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The Abbasid Vizier 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn (124-182/741-798)
The Man and His Role in Early Šī'ite History

Political and Historical Background

'Alī b. Yaqṭīn lived in the 2nd/8th century and personally experienced the events of his age in Baghdad and al-Madīna. He was born in the reign of the tenth Umayyad caliph Hišām b. 'Abd al-Malik, whose rule began in the year 105/723. 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn lived for about three years under Umayyad rule; however, this period was a time of great popular opposition to and revenge against this dynasty. The Abbasids then seized power. The first Abbasid ruler was Abū al-'Abbās 'Abdallāh al-Saffāḥ (ruled 750-754). He entered al-Kūfa as a governor in the year 132/749 and spent most of his time in power purging his state of the Umayyads and strengthening the foundations of the new re-gime. He did not persecute the adherents of 'Alī, both because his regime was not yet strong enough, and because the Abbasids seized power supposedly in their name. Al-Saffāḥ died in 136/754. He was followed by his brother Abū Ǧa'far al-Manṣūr (ruled 754-775), who did persecute 'Alī's followers. As a result 'Alid rebellions against the Abbasids broke out. The first such rebellion was led by Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh b. al-Ḥasan (d. 762), known as He of the Pure Soul (*dū'l-nafs al-zakiyya*), who himself had aspirations on the caliphate after the Umayyad downfall, since the Hāšemites promised him their alle-giance. He refused to recognize the Abbasid regime and did not swear alle-giance either to al-Saffāḥ nor to his successor al-Manṣūr. When Abbasid per-secution of the 'Alids intensified he revolted against them and seized al-Madīna in the year 145/762. Al-Manṣūr sent a large army against him, con-sisting of two divisions, one commanded by 'Īsā b. Mūsā and another com-manded by Ḥumayd b. Qaḥṭaba al-Ṭā'ī. The Abbasid army besieged al-Madīna, quelled the rebellion and killed its leaders. The residents of the city suffered greatly under the oppression of the Abbasid forces (al-Laytī 1976: 138 ff.). This rebellion was followed by another in the same year (762) which broke out in al-Baṣra. This second rebellion, led by Ibrāhīm b. 'Abdallāh

al-ʿAlawī, met the same fate as the first (*ibid.*: 147).

The Abbasids relentlessly pursued all ʿAlids and their adherents, even those who did not participate in the rebellion directly. The Abbasid authorities applied ever growing pressure on the sixth imam Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, who was perceived as the moving spirit behind the people's rebelliousness. Šīʿite sources accuse the caliph al-Manṣūr of having ordered his governor in al-Madīna to end al-Ṣādiq's life unobtrusively; they claim that the governor poisoned some grapes which the imam then ate and died (148/765); however, this accusation remains unsubstantiated.[1] The imam al-Ṣādiq was followed by the twenty-year-old Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 799). He led his congregation with care and wisdom until the death of the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr in 158/774, after a reign which lasted for twenty-two years. He was succeeded by his son al-Mahdī (ruled 775-785), who began his reign with a general amnesty for all political prisoners. He also returned all the money which his father had confiscated to the rightful owners, including that which al-Manṣūr had seized from the imam al-Ṣādiq, which he gave to the latter's son Mūsā al-Kāẓim.

The caliph al-Mahdī was a wanton profligate who ruled for eleven years (774-785). He once had the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim arrested because he perceived the latter's great popularity as a threat. He had him taken from al-Madīna to his own capital Baghdad and put in prison. However, he released him after he had a vision in a dream,[2] treated him with respect and returned him to al-Madīna. Al-Mahdī was followed by his son Mūsā al-Hādī (ruled 785-786), a young man of twenty-five who was quite hostile to the Šīʿites (al-Layṯī 1976: 258 ff.). At the beginning of his reign he adopted a policy of repression against them, which provoked an ʿAlid uprising, led by al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, the grandson of the imam al-Ḥasan, in the year 169/789, who was killed together with his companions in the Battle of Faḫḫ (786) near Mecca. Although the Abbasid authorities were aware of Mūsā al-Kāẓim's pro-revolutionary sympathies, they could find no hard evidence against him. For this reason the caliph al-Mahdī immediately accused the imam the moment he heard about the uprising and threatened to have him killed. Mūsā al-Hādī died not long

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[1] al-Masʿūdī (1988: IV, 28). Abū Zahra (1993: 51), it should be noted, rejects the claim that the caliph al-Manṣūr poisoned the imam al-Ṣādiq. He states that al-Manṣūr took steps to stabilize his rule and suppress any opposition, but that in his meetings with the caliph he became convinced that the latter did not oppose him. In fact, al-Ṣādiq's death occurred after al-Manṣūr's position had become completely secure and he had no reason to fear any hostile action on the part of the ʿAlids, nor would he have wanted to revive ancient enmities. He also attacks Šīʿite claims that he had killed the imam. Donaldson (1933: 141) states that these Šīʿite accusations against al-Manṣūr originated in the Šīʿite doctrine, according to which all the imams with the exception of ʿAlī, al-Ḥasan and the Mahdī died by poison, in line with *ḥadīṯ*s that maintained that no imam would die a natural death.

[2] al-Mahdī in his dream saw ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, who recited Kor. 47:22 to him: «Would ye perhaps, if ye had turned back, have done evil in the land and severed the bonds of kinship?» (al-Layṯī 1976: 229).

thereafter, in 170/786, about one year and two months after he came to power. He was followed by his brother Hārūn al-Rašīd (ruled 786-809), who pursued two different policies towards the 'Alids and their followers, at first quite tolerant and then very repressive. He killed a number of 'Alid leaders and members of the Prophet's family, among them 'Abdallāh b. al-Ḥasan Abū 'Alī, the son of the imam Zayn al-'Ābidīn, al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh, Idrīs b. al-Ḥasan, Yaḥyā b. 'Abdallāh, Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. 'Abdallāh, al-Ḥusayn b. 'Abdallāh b. Ismā'īl b. 'Abdallāh b. Ǧa'far b. Abī Ṭālib, and Isḥāq b. al-Ḥasan b. Zayd.

The imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim faced great tribulations in that period. He spent much of his life in prison, was threatened with death many times, and was tortured as well. He was killed in the prison of al-Sindī b. Šāhak in the year 183/799. Al-Kāẓim's death in al-Sindī's prison was described by Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī (al-Iṣfahānī 1995: 503-4), who related that al-Sindī rolled him into a carpet and ordered a servant of his to sit on his face until he died (al-Qurašī 1993: II, 86); Hārūn al-Rašīd ordered him killed in this way so that people would not accuse him of the murder (al-Iṣfahānī 1995: 417).

After the imam's death the 'Alids remained quiescent for the ten years which remained of Hārūn al-Rašīd's reign (he died in 193/808). During that period they abandoned their overt activities and began to operate clandestinely, adopting a policy of what they called *taqiyya*[3] «dissimulation» and *kitmān* «concealment». These were the circumstances under which 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn lived.

'Alī b. Yaqṭīn's Life[4]

Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Mūsā b. Yaqṭīn, a client of the Banū Hāšim tribe, or according to some of the Banū Asad tribe, was born in al-Kūfa in the year 124/741, towards the end of the Umayyad period. His father Yaqṭīn was a supporter of the Abbasids and a prominent Šī'ite propagandist. The Umayyad caliph Marwān b. Muḥammad (127-132/744-750) sought to capture him and he therefore went into hiding and his wife and his two sons, 'Alī and 'Ubayd, fled to al-Madīna. When the Umayyads fell from power and the Abbasid state was established, Yaqṭīn came out of hiding and his wife returned with their children to al-Kūfa. Yaqṭīn joined the Abbasid caliph Abū al-'Abbās al-Saffāḥ (750-754), and he remained also with his brother Abū Ǧa'far al-Manṣūr (754-775). He was a Šī'ite and a supporter of the imamate, as his son 'Alī,

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[3] *Taqiyya* is a practice in Šī'a Islam whereby an adherent may conceal their faith when said adherent feels that they are under threat, persecution or compulsion. For more on *taqiyya* see Kohlberg (1975); Meyer (1980).

[4] For more information on his life see: al-Barqī (1963: 48); al-Naǧāšī (s.d.: 273, no. 715); al-Ḥillī (1990: XXXIX, no. 4); al-Mufīd (1992: 247-48); Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī (1963: 253, no. 1079); al-Ṭūsī (s.d.*a*: 340, no. 5056-17; s.d.*b*: 90-91, no. 378).

who was already active in the days of the sixth imam Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765) and transmitted traditions about and in the name of the imam ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (d. 818). ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn died in Baghdad during the imamate of al-Kāẓim in the year 182/798 at the age of nearly fifty-seven, and was buried in Baghdad. He had two children. One, al-Ḥasan (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*a*: 354, no. 5246-7; al-Ḥillī 1990: 39, no. 4), was a transmitter, jurist and theologian, who transmitted traditions in the name of the father of the two imams Mūsā al-Kāẓim and ʿAlī al-Riḍā (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*a*: 355, no. 5259-20; Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī 1963: 115, nos. 440-41; al-Barqī 1963: 51; al-Ḥillī 1990: 49, no. 3). The other, al-Ḥusayn, was a companion of Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Riḍā. He wrote a book entitled *Masāʾil Abī al-Ḥasan Mūsā ʿalayhi al-salām* («Issues of Abū al-Ḥasan Mūsā peace be upon him»; al-Naǧāšī s.d.: 45, no. 91; al-Ṭūsī s.d.*b*: 48, no. 155). ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn had two grandsons, one from each son. Al-Ḥasan's son, al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan (Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī 1963: 493, no. 385; al-Ḥillī 1990: 248, no. 7), cognomen Abū Muḥammad, lived in Qumm. Al-Ḥusayn's son was called al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusayn (Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī 1963: 540). He also had three brothers: Yaʿqūb (al-Kulaynī s.d.: III, 340, no. 14; 379, no. 4), al-Ḥusayn (*ibid.*: III, 518, no. 5; IV, 451, no. 1) and Ayyūb (*ibid.*: IV, 160, no. 2). Šīʿite *ḥadīṯ* collections quote a number of traditions in their name.

His Master

ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn's master in faith was Abū Muḥammad Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, a very prominent Šīʿite born in the reign of the caliph Hišām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (724-743). He met the sixth imam Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa; no traditions have been transmitted in his name. The imam ʿAlī al-Riḍā publicly praised his knowledge and legal opinions. The imam gave him a great sum of money as a religious endowment and never reproached him. He was said to have one of four men who were the last with knowledge of prophecy, namely Salmān al-Fārisī, Ǧābir b. ʿAbd Allāh, Sayyid and Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān.[5] When people came to the imam al-Riḍā and asked him who would instruct them in the features of their faith he would refer them to Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. Šīʿite tradition also relates that when he presented his book *ʿAmal al-yawm waʾl-layla* («Work of Day and Night») to the imam Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (d. 873) the latter said that God would give the author a light for each letter on the Day of Resurrection. Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān composed more than thirty books, including Ǧāmiʿ al-Āṯār, *Kitāb al-šarāʾiʿ, Kitāb al-ʿilal, Iḫtilāf al-ḥadīṯ, Masāʾil ʿan Abī al-Ḥasan Mūsā b. Ǧaʿfar ʿalayhi al-salām* and others. The traditions which he quotes in his

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[5] Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī (1963: 381, no. 17081; 528, no. 550); al-Barqī (1963: 49, 54); al-Ṭūsī (s.d.*a*: 346, no. 1567-11; 369, no. 4578-2); al-Ḥillī (1990: 184, no. 1); al-Kaššī (1929: 284, no. 503, 483 ff.); al-Naǧāšī (s.d.: 446-47, no. 1208).

books are considered reliable and authoritative (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*b*: 181, no. 789).

