya, who usually achieves his ends by other means, indicate his uncompromising attitude towards Shi'ite sympathies, and which was obviously the result of his fear of this opposition. On the other hand, Husayn's repeated refusal to lead the Kufan enthusiasts into an open conflict with Mu'awiya reveals his cautious attitude to avoid any such situation which could afford Mu'awiya to annihilate completely the supporters of his rival house. In other words, it seems, throughout this period Mu'awiya was looking for an opportunity to find an excuse to destroy those followers of 'Ali who could not be bought by money or by other

1. Ibid. 238. Mufid, Irshād, 206.
2. Dīnawarī, Akhbār, 238.
means, and thus get rid of them for the consolidation of the Caliphate in his house. It is not unlikely that one of the reasons for the imposition of cursing 'Ali from the pulpits was to provoke the Shi'ite sectarians to a rising which could give him a chance for their physical destruction. Hujr and a few others became victims of this provocation while others remained cautious and careful. And Husayn, by his counter-action, was trying to avoid any such situation and to wait for a more suitable time, which is proved from his replies to the Shi'ites of Kufa. In this way he saved himself and his party from an obvious danger on the one hand, and honoured the treaty between Hasan and Mu‘awiya, in which he was involved in some way, on the other.

A great event of this period, however, which had far-reaching consequences in the history of the development of the Shi'ite "Passion", was the nomination of Yazīd by Mu‘awiya. After the death of Hasan, an obvious candidate of Iraq and al-Hijāz, Mu‘awiya moved to fulfill

1. See in Tab., II, 112, and also in Kāmil, III, 187, the duties imposed by Mu‘awiya on Mughīra b. Shu‘bā when the latter was appointed governor of Kufa in AH 41 that he should vigorously carry out the cursing of ‘Ali and propaganda against him and his followers, and multiply the propaganda to disgrace, dishonour and blemish him and his followers, and also to propagate the virtues of ‘Uthmān and his supporters and make them popular among the masses. The same charter was given to Ziyād b. Abīh when he was entrusted the governorship of Kufa after the death of Mughīra in AH 51.

2. Dīnawarī, Akhbār, 238.
his plan, to nominate his son Yazīd to the Caliphate. It was not an easy task, however, and to this end Muʿāwiya had to act with great caution. Nevertheless, Muʿāwiya proceeded with the appointment of Yazīd, and, in due course, commanded his subjects to swear allegiance to the new heir-apparent. Husayn, ‘Abdullah b. ‘Umar, ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abbās, ‘Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr and ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Abī Bakr refused and opposed the idea as foreign. Thus, while his task was incomplete, because these five most important personalities of the time did not agree, Muʿāwiya died in Rajab, AH 60.

1. Yaʿqūbī, Taʿrīkh, II, 228 and the references below in n. 2.

2. This is out of the scope of this study to go into detail how Muʿāwiya carried out his plans. I have only touched on it in passing for the sake of continuity and as far as it is necessary for our purpose in connection with the development of the Shiʿite sectarianism. For details see Tab., II, 173 ff., 196 and 179 ff. Yaʿqūbī, Taʿrīkh, II, 203 ff. Masʿūdī, Murūj, III, 36 ff. Kamīl, III, 198 ff. For a critical version see Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom and its fall, 140 ff. Also another useful work on this is by Ibn Hajar, Taḥfīr al-Jīnān wal-Lisān, a small treatise published with his well-known work Sawāʿiq Muhriqa.
B. MARTYRDOM OF AL-HUSAYN

On Mu‘awiyah’s death Yazid ascended the throne according to his father’s unprecedented testament. The Umayyad grip on the Islamic world, however, at least physically, was so strong that Yazid, who was never held in good opinion for his conduct, character and behaviour in any pious Islamic circle, succeeded in becoming 'Commander of the Faithful'. But his title was very much challenged until he could receive homage from the five most notable personalities of Islam at that time, whom Mu‘awiyah in spite of his utmost efforts could neither buy nor force as he did

1. According to Abū Mikhna‘f on the first Rajab AH 60, Tab., II, 216. See also Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom and its Fall, 145.

2. For Yazid’s character and conduct see particularly Baladhuri, Ansāb, IV B, 1-11. Mas‘ūdi, Murūj, III 75 ff. Damiri, Hayāt al-Hayawan, 261 ff. Dinawari, Akhbar, 261 ff. Jāhiz, Rasā’il, “Risāla fī Banī Umayya,” 294 ff. Ibn Ḥajar, Shawa‘iq, 135. It is surprising to note that some of the western scholars of Islam, contrary to the unanimous reports of Muslim writers of all times, try to picture Yazid in favourable terms. The reason seems to be that when these scholars assess the Umayyad rulers they ignore their close connection and proximity with the Prophet of whom they claimed to be rightful successors and on whose authority they derived their title.

with all other persons and tribes. Naturally after his accession the first task Yazid undertook, in order to secure undisputed possession of the Caliphate, was to order the governor of Medina, al-Walid b. 'Uqba, to exact homage from the refractory, and if they refused to behead Husayn and Ibn al-Zubayr, for only these two were the most dangerous as possible pretenders. The weak Walid b. 'Uqba, who was perhaps also conscious of the personality of Husayn as the grandson of the Prophet could not force him to abide by the orders of

1. Tab., II, 196. For the details of calculated and careful measures taken by Mu'awiya for the nomination of Yazid see Tab., under the years 56 and 60 AH. Kamil, III, years 56 and 60 AH. For a critical version see, Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom and its Fall, 141 ff.

2. Ya'qub, Ta'rikh, II, 287. Tab., II, 216 ff. Kamil, IV, 5. Baladhuri, Ansab, IV B, 12. In all these sources only the names of al-Husayn and Ibn al-Zubayr appear, which again indicates that the immediate danger to Yazid's authority was, first of all, from al-Husayn and then from the son of al-Zubayr. That the importance of Husayn was much more than that of Ibn al-Zubayr is clearly proved by the unanimous reports given by the early sources that as soon as Husayn reached Mecca people abandoned Ibn al-Zubayr and gathered round Husayn only. See Tab., II, 233. Dinawari, Akhbar, 242. Kamil, IV, 8. Baladhuri, Ansab, IV B, 13 ff.

3. See the reply of Walid to Marwan when the latter rebuked him for losing an opportune moment to behead Husayn. Walid retorted, "curse upon you O Marwan, you are advising me to kill the son of the Prophet, only because he refuses to pay immediate allegiance to Yazid. By God, if the whole wealth and treasures of the world are given to me I would not sell out my religion by killing Husayn and thus become slight on the day of judgment." Tab., II, 219. Kamil, IV, 6. Dinawari, Akhbar, 242. Baladhuri, Ansab, IV B, 15.
the ruler in Syria at once, and consequently Husayn with his close followers and family members succeeded in seeking refuge in Mecca.¹

al-Husayn, like his brother al-Hasan, combined in his person the right of descent both from the Prophet and ‘Ali and, in addition, unlike al-Hasan, had inherited his father's virtues and chivalrous disposition. After the death of al-Hasan he was the obvious Hashimite candidate. But in the preceding years he did very little to support his rights, restricting himself to a negative attitude towards Yazīd's nomination. Nevertheless, he could no longer keep himself aloof because of the pressing demand from the Shi‘ites of Kufa. As soon as they heard of his refusal to acknowledge Yazīd and of his escape from Medina to Mecca, they held an emergency meeting again² in the house of Sulaymān b. Šurad al-Khuza‘ī. In this crucial meeting only the leaders of the Shi‘ite movement in Kufa seemed to be present, who unanimously decided to invite Husayn to come to Kufa and take over.³ Accordingly they wrote a

1. On the 28th Rajab 60 AH.

2. It seems that the house of Sulaymān b. Šurad was the centre of Shi‘ite activities in Kufa, because we hear of all the meetings of the Shi‘ites in Kufa which were held in his house. For the reasons unknown he is not seen at Karbalā, but again he appears as the moving spirit in Tawwābūn movement and was killed among them by the Umayyads. See, Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqāt, VI, 25. Ibn al-Athīr, Usd al-Ghaba, II, 351. K.V. Zettersteen, El (1) art. “Sulaymān b. Šurad.”

number of letters urging him to come to Kufa as they have no Imām other than him. Thus the first letter Husayn received on the 10th of Ramadān 60 AH, was signed by Sulaymān b. Șurad al-Khuzā‘ī, al-Musayyib b. Najaba, Rafā‘a b. Shaddād and Ḥabīb b. al-Muṣāhir. This must have been the real incentive to Husayn for they were the trusted followers of his house from the very beginning and had proved their loyalties at the battles of Jamal and Șīfīn with ‘Ali. Here again, we must be very cautious in using the term "the Shī‘ites of Kufa", in connection with those who wrote to Husayn to come to Kufa. All of them were not Shī‘ites in the strictly religious sense of the term, but were political upholders of the house of the Prophet for their political interest. However, apart from those mentioned above a good number of other Kufans also wrote a succession of letters to Husayn, each signed by more than one, for the same purpose, but motivated by political reason. The political considerations behind this invitation were that the Kufans resented the supremacy of the Syrians, and were anxious to throw off their rule.

The actions of Husayn, however, show that from the beginning till the end he had no intentions for power or the Caliphate. We do not have any report that while

he was at Mecca he tried to enlist any support from the people gathered round him; we also do not have any record that he attempted to send his emissaries to stir up a rebellion in the places sympathetic to his house, like that of Yaman.\(^1\) And, above all, had he acted promptly on the invitations of the Kufans, while the governorship was in the hands of the weak al-Nu‘mān b. Bashīr al-Anṣārī, he might have had a fair chance of success. His speedy arrival would not only have forestalled any effective action on the part of the Umayyad government, but would also have stirred real enthusiasm among the Kufans. This they emphasized when the leaders of the movement wrote: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. To al-Husayn b. ‘Ali from his Shī‘a, the faithful Muslims. Further! Make haste, for the people are awaiting you, as they have no Imām other than you. So haste, and again make haste! Peace."\(^2\)

In spite of all that Husayn, however, tarried. But, perhaps, either as the grandson of the Prophet, he felt it his duty to respond to the appeal of the Muslims, or was plunged into action by the demand of allegiance to Yazīd, which his filial pride did not allow him. Still he did not take any hasty decision and as a precaution, sent his cousin Muslim b. ‘Aqīl to Kufa as his emissary.

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1. See, Baladhurī, Ansāb, IV B, 16.
with instructions to ascertain the truth of these representations and then to report to him accordingly.\footnote{1} On Muslim's arrival he was enthusiastically received by the Kufans. A meeting (perhaps for the sake of secrecy at this stage the meeting was composed of only leaders of the Shi‘ite movement) was held\footnote{2} in which Muslim read Husayn's letter. \citet{2} records for us another letter of Husayn in reply to the Shi‘ites of Kufa. The content of this letter is worthy of note, which reads; "You have invited me to come to Kufa because you have no Imam to guide you, and you hope that my arrival there will gather you on the way of God. I am sending my cousin Muslim to report to me about your affairs. If it is in agreement with what you have written to me, I will come to you soon. But you must keep in mind that the function of an Imam is nothing more than to follow the Book of God; make justice as his behaviour and conduct; he must be a follower of Truth and submit himself completely to the Will of God.\footnote{3} The last sentence of the letter, explaining the duties of an Imam and the nature of the Imamate, invites us to think over the whole approach and attitude of Husayn towards the problem. In response to Husayn's

1. Tab., II, 228 and 235. Dinawari, Akhbar, 244.
2. Tab., II, 237.
letter, however, 'Abi b. Abī Shabīb al-Shākirī, Ḥabīb b. al-Muẓāhir and Saʿīd b. 'Abd Allah al-Ḥanafi, who were among the leaders of the movement, made warm speeches and gave assurances of their whole-hearted support till the last breath. We shall see shortly that they did remain loyal to the cause till the end and ultimately gave their lives with Husayn. Apart from them the masses of Kufa did not think it wise to lag behind in supporting the movement which, they thought, might become successful in throwing off the Umayyad domination and bringing them new opportunities. Consequently, 12,000 or 18,000 men of Kufa swore allegiance to Muslim in the name of Husayn.

Having received the news of this success from Muslim b. 'Aqīl, Husayn, however, decided to go himself to Iraq. Ibn 'Abbas and other friends of Husayn tried vainly to persuade him not to trust to the Kufans' promises, reminding him of their instability and treacherous nature. On the other hand, Ibn al-Zubayr urged him on


2. Tab. gives two versions, on p. 229, II, he mentions 12,000, but on p. 264 he gives the number as 18,000. Masʿūdī, Murūj, III, 64, also gives both versions. Dinawarī, Akhbar, 249, mentions only 18,000.

3. This letter of Muslim was sent to Husayn on the 12th of Dhuʾl Qaʿda 60 AH, and was dispatched by 'Abis b. Abi Shabib al-Shākirī, 27 days before the murder of Muslim. Tab., II, 264 and 271. Mufīd, Irshād, 239.

for he wanted to make a bid for power, and while Husayn was in Hijāz this was impossible as the people would never give him precedence over the grandson of the Prophet. Notwithstanding Husayn left for Kufa on Tuesday the 8th Dhu Hijja, 60 AH.

A brief outline of the events which resulted in the tragic fate of Husayn at Karbala is as follows. Receiving the news of Muslim's arrival in Kufa and the support given to him by the Kufans, Yazīd sent his strong man 'Ubaydullāh b. Ziyād to Kufa to crush the movement by taking any possible measure required. Knowing full well all about the insurrection in Kufa in favour of the son of 'Ali, Ibn Ziyād rode into the city in disguise, wearing a black turban, covering his face and was surrounded by a squadron of horsemen. Naturally, the Kufans, who were expecting al-Husayn, mistook Ibn Ziyād for the former, greeted him enthusiastically, gathering all around his horse and shouting, "Hail to you O son of the Prophet, we were awaiting you," etc., etc. When they, however,

2. The necessity of giving this outline will be justified in the following pages.
3. See the content of the appointment letter of Yazīd to Ibn Ziyād to take charge of Kufa immediately and do whatever he could to crush the movement. Tab., II, 228 and 240. The famous early historian al-Jahshiyārī gives still more detailed a version of this letter. See al-Wuzara wal-Kuttāb, 19.
discovered their error, they completely lost heart and ultimately abandoned Muslim, who was captured and beheaded together with Hānī b. ‘Urwa, in whose house he had stayed. This unreliable attitude of the political supporters of Husayn, so called the Shi‘ites of Kufa in general, once again proves the weakness of their character as it was pointed out by those of the travellers coming back from Kufa and happened to meet Husayn on his way. For example, at a place called Saffāh he met Farazdaq, the poet, and enquired about the affairs in Kufa. Farazdaq replied, "Their hearts are with you but their swords are with your enemy." 2

Husayn left Mecca on the same day Muslim b. ‘Aqīl was being beheaded in Kufa, knowing nothing about the recent developments there. 3 There is another point which should be given some attention and could be of some help in assessing the tension of the situation. Husayn, who delayed so long to go to Kufa, did not wait for the

3. According to Dīnawārī, Akhbār, p. 256, it was the same day, i.e. Tuesday, the 3rd Dhi‘l-Hijja when Husayn left Mecca. Dīnawārī is seconded by Mufīd in Irshād, p. 228. Tab., II, 271, says Husayn left Mecca the next day after Muslim was killed at Kufa.
4. Husayn received the news of Muslim’s death at a place called Tha‘labiya, the sixth stage from Mecca to Kufa, and exactly the half-way between Mecca and Kufa.
Hajj which was only two more days off, and without giving any consideration for what the people would think of him for ignoring the sacred ceremony so loved by the Arabs. This sudden decision proposes some emergency situation in Mecca itself which made him leave the Sacred House without any further delay. Ṭabarī, quoting Husayn himself, reports that the Umayyad government sent some soldiers disguised as pilgrims to arrest him.¹ Though it is difficult to prove this report still we cannot rule out a possibility of this kind altogether, keeping in view what happened to the Holy cities later on, by the hands of the army sent by Yazīd, in connection with Ibn al-Zubayr.² Perhaps Husayn, (if this version be true) in this situation, preferred to reach among his supposed supporters and sacrifice his Hajj, rather than to allow himself to be arrested or assassinated helplessly.³

Husayn, however, at the head of a little band of followers and relatives including women and children was pushing on towards Kufa. On the other hand, Ibn Ziyād, after killing Muslim and Hānī, made Kufa a

1. Ṭab., II, 278. Shi‘ite sources say that Yazīd sent some soldiers disguised as pilgrims to assassinate Husayn, and then run away amid the crowds.

2. For a critical version of the attack on the Holy cities by Yazīd's army, see Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom, 147 ff.

3. When we compare Husayn’s consistently negative attitude towards the Kufans with that of his sudden and hasty decision to reach Kufa, we have to find out a reason for it.
scene of terror and horror and in this way brought it well under control. At the same time he put strong blockades on all the roads leading to Kufa. On al-Qādisiyya which, by normal route, joins Kufa with al-Ḥijāz, he put a strong check post with an army of four thousand troops under the command of Ḥaṣīn b. al-Numayr al-Ṭamīmī. Thus Husayn's messenger Qays b. Mushir, whom he dispatched from Ḥājir, the fourth stage from Mecca, with a letter to the Kufans informing them about his arrival, was arrested at this check post and was beheaded in Kufa before Ibn Ziyād. Similarly, other borders like Qutqutāna, la'la'a and Khaffān which join Kufa with Basra and other parts of al-‘Irāq were being heavily patrolled by the Umayyad army, and consequently it was almost made impossible for anyone to go out of or come into Kufa.

1. See Ibn Ziyād's inaugural speech and orders which he gave after taking over the governorship of Kufa from Nu'mān b. Bashīr. He emphatically declared that anyone suspected of Husayn's support would be hanged without any trial, his house would be set on fire and his property would be confiscated. Ṭab., II, 242. Kāmil, IV, 10. Mufīd, Irshād, 214.


Husayn reached Baṭn 'Aqīq, a place only a few stages from Kufa, where he heard that an army of 4000 had been posted at al-Qādisiyya and changed his route to enter Kufa from another side. Ḥaṣīn b. Numayr, receiving the intelligence of this change of route by Husayn, sent a detachment of one thousand troops commanded by Ḫurr b. Yazīd al-Riyāḥī, who met the former at Dhū Jasam and surrounded him to round him up and bring him to Kufa before Ibn Ziyād. Husayn refused to submit himself and ordered his small caravan to set out back to Medina. Ḫurr, though according to the instructions of Ibn Ziyād he did not allow him to go back, yet he did not like to use his force against 'the grandson of the Prophet.' It was, however, agreed that they should keep on travelling along the Euphrates, in the opposite direction to that of Kufa, until fresh orders came from the governor. They had only reached as far as Karbalā when the messenger of Ḫurr returned back with the strict orders from Ibn Ziyād not to allow Husayn to move an inch further. Thus, Husayn was forced to encamp at Karbalā.

Immediately after, Ḥasīn b. Numayr reached Karbalā from Qādisiyya with the rest of the 3000 troops. He was followed by another division of 4000 troops, under the command of ‘Umar b. Sa‘d who took the chief command of the field.¹

Now they surrounded Husayn from all sides, laid siege of his small camp and cut it off from the river.² The climax, however, came on the 10th of Muharram, the seventh day after his arrival at Karbalā, when Husayn with all his companions and relatives, except an ailing son ‘Ali, was massacred.³

This is a brief summary of the lengthy accounts of the tragic end of Husayn, given unanimously by almost all the early historians.⁴ The purpose of giving this outline, here, however, which would otherwise be irrelevant in this study, is firstly to analyse how it

3. 10th October 680 A.D. Husayn was fifty-six years old at that time.
4. For details see Tab., years 60-61 AH. Kamīl, same years. Ya‘qūbī, Ta’rikh, II, 243 ff. Mas‘ūdī, Murūj, III, 64 ff. Abu’l-Faraj Isfahānī, Magātil, 55 ff. Dīnawarī, AKBĀR, 440-272. Mufīd, Irshād, 207-263. It is regrettable to note that no study has yet been made of the tragedy of Karbalā - an event which undoubtedly played an immensely important role in the early development of Shi‘ite sectarianism in particular, and left in general such a deep impression on the Islamic world that hardly any other event could. A thorough study of it, however, can lead us to very useful and revealing factors.
became so easy for the Umayyads to crush Husayn and the movement behind him; and secondly to determine the elements of religious sentiment among those who readily sacrificed their lives with Husayn and thus made another step forward to the Shi'ite sectarian consolidation.

We have already pointed out that all those who invited Husayn to Kufa, and then those 18,000 who paid homage to Muslim b. 'Aqīl as Husayn's envoy, were not Shi'ites, in the religious sense of the term, but were supporters of the House of 'Ali for political reasons. Indeed they wrote to Husayn a succession of letters and gathered round his envoy but it was chiefly a time-serving policy to safeguard their future in case Husayn should come in power. Nevertheless, it was also an expression of their hidden desire, though on political and material grounds, to throw off the Syrian rule which at that time, they thought, was possible only through Husayn. As soon as Ibn Ziyād, well known to Islamic history for his high-handed policy, took over the governorship of Kufa and after all those extreme and

1. For the high-handed policy and cruel character of Ibn Ziyād see Tabarī and Ibn Athīr, from the years 57 to 63. Balādhurī, Ansāb, IV B, 77-97; Balādhurī devotes a complete chapter to Ibn Ziyād. Also see Ya‘qūbī, Ta’rīkh, II, Mas‘ūdī, Murūj, III, and Abu’l-Faraj Isfahānī, Maqātil. In fact, the cruel character of Ibn Ziyād is a unanimously accepted historical fact which does not need any further proof and should be accepted as a unanimous report given by the Muslim writers of all times. The unanimity in report, from the writers of different inclinations, without any kind of other instance, is a proof by itself.
severe measures which he energetically carried out to crush the movement, the Kufans saw their hopes gone and they completely lost heart. They found it easy to make peace with the Umayyads rather than to endanger themselves.

There were some, however, though small in number, who invited the 'son of the Prophet' and led the movement motivated mainly by their religious feelings. Where were they when Husayn was so helplessly killed at Karbala? We have seen that, after the execution of Muslim and Hānī, Kufa was kept under firm control. Anyone suspected of sympathy with Husayn was subjected to death. Naturally all the leaders of the movement who were genuine in their support to it hid themselves to escape execution or arrest, not because they betrayed Husayn and wanted to save their lives, but, as we shall see presently, because they wanted to make themselves of some help to Husayn who was on the way. This may be seen by scrutinizing the names of those who gave up their lives at Karbala with Husayn, for the same men had been leading the movement in Kufa. The majority of them, as soon as they heard of Husayn's arrival at Karbala, in spite of all the obstacles, somehow managed to reach there and laid down their lives before Husayn or any one of his relatives were hurt. And of those who were not seen with Husayn at Karbala, some were already arrested and some others due to the heavy blockade of

1. See Supra.
2. See Supra.
the roads could not make their way to Karbalā in time until it was all over. Still apart from the Banū Hāshim and Husayn's kin there were ninety-two persons\(^1\) from among the Shi‘ites who fought for him till the last breath. Out of these ninety-two, fifty-eight were from the Shi‘ites of Kufa alone.\(^2\) Ṭabarī and other sources tell us in detail how secretly they could manage to escape from Kufa and reached Karbalā.\(^3\) Besides, we find about a dozen names of those who came to Karbalā with the Umayyad army and when they saw the sacriligious treatment of the Umayyads with the grandson of the Prophet, they could no longer resist their feelings for the House of the Prophet and defected from the Umayyad ranks\(^4\) and put their lot with Husayn.

Furthermore, it should be noted again that the blockade of all the routes coming into Kufa and its vicinity made it almost impossible for the majority of those Shi‘ites of Kufa who were in hiding, and also for those residing in other cities like that of Basra to come to the help of Husayn. Nevertheless, nine

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persons from Basra did reach Karbalā and shared their lot with Husayn. We have, therefore, a good ground to suppose that had there not been so many obstacles and had they got sufficient time to mobilize their strength, quite a good number of those four thousand Tawwābūn (Penitents) who later on sacrificed their lives in the name of Husayn would have been with him at Karbalā. Circumstances allow us to suggest that those who gave their lives for the sake of 'the dead Husayn' would have done so for the living Husayn. On the other hand, the aim of elaborating this fact, however, is not to suggest that had there not been those crushing circumstances Husayn's fate would have been any different. It would certainly have been the same in any case, because of the well organized military strength of the Umayyads in contrast with the weak and disorganized movement of the Shi'ites. But, the aim is to suggest that under slightly better circumstances it would not have happened so helplessly and without any resistance, and thus we could get a more clear picture of the physical strength


2. The losses incurred from different tribes supporting Husayn at Karbalā were: Kindah, 13; Hawāzin, 20; Tamīm, 17; Asad, 6; Madh hij, 7; Thaqīf, 12; the rest were of unknown tribal affiliation. See W. Montgomery Watt, "Shī 'ism under the Umayyads", JRAS, (1960) p. 16 cf. Tab., II, 386. Dinawarī, Akhbār, 270. Tabarī mentions from the Madh hij, 7 and does not record Thaqīf's 12; while Dinawarī omits Madh hij, 7 and mentions Thaqīf as having contributed 12 persons who were killed. Scrutiny of other sources confirms both reports, i.e., from Madh hij, 7, and Thaqīf 12.
of the Shi‘ite sectarian movement even at this stage. To support this assumption we can very well cite the successes achieved, not long after Karbala but with better circumstances and opportunities, by al-Mukhtār¹ and Ibn al-Zubayr,² both much less important than the grandson of the Prophet. An analysis of the sources allows us to say that some of the component parts of Husayn’s movement, later on frustrated or perverted, gave vent to their indignation against the ‘ruling majority’ under the banners of al-Mukhtār and Ibn al-Zubayr. This comparison also leads us to another important point. Al-Mukhtār and Ibn al-Zubayr, however, achieved considerable successes in their enterprises and both were able to rule certain parts of the Muslim State for quite a few years, but could not leave any religious following behind them³ after they had fallen,

1. al-Mukhtār b. ‘Ubayda al-Thaqafī siezed possession of Kufta in 66 AH (685-686 A.D) and captured Mesopotamia and the eastern provinces. He, however, lost his control of power and was killed in Ramadān, 67 AH. G. Levi Della Vida, El (1) art.‘al-Mukhtār.’

2. ‘Abdullah b. Zubayr proclaimed his caliphate in 61 AH (680-681 A.D) and by 64 AH he established his power in Iraq, Southern Arabia and in a great part of Syria. He was killed in a battle against Hajjāj on the 17th Jumāda, 1, 73 AH (4th October 692); hence he ruled for nine years. M. Seligsohn, El (1) art.‘Abdullah b. Zubayr.’

3. There is no trace that Ibn al-Zubayr left any sectarian following behind him; the name of al-Mukhtār was kept for a very short time and was followed by a group but soon after lost its sectarian identity and was merged in a wider group. See B. Lewis, The Origins of Ismā‘ilism, p. 27. Nawbakhtī, Firaq al-Shi‘a, p. 45.
though as much martyrs as Husayn himself. The reason is both obvious and vital. Neither they nor their upholders had any specific principle or particular view which could keep their memory alive in the annals of sectarian organization in Islam. Husayn, on the contrary, though completely and helplessly a failure in his action, he and his cause were so upheld by a section of the Muslims that his name became an emblem of a sectarian entity in Islam known as the Shi‘ites. This was because of the fact that his movement was linked up with a 'particular view' about the leadership of the community.¹ The memory of al-Mukhlār and Ibn al-Zubayr died with the lapse of time and could only find place in the annals of history. The memory of al-Husayn remained alive in the hearts and minds of a section of the people. This section being an integral part of the religious unity of Islam was thrust into a sectarian role.

Now, here is the place to examine the second inference to be drawn from the outline of Karbala given above - i.e., to determine the religious feelings of those who willingly gave their lives with Husayn. Our early sources do not lack in providing us ample proofs of that doctrinal stand which urged the companions of Husayn to choose to die with him rather than to live in peace and comfort which was possible for them.

¹ I have traced out this 'particular view' right from the death of the Prophet and the event of Saqīfa. See first chapter. Supra.
even till the last moment. This can be well elucidated by examining those speeches and pledges of loyalty made by them on several occasions, and also from that war poetry in Rajaz, \(^1\) (verbal duels) which according to the Arabian warfare, were exchanged between the combatants of both sides. A few of them will suffice to illustrate the point that there was a particular doctrinal stand for which the followers of Husayn stood and died.

1) We have seen that Husayn's messenger Qays b. Mushir, whom he sent forward from Ḥājr to inform the Kufans about his arrival, was arrested at Qādisiyya from whence he was sent to Ibn Ziyād for the trial. The governor ordered him to go to the pulpit and curse Husayn if he wanted to save his life. \(^2\) Qays found it an opportunity to propagate his cause and addressed the people thus: "O people of Kufa! I am Husayn's messenger and I declare before you that Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet, is the best man of his time among the men of God on earth, and has better claim upon you than anyone else. It is, therefore, your religious duty to support him against the tyrants Ibn

1. It was customary among the Arabs that when two combatants come to fight each other, both declare in verse their tribe, its deeds and status and the stand for which they were going to fight. These verbal duels before actual duel made a huge bulk in Arabic literature.

Ziyād and his master Yazīd. Naturally, Ibn Ziyād's anger was inflamed and Qays was beheaded instantly.

If we compare Qays' attitude with that of Ḥujr b. 'Adī al-Kindī about twelve years before, we find a consistent way of thinking which links them with one another in an unbroken chain of the Shiʿite sectarian doctrine. His introduction of Husayn with special reference to his relationship with the Prophet, and that he was the best man of his time on the earth goes back to the ideas promulgated from the very beginning by the supporters of 'Ali.

2) When the first detachment of 1000 troops, sent by Ibn Ziyād under the command of Ḥurr, confronted Husayn, and he decided to return to Medina, he addressed his followers asking their opinions. For the sake of brevity we shall quote here only two of those speeches made on this occasion by the companions of Husayn in his reply. A devoted follower, Burayr al-Hamdānī, addressed Husayn: "O son of the Prophet, this is God's greatest blessing upon us that he has given us this opportunity to be with you to sacrifice our lives for you. We count ourselves the luckiest people of this 'Ummah to be killed and our bodies cut into pieces in

3. See part A Supra of this chapter.
your service, and thus we will be able to claim Muhammad's intercession on the day of judgment. How a people (ummah) can ask God's mercy while they kill the grandson of His messenger; and how will they show their faces to God on the Day of Resurrection?" Then one Nāfī' b. Hilāl spoke: "O son of the Prophet! You know that there were trying times for your grandfather, the Prophet of God, and it was not possible even for him to fill the hearts of all people with love and sincerity. So was the situation with your father 'Ali who had to fight again and again against the Blasphemers. Now you are facing the same situation. We all are wholeheartedly with you and will follow whatever you will decide. We would be friends only with those who are befriended with you and enemies of those who are enemies of you".¹

These speeches again reveal that religious view which prevailed throughout Shi'ite sectarian thinking. Specially, the declaration of Nāfī', that we will be friends of your friends and enemies of your enemies, takes us back to the year 37 AH when a group of the Shi'ites swore to 'Ali that they would be friends of those whom he befriended and enemies of those to whom he was hostile.² Now in 60 AH, after twenty-three years, the same words were being repeated again by a group of the followers of 'Ali's son and thus the continuity

of thought was kept alive in the development of Shi‘ite sectarianism.

3) On the night of ‘Ashūra (10th of Muḥarram), when all hopes for peace were gone and it was certain that the following morning would bring the summons of death for each one of Husayn’s small band, he gathered his companions and addressed them. In this address he clearly warned them of the surety of being massacred in the morning, and emphatically asked them to leave him alone and run away secretly in the veil of night as the enemy wants nothing else except his head. All the prominent companions and relatives of Husayn, in replying to his address, refused to leave him until all of them were killed. Perhaps we would not like to consider the pledges made on this occasion by the relatives of Husayn, like ‘Abbās his half brother and others, which may be interpreted as the clannish loyalty to the head of the clan. We would, therefore, examine the words and pledges of those only who had no blood, clannish or even tribal relationship with Husayn except, so to speak, the sectarian loyalty.

From among the companions, the seventy years old Muslim b. ‘Awsaja stood up and exclaimed: "How will we show our faces on the Day of Judgment to your grandfather, the Prophet of God, if we leave you at this moment. By God, we will not depart from you until our


2. For their words of pledge see Ṭab., II, 322. Kāmil, IV, 24. Mufīd, Irshād, 244.
bodies are torn to pieces in your defence. Then Sa'd b. 'Abdullah al-Hanafi addressed Husayn saying: "By God, we will not depart from you until by sacrificing our lives we will prove before God that we have faithfully fulfilled the duty we owe to the Prophet concerning you. This is the moment of the trial of our Islam and the trial of our sense of duty we owe through you to the Prophet from whom we received the message of Islam." Similar speeches were made by others.

