

SHI'ISM UNDER THE UMAYYADS

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§1. The early revolts*

The Shi'ite revolts against the Umayyadas may be said to have begun in 671. Immediately after his father's death in 661, al-Ḥasan had made an unsuccessful attempt to resist Mu'āwiyah, and had then retired to a life of luxury in Medina. Ten years later there was an abortive revolt in Kūfah led by Ḥujr b. 'Adī al-Kindī. Next, in the troubled period after the death of Mu'āwiyah in 680, al-Ḥusayn, the younger son of 'Alī and Fātimah, with some encouragement from the Shi'ite party in Kūfah, came to 'Irāq and claimed the caliphate. He did not receive the support he had expected, however, and his small force of about a hundred was massacred at Karbalā'. In the confusion of the following years, with considerable support in 'Irāq for Ibn az-Zubayr, the Shi'ites remained quiet; but on the death of Yazīd in 684 some of the older Shi'ites of Kūfah, led by Sulaymān b. Ṣurad al-Khuzā'i, prepared for military action. The basis of this movement was twofold: they were to show that they repented of the betrayal of al-Ḥusayn (and so are known as the *tawwābūn* or Penitents), and they were to seek vengeance for his blood. Most of those who carried out the massacre at Karbalā' were living in Kūfah, but the governor who had despatched the army against al-Ḥusayn, 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād, had been forced to retire from 'Irāq and was now on the Syrian border with an army. After some debate they decided to march against him with their 4,000 men, but they were defeated and several of their leaders killed (Jan., 685).

What is known about the character of the support given to 'Alī during his lifetime does not contribute much to our understanding of these events. Many of the Anṣār supported him, but the main reason probably was that both he and they believed in the principle of "priority" (*sābiqah*), namely, that grading in the *dīwān* or stipend-roll should be in accordance with

priority in acceptance of Islam and in service of the community. This would place 'Alī and the Anṣār above the two groups of Quraysh from Mecca who were the chief contestants for supreme power in the Arab empire, the Umayyads and the party of Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr, and later of Ibn az-Zubayr. Apart from this the Anṣār in general did not become Shī'ites. Again, what is said in the sources about the alleged founder of Shī'ism, 'Abdallāh b. Saba' or Ibn as-Sawdā, is now regarded by scholars as "a projection into the past by second-century traditionists of the conditions and ideas of their own day",¹ and so does not illuminate the historical origin. The Shī'ite movement began among the former nomadic tribesmen in 'Alī's armies; but these armies also included men of Khārijite sympathies, and it is only from the lists of participants in the revolts after 'Alī's death that we begin to see the identity of the earliest Shī'ites.

Shī'ism and Khārijism are diametrically opposed responses to a common situation. Reflection shows what this common situation was. In the course of thirty years countless nomads from the Arabian steppes had been transformed into the military aristocracy of a vast empire. Their leaders were its administrators, and the rank and file its standing army, living in camp cities or campaigning on distant frontiers. There must have been a widespread feeling of unsettlement and insecurity. In this critical situation some men looked for a strong leader, with superhuman charismata, as their one hope of safety; others sought for a community which would have some of the strength they had formerly found in their tribe. If we may speak of these as the charismatic leader and the charismatic community, then the Shī'ite looked for salvation to the former and the Khārijite to the latter;² and each thought that the other was threatening the salvation of the whole.

This contrast may be illustrated by what appears to be a genuine report from the earliest period. In 658 the Shī'ites swore to 'Alī that they would be "friends of those whom he befriended and enemies of those to whom he was hostile"; and the Khārijites criticized this as unbelief.³ The latter considered that it was possible for the leader to err, and that to accept his decisions without question might involve a man in acting against the law. The Shī'ah, on the other hand, held that 'Alī was "in accordance with truth and guidance" (*'alā 'l-ḥaqq wa-'l-ḥudā*), and his opponents consequently in error. In line with this report is the statement of ash-Shahrastānī, writing much later indeed (about 1130), but with a clear understanding of the issues. It is a basic principle of all the branches of the Shī'ah, he says, that "the imāmate is not a matter of relative advantage, depending on the choice of the common people, with the imām owing his institution to their action, but is a matter of fundamentals, the mainstay of religion, which the Messenger may not neglect or overlook and may not entrust or commit to the common people".⁴ Thus what the early Shī'ites insisted on was that the supreme authority in the community should be in the hands of a single man, and that

this man should be one who was, by the circumstances of his birth, specially qualified to bear authority.⁵

