

ISMAILIS



THROUGH

IISTORY

Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali



**Islamic Book Publisher
P.O. Box No. 5315
Karachi, Pakistan**

A Profile : Mr. Sadruddin Noorani

Lives of great men all received us. We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us. Footprints on the sands of time
(Longfellow)

It is indeed a unique occasion to introduce to the readers a personality of great distinction and respect.

Mr. Sadruddin Noorani, whose zeal to serve the communities with distinction is a "Reflect-o-Prospect" traditionally carried over from his ancestors. **Mr. Noorani's** grandfather, **Mr. Wali Muhammad Badalpara** had left behind a shining footprint to be emulated. He was known to have carried brick by brick on his shoulders to build a boarding school at Malia Hatina in District Junagadh, India. Over the years, the building has become a significant landmark as **His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan** would invariably stay at that building whenever he visits this historic city. The tradition of this noble services was carried over in same vein by **Mr. Noorani's** father, **Mr. Rajabali Badalpara** who also ventured in many meaningful welfare projects. His sterling contribution in A 60-Unit Housing Project at Mymensingh, Bangladesh is yet another glaring example of this family's resolve to serve the mankind.

Mr. Sadruddin Noorani has also retained the torch with the same breath as a gleaming beacon. His dedicated service to the Asian American Community and other civic contribution in U.S.A., has procured him an exceptional commendation and recognition from the Governor, State of Illinois, the Mayor, city of Chicago and many other notable offices of the United States of America. By virtue of being the only Muslim, who is elected for the fourth consecutive term as a member of Chicago's Local School Council, **Mr. Noorani** has been effectual in securing many notable progress towards:-

- * *The "Observance of Muslim Holidays and Festivals" In Chicago public schools;*
- * *Elimination of serving pork for school lunch;*
- * *Efforts are underway to Introduce Islamic Curriculum In 560 Chicago public schools;*
- * *Significant stride has been made towards "Bride Building" for Islam with many ethnic, local, mainstream American Communities and the government;*
- * *Inclusion of articles in Chicago schools newsletter which explain the "Salient Features" of different Islamic observances and festivals.*

We are confident that the admirable role of **Mr. Sadruddin Noorani** towards the community welfare shall be remembered and appreciated for a long time to come. We pray from the core of our hearts for his longer life and prosperity. (Amen)

P.S. - Some portion of this article is published through the kind courtesy of **"Unity Times International - U.S.A."** (February, 1996, Issue No. 66, Vol. IX)

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HISTORY

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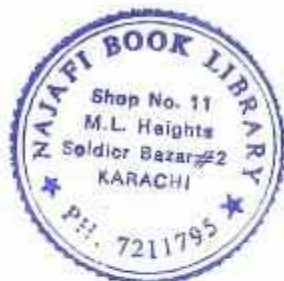
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ISMAILI historiography was connected with the beginning of orientalism when French scholar A.I. Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) wrote his famous **"Exposé sur la religion des Druzes"** (1838). But this was only a compilation of Sunni sources which were in general very hostile. That is why the real Ismaili historiography begun indeed under Sultan Muhammad Shah, the Aga Khan III at the very beginning of 20th century. A Persian scholar, Fidaï Khurasani was invited by the Imam in Bombay where he was able to achieve around 1902 his **"Hidayat-i Mu'minin"**. But this work was not really realized from a scientific point of view. The author included some miracles of the Imams even in modern times. With scholars like W. Ivanow (1886-1970) or L. Massignon (1883-1962), Ismaili studies growth but curiously, if the knowledge and the understanding of the Ismaili literature and doctrine increased, historiography was forsaken. However, in 1936, the editor of the review **"Ismaili"**, A.J. Chunara wrote the famous **"Noorum Moobin"** in Gujrati. It was the very first attempt in historiography from an Indian point of view. The book became very popular and it was reprinted; until now, most of the Khoja families possess it. A few years later, in 1940, A.S. Picklay produced the first synthesis in English. In 1964, a Libanese scholar, M. Ghalib, published the first attempt in the Arabian world. Since that period, F. Daftary published in 1990 his masterly **"The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines"**. Next year, in 1991, the Syrian scholar, Arif Tamir proposed his **"Tarikh al-Ismailiya"**. The first one embraced all the Ismaili community all over the world; the second is more involved into Arabic Ismailism.

TODAY, in 1995, a Pakistani Ismaili from Karachi, Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali published **"Ismailis through History."** I work in collaboration with him since many years. He allowed me to obtain very important Ismaili documents and arranged talks in National Tariqah Board when I was in Karachi, February, 1995. Mumtaz Ali Tajddin is well known for different works published in reviews or as separate booklets. For instance, there are **"Pir Shahabud Din Shah al-Rusayni"** in A.R. Kanji (ed.), **"Great**

Ismaili Heroes", Karachi, 1973; *"Imam Shamsud-din Mohammad"*, IIm, London, March-June, 1981, vol. 6, no. 4; *"Satpanth Literature"*, IIm, London, vol. 7, no. 1 and 2, July-November, 1981; *"Sayyida Bibi Imam Begum"*, Hidayat, Karachi, 1989; *"The Genealogy of the Aga Khan"*, Islamic Book Publishers, Karachi, 1990; *"Lawfulness of Imam's Photograph in Prayer-Hall in Islam: Tradition of Ismaili Muslims examined and elucidated"*, Karachi, 1990.

THIS new history is especially focused on the Ismaili Imams. Of course, some books about that topic have ever been written by Ismailis. But Mumtaz Ali Tajddin's one is important because it is the first one which is based on a scientific method. As a matter of fact, the author compares systematically different sources about a specific problem, and by way of rationality, he comes to a conclusion. The work is divided into six parts:- 1) *The Arabian period* 2) *Syrian period* 3) *North African and Egyptian period.* 4) *Alamut period* 5) *Post-Alamut period,* and 6) *The Aga Khans period.* All these parts form a blameless synthesis. Mumtaz Ali Tajddin quotes his sources but above the scientific outlook, the reading is very attractive because it allies successfully a living style and a strong analysis of the interaction of all the different factors which build history. Another important fact is that Mumtaz Ali Tajddin knows how to choose the right quotation. For instance, about the death of Sultan Muhammad Shah, he quotes the famous words of his son Prince Aly Khan; according to him, the last Aga Khan passed away repeating a verse of the Koran.

IT is important to note that Mumtaz Ali Tajddin is well acquainted with all the numerous literature about Ismaili studies. On the other hand, he uses often brand new sources. It is especially true in the modern times. Every reader can be sure to learn new informations. For instance, the author founded a document narrating Imam Ali Shah's funeral. According to one Mukhi Kassim Musa (d. 1314/1896), the journey from Bombay to Najaf lasted 25 days. Above all, this document teaches us how respected was the Imam even in the countries like Iraq. At the port of Kazimayn, 500 soldiers paid tribute to him with musket shootings. A crowd of over 15 thousand people turdged with the bier until Kerbala. Last but not least, Mumtaz Ali

Tajddin is able to indicate fields of research in Ismaili studies. His last words are an injunction to study Aga Khan IV's activities especially his various projects for the Shia Ismaili Muslim communities of different countries. **TWO** years ago, in February, 1993, I met Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan in Geneva, Switzerland. He asked me the question:- "What do you think about the future of the Ismaili community?" May be there was some preoccupation in his interrogation. I do not think that I gave a very good answer because in fact it is lost in my memory. On the other hand, I know quite well what I should answer now. The Ismaili community is well organized under the protection of Imam Shah Karim. The institutions developed in such a way as to integrate, after the fall of communism, the Central-Asian communities. Moreover, the spirit of Ismailism is alive and it is evident that it will never die. Because Ismaili tradition always produced - and then always will produce people like Muntaz Ali Tajddin. Ismaili institutions let the research freely develop. Muntaz Ali Tajddin is in the continuity of Ismaili scholar who, since oldest times, transmitted from generations to generations the essence of Ismailism: the quest of knowledge. Muntaz Ali's works is an undeniable proof that Ismaili mind is characterized by an unextinguishable craving for understanding. That is why I am convinced that each Ismaili family will own the book very soon. By way, Muntaz Ali will realize the Koranic injunctions to understand as well as Sultan Muhammad and Shah Karim's ones.

Michel Boivin

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**Associate Research fellow of Centre of Indian and South
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Fellow of the Asiatic Society (Paris)

November, 1996

PREFACE

The object of this volume is to afford the history of the Ismaili Muslims and their Imams. This small tract however does not pretend to be a comprehensive treatise, but it is an attempt to view the Ismaili history through the windows of accessible primary, secondary and modern traces. In deference to this atomic age when leisure is scarce and time more fleeting than ever, I have merely tried to recapture in thought and sketched the early historical factors which played a determining and instrumental role down to the present phases of Ismailism. I have endeavoured that this simple narration should provide at a glance, as it were, a general picture of Ismaili history, in the hope that it might induce the readers, particularly the young to dwell thought-fully on this picture and to make its features a subject for further study and contemplation. If but a single reader is thus persuaded and benefited by this labour of love, I should be amply rewarded.

The present essay does not claim to be an original study in a field hitherto unexplored, but it simply aims at bringing together in accessible form materials which will be of service to the intending students to reconstruct an order, keeping in view that the out-moded thought conched in old myths can no longer a little sense in this age.

Without the generous collaboration of several colleagues in the country and abroad, this volume would not have been possible. I wish to express my deep gratitude to the pioneer efforts of the individuals and institutions. Above all, I owe a debt of love to my elder brother, **Mr. Feroz Ali Tajddin**, who had laboured to give me secular education. I am indebted to **Miss Farida Allana** for suggesting me to prepare short notes for the students on Ismaili history, which ultimately prompted me to compile this volume. I owe a great debt of gratitude to my friend, **Dr. Michel Boivin**, who during his short visit to Karachi in February, 1995, has inspected the draft, and prepared a Forward for the book. I am highly thankful to the world renowned senior Ismaili missionary, **Abu Aly A. Aris** of Canada for his timely guidance and valuable remarks on this volume. A special debt of gratitude is owed to **Mr. Zulfikar R. Meghani** and **Miss Nabila Hashwani**, who

contributed tireless hours in computer works during last four years with zeal and interest. I acknowledge my indebtedness to **Mr. Shaukat Sabzali**, whose advices and aids were of inestimable value to this project, and with him the kind cooperation of **Mr. Salim L. Ladhe** shall also be remembered. Acknowledgement is also due to **Mr. Kassim Ali Kurban Sadiwalla** of Bombay for encouraging in this project from time to time. I am highly grateful to **Mr. Mehr Ali Ashiq Ali** of Karachi for financing and helping from time to time. Lastly, I am thankful to **Mr. Aziz Ali Muhammad Jiwani**, **Mr. Noor Ali Valliani** of Hyderabad, **Mr. Sultan Ali Aswani** and **Mr. Farid Fazal Punjwani** for their timely help and encouragement.

I am not an authority in Ismaili history. This is also not a doctoral dissertation, but an output of an arduous work, labour and interest of one individual. Of its many errors, alike in plan and execution, I am fully conscious, no doubt, my attention will soon be called.

Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali
Karachi. (Pakistan)

PROPHET MUHAMMAD (571-632 A.D.)

Progress made by humanity in the Near East and Europe suffered a severe setback after the fall of the Roman empire, and the 6th century saw Europe almost relapse into barbarism once again. Hardly could any Christian read or write; the priestly class enforcing on their followers the motto of Pope Gregory that "**ignorance is the mother of devotion**", demanded blind obedience to their dogmas. Likewise in Asia, the Hinduism, Buddhism and other cults had deteriorated, becoming mere bundles of outward forms and ceremonial worship. It was at this juncture that the greatest reformer Muhammad, the son of Abdullah bin Abdul Muttalib arose in Arabia. Through his love of knowledge and reverence for learning, mediaeval Europe once more was to become acquainted with art and science and the way was to be paved for the Renaissance. Stanwood Cobb, founder of the Progressive Education Association, states in similar vein:- "Islam, impinging culturally upon adjacent Christian countries, was the virtual creator of the Renaissance in Europe." (vide "**Islam's Contribution to the World Culture**", World Order, 6:202,9/40)

The origin of the word "Arab"

Hitherto, the first actual use of the word **Arab** in history is to be found in an Assyrian inscription of 853 B.C., commemorating the defeat of a mutinous chieftain, called **Gindibu the Aribi** during the reign of king Shalmaneser III (858-824 B.C.). Arabs are then mentioned quite often, until the 6th century B.C. as **Aribi** or **Arabu** that indicates a vassalage to the Assyrians. The first Greek who is accredited to have acquired some geographical knowledge was Homer, who flourished in 1000 or 800 B.C. He has referred to the Syrians under the name **Arimi** (the Biblical, **Aram**) and the Arabs under the name of **Erembi**. The place-name **Arabia** occurs for the first time in Greek writings. Herodotus (484-425 B.C.), followed by most other Greek and Latin writers, extended the term **Arabia** and **Arab** to the whole peninsula and everything in it, even including the eastern desert of Egypt between the Red Sea

and the Nile. References to the Arabs, in addition, are also found in the anonymous "**Periplus of the Erythraean Sea**" (between 95 A.D. and 130 A.C.). The word **Saracen**, first used in Greek literature too, is a transcription of an Arabic word meaning "easterner." As for the Arabs' use of the word, it occurs for the first time in the ancient epigraphical material originating in southern Arabia, where it is clearly used for Bedouin. In the north, the word is used firstly in the 4th century A.D., in one of the oldest surviving records of the language that became classical Arabic.

Further account of the Arabs comes in the 10th chapter of Genesis of the Old Testament, which names the descendants of Noah, whose elder son, Shem is regarded as the ancestor of the Hebrews, Arabs and Armaens, - the speakers of Semitic language. But the term **Arabs** is not explicitly mentioned in Genesis. It is however suggested that the "mixed multitude" (Hebrew, **erev**) mentioned in Exodus (xii, 38) as having accompanied the Israelites into the wilderness from Egypt may be for Arabs. According to "**Dictionary of the Bible**" (ed. by James Hastings, New York, 1898, 1st vol., p. 135), "The employment of the name Arab for an inhabitant of any portion of the vast peninsula known to us as Arabia, begins somewhere in the 3rd century B.C., though the only trace of it in Old Testament is in the 2 ch., 21, where the Arabians that are near the Ethiopians' would seem naturally to refer to the neighbours of the Habasha, whence there are grounds for placing in the extreme south of Yamen." The word **arabia** is expressly given to this country in the Old Testament (I Kings x. 15) when describing the visit of the Queen Sheba to Sololmon, which took place 1005 B.C. We also find the word **arabah** in Deut. i. 7 and ii. 8. Some writers hold that the village called **Arabah**, situated near Tehama, may be the name for the whole peninsula, an opinion scarcely deserving the least notice.

In the Bible, the name **Arab** is the first word used in the second book of Chronicles (xvii, 11) to refer to nomads from the east bank of the Jordan river in the time of king Jehosophat (900-800 B.C.), such as "...and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats."

The word **arab** or **arabah** is probably derived from a Semitic

root related to nomadism. In the Arabic language, the word **arab** (derived from i'rab), means "those who speak clearly" as contrast with **ajam** (those who speak indistinctly). In Holy Koran, the word **arab** has never used for the country of Arabia, but characterised the residence of Ismail, the son of Abraham as an "**uncultivated land**." In the time of Ismail his place of residence had no name, therefore, it was given the name of an "**uncultivated land**." In the Old Testament, the word **midbar** is used for Ismail's home, meaning a **desert** or a **barren land**, which closely corresponds to the Koranic description.

The peninsula was divided by the ancient geographers into **Arabia Petraea**, **Arabia Felix** and **Arabia Deserta**. The Arabia Petraea corresponded to the present Hijaz and eastern Najd. Arabia Felix to Yamen and Hazarmawt and Arabia Deserta comprised the rest of the country. Arab Peninsula (**jazirat al-Arab**) is situated in south-west Asia, embosomed with sea waters on its three sides, i.e., the Red Sea in the west, the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman in the east, and the Arabian Sea in the south; is considered to be a largest peninsula in the world with an area of about 1,230,000 sq. miles, i.e., about one third of Europe, or almost six times bigger than France, ten times that of Italy and eight times bigger than Switzerland. Geographically it is an extension of the Sahara desert. It is divided into various parts of which Hijaz, Najd, Yamen, Hazarmawt and Oman are most important. The whole land is almost barren. The climate is extremely hot in summer and the coastal tracts are among the most torrid regions.

Ancestry of Muhammad

The historians traced the genealogy of Muhammad from Ismail, the son of Abraham. Ismail was born in 1910 B.C., and Muhammad in 571 A.D., therefore, the time elapsed between these two personages was almost 2480 years. During this period, there were seventy generations from Ismail to Muhammad. The most ancient and authentic of all the traditions of Arabia have been acknowledged without the least hesitation that the temple of the Kaba at Mecca had been constructed in 19th century B.C. by Abraham, who was assisted in his work by his son Ismail. The original name of the temple was **Beth-el** (House of God), but it received

the general appellation of **Kaba** as being of a cubical form. At the time of its erection, the temple of Kaba remained in possession of Ismail, after whose death his descendants became the supreme guardians of the sacred building. His descendants for the most part, migrated to different portions of the peninsula. After another considerable interval of time, the Amalekites became the sole owners of the Kaba. On this occasion, the Ismailites and the Jorhamites united together in driving out their common foe, the Amalekites, and having succeeded in so doing, the Jorhamites became the masters of the hallowed edifice.

Ismail had 12 sons, one of them being Kaidar by name whose progeny spread over the Arabian province of Hijaz. Again, it is concurred on all hands among the Arabs that Adnan, to whom Muhammad traced his descent, was also a scion of Ismail in about the fortieth generations. Further down, in the ninth descent from Adnan, there followed Nadzr bin Kinana. Another descent in the genealogical scale and then comes in the ninth place, one, Qassi by name. The supreme charge of the sacred temple then fell into the hands of Qassi in due course. Qassi established a consultative body, its meetings were held in the Kaba for decisions to be taken with regard to war, trade, tribal affairs etc. Qassi collected the scattered tribe, which gave him the title of **Qoraish**, the word is derived from **taqreish** means one who brings together to the clans. Qassi died probably in 480 A.D., and from him the charge of the Kaba descended to his eldest son, Abdul Dar, from whom the chief offices held by him were transferred to his brother, Abd Munaf.

It must be known that the principal offices in connection with the Kaba were five altogether:- 1st, **Sicaya** and **Rifada**, the exclusive privilege of supply water and food to the pilgrims; 2nd, **Kiyada**, the command of the army in time of war; 3rd, **Siva**, the right of becoming standard bearer; 4th, **Hijaba**, the guardianship of the temple of Kaba, and 5th, **Nadwa**, the right of presidency of the council. After the death of Abd Munaf, a family strife arose among his sons, on which account the offices were divided in the following order:- Hashim was invested with the charge of **Sicaya** and **Rifada**, while the descendants of Abdul Dar retained the custody of the Kaba, the presidency of the council and the right of becoming standard bearer.

When Hashim was installed to the offices, he was proved a capable and generous. He married a girl from his own family and she gave birth to his son, Asad, who in due course became the maternal grandfather of Ali bin Abu Talib, as Asad's daughter, Fatima bint Asad was Ali's mother. Hashim's second marriage actualised with a girl of Banu Najjar being noble from both sides. She gave birth to a son, called Abdul Muttalib, who later rose to be a man of great nobility and fame. Hashim died in 510 A.D., who left his dignities to his elder brother, Almutallib, after whom his nephew, Abdul Muttalib, the son of Hashim, succeeded to his paternal offices.

The Zamzam, which is a well at present in Kaba, was in days of yore, a small rill of water flowing from one of the neighbouring hills, it being the same fountain which Hagar, the mother of Ismail had discovered in the desert, and where she and her son settled. After a time, however, the water ceased gushing from its mountain source, and the little stream completely dried up. A considerable time afterwards, Abdul Muttalib had a well dug on the very spot where the spring originally was in extant. It was also in the time of Abdul Muttalib that the Yamenite king, called Abrahah invaded Mecca, but was discomfited in his attempt and compelled to make a disgraceful retreat. Since Abrahah's army had come on elephants which the Arabs had never seen before, therefore, they named the year of the event as *amul feel* (the year of elephant). Abdul Muttalib died in the height of his glory and left indelible marks of his greatness. Abdullah was one of the sons of Abdul Muttalib, who married to Amina bint Wahab. To this noble couple was born Muhammad, but before he was born his revered father died while on a journey.

From this land originated a great revolutionary wave called ISLAM, in the 7th century - a period of darkness when the sun of Islam rose on the horizon of the Arabian peninsula. Mecca (the Greek's *Macoraba* or *Rahba*), a town in the Arab peninsula, has been celebrated through the ages because it encircles the House of God (*ka'batullah*), an ancient sanctuary sacred to the Arabs.

Pre-Islamic conditions

Demoralised state is perhaps the most comprehensive phrase through which the pre-Islamic world can be concisely

picturised. The whole world lay in the fast grip of paganism, savagery, debauchery, anarchy and other vices. Autocracy and despotism prevailed at an extreme in every religion. The poor were trampled down and persecuted by the rich and humanity groaned under the curse of inhumanity. Under this heavy incubus of religious was Arabia groaning when Islam suddenly and unexpectedly appeared.

The period preceding the advent of Muhammad has been designated the Dark Age by the Koran (vide 33:33 & 48:26), which epitomizes in two words. Virtually, the whole Arabia was enjoying complete independence, and the neighbouring empires of Byzantine and Iran paid no attention to Arabs who were thought to be barbaric, poor and hungry. There was no central government to enforce law and order in the peninsula. The whole Arabia was rent into innumerable petty states, each clan forming a separate and independent political unit. Each tribe had a chief of its own who would lead it in battle against a hostile tribe to vindicate its rights. Tribal prejudice was common and small incidents would lead to bitter feuds which continued for generations. But there was no law whatsoever, binding the tribe to the nation. The whole peninsula was thus like a hornet's nest.

The daily life of a Bedouin was nothing more than that of a shepherd, obtaining their livelihood from the rearing of animals, pitching their tents within certain limits and wandering in quest of water and pasture. Some, however, being more disposed to a settled life, congregated together, formed villages and the number of these still further increasingly grew into towns and cities. Their time was occupied in tillage, in the cultivation of palm tree and of other trees and plants whose fruits sustained their life.

The social condition of Arabs was deplorable as it was steeped in immorality. Human sacrifice was commonly practised. Ancient Arabs literature is stunk with wine and other strong liquors, containing a treasure of its expressions. During a state of drunkenness, acts of the most shameless vice and profigacy were indulged in by the whole assembly. Rum-shops were well decorated. Gambling was the next favourite pastime for them. Adultery was

another vice to which the whole of Arabia was hopelessly wedded. The enemies were burnt alive, pregnant women had their bellies slashed, innocent babes and children were massacred. Usuary was in vogue. The women, having no right and no social respect, were the worst sufferer in the society. They were regarded as chattels and were looked with bitter contempt. A man was free to marry any number of women and could divorce as he wished. Women were deprived of the right of inheritance. The Arabs were embarrassed at the birth of daughters and sometimes, the fathers buried them alive in spite of soul-harrowing cries. It was a custom for the eldest son to take as a wives his father's widows, inherited as a property with the rest of the estate. Slavery was another curse having a firm hold on the Arab society. The masters possessed the authority of life and death over them. The worst type of obscene language was used in expressing sex-relations. Stories of love and illicit relationships were narrated proudly and with utter want of shame in verses of the most indecent kind. In sum, women were accorded no better treatment than lower animals. Robbery, pillage and murder were also of common occurrence; human blood being almost daily shed without remorse or horror. On the death of any person, the custom was to tie his camel to his tomb and suffer it to be starved to death, and this camel they called *beliyah*. Nevertheless, the Arabs possessed certain natural virtues that marked them out in the post-Islamic age. They were the most eloquence nation, plain of speech, strong of memory, firm of determination, superb horsemen, loyal and trustworthy.

Religiously the Arabs were idolatrous. There were separate god and goddess for each city, tribe and locality and were figured according to the fancy of worshippers. The Kaba alone was housed with 360 idols, each personifying a representative deity of its respective tribe. *Lat* was a idol fixed at Taif as the deity of Thaqif tribe. *Uzza* was the god of Qoraish and Kanna tribes in Mecca, and the *Manat* was the deity of Aws and Khazraj tribes in Medina. Among them, *Hubal* was regarded as a biggest, and it stood on the summit of the Kaba. Within the Kaba was placed the images of Abraham, having arrows, called *arlam* in his hand, and a lamb standing beside him; as well as of Ismail in the same position painted on the walls of the temple. Either a statue of Mary, having Jesus Christ in her lap, was placed on the walls of temple, or her likeness in that position was painted on the walls. Besides, the Humayr of

Yamen were the sun worshippers and the Kanna worshipped the moon. Human destiny was associated with the movements of the stars. Phenomena of nature affecting the fortunes of man for good or evil were attributed to their influence.

The Jews migrated and settled in Arabia probably in 5th century B.C. They gained their foothold at Khaibar and began to propagate their faith. About the 3rd century B.C., the king of Yamen, Dhu-Nawas by name, embraced Judaism. This added fresh momentum to the Jewish movement, and in the course of time Judaism won considerable ascendancy in Arabia. But the Arab nation as a whole remained addicted to its ancestral religion of idol-worship.

The Christian missionaries also began pouring into Arabia in the 3rd century A.D., and settled in Najran. Their activities were supplemented a good deal by the political influence of the two Christian powers in the neighbourhood of Arabia, the Abyssinian to the west and the Roman empire to the north. Beyond this Christianity could make no headway and had a very little impact on the rotten society of the Arabs.

Unlike the rest of the Arabs, only the Hashimite family, the descendants of Abraham, adhered to their ancestral faith of monotheism, known as the *Hanif*. It was a small band of earnest men who discarded idolatry.

The corrupt morale of the Arabs reached its zenith, rather to a catastrophe of their ethical death. The whole Arab society was submerged in social evils, and life had no worth to them, neither was their conduct governed by any ethical code. Wine, gambling, slaughter and all inhuman indulgences were just synonymous to the very name of Arab.

Birth of Muhammad

Abdullah, the son of Abdul Muttalib, and the father of Muhammad, was then 24 years of age, affianced to Amina bint Wahab. Briefly was the wedded life of Abdullah and Amina. Shortly after the marriage her husband set out on a mercantile expedition to Yathirab, leaving the young pregnant wife who was destined to see him no more. It was their first and last parting, for on the return journey,

Abdullah sickened and died before his wife was delivered. He was buried in Dar-i Nabigha, among the Banu Najjar. For the support of his widow, Abdullah left behind him no richer legacy than four camels, a flock of goats and a slave girl. Muhammad was therefore destined to be a posthumous.

Under the rocks of the Abu Kobeis, which rise eastward of Mecca over the narrow valley, stood the house of Amina, the birthplace of her only son. On the morning of Monday, April 22, 571 A.D., a grandson was born to Abdul Muttalib, who named him **Muhammad** (the extolled one). He gave a banquet in honour of his grandson to which he invited a number of Qoraish tribesmen and peers. When they inquired from him why he had chosen to name **Muhammad**, thus changing the tradition of using the ancestors' names, Abdul Muttalib answered, "I did so with the wish that my grandson would be praised by God in heaven and on earth by men."

"To the Arab nation" writes Thomas Carlyle in **"Heroes and Hero-Worship"** (London, 1850, p. 101), "it was as a birth from darkness into light; Arabia first became alive by means of it. A poor shepherd people, roaming unnoticed in its deserts since the creation of the world; a Hero-Prophet was sent down to them with a word they could believe." John William Draper also writes in **"History of the Intellectual Development of Europe"** (London, 1875, 1st vol., p. 329) that, "Four years after the death of Justinian, 571 A.D., was born at Mecca, in Arabia, the man who, of all men, has exercised the greatest influence upon the human race." According to **"The Life of Mahomet"** (London, 1930, p. 171) by Dermenghem, "Muhammad appeared on the scene at one of the darkest periods in all history, when all the civilizations, from Merovingian Gaul to India, were falling to ruin or were in a state of troubled gestation."

Mecca, also known as **Umm al-Qura** (mother of towns), about forty miles from the Red Sea, lay in an arid valley, embosomed with torrid rocks. The streets were narrow and piled high with dirt and garbage. The air was heavy in Mecca and the children there grew up pale, weak and sickly. All about and around Mecca was desert, whose air was limpid. For this reason, it was a custom among the Arab gentry and nobility that the mother did not nurse

their children. They would give their suckling infants into the charge of Bedouin women shortly after birth to suckle and nourish them. Abdul Muttalib assigned his grandson into the nursing care of Halima al-Sadiyyah, the daughter of Abu Dhuayb, belonging to the clan of Sa'd, near Mount Taif, situated to the east of Mecca. The little Muhammad's five years of life spent in the tents of this wandering tribe. Having nurtured for a period of five years, the wet nurse Halima gave him back to his mother, Amina, who also died after one year. Henceforward, Abdul Muttalib was both mother and father to the orphaned child. But this was not to be for long either. The old man died when Muhammad was eight. The dying Abdul Muttalib had already consigned the guardianship of Muhammad to his son, Abu Talib, who discharged the trust kindly and faithfully. His fondness for his charge equalled that of Abdul Muttalib. He made him sleep by his bed, eat by his side, and go with him wherever he walked. Tor Andrae writes in **"Mohammed the Man and his Faith"** (London, 1936, p. 48) that, "It is said of Abu Talib that he loved Mohammed greatly. He would not sleep unless the lad were at his side, and he never cared to go out without him. He noticed also that a blessing accompanied the future prophet. When Mohammed was not present, Abu Talib's family could not eat." This tender treatment was continued until his nephew emerged from childhood. In the twelfth year of age, Muhammad travelled with his uncle in a trade-caravan to Syria. It was during this journey that Muhammad is said to have met a Christian anchorite, called Bahira. Beholding the boy, so goes the story, he could discern in his face marks of the future greatness and he advised Abu Talib to take good care of him, for he would some day be the recipient of Divine call.

Muhammad took part in the battle at the age of twenty, between the Qoraish and the Qais which goes under the name of **Harb al-Fijar**, i.e., a war of transgression, so called because it was fought in the sacred months when warfare was forbidden. But his part in it was not that of actual fighting, but only of handing over arrows to his uncles. After that, he participated in the alliance known as **Hilf al-Fudzul**, formed to vindicate the rights of the weak and the oppressed against tyranny. Each member of the alliance was bound in honour to defend the helpless against all manner of oppression. The credit of taking the lead in the formation of this humanitarian organisation was due to Muhammad and his family, Banu Hashim. His early

inclinations to render help to the distressed go to show that human sympathy was implanted in his very nature.

At this early age, Muhammad's integrity had already won household fame in the town of Mecca. He was commonly known as *al-Amin*, the trustworthy. The epithet does not imply honesty alone, but is all-comprehensive, denoting righteousness in every form. Whosoever happened to have any dealings with him at this period, never ceased to praise him all his life. It was about this time that the necessity arose for the reconstruction of the Kaba. The requisite material being all provided, the Qoraish jointly undertook the work. In the course of construction a serious dispute arose as to who should have the proud privilege of laying the Black Stone. This might have resulted in the outbreak of inter-tribal feuds, when there rose a hoary-headed man with his elderly advice to refer the matter to an arbitrator. Whoever, he suggested, should be the first to appear at the Kaba the following day, should be accepted as a judge to decide the point at issue. The proposal was unanimously agreed to. All were eagerly awaiting the next morning, when lo, to the satisfaction of all it was a personage no other than Muhammad. "Here is al-Amin! Here is al-Amin!" all shouted in one voice. And the general confidence in him was fully justified. Taking a sheet of cloth he placed the Black Stone thereon with his own hands, and then he invited principal men from every clan to hold the sheet by the four ends and thus equally shared in the honour of lifting the stone to its position.

Marriage of Muhammad

A high-placed widow, Khadija, who had acquired in pre-Islamic days, by her virtue the titles of *Tahira* (the virtuous) and *Saiyyadah-i Qoraish* (the princess of the Qoraish), hearing of the righteousness of Muhammad, entrusted to him the sole charge of her business. He accepted an office in the service of Khadija and was immediately placed at the head of a caravan and sent to Syria accompanied by Maysara, one of the slaves of Khadija. Before long much profit accrued to her through his honest dealings. The personal attributes and moral grace in Muhammad attracted the attention and won the admiration of Khadija. So honestly Muhammad did transact the widow's trade that she caused a proposal of marriage,

which met the approval of Abu Talib. Thus was he married, at the age of twenty-five, to a widow, fifteen years older than himself.

Beginning of Ministry

Always tormented by and concerned with the sinful and blasphemous pursuits of his native fellows, Muhammad kept pondering over the reforms of their ethnic beliefs and savage character. Even when his people were steeped in vices and immoralities of the worst type, he was straight with pure and stainless soul. His soul could not be satisfied with its milieu. Thomas Carlyle writes, "From of old, a thousand thoughts, in his pilgrimings and wanderings, had been in this man: What am I? What is this unfathomable thing I live in, which men name universe? What is life; what is death? What am I to believe? What am I to do? The grim rocks of Mount Hira, of Mount Sinai, the stern solitudes answered not. The great heavens rolling silent overhead, with its blue-glancing stars, answered not. There was no answer. The man's own soul and what of God's inspiration dwelled there, had to answer" (Ibid. pp. 63-4). It was indeed the spiritual self of Muhammad that solved all the problems which his thinking and inquisitive soul put to him. He had prepared his soul by years of exercises, introspection, and communion to give the answer.

For years after his marriage, Muhammad would frequently take a provision of dates and oatmeal for food and retire for days into a cave he had found at the top of a cone-shaped mountain, called Hira, some three miles from Mecca. He used to spend night after night in that solitary cave far away from all the worldly turmoils. Here he eagerly pondered and contemplated in long and lonely vigils to search after One and Only God. His periods of loneliness became more frequent and his vigils lengthened. He prayed ardently, opening his whole heart to his Creator Whom his soul longed to meet. He became so fully absorbed in the ecstasy of his devotions that he would remain for days in the mountain cavern. Often his beloved wife brought him food. This went on for a considerable length of time, till at last, in his fortieth year, a great unseen was revealed to him. The light of God was fully reflected in Muhammad. He had reached the stage of

self-elevation when duality becomes non-existent and only One remains.

The earliest sources relate that the moon on that day of the eve of Ramadan enwrapped Hira. The birds were still in their nests and not a sound or movement disturbed this heavy quiet. It was though as everything were pegged to its place and nothing existed save the heavens and the earth. Tonight, a few roaming shepherds had seen Muhammad go there. Now there was no one else, only the sky and the earth and the crescent moon between them, rising sometimes aloft and sinking to the edge of the horizon. Stricken with panic Muhammad came home from Hira on that morning, strangely troubled, his great eyes dilated in wonder. "Cover me up, Khadija, cover me up!" he said in feverish agitation. After a while, he became calmer and spoke thus, "A strange vision appeared to me in the cave of Hira tonight. The vision said, 'I am the angel Gabriel, sent by God.' Then he asked me to read. 'I am unlettered', I said. Upon this he clasped me to his bosom and held me firmly. Then he let me go and asked me to read. I gave the same answer. He clasped me once again, and asked once again to read. And embracing me the third time, he chanted, 'Read! in the name of thy Lord, Who created; He created man from a clot. Read! full of magnificence is thy Lord Who made the pen the vehicle of knowledge and taught man what he knew not.' Suddenly the words came alive to me; my limbs were all atremble." Khadija was sorely worried at first, but soon regained her composure and comforted him. "Fear not, my noble one", she said, "but rejoice. God will not forsake you in this affair nor expose you to shame. For you are good and kind and truthful. You are hospitable to the passing stranger, you aid and comfort the poor and the lowly, and support the virtuous in righteous deeds."

Waraka bin Naufal was Khadija's cousin. Wearying of idolatry he was on the look-out for a true faith and had at length embraced Christianity. Probably she had heard him talk of the appearance of the Promised Prophet, the Comforter whose advent had been foretold by Jesus. As soon as she found Muhammad called to that office, she took him to her cousin, out of sympathy, of course, for the latter who had lost his eyesight and was unable to move. No sooner did Waraka hear what inspiration Muhammad had received and how, than he spontaneously exclaimed: "This is the very angel Gabriel that God sent down to Moses."

Hence, the foremost to profess faith in the truth of Muhammad's mission was his wife Khadija.

Edith Holland writes in "**The Story of Mohammed**" (London, 1914, p. 18) that, "It was in the desert that Abraham, journeying by the guidance of the stars, came to the knowledge of all-powerful God, far above the vain idols of man's imaginings. Moses, during his long sojourn in the wilderness, never doubted the near presence of a mighty God, a sure help in time of trouble. In later years the Prophet of Arabia, wandering among the barren hills of his native lands, saw in the wonders of nature sure signs of the greatness of the Creator, and there came upon him the conviction that "God is One, the Eternal", that there is none like unto Him."

We must pause here for a while to focus a key point that no formal prayers had been instituted then, no month of fasting was ordained then. The law of Islam itself had not been promulgated. The Islamic *Shariah* was not yet enforced. But Muhammad had reached to that lofty stage of spiritual evolution that his soul had acquired eternal bliss. His soul had realized the Truth for itself. When the evolution of his spirituality had reached a high stage by self-abnegation and self-surrender, he was chosen by God to be His messenger to His people with the message of Islam. He was commissioned to set the best example to humanity.

Cessation of revelation

After the first revelation, Gabriel did not visit Muhammad for some time. This is known as the period of *fatrat al-wahy* or the cessation of revelation. There is great divergence of opinion as to the duration of this period. With some it was two or three years long. But the version of Ibn Abbas that it lasted but for a short time, is more reliable and corroborated by historical evidence. The story that during this period, Muhammad would go out to the tops of mountains to hurl himself headlong is sheer nonsense. According to the established criteria of the authenticity of reports, this is not reliable, for Zuhri, from whom the report has come down, belonged to a later generation. In truth, the Divine Light, after which Muhammad had been so eagerly seeking, disappeared no

sooner than it had flashed upon his mind. This made him all the more restless. All the more did his heart long to hear once again the word of God. It was thus in search of what was so dear to his heart that he would go out to mountains.

At length, there came an end to the period of cessation. To Muhammad, the period looked unusually long; for it was a period of separation from One he loved with all his heart. The number of Muslims continued to grow and the conversion of some prominent men from among the Qoraish added to the strength of the small brotherhood. At the outset, the opposition of the Meccans to the message of Islam took the form of sneering and jeering at Muhammad. They did not attach much importance to the mission, thinking that it would die out in due course. It was treated with contempt and indifference unworthy of any serious attention. Resort to violence was not yet thought necessary. When they passed by the believers, they would laugh and wink at them by way of derision. Sometimes they would call Muhammad an idle visionary, given to poetic fancies, destined to come to nought as a matter of course. There was something wrong with his brain, they would say. Once, when Muhammad was saying his prayers in the Kaba, lying prostrate, Abu Jahl placed the dirty foetus of a she-camel on his neck. As he used to go out of his house for prayers at early dawn, one way adopted to annoy him was that branches of prickly shrubs were strewn on his way, so that owing to darkness he should become entangled in them. Sometimes dust was thrown at him; sometimes he was pelted with stones. One day a number of the Meccans fell upon him. One, Uqba bin Abi Mu'ait threw his mantle around his neck and twisted it till he was on the point of getting strangled. But the brunt of the oppression had to be borne by those not coming of some family of note among the Qoraish, especially by the slaves, male as well as female. These were subjected to the most cruel tortures. Bilal, the Abyssinian, was tortured in a most heartless manner by his master to make him renounce Islam. His oppressor would make him lie flat on burning ground under the scorching heat of the sun at midday. Heavy slabs of stone were then placed on his chest, so that he could scarcely breathe. He lay gasping for breath and writhing with agony under the weight of the heavy stone. Notwithstanding such extremely painful torments he would loudly repeat in a state of senselessness, **Ahad** (One), i.e., there is but One God. Ammar's father, Yasir, and his

mother, Sumayya, were persecuted in a most barbarous way. The story of their afflictions makes one's hair stand on end. Yasir's legs were tied to two camels and the beasts were driven in opposite directions. He was brutally torn to pieces. Sumayya was killed in a similar brutal but far more disgraceful manner. Lubaina was the hand-maid of Umar. The latter used to go on beating her in his pre-conversion days till he would get tired. Then he would say: "I leave you now, not because I pity you, but because I am tired of beating you."

For the first three years, Muhammad kept his missionary activities underground. Neither the rancor of Arab chiefs nor the antagonism of other opponents in Qoraish prevented the underground secret mission of Islam. This period of Muhammad's life is one of the noblest and greatest pages of human history. To those who did harm him, Muhammad prayed for guidance, for liberation from the yoke of vile paganism. The more they persecuted, the more patience and resolve Muhammad showed in his mission. One must not forget the deep-rooted faith of the handful Muslims at a time when the new religion was not even complete and the Holy Koran was not yet fully revealed.

But in the fourth year, Muhammad received a divine command to preach his mission to the public. In compliance, he invited his kinsmen to a feast exclusively arranged for them. Tabari (d. 310/922) in "*Tarikh al-Rusul wa'l Muluk*" (ed. de Goeje, Leiden, 1879-1901, 2nd vol., p. 63) and Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845) in "*Kitab at-Tabaqat*" (ed. E. Sachau, Leiden, 1905, 1st vol., p. 171) write that after the feast was over, Muhammad addressed the participants, "Friends and Kinsmen! I hereby declare that I have brought unto you a blessing in this world and in the world to come. I do not think there could be anyone else throughout the whole of Arabia, to come out with a better and more precious offer towards this nation than that of mine. I am commanded by my Lord to invite you all towards Him. Tell me! who amongst you will come forward to help me and to be my vicegerent? The spell of hush prevailing over the audience, was broken by impatient courage of Ali, the son of Abu Talib, who responded with enthusiasm and said, "O Prophet of God! I am the youngest of all here, yet I beg to offer myself to stand by you and to share all your burdens and earn the great privilege of being your vicegerent." Muhammad caused Ali to sit down. Again he put the question to the assemblage. All remained silent but

Ali rose for a second time to repeat his fidelity, and was again ordered to sit down. When Muhammad repeated the same question to the congregation the third time, he got no response. Ali again stood up and repeated his fidelity on which Muhammad remarked, "You are my brother, my collateral and vicegerent." This evoked the hostility of the Qoraish tribe towards Muhammad and his followers. They leapt angrily to their feet and walked out, and their murmurings and protests echoed back into the house as they passed through the courtyard into the street.

On the following day, when Muhammad went to the Kaba, he was greeted with scornful gestures. "This is the man who claims to bring us messages from the heaven," they shouted and began to joke at him.

Migration to Abyssinia

When the sufferings and tribulations of the Muslims at the hands of the Meccans reached to its extreme in 615 A.D., Muhammad directed that those of them who could afford it should migrate to Abyssinia across the Red Sea, whose kings were known as the Negus (*Najashi*). As-Hama, the then Negus was a Christian king. Under the direction of Muhammad, eleven men and four women from among the Muslims migrated to Abyssinia. When the Meccans came to know of their migration, they were much upset and sent some men after them in pursuit, but the Muslims had a long start and could not be overtaken. This infuriated the malicious ones among the Meccans. They formed a deputation under Abdullah bin Rabi and Amr bin A'as, who went to Abyssinia with handsome presents to persuade the king to deliver the emigrants into their hands. In due course, this deputation stood in the presence of the king and listened to their representation. Then he sent for the refugees and asked them what they had to say.

Jafar, nick-named *Taiyar* (the flying), the son of Abu Talib and brother of Ali, acting as spokesman for the Muslims, stood forth and made reply, "O'king, we belong to a people steeped in ignorance. Our fathers and grandfathers worshipped idols. They ate carrion and other things unclean. They gambled and fornicated and indulged in other sins. They knew no pity, nor compassion nor human sympathy. They oppressed and persecuted the weak and the helpless. They robbed and killed without compunction. For

centuries our people lived thus and then God in His mercy sent us the light. From among these cruel and headstrong people, He deputed a man to be His prophet and His messenger. This man was already known to his people as the trusted one and everyone bore testimony to the purity of his conduct, the goodness of his ways and the nobility of his birth. This man spoke to us of One God and appealed to us to worship no one but Him. We listened to his appeal and accepted it. We vowed that we would renounce all false deities and idols and worship the One True God. He taught us to be honest, kind, compassionate and just, and we obeyed his teachings. This so angered our countrymen that they persecuted and tortured us in many fearful ways. These people demanded that we should renounce our new faith and once again revert to idolatry. We refused to give up our new faith and our enemies refused to give up their persecutions. When their brutalities exceeded all limits and our lives were in peril, reluctantly, we bade farewell to our mother land, and decided to emigrate."

The king was greatly impressed, and returned the gifts brought by the leaders of Mecca, and said, "I will not hand over to you these innocent men and women who have come to me for shelter." Nevertheless, the disappointed Meccans hit upon another plan. Next day, they tried to incite the king, by telling him that the heretics did not believe in the divinity of Jesus. But in this too their hopes were frustrated. The Muslims confessed on the basis of Koranic verse that they did not look upon Jesus as God but as a prophet of God. The king picked up a straw and pointing to it said, "Jesus is in fact not even this much more than the Muslims have described him to be." Empty-handed and humbled the deputation from Mecca returned home and the leaders of Qoraish gnashed their teeth in anger.

Gradually, the number of emigrants increased in Abyssinia. Only a few days had passed in peace, when a rumour reached them that the Meccans had finally embraced Islam. On hearing this, most of the Muslims decided to return to Mecca. When they reached the city, they came to know that the report was false. The Meccans began to persecute even more severely those persons who had returned from Abyssinia. In spite of this, however, about a hundred Muslims managed to leave Mecca and settled in Abyssinia. The Meccans however did their utmost to check the tide of emigration, but all in vain.

The Abyssinian emigration gave the Meccans a conclusive proof that the Muslims were ready to run all risks, and undergo every form of hardship in the cause of Islam. They would shrink from no danger in the path of God. The Meccans did their utmost to check this tide of emigration, but all in vain. It was not until seven years after Muhammad's flight from Mecca that they rejoined their Muslim brethren at Medina.

Social Boycott

Having failed in all their attempts to impede the progress of Islamic mission, the Qoraish of Mecca called a summit conference and pledged themselves to a policy of social boycott of the Hashimites on a large scale. This implied the severance of all social, matrimonial and commercial ties of Meccans with Hashimites. The decree was written by Mansur, the son of Akrama and the scroll hung up on the wall of Kaba, which reads: "It has been agreed that henceforth no one in Mecca shall have any dealings or transact any business with Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, his family or his followers. No one shall sell food to them nor visit them, nor converse with them. This ban will continue until Muhammad's people hand him over to us to be treated as he deserves."

On hearing of this, Abu Talib was thereby obliged to shift alongwith the entire family of Hashimites to a secluded valley fastness, known as **shib** (quarter) of Abu Talib, on the eastern skirts of Mecca, cut off by rocks from the city except for one narrow gateway. Abu Jahl spared no pains to keep a vigilant watch to ensure that the blockade was strickly observed. When Hakim bin Hazam tried to supply some provisions to Khadija, who was closely related to him, Abu Jahl offered obstruction. But never throughout these trying times did the Hashimites waver in their resolution.

The provisions which they had carried with them were soon exhausted. For days they went without food; water was scare; infants and children almost died of hunger. The sick and the infirm breathed their last painful breath without succour or sustenance. There was much weeping and wailing in the Muslim camp but there were no betrayers. The pressure of hunger had reached its climax to such an extreme that Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas relates, "One night I was

coming out of the valley in such a condition that I was about to exhaust all my faculties. Suddenly I saw a dried hide of a camel. I picked it up, washed, baked and ground it. I kneaded its powder with some water and used it for three days." The severity of the action of the Qoraish however did not diminish the great patience and fortitude of the Muslims.

The pitiable condition of the Hashimites continued for a period of three years, till, at length, the Qoraish were awakened to a sense of remorse on their dealings with the Hashimites. All at once it was discovered that the parchment in the Kaba, on which the decree had been written, was eaten up by termite and only the words, "In the name of the Lord" (with which the Qoraish commenced their writings) had survived. The decree was, therefore, declared to be annulled, and was torn off, and approaching Abu Talib, the Meccan leaders requested him to come back to his original abode. Abu Talib accepted to resume his civic life alongwith all members of Hashimites. During the period Muhammad was shut up in the Shib of Abu Talib, Islam virtually made no progress outside.

The Year of Grief

In the year 619 A.D., not long after annulment of the social boycott, Muhammad suffered a great loss of Abu Talib and Khadija, who followed each other to meet their deaths within a short interval, which was a severe blow. With the death of Khadija, the lamp of Muhammad's home was extinguished. One protected him with the influence that derived from his noble rank, while the other guarded him with her material and wealth. After the death of Abu Talib and Khadija, Muhammad was immersed in deep grief, and that is why, this year is called *aam-ul-huzn* (the year of grief). The bereavement of his uncle and wife cast a gloom over Muhammad's life. The tragedy coincided with so many afflictions and animosities of his enemies that Mecca had become a bed of thorns for Muhammad by now onwards.

Precautionary dissimulation of Abu Talib

If we may have a cursory glance on the biography of Abu Talib, we will find that he supported Muhammad for full 40 years, and displayed sacrifice during last ten years of

his life. The only factor which kept him so steadfast was his strong faith, which he had to keep secret in Mecca, exercising strict *tagiya* (precautionary dissimulation). According to "*Sirat-i Halabiya*" (1st vol., p. 390), Abu Talib said to his children at the time of his death that, "I recommend Muhammad to you, because he is the trusted one of Qoraish and truthful one of Arabia and possesses all the virtues. He has brought a religion, which has been accepted by the hearts, but the tongues have chosen to deny it on account of fear of taunts. Whosoever follows him becomes prosperous of his faith. If death had given me some more time, I would have warded off all the dangers that came to him."

Imam Jafar Sadik, according to "*Usul-i Kafi*" (p. 244) had said: "Abu Talib was like the People of the Cave, who had faith in their hearts but pretended to be polytheists." In one laudatory poem about his nephew, Abu Talib had said, as quoted by "*Majma'ul Bayan*" (7th vol., p. 36) that, "Don't you know that we consider Muhammad to be a Prophet of Allah like Musa bin Imran and read about him in the earliest book." In sum, it is quite true that Abu Talib had never publicly announced to embrace Islam, and this is the principal cause that the historians have doubted his faith. When a mention was made about Abu Talib, Imam Zayn al-Abidin is reported to have said, "I wonder why people doubt the faith of Abu Talib, when a woman cannot continue her matrimonial alliance with a non-Muslim husband after she has embraced Islam, and Fatima bint Asad was amongst those women who embraced Islam at a very early stage and still remained his wife till he breathed his last."

Al-Isra and al-Miraj

It was during this period that *al-Isra* and *al-Miraj* had taken place. *Al-Isra* means the night journey when Muhammad was reported to have taken from Mecca to the Mosque of Aqsa, the distance mosque of Jerusalem. *Al-Miraj* means Muhammad's ascension to heaven and his visit to paradise and hell. On the night of *al-Isra*, Muhammad was staying in the house of his cousin, Hind, daughter of Abu Talib, who was also called Umm Hani. Hind relates that the Prophet of God spent the night in my quarters. He recited the night prayers and went to sleep. Just before dawn, the Prophet of God awoke us and we all prayed the dawn prayer

together. When the prayer was through, he said, "O Umm Hani, I prayed with you the night prayer in this place; then I went to Jerusalem and I prayed there, and as you see, I have just finished praying with you the dawn prayer." I answered, "O Prophet of God! do not tell this to the people, for they will belie you and harm you." He said, "By God, I shall tell them."

Those who claim that *al-Isra* and *al-Miraj* of Muhammad had taken place spiritually rather than physically, have based their arguments on the aforesaid report of Umm Hani. They also refer to another report of Aisha which says, "The body of the Prophet of God was never missed from his bed. Rather, God caused him to travel in soul alone." Whenever Muawiya bin Abu Sufian was asked about it, he used to answer, "It was a true vision from God." Those who share such a view confirm their claim with the Koranic verse, "The vision which We have shown you is but a trial to the people" (17:60). According to the other view, *al-Isra* from Mecca to Jerusalem took place in body. In confirmation of this, they mention that Muhammad had related what he saw in the desert on the way hither and add that his ascension to heaven was in soul. Other hold that both *al-Isra* and *al-Miraj* were in body. As a result of this great divergence of opinion, thousands of volumes have been written on the subject.

