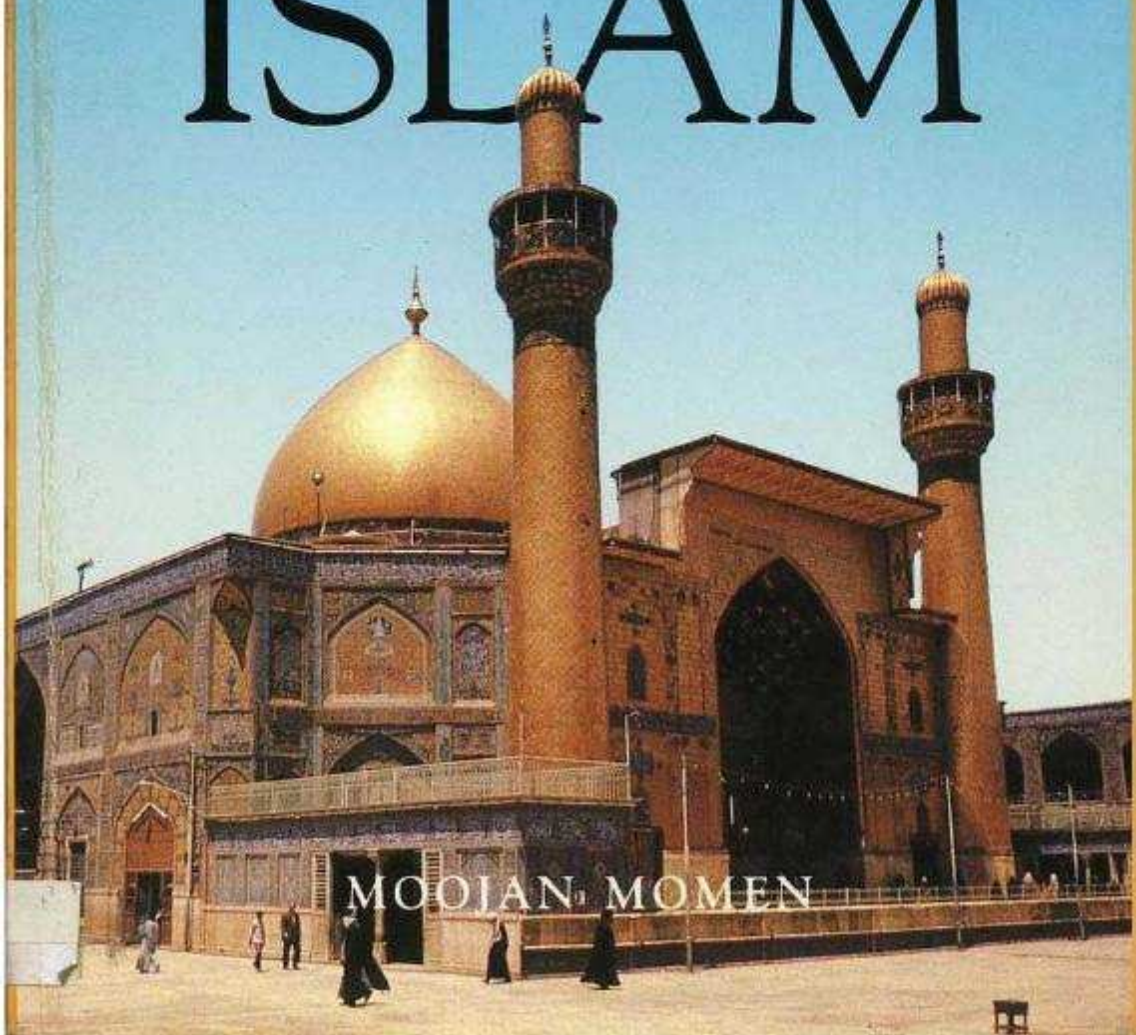


AN
INTRODUCTION TO
SHI'I
ISLAM



AN INTRODUCTION TO SHI'Ī ISLAM

The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism

MOOJAN MOMEN

This book is a general introduction to Shi'ī 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'ī doctrines and focusing in particular on those areas in which it differs from Sunni Islam.

"Momen's book fills an important gap in the general literature in English on Twelver Shi'ism, and should be carefully studied by anyone who wants to know more about what is happening in the Middle East today. . . . This is a fine work which deserves the widest possible readership."