The contents of all these pledges mentioned above, on two occasions, provide very useful points with which to emphasize that religious urge which made the companions of Husayn so firm and enthusiastic even at that moment of calamity. The aspects prevailing in these pledges are: (1) the emphasis on Husayn's close and direct relationship with the Prophet and not only with 'Ali; (2) that to betray Husayn is as to betray the

4. I would like to emphasize the point that the upholders of al-Hasan and al-Husayn based their claims on their relationship with the Prophet and not with 'Ali. We shall see in detail that a small group of the main body of the Shi'ites remained persistent on this point and upheld Husayn's surviving son 'Ali, Zayn al-'Abidin, and not Muhammad al-Hanafiya, on the very ground that the former was the great-grandson of the Prophet while the latter was only the son of 'Ali.
Prophet, or the other way round, loyalty to Husayn is loyalty to Muhammad, the Prophet of God; (3) that to give him up is as to renounce Islam which was conveyed by his grandfather, the Prophet; (4) that Husayn's betrayal this day will cause them to perish on the Day of Judgment and deprive them of the intercession of the Prophet. The essence of all these aspects, however, is that in their thinking there was an Imam or central authority who was the focal point for the love normally showered on, or directed to, the person of the Prophet himself.¹

4) On the day of 'Ashūra, shortly before the fateful battle began, Ḥurr b. Yazīd al-Riyāḥī, a respected commander of the Umayyad army, the first man who confronted Husayn and forced him to halt at Karbala,² away from the river, now was himself confronted by his own conscience and feelings. He developed a great conflict in his mind - either to wet his hand in the blood of the grandson of the Prophet, or to give up the rank and power and a bright career before him. His feelings won over him ultimately to choose the latter. He pushed his horse towards Husayn's camp, threw himself at his feet³ and exclaimed: "O son of the Prophet! Here is


2. See Supra.

the man who did you great injustice in rounding you up to this place and caused you so much troubles. Is it possible for you to forgive a sinner like me? By God, I never imagined that these people would go so far as to shed the blood of the grandson of their Prophet. I only thought that some sort of reconciliation will ultimately prevail, and in this way I would be able to retain my rank and position. But now when all hopes for peace are gone I cannot buy Hell for this worldly gain. Forgive my mistakes and allow me to sacrifice myself for you. Only by doing this I can ask for forgiveness from your grandfather and from God on the Day of Resurrection." Husayn, however, embraced him. Hurr then went in front of the Umayyad army and addressed his fellow men saying: "O people! What happened to you? I never thought that you could go so far as to be ready to shed the sacred blood of your Prophet's son. What will you say on the day of judgment when the Prophet will ask you about him?" Consequently Hurr was among the first who gave his life for Husayn.

3. The defection of Hurr to Husayn on the day of ‘Ashūra, shortly before the battle began and his being killed by the Umayyads, is as historical as the event of Karbalā itself. See Ṭab., loc.cit. Mufīd, Irshād, 229 f. and all the sources referred to above. In this context the speeches of Hurr quoted above, from Ṭabarī on the authority of Abū Mikhna‘f and from the Shi‘ite sources on the authority of ‘Ali b. al-Husayn who was present at Karbalā, seem extremely plausible.
The physical defection of Ḥurr from the established order was, however, not of much importance. It was the principle on which Ḥurr defected from the majority which should be counted seriously. This was, perhaps, the greatest visible victory for the Shi'ite viewpoint for which the companions of Husayn were fighting to death. The working of Ḥurr's mind at this last moment, as expressed in his statements mentioned above, was exactly the same as that of the companions of Husayn. This again supports the view that there was a particular way of thinking directed to the Shi'ite doctrine.

5) Now the last but not the least important in this connection are those Rajaz verses (verbal duels) exchanged between Husayn's companions and their opponents.

I. The same Ḥurr when engaged in battle was proclaiming: "I will strike my sword on your heads in the cause of that Imam who is the best among all the inhabitants of Mecca."¹

II. Nāfi' b. Hilāl al-Jamalī of Husayn's camp came forward and asked for his combatant proclaiming: "I am from the tribe of Banū Jamal and I am of the religion of 'Ali (Dīn 'Ali)." From the opposite side one Muzāḥim b. Ḥūrayth came forward saying: "I will fight with you, I am of the religion of 'Uthmān (Dīn 'Uthmān)." Nāfi' retorted: "No, thou art of the religion of Satan."²

2. Ṭab., II, 342.
III. When Zuhayr b. Qayn al-Bijalī was engaged in fighting, some one from the opposite rank asked him: 
"You were not from among the Shi‘ites of ‘Ali but were known to be as an ‘Uthmānī." Zuhayr replied, "But now being with Husayn you must recognize that I am a Shi‘a of ‘Ali." ¹

These are only a few instances of ‘Rajaz’ exclaimed by the combatants at Karbala,² which sufficiently reveal the fact that the Shi‘ite sectarian thinking was fully active among those who chose to be with Husayn. The statement of Hurr that Husayn is an Imām best of all dwellers of Mecca, and Nāfi‘’s and Zuhayr’s declarations that they are of the religion of ‘Ali are complete explanations by themselves and need no further comments. Yet the pronouncement of Husayn’s followers that they are of the religion of ‘Ali does not fail to suggest that they meant this term in a strictly religious sense in contrast with those who also called themselves with the same name at Jamal, Sīffān and other occasions with ‘Ali but on political grounds and, with the changing circumstances assimilated themselves with the ruling majority who were now going to kill the son of ‘Ali.

1. _Tab., II, 319._

2. War poetry in Rajaz pronounced by the combatants of both sides in Karbala preserved in Tabari, mainly on the authority of Abū Mikhnaf, who often relates from eye witnesses, makes useful reading and provides important points. See _Tab._ under the year 61, passim, in connection with Karbala, which covers a good number of pages. I have, however, quoted only three of them for the sake of brevity.
On the other hand by looking at all these quotations referred to above we find that throughout the incident of Karbala there had been a persistent, continuous doctrinal tendency among the followers of Husayn, based on their declaration of being of the religion of 'Ali. This very tendency in the course of time, as we shall see later, was translated into a more elaborate form of the Shi'tite sectarian tenets, and developed its own theology (kalam) and law (fiqh) in opposition to the Sunnî creed.

Commenting on the tragedy of Karbala, even a scholar like Hitti lets himself write that "Shi‘ism was born on the tenth of Muharram." But the information we get from our sources does not confirm this view. Instead, the fact as revealed by an analysis of the historical sources, is that the death of Husayn "set the seal on official Shi‘ism." For that purpose we have gone into detail in citing from those speeches, pledges and war poetry pronounced before the death of Husayn; and which clearly show the nature of the existing tendencies prevailing before the tragedy occurred. What is more true to say is that the tragedy did play an immensely important

2. See all the evidence and references quoted above in connection with Karbala.
role, not in the creation of Shi‘ism, but in the consolidation of the Shi‘ite's sectarian feelings. The fate of Husayn was destined to become the most effective measure in the propagation and comparatively rapid spread of Shi‘ism. It is also undoubtedly true to admit that the tragedy added to the Shi‘ite doctrine another element of 'passion' which makes human psychology more receptive to doctrine than anything else. From now on we find that this 'passion' element becomes a characteristic feature of the Shi‘ite. The tragedy of Karbala, however, in its immediate and far-reaching consequences, created four thousand Tawwabūn who let themselves die as a way of repenting for their negligence with regard to the 'grandson of the Prophet'. It provided a ground from which al-Mukhtār was able to launch his movement. It provided a penetrating slogan to the ‘Abbāsids to overthrow the Umayyad regime; and ultimately, the name and memory of al-Husayn became an inseparable part of the Shi‘ite's moral and religious fervour.

In the end of this phase a word seems necessary about the authenticity of the reports mentioned above from which we have tried to deduce the religious stand of the companions of Husayn. Taşbārī relates all these

1. Comparing the period before the tragedy of Karbalā.

2. See part C below.

3. See part B Chapter IV, below.

4. Ibid.

speeches, pledges and rajaz along with the lengthy accounts of Karbala from Abū Mikhnaf. Abū Mikhnaf as one of the oldest and best of Arabic historians has thoroughly and critically been studied by the scholars like Wellhausen¹ and Wüstenfeld² and is found the most reliable and authentic writer on the annals of Kufa and al-‘Irāq under the Umayyads. Their investigations find that as a rule he does not take his material from predecessors or far distant sources but collects it himself by enquiring in the most diverse directions from all possible people who could have first-hand information or who had been present to see and hear for themselves.³ The Isnād is with him a reality and not merely a literary form. His chain of transmitters is always very short and through this proximity of events he often relates from an eye-witness account, with only one intermediary.

Gibb suggests that Abū Mikhnaf presents an ‘Iraqi or Kufan, rather than purely Shi‘ite point of view in his historical narrative, but is weak and unreliable as a traditionist.⁴ In this, no doubt, his sympathies

1. See Wellhausen, preface to his Arab Kingdom and its Fall.
2. Wüstenfeld, Der Tod Husains und die Rache, Introductory chapter.
4. H.A.R. Gibb, El, (2) art."Abū Mikhnaf." I fail to understand in what sense Gibb has used the term "traditionist" for Abū Mikhnaf. In the list of Abū Mikhnaf’s works Ibn Nadīm, Tusi or Najāshī do not cite any work by him on Hadīth proper. See Ibn Nadīm, Fihrist, 93.
are on the side of Iraq against Syria, for 'Ali against the Umayyads. Yet in this there is not much of a bias noticeable, at least not so much as positively to falsify facts. Only on occasion does he seem to hush up what it does not suit him to state. For example, he suppresses the information that 'Aqil fought against his brother 'Ali.  

In the list of Abū Mihkna's works, however, Maqtal al-Husayn is unanimously recorded by all early bibliographers. It is beyond any doubt certain that Tabari copied and preserved this Maqtal to us in its original form. Wustenfeld, translating Maqtal al-Husayn into German, has convincingly seen in his long introduction that the authenticity of this Maqtal as of the genuine authorship of Abū Mihkna is beyond any doubt. Besides, when we compare Tabari's accounts of Abū Mihkna, with that of al-Ya'qūbī and other early writers reporting on Karbala from Abū Mihkna, we find that the accounts

1. Wellhausen, loc. cit.
2. Wellhausen, loc. cit.
4. Wustenfeld, Der Tod Husains und die Rache.
5. Ya'qūbī died 284/297.
are almost the same. Furthermore, early Shi'ite writers like Mufid\(^1\) (b.336, d.413 AH) and others relate the tragedy of Karbala, apart from Abü Mikhnaf, from 'Ali b. al-Husayn who was twenty-three years old when he was present at Karbala but could not take part in the battle due to his illness and thus was saved from the general massacre of the Banū Hāshim. We find that the Shi'ite accounts of Karbala also confirm what Tabarī has recorded from Abū Mikhnaf.

We have seen that Abū Mikhnaf's Isnād are always very short and often he relates events from the eye-witnesses.\(^2\) In the instances quoted above (from 1 to 5) he relates with the verb "Haddathāni", he told me,\(^3\) and his Isnād ran thus:

1) Abū Mikhnaf: Muhammad b. Qays,\(^4\) eye-witness.
2) Abū Mikhnaf: Abū Janāb al-Kalbi\(^5\) from 'Adī b. Ḥurmalā, eye-witness.
3) Abū Mikhnaf: 'Uqba\(^6\) b. al-'Ayzār, eye-witness.
4) Mufid, Irshād al-Qulūb. Mufid died in 413 AH and it is said that on his advice his pupils Abū'l-'Abbās al-Najāghī and Shaykh al-Tūsī wrote their Kitāb al-Rijāl and Fihrist respectively. See Aghā Buzurg al-Tihrānī Musannafī al-Rijāl, IX, p.423.
5) Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom and its Fall, preface.
6) See Tab., under the year 60 and 61, passim.
7) Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqāt, VI, 360.
8) He belongs to the 'fifth class' and died in 147 AH at Kufa. Ibn Sa'd Tabaqāt, VI, 360.
9) He belongs to the 'fifth class'. Ibn Sa'd, op.cit. 362.

5) Abu Mikhnaf: Yahin b. Hānī b. ‘Urwa, eye-witness; and


In most cases mentioned above Abu Mikhnaf cites the last name with the observation, "Wa Kāna Qad Shahida Qatl al-Husayn", "and he witnessed the murder of Husayn."²

Now, let us see the time factor here at the advantage of Abu Mikhnaf. Principally he records events of Iraq and its capital Kufa and about the people among whom he lived. We do not know precisely the date of his birth but at the rising of Ibn al-Ash‘ath AH 82, he had already reached man’s estate.³ The tragedy of Karbala took place in AH 61. It is therefore feasible that he had the opportunity of meeting in his early age those who had witnessed the tragedy of Karbala themselves; and in his old age he had met with those who heard the story of Karbala from eye-witnesses. And therefore, we can justify his assertion which he very often did for the last link of his Isnād with "he witnessed the murder of Husayn".


2. See Tab., under the year 61, passim.

Finally, by examining the very contents of the reports above (1 to 5) we find that the ideas expressed in them are not new but are almost the echo or repetition of those already promulgated and announced long before Karbala by the supporters of 'Ali, as we have already seen before. Even the fundamental points expressed in them like Shafā‘a (intercession)\(^1\), the Day of Judgment\(^2\), and love and respect for the Prophet frequently go back to the time of the Prophet and have also been a persistent theme of the Qur’ānic injunctions. We can, therefore, conclude that the speeches, pledges and rajaz verses expressed at Karbala by the companions of Husayn and reported by Abū Mikhnaf as preserved in Ṭabarī are, in all probability, historically sound and serve our purpose to infer the religious stand of the companions of Husayn.

1. See El (Sh) art.‘Shafā‘a.’

2. See El (Sh) art.‘Qiyāma.’
C. THE REACTION AFTER KARBALA

The martyrdom of al-Husayn had a great religious significance and a deep after-effect upon the Shi‘a and gave a new turn to the mode and nature of the Shi‘ite movement. The tragic fate of the grandson of the Prophet stirred the religious and moral sentiments, particularly those of the Kufan followers of ‘Ali who had so zealously asked him to come to Iraq to guide them to what they thought to be the Path of God. But when he came down to Iraq they did not or could not stand with him in the hour of trial. Soon after, however, they realised that their weakness or rather fickleness was the cause of the tragedy. A deep sense of repentance set in provoking their religious conscience, and in order to expiate their sin and obtain God's forgiveness, they thought, they must make similar sacrifice. They believed that they could only show real repentance by exposing themselves to death while seeking vengeance for the blood of al-Husayn. Hence they named themselves Tawwābūn (penitent) and are known to the history by this self-imposed title.

1. See in part B of this chapter the letters written by the Shi‘ites of Kufa to Husayn inviting him to come to Kufa.


The movement started under the leadership of five notables of Kufa with a following of a hundred persons, none of whom was below sixty years of age. This age factor should be noted as it indicates the maturity of their religious thinking and behaviour. They began, however, to prepare for a rising against the Umayyad government, and listened eagerly to the impassioned exhortations of ‘Ubaydullah b. ‘Abdillah al-Murri. The first meeting took place towards the end of the year 61 AH in the house of Sulaymān b. Ṣurad al-Khuzā‘ī who with four other Shi‘ite leaders of Kufa, al-Musayyib b. Najaba al-Fazārī, ‘Abdullāh b. Sa‘d b. Nufayl al-Azdī, ‘Abdullāh b. Wāl al-Tamīmī and Rāfā‘a b. Shaddād al-Bajīli, held a council in the presence of other members of the party. All of them unanimously entrusted the leadership of the


8. Balādhurī, op.cit. 205 ff. Tab., II, 497 ff. Kāmil, III, 333. See the speeches delivered by these five leaders, especially to note the emphasis put on Husayn's relationship with the prophet.
movement to Sulaymān b. Šūrad al-Khuza‘ī and from that time he is referred to as the Shaykh al-Shī‘a.  

They decided to seek God's pardon by fighting to the death the killers of Husayn, and to prove the purity of their intentions, some of them even willed their property as "Sadaqāt for the Muslims". Sulaymān b. Šūrad also entered into correspondence with Shi‘ite leaders in other cities, namely with Sa‘d b. Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān in al-Madā’in and al-Muthanna b. Mukharriba al-‘Abdī in Basra, who promised their support. The movement, however, went on secretly for about three years, increasing in number and strength, looking for a suitable time and opportunity. As long as Ibn Ziyād remained in power no action was possible, but the position changed with the death of Yazīd in AH 64/683 A.D., and the successful rising of Ibn Zubayr.

The sudden death of Yazīd brought about a great weakness in the strong control of the Umayyads and offered long-awaited opportunities to the under-current movement. Ibn Ziyād, who had resided in Basra as the governor of both cities, was expelled by a rebellion of the inhabitants and went to Marwān who was now Caliph in Syria.

1. A companion of the Prophet, a great partisan of ‘Ali and one of the most enthusiastic to invite Husayn to Kufa to take charge of the affairs.


5. Balādhurī, op.cit. 207.
The Kufans, on their part, ousted 'Amr b. al-Ḥārith, the deputy of Ibn Ziyād in Kufa and asked Ibn Zubayr to appoint his governor. Ibn al-Zubayr promptly sent 'Abdullah b. Yazīd al-Khaṭṭāmī, who took charge of the city in Ramāḍān 64 AH.  

Now with the obstacles removed the activities of the Tawwābūn became open. The governor of Ibn al-Zubayr is reported to have endeavoured to dissuade Sulaymān b. Șuṣrād and his followers from carrying out their plans, Nevertheless, he did not take any action to crush the movement for it was indirectly serving Ibn Zubayr’s interest. At the same time, however, al-Mukhtār b. ʿUbaydah al-thaqafī, who later appeared in Kufa, was organizing another group apparently for the same purpose but with somewhat different motives. Although al-Mukhtār tried to enlist the support of the Tawwābūn, they refused to join hands with the Thaqafite adventurer. They had no wish to participate in any doubtful adventure, and even announced that they would refrain from fighting the Syrians, if the latter would hand over Ibn Ziyād to them and accept the rights of the Ahl al-Bayt.  

They did not proclaim any particular member of the Ahl al-Bayt as the Imam, though there are very strong indications to suggest that they regarded ‘Ali (later on known as Zayn al-‘Abidîn) the surviving son of Husayn as the rightful successor.\(^1\) This suggestion is founded on many factors. Firstly, the very idea of the leadership based on hereditary sanctity which attracted the Arabs of Shi‘ite tendencies was still confined into the progeny of Muhammad through Fāṭima, as it was transferred from Hasan to Husayn and not to any other member of the Ḥāshimite clan; secondly, the name of Muhammad b. al-Ḥanafîya had not yet appeared on the scene for the leadership of the Shi‘ites;\(^2\) thirdly, even Mukhtâr who was the main progenitor of Ibn Ḥanafîya’s leadership first approached ‘Ali b. Husayn, and only when he failed in his attempt to get his confirmation did he turn to Ibn al-Ḥanafîya\(^3\) and ingratiate himself with his name; and fourthly, it was too natural for at least a group of the Shi‘ites of Kufa to regard the twenty-three years

1. See part A of the following chapter on Zayn al-‘Abidîn.

2. The movement of the Tawwâbûn started towards the end of 61 AH and Mukhtâr arrived in Kufa after the death of Yazîd in 65 AH and started his propaganda under the name of Muhammad b. al-Ḥanafîya. Thus the name of Ibn al-Ḥanafîya appeared four years after, when the Tawwâbûn were almost ready for action. See Balâdhurî, op.cit. 207. Tab., II, 506 and 534.

old son of al-Husayn as the successor to his father, as they had regarded the thirty-seven years old Hasan as the legitimate successor to 'Ali b. Abī Tālib.¹

Obviously the people were the same and their thinking was still the same so there is no reason to doubt that they would have applied the same principles in the case of 'Ali b. al-Husayn. Yet as long as he himself raised no claim publicly to the succession of his father and grandfather, the Tawwābūn also refrained from discussing this problem.² Instead they concentrated on their main goal, active repentance for their negligence in carrying out their duties in regard to the son of the Prophet. They did not seek political conquest or booty and discouraged those who desired material benefits from joining them.³

The severe standards set by Sulaymān b. Șurad proved too much for the majority of the original volunteers, and from the 16,000 who registered themselves, only 4000 turned up and marched under his banner.⁵

1. See part A of this chapter.
2. Nevertheless, their poet, 'Abdullah b. al-Ahmar mentioned in his verse "a caller" who "invited them to salvation", obviously an Imām, but without giving his name. See Masʿūdī, Murūj, III, 38.
5. Tab., loc.cit. Balādhwī, op.cit. 208. Wellhausen, Shiʿa, 194. The beginning of more organized and appealing movement of Mukhtār at this time was another reason.
First, however, they went to Karbala at the grave of Husayn and gave themselves up to wild and unprecedented expressions of grief, weeping and crying for the suffering and tragic death of the son of the Prophet. Wellhausen suggests that it was the first precedent of the glorification of the grave of Husayn and was purely Arabic in its character and nature since the Arabs were used to glorifying the Black Stone fixed in the Ka'ba. After spending a day and night in mourning, they left the grave of Husayn and ultimately reached `Ayn-al-Warda, where they met the Syrian army of Ibn Ziyād about 30,000 strong. They engaged the Syrians fiercely, shouting "Paradise, Paradise for the Turabites." After three days fighting the majority, including Sulaymān b. Šurad, were killed.

The first point to be taken very seriously is this, that all the 4000 Tawwābūn were Arabs only and not a single Mawlā. It was Mukhtār who for the first time conceived the idea of attracting Mawālī and gave a wider appeal to the Shi‘ite movement. Secondly, among these four thousand Tawwābūn many of the chief tribes of the

2. Wellhausen, Shi‘a, 194 cf. Tab., II, 547.
Arabs were represented though the outstanding number was from the South Arabian or Yamanite tribes. Thirdly, the penitent army included a very large number of the Qurrā’. All these facts, however, indicate two fundamental points. Firstly, that the Shi‘ite movement was still Arabian in its character and untouched by non-Arab elements—doctrinal or otherwise. And secondly, the movement of the Tawwābūn, who represented the "Central Body" of the Shi‘ites at this juncture, was absolutely a religious affair. Husayn himself, when he met Yazīd’s army, was aware of his dignity as the grandson of the Prophet, as well as the son of ‘Ali, and the Tawwābūn by their action were certainly combining loyalty to ‘Ali with loyalty to Muhammad himself and thus were taking the matter strictly as a religious issue. Finally, if we compare the feelings and the words of those of the Shi‘ites who gave up their lives with Husayn at Karbala with the speeches and expressions made by the Tawwābūn we find the same sentiments based on the same religious principles. But there is a great difference however. At Karbala the presence of Husayn himself was a great


2. Wellhausen, Shi‘a, 194.

3. See part B Supra of this chapter.

personal obligation on the Shi'ites who fought and were killed with him. In the case of the Tawwābūn there was no personal binding force which could keep them zealous enough to make them die except a strong feeling of duty and a feverish sense of religious obligation. Thus the Tawwābūn pushed Shi'ism another step further towards an independent and self-sustaining existence.

We have pointed out above that a little before the Tawwābūn were about to march against the Syrians, al-Mukhtār b. Abū 'Ubaydah al-Thaqaff arrived in Kufa with his ambitious plans and tried to gain the support of Sulaymān b. Ṣurad and his Tawwābūn, but they refused to join any doubtful adventure. This study, however, is meant only to survey the development of the central or legitimist body of the Shi'ites and its consolidation arising from the Imāmate of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, and does not cover the revolutionary, extremist or other ramifications of the Shi'ites which branch out at different stages. Our view is that there was, from the very beginning, a central or legitimist stream which was going to form, though certainly unconsciously, what ultimately came to be known as the Imāmite Shi'a. The movement of Mukhtār and the emergence of the idea of Mahdī attached to the person of Muhammad b. al-Ḥanāfiya are therefore outside the scope of this study and have

1. By the legitimate branch I mean 'Ali, Hasan, Husayn and his descendants in the main line who became Imāms, with the exclusion of Zayd b. 'Ali and other branches.
no direct bearing on the legitimists group at this stage.

Nevertheless, there were many cross-currents and much intermingling of ideas between these branches, and naturally the long continued Imāmite line was certainly affected by some ideas introduced by those who cut themselves off from the middle way. For example, the idea of ṭajra and the very idea of Mahdī in its technical meaning were ultimately adopted for their convenience by the later Imāmites. With these common points we shall deal as the necessity arises.

It should also be noted here that from this time of the confusion and rivalries in the leadership which followed the death of Husayn, this study has to deal with two different questions. One is how the legitimist Shī‘ism survived as a separate identity without being absorbed into the Sunnite synthesis. The other is how it maintained its own character distinct from the revolutionary and extremist branches of Shī‘ism itself. To resist the latter possible form of absorption was certainly more difficult than the former, as extremist and revolutionary ideas are often more appealing than moderate ones.
Chapter III
Beginning of the legitimist\(^1\) faction among the Shī‘ites.

A. ‘ALI ZAYN AL-‘ABIDIN

As long as Husayn was alive the Shī‘ites remained united, considering him the only head of the House of the Prophet.\(^2\) But his sudden death and the quiescent attitude of his only surviving son ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Abidīn left the majority of the Shī‘ites in confusion and uncertainty as to who would take his place. Thus the period following Husayn's death marks the first conflict in regard to the leadership of the followers of ‘Alī, resulting in their division.

1. To find a proper heading for this chapter is rather difficult. The term 'Legitimist' was used in the first chapter for those of the Muslims who supported the cause of ‘Alī against the first three Caliphs. In this chapter the term 'Legitimist' is used for those of the Shī‘ites who supported the Imāmate of Husayn's son ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Abidīn as against ‘Alī's third son, from a Ḥanafite woman, Muḥammad al-Hanafīya.

2. It is a historical fact that as long as Husayn was alive we do not find any support given to any other person, or any pretender who claimed the leadership. Even the "Crafty and ambitious" son of al-Zubayr, as Mu‘āwiya used to call him (see Tab., II, 197) could not dare to make public his ambitions. It should be borne in mind in particular that the confusion in leadership, among the so called Shī‘ites in general, started only when the last son of ‘Alī and Fāṭima was dead.
‘Alī b. al-Husayn was the only one of the sons of Husayn whose life was saved from the massacre at Karbala because he did not take part in the fighting due to his illness. He was at that time twenty-three years old. After his return, Zayn al-‘Abidīn lived in Medina for most of his life, avoiding political activities as much as he could. The tragedy of Karbala, left a deep mark on him. Rather naturally he bore a deep grudge against the Umayyads, holding them responsible for the death of his father. In spite of this feeling, however, he always refrained from expressing any hostile attitude towards them. As a result, the Umayyads too maintained good relations with him. In particular Marwān b. al-Ḥakam and his son ‘Abd al-Malik, who was Zayn al-‘Abidīn’s fellow traditionist, had even a certain affection for him.

When the Medinese rose against Yazīd b. Mu‘awiya in the year AH 62/682, Zayn al-‘Abidīn, in order to emphasize his neutrality left Medina and went to stay on his estate outside the city.


4. Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqāt, V, 212.

5. Ibid. 215 and 220.

compelled by the Medinese to leave the city he took his wife to Zayn al-‘Abidin and asked him to protect her.\(^1\) Zayn al-‘Abidin accepted the responsibility and sent her to al-Tā‘if, escorted by his son ‘Abdullah.\(^2\)

When Yazīd’s army led by Muslim b. ‘Uqba defeated the Medinese in the Battle of Ḥarra, and sacked the city, Zayn al-‘Abidin and his family were left unmolested on Yazīd’s express orders. Moreover, while all the other Medinese were obliged to swear a humiliating oath of allegiance, declaring themselves slaves of the Caliph, Zayn al-‘Abidin was allowed to pay ordinary homage only.\(^3\) These things, if on the one hand they show the neutral policy of Zayn al-‘Abidin, on the other hand they also indicate that the Umayyads, after killing Husayn, started to realize the respect which the progeny of Muhammad commanded among the majority of the Muslims.

In the conflict between the Umayyads and Ibn al-Zubayr, Zayn al-‘Abidin remained neutral. Ibn al-Zubayr did him no harm but held him in Mecca under his supervision. The most important factor in his policy is his attitude towards al-Mukhtār who tried his best to obtain the support of Zayn al-‘Abidin. At the very outset of his alleged mission he made Zayn al-‘Abidin a present of 20,000 dinārs. Some time later Mukhtār again sent him

1. Tab., II, 409, 410, 420.
2. Tab., II, 420.
40,000 dinars.¹ Zayn al-‘Abidin could neither accept nor refuse the money but laid it by until he later secured permission from the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik to keep it.² Al-Mukhtar even wrote a letter to Zayn al-‘Abidin offering him his allegiance.³ Zayn al-‘Abidin not only declined to accept this allegiance but tried to persuade Ibn al-Ḥanafiya to break with al-Mukhtar.⁴ He even publicly denounced him as a liar, but Ibn 'Abbās warned him of the possible consequences.⁵ Zayn al-‘Abidin took the advice, but nothing could change his resentful attitude towards al-Mukhtar, not even the grisly gift of ‘Ubaydullah b. Ziyād's head, which al-Mukhtar sent to him and not to Ibn al-Ḥanafiya, and which was delivered in a most dramatic manner.⁶ When


2. Ibn Saʿd, loc.cit. Tab., K. al-Dhayl, 119. Ibn Kathīr, Bidāya, IX, 105. Kashghī, Rijāl, 85, says that Zayn al-‘Abidin accepted and spent the first gift of 20,000 dinars sent to him by al-Mukhtar and used that money on the rebuilding of the house of ‘Aqīl b. Abī talib, but he refused to accept the second gift of 40,000 dinars and sent it back to al-Mukhtar because of his propaganda for the Imāmate of Muhammad b. al-Ḥanafiya. See Ibid.


Mukhtar was killed Zayn al-‘Abidin denounced him in violent terms, but again Ibn ‘Abbâs pointed out that Mukhtar was the avenger of the martyrs of Karbalâ. The reason for this hatred towards al-Mukhtar seems to be his proclamation of Ibn al-Hanafiya's Imamate which Zayn al-‘Abidin might have considered the usurpation of his rights.

Al-Kulaynî and other Shî‘ite traditionists record a number of traditions stating that al-Husayn expressly appointed Zayn al-‘Abidin as his successor. Most of these traditions are attributed to Zayn al-‘Abidin's eldest son Muhammad al-Bâqir. The authenticity of these traditions is doubtful, and it is likely that they would have been invented by later Shî‘ites. Yet, there are certain indications of the tendency of that period which makes us pause a little while in rejecting these sort of traditions. It is beyond any doubt historical that Mu‘awiyah clearly nominated his son Yazîd

1. The most commonly reported is that Husayn, before leaving for Iraq, entrusted 'Umm Salima, the widow of the Prophet, with his will and letters, enjoining her to hand them over to the eldest of his male off-spring in case he himself did not return. Zayn al-‘Abidin was the only son that came back, and so he was given his father's will and became his nominee. See, Kulaynî, al-Kâfî, 188. Majlisi, Bihâr, XI, 7. 'Amîlî, A'yan, IV, 332. Qâdî Nu‘mân, op.cit. fol.21 a does not mention any of these traditions but only says that he was successor (Wasî) to his father (Husayn).

2. It is also possible that Muhammad al-Bâqir himself might have introduced these traditions in order to support his claims to the Imamate against his half-brother Zayd, see part B infra.
as his successor to the Caliphate. Then it seems likely that Husayn, who was convinced of his right to the leadership of the Muslims, would have thought to bequeath his heritage to his son who could represent the same rights as he had himself done. Thus what is meant here by the tendency of the epoch is that the practice of the father nominating his son to the succession had already started at that time and was rigidly followed by the following generations. Nevertheless, the fact remains unchallenged that after Husayn's death the majority of the Shi'ites followed not Zayn al-‘Abidīn but Ibn al-Ḥanafīya, though the penitents, as we have seen, thought of Zayn al-‘Abidīn as a prospective Imām. Notwithstanding, even the remnants of the penitents who survived the battle of ‘Ayn al-Warda were attracted by Mukhtār to the side of Ibn al-Ḥanafīya. The reason was obvious. They wanted an active movement and could find an outlet only under the banner of Mukhtār. Zayn al-‘Abidīn could not tolerate this situation for long, however.

Zayn al-‘Abidīn, being the son of Husayn and the descendant of the Prophet, resented the pretentions of Ibn al-Ḥanafīya. Thus during the pilgrimage to Mecca in the year AH 73/693 A.D. he is said to have raised his claims, against those of his uncle. From the traditions in this connection, however, we may

deduce that Zayn al-‘Abidīn disputed the claims of Ibn al-Ḥanafiya, since we find that Abū Khālid al-Kābulī, Qāsim b. ‘Awf and some other followers of the latter abandoned him and went to Zayn al-‘Abidīn's side, thus making the nucleus of his party.  The majority of the Shi‘ites, however, continued to recognize the Imāmate of Ibn al-Ḥanafiya and later on his son Abū Ḥāshim ‘Abdullah. In order to disprove their assumptions, the adherents of Zayn al-‘Abidīn quoted a tradition from the Prophet known as Ḥadīth al-Mubahala.

The tradition runs thus: "Once a representative body from among the Christians of Najrān led by two monks came to the Prophet to contest his religious claims. After many days of discussion and arguments which could not convince either party, Muhammad received God's revelation which commanded: 'And whoso disputeth with thee concerning him (Jesus), after the knowledge which hath come unto thee, say unto him: 'Come, we will summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves, then we will pray to invoke the curse of Allah upon those who lie.'" Muhammad convinced of his truth put the suggestion of mutual cursing (Mubahala or Mulālā‘ina) including their families, before the Christians to which they agreed. Next morning Muhammad accompanied by ‘Ali, Fāṭima, Hasan and Husayn, came to the appointed place. When the Christians saw him with his dearest ones to

1. Kash., Rijāl, 80, 82f.
2. The Qurʾān, III, 59.
subject them to a trial of God, they lost courage, and
did not dare to curse him, but submitted and offered
to pay tribute."¹ This tradition has been transmitted
on a number of Isnāds but the earliest of them go as
far back as the circle of Zayn al-‘Abidīn's adherents
and these may be taken as genuine.² Thus Ḥadīth al-
Mubahala was the beginning of the idea of limiting Ahl
al-Bayt to the progeny of Fāṭima introduced by Zayn al-
‘Abidīn. We shall see that this idea was made more
clear and specific by the Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq during
his Imāmate by his introducing another tradition known
as Ḥadīth al-Kisā.

However, towards the end of his life Zayn al-
‘Abidīn seems to have succeeded in gathering round him a
small band of adherents. Among his earliest followers,
apart from Yaḥya b. 'Umm al-Ṭiwāl and Muḥammad b. Jūbayr
b. Mu‘tim, was also Jābir b. ‘Abdullāh al-Anṣārī,³ a

1. Wahīdī, Asbāb al-Nuzūl, 74 ff. Tabarī, Tafsīr, III,
212 ff. Majlisī, Bihar, IX, 49-52. Louis Massignon,
(El (1) Supplement) commenting on Mubahala says that
Mubahala was in fact an interview of the Prophet with
the Christians of Najrān which ended in a diplomatic
agreement-Musālahah. See also R 50. 1933. pp. 103 ff.