His Companions

Šīʿite sources mention that ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn had a number of companions, the most prominent among whom was Naǧiyya b. al-Ḥārit̲ (al-Ḥillī 1990: 176, no. 2; al-Kaššī 1929: 452, no. 852). He also had a muezzin, whose cognomen was Abū Muḥammad (al-Kaššī 1929: 145-46, no. 231; 215, no. 384). It seems that before he became a vizier for Hārūn al-Rašīd he was a modest spice merchant (al-Ḥillī 1990: 91, no. 3; al-Kaššī 1929: 430, no. 805).

His External Appearance

We know very few details about his appearance, except that he had two locks of hair (al-Kaššī 1929: 433, no. 812). The imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim compared him to the Prophet's companions. On one occasion the imam said to some of his companions when ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn approached «Whoever would gladly see one of the Prophet's companions, let him look at this approaching man». One of those who were present said: «He must then be one who will go to Paradise», to which the imam replied: «Indeed I can testify that he will go to Paradise» (*ibid.*: 431, no. 810).

ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn's Writings

In addition to the many traditions which he transmitted, he also left three books, which are no longer extant. Only their names are still known today (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*b*: 91, no. 378; al-Naǧāšī s.d.: 273, no. 715; al-Māmaqānī 1930: II, 315):

A. *Masāʾil ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn ʿan al-imām al-Ṣādiq min al-malāḥim*. The book's title «On Battles Reported by ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn in the Name of the Imam al-Ṣādiq» would seem to indicate that it dealt with prophecies made by al-Ṣādiq concerning future strife, in answer to questions posed to him.

B. *Munāẓara li'l-šākk bi-ḥaḍrat al-imām al-Ṣādiq* «Disputation of a Doubter in the Presence of the Imam al-Ṣādiq», as its name shows, apparently contained a debate between the imam and an unknown doubter.

C. *Masāʾil ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn ʿan Abī al-Ḥasan Mūsā b. Ǧaʿfar*. The title of this book «Topics which ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn took from Abū al-Ḥasan Mūsā b. Ǧaʿfar» indicates that it dealt with subjects that ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn had learned from the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim. The number of compositions which ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn is known to have written is quite modest in

comparison with other students of the imam al-Riḍā. The reason for this may perhaps be found in his political preoccupations, which took up most of his time. Šīʻite sources indicate that al-Šayḫ al-Mufīd (Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Nuʻmān al-ʻUkburī, d. 413/1022) mentioned ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn's books. It is also related that the latter's son al-Ḥusayn passed on his books to his brother al-Ḥasan, who then transmitted them to Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, who transmitted them to Aḥmad b. Idrīs, who transmitted them to Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā, to al-Ḥimyarī, to Saʻd b. ʻAbdallāh, and to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*b*: 91, no. 378).

The Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim Performs a Miracle for Hārūn in the Presence of ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn

According to Twelver Šīʻism the imam is a miracle worker,[6] in contrast to the Sunnī creed, which believes that only prophets are capable of performing miracles. In fact, performing miracles is only one of the special powers possessed by imams according to Šīʻite belief. Such traits are used by Šīʻites to argue for the legitimacy of their imams and to strengthen their claims that imams are on a par with prophets. The imam Ǧaʻfar al-Ṣādiq is said to have performed more miracles than any other. Al-Maǧlisī (d. 1698) in his *Biḥār al-anwār* quotes 227 accounts of miracles ascribed to him, a number which is exceeded only by the miracles of ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. The imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim, for example, is mentioned as a worker of miracles in only 106 traditions.[7] It is therefore not to be wondered that an imam was reported to have performed a miracle for Hārūn al-Rašīd and his companions in the presence of ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn. Šīʻite sources relate a miracle performed by the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim that was witnessed by ʻAlī b. Yaqṭīn, who also reported it, as follows: the caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd summoned his chamberlain Ḥumayd b. Mihrān, a sorcerer, in order to make light of the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim. When the table was set Ḥumayd b. Mihrān cast a spell over the bread, and when the imam al-Kāẓim's servant tried to take a piece of bread it flew out of his hands. This occasioned much amusement and Hārūn al-Rašīd broke out in laughter. The imam al-Kāẓim then raised his head in the direction of a picture of a lion that was painted on one of the curtains and spoke to it: «O lion of God, take the enemy of God», whereupon the picture was transformed into a real lion, which leaped out of the picture and devoured the sorcerer Ḥumayd b. Mihrān. Hārūn

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[6] On the miracles wrought by Šīʻite imams see: Loebenstein (2003); Momen (1985: 23); Jafri (1979: 294); Gramlich (1987: IV, 615-16); Amir-Moezzi (2000); Kohlberg (2003).

[7] For example, in al-Maǧlisī's *Biḥār al-anwār* there are 89 traditions which relate miracles performed by the fifth imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 732) and 81 traditions about the miracles of the imam al-Ḥasan al-ʻAskarī (d. 873). For more details see: Amir-Moezzi (2000: 259-60).

al-Rašīd and his companions fell to the ground in a faint, in terror of what they had seen. When they recovered Hārūn al-Rašīd asked Mūsā al-Kāẓim to bring back the man whom the lion had devoured, and the imam pleaded for his return (Ibn Šahrāšūb 1959: IV, 299; Sindawi 2007). The account of this miracle shows that Šī'ites believe that their imam has the power to turn an inanimate picture into a living animal in the presence of others, in order to prove to them that as a legitimate imam he possessed super-human powers, not only to create a living lion out of a picture, but also to command the lion to devour anyone who dared ridicule him.[8] The act by which the imam turned the picture of the lion into a real animal consisted of raising his head towards the picture and addressing it as follows: «O lion of God, take the enemy of God», whereupon the lion immediately leaped out of the picture and did as he was ordered. The imam's call was thus answered immediately and the lion did his bidding forthwith. The act of devouring is depicted as violent and fear-inspiring, perhaps as a Šī'ite warning to its enemies not to mock its imams. It would thus seem that this type of miracle serves as a kind of compensation whereby the imams were able to take vengeance on their enemies who had deprived them of their rights and prevented them from becoming the leaders of the Muslim state. God, according to this view, compensated them by giving them spiritual powers which they were able to utilize in times of trouble.

