

AN  
INTRODUCTION TO  
SHI'I  
ISLAM

MOOJAN MOMEN

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The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism

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This book is a general introduction to Shi'i Islam—specifically to Twelver Shi'ism, to which the majority of Shi'is belong today. It deals with the history and development of this important religion, giving an account of Shi'i doctrines and focusing in particular on those areas in which it differs from Sunni Islam.

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Moojan Momen has written numerous books and articles on Iran and the Middle Eastern religions.

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Caliphate of al-Mahdī. Spies were planted in Medina to watch for any sign of disloyalty emanating from Mūsā, and at least once during this period he was arrested, brought to Baghdad and imprisoned for a while. It was, however, during the Caliphate of Hārūn ar-Rashīd that the persecution of 'Alids reached a climax. This Caliph is reported to have had hundreds of 'Alids killed. On one occasion Mūsā was arrested and brought to Baghdad. The Caliph was determined on his execution but then set him free as a result, it is said, of a dream.

In the last half of Mūsā's lifetime, many of the Shi'īs who had split off from him at the beginning of his ministry returned their allegiance to him. New followers were gained and important new centres established in Egypt and north-west Africa.

The cause of Mūsā's final arrest and murder is said to have been the result of the plotting of Hārūn ar-Rashīd's vizier Yaḥyā ibn Khālīd of the Barmakī family. When Hārūn put his son and heir Amīn into the charge of Ja'far ibn Muḥammad of the al-Ash'ath family, Yaḥyā grew fearful that when Hārūn died, the influence of the Barmakī family would come to an end, and so he began to plot against Ja'far ibn Muḥammad. Ja'far was secretly a Shi'ī and a believer in the Imamate of Mūsā and so Yaḥyā began to feed information to Hārūn about the fact that Ja'far considered Mūsā to be the real sovereign and sent him the *khums* (see p. 179). These reports were designed to raise the wrath of the jealous and easily-influenced Caliph and to that end a relative of Mūsā's was suborned into giving further evidence about the influence of Mūsā and how money came to him from all parts of the Empire.

That year, 177/793, when Rashīd went on pilgrimage, he caused Mūsā to be arrested and sent him to Baṣra and then to Baghdad. There, Mūsā was kept in prison and eventually killed by poisoning. This occurred in the year 183/799.

Since there were rumours among the Shi'a that Mūsā, the Seventh Imam, would also be the last Imam and would not die but would be the Mahdī, Hārūn made a public display of Mūsā's body in Baghdad (this was also to show people there were no marks on his body and that he had not met a violent death). Mūsā al-Kāẓim was buried in the cemetery of the Quraysh.

In later years the Shrine of Mūsā al-Kāẓim and of his grandson, the Ninth Imam Muḥammad at-Taḳī, became the centre of a separate suburb of Baghdad called Kāẓimayn (the two Kāẓims) and a shrine has stood over the site of these graves since the time of the Buyid dynasty. The present magnificent shrine dates from the early 16th century when it was built by Shāh Ismā'īl, the Safavid ruler of Iran. The domes were tiled with gold in 1796 by Āghā Muḥammad Shāh, the first of the Qājār dynasty of Iran. They were later re-tiled by Nāṣiru'd-Dīn

Shāh in the 1850s and most recently in the last decade by the Iraqi government.

### 'Alī ar-Riḍā, the Eighth Imam

Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Mūsā, known as ar-Riḍā (the approved or acceptable) was born in Medina in 148/765. Various names are given to his mother in the historical sources but what is certain is that she was a slave. He was thirty-five years old when his father died.

It was during the Imamate of ar-Riḍā that the Caliph Hārūn ar-Rashīd died and the Empire was split between his two sons: Amīn, who was born of an Arab mother and controlled Iraq and the West with his Arab vizier al-Faḍl ibn Rabī'; and Ma'mūn, who was born of a Persian mother and controlled Iran and the East with his Iranian vizier, al-Faḍl ibn Sahl. Amīn attempted to interfere with the arrangements for the succession that had been agreed upon and soon there was a civil war in which Amīn was defeated and Ma'mūn's army under the Iranian General, Ṭāhir, occupied Baghdad. Ma'mūn, however, remained for the time being in Marv in Khurāsān.

It was at this point that Ma'mūn suddenly and somewhat unexpectedly summoned 'Alī ar-Riḍā from Medina to join him at Marv. On ar-Riḍā's arrival he was appointed, somewhat reluctantly it is said, to be Ma'mūn's heir-apparent.

There has been much conjecture as to what caused Ma'mūn to adopt this course of action. Some have suggested that the revolts in the West of the Empire – some of them under a Shi'ī banner led by Zaydī Imams – were becoming serious and this was a political move designed to give Ma'mūn the support of a body of the Shi'a and a respite. Some have suggested that it was the work of his powerful vizier, al-Faḍl ibn Sahl, who had Shi'ī proclivities.

It was while ar-Riḍā was in Marv that his sister, Fāṭima, known as Ma'sūma (the immaculate) set out from Medina to see him. She died at Qumm *en route* and it is her shrine which is the religious focus of the city of Qumm. Qumm had been founded as a Shi'ī town when, in 94/712, Aḥwaṣ ibn Sa'd al-Ash'arī had fled from Kūfa as a result of the persecutions of Shi'īs being carried out by the Umayyad Governor, al-Ḥajjāj. The present imposing shrine was constructed mainly by Shāh Bigum, the daughter of Shāh Ismā'īl, in 925/1519 and additions were made throughout the Safavid and Qājār eras. Gold tiles were placed on the roof by the Qājār monarch Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh. A number of the most important theological colleges in the Shi'ī world have grown up around this shrine.

Whatever may have been the cause of Ma'mūn's nomination of ar-

Riḍā (which occurred in the year 201/816) there can be no doubt that it caused a great stir. Everywhere the black standards and uniforms of the 'Abbasids were changed to the green of the 'Alids. In Iraq, the 'Abbasid family rebelled and set up a rival Caliph.

In order to quell these rebellions, Ma'mūn set out with his court and army towards Iraq. At Ṭūs, on the way to Iraq, 'Alī ar-Riḍā suddenly took sick and died. The year was 203/818. The suddenness of his death has caused most writers to state that he was poisoned and the Shi'ī writers accuse the Caliph Ma'mūn of doing this out of jealousy for the affection with which the people held ar-Riḍā, but there were other parties, especially the deposed 'Abbasids, who had reason to hate ar-Riḍā.

'Alī ar-Riḍā was buried near the tomb of Hārūn ar-Rashīd near Ṭūs. A tomb was built over the grave but this was destroyed and the present building dates from the early 14th century AD when the Mongol Sulṭān Muḥammad Oljeitu converted to Shi'ism and rebuilt the shrine. Most of the elaborate decorative work dates from Safavid and Qājār times and gold tiles were placed on the roof by Shāh 'Abbās I (completed in 1016/1607). In AD 1673 an earthquake destroyed the dome of the building and this was repaired by the Safavid Shāh Sulaymān. The city of Ṭūs was forgotten and a new city called Mashhad (place of martyrdom) grew around the shrine. Shi'ī pilgrims flock to this site and there is a prescribed ritual for the pilgrimage. Adjacent to the shrine itself is another magnificent building which is the Mosque of Gawhar-Shād, the wife of Shāh-Rukh (see p. 98). This building, completed in 797/1394, is one of the finest in Iran. A number of theological colleges have been built around the shrine, the most famous of which is that of Mīrzā Ja'far Khān.