2. (a) ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥāfiz, Abu ‘l-Hāfs
‘Umar b. Ahmad; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Sulaymān b. al-
Ash‘ath, Yaḥya b. Ḥātān, Bīghr b. Mehraw, Muḥammad
b. Dinār, Dāwūd b. Abī Hind, al-Shaybī from Jābir
b. ‘Abdullāh al-Anṣārī (Wahīdī, Toc.cit.) (b) ‘Isa b.
Furqād, Abu ‘l-Jārud from Zayd b. ‘Alī, (Tabarī, loc.
cit.) Yet another Isnād leads to Ibn Jurayj who was
well-known for his sympathies towards the Huṣaynid
Imāms. For Ibn Jurayj’s pro-Huṣaynid’s attitude see
Kash., Rijāl, 274.

3. He died in the year AH 78/697-698 A.D. Ḥā’irī,
Muntaha, 72. Also see Kash, Rijāl, 27 ff.
companion of the Prophet and a devoted supporter of 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib. On account of his prestige as a Ṣahābī, Jābir was a very important acquisition for Zayn al-‘Abidīn's party. Another important figure was the Kufan Sa‘īd b. al-Jubayr, a Mawla of Banū Asad, a warm-hearted and brave man, though because of his excessive zeal, unreliable as a traditionist. He was Zayn al-‘Abidīn's main spokesman, and gained many sympathisers among his fellow-traditionists, especially from the old companions of 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib such as 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Abī Layla al-Anṣārī. The group of Zayn al-‘Abidīn's active supporters included also two young Kufans: Abū Hamza Thābit b. Dīnār al-Thumālī, an Arab from the tribe of Azd, and Furāt b. al-Āhsaf al-'Abdī, who showed strong extremist tendencies. Both were later


2. He even refused to hide his partisanship and support of the House of the Prophet. Dhahabī, Tārīkh, IV, 3. Kash, Ṣījāl, 79.


4. Kash., Ṣījāl, 79. Majlisī, Bihār, XI, 38 quotes several Kufites, among them Ibars b. Taghlib and Ḫukaym b. Shu‘ayb al-Sayrafi, who must have been at that time a very young man.

5. Ḥā’irī, Muntaha, 173. Also see Kash, Ṣījāl, 67.

6. He died in the year AH 150/767 A.D. Ḥā’irī, Muntaha, 70.

7. Accused of ghulūw and perversion in religion, Ḥā’irī, Muntaha, 240.
close companions of al-Bāqir.¹

The poet Abū al-Ṭufayl ‘Amir b. Wā'ila² played rather an enigmatic role. A Kaysānite and a former associate of Mukhtār, he had been one of the leaders of the Kaysānites and after the death of Ibn al-Ḥanafiya he believed in his concealment in Jabal Raq'a.³ Yet he moved in the circle of the companions of Zayn al-‘Abidīn as well, and in a certain sense was his follower though he did not expressly recognize his Imāmate.⁴

Al-Tarazdaq, the renowned poet of that time, was another devoted follower of Zayn al-‘Abidīn who composed numerous verses to propagate the cause of the Imām.⁵ But his most famous Qaṣīda in praise of the Imām celebrates the occasion when Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik is reported to have been over-shadowed by the respect the people showed for the Imām while both were trying to reach the Black Stone in the crowded Ka‘ba, thus:


². He was known as a traditionist and traditions on his authority are quoted by Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, V, 455-6.

³. Ṣahīḥ, XIII, 167-168.

⁴. See Ḥā’irī, Muntaha, 167-168.

⁵. Ṣahīḥ, XIV, 78.
deeply offending the prince. This Qaṣīda is very important in that it shows the particular emphasis, on Zayn al-ʿAbidīn's noble birth as a descendant of the Prophet as distinct from Muhammad Ibn al-Ḥanafīya. Farazdaq, however, had to pay for his praise for the Imām and was imprisoned by the order of the prince. When Zayn al-ʿAbidīn heard about the misfortune of the poet, he sent him a gift of 12,000 Dirhams, but the poet refused to accept the gift saying that he had composed the poem purely from religious zeal.


2. The Qaṣīda begins with the line

3. See particularly the verses Nos. 3 and 13 which read:

The authenticity of this famous Qaṣīda of Farazdaq can hardly be doubted. The occasion on which it is reported to have been composed may be true, but the later part of the story about the Imām's gift and Farazdaq's reply in these words seems to be a latter addition as it does not agree with the careful attitude and policy adopted by Zayn al-ʿAbidīn.

However, all these reports of Zayn al-ʿAbidīn's adherents suggest that the Husaynid line had always been a focus of devotion and special regard, though by a very small minority, and that Zayn al-ʿAbidīn gathered round him some zealous followers who looked upon him as the legitimate Imām of the House of the Prophet. But in the period between the death of Husayn and the death of Ibn al-Zubayr, Zayn al-ʿAbidīn was certainly left without any visible following. The latter Shiʿite traditionists tried to fill in this gap but these traditions can easily be rejected. According to al-Kashshī, for example, Muhammad al-Bāqrī said: "After the death of Husayn all the people apostatized, except three - Abū Khalīd al-Kābulī, Yaḥyā b. ʿUmm al-Ṭawīl and Jubayr b. Muʿtim, and only later did others join them, and their number increase." This tradition seems to be highly doubtful.

1. Kash., Rijāl, 81-82. Abū Khalīd Wardān al-Kābulī, nicknamed Kankār. See Ḥāʾirī, Muntaha, 319, for Yaḥyā b. ʿUmm al-Ṭawīl see Ibid. 326. Jubayr b. Muʿtim must have been mentioned by mistake instead of his son Muhammad b. Jubayr, for he died in AH 58/677-678 A.D. Ibid. 74 and 254.
because a nucleus of the legitimist faction was not openly formed in opposition to the successful propaganda of Mukhtar for the Imamate of Ibn al-Hanafiya until the death of Ibn al-Zubayr. Even if Zayn al-'Abidin had made any plans to claim the Imamate before the year 73 AH in which Ibn al-Zubayr was killed, this must have been done within the circle of his closest dependents. Of these, however, his Mawla Shu‘ayb attained some fame, being counted as a traditionist. Furthermore, among the Alids whom Ibn al-Zubayr held in the prison of ‘Arim, the name of Zayn al-‘Abidin is nowhere mentioned, which again indicates that till then he was absolutely quiet. At the same time, on the other hand, quietness does not mean complete absence of an idea, the expression of which often depends on the prevailing circumstances and opportunities.

Apart from these reports which may be considered of some historical value, a tissue of legends was woven around Zayn al-‘Abidin's person making it difficult to extract anything factual from this tangle. Even the commonly recorded report that he was the son of a daughter of Yezdigird, the last King of the Sasanid dynasty, is highly doubtful. It is said that during

2. Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqāt, V, 211. Mubarrad, Kāmil, II, 462. Qādī Nu‘man, op. cit., fol. 27b. Shablanjī, Nūr al-Ibsār, 169. Ibn Khallikān, II, 209. Ibn Kathir, Bidaya, IX, 104. In fact all the biographers, both Sunnite and Shi‘ite, who have mentioned anything about Zayn al-‘Abidin, have called special attention to this point that his mother was a Persian princess.
the Caliphate of 'Umar two daughters of Yezdigird fell prisoner along with others and in accordance with 'Ali's advice one of them was given in marriage to 'Abdullah b. 'Umar, the other to Husayn and she bore him Zayn al-'Abidin. Zayn al-'Abidin was born in AH 37/657 A.D. and so the Persian princess, if captured during the lifetime of 'Umar, would have remained childless for about twenty years as Husayn's wife. The story, therefore, seems to be an expression of wishful thinking on the part of the Persian Shi'ites, who wanted the Imam to be regarded as descendants not only of the Prophet but also of the Sasanids. They even gave Zayn al-'Abidin the honorific name Ibn al-Khayratayn (the son of the two preferred ones), i.e., two preferred nations of peoples - the Quraysh among the Arabs and the Fars among the 'Ajam.

Apart from sentimental reasons, there were also political calculations at the base of this tradition, for the alleged descendant of Zayn al-'Abidin from Yezdigird made him and his progeny legal claimants of the rulership

1. In another version there were three sisters, one of whom became the wife of Husayn and bore Zayn al-'Abidin, the second married Muhammad b. Abi Bakr and bore al-Qasim who later on became a famous traditionist, and the third falling to the lot of 'Abdullah b. 'Umar gave birth to his son Sālim. See Ibn Khallikān, loc.cit. Ibn Kathīr, loc.cit. Mubarrad, op.cit. 461-462.


3. Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqāt, V, 221.

of 'Irān, in the eyes of the Persians. However, the mother of Zayn al-‘Abidīn appears to have been a slave woman from Kābul.¹

There are many stories told by both the Sunnite and the Shi‘ite authors² about his devotion in prayer, his generosity,³ his sorrow and copious tears on the death of his father and about his other extraordinary qualities. Nevertheless, his piety was great, and must have been sincere, for he was not addicted to making show of his virtues. When travelling with people who did not know him he remained incognito, so as not to take advantage from the fact that the Prophet

1. Ya‘qūbī, Ta‘rīkh, II, 364. Other authorities say that she was a slave from Sind. The Shi‘ites assert that the princess died at Zayn al-‘Abidīn’s birth, and he was cared for by a slave woman. As the people believed her to be his mother, he married her to Zuyayd, a Mawla of Husayn, in order to disprove these tales. ‘Amīlī, A‘yān, IV, 310. Mufīd states that she was captured by ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Amīr, when he conquered Khurāsān, during the reign of ‘Uthmān. See K. al-Irshād, 269 ff.


3. There are many stories told about his generosity. It is said that he used to help the poor anonymously, carrying at night a sackful of victuals, and with his face covered, knocked at the doors of the needy. Only after his death, when the unknown benefactor ceased to reappear, did people understand who this friend had been. See Qāḍī Nu‘mān, Sharh al-Akhbār, fol. 23. Ya‘qūbī, Ta‘rīkh, II, 363. ‘Abd Nu‘aym, Hilya, III, 137. Shablānji, loc.cit. and Ibn Sa‘d, Tabagāt, V, 222.
was his ancestor. During prayers he was oblivious of everything else, and sometimes had fits of trembling. Due to his excessive prayers he was known as Zayn al-‘Abidīn (the ornament of the pious) an honorific name given to him by his fellow-traditionist and friend, al-Zuhrī.

He was an eminent traditionist in the Medinese circle of learned men. Ties of friendship linked him with the greatest Medinese lawyer of his times, Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyib who, for his part, respected the Imām with the highest esteem. Though it is true that Sa‘īd had a regard for Zayn al-‘Abidīn, there is no evidence to support the Shi‘ite's assertion that he was a follower of Zayn al-‘Abidīn. In fact, though friend he was, he did not become Zayn al-‘Abidīn's follower nor did he hold common views in legal matters, being a strict adherent to the line derived from ‘Umar and Zayd b. Thābit.

At that time the schools of legal thought were still in their embryonic state, and there could not

1. Mubarrad, Kāmil, II, 482.
2. Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqāt, V, 216.
3. Ibn Sa‘d, loc.cit. Ya‘qūbī, Ta‘rīkh, II, 363. Abū Nu‘aym, Hilya, III, 135. Ibn Kathīr, op.cit. 106 and 109. He is reported to have had callosities on his forehead and knees, caused by his prolonged prostrations and they earned him the nickname of Dhu‘l-Thafīnāt. See also, Qādī Nu‘mān, Sharḥ al-Akhbār, MS. fol.22.
5. Kash., Ibid., 82.
have been any serious differences of opinion between Sa‘īd and Zayn al-‘Abidīn. Yet it is possible that Zayn al-‘Abidīn as well as his uncle, Muhammad b. al-Ḥanafīya, were partial to the Traditions related on the authority of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭāhir.

Zayn al-‘Abidīn died in the year AH 94/712-713 A.D., and was buried in the cemetery of al-Baqī’. He spent 23 years of his life under his father and 34 years as the Imām himself.

1. Apart from other common sources quoted above, both Sunnite and Shi‘ite, I have frequently used a precious manuscript in the possession of the School of Oriental and African Studies. It is Sharḥ al-Akhbār fī faḍā‘īlī ‘I-‘A’immati’l-Athār, by the most brilliant jurist, theologian, and historian of the Fātimid dynasty, Abū Ḥanīfīya al-Nu‘mān b. Muhammad b. Mansūr b. Ahmad b. Hayyūn, d. 363/974. This work is of double interest; it is a work of Ismā‘īli origin, and a very early one, compiled about 350/961, from early sources of which many are possibly lost. It is of great interest to note that when I compared the reports given by Qāḍī Nu‘mān in his Sharḥ al-Akhbār with other Sunnī works (such as Wafayat of Ibn Khallikān, Hīlyā of Abū Nu‘aym, Tabagāt of Ibn Sa‘d, etc.) and Shi‘ite works (such as al-Kāfī of Kulaynī, Irshād of Murūd and Iḥtiyāj of Tabarsī, etc.) I found that almost all reports are the same, except sometimes with different Isnāds. It is also very interesting to note that the first and the most highly esteemed Ithnā ‘Asharī traditionist, Muhammad b. Ya‘qūb al-Kulaynī, who wrote al-Kāfī, died in 328 or 329, about twenty-three years before Qāḍī Nu‘mān wrote his Sharḥ al-Akhbār and there is no considerable difference in the traditions recorded by both the authors regarding the personal qualities and virtues of Zayn al-‘Abidīn; though often Isnāds are different, and of course Kulaynī is more detailed than Qāḍī Nu‘mān.
Zayn al-ʿAbidīn by raising claims to the heritage of Husayn, and by collecting a number of adherents, had already blazed the trail, but he was only a forerunner of the legitimist Shīʿa, not its creator. His eldest son Muhammad al-Bāqir inherited his father's heritage and following and it was his task to evolve the basic principles of the legitimist faction. Some scholars doubt whether he really achieved any degree of success in his lifetime, or even claimed the Imāmate. Indeed, there is a strong possibility that many traditions attributed to him might have been produced by some of his fanatical followers who survived him. Or even these might have been produced by later Shīʿites. Yet, there being no decisive criterion for their admission or rejection, we must, as far as our own common sense and circumstances of the epoch allow, accept them in the form found in the earliest existing collection, the "Usūl al-Kāfī." The testimony of the later Imāms of the same line, and their rejection of many traditions forged by the fanatical followers of the House, make the case in favour of some of these traditions a little stronger.


2. By Muhammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, died in AH 329/939 A.D.
According to the unanimous Shi‘ite traditions before his death Zayn al-‘Abidîn nominated Muhammad al-Bâqîr, his eldest son, as his Wâsî and successor to his heritage. We may doubt the existence of any explicit will of Husayn for the nomination of Zayn al-‘Abidîn as his successor, but we should accept the received tradition that Zayn al-‘Abidîn before his death must have explicitly nominated his son al-Bâqîr, at least in the circle of his adherents. In support of this assumption there are two obvious and natural reasons. First, during Zayn al-‘Abidîn’s time the majority of the Shi‘ites abandoned the Husaynid line and went over to Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya and then accepted the Imāmate of the latter’s son Abū Ḥāshim. Zayn al-‘Abidîn thought it usurpation of his rights and, not without much effort, succeeded in winning over a group of the followers on the principle of legitimate succession, through Fāṭima, in the line of Husayn. It is then very natural that he would have entrusted his eldest son to continue the task on the same ground he had established for himself.

The second and more convincing fact is the conflict between the Husaynids and the Hasanids which came into the open during Zayn al-‘Abidîn’s last years on the question of the administration of the Sādaqāt from the estates left by the Prophet. Al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan, known


2. See part A of this chapter.
as al-Muthanna\(^1\) was then in charge of the Șadaqāt. This office was contested by Zayn al-'Abidīn.\(^2\) There is a possibility that the persecution meted out by al-Hajjāj to the followers of Zayn al-'Abidīn\(^3\) may have resulted from information given to him by al-Hasan al-Muthanna.\(^4\) There is no evidence that al-Hasan al-Muthanna had any designs on the Imamate, but nevertheless he must have been jealous of Zayn al-'Abidīn as he considered his own elder lineage to be more entitled to the spiritual heritage of 'Ali b. Abī Ṭalib. Thus keeping in view this tension between Zayn al-'Abidīn and his paternal cousins over the right of the administration of the Șadaqāt of the Prophet, it is but natural that he would have nominated his eldest son as his successor to the material and spiritual heritage of the House. After the death of Zayn al-'Abidīn, however, al-Bāqir resumed the family quarrel\(^5\) and when Hasan al-Muthanna died, instead of Zayd b. al-Hasan al-Muthanna, he succeeded in getting the management of the estate in his hands,\(^6\) though only temporarily.

Though Muhammad al-Bāqir inherited his father's following he had to face many more serious problems

1. He was at Karbalā with Husayn, but due to his tender age of four or five he was spared. Ḥā'īrī, Muntaha, 91-92.
3. Kash, Rijāl, 82.
5. Kulaynī, Kāfī, 189.
than his father. Zayn al-‘Abidîn had only to counteract Kaysânîte propaganda which he did on the ground that he was the descendant of the Prophet as well as of ‘Ali. ¹ With the Imamate of al-Baqîr many descendants of Fāṭima took either motivated by ambition or discontent with the idea of the Imam being merely a spiritual guide, raised their own claims to the heritage of the Prophet. Thus the immediate problem facing al-Baqîr was not from outside but within the family circle from which his half-brother Zayd b. Zayn al-‘Abidîn, whose energies appealed to many Shi‘ites, was more threatening than others.² In these rivalries Bāqîr and his followers were overshadowed by the party of Zayd, which led the former to put special emphasis on legitimacy within the Shi‘ite movement.

Al-Baqîr thus resorted to the principle of nomination by an explicit "text" (Nass). He claimed that Zayn al-‘Abidîn had appointed him to the succession in the presence of his brothers,³ and entrusted him with a

1. See Part A Supra.


Casket, which contained secret religious scrolls and the weapons of the Prophet. After the death of Zayn al-‘Abidîn, al-Bâqîr’s brothers demanded their share of the contents of the casket, but he refused, saying that it was given to him as his exclusive inheritance.

Both al-Bâqîr and later on his son Ja‘far al-Ṣâdiq insisted upon the importance of these weapons, which were the same to the Muslims, they maintained, as the Tabût (Ark of the Covenant) had been to the Israelites. Yet from contradictory reports at our disposal it is difficult to ascertain whether these weapons were in reality in the possession of al-Bâqîr and Ja‘far.

There is a large number of traditions, recorded by the early Shi‘ite traditionists, and attributed to al-Bâqîr describing the nature and function of an Imâm.


2. Vide n. 1 above.


4. On the one hand, at the time of al-Hasan’s death his sons were very young and all of them were no doubt under Husayn’s guardianship and submitted themselves to his headship of the House. Then Husayn is reported to have used ‘Ali’s sword in the fighting at Karbala. On the other hand, there are many traditions asserting that after Hasan’s death the weapons of ‘Ali passed to his descendants and later on Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, a grandson of Hasan, was seen fighting with ‘Ali’s sword in hand during his uprising in Medina and that this sword was broken when he fell mortally wounded. See Abu’lFaraj Isfahânî, Maqâtîl, 188. Tab., III, 247. Other versions stating that it came to the possession of the ‘Abbâsids are very doubtful indeed. See, Tab., Ibid.
Some of these must be considered as being of his genuine authorship at least on the ground that he introduced them in order to strengthen his claims against other pretenders of the family. Thus he said that Muhammad was endowed with the sum of knowledge available to all preceding prophets, and he had imported it to ‘Ali, who in turn bequeathed it to his descendants.\(^1\) Every Imām, before death, passes it on to his successor.\(^2\) It includes both the external (Zāhir) and the esoteric (bātīn) meanings of the Qur’ān.\(^3\) In fact no one except the Imām can claim to possess the whole of the Holy Book.\(^4\) The Imāms also know the greatest name of God.\(^5\) They are the Light of God, that like the sun in daytime illuminates the hearts (i.e., minds) of the Faithful.\(^6\) Only through the guidance of an Imām can man keep to the path of Truth.\(^7\) For this reason the knowledge of a true

5. Kulaynī, Kāfī, 140. The introduction of this sort of tradition from al-Bāqir himself or from his close circle shows the beginning of Gnostic influence on Shi‘ism.
6. Kulaynī, Kāfī, 115, 116. The doctrine of Light too was first introduced to Shi‘ism at the time of Bāqir, but was developed during the Imāmate of Ja‘fār by the semi-extremists and extremists of Kufa under the influence of Gnostic, mainly Manichaean ideas.
7. Kulaynī, Kāfī, 141.
Imām "from among the people of the House", who serves as "the proof" (al-Ḥujja), is necessary, and no one can attain salvation without it.¹ No efforts will avail anyone without guidance from the true Imām of his time.² Complete obedience to the Imām is a religious duty (al-Ṭā‘at al-Mafruḍah)³ imposed on the Faithful by the express command of the Qur’ān: "Obey God and obey the Prophet, and the rulers from among yourselves."⁴ The Imāms are vice-regents (Wūlāt al-‘Amr) of God upon the earth⁵ and His "miraculous signs" (Ayāt al-‘Allah)⁶ mentioned in the Qur’ān. This compulsory obedience was due first to ‘Āli, and then in turn to al-Hasan, al-Husayn, Zayn al-‘Abidīn and al-Bāqir.⁷

Perhaps the most important tradition of al-Bāqir in this connection is one in which he describes the nature and superhuman character of an Imām. In this he made a clear distinction between the offices of an Apostle of God (Rasūl), a prophet (Nabī) and an Imām.

4. Kulaynī, Kāfī, 124. Thus the term "Ulil‘Amr Minkum" in Qur’ān IV, 59, is interpreted by the Shi‘ites as the Imāms of the House of the Prophet, whereas it is held by the Sunnis as any ruler who could impose rule and order.
(Muhaddith). ¹ An apostle, according to him, is a person who hears the voice of the angel and sees him either in a dream or when awake; a Nabī, he said, is a prophet who also hears the voice of the angel under the same conditions, but does not see him. Muhammad and some of his ancient predecessors were both apostles and prophets (Rasūl and Nabī). A Muhaddith does not see an angel either in dreams or awake, nor does he hear voices, but he is spoken to by God internally (‘Ilqā). The Imāms are in fact Muhaddithun, ² speakers of God.

Thus, as held by the Shi‘ites, Muhammad al-Baqir tried to establish his position as the Imam declaring himself the representative of God on the earth and divinely inspired interpreter of His words.

Now the most vital question to be considered here in this connection is whether al-Baqir could really achieve any success of religious consequence in his lifetime. A close scrutiny of the biographical literature from both Sunnite and Shi‘ite sources will help us to reach a concrete answer. In this attempt, however, it is necessary to keep in mind that the biographical data of the followers of al-Baqir which had been recorded in full detail by the Imāmite writers, was never

¹ The term Muhaddith is used here in the meaning of Speaker, who speaks as inspired by God; and should not be confused with its common meaning as simply a traditionist.

² Kulaynī, Kāfī, 102, 103 and 166.
disputed by the Sunnī compilers of biographical diction-
aries (Kutub al-Rijāl). Instead, whenever Sunnī writers mention the names of the adherents of the legitimist Imāms, they immediately remark that he was a Rāfidī or Ghāli or Shi‘ī. Then, we should also note the fact that the Imāmīte writers themselves specifically mention that such and such a person changed his affiliation at such and such a time and went over to Zayd or al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, whatever the case might have been. Furthermore, the writers of the Zaydīyya sect do not claim these sectarians of al-Bāqir’s group as from among their own number. All these facts, however, support the view that the list of al-Bāqir’s followers, which we are going to examine presently, as the legitimist faction, is not a mere fiction.

It is no doubt true that immediately after the death of Zayn al-‘Abīdīn a tussle for the leadership started between al-Bāqir and his half-brother Zayd, and that many active Shi‘ites preferred the latter because of his bold attitude. But in course of time al-Bāqir succeeded in attracting quite a considerable number including some of those who had gone over to Zayd. The most important of them were: Zurāra b. A‘yān, his brother Ḥumrān and Ḥamza b. Muhammad b. ‘Abdullah

1. Besides biographical dictionaries see also here-
siographers like al-Bāghdādī, al-Faraq Bayn al-
Firaq; Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fīsāl; and al-Sharastānī, al-
Milal.


3. See infra.
al-Tayyār. Zurāra in particular was a very important acquisition, for he became the most eminent theologian and traditionist of his time, with a wide circle of disciples in Kufa. His brother Humrān was formerly a disciple of Zayn al-'Abidin and later made himself known as an extremely devoted supporter of al-Bāqir, who promised him paradise and declared that he would be "from our Shī‘a in this world and the next." Hamza Ibn al-Tayyār, although for a time opposed to al-Bāqir, after hesitating between various sects, finally chose to follow him.

Apart from Zurāra other important acquisitions of al-Bāqir, who were later accepted by the Shī‘a as the Fuqahā of the sect were: Ma‘rūf b. Kharrabūdāh, Abu Basīr al-Asadī, Burayd b. Mu‘awiya, Muhammad b.

2. Al-Bāqir said that Humrān was always his supporter: "He never apostatized from us." Tūsī, K. al-Ghayba, 223. Hā’irī, Muntaha, 120.
5. Kash., Rijāl, 155. Ma‘rūf, a Mawla of Quraysh, living in Mecca, had a reputation for being rather a weak traditionist and could not be compared with Zurāra. He seems to have been of moderate Shī‘ite attitude. See, Kash., Rijāl, 138-139. Hā’irī, Muntaha, 304-305. Tafrišī, 205, a-b.
7. Abū‘l-Qāsim, Burayd b. Mu‘awiya al-‘Ijlī, an Arab by origin. al-Bāqir promised him paradise as he did to some others.
Muslim b. Riyāh al-Ta’īfī and al-Fuḍayl b. Yasār. The prominent figure among them was Muhammad b. Muslim b. Riyāh, a Kufite Mawla of the Thaqīf, a miller by trade, known also as al-Awqas (the one-eyed). Described as the "most trustful of all men" he was well-known as a great jurist in Kufan circles, and a contemporary fellow-lawyer of Ibn Abī Layla, Abū Ḥanīfa and Sharīk al-Qāḍī. He seems to have been a counterpart of Zurārā, for while the latter was a traditionist as well as a speculative theologian, and the originator of the Shi‘ite School of Kalām, Muhammad b. Muslim combined knowledge of the science of Tradition with the work of a practical lawyer and was renowned for quick and drastic solutions. He was also a well-known ascetic.

Among these followers of al-Bāqir, Abū Baṣīr Layth al-Bakhtari al-Murādī also attained fame and reputation as a great Shi‘ite faqīh and traditionist. Abū Baṣīr, a Mawla of Banū Asad, became the favourite companion of al-Bāqir and later of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq. Ja‘far is reported to have said that Abū Baṣīr, Burayd, Zurārā and Muhammad b. Muslim were "the tent-pegs of the world", and that without them the prophetic traditions would have

1. Ḥā’irī, Muntaha, 243.

2. Abū’l-Qāsim al-Fuḍayl b. Yasār al-Nahdī, an Arab from Basra, was a favourite of Bāqir and later of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq who said of him, "al-Fuḍayl is from us, the people of the House", thus repeating the words of the Prophet about Salmān. See Kash., Rijāl, 139-140. Al-Fuḍayl died during the Imāmate of Ja‘far, Ḥā’irī, Muntaha, 243. Najāshī, Rijāl, 219, calls him al-Faḍl. See also Tafrıštī, Fol. 157 b.
been lost. They were the fastest runners and the closest associates of the Imāms.¹ Another striking figure was Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī, who occupied a high place among al-Bāqir’s associates, and to him may be traced many suspect or downright spurious traditions, especially those relating to miracles.²

Al-Kumayt b. Zayd al-‘Asādī,³ a renowned poet of his time, was another great and very important supporter of al-Bāqir. He served the cause of the Imām more than any other follower through his poetic genius. His devotion which found expression in his talented poetry took the name and fame of al-Bāqir far and wide. But his collection of poetry, devoted to the praise of the Ahl al-Bayt, the "al-Hashimiyyat", caused him some serious trouble. The anti-Alid Viceroy of Iraq, Yusuf b. ‘Umar, brought this work to the notice of the Caliph, ‘Abd al-Malik.⁴ Al-Kumayt, however, managed to extricate himself from danger, and in order to please the Caliph he even wrote some poems in praise of the Umayyads.⁵ Nevertheless, the poet remained a great favourite of the Husaynid Imāms and Ja‘far al-Ṣadiq said of him: "Al-Kumayt has not ceased to be aided by the Holy Spirit."⁶

2. Kash., Rijāl, 132-133. Ḥā’irī, Muntaha, 73.
Though the city of Basra was generally anti-Shī‘ite, al-Bāqir succeeded in making several followers there too, such as Muhammad b. Marwān al-Baṣrī and Mālik b. A‘yān. In Mecca also, al-Bāqir earned quite a few staunch followers. The main figure among them was Maymūn b. al-Aswad al-Qaddāḥ al-Makkī, a Mawla of the Banū Makhzūm. The most important point in studying the development of the legitimist Shī‘a during al-Bāqir’s period is the beginning and introduction of extremist ideas in its hitherto moderate tendency. Their origin can be found in Kufa where the bulk of al-Bāqir’s followers resided, though the Imam himself lived always in Medina. There in Kufa, Jābir al-Ju‘fī, a most striking personality among the adherents of al-Bāqir, was the chief representative of the Imam. We find that most of the extremist beliefs

1. A Kufi by birth but living in Basra. Died in AH 161 aged 83 years. Ḥā’irī, Muntaha, 293. According to al-Kashshī, he was a descendant of Abū Aswad al-Du‘ālī, see Rijāl, 140.


4. B. Lewis gives a most appropriate description of Kufa when he says "A new and growing town, with a population composed of men of innumerable creeds and races, all turbulent and discontented, hating the government, the religion it represents, and the oppressing class which maintained it. It was an admirable breeding ground for syncretist." See Origins of Ismā‘ilism, 26.

5. See Sam`ānī, Ansāb, fol. 113 b. Najāshī, Rijāl, 93-94; also see chapter V part B.
were evolved in Kufa, mainly under the leadership of this particular man, and then they were attributed to al-Bāqir which he accepted tacitly, for they suited his interest in many ways. Two of them are easily discernible. First, by allowing his Kufan propagandist to circulate these extremist ideas al-Bāqir was able to attract many of the Kaysānites and the list of his later adherents shows that he succeeded in this to a considerable extent. The other and more compelling reason was to distinguish himself from his half-brother Zayd b. Zayn al-‘Abidīn, who adopted a more moderate policy.

Though Zayd's popularity was very disturbing to al-Bāqir, yet he restricted himself to attacking only the friends and followers of Zayd. Nevertheless, when an opportunity presented itself, he did not hesitate to contest Zayd's rights quite sharply. Thus when SaʿĪd b. al-Mansūr, one of the leaders of the Zaydite circle asked him: "What is your opinion about nabīḍh, for I have seen Zayd drinking it?" al-Bāqir replied: "I do not believe that Zayd would drink it, but even if he did, he is neither a Prophet nor a Trustee of a Prophet, only an ordinary person from the Family of Muhammad, and he is sometimes right and sometimes may commit an error." This was both an open denial of Zayd's rights to the Imāmate, and an indirect assertion

1. A great number of the traditions bearing the stamp of extremism are related by Jābir al-Ju‘fī. See chapter V, part B.

of his own position as the prophetic Wasī. Muhammad al-Bāqir was the son of Fātima bint al-Hasan, and so, being the descendant of the Prophet and of ‘Ali on both sides, he had a great advantage over Zayd, whose mother was a slave-woman from Sind, but the former never showed any inclination to organize an active movement, and maintained the pacific policy of his father. On the other hand, Zayd, a disciple of Wāsīl b. ‘Aṭā‘, the Mu’tazilite, was strongly impressed by the ideas of his teacher, and laid emphasis on the principle of "ordering good and prohibiting evil", if necessary, by force. Accordingly, he believed that if an Imām wanted to be recognized, he had to claim his right, sword in hand. Al-Bāqir and Zayd quarrelled over this point for when the latter asserted that an Imām must rise against the oppressors, the former remarked: "So you deny that your own father was Imām, for he never fought the issue." When Abū Bakr b. Muhammad al-Ḥadrāmī and his brother ‘Alqama, two Kufan Shi‘ites asked Zayd whether ‘Ali was an Imām before he resorted to the sword, he refused to answer the question, which made them break their alliance with Zayd and they went

1. Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqāt, V, 211, 320 and 325 f.
2. She had been given to Zayn al-‘Abidīn by Mukhtār. See Abu’l-Faraj Isfahānī, Maqātil, 92. Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqāt, V, 211 and 325 f.
over to al-Baqir. ¹

A crucial question was that of the rights of Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Zayd agreeing with the Mu'tazilites, held that the first two Caliphs had been legally elected Imāms, though 'Ali was the preferable candidate, and this greatly impressed the traditionist circles. At the same time he rejected the Mu'tazilite doctrine of "the intermediate state," but did not object to the opinion of Wāsīl, that in the conflict of "'Ali and his adversaries" one of the opposing sides was certainly wrong, though Wāsīl was not sure which, ² whereas Zayd regarded the virtues of 'Ali as of such a high order, that the idea of him not being in the right was inadmissible.