There appears to be a further contrast in the tribal affiliations of the early Shī'ites and Khārijites. In a list of twelve men of the Shī'ah who revolted in 671 the tribes are: Kindah (two), Ḥadramawt, Shaybān, 'Abs, Khath'am, Bajīlah (two), 'Anazah (two), Tamīm (two).⁶ The losses incurred by the nomads supporting al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā' in 680 were: Kindah (thirteen), Hawāzin (twenty), Tamīm (seventeen), Asad (six), Madh'ḥij (seven), others seven.⁷ Finally among the Penitents and their associates in 684-5 the following tribes were represented: Khuzā'ah, Fazārah, Azd, Bakr b. Wā'il, Bajīlah (three), Muzaynah, 'Abd-al-Qays (two), Kindah, Ḥimyar, 'Abs, Asad, Hamdān, al-Ash'ar.⁸ The outstanding feature here is the number of South Arabian or Yemenite tribes—Kindah, Ḥadramawt, Khath'am, Bajīlah, Azd, Hamdān, and al-Ash'ar. Khuzā'ah, though living near Mecca, was reckoned as Yemenite by the genealogists (like al-Aws and al-Khazraj, the Anṣār in Medina). Other tribes, of course, supported 'Alī; and references in aṭ-Ṭabarī show that many men from these Yemenite tribes supported the Umayyads. Yet there is a definite contrast in the proportion of South Arabians among the Shī'ites and that among the Khārijites (as reported in the lists of those killed at an-Nahrawān⁹ and those who led risings against 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah).¹⁰

In the case of the Khārijites many tribes are represented in the lists, but the significant point seems to be that the doctrinally important individuals and sects came mainly from the tribes of Tamīm, Ḥanīfah, and Shaybān.¹¹ Thus the core of the Khārijite movement is from these northern tribes, whereas the core of the early Shī'ah was in South Arabian or Yemenite tribes. This is a strange fact. There are no striking differences in the outward circumstances of the two groups. If it is noted that the northern tribes began to raid non-Arabs earlier, it is also true that a large force of Bajīlah were among the first raiders.¹² Though 'Alī performed administrative functions in South Arabia about 631, there is no evidence of his gaining special affection.¹³ It is not possible, either, to link up the two groups historically with the contrast between Judaism and Christianity or between Monophysitism or Nestorianism (though there is some similarity in ideas between the Khārijites and the Nestorians and between the Shī'ites and the Monophysites).

In the absence of other significant differences I would suggest as a hypothesis that the contrast between the two groups goes back to deep-seated differences. The South Arabians came from a land of ancient civilization where for a thousand years kings had succeeded one another according to a dynastic principle and had been regarded as having superhuman qualities.¹⁴ Even if the seventh-century Arabs had no personal experience of kingship, they came from the land of a civilization based on charismatic leaders, and must somehow have been influenced by a

continuing tradition. The northern tribes had not come under any comparable influence. Some knew the Lakhmid rulers of al-Ḥīrah, but these were in the nomadic tradition according to which all the adult males of a tribe were roughly equal and had a right to share in the business of the tribe. This nomadic tradition was dominant in the steppe at that period, and there are traces of “democratic communities” in ‘Irāq in the distant past.¹⁵ It is not being suggested that there was any attempt consciously to recreate older forms of polity, but only that in the period of stress after 656 primitive and deep-seated urges directed men’s conduct. The opposite responses to the situation in the early Umayyad caliphate spring from roots in two diverse traditions.

§2. Al-Mukhtār and the *mawālī*

Not all the Shī‘ite sympathizers in Kūfah joined the Penitents in 684. In particular, al-Mukhtār b. Abī ‘Ubayd ath-Thaqafī, who had had to go into exile shortly before Karbalā’ for his part in a movement in favour of al-Ḥusayn, was now back in Kūfah and organizing the Shī‘ites. In a letter to the remnants of the Penitents¹⁶ he said he would base his policy on “The Book of God, the Sunnah of the Prophet, vengeance for ‘the family’, defence of the weak, and the *jihād* against the evil-doers”. Thus al-Mukhtār included not only the Book and Sunnah, the central principles of any Islamic government, but also the aims of the Penitents; and when he got control of Kūfah he actually executed those responsible for killing “the family” at Karbalā’. The “defence of the weak” referred specially to the clients or *mawālī*. In addition—and this was a novel feature—al-Mukhtār claimed to be acting as the emissary of a son of ‘Alī, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyah. The latter had probably nothing to do with originating al-Mukhtār’s movement, though, when he was imprisoned by Ibn az-Zubayr after al-Mukhtār had broken with the latter, he accepted help from his “emissary”. After the revolt had failed he continued to live peacefully in the Ḥijāz.