—Malise Ruthven, *The Middle East*

"An extremely useful reference source on the establishment and evolution of the Shi'ite branch of the Islamic religion."

—Cecil V. Crabb, Jr., *Perspective*

"An unpretentious style, interpretative clarity and . . . sound judgement characterize Momen's writing. The various aspects of Twelver Shi'ism are carefully distinguished to satisfy both the general reader and the aspiring student."

—Norman Calder, *Times Literary Supplement*

"A lucid, objective and timely book. . . . [Momen] dispels many illusions, counters prejudices and sheds light on many obscure or recondite facets of Shi'ī Islam. . . . Fascinating."

—Anthony Hyman, *International Affairs*

"Specialist and nonspecialist alike will benefit from its lucid exposition of both elite and popular Shi'ism. Especially valuable is the way the work presents modern critical scholarship on Shi'ī history alongside the orthodox history, which still has great influence on the religion's self-understanding."

—Mel Piehl, *Library Journal*

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

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS NEW HAVEN AND LONDON

ISBN 0-300-03531-4



9 780300 035315

The Twelfth Imam, His Occultation and Return

Perhaps no aspect of the history of Shi'i Islam is as confused as the stories relating to the Twelfth Imam and this is not surprising as this is the point in Shi'i history where the events related become of a miraculous, extraordinary nature and the non-believer may be unwilling to go along with the facts as related by Shi'is. But even for the committed believer, it is difficult to decide which of the many and often contradictory versions presented in the Traditions to follow. The following version is the one that is usually presented in the books published for popular reading.

The mother of the Twelfth Imam was a Byzantine slave-girl named *Narjis Khātūn* (or *Şaqil* or *Sawsan* or *Rayhāna*). In the more fully elaborated versions of the story she becomes the Byzantine Emperor's daughter who was informed in a vision that she would be the mother of the *Mahdī*. She was bought by the Tenth Imam, 'Alī al-Hādī, for his son the Eleventh Imam, *Hasan al-'Askarī*.

The Twelfth Imam was born in 255/868 (some sources vary by as much as five years from this date) in *Sāmarrā*. He was given the same name as the Prophet, *Abu'l-Qāsim Muḥammad*.

The usual miraculous accounts of his talking from the womb, etc. (see p. 23) may be passed over to the only occasion on which he is said to have made a public appearance. This was in 260/874 when the Eleventh Imam died. It appears that none of the Shi'i notables knew of the birth of *Muḥammad* and so they went to the Eleventh Imam's brother, *Ja'far*, assuming that he was now the Imam. *Ja'far* seemed prepared to take on this mantle and entered the house of the deceased Imam in order to lead the funeral prayers. At this juncture a young boy came forward and said: 'Uncle, stand back! For it is more fitting for me to lead the prayers for my father than for you.' After the funeral, *Ja'far* was asked about the boy and said that he did not know who the boy was. For this reason, *Ja'far* has been vilified by generations of Shi'is as *Kadhdhāb*, the liar.

The boy was seen no more and Shi'i tradition states that from that year he went into occultation. At *Sāmarrā*, beside the gold-domed Shrine of the Imāms 'Alī al-Hādī and *Hasan al-'Askarī* is a mosque under which

there is a cave. The end of one of the rooms of the cave is partitioned off by a gate which is called *Bāb al-Ghayba* (Gate of the Occultation) and was built on the instructions of the Caliph an-Nāṣir in 606/1209. The area behind the gate is called *Hujrat al-Ghayba* (Chamber of the Occultation) and in the corner of this is a well, the *Bi'r al-Ghayba* (Well of the Occultation) down which the Imam Mahdī is said to have disappeared. Shi'īs gather in the rooms of the cave and pray for his return.

The Lesser Occultation

Those Shi'īs who followed the line of the Imams were thrown into confusion by the death of Ḥasan al-'Askarī. Ja'far remained unshakeable in his assertion that his brother had no progeny and some gathered around him as the Imam. Others asserted that the Twelfth Imam had not yet been born but would be born in the Last Days just before the Day of Judgement. Others asserted that it was the Eleventh Imam, Ḥasan al-'Askarī, who had gone into occultation. Thus the Shi'a were fragmented into several factions (for a fuller account of these sects see pp. 59-60). It is difficult to assess at this distance in history and with the bias of the sources available what proportion of the Twelver Shi'īs of the time accepted the position of 'Uthmān al-'Amrī which was to become the orthodox Twelver position. Al-'Amrī claimed that Muḥammad, the son of Ḥasan al-'Askarī, did exist and was in occultation and that he, 'Uthmān, was the intermediary between the Hidden Imam and the Shi'a.