### **Muḥammad at-Taḳī, the Ninth Imam**

Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī, known by the titles at-Taḳī (the God-fearing) and al-Jawād (the generous), was born in 195/810. There are differences as to the identity of his mother but most sources seem to state that she was a Nubian slave. Muḥammad at-Taḳī's father 'Alī ar-Riḍā had been married to Ma'mūn's daughter but no children resulted from that marriage.

Muḥammad at-Taḳī was born in Medina and remained there when his father went to join Ma'mūn in far-off Marv. He was only seven years old when his father died and he succeeded to the Imamate. His youth became a cause of controversy among the Shi'a, some asking how such a boy could have the necessary knowledge to be the Imam. Shi'ī writers have countered such suggestions by relating numerous stories about his extraordinary knowledge at a young age and by referring to the fact that

the Qur'an states that Jesus was given his mission while still a child.

The Caliph Ma'mūn had changed his colour from the 'Alid green back to the 'Abbasid black shortly after arriving in Baghdad but he maintained his friendly attitude towards the Shi'is and the 'Alids and Muḥammad at-Taḳī was to benefit greatly from this.

Muḥammad at-Taḳī had apparently come to Baghdad shortly after his father's death and had been warmly received by Ma'mūn who was greatly impressed with the boy. Ma'mūn decided to give his daughter Umm al-Faḍl in marriage to at-Taḳī. Members of the 'Abbasid family were opposed to this but it is related that Muḥammad at-Taḳī proved his worth in public debate with one of the leading scholars of Baghdad. A magnificent wedding was arranged. It has been suggested that a revolt in the important Shi'ī centre of Qumm, which began in 210/825 and flared up again in 214/829 and 216/831, caused Ma'mūn to arrange this wedding in order to placate Shi'ī sentiment.<sup>12</sup> But it would appear that Ma'mūn had little to fear from this revolt.

After eight years in Baghdad, Muḥammad at-Taḳī and his bride retired to Medina. Some of the histories report that Umm al-Faḍl was not altogether happy as at-Taḳī's wife and wrote to her father complaining but the Caliph defended at-Taḳī.

Ma'mūn died in 218/833 and was succeeded by his brother, Mu'taṣim. Muḥammad at-Taḳī was summoned back to Baghdad in 220/835 and he died there in that same year. Since most Shi'ī writers have felt it necessary to demonstrate that all the Imams were martyred, they have attributed at-Taḳī's death to poisoning by his wife, Umm al-Faḍl, on the instigation of Mu'taṣim. However, there is little evidence of this and Shi'ī writers differ among themselves as to how the poisoning was accomplished. Moreover, early Shi'ī writers, such as Shaykh al-Mufīd, have declined to give credence to the story of the poisoning.<sup>13</sup>

Muḥammad at-Taḳī was buried in the cemetery of the Quraysh at Baghdad, close to his grandfather. The grave is now contained in the double shrine of Kāzīmāyn.

### **'Alī al-Hādī, the Tenth Imam**

Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad, who is known by the titles al-Hādī (the guided) and an-Naqī (the distinguished), was born in 212/827 or 214/829 in Medina. His mother was a Moroccan slave called Samāna. He was seven years old when his father died. Once again the Shi'is were faced with the problem of a child Imam.

During the remaining years of the Caliphate of Mu'taṣim and the five-year Caliphate of Wāthiq, al-Hādī and the Shi'is were relatively free and unmolested. All this was to change, however, with the Caliphate of

Mutawakkil which began in 232/847. During this reign, both Shi'is and Mu'tazilīs (see Glossary) came under an intense persecution.

In 233/848 Mutawakkil summoned al-Hādī to Sāmarrā, the new 'Abbasid capital north of Baghdad. Although received hospitably and given a house in which to live, al-Hādī was in reality a prisoner of the Caliph. The quarter of the city where al-Hādī lived was known as al-'Askar since it was chiefly occupied by the army (*'askar*) and, therefore, al-Hādī and his son Ḥasan are both referred to as 'Askarī or together as 'Askariyayn (the two 'Askarīs). Al-Hādī lived in Sāmarrā for twenty years, always under the observation of the Caliph's spies. It is reported that at least once Mutawakkil attempted to kill al-Hādī but was frustrated by a miracle. Al-Hādī continued to live in Sāmarrā after the death of Mutawakkil in 247/861 and during the brief reign of Muntaṣir and the four-year reign of Musta'in until his death in 254/868 during the Caliphate of Mu'tazz. Real power was, by this time, in the hands of the Turkish Generals of the Caliphs and so it is difficult to see what advantage there would have been to the Caliph in poisoning the Imam as most Shi'i histories claim. Shaykh al-Mufīd, among the early Shi'i writers, does not state that the Imam was poisoned.<sup>14</sup>

'Alī al-Hādī and his son Ḥasan al-'Askarī are buried in the twin shrines called 'Askariyayn in Sāmarrā. The first substantial building over this site was constructed by Nāṣiru'd-Dawla, the Hamdanid ruler of Mosul in 333/944. The building was enlarged and ornamentation added by the Buyids and Safavids and the dome was gilded by Nāṣiru'd-Dīn Shāh Qājār in about 1868.

### Ḥasan al-'Askarī, the Eleventh Imam

The Eleventh Imam was Abū Muḥammad Ḥasan ibn 'Alī, known as al-'Askarī on account of his almost life-long detention in Sāmarrā. He was born in 232/846 (or 230/844 or 231/845) in Medina and was therefore only two years of age when his father was summoned to Sāmarrā. His mother was a slave who is named as Ḥadīth.

Ḥasan al-'Askarī was twenty-two years old when his father gave him a slave-girl who is usually called Narjis or Ṣaqīl and who is named as the mother of Muḥammad, the Twelfth Imam.

The period of Ḥasan's Imamate was brief, only six years. During this time he was under intense pressure from the 'Abbasids and access to him for his followers was restricted. He therefore tended to use agents to communicate with the Shi'is who followed him.

Ḥasan al-'Askarī died on either 1 or 8 Rabī' al-Awwal 260 (25 December 873 or 1 January 874). The Shi'i histories maintain that he was poisoned by the Caliph Mu'tamid.

### Muḥammad al-Mahdī, the Twelfth Imam

Abu'l-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, known as al-Mahdī (the guided), al-Muntaẓar (the awaited), al-Ḥujja (the proof), al-Qā'im (the one who will arise), Baqiyatu'llāh (the remnant of God), is identified as the Twelfth Imam. After the death of Ḥasan al-'Askarī there was a great deal of confusion among the Shi'a, with some saying that al-'Askarī had had no son and others asserting that he had (see pp. 59–60). Those who were to go on to become the main body of the Twelver Shi'a believed that Ḥasan's son Muḥammad had gone into occultation. Further details of the Twelfth Imam can be found in Chapter 8.

### EARLY DIVISIONS AMONG THE SHI'IS

The traditional accounts of the history of the Shi'a are mostly a recital of the various sects that split off from the main body of the Shi'a at different times, starting from the time of 'Alī. It is difficult to determine how many of these sects really existed as historical entities and how many are inventions of later writers. What is certain is that even if these sects did exist, the majority died out within a century. A few have survived to the present day and a brief description of the later developments of these sects is given below.