'Alī b. Yaqṭīn and the Poet Abū al-'Atāhiya

'Alī b. Yaqṭīn is reported to have had a close relationship with poets and poetry, perhaps as a stratagem for hiding his true interest, namely to further the Šī'ite cause using his position as vizier. In the biography of the Abbasid poet Abū al-'Atāhiya (Ismā'īl b. al-Qāsim, d. 826) 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn is mentioned as a friend of the poet. Abū al-'Atāhiya was known for his impudence and for his adherence to the Abbasid state. 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn always showed kindness to him and regard for his circumstances and every year gave him a generous gift, but one year he was late with the gift. Still, whenever Abū al-'Atāhiya met him or came to him he showed his joy and praised him. It is related that once 'Alī met Abū al-'Atāhiya as the latter was about to go to the caliph's house. He stopped him and Abū al-'Atāhiya recited the following poem for him:

> Until when, o Ibn Yaqṭīn, will I wait for something which you have not brought?
> Greetings and a friendly smile in a man of your standing do not satisfy me
> This is the time in which men demand from me the haughtiness of kings and the morals of the poor

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[8] Note that in the Hebrew Bible there are a number of cases in which a lion is reported to have punished someone who did not believe in God; Šī'ites may well have been influenced by such tales. For more details see: Kaplan (1981: 124, 180); *King* 13: 1-32, 20: 35-43, 2: 23-24.

Do you not know that God will compensate you and increase your grace, o Ibn Yaqṭīn?
Save me with your gift in this world, not on the Day of Judgment.

The moment Abū al-ʿAtāhiya finished reciting these verses ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn said to him: «I refuse to allow either of us to leave this place until you are satisfied», and ordered that he be given what he used to send him every year. This was brought immediately, and Ibn Yaqṭīn remained standing there until he received it (al-Amīn 1960: VIII, 41, 371; Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya 2003: 418, no. 528). In my opinion ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn was fully familiar with Abū al-ʿAtāhiya's reputation as an impudent poet, and yet maintained an overt friendship with him and brought him an annual gift in order to draw attention away from his political activities and hide his Šīʿite connections.

ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn's Pro-Šīʿite Leanings

ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn was pro-Šīʿite. As a vizier to two caliphs, al-Hādī (ruled 785-786) and Hārūn al-Rašīd (ruled 786-809) he helped the Šīʿites financially and spiritually. It is related that Hārūn al-Rašīd himself gave an order that ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn should personally see to the collection of taxes from the Šīʿites and the supporters of the Prophet's family. ʿAlī secretly asked the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 799) for advice on this matter. The imam proposed to him that he return the money to its Šīʿite owners. And indeed, he would collect taxes from the Šīʿites quite openly, and then return it to them clandestinely, without Hārūn al-Rašīd's knowledge. In addition, ʿAlī provided the Šīʿites, and especially the imam al-Kāẓim, with vital information about the regime, its strength, its ability to face up to challenges, and about its plans to purge its Šīʿite opponents.

ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn was thus of considerable importance to the Šīʿites at the time. One example for his valuable assistance concerns the events of the Battle of Faḫḫ (786),[9] an uprising in which the ʿAlid forces lost. After this defeat the Abbasid caliph Mūsā al-Hādī threatened the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim. He even planned to travel to al-Madīna and unearth the graves of four imams, al-Ḥasan. ʿAlī (d. 661), ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 713), Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 733) and Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765), in the cemetery of Baqīʿ al-Ġarqad in al-Madīna, and to exhume their mortal remains. He threatened to kill Mūsā al-Kāẓim and accused him of having been behind the uprising. ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn immediately sent this information to the imam, who took the needed precautions. He went on pilgrimage to his grandfather's grave and there recited the

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[9] The Battle of Faḫḫ took place in 786 near al-Madīna, between the Abbasid army under the caliphate of Mūsā al-Hādī, and the forces of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, a son of the second imam al-Ḥasan. Al-Ḥusayn himself and those with him were killed, and many of the battle's participants were captured and led to Baghdad, where the caliph ordered them executed. For more details see al-Layṯī (1976: 276-78).

call of «Ǧawšan al-Ṣaġīr»[10] repeatedly, performed the supererogatory rites, and a few days later the unexpected happened, when the caliph al-Hādī was killed at the hand of his own mother (al-Maǧlisī 1984: XLVIII, 151, no. 25). ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn was concerned lest his close association with the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim would be discovered by Hārūn al-Rašīd, especially in light of the fact that the latter had sent out spies to ferret out Šīʿite sympathizers in his government. Indeed, were it not for the imam's advice to ʿAlī to keep his activities hidden from Hārūn al-Rašīd he would certainly have been killed.

Šīʿite writers report two instances in which the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim advised ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn to keep his activities secret. *The first incident*, known as the Durrāʿa Affair (*durrāʿa*: a long garment open at the front): ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn was in the presence of Hārūn al-Rašīd when the latter received a present from the Byzantine emperor. Among the presents was a black *durrāʿa* of silk brocade with gold threads. ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn looked at the presents and the caliph gave them to him as a present. ʿAlī then sent all the garments to the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim, including the *durrāʿa*, and also added some money which he had prepared out of the «fifth»[11] of his assets. All this came to the imam, who kept the money and the clothes, but nine months later he sent the *durrāʿa* back to Ibn Yaqṭīn with instructions not to let it out of his possession since he would eventually need it. When ʿAlī received the imam's letter he was frightened, but kept the *durrāʿa*. A few days later ʿAli b. Yaqṭīn dismissed one of his servants, who knew of this employer's close relations with Mūsā al-Kāẓim and the things which Ibn Yaqṭīn sent him. He informed Hārūn al-Rašīd that Ibn Yaqṭīn recognized Mūsā al-Kāẓim as imam and sent him a fifth of his income every year, and also gave him the *durrāʿa*. The caliph was incensed and said that he would investigate the matter, and if he found that it was true then he would kill ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn. He immediately sent his men to bring Ibn Yaqṭīn. When the latter was brought into his presence he asked him: «What did you do with the *durrāʿa* with which I covered you?» Ibn Yaqṭīn answered: «O Commander of the Faithful, I keep it in a sealed and perfumed basket. I have guarded it well. I open it, look at it and kiss it, then put it back in its place, every morning and every evening». According to another version, ʿAlī said that he wore it during prayer.