But it should not necessarily be assumed that 'Uthmān al-'Amrī's assertion was perceived by the Shi'īs of the time as being a radical change. For, after all, the Tenth and Eleventh Imams, as far as the generality of their followers were concerned, had also been in effective occultation. Because of the vigilant and hostile surveillance of the 'Abbasids, they had rarely showed themselves to their followers and are even said to have spoken to some of those who met them from behind a curtain. Their contact with their followers was through a network of Shi'i agents called the *Wikāla* which had been responsible for communicating the messages of the Imams and collecting the monies offered by the Shi'a. This network of agents was in contact with one or two special agents of the Tenth and Eleventh Imam who in turn were in direct contact with the Imam. 'Uthmān al-'Amrī had been the secretary and special agent of the Tenth and Eleventh Imams and thus effectively controlled the *Wikāla*. With the death of the Eleventh Imam, all that al-'Amrī was saying was that the Twelfth Imam was also in hiding due to the threat against his life from the 'Abbasids and that he, 'Uthmān, had been appointed to

continue the position that he had held under the previous Imams. For the majority of the Shi'a it must have seemed that nothing much had changed. It is probably only after about seventy years (i.e. the normal life-span of a man) had passed that the question of the Occultation became problematical (see pp. 74-5) and began to require doctrinal exposition. Thus al-Kulaynī, who completed his book (see p. 174) less than seventy years after the start of the Occultation has little or no discussion of the Occultation itself or of the position of al-'Amrī and his successors as intermediaries and neither do any of the extant Shi'i books preceding it. A few decades later, however, it is a topic of major importance to most Shi'i writers and whole books are devoted to the issue.

'Uthmān nominated his son, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān, as his successor. For forty-five years these two laid claim to the position of being the agents of the Hidden Imam. They would take messages and questions from the Shi'a to the Hidden Imam and would return with answers, usually verbal but sometimes written. They would also receive the monies offered by the Shi'a to the Imam as *khums* and *zakāt* (see p. 179). They were involved in bitter disputes with Ja'far and his followers who denied the existence of the Eleventh Imam's son and laid claim to his brother's estate – a legal battle that took seven years and was finally decided by the Caliph al-Mu'tamid. Narjis, the supposed mother of the Twelfth Imam, was also the subject of much wrangling that went on over twenty years.

The third person to be nominated as the agent of the Hidden Imam was Abū'l-Qāsim Ḥusayn ibn Rūh an-Nawbakhtī. He came to this position in 305/917, after the death of Muḥammad al-'Amrī. Conditions had changed considerably by this time. The Caliph Muqtadir (reigned AD 907-932) was favourable to the Shi'a and the Nawbakhtī family, who were Shi'is, wielded considerable power at his court as ministers. However, even at this late date there were disputes among the Shi'a over the question of the Occultation. Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ash-Shalmaghānī (executed in 322/933), who had been a close confidant of Ḥusayn ibn Rūh and his agent in Baghdad, suddenly turned against the latter and at first laid claim to the position of being the rightful agent of the Imam and later denounced the whole concept of the Occultation as a lie. Another who fell out with what was rapidly by now becoming the Twelver Shi'i orthodoxy was Ḥusayn ibn Maṣṣūr al-Hallāj (c. 244/858 – executed 309/922). Exactly what it was that Shalmaghānī and Hallāj said or did which brought upon them the anger of the Shi'is and eventually, through the power of the Nawbakhtī family, death at the hands of the state cannot now easily be discerned among the mass of gratuitous accusations and disinformation piled upon them by later writers. It has

been suggested, however, that their open avocation of extremist claims (*ghuluww*) was threatening the delicate balance which allowed Shi'ī families such as the Nawbakhtīs and the Āl al-Furāt to hold power and authority in a Sunni state and thus allowed Shi'īs to enjoy unprecedented freedom. It is clear that whatever differences there may have been among the Shi'a following the death of the Eleventh Imam in 874, by the third and fourth decades of the 10th century (i.e. the closing years of the Lesser Occultation), the majority of the Shi'īs were agreed about the line of Twelve Imams. There was still confusion and doubt over the question of the Occultation and this was to continue for a further hundred years. It was also during this period that the first of the four 'canonical' collections of *ḥadīth*, *al-Kāfi fī 'Ilm ad-Dīn*, was being completed by al-Kulaynī thus helping to bring about a convergence and consolidation of views among the Twelver Shi'īs.