In considering the traditional account of these sects, it would be useful to examine briefly a number of general terms used about them as these terms crop up frequently in the following accounts:

- a. *Ghulāt* (the extremists) and *Ghuluww* (extremism): those sects which hold either the opinion that any particular person is God or that any person is a prophet after Muhammad, are called by this title. Certain other doctrines such as *tanāsukh* (transmigration of souls), *ḥulūl* (descent of God or the Spirit of God into a person) and *tashbih* (anthropomorphism with respect to God) are also usually ascribed to these groups. They are generally considered to be outside the pale of Islam.
- b. *Wāqifa* or *Wāqifiyya* (those who hesitate or stop). This term is applied to any group who deny or hesitate over the death of a particular Imam and, therefore, stop at that Imam and refuse to recognise any further Imams. Most often it refers specifically to the group considering Mūsā al-Kāzim to be the last Imam.
- c. *Qaṭ'iyya* (those who are certain). This term applies to those who are certain of a death of a particular Imam and therefore go on to the next Imam.

## During the Caliphate of 'Ali

### 1. *The Sabā'iyya*

'Abdu'llāh ibn Sabā al-Ḥimyarī, a semi-legendary figure known as Ibn as-Sawda, is generally considered to have started the tendency to *ghuluww* (extremism in matters of doctrine). He is said to have been a Jew converted to Islam. He is described as a devoted follower of 'Ali and during 'Uthmān's Caliphate travelled from place to place agitating in 'Ali's favour. Indeed, he is considered by some Sunni writers as the originator of Shi'ism itself, although on account of his extremism this is considered by Shi'is as a mere insult.<sup>15</sup> During 'Ali's Caliphate, however, he was banished by 'Ali to Madā'in on account of his saying to 'Ali: 'Thou art God.' According to many accounts, moreover, 'Ali even caused some of the followers of Ibn Sabā to be burned.<sup>16</sup>

After the assassination of 'Ali, 'Abdu'llāh ibn Sabā is said to have stated that he had not died at all. He was alive in the clouds and would return to fill the earth with justice.<sup>17</sup> If these reports are true, the Sabā'iyya would be, within the traditional schema, the first group of Wāqifiyya<sup>18</sup> and the first to have introduced the doctrines of *ghayba* (occultation or concealment) and *raj'a* (return).<sup>19</sup> However, the doctrine for which Ibn Sabā is best remembered and which caused Muslim writers to account him as one of the *ghulāt* is his attribution of divinity to 'Ali (and according to some sources, his own claim to be the prophet of 'Ali).

Groups who were active at a later period but who are considered to have been derived from the Sabā'iyya are:

a. *'Ulyāniyya* or *'Alyā'iyya* named after 'Ulyān (or 'Alyā) ibn Dhirā' as-Sadūsī (or ad-Dawsī or al-Asdī) who appear to have been active around AD 800 and are also called adh-Dhammiyya (the blamers) because they stated that 'Ali was God with Muhammad as his Apostle and that Muhammad was to be blamed in that he was sent to call the people to 'Ali but called them to himself. Others of this group assigned divinity to both Muhammad and 'Ali.

b. *Ishāqiyya* or *Ḥamrawiyya* named after Ishāq ibn Muḥammad an-Nakha'ī al-Aḥmar of Kūfa, who died in 186/802. This group evidently had close links with the previous group as Ishāq is named as the leading dogmatist of the previous group by some writers.<sup>20</sup> They stressed that both Muhammad and 'Ali were divine and shared in the prophethood.

c. *Muḥammadiyya* or *Mīmiyya*. This sect are a counterpart to the 'Ulyāniyya and stressed the divinity of Muhammad. Their leading champion was al-Fayyād.

d. *Ahl-i Ḥaqq* ('Alī Ilāhīs, 'Aliyu'llāhīs). The 'Ulyāniyya are

traditionally linked to a Shi'ī sect that has survived to the present day, the 'Aliyu'llāhīs as the Ahl-i Ḥaqq are often erroneously called. The historical connection is however tenuous and the Ahl-i Ḥaqq sect appear to have originated among the tribes in the Qarā-Quyūnlū Empire in the 15th century. There is no uniform set of beliefs among the Ahl-i Ḥaqq. Rather they form a loose network of groups each with its own beliefs. The twelve Imams of the Twelver line are revered but are not central to their beliefs. Their organisation and rituals are not unlike those of the Sufi orders. They are most numerous among the Kurds in west Iran and among the Turkomans and Kurds in north Iraq (especially around Sulaymāniyya and Kirkūk) and south-east Turkey.

## After the Martyrdom of Husayn

### 2. *The Kaysāniyya*

The Kaysāniyya began (see p. 35) as a movement started by Mukhtār ibn Abū 'Ubayd ath-Thaqafī, claiming to represent Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyya (the son of 'Ali by a Ḥanafī woman). The name is thought to be derived from Kaysān, the leader of the *Mawālī* under Mukhtār.

Mukhtār himself is said to have taught that the Imamate was transferred to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyya after Husayn. Doctrinally the Kaysāniyya stood halfway between the later Zaydī and Twelver positions concerning the nature of the Imamate in that while denying *naṣṣ* (designation) and emphasising that the Imam's claim is based on his personal qualifications, they also stressed the innate supernatural knowledge of the Imam. Mukhtār is said to have introduced the doctrine of *badā* (changeability of God's will) when he was defeated in a battle that he had prophesied he would win.

The Kaysāniyya survived the defeat and death of Mukhtār but after the death of Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya himself they split up into a number of groups:

a. *Karibiyya*, named after Abū Karib ad-Ḍarīr; this group held to the doctrines of *ghayba* (concealment) and *raj'a* (return). They considered that Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya had not died but was concealed on Mount Rawḍa (some seven days' journey from Medina) and would return to fill the earth with justice. Because they believed that prior to the return of the Imam, the drawing of swords was forbidden, they fought with sticks and were therefore called the Khashabiyya. Two of the most famous of Arab poets belonged to this sect, Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī and Kuthayyir.

b. *Hāshimiyya*, who held that Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya did die and that he taught all of his knowledge to his son, Abū Hāshim, to whom the Imamate passed. This sect is said to have introduced the allegorical

interpretation of the Qur'an and the idea that beneath the *ẓāhir* (exoteric) there is a *bāṭin* (esoteric meaning).

Abū Hāshim died in Humayma (Palestine) in about 98/717. Upon his death several further factions arose.

c. *Abbāsiyya*. The 'Abbasids originally claimed that Abū Hāshim passed the Imamate on to Muḥammad ibn 'Alī (the great-grandson of 'Abbās, the uncle of the Prophet) at his death-bed in Humayma and that the Imamate was transferred to the descendants of 'Abbās. Thus initially the 'Abbasid propaganda was in reality a branch of the Hāshimiyya. Later, once the 'Abbasids had overthrown the Umayyads and assumed the Caliphate, they changed the basis of their claim to the Caliphate by stating that 'Abbās was the rightful successor to the Prophet.

d. *Rawandiyya*. Despite this change of emphasis by the 'Abbasids following their overthrow of the Umayyads, there remained a sect called the Rawandiyya who believed in the Imamate of the 'Abbasids and it is even said that some of them believed in the divinity of al-Manṣūr, the second 'Abbasid Caliph. However, the 'Abbasids, wishing to secure a more orthodox basis for their Caliphate, found such a heterodox movement extremely embarrassing and al-Manṣūr is even reported to have had some of the sect killed.