Muhammad in Taif

Weighed down by the loss of his venerable protector and of his cherished wife, Muhammad determined to turn to some other field for the exercise of his ministry, because the Meccans had rejected the words of God. Taif was about 75 miles south-east of Mecca, and a famous home of Banu Tha'qif. Accompanied by Zaid, he arrived in Taif, and invited at first the three brothers of Umayr family to adore One God. His words caused a storm of indignation and his voice was drowned by clamours. He was wounded by stones thrown at him, and which the faithful Zaid endeavoured in vain to ward off. They incited to ruffians of the town to ridicule him. The ruffians drove him from the town, and the rabble and the slaves too followed, hooting, reviling and pelting him with stones for a distance of three miles, until the evening, when they quitted Muhammad to pursue his way alone. Blood flowed

from his both legs. He, wearied and mortified, took refuge in one of the numerous orchards, and rested under a vine.

Guardianship of Mutim bin Adi

On his return to Mecca during the night, Muhammad arrived at Nakhlah, and thence he moved to Hira. According to Ibn Sa'd (1st vol., p. 212), Muhammad sent words to Mutim bin Adi that he desired to return to Mecca, if he was assured protection. Mutim, although a non-believer, was a gentleman. He not only assured Muhammad of his protection according to Arabian custom, but called all of his sons who went to Kaba and remained on guard till he finished his religious obligations. Mutim also declared in Mecca that Muhammad was under his protection.

He was sorely stricken in heart and lived in Mecca for some time, retired from his people, preaching occasionally, but confining his mission mainly to the strangers who congregated in Mecca and its vicinity during the season of the annual pilgrimage.

Pledge of Aqaba

A ray of hope beamed in the interim in the north. At a distance of about 250 miles from Mecca was a town then known as Yathirab, and later as Medina. Its population was divided into two groups, the Jews and pagans. The pagans had two clans, Aws and Khazraj, who were generally at loggerheads with each other. Every year in the month of Rajab, the Arabs swarmed like locusts into Mecca. One day in Mecca, whilst sadly but yet hopefully working among the half-traders and half-pilgrims, Muhammad came upon a group of six men who were of Khazraj. Meeting them perchance, Muhammad led them to a declivity and recited to them the verses from Koran, enumerated the blessings of a good and pious life and beckoned them to the fold. Struck by his earnestness and the truth of his words, they embraced Islam. When they returned to their native Yathirab, they spread the news, with lightning rapidity that a Prophet had arisen among the Arabs in Mecca. The town was soon agog with stories of the new faith and its wonderful leader. So the ensuing year another twelve pilgrims came to Mecca and made their vows at the same spot which had witnessed the conversion of the former six. This is called

the first pledge of Aqaba, from the name of the hill on which the conference was held. The following year, 622 A.D., the Yathirabites who had adopted the new religion repaired to Mecca. In the stillness of night, when all inimical elements appeared slumbering, these seventy-two pioneers of the new faith met under the same hill. Muhammad appeared among them, and vividly described to them the risk they incurred by adopting Islam. They replied with one voice that they adopted the religion fully conscious of the dangers that surrounding them. Thus was concluded the second pledge of Aqaba.

Migration to Yathirab

It was the 13th year of Muhammad's mission when the clouds had gathered fast. The Meccan chiefs centred in their Council Hall (*darun-nadwa*), a chamber inside Kaba, to deliberate over what might be done with Muhammad. Stormy was the meeting, for fear had entered their hearts. Imprisonment for life, expulsion from the city, each was debated in turn for Muhammad. They decided then on a final and desperate remedy, namely to murder Muhammad. Murder by one man would have exposed him and his family to the vengeance of blood. The difficulty was at last solved by Abu Jahl, who suggested that a number of courageous men, chosen from different families, should sheathe their swords simultaneously in Muhammad's bosom, in order that the responsibility of the deed might rest upon all, and the relations of Muhammad might consequently be unable to avenge it. The proposal was accepted, and forty youths were selected for the sanguinary deed. As the night advanced, and it was against the Arab sense of chivalry to kill any one within the four walls of his house at night hour. Hence, the assassins posted themselves round the Muhammad's dwelling, and watched all night long, peeping now and then through a hole in the door to make sure that Muhammad still lay on his bed. In order to keep the attention of the assassins fixed upon the bed, Muhammad put his own green coverlet upon Ali, and bade him to lie on his bed; so as to foil the scheme of his enemies, and himself escaped.

Muhammad had guessed exactly what would be the reactions of the Meccans when they found he had gone. He had, therefore, not started for Yathirab with camel. He had gone on foot with Abu Bakr to Mount Thaur, about one

hour's walk from Mecca. They reached Mount Thaur while it was still dark and concealed themselves in the innermost recess of a cave in the rocky hillside. A tracking party, following the footprints of the fugitives, reached the mouth of the cave. Abu Bakr, hearing the sound of their footsteps, grieved within himself. It was a critical moment when the sword of the blood-thirsty enemy was hanging on their heads. Muhammad quieted the fears of Abu Bakr with the words: "Do not be grieved, for surely God is with us." For full three days, Muhammad remained in the cave.

On the third night, they came out with two camels. Quickly Muhammad mounted and followed by Abu Bakr, rode into the desert night. They took a certain Abdullah bin Uraiqi, a non-Muslim as their guide. In order to avoid the main caravan tracks, they struck a diagonal course northwest toward the Red Sea. For nearly a week the journey continued over the parched, barren, mournful wasteland. No living creatures, not even vultures or snakes, inhabited this wilderness. They first had proceeded parallel to the Red Sea until they reached a place called Usfan. From here they turned a little inland and travelled for some distance along the foot of Mount Amaj. Then they followed a route parallel to the usual route. They went past Qudayda, al-Kharrar, Thanniyya al-Marrah and Liqfa, and crossed the territories of Banu Madlijah and Banu Aslam, where they alighted for a while. Here Muhammad hired a camel to relieve his own which was exhausted by the long non-stop journey. Before they entered Kuba, they passed through such places as al-Araj, Thanniya al-Ghair and the valley of Ri'm. On the seventh morning after the start of the flight, the oasis of Kuba, a few miles from Yathirab, was sighted. This flight of Muhammad from Mecca to Yathirab (Medina) is called the *Hijrah* and when Muhammad entered Kuba, with it commenced the Islamic era on 1st Muharram (lunar month) of the Hijrah, or on the date corresponding to July 16, 622 C.E. in the Julian calendar. In English this is usually abbreviated in the Latin form AH (*Anno Hegirae* i.e., "in the year of the Hijrah"). This Islamic calendar was introduced after 17 years during the caliphate of Umar.

On the other side in Mecca, Ali slept fearlessly whole night on Muhammad's bed. R.V.C. Bodely writes in "**The Messenger**" (London, 1946, p. 113) that, "The morning breeze whispered over the desert. The dawn came mauvely

from the east and showed the assassins braced to strike. As the first white rays of the rising sun hit the flat roofs of Mecca, the door of Muhammad's house opened. The men stood ready to spring. They then held back as their astonished eyes rested on the burly figure of Ali standing on the threshold carrying Muhammad's cloak over his arms." The assassins at first thought of killing him, but when they found him ready to defend himself, they gave up the idea and dispersed in search of Muhammad. Discomfited and unhappy, they immediately dispatched their best riders in pursuit of the fugitive. Up and down they hunted over all the tracks and passes leading out of Mecca, but found no trace of Muhammad.

Ali stayed three days at Mecca and handed back all the articles which were entrusted to Muhammad for safe custody, mostly by his enemies, secured their receipts and quitted the city in broad daylight. Ali was also assigned for safe transport of Muhammad's daughter Fatima, the daughter of Hamza, another Fatima, his own mother, Fatima bint Asad, and his aunt, that was the daughter of Abdul Motalib, a fourth Fatima. On account of scarcity of mounts, Ali had to travel on foot, and reached Kuba with bleeding feet. Muhammad embraced him, and dressed his feet. Muhammad stayed with the clan of Umar bin Auf at Kuba for 14 days, and during which time he laid foundation of the first mosque (Arabic *masjid*, the English *mosque* through the Italian *moschea*) of Islam. It is of this mosque that Koran (9:109) speaks as "the mosque founded on piety."

The news of Muhammad's arrival at Kuba soon reached Yathirab and the city had been in eager expectation of his arrival. Each morning some people would go out on the outskirts to watch the appearance of their revered master. The tedious hours of impatient expectancy were at last over, and the illustrious visitor appeared on the horizon of Yathirab. At last the great day arrived. News was brought to Yathirab that Muhammad was on his way. He entered the city on September 22, 622. Yathirab was wearing to look of jubilation all round. People came out to greet Muhammad, clad in their gayest attire. Women climbed to the tops of their houses and sang in chorus to welcome their noble guest. Syed Waheeduddin writes in **"The Benefactor"** (Lahore, 1964, p. 33) that, "The Banu Najjar led the welcoming crowds in full armour, their weapons glistening in the sun. The whole of Yathirab lined

the road in orderly rows. Young girls played on their tambourines and sang songs of welcome." There was an unprecedented merry-making, and when Muhammad came to the group of Umar bin Awf Najjari, the well-dressed girls came out of seclusion, danced and sang to the tune of music the following ballad:

*Nahno jowarun min bani Najjarin,
Janadan Muhammad min Jarin.*

"We belong to the clan of Najjar, (we are) Muhammad's soldiers from the Jari."

Each tribe, which Muhammad passed through in the city, very eagerly desired the honour of his presence and requested him to take up his abode with them. He, refusing all these offers, said that the camel, which he rode on, was inspired and would take him to the proper quarter. The camel proceeded on to the eastern quarter, and knelt down in the open courtyard of the Banu Najjar, near the house of Abu Ayub Ansari. He took up his temporary residence in his house for about seven months, until a mosque with proper quarters for himself was built in Medina.

Construction of the Mosque

After Muhammad's arrival in Medina, the first thing to be done was to build a cathedral mosque. It was constructed on the plot of two orphans, Sohal and Sohail, whom Abu Ayub Ansari paid the price. The ground of the plot was levelled and a mosque, 54 yards width and 60 yards in length was built over it with unbaked bricks and mud, and was roofed with palm-wood rafters. This mosque became known as the "Prophet's Mosque" (*Masjid-i-Nabwi*) was free from all kinds of artificialities and was a monument of simplicity. Its walls were made of mud bricks, the roof supported by trunks of palm-trees and covered over with the leaves and twigs. The floor was strewn with gravel. In the corner of the courtyard, a sort of a platform with a shed was raised to accomodate those having no home or family. Those who lived there were known as the residents of the *Suffa* or Platform. This was, so to speak, a kind of seminary attached to the mosque, for these people devoted their whole time to the study of religion. Adjoining the mosque were erected two apartments for the household of Muhammad.

Bond of Brotherhood

Five months after his arrival in Yathirab (the *Jathripa* in Ptolemy and Stephan, or *Jathrb* in Minaean inscriptions. The old word *Yathirab* is found only once in the Koran, 33:13), now known as Medina, it was Muhammad's next task to find shelter and livelihood for the men who had accompanied him from Mecca. In their own home-town many of them were prosperous, but now they were all equally destitute. As a preliminary step, Muhammad enjoined the Muslims of Medina, now known as *Ansar* (the helpers) to adopt as brothers their co-religionists from Mecca, now known as *Muhajir* (the refugees), to share with them like their own kith and kin whatever they possessed, in prosperity and in want. He thus created in Anas's house a bond of brotherhood, known as "Fraternization" (*muwakhah*), comprising forty-five (or according to another authority, seventy-five) pairs between the *Ansars* and *Muhajirs*. This was intended to prove that religion was a firmer basis for brotherly community than membership of the same tribe. These mandates thus resulted in a considerable extension of the Muslim community.

So strong, in short, was this new tie that it surpassed even the relationship of two real brothers.

Covenant of Medina

Another important task before Muhammad was to determine and clarify the relations between the various tribes and the Muslims in Medina. The Jews were a considerable power in Medina. It appears that they were Arabs by descent, but formed a distinct unit by reason of their adoption of Judaism. They were subdivided into three clans, the Banu Qainuqa, Banu Nazir and Banu Quraiza. The other inhabitants of the town were the Aws and Khazraj, always at war with each other. Of the two chief clans of the Jews, the Quraiza were the allies of the Aws, while Banu Nazir joined the Khazraj. Now it so happened that the major portion of the Khazraj and Aws embraced Islam. So Muhammad concluded a pact with the Jews, known as the "Covenant of Medina" (*mithag-i-Medina*), whose terms were as follow:- Firstly, the Muslims and Jews shall live as one people. Secondly, each one of the parties shall keep to

its own faith, and neither shall interfere with that of the other. Thirdly, in the event of a war with a third party, each was bound to come to the assistance of the other, provided the latter were the party aggrieved and not the aggressors. Fourthly, in the event of an attack on Medina, both shall join hands to defend it. Fifthly, peace, when desirable, shall be made after consultation with each other. Sixthly, Medina shall be regarded as a sacred by both, all bloodshed being forbidden therein. Seventhly, Muhammad shall be the final court of appeal in cases of dispute.

James A. Michener writes in **"Islam: The Misunderstood Religion"** (New York, 1955, p. 68) that, "Muhammad thus became head of the state and the testimony even of his enemies is that he administered wisely. The wisdom he displayed in judging intricate cases became the basis for the religious law that governs Islam today."

The hypocrites

Though emigration to Medina had given Muhammad a certain amount of respite, it increased opposition to his cause tenfold. While at Mecca, the malice of the Qoraish found vent in tormenting the Muslims, but now it was bent on the latter's destruction. The Bedouin tribes, who had so far been mere spectators of the Muslims's persecutions were also stirred at the growth of Islam in Medina. The Jews, being at a distance, were also quiet so far, but now that the Muslims were their next door neighbours in Medina, they could not watch the steady growth of Islam without a sting of jealousy and they rose in opposition. Distinct from all these, and of a singular nature, another wave of opposition set in, in the camp, known in the Islamic phraseology as that of the hypocrites. These were the men who had not the pluck to come out into the open. So they joined the faith with an object of undermining it from within. A certain man, Abdullah bin Ubay, was at their head. Before the immigration of Muhammad, both Banu Aws and Khazraj, wearied by their long drawn-out mutual hostility, which had often erupted into fighting and had exacted a heavy toll of life, had decided to put an end to this state of affairs and to set up a form of administration in Medina which should have the support of both tribes and should also be acceptable to the three

Jewish tribes. For this purpose, it had been agreed that Abdullah bin Ubay bin Salul, chief of the Khazraj, should be elected king of Medina. This plan had not yet been put into effect when Muhammad was invited to come to Medina. But Muhammad's presence eclipsed his personality, and he dwindled into a nonentity. He was deeply chagrined at the loss of a crown. At the outset, he offered some opposition, but beholding the rapid growth of Islam, he thought hypocrisy would be a best tool of revenge. Thus he put on the mask of Islam, and thenceforward till his last breath, he left no stone unturned to bring Islam into trouble.

Battle of Badr

Muhammad had hardly breathed a sigh of relief in Medina when he was confronted with the series of military expeditions against the fronts of the heathen Meccans. Attack was apprehended every moment from without and treachery from within. Small detachments of the Qoraish of Mecca used to go out on marauding expeditions and scour the country right up to the outskirts of Medina. Once, one such party lifted camels from the very pastures of the town.

From the start of Ramadan, a report reached to Medina that a large trading caravan of Qoraish was returning to Mecca from Syria under the leadership of Abu Sufian bin Harb, one of the most astute men, accompanied by a fifty armed guards. It has been pointed out that this richly loaded caravan constituted a grave threat to the security of Medina, therefore, Muhammad dispatched Talha bin Ubaidullah and Saeed bin Zaid, to gather intelligence about the caravan and to report back. Abu Sufian, apprehending the blockade by the Muslims, sent a fast rider to Mecca in advance to explain the situation to the Qoraish and bring adequate force for the safeguarding of the caravan.

In the interim, Muhammad dispatched small reconnaissance parties to keep an eye on the movements of the enemy as well as to approach certain tribes to secure their neutrality. It so happened that one such party of eight persons was sent out under Abdullah bin Jahash. They were given sealed instructions by Muhammad, requiring them not to open the cover, until two days had passed. When opened

as directed after two days' march, it was found to contain the orders that the party should proceed to Nakhlah, between Mecca and Taif, and there keep track of the movements of the Qoraish. The party arrived at Nakhlah, and after few days, they encountered a small caravan of Qoraish on its way from Taif to Mecca. They attacked the four persons, who were in charge of the caravan, of whom one Amr bin Hadharmi, was killed, two were captured and the fourth escaped. The scouting party took over the merchandise of the caravan and made haste to return to Medina. When news reached Muhammad, he was severely reprimanded Abdullah bin Jahash for transgressing his express commands.

It may be pointed out that the sealed orders of Muhammad to Abdullah bin Jahash contained the word **tarassadu**, meaning "to keep a watch" and not to lay an ambush. Margoliouth, Dr. Zwemer and other European scholars have gloated over this incident and have made it a handle for attack. But might they know that, firstly, it was against the expressed orders of Muhammad, and, secondly, even if Muhammad would have ordered Abdullah to do so, his act would have been justified by the modern international law of the West, which reads:- "From the moment one state is at war with another, it has, on general principles, a right to seize on all the enemy's property of whatsoever kind and wheresoever found, and to appropriate thus to its own use, or to that of the captors." (vide, **"Elements of International Law"** by Henry Wheaton, London, 1936, p. 419). The death of Amr bin Hadharmi, however, provoked Qoraish and stimulated their hostile designs against the Muslims. According to Tabari, the murder of Amr bin Hadharmi was the root cause of the battle of Badr.

On the other side, when the emissary of Abu Sufian arrived in Mecca, and reported to the Meccans, a preparation was at once made to invade on Medina. Within three days, a well-armed force of over a thousand warriors set out from Mecca under the command of Abu Jahl. When they reached at Jahfah, a little half-way to Badr, an emissary of Abu Sufian brought the news that the caravan had passed through the danger zone safely and that it was not necessary to march towards Medina. On hearing this, some of them counselled that they should go back, but Abu Jahl and his party rejected the suggestion violently and proceeded towards Badr.

Badr is the name of a celebrated well and a market-place of Arabia, and is so named after a certain Badr bin Qoraish bin Mukhlad bin an-Nadr bin Kananah, who hailed from the clan of Ghaffar. The first battle thus fought between the Muslims and the Meccans about 80 miles from Medina was that of Badr. The date given for the battle is 17th, 19th or 21st Ramdan, 2 A.H./March 13, 15 or 17, 624 A.D. The Muslims, who were unprepared for the engagement, numbered only 313 men who had only three horses, seventy camels and a few swords. This small force was marshalled out of Medina, and took suitable position near a stream of fresh water at Badr. The Meccans under the command of Abu Jahl, were a thousand with 300 horses and 700 camels. Numerically the Muslim force was hardly one-third of the Meccans. Besides, the latter were composed of skilled veterans, while the Muslims had recruited even inexperienced youths.

The two ill-matched armies collided on the morning of Friday, the 17th Ramdan. Sword clashed against sword and lance broke against lance. The men confronting each other in mortal combat were no strangers. Brother fought against brother, father against son, son against father. And when the battle was at its height, Muhammad prostrated himself before his God and prayed, "O'God, if this handful band of men perish, there will be no one left to pronounce Your word to worship You truly and selflessly. Your true faith will be destroyed. Come to the aid of Your devotees, my Lord, and give them victory."

At the taunt of the Meccans, Ali bin Abu Talib dashed out of the Muslim ranks, glittering in breastplate and helmet. He was closely followed by Ubaida bin Harith, a paternal cousin of Muhammad, and Hamza, who wore an ostrich feather on his cuirass. They performed such outstanding feats of bravery against Shiba, Walid and Atba in a single combat, who were considered the cream of the Qoraishite power. Hamza killed Shiba, while Ali killed Walid. Ubaida was mortally wounded but, before he fell, Ali and Hamza were able to come to his rescue. Hamza hurled at Atba and, with a sweep of his sword, cut off his head. This single combat was an ominous start for the pagans, as thereby they lost three of their best warriors and commanders in the very first phase of the battle. After a fierce and dreadful fighting, the Meccans army broke up and fled in a hurly-burly manner before the Muslims. Seventy of the bravest warriors of the Qoraish were slain, and forty-five

taken prisoners. Their commander, Abu Jahl had also fallen in the battle. On the Muslim side, fourteen men were killed.

This was the first opportunity of the Muslims after their long and bitter sufferings at the hands of the Meccans to wreak vengeance on them, if they chose. But how were they treated is well illustrated by the following incident. There was one among the captives, possessed of a remarkable force of eloquence which he used to exercise unsparingly while in Mecca, to arouse opposition against Islam. He was brought before Muhammad, and it was suggested that two of his teeth should be knocked out, as an appropriate punishment, to incapacitate him from stirring agitation against Islam. "If I disfigure any of his limbs," replied Muhammad, "God will disfigure mine."

Before Muhammad returned Medina with the Muslim warriors, Zaid bin Harith and Abdullah bin Ka'b had galloped through the city on their horses, and announced the victory, mentioning the names of fallen idolatars in the field. The Muslims rejoiced to hear it and gathered in the streets, acclaiming this great victory.

Battle of Uhud

In Mecca, the news of their defeat preceded the subdued army, and proclaimed their resolve for vengeance. The aggressions of the Meccans reached their climax. The traders among them set aside a portion of their profits for the expenses of war. In 3/625, three thousand Meccan warriors, of whom 700 were clad in armour, bore down on Medina under the command of Abu Sufian. Their women accompanied them in front to applaud the brave and to chide the craven-hearted. Three miles to the north of Medina, the Meccans encamped at the foot of a hillock, called Uhud. It is a massive feature lying three miles north of Medina, and rising to the height of about 1000 feet above the level of the plain. The entire feature is 5 miles long. In the western part of Uhud, a large spur descends steeply to the ground, and to the right of this spur, as seen from the direction of Medina, a valley rises gently and goes up and away as it narrows, at a defile about 1000 yards from the foot of the spur. At the mouth of this valley, and at the foot of this spur, Muhammad took the position.

Against the enemy force of three thousand entrenched below Uhud, Muhammad mustered barely a thousand men. Of this number, three hundred were led by the traitor Abdullah bin Ubay, who marched with them only a little way and then deserted. This left only 700 men, of whom only 100 were mailed combatants. Muhammad went forth to command his force. To protect his rear against a surprise attack from the pass in the Uhud hills, he selected about fifty archers to cover this pass under the command of Abdullah bin Zubayr. According to Ibn Hisham (d. 218/833) in "**Kitab Sirat-i Rasul Allah**" (ed. F. Wustenfeld, Gottingen, 1860, 2nd vol., pp. 66-7), Muhammad told to the archers, "Use your arrows against the enemy cavalry. Keep the cavalry off our backs. As long as you hold your position, our rear is safe. On no account must you leave this position. If you see us winning, do not join us; if you see us losing, do not come to help us."

It was the morning of Saturday, 7th Shawal, 3/March 23, 625 - exactly a year and a week after the battle of Badr. The Meccans again made first inroad and once again the rout began a good number among them fled the field with the Muslims in hot pursuit. This would have been another consequent victory, but the Muslim archers posted on the adjoining mound, neglecting the injunctions of Muhammad, rashly left their places to join them in the pursuit of plunder, leaving a critical gap in Muhammad's defence. Muhammad had commanded them never to leave their position regardless of whether the Muslims plunged into the enemy camp and won, but the archers violated the orders in greed of spoils of war. The Meccan general Khalid bin Walid at once perceived their error, who made the best of this opportunity. He wheeled his squadron and launched a reinforced attack on the rear of the Muslims, causing a great havoc. This turned the scales against them and the Muslims began to flee before the Khalid's lancers, who certainly took a heavy toll of Muslim lives. M.H. Haykal writes in "**The Life of Muhammad**" (Karachi, 1989, p. 265) that, "Muslim morale plunged to the bottom, and Muslim soldiers fought sporadically and purposelessly. This chaos was responsible for their killing of Husayle bin Jabir Abu Hudhayfah by mistake, as everyone sought to save his own skin by taking flight except such men as Ali bin Abu Talib whom God guided and protected."

Muhammad was also embosomed with the enemies, until his front teeth were broken. Ali hurled himself into the fray, and shielded Muhammad and dashed the raiders. The Meccans, tired out by a long and gruelling day, began to retreat, and in their retreat vented their rage on the Muslims dead in the field mutilating the corpses. With a final taunt to the Muslims, Abu Sufian ordered withdrawal, and both the fighting men and the baggage train moved off. For a time it seemed that they might lay another ambush the town of Medina, but they left it alone and headed for Mecca. The Meccans lost twenty eight in the battle, while seventy men were killed among the Muslims. Among the slain, the body of Hamza was found mutilated, who had been laid low by a spear thrust which pierced him. The fiend Hinda, wife of Abu Sufian, had cut open his body, and took a piece of his liver and gnawed it to quench her thirst for the vengeance of her father, Atba who was killed by Hamza in Badr. Because of this, Muawiya, the son of Hinda was called the **"son of the liver eater."**

On his return to Medina, Muhammad directed a small body of the disciples to pursue the retreating Meccans, and to impress on them that the Muslims, though worsted in battle, were yet unbroken spirit. Abu Sufian, hearing of the pursuit, hastened back to Mecca. He however sent a message to Muhammad, saying that he would soon return to exterminate him and his people.

Shortly after the battle of Uhud, a famine broke out in Mecca and its environs. When Muhammad heard of their hardships, he immediately appealed the Muslims for help. Donation poured in and when a sizable amount was collected, he sent it to Mecca. This gracious gesture made little impression on his foes, who accepted the help but refused to soften their hearts or to relent in their opposition.

The Muslims were still beleaguered on all sides by their enemies, the Jews, the Bedouin tribes and the traitors from Medina. They kept nagging the Muslims with constant raids which were stoutly repelled and petty machinations which were effectively countered. The Jewish tribes had been expelled from Medina because of their inimical and treacherous behaviours, entrenched themselves in a place called Khaibar.

Battle of Ditch

The enemies of the Muslims this time created a united front. This culminated in a solemn pact of alliance among the five principal tribes. When the news of this tremendous mobilization reached the Muslims in Medina, it struck them all with panic. It was Monday, the 1st Shawal, 5/February 24, 627 when a gigantic army under the command of Abu Sufian besieged Medina. The number of this invading force is variously estimated at something between ten and twenty-four thousands, the largest single army ever mustered on Arabian soil. The Muslims had fortified Medina from three sides, but it was exposed from one side. Salman al-Faras, who knew far more of the techniques of warfare than was common in the Peninsula, advised the digging of a dry moat around Medina and the fortification of its buildings within. Following the idea of Salman al-Faras, Muhammad ordered the trenches to be dug in that open end of the city, and thus it is called the battle of Ditch (*khandaq*). The word *khandaq* is, no doubt, regarded as the Arabicized version of the Persian word *kandah* (dug-up). The ditch ran from Sheikhein to the hill of Zubab, and thence to Jabal Banu Ubaid. All these hills were included in the area protected by the ditch, and on the west the ditch turned south to cover the left flank of the western of the two hills, known as Jabal Banu Ubaid. Once the digging of the ditch was completed within six days, the Muslims established their camp just ahead of the hill of Sila'a. Their total strength was 3000 which included hypocrites whose fighting value and reliability were uncertain.

The invading force fell on Medina like an avalanche, where they found an impassable ditch surrounding the whole city, thus they failed to subdue the besieged. The Muslims, after transferring their women and children to securer places, manned their fortifications so well that the siege continued for over a month. Food ran out, essential supplies were exhausted, and when the pang of hunger became unbearable, the besieged warriors stilled them by tying stones to their empty stomachs. The armies were effectively separated by the trench around Medina, but known champions in arms occasionally challenged each other to single combat. One of them was a famous Arab wrestler, named Amr bin Abdud-wudd. He found a point where the ditch was narrow, and succeeded in entering it on a fast jumping horse. He strutted forth haughtily and dared the Muslims

to send a man against him. Ali rode out at once and laid him low with a single stroke. Made with anger the invaders launched another furious attack to storm the trench, but were thrown back as before. Winter was approaching; the supplies of the besiegers were also running short and murmurs of discontent arose among their hordes. One night the wild wind terribly rose and soon gathered into a storm. It uprooted their tents, scattered their provisions, scared their mounts, and, what with the dark and unusual cold, spread so much terror and confusion in the camp that when the day dawned, the siege had been lifted and the invaders withdrew from the field. Each man carried as little as his camel, horse, or shoulders could bear and began to move while the storm continued to rage. The encounter at the battle of Ditch was the last time that the town of Medina ever faced an invader. After this battle, the strength of her enemies was for ever broken.

Treaty of Hudaibia

In 6/628, Muhammad marched from Medina with 1400 Muslims for the purpose of performing pilgrimage in Mecca. They went unarmed, clad in the ritual dresses. When this peaceful caravan approached its destination, tidings came that the Meccans were bent on mischief, and might stop their entry into the town by force. So, Muhammad halted his followers at a place, called Hudaibia, and his men encamped round a well. From here he sent a message to the Qoraish of Mecca, saying that, "We have come on a peaceful and religious mission. We have come only to perform the sacred pilgrimage. We desire neither bloodshed nor war, and we shall be glad if the Meccans agree to a truce for a limited period." When the Muslim messenger was sent to Qoraish, he failed to return, so another was dispatched. The enemies killed his mount and he did not return either. Finally, Muhammad sent one of his companions, Uthman to negotiate with the Qoraish. He too was detained and to provoke the Muslims, the Qoraish engineered a rumour that he had been slain.

So Muhammad collected all his followers and asked them to swear that if God demanded of them the supreme sacrifice they would lay down their lives without demur. One by one they came and touched his hand and swore, to die willingly, if such was the will of God. This oath or pledge became famous in the annals of Islam as the **Bai'at-**

ur-Ridwan (the pledge of God's pleasure). The Meccans heard of this and were afraid. Instead of directly attacking the pilgrim party as they originally intended, they now sent a messenger, a man named Suhail, to negotiate with Muhammad. He presented him with four demands on behalf of the Qoraish, as follows:- (a) The Muslims should return to Medina without performing pilgrimage. (b) They would be permitted to perform pilgrimage in the following year, but would not be allowed to stay in Mecca beyond three days with their traveller-arms, namely, their swords in sheathes. (c) They would not take any Muslim resident of Mecca with them to Medina nor forbid any Muslim from taking up his residence in Mecca, if he so desired. (d) If any Meccan went to Medina, then Muslims would return him to Mecca, but if any Muslim went to Mecca, he would not be returned to Medina.

The Meccans deliberately made their terms as rigorous and provocative as they could, but Muhammad refused to be provoked. As always he wanted peace not bloodshed, therefore he accepted all the terms with all the hardships and all the humiliation they implied. This treaty is known as the Treaty of Hudaibia. It was one of the most outstanding events in the life of Muhammad. According to R.V.C. Bodley in **"The Messenger"** (London, 1946, p. 257), "In point of fact, that the treaty was Muhammad's masterpiece of diplomacy. It was a triumph." Tor Andrae writes in **"Mohammed the Man and his Faith"** (London, 1936, p. 229) that, "The self-control which Mohammed revealed at Hodaibiya, his ability to bear occasional humiliation in unimportant issues, in order to achieve an exalted goal, shows that he was a person of unique ability."

This pact was the product of profound political wisdom and farsightedness. It was the first time after several wars that the Meccans acknowledged that Muhammad was an equal rather than a mere rebel or a runaway tribesman. It was the first time that Mecca recognised the Islamic state that was rising in Arabia. With it was terminated the struggle between the Muslims of Medina and the Qoraish of Mecca, which had extended over nineteen years, and had, after the migration, assumed the character of an armed conflict. By virtue of the truce, peace had at last been established, and the major difficulty in the way of peaceful propagation of Islam had been removed. Henceforward, Islam began to spread rapidly in the greater part of Arabia. Some estimate of the rate of this progress might be made

on the basis of the number of Muslims who were present with Muhammad at Hudaibia, which was just short of 1400, and the number that accompanied him two years later during the conquest of Mecca, which was 10,000. This is eloquent testimony that the attraction of Islam lie in its spiritual power and not in armed conflict.

As soon as this pact was solemnly concluded by the two parties, the tribe of Khazao entered an alliance with Medina and that of Banu Bakr with the Meccans.

Battle of Khaibar

In 7/629, about six weeks after Muhammad's party returned from Hudaibia, they learnt that the Jews in Khaibar were planning to make an inroad on Medina. To forestall these moves, the Muslims marched on Khaibar, about 92 miles from Medina, with 1600 men, and covered the distance in three forced marches and reached the enemy territory before dawn on the fourth morning. The two armies met at first at Natat and fought each other strongly. When Sullam bin Mishkam, the chief of the Jews was killed, Harith bin Abu Zaynab took over the leadership, and charged from the fortress of Naim, but he was soon repulsed. Five strongholds at Khaibar were reduced one by one with the exception of the strongly fortified and impregnable al-Qamus, which was under the command of Marhab, who was like Goliath of Goeth. The Muslim champions failed to conquer it despite untiring efforts. Ali was finally given the charge, who proceeded the front, and valiantly put Marhab and other Jewish champions to sword. The casualties of the Muslims in this battle did not exceed twenty, while ninety-three were killed on Jewish side.

Invitation to the Rulers

The time had now arrived for the Islamic mission to travel beyond the confines of the Arabian peninsula. So Muhammad dispatched his messengers to all the kingdoms known to his people, to the Roman Caesar, and the emperor of Iran, the governor of Egypt and the Negus of Abyssinia, the king of Ghassan, and the chief of Yamama. The message was identical to them all and neither political nor diplomatic expedients dictated either the choice or the status of the powers addressed. Each epistle bore the impression of

Muhammad's seal, with the words *Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah*. At the top came *Allah* and the bottom *Muhammad* and between the two *Apostle*. Hence, the epistle established also the fact that Muhammad looked upon Islam as a cosmopolitan religion. In case of Christianity, universality was never claimed. Jesus himself laid no claim to such a position. He clearly said that he had come for the lost sheep of Israel. Muhammad however claimed from the inauguration of his dispensation that it was meant for the whole mankind.

Conquest of Mecca

The Treaty of Hudaibia had been now nearly two years in force. Acting on the discretion allowed by the treaty, Banu Khazao and Banu Bakr, inhabiting Mecca and its neighbourhood, the former had become the allies of Muhammad, the latter had entered into an alliance with Qoraish. These two rival tribes had been fighting among them for a long time. Aided by a party of Qoraish, Banu Bakr attacked by night an unsuspecting encampment of Banu Khazao, and slew several of them. The Khazao were forced to take refuge in the Kaba, where they were also persecuted. A deputation of forty men from the injured tribe, mounted on camels, hastened to Medina, and spread the wrongs of Banu Bakr before Muhammad, and pleaded that the treacherous murders be avenged. Muhammad sent a messenger to Qoraish, offering three alternatives:- a) Blood-money for all the men killed be paid. b) The Qoraish should withdraw their help for the Banu Bakr. c) It should be announced that the treaty of Hudaibia, has been abrogated.

Qaratah bin Umar, on behalf of Qoraish, said that only the third alternative was acceptable. After the departure of the messenger, the Qoraish regretted their reply, and sent Abu Sufian as their ambassador to get the treaty of Hudaibia renewed. Abu Sufian came to Medina, but he got no reply, and returned back to Mecca unsuccessful. Muhammad was therefore impelled to march with a force of ten thousand Muslims. The move of the army started from Medina on 10th Ramadan, 8/January 1, 630. Having no courage to resist, the Meccans laid down their arms. Muhammad triumphantly entered Mecca at the head of a formidable force after a banishment lasting for years, on 20th Ramadan, 8/January 11, 630. Many had lost their nearest

and dearest at the hands of the people now completely at their mercy. All of them carried in their hearts bitter memories of cruelty, persecution and pain inflicted by their now humble enemies. Yet none thought of vengeance or retribution, and none raised his arm against a defenseless foe. Stanley Lane Poole writes in **"The Speeches and Table-Talk of the Prophet Mohammad"** (London, 1882. p. 47) that, "It was thus Mohammad entered again his native city. Through all the annals of conquest there is no triumphant entry comparable to this one."

As soon as Mecca was occupied, Muhammad went to Kaba, and circumambulated the House of God seven times. Ibn Hisham (2nd vol., p. 412) writes that Muhammad soon turned and looked at the Qoraish. There was a hushed silence as the assembled populace gazed at him, wondering what their fate would be. "O Qoraish!" called Muhammad, "How should I treat you?" "Kindly, O noble brother, and son of a noble brother!" the crowd replied. "Then go! You are forgiven." Muhammad now entered Kaba with Ali and saw the idols and deities arranged along its walls. In and around the Kaba, there were 360 idols which had long polluted its sanctity; being carved of wood or hewn out of stone, including a statue of Abraham holding divining arrows. Muhammad smashed these idols to pieces. When the task was finished, he felt as if a great weight had been lifted off his shoulders. The Kaba had been cleansed of the false gods; now only the true God would be worshipped in the House of God. The conqueror of Mecca ordered no celebration mark his glorious victory. Instead, the Muslims bowed themselves in genuflections of prayer and gave thanks to God.

Battle of Hunain

After the conquest of Mecca, the Muslims stayed in the city for two weeks when a news soon broke out that a big army had been mobilized in the valley of Hunain to attack Mecca and to undo the victory of the Muslims. This time Muhammad assembled a force of twelve thousand warriors, which included two thousand non-Muslim Meccans. Muhammad was forced to make necessary preparations for defence. He felt the necessity of borrowing money for provisions and war supplies, therefore, according to **"Masnad"** (Cairo, 1895, 4th vol., p. 36) by Ahmad bin Hanbal (d. 241/855), "He took a loan of 30,000 dhiraams from Abdullah bin

Rabiah, a step-brother of Abu Jahl, who was very rich." He also wanted from Safwan bin Umayyah, who had not yet accepted Islam, to lend him the weapons of war. Safwan offered one hundred coats of mail together with their accessories. On 6th Shawal, 8/January 27, 630, Muhammad marched to Hunain to crush the powers of the four savage tribes, viz. Thaqif, Hawazin, Sa'd and Jasam. In order to reach the fertile valley of Taif, they had to pass through a narrow defile, called Hunain. It is a name of a valley running from Shara'il-ul-Mujahid, which is 11 miles east-north-east of Mecca, to Shara'i Nakhilah which is 7 miles and then runs north towards Zeima. Between the Shara'i the valley is quite wide, about 2 miles in most places, but beyond the old Shara'i it narrows down to between a quarter and a half-mile, and as it approaches Zeima, it gets narrower still. It is this second portion of the Hunain valley which is a defile, and the defile is narrowest near Zeima. Beyond Zeima the Taif route winds into the Wadi Nakhlat-ul-Yamaniyya.

When the Muslim army entered the narrow defiles overlooking the valley, Hawazin sharp-shooters, securely hidden; sent forth a murderous rain of arrows, causing havoc among the Muslims ranks, who took to a wild flight, and only a handful were left with Muhammad. At this critical moment, writes Ibn Hisham (2nd vol., p. 444), Muhammad raised his voice in a great cry, "O Muslims! I am here! I am the Prophet of God, and no one dare doubt my word. I am Muhammad, the son of Abdul Muttalib." But his cries were of no avail. The leading elements of Hawazin got to the place where Muhammad stood, and here Ali brought down the first infidel to fall at Hunain - a man mounted on a red camel, carrying a long lance at the end of which flew a black pennant. This man was chasing the Muslims as they fled. Ali pursued the man, and cut the tendons of the camel's hind legs with his sword. The man fell with the camel. Muhammad now moved towards the right with his handful companions and took shelter on a rocky spur. He turned to Ibn Abbas and ordered him to call the Muslims to rally around him. Ibn Abbas was of large stature who had very resonant voice, which according to some accounts, could be heard long away. He shouted: "O'people of **Ansars**! O'people of the Tree (those who had taken oath of allegiance at Hudaibia)" No sooner did this inspiring call reach the ears of the retreating Muslims than they rallied again, and made a counter-attack. The

tide turned at once, and the unbelievers took to flight and dispersed.

It must be known that the Muslims had counter-attacked with such reckless courage that the enemy's ranks were broken and their forces split into two. One half fled widely from the field and retreated to their homes, the other half took refuge in their fortress of Taif. Thus, the Muslims pursued the fleeing enemy to the city wall of the fortified Taif, about 75 miles from Mecca by the old route, and laid siege to the city which lasted for a month or so. It is reported that the Muslims had used for the first time the advanced siege appliances of the day, such as the *dababah* (a wheeled structure made of brick and stone to provide a constant cover to besiegers) and the *minjanig* (ballista, a wooden structure to hurl large stones to break through fortifications) newly acquired from the Jews of Khaibar. They caused considerable loss of life to the besiegers by the advanced defensive unit of shooting arrows with fire balls of bitumen as warheads against the wooden ballista. Later, Muhammad raised the siege on the advice of a wise Bedouin. Meanwhile, the defeated Hawazin sent six of their chiefs to seek peace and beg for mercy, which was accepted. This is called the battle of Hunain, in which the enemies lost seventy of their bravest. Six thousand captives including women and children, forty thousand sheeps and goats, four thousand ounces of silver and twenty four thousand camels formed the booty of Hunain.

Returning from Taif, Muhammad halted at Je'raanah, a place beyond the outskirts of Mecca, where the entire booty of Hunain had been collected for distribution. In the division of the spoils, a large proportion fell to the share of the newly converted Meccans than to the people of Medina. Some of the Medinite *Ansars* looked upon this as an act of partiality and thus, there were whispers of dissatisfaction. Some of them said: "The Prophet had rewarded the Meccans and deprived us of our share, although the blood of the Meccans is still dripping from our swords." Other said: "We are remembered in moments of difficulties while booty is given to others." When their discontent reached the ear of Muhammad, he assembled the disheartened Medinite *Ansars* together and spoke, "O' men of *Ansar*, is it not true that you were in the dark and through me God guided you towards light?" The *Ansar* replied, "Verily, God and His Prophet did us a great

favour." Then he said, "Were you not torn by enmities and hostilities among yourselves and did I not give you unity and peace?" They said, "Verily, we are indebted to you for many favours." Then he said, "Were you not poor and God through me made you rich?" They said, "Verily, God and His Prophet have been kind to us." Then he said, "*O' men of Ansar, why you disturb your hearts because of the things of this life? Would you not prefer that the other people return to their homes with the goats and camels, while you go back to your homes with me in your midst?*" On hearing his words, the *Ansar* wept and said that they wanted only Muhammad and nothing else.

Mauta Expedition

When Muhammad summoned the nations the message of Islam, one of his letters was addressed to the governor of Ghassan, Shurahbil bin Amr, who was the ruler of this region and was the vassal of Caesar of Rome. The letter of Muhammad was carried by Harith bin Umayr, who had been killed at a place called Mauta, a village not far from Balka in Syria. The murder of the Muslim envoy by a feudatory of the Roman empire, was an outrage which could not be passed over in silence. It would have been unwise to allow the enemy any leisure to muster huge forces to fall upon the Muslims, therefore, an army of 3000 strong was forthwith mustered at the command of Zaid bin Harith to avenge the blood of his envoy Harith bin Umayr against the Ghassanid ruler in 8/629.

The Muslims suddenly found themselves in the presence of a force several times more numerous than themselves, near the village of Mauta. Zaid bin Harith seizing the banner which Muhammad had entrusted to his hands, led the charge of the Muslims, plunging into the midst of the enemy ranks until he fell transfixed by their spears. Jafar Taiyar, seized the banner from the dying Zaid and raised it aloft to command the Muslim force. The enemy closed in on the heroic Jafar, who was soon covered with wounds. When both his hands were cut off gripping the banner, he still stood firm holding the staff between his two stumps, until the Byzantine soldiers struck him a mortal blow. Immediately, the banner was caught up by Abdullah bin Rawaha, who also met death. Khalid bin Walid, newly converted to Islam, assumed control at this moment of defeat. Then, by

retiring methodically, the survivors, under Khalid's leadership, withdrew from the field. When the defeated Muslims approached Medina, Muhammad and the people went out to receive them.

Tabuk Expedition

With the conquest of Mecca, Islam marched with galloping speed throughout the length and breadth of Arabia. The neighbouring Christian states, especially the Roman empire, were watching this unprecedented, triumphant march with a great concern and anxiety.

The fate of the Muslims in the battle of Mauta also emboldened the Arabs and Romans of the frontier regions to enhance their mischief-mongering towards the Muslims. Thus, to restore the loss of prestige and to teach lesson, Muhammad marched with an army of thirty thousand from Medina to Tabuk, a well known place about midway between Medina and Damascus. He on that very occasion, appointed Ali as his caliph in Medina, and as a result, Ali did not take part in the battle of Tabuk. In the mid-Rajab, 9/late October, 630, the Muslims set out for Tabuk. This was the largest army that had ever mustered under the command of Muhammad. The army drawn up for the battle of Tabuk, known as the *Jaish al-Usrah* (the army of difficulty). So called because in the first place the journey had to be undertaken in the scorching heat of the summer and secondly, it was the time of reaping the harvest and ripening of fruit which made it very difficult to proceed.

Reaching the field of Tabuk, Muhammad encamped his army, where he came to know that the Romans in Jordan had withdrawn to Damascus, and dared not to come to arms with the Muslims, and therefore, Muhammad returned to Medina after a couple of days. This was the last campaign commanded by Muhammad.

Farewell Pilgrimage

When peace and order had been restored throughout the Muslim realm and the period of warfare was over and the people joined Islam in multitude, till in the course of some two years, there was one and but one religion - *Islam* - throughout the vast Arabian peninsula with a few Jewish

and Christian exceptions here and there. The cry of **Allah-u-Akbar** resounded on all sides. Now it took Muhammad but two brief years, not only to bring the whole of Arabia under the banner of Islam, but at the same time to work a mighty transformation, sweeping away all corruptions and uplifting the nation to the loftiest height of spirituality.

In 10/632, Muhammad set forth with a large concourse of Muslims, ranging in strength between ninety to one lac and twenty thousand bound on a farewell pilgrimage to Mecca. On his arrival at Mecca, and before completing all the rites, he addressed the assembled multitude from the top of the Jabal-ul-Arafat in words which yet live in the hearts of all Muslims. H.G. Wells writes in "**The Outline of History**" (London, 1920, p. 325) that, "A year before his death, at the end of the tenth year of the Hegira, Muhammad made his last pilgrimage from Medina to Mecca. He made then a great sermon to his people....The reader will note that the first paragraph sweeps away all plunder and blood feuds among the followers of Islam. The last makes the believing Negro the equal of the Caliph....they established in the world a great tradition of dignified fair dealing, they breathe a spirit of generosity, and they are human and workable. They created a society more free from wide-spread cruelty and social oppression than any society had ever been in the world before." In the terminology of Hadith, this historical journey is called **hajjatul wida** (the farewell pilgrimage) and at times it is also named **hajjatul balagha** (the pilgrimage of the delivery of message). On 18th Zilhaja, 10/March 16, 632, Muhammad after performing farewell pilgrimage, halted at the plain of Ghadir Khum, where he declared Ali bin Abu Talib as his successor.

Osama bin Zaid

At about the middle of the month of Safar, in the 11th A.H., on Monday, Muhammad ordered his followers to make speedy preparations for an expedition against the people of Mauta, in the Byzantine territory, and the sources go to say, to avenge the massacre of the soldiers, who had fallen in recent skirmishes. The next day, on Tuesday he appointed Osama to the command of the army. Osama was the son of Zaid bin Harith, who had been slain at Mauta, and

was a youth of 17 or 18 years. On Wednesday, a violent inroad of headache and fever seized Muhammad, but the next morning of Thursday, he found himself sufficiently recovered to prepare a flag-staff, with his own hands, which he made over to Osama. The camp was then erected at Jorf, three miles from Medina on the route to Syria. He ordered all his followers at Medina to join it at once, not excepting even the renowned companions to join it at once. Only Ali, who was required to remain with him at Medina, was exempted. The malady, although gaining ground, did not confine Muhammad entirely to his house. He used to move into the mosque, through the door of his apartment, to lead the prayers. After about a week of his summoning the men to the Syrian expedition under Osama, he perceived that the progress to join the camp at Jorf was very slow and poor, therefore, he once again addressed the people to join the Syrian expedition. The sickness of Muhammad was increasing every day, and the Syrian expedition, weighed upon his mind, and continued saying to those around him, "Send off quickly the army of Osama." According to the Shiites, Muhammad was really reprimanding his companions for not joining the expeditionary force. Knowing that Muhammad's end was near, the companions were reluctant to leave Medina at such a critical time and fearful that, if they absented themselves, Ali might step uncontested. In sum, the army of Osama could not depart from Medina during the time of Muhammad.

According to the Sunni historians, the expedition under Osama was ordered by Muhammad for taking revenge of Osama's father, Zaid bin Harith who had been killed at the hands of the Byzantine force in the battle of Mauta. This view however seems hardly plausible, because the battle of Mauta took place in the year 8/629 and there is no reason why the idea of revenge did not occur earlier 2 two years and 7 months' after that event. Secondly, Zaid bin Harith was not the only notable martyr of that battle. Muhammad's cousin, Jafar Taiyar was also killed in the same battle and if the expedition under Osama had been for avenging the blood of Osama's father, Zaid bin Harith, it should as well be for avenging the blood of Jafar Taiyar. But, it is learnt that not only Jafar's real brother, Ali but all other members of Banu Hashim had been expressly detained from joining the expedition under Osama. This indicates clearly that the expedition was not for avenging any one's blood. The critical examination of the sources leads to the conclusion that Muhammad aimed at keeping Ali and his

faithfuls in Medina and to keep all others away from the city, so that in the event of his death, Ali could establish himself as the successor of Muhammad without opposition.

Demise of Muhammad

Muhammad was seriously taken ill for several days. At noon on Monday (12th Rabi I, 11/June 8, 632), whilst praying earnestly in whisper, the spirit of the great Prophet Muhammad took flight to the "blessed companionship on high." So ended a life consecrated from first to last to the service of God and humanity. H.M. Hyndman writes in *"The Awakening of Asia"* (London, 1919, p. 9) that, "...this very human prophet of God had such a remarkable personal influence over all with whom he was brought into contact that, neither when a poverty-stricken and hunted fugitive, nor at the height of his prosperity, did he ever have to complain of treachery from those who had once embraced his faith. His confidence in himself, and in his inspiration from on high, was ever greater when he was suffering under disappointment and defeat than when he was able to dictate his own terms to his conquered enemies. Muhammad died as he had lived, surrounded by his early followers, friends and votaries: his death as devoid of mystery as his life of disguise." His apostleship lasted for 23 years, 2 months and 21 days; or 9 years, 9 months and 8 days in Mecca and 13 years, 5 months and 13 days in Medina.

Muhammad was an embodiment or rather an institution by himself of many ethical code. No doubt, when a fair-minded person studies various aspects of the life of Muhammad as a man, head of family, a member of the society, a judge, an administrator, a teacher, a military commander and a guide, he comes to the conclusion that his all round perfection is a definite proof of his being a Divine Messenger. Muhammad made wonderful contributions for the welfare of humanity at large. First, he himself acted upon the divine message and then he asked to follow him. He established the rights of the people when rights were being usurped; he administered justice when tyranny was rampant everywhere; he introduced equality when undue discrimination was so common; and he gave freedom to the people when they were groaning under oppression, cruelty and injustice. He brought a message which taught man to

obey and fear God only, and seek help from Him alone. His universal message covers all the aspects of human life, including rights, justice, equality and freedom. Edward Gibbon writes in **"The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire"** (London, 1848, 5th vol., p. 487) that, "More pure than the system of Zoroaster, more liberal than the law of Moses, the religion of Mahomet might seem less inconsistent with reason than the creed of mystery and superstition which, in the seventh century, disgraced the simplicity of the gospels."

The European criticism seems to have lost the sense to deal with Muhammad justly. All rules of that criticism seem to be subject to the one consideration that whatever is unfavourable and damaging to Muhammad's reputation must be accepted as true. The negative views of the Europeans for Islam and Muhammad need here sufficient space to examine from its root. The readers may refer in this context a separate write-up, entitled **"The Image of Islam and Muhammad"**, vide Appendix I.

Muhammad and Education

The tribe of Qoraish, and especially that branch of it called the clan of Sa'd, among whom Muhammad spent his childhood near Mount Taif, situated to the east of Mecca, were renowned in Arabia for the purity and eloquence of their language. William Muir writes in **"The Life of Mohammad"** (London, 1923, p. 7) that, "His speech was formed upon one of the purest models of the beautiful language of the peninsula." Such milieu could not fail to make him a man of some refinement and good taste; and no doubt it was this which enabled him to attract to himself men much more learned than he. Muhammad preached of an inestimable value of knowledge, and brought his followers out of the darkness of ignorance to the light.

It is recounted that a man came to Muhammad and asked, "What is *ilm*?" He replied, fairness (*insaf*). The man asked again, "And what more?" He replied, listening (*istimsa*). The man asked, "And what more?" The Prophet said, keeping in mind (*hifz*). The man asked, "And what else?" He replied, acting (*amal*) in accordance with knowledge. Then the man asked, "And what more?" Muhammad replied, spreading it (*nashru-hu*).