The fourth and last agent of the Hidden Imam was Abu'l-Ḥusayn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad as-Samarrī. He held office for only three years and died in 329/941. These four successive agents of the Hidden Imam are each called by the Shi'īs the *Bāb* (Gate, plural *Abwāb*), the *Safīr* (Ambassador, plural *Sufarā*) or *Nā'ib* (Deputy, plural *Nuwwāb*) of the Twelfth Imam.

At the time of his death, as-Samarrī brought the following written message from the Hidden Imam:

In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate! O 'Alī ibn Muḥammad as-Samarrī, may God magnify the reward of your brethren upon you! There are but six days separating you from death. So therefore arrange your affairs but do not appoint anyone to your position after you. For the second occultation has come and there will not now be a manifestation except by the permission of God and that after a long time has passed, and hearts have hardened and the earth become filled with tyranny. And there will come to my Shi'a those who claim to have seen me, but he who claims to have seen me before the emergence of the Sufyānī and the Cry (from the heavens) is assuredly a lying imposter. And there is no power nor strength save in God the Almighty, the All-High.¹

And so the Shi'īs passed, in 329/941, into what is known as the Greater Occultation, the period of time when there is no agent of the Hidden Imam on earth.

One final historical point is that although the history of the four agents of the Hidden Imam has been given above as it is to be found in the Shi'ī histories, there is some considerable evidence that this was a later superimposition of interpretation on the facts of history. In the early works there is no indication that the number of agents was limited to four and several others are mentioned.² It seems likely, then, that after the death of the Eleventh Imam, for the duration of a natural lifespan (i.e. seventy years), the former system of the *Wikāla* had continued to operate. But then the Shi'īs began to be thrown into confusion and doubt

over the matter of the Occultation.³ And so the scholars of the early Buyid period spent a great deal of time in writing books explaining and proving the doctrine of the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam. It was probably also at about the end of the Lesser Occultation that the Twelfth Imam came to be identified with the figure of the Mahdī.

The Doctrine of Occultation

In its simplest form, the doctrine of the Occultation (*Ghayba*) declares that Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, the Twelfth Imam, did not die but has been concealed by God from the eyes of men. His life has been miraculously prolonged until the day when he will manifest himself again by God's permission. During his Lesser Occultation, he remained in contact with his followers through the four *Bābs* (*al-Abwāb al-Arba'a*). During the Greater Occultation, which extends to the present day, he is still in control of the affairs of men and is the Lord of the Age (*Ṣāḥib az-Zamān*) but there is no longer a direct route of communication. However, it is popularly believed that the Hidden Imam does still occasionally manifest himself to the pious either when awake or more commonly in dreams and visions. It is believed that written messages left at the tombs of the Imams can reach him. The Hidden Imam was popularly supposed to be resident in the far-off cities of Jābulsā and Jābulqā and in former times books were written about persons who had succeeded in travelling to these places. Less has been made of this particular tradition in recent times when modern geographical knowledge permeated the Shi'i masses and it became generally realised that no such places existed. There are also accounts of persons who have seen the Imam in person, in visions or dreams.⁴

The occurrence of the Occultation is considered to have been due to the hostility of the Imam's enemies and the danger to his life. He remains in occultation because of the continuance of this threat. The severance of communication with the Hidden Imam is not considered to contradict the dictum that 'the earth is not left without an Imam', for, say the Shi'i writers, the sun still gives light and warmth to the earth even when hidden behind a cloud.

The Hidden Imam has a large number of titles including the following: *Ṣāḥib az-Zamān* (Lord of the Age), *Ṣāḥib al-Amr* (Lord of Command), *al-Mahdī* (the Rightly-Guided One), *al-Qā'im* (He who will arise), *al-Imām al-Muntazar* (the Awaited Imam) and the *Baqiyyat Allāh* (Remnant of God).