e. *Rizāmiyya* or *Muslimiyya*. There is also recorded a group called in one source the Rizāmiyya after Rizām ibn Razm.<sup>21</sup> What appears to have been an almost identical sect is called Muslimiyya in another source.<sup>22</sup> This sect considered Abū Muslim, the 'Abbasid General, as having inherited the Imamate from 'Abdu'llāh as-Saffāḥ, the first 'Abbasid Caliph, and some of the heresiographers include this group among the *ghulāt* on account of their believing in Abū Muslim's divinity or claiming that he was greater in rank than Gabriel. In any case, this sect did not believe Abū Muslim had died but rather that he was in concealment and would return to fill the earth with justice. One writer calls the sect Barkūkiyya and asserts that they were to be found in Herat and Marv and that they believed that the man who was killed by al-Manṣūr was not Abū Muslim but a devil who took on his shape.<sup>23</sup> What appears to be the same sect is called in other sources the Khurramiyya, Khurramdīniyya and Ishāqiyya. They were active in Khurāsān and Transoxania and are linked in several sources with Zoroastrianism and Mazdakism (the Ishāqiyya, for example, were held to believe that Abū Muslim was in fact a prophet sent by Zoroaster to revive his religion).

A group of this sect under the leadership of Hāshim ibn Ḥakīm al-Muqanna' (the veiled one) arose in revolt in 159/775 during the reign of the Caliph al-Mahdī. They believed that God had existed in the form of all the prophets from Adam to Muhammad and then in 'Alī and his sons and finally in Abū Muslim from whom it had passed to al-Muqanna'.<sup>24</sup>

This group were called Muqanniyya or Mubayyaḍa and are considered part of a wider belief in the descent of the spirit of God into the form of a man which is called Hulūliyya.

f. *Al-Kaysāniyya al-Khullaṣ* or *Mukhtāriyya*. This group considered the Imamate to be passed down among Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyya's descendants: from Abū Hāshim to his brother, 'Alī, and to 'Alī's son, Ḥasan, and to Ḥasan's son, 'Alī. The mothers of this succession of Imams were also descendants of Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya.

g. *Bayāniyya*. The followers of Bayān ibn Sam'ān at-Tamīmī who maintained that the divinity passed from 'Alī to his sons and then through Abū Hāshim to Bayān. Among the beliefs attributed to this group are anthropomorphism with respect to God. Bayān's relationship with the Fifth Imam, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, appears to have varied quite markedly. At one time he is reported to have been advancing claims of a *ghuluww* nature with respect to al-Bāqir; at another time he is reported to have sent a message summoning al-Bāqir to accept his prophethood. Bayān was put to death by Khālīd ibn 'Abdu'llāh al-Qasrī, Hishām's governor in Iraq.

### After the Imamate of Zaynu'l-'Ābidīn

#### 3. *The Zaydiyya*

Zayd, the son of the Fourth Imam, Zaynu'l-'Ābidīn, asserted a claim to the Imamate on the basis that it belonged to any descendant of 'Alī and Fāṭima who is learned, pious and comes forward openly to claim the Imamate (i.e. raises a revolt). Zayd is said to have studied under Wāsil Ibn 'Aṭā, the reputed founder of the Mu'tazila (see p. 77ff.), and so the Zaydiyya came to incorporate Mu'tazilī theology and a large number of this school joined the movement. In order to widen the basis of his support yet further, some Zaydīs propounded the doctrine of *Imāmat al-Mafdūl* – that it was possible for a man of lesser excellence to be appointed Imam during the lifetime of a man of greater excellence. Through this doctrine, they justified the Caliphates of Abū Bakr and 'Umar stating that these were matters of expediency while 'Alī was of greater excellence. A corollary of this was the acceptance that the companions of the Prophet were not blame-worthy or sinful in rejecting 'Alī (an important point for the Traditionists who depended on the authority of these companions for the transmission of the Traditions).

Zayd and his half-brother, the Fifth Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir, came to open disagreement over several points of doctrine. Initially, Zayd's activist approach attracted many of the Shi'is, but later as Zayd compromised more and more with the Traditionists many of the Shi'a turned their backs on him and returned to al-Bāqir.

Zayd raised his revolt in Ṣafar 122/January 740 but was unsuccessful and was killed in Kūfa by the Caliph Hishām. Zayd's son, Yaḥyā, then fled to Khurāsān and started a revolt there but was overcome and killed in 125/743.

Since the Zaydīs recognised no designation for the Imamate nor any strict hereditary principle (beyond the fact that the Imam must be of the descendants of Hasan and Husayn), a number of other revolts are held to be Zaydī rebellions. The first of these was that of Muḥammad ibn 'Abdu'llāh, An-Nafs az-Zakiyya (the pure soul) who was descended from Hasan. He claimed the Imamate and rose in rebellion against the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Manṣūr. He was killed in 145/762. After his death, a number of his followers, called the Muḥammadiyya, said that he had not been killed but was in concealment and would return to fill the earth with justice. Those who accepted the death of an-Nafs az-Zakiyya transferred the Imamate to Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim, one of the descendants of the Imam Husayn, who lived in Ṭālaqān. He was arrested on the orders of the Caliph Mu'taṣim in 219/834 and died in prison, although some of his followers in Daylām and Ṭabaristān (north Iran) continued to await his return. An even later revolt which is considered to be in the line of Zaydiyya is that of Yaḥyā ibn 'Umar who was of Husaynid descent. He arose in rebellion during the Caliphate of Musta'in and was killed in 250/864. The same year, Ḥasan ibn Zayd succeeded in founding a Zaydī state in Ṭabaristān in north Iran. A few decades later in 301/913, Ḥasan ibn 'Alī al-Uṭrush, Nāṣir al-Ḥaqq, a Zaydī Imam, made his way to Daylām and Gīlān in north Iran where the people had resisted the adoption of Islam. Here he was successful in converting the people to Zaydī Shi'ism and a succession of 'Alid Zaydī rulers ruled over them until about 424/1032. In 288/901 another Zaydī state was established in Yemen, centred on Sa'da and, in more modern times, in San'a. This state, although over-run on numerous occasions during its history, managed to retain its Zaydī identity and on the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, the Zaydī Imam, Yaḥyā al-Mutawakkil, succeeded in bringing the area under his control and establishing a Zaydī state which survived until a revolution in 1962. Thus this sect has survived to the present day. In its early history it was, however, recorded as having divided into a number of sub-groups:

a. *Jārūdiyya*. This group of the Zaydiyya named after Abu'l-Jārūd Ziyād ibn Abī Ziyād, was opposed to the approval of the companions of the Prophet. They held that although there was no specific designation of 'Ali by the Prophet, there was a sufficient description given so that all should have recognised him. They therefore considered the companions sinful in failing to recognise 'Ali. They also denied the

legitimacy of Abū Bakr and 'Umar. This sect was active during the late Umayyad and early 'Abbasid period and its views predominated among the later Zaydīs.

b. *Sulaymāniyya* or *Jarīriyya*. This group, led by Sulaymān ibn Jarīr, held that the Imamate should be a matter to be decided by consultation. They felt that the companions, including Abū Bakr and 'Umar, had been in error in failing to follow 'Ali but this did not amount to sin. 'Uthmān, however, was attacked for the innovations that he introduced.

c. *Butriyya* or *Ṣālihiyya*. These two groups, named respectively after Kathīr an-Nawa al-Abtar and Ḥasan ibn Ṣālih, seem to have held identical doctrines. They agreed with the Jarīriyya on the matter of Abū Bakr and 'Umar and suspended judgement with respect to 'Uthmān. It is stated by one author that they followed the Mu'tazila in theology and the Ḥanafī school in most questions of law, though in some matters they agreed with ash-Shāfi'ī and the Shi'is.