Hārūn al-Rašīd asked Ibn Yaqṭīn to bring it to him immediately. The caliph called a servant and sent him to Ibn Yaqṭīn's house. The servant brought the *durrāʿa* to Hārūn, who saw that it was indeed folded in a perfumed con-

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[10] This is a call used by the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim on the day when the Abbasid caliph Mūsā al-Hādī wanted to kill him. The «al-Ǧawšan al-Ṣaġir» evokes many of the trials and tribulations which men experience. It is highly regarded by Šīʿites. For more details see: al-Qummī (1984: 200-17); al-Maǧlisī (1984: XCI, 382-86).

[11] *Ḫums* is the Arabic word for One Fifth (1/5). According to Šīʿa Islamic legal terminology, it means «one-fifth of certain items which a person acquires as wealth, and which must be paid as an Islamic tax». For more details on *ḫums* see: Calder (1982); Sachededina (1980).

tainer. Hārūn's anger subsided and he asked ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn to put the garment back in its place. He said to him: «From this day on I shall not believe any slander». He gave Ibn Yaqṭīn a prize and ordered the servant to be given a thousand lashes, but after about five-hundred he died.[12] *The second incident*, known as the Ablution Affair: ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn had the habit of performing the ablution before prayer in the Sunnī manner,[13] in accordance with the principle of *taqiyya* (dissimulation). He sent a request to the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim to instruct him in the Šīʿite manner, but the imam commanded him to continue to perform the ritual as the Sunnīs do, until the proper time came, when he would teach him the Šīʿite manner of ablution. And indeed, after a time someone slandered ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn and told Hārūn al-Rašīd that he was a Šīʿite, an adherent of the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim who performed the ablution in the manner of the latter. Hārūn al-Rašīd then summoned ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn and asked him to perform a number of duties in his home. When the time for prayer came al-Rašīd hid behind a wall in order to observe ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn unseen. ʿAlī performed the ablution as the imam had told him, that is in the Sunnī manner, whereupon Hārūn al-Rašīd rose and said to ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn: «Whoever claimed that you were Rāfiḍī[14] "defector" or "deserters" is a liar». After this the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim send a letter to ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn in which he told him that from then on he may perform the ablution in the Šīʿite manner, and explained to him the way it was to be done.[15]

How ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn Maintained Contact with the Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim

The two maintained contact in a number of ways, which were kept secret in order to prevent the Abbasid caliph from discovering their relationship. Occasionally ʿAlī sent letters to the imam via messengers. According to one

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[12] al-Mufīd (1992: 225-26); al-Ṭabrisī (1970: 302-3); al-Rāwandī (1988: I, 334-35), whence al-Maǧlisī (1984: XLVIII, 59-60, no. 2); al-Ṭabarī (1963: 158-59); al-Fattāl (1966: 213-14); al-Irbillī (1962: II, 224-25); Ibn Šahrāšūb (1959: IV, 289).

[13] The difference between the Sunnī and Šīʿī methods of ablution lie mainly in the way they wash their feet. The Šīʿites rub their feet while the Sunnīs wash them. For more on the rubbing of soles among the Šīʿites see Schacht (1953: 263-64).

[14] Rāfiḍī 'defector' or 'deserter'. The term is used by Sunni Muslims to refer to Šīʿī Muslims who do not recognize Abū Bakr and his successors as having been legitimate rulers of the early Muslim community. The term *rāfiḍa* followed the Šīʿa from a very early period, back to the uprising of Zayd b. ʿAlī, against the Umayyad Caliphate. This uprising foreshadowed the collapse of the dynasty, which in turn led to the split between those Šīʿī Muslims who agreed with Zayd and those who did not. The meaning of the term went through several changes over time. It became a popular pejorative term for Twelvers, intended to recall their rejection of Zayd b. ʿAlī and of the first Sunni Rāšīdūn, namely Abu Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUṯmān. See Kohlberg (1979).

[15] al-Rāwandī (1988: I, 335-36); al-Maǧlisī (1984: XLVIII, 136-37, no. 11); Ibn Šahrāšūb (1959: IV, 288).

tradition 'Alī once sent 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ to the imam with a request that the imam pray for him. The imam asked 'Alī's messenger if 'Alī wanted him to supplicate God for this world or the next. The messenger replied that Ibn Yaqṭīn wanted his supplication for the world to come, whereupon the imam al-Kāẓim placed his hand on the messenger's chest and said to him: «You may ensure 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn that the fire [of hell] will never touch him» (al-Kaššī 1929: 431, nos. 807-10).

The Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim Manifests His Love for 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn

The imam loved 'Alī dearly. He not only promised him that he would go to heaven and that he would be saved from the fires of hell (Būḫamsīn 1990: 64-67), but also expressed his love on several occasions, as in the following instances:

A. One day 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn visited the imam al-Kāẓim, who was sitting with his companions at home. When 'Alī appeared the imam looked at him and said to his companions: «Whoever would be happy to gaze at a companion of the Prophet of God, let him gaze at this man who has just come», and pointed at 'Alī. One of those present asked excitedly: «Is he one who will go to Paradise?». The imam replied: «I testify that he will».

B. Another time 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn sent a messenger to the imam al-Kāẓim, in which he asked him to pray for him. When the messenger arrived he said to the imam: «O son of God's Messenger, Ibn Yaqṭīn sent me to you so would supplicate God for him». The imam asked him: «For the world to come?» and the messenger answered: «Yes», whereupon the imam said to him: «You may ensure 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn that the fire [of hell] will never touch him».

C. On yet another occasion Dāwūd al-Raqqī[16] gave the following report: «I came into the presence of my father al-Ḥasan (the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim) on the Day of Immolation» (the 10th day of the month of Ḏū'l-Ḥiǧǧa, the first day of the Feast of Sacrifice) and he said to me: «No one took notice of my when I was at al-Mawqif (a place of pilgrimage during the ḥaǧǧ near Minā) except for 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn, who stayed with me and did not leave me».