The Doctrine of Return (Raj'a)

The Hidden Imam, the Imam Mahdī, is in occultation awaiting the time that God has decreed for his return. This return is envisaged as occurring shortly before the final Day of Judgement. The Hidden Imam will then return as the Mahdī with a company of his chosen ones and there will also return his enemies led by the one-eyed Dajjāl and the Sufyānī. The Imam Mahdī will lead the forces of righteousness against the forces of evil in one final apocalyptic battle in which the enemies of the Imam will be defeated.

The Imam Mahdī will rule for a number of years and after him will come the return of Christ, the Imam Husayn and also the other Imams, prophets and saints. Strictly speaking, the term *raj'a* only applies to the return to life of figures who have died such as the Imam Husayn. It is more correct to refer to the *zuhūr* (appearance) or *qiyām* (arising) of the Twelfth Imam who did not die and is in occultation. Return is envisaged by Shi'is as involving only the Imams, their supporters and their enemies. Those who were neutral in or unaffected by the struggle will remain in their graves until the Day of Resurrection.⁵

Signs of the Return of the Imam Mahdī

Eschatological expectation in relation to the Twelfth Imam plays a very important part in the popular religion of Twelver Shi'is. In the Traditions relating to the advent of the Mahdī, there are numerous signs that are held to herald his advent. Some of these are related to the general condition of the world when the Mahdī will appear while others give specific signs of his return.

Perhaps the best known of the general signs, a Tradition that is related in both Shi'ī and Sunni sources, states that the Mahdī will fill the earth with justice after it has been filled with injustice and tyranny.⁶

Some modern Shi'is, such as the scholar *az-Zanjānī*, claim that some of the conditions of the world that have been related as accompanying the advent of the Mahdī appear to have been fulfilled by modern scientific inventions. Thus one of these Traditions seems to be referring to television:

'I heard Abū 'Abdu'llāh [the Sixth Imam] saying: the believer, in the time of the Qā'im, while in the east, will be able to see his brother in the west and he who is in the west will be able to see his brother in the east.'⁷

Other prophecies are seen as referring to the radio and aeroplane.⁸ The following is a lengthy Tradition quoted from the Sixth Imam, Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq, by Kulaynī which describes the moral degradation at the time of the coming of the Mahdī and is seen as referring to several modern

phenomena such as the secularisation of society, the appearance of women in national parliaments and other consultative assemblies and the advent of the 'permissive society':

When you see that truth has died and people of truth have disappeared, and you see that injustice prevails through the land; and the Qur'an has become despised and things are introduced into it that are not in it and it is turned towards men's desires; and you see the people of error having mastery over the people of truth; and you see evil out in the open and the doers of evil are not prevented nor do they excuse themselves; and you see moral depravity openly manifest and men being content with men and women satisfied by women; and you see the believer silent, his word not being accepted; and you see the sinful lying and he is not refuted nor does his deceit redound upon him; and you see the lowly despising the great; and you see the wombs cut open; and you see he who boasts of moral depravity is laughed at and is not spurned; and you see young men being handed over like women and women co-habiting with women and their numbers increasing; and you see men spending their wealth on things other than pious deeds and no-one opposes or hinders them; and you see the onlooker turn his back on the efforts of the believer; and you see one person molesting his neighbour and no-one prevents it; and you see the unbeliever joyful because he does not see gladness in the believer when he sees corruption in the world; and you see alcoholic drinks being drunk openly . . . and you see women occupying places in the assemblies just as men do and usury is carried out openly and adultery is praised . . . and you see the forbidden thing made legal and the legal thing forbidden; and you see that religion becomes a matter of opinion and the Book and its laws fall into disuse; and you see the leaders drawing close to the unbelievers and away from good people; and you see the leaders corrupt in their rule; . . . and you see men eating what their wives have obtained as a result of their immorality and knowing this and persisting in it; . . . and you see places of entertainment appearing which no-one who passes them forbids them and no-one is bold enough to put an end to them; and you see a worshipper only praying in order that the people may see him; and you see the experts in religious law devoting themselves to things other than religion, seeking the world and leadership; and you see the people living together like animals; and you see the pulpit from which fear of God is enjoined but the speaker does not act in the manner he has enjoined others to act; . . . and when you see the tokens of truth that I have taught, then be aware [of the advent of the Mahdi] and seek salvation from God.⁹

There are several similar prophecies such as the following Tradition from the Imam 'Ali concerning the coming of the Imam Mahdi:

I do not know when it will be any more than you do but some signs and conditions will follow one another, and the signs are these: When the people allow the saying of prayers to die out; and they destroy trust; and they regard lying as permissible; and they take usurious interest; and they sell religion in exchange for the world; and they employ fools; and they consult women; and they cut open the wombs; and they follow their lusts; and they take the spilling of blood lightly; and their discernment is weak; and tyranny becomes a source of pride; and the leaders become profligate, the ministers oppressors, the ulama faithless and the poor depraved; and false testimony is made; immorality, lies, crime, and repression are carried out openly; and books are embellished, the

mosques adorned and the minarets made tall; . . . and women assist their husbands in trade out of greed for the things of this world; and sinners are extolled and listened to; and the leader of the people is the most despicable of them and he is wary of the libertine, fearing his evil, and he gives credence to the liar and has faith in the traitor, and he imitates young girls; and men appear like women and women appear like men; . . . the best place to live on that day will be Jerusalem, for there will certainly come a day for the people when each of them will eagerly desire to be one of its inhabitants.¹⁰

Islam itself will be in a degraded state at the time of the advent of the Mahdī:

The Apostle of God said: 'There will come a time for my people when there will remain nothing of the Qur'an except its outward form and nothing of Islam except its name and they will call themselves by this name even though they are the people furthest from it. Their mosques will be full of people but they will be empty of right guidance. The religious leaders (*fuqahā*) of that day will be the most evil religious leaders under the heavens; sedition and dissension will go out from them and to them will it return.'¹¹

With respect to specific signs of the coming of the Mahdī, there are some signs that the Sunnis and Shi'is are agreed upon (for Shi'is, of course, the Mahdī is the Twelfth Imam):

1. That the Mahdī will be a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad of the line of Fāṭima.¹²
2. That he will bear the name Muḥammad.¹³
3. He will rule for either seven, nine or nineteen years.¹⁴
4. His coming will be accompanied by the raising of a Black Standard in Khurāsān. These Traditions state: 'If you see it [the Black Standard] then go to it even if you have to crawl over the snow, for with it is the Mahdī, the vicegerent of God.'¹⁵
5. His coming will be accompanied by the appearance of Dajjāl (the Anti-Christ) in the East.¹⁶

The Shi'i sources are very prolific in their descriptions of what will occur at the time of the coming of the Mahdī. Among these numerous, sometimes contradictory, Traditions, the following are the most commonly reported regarding the specific signs presaging the advent of the Mahdī:¹⁷

1. Before his coming will come the red death and the white death. The red death is the sword and the white death is the plague.¹⁸
2. Several figures will appear: the one-eyed Dajjāl, the Sufyānī and the Yamānī. Another figure, the Pure Soul (an-Nafs az-Zakiyya), will be assassinated.
3. The sun will rise from the West and a star will appear in the East giving out as much light as the moon.¹⁹
4. The Arabs will throw off the reins and take possession of their land, throwing out the authority of the foreigners.²⁰

5. A caller will call out from heaven.²¹
6. There will be a great conflict in the land of Syria until it is destroyed.²²
7. Death and fear will afflict the people of Baghdad and Iraq. A fire will appear in the sky and a redness will cover them.²³

About the Mahdī himself, the following Traditions are recorded:

1. He will not come in an odd year.²⁴
2. He will announce himself in Mecca between the Corner (of the Ka'ba) and the Station (of Abraham) and will summon the people to pay allegiance to him.²⁵
3. He will go from Mecca to Kūfa.²⁶
4. As for his appearance, he is a young man of medium stature with a handsome face and beautiful hair which flows onto his shoulders. A light dawns from his face. Black is the colour of the hair of his beard and of his head. He is the son of the best of mothers.²⁷
5. The Mahdī will do what the Prophet did. He will demolish whatever precedes him just as the Prophet demolished the structure of the Time of Ignorance (*al-Jāhiliyya* – the period before Islam).²⁸
6. He will come with a new Cause – just as Muhammad, at the beginning of Islam, summoned the people to a new Cause – and with a new book and a new religious law (*Shari'a*), which will be a severe test for the Arabs.²⁹
7. Between the Mahdī and the Arabs (the Quraysh), there will only be the sword.³⁰
8. The Qā'im when he arises will experience as a result of the ignorance of the people worse than what the Apostle of God experienced at the hands of the ignorant people of the Time of Ignorance because the Apostle of God came to a people who worshipped stones and wood but the Qā'im will come to a people who will interpret the Book of God against him and will bring forward proofs from it against him. When the flag of the Qā'im is raised, the people of both East and West will curse it.³¹
9. When the Qā'im arises, he will rule with justice and will remove injustice in his days. The roads will be safe and the earth will show forth its bounties. Everything due will be returned to its rightful owner. And no people of religion will remain who do not show forth submission (Islām) and acknowledge belief (Īmān), . . . And he will judge among the people with the judgement of David and of Muhammad. . . . At that time men will not find anywhere to give their alms or to be generous because riches will encompass all.³²
10. All knowledge is encompassed in 27 letters and all that the messengers of God have brought is two of these letters, and so the people only know these two letters. But when the Qā'im will arise, he will bring forth the other 25 letters and will spread them among the people.³³