#### **During the Imamates of Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq**

This period was a very turbulent one both in the Islamic world in general, with the overthrow of the Umayyads and establishment of the 'Abbasid Caliphate, and in the Shi'ī community. We have already noted the 'Abbasid movement which grew out of the Kaysāniyya during this time and the rebellions of Zayd and an-Nafs az-Zakiyya. A number of other groups were also active during this period.

#### 4. *The Janāḥiyya*

In 127/744 'Abdu'llāh ibn Mu'āwiya rose in revolt against the last Umayyad Caliph. 'Abdu'llāh was a descendant of Ja'far ibn Abū Ṭālib, the brother of the Imam 'Ali. Ja'far was known as Dhu'l-Janāḥayn (the possessor of two wings). 'Abdu'llāh is accused of holding a number of extreme opinions: the incarnation of God in a succession of Prophets and Imams passing eventually through Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyya and Abū Hāshim to 'Abdu'llāh ibn Mu'āwiya; transmigration of souls; and the allegorical interpretation of the Qur'an. 'Abdu'llāh was forced to flee from Kūfa and established his rule over the province of Fārs until defeated by Abū Muslim. Some of his followers asserted that he had not died but was concealed in the mountains of Isfahan and would appear again.

#### 5. *The Mughīriyya*

The followers of Mughīra ibn Sa'īd al-'Ijlī are sometimes accounted

among the *ghulāt* of the Imamiyya and sometimes among the Zaydiyya. In fact it would appear that Mughīra changed his allegiance over the years several times. Initially he was a follower of Muḥammad al-Bāqir but the latter repudiated him and anathematised him on account of his assertion of al-Bāqir's divinity. Mughīra believed in anthropomorphism with respect to God. After al-Bāqir's death, Mughīra claimed the Imamate and even prophethood for himself. However, he told his followers to await the return of al-Bāqir who would raise the dead. Mughīra was put to death in 119/737 by Khalīd ibn 'Abdu'llāh al-Qasrī, on the same day as Bayān ibn Sam'ān (see above) according to some writers.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Bayān and Mughīra were closely linked in many ways including their *ghuluww* tendencies with respect to al-Bāqir. After Mughīra's death his followers attached themselves to Muḥammad an-Nafs az-Zakiyya.

#### 6. *The Manṣūriyya or Kisfiyya*

A third group linked to the Bayāniyya and the Mughīriyya were the followers of Abū Manṣūr al-'Ijlī. Abū Manṣūr also initially claimed to be a follower of al-Bāqir but was repudiated by the latter on account of *ghuluww* tendencies. Later Abū Manṣūr claimed the Imamate had passed to him. The name Kisfiyya arose because Abū Manṣūr believed himself to be the piece (*kisf*) of heaven falling down which is mentioned in Qur'an (52:44). He maintained that the first thing created by God was Jesus and then after him 'Ali. He held to an allegorical interpretation of the Qur'an which among other things meant that those things forbidden in the Qur'an were nothing but allegory for the names of certain evil men. Thus his followers are accused of all manner of immorality and sin. It is also said that they killed their enemies by strangling or breaking the skull with wooden clubs.

After Abū Manṣūr's death, leadership of the group passed to his son, Ḥusayn, although some of the Manṣūriyya went over to the supporters of an-Nafs az-Zakiyya.

#### 7. *The Khaṭṭābiyya*

Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb Muḥammad ibn Abū Zaynab al-Asadī al-Ajda' was yet another figure who was at first connected with the main line of Twelver Imams. At first he claimed to be the representative of Imam Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq and to have been taught by him knowledge of the Greatest Name of God. But he was repudiated and anathematised by aṣ-Ṣādiq. Then Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb claimed the Imamate for himself while elevating aṣ-Ṣādiq to the level of prophethood and divinity. Central to Abu'l-

Khaṭṭāb's doctrines appears to have been an allegorical interpretation of the Qur'an. His followers also believed that they would not die but would be lifted up to heaven. They are accused of having disregarded all religious observances and regarded everything as lawful. Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb was executed in Kūfa in 138/755. His followers, who appear to have been numerous, split among several leaders:

a. *Bazīghiyya*. The followers of Bazīgh ibn Mūsā, the weaver, who followed Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb's doctrines and claimed that a man who had reached perfection should not be said to have died and that the best of his followers were superior to the angels.

b. *Mu'ammariyya*. The followers of Mu'ammār ibn Khaytham, the corn dealer, who claimed prophethood in succession to Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb and asserted that the present world would never come to an end but that both paradise and hell were to be experienced here.

c. *'Umayriyya* or *'Ijliyya*. The followers of 'Umayr ibn Bayān al-'Ijlī, the straw dealer of Kūfa.

d. *Mufaḍḍaliyya*. The followers of Mufaḍḍal aṣ-Ṣayrafī who is said to have believed in the lordship of aṣ-Ṣādiq but repudiated the apostleship or prophethood of Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb.

e. *Ghurābiyya*. The followers of this group, who in one source are accounted as part of the Khaṭṭābiyya, are said to have held that since Muhammad and 'Ali were as indistinguishable from each other as one raven (*ghurāb*) is from another, when the angel Gabriel was sent with the divine revelation from God for 'Ali, he gave it by mistake to Muhammad. One Muslim writer has commented on the beliefs of this sect that even were it to be accepted that Gabriel could not distinguish between an eleven-year-old boy and a forty-year-old man, can it really be accepted that God would not have corrected the error?<sup>26</sup>

In many of the sources, the Khaṭṭābiyya are closely linked with the emergence of the Ismā'īlīs. Mufaḍḍal ibn 'Umar al-Ju'fī, a member of this sect, is said to have been closely associated with and perhaps even a teacher of Ismā'īl ibn Ja'far and is accused of having led Ismā'īl astray in several Traditions attributed to the Imam Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq.<sup>27</sup> Some Ismā'īlī doctrines are said to have been derived from the Khaṭṭābiyya. A group of the Khaṭṭābiyya are said to have transferred their allegiance directly to Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl after the death of Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb. Even in some Ismā'īlī books, Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb is accounted as one of the founders of the Ismā'īliyya.<sup>28</sup> In other Ismā'īlī books, however, Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb is condemned as a heretic.

#### 8. *The Bāqiriyya*

This is one of the sects known under the more general name Wāqifiyya



– those who hesitate over the death of a particular Imam in contradistinction to the Qaṭ'iyya – those who are certain about the death of the Imam. In the case of the Bāqiriyya, they believed the Imamate ceased with al-Bāqir and that he was in concealment and would return.

### After the Imamate of Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq

The death of Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq marks an important turning-point in the history of the Shi'a, for it is at this point that one of the most important fragmentations of the Shi'i community occurred according to the traditional histories. Apart from the line of what would become the Ithnā-'Ashariyya or Twelver sect (who appear at this time to have been called the Qaṭ'iyya or the ones who were certain about the death of the previous Imam and went on to the next Imam) and the *ghulāt* sects of the Khattābiyya, Mughīriyya, etc. mentioned in the previous section, the following sects must also be noted:

#### 9. *The Ja'fariyya or Nāwusiyya*

These are the Wāqifiyya with respect to aṣ-Ṣādiq, believing that the latter did not die but is concealed and will return as the Maḥdī. Nāwus of Baṣra was a prominent exponent of this idea. There was also a group to whom no particular name appears to have been assigned who believed that after aṣ-Ṣādiq the Imamate ceased.