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[16] His cognomens were Abū Ḫālid and Abū Sulaymān. A client of the Banū Asad tribe, he transmitted traditions in the name of the imams Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, Mūsā al-Kāẓim and 'Alī al-Riḍā, and wrote two books, *al-Mazār* and *al-Ihlīliǧa*. He died after the year 200 H, not long after the death of the imam al-Riḍā (d. 818). For more details see: Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī (1963: 146, no. 584, 452, no. 173); Ibn al-Ġaḍāʾirī (1994: 290); al-Barqī (1963: 32, 48); al-Naǧāšī (s.d.: 156, no. 410); al-Ḥillī (1990: 67, no. 1).

D. In a fourth report the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim said of ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn: «It is ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn's good fortune that I mentioned him at al-Mawqif» (Būḫamsīn 1990: 66).

ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn Supports the Šīʿite Poor

ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn helped the Šīʿite poor. On the imam al-Kāẓim's directions he gave great sums and sent a fifth of his earnings to the imam. The fifth which he sent annually was a considerable amount of money, occasionally reaching hundreds of thousands of dirhams. ʿAlī also supported the imam in times of trouble and need. Whenever the imam al-Kāẓim was needy, or wanted to help someone for whom he cared, he would write to ʿAlī and ask him to buy or arrange what was needed (al-Kaššī 1929: 269, no. 484). Two of ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn's companions relate that he sent them the following message: «Buy two female camels and stay off the road». He gave them money and letters and told them to bring them to the imam al-Kāẓim and to take care that no one discover what they were doing. They reported what happened: «We came to al-Kūfa and bought two female camels, took supplies and left. We travelled off the road until we came to Baṭn al-Rimma, where we tied the camels, put feed before them and sat down to eat. As we were eating a rider came with a mule, and as he approached we saw that it was the imam al-Kāẓim. We rose and greeted him, and gave him the letters and the other things we had with us». He took some letters out of his sleeve and gave them to us. He said: «These are the replies to the letters you brought». We said: «Our supplies are low. With your permission, we would like to enter al-Madīna, visit God's Messenger and buy some supplies». He said: «Show me your supplies». We took out our provisions and he turned them over in his hand and said: «This will be enough for you until you reach al-Kūfa, and as for God's Messenger, you have seen him» (*ibid.*: 436-37, no. 821).

Among those whom ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn supported was one ʿAbdallāh b. Yaḥyā al-Kāhilī, Abū Muḥammad and his family. This he did at the request of the imam al-Kāẓim, who promised him in return that he would go to Paradise. ʿAlī fulfilled his obligation towards al-Kāhilī and his family until the latter's death. According to the reports what he sent was enough to support al-Kāhilī's family and his relatives as well (al-Ḥillī 1990: 108-9, no. 31; al-Kaššī 1929: 448, no. 841; al-Naǧāšī s.d.: 222, no. 580).

Secrecy and Concealment in ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn's Religious Behaviour

It is reported of ʿAlī that he kept his religious tendencies secret and did not perform Šīʿite rites, out of fear that his Šīʿite leanings would be found out. ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn prayed often, but in secret (Būḫamsīn 1990: 128; al-Qurašī 1993: II, 285). He also concealed his pilgrimage to Mecca in a variety of ways.

In fact, every year he asked people to perform this duty for him. His secretary, Sulaymān b. al-Ḥusayn, states: «One year I counted one-hundred-and-fifty people who went on pilgrimage for 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn, to each of which he gave at least ten-thousand dirhams» (al-Kaššī 1929: 437, no. 824). If there is any truth in this tradition, it means that Ibn Yaqṭīn's income must have been very large indeed. It would seem that he used the pilgrimage as a means for giving support to Šī'ites in a way which would not arouse his enemies' suspicions. This conjecture is supported by the fact that among the people he helped were important personages such as 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ and 'Abdallāh b. Yaḥyā al-Kāhilī, who were companions of the imam and disliked by the authorities (al-Ṭūsī 1970: 435). One final point in this respect is the fact that 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn included not only Šī'ite elders in his plan but others as well, for the purpose of making the Šī'ite creed known and to dispute with the other religious sects. 'Alī was thus able to conceal his connection with Šī'ism and the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim. In fact, he did this so well that a senior Šī'ite complained to the imam that he suspected 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn of being a dissimulator who only pretended to be a Šī'ite and an adherent of the imam. The imam asked him if he had evidence for his accusation. He replied that one day he was at a gathering in the home of a prominent man in Baghdad, and 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn was also present. The host asked 'Alī if he thought that Mūsā b. Ǧa'far was the imam rather than the reigning caliph. 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn replied: «I do not say this. Rather, I say that Mūsā is not imam, whoever is not imam then Mūsā is not him, and I agree that this is my imamate and I reject the imamate of anyone else». The host then said: «May God give you recompense and may He curse those who slander you». The imam then said to the man who brought him this report: «It is not as you thought. 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn is better versed in jurisprudence than you are». When he said «Mūsā is not imam» he meant that whoever is not imam, Mūsā is not like him, that is, he is imam, and he reiterated this by saying «this is my imamate» and rejected «the imamate of anyone but me». The imam then added: «O 'Abdallāh, when will you cease from such suspicions about your brother. Do penance before God». When the man realized what the imam meant he was greatly distressed and said to him: «I do not possess money, but I have give half of my devotions and prayers to you, family of the Prophet, and my curses to your enemies». Thereupon the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim said to him: «Now you have escaped hellfire» (al-Maǧlisī 1984: LXXII, 195, no. 7; al-Ṭabrisī 1982: 394-95; al-'Askarī 1988: 359-60).