However, Zayd's special emphasis on accepting the Caliphates of Abū Bakr and 'Umar and his popularity on this ground among moderate circles shows, on the one hand, that the question of the Caliphate of the Shaykhān had already been under serious discussion at that time, and on the other hand, that Zayd's success by adopting this stand created an embarrassing and complicated situation for al-Baqir. Zayn al-'Abidīn himself never spoke against the two first Caliphs, but during al-Baqir's time the extremist views were becoming more and more popular among the legitimist section of the Shi‘ites. Al-Baqir was asked time and again what he

2. Shahristānī, Milal, 1, 49.
thought of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, but he always stated—at least in public—that they were legal Imāms. Yet certain Shi'ītes of Kufa asserted that he disavowed the two Shaykhs and only concealed his real opinion by resorting to the principle of Dissimulation. This propaganda no doubt earned him the sympathy of many extremist and semi-extremist circles, but on the other hand it discouraged those who wanted an active and more practicable movement to bring Ahl al-Bayt to power, and were already disappointed with al-Bāqir's quiescent policy. These moderates, so to speak, therefore preferred to range themselves on the side of Zayd who, in order to secure certain advantages, became more emphatic in his assertions of the two Shaykhs, at the same time rejecting the principle of Taqiyya. Al-Bāqir was infuriated by the attitude of these Kufan Shi'ītes and said, "Even if the Butrites formed one battle-line from east to west, God would not grant glory to the world through them."  

Among these Kufan Shi'ītes was al-Ḥakam b. 'Utayba al-Kindī, one of the most eminent lawyers of his city.


2. Traditions referring to the poet Kumayt quote Bāqir as very violently disavowing Abū Bakr and 'Umar. See Kash., Rijāl, 135. On the other hand Kumayt himself did not express himself openly against the first two Caliphs. See his verse in Ḥāshimiyyāt, 155.


He put 'Ali b. Abī Tālib above Abū Bakr, but nevertheless remained mild in his Shī‘ite partisanship, which made him highly popular among the followers of Zayd. As the judge of Kufa, he exercised a strong influence upon his fellow-citizens thus greatly helping the cause of Zayd. Naturally, al-Baqir, who considered that he possessed better rights to the Imamate than his younger half-brother, and also objecting to the generally compromising attitude of Zayd and his partisans spoke of them in a bitter way, giving expression to his anger thus: 1

"Hākam b. ‘Utayba and other associates of Zayd led astray many people. They say: 'We believe in God and the Last Day,' but they are not believers." The successor of al-Baqir, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, upheld the same view and accused Hākam of blaspheming against al-Baqir, and even called the Zaydites al-Nuṣṣāb (i.e., dissenters) who hated ‘Ali.

The problem of the Shaykhāt at this stage draws our attention to another problem - that of religious practice. Al-Baqir adhered to the Traditions derived from ‘Ali and his supporters, or at least attributed to them. There were, however, certain disagreements even between the Ahl al-Bayt, for Zayd was inclined to accept the practice of the Ashāb al-Ḥadīth of Kufa, mainly based on the

1. Ibn ‘Imād, Shadharāt, I, 151.
2. Al-Baqir ultimately succeeded in converting three of Hākam b. ‘Utayba's most important disciples to his side, as I have mentioned above: Zurāra, Ḥumrān and Ḥamza.
4. Kash., Rijāl, 149.
rulings of ‘Umar. Thus it was al-Bāqir who established the beginnings of the Madhhab Ahl al-Bayt. Al-Kashshī records for us a very important tradition which says: “Before the Imamate of Muhammad al-Bāqir the Shi‘ites did not know what was lawful and what was unlawful, except what they learned from the (other) people. Until Abū Ja‘far (i.e. al-Bāqir) became the Imam, and he taught them and explained to them the knowledge (of law), and they began to teach other people, from whom they were previously learning.”

This tradition clearly indicates that until the time of Bāqir the Shi‘ites followed the same principles as the Ašhab al-Hadīth of Medina, Kufa and elsewhere. Even later the differences in the sphere of the Furū‘ were in reality few. Al-Bāqir absolutely forbade all intoxicants, including nabīdh, allowed by the Kufan jurists. This measure was aimed to strike at Zayd and his party. Another problem was that of Mut‘a (temporary marriage), the prohibition of which the Kufan and most of the Medineese lawyers put in the mouth of ‘Umar. For this very reason, in order to deny the authority of the

1. Kash., Rijāl, 267. Qādī Nu‘mān, Sharh al-Akhbār, MS. fol 33a, records the same tradition with a slight difference. Ibn Nadīm says on the authority of Abu’l-Jārūd, that the Imam has written a commentary on the Qur‘ān, known as "Kitāb al-Bāqir", see Fihrist, 33.


second Caliph, al-Baqir permitted Mut'a.¹

However, the above mentioned accounts seem to make it highly probable that Muhammad al-Baqir did claim the Imamate as the inheritance of his father, and that the small nucleus established by Zayn al-‘Abidin began to develop under al-Baqir, into a legitimist faction within the Shi'ite movement. If we reject this then we will have to reject many established historical facts—foremost among them is the rivalry and even quarrel between him and Zayd. Nevertheless, the dates of the deaths of the chief associates of al-Baqir indicate that these developments in his favour took place towards the end of his life, for most of the renowned traditionists and jurists of his circle survived him at least for a decade.

At the time of al-Baqir's death, the legitimist faction though still limited in number, was to be found in all the main centres of Hijaz and Iraq. It possessed the elements necessary for its future growth into a strong and popular movement. It possessed a theoretical foundation, still only partly formulated and uncertain, and although it was not completely separated from the current ideas permeating the Madhhab Ashab al-Hadith, it was nevertheless sufficiently individualised to be regarded as a doctrine in its own right. It had in Zurara and his disciples its own school of speculative

theology, and an embryo for a school of jurisprudence. Finally, it had a "department of propaganda and literature" represented by the poet al-Kumayt.

The majority of this "legitimist" faction of the Shi‘ites still consisted of the Arabs residing in Kufa and mostly of Yamanite extraction, though the number of the Persian Mawālī, with a few of Greek origin, was increasing rapidly. The increase of Mawālī resulted in the sectarian doctrine becoming influenced by extraneous ideas. But these influences, especially Manichaean, did not become intelligible enough till the following epoch.

It is not certain when al-Bāqir died. The earliest date is given as AH 113/731-732 A.D., the latest as 126/743-744 A.D. The most acceptable, however, seems to be AH 117/735 A.D., as given by Ya‘qūbī. There can be no doubt that he was no longer alive when Zayd revolted in Kufa, but he could not have been dead for many years then, as Ja‘far al-Sādiq's position was still not well established.

Sharastānī tells us that some of al-Bāqir's followers refused to believe that he died and expected his

1. For the details of the tribes of Shi‘ite allegiance at this stage see Mui‘zz al-Dīn Qazwīnī, Ansāb al-Qabā‘il al-Iraqiya, pp.2-20. ‘Umar Rida Kahlalāh, Mu‘jam Qabā‘il al-Arab, I, 133 to 173 and II, 757.


4. Ya‘qūbī, Ta‘rīkh, II, 387. also Dhahabī, Ta‘rīkh, IV, 300.
Raj‘a.¹ If this report has any truth in it, it is a further proof that al-Bāqir in his lifetime was recognised by a group of people as their Imām. Nawbakhtī classifies his followers as al-Baqqiriyya² which was replaced after his death by al-Ja‘fariyya,³ derived from his son and successor. These names given by heresiographers, however, should not be taken seriously as they are very often used to mention the followers of certain persons and not as a sect.

Much has been recorded about his person and extraordinary qualities, a feature common with all Shi‘ite Imāms in particular. These reports though seems to be legendary, nevertheless serve some historical purpose in that they show current views and the tendencies of the epoch.

What we can, to some extent, accept from the tangle of legends woven around him is this. It seems he inherited many of his father's qualities: he was extremely generous, devoted to acts of piety and peaceful by nature, never thinking to organize a revolt to assert his rights.⁴

1. Milal, 1, 166.
2. Firaq, 25.
3. This name should not be confused with the Madhhab al-Ja‘fari, given very often to the present Twelve Shī‘a.
Instead, he strove to impress people by his extensive knowledge in matters of religion, and in fact he came to be considered as one of the most erudite men of his time. Because of this learning according to al-Ya‘qūbī he was nicknamed al-Bāqir,¹ "the one who splits knowledge open", that is, he scrutinised it, and examined the depths of it.² But according to Ibn Khallikān, he received the appellation - al-Bāqir - the Ample, because he collected an ample fund (Tabaqqar) of knowledge.³

He was visited by many jurists, who attracted by the fame of his learning, came to discuss legal problems. Among them were Muhammad b. Minkadir, Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu‘mān, Qatāda b. Di‘āma, ‘Abdullah b. Mu‘ammar al-Laythī and the Khārijite Nāfī‘ b Azraq.⁴

Al-Bāqir, however, lived as an Imam for about nineteen years and left his heritage to his son and successor Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq.

1. Al-Bāqir is derived from the verb Baqara, to split asunder.


Chapter IV

The Era of the Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq.

A. THE BIRTH, PARENTAGE AND PERSON OF JA'FAR.

'Abū 'Abdallah Ja'far, the eldest son of Muhammad al-Baqir, was born in Medina either in AH 80/699-700 or 83/702-703. It is difficult to choose between these two dates as our sources are divided. The year AH 80, however, seems to be more correct as Ibn Khallikān and other writers mention his birth in the 'Amm al-Juhāf, the year of the flood in Mecca, which according to al-Tabari and others occurred in AH 80.

From his father's side Ja'far, of course, was a Husaynid descendant of the Prophet. Besides, like his father, he had a double claim to 'Ali, as Muhammad al-Baqir was an Alid from both his father's and mother's sides.

From his mother's side Ja'far was the great-great-grandson of Abū Bakr, and thus he was the first among

   Muhammad b. Ta‘līha, Matālib al-Su‘ūl, 89.


3. Ta‘b., II, 1040.


the Ahl al-Bayt who combined in his person the descent of Abū Bakr as well as of ‘Ali. His mother Umm Farwa was the daughter of al-Qāsim b. Muhammad b. Abū Bakr. As Qāsim married the daughter of his uncle ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Abū Bakr, Umm Farwa happened to be the great-granddaughter of Abū Bakr from both the father’s and mother’s sides. It was because of this fact that Ja‘far is often reported to have said that he was “a double descendant of Abū Bakr.”

Ja‘far was brought up for his first fourteen years under the guardianship of his grandfather Zayn al-‘Abidīn. He observed his acts of charity, his love for long series of prostrations and prayers, and his withdrawal from

1. Her Kunya was ’Umm Qāsim and her real name is given as either Qarība or Fāṭima, see: ‘Amīlī, A’īyān, IV, 452.


3. Dilāy Bikrī, Tārīkh al-Khamīs, II, 287. Abī‘l-Maḥāsin, al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah, II, 8. Shablanjī, Nūr al-Ibṣār, 145. Muhammad al-Sabbān, Is‘āf al-Raghibīn, 227. ‘Amīlī, A’īyān, IV, 542. It is to be noted that the first and most important of all Shi‘a traditionists, al-Kulaynī and those who followed him among the Shi‘a traditionists like Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, al-Mufīd and Kashshī do not mention it, nor does the Ismā‘īlī writer Qādī Nu‘mān in his Sháb al-Akhbār, MS., or in the Da‘ā‘īm. Moreover, the fact that the historians of Shi‘a leanings like al-Ya‘qūbī and Mas‘ūdī and non-Shi‘ites like Tabārī also do not make any mention of this saying of Ja‘far, makes us doubt the authenticity of this report. Nevertheless, it is very useful to see how pious Sunnism tried to cement the relationship between the Imāms of the House of the Prophet and the tenets of the Jamā‘a.
politics. At the same time Ja'far noticed his grandfather's claims to the Imamate and his efforts, though meagre and limited, in collecting round him some devoted followers, against the popular appeal of the Imamate of Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya and then his son Abu Hashim. He also saw the respect with which Zayn al-'Abidin was held by the famous lawyers and scholars of Medina and elsewhere. In his mother's house young Ja'far saw his maternal grandfather, Qasim b. Muhammad b. Abü Bakr, accounted by the people of Medina as one of the most erudite and esteemed traditionists of his time.

Outside the family the childhood of Ja'far coincided with a rapidly growing interest in Medina in the acquiring of knowledge of prophetic traditions and of seeking explanations of the Qur'ānic verses. His boyhood also witnessed the culmination of Umayyad power, the final establishment of their administrative imperium, a period of peace and plenty, but hardly of religious fervour. It seems probable that an environmental background of this kind in the life of a boy of fourteen may have

1. See Chapter III, A.
2. See Chapter III, A.
influenced his thinking and personality giving his future work a certain direction.

With the death of Zayn al-‘Abidīn Ja‘far entered his early manhood and spent about twenty-three years under his father Muhammad al-Bāqir. In all these years not only did Ja‘far see his father’s efforts to establish himself as the Imām of the House of the Prophet, but as the eldest son he participated in these activities. Thus he noticed the resentful attitude of his father towards the claims of Zayd b. ‘Ali and the Hasanid claimants to the leadership. When al-Bāqir died, however, Ja‘far was thirty-seven or thirty-four years old and was destined to live for a period of at least twenty-eight years as the head of the Husaynid faction of the Shi‘ites—a period longer than any other Imām of the House could attain. ¹

Much has been recorded about the person of Ja‘far but it is all so much mixed up with legendary accounts that it is really very difficult to separate facts from legend. The sources, whether Imāmite or Ismā‘īlite, are very late and belonged to the period when Ja‘far was looked back on by these sectarians in some sense, as the fountain-head and the main source of their religious dogma and practice, and thus, they tried to attach every possible virtue and extraordinary quality to his person. Even pious Sunnī writings could not escape the

¹. If we take his date of birth as AH 83. Otherwise, taking AH 80, the period of his Imāmate would be thirty one years.

². Kulaynī, Kāfī, 193.
influence of this mythical image of the persons of the Imāms, especially in the case of Ja‘far when he was accepted as a Quṭb in mystic schools. The best we can do in this situation is to make a general picture of his personality based on the popular belief regarding his character as presented by the earliest extant sources.

We are told that he inherited many of the characteristic which distinguished his father and forefathers. In his house he used to sweep the courtyards and the rooms himself. He entertained generously not only the guests but the needy visitors as well. He upheld the family tradition of charity, and following the example set by Zayn al-‘Abidīn, went round knocking at the doors of the poor of Medina at night with a leather bag full of food.

1. As for example Abū Nu‘aym’s Hilyat al-Awliya, Farīd al-Dīn Atṭār’s Tadhkirat al-Awliya or Abī’l-Mahāsin’s al-Nujūm al-Zahira. Even the titles given to these works speak for themselves.

2. Kulaynī, Kāfī, 194-199. Abū Nu‘aym, III, 194. Apart from Kulaynī Kāfī, K al-Hujja, also see the venerated way in which the personalities of Ali Hasan, Husayn, Zayn al-‘Abidīn and Muhammad al-Bāqir are presented by Ya‘qūbī, Marasūdī and even Ibn Sa‘d. The same tendency manifests itself, to a great extent, in late Sunnī collections of Hadīth, e.g. Tirmidhī, Sahīh, II, 308 ff. See Wensinck, Handbook of Early Muhammadan Traditions under the headings "Ali, Hasan and Husayn".


He showed kindness and delicacy of feeling even towards men of very low standards. Once an Aramaean peasant from the Sawād, who had been coming over a period of time to pay the Imām daily visits, failed to arrive, and Ja‘far, noticing it, enquired about him. Someone remarked: "It is a fellow we can well dispense with, a Nabhātī." Ja‘far answered: "The nobility of a man is in his mind, and his dignity is in his religion, in his generosity and his fear of God, for all men are equal in their descent from Adam."¹

Despite the commonly recorded and universally accepted reports of his extreme piety and self-denial, Ja‘far used to wear costly and decorative clothes. He prayed in them and circumambulated the Ka‘ba exquisitely attired and perfumed,² thus bringing on himself the disapproval of some ascetically minded devotees, such as ‘Ibād b. Șuhayb and Sufyān al-Thawrī. When Sufyān reproached Ja‘far, saying that ‘Ali b. Abī Tālib used to wear a shirt bought for four dirhams, he replied: "Certainly ‘Ali b. Abī Tālib dressed himself like that, but if he did the same today, he would appear strange. The best clothes in every epoch are those which the contemporary people wear."³

Ja‘far is usually given the honorific name of al-Șādiq, the truthful, allegedly on account of his truthfulness

¹ Muhammad b. Țalḥa, Matālib al-Su‘ūl, 82. ‘Amīlī, A‘yān, IV, 591.
in relating traditions. Yet some of his contemporaries thought Ja'far to be "weak in traditions" ḍaʿīf al-Hadīth). Perhaps this was after he associated himself with the extremists of Kufa. It seems likely, therefore, that to contradict these doubts he was nicknamed al-Ṣādiq, though it is difficult to ascertain when for the first time this title was used for him. We find a report, though from a late source, which attributes to the Caliph al-Mansūr the initiation of the idea of Ja'far's being al-Ṣādiq. The circumstance in which it has been described appears to be worth considering. Mansūr was trying to justify the legal rights of the 'Abbāsids to the Caliphate which was being severely disputed by the Ālid claimant Muhammad al-Naf's al-Zakiyya and his supporters. At that critical moment Ja'far not only kept himself away from the political struggle but also discouraged his followers from taking part in those activities. When Mansūr sent for him to come to Kufa, Ja'far expressed his complete neutrality in the activities of his cousins and his hatred of involving himself in any sort of political adventure, whereupon Mansūr praised him as the most Trustworthy and Truthful of his time. This explanation becomes more


2. Kash., Rijāl, 208-209.

3. Abu'l-Faraj Isfahānī, Maqātil, 177-178 and 236 f.
appealing when one sees that Ja'far had been against al-Nafs al-Zakiyya's claims and at times supported Mansûr's Caliphate. He was anxious to assure the 'Abbâsids of his loyalty and often tried to impress upon his listeners that he did not like to displease "these cousins of his", (i.e. the 'Abbâsids). Mansûr is also reported to have mentioned Ja'far after his death as the noblest of all the 'Alids.

However, apart from al-Ṣādiq he was also known as al-'Alîm and al-Shaykh, but the more usual way of addressing him or speaking about him was by using his kunya Abū Abdallah or occasionally Abû Ishaq. Another way of addressing him was 'Yabna Rasûl Allah', O son of the Prophet. We often find in our early sources that this form of address was frequently used for the Imâms of the Husaynî line.

Ja'far is also reported to have had a weakness of making mistakes in speaking Arabic. When Juwayriyya b. Asmâ' criticised him for making these mistakes Ja'far was greatly pained and retaliated by calling Juwayriyya

1. At least he remained silent when others issued legal decisions (Fiṭrâs) in support of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya.
3. Tab., III, 213.
5. For example see Tabarî under the years 41 for Hasan and 60 and 61 for Husayn, which is reported often by Abû Mikhnaf and sometimes by al-Madâ'înî and Wâqîdî.
a Zindiq. Nevertheless Ja'far's fame for religious learning was great, greater than that of his father or any other Imam of the Imamiites. Perhaps the earliest historical reference in presenting Ja'far as one of the most respected and highly esteemed personalities of his epoch, and as having profound knowledge and learning, is al-Yaqubi who says it was customary for scholars who related anything from him to say "the Learned One informed us". Even the famous jurist of Medina, the Imam Malik b. Anas is reported to have said, when quoting Ja'far's traditions: "The Thiqa Ja'far b. Muhammad himself told me that"; Similar compliments for Ja'far are attributed to the Imam Abū Ḥanifa. The Shi'ite sources even mention Abū Ḥanifa as the pupil of Ja'far which is certainly not true.

In any case we do not find in the Kitab al-Kharaj of Abū Yūsuf more than two traditions from the authority of Ja'far. It is, however, not intended at this place to discuss Ja'far as a traditionist, but the aim is to make a possible assessment of his personality. In this connection, however, Shahrastani's remark whether influenced by pious Muslim thinking or based on some original sources at his disposal, would be helpful.

2. Ya'qūbī, Ta'rīkh, III, 115.
4. Ibid., fol. 39a.
He says: "His knowledge was great in religion and culture, he was fully informed in philosophy, he attained great piety in the world and he abstained entirely from lusts. He lived in Medina long enough to greatly profit the sect that followed him, and to give his friends the advantage of the Hidden sciences. On his father's side he was connected with the "tree of prophecy", and on his mother's side with Abū Bakr."

Whether we accept Shahrastāni's assessment of Ja'far or not, one might consider the fact that quite frequently Kufan as well as Medinese jurists, such as Muhammad b. 'Abd. al-Rahmān b. Abī Layla, Muhammad b. Shubruma, Sufyān b. 'Uyayna, Ibn Jurayj and Rūh b. al-Qāsim came to him asking for his views on various legal matters or for his interpretation of Qur'ānic verses. Some, as al-Ja'd b. Dirham, the Qadarite, and the dualist Abū Shākir al-Daysānī, a member of the Gnostic sect of Bardesanians, visited him in order to hold disputations. Then, there is a body of Mutakallimūn or speculative theologians, in whom al-Ash'ari takes much interest and

1. Shahrastāni, Milāl, 1, 166.
4. 'Amīlī, A'īyan, IV, 570.
5. Ibid. 569. Ṭabarṣī, Ihtijāj, 171.
devotes a number of pages, who are often seen round Ja‘far referring to him their problems. Besides, in mystic accounts we find that Ja‘far’s discourses with his contemporaries on points of asceticism and mystical behaviour are given much prominence. For example, Qushayri gives a full account of Ja‘far’s discussions with Shaqiq al-Balîkhî (died AH 194) who is presented as a pupil before his master.\footnote{Qushayri, \textit{Risâla}, 136 ff.} Farîd al-Dîn ‘Attâr, who never tires of referring to Ja‘far’s name, quotes, for example, Dâwûd al-Tâfî (died AH 165) who comes to Ja‘far asking his opinion about certain matters. Ja‘far said to Dâwûd: "You yourself are the most pious and ascetic person of this age, why have you come to ask me for my opinion?" Dâwûd replied: "O son of the Prophet, you are best among the creatures of God on earth, and it is our duty to ask your opinions.”\footnote{‘Attâr, \textit{Tadhkirat al-Awliya}, I, 167 ff.} Indeed this sort of information has little historical value and betrays a pious tendency of late century Islam. Nevertheless all these reports, some of them of early origin, apart from many exaggerated details, would show that Ja‘far did attract a great many people and did hold a considerably distinguished place in different circles of his time – for some as the Imam and inheritor (Wârîth) of the knowledge particularly in the House of the Prophet, for others as a devoted scholar and well versed in matters of religious learning.

Whereas too much has been recorded about his virtues
and extraordinary personality, little is reported about his domestic life and personal appearance. We are told that his complexion was very fair, his nose was somewhat bent, and his hair was black. He had ten children, seven sons and three daughters. Only three of them, Ismā‘īl, Abdullah and Umm Farwa were from his first wife Fātima bint al-Husayn b. ‘Ali b. Husayn b. ‘Ali b. Abī Tālib; Mūsa, Ishāq and Muhammad from a concubine called Ḥamīda; ‘Abbās, ‘Ali Asma and Fāṭima from different wives.

Ja‘far died in AH 48/765 A.D., supposedly of poisoning instigated by al-Mansūr, but this allegation is absolutely incredible and the cause of his death must have been natural. The story of his being poisoned was obviously invented by the later Shi‘ites to suit their belief that each Imām should die as a martyr. He was buried in the cemetery of al-Baqī’ in the grave of his father and grandfather.

1. Majlīsī, Tadhkira‘t al-‘A‘immah, 139.
B. THE GENERAL RELIGIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

OF THE IMAMATE OF JA'FAR.

The Imamate of Ja'far al-Sadiq saw the most crucial period of Islamic history, both in political and doctrinal spheres. It coincided with many epoch-making events, violent movements, the natural results of various undercurrent activities and revolutionary attempts, and above all the compromising attitude between 'the Ahl al-Hadith' and the Murjites in their efforts to

1. As we shall have to use this term frequently in this chapter it would be helpful to explain briefly its meaning and importance in the first century of the Islamic era. At first we hear of a term Qurra (Readers) which was in common use until the beginning of the ninth decade after the Hijra and was applicable to the Readers of the Qur'an, collectors of the Traditions and all those who applied them in a practical way by judging legal cases. Thus the divines of Basra and Kufa who revolted against al-Hajjaj were all described as Qurra. Then roundabout this time the term Qurra was replaced by the term Ahl al-Hadith. This included both the collectors of the traditions and the practical lawyers. Gradually, however, the function of traditionist (Muhaddith) became separated from that of practical lawyers, perhaps after the rise of the 'Iraqi School of Ra'y. (See Ibn Qutayba, Ma'arif, 171-179.) Although at first the Medinese attributed the name Ahl al-Hadith to themselves, the cognate term Ashab al-Hadith was also used to describe all those who studied the Prophet's traditions, whether Medinese or not. (See Shahrastanî, l, 206) Abu'1 'Ala' al-Ma'arrî says that both the terms were interchangeable. (See Risalat al-Ghufran, 386). They, however, claimed to be the spokesmen of the community and the interpreter of the word of God and the custom of the Prophet; and despite the differences between the various Ahl al-Hadith, they were looked upon, in a general way, as the backbone of the community.

Cont..
standardise a main body of the doctrines for the synthesis of the Jamāʿa or Muslim community. The very existence of this many-sided and complex situation eased the rise of Jaʿfar’s Imamate to a prominence so far denied to his father and grandfather. Thus the fundamental point to be investigated is how the Imamate of Jaʿfar attained so great a prominence, which the testimony from every source, Shiʿite as well as Sunnite, asserts, after having been reduced to an insignificant following by the abandonment of the line of the quiescent Imāms by the majority of the Shiʿites who had been persuaded to join the extremist and revolutionary factions. The answer to this question, however, cannot be found without examining a series of events and their ultimate results - the results which appeared in the success of the ‘Abbāsid house and the subsequent repudiation and frustration of the Shiʿites.¹

Con. Thus, Madhhab Ashāb al-Ḥadīth, especially when they adopted the doctrine of postponement (Irja) became a standard form of Islam and continued for a very long time, See Subkī, Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya, II, 259, who says: انتقل أصحاب الحديث أن بالحسن على بن اسماعيل النخعي كان: اماماً من أئمة أصحاب الحديث ومذهب مذهب أصحاب الحديث. Also see, Ibn Ḍākir, Ṭabyin Kidb al-Muṭtarī, 254. Also see, Schacht, EI (2) art, ‘Ahl al-Ḥadīth, who deals mainly with their legal aspect.

¹ S. Moscati (Per Una Storia Dela’Antica Siʿa, RSO, 1955, p.251.) observes that after their success the ‘Abbāsids joined hands with the rest of the Muslims and pushed the Shiʿites, on whose strength they rose to power, into the role of an opposition.
It is not possible, however, nor would it be desirable, to go into details of all those events of far-reaching consequences which took place before and during the Imamate of Ja'far and, as we have tentatively assumed, made it 'crucial'. Nevertheless, a broad outline and brief survey is necessary.

When the Umayyad's autocratic rule and their libertine way of life frustrated the expectations of the Muslims, especially after the massacre at Karbalā, many Muslims conceived the idea of a leader guided by God. This leader they called al-Mahdī. Though its use became the chief characteristic of the Shi‘ites, it had a great appeal among non-Shi‘ites as well.

The first to be proclaimed as al-Mahdī was ‘Ali's third son Muhammad from a Ḥanafite woman. The massacre of al-Husayn, the only surviving grandson of the Prophet, at Karbalā, the destruction of the Ka‘ba, the siege of Medina and the misfortunes inflicted on the pro-'Alid Kufans were sufficient grounds to light the fire for a

1. It is outside the scope of this study to account for the origin of the idea of Mahdī in Islam, the knowledge of which was undoubtedly supplied by some of the newly converted Jews and Christians. Foremost among them were ‘Abdullah b. Salām, a Jew from B. Qaynuqa; Abū ‘Abdillah Wahb b. Munabbih al-Yamanī, a man of very mixed Himyarite, Persian and Jewish antecedents; Ka‘b al-Aḥbār, a Yamanite Jew; Ibn Juraij, a Greek by origin, well-versed in Christian lore and Tamīm al-Dārī, an Arab Christian clerical.


3. Husayn was also called "al-Mahdī, son of al-Mahdī", but this as yet had no Messianic implications. See Tab., II, 546.
Mahdi uprising, though the revenge of 'the blood of the Son of the Prophet' was made the main cry. Husayn's surviving son Zayn al-‘Abidîn, afraid to stake his life for political adventures caused the restless Kufite sympathisers of the House to find any other member of the ‘Alid descent for a moral support. Thus, in the beginning it was perhaps not the personality of Muhammad Ibn al-‘Hanaﬁyya which impressed the Kufites but the basic need of a figure head in whose name the movement could be launched. Mukhtâr understood the situation only too well and made full use of it. He gathered the Kufan Shi‘ites in his house and declared: "Al-Mahdi Muhammad b. ‘Ali, the son of the Wâsî, sent me to you as his trusted man, minister and chosen supporter, and as his commander. He ordered me to fight against the Blasphemers and claim vengeance for the blood of the people of his House, the excellent ones." Mukhtâr's propaganda of Ibn al-‘Hanaﬁyya's Mahdism gained the unqualified support of the most fanatical and extremist groups of the Shi‘ites, composed mainly of South

1. Balâdhurî, Ansâb, V, 216. and also see Tab., II, 606-607 and 633.

2. Even Muhammad Ibn Hanaﬁyya had always been reluctant to claim the role of Mahdi for himself. See Ibn Sa‘d, Tabaqât, V, 94.

3. Note the emphasis not on Muhammad Ibn al-‘Hanaﬁyya, but on 'al-Mahdi,' and 'the son of the Wâsî.' (Balâdhurî, Ansâb, V, 218) Ibn al-‘Hanaﬁyya in fact may have agreed to Mukhtâr's suggestions, when the latter said, "your silence is your agreement", but diplomatically preserved a non-committal attitude. In any case Mukhtâr so interpreted his behaviour before the Shi‘ites of Kufa.
Arabian Yamanites, and a very large number of Persian Mawāli living in Kufa who, in fact, outnumbered the former. These Mawāli who formed the backbone of Mukhtār's movement called themselves Shī‘at al-Mahdī (the party of al-Mahdī), Shī‘at Al Muhammad (the party of the Family of Muhammad), or the Shī‘at al-Haqq (the party of Truth). Consequently a sect, in its own right, considerably well organised, active and equipped with ideas of different extractions emerged with the name of Kaysāniyya, either after the Kunya of Mukhtār himself or after a highly controversial figure Abū ‘Amra Kaysān.

Though Mukhtār's rule was soon ended by his being killed with the majority of his followers, Kaysānism introduced by his governors to various provinces became too widespread to be eradicated. These sectarians, some of whom lived as far as Khurāsān, continued to recognise Ibn 'al-Hanafiyya as their Imām-Mahdī and to revere him to an extravagant degree. After his death in AH 81/4700-701 A.D. the extremists of the sect believed in his

1. See Baghdādī, Farq, 32. Also see in Tab., II, 704, the verse of A‘sha Hamadān.

2. Tab., II, 672-710. Balādhurī, Ansāb, V, 253. For the other titles which they were given see Tab., II, 691. Balādhurī, loc. cit. and Agh., V, 155.

3. For the name Kaysāniyya there are a number of suggestions and the person of Abū ‘Amra Kaysān has also been a great historical problem. For various suggestions and possibilities see Shahrastānī, Milal, I, 147. Baghdādī, Farq, 26. Balādhurī, Ansāb, V, 229. B. Lewis, Origins of Ismā‘īlism, 27.

ghayba (concealment) and Raj‘a (Return), while the majority accepted the eldest of his sons, Abū Hāshim ‘Abdullah as the new Imām, directly appointed by him. The former group was represented by three notable poets, Abū’l-Tufayl ‘Amir b. Wa‘ila, Kuthayyar and al-Sayyid al-Hīmyari; the last named later became a follower of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq.

Al-Kashshāl records an interesting story about two men from the entourage of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, al-Sarrāj and Ḥammād b. ‘Isa, who were known to believe that Muhammad al-Ḥanafīyya was still alive. Ja‘far reproached them and pointed out that Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya was seen being buried, and his property had been divided and his widow had re-married. Nevertheless, the doctrine of ‘Return’ from that time became one of the chief characteristics of almost all branches of the Shī‘ites.

The Messianic expectations of the Kaysānites, however, influenced a great number of the Muslims, Shī‘ites as well as non-Shī‘ites. Mahdism in fact became a common

1. There was among these extremists still another group known as al-Karbiya, who believed in the Godhead of Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya. This was led by two of al-Bāqir’s former followers, Sa‘īd and Bayān. This group, however, could not survive for long. See B. Lewis, op. cit. 27–28, and Hodgson, El (2). art. “Bayān b. Sam‘ān.”


vehicle for the expression of the general feelings of the epoch, and was used as an effective instrument for political adventures.

There was a widespread dissatisfaction of both a political and social nature which had many causes. The Arabs of Iraq were opposed to the hegemony of the Syrians. The non-Arab Mawālī resented the high-handed treatment meted out to them by the Arab ruling class, and the increasing number of Arabs entitled to the allowances must have added to the burdens imposed on the subject and conquered peoples. Because of the omnipresence of religion in every sphere of life, the social ferment and opposition against the existing regime were expressed in religious terms. General discontent, however, was not directed against the legal and religious foundations of the Islamic state as such. The laws contained in the Qurʾān and the Sunna were the Word of God and the example of the Prophet under divine inspiration, and so they could not be wrong. But the rulers who applied these laws, and whose duty it was to preserve justice, were responsible for distorting or neglecting the commands of God and the custom of the Prophet. Thus the hope for liberation and change in the political and social system meant not the abolition of the existing legal basis and the introduction of another law, but the faithful application of the divine rules.

2. Ibid.
Thus anti-Umayyad propaganda found expression mainly and perhaps spontaneously in religious terms. "The main concern of the Umayyads", as Schacht remarks, "was not with religion and religious law, but with political administration, and here they represented the organising, centralising, and increasingly bureaucratic tendency of an orderly administration. They were interested in questions of religious policy and theology insofar as these had a bearing on loyalty to themselves". Besides, let us add and admit freely that the close proximity in time of Umayyad rule with that of Muhammad and the Rashidun Caliphs and the vast difference in their way of life made the Muslims watch with greatly shocked concern the personal lives, conduct and behaviour of the Umayyads, addicted to wine-bibbing and singing-girls. Thus, with the emphasis on their impiety and ungodliness, the Umayyads were represented as Usurpers, who deprived the family of the Prophet of their rights, and inflicted untold wrongs upon them. The sack of Medina and the burning of the Ka'ba were also laid at the door of the unpopular dynasty.