With the coming of the Mahdī, there will occur the return (*raj'a*) of other figures of the past:

1. The first to return will be the Imam Husayn who will come with the 72 companions that were killed with him at Kārbalā.³⁴
2. There will also occur the return of Jesus which is also anticipated in the Sunni traditions.³⁵
3. The 313 who fought with the Prophet at the Battle of Badr will also return.³⁶
4. The other Imams and prophets of former ages will also return.³⁷

Consequences of the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam

The Occultation of the Twelfth Imam left a considerable gap in Shi'ī theory. The Imam was both the spiritual and political head of the community. He interpreted the law and was theoretically responsible for its execution. The Lesser Occultation in which the four agents each successively claimed to be the mouthpiece of the Hidden Imam was followed by the Greater Occultation in which there was no communication. And yet the Imam had left no specific instructions as to how the community was to be organised in his absence. In particular, the Imam's role as the head of the community was left vacant and a number of functions invested in him as head of the community thus theoretically lapsed. Initially this did not matter too much since the Shi'īs had no political power and therefore such theoretical functions of the Imam as leading the *jihād* and the Friday prayer could easily be dispensed with.

In later centuries, however, as Shi'ī states arose, a tension arose between the theoretical consequences of the Occultation and political realities. Since the Twelfth Imam, though hidden, still lives and is the Lord of the Age and the leader of the community, there can be no theoretical justification for taking his place. And yet the political reality was that the Shi'ī states that arose in later centuries had at their head either a king or an amir who had arrogated to himself some of the functions of the Hidden Imam.

The political consequences of this divergence between theoretical consideration and political realities have caused continuing tension between government and religion throughout the ages. No-one has seriously questioned the ulama's arrogation of certain functions of the Hidden Imam (see Chapter 10 for a fuller description of the ulama's gradual assumption of these functions). But the ulama have often expressed doubt and antagonism to the assumption of political power by temporal rulers on the grounds that this was usurpation of the prerogatives of the Hidden Imam. Over the years, whenever the temporal rulers were strong and acted with justice, many of the ulama

would co-operate with the government and in their writings find justifications for the temporal state while others would be muted in their opposition or more commonly indifferent to political matters. But when rulers became weak or tyrannical, the ulama would re-emerge with their claim to represent the Hidden Imam and would voice their opposition to the temporal authorities. This was to be the pattern of historical events, particularly in Iran after the emergence of the Safavid dynasty.