Muhammad's interest in education can also be judged from the tradition as quoted by Ibn Sa'd in **"Tabaqat"** that among the Meccan prisoners taken in the battle of Badr, there were many who could not pay for their liberty; and the literate among them however were ordered by the Prophet to teach at least ten illiterate Muslim children as a ransom. Zaid bin Thabit, who later one became famous as one of the scribes of the Koranic revelations, learned reading and writing in this way. It is also worthwhile to mention that Muhammad encouraged the learning of foreign languages, and thus Zaid bin Thabit is also reputed to have learnt Persian, Greek, Ethiopian, Aramaic and Hebrew. According to H.E. Barnes in **"A History of Historical Writings"** (Oklahoma, 1937, p. 93), "In many ways the most advanced civilization of the Middle Ages was not a Christian culture at all, but rather the civilization of the people of the faith of Islam."

The Holy Koran is no barren in this context. In Koran alone there are 704 verses in which either the word *ilm* or the words of the same derivation are used in the following order:- *a'lam* 49 times, *al-ilm* 80 times, *a'lami* 11 times, *alim* 162 times, *a'lim* 13 times, *ilman* 14 times, *i'lami* 27 times, *ma'lum* and *ma'lumat* 13 times, *ya'lamun* 85 times, *ya'lami* 93 times, *ta'lamun* 56 times. Pen and books are essential aids of knowledge, and for them, the *qalam* occurs 2 times and *al-kitab* 230 times. In addition, a number of words related to writing, like *kataba*, *katabna*, *kutiba*, *katib*, *yaktubu*, *naktubu* are used in a number of verses. The total number of the Koranic verses using the words related to writing is 319, and the word *kitab* for the Koran is used on 81 different occasions. This is enough to show to what extent knowledge and the means of its acquisition are emphasised in the Koran, that had been excellently elaborated in the precious sayings of Muhammad.

Hence, it may be remembered that the advanced civilization in the Middle Ages originated by the Muslims was solely the outcome of the Koranic teachings and the recorded sayings of Muhammad in acquisition of education. Few fragments of Muhammad's teachings are also given below:-

* *Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.*

- * The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of martyr.
- * The acquisition of knowledge is a duty incumbent on every Muslim, male and female.
- * He does not die, who takes learning.
- * The worst of men is a bad learned man, and a good learned man is the best.
- * To listen to the words of the learned and to instil into the lessons of science is better than religious exercises.
- * Acquire knowledge; it enables the possessor to distinguish right from wrong; it guides us to happiness; it sustains us in misery; it is an ornament among friends, and an armour against enemies.
- * Go in search of knowledge even into China.
- * Excessive knowledge is better than excessive praying.
- * Whoso honours the learned, honours me.
- * One learned man is harder on the devil than a thousand ignorant worshippers.
- * The superiority of a learned man over an ignorant worshipper is like that of the full moon over all the stars.
- * People are like mines of gold and silver. The more excellent of them in Islam are those who attain knowledge.
- * Knowledge is maintained only through teaching.

- * *The learned ones are the heirs of the prophets. They have knowledge as their inheritance; and he who inherits it, he inherits a great fortune.*
- * *The only cure for ignorance is to ask.*
- * *One scholar has more power over the devil than a thousand devout men.*

ALI BIN ABU TALIB (11-40/632-661)

Abul Hasan Ali, or Ali (Lofty, Exalted), the son of Abu Talib and the cousin of Muhammad was born on Friday, the 13th Rajab in the 28th year of *amul feel* (the year of elephants), or 600 A.D. inside Kaba in Mecca. His mother Fatima bint Asad stayed in Kaba for three long days and as the fourth day approached, she stepped out, carrying her gem in her arms. He was brought up under the subtle care and affection of Muhammad. Ali himself cherished the memory of his childhood by saying: "The Prophet brought me up in his own arms and fed me with his own morsel. I followed him, wherever he went, like a baby-camel which follows its mother. Each day a new aspect of his character would beam out of his noble person and I would accept it and follow it as commanded."

Ibn Abid Hadid (d. 655/1257) quotes Ibn Abbas as relating in his "**Sharh Nahj al-Balagha**" that Muhammad and Ali loved each other intensely. Muhammad was so fond of Ali that once when Ali was a young boy, he sent him out on some errand, and Ali took long time to return; he started getting worried and prayed to God, "O'Lord, do not let me die unless I behold Ali once again."

Ahmad bin Hanbal writes that, "There are not as many verses and traditions in the praise of any other companion of Muhammad as there are in the praise of Ali bin Abu Talib." Ibn Abbas says that, "There have not descended as many verses about anybody as have revealed about Ali." On another occasion Ibn Abbas narrates, "Three hundred verses of the Holy Koran have been revealed in favour of Ali." Abdullah bin Ayyash bin Abu Rabi'ah says, "Ali's knowledge and insight were perfect and he was the first to embrace Islam and he has the honour of being the son-in-law of the

Messenger of God. He alone had perfect ability to understand the traditions. He was very brave in fighting and very generous in charity."

Regarding the first man to profess faith in the prophetic mission of Muhammad, the early historians seem to have created a debating issue. Ibn Hisham (1st vol., p. 245), Tabari (2nd vol., p. 56) etc. however write that Ali bin Abu Talib was the first male to accept Islam at the hands of Muhammad. While Nuruddin Ali bin Ibrahim Shafayee writes in **"Sirat-i Halabiya"** that, "Ali was like a son unto Muhammad, therefore, his faith from very start was the faith professed by the Prophet." Masudi (d. 346/958) writes in his **"Muruj adh-Dhahab"** (2nd vol., p. 283) that, "The general conscientious of opinion amongst the Muslim historians and theologians is that Ali was never a non-Muslim or prayed before idols, therefore, the question of his embracing Islam does not and cannot arise."

In 614 A.D. about four years after his divine call, Muhammad proceeded to summon his close relatives. Thus he prepared a banquet, a lamb, and a bowl of milk for the entertainment of forty guests of the Hashimite. When Muhammad asked the assembly, who will assist him in his mission, no answer was returned. It was only Ali on that occasion stood up to offer his services for the cause of Islam to Muhammad. Thomas Carlyle writes in **"Heroes and Hero-worship"** (London, 1850, p. 77) that, "Nevertheless, it proved not a laughable thing; it was very serious thing! As for this young Ali, one cannot but like him. A noble minded creature, as he shows himself, now and always afterwards; full of affection and fiery daring."

During the night of Muhammad's migration from Mecca, it was indeed a most dangerous moment for Ali, when he volunteered to sleep fearlessly in Muhammad's bed. The task entrusted to him was not a small undertaking for a young man of 22 or 23 years old, but the way in which he carried it out, Ali showed an unflinching fidelity. He was called upon to deputise Muhammad at the risk of his own life, for it was highly probable that the assassins, furious at being foiled of their chief objective would kill Ali in his stead. Historian Tabari writes that, "Ali's willingness to sacrifice his life for Muhammad is unique in the history of mankind." Shibli Nomani writes in his **"Sirat al-Nabi"** (tr. by Fazlur Rahman, Karachi, 1970, p. 247) that, "It was a very critical moment. Ali knew

that the Quraysh had planned to assassinate the Prophet, and fully realized that his bed that night was to be turned into a place of murder, but, for the Victor of Khaybar it was a bed of roses." On that occasion a Koranic verse revealed in favour of Ali, which reads: "And among men there is he who would sell himself to seek the pleasure of God, and God is Compassionate to His servants." (2:207)

During the 2nd year of migration, Ali's betrothal took place with Muhammad's daughter Fatima, which had been actualized in the month of Ramadan, but the nuptial ceremonies were performed two months later in Zilhaja very simply without pomp and ostentation. Abu Muhammad Ordoni writes in **"Fatima the Gracious"** (Qum, 1992, p. 131) that, "The Prophet asked for a jug of water; he sipped a small amount of the water and after gargling with it, placed it back in the jug. He then called for Fatima and sprayed her head and shoulders with that water and did the same thing to Ali." According to some sources, Ali at the time of marriage was 21 years, 5 months and 15 days old, while Fatima was 15 years, 5 months and 15 days old.

Ali is said to have taken part in all the holy wars with the exception of the expedition of Tabuk, when he was left as a governor of Medina, and during that occasion, Muhammad said, "O Ali, you are to me as Aaron was to Moses." (**"Ma'nad"**, 1st vol., p. 174) His dauntless courage, fortitude and unflinching loyalty made him the main hero of all these campaigns. It was the valour of Ali and the strength of his arms that turned the table at critical juncture on the battlefield, and it was the victories won by him that ensured the triumph of Islam over polytheism. At the battle of Badr, as had been customary in all Arabian battles since pre-historic times, the champions of each force came out of the ranks before commencement of operations. With Hamza and Obaida, Ali fought duel with the Meccan champions. In the battle of Uhud, Ali stood steadfast to shield Muhammad when the Muslims had fled from the field.

Ali's dauntless courage and valour was further seen when he killed Amr bin Abdu-wudd in the battle of Ditch, ensuing the triumph of Islam. During the battle of Khaibar, five strongholds of the Jews had been reduced with the exception of al-Qamus, whose commander was Marhab. Muhammad at first assigned Abu Bakr to lead the

Muslim army to besiege the fort. R.V.C. Bodley writes in "The Messenger" (London, 1946, p. 271) that, "Into this Abu Bakr led a heroic attack, but he was driven back. Then Umar tried, but while he reached the mouth of the breach, he had to retire." Thus, Muhammad declared, "Tomorrow, I will hand over the banner of Islamic army to such a person who is an impetuous warrior and not an absconder; he befriends God and His Apostle and is also befriended by them. God is sure to grant victory on his hands." The next morning, Ali had been given the charge to lead the assault and to fight till the Jews acknowledged submission. Ali, clad in a scarlet vest over which was buckled a cuirass of steel, proceeded to the front. He put Harith, a man of gigantic stature to the sword. To revenge the death of his brother, the Jewish champion Marhab stepped forward from Jewish lines, and challenged Ali to single combat. "I am Marhab", he cried, "as all Khaibar know, a warrior bristling with arms in a furiously ranging war." Ali advanced from the Muslim ranks in response to his vainglorious challenge, saying "I am he whom his mother named Haidar, a lion of the wilderness; I weigh my foes in a gigantic balance." As both closed, Marhab made a thrust at Ali with his three-pronged lance, which Ali dexterously warded off, and before he could recover himself, Ali dealt him a blow with his irresistible sword, which divided his buckler, passed through his doubled turban, cleaving his head went down to his chest. Marhab fell lifeless to the ground. The Muslim warriors rushed forward in a body, and captured the citadel and the victory was decisive.

During the battle of Hunain, the Muslim army was unable to withstand the volley of arrows of the foe. Some of them shattered but Ali faced the situation boldly. He put numerous opponents to death with his sword.

Ali acted as the scribe for writing the treaty of Hudaibia. He wrote Muhammad as Messenger of God. The infidels objected to it. They wanted him to write Muhammad, the son of Abdullah. The Prophet consented to do so for the sake of peace, but Ali did not like to delete those words with his own hands. To him it was sacrilege and against the spirit of reverence. Muhammad however did so with his own hand.

Ali spent his youth in the shadow of the sword and his early manhood in wielding it. On several occasions, he fought single-handed against overwhelming odds and emerged

out victorious. In the battle of Siffin, he penetrated into the front ranks of the Syrian forces, dressed only in a cotton uniform and without any protective armour. For much the same reason, Ali wore protective armour on the front part of his body only, while his back lay open and unprotected. Someone asked him, "Are you not afraid that you will be attacked from behind?" "God forbid", was Ali's reply, "that I may live to see the day when an enemy would have the dexterity to attack me from the rear." Once a soldier asked Ali why he preferred mule to a horse when going into action. Ali replied, "A horse can gallop at a great pace, but a mule only ambles along, faltering little in its slow and steady pace. As I have neither to chase one who flies from the battlefield nor any inclination to seek safety in flight myself, I prefer a mule to horse." His behaviour at the battles also illustrates his adherence to his code he imparted. While fighting a duel in a battle, Ali had thrown his opponent on the ground and had drawn his sword to cut off his head, when the latter spat on his face. Ali then left his enemy and sheathed his sword. Asked why he left such a dangerous foe alive, Ali said, "I would have killed him in the way of God, but when he spat on my face, I lost my temper and his death at that juncture would have been caused from motives of retaliation rather than in the spirit of holy war."

During the conquest of Mecca, Muhammad entered Kaba and removed 360 idols. The Meccans looked on aghast while Muhammad, with a stroke of stick held in hand, smashed the idols which lay in the lower cavities of the walls. To break those idols which were placed higher up, out of reach of either hand or stick, in particular the idol most treasured by the Meccans, that of Hubal, like a giant statue; Muhammad solicited the help of Ali. Ibn Sa'd (3rd vol., p. 13) and other compilers of Hadiths, like Tirmizi (2nd vol., p. 299) and Ibn Majah (p. 12) write that Muhammad said, "Ascend on my shoulders and then shatter with this stick all the idols which are placed up above." Ali placed his feet on the shoulders of Muhammad and completed the great purge. He cast down all the idols, relics of the age of ignorance, also climbed to the top of the Kaba and pulled Hubal from its place and threw it down.

In the year 9/631, Islam was firmly established throughout Arabia. There remained, however, certain isolated pockets of resistance, therefore, Muhammad next turned his

attention to the large Christian community of Najran in Yamen, and invited them to accept Islam. Their response was to conduct a **mubahila** (imprecation), which was an old custom much used by the ancient prophets. Each of the disputant parties was required to swear a solemn oath that they were on the side of the truth, calling on God to wreak His vengeance on them if they lied. In short, **mubahila** was a custom to invoke the curse of God on the liar. Hence a deputation of sixty Christian priests, headed by Abu Harith bin Algamah, the grand bishop of Najran, Abdul Massih and Ayham arrived in Medina. Muhammad had taken with him Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Hussain, making themselves as **panj-tan** (the blessed Quincunx), and when the Christians saw their radiant faces, they were dismayed and overwhelmed. The bishop of Najran changed his mind, and went to Muhammad, informing their inability to proceed with the **mubahila**, and agreed to come to the terms.

The Muslim scholars unanimously concur with the fact, says, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal in his "**Masnad**," "that not one of the companions of the Prophet was ever praised by God and His Prophet for his virtues and estimation as was Ali." On one occasion when four of the Muslims complained to Muhammad concerning something that Ali had done, Muhammad was displeased and said, "What do you want from Ali? Ali is from me and I am from Ali. He is the guardian of every believer after me." (**Tirmizi**, 2nd vol., p. 298) On another occasion, Muhammad is reported to have said, "Ali is my brother, my executor and my successor. You obey him." (**Tabari**, 2nd vol., p. 63)

Muhammad's successor

The succession to Muhammad is the key question in Shiite Islam, and a principal factor separating them from the Sunni majority. It is seen that Muhammad had nominated Ali bin Abu Talib as his successor by rule of **nass** (investiture) and **nass wa-ta'yin** (explicit investiture). During the period of the Prophethood, the designation was made by **nass** from time to time, whose main term was **wali** (helper, friend, lover, guardian or attorney), as it is said in Arabic: **wali amru'l raiyya** (the guardian of the subject), or **wali ahad** (one who succeeds to the office). In addition to the **wali**, different terms were used on different occasions for the succession of Ali bin Abu

Talib in Holy Koran, such as *Noor*, *Imam-i Moobin*, *Rasikhul fi'l Ilm*, *Ulil Amr*, *Ilmul Kitab* etc. While the most frequent words used in Hadiths, denoting Ali's succession were *hujjatullah* (God's proof), *Sayedu'l Muslimin* (leader of the Muslims), *Shabih Harun* (like Aaron), *Sahibu'l Iawa* (the master of the standard), *Sahibu'l hanz* (master of Kauthar pool), *Babu'l Ilm* (gate of the knowledge) etc.

The *nass wa-ta'yin* was made after the farewell pilgrimage of Muhammad. Accordingly, on Monday, the 20th Zilkada, 10, Muhammad received following revelation:-

"And you proclaim to the people for pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and lean camel, coming from every remote place." (22:27)

Due proclamation was made among the Muslims to join the pilgrimage, and Muhammad himself left Medina on Saturday, the 25th Zilkada, 10 which was his farewell pilgrimage. He reached Mecca on Wednesday, the 7th Zilhaja, 10, and performed the pilgrimage. He delivered a historical sermon at the plain of Arfat. He left Mecca on 14th Zilhaja, 10 after performance of pilgrimage. His caravan reached a little before noon to a pond (*ghadir*), known as Khum, on 18th Zilhaja, 10/March 16, 632. It is situated about 3 miles north-west of Mecca in the heart of the desert, called Sahara'i Huja, about 3 miles from the town, al-Jahfa. Here, Muhammad received the following Koranic revelation:-

"O' apostle! deliver what has been revealed upon you from your Lord, and if not, you have not delivered His message. And surely God will protect you from men." (5:67)

The town al-Jahfa was a junction from where the routes for Medina, Egypt, Syria and Iraq radiated in different directions. On its border is a pond (*ghadir*) with a vast open plain, embosomed with trees and bushes, which had been swept off. Under the shade of two trees, a big pulpit for Muhammad was erected with the camel-saddles. He mounted it and placed Ali on his right. He then delivered a sermon, thanking God for His bounty and stated that he felt that he would die soon. He repeated that he would be leaving two *heavy weights* i.e., Holy Koran and his Ahl-al-

Bait, with them. The two were inseparable. If people held both fast they would never go astray. Muhammad then asked his audience if he was not superior to the believers. The crowd answered in the affirmative. He then declared: "Whose Master (*mawla*) I am, this Ali is his Master (*mawla*)." He then prayed, "O God, be the friend of him who is his friend, and be the enemy of him who is his enemy." After the sermon, Muhammad dismounted and retired to his tent. He asked Ali to accept the people's congratulation and allegiance.

It must be known that the word *mawla* means master, lord, guardian or one who deserves superior authority. As the words *ana awla* (I am superior) indicate that *mawla* means *awla* (superior). What Muhammad meant by this sentence was, God is superior in right and might to him and he is superior in right and might to the faithful and Ali is superior in right and might to all those to whom Muhammad is superior.

The most earliest source of the event of Ghadir'i Khum is Asma bint Umayy (d. 38/658), the wife of Jafar Taiyar bin Abu Talib. Her report has been documented in "*at-Tarikh*" (Beirut, 1960) by the historian Yaqubi (d. 284/898). Hassan bin Thabit (d. 40/661), a famous poet had vividly versified the event in his *Diwan* of 228 poems. Suleman bin Qays al-Hilali (d. 82/701) also is ranked among the earliest authorities. Kumyt bin Zaid (60-126/680-744) however has been considered as the most earliest authority by the German scholars, Horovitz and Goldzier. Among the prominent Companions, who had related the event of Ghadir'i Khum are Abuzar Ghafari (d. 32/653), Huzaifah al-Yameni (d. 29/650), Abu Ayub Ansari (d. 50/670), Ammar bin Yasir (d. 37/657), Salman al-Faras (d. 36/657), Abdullah bin Abbas (d. 86/705) etc. etc. Among the earliest Umayyad historians, the most famous were Ibn Shihab az-Zuhari (50-125/670-744) and Ibn Ishaq (d. 152/769).

The historians and compilers of the Hadiths between 10/632 and 300/912 were mostly under pressure of the ruling powers of Umayyads and the Abbasids, therefore, they avoided to refer the event, such as Ibn Hisham (d. 218/833), Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845) and Tabari (d. 310/922). Nevertheless, Nisai (d. 151/768), Ahmad bin Hanbal (d. 241/855), Tirmizi (d. 279/893), Ibn Majah (d. 283/897), Abu Daud (d. 276/890) and Yaqubi

(d. 284/898) had demonstrated their impartiality, whose bold assertion lends colour to this historical event. In sum, Hussein Ali Mahfuz, in his researches, has recorded with documentation in **"Tarikh ash-Shia"** (Karbala, n.d., p. 77) as quoted by Dr. S.H.M. Jafri in **"Origins and Early Development of Shia Islam"** (London, 1979, p. 20) that the tradition of Ghadir'i Khum has been narrated by at least 110 Companions, 84 tabi'un, 355 ulama, 25 historians, 27 traditionists, 11 exegesists, 18 theologians and 5 philosophers.

It must however be remembered that the Arabs of Northern and Central, of whom the tribe of Qoraish was dominant in Mecca. The people of South Arabian origin, Banu Aws and Banu Khazraj had settled in Medina. There had been many differences among the Arabs of North and South, socially, culturally, economically, geographically and religiously. The leader in the North was elected on a principle of seniority in age with administrative ability. In South, the Arabs were accustomed to hereditary succession in leadership. In the face of these facts, the South Arabian tribes of Aws and Khazraj had presented a healthy atmosphere for Islam in Medina. The majority of Northern Arabs were nomads, and understood Islam at least at the first stage of their acceptance of it as social-political discipline, as the Holy Koran says: "The wandering Arabs are harder in disbelief and hypocrisy and more likely to be ignorant of the limits which God has revealed to His Prophet" (9:97). These Arabs of North have been also called "most obdurate in hypocrisy" (9:101). Conversely, the tribes of Aws and Khazraj had understood Islam as basically religious discipline coupled with a socio-political movement, and were more sensitive to religious affairs. When the Holy Prophet died in 10/632, the issue of his succession was understood to combine it both political and religious leadership. To some it was more political than religious, to others it was more religious than political. The majority who accepted Abu Bakr as their leader, had laid more emphasis on the socio-political side, disregarding the religious principle and the idea of hereditary sanctity of a certain house. This assumption is strongly supported by the words of Umar bin al-Khattab, who in reply to Ibn Abbas, said: "The people do not like having the Prophethood and Caliphate combined in the Banu Hashim" (**Tabari**, 1st vol., p. 2769). Hence, Muhammad did not designate Ali explicitly in the start owing to the Northern Arabian custom of leaving the

selection of a leader to the people. The Holy Koran however says that Muhammad's family had a prerogative over others. Neither Banu Taym bin Marra, the clan of Abu Bakr, nor Banu Adi bin Ka'b, the tribe of Umar Khattab had ever been regarded with esteem on any religious ground. But, those who laid stress on the religious principle could not accept them as candidates for succession to Muhammad. It was from Banu Hashim, and among them was only Ali bin Abu Talib for the succession.

There was an assembly hall (*sageefa*), about 6 miles from Medina, belonging to Banu Sa'd, where the Arabs used to discuss their mutual problems. Upon the death of Muhammad, the *Ansars* and *Muhajirs* of Medina, numbering about 300 to 325, had assembled at Sageefa Banu Sa'd to choose their leader. There was not a single man from Banu Hashim. Abu Bakr and Umar bin Khattab also rushed the spot during the time when the people were about to take an oath of allegiance from Abu Ubaida as their caliph. The proceeding stopped and a hot argument started among them. Historian Tabari (3rd vol., p. 198) writes, "The *Ansars* or some were arguing that they would never take oath from anybody except Ali". When the swords were about to unshield, Umar bin Khattab asked Abu Bakr to raise his hand, and took his *bayt*, then it was followed by Abu Ubaida and the rest of people.

Sir Thomas W. Arnold writes in "The Caliphate" (London, 1924, p. 30) that, "The Prophet had been at one and the same head of the state and head of the church. The paramount control of political policy was in his hands; he received the ambassadors who brought the submission of the various Arab tribes, and he appointed officers to collect dues and taxes. He exercised supreme authority in military matters and the dispatch of military expeditions. He was at the same time supreme legislator, and not only promulgated legal status, but set in judgement to decide cases, against his decision there was no appeal. In addition to the performance of these offices of administrative and political order as ruler, general and judge, he was also revered as the inspired Prophet of God and the religious dogmas he enunciated were accepted by his followers as revelations of divine truth, in regard to which there could be no doubt or dispute. At the same time he performed the highest ecclesiastical functions, and as Imam led the prayer in public worship at the canonical hours in the mosque of Medina. In all these respects, Abu

Bakr was a successor of the founder of the faith - with the exception of the exercise of the prophetic function." In sum, Muhammad administered both temporal and spiritual powers in Islam, and after his death, the temporal power came to the hands of Abu Bakr in the form of *Caliphate*, while the spiritual power was inherited by Ali bin Abu Talib and his descendant in the form of *Imamate*.

During the period of Abu Bakr's caliphate, whatever initial support there may have been for Ali's candidature melted away in the face of Ali's own refusal to advance the temporal claim. Ali reverted to leading a quiet life, almost confined to the four walls of his house. He had no choice but to reconcile himself with the existing order, since he had considered that any action would lead to the destruction of infant Islam. His compromise with the political order can be well asserted from the fact that he did not demonstrate any sort of opposing attitude publicly and continued to live in Medina. If he had quitted Medina for elsewhere, his followers supporting his cause, must have followed him, which Ali most probably did not like.

Tabari (3rd vol., pp.203-4) writes that Abu Sufian bin Harb, who endeavoured to instigate Ali with the words: "What! It is the limit that in your presence, one of the lowliest families of Arabia should have gained the upper hand. By God, if you so desire I would fill the streets and lanes of Medina with mounted soldiers to aid you." Ali gave him short shift reply that, "By God, you have always been an enemy of Islam and of the Muslims." This demonstrated how firmly Ali was resolved to place the collective interests of the community and solidarity of Islam. In spite of maintaining his passive attitude, Ali did occasionally help the caliphs. He was a valued counsellor of the caliphs, and dominated by his heroic love and sense of sacrifice for the faith and saved the caliphs from committing the serious mistakes. Umar is thus often reported to have said: "Had there not been Ali, Umar would have perished." (vide "*Kitab al-Isti'ab*" by Ibn Abd al-Barr, 3rd vol., p. 1104)

Fourth Caliph of Islam

Accordingly, Abu Bakr was elected at the age of 60 years, adopting the title of *Khilafat rasulillah* (Vicegerent of the Messenger of God), a title which was soon simplified

to *khalifa* (whence the word *caliph* was coined in western languages). Abu Bakr died in 13/634 after ruling for 2 years, 3 months and 10 days. He nominated Umar, whose age at that time was 52 years, ruled for 10 years, 6 months and 4 days; and died in 23/644. The third caliph Uthman was selected at the age of 70 years, who was assassinated in 35/656 after ruling for 11 years, 11 months and 14 days. Wardi writes in "*Wu'az al-Salatin*" (p. 217) that, "It was the Umayyads who engineered the murder of Uthman, with Muawiya instigating the murder and Marwan working out the death." Immediately after the murder of Uthman, a crowd rushed to Ali in the mosque, urging him to accept the caliphate. Eventually, Ali consented and became the fourth caliph. This implies that the temporal and spiritual powers once again joined together in Islam just 24 years, 8 month and 28 days after the death of Muhammad. Dr. Gustav Weil writes in "*History of the Islamic Peoples*" (New Delhi, 1914, p. 88) that, "Still from credible sources it is clear enough that Ali surpassed not only Muawiya but even Abu Bakr and Umar in his unflinching love of righteousness, in bravery and eloquence."

It can be said that Ali's succession to the caliphate was approved by the vast majority of Muslims in Medina, and also in most of the provinces of the state. He was however placed in a difficult time, and the dice of fate appears to have been loaded against him. The period of four caliphs were subdivided into four distinct periods. It falls to the lot of Ali that he should pilot the bark of Islam in times of the most dangerous internecine dissensions. To maintain a proper hold of state administration under such conditions was a difficult as to keep a boat steady on stormy waters. Nevertheless, Ali displayed a high example of affection and sympathy for brother-Muslims which is without parallel.

During Uthman's caliphate, all the important governorships of the Muslim states were in the possession of the unworthy members of the Umayyad family. Ali firstly dismissed them in the state, but Muawiya the governor of Syria revolted, demanding "revenge for the blood of Uthman". Ali promptly announced that the names of the assassins should be reported, so that they could be executed. He had also started enquiries, but the only witness to the assassination was Uthman's widow, Naila, who deposed that Uthman had been killed by two persons whose names she did not know. Abul Ala Mawdudi writes in

his "**Khilafat wa Mulukiyat**" (Rampur, 1974, 3rd ed., pp. 115-17) that, "With due respect to Aisha, Talha, Zubayr and Muawiya, one could not help saying that legally their position was untenable. It was only during pre-Islamic days that tribes started wars of vengeance. Only Usman's relatives, who were alive at the time, had the right to demand reparation. If the ruler delayed arresting the criminals, then justice could be demanded by anyone. No law or *Shariah* permitted the people to declare the government illegal, because of its failure to redress grievances. If Ali's enemies did not consider him the legally elected caliph, their demand for vengeance against Ali was meaningless." Criticizing Aisha, Talha and Zubayr, who recruited an army and marched from Mecca to Basra against Ali, crying for vengeance for Uthman's blood, Mawdudi remarks that, "This act was illegal as they should have gone to Medina, where Ali, the criminals, and Uthman's heir lived. The war they provoked led to the slaughter of 10,000 people for the blood of one. Even more illegal was the position of Muawiya, who rebelled against the central government when he took revenge for Usman's blood. He did not make this claim in his private capacity, but in his official position as the governor of Syria. He misused the resources of his government in that cause. He was not satisfied with demanding that Ali prosecute and punish the assassins, but urged that they be handed over to him, so that he himself might execute them." Mawdudi goes on to say that, "Muawiya's relationship with Usman was a private matter, the governorship was not involved. He had no right to claim vengeance as a governor against the caliph to whom allegiance had been given by all the provinces except those governed by himself. Rebellion against the central government by a provincial army meant the revival of pre-Islamic tribal laws."

After Ali had taken over as caliph, exactly what he had anticipated took place. Muawiya exercised the motives of old enmity and opposition towards Ali. The charge of Uthman's murder was trumpeted up against Ali and afforded Muawiya's excuse enough to unfurl the standard of revolt against him. Muawiya incited the Syrians against Ali to a feverish pitch by indoctrinating them with a belief in the false charge against Ali. "In order to discredit Ali further" writes Prof. N.A. Faris in "**Development in Arab Historiography**" that "the Umayyads made the Shiite movement a conspiracy against Islam, engineered by the

Jewish convert Abdallah bin Saba, who was alleged to have been an ardent follower of Ali. Both Taha Husayn and Wardi, marshalling a great deal of impressive historical evidence, deny the existence of Ibn Saba and make him the creation of Umayyad propaganda." (cf. **"Historians of the Middle East"**, ed. Bernard Lewis, London, 1962, p. 441).

In the cathedral mosque at Damascus, a meeting to mourn the murder of Uthman had been convened, his blood-stained shirt was exposed to the general view from the pulpit. According to Tabari (5th vol., p. 163), "It was during these bouts of mourning that the Syrians were told that they had to avenge Uthman's blood." Hence, Uthman was the symbol and slogan of Umayyad aspiration in contrast to Ali, and in order to solidify his rule in Syria, he got fabrication of many hadiths. For instance, it was propagated that "Syria is the chosen country of God and He sends those of His servants there whom He prefers to all others. O confessors of Islam, press forward towards Syria because God has chosen this country as His favourite amongst the countries of the whole world" (cf. **Yaqut**, 3rd vol., p. 242).

Battle of Camel

Aisha had long hated Ali, and wished that, when the aged Uthman died, her own kinsman, Zubayr, should become caliph. When Uthman was assassinated, she was not in Medina, having gone to Mecca a few weeks previously to perform the pilgrimage. The news of Uthman's murder reached her when she was on the way back. She returned immediately to Mecca and incited the citizens against Ali. The fiery address set a match to the smouldering fire of discontent. The first to respond to Aisha's call was Abdullah bin Amur, the Uthmanid governor of Mecca. Those Umayyads who had fled from Medina after the ghastly murder of Uthman now also joined Aisha, and when Talha and Zubayr came over to Aisha, many more of the Qoraish clamoured to join in the rebellion. Aisha advocated march on Basra. Throwing off the veil ordained, Aisha now took command of the army. The money to equip it came from Yamen treasury, brought to Mecca by the governor whom Ali had deposed. It is however clear from the sources that in the battle between Ali and Aisha, the triumvirate was fighting for personal reason rather than for the blood of Uthman, which was a timely and convenient pretext for them.

Ali had been obliged to abandon the Syrian campaign against Muawiya, deciding instead, to use his small force against Aisha, who had hatched a rebellion. Realizing, however, that his army was by no means adequate for the task in hand, he pitched his camp at Rabaza. In the interim, Aisha occupied Basra in 35/656. Ali was a seasoned commander, born and bred in wars and famous for his skill as tactician. His ascetic life had not chilled his martial fervour and at the advanced age of sixty, he still retained the vigour of a much younger man. He took to war after a recession of 25 years only taught that the demands of duty only should be determined action and inaction, and that in matters concerning principles and duties, the importunities of emotions and claims of age should alike find no place. He was however anxious to avoid the shedding of Muslim blood by Muslims. Of his desire and pacific intention, William Muir writes in **"The Caliphate, its Rise, and Fall"** (London, 1924, p. 247) that, "But Ali's thoughts were for peace if possible. He was a man of compromise and here he was ready, in the interest of Islam, magnanimously to forget the insult offered him."

The two armies eventually encamped in the Wadi-us-Saba (Valley of the Lion) near the village of Khuraiba outside Basra, facing each other. Aisha, on the advice of some of her followers, went so far as to mount her camel, al-Askar and that this battle is called the Battle of Camel, which took place on 10th Jamada II, 35/December 4, 656. The battle began and reached a critical stage. Ali ordered his men not to take offensive unless the enemy began to onset. He gave further stringent orders that no wounded should be slain, no fugitive pursued, no plunder seized nor the privacy of any house violated. The showers of arrows were pouring in from the Aisha's side, Ali forbade his soldiers to return the shot and bade them wait. Wherever the camel of Aisha stood, there the battle was waged most fiercely. As long as that animal was standing, Ali realized, would the battle continue. He therefore deputed one of his men to cut off its legs. The warrior slipped behind the camel, did as he was bidden, and the camel thudded to the ground. Within a very short time the bugle sounded the end of the battle.

After the battle, Ali repaired to Aisha's camp, where he treated her with greatest deference, "For," said he, "respect must be shown to her because she is the spouse of

the holy Prophet." In the care of her brother, and under the command of his own two sons, Ali then sent Aisha to Medina. She was shown every deference and given forty hand-maids. Ali himself accompanied her retinue on foot for a short distance, before bidding her farewell. "It befits your dignity", Ali said to her, "to remain in your house and not to meddle in politics or to share the rough life of the battlefield, nor to join any party in future which may tarnish the glory of your name, or become the authoress of a second rebellion." To this Aisha replied, "By God! there existed no enmity between Ali and me, save a few petty domestic squabbles." On her return to Medina, Aisha led a life of seclusion. She is said to have died in 59/678 at the age of 66 years.

The loss in the battle was very great. Some historians say that 16,796 men of Aisha's forces, and 1,070 of Ali's army were killed. During the encounter, the people of Aisha were known as *asahab al-jamal* (the companions of the camel), but Ali called them *an-nakisun* (those who broke oath), which is the derivation of Koran (48:10), wherein the word *naksa* means "*bayt*" or an oath of allegiance. The supporters of Ali, however, became known after the battle of Camel as *Shiat'i Ali* (the followers of Ali).

Kufa - a new capital

Ali's stay in Basra was not long. Having appointed Abdullah bin Abbas as the governor, Ali repaired to Kufa in 36/657 and made it the seat of his government and the capital. The word *kufa* means, a spot where pebbles and sand are found in admixture, and as the site answered to this description. It will be worthwhile to mention that Kufa in Iraq was founded in the year 17/638, about three years after caliph Umar bin Khattab assumed the caliphate at Medina. It was used as a garrison town during Umar's time, where different contingents from distant places could stay and should be readily available in an emergency. The city was organised into seven tribal contingents divided into seven military districts. This grouping continued for 19 years until it underwent another change in 37/657, when Ali came to Kufa. So great was Umar's interest in Kufa that he described it as "tower of Islam" (*qubbat al-Islam*), and "the head of the people of Islam" (*ras ahli al-Islam*). In describing the settlers of

Kufa, he according to Ibn Sa'd (6th vol., p. 7) said, "They are the lance of God, the treasure of faith, the cranium of the Arabs, who protect their own frontier forts and reinforce other Arabs." It may be pointed out that these epithets of honour and distinction were not accorded to any other city, such as Damascus or Basra. The selection of Ammar bin Yasir as the governor of Kufa, and Abdullah bin Masud as deputy governor to the leadership of Kufa reveals Umar's intention to replace tribal claims with Islamic claims. After Umar's death, Uthman appointed Walid bin Uqba as a governor of Kufa in 25/646. Apprehensive of Muawiya's designs against him, Ali considered Kufa suitably situated to check any encroachment in Iraq, therefore he made it his capital, as topographically it was in the centre of his dominions.

Battle of Siffin

In Syria, disorder and incitement to commotion continued unabated. Uthman's shirt, besmeared with his blood and the chopped-off fingers of his wife, Naila, were exhibited from the pulpit. In this manner, Muawiya raised the entire country of Syria against Ali. Ultimately, both the parties, opposed to each other, converged on Siffin where their armies pitched their camps in 37/657. Even at this stage, Ali sent three men, viz. Bashir bin Amr bin Mahz Ansari, Saeed bin Qais Hamdani, and Shis bin Rabiee Tamini to Muawiya to induce him to settle for union, accord and coming together. According to Tabari (5h vol., p. 243), Muawiya replied that, *"Go away from here, only the sword will decide between us."*

With an army of some 80,000 strong, mainly recruited from Iraq, Ali set out from Kufa, planning to march through upper part of Iraq and invade Syria from the north. Ali, then pushed on to Raqa, on the left bank of the Euphrates. Here his troops came across the Syrian vanguard but it withdrew without engagement. The next problem was how to cross the river. Ali wanted to construct a bridge of boats, but the people of Raqa were hostile. It was only after Ali's general, Ashtar, had threatened them with death that they consented to help in building the bridge which was completed under the great difficulties. Ali's men then advanced along the right bank of the river in the direction of Aleppo. At Sur-Rum they had a brief skirmish

with a Syrian outpost before they reached the plain of Siffin, where they found Muawiya's forces drawn up in strength and waiting for them.

Ali soon discovered that the Syrian positions controlled the water supply of the whole valley, and that there was no access to the river for his men. Muawiya obviously intended to use thirst to drive Ali's men to surrender. Muawiya had, however, underestimated the calibre of Ali's troops. Ali, however wrote a letter to Muawiya, which reads: "You have fore-stalled me in pitching the stables for the horses of your cavalry. Before I could declare war on you, you have declared war on us. It was bad move on your part to cut off our supply of water. It behoves you to allow us the natural supply of water. Failing this, we will be reluctantly forced to fight with you." On receiving this letter, Muawiya conferred with his advisers, who urged him not to yield up the advantage he had gained. Ali was therefore left with no alternative but to attack at full gallop and inflicted a crushing defeat on Muawiya's forces, and took charge of water supply. Now it was the turn of Ali's counsellors to urge control of the water supplies and for the soldiers of Muawiya to suffer the rigours of extreme thirst. But Ali ordered his men to allow the Syrians free access to the river, saying: "Our religion and ethical code does not permit us to stop water supply, and so pay our enemy back in his own coin. I do not want to follow the way of the ignorant people."

Ali's next step was, as usual, to try and come to a peaceful settlement. He deputed Bashir bin Amr, Sa'id bin Qais and Shabus bin Rabi, but Muawiya declined the offer to the delegates. Ali still did not give up hope but a second delegation, consisting of Adi bin Hatim, Yazid bin Qais, Ziyad bin Hufza and Shabis bin Rad, also failed to persuade Muawiya to come to an amicable settlement. For the next three months, Zilhaja, Muharram and Safar 36/May, June and July, 657, the armies remained in camps at Siffin, facing each other neither at war nor at peace. This period of negotiations lasted 110 days, during which time, the Arabian chroniclers maintain that Ali made as many overtures for peace as there were days. There was much heat in the discussions with Muawiya, and finally Ali was obliged once again to resort to arms on 8th Safar, 36/July 26, 657.

Historian Yaqubi (2nd vol., p. 188) writes that Ali had 80,000 men, including 70 Companions who participated in Badr, 70 Companions who took oath at Hudaibia, and 400 prominent *Ansars* and *Muhajirs*; while Muawiya had 1,20,000 Syrians.

During the 110 days of negotiations, no fewer than 90 skirmishes were fought. Almost every day one tribal column would engage an enemy in combat, sometimes two or more engagements would be fought in one day. Heart-broken at the amount of Muslim blood that had already been shed in vain, Ali made one last bid for peace with Muawiya, at the start of the new year, but of no avail. At long last, Ali decided on a general engagement, and thus the battle of Siffin broke out on 8th Safar, 36/July 26, 657. A fierce battle was fought between them on the whole day, and it even continued in the darkness of that night, which is known as *laila'tul harir* (the night of clangour). William Muir writes in "**The Caliphate, its Rise and Fall**" (London, 1924, p. 261) that, "Both armies drawn out in entire array, fought till the shades of evening fell, neither having got the better. The following morning, the combat was renewed with great vigour. Ali posed himself in the centre with the flower of his troops from Medina, and the wings were formed, one of the warriors from Basra, the other of those from Kufa. Muawiya had a pavilion pitched on the field; and there, surrounded by five lines of his sworn body-guards, watched the day. Amr with a great weight of horse, bore down upon the Kufa wing which gave away; and Ali was exposed to imminent peril, both from thick showers of arrows and from close encounter. Reproaching the men of Kufa for their cowardice, the Caliph fought bravely, his unwieldy figure notwithstanding, sword in hand, and manfully withstood the charge. Ali's general Ashtar, at the head of 300 readers of (the Koran) led forward the other wing, which fell with fury on Muawiya's **Turbaned** body-guard. Four of its five ranks were cut to pieces, and Muawiya, bethinking himself of flight, had already called for his horse, when a martial couplet flashed in his mind, and he held his ground."

The following morning, the battle started up again. Edward Gibbon writes in "**The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire**" (London, 1848, 3rd vol., p. 522) that, "The Caliph Ali displayed a superior character of valour and humanity. His troops were strictly enjoined to wait the first onset of

the enemy, to spare their flying brethren, and to respect the bodies of the dead, and the chastity of the female captives. The ranks of the Syrians were broken by the charge of the hero, who was mounted on a piebald horse, and wielded with irresistible force, his ponderous and two edged sword."

Appalled by the carnage, Ali sent a message to Muawiya and challenged him to single combat, saying that whoever won should be the Caliph. In Gibbon's words, "Ali generously proposed to save the blood of the Muslims by a single combat; but his trembling rival declined the challenge as a sentence of inevitable death." Muawiya had indeed lost his nerve, and was about to flee from the field, a trick of his accomplice Amr bin al-A'as saved them from destruction.

At length, Muawiya made his mercenaries tie copies of Holy Koran to their lances and flags, demanding for the decision of arbitration. Tabari (6th vol., p. 46) writes that, "The defeat started Muawiya in the face. Amr bin al-A'as, however, had a trick up his sleeve for this emergency, and it was the raising of the Koran aloft on spear-heads, and announcing, **"Brethren, this Book of God alone will decide between you and us."** It will be recalled that even before the commencement of the battle, Ali had invited Muawiya by sending his three men to turn to the Koran for a decision, but his offer was declined by telling, **"Go away from here, only the sword will decide between us."** (Tabari, 5th vol., p. 243). And now they sought the intercession of the Holy Koran to escape the unpleasant consequences of an ignominious defeat. At this Ali came forward and expostulated his soldiers, saying, "It is an infamous stratagem and a nefarious device of Amr and Muawiya to cloak their defeat. Beware of the trick which they are playing. You should fight to a finish." But Ali's men refused to fight. Ali, with a great expectation of victory in sight, was therefore impelled to call a retreat.

Ali's supporters during the battle of Siffin were called *ahel-i Iraq*, or *Shiat'i Ali*, while his opponents became known as *ahel-i Sham*, or *Shiat'i Uthman* and *Shiat'i Muawiya*. But Ali called them *al-kasitun* (those who act wrong), a word derived from the Holy Koran that: "And as for the deviators, they shall be for the hell, a fuel."

(72:15), wherein the word **al-kasitun** means the fuel of hell-fire.

Appointment of Arbitrators

It was decided that the Syrians and the residents of Kufa should nominate an arbitrator each to decide between Ali and Muawiya. The Syrians choice fell on Amr bin al-A'as who was the rational soul and spokesman of Muawiya. Ali wanted one of his sincere followers like Malik Ashtar or Abdullah bin Abbas to be appointed as an arbitrator for the people of Kufa, but the men of his own army strongly demurred, alleging that men like these two were, indeed, responsible for the war and, therefore, ineligible for that office of trust. They nominated Abu Musa al-Ashari as their arbitrator. Ali found it expedient to agree to this choice in order to ward off bloody dissensions in his army. According to "**Asadul Ghaba**" (3rd vol., p. 246), Ali had, therefore, taken care to personally explain to the arbitrators, "You are arbiters on condition that you decide according to the Book of God, and if you are not so inclined you should not deem yourselves to be arbiters."

When the arbitrators assembled at Daumat-ul-Jandal, which lay midway between Kufa and Syria and had for that reason been selected as the place for the announcement of the decision, a series of daily meeting was arranged for them to discuss the matters in hand. When the time arrived for taking a decision about the caliphate, Amr bin al-A'as deluded Abu Musa al-Ashari into entertaining the opinion that they should deprive both Ali and Muawiya of the caliphate, and give to the Muslims the right to elect the caliph. Abu Musa al-Ashari also decided to act accordingly. As the time for announcing the verdict approached, the people belonging to both parties assembled. Amr bin al-A'as requested Abu Musa to take the lead in announcing the decision he favoured. Abu Musa al-Ashari agreed to open the proceedings, and said, "We have devised a solution after a good deal of thought and it may put an end to all contention and separatist tendencies. It is this. Both of us remove Ali as well as Muawiya from the caliphate. The Muslims are given the right to elect a new caliph in their places as they think best." As soon as he sat down after giving his award, Amr bin al-A'as sprang to his feet and addressing the gather said, "You have heard Abu Musa who represents Ali. He has

deposed Ali from the caliphate. As the representative of Muawiya, I agree with him in the deposition of Ali, but I install Muawiya as the caliph." Here, an disorderly scene ensued in which Abu Musa al-Ashari cursed Amr bin al-A'as. The Syrians hailed the trick played by Amr bin al-A'as as a great diplomatic triumph. It should be noted that the above judgement, the arbitrators did not quote any authority of the Koran or *Sunnah* to justify deposing Ali.

Battle of Naharwan

The name *Khariji* (pl. *Khawarij*) has been held to mean, "seceder" or "deserter." They are those who have "gone out against" (*kharaaja 'ala*) Ali, or "went out" and "made a secession" from the camp of Ali in the sense of rebelling against him. Ali's decision to submit the fate of the battle of Siffin to Arbitration did not meet with the approval of his Iraqi soldiers, and about 12,000 of whom deserted and rebelled against him on the march back to Kufa, known as the Kharijis. They also came to be known as *Harurites* from the place where they were first encamped. Ali referred to them as *al-marigun* (those who missed the truth of religion).

Seething with unrest, the Kharijis encamped at Harura, taking as their watch-word *la hukma illa lillahi* (The decision of God, the word of God alone), a phrase which, ever since it was first coined, has become a favourite with public agitators. The original separatists had three great leaders, namely Shabath bin Ribī al-Riahi, Abdullah bin Kauwa al-Yeshkuri and Yazid bin Qais al-Arhabi from the three principal tribes of Banu Tamim, Banu Bakr and Banu Hamdan. Anxious to prevent another outbreak of fighting, Ali deputed his cousin Ibn Abbas to negotiate a compromise. The Kharijis insisted that Ali should march forthwith against Muawiya, a demand with which Ali could not possibly comply, as he had given his word to abide by the decision of the arbitration. Months later, when Ali having been deposed off by the umpires of arbitration, he sought to raise an army against Muawiya, and expected the Kharijis to flock to his standard, but they made no attempt to join him. Repeated attempts on Ali's part to urge the Kharijis to join him met with total failure. Instead they decided to raise their own independent

standard and went into camp at Naharwan, under the leadership of Abdullah bin Wahab al-Rasibi.

Naharwan was a township, situated on a canal of the same name, a few miles east of the Tigris near Madain and between Baghdad and Wasit. Here the Kharijis made extensive preparations for war. Meanwhile, Ali had managed to muster an army for a renewed campaign against Muawiya, and while he was on his way to Syria, a news of the latest outrages by the Khariji fanatics reached him. They had murdered Abdullah bin Khabbab, cutting him down in cold-blood, alongwith his wife and children. Three women of the Banu Taiy had also been put to death in a similarly cruel manner. Pregnant women had been ripped up with the sword, and the aged and impaired cruelly tortured to death.

Ali decided to relinquish Syria for a while and to take field against the yoke of the Kharijis at Naharwan. Arriving near Naharwan, Ali followed his usual method of first exploring the possibilities of a peaceful settlement, but their leader Abdullah bin Wahab al-Rasibi resolved to fight to a finish. In 37/658, Ali marshalled his forces and led the final assault against the Kharijis in the memorable battle of Naharwan, which took place in Shaban, 38/January, 659. With the battle cry, the Kharijis rushed on Ali's troops. All save nine of Abdullah's men were killed and he himself also perished. "A little before this fight" says Simon Ockley in **"History of the Saracens"** (London, 1870, p. 326), "Ali had foretold to his friends what would be the event. "You see" says he, "these people who make profession of reading the Quran, without observing its commandments, will quit the profession which they make of their sect, as quick arrows fly from the bow when they are shot off."

Muawiya occupied Egypt

When Ali assumed caliphate, he had deposed the Egyptian governor, Abi Sarah in favour of the famous **Ansar** chief, Qais bin Sa'd bin Ubaida. This seasoned warrior of Islam, proud of his lineage and sincerely devoted to the Hashimites, was famed for his wisdom and diplomacy, qualities which were to stand him in good stead during his governorship. Muawiya tried to take Qais bin Sa'd to his side, but failed. Thus, Muawiya spread a rumour that Qais

had joined the party of Muawiya. Ali had full trust on Qais, but his men wanted to appoint another governor in Egypt. Ali then appointed Muhammad bin Abu Bakr as the governor of Egypt. The ground in Egypt had certainly been prepared well in advance by Muawiya's propaganda. In the meantime, Muawiya sent 6000 soldiers in command of Amr bin al-A'as in Egypt. Realising the failure of Muhammad bin Abu Bakr, Ali now sent hasty orders to Ashtar in Iraq, appointing him the new governor of Egypt. Muawiya bribed the chief of Qulzum in whose house Ashtar would almost stay on the way to Egypt, to poison the general. So Ali lost his most staunch of all his supporters, Ashtar, not on the battlefield, but at the table of a man whose loyalty had been bought by Muawiya and who had poisoned the honey which he offered his guest. Ali had no alternative but to ask Muhammad bin Abu Bakr to continue in the office and to hang on as best he could. Ali was yet able to send 2000 crack troops under the command of Tujibite Kinana by way of reinforcement. Other authorities maintain that once again, the Kufans would do nothing to help Ali and that, after fifty days of haranguing them from the pulpit, Ali still had managed to muster only 200 volunteers. These he is said to have sent to Egypt, but the long delay had already proved fatal. Hardly had they left Kufa when the news came of the total defeat of Muhammad bin Abu Bakr's forces and his ugly death. Having fled from the battlefield, Muhammad took shelter in some nearby ruins where he was discovered by Muawiya bin Hudaija, who dragged him out and slain. His corpse was wrapped in an ass-skin and burned. The ignominious end of Muhammad bin Abu Bakr sealed the fate of Egypt for Ali. Muawiya occupied Egypt and appointed Amr bin al-A'as as his lieutenant to rule it in his name, and the newly conquered country, with its immense rich resources became incorporated in the Syrian empire.

When Egypt was lost, in one of his sermons to the Kufans, Ali summed up the loss in these words: "O ye people! In the hour of need you have kept aloof from me, like a restive camel when it casts its burden. Lo and behold! The son of Abu Bakr falls, and with him, Egypt too." Things hence became bleak and dreary. Alarmed by the news of Ali's depressive state of mind, his cousin Abdullah bin Abbas, the governor of Basra, set out for Kufa, hoping to rally Ali's spirit. Muawiya immediately took advantage of Ibn Abbas's absence from Basra to send an expedition of 2000 horses under the command of Ibn Hadrami. The then

deputy governor of Basra, Ziyad bin Abihi, found himself unable to oppose the invader and took to flight, seeking refuge with the neighbouring tribe of Banu Azd. From here he wrote to Ali, asking for aid. Ali sent such troops as he could muster, and with this reinforcement, Ziyad was able to give battle to the Syrians, near Basra, where he routed the enemy. Basra thus reclaimed for Ali, who reappointed Ibn Abbas as governor, but Ali's hold over the city remained precarious. The expedition to Basra was Muawiya's first attempt at invading Ali's territory and although the defeat inflicted on Syrian forces was decisive the victory for Ali was to prove only a temporary one.