This propaganda descrying the Umayyads and depicting

1. Schacht, An Introduction to Islamic Law, 23.
their rule as an epoch of tyranny (Zulm), at the same time placed before the eyes of the masses a hope for libration. The victory of justice being understood as one of faith over impiety, it could be achieved only by divine sanction and under a God-inspired leader. Thus rather naturally the majority believed that this leader, al-Mahdi, should be a man descended from the Prophet, or at least a member of his Family, the Ahl al-Bayt. At the same time it should be particularly noted that the Messianic idea did not imply a mere passive waiting for salvation or spiritual guidance, since the concept of Jihād which required every believer to expose his life and property in the cause of religion did not allow for such an attitude.

The first 'Alid of the Husaynid line but not having legitimist rights, who rose against the tyranny (Zulm)

1. As against ‘Adl (Justice). The terms ‘Adl and Zulm are frequently used in Islamic literature. The first appearance of these terms is to be found in the treaty of Medina which Muhammad made between various groups, perhaps in the first or early in the second year of his migration to this city. From that time onwards these terms were constantly used by the Muslim Jurists, theologians and theorists. The basis of all Mahdi propaganda was intended, however, to establish the rule of ‘Adl (Justice) against the reign of Zulm (tyranny).

2. A policy distinctly adopted by the legitimist line of the Imāms, i.e., Ja'far and his predecessors.

3. As did Muhammad al-Bāqir being the eldest son of Zayn al-'Abidin and claimed the legitimist rights in his person and also, according to the Shi'ite sources, on the authority of Nass.
of the Umayyads, was Zayd b. Zayn al-‘Abidīn. After the death of Zayn al-‘Abidīn, when his eldest son al-Bāqir followed strictly his father’s quiescent policy and restricted himself to the claims of religious leadership, Zayd proclaimed the principle of establishing good and prohibiting evil by force if necessary. He preached that if an Imām wanted to be recognised he should claim his rights sword in hand. It was, in fact, an expression of the deeply felt feelings not only of the Shi‘ites of Kufa, but also of the great majority of Medinese which Zayd understood only too well. Thus many followers of Zayn al-‘Abidīn left al-Bāqir and went over to Zayd. They were added to by a considerable number of those of the Shi‘ites who had previously upheld the Imāmate of Ibn al-Hanafiyya and Abū Hāshim, but the moderate views of these Shi‘ites could not be reconciled with the extremist doctrines of the Kaysānites. At the same time, Zayd, by adhering himself to Wāṣil b. ‘Atā’ and his doctrines, gained whole-hearted support of the Mu‘tazilites, and his acceptance of the legitimacy of the first two Caliphs earned him the full sympathy of the traditionist circles. These combinations reveal two fundamental points. Firstly, Zayd and his close followers rejected the ideas prevailing among other Shi‘ite sectarians. Zayd and his followers wanted no quiescent or hidden Imāms (like Bāqir and Ibn al-Hanafiyya respectively). The Imām, in their eyes, although he had to be a descendent of ‘Ali and Fāṭima, yet he could not claim allegiance unless he asserted his Imāmate publicly. Secondly, Zayd realised the fact that in order to run the Caliphate, he must have the main body
of Muslim opinion behind him, and must, therefore, accept the main body of Islamic traditions. Thus he expressed his attitude by accepting the Caliphate of Abū Bakr and 'Umar as legally elected Imams. But to satisfy the Shi'ite feelings he propounded the theory that while 'Ali was superior, the "Imāmate of the inferior" (Mafdūl), that is of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, was permissible in order to secure certain temporary advantages.¹

After the death of al-Bāqir, Ja'far maintained his father's policy towards Zayd and his movement and remained rather a passive spectator. Being the uncle of Ja'far, Zayd had the superior position and Ja'far could not dare to deny his merits outwardly. It does not mean, however, that Ja'far did not have a close group of his own followers whom he inherited from his father and who survived the Zaydite propaganda. Moreover, the concession to non-Shi'ites given by Zayd, especially his emphasis on the rightfulness of the first two Caliphs, raised objections and ultimately caused many zealot Shi'ites to abandon him. They revoked their oath, and transferred their allegiance to Ja'far.²

According to a rather doubtful tradition Zayd said to the deserters: "You have abandoned me (ra'faq tu mūnī)", and zealous Shi'ites have since been called Rāfiḍa.³ A party of Mufan Shi'ites went to Medina and informed Ja'far

2. Tab., II, 1700.
3. Tab., II, 1700. For the use and meaning of the word Rāfiḍi see Montgomery Watt, "The Rāfiḍites", Oriens, XVI, 1963. 116 ff.
of Zayd's ideas and activities. Ja'far did not raise any objections, but on the contrary he said that "Zayd was the best of us and our Lord".  

Zayd's revolt, however, took place on the 1st Safar AH 122/ 26th December, 740 A.D., and was unsuccessful. Zayd himself was killed and many of his followers were massacred. 2 Hishām then commanded that all eminent Ṭālibites publicly dissociate themselves from the insurrection and condemn its leader. 3 Among them were 'Abdullah b. Mu'āwiya and ‘Abdullah al-Mahd, 4 but the name of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq is nowhere mentioned. It shows that Ja'far must have shown himself distinctly and categorically opposed to the activities of the other members of the family. It also takes us back to the time of Ja'far's grandfather, Zayn al-'Abidin, in the reign of Yazīd when, after the suppression of the Medinan revolt led by Ibn al-Zubayr, all the Hāshimites were forced to swear allegiance declaring themselves slaves of the Caliph, but Zayn al-'Abidin was exempted. 5 Now Ja'far was spared in a similar situation which indicates the continuity of the same policy in the legitimist line.

Zayd's son Yahya, however, continued his father's activities and managed to reach Khurāsān in order to arouse

1. Ṭab., II, 1700.
2. Ṭab., II, 1709 ff. Abū'l-Faraj, Maqātil, 103 f.
4. Ibid.
5. Mubarrad, Kāmil, I, 222. and also see chapter III, part A.
the sympathies of the Kufan Shīʿites, whom al-Ḥajjāj and other Umayyad Viceroys of Iraq had exiled to that distant province. But after three years' futile efforts he met the same fate as his father. In fact, Zayd's movement was unable to captivate the hearts of the fanatical groups because he did not claim to be the Mahdī—an idea so dear to the Shīʿite masses. Moreover, his moderate policy eventually deprived him of the popular support of the Shīʿites. Yet his revolt left a very deep mark upon the development of the whole Shīʿite movement. Numerous learned men of Kufa and other cities had supported or at least sympathised with his cause, among them the great lawyers Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān and Sufyān al-Thawrī, the traditionist al-Aʿmash, the Qāḍī of Madāʾin Hilāl b. Hubāb and others.

The movement of Zayd, however, though it ended in failure, paved the way for other claimants and offered ready ground for a more effective revolt. His and his son's death which created a vacuum for active leadership, enhanced the prospects of two of their relatives and hitherto rivals—Jaʿfar al-Sādiq and Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. Since the former adhered to the quiescent policy of his predecessors, as it appears from the reports at our disposal, he was not inclined to make a bid for the leadership of an active movement with political

3. Abūʾl-Faraj, Maqātil, 107 ff.
implications. It would be better to keep in mind that the whole of Shi'ism at this stage was divided into three doctrinal groups. First, the extremist and Messianic group or groups originating from the Kaysanites; second, the moderate group which emerged from the teachings of Zayd and was backed by the Mu'tazilites and the traditionists of Medina and Kufa. The third group seems to have been under the personal influence of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq who is said to have been quietly propounding and expressing his own views and theories about the Imam and his function which had neither Messianic pretentions nor Zaydite reconciliatory moderation, as we shall see later.

Thus there remained only Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, from the House of the Prophet, who could attract both the Zaydites and the pro-Shi'ite Mu'tazilites as well as a number of extremists on account of his Messianic claims. Though the actual revolt of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, took place long after, in the sequence of events it would be in order to note that his Messianic movement in fact starts from this point.

Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya was designated for the role of al-Mahdi from his childhood, by his father 'Abdullah, known as al-Mahdî, a grandson of al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. Abî Ṭalib. When he reached manhood, however, he spared no efforts to extol the expected destiny of al-Nafs

al-Zakiyya and it is very likely that the following Tradition, foisted upon 'Abdullah b. Mas'ūd, was in reality his invention: The Prophet said: "Even if there remain for the world but one single day, God will extend it until He sends a man from the people of my House, whose name will be the same as mine, and the name of his father will be that of my father. He will fill the earth with equity and justice as it is filled with tyranny and oppression."\(^1\) As this tradition could also be applied to Muhammad al-Mahdī the son of al-Mansūr,\(^2\) another tradition was produced to assure the role of the Deliverer to al-Nafs al-Zakiyya: "On the authority of Umm Salima, who reported: I heard the Apostle of God say, 'Al-Mahdī will be from the descent of Fātima.'\(^3\)

The candidature of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya to the position of the Messiah was supported not only by his close relatives, but also by the extremist al-Mughīra b. Sa'īd al-'Ijī,\(^4\) a former disciple of al-Bāqir, and so it is also probable that the Tradition quoted above might have been an invention of Mughīra. It is important to note that Ja'far al-Ṣādiq repeatedly warned his followers not to accept al-Mughīra's traditions.\(^5\)

Even after al-Mughīra was executed his followers remained

2. See Agh., XII, 85.
faithful to al-\(\text{Nafs al-Zakîyya}\).\(^1\) Besides, a number of moderate traditionists as well as the Mu'\'tazilites, led by 'Amr b. 'Ubayd and Wâsil b. 'Atâ',\(^2\) recognised the young 'Alîd as the most suitable person to take the place vacated by Zayd and Yaḥya.\(^3\)

After the death of al-Walîd b. Yaḥya, however, when the Umayyad dynasty was apparently disintegrating,\(^4\) and the revolt of 'Abdullâh b. Mu'\'awiya had gained a certain success in Khurāsân, 'Abdullâh al-Mahd, along with other partisans of the 'Alîd cause, decided to act.\(^5\) During a pilgrimage to Mecca, 'Abdullâh al-Mahd invited his relatives and followers to take the oath of allegiance to his son. That was done first in the Ḥaram of Mecca and again at al-Abwa, in the neighbourhood of Medina.\(^6\) According to Abûl-Faraj Isfâhâni,\(^7\) among those who took the oath were the three 'Abbasid brothers Ibrahim al-Imâm, Abûl-'Abbâs al-Safâh and Abû Ja'far al-Mansûr (b. Muḥammad b.

3. Abûl-Faraj, Maqâtil, 145 and 165.
4. Ibid., 176-179.
5. Ibid., 176-177. Tab., III, 143 ff.
6. Tab., III, 52. Abûl-Faraj Isfâhâni, Maqâtil, 143 and 178. (for the place Abwa see Yaqût, Mu'jam, I, 79.) According to another report, this homage was paid at Suwaqa. See Abûl-Faraj, Maqâtil, 202 ff. Buhl, El (1) art. 'Muḥammad b. 'Abdullâh'.
7. Maqâtil, 143 and 178.
'Ali b. 'Abdullah b. al-‘Abbas) as well as other members of the ‘Abbasid clan. There is no confirmation of this report that all these ‘Abbasids took part in the ceremony at al-Abwa. Only the name of Abū Ja‘far al-Mansūr is given by some other historians. This latter report seems acceptable as al-Mansūr in his youth was a Mu‘tazilite and a companion of ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd, who probably induced him to pay homage to al-Nafs al-Zakiyya.

The only opposition from the Hashimites to al-Nafs al-Zakiyya at al-Abwa is reported to have come from Ja‘far al-Sādiq’s side, for he considered himself the only rightful person to the function of the Imamate, and was against any militant organisation.

However, in spite of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya’s popularity neither he nor his father acted with sufficient energy and they allowed the ‘Abbasids to snatch the initiative. Both the father and the son were but passive spectators of the great upheaval and downfall of the Umayyad dynasty. Indeed all the necessary elements for a successful revolution were present and it was only a matter of strike and action. Whoever could strike first would gain the prize.

Ideas as to who should and who should not be regarded as the people of the House were utterly confused at this

1. See for example, Tab., III, 152. also, Mufīd, Irshād, 295–296.
3. Abū’l-Faraj, Magāšil, 145.
time. Every pretender of the 'Alid House and their supporters and followers spread different theories to justify their own claims. One group of the Shi'ites held that after 'Ali only his sons through Fāṭimah had the right to the heritage of the Prophet as the "family of the Prophet" and, among them, since Husayn succeeded Hasan by the latter's expressed will, all rights were transferred to him and his posterity to the exclusion of the Hasanids. This group, which came to be known as the legitimist faction of the Shi'ites, though never ceased to make its existence felt, was undoubtedly reduced at times to an insignificant minority. Others believed that any descendant of 'Ali and Fāṭimah, whether Husaynid or Hasanid, was entitled to the leadership of the community. In this group come the followers of Zayd and al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. The third and major groups of the Shi'ites, namely Kaysānites, included also 'Ali's progeny by other women, in particular Muhammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya and after him his son Abū Ḥāshim. These distinctions were largely understood and observed by the more theoretical and legalistically minded people in Medina and Kufa. The mass of the people, however, full of hatred, discontentment, and the feeling of being suppressed by the Umayyad autocracy, were ready to swarm round any member of the Holy Clan of the Ṭalibites who could liberate them from their sufferings.

Swayed by these feelings, therefore, a large part of the local population of Kufa, especially of the lower classes, were prepared to range themselves with any anti-Umayyad movement. Such was the support given to the
dubious claims of 'Abdullah b. Mu‘awiya,¹ a great-grandson of 'Ali's elder brother Ja'far b. Abī Tālib. Tabarī mentions that the majority of his supporters consisted of the slaves of Kufa and villagers from the Sawād.² After an unsuccessful rising in Kufa, Ibn Mu‘awiya managed to reach Persia and controlled a large area there until he was assassinated possibly by Abū Muslim.³ It might be accepted that Ibn Mu‘awiya connecting himself with the Kaysāniya by the claim that he was the emissary of Abū Hāshim, was responsible for his success in Persia. Ibn Mu‘awiya's propaganda in Iran, however, made the task easier for a more vigorous leader to organise a successful revolt.

After all the preceding movements and revolts, the time was now ripe for a successful rising, not for the 'Alids but for the house of 'Abbās who had for some time been plotting in the background and watching their opportunity. ‘Ali b. ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭtalib was the first person of the house to nourish political ambitions, but had nothing tangible to support them from a legal point of view. His grandfather al-‘Abbās, the uncle of the Prophet, had never claimed the Caliphate

2. Tab., II, 1881-1883-1887.
for himself. Moreover, his being a late convert to Islam and his opportunist policy had marred his reputation among the Muslims. Ali's father 'Abdullah b. 'Abbās, too, though renowned for his learning, had no political aspirations and always championed the cause of 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib. It is possible that 'Ali (the 'Abbāsid) might have been inspired by certain rights based on old tribal customs. The Meccan clan of Priest-Sayyids included all the descendants of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and so, from the viewpoint of legitimism, their claims were better than those of the Banū Umayya, which were based mainly on political factors. Nevertheless, even if 'Abbās, once the custodian of Meccan Haram, and his progeny had as strong a claim to supreme leadership as 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib, the 'Abbāsids had neglected it for too long. Moreover, the fact that 'Ali was one of the earliest converts to Islam, while 'Abbās tarried until the conquest of Mecca, was detrimental to the position of the 'Abbāsids in the Muslim community. Then, the Shi'ites had accustomed themselves to the idea that the rights to the Caliphate belonged to the 'Alids. Obviously, therefore, it was not possible for the 'Abbāsids to claim the Caliphate directly.

1. See Watt, El (2) art. "Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib."

2. Kash, Rijāl, 39-40. He was 'Ali's governor in Basra and also his personal representative attached to the arbiter Abū Müsa al-'Ash'arī. See Kash., Rijāl, 40 and Veccia Vaglieri, El (2) art. "Abd Allah b. 'Abbās."

3. The Umayyads, on their part, endeavoured to prove that the whole clan of the Banū 'Abd Manāf were the ruling house of the Quraysh. See Mubarrad, Kāmil, I, 180.
'Ali b. 'Abdullah saw an opportunity in inducing Abū Ḥāshim, who had no son and was a lonely person under the detention of the Umayyads in Damascus, to bequeath to the 'Abbāsids his rights to the Imāmate. He instructed his youthful son Muhammad to gain the Imām's favour and confidence.\(^1\) After some time, Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik allowed Abū Ḥāshim to return home. On his way to Hijāz, it is said that he was poisoned either at the instigation of the Caliph Sulaymān or by Muhammad on his own account.\(^2\) He died at Humayma, the headquarters of the 'Abbāsids, where he stayed as the latter's guest. Before his death, he made Muhammad b. 'Ali his legatee\(^3\) and gave him letters addressed to Shī‘ite circles in Khurāsān. In this way Muhammad became Imām and was recognised by the majority of the Ḥāshimiyya sect and thus "The 'Abbāsids inherited the party and organisation of Abū Ḥāshim, along with his claims."\(^4\)

Though the 'Abbāsid movement was first organised and directed from Kufa, nevertheless it seems that the 'Abbāsids were not very sure of the Kufans due to their pro-‘Alid sympathies and so were afraid that the Iraqis would be unfriendly to the new sect.

1. Dhahabī, Ta’rīkh, IV, 21.
4. Bernard Lewis, El (2) arts. Ḥāshimiyya and ‘Abbāsids.
would be unwilling to accept their claims to the Imamate. 1 On the other hand, Khurāsān was still largely a virgin land, so far as sectarian conflicts were concerned. The majority of the so-called Shi‘ites in that distant country were not so much interested in the difference between the various branches of the Ahl al-Bayt as they were ready to follow any leader from the House of the Prophet against the Umayyads. Still, Ābu Muslim, the chief organiser of the movement, though appointed by Ibrāhim, 2 the head of the ‘Abbāsid family, claimed to be acting on behalf of an Imām of the clan of Ħāshim who had not yet been chosen or designated. In this way he gained the support of many who would not have been ready to support him had they known that the Imām from the clan of Ħāshim

1. Although many of the Ħāshimiyya sectarians recognised the validity of the ‘Abbāsid’s claim, some refused to accept the transfer of the Imamate from the ‘Alids to another branch of the Ahl al-Bayt. This, in particular, was the attitude of the Kufans, whose pro-‘Alid sympathies were very strong. Some Shi‘ites believed that Ābu Ħāshim was not dead, but had concealed himself, and that he was al-‘Āmahī. Others admitted that he had died but appointed his brother ‘Ali to the Imamate which then passed from father to son in the same line. See Nawbakhti, Fīraq, 28-29. Nashwān al-Ḥimyarī, Ḥurr al-‘Āyn, 159-160.

2. For the readiness of the Khurāsānis to follow any branch of the Ahl al-Bayt see Ibn Qutayba, ‘Uyūn al-Akhbār, I, 204 and Yaqtū, Mu‘jam, II, 352.

would in fact be from the family of al-‘Abbās. The support given by the followers of al-Mukhtār strengthens this assumption.¹

However, Ibrāhīm was arrested by the Umayyads and died in prison² in Safar AH 132/October 749 A.D. According to his instructions, his brother Abū’l-‘Abbās, in the company of a third brother Abū Ja‘far ‘Abdullāh and fourteen other members of the family, left al-Ḥumayma and reached Kufa.³ In Kufa the local representative of the ‘Abbāsids was Abū Salma Ḥafs. At this crucial moment Abū Salama is reported to have thought of breaking his allegiance⁴ to the ‘Abbāsids since he felt bound by loyalty to Imām Ibrāhīm, but not to his brothers. He lodged the ‘Abbāsid fugitives in a house and tried to conceal their whereabouts from the Khurāsānīte leaders⁵ in Kufa.


2. He was arrested by the orders of Caliph Marwān b. Muhammad, brought to Damascus and subsequently dispatched to Harrān and confined in gaol, where he died either of plague or as the ‘Abbāsids assert — was put to death at the Caliph’s command. See Taḥ., III, 25 ff. and 42 ff. Dīnawarī, Akhbār, 357. Mas‘ūdī, Murūj, III, 259.


Here we come across a very interesting but dubious report. It is said that when the news of the death of Ibrāhīm al-Imām reached Kufa, Abū Salama, as Jahshiyarī and Tabari put it, "on the suggestion and advice of some other Shi'ites of Kufa, intended to establish the Imāmate of the ‘Alids’" and accordingly he wrote letters to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, 'Abdullah al-Mahd and 'Umar b. ‘Ali Zayn al-‘Abidīn, asking each one of them in turn to come to Kufa in person and he would support their claims to the Imāmate. The messenger was ordered first to contact Ja'far, and only if he refused then to go to ‘Abdullah and in case of his refusal then to ‘Umar b. ‘Ali. When the messenger, however, presented the letter first of all to Ja'far he called for a lamp, burnt the letter and said to the messenger, "tell your master what you have seen." Mas'ūdī begins the story in a different colour saying: "When the ‘Abbāsid leader Ibrāhīm al-Imām was killed by Marwān II, Abū Salama feared that this would mean the failure of their undertaking, and he attempted therefore to induce Ja'far al-Ṣādiq to come to him in person, and to openly declare his claims to the Imāmate."

Indeed the story appears to be of a highly dubious nature. Nevertheless, while it is very difficult to

3. "In case he refuses then 'Abdullah and lastly 'Umar b. 'Ali."
4. Mas'ūdī, Murūj, III, 228.
accept it as an authentic one, it is also not very easy to reject it outright. In both cases it would raise many unsolved questions since the reasons for acceptance and rejection seem to carry equal weight.\footnote{In any case Masʻūdī's reason for Abū Salama's action is certainly not acceptable.}

The same story asserts that 'Abdullah al-Mahdī accepted the offer and was only too delighted to receive the help of Abū Salama. Jaʻfar al-Ṣādiq, in all the sources which have recorded this story, is reported to have severely warned 'Abdullah "not to indulge and endanger his and his son's life in this game of power and treachery as Abū Salama is not our Shiʻa and the Khurāsānites are not our followers"; and 'Abdullah bitingly retorted saying, "You are jealous of me and my son."\footnote{If we accept it we may well ask why Abū Salama who had been a chief supporter of the 'Abbāsid cause, suddenly changed his allegiance and why he turned to Husaynid and Hasanid lines while a great follower of Abū Hāshim. In case we reject the story the question arises why he hid the 'Abbāsids and delayed so long in doing anything. It is a historical fact that he did delay and it was not Abū Salama but other Khurāsānite chiefs who installed Abūʻl-‘Abbās to Caliphate. Then comes the more serious question of his murder by the orders of Abū al-ʻAbbās almost immediately after the latter's accession to power. After comparing the reasons for and against this story, I am inclined to think that it should be given some consideration.}

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See Yaʻqūbī, \textit{loc.cit.} Masʻūdī, \textit{loc.cit.} Jahshiyārī, \textit{loc.cit.}
out that the whole story was a later invention, firstly, to show Ja'far's importance even at that early stage of his Imamate, and secondly to emphasise his peaceful nature and withdrawal from politics. Nevertheless one thing cannot be completely ignored. As Moscati points out, in the wavering attitude of Abū Salama "one can perhaps see a consequence of the deliberate ambiguity about the rights of the 'house of the Prophet', put into circulation by the revolutionary propaganda."²

Whether Abū Salama wrote or not and whether 'Abdullah al-Mahd accepted it or not, the events in Kufa moved quickly in favour of the 'Abbasids. Their presence or concealment³ in Kufa was betrayed through one Abū Jahm to Abū Humayd who with other Khurāsānīte chiefs encamped in the vicinity of Kufa, came and at once paid homage to Abū'1-'Abbās⁴ as the Imam and Caliph, compelling Abū Salama to comply.⁵

Immediately after, Abū'1-'Abbās together with his supporters went to the mosque where he made his inaugural speech. In this speech he named himself al-Saffah (the Blood-Shedder) and identified the glory of God with his

1. Although Ja'far is not the only one approached.
2. S. Moscati, El (2) art. "Abū Salama."
3. Ya'qūbī, Ta'rikh, III, 87 gives the period of concealment as two months, and Tabarī, III, 27, makes it forty days. Other sources do not mention the precise period.
4. See B. Lewis, El (2) art. 'Abbāsid.'
own interest and those of his house. He named "the 'Abbāsids as the Ahl al-Bayt from whom uncleanness was removed" and denied that the Ālīs were more worthy of the Caliphate.¹ Al-Saffāh's address was followed by his uncle, Dawūd b. 'Ali, who emphasised that the rights of the 'Abbāsids were legally inherited; and that there were but two legal Caliphs in Islam: 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib and al-Saffāh. He added that the Caliphate would remain in the hands of the 'Abbāsids until they passed it over to 'Isa b. Maryam.²

The accession of Abū'l-Abbās was followed immediately by the first breach with the extremist Shi'ites.³ The testament of Abū Hāshim was of the utmost importance to the 'Abbāsids for at the outset of their propaganda, it allowed them to take over the sectarian circles in Persia, and so establish the nucleus of their own religio-political party. Once the aim was achieved, the 'Abbāsids on their accession to the Caliphate justified their rights by different arguments, without even mentioning Abū Hāshim's name.⁴ Now they found it necessary to

1. Tab., III, 29 ff. Ya‘qūbī, Ta‘rīkh, III, 87 says Abū’l-Abbās did not speak at all because of fever. Mas‘ūdī, Murūj, III, 185, gives only a summary of the speech in two lines.

2. The speech of Dāwūd b. 'Alī is recorded by all, i.e., Tab., III, 31 ff. Ya‘qūbī, Ta‘rīkh, III, 87. Mas‘ūdī, Murūj, III, 270. The last named again summarises the speech with major points and does not give the text of it.

3. B. Lewis, El (2) art. "'Abbāsids."

4. See the speeches of al-Saffāh and Dawūd quoted above.

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¹ See the speeches of al-Saffāh and Dawūd quoted above.
let the memory of the bequest pass into oblivion, for its connections with Shi‘ite extremism were too strong and could be dangerous or embarrassing. The first task therefore, before al-Saffāh was to break the alliance with the extremists and to remove those who supported the cause basically on that sectarian ground. Thus the first who had to pay with his life was Abū Salama, either on account of his strong connections with the extremist Shi‘ites or because of his alleged pro-‘Alid leanings and his offering support to them for the Caliphate. The second reason cannot be completely ignored as an "immediate cause of his assassination."

There seems difficulty in accepting that at first, knowing nothing about Abū Salama's recent pro-‘Alid activities, the ‘Abbāsids called him with the title Wazīr Al Rasūl Allah, but as soon as al-Saffāh came to know about his fickleness he successfully arranged for his assassination. This is what both al-Ṭabarī and Mas‘ūdi2 clearly describe as the reason for Abū Salama's assassination. Nevertheless, this immediate cause was coupled with al-Saffāh's policy to get rid of revolutionary sectarians of whom Abū Salama was the most powerful leader.

Al-Saffāh's rule lasted four years during which period the ‘Alid in Medina "disorganised by the frustration of their hopes", kept quiet and affairs remained

2. See Ţab., III, 58 ff and Mas‘ūdī, loc. cit. who says: "وكان في نفس أبي العباس منه شيء، لأنه كان حاول في رد الأمر عليهم إلى غيرهم،"
3. B. Lewis, El (2) art. "Abbāsids."
stationary. But when al-Mansūr assumed the Caliphate in AH 136/757 A.D., the 'Alids embittered by the usurpa-
tion of their rights by the House of 'Abbās, began to
voice their complaints. On the other hand, except for
the Shi‘at Banū ‘Abbās who regarded al-Saffāḥ as not
only Caliph and Imām but also al-Mahdī, the Shi‘ite
masses were also dissatisfied, and the popular dissa-
tisfaction which became manifest even during al-Saffāḥ's
rule, grew with the accession of al-Mansūr. They felt
that the expected Kingdom of Righteousness had not
materialised. One evil rule had been replaced by another.

Thus at the accession of al-Mansūr, Muhammad al-
Nafs al-Zakiyya who had long been cherishing the role of
al-Mahdī refused to take the oath of allegiance to him
and started his Messianic propaganda. This angered al-
Mansūr and in AH 140/758 A.D., he decided to compel him
and his brother Ibrāhīm to pay him homage. He ordered the
arrest of 'Abdullāh al-Mahdī and many other ‘Alids. Some
of them were cruelly scourged to make them disclose the
hiding place of the fugitives, but in vain. It is impor-
tant to note that though al-Nafs al-Zakiyya tried to arouse
support in many parts of the Muslim population, it was

1. Abū’l-Faraj, Maqātil, 179.
2. See the verse of Sūdayf in Aḥ., IV, 93.
3. See Tab., III, 75 f. and 85, Maqrizī, al-Niṣā‘, 52.
Tab., III, 151 ff. Abū’l-Faraj, Maqātil, 128. Al-
together thirteen persons were put under arrest.
Also see, De Goejje, Fragmenta, 237.
5. Abū’l-Faraj, Maqātil, 128.
chiefly the people of Hijaz who enthusiastically responded to his appeal, and with few exceptions, swore the oath of allegiance\(^1\) to him. The traditionist circles of Medina whole-heartedly supported and upheld his cause.\(^2\) The Zaydites and Mu'tazilites of Kufa and Basra were also ready to help him.\(^3\) On 19th Ramaḍān AH 145, however, a fierce battle was engaged and resulted in the utter defeat of the Medinese and in the death of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya\(^4\) while fighting the 'Abbāsid army.

Al-Nafs al-Zakiyya's abortive rising was followed by another by his brother Ibrāhīm in Basra where he was collecting supporters for the former. The Zaydite and Mu'tazilite circles of Kufa and Basra supported Ibrāhīm in a body.\(^5\) The jurists of Kufa; Abū Ḥanīfa, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mas‘ūd b. Kudam and many others - wrote letters to Ibrāhīm inviting him to their city or backed him by issuing legal decisions favouring his cause.\(^6\) Ibrāhīm, however, with a force of 15,000 left Basra for Kufa to

1. Ṭab., III, 199. Abū’l-Faraj, Maqātil, 183.
2. Mālik b. Anas declared that the oath sworn to the 'Abbāsids was no longer binding as it had been taken under compulsion, Ṭab., III, 200.
4. The experience and death of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya resulted in many spurious Traditions and prophecies, some of them attributed to Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, who was alleged to have foreseen the fate of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. Ṭab., III, 248, 252 and 254. Abū’l-Faraj, Maqātil 189. Shristānī, Milal, 1, 156.
5. Ṭab., III, 291-300. for the names and details see Abū’l-Faraj, Maqātil, 215 ff and 242 ff. also 247,248.
join his Kufan sympathisers, but was encountered by
the 'Abbāsid army at Bakhamra which resulted in Ibrāhim's
death. This was the end of Alīd risings of any conse-
quence and of Messianic hopes aspired to by them or placed
in them; and also it was practically the end of the
Medinese desire to establish a Caliphate of their own
choice. The long cherished hopes of the Shi‘ites, es-
pecially those of activists and extremists, were frustrated.

All these events and circumstances, however, form
the background in which the Imāmate of Ja‘far happened
to fall. But before we try to examine his position and
his standpoint in this religio-political setting there
remains still another vital aspect to be fully elaborated.

We have seen that the great Ḥāshimite party of the
Umayyad era was now split into 'Alids and 'Abbāsids. So
the struggle assumed a new form. It was no longer a
deadly strife between 'a usurping dynasty' and a legiti-
mist opposition, but between the two legitimist parties,
each claiming legitimist rights for itself with the total
exclusion of the other; the descendants of the Prophet's
uncle and the descendants of the Prophet's cousin and
daughter, 'Ali and Fāṭima.

2. Some of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya's followers regarded him
as Mahdī and refused to accept the fact of his death,
asserting that only a devil in human form had been
killed in his stead, while he was concealed in a
Sa‘d Ash‘arī, Maqālat, 76.
The first 'Abbasid Caliph al-Saffah fully anticipated this situation and from the very first moment of his Caliphate started the task of justifying the rights of his house on legitimist grounds as it is evident from his inaugural speech.\(^1\) In this way he laid down the foundation of his family's policy in the forthcoming struggle to repudiate the claims of the house of 'Ali. But, owing to the fact that during the short-lived reign of al-Saffah the 'Alids themselves could not come out with any serious or visible opposition, things remained rather confused and stationary.\(^2\) It was, however, al-Mansur who had to face the most threatening opposition from the 'Alids to the newly established authority. Thus in order to save, strengthen and consolidate his Caliphate, al-Mansur concentrated his efforts on two basic and fundamental objects. The first was to get the rights of his house justified on legal and religious grounds. This logically implies the repudiation of the claims of the 'Alids by legal argumentation. The second was to get his Caliphate accepted by the Muslim Jamā'īa. This required the severance of all relations and connections with all revolutionary and extremist groups and organisations. Al-Mansur realised only too well that Kaysānite Shi‘ism, Rāwandite\(^3\) extremism, revolutionaries

\(^1\) See the speech of al-Saffah quoted above.

\(^2\) Abū’l-Faraj, Maqātil, 179. Al-Saffah even made large gifts of money to 'Abdullāh al-Māhād and granted him and his brother al-Ḥasan b. al-Hasan feudal estates. See de Goeje, Fragmenta, 232.

\(^3\) The name Rāwindiya is given to the sect who held that Abū Ḥāshim bequeathed the Imamate to Muḥammad b. 'Alī (the ‘Abbāsid). See B. Lewis, The Origins of Ismā‘īlism, 28.
of Abū Muslim's following (who held beliefs which comprised a mixture of Kaysānīte Shi'ism and Mazdakism) or the Shi'at of 'Abbāsiyya, could not serve as the religious basis of the Caliphate. Thus repudiating all of them he approached the traditionist circles (Ahl al-Ḥadīth) which he recognised as the representative section of the Muslim community and the exponents of the Jamā' ā. It would be in order if we consider this aspect later and examine first his endeavour to vindicate the rights of the Caliphate in his house.