#### 10. *The Aftaḥiyya or Fataḥiyya*

These maintained that after the Third Imam, Husayn, the succession should always be through the eldest surviving son of the previous Imam. The eldest surviving son of aṣ-Ṣādiq was 'Abdu'llāh al-Aftaḥ (the flat-footed or flat-headed). It is claimed that al-Aftaḥ disagreed with his father during his lifetime over matters of doctrine and was inclined to the opinion of the Murji'ites.<sup>29</sup> However, according to one tradition, al-Aftaḥ survived his father by only seventy days leaving no sons and according to another tradition he was found to be lacking in knowledge by the learned ones among the Shi'a. Therefore, although there was a great deal of support for his claim to the Imamate initially, it fell away rapidly. Some of his followers felt that the Imamate finished with him, while others believed that he had a son who was living in concealment but who was the Maḥdī. Most of them turned to the Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim; but some, however, continued to regard al-Aftaḥ as the rightful Imam before Mūsā.

#### 11. *The Shumaytiyya or Sumaytiyya*

The followers of Yaḥyā ibn Abī Shumayt (or Sumayt) who asserted the Imamate of aṣ-Ṣādiq's fourth son, Muḥammad, known as ad-Dībāj (the handsome). According to at least one account this Muḥammad believed in a Zaydī type of Imamate and came forward against the Caliph Ma'mūn in 199/814. He was defeated but Ma'mūn treated him considerately and made him part of his court in Khurāsān.<sup>30</sup> This sect believed in the Imamate remaining in the family of Muhammad ad-Dībāj and that the Maḥdī would come from among them.

#### 12. *The Ismā'iliyya or Sab'iyya*

There seems general agreement among the Shi'i sources that, at first, aṣ-Ṣādiq had intended his eldest son Ismā'il to succeed him. But then Ismā'il died and this had disturbing implications for both the question of the nature of the Imamate and for the doctrine of designation (*naṣṣ*). Apart from the groups mentioned above who believed that Ismā'il's death annulled his Imamate and who therefore transferred their allegiance to other members of aṣ-Ṣādiq's family, there were a number who denied that it was possible to annul designation. These split into several groups:

- a. *Pure Ismā'iliyya*. These held that Ismā'il did not in fact die but was concealed by aṣ-Ṣādiq out of fear for his safety and that he will return as the Maḥdī.
- b. *Mubārakiyya*. The followers of Mubārak, a servant or *mawla* of Muḥammad ibn Ismā'il, who maintained that since the Imamate was designated to Ismā'il and since after Hasan and Husayn the Imamate could not pass between brothers but only to sons, the Imam after aṣ-Ṣādiq should be Muḥammad, the son of Ismā'il, but these then stop with Muḥammad's Imamate.
- c. *Fatimid Ismā'ilīs, Qarāmiṭa (Carmathians), Bāṭiniyya and Ta'līmiyya*. The Fatimid Ismā'ilīs believed that following on from Muḥammad ibn Ismā'il there were several hidden Imams and that from these came the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt (297/909–567/1171). Simultaneous to the rise of the Fatimid dynasty, there were groups of Ismā'ilīs active along the southern shores of the Persian Gulf who did not recognise the Fatimids as their Imams. These were called Qarāmiṭa (Carmathians). Because of their belief that there is a hidden meaning (*bāṭin*) behind every literal or external meaning (*ẓāhir*) of all revealed scripture, the Ismā'ilīs were often called Bāṭiniyya. Another sub-group of the Ismā'ilīs were the Druse, who had deified the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim and broken off from the main body of the Ismā'ilīs forming a distinct group in Syria that has survived to the present day.

The Fatimid Ismā'īlīs split in 487/1094 into two major divisions, the Nizārī and Musta'lian in favour of two opposing claimants to the Imamate. The majority of the Musta'lian branch continued to recognise the Caliphs in Egypt until 526/1132 and then their Imam and Caliph Abu'l-Qāsim Ṭayyib went into occultation and this branch has had no revealed Imam ever since. Leadership of the movement was transferred to the Yemen under a series of *Dā'ī Muṭlaqs* (missionaries in charge of the movement). There was a further split in 999/1590 with one line of *dā'īs*, the Sulaymānī, remaining in Yemen with a few followers in India, and another line, the Dā'ūdī, resident in India claiming the majority of Indian Musta'lian followers who are called Bohras. Musta'lian Ismā'īlīs are predominantly to be found in the Indian province of Gujarat but also in south Arabia, the Persian Gulf, East Africa and Burma, numbering several hundred thousand in all.

The other main division of the Ismā'īlīs, the Nizārīs, became centred on Alamut in Iran under Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ. Initially Ḥasan's successors regarded themselves as *dā'īs* of an occulted Imam, but the fourth *dā'ī* proclaimed himself Imam, claiming to be in fact a descendant of Nizār who had been ousted from the Fāṭimid Caliphate in 487/1094. The Nizārīs became famous in history as the Assassins. They are also called Ta'līmīs because of their doctrine that the Imam is the dispenser of divinely-ordained teaching (*ta'līm*). Their centre at Alamut was destroyed by Hulagu Khan in 654/1256 and after this the Nizārī Imams went into hiding, changing their residence from place to place in Iran. It is only in the 19th century that the Nizārī Imams re-emerge as historical figures in the form of the first Agha Khān who in 1840 fled from Iran to India where Nizārī missionary efforts over many centuries had created a large community. The Agha Khān established himself in Bombay, which has remained the centre of the Nizārīs in India. The Agha Khān's successors have become international figures. The community is most numerous in India (where they are called Khojas) but there are also important communities in East Africa, Pakistan, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia, numbering several millions in all.

### After the Death of Mūsā al-Kāẓim

After Mūsā the main line of Shi'īs who eventually went on to become the Twelvers turned to Mūsā's son, 'Alī ar-Riḍā, and were again called the Qaṭ'iyya (those who were certain of the death of Mūsā). But a number of other groups arose:

#### 13. *The Mūsawiyya or Mamṭūra*

These denied or were uncertain of the death of Mūsā and therefore did

not accept the continuation of the Imamate beyond Mūsā, and are again called by the general name of Wāqifiyya. Some of them believed that he had not died but escaped from prison and was now in concealment; others considered he had died and was raised again to life and is in concealment; yet others believed he was raised to heaven like Jesus and will return. All these groups believe in the return of Mūsā as the Imam Mahdī to fill the earth with justice. By their enemies these people were called the Mamṭūra (the rained-upon).<sup>31</sup>

#### 14. *The Bajaliyya*

Ibn Warsand al-Bajalī took the Mūsawiyya doctrine to Morocco and Spain in the first part of the 3rd/9th century. He and his descendants had some success in propagating this doctrine among the people of this area and some of the Idrisid amirs were also converted. The sect probably eventually died out in the 6th/12th century with the advent of the Almohad movement.