In the same year of 37/659, a section of the Kharijis hatched rebellion against Ali, led by Khirrit bin Rashid of Banu Najiya. Ali attempted to appease the new rising by inviting Khirrit to come and discuss the matters with him, but Khirrit and his followers left the town in disgust and fled to Ahwaz. Here he incited the Iranians, the Kurds and the Christians to withhold payment of taxes to Ali's government. Other disgruntled warriors soon joined him and in a short time he had raised a considerable army, which invaded and occupied Fars, defeating the Alid governor who sought safety in flight. Ali now sent his Kufan general Muqil bin Qais al-Tamimi against Khirrit, who was subdued at Ramhurmuz. In all, Ali was forced to send Muqil against Khirrit twice more. In the third and last encounter, Khirrit and the 170 soldiers, who made up his personal force, were wiped out to a man. Ali appointed Ziyad, the deputy governor of Basra, to rule over Fars.

Grown fat on the resources of Egypt, the Syrians now began to cast covetous eyes on Iraq. Muawiya accordingly deputed Noman bin Bashir to ravage Ayn Tamr, Sufian bin Awf to attack Hit and Anbar, Abdullah bin Masada al-Fazari to invade Taima and Dahhak bin Qais to subdue Qutgutana. According to Yaqubi (d. 284/898) in "*at-Tarikh*" (Beirut, 1960) and Waqidi (d. 207/822) in "*Kitab al-Maghazi*" (ed. von Kremer, Calcutta, 1856), Muawiya himself came out with these troops to lead them towards Iraq, going as far as Tigris, before returning to Damascus. Apparently these were plundering expeditions, their ostensible aim was to harass Ali. Ali went forth himself into the field almost unattended. On this the men of Kufa, partly from shame, partly lured by promise of increased stipends, marched to the defence of their frontier. One of Ali's commanders,

with a flying column, pursued the raiders back into the heart of Syria as far as Balbek; and thence turning northward, escaped by Rakka again into Iraq. On the other side, Muawiya made an incursion right across Iraq, and for some days remained encamped on the banks of Tigris. After leisurely inspecting Mosul, he made his way back to Damascus unmolested.

Syrians' entry into Hijaz and Yamen

From the start of 40/660, Muawiya sent an expedition under the command of Busr bin Artat, to ravage the Hijaz. The main objective of this enterprise was to seize the important cities of Mecca and Medina, and so prepare the way for penetration into Yamen. Medina at this juncture, was governed by Ali's deputy, Abu Ayub Ansari, who at the approach of the Syrian invaders, could not offer any resistance, and fled from the capital. The entire city swore allegiance to Muawiya. Leaving Abu Hurrera to govern Medina, Busr bin Artat advanced to Mecca, which was at that time governed by Ibn Abbas. The inhabitants offered no resistance, and Ibn Abbas fled from the city. The Meccans like the Medinites, swore allegiance to Muawiya in a body.

From Hijaz, Busr went on through the southern parts of the Arabian peninsula until he reached the borders of Yamen. Ubaidullah bin Abbas, attempted to defend the province on Ali's behalf, but the small army which was all that he had been able to raise, was routed. At the approach of Busr, Ibn Abbas made a precipitate retreat, leaving the hazard of repelling the incursion to his deputy, Abdullah Harithi, who fought a pitched battle with Busr. Abdullah was defeated and killed. To oppose Busr in Yamen, Ali mustered 4000 men under the command of Jariah bin Kedaumah and Wauhib bin Masud, the Thaqafite from Kufa. It was now the turn to Busr to flee for his life. Scarcely had the Alid army reached the borders of Yamen, when Busr made his escape to Syria.

At this juncture, Egypt and Syria were under the occupation of Muawiya. In 40/660, Muawiya was however in Jerusalem, where he proclaimed himself the caliph of the Islamic empire. Ali was so staggered by Muawiya's claim of powers that he began to make huge preparations for an

inroad on Syria, but in the interim, he had been assassinated in Kufa.

Death of Ali

Many of the Kharijis, after the battle of Nahrawan, had gone to Mecca, where they had frequent political meetings in the holy sanctuary, devising plans to avenge their relatives who had fallen in Nahrawan. Here too, they planned the murder of Ali and Muawiya, adding a third name to the list of Amr bin al-A'as. The three Meccan Kharijis, Abdur Rahman bin Muljam al-Sarimi, Burk bin Abdullah, and Amr bin Bakr volunteered to come forward. Abdur Rahman agreed to kill Ali, Burk to Muawiya, and Amr to murder Amr bin al-A'as, now the governor of Egypt. The morning of Friday, the 17th Ramdan was fixed for the execution. The three assassins poisoned their swords and separated. Abdur Rahman took the route of Kufa, Burk that of Damascus and Amr that to Egypt. The chosen day arrived and Burk bin Abdullah, in Damascus, attacked Muawiya while he was in the mosque, and wounded him in the loins. He was arrested. Muawiya ordered his men to cut off the feet of Burk and take out his tongue. He was then dragged to be further tortured and put to a cruel and ignominious death. In Egypt, Amr bin Bakr went to the mosque on the morning of 17th Ramdan to assassinate Amr bin al-A'as. In his stead, his deputy, Kharja bin Huzafa was in the mosque. Amr bin Bakr, who had never seen either of them before, slew Kharja with one stroke of his sword. He was arrested and was forthwith put to a cruel death.

Of the three assassins, it was Abdur Rahman who had the easiest task for Ali. He went to the cathedral mosque of Kufa just before the break of dawn, where he took up his position in the narrow passage leading to the mosque and waited for Ali to enter. The moment Ali set foot in the mosque, while it was still dark, the assassin attacked with the sword, but missed his aim. When Ali was in prostration, Abdur Rahman struck Ali the point of his poisoned sword and fled away. Shortly afterwards the congregation began to assemble in the mosque for the dawn prayers, and there they found Ali lying wounded on his prayer mat. Abdur Rahman was soon arrested, but no antidote could be found for the poison and Ali's condition rapidly deteriorated, and died on 21st Ramdan, 40/January

29, 661 at the age of 63 years, and bequeathed the office of Imamate to his son Hussain.

The period of Ali's caliphate lasted for 4 years and 9 months, and the period of his Imamate since the death of Muhammad was for 29 years. John J. Pool writes in **"Studies in Mohammadanism"** (p. 62) that, "The death of Ali was an epoch-making event. We come now to the parting of ways. Henceforward, the Commander of the Faithful ceased to be elected by the votes of the people of Medina or Mecca. Arabia was no longer to be the seat of temporal power. For the future, in Islam might was to take the place of right."

Wives and children

His first wife was Fatima, the only daughter of Muhammad, during whose lifetime, he did not marry any other lady. By Fatima, he had three sons, Hasan, Hussain and Mohsin, who died in infancy; and two daughters, Zainab and Umm Kulsum. By his wife, Ummul Banin bint Hizam, Ali had four sons, viz. Abbas, Jafar, Abdullah and Uthman. By Layla bint Masud, he had Ubaidullah and Abu Bakr. By Asma bint Umyas, he had Yahya and Muhammad Asghar. By Umm Habiba bint Rabia, he had one son, Umar and a daughter, Ruqaiya. By Amama bint Abil Aas, he had a son, named Muhammad al-Awasat. By Khawla bint Jafar bin Qais al-Hanafiya, he had Muhammad Akbar, who was known as Muhammad ibn Hanafiya. By Umm Sa'id bint Urwa bin Masud, he had Ummul Hasan and Ramla.

It is difficult to design a portrait of the qualities and merits of Ali bin Abu Talib, for he was a paragon of virtues and fount of knowledge. He was indeed a living encyclopaedia of learning. The Sufis traced their esoteric chains back to Ali. Abu Nasr Abdullah Sarraj writes in **"Kitab al-Luma fi't-Tasawwuf"** (ed. Nicholson, London, 1914, p. 129) that when Juna'id Baghdadi (d. 298/910) was asked about Ali's knowledge in esoteric field, he said, "Had Ali been less engaged in wars, he might have contributed greatly to our knowledge of esoteric things for he was one who had been vouchsafed *ilm al-ladunni* (i.e., spiritual knowledge direct from God)."

Ali taught to his followers that Islam is the only religion which is in harmony with intellect in its

objectives and agrees with nature in its commands and prohibitions. The great revolution which Islam brought about in the domain of religion was obviously stimulated by the attitude which it adopted in regard to the supremacy of reason. He called upon the people to accept the sovereignty of intellect, and invited them to reflect and ponder over the natural phenomenon. According to Ali, Islam before everything else is the religion of reason, and not a path of blind faith, and accordingly, it requires its adherents to be wise, able and intelligent, in possessing of penetrating insight; so that they might always act in accord with the dictates of justice and truth, and build sound character. For these, Ali raised the dignity of knowledge (ilm) through his various sermons and speeches. It infers from his teachings that knowledge covers all branches, and it is not confined to the religious knowledge, otherwise, the Arabs would have stopped at the boundaries of theology alone.

Ali is attributed with having been the founder of the study of Arabic grammar through his disciple, Abdul Aswad al-Dulai; and the originator of the correct method of reciting Koran. His works have been collected by Sharif al-Razi Zul Hussain Muhammad bin Hussain bin Musa al-Musawi (d. 408/1015) into a vast compendium, called **"Nahjul Balagha"** (Course of Eloquence), an anthology of his sermons, letters, discourses, exhortations, advices, judgements on penal, civil and commercial law, proposed solutions of fiscal and economic problems. It represents the best early example of Muslim writing on philosophy, theology, science and ethics. In its sanctity, the work is regarded by the Shiites as second only to the Koran.

While studying his discourses, we will know that many modern scientific theories had been expounded by Ali 1300 years ago. Shaikh Ali bin Ibrahim al-Qummi of 3rd century writes in **"Wassaffat"** that once in a moon-lit night, Ali said: "The stars that you see in the sky, all of them, contain cities like the cities of our earth, and each city is tied to a perpendicular of light, and the length of the perpendicular is a distance of two hundred and fifty years' journey in the sky." The French scholar Mons. Xion was so impressed upon these words that he was constrained to advance his remarks that, "A person who gave such information a thousand years ago without having recourse to any instrument or material means, cannot be having merely human eye or mind, but must have been endowed with

divine knowledge, and with such a religious guide and leader, Islam must be a true heavenly religion, which stands proved by the fact that the successor of its founder possessed super human intelligence and knowledge."

It is related that Ali asked an Egyptian astrologer, called Sarsafil, "Tell me what is the relation of venus to the satellites (*tawabi*) and fixed stars (*jawami*)?" Sarsafil could not return answer for he knew only Greek astronomy. The Arabic word for satellites is *tawabi* means "followers", and truly a satellite is a follower of the planet round which it revolves. Similarly, the word for fixed stars is *jawami* means "gatherers" and truly a sun, or fixed star keeps all the planets revolving round it gathered together. How accurate were the terminologies of Ali?

Once a person asked Ali, "What is the distance between earth and the sun?" Ali said, "Suppose a horse runs day and night without any break from earth to sun, it would take 500 years to reach the sun." While making its calculation, it should be known that the speed of an Arabian horse is normally 22 miles per hour. The horse thus would cross 95,040,000 miles in 500 years, indicating a distance between earth and the sun. It must be remembered that the same distance between the earth and sun was commonly accepted in Europe during Renaissance. The western scientists expounded the same distance during 18th century under another notion, that if a jet plane flies from earth at the speed of 10,000 miles per hour, it would reach the sun in 11 years. This method also indicates the distance of 95,040,000 miles, vide **"The Book of Knowledge"** (ed. by E.V. McLoughlin, New York, 1910). The modern science however shows that when the earth is closest to the sun in the early January, the distance from earth becomes 91,400,000 miles, and when the earth is farthest in early July, the distance becomes 95,040,000 miles. It is therefore safe to conclude that the person would have asked the above question to Ali most possibly in the month of early July.

Philip K. Hitti writes in **"History of the Arabs"** (London, 1949, p. 183) that, "Valiant in battle, wise in counsel, eloquent in speech, true to his friends, magnanimous to his foes, Ali became both the paragon of Muslim nobility and chivalry and the Solomon of Arabic tradition, around whose name poems, proverbs, sermonettes and anecdotes

innumerable have clustered." William Muir was one of the admirers of Ali, who says in his **"The Caliphate, its Rise, and Fall"** (London, 1924, p. 288) that, "In the character of Ali, there are many things to commend. Mild and beneficent, he treated Basra, when prostrate at his feet, with a generous forbearance. Towards theocratic fanatics, who wearied his patience by incessant intrigues and insensate rebellion, he showed no vindictiveness." R.A. Nicholson writes in **"A Literary History of the Arabs"** (Cambridge, 1953, p. 191) that, "He was a gallant warrior, a wise counsellor, a true friend and a generous foe. He excelled in poetry and in eloquence; his verses and sayings are famous throughout the Muhammadan East though few of them can be considered authentic." "As the chief of the family of Hashim" writes Charles Mills in **"A History of Muhammadanism"** (London, 1817, p. 84), "and as the cousin and son-in-law of him, it is apparently incredible that Ali was not raised to the caliphate immediately on the death of Muhammad. To the advantage of his birth and marriage, was added to the friendship of the Prophet. The son of Abu Talib was one of the first converts to Islam and Muhammad's favourite appellation of him was, the Aaron of a second Moses. His talent as an orator, and his intrepidity as a warrior, commended him to a nation in whose judgement courage was virtue and eloquence was wisdom." According to **"History of Arabia and its People"** (London, 1852, p. 307) by Dr. Andrew Crichton, "This prince united the qualifications of a poet, an orator, and a soldier, for he was the bravest and most eloquent man in his dominions. A monument of his wisdom still remains in a collection of precepts or sentences of which 169 have been translated by Ockley." Thomas Carlyle writes in **"Heroes and Hero-worship"** (London, 1850, p. 77) that, "As for this young Ali, one cannot but like him. A noble minded creature, as he shows himself, now and always afterwards; full of affection, of fiery daring. Sometimes chivalrous in him, brave as a lion, yet with a grace, a truth and affection worthy of Christian knighthood."

Despite his engagements in the civil wars during his caliphate, Ali however made many reformatations in the state. He was the first to realize land revenue from peasants. He exempted taxes on horse-trade to promote its trade. He included forests as a source of revenue for the first time, and necessary tax was imposed on it. He reserved a specific part in poor-rate for the poor. He

codified Islamic laws for the judges, and set up courts in every province. Ali was the first to make metalled roads in the state, and constructed many forts, notably Astkhar fort. He reorganised the army, and erected military posts everywhere. He was the first to build a strong bridge on river Euphrates.

Ali's period is also acclaimed for the promotion of education, and he was the first caliph to patronise education, and as a result, about 2000 students in Kufa got free scholarship.

HUSSAIN BIN ALI (40-61/661-680)

Abu Abdullah Hussain bin Ali was born on the 3rd Shaban, 4/January, 626 in Medina. When the news of his birth reached to Muhammad, he came to his daughter's house, and took the newly-born child in his arms affectionately, and named him Hussain. He spent his early life in the godly lap of Muhammad, who loved him too much. Among the numerous sayings of Muhammad concerning Hussain is the one to this effect that, "I owe my being to Hussain, and Hussain owes his being to me." (*Ibn Majah*, 1st vol., p. 33). It is further related that once, while sermoning in the mosque, Muhammad was interrupted all of a sudden by the cry of a boy, whose voice resembled that of Hussain. He asked to a person to enquire whether Hussain was weeping. Muhammad was soon reported that the weeping boy was a student, whose teacher had punished him due to negligence to his lesson. Muhammad sent for the teacher and said, "Please do not punish this boy so much that causes him to weep, as his voice resembles that of my child Hussain."

Hussain was 6 years old during the demise of Muhammad and his mother. He was married to Shahr Banu, the daughter of Yazdigard, the last Sassanid king of Iran.

Hussain's self-control and patience must indeed have been remarkable, for once when a slave-girl spilled a dish of thick soup all over the Imam's head and neck, he refrained from reprimanding her, but on the contrary, he graciously gave her freedom.

The sources acknowledge in the face of the facts that Hussain was the superlative genius of his age in learning and knowledge. "The traditions indicating his profound knowledge," writes Abdullah al-Ala'ili, "are more than one can count. There were many complicated cases in which his judgement were astonishing even to the learned and distinguished scholars, till Abdullah bin Umar commented that Hussain was the source of inspiration of knowledge." During his living in Medina, since the death of his father, Hussain was mostly engaged in the intellectual pursuits with his followers. It infers from the collection of his saying, as recorded by Kulaini (d. 329/941) in his "**Usul al-Kafi**" that Hussain highly stressed on the application of intellect in religion. For instance, his few saying to this effect are given below:-

- * *Intellect is a guide to every believer. ("al-Kafi", p. 60)*
- * *The lack of intellect and faith in no case can be overlooked and forgiven. Being without faith and religion is equal to being without peace and security. (Ibid. p. 64)*
- * *A person devoid of intellect cannot be conceived except as a corpse. (Ibid.)*
- * *One who has intellect has a faith. And he who has faith has a peace in paradise. (Ibid. p. 27)*
- * *The reasoning potentiality is the chief pillar of human existence. It is a fountain spring of sagacity, comprehension, memory and knowledge. It is through reason one knows who guides him and who misguides him. (Ibid. p. 60)*

Hasan bin Ali bin Abu Talib

Abu Muhammad Hasan, or Hasan (Handsome), the elder brother of Hussain was born in 3/625 in Medina. He was also brought up with Hussain in the household of Muhammad until the latter's death when Hasan was about 7 years old. It emerges from the extant traditions that Muhammad had a

great fondness for his two grand-children. Hasan and Hussain, whom he referred to as the "chief of the youths of paradise." Another tradition relates, "Both Hasan and Hussain are for me the fragrance in the world." ("Masnad", 2nd vol., p.85)

Hasan was 37 years old when his father fell at the hands of the assassin at Kufa. Qais bin Sa'd was the first to swear allegiance to Hasan on the day when Ali died, and then it was followed by 40,000 Kufans, acclaiming Hasan as the fifth caliph. Tabari (2nd vol., p. 5) writes that the oath of allegiance taken by those present stipulated that, "They should make war on those who were at war with Hasan, and should live in peace with those who were at peace with Hasan." This sharply suggests that the oath sworn by the Kufans was purely political. Thus, as we have discussed, the temporal power that had been with Muhammad, had joined with the caliphate of Ali about 24 years, 8 months and 28 days after the death of Muhammad. When Ali died, the same powers, though remained with the Ahl-al-Bait, were separated once again. The temporal authority had gone to the hands of Hasan, and the spiritual authority was inherited by Hussain and in his Hussainid progeny.

Hasan's acclamation as caliph by the Kufans was a great cause of alarm to Muawiya, who had been working for the office since the death of Uthman. He dispatched many of his agents and spies to arouse the people against Hasan in Yamen, Hijaz, Iran and Iraq. At length, he began preparations for war and summoned all the commanders of his forces in Syria, Palestine and Trans-Jordan to join him. Not longer after, the Syrian leaders marched against Hasan with an army of 60,000 men. Muawiya's purpose of this prompt action was twofold. Firstly, by demonstration of arms and strength, he intended to force Hasan to come to terms; and secondly, if that course of action failed, he would attack the Kufan forces before they had time to consolidate their position. It was for the first reason that Muawiya moved towards Iraq at a very slow pace, while sending letter after letter to Hasan, asking him not to try to fight and urging him to come to terms. If Hasan was defeated, this would give Muawiya only power and authority; but if Hasan abdicated, this would provide Muawiya with a legal base and legitimize his authority as well. This was what Muawiya was actually trying to achieve.

Soon after, Hasan left Kufa with his main force and reached Madain, where he pitched his camp in the outskirts of the city. Qais bin Sa'd and his vanguard had already reached Maskin, facing Muawiya's army. The Syrian governor tried to bribe Qais by offering him a million dhirams if he would defect from the ranks of Hasan and join him. Yaqubi (2nd vol., p. 214) writes that Qais rejected the offer, saying: "You want to deceive me in my religion." Muawiya then made a similar offer to Ubaidullah bin Abbas, who accepted it and went over to him with 8000 soldiers. Qais was thus left only 4000 soldiers, waiting at Maskin for the arrival of Hasan.

While Hasan himself faced a serious situation at Madain. Some of his troops hatched rebellion against him, plundered his tent, and fell upon him. Different versions of this rebellion are given in the sources. According to Yaqubi (2nd vol., p. 115), "As soon as Hasan reached Madain, Muawiya sent Mughira bin Shuba, Abdullah bin Amir and Abdur Rahman bin Umm al-Hakama to Hasan as his mediators. After they talked to Hasan privately, and while leaving his camp, they spread the news that Hasan had agreed to relinquish the power in favour of Muawiya, whereupon Hasan's soldiers fell upon him and plundered his tent." Yaqubi also records that Muawiya sent his men to Hasan's camp to spread the news that Qais had made peace with Muawiya at Maskin and had come over to his side, while simultaneously he spread the rumours in the army of Qais at Maskin that Hasan had made peace with Muawiya. In this case, again, Muawiya's machinations are responsible for the mutiny in Hasan's army. Another reason of rebellion is given by Dinawari (d. 276/889) in his "**Kitab al-Akhbar at-Tiwal**" (Cairo, 1960, p. 216) that when Hasan left Kufa, he reached Sabat, in the outskirts of Madain, and discerned that some of his troops were showing fickleness, lack of purpose and withdrawn attitude to the war. Hasan therefore halted at Sabat for a while, and made a following speech:-

"O people, I do not entertain any feeling of rancour against a Muslim. I am as much an overseer over yourselves as I am over my own self. Now, I am considering a plan; do not oppose me in it. Reconciliation, disliked by some of you, is better than the split that some of you prefer, especially when I see that most of you are shrinking from the war and are hesitant to fight. I do not, therefore,

consider it wise to impose upon you something which you do not like."

When his people heard the above speech, they silently looked at each other, reflecting their suspicions. Dinawari continues to write that those among them who were of Kharijite persuasion said: "Hasan has become infidel as had become his father before him." They suddenly rushed upon him, pulled the carpet from under his feet, and tore his clothes from his shoulder. Hasan called for help from among his faithful followers from the tribes of Rabia and Hamdan, who rushed to his assistance and pushed the assailants away from him. The disheartened and shaken Hasan found it dangerous to stay in the army camp. He rode away with his trusted men towards the White Castle of Madain, the residence of his governor, Sa'd bin Masud. He was however wounded on his way by Jarrah bin Sinan Asadi with a dagger. Hasan, bleeding profusely, was carried to the White Castle, where he was cared for by his governor.

Qais at Maskin was facing Muawiya's army and waiting for Hasan's arrival. When he heard of the attack on Hasan, Qais thought it wise to engage his soldiers in battle with the Syrians, so that they should not have a chance to brood over the situation, and become more demoralized. Thus, an encounter between the two armies took place, resulting some losses on both sides. According to Ibn Atham (d. 314/926) in "**Kitab al-Futuh**" (4th vol., p. 156), the envoys of Muawiya then came forward in the battlefield and addressed Qais, saying: "For what cause are you now fighting with us and killing yourself? We have received unquestionable word that your leader has been deserted by his people and has been stabbed with a dagger and is on the verge of death. You should therefore refrain from fighting until you get the exact information about the situation." Hence, Qais was forced to stop fighting and had to wait for the official news about the incident from Hasan himself. But by this time, his soldiers began defecting to Muawiya in large number. When Qais noticed this large scale desertion, he wrote to Hasan about the gravity of the situation. When Hasan received the letter from Qais, he lost his heart, and immediately summoned the Iraqi leaders and nobles and addressed them, according to Ibn Atham (4th vol., p. 157) in dejection and disgust as under:-

"O people of Iraq, what should I do with your people who are with me? Here is the letter of Qais bin Sa'd, informing me that even the nobles from among you have gone over to Muawiya. By God, what shocking and abominable behaviour on your part! You were the people who forced my father to accept arbitration at Siffin; and when the arbitration to which he yielded (because of your demand), you turned against him. And when he called upon you to fight Muawiya once again, then you showed your slackness and lassitude. After the death of my father, you yourself came to me and paid me homage out of your own desire and wish. I accepted your homage and came out against Muawiya; only God knows how much I meant to do. Now you are behaving in the same manner as before. O people of Iraq, it would be enough for me from you if you would not defame me in my religion, because now I am going to hand over this affair to Muawiya."

Soon after his plausible speech, Hasan sent word to Muawiya, informing him of his readiness to abdicate the rule. When the news reached to Qais officially, he told to his soldiers that, "Now you must choose between the two, either to fight without a leader or to pay homage to the misled." They replied that, "Paying homage is easier for us than bloodshed." Hence Qais withdrew from the field alongwith those who were still with him, and left Maskin for Kufa.

Hasan sent Abdullah bin Nawfal bin Harith to Muawiya at Maskin for the terms. Hearing this, Muawiya took a blank sheet of paper, affixed his signature and seal, and said to Abdullah to take it to Hasan and ask him to write on it whatever he wanted. Ibn Atham (4th vol., p. 159) writes that when the blank sheet had been presented to Hasan, he called his secretary, and asked him to write: "These are the terms on which Hasan bin Ali bin Abu Talib is making peace with Muawiya bin Abu Sufian, and handing over to him the state or government of Amir al-Mominin Ali:- 1) that Muawiya should rule according to the Book of God, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, and the conduct of the righteous caliphs. 2) that Muawiya will not appoint or nominate anyone to the caliphate after him, but the choice will be left to the *shura* of the Muslims. 3) that the people will be left in peace wherever they are in the land of God. 4) that the companions and followers of Ali, their lives, properties, their women, and their children, will be guaranteed safe conduct and peace. 5) that no harm or

dangerous act, secretly or openly, will be done to Hasan bin Ali, his brother Hussain, or to anyone from the family of the Prophet." This agreement is witnessed by Abdullah bin Nawfal, Umar bin Abu Salama and so and so.

The agreement having been concluded, Hasan returned to Kufa where Qais joined him. Soon afterwards, Muawiya entered the city with the full force of his army. He held a general assembly, and different groups of people, one after the other, paid him homage. The speech of Hasan in Kufa delivered at the insistence of Amr bin al-A'as and Muawiya is worth noting. Abul Faraj quotes the speech in his "**Maqatil**" (p. 72) which reads: "The caliph (**khalifa**) is one who dedicates himself to the way of God and the **Sunnah** of His Prophet, and not the one who is an oppressor and aggressor; the latter is only a king (**malik**) who rules a kingdom (**mulk**), whose enjoyment is little, and whose pleasure is short-lived, leaving behind only a trace of it. I do not know if this is a trial for you and a grant of livelihood to you for a period." It is interesting to note that if this quotation is historically correct, it might be the origin of the use of the word **mulk** (king) instead of **khalifa** (caliph) for Muawiya and his successors, used by the historians from the earliest times. There are however numerous instances, where Muawiya is recorded as saying, in reference to himself, "I am the first king of Islam." (vide "**Bidayat wa'n Nihaya**" by Ibn Kathir, Cairo, 1939, 8th vol., p. 135). Thus, Muawiya grabbed the power and founded the Umayyad rule in Syria. He lived on a scale of royal splendour comparable only to the pomp and pageantry of the Byzantine emperors.

The extant sources specify the causes of Hasan's renunciation as love for peace, distaste for politics and its dissensions, and the desire to avoid widespread bloodshed among the Muslims. He relinquished the power in 41/661 after ruling for 6 months and 3 days, and the year of his abdication became known as the "Year of the Community" (**am al-jama'a**). Tabari (2nd vol., p. 199) quotes a tradition to this effect, attributed to the Prophet, who is reported as saying: "This son of mine is a lord (**sayid**) and he will unite two branches of the Muslims."

Hasan had certainly prevented a bloody military solution of the conflict by abdicating in favour of Muawiya. His

abdication had far-reaching consequences for the later development of Shiism. Now the wheel turned on reverse side, as the Uthmaniya branch, with Muawiya its head, became the central body, while the Shiat-i Ali was reduced to the role of a small opposition party.

Hasan, after his abdication in 41/661, quitted Kufa and retired to Medina and led a quiet life. His attitude could be understood from the fact that during his journey back to Medina, at Qadisiya, according to Baladhuri (d. 279/892) in "**Ansab al-Ashraf**" (ed. M. Hamidullah, Cairo, 1955, 4th vol., p. 138), he received a letter from Muawiya, asking him to take part in a campaign against a Khariji revolt which had just erupted. Hasan replied that he had given up fighting in order to restore peace, and that he would not take part in a campaign at his side.

Muawiya's ambitious plans to perpetuate the caliphate in his own house and nominate his son Yazid as his heir-apparent, were not so possible, because of the terms on which Hasan had abdicated to Muawiya. To carry out his plan, Muawiya had to remove Hasan from the scene. The sources admit that the cause of Hasan's death was poison administered by one of his wives, Juda bint al-Ash'ath. Muawiya is reported to have suborned her with the promise of a large sum of money and of marrying her to his son Yazid. After she had completed the task, Muawiya paid her the promised sum of money but refused to marry her to Yazid, saying that he valued the life of his son. Thus, the death of Hasan took place in 49/669 at the early age of 46 years.

Nomination of Yazid

After the abdication of Hasan, Muawiya became an absolute ruler of the Islamic state, which he diplomatically acquired on the ground of *Revenge of Uthman's blood*, and it must be pointed out that when he became absolute ruler, neither he investigated the assassin of Uthman, nor he did care for this issue. It was mere a pretext to remove Ali from his caliphate. In sum, he succeeded to establish the Umayyad rule in Syria.

Perhaps the most important event in the history of the development of the Shiite passion was Muawiya's nomination of his son Yazid to succeed him. He could not act in this

direction as long as Hasan lived, and it is significant that immediately after the news of Hasan's death, Muawiya began actively on the project that would fulfil his long desire of perpetuating the rule of his family. This was however not an easy task, and he had to move with great caution and use all devices: diplomacy, generous gifts, bribes, and finally threat and oppression.

The early Arabic traces of the first century of Islam are rich in information, mostly tinged with legends and miracles. We may safely divide the sources into two groups. The one is the *Nasibi* sources i.e., official Umayyad reports and sayings of their partisans, circulated chiefly during the reigns of Abdul Malik and Hisham. The second one is supported with the sayings of Umm Salmah, some companions of Muhammad and the traditions transmitted by descendant of Hussain. This version was first recorded by Abu Mikhnaf (d. 157/774), who was the author of about 32 works. Tabari (d. 310/922) provides the fullest account; the narrative of Baladhuri (d. 279/892) and Ibn Atham al-Kufi al-Kindi (d. 314/926) are almost as full. It is worth mentioning that these three historians all utilized the earlier histories of Abu Mikhnaf, (d. 157/774), Madaini, Ibn al-Kalbi, Awana bin al-Hakim and Waqidi (d. 207/822). Tabari however relies almost entirely on the narrative of Abu Mikhnaf, whose importance lies in the fact that he uses the accounts of eye-witnesses such as Hamid bin Muslim al-Azdi, al-Shabi and Abdur Rahman bin Abil Kanud. We have therefore derived our informations mostly from the source of Tabari in relating the forthcoming tragedy of Karbala.

Muawiya died in 60/680 after ruling for 19 years and 3 months. With his death, his son Yazid issued orders to his governor of Medina, Walid bin Utba, to exact homage from Hussain and Abdullah bin Zubayr. In his letter to the governor, he gave strict orders that they should not be allowed to delay. Walid bin Utba accordingly summoned them in his palace. Abdullah bin Zubayr did not go and fled to Mecca. Hussain went to the palace alone. Walid read to him Yazid's letter and asked for immediate recognition of the new caliph. Hussain replied uncommittedly that the oath, in order to be valid, must be made in public and that the governor should arrange a public gathering in the mosque where he would also be present. With this reply, Hussain rose to leave the palace. Walid bin Utba paid for his

lenient attitude towards Hussain, he was shortly thereafter dismissed from his post of governor of Medina.

Invitation of the Kufans

Abdullah bin Zubayr, who reached Mecca before Hussain, had gathered people around him against Yazid, and he is reported to have been harbouring secret ambitions for the caliphate himself. But as soon as Hussain arrived in the city, the influence for Abdullah bin Zubayr's candidature melted away. The people abandoned Abdullah bin Zubayr and gathered around Hussain. In Kufa, as soon as the people received a word of Muawiya's death, they held a series of meetings expressing their support for Hussain. They sent out numerous letters and a succession of messengers, urging Hussain to come in Kufa to guide them, and release from the tyranny and oppression of the Umayyads.

The first letter Hussain received on 10th Randaan, 60/June 15, 680; it was signed by Suleman bin Surad al-Khuzai, Al-Musayyab bin Najaba, Rifa bin Shaddad, Habib bin al-Muzahir, and Muslim bin Awsaja on behalf of the Kufans, and according to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 233), it reads:- "We thank God for casting down the tyrannical rule of your enemy, who had usurped the power to rule this community without any right, allowed the possession of God to pass into the hands of the powerful and the rich, and killed the best men while allowing the worst of the people to remain alive. We invite you to come to Kufa, as we have no Imam to guide us; and we hope that through you, God will unite us on the path of truth. We do not go to Friday congregational prayers to pray with Noman bin Bashir, the governor of Kufa, nor do we assemble with him at the occasion of the Id. If we hear that you are coming to us, we will oust the governor from our city. Peace and mercy of God be upon you."

Both eastern and western research alike do not lose sight of the fact that Hussain had no political ambition. His action, however, shows that from start to end his strategy was aimed at a much higher goal than simply accession to the caliphate. There is no evidence that he tried, while at Mecca, to enlist active supporters from among the people who gathered around him, or to propagate his cause among the mass of people who congregated in Mecca for the pilgrimage. There is also no evidence that he attempted to

depute his emissaries to stir up any rebellion in provinces such as Yamen and Iran, which were sympathetic to the house of Ali. It must be pointed out to this effect that Hussain never mustered even a small force against the Umayyads which was an easy for him. And above all, had he acted promptly on the invitation of Kufans, while the governorship of the city was in the hands of the weak Noman bin Bashir, he might have had a fair chance of success. His speedy arrival would not only have forestalled any effective action on the part of the Umayyad government, but would also have stirred real enthusiasm among the Kufans. This was emphasized by the leaders of Kufa, when, according to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 234) they wrote, "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate; to al-Hussain bin Ali, from his Shia, the faithful Muslims: Further make haste, for the people are awaiting you, as they have no Imam other than you! So haste, and again haste! Peace." In response to all these approaches, however, Hussain sent only one letter in reply. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 235), it reads:- "From Hussain bin Ali to the believers and Muslims. Hani and Sa'id came to me with your letters, they being the last among your messengers and delegations to come to me. I have understood what you said and that you have invited me to come to you because you have no Imam to guide you; and that you hope my arrival there will unite you in the right path and in the truth. I am sending my cousin and the trusted one from my family to report to me about your affairs. If his report conforms with what you have written, I will soon come. But you must be clear about the fact that the Imam is only one who follows the Book of God, makes justice and honesty his conduct and behaviour, judges with truth, and devotes himself to the service of God. Peace."

In spite of repeated appeals and hundreds of letters sent by the Kufans, Hussain did not take a hasty decision, and as a precaution, he sent his cousin, Muslim bin Aqil, to Kufa as his emissary with instructions to ascertain the truth of these representations, and report back of his survey. As soon as Muslim bin Aqil arrived in Kufa, there was held in the house of Suleman bin Surad a meeting, which for the sake of secrecy, was attended only by the leaders of Kufa. Very soon, Muslim bin Aqil quickly gathered thousand of pledges of support, and the number of people who registered their names and swore allegiance to Muslim bin Aqil in the name of Imam Hussain is variously

given as 12,000 and 18,000. Soon the movement became so widespread that Muslim bin Aqil was able to preside over the public meetings from the pulpit in the cathedral mosque of Kufa. Confident of Kufan support, Muslim bin Aqil consequently wrote to Hussain to come to Kufa and assume spiritual leadership of the people. His letter was sent to Hussain by Abis bin Habib ash-Shakiri. Having been assured of the extent of Kufan enthusiasm, Hussain decided to go to Iraq.

Receiving word of Muslim bin Aqil's activities in Kufa, Yazid no longer trusting the mild-tempered governor of the town, Noman bin Bashir, and appointed his strong man Ubaidullah bin Ziyad, the then governor of Basra, to take charge of Kufa. Fully aware of the insurrection in Kufa in favour of Hussain, Ibn Ziyad rode into the city in disguise, wearing a black turban, covering his face, and surrounding himself with a small band of horsemen. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 241), the Kufans who were expecting Hussain's arrival, mistook Ibn Ziyad for the former, and gathered all around his horse, greeted him enthusiastically, and shouted: "Hail to you, O son of the Prophet; we have been awaiting you." Ibn Ziyad, quietly observing the people's enthusiasm for Hussain, entered the mosque along with the crowds, mounted the pulpit, and then suddenly tore the veil from his face. He delivered a terrifying speech, declaring death and unprecedented punishment for the sympathizers of Hussain, while making tempting promises for those who would prove their loyalty to Yazid. The Kufans were stricken by awe and fear, completely lost hearts, and ultimately abandoned Muslim bin Aqil. He was captured and beheaded together with Hani bin Urwa, in whose house he had stayed. This attitude of the Kufans once again demonstrated the weakness of their character and disloyalty.

Hussain's departure from Mecca

While Hussain was making preparations for departure from Mecca, things took a reverse turn for him in Kufa. He however left Mecca on 8th Zilhaja, 60/September 10, 680, the same day Muslim bin Aqil had been killed in Kufa. It was the season of pilgrimage when various tribes from Iraq, Yamen, Taif and other lands were pouring in Mecca, while Hussain was going out of the town with his family. While he was heading towards Iraq, Ibn Ziyad had made Kufa

a scene of terror and horror, and imposed strict martial law. He made a declaration that anyone suspected of supporting Hussain, would be hanged without trial, his house would be set on fire, and his property would be confiscated. At the same time, Ibn Ziyad blockaded all the roads leading from Mecca to Kufa, and gave strict orders forbidding anyone from entering or leaving the territory of Kufa. Hussain learned of all these strict measures from the Umayyads, but continued his journey undeterred.

Imam Hussain continued his journey till he reached Taneem, a few miles from Mecca and encamped there. He thence started and effected a junction at a place called Sifah, where according to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 242) he met the poet Farazdaq, and inquired about the conditions in Kufa. Farazdaq replied, "Their hearts are with you, but their swords are with your enemies." Hussain resumed his journey and reached Salabia, which he left very soon and arrived in Wagesia, where his follower Zuhair bin Qayn, alongwith his wife joined the caravan. Khuzaimia was the fifth resting place, and thence he advanced and alighted at Zubala. When he reached Ath-Thalibiya, he received word from some travellers of the executions of Muslim bin Aqil and Hani bin Urwa at Kufa. After leaving it, Hussain reached Batn Aqiq, a place few stages from Kufa; and upon learning of the strong military force stationed at Qadisiya, he changed his route to enter Kufa from another direction. Hussain bin Numayr, the Umayyad commander at Qadisiya, was informed of Hussain's change of route, and sent a detachment of one thousand troops under the command of Hur bin Yazid at-Tamimi to intercept him. When they appeared on the horizon, Hussain ordered his people to pitch their tents at a nearby place called Dhu Husm. The army of Hur soon reached Hussain. The day was very hot and Hur's army had run out of water. Hussain immediately ordered his men to give water to the Umayyad troops and their horses. Hur had a certain regard for the Imam, and even when four of the leading Kufans, who had managed to escape from the city and joined Hussain at this point, Hur did not dare to use force. Hussain explained to his adversaries the reason which had caused him to set out. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 298), Hussain said: "O people of Kufa! you sent to me your delegations and wrote me letters saying that you had no Imam and that I should come to unite you and lead you in the way of God....But if you have changed your minds, have become ignorant of our rights, and have forgotten your delegations and

repeated appeals to me to come for the sake of your religion, I shall turn back."

Then Hussain showed Hur two sacks full of letters sent by the Kufans to him, but Hur said that he knew nothing, and that he had come with the orders of Ibn Ziyad to arrest him and his party. Hussain refused to submit, but still Hur did not use force against him. It was however agreed that Hussain should keep on travelling along the Euphrates in the opposite direction from Kufa until fresh orders arrived from the governor, and that Hur would follow Hussain closely.

Hussain at Karbala

When they reached the district of Ninawa, a horseman arrived from Kufa, and gave a letter to Hur from Ibn Ziyad, ordering him not to allow Hussain to make halt except in a desert place without fortifications of water. Hussain, therefore, advanced a bit turning to the left when Hur's contingent stopped him from moving further and asked him to alight, adding that the Euphrates was not far from there. Hussain said, "This is the stage of distress (*karb*) and trial (*bala*)" and got down from his horse. (vide *Tabari*, 2nd vol., p. 232). This place henceforward became known as **Karbala**, about 25 miles north-west of Kufa; where Hussain pitched his tents when it was 2nd Muharram, 61/October 2, 680.

On the 3rd Muharram, the situation deteriorated as Umar bin Sa'd arrived with the fresh Umayyad force of 4,000 men and assumed overall command on the field. Ibn Sa'd learned that Hussain now intended to return to Medina, but Ibn Ziyad, on receiving word of this development, ordered that all the "rebels" should render homage to Yazid. On 7th Muharram, an embargo was placed on the water supply to the Imam's camp, and for that Ibn Sa'd stationed a force of 500 cavalry on the road to the river, and for three days before the massacre on the 10th Muharram, Hussain and his party suffered terribly from thirst. A daring sortie led by Abbas, the brother of Hussain, however, managed to reach the river, but succeeding in filling only a few waterskins.

Ibn Sa'd was still trying to persuade Ibn Ziyad to find some peaceful solutions to avoid shedding the blood of the

grandson of the Prophet, but all in vain. Ibn Ziyad sent his final orders to Ibn Sa'd through Shimar bin Dhul Jawshan, either to attack Hussain immediately or to hand over the field command to the army of Shimar. Soon after receiving these fresh orders on the evening of 9th Muharram, Ibn Sa'd advanced with his forces towards the camp of Hussain, who sent Abbas to request for a respite of one night, which was granted. On this juncture, Hussain assembled his relatives and followers and induced them to abandon the field to his fate. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 319), he said:- "I give praise to God, Who has honoured us with the Prophethood, has taught us the Koran, and favoured us with His religion. I know of no worthier companions than mine; may God reward you with all the best of His reward. I think tomorrow our end will come. I ask you all to leave me alone and to go away to safety. I free you from your responsibilities for me, and I do not hold you back. Night will provide you a cover; use it as a steed. You may take my children with you to save their lives."

The relatives and followers of Hussain refused to leave or survive after him, and demonstrated in the same vein an unshakable devotion to the Imam, and said, "By God, we will never leave you alone until all of us are killed and our bodies are torn to pieces. By this we will have fulfilled our duties to you." (vide **Tabari**, 2nd vol., p. 322) Thus, the whole night was spent in prayer, recitation of Koran, and worship and meditation. The borrowed night ended, and the fateful morning of 10th Muharram brought with it the summons of the tragic result of the family of Ali bin Abu Talib and its handful supporters. Hussain drew up in front of the tents his small band of 72 men: 32 horsemen and 40 foot soldiers of varying ages ranging from 70 years old Muslim bin Awsaja to the 14 years old Kassim bin Hasan bin Ali. The rear of the tents was protected by setting on fire the heaps of wood and reeds. Zuhayr bin Qayn was given command of the right wing, Habib bin Mazahir al-Asadi of the left, and Abbas bin Ali was entrusted with the standard of the Hashimite house.

Tabari (2nd vol., p. 268) writes that Hussain rode on his camel, and came before his enemies and praised God and His Prophet, and related the dignity of Ahel-al-Bait, and said in conclusion, "Tell me! do you want me killed to avenge the death of one of you whom I have killed? Or because of property belonging to you which I have expropriated? Or to

avenge some wound which I have inflicted upon you?" Hussain then spoke the names of the persons, who were now in the army of Umayyads, and said to them, "Did you not write me letters, inviting me to come in Kufa?" But they refused to accept it at that moment. Hussain soon returned to his camp.

Shortly before the fateful battle began, Hur bin Yazid, the Umayyad commander, the first who confronted Hussain and forced him to halt at Karbala, was himself now confronted by his own conscience and feelings. A great conflict arose in his mind. He suddenly spurred his horse towards Hussain's camp, and threw himself at Hussain's feet, and exclaimed: "O son of the Prophet! here is the man who did you great injustice in detaining you at this place and causing you so much trouble. Is it possible for you to forgive a sinner like me? By God, I never imagined that these people would go so far as to shed the blood of the grandson of their Prophet. I only thought that they would accept one of three options you offered; and thus some sort of reconciliation would ultimately prevail, and in this way I would be able to retain my rank and position. But now, when all hopes for peace are gone, I cannot buy hell for this worldly gain. Forgive my mistake and allow me to sacrifice myself for you. Only by doing this I can redeem myself in the eyes of God for my sin against you." (*Tabari*, 2nd vol., p. 333). Hussain embraced Hur and said, "You are as free-born and noble (*hur*) as your mother named you." Hur then spurred his horse towards the Umayyad army and condemned their sacrilegious action against Hussain. He said to Ibn Sa'd and his men, as describes by Washington Irving in his "**Lives of the Successors of Mahomet**" (London, 1905, p. 211) that: "Alas, for you, men of Cufa! you have invited the descendant of the Prophet to your city, and now you come to fight against him. You have cut off from him and his family the waters of the Euphrates, which are free even to infidels and the beasts of the field, and have shut him up like a lion in the toils." Hur then attacked with his single power and was killed. He had thus enlisted in history as the protomartyr of Karbala.

Battle of Karbala

Ibn Sa'd shot an arrow into the Hussainid camp, calling all to witness that he struck the first blow, marking an

outbreak of the battle. Hence, a skirmish ensued, but the men of Hussain kept within their camp, where they could only be reached by the archers. From time to time there were single combats in defiance. It began in the morning and ended shortly after noon as both parties desisted from the fight at the hour of noontide prayer. It was in the afternoon that the battle became fiercer, and Hussain's handful supporters one after the other fell fighting in front of him, and finally it was the turn of his relatives to perish. The first to be killed was Ali Akbar, the son of Hussain, followed in quick succession by the son of Muslim bin Aqil, the sons of Aqil, three brothers of Abbas bin Ali, then Kassim, the son of Hasan; and eventually there remained only two: Hussain and his half-brother Abbas bin Ali. With broken hearts and distressed, both brothers went together and fell upon the enemy. The enraged Abbas penetrated deep into the ranks of his foes, became separated from Hussain, and was killed some distance away. Alone and weary, Hussain returned to his tents to console the terrified women and children, and to bid them farewell for the last time, and to consign spiritual authority of Imamate to his son, Ali Zayn al-Abidin. Exhausted and wounded, Hussain sat in front of the main tent, sheltering the women and children. Yet nobody dare to attack him, until Shimar ended the delay. He caused Hussain to separate from the tent, and several soldiers fell upon him and killed him, with 33 thrusts and 34 cuts to the body. Sinan bin Anas bin Amr raised his sword to make the final blow on Hussain, and cut off his head in front of the tent. Khawali bin Yazid al-Asbahi took the head into his custody. It was on the 10th Muharram/October 10, on a Friday that the pathetic tragedy in the history of Islam ended, known as the Battle of Karbala. Edward Gibbon remarks in his **"Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire"** (London, 1848, 5th vol., p. 391) that, "In a distant age and climate, the tragic scene of the death of Husayn will awaken the sympathy of the coldest readers."

On 12th Muharram/October 12, however, when the Umayyad forces left Karbala, the people of Banu Asad from the nearby village of Ghadiriya came down and buried the bodies of Hussain and his companions on the spot where the massacre had taken place.

Wives and children

Hussain had concluded five marriages, by which he had four sons and two daughters. His first wife was Shahr Banu, who was the mother of Ali Zayn al-Abidin. By Layla, Hussain had one son, Ali Akbar, or Ali Asghar. His third wife belonged to the clan of Kaza'a, who gave birth of a son, Jafar. By Rabab, he had a son, Ali Asghar, or Abdullah Asghar; and a daughter, Sakina. By Umm Isac, he had one daughter, Umm Fatima.

ZAYN AL-ABIDIN (61-94/680-713)

Abu Muhammad Ali bin Hussain, known as Zayn al-Abidin (ornament of the pious) and also by the titles of **as-Sajjad** (the prostrator) and **az-Zaki** (the pure), was born in Medina on 38/658. Dhahabi (d. 748/1348) writes in "**Tadhkiratul Huffaz**" that Imam Muhammad Bakir narrated, "Whenever my father mentioned any blessing of God, or whenever any worldly trouble was averted, or whenever he reconciled two quarrelling persons, or whenever he finished any prayer - on such occasions he used to offer prostration (*sajda*), therefore, he was called as **Sajjad**." As for the title **az-Zaki** (pure), it is said that he had left to involve into worldly turmoils, and led a pious life in Medina. He would feed the hungry persons at night, from one to three hundred families; and in daytime, he would have a hundred sheep a day killed for meat, which would be distributed to the needy people. Much of his time he spent sitting on an old piece of matting, fasting all day, or eating a little barely bread. D.M. Donaldson writes in "**The Shiite Religion**" (London, 1933, p. 110) that, "One day, he claimed to get nourishment from merely the smell of food."

It was the year of Zayn al-Abidin's birth that the edifice of Islamic solidarity was rudely shaken by a band of seceders from Ali's army, known as the Kharijis. Zayn al-Abidin was 2 years old during the martyr of Ali bin Abu Talib, and about 22 years and 6 months old during the event of Karbala. In his personal appearance, Zayn al-Abidin is described as much like Ali. He was about the same height, had reddish hair, a white face and neck, and a large chest and stomach.

Shah-i Zanan, al-Sulafa, or Harar, better known as Shahr Banu, the mother of Zayn al-Abidin was the daughter of the last Sassanid emperor Yazdigard (d. 31/652) of Iran. Tradition has it that during the caliphate of Ali bin Abu Talib, his governor at Fars, Hurais bin Jabir had sent two daughters of Yazdigard as captives to Medina, one of whom was married to Imam Hussain, called Shahr Banu, and other to Muhammad bin Abu Bakr. The popular legend relating the presence of Shahr Banu at Karbala is quite untrue, and cannot be ascertained from any known source. She however is reported to have died soon after the birth of her son, Zayn al-Abidin. In memory of his mother, Zayn al-Abidin used to utter these words: "I am the son of the two chosen stocks (*ibn al-khairatain*). The Prophet was my grandfather, and my mother was the daughter of Yazdigard."

Imam Hussain had expressly appointed Zayn al-Abidin as his successor. The most commonly reported tradition in this connection, according to "**Bihar al-Anwar**" (11th vol., p. 7) by Muhammad Bakir Majlisi, is that Hussain, before leaving for Kufa, entrusted Umm Salmah bint Abu Umayyah Suhail, the widow of the Muhammad, who outlived all the wives and died in 63/682; with his will and letters, enjoining her to hand them over to the eldest of his male offspring in case he himself did not return. Zayn al-Abidin was the only son who came back and so he was given his father's will and became his nominee. According to "**Usul al-Kafi**" (1st vol., p. 149), "Verily, al-Hussain bin Ali, leaving for Iraq, entrusted the book and his will (*istawda al-kitab wal wassiya*) to Umm Salmah, and when his son Ali bin al-Hussain returned to Medina, she handed these over to him." Another tradition relates (vide Kulaini's "**Usul al-Kafi**", 1st vol., p. 353) that Hussain nominated Zayn al-Abidin as his successor and the next Imam of the house of the Prophet just before he went out to meet the Umayyad forces for the last encounter at Karbala.

With the exception of few incidents, the life of Zayn al-Abidin is shrouded in the political intrigues. He had however witnessed the rule of the six Umayyads caliphs, viz. Muawiya bin Abu Sufian (40-60/661-680), Yazid I (60-64/680-683), Muawiya II, Marwan bin Hakam (64-65/683-685), Abdul Malik (65-86/685-705) and Walid (86-96/705-715). He had also seen the reigns of Abdullah bin Zubayr and Mukhtar Thaqafi, but kept himself out of the vortex of politics.

Zayn al-Abidin in Kufa

When the blood-thirsty soldiers of Yazid were bent on destroying Hussain and his dear ones at Karbala, sparing neither old nor young, the survival of Zayn al-Abidin was nothing but a miracle. His severe illness had prevented him from taking up arms, and confined him to bed. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 367), "The only surviving male of the line of Hussain, his son, Zayn al-Abidin, who because of serious illness did not take part in the fighting, was lying on a skin in one of the tents. The skin was pulled from under him and Shimar would have killed him, but he was saved when Zainab covered him under her arms and Ibn Sa'd restrained Shimar from striking the boy." But the morning of 12th Muharram saw a peculiar procession leaving Karbala for Kufa. Tabari (2nd vol., p. 369) writes that, "Seventy-two heads were raised on the points of the lances, each of them were held by one soldier, followed by the women of the Prophet's family on camels and the huge army of the Umayyads." After reaching Kufa, the captives were presented to Ibn Ziyad. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 371), Zaid bin Arram, an old companion of the Prophet was present in the court, who was stricken by shock and grief to see the captives. He quitted the court of Ibn Ziyad, and the people heard him saying outside that, "O people of the Arabs, after this day you have made yourselves home-born slaves and cattle. You have massacred the son of Fatima and your ruler, Ibn Marjana (*kunya* of Ibn Ziyad), who will now keep on killing your best men, and force you to do the most hateful things. You must now be ready for the utmost disgrace."