And important consequence of this revolt (as was emphasized by Wellhausen) was the emergence of the *mawālī* as a political force to be reckoned with. Al-Mukhtār’s claim to be their champion won him much support from them, but he had trouble in reconciling their interests with those of the Arabs. The *mawālī* thought he was favouring the Arabs, and the Arabs objected to the *mawālī* receiving any share at all of the spoil.¹⁷ Some influential Arabs withdrew their support, and in later stages al-Mukhtār had to rely more on the *mawālī*. It is significant that his followers, though sometimes referred to by heresiographers as Mukhtārīyah, are more commonly called Kaysānīyah. Various explanations are given of this name, but it is almost certainly derived from Kaysān Abū ‘Amrah, the most distinguished of the *mawālī* in the revolt and chief of al-Mukhtār’s bodyguard.¹⁸ The name was applied widely to persons of Shī‘ite views

during the latter part of the Umayyad caliphate, and may originally have been a *nomen odiosum* given to them by their enemies.¹⁹

It will be useful at this point to assemble some elementary facts about the identity of the *mawālī* in general, and especially of those concerned in al-Mukhtār's and later Shī'ite revolts. In juridical circles there was eventually a threefold classification: *mawlā raḥim*, *mawlā 'atāqah*, *mawlā 'l-'aqd*; that is, *mawlā* by kinship, by emancipation or by covenant.²⁰ Of these the first is conceivably a way of incorporating matrilineally related persons into a patrilineal society; the second type is the freedman who would often be free born but enslaved as a result of capture in war; the third type is the man who, by a compact or covenant, voluntarily accepts the status of "client" to a "patron". It is almost exclusively the second and third which are met in the Umayyad period. In the biographical notices of the numerous *mawālī* at Medina, Mecca, Kūfah, Baṣrah and elsewhere (in volumes v, vi, and vii of the *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Sa'd) some are said to have the status "by emancipation"; but this is exceptional, and the presumption is that most belong to the third type. Perhaps men sought or were given this status because the Islamic community was regarded as consisting of a number of tribes and other groups in treaty relations with Muḥammad and the caliphs. A non-Muslim would be a member of one of the dependent groups of *dhimmi*s; if he became a Muslim, he would have to be detached from that group and attached to a Muslim tribe, and the simplest way to do this was to become a *mawlā* by covenant. The relationship was not necessarily permanent, for men seem sometimes to have left one Arab and Muslim tribe to become *mawālī* of a stronger and more important one.

It is clear from this account that an Arab may be a *mawlā*. Among the *mawālī* on the Muslim side at Badr there were several of Arab origin who had been captured in war and set free.²¹ A list of *mawālī* at Medina at a later period includes men from Hudaylah (of Azd), an-Namir, and Lakhm, while another has a South Arabian name (Shuraḥbīl).²² After 634 there were practically no opportunities for the capture of Arabs in war, so that Arab *mawālī* of the later seventh century would be descendants of former captives or persons who had adopted the status voluntarily.

In southern 'Irāq, the main centre of early Shī'ism,²³ the population at the time of the Arab conquest was predominantly Aramaean, but there was an upper stratum of Persian landlords and officials. In several areas the peasants helped the Muslims against the Persians.²⁴ There is thus a presumption that many of the *mawālī* in this region were of Aramaean (and also Christian) origin. The fact that many leading scholars were *mawālī* is doubtless connected with the existence of important Christian schools in 'Irāq.²⁵ The similarity of Shī'ite to older pre-Christian ideas (like the death of Tammuz) also suggests that many adherents of the Shī'ite sects were from the old stock of the land (and persons assimilated to it) rather than from the more recent Persian immigrants. The extent of Aramaean-Christian

influence is indicated by the case of Abū Maṣṣūr, head of the Maṣṣūrīyah, who was an illiterate desert Arab, probably of the tribe of ʿAbd-al-Qays, who heard God speaking to him in Syriac (*surṣānī*), and who assigned a special place in his cosmology to ʿIsā and the *kalimah* or "Word of God".²⁶

These grounds for thinking that many of the Shīʿite *mawālī* were of Aramaean and Christian origin have to be balanced by signs of the presence of a Persian element. Hamzah b. ʿUmārah is said to have allowed marriage to daughters, which is a Persian trait.²⁷ The father of ʿAbdallāh b. al-Ḥārith (whose followers took ʿAbdallāh b. Muʿāwīyah for imām) is called a *zindīq*, and this probably means that he was either a Persian or a persianized Aramaean.²⁸ That there were also numbers of persianized Arabs is shown by the fact that part of the tribe of ʿIjl had "completely passed into the Persian nationality".²⁹ Several Shīʿite leaders had connections with this tribe. Al-Mughīrah b. Saʿīd was of ʿIjl, but had become client of Khālīd b. ʿAbdallāh al-Qasrī (of Bajīlah); Abū Maṣṣūr is sometimes said to be of ʿIjl (though an-Nawbakhtī says of ʿAbd-al-Qays); and Abū Muslim, the leader for the ʿAbbāsids, was a *mawālī* of ʿIjl and said to be of Persian stock.