#### 15. *The Bashīriyya*

The followers of Muḥammad ibn Bashīr of Kūfa maintained that Mūsā was not imprisoned and did not die. He was in concealment and had appointed Ibn Bashīr as his representative and given him his seal. Therefore, all the followers of Mūsā had now to obey Ibn Bashīr for he was the Imam and the Imamate would remain with him and his successors until the return of Mūsā as the Mahdī. 'Alī ar-Riḍā and others who claimed the Imamate after Mūsā were of base birth and were falsely claiming descent from Mūsā. Only the five daily prayers and fasting were obligatory and the validity of all other religious laws were denied. The Bashīriyya were said to have believed in the transmigration of souls, holding that there has only ever been one Imam whose soul goes from one body to the next. They also held to the doctrine of *tafwīḍ* (see p. 66). They believed in holding all goods in common. After Ibn Bashīr, leadership of this group fell to his son, Samī'.

### After the Imamate of 'Alī ar-Riḍā

The main line of Twelver Shi'ism continued after 'Alī ar-Riḍā with his son, Muḥammad at-Taḳī, but as the latter was only seven years old there were groups who dissented from this:

#### 16. *The Aḥmadiyya*

This group believed that 'Alī's father, Mūsā, had decreed that after 'Alī

the Imamate should go to Mūsā's next son, Aḥmad (it is he who is said to be buried in the shrine of Shāh Chirāgh in Shiraz).

#### 17. *The Mu'allifa*

This group adopted a position of being Wāqifiyya over the death of Mūsā and awaiting his return.

#### 18. *The Muḥadditha*

These are stated to have been a group of Murj'ites and others from the main stream of Islam who came to believe in the Imamate of Mūsā and 'Alī (in the hope of political favour it is said) but after 'Alī's death returned to their former belief. Similarly some of the Zaydiyya are said to have attached themselves to 'Alī but returned to their former beliefs when he died.

### **After the Imamate of 'Alī al-Hādī**

#### 19. *The Namīriyya, Nuṣayriyya, 'Alawīyya*

This group began as followers of Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr an-Namīrī. There is considerable variation in the sources regarding the teachings of this man. Some state that he was a follower of the teachings of Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb; some say that he considered 'Alī al-Hādī, the Tenth Imam, to be God and that he, Ibn Nuṣayr was his prophet; some state that he considered 'Alī al-Hādī to be the Imam and 'Alī's son Muḥammad who died in 249/863 was the Mahdī while he proclaimed himself in 245/859 to be the Bāb (Gate) to 'Alī al-Hādī. The later writers of the sect relate his claims regarding the Mahdī to the son of Ḥasan al-'Askarī, the Eleventh Imam, and thus acknowledge all twelve Imams of the Twelver line. The man who is mostly responsible for the establishment of the sect was Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī (d. 346/957 or 358/968). Under the patronage of the Hamdanid dynasty, he greatly extended the influence of the sect at Aleppo. After the fall of the Shi'ī dynasties of Aleppo, the sect faced great persecution over the centuries at the hands successively of the Crusaders, the Mamluks and the Ottomans. They were also rent by civil wars between their various clans. After the First World War the French attempted to set up a separate 'Alawī state centred on Lattakia but later this was abandoned. At present the 'Alawīs are politically dominant in Syria under President Hafiz al-Assad. The 'Alawī community now numbers several millions living in a band of land stretching from Lattakia in Syria to Antakya (Antioch) in Turkey.

#### 20. *The Muḥammadiyya*

During the lifetime of 'Alī al-Hādī, one of his sons, Muḥammad, died. However, a group of 'Alī's followers maintained that 'Alī had designated Muḥammad as the next Imam and that the latter had not died but this had been a ruse to put off their enemies. Muḥammad was now concealed and would return as the Mahdī.

#### 21. *The Pure Ja'fariyya*

These maintained that 'Alī al-Hādī had in fact nominated his son, Ja'far, as the next Imam.

### **After the Death of Ḥasan al-'Askarī**

After the death of Ḥasan al-'Askarī, the Shi'is were thrown into confusion and fragmented into a large number of groups. According to al-Mas'ūdī, the Shi'ī broke up into twenty sects at this time;<sup>32</sup> Sa'd al-Qummī describes fifteen sects;<sup>33</sup> and an-Nawbakhtī, fourteen sects.<sup>34</sup> These sects may be divided into the following broad groupings:

#### a. *The Wāqifiyya at Ḥasan al-'Askarī*

These stopped at the Imamate at Ḥasan al-'Askarī who was considered the Mahdī. Some of these thought that he had not died but had gone into occultation while another group thought he had died but had been raised to life again. Both of these groups considered that al-'Askarī had left no son. A third group stopped at al-'Askarī because although they acknowledged his death and recognised that the earth could not be without an Imam, they could not be sure who was al-'Askarī's successor.

#### b. *The Cessation of the Imamate*

These considered that just as prophecy had ceased with Muhammad, so it was possible for the Imamate to have ceased with al-'Askarī who had neither son nor successor. One group maintained that there could be no Mahdī, while another held that the Mahdī would arise from among the descendants of the Imams in the last days.

#### c. *The Muḥammadiyya*

These maintained that al-Hādī had designated his son Muḥammad, who predeceased him, as the Imam (since neither Ḥasan al-'Askarī, because

of his childlessness, nor Ja'far, because of his immorality, fulfilled the conditions required for the Imamate). One group maintained Muḥammad had not died but was the Mahdī in concealment.

d. *The Ja'fariyya*

These considered that al-'Askarī had died without a son and that the Imamate belonged to his brother Ja'far. One group of this faction considered that since al-Askarī died without issue, the Imamate must belong to Ja'far; another group held that al-'Askarī had formally designated Ja'far; another group that as al-Askarī had died without issue, he had not fulfilled the condition for the Imamate and thus the true Imam after al-Hādī was Ja'far (see number 21 above); yet another group claimed that the Tenth Imam had designated his son Muḥammad as Imam but as Muḥammad predeceased him, the Imamate was transferred to Ja'far through an intermediary, a slave called Nafīs (this group is called the Nafīsiyya).

e. *The Qaṭ'iyya*

This is the group who as with the previous Imams was certain of the death of the previous Imam, al-'Askarī, and went on to al-'Askarī's son as the next Imam. One group considered that his name was Muḥammad and that he was of mature years at the death of al-'Askarī; another that his name was 'Alī; another that his name was Muḥammad but that he had been born eight months after the Imam's death; and finally there was the group who held that al-'Askarī had had a son, he was four years of age at the time of the death of his father, he had gone into occultation until the last days and it was forbidden to seek him out.

This last-described group, the fifteenth sect described by Sa'd al-Qummī, was, of course, the one that went on to become the orthodox Ithnā-'Asharī (Twelver) or Imāmī sect of Shi'ī Islam. The other groupings died out within one hundred years or so.

The reason that a fairly lengthy description of all these various Shi'ī groupings (most of which became rapidly extinct) has been given is that this was the milieu out of which Twelver Shi'ism emerged in the early 4th/10th century. Many of the doctrines and concepts first used by these groups were to become incorporated into Twelver Shi'ism (e.g. the Mahdī, occultation and return, esoteric exegesis, etc.; see next chapter).

4

*Early History of Shi'ī Islam, AD 632–1000*

In the whole field of Islamic studies, Shi'ī Islam has probably received less than its fair share of attention and effort from Western orientalists. However, in recent years, there have been some studies in this very important field and the 1979 revolution in Iran has undoubtedly focused attention on Shi'ī Islam. In surveying the whole of Shi'ī history, it is without doubt the early period in which modern, mainly Western, critical scholarship has presented a picture which differs most markedly from that found in the books of the traditional Muslim historians, whether Shi'ī or Sunni.