Zayn al-Abidin in Damascus

It is however not quite clear how long the captives were detained in Kufa, but it seems that before long they had been sent to Damascus at Yazid's court. The reaction of Yazid is reported to have been different from that of Ibn Ziyad, and he regretted the haste with which his governor had acted. This seems to be contrary to all those reports which describe Yazid's explicit orders to his governor in Medina and then to Ibn Ziyad, in which he clearly ordered them to either exact homage from Hussain or behead him without delay. Ibn Kathir (d. 774/1373) writes in "*Bidaya wa'n Nihaya*" (8th vol., p. 203) that, "If Yazid had really

felt that his governor had committed a serious mistake in dealing with Hussain, he would have taken some actions against him. But, Yazid did not dismiss Ibn Ziyad from his post, did not punish him in any way, or even write a letter of censure for exceeding his orders."

Sermon in the mosque

One Friday in Damascus when the congregation in the cathedral mosque, accustomed to listen to the curse on Ali bin Abu Talib and his family, requested Zayn al-Abidin to address them. Taking Yazid's permission, the Imam delivered a sermon thus:- "O people! beware of the temptation of the world which is transitory. The nations of antiquity who were stronger than you and lived longer are no more. Do you think you will live for ever? Certainly not, so try to live a virtuous life before you are removed from your house to the grave and reduced to dust. Remember, you will have to stand before God to give an account of your deeds. Woe to the wicked whose disappointment will know no bound. Woe to the proud tyrant whose repentance will then be of no avail. O people! listen I am the offspring of him on whom God showered His blessings, whom God appointed as intercessor, bestowing on him **kauthar** and power of showing miracles; praiseworthy, and generous sayeds, true to his words - the great Apostle of God, whose son Hussain my father, has been massacred at Karbala with inhuman atrocities and on whom angels are shedding tears. Verily, it is God's trial." The congregation was moved - some heaved sighs, some wept when suddenly Yazid beckoned the **muazzin** to call for the prayers.

Zayn al-Abidin in Medina

Yazid thought it advisable not to keep Hussain's family in his capital, and finding that Zayn al-Abidin preferred a quiet and virtuous life, he made arrangement for them to return to Medina. When they reached Medina, the citizens came out for condolence. Zayn al-Abidin in a short touching speech addressed them thus:- "Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds. High above the highest heavens and nearer to us than to our jugular veins, knowing our inner most secrets. Verily, He has tested us by tribulations calamitous to Islam for they killed Hussain and took

captive his family. Is there any one who will approve this murder? Lo! we are God's and unto Him we are returning. He will reward us for what we have suffered."

Reactions of the Muslims

A storm of grief and anger raged in every heart in the Muslim world because of the tragical event of Karbala, putting great deal of thrill of horror. It caused rise to a universal feeling of revulsion against the tyrants. From the start of 62/681, the people of Medina unitedly turned out the Umayyad governor, and beleaguered the Umayyad ashes in the town. Ibn Athir (d. 630/1234) writes in "**Kamil fi't Tarih**" (Beirut, 1975, 1st vol., p. 186) that Marwan bin Hakam, the sworn enemy of Ahl-al-Bait was also unable to stay safely in the city. The only person he could find to offer protection to his wife was Zayn al-Abidin, who sent her safely to Taif escorted by one of his sons. Yazid sent an army under Muslim bin Aqba to suppress the rising in Medina. According to Tabari (7th vol., pp. 6-7), "He ordered that for three days on end, Medina should be given over to rapine and murder, and that the army might appropriate to its own use whatever it might capture including the prisoners of war." Dinawari writes in "**Akhbar at-Tiwal**" (p. 260) that the instructions to Muslim bin Aqba were given that, "If you obtain victory over the people of Medina, plunder the town for three days without break." The orders were carried out on the 28th Zilhaja, 63 and for three full days and nights, Medina was given over to plunder. The Umayyad forces gained such ascendancy that the remaining citizens of Medina avowed allegiance specifying that they would be the slaves of Yazid who would possess plenary powers over their lives, properties and dependents, but Zayn al-Abidin and his family were left unmolested, and when the citizens of Medina were forced to take oath of allegiance of Yazid, the Imam was exempted.

The Meccans too had been aroused against Umayyads. Abdullah bin Zubayr, the son of Asma bint Abu Bakr, who had long yearned to secure the office of caliph for himself, considered it an opportune moment to advance his interest, delivered a forcible speech, decrying the inconstancy of the Kufans, and paying rich tributes to Hussain. The Meccans became alienated from Yazid and agreed to pledge their allegiance to Abdullah bin Zubayr.

After the savage massacre and ravage of Medina, Yazid's commander, Muslim bin Aqba advanced on Mecca as ordered by Yazid. On his way to Mecca in 64/683, he was picked up by death. Before his death, he had made Haseen bin Namir the head of the army. Thus, Haseen invaded Mecca and laid siege to the Kaba. Our chronicler Tabari (7th vol., p. 14) writes that, "Not only stones but also live wood were catapulted at Kaba which caught fire." This was Yazid's last operation after which he died in 64/683 after ruling for 3 years and a half.

After Yazid's death, the pent up feelings of revulsion entertained by the people of Iraq against Ibn Ziyad were released with such a violence that he had to flee from Basra. The climax in the exertion of disgust with Yazid was reached when his son and successor, Muawiya bin Yazid, who had been accepted as the ruler, mounted the pulpit and delivered speech. He then retired into the palace and forty days later, he left this world. Thus the office of caliph was lost to the descendants of Abu Sufian for ever, and in Syria, the old Marwan bin Hakam received the pledge of allegiance, and the office of caliph of the Umayyads was for long held by his progeny.

As soon as Yazid died, the people of Mecca rose once again, and began to hunt the Umayyad soldiers in the city. Thus, it was difficult for Haseen bin Namir and his forces to move from Mecca to Syria. They started their journey from Mecca in secret, and meanwhile they felt acute need of fodder for their horses. Tabari (7th vol., p. 342) writes that when Zayn al-Abidin knew the difficulties of the Umayyad forces, he came down from Medina with grass and foods and rescued them from starvation. Haseen bin Namir was highly impressed with the generosity of the Imam, and offered him to accept the caliphate of Damascus with his all supports. Zayn al-Abidin did not answer him, and went away after casting a smile.

Origin and rise of the Tawwabun

The tragic event of Karbala stirred religious and moral sentiment, particularly among those of the Kufans who had so zealously invited Hussain to Iraq to guide them on the path of God. But when Hussain came to Iraq they did not not stand with him in the hour of trial. Soon after the event of Karbala, the Umayyad governor Ibn Ziyad returned

to Kufa from his camp at Nukhayla, the Shiites, according to Tabari (7th vol., p. 47), "were stung with shame at their faint-heartedness. They took to mutual recrimination as they painfully realized the enormity of neglecting to go to Hussain's help, and thereby leading him to his death in their close neighbourhood, since he had come to Iraq only to their invitation." They thought that they must make similar sacrifices to obtain God's forgiveness. They believed that they could only prove their real repentance by exposing themselves to death while seeking vengeance for the blood of Hussain. Hence they named themselves as the **tawwabun** (the penitents).

The movement of the Tawwabun began under the headship of five of the oldest trusted associates of Ali, with a following of a hundred diehard Shiites of Kufa. The five leaders of the Tawwabun, Suleman bin Surad al-Khuzai, Al-Musayyab bin Najaba al-Fazari, Abdullah bin Sa'd bin Nufayl al-Azdi, Abdullah bin Walin at-Taymi, and Rifa'a bin Shaddad al-Bajali; had always been in the forefront of all Shiite activities in Kufa. At the end of 61/680 they held their first meeting in the house of Suleman bin Surad. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 498), the first to speak was Al-Musayyab bin Najaba al-Fazari, who said: "We invited the son of the daughter of our Prophet to come to Kufa to guide us on the right path, but when he responded to our call, we became rapacious for our own lives until he was killed in our midst. What excuse would we have before our Lord, and before our Prophet when we must meet him on the day of resurrection, while his most beloved son, family and progeny were massacred in our midst. By God, there is no other way for us to expiate ourselves for the sin except to kill all his murderers and their associates or be killed. Perhaps by doing so our Lord may forgive our sin. You must, therefore, now select someone from among you as your leader, who can organize and mobilize you under his command and proceed with the plan of seeking God's forgiveness by taking the action which has been proposed."

Finally, Suleman bin Surad had been chosen as their leader, who also made a forceful speech in the meeting, and said: "We used to crane our necks eagerly in looking for the arrival of the members of the Prophet's household, but when they arrived, we acted with such indifference and laxity that in our land and not far from us, the Prophet's son was put to the sword. When he raised his voice in

demanding justice and help, there was none to respond to him to say, 'Here I am, standing in thy service'. The man of sin made him the target of their arrows and spears, and killed him. Now if you wish to get up, rise! God's wrath has been stirred. Resolve here and now not to return to your wives and children till you have taken steps to win God's pleasure. Now that you consider sinners, prepare yourselves for sacrifice. Sharpen your swords, and straighten your spear-heads." (Tabari, 7th vol., p. 48) He then entered into correspondence with Shiite leaders in other cities, namely Sa'd bin Hudhayfa al-Yamen in Madain and Al-Muthanna bin Mukharriba al-Abdi in Basra. The movement of Tawwabun, however, went on secretly for three years, increasing in number and strength, and waiting for an appropriate time. In the interim, Yazid died in 64/683, encouraging the Tawwabun to come out in the open. They succeeded in gaining support of 16,000 Kufans. Suleman started final preparations for action, and the penitents embarked upon a course of direct action against Yazid's rule.

In the interim, Mukhtar also spurred his horses towards Kufa, and tried to bring the Tawwabun in his mission. The main body of Tawwabun, however, refused to join Mukhtar, though at least 2,000 of these had registered their names with Suleman bin Surad did switch over to him. According to their plan, the Tawwabun raised their call for "revenge for the blood of Hussain" (*la latha'rat al-Hussain*) in 65/684, and gathered at Nukhayla, a suburb of Kufa, from where they had to march against the forces of Ibn Ziyad, the Umayyad governor who had been responsible for the massacre of Karbala upon the instructions of Yazid. Only 4,000 out of 16,000 enrolled members of Tawwabun assembled at Nukhayla, where their supporters from Madain and Basra yet not arrived. Meanwhile, another 1,000 out of 4,000 had left the field. Thus Suleman led the remaining 3,000 and marched to Karbala to the grave of Hussain, where they mourned. They then proceeded to the village of Qarqisiya, the fifth stage of Karbala, and ultimately reached Ayn al-Warda, and engaged the twenty thousand Umayyad horsemen fiercely, shouting: "Paradise! Paradise! for the Turabites." The battle lasted for three days, in which Suleman bin Surad was killed. Finally, Rifa bin Shaddad, advised the survivors to return, and brought them to Qarqisiya after getting defeat.

An exhaustive scrutiny of the earliest sources suggests that the small number of Tawwabun survived the battle of Ayn al-Warda, went over to Mukhtar and accepted Ibn al-Hanafiya as their Imam. This is confirmed even by Imam Muhammad Bakir in one of his traditions quoted by Kashi, who said: "After the death of Hussain, all the people apostatised except three, viz. Abu Khalid al-Kabuli, Yahya bin Umm at-Tiwal and Jubayr bin Mutim, and only later did other join them and their number increased." ("*Marifat Akhbar ar-Rijal*", p. 123) These Kufans, who formed the backbone of Mukhtar's movement, called themselves *Shiat al-Mahdi*, *Shiat al-Haqq* or *Shiat al-Muhammad*. Consequently, a sect emerged with the name of *Kaysaniya*. The power of Mukhtar soon ended by his being killed with the majority of his followers, Kaysaniyas. These sectarians, some of who lived as far away as Khorasan, continued to recognize Ibn al-Hanafiya as their Imam Mahdi, who died in 81/700, who believed in his concealment and return, while the majority accepted the eldest of his sons, Abu Hashim as the next Imam, who himself also claimed to have inherited the scrolls of his father.

The famous Umayyad poet, Kuthayyir bin Abd Rehman Azza (24-105/644-723) was first to propagate that Ibn al-Hanafiya was alive on the Mount Radhwah, that he was being guarded by a lion and a tiger, that he had two rich springs of water and honey, and that he would reappear to fill the world with justice, vide his "*Diwan*" (ed. by Ihsan Abbas, Beirut, 1971). Kashi also records a story about two men from the entourage of Imam Jafar Sadik, viz. as-Sarraj and Hammad bin Isa, who were known to believe that Ibn al-Hanafiya was still alive. Jafar Sadik reproached them and pointed out that Ibn al-Hanafiya was seen being buried, and his property had been divided and his widow had re-married. (Ibid)

Mukhtar Thaqafi

Mukhtar Thaqafi comes from a leading family of Thaqif of Banu Hawazin at Taif. His father, Abu Ubaida Thaqafi was the commander of the army during the invasion of Iran at the time of caliph Umar, and died in the battle of Marva in 13/634. Mukhtar was born in the first year of Hijra in Taif, 622 A.D. In his youth, spent in Medina after the death of his father. Mukhtar was known to be an Alid

sympathiser. Yet, according to Tabari (2nd vol., p.520) there is a story which depicts him as anti-Shiite, based on the advice he gave to his uncle, Sa'd bin Masud at the time when Hasan, the son of Ali bin Abu Talib, was carried wounded to the White Castle in Madain. The advice was that Hasan be handed over to Muawiya to win the latter's favour. His uncle refused this advice and cursed Mukhtar.

The first man to pay homage to Muslim bin Aqil in Kufa was Mukhtar, but the tradition relates that he was imprisoned by Ibn Ziyad during the event of Karbala. He appeared in Kufa as a revenger of Hussain's blood. His mission was the same as that of the Tawwabun (the penitents) insofar as the revenge of Hussain's blood, but differed in that he intended to achieve political authority through a more organised military power. Mukhtar, therefore, tried to persuade the Tawwabun not to take any hasty action and to join him for a better chance of success. The Tawwabun refused to join Mukhtar, as they had no wish to participate in any doubtful adventure. Mukhtar also tried to propagate in Kufa that Suleman bin Surad, the leader of the Tawwabun, did not know how to organise the military warfares, nor did he has any knowledge of diplomacy.

Mukhtar then turned to Zayn al-Abidin to seek his support to this effect. Baladhuri writes in **"Ansab al-Ashraf"** (5th vol., p. 272) that, "Mukhtar wrote to Zayn al-Abidin to show his loyalty to him, asking if he could rally the Kufans for him. He sent with the letter a large sum of money. Zayn al-Abidin refused this offer and declared Mukhtar publicly to be a liar who was trying to exploit the cause of Ahl-al-Bait for his own interests." Ibn Sa'd (5th vol., p. 213) also describes that Zayn al-Abidin had publicly denounced Mukhtar's mission. Mukhtar lost all hopes of winning Zayn al-Abidin, he then turned to Ibn al-Hanafiya, the third son of Ali from a Hanafite woman. On his part, Ibn al-Hanafiya did not repudiate Mukhtar's propaganda for his Imamate and Messianic role; he nevertheless, maintained a carefully non-committal attitude and never openly raised his claims to the heritage of Hussain. Baladhuri (5th vol., p. 218) writes that, "Ibn al-Hanafiya gave Mukhtar only a non-committal reply. He neither approved nor disapproved of Mukhtar's intention to avenge Hussain, and only warned him against bloodshed." In the event, however, the hesitation and political inactivity of Ibn al-Hanafiya emboldened Mukhtar more and more to exploit his name for his own interest.

Mukhtar propagated that Ibn al-Hanafiya was the Mahdi, and he himself was his minister (*vizir*) and commander (*amir*).

Abdullah bin Zubayr proclaimed his caliphate in 61/680 and established his power in Iraq, southern Arabia and in the greater part of Syria. When the Umayyad caliph Abdul Malik wished to stop the pilgrimages to Mecca because he was worried lest his rival Abdullah bin Zubayr should force the Syrians journeying to the holy places in Hijaz to pay him homage, he had recourse to the expedient of the doctrine of the vicarious *hajj* to the Qubbat al-Sakhra in Jerusalem. He decreed that the obligatory circumambulation (*tawaf*) could take place at the sacred place in Jerusalem with the same validity as that around the Kaba ordained in Islamic law. The famous theologian al-Zuhri was given the task of justifying this politically motivated reform of religious life by making up and spreading a saying traced back to the Prophet.

Abdullah bin Zubayr was at last killed in a battle against Hajjaj bin Yousuf in 73/692 after ruling for almost nine years. On the other hand, Mukhtar seized possession of Kufa in 56/686 and captured Mesopotamia and some parts of the eastern provinces from the Umayyads mainly in the name of the blood of Hussain. In Kufa, he continued his mission in the name of Ibn al-Hanafiya. Thus, the name of Ibn al-Hanafiya appeared for the first time four years later, when the Tawwabun were almost ready for the action. The Shiites of Kufa, especially the *mawali* among them, wanted an active movement which could relieve them from the oppressive rule of the Umayyads. They found an outlet only under the banner of Mukhtar, and saw a ray of hope in the Messianic role propagated by him for Ibn al-Hanafiya.

It must be pointed out here that the Shiites from Iran were not granted equal status by their Arab co-citizens in the social system of Kufa, and thus they were called *mawali* (sing. *mawla*) means "clients", a term to indicate inferior social standing, or second-class citizens. The expression *mawla* at the latest stage of its evolution means the people descended from foreign families whose ancestors, or even they themselves, on accepting Islam, have been adopted into an Arab tribe, either as freed slaves or free-born aliens. Juridically there were three classes of *mawali*: *mawla rahim* (blood relation), *mawla ataq* (freed man) and *mawla'l aqd* (free Arab who becomes

a member of a tribe to which he belongs neither by birth nor by previous affiliation as slave). 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 freed born but enslaved through capture in war; while the third type is the man who by compact or covenant voluntarily accepts the position of "client" to a "patron".

One week after Mukhtar's arrival in Kufa, Abdullah bin Zubayr sent Abdullah bin Yazid al-Khatmi as governor of Kufa. While, after the departure of Suleman bin Surad, Mukhtar's activities aroused the suspicions of the nobles of Kufa, who reported the new governor to warn him against the movement, saying that it was more dangerous that of Suleman bin Surad, for Mukhtar wanted to revolt against the governor in his own city. Mukhtar was hence imprisoned, where he remained until the return of the remnant of Suleman bin Surad's followers from the battle of Ayn al-Warda. He was however released only after the request of his brother-in-law, Abdullah bin Umar and other ten influential men, on the condition that he would not engage in any subversive activities against the governor of Kufa as long as he was in power. Abdullah bin Zubayr, considering the danger of Mukhtar and his movement, appointed a new governor for Kufa, Abdullah bin Muti in 65/685, and presumably ordered him to be more cautious and prudent than his predecessors. Meanwhile, Mukhtar became enough capable and began to prepare to seize Kufa in 66/685. He stationed near Dair Hind in the Sabkha, and his army contained about five hundred soldiers. To counter him, the governor sent Shabath bin Rabi al-Tamimi with three thousand soldiers to Sabkha, and Rashid bin Iyas with four thousand soldiers from Shurta. Mukhtar sent his nine hundred men in command of Ibrahim to meet Rashid, and three hundred men in command of Nuaim bin Hubaira against Shabath. In this battles, Mukhtar succeeded and captured Kufa. Nevertheless, the circumstances eventually changed when Abdullah bin Zubayr proclaimed himself caliph in 64/683, Ibn al-Hanafiya and Abdullah bin Abbas, with their followers, refused to pay him homage on the grounds that he had not yet been unanimously recognised as caliph. In 66/685, Abdullah bin Zubayr detained Ibn al-Hanafiya and his family and threatened them with death if they did not pay homage within a specified time. Ibn al-Hanafiya sent a letter to Mukhtar, apprising him of his perilous condition. Thus, Mukhtar marshalled out four thousand men

and managed to liberate to Ibn al-Hanafiya, who left Mecca for Taif. In 67/686, Mukhtar subdued Ibn Ziyad and killed him. He also hunted down the other murderers of Hussain and his followers, and slaughtered. At length, Kufa was brought under an incursion by Musab bin Zubayr with a huge army, in which Mukhtar was killed in Shawal, 67/April, 687.

Poet Farazdaq and Hisham

The most instrumental role in boosting the dignity of Zayn al-Abidin was played by a famous poet, Farazdaq (d. 112/730). He composed numerous verses to propagate the cause of Zayn al-Abidin, the most renowned of which was his encomium (*qasida*) in praise of the Imam. It was the season of pilgrimage when Hisham (d.125/743), the son of the Umayyad caliph Abdul Malik and Zayn al-Abidin were trying to reach the Black Stone in the crowded Kaba. The people gave way to the Imam with respect, but Hisham had to cut a way through the crowds. This deeply offended Hisham, and in a sarcastic manner he inquired who was the person to whom the people gave preference. Poet Farazdaq, present at the scene, upon hearing this remark, spontaneously composed his famous ode, and recited it, addressing to Hisham bin Abdul Malik, which begins as follows:-

This is he whose footprint is known to the valley of Mecca.

He whom the Kaba knows and the most frequented sanctuary.

This is the son of the best of all the servants of God.

This is the pious, the elect, the pure, the eminent.

This is Ali, whose father is the Prophet, and it was through the light of his guidance, that the darkened road changed into the straight path.

This is the son of Fatima, if you are ignorant of him; and with his great-grandfather the Prophethood came to an end.

Farazdaq, however, had to pay for his praise, and was imprisoned by the order of Hisham. When Zayn al-Abidin heard the misfortune of the poet, he sent him a gift of

12,000 dhirams, but Farazdaq refused to accept it, arguing that he had composed the poem purely from his religious zeal. Zayn al-Abidin, however, urged him to accept it for he could not take back what he had already given away.

Towards the end of his life in Medina, Zayn al-Abidin seems to have succeeded in gathering round himself a small group of his adherents. Among them, apart from Yahya bin Umm at-Tiwal and Muhammad bin Jubayr bin Mutim was also Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari, a famous companion of Muhammad, who took part in the pledge of Aqaba and in the oath of allegiance during the treaty of Hudaibia. Another important figure was the Kufan Sa'id bin Jubayr, a *mawla* of Banu Asad. The greatest Medinese jurist, Sa'id bin Musayyab regarded the Imam with highest esteem. Another great jurist, Az-Zuhri was also a great admirer and the honorific title **Zayn al-Abidin** (the ornament of the pious) was invested to the Imam by him.

Zayn al-Abidin died at the age of 57 years in 94/713. He lived 34 years after the event of Karbala. Ibn Hajar (d. 852/1449) in his "**Sawaik'l Muhriqah**" quotes a tradition from Ibn Ishaq that there were many men in Medina, who knew nothing who provided them rations secretly, but they knew all about after the death of Zayn al-Abidin, who used to say, "Secret alms-giving turns away divine wrath." He used to carry on his back at night time sacks, full of loaves of bread for the poor. The traces of carrying burden were discovered on his back when his dead body was being washed for burial.

Wives and children

Zayn al-Abidin had seven wives by which he had 11 sons and 4 daughters. His first wife was Fatima bint Hasan bin Ali, who gave birth of Muhammad al-Bakir. His other sons were Abdullah, Zaid, Umar, Hasan, Hussain Akbar, Hussain Asghar, Abdur Rahman, Suleman, Ali Jawad and Asghar. His daughters were Khadija, Fatima, Umm Kulsum and Aliya.

His collection of prayers is known as "**Sahifa-i Kamilah**" (the book of perfection), or also called "**Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya**" (the scroll of Sajjad). Its collection was made by his sons, Muhammad al-Bakir and Zaid. Out of 75 prayers, 11 were lost and 8 are considered as apothyphal

owing to anachronisms. In its present form, now consists of 71 prayers, and have been designed on the pattern of the Psalms of David containing 150 songs, and therefore, it is also named as "Psalms of Ahl-al-Bait." The prayers of "Sahifa" also contains the notion of astronomy, the cosmos, the secrets of navigations etc. Examining the 43rd prayer, which the Imam had invoked while looking at the new moon, we will find the theory of "rotation of moon", which reads as under:-

*O thou, the obedient, toiling quick creature, who
passeth through the fixed stages and moveth in
the appointed orbit I believe in Him, Who
illuminated with thee the darkness, and
enlightened by thee the ambiguities, and
instituted thee one of the signs of His
sovereignty, and one of the emblems of His
authority.*

Once an astrologer went to Zayn al-Abidin, when Imam told him: "I shall introduce you to a **person** whose journey, during the interval taken by you in coming to me, has extended to fourteen universes, of which each universe is three times as bigger as our earth, and all this has happened in spite of the fact that the **person** has not moved from his place." The astronomer thereupon asked: "Who is this personage?" Imam replied: "It is I. If you wish I can tell you what you ate today at home, and what lies in your house." In this tradition, however, those universes are referred to, every one of which is bigger than our earth, that is, of course nothing but our Solar System.

MUHAMMAD AL-BAKIR (94-114/713-733)

Abu Jafar Muhammad bin Ali, known as al-Bakir was born on 1st Rajab, 57/October 15, 677. He was about two years and half old during the event of Karbala, and assumed Imamate at the age of 37 years. He was noted for his generosity, devotion in piety and was peaceful by nature. He possessed extensive knowledge in religion matters, and because of that, according to Yaqubi, he was nicknamed **al-Bakir** (split open, or revealer of secret science), as it is

said, "*tabaqqara al-rajulu fi'l aw fi'l mal*" means "the man became abundant in knowledge" or "he enhanced himself in knowledge." But according to Ibn Khallikan (1211-1282), he was so called because he collected an ample treasure or fund (*tabaqqar*) of knowledge. Thus, he was also called *Baqir al-ulum* (opener of the knowledge). Many jurists attracted by the fame of his learning. Among them were Muhammad bin Minkadir, Abu Hanifah an-Noman, Qatada bin Dima, Abdullah bin Mu'awwar al-Laythi and Nafi bin Azraq etc.

The period of Muhammad al-Bakir is noted for the rule of the Umayyad caliph Sulayman (96-99/ 715-717), Umar bin Abdul Aziz (99-101/ 717-720), Yazid II (101-105/720-724) and Hisham (105-125/724-743). He did not take part in the politics and passed most part of life calmly in Medina.

Estate of Fadak and Umar bin Abdul Aziz

Fadak was a fertile tract in the vicinity of Khaibar under the Jewish occupation, just three miles from Medina, now the modern village of Howayt. After the victory of Khaibar, Prophet Muhammad thought to destroy the strength of the Jews of this area, who were threat to Islam, therefore, he sent his envoy, Muhit to Yusha bin Nun, the chief of the village Fadak. The chief of the Jews preferred peace and surrendered to fighting. A peace treaty was concluded between Muhammad and the local Jews on the terms that 50% yield of Fadak would be surrendered to Muhammad each year by the Jews. It was a gift, and not a booty of war, and according to Islam, the areas which are conquered through wars are the property of all the Muslims, and the lands which fall into the hands of the Muslims without any military operation pertain to the personal property. When the Koranic verse: "Give the kinsman his due, and the needy, and the wayfarer...." (17:26) was revealed, Muhammad called his daughter and made over Fadak to her. Suyuti writes in "*Dhurr'i Manthur*" (4th vol., p. 176) that, "Muhammad had bequeathed the ownership of the property of Fadak to his daughter, Fatima, and also executed a deed of gift in her favour, and her two sons."

When Abu Bakr assumed the caliphate, he forfeited Fadak from Fatima. When she was informed of the usurpation of Fadak, she appeared before him and produced a legal deed

of trust, and also produced the witnesses of Ali and Umm Aiman, which were totally disapproved by Abu Bakr. The confiscation of Fadak was perhaps one of the burning issues between the Shiites and Sunnites. The Umayyad caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz, the Marcus Aurelius of the Arabs, a virtuous ruler and a God-fearing Muslim, finally handed over the property of Fadak to Muhammad al-Bakir as the sole heir of Fatima.

Origin of the Zaidiyya

Like his father, Muhammad al-Bakir was politically quiescent and refrained from openly putting forward any claim. During his time, there was a rival claimant for the allegiance of the Shiites. This was his half-brother, Zaid, who advocated a more politically active role for the Imam and was prepared to accommodate to a certain extent the view-point of the majority of Muslims by acknowledging the caliphates of Abu Bakr and Umar.

Zaid had asserted a claim to the Imamate on the basis that it belonged to the descendant of Ali and Fatima, who must come forward publicly for his claims for Imamate and Caliphate. He believed that if an Imam wanted to be recognized, he had to claim his right with a sword in hand. Thus, the first Alid of the Hussainid line who rose against the Umayyads was Zaid.

The popularity of Zaid's movement overshadowed Muhammad al-Bakir's efforts to attacking only the friends and followers of Zaid. Nevertheless, he did not hesitate to contest Zaid's claim. However, al-Bakir and Zaid quarrelled over this point, for when the latter asserted that an Imam must rise against the oppressors, the former remarked: "So you deny that your own father was an Imam, for he never contested the issue." The disagreement between al-Bakir and Zaid had arisen when the latter incorporated the teachings of a Mutazilite, Wasil bin Ata. In the course of time, al-Bakir succeeded in winning back some of those who had gone over to Zaid. The most important of them were Zurara bin Ayan, his brother Humran, and Hamza bin Muhammad bin Abdullah at-Tayyar etc.

Zaid, by adhering to Wasil bin Ata and his doctrines, gained good support of the Mutazilites, and his acceptance of the legitimacy of the first two caliphs earned him the

full sympathy of the traditionist circles. Finally, Zaid's revolt against the Umayyads took place in Safar, 122/December, 740 when he came forward and summoned the people to espouse his cause. Zaid was warned by his brother, Muhammad bin Ali bin Hussain, not to put any reliance on the people of Kufa, but Zaid did not notice his brother's warning and led the Kufans in a vain rebellion. This occurred in the reign of caliph Hisham. Yousuf bin Umar Thaqafi, the governor of the two Iraks, dispatched Abbas al-Murri with an army against Zaid. He was struck by an arrow, and died of his wound. Zaid's son Yahya fled to Khorasan and led an uprising after three years. He too was overcome, and killed in 125/743 and met the same fate as his father. Later on, the Zaidiyya recognized no designation for the Imamate, nor any strict hereditary principle. Thus the movement of Zaid however ended in failure, paved the way for other claimants and offered ready ground for a more effective revolt.

Muhammad al-Bakir was the first to establish the start of legal school of Ahl-al-Bait in view of the prevalent milieu. Kashi records for us an important tradition in his "Rijal" (p. 289) that, "Before the Imamate of Muhammad al-Bakir, the Shias did not know what was lawful and what was unlawful, except what they learned from the people; until Abu Jafar (al-Bakir) became the Imam, and he taught them and explained to them the knowledge (of law), and they began to teach other people from whom they were previously learning." This tradition clearly indicates that until the time of Muhammad al-Bakir, there were hardly any differences in legal practices among the Shiites of Medina, Kufa and elsewhere. This was an earliest move in the formation of the Shiite jurisprudence.

Imam in Damascus

Ibn Taus related that once caliph Hisham bin Abdul Malik visited Mecca on pilgrimage. On that occasion, Muhammad al-Bakir and his son Jafar Sadik were in Kaba, where the latter delivered the following speech:-

"I thank God Who conferred the honour of Prophethood on Muhammad and made all of us august through him. We are therefore the chosen and

elected caliphs of God on earth. He who follows us is blessed. He who opposes us is unfortunate."

Hisham's brother communicated the words of the above speech to Hisham, who at that time remained silent. He returned to Damascus and wrote to his governor of Medina to send al-Bakir and his son. Thus, both father and son went to Damascus, where they had to wait for three days in the city, and were summoned at the court on fourth day. Hisham was sitting on his throne, and there was staged a platform for arrow shooting (*rami al-nushshab*) in the middle. Hisham asked al-Bakir to shoot arrows, but the latter wanted to be excused on the ground that he was too weak and incapable for it. When Hisham insisted repeatedly, al-Bakir took the arrow and bow and shot. It hit the bull's eye with the first arrow. He then shot another arrow at the first arrow's target, and process continued nine times one after another. Hisham exclaimed: "O' Abu Jafar! what a good shooting performance it is? I have never seen a perfect archer like you." Thereupon, a religious deliberation was held between al-Bakir and Hisham, and in the course of which the former quoted authorities from the Koran and the traditions, and the caliph was silenced. Both father and son at last retired in the court and took their way back to Medina.

Conversion of the Christian saint

After leaving Damascus, they saw a huge crowd on the way to Medina. On enquiring, it was known that a crowd of Christian priests and monks had assembled to have a glimpse of a great saint. When the saint's eyes fell on Muhammad al-Bakir, he asked him whether he was one of them or not. Imam replied that he belonged to the blessed nation of Prophet Muhammad. The saint asked him many questions, which were replied to him. Muhammad al-Bakir told him that, "The religion of Jesus Christ is true, but it is too old. While the religion of Muhammad is fresh. As the fresh food is essential for the body, so is the fresh religion for the soul." The tradition has it that it deeply impressed the saint, who is said to have embraced Islam.

Hatred of the people of Madain

Hisham had issued a public circular to his officials that none should host al-Bakir and his son on their way to Medina, as they were the magicians from the progeny of Abu Turab. When both of them reached Madain, about seven leagues below Baghdad, occupying both banks of the Tigris; they found the people full of hatred towards them. Both of them went from one end of the town to the other, but none showed them any courtesy or sold anything to them, and closed the doors in their face. Muhammad al-Bakir soon ascended the hillock near the town, and recited loudly the verses of the Koran (11:84-95), revealed in connection with Prophet Shu'aib, and declared, "O people, now we alone are the recipients of Divine Mercy on the face of the earth."

It must be known on this juncture that Shu'aib was among the descendant of Abraham, who was deputed by God to guide the people of Madain and Alikah. Besides the other vices, the people were notorious in two things, in which every one of them was involved. Firstly, they were professional highway robbers. Secondly, they used to take more while measuring and gave less to the wayfarers. Shu'aib preached amendments to their evil habits and wickedness in character, but of no avail. The whole habitation was finally ruined by death and destruction.

The people of the town went up to their house-tops and listened the words of Muhammad al-Bakir. One of them was an old man, who shouted, "Beware of the Divine wrath. This man is standing at a place, where Shu'aib stood and cursed the people, and were chastised by God." The people were much afraid and opened their doors and apologized for their mistake.

Beginning of Islamic coinage

Caliph Abdul Malik is credited to have regulated monetary system in Islamic states. By putting together the evidence from a variety of sources, one sees that an attempt had already been made during the caliphate of Ali bin Abu Talib to start the Islamic coins, which could not be continued due to the then political cataclysm in the Islamic state. Maurice Lombard writes in **"The Golden Age of Islam"** (Netherlands, 1975, p. 110) that, "The Caliph Ali was the first to attempt a reform, at Basra in 660, by

introducing a Muslim *dhiram* with the inscriptions in Kufic script, but this attempt failed. Forty years later it was again introduced and this time it succeeded."

The Roman gold dinar and the Iranian silver dhiram had been in circulation in the Arabian regions. One dinar weighed 4.25 grams, inscribed with the Christian symbol of cross; while a dhiram weighed 1.40 grams. The Muslim kingdoms had no currency for their own, and were entirely dependent on the foreign currency for their transactions. Abdul Malik was perplexed by the situation and called for a meeting of the grand consultative assembly, in which Muhammad al-Bakir was also invited. The proposal for minting Islamic coins had been accepted in the meeting, but when the question of its inscription arose, al-Bakir recommended for the Islamic legends on both sides of the coin, which had been also approved. Thus, the first Islamic coin was struck in 76/695 in the mint installed at Damascus. The gold coin was dinar, the silver coin called dhiram, and the copper coin was named fals. These bore Islamic inscriptions, and were standardized both in weight and metal.

Survey of the persecutions

It is said that al-Bakir summed up the persecutions since the demise of Prophet Muhammad to his period in these words: "Since the death of the Prophet, the Ahl-al-Bait have continued being humiliated, inflicted with pains, maltreated, put under trials, deprived of their rights, murdered, frightened. We did not find any security for our own blood and for our friends. The liars and deniers of our rights found a good pretext for their lies in order to be in the good books of their masters and bad judges and governors in every town. They told them fabricated traditions and reported of us those things which we never said nor had we done, in order to instigate people against us. The reign of Muawiya after the death of Hasan was prime period for such activities. In every town, our friends were killed; their hands and feet were amputated on mere doubt. Whoever mentioned our names with love was imprisoned, his property confiscated and his house pulled down. These calamities got severer and increased during the rule of Ubaidullah bin Ziyad, the murderer of Hussain. Then came Hjjaj. He killed them in cold blood and arrested them on doubt. So much so that the man who

declared a pagan or *kafir* was dearer to him than the one who called himself a friend of Ali." (*"Ad-Darajat-ur-Rafiah fi Tabaqatil Imamiya min Shiah"* by Sayed Ali Khan, cf. *"Shiite Encyclopaedia"* by Hassan al-Amin, 1st vol., p. 29).

Imam's reply to Hisham's question

In 106/725, caliph Hisham visited Mecca on pilgrimage when Muhammad al-Bakir was also in the city. Hisham found al-Bakir sitting among his followers, therefore, he sent one amazing question in the presence of al-Bakir, so that he might not give its answer and become discredited before his followers. Hisham's question was "What will the people eat and drink on the day of judgement, till the time their reckoning is finished?" Imam replied that, "There will be abundance of fruits and rivers on that place, from which they shall continue to avail till such time as their reckoning is finished." Hisham had intended thereby to bring censure on al-Bakir in the open assembly. He was mighty gratified at this answer, thinking that it would provide him with an excuse for his designs. He therefore sent a counter-question that, "Due to the fear of their accounts, how it is possible that the people will have the sense of eating." Imam said, "Go, and tell to Hisham that the sense of eating and drinking will be also among those people, who had been already cast into the hell. Does Hisham not read the Koranic verse, in which it is mentioned that, "And shall call the inmates of the (hell) fire unto the inmates of the garden (of paradise), saying: Pour on us of the water or of what God hath provided you with; They shall say: Verily, God hath forbidden both to the infidels." (7:50) On hearing this, Hisham was dumb founded and in his mind he had to admit the merits of al-Bakir.

Al-Bakir articulated the implication of the doctrine of *taqiya* in Shiism, and we may attribute the rudiments of its theory to him. But it was left to his son and successor, Jafar Sadik to give it a final form and make it an absolute condition of the faith.

Many leading jurists used to visit al-Bakir to discuss the legal problems. Among them were Muhammad bin Minkadir, Abu Hanifah an-Noman, Qatada bin Diama, Abdullah bin Mu'ammir and al-Laythi etc. He greatly emphasised also on the

importance of knowledge and its promotion. Kulaini quotes in **"al-Kafi"** (1st vol., p. 89 and 104) that he said, "Acquire knowledge and adorn it with forbearance and reverence. Be humble to those whom you give knowledge and also to those from whom you acquired it. Never be among the harsh tempered scholars. Lest you should forfeit your title because of your wrong and harsh demeanour." He also said, "The divine tax on knowledge is to teach it to God's creatures."

Mirkhwand (d. 903/1498) writes in **"Rawzatus Safa"** that, "Neither the pen can write, nor the tongue can describe the merits and the traditions of al-Bakir." Shibli Nomani writes in **"Sirat-i Numan"** (Lahore, 1972, p. 28) that, "Abu Hanifah sat for a long time at Imam Baqir's feet and acquired from him much valuable knowledge of fiqh and hadith not available anywhere else. Shiahs and Sunnis are agreed that Abu Hanifah derived much of his learning from Baqir."

Muhammad al-Bakir died in 117/735, and was buried in the Baqi cemetery near his father's grave.

Wives and children

Muhammad al-Bakir had four wives, the first being Umm Farwa bint Kassim bin Muhammad bin Abu Bakr, who gave birth of Jafar Sadik and Abdullah al-Fatah. The second wife, Umm Hakeem bint Asad bin Mughira Thaqafi had two sons, Ibrahim and Abdullah. The third wife was Layla, who gave birth of Ali and Zainab. While Umm Salma was the daughter being born by the fourth wife.

Ibn Hajar writes in his **"Sawaik'l Muhriqa"** (p. 120) that, "Imam Muhammad Bakir has disclosed the secrets of knowledge and wisdom and unfolded the principles of spiritual and religious guidance. Nobody can deny his exalted character, his God-given knowledge, his divinely-gifted wisdom and his obligation and gratitude towards spreading of knowledge. He was a sacred and highly talented spiritual leader and for this reason he was popularly titled **al-Bakir** which means **the expounder of knowledge**. Kind of heart, spotless in character, sacred by soul and noble by nature, the Imam devoted all his time in submission to God. It is beyond the power of a man to

count the deep impression of knowledge and guidance left by the Imam on the hearts of the faithfuls. His sayings in devotion and abstinence, in knowledge and wisdom and in religious exercise and submission to God are so great in number that the volume of this book is quite insufficient to cover them all."

Much has been recorded about Muhammad al-Bakir's person and extraordinary qualities. Once he said, "The height of perfection is excellence in the understanding of the religion" and "The scholar who derives benefit from his knowledge is better than seventy thousand devotees." He strove to impress people by his extensive knowledge on religion as well as science. Himself a student of science had once said: "Air contains a combustible energy, and if it is isolated, and comes in our hand in its purest form; it will cause a big combustible energy that can even melt away an iron." Firstly, he indicates an existence of oxygen in air, which constitutes approximately 20% of the atmosphere. Oxygen was first isolated by a clergyman and chemist, Joseph Priestly (1733-1804) in 1774, and independently by Karl Scheele (1742-1786) at about the same period, and it was recognised as **fire-air** to be the promoter of combustion. But Lavoisier (1743-1794), a French chemist was the first to demonstrate the true nature of combustion as an oxidation reaction and to give oxygen its modern name. Secondly, Muhammad al-Bakir indicates its power to melt an iron. There are some 40 variants of melting an iron. The oxy-acetylene Gas is a dominant process for welding and melting an iron, and therefore, the oxyacetylene torch was invented in 1901 by Edmund Fouché.

JAFAR SADIK (114-148/733-765)

Abu Abdullah Jafar bin Muhammad was born, according to Yaqubi (2nd vol., p. 381) in 80/699 at Medina. Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., p. 327) and others also determine his birth from the event of **Ann al-Juhaf** (the year of the flood) in Mecca, which according to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 320) occurred in 80/699.

According to the Arabic lexicon, **jafar** means "stream". His father had referred to him "the best of all mankind" and "one in charge of the family of Muhammad" (**qaim al-**

Muhammad). He is also known by the titles of **al-Sadik** (trustworthy), **al-Sabir** (patient), **al-Tahir** (pure one) and **al-Fazil** (excellent one).

For the first 14 years of his life, he was brought up under the care of his grandfather, Zayn al-Abidin. He observed the latter's acts of clarity, his love for long series of prostrations and prayers as well as the withdrawal from politics. He spent 23 years under his father, and assumed the Imamate at the age of 34 years.

His fame for religious learning was great. According to Yaqubi, it was customary for scholars, who related anything from Jafar Sadik, used to say: "**the Learned One informed us**". Even Malik bin Anas (d. 179/795), the famous jurist of Medina, is reported to have said when quoting Jafar Sadik's traditions: "The **thiqa** (truthful) Jafar bin Muhammad himself told me that ..." Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767) is also reported to have been Imam's pupil for two years. Shibli Nomanî writes in "**Sirat-i Numan**" (pp. 28-29) that, "Abu Hanifah learned a great deal from Imam Baqir's son, Jafar Sadik also, which fact is generally mentioned in the history books. Ibn Taimiyyah, however, denies this on the ground that Abu Hanifah and Jafar Sadiq were contemporaries and equals, which ruled out the probability of the former being the latter's pupil. But I consider this sheer impudence and lack of comprehension on Ibn Taimiyyah's part. For all his greatness as an original thinker and master of fiqah, Abu Hanifah could not compare in learning with Imam Jafar Sadiq. The Ahl-al-Bait were the fountain-head of Hadith and fiqah and, in fact, all religious learning. **'The master of the house knows best what is in it'**, to quote a well-known Arabic saying." Abu Hanifah also attended many lectures of Jafar Sadik. In spite of many differences of opinion with the Imam, he was deeply influenced by him. Donaldson goes even beyond saying that he was one of Jafar Sadik's pupils, vide "**The Shiite Religion**" (London, 1933, p. 132)

The house of Jafar Sadik in Medina took a real shape of a regular academy, where a galaxy of talented scholars of jurisprudence, traditions, philosophy, exegesis and theology attended the studies. It was perhaps the first academy in Islam in respect of Islamic ideology which Jafar Sadiq founded in Medina. The concourse of the varied

minds in Medina gave an impetus to the cultivation of science and literature, where a stream of unusual intellectual activity flowed towards other Islamic states, and soon led to the growth of philosophical tendencies among the Muslims.

The period of Jafar Sadik saw the most crucial time of Islamic history, both in political and religious spheres. We will cast a rapid glance at the political upheavals of the period under review. Jafar Sadik witnessed 3 years of the rule of Abdul Malik, the Umayyad ruler, 9 years and 8 months of Walid bin Abdul Malik, 3 years and 3 months of Suleman, 2 years and 5 months of Umar bin Abdul Aziz, 4 years and 1 month of Yazid bin Abdul Malik, 10 years of Hisham bin Abdul Malik, 1 year of Walid bin Yazid and 6 months of Yazid bin Walid; till finally the empire of the Umayyads ended in 132/750 by the Abbasids. It implies that the period of Jafar Sadik may be said to consist of two parts. During the first part, while the Umayyads were in power, the Imam was engaged in teaching quietly at home in Medina. During the second part, the Abbasids were in power after the fall of the Umayyads of Damascus in 132/750. The Umayyad empire was overthrown by the huge upheaval lead by Abu Muslim Khorasani, and the Abbasid caliphate came into existence with Abul Abbas as-Saffah as the first caliph. Hence, Jafar Sadik also witnessed the rule of as-Saffah (132-136/750-754) and Mansur (136-158/754-775). In sum, Jafar Sadik absolutely remained away from political arena.

The origin of the Kaysaniyas

Heretofore, we have examined that Mukhtar Thaqafi appeared in Kufa as a revenger of Hussain's blood after the event of Karbala. He failed to win support from Imam Zayn al-Abidin in his movement. He then turned to Ibn al-Hanafiya, whom he declared as an Imam and a promised Mahdi. Ibn al-Hanafiya did not repudiate Mukhtar's propaganda, and maintained a non-committal attitude, but his name became slogans for Mukhtar to gain public supports. Mukhtar was killed in 67/687, and the death of Ibn al-Hanafiya also took place in 81/700. Abu Hashim, the eldest son of Ibn al-Hanafiya however continued the mission originated by Mukhtar, and his followers then became known as **Kaysaniyas**. Various explanations are given to this name, but the **Kaysan** in question was almost certainly the man

with the *kunya* Abu Amra, who was the most distinguished of the *mawali* supporting Mukhtar. The name was widely given to men of Alid sympathies during the later part of the Umayyad rule and was presumably a pejorative nickname first applied by opponents in order to discredit the group. Abu Hashim was poisoned by the Umayyad caliph Hisham, but before his death in 98/718, he quickly rushed to Humayma, and bequeathed his right to the caliphate and charge of the Kaysaniya sect to Muhammad bin Ali as he had no son.

The origin of the Abbasids

Abbas, the uncle of Holy Prophet had a son, Abdullah, who never tried to establish his own caliphate. Abdullah and his son, Ali bin Abdullah resided in Humayma. It was the latter's son, Muhammad bin Ali to have taken the charge of Kaysaniya sect from the dying Abu Hashim. Thus, the house of Abbas inherited the party and organisation of Abu Hashim along with his claims. Muhammad bin Ali led the Kaysaniya sect, and propagated in the name of Ahl-al-Bait, declaring that the caliph should be from Alid descent and the Umayyads had no right to rule. It was mere an ostensible slogan to procure wide supports of the Alids and nourish future political ambition. Muhammad bin Ali died before attaining his objective and handed on his claims to his son, Ibrahim. He began to dispatch emissaries, starting with Khorasan, where the bulk of the Kaysaniya faction resided.

In the meantime, the newly acclaimed Umayyad caliph Marwan sought to strike at the centre of the whole movement by arresting Ibrahim. He is said to have strangled him as Yaqubi writes, by having his head put into a bag of lime until he died. But Ibrahim had two brothers, Abul Abbas and Abu Jafar Mansur, both of whom escaped to Khorasan. And very soon these two brothers returned, supported by Abu Muslim's victorious troops, to lead the insurgents in their final struggle in the West. Their way had been prepared for them in Kufa by propaganda that had been carried on for more than twelve years.

Abu Salama's offer

In Kufa, the local representative Abu Salama Hafs, the Kaysaniyan follower of Abu Hashim, known as *Wazir-i Al-i Muhammad* was very popular figure. Tabari (3rd vol., p. 27) writes that, "When the news of the death of Ibrahim reached Kufa, Abu Salama on the suggestion and advice of some other Shias of Kufa, intended to establish the Imamate of Alids." Accordingly, he wrote letters to Imam Jafar Sadik, Abdullah al-Mahd and Umar bin Ali Zayn al-Abidin, asking each one of them in turn to come to Kufa in person and he would support their claims of Imamate. The messenger was instructed first to contact Jafar Sadik, and only if he refused, then to go to Abdullah al-Mahd, and in case of his refusal, to Umar bin Ali Zayn al-Abidin. When the messenger presented the letter first to Jafar Sadik, the latter called for a lamp, burned the letter and said to the messenger, "Tell your master what you have seen" (vide Ibn Tigtaga's *"al-Fakhri fi'l Adab as-Sultaniya"*, Cairo, 1966, p. 109). The messenger then came to Abdullah al-Mahd, who readily accepted the offer.

Foundation of the Abbasid Caliphate

Meanwhile, things took a reverse turn for the Abbasid family. The army commanded by Abul Abbas and Abu Jafar Mansur, had come from Khorasan to Kufa, where they found the city decorated in black, the accepted colour of the Abbasids, and the people who crowded to the mosque also wore black clothes and black turbans with black banners planted in hands. Abu Salama led the prayers, after which he announced that Abu Muslim had now made it possible for the world of Islam to shake itself free from the Umayyads, and declared that it was to this end that he called upon them to recognize Abul Abbas, the brother of the murdered Ibrahim, as their rightful Imam and Caliph. Abul Abbas mounted the pulpit and made his inaugural speech, in which he named himself as *as-Saffah* (blood-shedder) and "identified the glory of God with his own interest and those of his house. He named the Abbasids as the Ahl-al-Bait from whom uncleanness was removed, and denied that the Alids were more worthy of the caliphate." (vide Tabari, 3rd vol., p. 29). His speech was followed by a speech from his uncle, Daud bin Ali, who also emphasized that the rights of the Abbasids were legally inherited and

there were but two legal caliphs in Islam: Ali bin Abu Talib and Abbas as-Saffah. He added that the caliphate would remain in the hands of the Abbasids until they passed it over to Isa bin Marium. (vide **Tabari**, 3rd vol., p. 31; **Yaqubi**, 2nd vol., p. 350 and **Masudi**, 3rd vol., p. 256). The excited crowd expressed their approval and gave their allegiance to Abul Abbas as the first caliph of the Abbasid caliphate in 132/750.

Fall of the Umayyads

Marwan, the Umayyad caliph was at that time advancing towards Kufa with a huge army. He encountered the army from Khorasan at a point on the greater Zab river, and the battle of Zab lasted for two days. It was closely contested struggle, and the day was turned when Marwan's horse ran away without its rider. He managed to escape, but was eventually discovered and killed.

So fell the last of the Umayyads in 132/750. The total duration of the Umayyad rule till the time when Abul Abbas assumed the power of the Abbasid rule was 90 years, 11 months and 13 days.