In studying the passage of Shīʿite conceptions from Arab bearers to Persian the mingling of the two cultures, that had begun in pre-Islamic times, must be kept in mind. This cultural interaction is more important than, for example, the settlement of 4,000 Persians from Daylam in Kūfah as Muslims,³⁰ since these felt themselves distinct from the main body of Persians. Evidence for interaction is the Persian element in the language of the Qur-ʿān and the pre-Islamic poets.³¹ Again, though the Persians in South Arabia were arabized, the Arabs there may also, though to a lesser extent, have been influenced by the Persians. Among the Muslim *mawālī* at Badr were two of Persian extraction;³² and the Meccan pagan, an-Nadr b. al-Ḥārith, had special knowledge of Persian lore which he used in his criticisms of Muḥammad.³³

§3. The period of quiescence and the later revolts

The wide application of the name Kaysānīyah is a pointer to the fact that during the later Umayyad period the Shīʿite movement was not at all Imāmīte (or Rāfīdīte) in character; that is to say, the descendants of al-Ḥusayn, who later became imāms of the Imāmītes, were not during their lifetime the centre of any political or religious movement of consequence. The biographies of these men have been touched up by Shīʿite (Imāmīte) writers in the attempt to show that all along they claimed to be imāms and acted as such. Yet even these revised biographies show that they were unimportant politically.³⁴ Thus in order to understand the development of Shīʿism under the Umayyads it is necessary to discount most of the statements about the descendants of al-Ḥusayn (and some other men also) until we come to the solid historical fact of the rising of Zayd b. ʿAlī in 740.

A brief outline of the history of this period will help to make the theological views intelligible.

After the defeat of al-Mukhtār in 686 there is no real historical event involving the Shī'ite movement until 737, when Bayān b. Sim'ān and al-Mughīrah b. Sa'īd al-'Ijlī were executed in Kūfah by order of the governor.³⁵ In this half century much had been happening to the Kaysānīyah. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyah had died in 700 and his son Abū Hāshim about 716, but neither had organized any political move against the Umayyads. To the Kaysānīyah had belonged the poet Kuthayyir (b. 'Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Khuzā'ī), who is reported as having been present at the courts of 'Abd al-Malik (685–705) and Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik (720–724), and is said to have died in 723; he lived mostly in the neighbourhood of Medina.³⁶ With his name is coupled that of a later poet, as-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī (723–89). Of the imāms of the later Imāmite line 'Alī Zayn-al-'Ābidīn (son of al-Husayn) died about 712, his son Muḥammad al-Bāqir died in 731, and the latter's son Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq died in 765.

In the same half century from 686 to 737, and particularly after the death of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyah in 700, many of those who supported or sympathized with al-Mukhtār turned towards messianic ideas. They asserted that Ibn al-Ḥanafīyah was not dead but in concealment (*ghaybah*), and they expected his return (*ra'āh*) as the Maḥdī, when he would set wrongs right and establish justice on earth. Such ideas, in one form or another, came to be widely held among Shī'ites, and their similarity to Judaeo-Christian messianic ideas has frequently been pointed out. In their historical context, however, they can be regarded as justifying a *de facto* acceptance of the existing regime. Those who believe in the "hidden imām" are not required to do anything in the immediate future, not even to work for any particular reform.³⁷ At the same time it is implied that the regime is not perfect, and the way is left open for action at some later date. Such an attitude might often be politically harmless, but there lurked in it a potential danger. A change of circumstances might suggest to the adherents of the movement that the time for action had come. When the Umayyad government was obviously growing weaker, for example, and there was a chance that resolute action might be successful, an adventurer claiming to be the imām or his emissary might soon have a revolt in progress.