At the start, one problem that is conceived by modern scholars to beset the study of Islam (whether Sunni or Shi'ī) is the problem of the historicity of the sources. For Muslims the ideal society was the one in which the Prophet ruled over men with infallible wisdom and judgement. For Shi'īs this period is extended to the period of the Imam 'Alī. This was an ideal 'Golden Age' which each generation of Muslims tries to recreate. Therefore there is little concept of change and development having occurred in Islamic theology, jurisprudence or constitutional theory. If most Muslims in any age were to have been asked in what way their theology differed from that of the orthodox of an earlier period, their answer would be that there is no difference. This, of course, is a fundamental difference from Western insistence that all such matters are continuously in a state of change and development. However, the result of this Muslim conceptualisation of a static, unchanging Islam is that when later Shi'ī writers write of early periods, and especially of the period of the Prophet and the Imams, they unconsciously and retrospectively impose their own views and formulations onto that earlier period. Thus works that purport to examine the history or teachings of an earlier period are in reality more a reflection of the period in which they are written than true expositions of that earlier period. Also, since we have very few Shi'ī works surviving from much before the 4th/10th century, it is very difficult to examine the earliest period and, to a great extent, reliance has been placed on the

- 30 al-Mufīd, *al-Ikhtisāṣ* quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p. 30, Nos. 38–41.
- 31 Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p. 6.
- 32 *ibid.* pp. 4–5; similar Tradition in Ibn Bābūya, *‘Uyūn al-Akhhbār ar-Riḍā*, quoted in *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 39, p. 36, No. 5.
- 33 Qur’an 13:7.
- 34 Suyūṭī, *ad-Durr al-Manthūr*, Vol. 4, p. 45.
- 35 Qur’an 5:55.
- 36 Rāzī, *at-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Vol. 12, p. 26.
- 37 For a review of these see Jafri, *Origins*, pp. 27–57.
- 38 Baladhūrī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, Vol. 1, p. 580.
- 39 al-Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 137.
- 40 aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, Vol. 1, pp. 2769–70; this phrase occurs several times.
- 41 Baladhūrī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, Vol. 1, pp. 581, 583.
- 42 *ibid.* p. 588 (2 Traditions).
- 43 But see, for example, aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, Vol. 1, pp. 2769–70 where even in this source which is accepted by Sunnis, the mutual dislike of ‘Umar and the house of Hāshim is clearly seen.
- 44 ‘Ali, for example, disagreed with ‘Umar on the question of the distribution of money from the Central Treasury. The Sunni collections have numerous Traditions showing how ‘Ali saved ‘Umar from making erroneous legal decisions on several occasions. ‘Umar is reported to have said: ‘‘Ali is the best judge among us.’’

### 3. THE LIVES OF THE IMAMS AND EARLY DIVISIONS AMONG THE SHI‘IS

#### Sources

*Arabic and Persian:* Important sources on the lives of the Imams include Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Irshād*; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*; al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghumma*; and Majlisī, *Jalā’ al-‘Uyūn*.

On the Shi‘i sects the most important non-Shi‘i sources are: Ibn Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* (First part translated by Seelye and second by Halkin); ash-Shahristānī, *al-Milal wa’n-Niḥal* (Tr. Kazi and Flynn); Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Faṣl fi’l-Milal* (Tr. Friedlander); al-Khayyāt, *al-Intisār* (Tr. Nader); al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*. Shi‘i sources include: an-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq ash-Shī‘a* (Tr. Mashkur) and al-Qummī, *al-Maqālāt*.

*European languages:* One of the most important Arabic sources on the lives of the Imams, al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, has been translated into English by Howard Jafri, *Origins and Early Development of Shi‘a Islam*, has given a detailed and thoughtful review of the traditional accounts for the period of the first six Imams. Hussain, *Occultation of the Twelfth Imam*, has useful information from the period of the last six Imams.

On the Shi‘i sects several of the important sources have been translated as indicated above. See also Ivanow, ‘Early Shi‘ite Movements’, for some additional information from Ismā‘ilī sources.

- 1 For example al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*; see notes 13 and 14 below.
- 2 Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, Vol. 1, p. 44, No. 118.

- 3 *ibid.* p. 51, No. 143.
- 4 ‘Āshūrā (10 Muḥarram) had been a Holy Day of atonement and fasting in pre-Islamic and Jewish custom, long before the martyrdom of Husayn on that day. Muhammad had ordained it as a day of fasting.
- 5 The al-Ḥurr family of Lebanon which has produced many prominent Shi‘i ulama claims descent from this man.
- 6 al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, pp. 227–8 (Tr. pp. 364–5). Also quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 45, p. 116. Some of the Shi‘i histories have a similar episode occurring when the head of Husayn reaches Damascus and is hit by Yazīd.
- 7 al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, pp. 228–9 (Tr. p. 366). Also quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 45, pp. 117–18.
- 8 Jafri, *Origins*, pp. 200–204.
- 9 The years AH 36, 37 and 38 are all mentioned by different sources. For the different versions of the dates of the births and deaths of the Imams, see the relevant sections in Majlisī, *Jalā’ al-‘Uyūn*.
- 10 al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj adh-Dhahab* Vol. 5, pp. 467–8.
- 11 Jafri, *Origins*, pp. 290–3.
- 12 Hussain, *Occultation*, pp. 46–7.
- 13 al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, p. 308 (Tr. p. 495).
- 14 *ibid.* p. 314 (Tr. p. 506).
- 15 al-Kashshī, *Rijāl*, p. 48.
- 16 *ibid.* p. 70.
- 17 Ibn Ḥazm, see Friedlander, ‘Heterodoxies’ I, p. 45; Shahristānī, see Kazi, ‘Shahristani’, p. 76.
- 18 Ibn Ḥazm, see Friedlander, ‘Heterodoxies’ I, p. 45.
- 19 *ibid.*; Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Mawā’iz*, Vol. 2, pp. 356–7.
- 20 Ibn Ḥazm, see Friedlander, ‘Heterodoxies’ I, p. 66.
- 21 Shahristānī, see Kazi, ‘Shahristani’, pp. 56–7.
- 22 al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, Vol. 6, p. 186.
- 23 Ibn Ṭāhir, *al-Farq*, pp. 242–3 (Tr. pp. 74–5).
- 24 *ibid.* p. 243 (Tr. pp. 75–8).
- 25 Ibn Ḥazm, see Friedlander, ‘Heterodoxies’ I, pp. 60–61.
- 26 *ibid.* p. 56.
- 27 al-Kashshī, *Rijāl*, p. 206.
- 28 Ivanow (ed.), ‘Ummu’l-kitāb’, p. 11 of text, p. 97 of article.
- 29 The Murji‘ites were a group who took some of the important early steps towards what was to become the final Sunni position on matters of theology and politics. See Watt, *Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 32–5.
- 30 al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, p. 268 (Tr. pp. 432–3); also quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 47, p. 243.
- 31 It is said that in the course of argument, ‘Alī al-Maythamī, one of the followers of Imam Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣadiq, said to them: ‘You are nothing but rain-drenched dogs’ – it being considered that the smell of rain-drenched dogs was worse than that of rotting corpses.
- 32 al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, Vol. 8, p. 40.
- 33 al-Qummī, *al-Maqālāt*, pp. 102–16.
- 34 an-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, p. 79.