The risings of the Alids

The Alids were totally disappointed while seeing the Abbasids taking power in the name of Ahl-al-Bait. The first task before Abbas as-Saffah therefore was to break the alliance with the Alids who were yet strong and could be dangerous. During his short rule of less than four years, he was kept fully occupied in meeting numerous insurrections and in ruthlessly killing those Alids who were suspected. The first to pay his life was Abu Salama. Abul Abbas died in 136/754, during which period, the Alids in Medina, disorganized by the frustration of their hopes, kept quiet. But when Abu Jafar Mansur, the brother of Abul Abbas as-Saffah assumed the caliphate, the Alids embittered by the usurpation of their rights by the house of Abbas, began to voice their complaints. An-Nafs az-Zakiyya, the son of Abdullah al-Mahd openly refused to take oath of allegiance to Mansur. The traditionalists circle of Medina supported him and upheld his cause. According to **Tabari** (3rd. vol., p. 200), "Malik bin Anas

declared that the oath sworn to the Abbasids was no longer binding as it had been taken under compulsion."

Soon afterwards in 137/755, Abu Muslim was lured to Iraq and murdered. In 141/758, Mansur massacred a group of the Rawandiyya who besieged his palace. Caliph Mansur thus had to face the most threatening opposition from the Alids to the newly established authority of his house. He firstly concentrated his efforts on two basic points. The first was to justify the rights of his house on religious ground. The second was to gain for his caliphate the acceptance of the Muslims. The sources agree to mention that caliph Mansur also persecuted Imam Jafar Sadik many times, but the latter retained his equanimity.

The Abbasids had also adopted a very cruel policy towards the Umayyads, and many members of the family were ruthlessly executed. Some Umayyads, however, escaped and sought refuge among the nomadic tribes, one of them being Abdur Rehman (138-173/756-788), the grandson of Hisham. He escaped to Rah, near Euphrates, where he began to prepare for the long journey to Africa, where few other Umayyad princes had already taken refuge. On 1st Shawal, 138/March 8, 756, he entered Archidona, the capital of Regio, where he was declared an **amir**. Hence, he became the king of the Umayyads in the southern districts of Spain.

Returning to the thread of our main narratives, it is recounted that Jafar Sadik died in 148/765 in Medina after the Imamate of 34 years and 7 months. Upon his death the Imamate devolved upon his elder son, Ismail.

Wives and children

Jafar Sadik had seven sons and four daughters. His first wife was Fatima. For the first 25 years he had only two sons by his first wife, Ismail and Abdullah and a daughter Umm Farwa. His second wife was Hamida, the mother of Musa Kazim and Muhammad. Besides, Abbas, Ali, Asma and Fatima were also the children of Jafar Sadik.

The butchery of Karbala and the sack of Medina had almost led to the closing of the lecture-room of the Imams in Medina. With the appearance of Jafar Sadik as the head of Muhammad's descendants, it acquired a new lease of life.

Abu Amr Muhammad al-Kashani writes in "**Marifat Akhbar ar-rifal**" (p. 249) that once Jafar Sadik was pointed out by his disciples for wearing fine apparel, a variant of clothes from Marw, while his ancestors had worn rude and simple garments. He replied that his ancestors had lived in a time of scarcity, while he lived in a time of plenty, and that it was proper to wear the clothing of one's own time.

Extremely liberal and rationalistic in his teachings, Jafar Sadik was also a scholar, a poet, and a philosopher, well grounded in some of the foreign languages; he impressed a distinct philosophical character on the Medinite school. W. Ivanow (1886-1970) writes in "**Ismailis and Qarmatians**" (JBBRAS, Bombay, 1940, p. 54) that, "Jafar Sadik chiefly emphasized the tendency of moderation and sobriety in religious beliefs, i.e., exactly the qualities which strike us so much in early Ismailism."

Jabir bin Hayyan

And Jafar Sadik was a scientist besides. We cannot but invite attention to a fact that Jabir bin Hayyan (103/721-200/815), known as *Geber*, the father of modern chemistry, worked with the materials gathered by Jafar Sadik in Medina, who referred to his Lord in his writings as "**My Master**" and "**A mine of wisdom.**" The intellectuals in Renaissance in Europe greatly took benefits from the treatises of Jabir bin Hayyan, and these were translated into Latin, German, French and English. He is world-famed as the father of **Arabic Alchemy**. The word *al-kimiya* is usually said to be derived from the Egyptian *kam-it* or *kem-it* (the black), or some have thought, from the Greek *chyma* (molten metal).

According to "**The Cultural Atlas of Islam**" (New York, 1986, p. 328) by Ismail al-Faruqi and Lois al-Faruqi that, "In response to Jafar al-Sadik's wishes, he invented a kind of paper that resisted fire, and an ink that could be read at night. He invented an additive which, when applied to an iron surface, inhabited rust and when applied to a textile, would make it water repellent." Jabir bin Hayyan defined chemical combination as union of the elements together in small particles too small for the naked eyes to see without loss of their character, as John Dalton

(1766-1844), the English chemist and physicist was to discover ten centuries later. He was however first to describe the processes of calcination and reduction, improved the methods of evaporation, sublimation, melting and crystallisation; prepared acetic acid, sulphuric acid, nitric acid and the mixture of the last two, in which gold and silver could be dissolved; discovered several chemical compounds, and separated antimony and arsenic from the sulphides.

One of the renowned titles of Jafar Sadik was **kashiful haqiq** means "one who reveals mysteries", and also **muhagiq** means "researcher." The reason for investing him such titles was that he had disclosed many wonderful scientific theories then unknown to the Arab world. For instance, it is related that once Jafar Sadik said: "God has created a planet with cold water on the seventh heaven, and other six planets have been created with hot water." This is an explicit discovery of a planet, called **Pluto**. Clyde Tombaugh however discovered it photographically on January 21, 1930 at the Lowell Observatory in Arizona. The word **seventh heaven** signifies the **most distant** planet in the solar system, as its distance is 3.67 billion miles (5.9 billion km.) from the sun. Being remote in distance, the rays of the sun reach very mild, resulting the temperature as low as 360 degree F (or -218 degree C), and thus it remains frozen. On account of its coldness, Jafar Sadik expounded the creation of Pluto with cold water. He was therefore the first to report the very existence of Pluto.

In Arabic astronomy, **kawakib** is the general term for the luminous heavenly bodies, and thus the word **al-kawakib al-sayyarah** means "the planets as opposed the stars" or it is known as **al-kawakib al-thabitah**. Only five planets (**kawakib**) were known to the Arabs in pre-Islamic period, known as **al-kawakib al-khamisa** or **al-mutahayyira**. When the Greek science had been translated (between 133/750 and 287/900) in the Arabian peninsula in the time of Jafar Sadik, the Arabian astrologers accepted the theory of six planets by adding **zuhul** (Saturn) in their study. Thus, the three planets below the sphere of the sun were known as "the lower planets" (**al-kawakib al-sufliyah**) viz. Venus (**zuhrah**), Mercury (**utairid**) and the Moon (**qamar**). While the other three planets beyond the sphere of the sun were called "the high planets" (**al-kawakib al-ulwiyah**) viz.

Saturn (*zuhul*), Jupiter (*mushtari*) and Mars (*marikh*). The credit therefore, for reporting the existence of Pluto for the first time goes to Jafar Sadik when the instrument observing the heavenly bodies was not then invented.

There is also another astronomical discovery by Jafar Sadik, who once asked a Syrian astrologer, "How much is the light of *sukainah* less than that of Venus (*zuhrah*)?" The astrologer said, "I swear upon God that I never heard until today even the name of this planet." This tradition most unambiguously indicates the very existence of one another planet which was also unknown then, but it had been discovered with the help of telescope by the English astronomer, William Herschel in 1781, known as *Uranus*. The Arabic word *sukainah* is derived from *sukun* means "rest", and how appropriate a name it is for Uranus, which would appear from the slow and restful way in which it completes its revolution round the sun, and as a result it is called a "fainter planet". Jafar Sadik spoke in the same breath of two such different planets as Venus and Uranus, the former being bright and rapid, and the latter a very faint, slow moving orb.

Jafar Sadik is said to have propounded few other important scientific theories in his discourses. For instance, he once said: "The visual rays of an object enter in our eyes, whose only one part flashes in our eyes, resulting our inability to perceive an object so easy which is far from us. The rays of an object lying at a distance can be totally entered in our eyes and we can see it very closely, provided an instrument is invented, through which the rays of a farthest object can enter in the eyes, and then the camels in the desert, grazing at a distance of 3000 yards, will be seen at a distance of 60 yards. It means that the grazing camels will be seen 50 times nearer." This is perhaps the first correction of the theories of "sight rays" as expounded by Euclid (330-226 B.C.) and Ptolemy (9-168 A.D.), which were supposed to radiate out of eyes onto object. Later on, the theory of Jafar Sadik had been accepted after many experiments by the renowned scientist of Fatimids period, called Ibn al-Haytham (354-429/965-1039), known as *Alhazen*. His acclaimed treatise on optics, namely "*Kitab al-Manazir*" was translated into Latin under the title "*Opticae Thesaurus Alhazeni*" in 1270 by Witelo. Afterwards, it was published by Frederick Risner at Basel in 1572. According

to Ibn al-Haytham, "It is not a ray leaving the eyes that causes sight! It is far more the form of the perceived object that radiates onto the eye and is converted by its transparent body."

Jafar Sadik further recommended for an invention of an instrument to watch an object of a remote distance 50 times nearer. Hence, the European scientist, Roger Bacon (1220-1292) had also proposed for such instrument, bringing an object 50 times near to our sight. Later on, the Italian scientist Gailileo (1564-1642) was destined to invent the suggestive instrument, that is, **telescope** in 1610; whose functions absolutely based on the theory of Jafar Sadik, bringing an object visible 50 times closer to its actual distance.



ISMAIL BIN JAFAR SADIK (148-158/765-775)

Abu Muhammad Ismail, surnamed al-Wafi was born in Medina between 100/719 and 103/722. Ismail (Listening by God) is also known as an absolute Lord (*az-azbab-i itlaq*). He was born by the first wife of Jafar Sadik, named Fatima. According to "*Sharhu'l Akhbar*" (comp. 350/960), the mother of Ismail was Fatima bint Hasan bin al-Hussain bin Ali, but Ahmad Inaba (d. 825/1422) writes in "*Umadatu't-talib*" that she was Fatima bint al-Hussain al-Athram bin al-Hasan bin Ali. Shahrastani (1076-1153) writes in his "*Kitab al-milal wa'l nihai*" that during the lifetime of Fatima, Jafar Sadik never got another marriage like Muhammad with Khadija and Ali with Fatima.

Hatim bin Imran bin Zuhra (d. 498/1104) writes in "*al-Usul wa'l Ahkam*" that, "Ismail was the most perfect, the most learned and the most excellent of the sons of Jafar as-Sadik." He is also reported to have well steeped in the esoteric interpretation of the Koran.

Ismail was declared many times by his father as his successor, and said on an occasion, while Ismail was present, according to "*Asraru'n-Nutaqa*" (comp. 380/990) that "He is the Imam after me, and what you learn from him is just the same as if you have learnt it from myself." It is also related that when the health of Imam Jafar Sadik became impaired, he summoned the most trusted amongst his followers, and those members of his family who were alive, and did what his predecessors had done, i.e., he handed over the authority of Imamate to Ismail. It must be known that the most trusted followers of Imam Jafar Sadik had supported Ismail, notably Abu Hamza Thabit bin Abu Sufiyya Dinar as-Samali (d. 150/767), a *mawla* (freed slave) from Kufa. Jafar Sadik is reported to have said that Abu Hamza was in his time like Salman al-Farasi in his own time (*Abu Hamza fi zamani'hi mithl Salman fi zamani'hi*).

The early biography of Ismail is not traceable except few fragmented records. Our authority "*Asraru'n-Nutaqa*" adds, "When Ismail completed 7 years of age, the Lord of

religion (Jafar Sadik) declared him the master of religion and his heir-apparent, as his next in descent. He guarded him from his other sons, kept him away from the contact with the public, and his education went on under his own supervision." According to **"Marifat Akhbari'r-Rijal"** (comp. after 280/890) that in the absence of his father from Medina, Ismail acted on behalf of his father as the head of family. It is also narrated in **"Uyun'l-Akhbar"** (comp. 842/1438) that Mualli bin Khunyas, a wealthy Iranian and a famous narrator was killed and his property was confiscated by the order of the Abbasid governor of Medina, Daud bin Ali. Masudi (d. 346/958) also asserts in his **"Kitab al-Tanbih wal Ishraf"** (ed. de Goeji, Leiden, 1894, p. 329) that Daud bin Ali had killed many persons by order of Abul Abbas, the first Abbasid caliph and the number of victims was about eighty persons. While in the matter of Mualli bin Khunyas, however, Jafar Sadik was absent from Medina, therefore, the dispute was solved by Ismail in the year 133/751.

The Abbasid caliphate founded in 132/750 by uprooting the Umayyads. They were the bitterest foes of the Alids, and did everything to stamp out their propaganda. They had gained power by the Alids support, and started sweeping their accessible ashes. Mansur, the second Abbasid caliph, according to Tabari (d. 310/922) in **"Tarikh al-Rusul wa'l Muluk"** (ed. de Goeje, Leiden, 1879-1901, 3rd vol., p 426), spread news everywhere that the Abbasids were the Ahl-al-Bait and minted many fabricated Hadiths for his cause. He said of himself, **"Innama an sultan Allah fi ardihi"** i.e., "Verily! I am the authority of God on earth." He also claimed that "the rule is God's shadow on earth, all those troubled find refuge in it" (**al-sultanu zillu'llahi fi'l ardi ya'wi ilayhi kullu malhufin**).

Ibn Jawzi (d. 597/1200) writes in **"Sifat al-Safwa"** that, "Jafar Sadik was quite aloof altogether from the state affairs because of his pre-occupation with devotional observances." He was however marked by caliph Mansur as one of his opponents. This time the Abbasids had firmly determined to expunge the Alids from the state, and were bent upon an utter annihilation of the institution of Imamate with the death of Jafar Sadik, pitching deadly opposition to them. Under such policies, Mansur was closely watching to know the name of the successor of Jafar Sadik to motivate his objective. He tried to harass

the Imam through various means. Ibn Jawzi writes in "*Sifat al-Safwa*" (2nd vol., p. 96) that Mansur was also worried about the *khums* which used to be paid as a religious dues to Jafar Sadik by his followers and had asked many questions to the Imam on the matter when he visited Medina in 147/764.

In 141/758, caliph Mansur appointed Ahd al-Jabbar al-Azadi as the governor of Khorasan with an order to watch Alid activities as well as the followers of Jafar Sadik. Riyah bin Uthman al-Murri, the Abbasid governor in Medina from 144/761 at first attempt, burnt the house of Ahl-al-Bait. Even Ismail was decided to be killed being an expected successor of Jafar Sadik. Ahmad bin Ali Najashi (d. 450/1058) writes in his "*Kitab al-Rijal*" (Bombay, 1917, pp. 81-2) that once caliph Mansur summoned Jafar Sadik and his son Ismail to Iraq, where he found no chance to kill them, and thus their lives were spared, but only Bassam bin Abdullah al-Sayrafi was executed instead. Muhammad Hussain al-Muzzafari quotes Jafar Sadik as saying in his "*al-Sadik*" (2nd vol., p. 119) that, "Ismail was planned two times for killing, but I prayed for his life, and God protected him."

The succession issue of Jafar Sadik has become a mystery in the extant traces. We are faced with fact as with legend and myth; conjecture and hypothesis; the passions and prejudice of the historians. Committed in the heat of strife and argument by the early Shiite authors, they were continuously repeated by those who followed them. And finally, all this was inherited by the modern orientalist, who, after relying too much on these crumbs, accepted and endorsed many of these errors. Some elements of the traditions are quite fictitious, and exist only in the ingenious guesses and conjectures of the Shiite authors, on which the conclusions of the modern writers are based. The derogatory conclusions of the Sunnis sources from the hotchpotch, who lacked the concept of Imamate, have also created unnecessary complications. They assailed the Ismailis in view of their own sense of propriety in opprobrious words. It is highly probable that the early Ismailis, living in an extremely hostile milieu, did not produce any substantial volume of literature, preferring instead to propagate their doctrines. In analysing the accessible materials, therefore, the scholars will have to exercise a careful selection.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes in **"Ideals and Realities of Islam"** (London, 1966, pp. 165-6) that, "The question of the successor to the Imam (Jafar Sadik) having been made particularly difficult by the fact that the Abbasid caliph al-Mansur had decided to scourge to death whoever was to be chosen officially by the Imam as his successor thereby hoping to put an end to the Shiite movement." Caliph Mansur began to hatch animosity with Jafar Sadik, whose activities were closely watched. He moreover invested his successor, Muhammad (158-169/775-785) with the epithet **al-Mahdi** to turn the attention of his subjects from the Alid family and attract them towards the house of Abbas. Under these circumstances, different traditions had been contrived and many ideas were constructed in determining the real successor of Jafar Sadik. Farhad Daftary writes in **"The Ismailis: their History and Doctrines"** (London, 1990, pp. 93-4) that, "According to the majority of the available sources, Jafar al-Sadiq had designated his son Ismail as his successor, by the rule of the **nass**. There can be no doubt about the authenticity of this designation, which forms the basis of the claims of the Ismailiyya and which should have settled the question of al-Sadiq's succession in due course."

W.Ivanow (1886-1970) writes in **"Ismailis and Qarmatians"** (**JEBRAS**, Bombay, 1940, p. 57) that, "According to the overwhelming majority of the available sources, both sectarian and of their opponents, Imam Jafar appointed as his successor his eldest son Ismail, by his first wife, a highly aristocratic lady, great grand-daughter of Hasan." W.Montgomery Watt writes in **"The Formative Period of Islamic Thought"** (Edinburgh, 1973, p. 271) that, "The Ismailites derive their name from the fact that they consider that the Imam after Jafar as-Sadik was his son Ismail and not Musa al-Kazim." Nawbakhti (d. 310/912) however admits in his **"Kitab Firaq al-Shia"** (comp. 285/899) that Musa Kazim was not the heir-apparent.

The historians quote the tradition that Ismail had died during his father's lifetime, but the followers of Ismail refused to believe the rumours of his death. Shahrastani (1076-1153) writes in **"Kitab al-milal wa'l nihal"** (tr. by A.K. Kazi and J.G. Flynn, London, 1984, p. 144) that, "Some of them (followers of Ismail) say that he did not die, but that his father had declared that he had died to save him from the Abbasid caliphs; and that he had held a

funeral assembly to which Mansur's governor in Medina was made a witness." This tradition, most possibly familiar in Iraq, however could not solve the complications in a question.

Thanks to the new evidence in this context, shrouded behind an impenetrable veil for centuries, has been delved recently from one anonymous manuscript in Khwabi, which perhaps is a key to solve the complications hitherto remained unsolved. It is written in the manuscript of "**Kitab Fusul wa'l Akhbar**" by Nuruddin b. Ahmad (d. 233/849). This manuscript was copied mostly by the end of 17th century at Khwabi, Syria and the scribe had described a tradition in it regarding Ismail bin Jafar Sadik. It relates that Abdullah, surnamed al-Aftah, or al-Aflah and Ismail were the twin brothers in the house of Jafar Sadik, which was unknown to the people in Medina. Its veracity however cannot be substantiated from any other sources. Nevertheless, it cannot be brushed aside as untrue, especially when contemporary evidence is absent or scant. Whether literally true or not, the story seems to contain certain germs of truth, revealing some interesting insights about this important period. Its clues however can be judged from "**Asraru'n-Nutafa**" (comp. 380/990) that Ismail was brought up at home, and the same source also mentions at another place that Abdullah was also brought up at home. The historians write that Ismail predeceased his father in 145/762 at Medina. But, our above Syrian tradition goes on to unmask in relating that in the year 145/762, it was the death of **Abdullah** in reality and not that of **Ismail**. It further relates that both Abdullah and Ismail almost resembled each other physically, and none among those present could perceive the death of Abdullah due to an likeness among the identical twin and therefore, the **death** was considered that of Ismail. On that juncture, Jafar Sadik was constrained to remain silent, since the Abbasids had conspired to kill Ismail and therefore, it became a mystery, making Ismail publicly death during his father's time, but in reality he was not dead. Abul Fawaris Ahmad bin Yaqub writes in his "**ar-Risala fi'l Imama**" (comp. before 408/1017) that, "Ismail died during his father's life time is not substantiated, nor can it be proven without some clear evidence that reliable person saw the face of (actual) Ismail at his interment. This is untrue and impossible".

The Syrian tradition has it further that Ismail had been sent stealthily out of Medina on the night when Abdullah was expired on Ramdan, 145/November, 762. Thus, the tradition of a mock funeral came to be originated to this effect among the group, whom Nawbakhti and al-Qummi have regarded as "pure Ismailis" (*al-Ismailiyya al-khalisa*). It is quite possible that the people were unaware of the physical resemblance of two brothers as well as the death of Abdullah, resulting the coinage of a story of mock funeral. W.Ivanow writes in *"Ismailis and Qarmatians"* (JBBRAS, 1940, p. 57) that, "On the whole, this story seems to be very strange, especially because it seems really old. As it is narrated in one and the same version, it is quite probable that it was invented and put into circulation by someone at a very early time, and was ever since repeated in the absence of any other material referring to Ismail in general literature." The mock funeral stood on the face of the tradition, while its other side seems to have been unveiled in the above Syrian tradition. W.Ivanow was unaware of the above Syrian tradition, therefore, his doubt seems correct to this effect that, "Although how this could be a ruse, and how a complete likeness was achieved in the substitute for a successful disguise, is not explained" (Ibid).

The Syrian tradition lastly attests that the dead body of Abdullah, being publicly known that of Ismail's was interred in Janat al-Baqi in Medina, and it was attended by a huge multitude. Henceforward, it became to be known that Ismail's grave existed in Medina. Hasan bin Nuh Broachi (d. 939/1533), the author of *"Kitabu'l Azhar"* had visited Medina in 904/1498 and described that the grave of Ismail was situated within the city's walls, near the Baqi's gate. In reality, it was the grave of Abdullah being visited by Hasan bin Nuh Broachi provided the above Syrian tradition is genuine. By then onwards, Ismail assumed the name of Abdullah, and our Syrian tradition also relates that Abdullah had also assumed the name of Ismail before 145/762 in some cases to protect his brother. The fact of which also sounds in a letter of the Fatimid Imam al-Mahdi, written around 308/921 to Yamen, vide *"Kitab al-Fara'id wa Hudud ad-Din"* (pp. 13-19) by Jafar bin Mansur al-Yamen. In his letter, Imam al-Mahdi curiously discloses that: *"Ismail was substituted for Abdullah"* and also *"Abdullah bin Jafar, who was styled Ismail."*

Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) writes in **"Zahru'l-ma'ani,"** that Abdullah predeceased his father. While **"Asraru'n-Nutaga"** makes him to have died many years after his father. Similar discriminations are also narrated for Ismail, but in view of our Syrian tradition, the death of Abdullah had taken place in 145/762. It must be noted that a sizable faction in Kufa believed Abdullah as their Imam, known as Fathiyya. Ali bin Hasan was an eminent follower, who according to Najashi (d. 450/1058) in **"Kitab al-Rijal"** (p. 196), had compiled **"Kitab ithbat Imamati Abd Allah"** in affirmation of the Imamate of Abdullah.

The rule of the first Abbasid caliph, Abdullah as-Saffah lasted for 4 years and 9 months, during which period the Alids in Medina kept quiet and affairs remained stationary. But when Mansur assumed the caliphate in 136/753, the Alids embittered by the usurpation of their rights, began to voice their complaints. Thus, an-Nafs az-Zakia, the son of Abdullah al-Mahd refused to take the oath of allegiance to Mansur. The traditionalist orbits of Medina wholeheartedly supported his cause. It was the month of Ramadan, 145/December, 762 when the Abbasid commander Isa bin Musa spurred his horses towards Medina to crush the uprising of an-Nafs az-Zakia. It was very critical moment, and many families evacuated the city to avoid persecution. On that juncture, Ismail also managed to leave Medina privily with the outgoing caravans. Tabari (3rd vol., p. 226) and Baladhuri (d. 279/892) in **"Ansab al-Ashraf"** (5th vol., p. 617) write that, "On 12th Ramadan, 145 (December 4, 762), Isa bin Musa camped at al-Jurf, where he entered into correspondence with many notables of Medina, including some Alids. Many of them left the city with their families and some even joined Isa, a move which created a sense of insecurity and led to a large scale evacuation of Medina." When the veritable fighting took place with the Abbasids, an-Nafs az-Zakia was left with only a small number of his followers, mainly drawn from the tribe of Juhayna and Banu Shuja. Tabari (3rd vol., p. 249) writes that, "His followers took to flight, and he himself was killed on the 14th Ramadan, 145 (December 6, 762)." His brother, Ibrahim, wandering from Medina to Aden, Syria, Mosul, Anbar until he finally settled in Basra in 145/762 to propagate for his brother. He also rebelled two months after his brother's revolt, and seized control of Basra.

Tradition has it that Ismail went to Basra after leaving Medina, but it seems improbable as after the defeat of an-Nafs az-Zakia in Medina in 145/762, his brother Ibrahim mustered a large army in Basra, hatching a massive revolt against the Abbasids, where the political condition was alike Medina, therefore, Ismail must have hidden himself elsewhere in Arabia, and when the condition had become congenial, he would have harboured himself in Basra. Abul Faraj Ispahani writes in "**Maqatil al-Talibiyyin**" (Tehran, 1949, p. 365) that, "Abu Hanifah, Sufian al-Thawri, Masud bin Kudam and many others wrote to Ibrahim, offering him to their city and issued fatwa favouring his cause." It is to be noted that Muhammad bin Hurmuz, Muhammad bin Ajlan and Abu Bakr bin Abu Sabra also sympathized with an-Nafs az-Zakia and Ibrahim.

Ibrahim had left Basra for Kufa after some time, but was killed in a battle at Bakhamri, about halfway between Wasit and Kufa. His rebellion lasted for 2 months and 25 days. "After the end of these revolts" according to "**Tarikh-i Baghdad**" (13th vol., p. 380), "Mansur ordered Malik bin Anas to be flogged, and considered Abu Hanifah as an enemy so dangerous that he imprisoned him until his death." After these revolts in 145/762, there was a gap of 24 years until the next attempt to overthrow the Abbasids in 169/786.

The critical examination of the extant traces suggests that the Abbasids had added a twist to this puzzle after few years with the help of the predeceased tradition for Ismail, broadcasting everywhere that Jafar Sadik had changed the **nass** (investiture) in favour of his another son, Musa Kazim. This newly contrived theory enjoyed its early nourishment among the people who absolutely lacked the concept of the Imamate. The later sources, trusting on it, however mention three different reasons for the **change of nass** i.e., Ismail's indulgence in drink in 138/755, Ismail's intriguing in the extremists circles in 143/760, and his death during his father's life time in 145/762. It deserves to note here that some florid and bombastic stories of Ismail's indulgence in drink and his alleged association with the extremists have been added, which had been condemned by many historians. Mufazal bin Umar as-Sayrafi however relates that Jafar Sadik, in view of his son's piety had already warned the people in Medina that, "Do not wrong Ismail" (**la tajafu Ismaila**). The later

sources however firmly cling to their idea in the predeceased tradition.

Caliph Mansur, however, had not yet exhausted in his plan, for he had yet another card to play, and there is a reason to suppose that the story of *change of nass* had been concocted in the Zaidite orbits by the orders of caliph Mansur. It was however rolled publicly most probably after the death of Jafar Sadik in 148/765, otherwise the Imam himself would have refuted it. It aimed to force Ismail to expose from concealment to repudiate the claim of Musa Kazim. But, as we have heretofore seen that Ismail had tenaciously determined not to expose himself as it was a diplomacy of the Abbasids to arrest him. As a result, the predeceased tradition became all alone unchallengable and authentic in the historical works. Ismail's exposition would have also given free rope to the Abbasids to upbraid Jafar Sadik, who is said to have produced a document to caliph Mansur, bearing signature of the persons, testifying the alleged death of his son.

It should be recalled that the Abbasids had gained power on the slogans of the Alids. Later, their slogans took a political shape to the right of caliphate in the house of Abbas on religious ground. Abbas as-Saffah, the founder of the Abbasid dynasty, was to be succeeded by his son like the tradition of the Imamate in the house of Ali bin Abu Talib from father to son. Conversely, Abbas as-Saffah was succeeded by his brother, Mansur. He also boosted to - legitimize the line of Banu Abbas on religious ground, and determined to have a same effect in the house of Ali bin Abu Talib, that a brother could succeed by a brother. He diplomatically seems to have rolled a tradition of *change of nass* in the house of Jafar Sadik by bringing Musa Kazim to the line of Imamate. Thus, in the theory of *change of nass*, the Abbasids gained more than one benefit. The Shiite orbits, who had acquired the knowledge of the doctrines of Imamate from Imam Muhammad Bakir and Imam Jafar Sadik, however, ruled out the theory of *change of nass*.

The landmark principle of Shia Islam is that the Imamate can only be passed on from one Imam to the next in succession by the divinely-inspired investiture (*nass*). It is a divine ordination and a cardinal article of Shiism. This principle is sometimes referred to the covenant (*ahd*)

from father to a son. According to "**Basa'ir ad-Darajat**" by as-Saffar (vide **BA**, vol., 23, p. 73), Imam Jafar Sadik had said: "Each Imam knows the Imam who is to come after him, and so he appoints him as his successor." It implies therefore that the three different reasons shown by the aggressive historians for **change of nass** in favour of Musa Kazim, seem to have been fabricated, challenging the spiritual knowledge of Jafar Sadik. According to Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina in "**Islamic Messianism**" (New York, 1981, p. 153), "It implied God's change of mind (**bada**) because of a new consideration, caused by the death of Ismail. However, such connotations in the doctrine of **bada** (change of mind) raised serious questions about the nature of God's knowledge, and indirectly, about the ability of the Imams to prophesy future occurrences."

Jafar Sadik is also reported to have said: "**Inlillah fi kullo shain bida illah imamah**" means, "Verily, God makes changes in everything except in the matter of Imam." It tends, however, to prove one thing that once Ismail had been designated as an Imam, the **spiritual power** inherited by Jafar Sadik, came to the hands of his real successor. On that juncture, the status of Jafar Sadik becomes same as he was before acquiring spiritual power from his father. This point merits further indication that Jafar Sadik had no power to cancel, revoke or alter the first **nass** in favour of Ismail, and therefore, the tradition of **change of nass** carries no historicity. The European scholar Marshall Hodgson writes in "**The Order of the Assassins**" (Netherland, 1955, p. 63) that, "Such a withdrawal (of **nass**) evidently was not historical." Nawbakhti (d. 310/912) writes in "**Kitab Firaq al-Shia**" that, "Yet another version is that by appointing his son, Ismail, as an Imam, Jafar Sadik thus resigned. Ismail was therefore a real Imam, and after him, the Imamate has to pass to his son, Muhammad." Shahrastani (1076-1153) also writes in "**Kitab al-milal wa'l-nihal**" (p. 144) that, "Designation (**nass**), however, cannot be withdrawn, and has the advantage that the Imamate remains in the descendants of the person designated, to the exclusion of others. Therefore, the Imam after Ismail is Muhammad bin Ismail." According to "**Dabistan al-Mazhib**" (comp. 1653, vide English tr. by David Shea and Anthony Troyer, Paris, 1843, p. 332), "The appointment does not return by retrocession; and a convention reversed from whence it came is

impossible. Jafar was not likely to appoint, without traditional credentials from noble ancestors, one from among his distinguished descendants, and to be uncertain and unknown is not suitable to an Imam." Granted for a while that Ismail predeceased his father, then he must have declared his successor before his death according to the ruling of the principle of *nass*, since the authority to appoint the next Imam was in the sole hands of Ismail and none else. Ibn Khaldun (d. 808/1406), for instance, accepting the predeceased tradition, has however ruled out the theory of *change of nass* by saying in his "Muqaddimah" (tr. Franz Rosenthal, London, 1958, 1st vol., p. 412) that "Ismail died before his father, but according to the fact that he was determined by his father as his successor, means that the Imamate should continue among his (Ismail's) successors." Among the modern writers, H. Lammens remarks in "Islam Beliefs and Institutions" (London, 1929, p. 156) that, "The Ismailis, more logical in their Alid legitimism, claim that his (Ismail's) title (of Imamate) must have passed to his son Muhammad."

While inspecting the later Shiite sources, it appears that the theory of *change of nass* became an only tool for the later Twelvers to justify the claim of Musa Kazim. The theory of *change of nass* however contradicts the reports of Imam Jafar Sadik, being selected by the Shiite scholar, Abu Jafar Muhammad bin Ya'qub al-Kulaini (d. 329/940) in his "Usul al-Kafi" (Tehran, 1972). Regarding the new Imam and his successor, Kulaini cites the alleged reports of Imam Jafar Sadik, whose few examples are as under:

Imam is created in the best shape and form.
(11:6)

Before conception, the preceding Imam is sent through an heavenly syrup which he drinks. (93:3)

Imam is born pure and circumcised. (93:5)

Imam's mother experiences light and noises before the birth of the Imam. (93:5)

Imam is created from sublime water and his spirit is created from a matter above that. (94:1)

The Imam hands over the books, knowledge and weapons to his successor. (59:1)

These are the qualities of the Imam's successor theorized by the later Twelvers. The average Shiite and Sunnite sources unanimously concur that Jafar Sadik had declared Ismail as his successor by rule of *nass* (investiture), suggesting quite clearly that Jafar Sadik must have found above qualities in his son Ismail, and not in other sons. Granted that he had changed the *nass* in favour of Musa Kazim, then how it can be possible that **both sons** had qualified the above merits at a same time for succession?

Besides the preceding, Kulaini has devoted space about the knowledge of an Imam, whose few examples are given below:

Imam is the treasure of God's knowledge in the heavens and earth. (11:2)

Imam is informed by God what he intends to know. (46:3)

He inherited the knowledge of future events. (48:1)

He is learned than Moses and al-Khidr, who possessed the knowledge of the past only. (48:1)

His knowledge is from three directions: past, present and future. (50:1)

He can inform about what is going to happen the next day. (62:7)

He is endowed with a secret from the secrets of God, knowledge from the knowledge of God. (102:5)

Granted that Ismail predeceased his father, it will mean that Jafar Sadik had no knowledge of the future, or he was unknown with the death of Ismail during his life time. Nothing prevents us in concluding therefore, that Ismail had not died during his father's time, and the theory of

change of nass was absolutely an Abbasid fabrication to motivate their inimical objectives, which also became a tool of the later Twelvers.

In sum, the Abbasids brought Musa Kazim to claim for his right on one side, and made an intensified search of Ismail on other, indicating to understand that Ismail was a legitimate Imam in the eyes of the Abbasids. W.Ivanow writes in *"Ismailis and Qarmatians"* (JHRRAS, Bombay, 1940, p. 58) that, "Musa apparently was recognized by the secular authorities as the legitimate successor of Imam Jafar in his position, so far as it was concerned with the outer world." W. Montgomery Watt also writes that the political moderates had preferred Musa Kazim, vide *"The Formative Period of Islamic Thought"* (Edinburgh, 1973, p. 271). We have to admit that the Abbasids mustered a large following for Musa Kazim in Medina, and the snares of spies were also planted to watch signs of disloyalty emanating from him. It was also a policy to gather the scattered Shiites at Medina under the leadership of Musa Kazim, and strike a final blow upon them to get an end of the belief of the Imamate among the Shiites.

It must be noted that Medina and Mecca were the nerve-centres of the Muslims since the advent of Islam. Medina was in particular the city of the Hashimites of whom many were descended from Abu Talib. Medina had been the headquarters of the previous Imams since beginning, and after Jafar Sadik, a tradition almost began to be hatched among the Shiites to adhere one who claimed for Imamate at his base in Medina, and as a result, Musa Kazim could procure a large following in Medina with the virtual hands of the Abbasids.

It is also worth mentioning that Musa Kazim never condemned the claims of Ismail in Medina. He was being watched without harassment from 148/765 to 158/775, during which time, the Abbasids failed to reach their seminal objectives. When the Abbasids found that Musa Kazim was being seriously adhered as an Imam, or another line of Imamate was about to emerge in the house of Jafar Sadik, their harassment reached a climax during the rule of Harun ar-Rashid. He arrested Musa Kazim and brought him to Baghdad in 177/793, where he died in prison in 183/799. Even more serious was the bifurcation among the followers of Musa Kazim after his death. Abu Hatim ar-Razi (d. 322/934) writes in *"Kitabu'z-Zina"* that the Waqifiya

and Mamtura sects believed in the immorality of Musa Kazim, claiming that he would return as a Mahdi before dooms-day. They also rejected the claim of his son, Ali ar-Rida. Aside from this schism, the Qati'a sect believed in the death of Musa Kazim and the claim of his son upto Ali bin Muhammad al-Askari. W.Ivanow writes in **"Early Shiite Movements"** (JEBRAS, 1941, Bombay, p. 20) that, "This was the atmosphere in the family of the descendants of Imam Jafar as-Sadik, the line of his son Musa, who lived in the full light of publicity at the court of the Abbasids. It is therefore easy to understand that many of their devout supporters might easily lose all respects for them, and come over to support the elder line, of Ismail b. Jafar, who lived in the impenetrable mystery of concealment, and about whom the public could know only what their *dais* were authorised to tell them."

The line of Musa Kazim

The successor of Musa Kazim (d. 183/799) was his son Ali ar-Rida, who also died in 203/818. He was succeeded by Muhammad at-Taki (d. 220/835) and the latter by Ali al-Naqi (d. 254/868). His son Hasan al-Askari (d. 260/874) had married to a Christian slave-girl, named Narges Khatoon. There however are few controversial accounts for his son, Muhammad Mahdi. J.R.I. Cole writes in **"Roots of North Indian Shiism in Iran and Iraq"** (New Delhi, 1989, p. 17) that, "Several schism occurred, with some groups saying that Imam Hasan al-Askari had left no heir. Others, especially wealthy Shiis close to the Abbasid court, proclaimed that the Imam had a small son, who supernaturally disappeared and who would one day return to restore the world to justice."

Jafar, the brother of Hasan al-Askari is also reported to have been asked about the boy, and he said that he did not know who the boy was. For this reason, Jafar has been vilified by the Shiite sources as *Kadhdhab*, means "liar." Moojan Momen writes in **"An Introduction to Shi'i Islam"** (London, 1985, p. 162) that, "Jafar remained unshakable in his assertion that his brother (Hasan al-Askari) had no progeny." Mohammad Manzoor Nomani further writes to this effect that, "As for the truth or correctness of the whole thing, anyone with a little commonsense will conclude that

it was a ruse played by a few artful persons to deceive the people" (Ibid. pp. 108-9).

Mohammad Manzoor Nomani, the author of **"Iranian Revolution"** (Karachi, 1988, p. 105) writes that, "Traditions relating to the birth, disappearance and the concealment of the twelfth Imam are given in several chapters of **"Usul al-Kafi,"** such as, from pages 202 to 207, and 333 to 342. A perusal of them will convince that the whole "case" is fabricated and even that has not been done skillfully and well, and the version of Imam Hasan Askari's brother and other family members appears to be correct and worthy of belief."

W.Ivanow however writes in **"Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismailism"** (Holland, 1952, p. 6) that, "The fourth Imam (Hasan al-Askari) after Musa Kazim died childless in 260/874, but his relatives, to prevent the sequestration of his property by the state, invented a story of a posthumous male child being born to him. The mysterious baby, however, as they said, became concealed in a cellar in Samarra, a town north of Baghdad, where he is supposed to be still living to come in glory as the promised Mahdi on the judgement day." W.Ivanow concludes his remarks in these words: "If an Imam dies without leaving a son as his successor, it can only mean that not only he personally, but the whole line of his ancestors were not the true Imams. Thus the discontinuation of the line of the Twelvers proved that at least the last several of them were not genuine." (Ibid. p. 9).

At Samarra, is a mosque under which there is a cave (**sirdab**). The end of one of the chambers of the cave is partitioned off by a gate, and the area behind the gate is called the "chamber of the occultation" (**hujrat al-ghayba**), and in the corner there is a well, known as the "well of the occultation" (**bi'r al-ghayba**) down which the twelfth Imam of the Shia Twelvers is supposed to have disappeared.

The following of Jafar Sadik henceforward bifurcated into two branches - the **Ismailis**, the followers of Ismail, and the **Musawite**, the supporters of Musa Kazim, who later on came to be known as **Twelvers**, or **Ithna Asharites**. J.R.I. Cole writes, "The end of the line of Imams came as a powerful shock to the Twelver community. Early Shii

thinkers living after the occultation, or disappearance, of the Imam felt leaderless. In the absence of the infallible Imam, they believed that no one could conduct Friday congregational prayers, lead believers in an aggressive holy war, or collect certain types of land taxes. In short, they felt a profound alienation from the world and generally adopted a quietest political policy." (op. cit., p. 17)

It is further worthwhile to ponder at a focal point that the average Shiite sources concur that Ismail predeceased his father, therefore, Jafar Sadik changed the ~~name~~ and nominated his another son, Musa Kazim as his successor. Granted that Ismail predeceased his father, then it sharply indicates that Ismail was in reality an Imam for few years or months between the period of his nomination and death. If so, the lineage of the Twelvers's Imams should have run as follows:- **Jafar Sadik, Ismail, Musa Kazim** and so forth. It is curious beyond measure that the Twelvers do not include the name of Ismail between Jafar Sadik and Musa Kazim as per their ruling in the list of their Imams!

Abul Khattab

Abul Khattab Muhammad bin Abi Zaynab Maqlas al-Asadi al-Kufi (d. 167/783), surnamed Abul Khattab was an eminent disciple of Jafar Sadik. He was first to have preached the Shiite doctrines tinged with esoteric interpretation. For quite some time, he was closely associated with Jafar Sadik, who had commissioned him as his chief *dai* in Kufa. Kashi narrates that once Imam put his hand on Abul Khattab's breast, and said: "You know the mystery (*ghayb*)."
This may be linked with Nawbakhti's expression that Imam revealed to him a solemn word (*ism-i azam*), and also called him the **"casket of our knowledge, the lodging place of our secrecy, the one who is trusted with our people's life and death."** One can thus easily judge the status of Abul Khattab before Jafar Sadik.

Soon afterwards, it is related that Jafar Sadik disliked his so called habit of never transmitting intact and unaltered the tradition which he heard, causing his relation with the Imam strained, and was excommunicated in about 138/755. This is perhaps an earliest glaring example

of *taqiya* in Jafar Sadik's time, revealing outwardly a rupture between him and the Imam, to which some historians hazarded wrong opinion and concocted false stories around it. This sort of a *taqiya* seems to have intended to make the Shiite to dissociate themselves from Abul Khattab, and to make the Abbasids to implant in minds a consideration that there was no relation between Abul Khattab and Jafar Sadik. Abul Khattab's faith however was deep-rooted that had been never wavered for a single moment.

It is related that when Ismail had been in Iraq, he adopted the title of **Abul Khattab** most probably after 151/769 for exercising *taqiya*. Granted that Abul Khattab was not a secret follower of Jafar Sadik, then why Ismail assumed his name? Ismail henceforward, became known as **Abul Khattab** among the small group in Kufa, while Abul Khattab hid his identity. Nawbakhti in "**Kitab Firaq al-Shia**" (ed. Ritter, Istanbul, 1931, pp. 60-61) and al-Qummi (d. 300/912) in "**Kitab al-Maqalat wa'l-Firaq**" (ed. M.J Mashkur, Tehran, 1963, p. 83) write that the followers of **Abul Khattab** (i.e., Ismail) became known as **Khattabiyya**, believing that "the divine light had transferred from Jafar Sadik into Abul Khattab, and on the death of the latter, it passed into Muhammad bin Ismail." The term **Abul Khattab** here in reality was the epithet of Ismail. In Central Asia, a treatise "**Ummi'l-Kitab**" is preserved among the Ismailis in which the Khattabiyyas are mentioned as the founders of Ismailism. It states further that the Ismailism was founded by the children of Abul Khattab, who gave their lives for the love of Ismail.

It is related that seventy followers of Abul Khattab had assembled in the mosque at Kufa, who had been killed by order of the governor. Abul Khattab was also captured and crucified. It is impossible to confess the notion advanced by the historians that his death took place in 138/755 or 145/762. He was killed most possibly in 167/783.

Al-Mubarak

Besides, it is also known that Ismail had to assume the pseudonym of **al-Mubarak** in certain cases to protect his life. Al-Mubarak was a servant of Ismail in Medina, and a potential *dai* too. Very little is known about him. He was however hailed from Hijaz and an expert in Arabic

calligraphy of the type known as *mugarmat*. In all probability, al-Mubarak was also the epithet of Ismail. More evidence of the application of the name al-Mubarak to Ismail have now come to light, lending strong support to W.Ivanow's hypothesis, vide **"The Alleged Founder of Ismailism"** (Bombay, 1946, pp. 108-112), describing that, "I have happened upon such clear and unequivocal testimony concerning al-Mubarak. The fact that it was in reality the surname of Ismail b. Jafar is revealed in at least four different passages in the early Ismaili esoteric work, **"Sullamu'n-Najjat"** by Abu Yaqub as-Sijistani" (p. 111). It can be also ascertained from another work of Abu Yaqub as-Sijistani, entitled **"Ithbat al-Nubuwwat"** (ed. Arif Tamir, Beirut, 1966, p. 190). Farhad Daftary also writes in **"A Major Schism in the Early Ismaili Movement"** (*Studia Islamica*, Paris, LXXVIII, 1993, p. 127) that, "It has now become evident that the name Mubarak (the blessed) was the epithet of Ismail himself and it was applied as such to him by his followers."

Hence, another small following of Ismail became known as *Mubarakdiyya*. The Fatimid Imam al-Mahdi had routed a letter in Yamen after 308/921, which is reproduced by Jafar bin Mansur al-Yamen in **"al-Fara'id wa Hudud ad-Din"** (pp. 13-19), in which the Imam has also disclosed that the Imams descending from Jafar Sadik wished to resuscitate the true *dawat*, and feared the treachery of hypocrites, therefore, they assumed names other than their own, and used for themselves esoterically names denoting the rank of proofs (*hujjats*) and styled themselves as Mubarak, Maymun and Sa'id because of the good omen in these names.

The terms *Mubarakdiyya* and *Khattabiyya* therefore, were the original names of the nascent Ismailism, as well as the regional identifications of the followers of Ismail, who, on the whole, merged into the main fold of *Ismailism* in the time of Imam Muhammad bin Ismail. Concluding his judgment, al-Mutawakkil (532-566/1137-1170) writes in his **"Kitab Haqa'iq al-Marifa"** as quoted by Bernard Lewis in **"The Origins of Ismailism"** (London, 1940, p. 35) that, "The Ismailiyya are the Mubarakdiyya and the Khattabiyya."

Returning to the thread of our main narrative, it is seen from the scrutiny of the historical traces that Ismail mostly lived in Salamia, and then moved to Damascus. Mansur knew his whereabouts, and wrote to his governor to

arrest Ismail, but the latter quitted Damascus for Basra. Ismail's presence in Basra had been noticed by the people in 151/769. According to "**Tarikh-i Jhangusha**", "A paralytic begged alms of him. Ismail took him by the hand and he was healed; and rising to his feet he departed in his company. Ismail also prayed for a blind person and he recovered his sight."

The doctrine of *taqiya*

We have heretofore noted that Imam Muhammad al-Bakir had articulated the implication of the doctrine of ***taqiya*** in Shiism, and we may attribute the rudiments of its theory to him. But it left to his son, Jafar Sadik to give it a final form abreast of time and make it an absolute condition of the faith.

Looking the changing condition radically then prevailing in the Arab society, it was a wise move by Imam Jafar Sadik to broach his followers the doctrine of ***taqiya*** (precautionary dissimulation), and made it the Shiite article of faith. He is reported to have said that, "***Taqiya*** is of my religion and of the religion of my forefathers. One who does not keep ***taqiya*** he has no religion." He also said on another occasion that, "Fear for your religion and protect it with ***taqiya***." He further said, "Our belief concerning ***taqiya*** is that it is obligatory and he who forsakes, it is in the same position as he who forsakes prayer."

Jafar Sadik had certainly worked out that an open ***dawat*** based on esoterism in the line of Ismail would mean a sure doom in the powerful Abbasid regime. It was, of course, risky for the Imams and their followers to openly propagate their minoritarian beliefs then onwards, therefore, the secret mission system was introduced with the help of ***taqiya***, which could also avoided great deal of persecution. Farhad Daftary writes in "**The Ismailis: their History and Doctrines**" (London, 1990, p. 85) that, "The practice of ***taqiya*** conveniently protected the Shi'is, especially the later Ismailis, from persecution, and served in the preservation of their sectarian existence under hostile circumstances."

The word **tagiya** is derived from the root **tugat**, means "conceal" or "hide". It is also suggested that it is rooted from **wagga**, means "keep or guard from someone". The Koranic term **tauggat** is also taken in the meaning of **tagiya**, to which divergance of opinions have been advanced. Baidawi (d. 685/1286) writes in his "**Amwar al-Tanzil**" that, "The **qirah** of Imam Yaqub (d. 205/820) contains the word **tagiya** instead of **tauggat**." Similar word is also traced in the meaning of **tagiya** in **Bukhari** (vide "**Kitab al-Iqrah**", 28:50). Ibn Hajar (d. 852/1449) also admits in "**Fateh al-Bari**" (28:50) that **tauggat** and **tagiya** are same in meaning. Zamakhshari (d. 538/1144) in "**Tafsir al-Kashshaf**" (Cairo, 1953, 2nd vol., p. 16), Raghīb Ispahani (d. 502/1108) in "**Tafsir al-Gharāib al-Koran**" (Cairo, 1894, 1st vol., p. 313), Baidawi (d. 685/1286) in "**Amwar al-Tanzil**" (Beirut, 1958, 1st vol., p. 153) and Fakhruddin Razi (d. 606/1209) in "**Tafsir al-Kabir**" (Cairo, 1890, 2nd vol., p. 646), etc. have concurred the doctrine of **tagiya** permissible in Islam in the light of the Koranic verse, which reads:- **"Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends rather than believers, and whoever does this, he shall have nothing of God, except when you have to guard yourselves against them for fear"** (3:27).

Another Arabic word **kitman** is also used for **tagiya**. The Arabic lexicons however render the meaning of **tagiya** as "to arrange for protection." In sum, **tagiya** is a practice permissible in Islamic jurisprudence. It is a doctrine allowing the disciples to conceal their faith during the time of trouble. According to "**Urdu Encyclopaedia of Islam**" (6th vol., p. 581), "The Shiites were suspected in some matters in non-Shiite rules, therefore, the doctrine of **tagiya** exercised special importance among them."

Imam Jafar Sadik also then seems to have realized the significance of a tight, well-knit and secret organisation to face the emerging challenges in Arab society. For that purpose, he employed his Iranian client (**mawla**, named Maymun al-Qaddah, who had a skill for organising the vast network of an underground mission. The Arabs, it must be noted, were not traditionally and temperamentally suited for secretive and underground functionings. They had always lived in an open and free society in the desert

without the paraphernalia of state and political intrigues. Comparatively, the character of the Abbasid empire at the same time, was also different from that of the Umayyads in as much as it was an empire of neo-Muslims of which the Arabs were only a part. It was mainly due to the support and strategy of the non-Arabs sections of people of Iran that the Abbasid succeeded in establishing their empire, chiefly by Abu Muslim Khorasani, who did much to bring the Abbasids to power.

Maymun al-Qaddah

Maymun al-Qaddah was born in Ahwaz in Iran. He belonged to the Makhzumi clan and was the ~~mawla~~ (freed slave) of Imam Muhammad Bakir and Imam Jafar Sadik. His surname "**al-Qaddah**" is usually taken to mean "oculist", which seems extremely doubtful. It is a word connected with **al-qidah** i.e., an ancient Arab play or a form of divination with the help of arrows. Tusi (d. 460/1068) in "**Tahdhibul Ahkam**" while dealing with Maymun al-Qaddah, explains the word as "a man who practises the game of qidah (**yabra'ul qidah**). Thus, he was a specialist in divination with the help of arrows.

Maymun al-Qaddah was a very pious man of ascetic life. Because of his close association and faithfulness, he was chosen for the task of stimulating the secret Ismaili mission, and became the primary architect in articulation of the Ismaili mission.

It also appears that the activities of Maymun al-Qaddah had been exaggerated by the Arabs because of being an Iranian. The derogations of his Arab enemies can be judged from their baseless propaganda that he and his son, Abdullah bin Maymun were against the Islamic tenets, and had planned to blow it up, and broadcast that the Ismailism was typically an Iranian. Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) therefore, is inclined to make his judgement curiously in his "**Expose de la Religion des Druzes**" (Paris, 1838, p. 31) that the Ismaili doctrine is typically Iranian, and later E.G. Browne in "**A Literary History of Persia**" (New York, 1902, 1st vol., p. 405) also advanced same views. Being influenced with the Arab propaganda, the orientalisists adopted the theory that the Ismailis were of Iranian origin, which has been however

falsified by W. Montgomery Watt, vide **"Islamic Philosophy and Theology"** (Edinburgh, 1985, p. 126). This idea led the other scholars to theorize the Ismailism not merely an anti-Arab movement, but more so an anti-Islamic revolution; but the recent researches have ruled out such groundless propaganda.