The best and probably the most authentic documentary evidence in this connection, however, is an exchange of letters between al-Mansūr and the 'Alid claimant Muhammad al-Nafṣ al-Zakīyya. In order to understand al-Mansūr's way of argument and approach to the problem it is necessary to read first al-Nafṣ al-Zakīyya's letter to him, which runs: "Our father 'Ali was the Wassium, and the Imam. How is it then that you appropriate his inheritance while we are still alive. You know that there is none amongst the Hāshimites who has the same points of excellence and prides himself on the like of our past and present, our descent and our cause ... We are the children of Fāṭiما, the daughter of 'Amr, at the time of paganism, whereas you are not, and the children of the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima, at the time of Islam, and you are not; and I happen to be the golden medium in the line of descent amongst Banū Hāshim, and the best of them all as regards parentage. No Persian did I have for a mother and no slave-girls were on the maternal

1. Al-Mansūr himself was a son of a slave-girl, and perhaps it was because of this that though he was older than al-Saffāh, Ibrāhīm al-Īmām did not appoint him as his successor.
side of my ancestors .... I was twice born from the loins of Muhammad the Prophet.... amongst my grandfathers I have the highly esteemed in Paradise and the least tormented in Hell; so, I am the son of the best of the good people."

"As for the amnesty you have given me, may I ask what kind of amnesty it is. Is it the same that you gave to Ibn Hubayra or to your uncle 'Abdullah b. 'Ali or the one that was given to Abū Muslim?"

It is clear from this letter that first of all al-Nafs al-Zakiyya claims his rights on the fact that his ancestor 'Ali b. Abī Tālib was 'Wasīn and 'Imām', and then he strengthened this by emphasising the circumstance of his birth from both his father's and mother's sides - 'Sharaf' from the father's side and dignity from the mother's side. At the end he makes out the treacherous nature of the 'Abbāsids. It is interesting to note in passing that in spite of his reference to 'Ali as the 'Wasī' and the 'Imām' and to the Fātimid descent, the Hijāz was unanimous in supporting the cause of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya.

Now we are better able to see how al-Mansūr rejects the claims of his 'Alid rival and how he justifies his own rights to the supreme leadership of the community. Thus al-Mansūr replies in this way: "I received your letter. You know that our greatest honour in the times

Ibn Tiqtiga, al-Fakhrī, 225 ff.

2. Tab., III, 189.
of ignorance, namely the dispensing of water for the pilgrims, and the guardianship of the well of Zamzam, became 'Abbās's privilege, alone among all his brothers. Your father (i.e. 'Ali) litigated concerning this privilege with us, but 'Umar has given judgement in our favour, so that we have never ceased to be in possession of this honour in the times of al-Jāhiliyya as well as in those of Islam..."

"Most of your pride is in the women's 1 side which would only deceive the uncouth and the common; and God has not made the mothers (lit. women) like uncles, fathers, fathers-in-law and the responsible relatives... As for your claim that you are the son of the Apostle of God, Almighty God has rejected such a claim, when he said: 'Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Apostle of God and the 'Seal of the Prophets'. 2 But you are the children of the daughter. Verily it is a close relationship, but she is a woman who can inherit but cannot become an Imām, how on earth then could the Imāmate be inherited through her? ... You know that after the death of the Prophet no other son of 'Abd al-Muttaḥal remained alive (except al-'Abbās), and that 'Abbās inherited his rights as the uncle of the Prophet. Then more than

1. i.e. Fāṭima, the mother of Abū Tālib; Fāṭima, the mother of 'Ali, Fāṭima, the daughter of the Prophet; Fāṭima bint al-Husayn, the mother of 'Abdullāh al-Mahd and finally Hind bint Abī 'Ubaydā, a descendant of 'Abd al-Muttaḥal, the mother of al-Nafs al-Zakīyya. See Abū'l-Faraj, Maqātil, 128 and 160. Al-Mangūr belittled this "descent through women" being himself a son of a slave girl.

2. Qur'ān, XXXIII, 40.
one of the Banū Hāshim sought the Caliphate, but none attained it, except the descendants of 'Abbās, and so the Siqāya and the inheritance of the Prophet as well as the Caliphate belong to him and his progeny, and will remain in their possession. For 'Abbās was heir and legatee to every honour and virtue that ever existed in the times of al-Jāhiliyya and Islam."¹

This letter is a most important document for our understanding of the line of argument which al-Maṣṣūr adopted against his Ālid rivals. If we analyse the contents of the letter the following points will be evident. Firstly he resorted to the customary law of the Arabs according to which when the father dies, the paternal uncle takes his place; secondly, he placed special stress on ‘Umar’s ruling in favour of ‘Abbās, thus emphasising the second Caliph’s authority in the same way as the Ashāb al-Hadīth; thirdly, according to the Shari‘a law, ‘Abbās as the uncle had better claims to the heritage of the Prophet than ‘Ali as a cousin and son-in-law; fourthly, the rejection of any claim through Fāṭima which was a great prerogative for commanding respect among the Shi‘ites² in particular and among the Muslims in general; and, finally the ‘Alids, due to the weakness of their legal claim coupled with their incompetence, successively failed in their attempts to procure


2.  We have seen that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn had been respected more on the ground that they were the grandsons of the Prophet, rather than the sons of ‘Ali. See Chapter II, parts A and B.
the Caliphate for themselves, while the progeny of 'Abbās attained it due to their better claims coupled with competence and ability.¹

It is, however, evident from the support given to the risings² of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and his brother Ibrāhīm by the Āhl al-Hadīth (whether of Murjite brand or otherwise) that they were not impressed by the arguments of al-Mansūr for the alleged rights of 'Abbās and they continued to assert that the only just candidates to the Imāmate were the 'AlIDS. We have pointed out that when al-Nafs al-Zakiyya rose in rebellion, Mālik b. Anas declared that the oath of allegiance taken by the inhabitants of Medina to the 'Abbāsids was unlawful being enforced under duress.³ Similarly, during the revolt of Ibrāhīm b. 'Abdullah, Abū Ḥanīfa, Sufyān al-Thawrī, al-A'maṣm and other Kufan jurists and Āhl al-Hadīth gave their most emphatic support and encouragement to those who wished to participate in insurrection.⁴

After the re-conquest of Medina and the suppression of the revolt of Ibrāhīm, al-Mansūr therefore ordered Mālik b. Anas to be flogged, and looked upon Abū Ḥanīfa

1. It is very important to note that both al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and al-Mansūr go back for their arguments of rights to the Jāhiliyya period and consider the prerogative of that time honourable and applicable to the Islamic era.

2. Which took place after this correspondence.

3. Ṭab., III, 200.

as an enemy so dangerous that he imprisoned him until his death. Apart from these few strong and rather irreconcilable personalities who actively opposed him and were to be severely punished, he did not attack the traditionists as such. On the contrary, he regarded them as the basic element on which he could establish the foundation of a theocratic state, headed by the 'Khalifat Allah', the vice-regent of God, obedience to whom was an absolute religious duty (Fard). Thus, for example, when al-Mansur said in a sermon: "Only I am the Authority of Allah upon His earth," he was not announcing himself merely as a defender of religion or its protector. He identified his interest with the faith of Islam, and treated the Will of God as synonymous with his own aims.

Gradually, however, whether because of the fact that no powerful member of the 'Alid house was ready to lead a rising, or due to al-Mansur's successful policy of blandishment or coercion, most of the Ahl al-Hadith, and jurists of Medina and Kufa began to be reconciled with the Caliphate. Eventually, willingly or unwillingly, they abandoned the 'Alid cause and ranged themselves obediently under al-Mansur's orders.

1. Khatib al-Baghdadi, Ta'rikh Baghdad, XIII, 422. Shahristani, Milal, 1, 158. Abu'l-Faraj Isfahani asserts that Abu Hanifa was poisoned at the orders of the Caliph. See, Magatil, 247 and 248.


3. This was stressed by other 'Abbasiid caliphs too. See, Tab., III, 1565.

4. Tab., III, 426.
Now, keeping in view this religio-political setting of events, we are better able to examine the Imāmate of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and the role played by him in the midst of these circumstances. By an analysis of all that has been brought out above, one major and fundamental point is certain. All the successive claimants of the ‘Alid house base their claims on the principle that they are the rightful Imāms due to their virtues and circumstances of birth, and that the Imāmate and Caliphate cannot be separated. Therefore, it is exclusively their legitimist right as well as their religious duty to take the Caliphate back from the usurpers — Umayyads or ‘Abbāsids. In other words they thought it the function of the rightful Imām to run the Caliphal administration which is meant to establish the rule of justice and equity and thus it is necessary for an Imām to be a Caliph. This principle was accepted by the representative groups of the Muslim Jamāʿa — Muʿtazilites, Murjites, Ahl al-Ḥadīth and the jurists of Medina and Kufa — which is evident from the wholehearted support given by them to the ‘Alid claimants and to their risings. On the other hand, the ‘Abbāsids too held the same view that the Imāmate and Caliphate are inseparable and a rightful Imām alone has the right to command the Caliphal Authority. But at the same time they disputed and rejected the claims of the ‘Alids to this ‘Office’ and asserted that only they themselves were the legitimist Imām-Caliph. Ultimately al-Mansūr, however, succeeded in crushing the ‘Alids and getting the submission of the representative groups of the Jamāʿa.
This was practically the complete collapse and defeat of the 'Alid claims to the Imamate since, as they held, it was bound up with the Caliphate which they failed to procure for themselves. This critical situation, however, required an absolutely new interpretation and a complete reorientation of the whole concept of an Imamate. Here emerges the Imam Ja‘far al-‘Sādiq with his altogether different theory and a different interpretation of the function of the Imamate. He differed categorically from the hitherto dominating view that an Imam should be a Caliph as well, and put forward the idea of dividing the Imamate and Caliphate into two separate institutions, (until such time when God would make an Imam victorious). This Imam, who must be a descendant of the Prophet through ‘Ali and Fāṭima, deriving his exclusive authority not by political claims but by Nāsiṣṭ, explicit designation by the previous Imam, and he inherits the special knowledge of religion coming down in the family from generation to generation. Thus the sphere and domain of this Imam is chiefly religious leadership and the spiritual guidance of the community and not the temporal power. We shall see in detail in the following chapter, however, how Ja‘far elaborated his theory of the Imamate and the nature and function of an Imam. But let us make it clear here that Ja‘far was by no means the originator of the basic theory of the Imamate. We have already pointed out that the idea of a legitimist Imam inspired with special knowledge was, in its rudimentary form, started by Zayn al-‘Abidīn, and then it was further
advanced by al-Bāqir. It was, however, the time and circumstances which provided Ja‘far a most suitable and propitious opportunity to elaborate and explain the ideas propounded by his father and grand-father. This great opportunity therefore made Ja‘far's Imāmate 'crucial'. Thus it was not so much Ja‘far's genius or personal efforts as the circumstances of his time which contributed to the rise of Imāmate to such a prominence.

Before we close this chapter two more points are to be noted in passing. One is the question whether Ja‘far, by presenting the theory pertaining to his own and his father’s Imāmate, thought of establishing a sect, group or party of his own, separated from the rest of the Muslims, or whether he wanted his Imāmate with the above-mentioned prerogative to be accepted and acknowledged by the whole body of the Muslims. The audience of Ja‘far and the wide range of people whom he addressed and tried to convince is a sufficient proof that Ja‘far himself did not intend to found a separate sect who alone should follow his doctrine of the Imāmate. But in the event, only those who had already a background of Shī‘ite inclination of one sort or the other accepted Ja‘far’s doctrine of the Imāmate and ultimately became a sect distinct from the rest of the Jamā‘a.

The second point is that the doctrine of the Imāmate and the function of the Imām elaborated by Ja‘far at this stage provided a basic authority for the later Imāmite theologians and theorists to explain and solve many problems of the pre-Ja‘far period. This was done by applying
Ja'far's theory of the Imamate to the actions of the Imams of the House who came before him, for example, 'Ali's acceptance of the first three Caliphs, the abdication of Hasan, the inactive attitude of Husayn and the quiescent policies of Zayn al-'Abidîn and al-Bâqîr. All these questions were solved in accordance with Ja'far's explanation that it is not necessary for a rightful Imam to combine the temporal power in his person or even claim the political authority, (the Caliphate), if the circumstances do not allow him to do so. On the other hand, it can also be said that Ja'far's theory of the Imamate was in fact a natural corollary of his family's past history and experience.
A. THE DOCTRINE OF THE IMAMATE AS EXPOUNDED
BY THE IMAM JA'FAR AL-SADIQ

Before we try to elucidate the doctrine of the Imamate which is said to have been expounded by Ja'far al-Sadiq, it is very important to make a brief scrutiny of the available source material and its apparently dubious nature. It is obvious that historical writings like that of Tabari and others had little to say about the quiescent Imamate devoid of political claims and activities. We see, for example, that Zayd, Yahyā, Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and Ibrāhīm fill a considerable number of pages in Tabari whereas Ja'far is not given more than a few lines. Ruling out the historical works therefore, we can divide our sources into three groups, namely (1) the Shi'ite Ḥadīth literature, (2) the Shi'ites' works on Rijāl, (3) heresiographical works of both the Shi'ite and the Sunnite writers.

The earliest and the most comprehensive work in the first group is al-Kāfī by Muhammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī (d. 328 AH) who devotes a full chapter entitled K.al-Ḥujja, on the Imāmate. Another important traditionist of the same century is Shaykh Ṣadūq (d. 381 AH) who also records a great many traditions on the subject of the Imāmate in his several works. ¹ The majority of these

¹. Al-Ṣadūq's Risālat al-Iʿtiqādāt is an authoritative creed of the Shi'ites and his 'Man lā Yahdurhu'l-Faqīh' is one of the four 'Standard Books' of the Shi'ites. The other three are Kulaynī's Kāfī and Tūsī's (d.460) the Istibsār and the Tahdhibu'l-Ahkām.
traditions have been related from the Imam Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, and both al-Kulaynī and Shaykh Ṣadūq claim to have used as their source the treatises written by as many as four hundred people who heard Ja‘far relating traditions. While the number four hundred seems to be a later exaggeration it is possible to accept that some of Ja‘far’s followers would have committed to writing what they heard from him, as at that time the writing down of such subjects had become very popular. But it is by no means certain that Ja‘far really was the author of everything that reached early Shi‘ite traditionists with the stamp of Ja‘far’s name. Many of these traditions appear to be of much later date and were attributed to Ja‘far; and even those which originated in his time are, to a very large extent productions of the Extremists and Zealot Shi‘ite circles in Kufa whereas

1. A comprehensive account of the majority of these 'four hundred treatises' with the titles and authors' names can be found in the al-Dhāri‘a ila Taṣānīf al-Shī‘a by Aghā Buzurg al-Tihrānī. This huge work is in sixteen volumes and the author gives the titles of the books in alphabetical order, and, therefore it would be too lengthy to quote here all volume numbers and pages where references to these treatises are made. Aghā Buzurg also claims that a few of these treatises are still preserved in some private libraries.

2. Indeed, that was the time when the writing down of such matters had become a very popular occupation. That was the time when Malik b. Anās was compiling his Muṣṭa‘a, Abū Mikhna‘f was busy in writing historical accounts of Iraq, and Ibn Ishāq was occupied in writing his Sīrah of the Prophet. Thus, it is possible that some of Ja‘far’s close adherents and pupils had committed to writing his traditions.
the Imām himself lived in Medina. We shall examine, in
the following part of this chapter, some of the impor-
tant adherents of Ja‘far like Jābir al-Ju‘fī and others
whose names frequently appear in the Isnād of Ja‘far’s
traditions, and who seem to have been responsible for
the creation of many traditions which bear Ja‘far’s name.
Furthermore, numerous Abādīth, too, whether of his genuine
authorship or of Kufan make, were subsequently amended
to suit the Mu‘tazilite views which the Shi‘ite movement
adopted in the fourth century of the Hijra. Moreover,
the gap of 180 years between Ja‘far and Kulaynī, in which
many changes, adjustments and readjustments took place,
is by itself sufficient to rouse our doubts in accepting
what is recorded with Ja‘far’s name. This period of 180
years, however, can be reduced by about sixty years in
the case of a very few traditions in Kāfī which corres-
pond only in their spirit and meaning with those sayings
of Ja‘far which have been recorded by al-Ya‘qūbī (d.284).
But they are generally pithy sayings or proverbs and do
not contribute much towards his theory of the Imāmate.
Still, they reflect Ja‘far’s pacific policy and peaceful
nature, which no doubt have some connection with his
doctrine of the Imāmate.2

In the second group of the sources mentioned above,
Kashshī’s Ma‘rifat Akhbar al-Rijāl is perhaps the most

1. I have already discussed some of the important
traditionists who were attached to Bāqīr and then
became the adherents of Ja‘far, like Abū Hamza
al-Thumālī and Abū Baṣīr.

2. See, Ya‘qūbī, Ta’rīkh, III, 115-117.
useful work, especially in connection with the accounts of Ja'far's close adherents and their divergent tendencies. The fact that he records many undesirable things about Ja'far's companions, and the fact that later Shi'ite traditionists like Tusi, Najashi and Allama Hilli frequently warn the Shi'ites of the misrepresentation of many of the adherents of the Imam by Kashshi, afford enough proof to give some weight to his accounts.

The third group consisting of heresiographical works from both the Sunnite and the Shi'ite are very important in that they help us in our understanding of the evolution of the doctrine of the Imamate. It is noteworthy that the Shi'ites were the first to start this branch of writing as an independent subject for Firaq al-Shi'a of Nawbahri (d. about 300 AH) or more correctly K. al-Maqalat wa'l-Firaq of Sa'd al-Ash'ari (d. 301 AH) are the earliest works in this field. The earliest of the Sunnite works in this group, however, is Maqalat al-Islamiyyin of al-Ash'ari (died about 325 AH). The great advantage of this heresiographical literature is that it enables us to know the cross-currents and intermingling

1. See the biographical comment on Kashshi at the end of his Rijal, p. 379 where both 'Allama Hilli and Najashi are quoted as saying:

له كتاب الرجل كثير العلم إلاّ أن فيه إغلاق كثير، وكان عقّة في عين الضعفاء.

2. Abbas Eqbal, in his scholarly work Khândan-e-Nawbakht, has convincingly proved that the Firaq al-Shi'a which has so far been known as Nawbakht's work is, in fact, the work of Sa'd b. 'Abdillah Abi Khalaf al-Ash'ari. See Abbas Eqbal, Khândan-e-Nawbakht. The work of Sa'd al-Ash'ari has recently been published from Teheran as Kitab al-Maqalat wa'l-Firaq, ed. by Muhammad Jawad Masihkour. A comparison of the two texts, however, shows very little difference only in readings at some places.
of ideas between different groups or 'sects' (if we use this rather loose English rendering of the Arabic term 'Firaq' which has a different connotation) at their evolutionary stages. But at the same time, the great danger of this literature is that the writers of these works present all those who differ from them as committed to pernicious errors and thus as heretics and heterodox. 1

Nevertheless, another very important aspect of this group of sources is that it gives us useful information about the teachings and ideas of a particular circle whom we may call the first scholastic philosophers of the Shi‘ites, who gathered round Ja‘far and later his son Mūsa. These speculative theologians who provided the intellectual element in the Imāmate of Ja‘far stand out from the Shi‘ite extremists even in the hostile presentation of some of the heresiographers. Al-Ash‘arī takes much interest in them and clearly distinguishes them from the extremists. These Mutakallimūn of Ja‘far's circle promulgated their theories of the Imāmate and Ja‘far often appears to have approved of their expositions. However, with this brief survey of the sources we are better able to examine Ja‘far's theory of the Imāmate.

We have examined in detail the circumstances and the claims of the more effective and more popular contenders of the 'Alid house against whom Ja‘far had to struggle for his claim to the Imāmate. Thus, in order to justify

1. As is apparent from Friedlander's article "The Heterodoxies of the Shi‘ites in the presentation of Ibn Hazm". JAOS. Vol. 28. pp.1-80.
his claims and establish himself as the sole rightful Imam, he put the utmost emphasis on two 'Fundamental Principles'.

The first principle was that of the Nass: that is the Imamate is a prerogative bestowed by God upon a chosen person who before his death and with the guidance of God, transfers it to another by an explicit designation (Nass). By the authority of Nass, therefore, the Imamate is restricted, through all political circumstances, to a definite individual among all the 'Alids whether he claims temporal rule for himself or not. Naturally such a claim of Nass Imamate would be meaningless unless it could be traced back to the person of ‘Ali who should have been entrusted with the office of the Imamate by the Prophet himself. The Nass thus initiated by the prophet came down from ‘Ali to Hasan and from Hasan to Husayn until it reached Ja‘far. This theory, as we shall see presently, distinguished Ja‘far’s Imamate from all other claimants who do not claim a Nass from any preceding Imam. Zayd clearly denied that there was an explicit Nass or designation of ‘Ali by Muhammad,1 or that there was any designation of the next Imam by the preceding one. Nor did Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakīyya or his brother Ibrāhīm ever resort to the principle of Nass from any preceding authority. On the contrary, as al-Ash‘arī2 points out, the idea of Nass was the key trait of the

1. Ibn Hazm, in Friedlander, "Heterodoxies of the Shi‘ites", JAOS, XXVIII, 1907, 74.
Rawāfiq as against the supporters of Zayd and later on of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. Al-Ashʿarī's statement is in accordance with the reports given by al-Nawhakhtī, Saʿd al-Ashʿarī and Kashshī of al-Bāqir's followers who upheld him against Zayd as the only legitimate ‘Alid authority on the principle of Nass, though the doctrine of Nass was still vague.¹ But a comparison between the traditions related from al-Bāqir and that of Jaʿfar would show that Jaʿfar became increasingly clear and emphatic in his expositions of the doctrine of the Nass Imāmate. As a result, a further comparison between the attitudes of the followers of these two respective Imāms discloses a shift from vagueness to clarity in accepting Jaʿfar as the Imām largely on the principle of Nass. This is evident from the action of a group of the Kufan Shiʿites, who after the death of al-Bāqir for some time adhered to Zayd but soon after abandoned him and went over to Jaʿfar whom they regarded as representing al-Bāqir's claims.² Hodgson quotes Strothmann's suggestion, "that the story of the Kufan Shiʿites abandoning Zayd for Jaʿfar shows that they already accepted the idea of a line of Imāms by inheritance."³ The idea of the Nass Imāmate, however, became such a common instrument that

1. Though al-Bāqir claimed the Imāmate on the principle of Nass, the doctrine was not yet fully explained and elaborated as it came to be during Jaʿfar's Imāmate.

2. Tab., II, 1700.

not only Ja'far, but a number of ghūlāt such as Bayān,1 Abū Mansūr2 and Mughīra3 claimed inheritance from al-Bāqir achieved some, though shortlived, success. There are numerous references in our sources to the effect that Ja'far repeatedly condemned these fanatics and warned his followers not to accept their tradition.

The second fundamental principle embodied in the doctrine of the Imāmate as emphasised by Ja'far was that of 'Ilm. This means that an Imām is a divinely inspired possessor of a special sum of knowledge of religion and which can only be passed on before his death to the following Imām. In this way the Imām of the time becomes the exclusively authoritative source of knowledge in religious matters and thus without his guidance no one can keep to the path of truth.4 This special knowledge includes both the external (Zāhir) and esoteric (Bāṭīn) meanings of the Qur'ān.5 A close scrutiny of the traditions related from Ja'far on the subject of the Imāmate will show that they rotate round these two principles of

1. Nawhakhtī, Firaq, 25 and 30. Sa‘d al-Ash‘arī, Maqālāt, 33, 35 and 37 mentions Bayān as claiming the Imāmate as the legatee of Abū Hāshim not as that of al-Bāqir, also see part B. of this chapter.


3. Nawhakhtī, 52-55. Sa‘d al-Ash‘arī, Maqālāt, 44-45, Shahrastānī, Milal, 1, 176 f. also see part B. of this chapter.

4. Kulaynī, Kāfī, 141.

5. Ibid., 139.
Nass and 'Ilm, which go side by side and it is rather
difficult to separate one from the other. Hence, Nass
in fact means transmission of that special knowledge
of religion which had been exclusively and legitimately
in the possession of the divinely favoured Imāms of
the House of the Prophet thorough ‘Ali, and which can
only be transferred from an Imām to the following Imām
as the legacy of the family. Thus for the adherents
of Ja‘far his claim was not just as an Imām who ought
to be a member of the ‘Alid family, but that he was a p
particular individual designated by his father and there­
fore inherently possessed of all the authority to guide
believers in all religious matters.

As we shall see presently in the traditions of
Ja‘far, this emphasis on the aspect of 'special knowledge'
having been possessed by the Imāms of the House of the
Prophet, certainly showed a most realistic grasp of the
situation and tendencies of the epoch. Hodgson\(^1\) makes
a very appropriate observation when he says: "This was
the time of the rise of Hadīth and the attempt to construct
total systems of the pious life— which eventually issued
in the full Sharī‘a law. It was the time of Abū Ḥanīfa and
Mālik, the Imāms. Ja‘far was evidently looked on as an
Imām like them concerned with working out the proper de­
tails of how the pious should solve the various cases in
conscience that might arise. So he appears in Sunnī tra­
dition to a degree. But in the case of Ja‘far it was
claimed that he had a Unique authority in these matters,
by virtue of his position as Imām by Nass — that in some

\(^1\) Hodgson, "How did the early Shi‘a become Sectarian",
JAOS, 1955, p.11.
sense his was the final decision on earth in these matters; whereas the others, as was indeed admitted, had no more legal authority in principle than any of their followers."

"This claim was perhaps initially less a matter of the Knowledge he had (from his father) than of the authoritative use he could make of it—his hereditary authority to decide cases. Any sovereign must be empowered to make the final decisions in any legal matter; hence the Imam's very claim that sovereignty was justly his could readily entail a claim to final authority in legal (and in this case all religious) matters. Such a claim would be readily transmuted to one of supernatural knowledge in many minds. But in an Imamate where the authority was not in actual fact the sovereign, and his 'Ilm remained on a theocritical level, that discernment, that 'Ilm which should guide his decisions, took on a special sacredness and became a unique gift inherited from Imam to Imam. Accordingly, as the exclusively authorised source of the knowledge of how to lead a holy life, the Imam had an all-important function whether he was ruler or not."

It is now no longer difficult to understand why Ja'far remained absolutely indifferent in all those struggles for power which took place in his lifetime. In his doctrine of the Imamate it was not at all necessary for a divinely appointed Imam, as he lets himself believe, to rise in rebellion and try to become a ruler. To his mind his place was above that of a ruler, who should only carry out what an Imam decides as a supreme authority of religion. It is with this idea in mind that when Zayd appeared with his claims Ja'far raised no protest, and
even extolled Zayd's virtues before a delegation of Kufan Shi'ites. But at the same time he said to Fuḍayl b. Rassān that had Zayd become a King, he would have known how to act and fulfill his duties. In this way he implied that Zayd had right to political rule only. He passed similar remarks when Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya rose to claim the Imāamate, and he emphatically denied any share in the religious headship of the community for the descendants of al-Hasan, from whom Husayn inherited the Imāmite which then remained in the latter's progeny.

According to the traditions related in this connection, al-Bāqir designated Ja'far as his successor in many ways. He called him "the best of all mankind" and "the one in charge of the Family of Muhammad" (Qā'im Al Muhammad) and also entrusted him with the books and scrolls and the weapons of the Prophet, which were in his possession. These treasures were kept in two leather bags (Jafr), one white and the other red. In the White Bag (al-Jafr al-Abyad) were the Psalms of David (Zubūr),

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 189-190.
5. See, T. Fahd, El (2) art. "Djafir", which gives full description of it with many references. Also see Ibn Khaldūn, Muq., II, 761 and 766 f. who examined it critically. For the lists of the mysterious books attributed to Ja'far, see Brockelmann, 5,1,104.
the Scrolls of Ibrāhīm, the Tablets (Tawriyya) of Moses, the Gospel (Injīl) of Jesus, instructions pertaining to what is lawful and what is unlawful (al-Ḥalāl waʾl Ḥarām), and the book (Muṣḥaf) of Fāṭima. This Muṣḥaf Fāṭima contained the secret knowledge of all events until the Day of Resurrection. When Fāṭima was in despair after the death of the Prophet, in order to console her, God sent an angel, who told her everything about the future. The people heard a voice speaking to her, but could not understand the words. When she related what she had heard, it was put in writing, and so the Book of Fāṭima came into being. Another mysterious scripture Jaʿfar claimed to be in his possession, was al-Jāmiʿa, a scroll seventy cubits (dharāʾ) long. Al-Jāmiʿa or the adjective Jāmiʿ contained the most detailed instructions concerning the Ḥalāl and Ḥarām, as well as other problems, even so minute as the blood price for a scratch (arsh fi al-Khadash). They were written by ‘Ali under the Prophet's dictation. In the red bag (al-Jafr al-Aḥmar) were the weapons of the Prophets which should only be taken out "for killing and bloodshed" when al-Mahdī arises. These weapons and scriptures must only come into the possession of a true Imām. Thus by alleging that they were in his trust, Jaʿfar denied the rights of al-Nafs al-Zākiyya, who asserted that he


had the sword of the Prophet.¹

Whether these legendary possessions were really claimed by Ja'far himself or the claims were foisted on him by the later Shi'ites, is impossible to ascertain now. But the fact remains that he claimed the spiritual leadership of the community which he based on the same principles as al-Baqir, namely on Nass which means divine appointment and inheritance of special knowledge and rights.

Ja'far explained that the Imamate is bequeathed from father to son, but not necessarily to the eldest one, for "as David selected Solomon from among his progeny", so an Imam designates as his successor the son he considers really worthy of the "Office". Thus Ja'far could annul the appointment of Isma'il, pass over the candidature of 'Abdullah and nominate Musa.²

The Imamate is a "covenant" between God and mankind and recognition of the Imam is the absolute duty of every believer.³ Whosoever dies without having known and acknowledged the Imam of his time, dies an infidel.⁴ The Imams are the proofs (Hujaj) of Allah on earth, their words are the words of Allah and their command is the command of Allah. Obedience to them is obedience to Allah and disobedience to them is disobedience to Allah. In all their decisions they are inspired by Allah,

1. Abūl-Paraj Isfahānī, Maqātil, 188. Tab., III,247.
3. Ibid.
and they are in absolute authority.¹

It is to them that Allah has ordained obedience. Ja‘far goes on to declare that the Imām of the time is the witness for the people and he is the gate (Bāb) of Allah and the road (Sabīl) to Him, and the guide (dalīl) thereto, and the repository² of His Knowledge and the interpreter of His revelations. The Imām of his time is a pillar of Allah’s Unity (Tawḥīd). The Imām is immune from sin (Khaṭā) and errors (dālāl). The Imāms are those from whom "Allah has removed all impurity and made them absolutely pure"; they are possessed of (the power of) miracles and of (irrefutable) arguments (dala‘il); and they are for the protection of the people of this earth just as the stars are for the habitation of the heavens. They may be likened, in this community, to the Ark of Noah; he who boards it obtained salvation or reaches the Gate of Repentance.³ In another tradition, "God delegated (fawwāda) to the Imāms spiritual rulership over the whole world, which must always have such a leader and guide. Even if only two men were left upon the face of the earth, one of them would be an Imām, so much is his guidance needed."⁴

In fact, according to Ja‘far’s explanation, there are always two Imāms, the actual or "speaking" one

1. Reference to the Qur’ānic verse, IV, 62.
2. The Arabic word ‘ayba means a leather bag; metaphorically, it is used for a person who is a repository of one's secrets. See, Fyzee, A. Shi‘ite Creed, 96 n.4. cf. Lane.
(Nāṭiq) and his son-successor, who during the lifetime of his father is "silent" (Ṣāmit). The Silent Imām does not know of his exalted position until his father's death, for only then is he entrusted with the scriptures and the secrets of religion. When the father expires, his son immediately steps into his place and becomes "the Proof" (al-Ḥujja) for mankind. Thus the Shi‘ites of Ja‘far's time accepted the principle that the Imāmate must pass from father to son who should also be a father and not a child (min wālidin ila wālid). Hence arose the famous problem of Ja‘far's succession when he nominated Mūsa after the death of Ismā‘īl. It apparently contradicted the principle that the Imāmate which once passed from al-Hasan to al-Ḥusayn can never again be inherited by a brother from a brother. But was justified under the principle of Nass that the Imām with the guidance of God chooses the best of his sons worthy of the office.

However, as we have pointed out above, in order to justify his claims to the Imāmate on the principle of Nass it was necessary for Ja‘far to put the utmost emphasis first of all on ‘Ali's rights to the spiritual leadership of the community (Imāmate) as the divinely favoured legatee of the Prophet. For this reason Ja‘far quoted many verses of the Qur‘ān which in his interpretation proved the appointment of ‘Ali to the Imāmate. It was

2. Kulaynī, Ibid.
4. See part B of this chapter.
also Ja‘far who narrated the Tradition according to which the Prophet said: "Whosoever’s master I am, ‘Ali is his master." This important Hadîth is given by Kulaynî in a very simple form without all the details of the assembly at Ghâdîr Khum, and this may indicate that the Shi‘ites of Ja‘far’s time had not yet elaborated the details which, as Vaglieri suggests, were based on a historical event in which the Prophet showed some favour to ‘Ali.