'Alī b. Yaqṭīn as Vizier

Our written sources do not tell us the circumstances under which 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn was appointed to the post of vizier by Hārūn al-Rašīd and the specific function he had. Šī'ite sources relate that 'Alī had a close relationship with the Abbasids, by whom he was appointed to senior posts, and that Hārūn al-Rašīd

chose him to be his vizier. ‘Alī agreed to take the position after he had secretly sought the advice of the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim, al-Kāẓim who urged him to agree to the appointment. Later ‘Alī asked the imam a number of times for permission to resign, but the imam refused to accede to his request (al-Maǧlisī 1984: XLVIII, 158, no. 32), and explained that his position was important for the preservation of Šī‘ite lives, property and rights. The imam said to ‘Alī: «Safeguard me one tuft and I will safeguard you three». ‘Alī asked him: «What are they?», and the imam replied: «The three which I will safeguard you are: that the heat of iron will never strike and kill you, that you will never know poverty, and that you will never be put in prison; and the one thing you will guarantee is that you will respect every religious leader who comes to you». ‘Alī b. Yaqṭīn accepted this request, and the imam guaranteed him the three (ibid.: 136, no. 10).

The imam al-Kāẓim said to ‘Alī: «We (the Šī‘ites) have a friend in you and your brothers have strength in you. May God through you mend a fracture, and through you may He break the enmity of those who oppose His supporters» (ibidem).

‘Alī b. Yaqṭīn remained true to his commitment and continued to give succour to the Šī‘ites during his entire term of office and helped them in those dire times to maintain their lives and their independence.[17]

‘Alī b. Yaqṭīn’s Complaints About His Job as Vizier of Hārūn al-Rašīd

The imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim once came to Iraq and met secretly with ‘Alī b. Yaqṭīn. When the latter complained about his work as vizier the imam said to him: «O ‘Alī, God has supporters with the supporters of darkness, with whom He defends his own supporters, and you are one of them» (al-Maǧlisī 1984: LXXII, 349-50, no. 56; al-Kaššī 1929: 43, no. 817). As mentioned above, ‘Alī b. Yaqṭīn asked the imam a number of times for permission to resign, but the imam refused, out of concern for the lives of the Šī‘ites.

‘Alī b. Yaqṭīn as a Transmitter of Traditions

‘Alī b. Yaqṭīn played an important role in the life of the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim and his reports are often quoted in Šī‘ite ḥadīt and history collections.

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[17] It is perhaps worth noting here that a number of companions of the imams joined the regime at various times and were able to help the Šī‘ites in their positions. This they did on the instructions of the imams, as in the case of ‘Alī b. Yaqṭīn who held the post of vizier under Hārūn al-Rašīd, as well as Dāwūd b. Zurbī Abū Sulaymān al-Ḥandaqī al-Bundār, another vizier under Hārūn al-Rašīd, Isḥāq al-Naysābūrī who governed Ahwāz under the Abbasids and was also a companion of the imam al-‘Askarī (d. 847), and al-Ḥusayn al-Naysābūrī the Abbasid governor of Siǧistān, a companion of the imam al-Jawād (d. 835). For more details see: Būḫamsīn (1990: 123); Fawzī (1987: 135).

In Šī'ite traditional sources 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn is often quoted as a reliable source of information about pronouncements which he heard from Mūsā al-Kāẓim, Ǧa'far al-Ṣādiq and others. Most of these *ḥadīṯ*s contain answers to questions which were posed to the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim. Among other topics with which 'Alī's *ḥadīṯ*s deal are issues in Šī'ite jurisprudence, for example on funeral procedures (al-Kulaynī s.d.: III, 168, no. 1), charity (*ibid.*: III, 518, no. 5), the rules of the pilgrimage to Mecca (*ibid.*: IV, 380, no. 8), ritual ablution before prayer (*ibid.*: III, 18, no. 15), major ritual impurity (*ibid.*: III, 46, no. 3), why God spoke to Mūsā (*ibid.*: III, 123), pregnant woman who dies (*ibid.*: III, 155, no. 1), the traveler's prayer (*ibid.*: III, 435, no. 8), and others. It is, however, very difficult to determine whether 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn did in fact report all the *ḥadīṯ*s attributed to him or whether some or most of them are later fabrications.

'Alī b. Yaqṭīn's Ḥadīṯs About His Spiritual Masters (šayḫ)

Many of 'Alī's *ḥadīṯ*s report the words of the imams, especially al-Kāẓim. In all, some 187 *ḥadīṯ*s about the imams are ascribed to him. From the *ḥadīṯ*s found in various Šī'ite sources and ascribed to 'Alī, it appears that he had nineteen spiritual masters: the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim, who held a very important place in his life (al-Kulaynī s.d.: I, 313, no. 10; II, 13, no. 2; III, 168, no. 1; III, 435, no. 8; VI, 434, no. 24; al-Ḥillī 1990: 91, no. 3); the imam Ǧa'far al-Ṣādiq, in whose name he related a single *ḥadīṯ* (al-Ḥillī 1990: 91, no. 5; al-Ṭūsī s.d.*c*: I, 166, no. 48); Muḥammad b. Sinān (al-Kulaynī s.d.: IV, 25, no. 3); al-Faḍl b. Kaṯīr al-Madā'inī (*ibid.*: II, 106, no. 5; V, 317, no. 52); 'Īsā b. Sulaymān (al-Kaššī 1929: 396, no. 597); Yūnus, 'Alī's teacher (al-Kulaynī s.d.: IV, 505, no. 3); Ḥafṣ b. 'Amr b. Muḥammad Abū Muḥammad (*ibid.*: IV, 541, no. 5); his muezzin, whose name was al-Ḥusayn b. Ḫālid (*ibid.*: V, 104, no. 5; al-Ṭūsī s.d.*c*: VI, 209, no. 2); 'Amr b. Ibrāhīm (al-Kulaynī s.d.: V, 236, no. 17); 'Āsim b. Ḥumayd (*ibid.*: V, 391, no. 7); Yūnus b. Ya'qūb (*ibid.*: V, 236, no. 17)[18] b. Qays Abū 'Alī al-Ǧalāb al-Baǧalī al-Dahnī; Muḥammd b. Hāšim (*ibid.*: VI, 31, no. 5); Ruhm al-Anṣārī;[19] al-Madāyinī (al-Kaššī 1929: 398, no. 743); Hāšim b. Ḫālid (al-Kulaynī s.d.: VI, 405, no. 3); Bakr b. Muḥammad (*ibid.*: VI, 428, no. 1); 'Amr b. Ibrāhīm (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*c*: III, 31, no. 21; III, 282, no. 157); and al-Ḥasan b. Ṣabbāḥ (*ibid.*: VII, 10, no. 38).