Allegorical interpretation (**tawil**) of the Holy Koran was in vogue among the people of all walks of life, attempting the evolution of a religious philosophy. The Ismaili **dais** had purified the Islamic **Shariah** polluted by the ignorants. The draining off the adulterated tenets through the agency of **tawil** by Maymun al-Qaddah and his son was violently opposed and misinterpreted by the Arabs, who were basically against the philosophical approaches. Most of the historians tried to project Maymun al-Qaddah as an enemy of Islam, planning to destroy it from within by founding the Ismaili movement and evolving its doctrines in such a way as to present Zoroastrian or Manichean teachings in the Islamic garb. These historians want us to believe that Maymun al-Qaddah had nothing but contempt for Islam and fierce hatred towards the Arabs and that they conceived the idea of a secret society which should be all things to all men, and which, by playing on the strongest passions and tempting the inmost weaknesses of human nature, should unite malcontents of every description in a conspiracy to overthrow the then existing Abbasid regime. These are fantastic allegations levelled with a calculated purpose to discredit the Ismailis in the eyes of orthodox Muslims. Many eminent orientalist like de Goeje, R.A. Nicholson, etc., have erred in taking this story from the prejudiced historians.

Evincing their utter ignorance, the philosophy was officially banned in the orthodox orbits, propagating that it was the tool used by the Ismaili **dais** to undermine Islam. Syed Abid Ali Abid writes in **"Political Theory of the Shiites"** (cf. **"A History of Muslim Philosophy"** ed. by M.M. Sharif, Germany, 1963, 1st. vol., p. 740) that, "The orientalists - nay even such an erudite Iranian scholar as Muhammad Qazwini, the editor of **"Tarikh-i Jhangusha"** by Ata Malik Juvaini - were misled by the voluminous Abbasid propaganda, hostile commentary of the orthodox Shiites, and the specious argument of those opposed to the Ismailites, into thinking that Maimun and his son Abd Allah were opposed to the tenets of Islam or were inspired

by the hatred for the Arabs." J.J. Saunders also advanced his doubts in this context, vide **"A History of Medieval Islam"** (London, 1965, p. 128). Besides, Maymun al-Qaddah is shown as a real founder of Ismailism, which is starkly a fabrication, and it was apparently a "brain-wave" on the part of Ibn al-Razzam, whose historical character is yet doubtful.

Maymun al-Qaddah was canonised in the rank of *hijab* (screen), whose function was in addition to screen the real Imam from his enemies, and was thus the *hijab* of Imam Ismail and his son. According to W.Ivanow in **"The Rise of the Fatimids"** (Calcutta, 1942, p. 56), "The idea of the *hijab*, or a dignitary, whose duty was to pretend to be the Imam, thus sheltering the real holder of the office."

It must be known that the functions of the *hijab* in pre-Fatimid period was the same as the *huffat*. The *hijab* was the most trusted, tested, devoted and reliable dignitary who was ostensibly assigned with high religious authority, posing as an Imam to the ordinary people, accepting oath of allegiance on behalf of the concealed Imam.

According to **"Kashfu'l-Asrar"** by Jawhari, quoted by L. Massignon, Maymun al-Qaddah died in 210/825, leaving behind two sons, Aban and Abdullah.

De Lacy O'Leary writes in **"Short History of the Fatimid Khilafat"** (London, 1923, p. 25) that, "The Ismailians alone have inherited the accurate knowledge of secret mysteries bequeathed by Jafar as-Sadik to his son Ismail." W. Ivanow writes in **"Ismailis and Qarmatians"** (JBRAS, Bombay, 1940, p. 59) that, "The successors of Ismail were therefore compelled to pay more attention to the other aspect of Imam Jafar's heritage - the philosophical and esoteric theories, which were more in demand here. This probably defined the further course of the evolution of Ismailism, which though it never gave up its strictly Islamic substance, had, nevertheless, to reconcile it with the philosophy of the time."

Death of Ismail

Ismail lived for the most part in Salamia, where he died after bequeathing the office of Imamate to his son

Muhammad. According to "**al-Usul wa'l Ahakam**" by Hatim bin Imran bin Zuhra (d. 498/1104) that, "Ismail had sent his **da'is** to all parts and ordered him (Muhammad) to administer the oath in his name according to the custom of all preceding Imams. When his death drew near, he appointed as his heir, his son Muhammad who showed great perfection."

The predeseased tradition assigns Ismail's death in 145/762, but "**Dustur al-Munajjimin**" (comp. 450/1056) places it in 152/769. According to the Ismaili tradition, Ismail died in 158/775, and was interred in Salamia. Besides Muhammad, he had a son called Ali, who was born in 130/748 and a daughter, Fatima.

MUHAMMAD BIN ISMAIL (158-197/775-813)

Abu Abdullah Muhammad, surnamed ash-Shakir was born in 122/740 in Medina. He passed his early life with his grandfather for 24 years and 10 years with his family in Medina. He however kept himself silent (**samit**) so long as he lived in Medina. He most probably left Medina soon after the death of his grandfather in 148/765.

The Abbasid caliph Mansur also died in 158/775 and was succeeded by his son Mahdi, who according to Ignaz Goldziher in "**Muslim Studies**" (London, 1971, 2nd vol., p. 106), "was listed by Ibn Adi as an inventor of hadiths." He also died in 169/785 after ruling for 22 years, and was succeeded by his son, Hadi. He died in 170/786, and then his brother, Harun ar-Rashid became the next ruler till 193/809. He was also succeeded by his son, Amin.

The inimical opposition of the Abbasids against the Ismaili Imams was vigorously in continual. Abul Faraj Ispahani writes in "**al-Aghani**" (12th vol., p. 17) that, "Harun al-Rashid demanded of his poets that they combine his own praise with refutation of the claims of Ali's descendants and with attacks against the latter." Abul Faraja further writes that, "Harun ar-Rashid permitted himself to be glorified with things by which the prophets were praised; he did not disapprove of it and did not refuse it." (Ibid. 12th vol., p. 18)

The most earliest description of Muhammad bin Ismail is found from the work of Tabari (3rd vol., p. 2218), and in the Ismaili sources summed up in the 4th volume of "**Uyun'l-Akhbar**" (comp. 842/1438). Accordingly, Muhammad bin Ismail resided in Medina from where he sent his *dais* not only to spread Ismailism, but to search for a land of refuge where he could live unscathed. When Harun ar-Rashid learnt news of it, he sent his officials to arrest and bring the Imam to his court. When the caliph's men came to the house to carry out the orders, Muhammad bin Ismail entered an underground passage he had constructed inside his house and remained concealed until they had left. When the search for him had abated, he started on his journey, leaving behind his two sons. His whereabouts had been kept a closely guarded secret only the few specially privileged being acquainted with it and even they being pledged to the strictest secrecy.

It has been heretofore discussed that Musa Kazim had been staged as an Imam by the Abbasids on the ground of the fabricated theory of *change of nass*. The Abbasids had instituted an intensive search for Ismail, because they were well aware that Musa Kazim was not the true successor, otherwise he would have been executed very soon. They however failed to trace out Ismail and his son Muhammad. On the other side, the Abbasids noticed its reverse effect in Medina, where Musa Kazim was being truly adhered as an Imam. In the time of Harun ar-Rashid, finally Musa Kazim was arrested, who died in prison in 183/799. He should have been arrested and executed in 148/765, had he been truly succeeded his father.

Cyril Glasse writes in "**The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam**" (London, 1989, p. 197) that, "The followers of Ismail, whose conception of the Imam was more absolute than that of the other Shiites, maintained on the contrary that the next Imam should be Ismail's son."

The Qaddahid theory

Admittedly, it is learnt that after leaving Medina, Muhammad bin Ismail made his way towards Iran and Syria accompanied by Maymun al-Qaddah. The bitterest of the Abbasids' enmity was daily growing in intensity. Apprehending lest the enemies should resort to some violent measures against him, Muhammad assumed the name of

Maymun al-Qaddah to elude discovery. Thus, the name **Maymun al-Qaddah** came to be used by two characters at one time. It was also resolved, if the real identity of the Imam be traced, Maymun al-Qaddah was to come forward as Muhammad bin Ismail to sacrifice his own life in order to protect the line of Imamate from extinction.

Henceforward, Muhammad bin Ismail had also a sobriquet of Maymun al-Qaddah to conceal his identity. In fact, Maymun al-Qaddah had a son, named Abdullah (d. 260/874), while Muhammad bin Ismail had also a son at the same time, called Abdullah (d. 212/828), surnamed al-Wafi Ahmad. With the passage of time, Muhammad became known as Maymun al-Qaddah in the places he resided, while Maymun al-Qaddah was treated as Muhammad bin Ismail in the regions he propagated Ismailism. Abdullah, the son of Maymun al-Qaddah was consequently considered as the son of Muhammad bin Ismail in the regions where the Imam had assumed the title of al-Qaddah. It therefore gave rise to the contrivance of a story that Abdullah (al-Wafi Ahmad) was the son of Maymun al-Qaddah on one hand, and Abdullah (bin Maymun al-Qaddah) was the son of Muhammad bin Ismail on other. Later on, it became an instrument for the anti-Fatimid propagandists, notably Ibn Razzam to join the lineage of the Fatimid Imams with that of Abdullah bin Maymun al-Qaddah instead of Abdullah (al-Wafi Ahmad) bin Muhammad bin Ismail. This is known as Qaddahid theory and became a weapon of the later Abbasids to discredit the Fatimid origin in 401/1010.

In the face of these facts, the Ismaili Imams had assumed the titles of the **dais** in one or more time during the veiled period, which is also sounded expressly in the letter of the Fatimid Imam al-Muizz (341-365/953-975), written in 354/965, addressing to his **dai** in Sind, called Jaylam bin Shayban. This important letter is well preserved by Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) in the 5th volume of "**Uyun'l-Akhbar**" (comp. 842/1438). It reads:- ".... These people have arbitrarily limited (the period of Imamate) by (the death of) Muhammad bin Ismail; and when he died, they said about him all what was said by them. They (also) thought that he entrusted the Imamate to some one who was not his son. And that his successor (similarly) entrusted the Imamate (to his own) successors, whose number has (also) reached the number of seven. They thought that the first (of these pseudo-Imams) was Abdullah bin Maymun al-Qaddah. All this is preached in

order to prove their theory that there was no Imam after him (i.e., Muhammad bin Ismail), and that those who succeeded him were ordinary people. Thus they have cut what God ordered to be continuing (the line of Imams), opposing the command of God, given in the Koran (47:27). "....and We have made a word to remain after him." The cause of this requires explanation. When the preaching in favour of Muhammad bin Ismail has spread, the Abbasid usurpers tried to lay their hands upon him, i.e. the person whose rights were claimed. Therefore (he and other) Imams went into concealment. Their *dais* used to refer to them under allegorical names, in accordance with the principle of *taqiya*, alluding to what they possessed and what was appropriate to them. They used to say, for instance, that the Imam, the son of Muhammad bin Ismail was Abdullah. And this was true. And with regard to his being the son of Maymun al-Qaddah, it was true that he was the son of *Maymunu'n naqibat*, i.e. of the "Divinely blessed with success in his affairs," *of al-Qaddah* (the flint) "striking the sparks of guidance", i.e. "lighting the light of the Divine wisdom". Similar allegorical expressions were applied also to other Imams after him, at their own orders and instructions given to their *dais*. When such allegorical expressions reached those who know nothing about their real implications, and only took them literally, as we mentioned above, they fell into an error, and made others err after them, straying from the straight path. But if they would only do what God has ordered them to do, rallying around the Imams, they surely would know those who were otherwise hidden from them. Just as you know them now. But the blind, who has no one to lead him, or a stick in his hand, falls into an abyss from which no one can save him. The self-conceited fall into sin and error. So beware of thinking that God ever abandons humanity to itself. No, He does not abandon them even for a moment, leaving them without an Imam from the descendants of the Prophet. And the Imams can come to their office only by the commandments relating to Imamate...."

In addition, Hatim bin Imran bin Zuhra (d. 498/1104) writes in his "*al-Usul wa'l-Ahkam*" that, "The *dais* used their own names as nick-names for the Imams in order to protect them from persecution; some people were misled by this to such a degree that they said that the Imam, descendant of Muhammad bin Ismail was Abdullah bin Maymun

al-Qaddah." According to Arif Tamir in "**al-Qaramita**" (p. 87), "When Muhammad bin Ismail fled from the east and established in Palmyra in Syria, the centers of his activities; he called himself Maymun al-Qaddah." Syed Abid Ali Abid writes in "**Political Theory of the Shiites**" (cf. "**A History of Muslim Philosophy**", ed. by M.M. Sharif, Germany, 1963, 1st. vol., p. 740) that, "As a matter of fact, as the latest research has established beyond any doubt, Maimun was the name adopted by Imam Muhammad when he went into concealment. In other words, during the period of concealment those who were in his confidence knew Imam Muhammad to be a Maimun." Husayn F. al-Hamdani (1901-1962) writes in his "**On the Genealogy of Fatimid Caliphs**" (Cairo, 1958, p. 18) that, "It is likely that Muhammad b. Ismail, who did not, and could not, according to accounts, live a settled life at one place, went underground during his wanderings by assuming the name of Maymun."

Before bidding goodbye to his ancestral abode, Medina, Muhammad had secretly convened an assembly of his *dais*, inviting them from all the regions. When caliph Harun ar-Rashid came to know the secret assembly, he resolved to arrest Muhammad bin Ismail in Medina. In the meantime, Zubeda, the wife of Harun ar-Rashid and a secret follower of the Imam, managed to send her trusted servant towards the Imam in Medina, informing him the plan of the caliph. Thus, Muhammad bin Ismail had to make his footing out of Medina at once.

Tradition however has it that Muhammad first went to southern Iraq, where he acquired the epithet of *al-maktum* (veiled one), and then at Nishapur in disguise, where he lodged for some times. Nishapur was one of the most important of the four great cities of Khorasan. The word "**Nishapur**" is derived from *New-Shapur*. In Armenian it is called *Niu-Shapuh*, then became *Nishwpur*, finally *Nishapur*. It is situated on the east side of a plain surrounded by hills. To the north and east of the town lies the ridge of Binalud-Kuh, which separates it from the valley of Mashhad and Tus. It was divided into 42 wards, 1 farsakh in length and breath. Muhammad afterwards proceeded towards Ray (the ancient *Ragha*), a town in Media, about 15 miles from Tehran. Ray was situated in the fertile zone which lies between the mountains and the desert. The Abbasids rebuilt and surrounded it by a ditch. Harun ar-Rashid was also

born in Ray and used often to recall with pleasure his native town. In 195/810, caliph Mamun's general Tahir bin Hussain won a victory over caliph Amin's troops near Ray.

Sacrifice of Ishaq bin al-Abbas

Ishaq bin al-Abbas al-Farsi, the Abbasid governor of Ray privily professed Ismaili doctrines. Muhammad betrothed to Fatima, the daughter of Sarah, sister of Ishaq bin al-Abbas; who gave birth to a son, who was named Abdullah, also known as Wafi Ahmad. When the news of Muhammad bin Ismail's stay at Ray reached the ears of Harun ar-Rashid, he wrote to Ishaq bin al-Abbas, ordering to arrest Muhammad and send him to Baghdad. Upon receipt of caliph's letter, he showed it to the Imam and replied to the caliph that he found no trace of Muhammad, and would send as soon as he was arrested, and thus he tried to put the caliph off the scent. But the spies planted by Baghdad were vigilants and reported to the caliph that Muhammad bin Ismail not only was living at governor's house, but that he was directing his mission from there. Upon this, the caliph wrote another letter to Ishaq bin al-Abbas, impugning him to come in person with his forces if his orders were not obeyed forthwith. The governor however made his usual reply.

Meanwhile, the complaints about Ali bin Musa bin Mahan, the governor of Khorasan reached the point where Harun ar-Rashid could no longer ignore them. With the intention of deposing his governor and to make a search of the Ismaili Imam, Harun ar-Rashid adopted a militant stance. In 189/805, he marched towards Ray with a detachment of his army, and after searching for the Imam through a tracking party, ordered the arrest and torture of Ishaq bin al-Abbas. He however did not give away any clue of the whereabouts of the Imam. Ishaq died as a result of severe and cruel torture that was inflicted upon him, and was rigorously flogged till death. He did not waver and stood firm in spite of excruciating tortures. In spite of the gloomy situation, however, his faith remained unshakable.

Muhammad bin Ismail in Nihawand

Muhammad selected Hurmuz as a chief *dai* of the mission, and then had made his footing at the fortified city of

Nihawand, where he stayed with the governor, Mansur bin Jowshan, who had close ties with Ishaq bin al-Abbas. He allotted the Imam a piece of land in the district of Sarha, where he led a peaceful living.

Nihawand was a town, lying about forty miles south of old province of Hamdan. It lies on the southern road, which coming from Kirmanshah, leads into Ispahan. The district of Nihawand was formerly called Mah-Bahrajan or Mahadinar. Among the products of Nihawand the Arab historians mention willow-wood which was used for polo-sticks (*sawalija*), aromatic reeds (*kasbat al-dharira*) to be used for *hanut* (a kind of perfume).

Muhammad bin Ismail in Khuzistan

It is related that Muhammad was traced out on one day in Sarha by the Abbasid agent, named Muhammad bin Ali al-Khorasani, who surprised the Imam in a mosque. He was greatly impressed to behold the Imam, and lost courage to arrest him, and permitted the Imam to escape. Thence, Muhammad went to Azar in Khuzistan, a province of south-western Iran. It was bounded on the west by the Iran-Iraq border; on the north by Luristan, on the south by the Persian Gulf; and on the east by the river Hindiyan. Muhammad thence proceeded to Shapur. Disguised as a merchant, he stayed in Shapur with a certain Qamas bin Nuh, whose daughter Rabta, he married. Shapur (Arabic *Sabur*), the *Shapurgird* of Firdusi; became an unscathed place for the Imam for some times.

Muhammad bin Ismail in Farghana

When the Abbasids intensified their search for the Ismaili Imam to its extreme, Muhammad had to travel out of Iran and reached as far as the valley of Farghana, which was a large, prosperous and pleasant region. Farghana was known as the "*Gate of Turkistan*" and now it is in Uzbekistan and partly in Tajikistan. It must be however noted that the history of Tajikistan is bound up with that of Uzbekistan in Central Asia, for the two countries are not only contiguous, but have often been governed by the same rulers and subject to the same invasions. The dominant tradition has it that Muhammad bin Ismail had taken refuge at Farghana valley, situated mainly in the eastern

Uzbekistan and partly in Tajikistan and Kyrgstan, covering an area of 8500 sq. miles. The old city of Paghana, however, is in Uzbekistan, spread over 2750 sq. miles with ancient ruins, wherefrom Muhammad bin Ismail seems to have dispatched his *dais* in the Pamir, the highland region of Central Asia, which is centered in the Gorno-Badakhshan in Tajikistan.

It is necessary here to remark that the Ismailis in upper Oxus were reportedly deep-rooted in their faith, but unfortunately we do not have details of the Ismaili mission during the veiled era in Central Asia. These Ismailis however retained a specific literary tradition by preserving and transmitting from generation to generation an anonymous treatise, entitled "**Ummu'l-Kitab**" that had certainly exercised a sole source of their religious inspiration for about three hundred years till the arrival of Nasir Khusaro in this region.

"**Ummu'l-Kitab**" consists of the discourses of Imam Muhammad al-Bakir in response of his disciples and the famous narrators of the traditions, such as Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari, Jabir al-Jufi and Muhammad bin al-Mufazzal bin Umar. It was composed originally in Arabic and was translated into Persian in later period. W. Ivanow assigns its compilation before the beginning of the 5th/11th century, while Henry Corbin (1903-1978) places its origin in 2nd/8th century.

"**Ummu'l-Kitab**" remained wrapped in mist for a long period. In 1898, A. Polovtsev, a Russian official in Turkistan, who was interested in the study of Ismailism and later became the Russian Consul-General in Bombay, while visiting the upper Oxus, he discovered a copy of "**Ummu'l-Kitab**". In 1911, its another Persian version was unearthed from Wakhan by the Russian official, called J. Lutsch. The photocopies of both these manuscripts were deposited in the Asiatic Museum of the Imperial Russian Academy of Science at St. Peterburg. Carl Salemann, the director of the Museum was editing its text, but his death in 1916 prevented the task. Later on, W. Ivanow was destined to edit and publish the text of "**Ummu'l-Kitab**" in 1936. He however based his edition on the copy which was obtained by Ivan I. Zarubin (1887-1964) in 1914 at Shagnan. "**Ummu'l-Kitab**" is a volume of 210 pages and was also

translated into Italian by Pio Filippini-Ronconi in 1966 from Naples.

After some times, Muhammad returned to his ancestral abode, Salamia and died in 197/813. He left behind six sons, viz. Jafar, Ismail, Ahmad, Ali, Hussain and Abdullah. He had also a son named Yahya.

Organisation of Ismaili Dawa

The word **dawa** (pl. **du'at**) is derived from **du'a** means to call, invite or summon, and thus the term **dai** denotes, "he who summons", whose corresponding term in English is "**missionary**" (derived from the Latin, *mittere*). The word **dawa** is also used in the sense of prayers, such as **dawat al-mazlum** (prayer of the oppressed), or **dawa bi'l shifa** (prayer of the health). The word **dawat** virtually originated in the time of Imam Jafar Sadik, and Abdullah bin Maymun had founded the Ismaili **dawa** organisation in Basra.

T.W. Arnold writes in "**The Preaching of Islam**" (Aligarh, 1896, p. 277) that, "The Ismailis were the master of organisation and tactics at the time of Abdullah bin Maymun." W. Ivanow writes in "**Collectanea**" (Holland, 1948, p. 20) that, "The only branch of Islam in which the preaching of religion, **dawat**, was not only organised but even considered of special importance, was Ismailism." According to "**The Encyclopaedia of Islam**" (Leiden, 1965, 2nd vol., p. 168), "The word **dawat** is well known as applied to the wide-spread Ismaili propaganda movement, appealing to Muslims to give their allegiance to an Imam descended from Ismail bin Jafar Sadik."

Soon afterwards, Salamia became the headquarters of Ismaili **dawat** after Basra, while Yamen later on became the **dai** generating hub. Indeed, very little is known about the actual mission (**dawa**) system of early Ismailism, but it is however certain that the Ismaili mission was brisk and pervasive throughout the Islamic regions. In the broadest terms, it seems that Muhammad bin Ismail was represented by twelve **huffats** in different regions, and beneath the **huffats**, a hierarchy of missionaries (**dais**) conducted the different tasks of initiation and instruction. The Ismaili

dais stimulated a network of the mission in many parts of the Abbasid empire and there was plenty of its activity even outside it. They fully exploited the socio-economic conditions of the weaker sections of society to attract them towards the mission on one hand, and the philosophical interpretations of the teachings of Islam to attract the thinking sections of the society on the other.

For purposes of mission, the world was divided into twelve parts, each being called *jazira* (usually translated as an island), known as the island of the earth (*jazira al-arad*). It is difficult to say whether *jazira* really meant an island. One can broadly agree with W. Ivanow when he says: "It appears that in this sense *jazira* does not mean the island, as it usually means, but is taken here in its basic sense, from the root *j-z-r* = to cut off, and therefore means a slice, cutting, or a part, a section. Therefore the expression 12 *jazair* should be translated as the 12 sections of the world population. They are: Arabs, Turks, Berbers, Negroes, Abyssinians, Khazras, China, Daylam, Rum and Sagaliba. Thus this classification is partly based on geographical, and partly on ethnographical principle, and plainly belongs to the fourth/tenth century." (vide "The Rise of the Fatimids", Calcutta, 1942, p. 21)

Zubaida - wife of Harun ar-Rashid

Most of the adherents of Ismaili faith during the period under review are hardly known due to the practice of *taqiya*. But, the Ismaili *dais* had best records of it, who became the source of informations for the later Ismaili authorities. Among the secret followers, the name of Zubaida, the wife of caliph Harun ar-Rashid is a significant. She was the daughter of the Abbasid caliph Mansur's elder son, Jafar; and her mother was Salsal, the sister of Harun ar-Rashid's own mother, named Khaizuran. Zubaida was thus the cousin of Harun ar-Rashid, and professed *batini tariqah* of the Ismailis secretly. Her marriage with Harun ar-Rashid took place in 164/781. Zubaida, in middle life, built herself a palace of her own, surrounded by a very large garden. She had employed a large staff of secretaries and agents to manage the properties she had acquired in all over the empire. She also undertook projects for the digging of canals for

irrigation and water supply. She was famous for the extensive engineering works which she had carried out in Mecca, to bring water sufficient for the increasing number of pilgrims. One of the most of her projects was the improvement of the pilgrim road across 900 miles of desert from Kufa to Medina and Mecca, which still in south Kufa is known as Darb Zubaida. She died in 226/841, about 32 years after her husband's death. It appears that she advocated Ismaili faith before her marriage in 164/781 and used to inform Imam Muhammad bin Ismail in advance the measures of Harun ar-Rashid through her trusted agents. It also appears that her close link with the Imam had ceased after the death of Muhammad bin Ismail.

According to "*Zahru'l-ma'ani*", "Muhammad spread religious knowledge, explained esoteric doctrines, and revealed to the chosen ones the great mystery, so much of these as never was revealed by any Imam before him."

Some sources state that after the massacre of Abul Khattab and his followers in Kufa, the remnants joined al-Mubarakhiyya, and that out of this union arose a group who preached that Muhammad bin Ismail was the last Imam, anticipating his return. It was however this group who was the predecessors of the later Qarmatians, who refused to accept the death of Muhammad bin Ismail, who, according to them remained alive and would return in the imminent future as the promised Mahdi or Qaim. The main loyalist branch of Ismailism however traced the Imamate in the progeny of Muhammad bin Ismail.

The period of Muhammad bin Ismail also saw an early growth of the Sufism in Islam. The eminent Sufis who flourished in the period under review were Hasan Basri (d. 110/728), Ibrahim bin Adham (d. 160/776), Abu Hashim Kufi (d. 160/775-6), Rabia Basri (d. 185/801), Shaiq Balkhi (d. 194/810), etc.

Muhammad b. Ismail - *al-Imamu'n Natiq*

It is worth mentioning that the Sunni historians had no basic idea of the Shiite concept of Imamate and arrayed hostility with the Ismailis in the light of their own sense of propriety. They championed in dressing up the baseless stories in their notion, and then used it a tool to defile Ismailism in aggressive and hyperbolic words.

Under such derogatory attitude, Muhammad bin Ismail is accused of claiming the prophethood and abolishing the *Shariah* of the Prophet.

The institution of the Imamate is a cornerstone and paramount position in Ismaili *tariqah*, and according to their theory, the seven millennial periods (*adwar'i azam*) form a part of a great cycle of 360,000 years. At its end, during the last period of 7000 years, there were six *natiqs* (speakers, pronouncers or law-givers), viz. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, the last Prophet. They are the seven law-givers. Each great period is started by the introduction of a new religion. This religion, exercising great influence upon mankind at the outset, but lost its original force with the passage of time. It is ultimately replaced by a new system to retain its originality and make it forceful then onwards. Each *natiq* lays down the *Shariah* for his period, and appoints an *asas* (base, foundation or executor). The *asas* lays the foundation of hidden knowledge (*ilm al-batin*), who is also called *wasi*, organizing the dissemination of the hidden knowledge among the faithfuls only. The *asas* is followed by a chain of Imams, who stimulate the mission on the basis of hidden teachings. The period (*dawr*) of one *natiq* comprises six ones and the seventh one becomes another *natiq*, who either proclaims another *Shariah* setting aside the earlier one, or cancelling (*tatil al-shariah*) its manifestation, and gives it a new interpretation on the ground of hidden secrets (*asrar'i batin*). The Prophet Muhammad was preceded by five *natiqs*, each *natiq* had cancelled his predecessor's *Shariah*. With this cycle, the Prophet stands as the sixth *natiq* who appointed his son-in-law Ali as his *wasi*, and there followed after him six Imams, bringing the Prophet's period (*dawr*) to a close. The seventh Imam, Muhammad bin Ismail was the *seventh natiq* in the new heptad. Muhammad Bakir Majlisi quotes a Hadith in his "*Biharu'l Anwar*" (13th vol., p. 156) that, "The next expected (*natiq*) Imam would be "the son of six" (*ibn sitta*), means the next *natiq* would be preceded by six Imams." Since there was no *Shariah* after the Prophet, Muhammad bin Ismail was not to announce a new religious law. Instead, he would reveal the esoteric truths concealed behind all the preceding messages. He abrogated the adulterated parts of the *Shariah* by explaining the hidden meaning of the true *Shariah* and

revealing its purpose. The Islamic **Shariah** had lost much of its pristine purity, and many unhealthy practices crept into the religion, therefore, the **tawil** was applied to protect its dynamic force.

Abrogation of the **Shariah**, therefore, by every seventh **natiq** encompasses the meaning of the law only, not its exoteric or practical and ritualistic aspects. The Prophet was **ar-Rasulu'n-Natiq**, whereas Muhammad bin Ismail was **al-Imamu'n-Natiq**. The former was the **natiq** in the capacity of the Prophethood, and the latter was the **natiq** in the role of Imamate. Thus, Muhammad bin Ismail had never repudiated or suspended the **Shariah** for his followers. Arif Tamir writes in "**al-Qaramita**" (pp. 86-87) that, "The Imamate of Muhammad bin Ismail was the beginning of a new era in the history of the Ismaili movement. We go even further to say that he came with some new teachings, setting aside some exoteric teachings which preceded. He was in fact the first Imam to have done away with the trouble of manifestation and gave call for **tawil** and esoteric meaning, and for spreading his mission, he relied on his **huffat** and great **dai**, Maymun al-Qaddah." Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) writes in "**Zahru'l-ma'ani**" that, "Muhammad bin Ismail was named the seventh **natiq**, because he rose to preach by the command of God, incorporating in himself all the virtues which are to be crowned in him. He is neither the Revealer of the final religion, nor the Apostle of God, but he is in a class by himself, of a unique rank."

It must be noted that the period of Muhammad bin Ismail was a turning point in the history of the Ismaili mission. The Abbasids revolution had been consolidated, and the Iranian influence in particular and Greek influence in general were being applied in the intellectual field. In a century that followed, the wave of Muslim conquest reached upto Samarkand, beyond the Oxus. With the extension of Muslim territory, there cropped up a number of new problems neither contained in Koran, nor anticipated by the Prophet. Hundreds of schools of jurisprudence appeared to mould the Muslim system of laws, but none could crystallize into definite system, acceptable by all. "Some five hundred schools of jurisprudence" writes Adam Mez in "**The Renaissance of Islam**" (London, 1937, p. 212), "are said to have disappeared at or about the beginning of the 3rd/9th century."

The *Schools of Law* represented by Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767), Malik bin Anas (d. 179/795), al-Shafi (d. 204/819) and Ahmad bin Hanbal (d. 241/855) also emerged prominently in this period. The major collections of Hadiths also were done mainly by Bukhari (d. 256/870) and Muslim bin al-Hajjaj (d. 261/875).

The problem however was to find a correct balance among all these developments when the Islamic world was undergoing radical changes. Islam had to keep pace with, and adjust to, the fast changing world and the growing of new trend. Muhammad bin Ismail had to impart the true Islamic teachings through *tawil* (the allegorical interpretation) based on reason to his followers. It was thus absolutely a false propaganda of the historians that Muhammad bin Ismail - he being the seventh *natiq* had claimed for his apostleship or cancelled the *Shariah* of the Prophet. P.J. Vatikiotis writes in "*The Fatimid Theory of State*" (Lahore, 1957, p. 90) that, "Abrogation of the *Shariah* by every Seventh *natiq*, as for example Muhammad b. Ismail, encompasses the meaning of the law only, not its *zahir* or practical and ritualistic aspect. Muhammad b. Ismail did not abolish anything of the formal worship and law of the *Shariah*; on the contrary, he strengthened it, and ordered everyone to act according to it. What Imam al-Muizz meant by the expression *al-shariah uttilat*, or the *Shariah* of Muhammad was purified by his mission, refers to his explaining its meaning and clarifying its hidden points. *Tatil* of *Shariah*, then, means its purification through *tawil*. A revelation of the external truths behind the *Shariah* to the closest initiates in the *dawa* constitutes Fatimid abrogation of law. It is not an abrogation that overthrows accepted legal ritual in the Quran, but rather the reconciliation of such law with religious philosophy."

It should also be known that the mis-interpretation of the theory of Muhammad bin Ismail as the Seventh *natiq* by the Sunni historians had engendered the coinage of the name "Seveners" (*sabiya*) for the Ismailis, which is a glaring instance, sounding their misconception in the Ismaili belief of Imamate. The Muslim knowledge of the Ismailis in the field of *tawil* had not progressed much beyond what they had transmitted on the subject. They knew little and broadcast more, and the field therefore continued to be

dominated by the fanciful impressions and fictitious hodgepodge.

WAFI AHMAD (197-212/813-828)

Abdullah bin Muhammad, surnamed ar-Radi, Nasir or al-Wafi (True to one's word) was also known as ar-Radi Abdullah al-Wafi or Wafi Ahmad, was born in 149/766. The tradition relates that Wafi Ahmad was locally known as **attar** (druggist) in Nishapur and Salamia as well, a surname he earned after his profession in drug and medicine as a protection against his real position. He was however represented by his **huffat**, Abdullah bin Maymun (d. 260/874). It is also learnt that he was called Muhammad bin Ismail among the Ismailis, who lived at remote distance and had not seen the Imams. He, being the son and successor of Imam Muhammad bin Ismail is admittedly asserted in the work of Tabari (3rd vol., p. 2218). His mother was Fatima, the daughter of Sarah, sister of Ishaq bin al-Abbas.

The Abbasid caliph Amin (193-198/809-814) was murdered after ruling for 4 years and 8 months, thereupon, his foster brother, Mamun Rashid (198-218/814-833) became the next caliph, who transferred his capital to Khorasan in early period of his rule, and as a result he followed a mild attitude with the Alids. After coming to Baghdad, Mamun Rashid changed his mind, and followed the doctrines of Mutazilite. He was however a bitterest foe of the Ismailis.

Beginning of *Dawr-i Satr*

The word **satr** (pl. **satur**) is derived from **astar**, meaning hide, cover or shield. As it is said, **masatra** (he concealed enmity), or **tastir** (to hold within a curtain). According to "**Arabic-English Lexicon**" (New York, 1872, 4th vol., p. 1304) by Edward William Lane, the word **satr** means to veil, conceal or hide a thing. The early Ismailis had employed the term **satr** with regards to those periods in their history when the Imams were hidden from the eyes of their followers. When the animosity of their enemies reached to its extreme, the Ismaili Imams had to hide

themselves to elude discovery. On that juncture, the *huffats* represented the Imams in the community. Thus, the *huffat* was himself a living proof, acting as the custodian until the time of the Imam's reappearance. This period is called *Dawr-i Satr* (period of concealment) in Ismaili history. In contrast, the period following the concealment is known as an unveiling (*Dawr-i Kashf*), or the period of manifestation (*Dawr-i Zuhur*), when the Imams publicly made their appearance.

With the death of Jafar Sadik in 148/765, Ismail (d. 158/775) and Muhammad (d. 197/813), the gravity of brutal persecutions of the Abbasids had considerably increased. The Abbasids left no chance to grind the Ismailis under the millstone of cruelty. The Ismaili Imams were impelled to thicken their hiding, therefore, the first *Dawr-i Satr* came into force from 197/813 to 268/882, wherein the Imams were known as *al-A'imatu'l masturin* i.e., the concealed Imams. Achilles des Souza writes in "*Mediation in Islam - an Investigation*" (Rome, 1975, p. 35) that, "For the first century and a half after the death of Ismail, the Ismaili Imams remained hidden and little is known. This period could be characterised, as we have seen earlier, as the period of the quietists."

And here we cannot but call attention to a fact that the doctrine of *ghayba* among the Twelvers should not be confounded with that of the concept of *satr* among the Ismailis. Seyyed Hossain Nasr writes in this context in his "*Ideals and Realities of Islam*" (London, 1966, p. 159) that, "The idea of being hidden (*mastur*) must not, however, be confused with the occultation (*ghayba*) of the twelfth Imam (of the Twelvers). The first implies simply being hidden from the eyes of the crowd and from public notice, while the second means disappearance from the physical world."

Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) writes in "*Zahru'l-ma'ani*" (p. 59) that, "He (Wafi Ahmad) was the first of the three concealed Imams by the order of God and His inspiration." Hamiduddin Kirmani (d. 412/1021) also admits in his "*ar-Risalat al-Wai'za*" (comp. 408/1017) that, "Muhammad bin Ismail became *qaim*, and after him, the concealed Imams (*aima'i masturin*) succeeded to the Imamate, who remained hidden on account of the persecution of the tyrants, and

these were three Imams, viz., Abdullah, Ahmad and Hussain." Hatim bin Imran bin Zuhra (d. 498/1104) writes in "**al-Usul wa'l Ahakam**" that, "When Muhammad bin Ismail died, his authority passed to his son, Abdullah bin Muhammad, the hidden one, who was the first to hide himself from his contemporary adversaries." According to Hasan bin Nuh Broachi (d. 939/1533) in "**Kitab al-Azhar**" (comp. 931/1525) that, "The three hidden Imams were Abdullah bin Muhammad, Ahmad bin Abdullah, surnamed at-Taqi and Hussain bin Ahmad." The fact that the **Dawr-i Satr** virtually came into force in the time of Wafi Ahmad has been also asserted by the modern scholars, such as W. Ivanow, Dr. Sami Nassib Makarem, Sir Johj Glubb, Husayn F. al-Hamdani, etc.

Shahrastani (1076-1153) writes in "**Kitab al-milal wa'l nihāl**" (p. 164) that, "Then begins the era of the hidden Imams, who went about secretly but sent out emissaries, who appeared openly on their behalf. They hold that the world can never be without an Imam who is alive and a **gaim**, either visible and manifest, or hidden and concealed. When the Imam is manifest it is possible for his **hujjat** (proof) to be hidden, but if the Imam is hidden it is necessary for his **hujjat** and emissaries to be manifest."

On account of the strictness of Imam's concealment, when his **hujjats** were accepting on his behalf the oath of allegiance from neophytes, they used to tell them that they should obey the Lord of the Time (**Sahib al-Asr** or **Waliyul Asr**) without pronouncing the name of the Imam. This practice was in use among the neophytes through the whole period of the concealment of the Imams.

Summing up the condition of the hidden Imams in the veiled period, Ibn Khaldun writes in his "**Muqaddimah**" (1st vol., pp. 44-5) that, "These people (Imams) were constantly on the move because of the suspicions various governments had concerning them. They were kept under observation by the tyrants, because their partisans were numerous and their propaganda had spread far and wide. Time after time they had to leave the places where they had settled. Their men, therefore, took refuge in hiding, and their (identity) was hardly known, as the poet says: 'If you would ask the days what my name is, they would not know, and where I am, they would not know where I am.'"

Wafi Ahmad settled in Nihawand, and betrothed to Amina, daughter of Hamdan, son of Mansur bin Jowshan, who was from Kazirun. By this wife, the Imam had a son, Ali bin Abdullah, surnamed al-Layth, and a daughter, Fatima. The brother of Wafi Ahmad also married here and had a posterity.

Meanwhile, the Abbasids intensified their operations, thus Wafi Ahmad made his son as the chief of the Ismaili mission, and himself went from the knowledge of the people, so that none of his followers and other knew where he was. It is however known from the fragment of the traditions that he had gone to Syria and lived in the castle of Masiyaf for some time.

Wafi Ahmad in Salamia

The Ismaili *dais* in search of a new residence for their Imam came to Salamia and inspected the town and approached the owner, Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Saleh, who had transformed the town into a flourishing commercial centre. They told him that there was a Hashimite merchant from Basra who was desirous of settling in the town. He readily accepted and pointed out to them a site along the main street in the market, where existed a house belonging to a certain Abu Farha. The Ismaili *dais* bought it for their Imam and informed him about it. Wafi Ahmad arrived to his new residence as an ordinary merchant. He soon pulled down the old building and had new ones built in its place; and also built a new wall around it. He also built a tunnel inside his house, leading to the desert, whose length was about 12 miles. Money and treasures were carried on camels to the door of that tunnel at night. The door opened and the camels entered with their loads inside the house.

Salamia was a small town in Syria in the district of east of the Orontes, and is located at a distance of 32 kilometers to the south-east of Hammah, or 44 kilometers to the north-east of Hims. It lies in a fertile plain, about 1500 feet above the sea level, south of the Jabal al-A'la and on the margin of the Syrian steppe, standing on the main entrance of the Syrian desert.

It is an ancient *Salamias* or *Salaminias* of the Greek, which flourished in the Christian period. According to Yaqut in "Mudjam" (3rd vol., p. 123), the town was

originally called **Salam-miyyah** (a hundred safe) after the hundred surviving inhabitants of the destroyed town of al-Mutafika, who migrated to this town, which they built and the expression was changed with the years until it became **Salamia**. There is a foundation inscription of a mosque on a stone at the entrance to the citadel, dating 150/767 founded by the local Hashimites and was destroyed by the Qarmatians in 290/902. It will be perhaps appropriate to say that the modern Salamia in Syria was prospered by the Ismailis. According to "**The Encyclopaedia of Islam**" (Leiden, 1995, 8th vol., p. 921), "The fact that Salamiyya was the centre of an important branch of the Hashimids and the isolated position of the town perhaps account for its important role in the early history of the Ismaili movement as the secret headquarters of the pre-Fatimid Ismaili **dawa**."

The adherents and **dais** began to rush privily to Salamia. Like in Nishapur, Wafi Ahmad was also known locally as **attar** (druggist) in Salamia.

Ahmad bin al-Kayyal al-Khasibi

It is related that during the Abbasid campaign of energetic search for Wafi Ahmad, the **huffat**, **dais** and the followers demonstrated matchless example of their firm faith. But one of the **dais**, called Ahmad bin al-Kayyal al-Khasibi had deviated from Ismailism. He had acquired Ismaili teachings from Imam and was well steeped in esoteric doctrines (**kalimat ismiyya**), but concocted his own theories that were contrary to the Ismaili faith. When Wafi Ahmad was informed about his negative propaganda, his having created confusion in the community, he excommunicated him, ordering his followers to separate from him. When Ibn al-Kayyal learnt the severe actions of Wafi Ahmad against him, he publicly renounced his allegiance and proclaimed himself first an Imam, and later on the promised Mahdi on earth to establish peace. Shahrastani also writes in "**Kitab al-milal wa'l-nihal**" (p. 17) that, "Ibn al-Kayyal had claimed the Imamate for himself and asserted that he was the promised Qaim on earth." He founded a sect called after him **Kayyaliyya**, who incorporated different heretical ideas in their doctrines. Ahmad bin al-Kayyal was however executed by his own followers in 207/822 who depended upon him, when they understood his impiety and his idea to

spread trouble in the world. With the end of Ahmad bin al-Kayyal, the Kayyaliyya sect also disappeared and its handful followers reverted to their original faith of Ismailism.

Wafi Ahmad further on repaired to Daylam with his 32 trusted *dais*, where he got married with an Alid lady in the village of Ashnash, and had a son by her, whom he named Ahmad, who later on became known as Taqi Muhammad. The adoption of strict *taqiya*, and moving from one to another place, forced Wafi Ahmad to assign the mission works to his brother, Hussain bin Muhammad. He ordered his followers to obey his brother, saying: "One who obeys him, he obeys myself, and one who disobeys him, he disobeys me." Hussain bin Muhammad with a party, disguised as merchants, went on pilgrimage to Mecca. He then arrived in Ahwaz from Samarra. A certain *dai* started preaching in favour of Hussain bin Muhammad, stating that Wafi Ahmad appointed him instead of himself. When Hussain heard about this, he went to the place where the *dai* resided, collected the concerned people, and declared that he was not the Imam, but a lieutenant of his brother, his servant and his slave. When the people heard this, their allegiance to the Imam increased.

Martyrdom of Imam's son and brother

Ali al-Layth, the elder son of Wafi Ahmad had also converted a multitude of people. He was a generous and brave soldier, and fond of hunting and raised a small force of about two thousand men. Once he was on a hunting excursion with his friends in woods, where they were raided by the Abbasids force sent from Ray. He had a handful men with him, but fought valiantly until an arrow struck him in his throat and fell from his horse. He was arrested and beheaded and his head was sent to the Abbasid governor at Ray.

Hussain bin Muhammad was busy with his correspondence and the affairs of the community on other side. He was much frightened when the news about the murder of Ali al-Layth reached him. He decided to emigrate a safe place together with his associates. They were also ambushed by the Abbasids in the hills of Nihawand. Hussain bin Muhammad performed outstanding feats of bravery, and after a heroic

resistance, he was killed with his associates with their families.

Ali al-Layth had a son, called Ahmad bin Ali al-Layth, a learned and highly talented. When his father was killed, his nurse concealed him and saved from the enemies. He took refuge in the village called Mahdi kad-gah in Khuzistan. With him there were those of his relatives from among the sons of Hussain bin Muhammad. When he grew up, he resolved to take revenge of his father's murder from the people closely involved. Hence he gathered around him those of the Shiites, who were supporting him. Thus, he is said to have mustered four thousand men around him. He proceeded with them and pitched his tents at Shaliba, near Damawand, where he posed himself as an Abbasid commander. He summoned the local inhabitants, assuring them to read an official letter received from the government for his commandership. When the people came, he, with his Shiite supporters, slaughtered them all. It is recounted that they were the people who had killed his father and Hussain bin Muhammad. After taking revenge, Ahmad bin al-Layth repaired to Asak, a village in the district of Ramhurmuz in Khuzistan.

Ahwaz (the **Elymais** of the Greeks) was a province in Abbasid realm, whom the Iranians coined in the form of **Susiana**. Ahwaz is an Arabic name (pl. of the sing. **Huz**, corresponding with Syriac **Huzaye**). It was bounded by Iraq on the west side, by the province of Faras, on the east and south, and on the north by the part of the province Jabal (now Luristan). Its capital was Suk al-Ahwaz (market of Ahwaz) and hence simply as al-Ahwaz.

It is most possible that Wafi Ahmad lived in Suk al-Ahwaz for a short period. When he received news of the misfortunes that befell his brother and son, he left Ahwaz, which was so far an unscathed place for him.

Wafi Ahmad next moved to Samarra with his son, Taqi Muhammad. Samarra lies on the east bank of the Tigris, half way between Takrit and Baghdad. The original form of the name is probably Iranian, and in this context, the following etymologies have been proposed: **Sam-rah**, **Sai-Amorra** and **Sa-morra**. The last two meaning the place of payment of tribute. On the Abbasid coins, it was written as **Surra man ra's** (delighted is he who sees it). Samarra was founded in 221/836 by the Abbasid commander, Ashnas,

two parsangs south of the village of Karkh-Fairuz. Between 221/836 and 276/889, seven Abbasid caliphs lived in Samarra. It seems that Wafi Ahmad found no proper respite at Samarra, therefore, he ultimately settled in Salamia, where he built a house and resided in the cloak of a local merchant.

There lived many eminent Hashimites in Salamia. Most of them belonged to the posterity of Agil bin Abu Talib, but some of whom were related to the Abbasids. So Wafi Ahmad pretended to be one of these, and was regarded as one of the Hashimites. He however kept in secret his own real name and the name of his son.

Search of the Imam

The constant change of the Imam's abode made the Ismailis and *dais* a complete loss of the trace of Wafi Ahmad, making them to remain in great confusion. *Dai* Hurmuz and his son Mahdi, *dai* Surhaf bin Rustam and his son Imran finally came forward to institute a search of the Imam. They collected four thousand dinars in cash from the donations of the faithfuls. They started on their journey, dispersing everywhere, each of them carrying with him a description of the appearance and characteristic features of the Imam. They travelled in guise of wandering hawkers, carrying with them on their donkeys different wares, such as pepper, aromatic plants, spindles, mirrors, frankincense and different kinds of millinery that find demand amongst women. Among themselves they agreed to meet on a fixed date at a certain place, selected in every province, different districts of which were allotted to every one of them to be toured. Whenever children and women came around them, they would ask these whether there was in their locality a person, bearing such features. At length, they came to the district of Hims in Syria. They appointed a mosque of that town as their meeting place. So it happened that the Imam also was in the same district, namely in the hills of Jabal as-Sumnaq, in "the monastery of sparrows" (*dayr asfurin*), near Kafrabhum. As usual, they were shouting for the items for sale in the Jabal as-Sumnaq. Some women and children came out to them, and they, as usual, asked whether there was amongst them a man, having such and such appearance. To their utter surprise, a boy and a woman demanded from them as a price from their goods, promising to show them where the person

answering their description could be found. They offered to them mastic, frankincense and other things. The woman and child told them that when just a short while ago they were passing near the monastery of sparrows, where they had seen the person with his pages. At length, they succeeded after hard searching for a year to find the Imam with great relief and jubilation.

Incomparable sacrifices

During the period of concealment (*dawr-i satr*), it is known that the Ismailis had offered great sacrifices for the cause of their faith, the detail of which is not accessible. They had been severely domineered and tortured by the Abbasids, the equal of which is hardly seen in other period. Suffice it to elite here one instance: a Syrian daily news, "*al-Baath*" on October 28, 1966 highlighted a report that a team of workers had discovered human skulls beneath the earth while digging a location to lay a pipeline, about 150 miles north of Salamia. The exhumation was immediately suspended, and the experts were summoned from Damascus for investigation. During the excavation, about 382 human skulls were exhumed, pitching with small iron nails, emanating a trembling story of severe torture and maltreatment. One skull, for instance was pierced with 151 nails. The matter was referred to the archaeological department, and after a minute examination of two months, it had been discovered that the above location originally was an old Ismaili cemetery, belonging to the period between 150/777 and 275/900. These Ismailis had to live in the teeth of very bitterest opposition, and were tortured with heartless during brutal persecutions, who could not escape the snares of the Abbasids. Being ingrained in their faith, they would not recant even under hardest trials.

Wafi Ahmad is known to have summoned his most trusted *dais*, called Abu Jafar and Abu Mansur at Salamia before his death, and said in presence of his son, Taqi Muhammad that: "I bequeath the office of Imamate to this my beloved son. He is your Imam from now onwards. You take an oath of allegiance from him, and must remain faithful with him in the manner you have been with me, and obey his orders." It is said that shortly before his death, Wafi Ahmad retired into solitude and died in Salamia in the year 212/828.

Wafi Ahmad had two sons, Ahmad surnamed Taqi Muhammad and Ibrahim. Nothing is virtually known about Ibrahim, save the fact that his posterity was still living at the time of Imam al-Mahdi in Salamia and were slain by the Qarmatians in 290/902.

According to Ibn Athir (10th vol., p. 184), Khalaf bin Mulaib al-Ashhabī (d. 499/1106) had captured Salamia in 476/1084 and acknowledged the Fatimid suzerainty. There is an evidence of this in an inscription in Kufic character, dated 481/1088, on the door beam of a mosque in Salamia. In the inscription, studied extensively by Rey, Hartmann, van Berchem and Littmann, Khalaf bin Mulaib says that he has erected a shrine on the tomb of Abul Hasan Ali bin Jarir. But, the Syrian Ismailis however have traditionally regarded this tomb as that of Imam Wafi Ahmad (Abdullah bin Muhammad), calling the mausoleum locally as *Makam al-Imam*. Later on, Prof. Heinz Halm studied and reinterpreted the aforesaid inscription in 1980, lends support to the local Syrian Ismaili tradition by holding that the mausoleum was in all probability originally erected, about 400/1009, over the tomb of Imam Wafi Ahmad by the Fatimid commander, called Ali bin Jafar bin Falah, known as *qutb ad-dawla* (magnate of the state), who, after subduing the rebellion of Mufraj bin Dagfal al-Jarrah Taiy, had seized Salamia for the Fatimids and whose name also appears in the inscription, and that Khalaf bin Mulaib merely repaired the site, some four decades later, vide "*Les Fatimides a Salama*" (*Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, LIV, 1986, pp. 133-149) by Heinz Halm.

TAQI MUHAMMAD (212-225/828-840)

Ahmad bin Abdullah, Muhammad al-Habib, or Abul Hussain, surnamed at-Taqi (God-fearing), also called Taqi Muhammad, was born in 174/790 and ascended in 212/828. He lived secretly with his followers as a merchant at Salamia. He is also called *Sahib al-Rasail* (Lord of the epistles). He however retained the services of Abdullah bin Maymun (d. 260/874) as his *hujjat*.

W.Ivanow writes in "Ismailis and Qarmatians" (*JEBRAS*, Bombay, 1940, p. 73) that, "The second hidden Imam, the author of the Encyclopaedia of the *Ikhwanu's Sifa*, or

Sahib al-Rasail, as he is usually referred to in the Ismaili theological works, is also known definitely as Ahmad."