- 1 Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl ad-Dīn*, p. 516.
- 2 Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, pp. 86–7. Massignon suggests that the first Bāb, ‘Uthmān al-‘Amrī, died in 258/871 (i.e. during the lifetime of the Eleventh Imam and before the Occultation occurred) and that there were several agents until about 280/893 when the second Bāb, Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān al-‘Amrī, succeeded in consolidating his authority. *Passion of al-Hallāj*, Vol. 1, pp. 307–9.
- 3 See sources quoted by Kohlberg, ‘From Imāmiyya . . .’, p. 524. Also Hussain, *Occultation*, p. 143.
- 4 See, for example, the *risalā* by Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Taqī Nūrī entitled *Jannāt al-Ma’wā* (appended to Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13) listing 59 such stories.
- 5 al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisās*, quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, p. 210.
- 6 For Sunni sources see Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, Bāb Khurūj al-Mahdī, pp. 1366, No. 4082; Abū Dāwud, *Sunan*, Kitāb al-Mahdī, Vol. 2, p. 422. Shi’i sources for this are numerous; see, for example, al-Mufid, *al-Irshād*, p. 341 (Tr. 548).
- 7 az-Zanjānī, ‘*Aqā’id*’, p. 255.
- 8 *ibid.* pp. 253–4.
- 9 *ibid.* p. 261, quoting Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī* (*Rawḍa*). Zanjānī concludes this Tradition by stating that most of these signs are without doubt occurring today.
- 10 az-Zanjānī, ‘*Aqā’id*’, pp. 258–9.
- 11 Ibn Bābūya, *Thawāb al-A’māl*, quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, p. 152.
- 12 For Sunni sources see Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, p. 1367, No. 4085; at-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, Vol. 2, p. 36; Abū Dāwud, *Sunan*, Vol. 2, p. 422. For Shi’is the Mahdī is the Twelfth Imam who was, of course, a descendant of Muhammad.
- 13 For Sunni sources see at-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, Vol. 2, p. 36; Abū Dāwud, *Sunan*, Vol. 2, p. 420. For Shi’is the Mahdī is, of course, Muḥammad ibn Hasan al-‘Askarī. However, interestingly, there are also numerous Traditions that state that no name should be attributed to the Hidden Imam prior to his advent; see Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl ad-Dīn*, p. 648.
- 14 For Sunni sources see at-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, Vol. 2, p. 36; Abū Dāwud, *Sunan*, Vol. 2, pp. 422–3. For Shi’i sources see, for example, al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghumma*, Vol. 3, pp. 257, 269; al-Nu’mānī, *al-Ghayba* quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, p. 178.
- 15 For Sunni sources see Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, p. 1367, No. 4084; see also p. 1366, No. 4082. For Shi’i sources see al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghumma*, Vol. 3, pp. 262–3; Shaykhū’t-Ṭā’ifa, *al-Ghayba*, quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, p. 159.
- 16 For Sunni sources see at-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, Vol. 2, pp. 36–7. For Shi’i sources see Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl ad-Dīn*, pp. 525–32.
- 17 Taken from Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13; Shaykh al-Mufid, *Kitāb al-Irshād*; al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghumma*; and Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl ad-Dīn*.
- 18 Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl ad-Dīn*, p. 655; Shaykhū’t-Ṭā’ifa, *al-Ghayba*, quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, pp. 156–7; al-Mufid, *al-Irshād*, p. 338 (Tr. 544).
- 19 al-Mufid, *al-Irshād*, p. 336 (Tr. 541).
- 20 *ibid.* p. 336 (Tr. 541).
- 21 Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl ad-Dīn*, pp. 650, 652; al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr*, and other sources quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, pp. 156, 160.
- 22 al-Mufid, *al-Irshād*, p. 338 (Tr. 544).
- 23 *ibid.* p. 337 (Tr. 542, 548).
- 24 *ibid.* p. 341 (Tr. 548).
- 25 *ibid.* p. 341 (Tr. 548).

- 26 *ibid.* p. 341 (Tr. 549).
- 27 *ibid.* p. 342 (Tr. 551); al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghumma*, Vol. 3, p. 254.
- 28 al-Nu'mānī, *al-Ghayba*, quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, p. 191.
- 29 al-Nu'mānī, *al-Ghayba*, quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, pp. 192, 194; al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, p. 343 (Tr. 552); al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghumma*, Vol. 3, p. 255.
- 30 al-Nu'mānī, *al-Ghayba*, quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, p. 192.
- 31 al-Nu'mānī, *al-Ghayba*, quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, p. 193.
- 32 al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, pp. 343-4 (Tr. 552-3).
- 33 Quṭbu'd-Dīn Rāwandī, *al-Kharā'ij*, quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, p. 187.
- 34 al-'Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr*, quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, p. 222.
- 35 Ibn Bābūya, *'Uyūn al-Akhhār ar-Riḍā*, quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, p. 214. For Sunni traditions see, for example, at-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, Vol. 2, p. 36.
- 36 Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl ad-Dīn*, p. 654; Hasan ibn Sulaymān al-Hillī, *Muntakhab al-Baṣā'ir*, quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, p. 210.
- 37 al-Mufīd, *al-Ikhtisās*, quoted in Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (old ed.), Vol. 13, p. 210.