Messianic ideas are specially associated with a sub-division of the Kaysānīyah called the Karbīyah (about whose founder nothing seems to be known). To the Karbīyah the poets Kuthayyir and as-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī are sometimes said to belong, though they took the view that the place of concealment of Ibn al-Ḥanafīyah was mount Raḍwā, seven days' journey from Medina. In another form of the doctrine the place of concealment was unknown, and this form was held by Ḥamzah b. 'Umārah of Medina, who gained a number of followers in Medina and Kūfah. He is alleged to have said that Ibn al-Ḥanafīyah was God and he himself his prophet; but this is

probably a hostile exaggeration of a statement about Ibn al-Hanafīyah's God-given charismata which was primarily intended to justify his own claim to charismatic leadership.³⁸

While Hamzah, so far as we can tell, remained politically inactive, one of his Kūfan followers, Bayān b. Sim'ān, a straw-dealer of the South Arabian tribe of Nahd (though also called at-Tamīmī), was sufficiently active to be arrested and executed (by burning) in 737. He apparently sometimes claimed to be the emissary of Abū Hāshim, who had allegedly succeeded his father Ibn al-Hanafīyah as imām.³⁹ At other times he seems to have tried to establish a connection with the descendants of al-Ḥusayn. At one moment he is said to have written to Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 731) summoning him to accept himself, Bayān, as a prophet; at another moment he claimed that Muḥammad al-Bāqir had appointed him as emissary.⁴⁰ These reports may both be true and merely show that Bayān was unscrupulous. If they are true, they also show that before 737 (but not necessarily before 731) the Shī'ite movement was becoming interested in the family of al-Ḥusayn.

Many picturesque doctrines are ascribed to the other man executed in Kūfah in 737, al-Mughīrah b. Sa'īd al-'Ijlī, a client of the governor. He is said to have looked to Muḥammad al-Bāqir as his imām, but on his death in 731 to have turned to a great-grandson of al-Ḥasan with the name of Muḥammad and the bye-name of an-Nafs az-Zakīyah, the Pure Soul (718–62). The latter eventually led an unsuccessful revolt against the 'Abbāsids in 762, but he was only nineteen in 737 and may not have acknowledged al-Mughīrah in any way.⁴¹

Another man who claimed to have been appointed emissary by Muḥammad al-Bāqir was Abū Mansūr (of the tribe of 'Abd-al-Qays or 'Ijl), who was executed in 742.⁴² Some of his followers practised strangulation, and there was a revival of the sect about 780. They seem to have been the first to attach cosmic importance to "the family of Muḥammad", since Abū Mansūr asserted that "the family of Muḥammad" was heaven and the "party" (*shī'ah*) was earth—an assertion reminiscent of ancient Mesopotamian beliefs. Yet he claimed something like prophetic inspiration for himself, and even for his sons.

The cases of Bayān, al-Mughīrah, and Abū Mansūr make it almost certain that by 737 there was interest in the family of al-Ḥusayn throughout the Shī'ite movement. Yet the possibility must be kept in mind that some of these reports are later Imāmīte inventions to support the contention that Muḥammad al-Bāqir was recognized as imām during his lifetime; but on the whole it seems most likely that the claims were actually made, though perhaps not until after the death of Muḥammad al-Bāqir in 731. By that time propaganda for the 'Abbāsids had probably begun, and al-Bāqir's son Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq may also have been putting forward claims on his own behalf. If this is so, the claims of the three sectaries to have been appointed by al-Bāqir would be attempts to counter the claims of Ja'far and the

ʿAbbāsids; and the story that Bayān summoned al-Bāqir to follow him and was roughly rejected would be an invention (perhaps by someone in Jaʿfar's circle) to parry Bayān's claim. In all this one clear and important point is that the Shī'ite belief in the charismata attaching to the kin of Muḥammad did not restrict these charismata to the descendants of ʿAlī and Fāṭimah, still less to the descendants of al-Ḥusayn. Throughout the Umayyad period the whole clan of Hāshim was regarded as sharing in the charismata—not only Ibn al-Ḥanafīyah, but, as will be seen presently, the descendants of ʿAlī's brother Jaʿfar and his uncle al-ʿAbbās.