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[18] al-Kulaynī (s.d.: VI, 4, no. 4). For details on his life see, for example: al-Ḥillī (1990: 185, no. 2; 265, no. 2); Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī (1963: 382, no. 1709, 533); al-Ṭūsī (s.d.*a*: 323; s.d.*b*: 182, no. 790); al-Kaššī (1929: 385, no. 720); al-Naǧāšī (s.d.: 446, no. 1207).

[19] al-Ḥillī (1990: 72, no. 4). For details on his life see: al-Kaššī (1929: 454, no. 858); al-Ṭūsī (s.d.*a*: 336, no. 5008-1); Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī (1963: 154, no. 611).

His Disciples and Transmitters

   In this section we deal with those people who learned the imams' words from ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn and transmitted them. To judge by the available sources he appears to have had eighteen disciples: his son al-Ḥasan (al-Kulaynī s.d.: I, 11, no. 7; II, 106, no. 5), al-Ḥusayn b. Mayyāḥ (*ibid.*: I, 58, no. 18; V, 158, no. 7; V, 305, no. 8), Ibn Abī ʿUmayr (*ibid.*: II, 123, no. 7; III, 192, no. 2; III, 435, no. 8; III, 155, no. 1; III, 547, no. 5; IV, 380, no. 8; al-Ṭūsī s.d.*c*: VII, 224, no. 73), Muḥammad b. Abī Ḥamza (al-Kulaynī s.d.: VI, 186, no. 5), Ḥarīz (*ibid.*: III, 518, no. 8), Ibrāhīm b. Abī Maḥmūd (*ibid.*: V, 110, no. 3; al-Ṭūsī s.d.*c*: VI, 335, no. 48), Ḥamād b. ʿUtmān (*ibid.*: II, 212, no. 24), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ (*ibid.*: VII, 22, no. 92), his muezzin Ḥafṣ b. ʿAmr b. Muḥammad Abū Muḥammad (al-Kaššī 1929: 432, no. 814), Yaʿqūb b. Yazīd (al-Kulaynī s.d.: VI, 387, no. 1), Sulaym (his slave) ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn (*ibid.*: VIII, 383, no. 583), Ṣafwān b. Yaḥyā (al-Ṣadūq 1993: I, 415, no. 1226), Ǧaʿfar b. ʿĪsā b. ʿUbayd (*ibid.*: IV, 209), Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā (al-Ṭūsī s.d.*c*: I, 111, no. 26), Abū Ḫālid (his slave; *ibid.*: V, 491, no. 410), his brother Yaʿqūb (*ibid.*: III, 11, no. 36; III, 12, no. 19.), his brother Ayyūb (*ibid.*: III, 101, no. 35.), and his scribe Sulaymān b. al-Ḥusayn (al-Kaššī 1929: 437, no. 824).

Conclusion

   ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn, as we saw, was born in al-Kūfa and then moved with his family to Baghdad, where he grew up in a period of political troubles, at the end of the Umayyad and the beginning of the Abbasid period. He was an adherent of the Šīʿa, as was his father, and was the contemporary of the two imams Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and Mūsā al-Kāẓim. He reported numerous *ḥadīt*s quoting the latter. ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn served as vizier under two Abbasid caliphs, Mūsā al-Hādī and Hārūn al-Rašīd. As we found in our study, ʿAlī's position in the Abbasid caliphate enabled him to help the Šīʿites in two ways. First, he was privy to important information concerning the confrontation between the Abbasid authorities and the Šīʿites, which he was able to provide the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim with. Second, he was able to provide generous financial support to needy Šīʿites. He also contributed to Šīʿite jurisprudence in the form of three books on this subject that he composed, and 187 *ḥadīt*s about the imams, which were later transmitted by his numerous disciples. During the entire time in which he held the post of vizier ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn successfully concealed his religious beliefs and his association with Mūsā al-Kāẓim. More than once he asked the imam to be allowed to resign his post in the Abbasid administration, but the imam turned down his request, since in his position he was able to help the Šīʿites. The taxes which ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn collected from the Šīʿites he returned to them clandestinely. He kept his relationship with the imam a secret and his entire behaviour is in line with the Šīʿite principle of dissimulation

(*taqiyya*). Using his innate wisdom and with the help of the imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim's instructions, ʿAlī b. Yaqṭīn was able to provide great assistance to the Šīʿites, warn them of impending steps which the Abbasid caliph intended to take against them and supported them financially. He devoted a great part of his life, occasionally at considerable personal risk, to serve the members of his denomination.

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SUMMARY

The present study discusses 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn, an important Šī'ite figure of the 2ⁿᵈ 8ᵗʰ century, a student of the sixth imam Ǧa'far al-Ṣādiq and the seventh imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim, and analyzes his role in the shaping of Šī'ism and Šī'ite religious jurisprudence. Ibn Yaqṭīn held the post of vizier under two Abbasid caliphs, al-Hādī and Hārūn al-Rašīd. He used his position within the Abbasid regime in two ways: he obtained information relevant to the confrontation between the Šī'ites and their enemies and gave it to the imams, and he gave very generous financial support to needy Šī'ites. The study also describes 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn's personal characteristics, his piety, and the 186 traditions which he reported in the names of the two imams Ǧa'far al-Ṣādiq and Mūsā al-Kāẓim, by which he enriched Šī'ite religious law.

Keywords: Abbasid vizier, 'Alī b. Yaqṭīn, Early Šī'ite history, Ǧa'far al-Ṣādiq, Mūsā al-Kāẓim, Šī'ite religious jurisprudence, Abbasid caliphs, al-Hādī, Hārūn al-Rašīd.