Like the Naṣṣ, the 'special knowledge' of religion which Ja‘far claimed for himself should also be traced back to ‘Ali which passed on from Imām to Imām until it came to his possession. Thus Ja‘far said that the Prophet entrusted ‘Ali with the greatest name of God, the Traditions pertaining to the knowledge of prophethood (athâr al-Nubuwwa) and a thousand words in a thousand chapters, each a thousand other words and a thousand other chapters. Abû Basîr, reported Ja‘far as saying that the Prophet had in the Sheath of his sword a small scroll, on which were letters (ḥurūf), each of them "opening a thousand other letters".2

Mu‘ādh b. Kathîr stated on the authority of Ja‘far that the legacy (al-Wâṣiyya) came from heaven, brought by Gabriel for the Prophet in the form of a sealed book (or

1. The event of Ghâdîr Khum has so far been described by the western scholars of Islam as a complete forgery by the later Shi‘ites. L.V. Vaglieri is, however, the first who emphatically suggests in her recent article in El.2, that the event described by al-Ya‘qûbî at Ghâdîr Khum in favour of ‘Ali should be accepted as of some historical merits. See E.1.2, art. "Ghâdîr Khum" also see p.44, n.1, supra.

rather scroll) with the command that it should become the inheritance of ‘Ali b. Abī Ţālib and his progeny. ¹ There were a number of seals on this scroll. When the Prophet handed it over to ‘Ali, the latter took off the first of these seals, and conformed to the instructions which were thus made available to him. On his death the scroll was inherited by al-Hasan, who broke the second seal and read the further instructions. All the succeeding Imāms — Husayn, Zayn al-‘Abidīn, al-Bāqir and al-Šādiq, acted in the same way. ²

Ja‘far went beyond the simple assertion of the divine appointment of ‘Ali and his successors. He developed the doctrine of 'Light', introduced in al-Bāqir’s time, and upheld the supernatural origin of the Family of Muhammad. He maintained that God created Muhammad and ‘Ali from his Light as one Spirit without body before the creation of the world, the heavens and the Throne. Then he divided this spirit into two, and again each of the two parts into a further two, and so they became Muhammad, ‘Ali, Hasan and Husayn. Then God raised Fāṭima from the same light, a spirit without a body. ³ Owing to this the Imāms and their descendants are made of Light. Their bodies, too, are formed from the Great Light, which is stored under the Throne, and made into a superior sort of clay. ⁴

2. Ibid, 172.
3. Ibid, 278.
Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Muhammad b. 'Abdillah b. 'Umar b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib gave a somewhat different version of Ja'far's views, namely that "God was when there was nothing", (Inna Allaha Ka'na idha la Kanā), and he created "to be" (Khalaqa Kana), "the place" (al-Makān) "and the Light with which He set aflame other lights. From this first Light He created Muhammad and 'Ali. They were in existence before all other beings. They remained one and did not become two lights until they were born pure from 'Abdullah b. 'Abd al-Muttalib and his brother Abū Talib.  

Another tradition explaining the supernatural birth and status of the Imāms is related by Abū Hamza on the authority of Abū Basīr from Ja'far al-Sādiq. Ja'far said that God created the Holy Spirit, which is greater than Gabriel, "for Gabriel is an angel and Rūh is greater than the angels." This Holy Spirit descends upon an Imam while he is still in the state of embryo after forty days in the womb of the mother. He visits, too, the Imam on the night of power (Laylat al-Qadr). Another interesting tradition related from Ja'far on the supernatural nature of the Imāms reads "An Imām is

1. This is perhaps the first trace of the Neo-platonic theory of emanation.
3. Ibid, 168-245.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid, 125.
endowed with five spirits: the Holy Spirit (Rūḥ al-Quds), the spirit of Faith (Rūḥ al-Imān), the Spirit of Religious Belief (Rūḥ al-Madraj), the Spirit of Strength (Rūḥ al-Quwwa) and the Spirit of Desire (Rūḥ al-Shahwa).\footnote{Ibid., 166-167. Another Tradition mentions the Spirit of Life (Rūḥ al-Ḥayāt) instead of the Spirit of Desire.} Owing to the Holy Spirit they know everything "below the Throne of God and beneath the earth"; they are helped by the Spirit of Faith, owing to which they fear God and are just; the spirit of Religious Belief makes them hate sins which the other mortals commit; the Spirit of Strength gives them power and inspires them with supreme obedience to God, and the Spirit of Desire enables them to fulfill their bodily needs without sin.\footnote{Kulaynī, Kāfī, 166, 167.}

There is a great store of traditions of this kind recorded by al-Kulaynī and other Shi‘īte traditionists as having been enunciated by Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq. We have quoted only a few of them just to show the nature and character of these traditions which speak for themselves. If we take Ja‘far's authorship for granted we may wonder to what extent he believed in what he said about his supernatural wisdom and divine origin. It would be easy to condemn him as an unscrupulous impostor, who prayed upon the credulity of his votaries. First of all, as has already been pointed out, it is almost impossible to ascertain which traditions really came from his mouth, and which were produced by the circle of his adherents among whom were such fanatics as Jābir al-Ju‘fī, al-Mufaddal b. ‘Umar.
and Abu'1-Khattâb.\(^1\) Even, it seems, Ja‘far himself was aware of the fact that many false traditions were being manufactured by the Kufa circle of his followers and attributed to him so that he warned: "only these Traditions should be accepted which agree with the Qur‘ân.\(^2\)"

To prevent his own words from being perverted, he said "write them down, for you will not remember them unless you have committed them in writing".\(^3\)

Yet, among all these traditions, whether genuine or false, there are certain common trends, which indicates that Ja‘far was responsible for at least the nucleus of the theories which arose in his time. These general trends reveal his belief that he and the other Imâms, his predecessors, were incarnations of the Divine Light, acting under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus everything that came to his mind he sincerely understood as an absolute truth supernaturally suggested by God. In such a mental state it was natural that the borderline between the real and the imaginary tended to become very hazy and he could have been quite sincerely convinced that many things were real although they existed solely in his mind. On the other hand, among Ja‘far's frequent visitors we find Murji‘ites, Qadarites, Mystics and fanatical Shi‘ites extremists and even non-Muslim sectarians. It is then quite probable that ideas of a miscellaneous origin might

1. See part B of this chapter.

2. Kash., Rijāl, 146. This he said in connection with Mughîra b. Sa‘îd whom he condemned and cursed for heresies.

have influenced Ja'far's theories regarding the Imāmate and other allied problems. Such extraneous ideas seem to be of Iranian brands of Gnosticism, namely Manicheism. The traditions which have been quoted above on the theory of the Imāmate clearly betray Gnostic elements, and though Ja'far's successors added certain points of their own, they did not change the essential structure.

As far as Ja'far's claims to the secret Books and Scrolls containing religious hidden knowledge are concerned, it is easy to reject them outright, but still there are some avenues for the investigation of their possible origin. According to al-Waqqādī, at the time of the appearance of Islam, 'Ali was one of only those six or seven men among the Quraysh who could write. The Prophet himself is said to have been unable to write, but he had four secretaries who wrote the text of the Qur'ān, on whatever material was available at hand - branches of palms, bits of leather or dry bones. There are several traditions from both Sunnite and Shi'ite sources, that affirm that 'Ali used to write the revelations when Muhammad pronounced them. At the same time, 'Ali is said to have annotated them according to conversations he held with Muhammad. We may accept that 'Ali made these additional notes on the margin of his Qur'ān and this is apparently all that 'Ali claimed to possess in the nature of revelation from the Prophet that others did not have.

1. See T. Pahd, El (2), art. 'Djafr'.

Moreover, in his chapter on 'Ilm Bukhārī cites a tradition that referred originally to Abū Juhayfah who said, 'I asked 'Ali, 'Is there any book with you?' He answered, No, none except the Book of God, or the Understanding which is given a man who is a Muslim, or what is in 'this writing'. I said, 'what is in this writing?' He replied, 'Reason, and the separation of captives and not killing the one who submits in unbelief.' Another tradition attributed to al-Taymiya is mentioned twice by al-Bukhārī, in which the father of al-Tamiya reported that 'Ali said in a speech "There is no book among us that we should read except the Book of God, the Most High, and what is in the writing." Then he said, "In it are instructions about the wounded, what to do with the older camels, and the extent of the sacred territory about Medina that lies between Ayr and Kadha." Ahmad b. Hanbal in connection with the sacred territory, also gives this tradition frequently.

If 'Ali was from ten to fifteen years of age at the time when he professed Islam, and if he was none of those who could write, and considering the testimony of the traditions, it does not seem improbable that he had a Qur'ān with marginal notes which he had made in his conversations with the Prophet. It is also possible that 'Ali

1. Bukhārī, Sahih, III, 49. Tayālīsī, Musnad, No. 91. Also see many references cited by Hamidullah in his Sahifah Hammām Ibn Munabbih, 31-33.
2. Bukhārī, Sahih, ch. 58. sec. 10 and 17 and see a number of references cited by Hasan al-Ṣadr, Tāsīs al-Shī‘a li ‘Ulūm al-Islām, 279. Also Ḥamidullah, loc. cit.
3. Muslim, Musnad, II, 414.
might have written down some other notes from the Prophet apart from the Qur'ān. If it is so, we may perhaps find the origin of the elaborated claim made by Ja'far or only attributed to him, for the secret book (Jafr) and scrolls in his possession. Ibn Khaldūn says that Ja'far did possess a book written on the skin of the bullock which Harūn b. Sa‘īd, the Zaydite theologian, transmitted from him and called it jafr, which dialectically means "small skin" (Thawrsaghīr). In this book were Malāḥim and prophecies about certain members of the Ahl al-Bayt. Ibn Khaldūn goes in details of this book and explains how the Fāṭimid emissaries of later times made constant use of these prophecies, twisting their context to suit the conditions of the epoch.

Another way to find some explanation of Ja'far's claims to these secret scrolls is to investigate his access to writings on occult sciences. In saying this, it is not meant that Ja'far really occupied himself in these studies and became a scholar in occult sciences, as it is generally claimed by the Shī‘ites on the ground that he is an often quoted authority in the works which bear the name of Jābir b. Hayyān. First of all, Jābir

1. Ibn ‘Asākir, Ta‘rīkh, II, 4 f f. makes it clear that it was a widespread belief among the Muslims that ‘Ali had writings other than the Qur'ān, bequeathed to him by the Prophet. see Ibid. Ibn Nadīm, Fihrist, 28. and also see many references cited by Hamidullah, loc.cit. Hasan al-Sadr, loc.cit.

2. Ibn Khaldūn, Muq., II, 766. Also see T. Fahd, El.(2) art."Djafar."

3. Ibid, 767.
b. Ḥayyān himself is a historical problem and it is by no means certain that the works attributed to him are really of his genuine authorship. Secondly, the relationship between Jābir and his supposed teacher Jaʿfar is also not quite certain. What we mean then by Jaʿfar's access to writings on occult sciences is a possibility of his getting hold of some of the Hermetic revelations through the Manichaens, and the Sabaians of Harrān. We know of Abū Shākir al-Daysānī with whom Jaʿfar held disputes. There were also other Zindīqānī who visited the Imām. Many of his disciples, too, especially in Kufa were in constant contact with the Manichaens, large numbers of whom lived in that city. Jābir b. Yazīd al-Juʿfī in particular was known to be addicted to occult sciences, which presumably he learned from the Gnostics and the Jews.

However, we have gone far from our direct concern here in finding whether there was in reality any secret book or scroll in possession of Jaʿfar. What concerns us is that Jaʿfar did claim for himself a special knowledge in matters of religion and made it a unique source of authority for the Imāmate.

Another greatly relevant and rather difficult problem connected with Jaʿfar's claims to the Nass and inheritance of special knowledge was the question of the scope


and applicability of the term 'Ahl al-Bayt'. On the one hand, all the descendants of 'Ali, whether through Fâtimâ or not, were claiming membership of the 'Sacred House'. On the other hand, the 'Abbâsids, being the descendants of Hâshîm, also claimed the prerogative of the Ahl al-Bayt and were revered by their Shi'a as God's inspired Imâms and the Mahdî. This compelled Ja'far to circulate a tradition allegedly from the Prophet which would limit the inclusive meaning of the Qur'ânic verse referring to the people of the House 'from whom the abomination was removed' to 'Ali, Fâtimâ and their progeny. Thus he narrated a tradition of a very similar pattern to that of the Hadîth al-Mubahala related by Zayn al-'Abîdîn, and known as the Hadîth, Aşqâb al-Kisâ or Hadîth al-Kisâ. The Hadîth runs: Muhammad made 'Ali, Fâtimâ, al-Hasan and al-Husayn enter under his mantle (Kisâ) in the house of Umm Salîma, and then said: "Every prophet has his family (ahl) and his charge (thaqal); these are, O God, my family and my charge." When Umm Salîma asked: "Am I not from the people of your House?" the Prophet replied, "No; may you be well, only these under the mantle are the people of my House and my charge."

The tradition is a long one. But perhaps the most important part of it is when Gabriel comes down to announce the verse of the Purification for the 'Five of the Mantle',

1. Kulaynî, Kâfî, 176.
2. "For God only desireth to put away filthiness from you as Muhammad's Household, and with a cleansing to cleanse you." Qur'ân, XXXIII, 33.
3. See Thâ'labî, Tafsîr, 402.
and Muhammad introduces them to the angel saying: "There is, in the mantle, Fāṭima, her husband ‘Ali, and her two children Hasan and Hussayn." One can see clearly that the point of gravity is laid here not on ‘Ali but on Fāṭima with whose reference ‘Ali, Hasan and Husayn are introduced. Though the reference to Fāṭima for a special claim in her own right was made before,¹ it was Ja‘far who put extreme emphasis on this point. It had indeed an immense potential appeal for Ja‘far's claims, especially when all other claimants of Fāṭimid descent had been killed. Eventually Fāṭima came to be regarded among the Shi‘ites as one of the holiest of figures.

When we examine the Isnād of the version of Ḥadīth, Aṣḥāb al-Kisā, given above, we may take it as the earliest in existence, and we may regard it as having genuinely emanated from Ja‘far. Later other variants were elaborated and new chains of transmission artificially constructed, projecting it to Ibn ʿAbbas. In this way the designation of ‘Ali and Fāṭima and their progeny as the sole true Ahl al-Bayt was put into the mouth of the ancestor of the ‘Abbāsid dynasty.

Thus Ja‘far claimed for himself the sanctity of the Ahl al-Bayt as an inherited quality confined only to those of the children of Fāṭima who were ordained to be the Imāms and in this way rejected the claims of all other

¹. See al-‘Nafs al-Zakiyya's letter to al-Mansūr in chapter IV part B. The reference to Fāṭima was made essential even by the Zaydīs, who came to restrict the Imāmate to those ‘Alids who were also Fāṭimid. But it was perhaps quite late as Nawḥakhtī, p.15 quotes some Zaydīs who accepted any son of ‘Ali, no matter of what womb.
Hāshmites — whether 'Abbāsids or 'Alids. But, at the same time, in order to inspire with enthusiasm some of his close friends, he introduced an honorary membership of the Ahl al-Bayt. The precedent was supplied by the Prophet himself. When ransoming Salmān al-Fārūqī from slavery, he declared him to be from us, "the people of the House". This was imitated later by Ibrāhīm al-Imām, when he proclaimed Abū Muslim to be the Mawla of the Ahl al-Bayt and thus put him above the hierarchy of the other missionaries. Thus, Ja'far said to 'Umar b. Yazīd Bayān al-Sābīrī, a Mawla of the Thaqīf, "You are, by God, from us, the Ahl al-Bayt." 'Umar apparently was so elated that he could not believe his ears, and asked, "May I be your ransom, am I from the family of Muhammad?" "Yes," answered Ja'far, "from among them." "From among them?" asked 'Umar, still not sure that he understood correctly. The Imām repeated, "Yes, by God, from among them, O 'Umar. Have you not read in the Book of God that the men closest to Ibrāhīm were those who followed him? Muhammad was also a Prophet and those who believed in him were also his closest relatives, and God is the friend of the Faithful." On another occasion Ja'far said of 'Isa

1. For Salmān see Massignon, Salmān Fāk, 16 ff.
2. He was a Kufite known also as al-Bazzāz, a seller of cloth, see Hā'irī, Muntaha, 234. Najāshī, Rijāl, 203.
3. Kash., Rijāl, 212-213. (The exact wording here is not quite clear in the text published from Bombay. I do not have any other edition of Kashshī to compare it. The sense seems to be that the true believers in Muhammad are like those of the believers who are close relatives of him.)
b. 'Abdullah al-Qummi: "He is from us when alive and when dead." And also: "He is from the people of the House, the noble ones." \(^1\) 'Isa's brother, 'Imrān, was also similarly treated by the Imām. \(^2\)

There remains another point to be considered here concerning a principle which was raised by Ja'far to the status of an absolute condition of Faith. Such a hereditary claim to the Imāmate based on Naṣṣ and Special Knowledge as that made by Ja'far and his father al-Bāqir, greatly exposed the claimants to the danger of persecution by the 'Abbāsids who also claimed spiritual leadership of the community. Thus Ja'far put extreme emphasis on the principal of Taqiyya. It is interesting to note that there is not a single tradition on Taqiyya from any Imām prior to al-Bāqir, which is a sufficient proof that the principle of Taqiyya was first introduced by al-Bāqir according to the needs of his time and was further elaborated by Ja'far. One may see that the theory of Taqiyya suits very well the theory of supernatural knowledge embodied in the Imāms, and which should be limited to a few selected people. Thus Ja'far said, "This affair (Amr, i.e. the Imāmate and the esoteric meaning of religion) is occult (Mastūr) and veiled (Muqanna) by a covenant (Mīthāq), and whoever unveils it will be disgraced by God.\(^3\)

In a conversation with Mu'alla b. Khunays, the

2. Ḥā'irī, Muntaha, 237-235.
extremist, Ja'far said: "Keep our affair (amr) secret, and do not divulge it publicly, for whoever keeps it secret and does not reveal it, God will exalt him in this world and put light between his eyes in the next, leading him to paradise. O Mu‘alla, who divulges our affair publicly, and does not keep it secret, God will disgrace him in this world and will take away light from between his eyes in the next, and will decree for him darkness that will lead him into the Fire. O, Mu‘alla, verily the Taqiyya is of my religion and of the religion of my father, and one who does not keep the Taqiyya has no religion. O Mu‘alla, it is necessary to worship in secret as it is necessary to worship openly. O, Mu‘alla, the one who reveals our affair is the one who denies it."¹

The esoteric mysteries of religion were Wilāyat Allah, which God entrusted to Gabriel, who brought them to Muhammad. The Prophet, in turn, handed them over to ‘Ali, and they became the inheritance of the Imāms, who are bound to keep them secret.² The duty, therefore, incumbent on the Faithful is that they should not impart their tenets to outsiders. Ja‘far accused the Kaysānites of betraying religion when they spread its secrets among the common people: "Our secret continued to be preserved until it came into the hands of the sons of Kaysān (Wulid Kaysān, i.e. his followers) and they spoke of it on the roads and in the villages of the Sawād."³

1. Ibid, 486.
2. Kulaynī, Kāfī, 487.
3. Ibid, 486.
It is certain that the basis of the principle was a necessity imposed by the danger of following certain religious or political views. Every pattern of behaviour, however, was then considered from the religious standpoint and so had to be justified by certain passages from the Qur'ān or Ḥadīth indicating a precedent. If no explicit verse in the Qur'ān or Tradition could be found, it was not difficult to justify it by the application of certain texts in the Qur'ān. Thus, according to Ja'far, both Joseph and Abraham practised Taqiyya, when they resorted to falsehood — the first by accusing his brothers of theft, and the second by asserting that he was ill.1 Muhammad himself is alleged to have practised Taqiyya until the verse in which he was ordered to preach publicly was revealed.2

In al-Bāqir's period the principle of Taqiyya was established in Shī‘ism, and we may attribute the rudiments of its theory to him, but it was Ja'far who gave it final form and made it an absolute condition of true Faith. "Fear for your religion and protect it (lit. veil it) with the Taqiyya, for there is no faith (Imān) in whom there is no Taqiyya."3 Ja'far made it clear to his followers that by

1. Ibid, 483.
2. "O thou, Apostle, publish the whole that has been revealed to thee from thy Lord; if thou doest it not, thou has not preached His message, and God will not defend thee from wicked men." Qur'ān, V, 67. Another verse was interpreted for 'Ammār b. Yāsir, "And who disbelieved in God after believing in Him, except under compulsion (mān 'Ukriha), and whose heart is confident in faith..." Qur'ān, XVI, 106.
resorting to the principle of Taqiyya, he might give different answers to the same question on various occasions. Once he asked a certain Abū 'Amr al-Kinānī, "O Abū 'Amr, what is your opinion, if I related to you a Tradition or issued a legal decision, and you come another time, asking the same question, and I gave you a different answer? Which of the two answers would you accept?" Abū 'Amr replied: "The first, and I would leave off the second." "You are right, O Abū 'Amr," confirmed Ja'far. "God has permitted us to worship Him only in secret. By God, if you do this, it is better for you and for me. God, glory and power unto Him, refuses to accept our worship except in the Taqiyya."¹

It is, however, hardly disputable that the principle of Taqiyya thus made by Ja'far as a necessary part of Faith ultimately served the Shī'ites as a very useful instrument in their sectarian organisation during all unfavourable political circumstances. This is also evident from another tradition from Ja'far quoted by al-Sadūq in his Creed where the Imam says, "Mix with the people (i.e. enemies) outwardly, but oppose them inwardly, so long as the Amirate (Imaratu) is a matter of opinion."² On another occasion, when Zakariya b. Šāhiq enumerated

1. See Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der Takijja im Islam", ZDMG IX (1906) 213-220, who gives a history of the principle of Taqiyya and finds it practiced without being announced as a principle even by Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya. It was Ja'far who so elaborated Taqiyya as basic principle of the Shi'ite faith, out of the political needs of his time.

the Imāms in the presence of Ja‘far and reached the name of Muhammad al-Bāqir, he was interrupted by the exclamation: "That is enough for you. God has affirmed your tongue and guided your heart."1 We may note that the principle of Taqiyya is equally recognised by the Ismā‘ilites and many traditions on the subject are common between the Ismā‘ilites and the Imāmis.

1. Compare the traditions mentioned above from the Imāmite sources with the traditions recorded by Qādī Nu‘mān in his Da‘ā‘im and Mukhtasarul‘Athār Vol. II. "Kitab al-Ashā'riba," quoted by A.A. Fyzee, A Shī‘ite Creed, 110, n.1; for example

التقيّة ديني ودين أبي في كل شيء إلا في تحريم المسكر
Also see Kalāmi Pir, a treatise on Ismā‘īlī doctrine edited by W. Ivanow, 67-69.
B. THE CIRCLE OF JA‘FAR AND THE EVOLUTION
OF THE IMAMITE DOGMAS

We have pointed out that the majority of the
Imāmite (as well as Ismā‘īlīte) traditions both in the
sphere of theological principles ('Usūl) and in that
of religious practice and legal institutions (Furū‘)
are allegedly derived from Ja‘far and so he is regarded
by them as the father of both Shi‘ite law and dogmas.¹
On the one hand, it is almost impossible to ascertain
with any degree of certainty which tenets were really
of Ja‘far's own creation and which were produced by
the circle of adherents of peculiar tendencies surroun-
ding him. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that
the nuclei of the Imāmite dogmas owe their origin to
the time of Ja‘far. In this situation the only possi-
ble thing to do is to make a close examination of the
important personalities in the circle of Ja‘far on whose
authority most of Ja‘far's doctrines are related. A
better understanding of Ja‘far's close adherents will
help us in our knowledge of the Imāmite dogmas, attrib-
uted mostly to Ja‘far. We shall, therefore, consider
the personalities and their ideas side by side.

In this connection, however, two important points
are to be noted. First, that not all of Ja‘far's follow-
ers were his own acquisition but were formerly attached
to al-Bāqir and later became ardent followers of the son.
It was this old group which made the nucleus of Ja‘far's

¹. Because of this reason the Imāmite Shi‘a are
called "Millat Jafariyya."
following and is largely responsible for the majority of the tenets circulated among the Shi‘ites on his authority. The second and still more important point is, that while Ja‘far himself resided in Medina, almost all of his important followers lived in Kufa, busy in their sectarian activities and only occasionally paying visits to the Imam. This fact introduces us to a very crucial problem.

Kufa had long been a centre of ghulāt speculations and activities. Whether ‘Abdullah b. Saba‘,1 to whom the history of ghulāt is traced back was a real personality or not, the name al-Sabā‘iyya2 is often used as synonymous with those Shi‘ites in Kufa who believed in the Godhead of ‘Ali. According to heresiographers Ibn Sabā‘ was the first to preach the doctrine of Waqf (refuse to recognise the death of ‘Ali), and condemnation of the Shaykhān in addition to ‘Uthmān.3 Baghdādī says that al-Sabā‘iyya, mostly consisting of the South Arabian Yamanites, survived all vicissitudes until the time of al-Mukhtār in AH64/684 A.D., and formed the nucleus of his "chair worshippers".4

This early group of ghulāt seems to have been absorbed by the Kaysānites who believed in Ibn al-Hanafiyya's

1. See El (2), art. ‘Abdullah b. Sabā‘.


4. Baghdādī, Farq, 32. Also see verse of ‘Asha‘ Hamadān in Ṭab., II, 704.
Mahdism and followed Ābu Ħāshim ‘Abdullah. The death of Ābu Ħashim was the turning point in the history of the ghulāt, for it caused the split in consequence of which they separated into two distinct groups. One upheld the various successors\(^1\) of Ābu Ħāshim, while the others turned towards Muḥammad al-Ṯāqīr. Among the later the first name to appear is that of Hamza b. ‘Umar al-Buraydi.\(^2\) For some time he preached that he was a prophet and that Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya was God;\(^3\) but later he recognised al-Ṯāqīr as the incarnation of God, and pretended to act in his name. He claimed that the Imam was paying him visits at night.\(^4\) When al-Ṯāqīr denied this allegation and cursed him, Hamza declared himself the Imam.\(^5\)

Bayān b. Șāmān and Saʿīd al-Nahdī, two associates of Hamza, formed the next link in the chain of the development of Shi‘īte extremism. Of Saʿīd we know very little, but Bayān, a straw dealer of the South

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2. His nisbah is given variously as al-Ṭabarī (Nawbakhši; 25 and Saʿīd al-Ashʿarī, 32), al-Yazdī, al-Zubayrī and al-Zaydī (Kash., 188, 195, 196), al-Burayrī (Ḥā’irī, 122). The most likely version is al-Burayrī, (Kash-188). Hodgson, following Nawbakhši, writes him al-Ṭabarī (JAOS. 1955, 7).


5. He was called "one of the seven accursed", see Kash., Rījāl, 188-195. Hillī, Rījāl, 219.
Arabian tribe of Nahd, was to fulfill an important role in the history of *ghulāt*. Like Ḥamzah, he recognised the Imamate of Abū Ḥāshim, but after his death, went over to al-Bāqir. Bayān held that the divine particle, incarnated in ‘Ali b. Abī Tālib, enabled him to know the unseen, to foretell the future, and to fight against the infidels. The power of the invisible angelic world was in ‘Ali like a lamp within a niche in a wall, and God’s light was in him as the flame in the lamp. He propounded his anthropomorphic theories of the nature of God. At one moment he is said to have written to al-Bāqir summoning him to accept him, Bayān, as a prophet; at another moment he claimed that al-Bāqir had appointed him as emissary. Al-Bāqir is reported to have cursed him many times.

Many teachings of the *ghulāt* are ascribed to a contemporary of Bayān, Abū ‘Abdillah Mughīra b. Sa‘īd al-‘Ijlī, who was also executed in Kufa for his heresies. He tried to establish connections with al-Bāqir, but after the latter’s death turned to al-Nafs al-Zakiyya who also condemned him. His ideas were more or less the same as that of al-Bayān with many additions. Mughīra produced so

many false and imaginary Ahādīth and Malāḥim that Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq warned his disciples against accepting any of his traditions.¹

After Mughīra’s execution in 119/737, another extremist Abū Mansūr al-‘Ijīlī continued his co-tribesman's activities. He also claimed to have been appointed emissary by al-Bāqir, but after the Imām’s death he claimed the Imāmate for himself. Some of his followers practised strangulation. They seem to have been the first to attach cosmic importance to "the family of Muhammad", since Abū Mansūr asserted that ‘Ali and his Husaynid descendants were heaven and their Shi‘a were earth.² Yet he claimed something like prophetic inspiration for himself and even for his sons. The prophethood would continue, he said, in six of his successive descendants, of whom the last would be al-Qā‘im.³ The Husaynid Imāms rejected his claims and al-Bāqir cursed him. Later Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq said that Abū Mansūr was inspired by a devil and had thus become an apostle of Iblīs.⁴

This is a very brief outline of the history of ghulāt movement in Kūfah from the death of ‘Ali till the Imāmate of Ja‘far. These ghulāt may be divided into two main groups, both presumably sprouting from a common stem—that of al-Sabā‘iyya. One of them, (al-Kaysāniyya, al-Hāshimiyya and al-‘Abbāsiyya) transplanted to Iran towards

1. Ibn Ḥajar, Lisān, VI, 76-77.
2. Watt, loc.cit.
the end of the Umayyad period, came under the impact of Mazdakism, and grew into the Kharrāmite revolutionary movement. We are not now concerned, however, with this group. The other group overlapped the Kaysānite stage, remained in Kufa and was closely connected with the successive Husaynid Imāms of the twelvewline. Though these ghulāt never formed a complete body, there was, nevertheless, a logical line of development in their views, and to a certain degree, also a continuity of leadership. The so-called "Founders" after whom the various extremist groups are usually named, were by no means the heads of independent, individual circles vanishing after their death without trace. Though the leaders were condemned, their ideas persisted in some form or other. Our interest, therefore, in these extremists of the second group is that they have, to a great extent, a direct impact on many tenets of some of the most conspicuous adherents of Ja'far in Kufa; and what sets off the condemned extremists from the semi-extremists, so to speak, of Ja'far's circle, is the presence in the latter of a unifying discipline and its absence from the former. This can easily be illustrated by comparing the cases of Jābir al-Ju'fī and Abu'l-Khattāb - the former's services were highly appreciated by the Imām, the latter was condemned and expelled.

Jābir b. Yazīd b. al-Hārith al-Ju'fī,¹ one of the most enthusiastic of al-Bāqir's associates, was the most

striking personality in the closest circle of Ja'far. Opinions regarding him are greatly divergent and even contradictory. According to certain authorities, among them Sufyān al-Thawrī, he was very trustful (Sadūq) and trustworthy (thiqa) as a traditionist, but his transmitters 'Amr b. Shimr al-Ju'fī, Mufaddal b. Šālih al-Asadī and Munakhkhal b. Jamīl al-Asadī were liars and introduced many spurious Ḥadīths for which Jābir himself was not responsible. Yet much of what we know of him indicates that his critics were definitely right. For example, Abū Ḥanīfa is reported to have said, "I have never met a bigger liar than Jābir al-Ju'fī." Jābir might have been a learned man, but from the reports concerning him he appears as a pathological type, whom boasting carried beyond the limits of reason, and at least on certain occasions he could put no dividing line between reality and fantasy. He asserted that he knew 50,000 or even 70,000 Traditions, "which he could not relate to anyone," meaning that they contained esoteric secrets.

1. Dḥahabī, Mizān, 1, 153. Hā'iri, Muntaha, 129.
2. Šamā'īnī, Ansāb, 131 b. calls him a liar. Najashi Ṣa'rī, 93-94 describes him as "weak". Ǧihāl, Ṣa'rī, 35, says he was Thiqāl.
5. A seller of slave girls. As a traditionist he was "weak" and accused of extremism. Hā'irī, Muntaha, 31l. Tafrīshī, op. cit. fol. 208 a-b. Najashi, Ṣa'rī, 298.
6. Ǧihāl, Ṣa'rī, 35.
of religion. Some people expressed impatience concerning the Hadiths related by Jābir or held him to be a madman. Even Jābir himself confessed before al-Bāqir that the secrets which the Imam had imparted to him, stirred him sometimes so much that something like madness overwhelmed him. When you feel like this, "said al-Bāqir, "go to the mountains, dig a hole and put your head into it, and then say Muhammad b. 'Ali told me such and such." Thus the Imam put the emphasis on the necessity of keeping the knowledge strictly secret.

Jābir's reputation for madness, however, saved him from serious trouble for when Caliph Hīsham ordered him to be sent to Damascus for an inquiry into his activities, people testified before the Governor of Kufa that he was insane.

Jābir is also reported to have been addicted to necromancy and to have practised sleight of hand, pretending that his simple tricks were miracles. There was, to be sure, no difference between his methods and those of al-Mughīra b. Sa‘īd.


2. Even Kulaynī records it, see Kāfī, 251. ‘Amīlī, A‘yān, 213 ff.


4. Ibid.


Jābir's position among the Shī‘ite traditionists was safeguarded by the way he extolled the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt and by his devotion to al-Baqir and then Ja‘far al-Sādiq, whom he called "the Trustees of the Trustees and the inheritors of the knowledge of the Prophets." The fact that he pretended to have witnessed miracles worked by the Imāms, was held as proof of his truthfulness, and he became recognised as the bāb (gate, i.e. spokesman) of the two Imāms. Despite his obvious extremist tendencies, he was not rejected as ghāli because instead of his extremist tendencies he remained faithful to a discipline under al-Baqir and Ja‘far. He held the opinion that Godhead was incarnated in the Imāms and believed in Ḥaj‘a. He also maintained that Dabbat al-Ard in the Qur‘ān was ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭālib. This belief is said to have been held by some Shī‘ites even in the time of Husayn.

With this knowledge of Jābir it is easy to understand the nature and character of the traditions related by him with the stamp of either al-Baqir or al-Sādiq—the traditions which ultimately became part of the base of the Imāmīte dogmas. It will suffice to quote here only one from a great number of traditions related by Jābir.

2. See Kash., Rijāl, 129-130.
3. Ḥillī, Rijāl, 35.
5. İbn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, II, 49.
in connection with the Imāms and their supernatural character. Jábir related that al-Bāqir said, "O Jábir, the first beings that God created were Muhammad and his family, the Rightly guided ones, and the guides, and they were phantoms of light before God. " I asked and what are the phantoms," said al-Bāqir. "Shadows of light, luminous bodies without spirits; they were strengthened by one spirit, the Holy Spirit (Rūḥ al-Quds) through which Muhammad and his family worshipped God. For that reason He created them forebearing, learned, endowed with filial piety and pure; they worship God by prayer, fasting, prostrating themselves, enumerating his name and ejaculating "God is great"."