The first Hāshimite to lead a revolt personally was Muḥammad al-Bāqir's brother Zayd, who took arms against the Umayyads in 740 but was killed almost at once. Zayd and his followers rejected the ideas of the sects so far considered.⁴³ They wanted no quiescent or hidden imām. The imām must be a descendant of ʿAlī and Fāṭimah (though this point may not have been made until after some of the Zaydīyah joined the revolt of an-Nafs az-Zakīyah), but he cannot claim allegiance unless he asserts his imāmate publicly. Zayd was thus trying to mobilize Shī'ite feeling behind an attempt to gain control of the caliphate. While previous Shī'ite movements (except that of al-Mukhtār) had been irrational, giving vent to grievances and spiritual yearnings but having no considered plan for taking over the administration of the caliphate, the Zaydīyah were over-rational. Zayd saw that, in order to run the caliphate, he must have the main body of Muslim opinion behind him, and must, therefore, accept the main body of Islamic tradition. He expressed this attitude by saying that he accepted Abū Bakr and ʿUmar as caliphs and imāms, but to reconcile the Shī'ites added that, while ʿAlī was superior, the "imāmate of the inferior" (*mafdūl*), that is of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, was permissible in order to secure certain temporary advantages. The concessions to non-Shī'tes, however, involved a partial denial of the charismata claimed for ʿAlī and the Hāshimites, and Zayd eventually lost much Shī'ite support. It is interesting to contrast Zayd's failure with the success of Abū Muslim and the ʿAbbāsids.

The last of the unsuccessful Shī'ite revolts against the Umayyads was that of ʿAbdallāh b. Muʿāwīyah, great-grandson of ʿAlī's brother Jaʿfar, which began in Kūfah in 744 and lasted until the assassination of ʿAbdallāh by Abū Muslim, probably in 747. With this revolt are connected the sects of the Ḥarbīyah, Ḥārithīyah, and Janāhīyah; but there is much obscurity and confusion. It seems clear that a man called ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAmr b. Ḥarb al-Kindī, said to have been a follower of Bayān, and certainly connected with the quietist section of the Kaysānīyah, propagated ideas about the hidden imām and the transmigration of souls among persons who later became followers of ʿAbdallāh b. Muʿāwīyah and applied some of these ideas to him, especially after his death.⁴⁴ The connection with the Kaysānīyah is vouched for by the claim that ʿAbdallāh b. Muʿāwīyah was the emissary of Abū Hāshim, the son of Ibn al-Ḥanafīyah. It is doubtful

whether he himself approved of the claims made for him: some were not made until after his death. In his army at Kūfah the remnants of Zayd's forces are said to have been more important than the extreme Shī'ites. Later, when he had to leave Kūfah and controlled a large area in Persia, his supporters included almost every shade of Muslim religious and political opinion. In the confusion of the times a movement without clear ideas and without vigorous leadership was unlikely to succeed.

Finally there was the movement which brought the 'Abbāsids to power. Though not exactly a Shī'ite movement, it made use of Shī'ite ideas. From about 718 some members of the family of al-'Abbās were making plans to gain the caliphate for themselves. The leaders in this project were first Muḥammad b. 'Alī (d. 743), a grandson of 'Abdallāh b. al-'Abbās, and then his son Ibrāhīm (d. 748). There are no grounds for supposing that these men believed in the existence of more than a minimal degree of charismata in the house of Hāshim; but they were prepared to use agents with more extreme views. One such was Khidāsh, who is said to have claimed to be a prophet, but was probably repudiated by Muḥammad b. 'Alī.⁴⁵ The most famous agent of the 'Abbāsids, Abū Muslim, was most likely a slave of Persian origin attached to the tribe of 'Ijl in Kūfah and a follower of al-Mughīrah b. Sa'īd al-'Ijlī prior to the latter's execution in 737. Abū Muslim presumably taught some of the messianic ideas current among the Shī'ites at the time (though not prominent in the doctrine of al-Mughīrah), since after his death some followers asserted that he was the imām in concealment and the Mahdī.⁴⁶ If this is so, the ideas must have been for him a basis for imminent action and not a justification for quietism.

In 'Abbāsīd propaganda emphasis was laid on the assertion that the imāmate had been formally transferred to the house of al-'Abbās by Abū Hāshim, son of Ibn al-Hanafīyah, just before his death in 716. In this way they hoped to become the focus of most of the Shī'ite feeling of the time, since, as maintained above, there was as yet no widespread recognition of the special qualities of the descendants of al-Ḥusayn. The claim to inherit the imāmate through Abū Hāshim was only abandoned by the caliph al-Mahdī (775–785), who asserted instead that the rightful imām after the Prophet was his uncle al-'Abbās; doubtless he did this to avoid giving even partial endorsement to the claims of the 'Alid opponents of the 'Abbāsīd regime.⁴⁷ To gain the more realistically-minded Shī'ites the 'Abbāsīds also claimed that they were seeking vengeance for the blood of Zayd. This was not just opportunism, for the 'Abbāsīds were nearer to the Zaydīyah than to the Kaysānīyah as the latter had developed. They were planning a movement to gain control of the caliphate, and were, therefore, thinking of the imām as an active leader. Like the Zaydīyah, too, they were concerned with the defence of "the weak", that is, the *mawālī*; and the extent of their concern is shown by their eventually backing Abū Muslim, a *mawlā*,

as their chief agent, though they may have been looking rather at the volume of support he was gaining among the *mawālī*.

When the materials from the heresiographers are thus linked with those from the historians, a fuller understanding is obtained of some aspects of early Shī'ism. The quest for the charismatic leader is seen to unite *mawālī* both Aramaean and Persian, with Yemenite Arabs, the core of the earliest Shī'ah. A period of relative quiescence follows. Then, when the Umayyad caliphate is clearly disintegrating, men turn to various forms of the conception of the imāmate in the attempt to find a viable alternative to the failing regime.

The article of Sabatino Moscati, "Per una Storia dell'antica Šī'a" (*RSO*, 30 [1955], 251–267), with its valuable discussion of the sources, unfortunately only came to my notice after this article had been written.

Notes

- * The following contractions are used in the notes:
 Ash. = al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn*, ed. H. Ritter, Istanbul, 1929–1930;
 Bagh. = al-Baghdādī, *Al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, Cairo, 1910;
 Nawb. = an-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq ash-Shī'ah*, ed. H. Ritter, Istanbul, 1931;
 Shahr. = ash-Shahrastānī, *K. al-Milal wa-'n-Nihal*, 3 vols., Cairo, 1948; also ed. W. Cureton, London, 1846.;
 Ṭab. = at-Ṭabarī, *Annales*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, Leiden, 1879–1901.
- 1 Bernard Lewis, *The Origins of Isma'ilism*, 25; cf. M. G. S. Hodgson, art. "'Abd Allāh b. Saba'" in *EI* (2). Cf. Israel Friedlaender, "'Abdallāh b. Sabā, der Begründer der Šī'a, und sein jüdischer Ursprung," *ZA*, xxiii, 296–324, xxiv, 1–46, esp. 27 f.
 - 2 This question is dealt with more fully in my forthcoming book, *Islam and the Integration of Society*.
 - 3 Ṭab., i, 3350 f.
 - 4 Shahr., i, 235.
 - 5 R. B. Serjeant (in *BSOAS*, xxi, 10 f.) calls attention to the contemporary belief that members of certain families have a charisma ("spiritual power", *sharaf*); this may be an interesting corroboration, but the possibility must not be overlooked that the modern belief is largely due to Shī'ite influences.
 - 6 Ṭab., ii, 136.
 - 7 *Ibid.*, 386.
 - 8 *Ibid.*, 497, 559, 566, 599, 601.
 - 9 Ṭab., i, 3363–8, 3380, 3382.
 - 10 For references to Ṭab., and Ibn al-Athīr see J. Wellhausen, *Die religiös-politischen Oppositionsparteien im alten Islam*, Göttingen, 1901, part I.
 - 11 From Tamīm came the Azāriqah (apart from their leader), and the leaders of the Sufriyah, Ibādīyah, and Bayhasīyah, together with Šāliḥ b. Musarriḥ. From Hanīfah came Nāfi' b. al-Azraq, Abū Fudayk, and the Najadāt. From Shaybān came the followers of Šāliḥ b. Musarriḥ and also Shabīb b. Yazīd.
 - 12 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, Leiden, 1866, 253 (tr. by P. K. Hitti, i, 405).
 - 13 Cf. *Muḥammad at Medina*, 124, 343, 366 with references.
 - 14 Cf. J. Ryckmans, *L'Institution Monarchique en Arabie avant l'Islam*, Louvain, 1951, 329 ff., etc.