Perhaps no other companion of al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq dared to go as far in his assertions as Jábir. A great number of the traditions bearing the stamp of ghuluw are related from him and thus it can be said that he was, to a great extent, responsible for the step towards extremism which legitimist Shī‘ism adopted during the Imāmate of al-Bāqir and which was developed under Ja‘far.

Al-Ashʿarī says that Jábir al-Ju‘fī sometimes claimed to be the legatee and successor of al-Mughīra b. Sa‘īd. Ibn Ḥazm goes still further and firmly states

2. Ashʿarī, Maqālāt, 1, 8. Also Baghdādī, Fārq, 148. It should be particularly noted that this charge against Jábir is not mentioned by any Shī‘ite source, not even by al-Kashshī, who often does not suppress unfavourable reports about the early Rijāl.
that Jābir was the first Khalīfa of Mughīra. This is, however, highly improbable for Jābir throughout his career remained faithful to al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq in their quarrel with al-Mughīra whom he reviled and cursed. On the other hand, there was but a small difference between their theological views, and later extremist groups accepted Jābir as their forerunner. This is indicated by the assertions of Abū’l-Khaṭṭāb and his successors who claimed Jābir al-Ju’fī as their predecessor. Thus "Umm al-Kitāb" is said to contain the teachings of al-Bāqir, Jābir b. ‘Abdullah al-Ansārī and Jābir al-Ju’fī. Another religious writing, 'Risālat al-Ju’fī,' containing Ismā‘īlīte doctrines, is based mainly on the exposition of Jābir on the authority of al-Bāqir. Apparently neither the doctrine of "Umm al-Kitāb", nor that of Risālat al-Ju’fī, represent the views of al-Bāqir, and probably only little of what Jābir himself taught. It is nevertheless an important point that he was regarded as the spiritual forefather of the post-Khaṭṭābīte sects. What Jābir really taught is now difficult to decide, but two points are evident. One is that the traditions attributed to him, as we have seen, are on the whole very strongly

1. Ibn Ḥazm, Risāl, IV, 141.
tinged with ghuluw, not far from Mughīra's doctrines, despite the fact that they were pruned by the later Imāmīte traditionists such as al-Kulaynī, who wholeheartedly included them in his al-Kāfī. The second point is that despite his extremist tendencies he was throughout his life the chief representative of al-Bāqir and after al-Bāqir's death Jābir remained Ja'far's representative and chief spokesman in Kūfah for about twelve years until he (Jābir) died in AH 128/745 A.D.1 This was not the case with Abū‘l-Khaṭṭāb, however.

Muhammad b. Abī Zaynab Miqlās b. Abī al-Khaṭṭāb appears to be the most peculiar and striking figure of all the early adherents of Ja‘far. A Kufite mawla of the Banū Asad, he bore the kunya of Abū‘l-ʿImā‘īl but was more commonly known as Abū‘l-Khaṭṭāb.2 He was, it seems, a bold man of strong character and also most trusted and loyal to Ja‘far, for after the death of Jābir al-Ju‘fī, Ja‘far selected him as the Wakil in charge of the whole sectarian group in Kūfah. Unfortunately our knowledge of Abū‘l-Khaṭṭāb's theories is very imperfect. The extremely concise description found in the works of al-Asḥā‘ī,3 al-Baghādādī,4 Shahrastānī,5 and some other heresiographers, give us only a partial picture of his teachings. Perhaps the clearest are the accounts of

3. Maqālāt, 1, 10 ff.
5. Milal, 1, 179 ff.
al-Ｎawbakhtī and Sa’d al-Ａsh‘arī, but even these are fragmentary. In any case, it is not possible for us in this limited space to go into details of his teachings which in many points are not very different than those taught by the ghulāt before him. A brief summary of Abū’l-Khattāb's doctrines has been outlined by Prof. Lewis and is sufficient to give a general idea about his theories.

Our main interest in Abū’l-Khattāb is to point out that his excommunication by Ja‘far, due to his uncompromising fanatical activities both in doctrinal and political fields, helped to maintain a more disciplinary atmosphere in the circle of the Imām. Abū’l-Khattāb's assertions regarding the Imāms were in many points the same as those of Jābir al-Ju‘fī, but the former went a step further in diminishing the Imāms and thus broke the doctrinal discipline which both al-Bāqir and Ja‘far wanted to establish. He was not content with the theory that the Divine Light was incarnated in the Imāms, but declared them gods - being residing upon the earth, but absolutely pure, endowed with the knowledge of the unknown and the gift of prophecy.

These assertions, made so openly, frightened Ja‘far, for they could get him into serious trouble. Ja‘far found

1. Firaq, 37 ff and 58 ff.
3. The Origins of Ismā‘ilism, 32 ff. Also see E. Lewis, EI (2) art. "Abu’l-Khattāb."
it necessary to deny supernatural knowledge, and when asked: "Is it true that you know the number of the drops of rain and of the stars and of the leaves of the trees, and the weight of water in the sea?" Ja'far raised his head to heaven and exclaimed, "Subhan Allah! Subhan Allah! No by God, nobody knows this except God." These denials on the part of Ja'far which might have been expressed under the principle of *taqiyya* and meant for public consumption, were perhaps too emphatic, and enraged the obstinate Abūl-Khattāb so that instead of retracting, he still more vigorously reasserted his opinions. Eventually, as it is said, Ja'far disowned and excommunicated him on the grounds of his fanatical extremism.  

He said that the fanatic was "worse than the Jews, the Christians, and those who give associates to God."  

In short, these and similar extreme views of Abūl-Khattāb on the nature of the Imam, and his divination of Ja'far are usually believed to be the main cause of the quarrel and the break between them, which occurred probably sometime before AH 138/755-756 A.D. On a close examination, however, we find that they were an important part but not the whole of the contributory motives that led to Ja'far's repudiation of Abūl-Khattāb.  

Indeed, Ja'far, like his father, did not want to be worshipped as God or given the status of the Prophet.

Yet Ja‘far's own theory of light and of the divine origin of the Imāms made it very difficult to draw a dividing line between his tenets and extremism. Abū‘l-Khaṭṭāb's assertions had to be denied, but this was not a sufficient motive for excommunication. Ja‘far did not object when a certain Ja‘far b. ‘Uthmān al-Ṭā‘ī addressed him with the word 'Labbayka'.¹ He did not disown Mufaddal b. ‘Umar al-Ju‘fī, although the latter held the opinion that there is a God in heaven, and a demiurge on the earth in the person of the Imām.² Ja‘far even said: "I put over you al-Mufaddal, so look to him and take from him, for what he says about God is only true."³ Al-Mufaddal was not far away from Abū‘l-Khaṭṭāb when he asserted that the knowledge of the Imām was necessary to a believer, and at the same time it dispensed with the fulfillment of religious obligations.⁴ Also when entering the house of Ja‘far, he greeted those present as prophets calling them such names as Ibrāhīm, Nūḥ or Yūmūs.⁵

Thus, all those heretical assertions cited by al-Kašshī and others constitute only part of the cause of Ja‘far's anger which resulted in his excommunication of Abū‘l-Khaṭṭāb. There seems to have been some deeper reason.

Ja‘far had once excommunicated Zurā‘ra allegedly on

5. Ibid.
account of a small doctrinal difference, but this was
done to protect him from persecution.¹ Abū’l-Khaṭṭāb did
not need such protection for he was himself inclined to
be aggressive. Moreover, Ja‘far’s anger against him was
sincere and not pretended. Thus another equally impor-
tant factor which caused the break between them seems to
be Abū’l-Khaṭṭāb’s political activities aiming at an armed
Messianic uprising in the name of the eldest son of Ja‘far,
Ismā‘īl.² Kashshī quotes Ja‘far saying in connection with
Abū’l-Khaṭṭāb’s extremist views; “He frightened me while
I was standing and while I was lying in bed.”³ The real
meaning of Ja‘far’s fear should not be sought in Abū’l-
Khaṭṭāb’s extremist views only, as by Kashshī, but also
in his political activities. These conspiracies must have
reached quite an advanced stage since they did not escape
the attention of the ‘Abbasids and both Ja‘far and Ismā‘īl
found themselves in serious danger. They were ordered to
‘Abdollah al-Ṣayrafī, another participant in the plot, was
slain in the presence of the Caliph. He was made the
scapegoat, for Ja‘far and Ismā‘īl were spared. When they
were brought out, Ja‘far gave vent to his fear and anger,
shouting at his son, “You prevaricator, I give you tidings
of the Fire.”⁴

1. See below.
2. See B. Lewis, Origins of Ismā‘īlism, 39 f.
For some time, Ja'far was kept in Ḥīra under the supervision of the Caliph. Allowed to return to Medina, he took steps to prevent the recurrence of any fool-hardy action on the part of Ismā'īl, and deprived him of the rights of succession on the pretext that he was addicted to drinking Nabīdḥ, and appointed Mūsa, then only a child, in his stead. Many people opposed this decision declaring that the Ṣass cannot be revoked. They, including Abū‘l-Khaṭṭāb and Mufaddal b. ‘Umar, did not consider that Ismā‘īl had proved unfit to be an Imām because he drank Nabīdḥ. They said that in fact he drank it to indicate that the religious prohibitions and obligations should be understood in an allegorical sense. After Ismā‘īl's death, some of his supporters, among them Mufaddal b. ‘Umar, recanted and became reconciled with Ja‘far.

This leads us to two conclusions. First, Ja‘far's policy was decidedly against any bid for power not only for himself but also for his successor. Second, the principle of Ṣass had by now got such firm hold that even Ja‘far's own revocation of it from the eldest son to a younger one aroused much criticism; and when Ismā‘īl died some left Ja‘far on the ground that he should not have named a man who was not to survive him. This indicates that a distinct idea of the supernatural character of the Ṣass was already present.

We can, however, conclude that in the expulsion of Abū‘l-Khaṭṭāb both reasons might have been equally weighty:

(1) his political activities, which strengthens our view that Ja'far was against any political enterprise, and (2) his extremist teachings which crossed a certain 'limit'. This 'limit' is certainly a very vague term to be used, especially for that period. But it seems that al-Bāqir in his time did introduce a certain doctrinal discipline and anyone breaking that discipline could not enter the recognised sectarian circle. Such were the cases with Hamza, Bayān, Mughīra and Abū Maṃṣūr, and finally in Ja'far's time with Abū'1-Khaṭṭāb after he was excommunicated by him. We must accept that a certain disciplining by way of doctrinal limitation was adopted or introduced by al-Bāqir and was maintained by Ja'far. Al-Kashefī quotes Ja'far who complains of Mughīra mis-representing al-Bāqir, and adds that all the ghuluw ascribed to al-Bāqir is from Mughīra.  

On the other hand, in the doctrines of the early ghulāt we find the rudimentary ideas and nucleus of the Imāmite tenets and also the elements which helped develop their sectarian aspects. This can be well illustrated by a close comparison between the theories of the early ghulāt, who could not keep a borderline to discipline their speculations, and the dogmas of the Imāmites, attributed mainly to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, who did maintain a certain limit. Thus, if we analyse the basic principles to which all ghulāt adhered in broad outline, they will be the following:

1. As we learn from the heresiographical works quoted above in connection with these extremists.

2. Kash., Rijāl, 146-147.
1) Ḥulūl or the "dissolving of the divine particle (al-Juz al-Ilāhiyya) in the person of the Imāms, who thus becomes an incarnation of God.

2) Rajʿa – the Return of the Imām. When an Imām died, he was believed only to have "concealed" himself. His death was simulated, and his spirit returned in the body of another Imām. The last of the Imāms was expected to come from his concealment to initiate the rule of justice. The doctrine of Rajʿa was also combined with that of Tanāsukh.

3) Tawīl – the allegorical interpretation of the Qur’ānic prescriptions, which had two meanings: the outward (zāhir) as understood by the mass of the Muslims, and the esoteric (bāṭīn) the key of which was held by the divine Imāms. Usually the various religious duties such as prayer and fast were explained as having the inner sense of knowledge represented by certain persons.

4) Rafḍ – the absolute rejection of the first three Caliphs as illegitimate rulers, demiurges of Satan and enemies of God–ʿAli.

5) Tafwīd – the delegation of power. This principle, introduced towards the end of the first century of the Hijra, permitted the non–ʿAlid sectarian leaders to claim the Imāmate and godship, by asserting that they held their rank by delegation, as at some stage or the other Bayān, Mughīra and Abū Manṣūr did.¹

¹. For all these tenets of the ghulāt see Ashʿarī, Magālāt, 1, 5–16. Shahristānī, Milāl, 1, 173–186. Nawbakhtī, Firaq, and Saʿd al-Ashʿarī, see indexes.
Leaving aside very many other details, however, these five are the fundamental doctrinal principles common to all ghulāt till the time of Jaʿfar, including Abūʾl-Khaṭṭāb. All these principles were in some ways recognised by the later Imāmī Shīʿa, but with a "guiding limit". Thus the Imāmite said that (1) God’s Light was incarnated in their Imāms, but they did not worship them as God; (2) they believed in the Rajʿa, but did not deny the truth of the Imām’s death, and completely repudiated the transmigration of soul (Tanāsūkh). (3) They demanded an absolute obedience to the Imāms, but did not proclaim that it dispensed the Faithful from fulfilling their religious obligations. (4) They cursed the first three Caliphs, but did not look upon them as incarnations of the Devil. (5) Finally, they rejected the principle of delegation and held that only the descendants of ‘Ali and Fāṭima could be an Imām.† With this brief comparison between the basic principles of the early ghulāt and the Imāmite dogmas, it is perhaps easy now to see the influence of the former on the latter, and the similarities of the two. This flow of extremist doctrines into the Imāmite creed was rather natural since, as had been pointed out, the circle closest to Jaʿfar was formed by men of at least semi-extremist tendencies. We have seen Jābir al-Juʿfī and Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī. There were many others like them. For example, Muʿadḥ b. Muslim al-Farrāʾan-Nahwī,  

the grammarian and traditionist who, according to the Shi'ite's own sources, is said to have produced many Ahādīth of Gnostic character with a marked tendency towards extremism.¹

Furthermore, among Ja'far's followers were simple men like 'Umar an-Nabāṭī who may have misunderstood much of what he said, and later repeated his words to others, adding a flavour of the miraculous or even distorting them for the sake of material gain.² Frightened by the tone of many of the traditions, Ja'far sometimes felt compelled to deny his supernatural powers and to discount the miracles.³ But then the principle of Taqiyya, to which he adhered, prevented the sober warnings from being taken seriously. His negation of the knowledge of hidden things was in conflict with the assertions that the Imāms possessed books of prophecy, and were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thus the principle of Taqiyya involved the Imām in a vicious circle. Naturally, the ghulāt who thought themselves divinely inspired — such as Bayān and later Abū'l-Khaṭṭāb — attributed to Ja'far and other Imāms words which may have been based upon some real sayings, but largely and deliberately altered and exaggerated. They sometimes reacted quite violently when Ja'far refused to accept their exaggerated assertions. Once when Ja'far denied some tenets which Abū'l-Khaṭṭāb propounded as having emanated from him, the latter flew into a fury, and grabbed the Imām by the beard.⁴ The ghulāt's practice of attributing

1. Ḥā'irī, Muntaha, 2029, 203. Ibn Nadīm, Fihrist, 1, 66.
4. Ibid, 190.
their views. Ja‘far is further illustrated by a report given by al-Kashshāḥī that once a follower of the Imām ‘Ali al-Riḍa read before him certain Abādīth which he had copied from the notebooks of those in ‘Irāq, who had taken down sayings of Ja‘far and Bāqir. The Imām strongly rejected the authenticity of those traditions and declared that Abu’l-Khattāb and his followers had misrepresented Ja‘far, and got their lies accepted in those notebooks.¹ Many traditions also are reported of Ja‘far complaining of Mughīra misrepresenting al-Bāqir.² In the same sequence Kashshāḥī records another tradition attributed to Ja‘far which goes even further back. Ja‘far said: “al-Hasan had a liar, who blasphemed against him... and there was a liar who blasphemed against Husayn... and there was al-Mukhtār, who blasphemed against ‘Ali Zayn al-‘Abīdīn, and al-Mughīra b. Sa‘īd, who lied against my father.”³ As the transmitter who reported this tradition, Ḥabīb al-Khāṭṭāmī, remarked, “Ja‘far did not give the names of the first two liars”, the whole tradition must be dismissed as an expression of the idea that every successive Imām had a particular blasphemer.

We have so far been discussing the extremists and semi-extremists of Ja‘far’s circle and their impact on the legitimist Shi‘ite dogmas. Not all of Ja‘far’s followers were fanatics, however. A considerable number of them were simply Shi‘ites distinguished from the other Muslims only by the higher degrees of their devotion to

¹  Ibid. 146-147 and see Hodgson, JAOS, 1955, 13.
²  Kash., Rijāl, 146-147.
³  Kash., Rijāl, 148.
the memory of 'Ali, and by their conviction that he was the best person after the Prophet for the combined office of the spiritual and temporal rulership of the community; and thus the Imamate was his and his descendant's right which was ordained to them by God. The best example of this group is 'Abdullah b. Abī Ya'fūr, a resident of Kufa. He opposed his fellow-sectarians such as Mu'alla b. Khunays, a Mawla of Ja'far, who asserted that the Imāms were prophets. This was contradicted by Ibn Abī Ya'fūr saying that they were only pure, God-fearing, learned theologians. Very strict in his religious practices, he was highly favoured and respected by Ja'far. He enjoyed the respect of the moderate traditionists circle, and when he died during the lifetime of Ja'far, many of the Ahl-al-Hadīth and pro-Shī'ite Murji'ites accompanied his bier.

There was still another group among the followers of Ja'far. The members of this group were the people busy in the intellectual or Dialectical questions of the day, along the lines of the Mu'tazilites. It was a great source of strength for the Imamate of Ja'far that he gathered round himself the men who could stand with remarkable vigour among those of the Muslims who were

1. See Kash., Rijāl, 239 ff.
3. See in Kashghī, 160 f, many traditions of Ja'far in his praise, though he was lax by Shi'ite standards for he drank nabidh which he treated as a medicine. Ibid.
speculating on the philosophical problems of the time. Moreover, the attachment of this group to Ja'far was a great advancement in the development of the sect in its own right. These speculative theologians of Ja'far's circle were later regarded as the elite of the Shi'ite Mutakallimūn.²

In this group, however, mention should first be made of Abu'l-Hasan b. A'yan b. Susan, better known by his Kunya al-Zurāra. He was a Mawla of the Banū Shaybān of Kufa, and the grandson of an enslaved Greek monk who adopted Islam.³ Zurāra originally belonged to the supporters of Zayd b. 'Ali,⁴ for together with his brother Ḥurmān b. A'yan⁵ and al-Ṭayyār⁶ he was a disciple of al-Ḥakam b. 'Utayba,⁷ who was a great Zaydite and Mu‘tazilite leader. Later they changed their allegiance and attached themselves to al-Bāqir, Ḥurmān being the first to take this step.⁸

1. We should not ignore the fact that al-Bāqir had already prepared the way for speculative theology among the legitimist Shi‘ites.

2. Though before the science of Kalām became a definite branch of learning the early Shi‘ite Mutakallimūn were speculative theologians, traditionalists and lawyers all at the same time.


4. This fact itself suggests that under Mu‘tazilite influence Zurāra developed his interest in speculative theology.


6. Probably Ḥamza b. Muhammad b. ‘Abdillah al-Ṭayyār, see Ḥā’irī, Muntaha, 121 and 279.


8. Ḥā’irī, Muntaha, 120.
After the death of al-Bāqir, Zurāra belonged to the circle of the closest adherents of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, who spoke of him with great appreciation: "Four men are the best beloved to me, whether alive or dead: Burayd b. Muʿāwiya al-ʿIjlī,1 Zurāra, Muhammad b. Muslim and al-Ahwal."2 Ibn Abī ʿUmayr3 said that he and his contemporaries were beside Zurāra "like children around their teacher."4

It seems that because of his vehement activities in the cause of Jaʿfar, Zurāra met with some difficulties and even dangers. Thus to spare him hardships, Jaʿfar, resorting to the principle of Taqiyya, apparently disavowed him and even cursed him. Justifying this, he said that in order to save Zurāra, he had acted in the same way as the Prophet Khidr when he sank a ship to save it from being taken from its owners by a tyrannous King.5

Zurāra who only occasionally paid visits to Jaʿfar in Medina or met him in Mecca, but normally lived in Kufa,

1. Died in AH 150/767 A.D.

2. Kash., Rijāl, 89, 122, also see pp.113 and 114 with the name of Abū Baṣīr instead of al-Ahwal. Tūsī, Fihrist, 146. Ḥāʾirī, Muntaha, 136.


5. Kash., Rijāl, 92. For the reference to Khidr see the Qurʾān, XVIII, 71.
had there a numerous circle of his disciples which is
described as the al-Zurā'īya. Though Zurā'ā was also
regarded as a traditionist, a lawyer and a theologian,
he attained his great renown in the fields of the
science of Tradition and in the Kalām. In fact, he was
the founder of the Shi'ite School of speculative theology
in the proper sense, and the first teacher of Kalām from
among the circle of Ja'far.

Among Zurā'as pupils who were all devoted fol-
lowers of Ja'far, were his own sons al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn
and 'Ubaydullah; his brother Hurmān, the grammarian and
one of the foremost companions of al-Bāqir; Hamza the
son of Hurmān; Bukayr b. 'Ayan, Ayān and his son 'Abdullah;
Muhammad b. al-Ḥakam; Hūmāy b. Rabbah, Muhammad b.

1. Ibn Nadim, Fihrist, 1, 220. Há'irī, Muntaha, 136.
4. Há'irī, op.cit. 99. Ibn Nadim, loc.cit. Tūsī,
Fihrist, 202, calls him 'Ubayd b. Zurā'ā.
declared him among the people of paradise see,
Ibid.
Nadim, loc.cit.
8. Tūsī, Fihrist, 188. Há'irī, Muntaha, 182. Ibn
Nadim, loc.cit.
9. A brother of Hishām b. al-Ḥakam, Há'irī, Muntaha,
271.
10. Ash'arī, Maqālāt, 1, 43.
al-Nu‘mān al-Alwāl1 and Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawāliqī.2
This circle of Zurāra was usually known as al-Zurāriya
or al-Tamīmiya3 and its intellectual activities in the
field of scholastic theology greatly strengthened the
cause of Ja‘far and later that of Mūsa al-Kāzīm.4
Together with other theological and scholastic
problem,5 Zurāra and his disciples evolved their theory
that the knowledge of God is an obligation on every
believer and cannot be attained without an Imām, desig­
nated by God, and thus complete obedience to the Imām
is a religious duty. The Imāms by necessity are endowed
with special knowledge. Therefore, whatever other men
can attain by discursive reason (nażar), an Imām always
knows owing to his special knowledge, and also his power
of reasoning is superior and unequalled.6 Yet, as we
learn from the sources there was not always complete
agreement between Ja‘far and Zurāra on many other points

1. See below.
2. See below.
4. See a very detailed account of the activities of
Zurāra and his circle, in Kash., Rijāl, 89-107.
5. Zurāra and his circle promulgated their views on
almost every question of what we now call scholastic
philosophy, such as the Attributes of God, His
Essence and His actions, His Intention or Will, the
human capacity, etc., etc. Detailed accounts can
be found in al-Ash‘arī, Maqālāt, II 36. Baghdādī,
Fārq, 43. Shahrastānī, Milal, 1, 186.
6. Shahrastānī, Milal, 1, 186.
for example, Capacity of man (Istițā‘a)\(^1\) etc.

Zurāra was a strict legitimist, and he supported the candidature of ‘Abdūllah b. Ja‘far to the Imāmate, instead of Mūsa al-Kāẓim.\(^2\) Thus, on the one hand, our sources report a tradition saying, on his death-bed Zurāra put the Qur’ān on his breast, exclaiming: "This is my Imām."\(^3\) In this way he indicated that he no longer recognised a living Imām, and only took guidance from the Book of God. On the other hand, there are many traditions which assert that after some hesitation he recognised Mūsa.\(^4\)

However, the impression we get about Zurāra from the sources, especially al-Kashshāfī, is that he played a very important role in the legitimist Shī‘ite sectarian hierarchy and contributed a great deal to the formation of the Imāmite Creed. He is one of the most frequently quoted authorities in all the four books (al-Kutub al-Arba‘a) of the Shī‘ites.

Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Nu‘mān al-‘Awwal was another striking personality among the speculative theologians of Kufa who linked the question of the Imāmate with other fundamental scholastic problems. A money changer by occupation, he had a shop in Kufa under the porch known as Ṭaq al-Mahāmil, and on account of his cunning and skill

1. See Kash., Rijāl, 96 ff.
4. See. Baghdādī, Farq, 43. Shahrastānī, Milal, 1, 186. Majlisī, Bihār, XI, 206. All these sources give both versions. Also see Kash., Rijāl, 103-104.
in his trade, he was nicknamed Shayṭān al-Ṭāq (the Devil of the Porch), which later Shī‘ites changed into Mu‘min al-Ṭāq (the Believer of the Porch) or sometimes Śālih al-Ṭāq. \(^1\) He distinguished himself among all the adherents of Ja‘far for his expertness in dialectics and learning in theology as well as for the piquancy of his answers in disputes with his adversaries. An extremely zealous Shī‘ite, al-Aḥwāl, at first was one of the most devoted adherents of al-Bāqir whose claims he defended against Zayd. He later became an equally ardent supporter of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq and finally of Mūsā al-Kāzīm. \(^2\) But the best part of his intellectual activities in promoting the Shī‘ite cause was perhaps spent during the Imamate of Ja‘far. He is frequently reported to have held verbal battles with the great jurist Abū Ḥanīfa, the Imām, whom he despised for being a Murjite. On his part, Abū Ḥanīfa treated him with scorn and contempt. \(^3\) He is described as the most courageous and vociferous in his convictions regarding the rights of the legitimist Imāms on rational grounds. \(^4\)


2. Kash., Riṭāl, 122 and 182. He is counted by Sa‘d al-Ash‘arī, Maqālāt, 88, among the most prominent companions of Ja‘far (min wujūḥ ašhāb al-Ja‘far) who accepted Mūsā al-Kāzīm as their Imām immediately after the former's death and without considering candidature of any other son of Ja‘far.


His circle is described by the heresiologists as al-Nu‘māniya or thus called by his opponents al-Shaytāniya. He was himself dominated by the anthropomorphic theories of the ghulāt al-Bayān and al-Mughīra. As a zealous supporter of the legitimist Imāms, he upheld the dogma of the God-imposed duty of complete obedience to them, and of the supreme knowledge of the Imāms, necessary for the guidance of men. He is said to have been a prolific writer, and a number of his works are mentioned by various authorities. They include: Kitāb al-Imāmah, Kitāb al-Radd ‘alal Mustazila fī imāmat al-Mafdūl and a number of other treatises, probably of a polemical nature. The titles of the books ascribed to him suggest that the question of the Imāmate was one of the main issues between the Mu‘tazilite and the Shi‘ite thinkers. Al-Kashshī records a number of controversial debates held by him in support of Ja‘far’s claim to the Imāmate, and also quotes Ja‘far saying: “Al-Ahwāl is most beloved to me whether alive or dead.”

Another foremost supporter of Ja‘far from this circle was Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawāliqī, who was brought in


2. See Shahrastānī, Milal, 1, 187.


4. See Kash., Rijāl, 122 ff. Al-Kashshī also takes much pain to prove that the approbrious title Shayṭān al-Taq was given to him by his opponents and the Imāms confirmed him as the Mu‘min al-Taq.
his childhood as a slave from Jurjān, and became a Mawla of Bishr b. Marwān. He also lived in Kufa earning his living as a seller of fodder ('allāf). Like al-Ahwal, whose close friend he was, he led a large circle of disciples and propounded his theories on all questions of the Nature and attributes of God.

The greatest of all the Shi‘ite thinkers of Ja‘far's following were Abū Muhammad Hishām b. al-Ḥakam, and ‘Ali b. Ismā‘īl al-Maythamī. Hishām b. al-Ḥakam was originally a disciple of Jaḥm b. Saflān, the Jubrite, but later was converted to the Shi‘ite doctrine and became a most devoted adherent of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq.


2. The group of Hishām b. Sālim bore the name of al-Hāshimiya usually with the addition al-‘Ula to distinguish them from the adherents of Hishām b. al-Ḥakam. See Ash‘arī, Maqālaṭ, l, 34. Baghdādī, Farq, 139. Shahrastānī, Milal, 184 ff. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Ṭiqādat, 64.


4. A Mawla of Kinda, but often described as the client of the Banū Shaybān, because he attached himself to that tribe. See Kash., Rijāl, 166 ff. Tūsī, Fihrist, 353. Najāshi, Rijāl, 304. Ibn Nadīm, Fihrist, l, 175. Ḥā‘irī, Muntaha, 322 ff.

5. A Mawla of the Banū Asad, he lived in Basra, where he frequented the circles of the local Mutakallimūn. See Najāshi, 176. Ḥā‘irī, Muntaha, 207-208. Tūsī, Fihrist, 212.

6. He must have been quite young at that time for he lived till the Imāmate of al-Ridā and was one of his closest companions. See Kash., Rijāl, 166 ff.
The theories regarding God and other scholastic questions propounded by these five most important thinkers of Ja'far's period are too lengthy to be examined here. What mainly concerns us at present is their ideas or contribution to the doctrine of the Imāmate which they linked up with fundamental principles of a scholastic nature. A remarkable fact is that although these five thinkers often differ from each other on many questions, their teachings concerning the Imāmate are almost the same. The essence of their doctrine of the Imāmate is that 'the Prophet appointed 'Ali to the Imāmate by an explicit text, and after him, his sons Hasan and Husayn. This appointment was based on the principle that mankind needs an Imām to lead it on the right path as much as an individual man needs intelligence to co-ordinate the activities of his body and to guide him. Naturally, to guide mankind and preserve it from straying, an Imām who receives no revelation must be infallible. On the other hand, as he is the infallible guide appointed by God, obedience to him is synonymous with obedience to God, while disobedience is the same as infidelity.

While so many speculative theologians from among the followers of Ja'far were busy working out the scholastic problems of the time, there were a good many in his circle who concentrated their efforts mainly on legal

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1. See Ash'arī, Maqālāt, 1, 48 and index. Shahrastānī, Milāl, 1, 184 ff and index. Hishām b. al-Ḥakam argued that even the Prophet can sin because he can be corrected by the revelation which he receives, but the Imāms who do not receive revelation must be infallible and sinless. See also Baghdādī, Farg, 42.
questions. Although the distinction between lawyers and traditionists at this stage, especially among the Shi'ites, is not very clear, nevertheless there was a difference in their respective interests. Some were more interested in the traditions of a dogmatic and doctrinal nature, others in the traditions concerning practical problems. Thus the names of Jābir al-Ju‘fī and Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī, for example, appear in Shi'ite works mostly as the transmitters of the traditions dealing with doctrinal questions like that of the Imāmate. On the other hand, the names we want to list here as the eminent lawyers of Ja‘far’s circle are those who are cited by all the writers of the ‘Four Books’ of the Shi'ites as the six most authoritative transmitters of the traditions on legal problems. They were: Ja‘mīl b. Darrāj,4 ‘Abdullah b. Miskān,4 ‘Abdullah b. Bukayr,5 Hammād


2. From all the companions of Ja‘far six persons are unanimously accepted by all Shi'ite writers as the most reliable authorities on legal traditions and most of the traditions on jurisprudence are ascribed to them. See al-Muzaffarī, al-Imām al-Sādiq. II, 146.

3. He was a disciple of Zurāra. See Kash., Rijāl, 163. Ḥā‘irī, Muntaha, 82. Najāshī, Rijāl, 92. A companion of both Ja‘far and Mūsa al-Kāzīm, died during the Imāmate of ‘Ali al-Riḍā.


b. 'Uthmān, 1 Ḥammād b. 'Isa 2 and Abān b. 'Uthmān. 3

Another very important and outstanding lawyer-traditionist was Abān b. Taghlib b. Riyāḥ, 4 formerly an associate of Zayn al-‘Abidīn and al- Bāqir. When he died in AH 140 Ja'far is reported to have said, "I love to have my Shi'a like Abān b. Taghlib," and "his death grieved my heart." 5 Abān's name, however, appears in a good number of traditions mostly of a practical nature. We may note with interest that almost all these lawyer-traditionists of Ja'far's circle were in continuous attachment to three or at least two generations of the legitimist Imāms 6 either Zayn al-‘Abidīn, al- Bāqir and Ja'far or al- Bāqir, Ja'far and Mūsa, while some others who came to the fold of Ja'far served the line of the Imāms till 'Ali al-Riḍā.

From this brief summary of the persons or groups of persons having an active interest in all the necessary


2. From the tribe of Juhm, a Kufite Mawlā and companion of Ja'far, Mūsa and 'Ali al-Riḍā. See Ha'īrī, Muntāḥa, l19. Tafrīshī, fol. 70 b.


5. See Kash., Rijāl, 212.

6. It is evident from the biographies of all these persons as recorded by Kashshī and others.
branches of learning current at that time in Muslim society, we may deduce two results. First they provided enough material for the later Shī‘ites to construct dogmas and the legal system of Imāmite Shī‘ism allegedly derived from Ja‘far through his followers. It was conveniently based on the argument that since all these people accepted Ja‘far as their Imām, whatever they said had authoritative value in transmitting or conveying the Imām’s ideas or at least his approval. Second, the gathering round Ja‘far of so many persons working in various aspects of religious life with the acceptance of his Imāmate based on the principle of Nass set the legitimist Shī‘ites well on the way to a sectarian organisation of their own—though it was still far from completion.
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