- 15 Cf. H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, Chicago, 1948.
- 16 Ṭab., ii, 569 f.
- 17 Ibid., 634, 649.
- 18 Ibid., 634, etc.; cf. I. Friedlaender, "The Heterodoxies of the Shiites in the presentation of Ibn Hazm." *JAOS*, xxviii (1907), 1–80 and xxix (1909), 1–183, esp. xxix, 33 f.
- 19 Cf. Friedlaender, op cit. In Ash., i, 18–23 a number of small sects are reckoned as sub-divisions of the Kaysānīyah. Shahr. (i, 236) seems to regard the Mukhtārīyah as a sect of the Kaysānīyah, and perhaps also the four following sects.
- 20 Cf. Goldziher, *Muhammedunische Studien*, i, 106, quoting from *Al-'Iqd al-Farīd*, Būlāq, ii, 334.
- 21 Cf. *Muḥammad at Medina*, 344, based on Ibn Sa'd, iii, I.
- 22 Ibn Sa'd, v, 208 (Busr b. Sa'īd), 209 Humrān b. Abān), 220 ('Amr b. Rāfi'), 228 (Shuraḥbīl b. Sa'd); on p. 222 Sālim Sabalān is said to be of Egyptian origin, while Abū Sāliḥ Bādhām is almost certainly Persian, perhaps from South Arabia.
- 23 As also of the Khārījite movement, which had some support from *mawālī*.
- 24 Cf. al-Balādhurī, 242 f.
- 25 E.g. the three most famous scholars in Kūfah about 730 were *mawālī*—Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit (d. 737), al-Ḥakam b. 'Utaybah (d. 733), Ḥammād b. Abī Sulaymān (d. 738); Ibn Sa'd, vi, 223, 231 f. Cf. *ibid.*, 109, a *mawlā* Ussāq is still a Christian. Ka'b b. Sūr was a Christian who after conversion became a Muslim judge, Ṭab., i, 3178, 10, and C. Pellat, *Le Milieu Basrien . . .*, Paris, 1953, 288.
- 26 Nawb. 34; as noted by Friedlaender, *JAOS*, xxix, 90, al-Kashshī, *Ma'rifāt ar-Rijāl*, Bombay (1899), 1317, 196, gives the Persian words *yā pisar*, but this version seems less likely.
- 27 Nawb., 25.
- 28 Ibid., 31.
- 29 Goldziher, *RHR*, xliii, 23; cf. *JAOS*, xxix, 80 n.
- 30 Al-Balādhurī, 280 (tr. i, 440 f.).
- 31 Cf. A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, Baroda, 1938, 14–16.
- 32 *Muḥammad at Medina*, 344, nos. 2, 5; perhaps also no. 11.
- 33 Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen, 1859–60, 191 f., 235.
- 34 Cf. the early chapters of D. M. Donaldson's *The Shi'ite Religion*, London, 1933, which give the Imāmite sources.
- 35 Ṭab., ii, 1619 f.
- 36 Ibn Qutaybah, *K. ash-Shi'r*, ed. de Goeje, Leiden, 1900, 316–329; C. J. Lyall, *Mufaddalīyāt*, Oxford, 1918–21, i, 174, 7; Friedlaender, *JAOS*, xxix, 38 f.; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-A'yān*, ed. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen, 1835–43.
- 37 Cf. Ibn Hazm, *K. al-Fiṣal*, Cairo (1899), 1317, iv, 171 (quoted by Friedlaender, *ibid.* 92): many of the Ahl as-Sunnah thought that "commanding right and prohibiting wrong" was to be carried out by the heart and, if possible, by the tongue, but not by the hand or by force of arms; "all the Rawāfiḍ held this view, even if all were to be killed; but this (avoidance of weapons) was approved only while the "speaking" (imām) had not come forth; when he comes forth it is obligatory to draw swords along with him. "Because of this doctrine those who wanted to be active before the imām appeared used wooden clubs or strangled their enemies.
- 38 Nawb., 25 (with further references in the Index). There are many variations of his *nisbah* (cf. *JAOS*, xxix, 90); perhaps something with a South Arabian suggestion like Zubaydī might be possible; but the allegation that he married a daughter may indicate a Persian origin.
- 39 Ash., i, 23.

- 40 Nawb., 30, 25.
 41 Nawb., 52–5; A. S. Tritton, *Muslim Theology*. London. 1947. 23–5.
 42 Nawb., 34; Ash., i, 9 f.; Friedlaender, *JAOS*, xxix, Index; Bagh., 234 f.; Shahr., i, 257–300 (= Cureton. 135 f.).
 43 Nawb., 50 f.; Ash., i, 65–75; Bagh., 22–6; Shahr., i, 249–265 (= 115–21); *EI* (1), art. “al-Zaidīya”. Wellhausen, *Oppositionsparteien*, 96. following Ṭab. ii, 1676–8, 1698–1711, gives the principles on which his programme was to be based; they included the adoption of the Book and the Sunnah as standards, and the defence of “the weak”.
 44 Ash., i, 6, 22; Bagh., 233 f., 235 f.; Shahr., i, 244 f. (= 112 f.); Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, Calcutta, 1927, Index. Nawb., 29, 31, and Ibn Ḥazm, iv, 187 f., have “‘Abdallāh b. al-Ḥārith.” who may be the same; cf. *JAOS*, xxix, 124 ff.
 45 Ibn Ḥazm, iv, 186; Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*, 511, based on Ṭab., 1639 f.
 46 Nawb., 41 f.; Ash., i, 21 f.; etc. Cf. S. Moscati, art. “Abū Muslim” in *EI* (2).
 47 Nawb., 43.