Taqi Muhammad was known as an eminent Hashimite trader, making the people to flock at his residence. It suspected the Syrian governor, who communicated its report to caliph Mamun Rashid, who issued order to arrest Taqi Muhammad, but the latter had quitted Salamia in advance for few years.

Abu Tirmizi in Abbasid court

Abu Sa'id Tirmizi, known as Abu Tirmizi was an Iranian Ismaili *dai*. He seems to have been active in the villages of Iraq. Tradition has it that he once happened to visit Baghdad and joined the philosophical deliberations of the Mutazalites in the Abbasid court. It is recounted that someone informed caliph Mamun that Abu Tirmizi was an Ismaili *dai*, whereupon, he summoned him in a separate chamber. Mamun treated him tactfully, pretending that he was too a secret follower of Taqi Muhammad and said, "I am an ardent lover of the Imam. I cherish a desire to hand over my caliphate to the Imam when I behold him and will serve him whole-heartedly." Abu Tirmizi delighted on Mamun's words, but did not divulge his identity and left the court. He resided in Baghdad for few months and when he found that nobody followed him, he made his way towards Salamia and visited Imam's residence. During the course of discussion, he said to Taqi Muhammad that, "Mawla! caliph Mamun feels himself ashamed in his actions against us. He is ready to abdicate the temporal power in your favour, therefore, you manifest publicly and assume the caliphate." Taqi Muhammad said, "O' Tirmizi! you have not yet known the deceitful trick of the Abbasids. The heart of Mamun is full of animosity. He is a liar and hypocrite. His heart is harder than stone." Abu Tirmizi however continued to insist, whereupon the Imam said, "I allow you to go once again to Mamun's court if you have still trust on his words and claim yourself as if an Imam. He will swiftly hand over you his caliphate if he is truly a follower. If so, you let me know, so that I may manifest publicly." Abu Tirmizi said, "Mawla! Mamun is very clever and will persecute me if I fail to show him the signs of Imamate if asked." Taqi Muhammad replied, "The time itself will favour you. He will be surprised through my

light and you will surely pass through his trials. But remember, Mamun is not a faithful and he will execute you."

Abu Tirmizi returned to Baghdad and managed to see caliph Mamun once again and said, "O'caliph! I am an Imam on earth. I have concealed my legitimate claim during our first meeting due to your fear. You must trust me, as I am indeed an Imam." Upon hearing, Mamun discoursed with him on religious matters and asked many questions. When he became satisfied, he ordered his soldiers, who brutally beheaded Abu Tirmizi in the court. It is also said that caliph Mamun was made known that he had executed an Ismaili *dai* and not the Imam, therefore, he ordered to find whereabouts of Imam Taqi Muhammad.

Trend of philosophy in Islam

To understand the meaning of philosophy in Islam, it is best to examine the use of the terms *falsafah* and *hikmah* in various traditional sources. The term *hikmah* appears in several places in the Holy Koran, of which perhaps the most often cited is, "He gives wisdom (*hikmah*) to whom He wills, and he to whom wisdom is given" (2:269). It also appears in the hadith literature that "The acquisition of *hikmah* is incumbent upon you. Verily the good resides in *hikmah*" and according one another hadith, "Speak not of *hikmah* to fools" (*alaika bil hikmati fa-innal ghair*).

After the rise of the Abbasids, the Iranian who excelled the Arabs in learning and scholarship, became associated with their empire. In fact they were the intellectual cream of that society, being greatly inclined towards philosophy, for which the Arabs had no taste. It was for this reason that during the Umayyad period in Damascus, known as the Arab national rule, the intellectual discipline like philosophy never acquired popularity. But during the Abbasid rule, because of the close association of the Iranians, the Greek philosophy acquired great currency. Thus in those days, it was the Muslim intellectuals who kept the torch of Greek philosophy burning. They realized that the old religious ideas must not be taken in their literal meaning, imparting that the mystical philosophy of esotericism owed its distinct origin to the words of Koran. The Mutazalites were in

front to see Islamic teachings on the scale of philosophy. Baghdad became not only the metropolis, but also an important centre at that time.

The function of philosophy is nothing more than speculating on the beings and considering them in so far as they lead to the knowledge of the Creator. The Holy Koran exhorts man to this kind of rational consideration (*i'tibar*) in many a verse such as: "Consider, you who have vision." Thus *al-i'tibar* is a Koranic term which means something more than pure speculation or reflection (*nazar*). M.M. Sharif writes in "**Philosophical Teachings of the Quran**" (cf. "**History of Muslim Philosophy**", Germany, 1963, 1st vol., p. 137) that, "The Quran claims to give an exposition of universal truths with regard to these problems - an exposition couched in a language and a terminology which the people immediately addressed, the Arabs, with the intellectual background they had at the time of its revelation, could easily understand, and which the people of other lands, and other times, speaking other languages, with their own intellectual background could easily interpret. It makes free use of similitude to give a workable idea of what is incomprehensible in its essence."

According to "**al-Kafi**" (Tehran, 1978, p. 76) by Kulaini (d. 329/941), Jafar Sadik once said: "It is obligation on you to gain sound comprehensions of the religion of God and not to be like the rustic Bedouin Arabs, since God on the day of judgement, will neither cast even a glance at nor will He purify the deeds of a person who has developed no understanding of the religion." The Arabs with scarce means and resources at their disposal in the desert, had no tradition of speculative philosophy. They could not achieve intellectual sophistication, and therefore, they were both physically and intellectually very simple people. Islam too bore this imprint, and its teachings were comparatively simple and speculative thought having an emphasis on external observations. The situation had changed drastically during the Abbasid period. Islam was no longer a simple faith it used to be believed in the Arabian desert. It was a Semitic religion universalized to embrace non-Semitic elements. The Iranians who embraced Islam had intuitive and speculative minds, and they saw Islam with such minds. In sum, the Iranians were so more cultivated, both in education and tradition, that the ordinary Arabs were looked down upon as coarse ruffians

and uncouth barbarians. Nor did the Arabs have anything special to point to in self-defence against such sneers, except their priority as a cradle within the Islam. In sum, the Arabs were only in exceptional cases mystically minded, who were generally content with the literal and the way to God along extrinsic lines had been enough for them. The cultivation of philosophical trend therefore, had been strongest among the Muslims in non-Arabs lands.

The Mutazalites came forward to apply the criterion of reason in presenting Islamic teachings. Tools of Greek philosophy and its terminologies were now being freely employed for explaining Islamic faith. Even the Asharites who were fanatically opposed to see Islam in the light of Greek philosophical aspects had to employ those very tools to refute such attempts by their opponents. Mysticism too, grew side by side with this trend. The mystics were influenced by Neo-Platonism. Ibn Sina writes in "**al-Isharat**" that, "Philosophy is the exercise of intellect, enabling man to know Being as it is in itself. It is incumbent upon man to do this by the exercise of his intellect, so that he may ennoble his soul and make it perfect, and may become a rational scientist, and get the capacity of eternal bliss in hereafter." During the time of new philosophical approach, the orthodox circles had two options open before them; either to adopt a rigid stance, or to assimilate the trend. The orthodox orbits, however, tenaciously reacted against this pattern.

It must be noted that the legacy of Greek philosophy had ended with the school of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), but it reappeared blended with Oriental thought under the name of Neo-Platonism (**al-afletuniyat al-muhdathah**), propounded by Plotinus (207-270 A.D.). He was succeeded by his pupil, Porphyry (233-305), who made certain modifications. Proclus (411-485) was the last great schoolman, who had left it in a form in which it was taken up by the Muslim thinkers.

The Ismaili **dawa** was yet in the cradle during that period, who opted the philosophical course, and provided an ideal climate for the new philosophical tendency with the ever living role of the Imams. The Ismaili **dais** were well aware of the intellectual trend, who sincerely desired to creatively apply Neo-Platonism in the teachings of Islam. What is known as **tawil** in Ismaili jargon was nothing but the esoteric explanation of the exoteric teachings and

practices of Islam. This assimilation attracted a number of eminent persons towards Ismailism. The Neo-Platonism readily found a congenial home for itself within the world of Shiism. It was for this principal cause that the orthodox theologians vehemently opposed the rational interpretation, and wrongly accused Ismailism of having suspended the operation of the Islamic *Shariah*. The Ismaili Imams however never allowed their followers to disregard the observance of the outward injunctions, but imparted the hidden meaning of the Koranic verses. They had nothing to do with political opportunism and remained away from its vortex and clung fast to their doctrines.

Origin of the Mutazalism

The account of the origin of Mutazalism given by Shahrastani is widely accepted as the standard one. According to his account, once Hasan Basri (d. 110/728), one of the earliest Sufis, was imparting instructions to his pupil in a mosque. Before the lessons were finished, someone turned up and asked, whether they should regard the grave sinner as a believer or an unbeliever. Hasan Basri was on the point of giving a reply to this query when a long-necked pupil, Wasil bin Ata (d. 131/748), burst into discussion with the assertion that the perpetrator of grave sins is neither a complete unbeliever nor a perfect; he is placed midway between unbelief and belief - an intermediate state, i.e., *mansila bayn al-manzilatayn* (a position between the two positions). Having spoken he strode to another pillar of the mosque followed by a number of those in the circle. Hasan Basri shot a swift glance at him and said that, "He has withdrawn (*i'tazala anna*) from us." From this remark originated the name, *Mutazila* or *Mutazalite*, i.e., the Withdrawers or Secessionists. Other versions have a similar story, but the man who withdraws is not Wasil bin Ata but Amr bin Ubaid (d. 144/761). About the same time as al-Khayyat Ibn Qutayba wrote of Amr that he held the doctrine of Qadar and made propaganda for it; and he and his followers withdrew (*i'tazala*) from Hasan Basri and were called the *Mutazila*. Ibn Munabbih says that the title of *Mutazila* came into vogue after the death of Hasan Basri. When Hasan passed away, Qatada succeeded him and continued his work. Amr bin Ubaid and his followers avoided the company of

Qatada, therefore, they were given the title of al-Mutazila.

The material so far examined shows a divergence of view on whether the leader was Amr or Wasil. Yet other considerations, however, suggest that the originator of the sect in the form in which it became famous was neither of these men but Abul Hudhayl and his generation. The statement of Ibn Hazm shows that the Mutazalites were a group of rationalists who judged all Islamic beliefs by theoretical reason and renounced those that related to all that lay beyond the reach of reason. They raised the problems of freewill and determinism, the attributes of God, the nature of the soul, the createdness of the Koran, etc. In sum, an endless chain of polemics was started by them in the Muslim society to such extent that Islam began to be assailed both from inside and outside. The situation was fraught with great danger for the faith. When the various forces arrayed themselves against the extremism of the rationalists, the orthodox **ulema** also reacted against them negatively.

The Rasail Ikhwan as-Safa

The Abbasid caliph Mamun (d. 218/833) also patronized philosophy and professed Mutazalism. It was an interesting trend among the educated elite to drift towards Greek philosophy and ultimately a bulk of the contradictions raised among the Muslims in interpreting Islamic practices. It must be known on this juncture that the intellect is an indispensable faculty in man, but despite this, its power of penetration has a definite limit. It may enjoy apparent supremacy and mastery in certain fields, but there are many things which are baffling and incomprehensible to it. The intellect cannot grasp a thing as a whole and its entirety. Its range of operation is limited, and therefore a true spiritual master is needed to guide a proper method.

When the independent philosophical trend was perceived a threat to the Islamic **Shariah** from liberal sciences, a knot of earnest thinkers began to flock in a house in Basra at a fixed season to reconcile the philosophy and religion. They were the **Ikhwan** most probably an agency or organ of the Ismaili mission. They tried to evolve a new synthesis in order to save Islamic teachings from being swept away by the new flood of knowledge. Sayed Amir Ali

writes in *"The Spirit of Islam"* (London, 1955, p. 432) that, "It was at this epoch of travail and sorrow for all lovers of truth that a small body of thinkers formed themselves into a Brotherhood to keep alive the lamp of knowledge among the Muslims; to introduce a more healthy tone among the people, to arrest the downward course of the Muslims towards ignorance and fanaticism, in fact, to save the social fabric from utter ruin. They called themselves the Brothers of Purity, *Ikhwan-as-Safa*."

The Arabic phrase *"Ikhwan as-Safa"* has been variously translated by orientalist as *"Brethren of Purity"* (R.A. Nicholson), *"The Pure Brethren"* (H.A.R. Gibb), *"Sincere Brethren"* (W. Montgomery Watt), *"Sincere Friends"* (G.E. Von Grunebaum), *"die lauterer Bruder"* (C. Brokelmann), *"die treuen Freunde"* (ibid), *"die aufrichtigen Bruder und treuen Freunde"* (G. Flugel), or *"les Freres de la Purete"* (A. Awa). The full name of the association was *Ikhwan al-Safa wa Khullan al-Wafa wa Ahl al-adl wa abna al-Hamd* (i.e., "The Brethren of Purity, the Faithful Friends, the Men of Justice and the Sons deserving praiseworthy Conduct"), a name which was suggested to them by the chapter of the *"Ring-Necked Dove"* in *Kalimah wa Dimnah*. Different explanations are offered for the appellation, *Ikhwan as-Safa*. Nicholson and Levy write on the authority of Ibn Qifti (d. 646/1248) that its title is derived from their declaration that the Islamic *Shariah* in their time had become defiled with ignorance and adulterated with errors, and the only way to purify it was by means of philosophy. Tibawi rather than Goldziher was therefore closer to the truth when he observed that the name *"Ikhwan as-Safa"* was chosen as an imitation of the Sufi tendency to associate their name with *safa* (purity).

It is said that the members of the *Ikhwan as-Safa* formed a sort of Masonic Lodge, who lived in the Lower Mesopotamian river port of Basra; debating on literature, religion, philosophy and science. The association or club kept their proceedings concealed, and none were admitted. They were classed into four grades according to their moral and age, rather elevation of soul. The first grade consisted of young men between 15 and 30 years of age, who were initiated into complete obedience to their teachers. The second grade included men between 30 and 40 years, who were given secular education and awareness of philosophy

as well. To the third grade belonged men between the ages of 40 and 50 who had a more adequate knowledge of divine law working in the universe. The fourth grade comprised men over 50 years, who were supposed to have an insight into the reality of things. Their philosophical meetings took place three evenings each month at the start, middle and sometimes between 25th and the end of the month. They also celebrated three major feasts in the year, and both the meetings and feasts were closely related and coincided with the entry of the sun into three Zodiacal Signs of the Ram (**Aries**), the Scorpion (**Cancer**) and the Balance (**Libra**). These feasts were also co-related with the Islamic feasts of Id al-Fitr, Id al-Adha and Id al-Ghadir. They also held special gathering (**majlis**), each one on every twelve days. This secret association has left behind a standing monument of its achievements in an encyclopaedia, known as "**Ikhwan as-Safa**", comprising of 52 epistles (**rasail**) with the following topics:-

- 14 epistles on **Mathematics**.
- 17 epistles on **Natural Sciences**.
- 10 epistles on **Psychological and Rational Sciences**.
- 11 epistles on **Theological Sciences**.

It also classified the science in three major groups as under:-

- a) **Mathematics**: includes theory of number, geometry, astronomy, geography, music, theoretical and practical arts, ethics and logic.
- b) **Physics**: includes matter, form, motion, time, space, sky, generation, minerals, planets, animals, human body, senses of life and death, microcosm, pleasure, pain and language.
- c) **Metaphysics**: divided into psycho-rationalism and theology.
 - i) psychics, rationalistic, being, macrocosm, mind, love, resurrection and causality.



- ii) belief, faith, divine law, prophethood, etc.

The Epistles of the *Ikhwan* occupy a place in the first rank of Arabic literature. It is also the great treasure house of Sufic thought. For example, it says: "Know, O brother, that your soul is potentially an angel, and can become One in actuality if you follow the path of the prophets and the masters of the divine laws." (*Rasail* 4th vol., p. 122), and also "All creation will ultimately return to Him since He is the source of their very existence, substance, immortality and perfection" (*Rasail* 3rd vol., p. 285).

The Epistles were distributed in various mosques of Baghdad. It played an important role by attempting a creative synthesis of Greek philosophy and the doctrines of Islam, giving a new dimension to the religion. It attracted the best intellectuals of its time and saved Islam from the heretical inroads that were preying upon it. It aimed to impart that if the *tawil* is carefully studied similarities with philosophical tools, the essence of the Islamic teachings can be easily discovered logically. It must be known that it greatly impacted the rationalists and after 270/850, even the Mutazalites became more and more a small coterie of academic theologians cutt off from the masses of the people and exercising no more influence on the further course of Islamic thought.

The compiler of *Ikhwan as-Safa* concealed his identity so skillfully that modern scholarship has spilled much ink in trying to trace the members of group. Using vivid metaphor, the members referred to themselves as "sleepers in the cave" (*Rasail* 4th, p. 18). In one place they gave as their reason for hiding their secrets from the people, not fear of earthly rulers nor trouble from the common populace, but a desire to protect their God-given gifts (*Rasail* 4th, p. 166). Yet they were well aware that their esoteric teachings might provoke unrest, and the calamities suffered by the successors of the Prophet were a good reason to remain hidden until the right day came for them to emerge from their cave and wake from their long sleep (*Rasail* 4th, p. 269). To live safely, it was

necessary for their doctrines to be cloaked. Ian Richard Netton, however writes in **"Muslim Neoplatonists"** (London, 1982, p. 80) that, "The Ikhwan's concepts of exegesis of both Quran and Islamic tradition were tinged with the esoterism of the Ismailis." Strangely enough, in dealing with the doctrines of Qadariya and Sabaeans of Harran, the Epistles do not mention the Ismailism. Yet it was the Ismailis, perhaps more than any other, which had the most profound effect on the structure and vocabulary of the Epistles. Almost the average scholars have attempted to show that the **Ikhwan** (brothers) were definitely Ismailis. A.A.A. Fyzee (1899-1981), for instance, writes in **"Religion in the Middle East"**, (ed. by A.J. Arberry, Cambridge, 1969, 2nd vol., p. 324) that, "The tracts are clearly of Ismaili origin; and all authorities, ancient and modern, are agreed that the Rasail constitute the most authoritative exposition of the early form of the Ismaili religion." According to Yves Marquet, "It seems indisputable that the Epistles represent the state of Ismaili doctrine at the time of their compositions" (vide, **"Encyclopaedia of Islam"**, 1960, p. 1071) Bernard Lewis in **"The Origins of Ismailism"** (London, 1940, p. 44) was more cautious than Fyzee, ranking the Epistles among books which, though "closely related to Ismailism" may not actually have been Ismaili, despite their **batini** inspiration. Ibn Qifti (d.646/1248), reporting in the 7th/13th century in **"Tarikh-i Hukama"** (p. 82) that, "Opinions differed about the authors of the Epistles. Some people attributed to an Alid Imam, proffering various names, whereas other put forward as author some early Mutazalite theologians."

Tibawi in **"Ikhwan as-Safa and their Rasail"** (p. 37) has aptly linked their content to the draft of deliberations by a learned society composed by a well educated secretary, and this could be very close to the truth. It is certainly possible that the Epistles could be the work of one author only, for there are significant lapses from the usual plural mode of address into the first person singular. It also appears that the Epistles were not completely authored by a specific person, but it was the outcome of the intellectual deliberations of the learned thinkers inspired from the close directive of the specific person. It may also be possible that the specific author had been referred the deliberations in writing for approval, who had edited and deleted the irrelevant

portions, and projected into different Epistles. When the Epistles had been circulated widely, the secret club founded in Basra and its branches were liquidated with a view that their secret mission had been accomplished.

Among the Syrian Ismailis, the earliest reference of the Epistles and its relation with the Ismailis is given in "**Kitab Fusul wa'l Akhbar**" by Nurudin bin Ahmad (d. 233/849). Another important work, "**al-Usul wa'l-Ahakam**" by Abul Ma'ali Hatim bin Imran bin Zuhra (d. 498/1104), quoted by Arif Tamir in "**Khams Rasa'il Ismailiyya**" (Salamia, 1956, p. 120), writes that, "These **dais**, and other **dais** with them, collaborated in composing long Epistles, fifty-two in number, on various branches of learning." It implies the Epistles being the product of the joint efforts of the Ismaili **dais**.

Among the Yemenite traces, the earliest reference of the Epistles is found in "**Sirat-i Ibn Hawshab**" by Garar bin Mansur al-Yamen, who lived between 270/883 and 360/970, and writes, "He (Imam Taqi Muhammad) went through many a difficulty and fear and the destruction of his family, whose description cannot be lengthier, until he issued (**ansa'a**) the Epistles and was contacted by a man called Abu Gafir from among his **dais**. He charged him with the mission as was necessary and asked him to keep his identity concealed." This source not only asserts the connection of the Epistles with the Ismailis, but also indicates that the Imam himself was not the sole author (**sahib** or **mu'allif**), but only the issuer or presenter (**al-munsi**). It suggests that the text of the philosophical deliberations was given a final touching by the Imam, and the approved text was delivered to Abu Gafir to be forwarded possibly to the **Ikhwan** in Basra secretly. Since the orthodox circles and the ruling power had portrayed a wrong image of Ismailism, the names of the compilers were concealed. The prominent members of the secret association seem to be however, Abul Hasan al-Tirmizi; Abdullah bin Mubarak, Abdullah bin Hamdan, Abdullah bin Maymun, Sa'id bin Hussain etc. The other Yemenite source connecting the Epistles with the Ismailis was the writing of Ibrahim bin al-Hussain al-Hamidi (d. 557/1162), who compiled "**Kanz al-Walad**." After him, there followed "**al-Anwar al-Latifa**" by Muhammad bin Tahir (d. 584/1188), "**Tanbih al-Ghafilin**" by Hatim bin Ibrahim (d. 596/1199), "**Damigh al-Batil wa haft**

al-Munazil" by Ali bin Muhammad bin al-Walid al-Anf (d. 612/1215), **"Risalat al-Wahida"** by Hussain bin Ali al-Anf (d. 667/1268) and **"Uyun'l-Akhbar"** by Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) etc.

Virtually, nothing is known in detail about the Ismailis during the veiled era, and it seems that most of the renowned Ismailis had adopted **tagiya**. According to **"Ikhwan as-Safa"** (Rasail 21st., p. 166), "Know, that among us there are kings, princes, khalifs, sultans, chiefs, ministers, administrators, tax agents, treasurers, officers, chamberlains, notables, nobles, servants of kings and their military supporters. Among us too there are merchants, artisans, agriculturists and stock breeders. There are builders, landowners, the worthy and wealthy, gentlefolk and possessors of all many virtues. We also have persons of culture, of science, of piety and of virtue. We have orators, poets, eloquent persons, theologians, grammarians, tellers of tales and purveyors of lore, narrators of traditions, readers, scholars, jurists, judges, magistrates and ecstasies. Among us too there are philosophers, sages, geometers, astronomers, naturalists, physicians, diviners, soothsayers, casters of spells and enchantments, interpreters of dreams, alchemists, astrologers, and many other sorts, too many to mention."

The preceding inventory suggests that the Ismaili faith had been penetrated privily in the people of all walks of life. Joel Carmichael writes in **"The Shaping of the Arabs"** (London, 1969, p. 386) that, "The Ismaili sect seems to have elaborated its doctrines in such a way as to attract a great part of the social discontent into its own channels and to have had immense appeal for the common people who were suffering so much from the social afflictions of the period. Beginning with the substantial peasant support and gradually infiltrating the urban workers, especially the craftsmen, with their revolutionary ideas, the Ismailis seem to have created some of the Islamic craft guilds."

During **dawr-i satr**, the Ismaili **dais** preached that an Imam in the descent of Jafar Sadik would manifest in near future as a promised Mahdi. The fragment of this prediction is also sounded in **"Ikhwan as-Safa"** (2nd vol., p. 290) that: "We hope that there will appear from our

community the Imam, the Mahdi, who is the expected one (**al-muntazar**) from the house of Prophet Muhammad."

Prof. Masudul Hasan writes in **"History of Islam"** (Lahore, 1987, 1st vol., p. 486) that, "Al-Habib (Taqi Muhammad) had his headquarters at Salamiah near Hims in Syria, and from there he sent missionaries in all directions to propagate the Ismaili creed and enrol adherents."

The period of Taqi Muhammad is also noted for the several skilled exponents of Sufi thought, such as Harith Muhasibi, Dhun al-Nun Misri (d. 243/859), Bayazid Bustami (d. 260/874), Junaid Baghdadi (d. 298/910), etc.

Taqi Muhammad exercised **tagiya** during the period of his Imamate to escape the snares of the Abbasids. A rhetorical reference to him is found in **"Rasail Ikhwan as-Safa"** (Rasail 4th, p. 199), indicating that the veiled Imam was apparent in reality.

Taqi Muhammad is reported to have died in 225/840 in Salamia after bequeathing the office of Imamate to his son, Hussain surnamed, Radi Abdullah. His another son, Muhammad surnamed Sa'id al-Khayr, whose posterity were living in Salamia and killed at the hands of the Qarmatians in 290/902.

RADI ABDULLAH (225-268/840-881)

Hussain bin Ahmad or Abu Abdullah, surnamed az-Zaki, known as Hussain ar-Radi, or Radi Abdullah (Servant of God who is satisfied and content), was born in 210/825 and assumed the Imamate in 225/840. He is also called Muhammad and al-Muqtada al-Hadi. His also kept his identity secret being represented by his **huffat**, Ahmad, surnamed al-Hakim.

Tabari (3rd vol., p. 2232) refers to his son, al-Mahdi under the name of Ibn al-Basri (the son of Basra), emphasising the connection of Radi Abdullah with southern Mesopotamia and the adjoining province of Khuzistan.

The Abbasid caliph al-Mutasim (218-227/833-842) was followed in succession by al-Wasik (227-232/842-847), al-Mutawakkil (232-247/847-861), al-Muntasir (247-248/861-

862), al-Mustain (248-252/862-866), al-Mutaz (252-255/866-869), al-Muhtadi (255-256/869-870) and al-Mutamid (256-279/870-892).

Radi Abdullah is celebrated in devoting time to complete the task of his father, his teachings and institutions. In his time, the faith of the Ismailis spread by leaps and bounds with galloping speed through out the length and breath of Arabia.

Radi Abdullah was an erudite scholar and is celebrated to have epitomised "**Ikhwan as-Safa**" into an instructive synopsis (**al-jamia**). Its full name was "**ar-Risalat al-Jamia**" (the comprehensive epistle). It served as a substitute for the Epistle of "**Ikhwan as-Safa**" and was intended for private circulation among the more advanced members of the groups. The **al-Jamia** is the backbone of the Epistles, which was further summarized in "**Risalat al-Jamiat al-Jamia an al-Zubdah min Rasail Ikhwan as-Safa**" (the condensation of the comprehensive epistles, or the cream of the epistles of Ikhwan as-Safa).

It must be known that the monograph of "**ar-Risalat al-Jamia**" was awarded the first **Howard Bliss Prize** by the American University of Beirut in 1929, and was subsequently published serially in the Journal of that institution, vide "**al-Kulliyat**" (vol. xvii, 1930-1).

Ahmad bin Abdullah bin Maymun

He was born in 204/828 and had joined the Ismaili mission at youth. He conducted his activities in Iran and Iraq. His father had sent him with a deputation to make a survey in Yamen, where he collected the informations for the headquarters and also travelled as far as Bahrain. After his father's death in 260/874, he returned to Salamia, where Radi Abdullah promoted him to the rank of *hujjat*. He was known in Salamia as Ahmad al-Hakim, and died in 275/888. He was a man of great ability and is credited with having surveyed the above regions for forthcoming mission works.

Mission of Ibn Hawshab in Yamen

Radi Abdullah had dispatched his *dais* in all directions, the most acclaimed among them was Abul Qassim Hasan bin Farah bin Hawshab, generally known by the epithet, **Mansur al-Yamen** (the victorious one of the Yamen). Ibn Hawshab was originally a Twelver, and is said to have spent most of time in a secluded spot on the bank of Euphrates. In such state, he is reported to have met Radi Abdullah and discoursed with him on religion. Imam left him after promising to see him again. Ibn Hawshab was impressed by his chance meeting with the Imam, and was eager to further meeting. After an anxious wait for several days, the Imam did not appear again, thus he became restless and began to search him. Despite his frantic efforts to locate the Imam's whereabouts, he could not trace him. After sometimes, he accidentally met the Imam's deputy, and through him, Ibn Hawshab eventually succeeded in reaching the Imam's presence. Radi Abdullah answered his queries to his satisfaction and assuaged his doubts, and at length he espoused Ismailism. Radi Abdullah imparted him the knowledge of Islamic creed, tenets and esoterism.

When the Imam found that Ibn Hawshab was firmly grounded in Ismaili faith and groomed enough for the responsibility of its promulgation, he jointly entrusted him and his colleague, Ibn Fazal, with the task of Ismaili mission in Yamen. Before they set off on their venture, Radi Abdullah summoned them in a private audience and urged to respect each other, and avoid any sort of religious difference. He also entrusted Ibn Hawshab with a voluminous tome which comprehensively dwelled upon the exoteric and esoteric aspects of Ismaili faith. Thus, being equipped with verbal as well as written guidances, both of them set forth on their mission to Yamen in 266/880. Mecca was their first destination, and accosted the pilgrim caravan from Yamen. They proceeded at last to Yamen, and after reaching, both of them separated. Ibn Hawshab headed towards the southern region, and focused his mind on the village of Adanla'a, thickly populated by the Shiites. He married to a local woman and settled down in Adanla'a under strict *taqiya*. He succeeded to convert the inhabitants. When he found the time appropriate to reveal his identity, he discreetly started his mission, inviting the people to the Ismaili fold and accepting oath of allegiance on behalf of Radi Abdullah and his successor. On other side, Ibn Fazal also

followed similar tract, and succeeded in winning the sympathy and adherence of the people of Saroyafca.

Ibn Hawshab had managed to take possession of a stronghold constructed on a hillock and made it his headquarters. He arranged military training for his followers. He also took possession of Jabal al-Jusaysah and Jabal al-Maswar. Ibn Hawshab however assured the people that his campaigns were neither after booty nor personal glory, but these were meant to promulgate true Islamic message through Ismailism. Finally, he conquered Sana'a, the capital of Yamen, and exiled the ruling tribe of Banu Laydir, and established Ismaili authority in Yamen.

The Ismaili mission reached the apex of its influence in Yamen, from where Ibn Hawshab dispatched many *dais* to the farthest corners. Thus, Yamen became a vital zone and an important hub of Ismaili *dawa*. In the time of Radi Abdullah, Abu Abdullah al-Shi'i had embraced Ismailism, who was sent to Yamen for further training. Ibn Hawshab was loyal to the Imam till his last breath and died in 302/914. While reading his biography, we will greatly move the streak of intellectual honesty which ran through his very nature.

Khalaf al-Hallaaj

Abdullah bin Maymun (d. 260/874) is reported to have also sent a *dai* called Khalaf al-Hallaaj, the cotton-dresser to Ray in about the middle of the third century with the instructions: "Go to Ray, because there are many Shias in Ray, Aba, Qumm, Kashan and the provinces of Tabaristan and Mazandaran, who will listen to your call." Khalaf went to the neighbourhood of Ray and resided in the district of Fashafuya, in a village called Kulin. He examined the local situation and started his secret mission. His secret activities however attracted attention, therefore he moved to nearby city of Ray, where he died. He is remembered as the founder of Ismaili *dawa* in Iran, and the converted people locally became known as Khalafiyya. He was succeeded by his son Ahmad, whose chief disciple was Ghiyath from the village of Kulin.

Radi Abdullah continued his peaceful living in Salamia, associating the local Hashimites. He also kept on good terms with the local governor. He seems to have been

active in scholarly matters without a bearing in the politics. He was rolling in plenty; yet he contented himself with plain dress and simple food. He was humble in disposition and very hospitable. He is said to have granted allowances from his wealth to the poor and disabled persons in Salamia without discrimination between the Ismailis and non-Ismailis. Tradition has it that he was fond of horsing, shooting, hunting and archery, which had been also a favourite pastime of the Hashimites in Syria.

When Radi Abdullah felt that the shadows of his death were closing upon him, he consigned the office of Imamate to his son, Muhammad al-Mahdi, saying, according to Ibn Khaldun that: "You are the promised Mahdi. You would take refuge in a remote land after my death, where you would have to submit to hard trials." (vide "Tarikh", Karachi, 1966, 5th vol., p. 93).

Radi Abdullah died in 268/881 at Salamia while he was travelling in the vicinity, appointing before his death as his trustee his own brother, Muhammad bin Ahmad, surnamed Sa'id al-Khayr as the guardian of his son, al-Mahdi. His death in 268/881 remarkably marks the termination of *dawr-i satr* (concealment period) in the Ismaili history.

Hidden Imams in *Dawr-i Satr*

It is worth mentioning that the most important aspect of the Ismailism, which deserves serious treatment is to keep everything secret under the garb of *tagiya* connected with their faith, tending their enemies to contrived baseless stories and myths against them. The veiled period (*dawr-i satr*) thus became benign climate for them to cultivate different wrong genealogies of the Imams. Thus, the ancestry of the Fatimids has confounded the students of history due to divergent accounts given by the historians, which had been developed round the persons of the "hidden Imams" (*aima'i masturin*) during concealment period. The widespread Abbasid propaganda, the derogatory attitude of Sunnite and Shiite authors make difficult to decide one way or the other about the legitimacy of their claim. In the light of the Fatimid policy, we are inclined to believe that the Fatimids deliberately seem to have avoided discussing the matter of their ancestry. It

emerges from this a safe conclusion that it was a preconceived plan of the Fatimids to keep their genealogy a top secret, owing to the intricate and dark passages it passed through and due to contradictions involved in the adoption of assumed names by the hidden Imams.

The variety of lineages suggested by the writers amounted to several hundreds, and the lineage between Wafi Ahmad and Radi Abdullah alone has been altered in no less than fifty ways. Since the hidden Imams had assumed different names in various regions to outsiders, in order to evade the vigilance of the Abbasids, the historians derived their informations on hearsay. The Ismaili Imams of that period were too cautious to disclose their true names; instead they assumed names, other than their owns and used for themselves the names of their *dais*. The hidden Imams, for the most part, could not pass the settled lives in specific places, but were known by names other than their own, sometimes by names of their *dais* and *huffats* as a precautionary measure designed to ward off the danger of their persons being discovered.

The absence of detailed biographies of the three hidden Imams is also the result of their having lived in strict disguise. This seems quite probable, if one realizes the situation very seriously. What in fact would the popular memory preserve about the Imams when these were living ostensibly as local merchants, carrying on their business, associating with friends, directing their followers through secret agency of mission, marrying, educating their children, etc. The memory of these traditions is very meagre, retaining only reminiscences of the most important names and events. Similarly, the Ismaili *dais* also disguised as pious merchants of slightly lower standing, also left behind very trivial traces. Thus the leaving of any trace of their activities in writing was obviously avoided as much as possible. W.Ivanow writes in **"The Rise of the Fatimids"** (Calcutta, 1942, pp. 43-44) that, "Thus the long blank period in the story of the Imams, living in such conditions, cannot reasonably be taken as valid proof of the falsity of their claims to continuous succession from their original ancestor, Ismail b. Jafar."

Even though the period of concealment and fear of the Abbasids were no longer in existence, the Fatimids were insistent not to divulge the names of their earlier three

hidden Imams, the link between Imam al-Mahdi and Imam Muhammad bin Ismail. It seems quite possible that these Imams had assumed names for more than one time, and hid their true names, and were too complicated to be clarified. The followers also seem to have given much priority on the Imam of the time, descending from Muhammad bin Ismail. This secrecy however led too much confusion and made it too hard to locate the real names of the hidden Imams. It is also a striking feature that these three hidden Imams are not mentioned by the early renowned Ismaili scholars, viz. Abu Hatim ar-Razi (d. 322/934), Qadi Noman (d. 363/974), Jafar bin Mansur al-Yamen (d. 365/975) and other authors of 4th/10th century.

Commenting the aggressive attitude of the historians, Ivanow writes in **"The Rise of the Fatimids"** (Calcutta, 1942, p. 29) that, "With their predominantly hostile tendency, each author vie with the others in inventing something more humiliating and scandalous for the dynasty." The diversity of the names of the three hidden Imams can be judged from the following list of some special surname and epithet, whose implications were intelligible only to the trusted followers, indicating a causative factor of the contradictions in the sources:

ABDULLAH	:	Radi, Ahmad, Abu Muhammad, al-Wafi
AHMAD	:	Wafi, Muhammad, Abul Hussain, at-Taqi .
HUSSAIN	:	Muhammad, Taqi, Ahmad, Abu Abdullah, az-Zaki, al-Muqtada al-Hadi, ar-Radi .

The fact about the Imams assuming the above code names in one or more times can be derived from the letter of Imam al-Muizz (341-365/953-975), which he routed in 354/965 to his **dai** in Sind, named Jaylam bin Shayban, which is preserved in the 5th volume of **"Uyun'l-Akhbar"** by Idris Imaduddin. According to **"Expose de la Religion des Druzes"** (Paris, 1838, p. 252) by de Sacy, "These men (hidden Imams) obliged to seek concealment, took sometimes one name and sometimes another, in order to shelter from the pursuit of their enemies." John Nicholson also writes in **"Establishment of the Fatemide Dynasty in Northern Africa"** (1840, p. 12) that, "They themselves have taken different names at different times in order to elude discovery."

According to "an-Naqdu'l-Khafi" by Hamza (cf. "Exposé de la Religion des Druzes" by Silverstre de Sacy, Paris, 1838, p. 74) that the Fatimid Caliph, al-Muizz had once said: "I am the seventh in the second heptad." As is well known, al-Muizz was the 14th Imam in the second heptad. The Imams of the first heptad were seven and the seventh one was Muhammad bin Ismail, and the Imams followed after him were also seven to make al-Muizz as the 14th Imam. Hence, the 13th Imam was al-Mansur, the 12th was al-Qaim and 11th was al-Mahdi. It therefore emerges conclusively that there must have been **three Imams** between al-Mahdi and Muhammad bin Ismail, whose names were Abdullah (**Wafi Ahmad**), Ahmad (**Taqi Muhammad**) and Hussain (**Radi Abdullah**) from 8th to 10th in the sequence. W. Ivanow writes in "Ismailis and Qarmatians" (JEBRAS, Bombay, 1940, p. 74) that, "Being the fourth Fatimid Caliph, al-Muizz was the seventh Imam after Muhammad bin Ismail. Thus this formally rejects the theory of the Fatimids descending from Abdullah bin Maymun."

The statement of al-Muizz however does not contain the explicit names of the "**three hidden Imams**", but before that, it is known that al-Mahdi had sent a letter in Yamen, which reached there after his arrival in Mahdiya in 308/921. Jafar bin Mansur al-Yamen (d. 365/975) had quoted the letter in his "**al-Fara'id wa Hudud ad-Din**" (pp. 13-19), wherein the names of the **three hidden Imams** have been mentioned, viz. Abdullah, Ahmad and Muhammad. Dr. Sami Nasib Makarem writes in "**The Hidden Imams of the Ismailis**" (**al-Abhath**, 21, 1969, p. 24) in this context that, "If al-Mahdi's letter is authentic, it is one of the oldest documents that have come to light until now, and, consequently a most reliable document, especially because it was written by the Caliph al-Mahdi himself."

Among the later Ismaili historians, Ahmad bin Muhammad an-Naysaburi, the author of "**Istitaru'l-Imam**", compiled under Imam al-Aziz (365-386/975-996) seems first to have mentioned the names of the **three hidden Imams**. Later on, such references appear in the works of Hamiduddin Kirmani (d. 408/1017), in his "**Tanbihu'l-Hadi wa'l-Mustahdi**" and "**ar-Risalat al-Wa'iza**". Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) in "**Uyun'l-Akhbar**" and Hasan bin Nuh Broachi (d. 939/1533) in "**Kitabu'l Azhar**", had also advanced brief biographies of the three hidden Imams.

In sum, R. Strothmann writes in **"Gnosis-Texte der Ismailiten"** (Gottingen, 1943, p. 59) that, "The three Imams followed by Muhammad bin Ismail were in concealment: Abdullah al-Rida, Ahmad al-Wafi and Hussain al-Taqi, and finally the beginning of the Fatimid dynasty with al-Mahdi."



MUHAMMAD AL-MAHDI (268-322/881-934)

He was born on Monday, the 12th Shawal, 260/July 31, 873 in the town, called Askar-i Mukram (or *Askar wa Makrum*), situated between the rivers of Masrukan and Shushtar. It is to be noted that Askar-i Mukram took its name from the camp (*askar*) of Mukram, an Arab commander sent into the Khuzistan by Hajjaj bin Yousuf.

His name was Abdullah al-Mahdi and assumed the Imamate at the age of 8 years. His father, Radi Abdullah had assigned the control of organization to his uncle, Sa'id al-Khayr. By the time al-Mahdi became young, and married a daughter of his uncle, who died after some time. On that juncture, al-Mahdi was at the age of discernment to take over complete control of organization in his own hands.

The first thing that al-Mahdi did was to summon *dai* Abul Hussain bin al-Aswad and insisted him to stay in the town of Hammah, and said to him, "I appoint you to be the head of all *dais*; whomsoever you make a headman, he shall be the headman, and whomsoever you make a subordinate, he shall be a subordinate. You shall reside on the road to Egypt." With this new mandate, *dai* Abul Hussain reorganised the mission at his disposal.

Jafar bin Ali, the chamberian of the Imam's household, has left behind a memoirs, entitled "*Sirat-i Jafar*" (comp. 346/957), and it can be seen from it that al-Mahdi was known in Salamia as a wealthy prince. He lived in the town in a huge building which had an underground passage dug underneath. This secret passage covered a distance of twelve miles and opened out at an unscathed distance from the gate of the town, its entrance at the other end being always kept covered with earth. The subterranean passage was intended for the *dais* and other followers in the confidence of al-Mahdi, and the entrance was opened to them at night only.

The backward Katama Berber land of the farther west of North Africa was the land of the lost cause of Islam, where Imam Jafar Sadik is reported to have sent his two

missionaries, Halwani and Abu Sufiani, who laid the foundation of the Ismaili **dawa** in North Africa, and promulgated among the aboriginal Berbers in the territory covered by modern Tripoli and Tunisia. Ibn Khaldun (d. 808/1406) writes in his "**Tarikh**" (5th vol., p.89) that, "Jafar Sadik sent his missionaries to Maghrib, saying that it was a barren soil and that it ought to be watered in expectation of the person who would come to sow the real seed." We must not lose a sight of the fact that it was a prediction for al-Mahdi, who made an extensive journey and manifested in Maghrib, where he founded the Fatimid Caliphate.

Abu Abdullah al-Shi'i

Abu Abdullah al-Hussain bin Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Zakariya, commonly known as Abu Abdullah al-Shi'i was hailed from Kufa, where he had been an inspector of weights and measures, and was also an ascetic of Shiite inclinations, having been converted along with his brother, Abul Abbas bin Ahmad to Ismailism by **dai** Firuz. Realizing his potential, Imam Radi Abdullah had sent him to Ibn Hawshab in Yamen for further training in Ismaili esoteric doctrines as well as affairs of the state. Abu Abdullah stayed in Yamen with Ibn Hawshab for a year.

The Ismaili mission had its roots in the era of Imam Jafar Sadik. As early as the year 145/762, the two **dais**, called Halwani and Abu Sufiani had been dispatched to the Maghrib. They settled among the Berbers in the land of Katama and summoned the local populace to the cause of Ahl-al-Bait, and converted a bulk of people to their doctrines. Abu Sufiani died a few years later, but Halwani lived for a long time. Knowing the death of Halwani and Abu Sufiani in Maghrib, Ibn Athir (d. 630/1234) writes in "**Kamil fi't Tarikh**" (Beirut, 1975, 8th vol., p 31) that Ibn Hawshab told to Abu Abdullah: "Our missionaries have thoroughly ploughed the land of Maghrib, making it arable. None is capable except you after them. You prepare yourself now for Maghrib."

Abu Abdullah set out from Yamen in 279/892, accompanied by another **dai** Abdullah bin Abul Malahif. He arrived in Mecca during pilgrimage, where he contacted the Katama pilgrims of Maghrib lodging at Mina, and impressed them with his

vast knowledge about the merits of Ahl-al-Bait. The pilgrims were gladdened to know that Abu Abdullah was heading towards Egypt, which was on their route to the Maghrib. While travelling with them, Abu Abdullah inquired at great length about their country in order to judge the suitability of his mission. He, thus gained the admiration of his fellow-travellers. After a short stay in Egypt, he reached Maghrib in the Katama homeland on 14th Rabi I, 280/June 3, 893.

The name *maghrib* (the land of sunset) was given by the Arabs to that virgin part of Africa, which European have called *Barbery* or *Africa Minor*, (the French *Afrique du Nord*), and then North Africa. In north it is bordered by the Mediterranean, and in the south by the Sahara desert. In the west it is extended as far as the Atlantic Ocean, and in the east it extends as far as the borders of Egypt. The *jazirat al-maghrib* i.e., "the island of the setting sun," consists of that part of the North Africa, which includes Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Cyrenaica, and Tripolitania.

The word *Berber* is derived from Latin *barbari*, an appellation equivalent to the English "barbarian", which the Romans used to call peoples who spoke neither Latin nor Greek. The social organisation of the Berbers or Katama Berbers had been tribal from the earliest known period of their history. Ibn Khaldun distinguished three major divisions among the Berbers, i.e., the Zanata, Sanhaja and Masmuda. The Zanata, whose original home was in Tripolitania and southern Tunisia, were predominately nomadic. The Sanhaja were as widely dispersed in the Maghrib as the Zanata. The Sanhaja were split into two main branches: the Kabylia Berbers, who were sedentary, and the nomadic Zanaga, whose traditional home had been the western Sahara desert. The Masmuda were the sedentary Berbers of Morocco. Hence, it must be known that the Katama Berbers had embraced Ismailism and took prominent part towards the foundation of the Fatimid Caliphate in Maghrib.

Abu Abdullah established his base in Ikjan (the *Tzajjan* of the Romans) near Satif, a mountain stronghold that dominated the pilgrimage route, where he spent seven years in propagating the cause of Ahl-al-Bait among the old people as well as the youths of the Berber tribes. Very soon the tribesmen in the vicinity began to trek to Ikjan.

He completely swayed a large body of Berber tribesmen amongst whom the Katama tribe was very prominent and powerful. Abu Abdullah, however, had to face many vicissitudes, sometimes meeting with success and sometimes facing defeats, but he never wavered in his resolve.

In the interim, the report of the tremendous popularity of Abu Abdullah began to filter through to the Aghlabid ruler, Ibrahim bin Ahmad, who wrote to his governor of Meila to subdue Abu Abdullah, but of no avail. Meanwhile, Abu Abdullah, feeling full confident of his strength, began to wave of conquests. Ibrahim bin Ahmad dispatched a large army in 289/901 under his grandson, who made success to some extent. A number of Katama leaders, wary of Aghlabid inroads into their country, sought to banish Abu Abdullah and in the ensuing battle, he gained upper hand. Ibrahim bin Ahmad died in 291/903 and was succeeded by his son, Ziadatullah, a man indolent and entirely devoted to pleasure. Abu Abdullah captured Tahirt and his followers built living quarters around it. Immediately, he set on laying the foundations of administration for his principality and divided the Katama into seven units, each with its own army with wide powers. After consolidating his position in the Katama country, Abu Abdullahh embarked on his second phase of conquests. He advanced on Meila which surrendered after a brief resistance. He then marched on Satif. With the conquest of this city, Abu Abdullah openly declared the purpose of his mission that:- "I am propagating for God, the Almighty, the Exalted, for His Book and for Imam al-Mahdi from the progeny of the Apostle of God."

Abu Abdullah's success in overcoming the major internal opposition movements as well as conquering one territory after another at last awakened Ziadatullah from his slumber. He sent a large force to curb Abu Abdullah's power. The two armies met at Billizma. This new encounter resulted in two more cities, Billizma and Tubna, falling into the hands of Abu Abdullah.

Abu Abdullah was now feeling confident that the mission organisation as well as the basic framework of the state were clearly emerging with good result. He, therefore, deputed some prominent leaders of Katama tribe led by his brother, Abul Abbas in Salamia, and sent an invitation to al-Mahdi for Maghrib to take over the reigns of government.

Journey of al-Mahdi

Scanning the narrative of "Istitaru'l-Imam" by Ahmad bin Ibrahim an-Naysaburi, who lived under Imam al-Aziz (d. 386/996), it appears that a certain **dai** Abu Muhammad died at Kufa in 285/898, had left three sons, viz. Abul Kassim, Abu Mahzul and Abul Abbas. Abul Kassim himself took over the charge of the mission in Kufa, but Abul Hussain bin al-Aswad, the chief **dai** had dismissed Abul Kassim from the post and the latter, together with his two brothers, was furious. They wrote to al-Mahdi, complaining that Abul Hussain deprived them without any serious reason, but al-Mahdi sent no reply to them. The three brothers then conspired, making a sworn pact between themselves, to make a sudden attack on Salamia, and to kill Ibn Basri, who empowered Abul Hussain to commit such an offence on them. They also wanted, if possible, to kill Abul Hussain; if impossible, they intended to report to the government of Syria. News about this transpired to the **dai** Hamid bin Abbas and Ibn Abd residing at Baghdad. Some Hashimites also wrote to al-Mahdi, informing him that the sons of Abu Muhammad had conspired to kill him with his family. "If you are sitting" as they wrote, "then get up. The three brothers have already started, intending to kill you. If they do not succeed, they will expose you to Ahmad bin Tulun. They say that you are the enemy of the religion, and they want to expose your affairs. Do everything to save yourself without wasting a moment."

Apprehending lest the sons of **dai** Abu Muhammad and the Qarmatians would resort to the violent and stormy operations, al-Mahdi gave orders to prepare for a journey. He took with him only his son Abul Kassim, Jafar bin Ali, the Chamberlain, Ibn Barka and Tayyib, the tutor of Abul Kassim. He abandoned his residence with all that it contained: precious carpets, clothing, property, servants and also the family of his uncle and brother, male and female. He entrusted all his wealth, with his house, wares and granaries, to Hasan bin Mu'adh.

Hence, al-Mahdi quitted Salamia in a thick of insecure milieu in 286/899. He relinquished his house at the time of the evening prayer, unnoticed by any one and travelled the whole night escorted by an Arab and thirty other horsemen. He arrived at Hims in the morning. Sending back the Arab escort from Hims, al-Mahdi's caravan first left

for Damascus when Haroon bin Khamruya bin Ahmad bin Tulun (283-292/896-904) was the then governor of Syria. They continued to travel whole of that day and the next and arrived in Tiberias on the third. The long journey from Syria was beset with great perils, therefore he continued without a halt in Tiberias and went to Palestine and alighted in Ramla, and putting up with the governor, who was his devout follower.

Ramla was a town, 25 miles from Jerusalem and on the road between Syria and Egypt, covering an area of a square mile. Its chief gates were Darb Bir al-Askar, Darb Masjid Annaba, Darb Bait al-Makdis, Darb Bila, Darb Ludd, Darb Yafa, Darb Misr and Darb Ajun. Ramla was rich in fruits, especially figs and palms. It was famous for comfortable baths, commodious dwellings and broad streets.

In Ramla, al-Mahdi received the news that the three sons of Abu Muhammad had reached Salamia and were vainly searching for him. The three brothers continued searching for al-Mahdi for a whole year. In the interim, one of the brothers, Abul Abbas had returned to Iraq but Abul Kassim and Abu Mahzul remained in Salamia. They often visited Hammah stealthily, trying to find out from ~~dal~~ Abul Hussain the informations about al-Mahdi and returning again to Salamia. When they realized that it was futile to find out anything from Abul Hussain, and that they could not trace al-Mahdi, who was lost for them, Abul Kassim, a real cheat, left, while Abu Mahzul continued to stay in Salamia.

Abul Kassim went to the tribe of Qasiyyun, giving them preference over other tribes. He brought them to his favour, such as Banu Malik, Banu Murid, Banu Hujayna, Banu Balwa, Banu Fakhdash, Banu Hudhayl and Banu Ziyad. These tribes swore allegiance to Abul Kassim and rose in rebellion. They marched against Tughuch bin Juff (283-293/896-906), the new governor of Syria, whom they defeated near the village, called Mazzatul Abai. The insurgents inflicted heavy loss on his force and besieged Damascus.

In the meantime, Abu Mahzul quitted Salamia and betook himself to Ramla, while his brother Abul Kassim remained before Damascus, repelling the attacks every day. In Ramla, he incidently met Jafar bin Ali in the market, while he was purchasing provisions. A man accompanied Abu

Mahzul identified Jafar bin Ali. He followed Jafar and entered the house with him, and sat in the entrance porch, bidding Jafar to convey his greetings to the Imam and to tell him that he must have an interview with him. If not, he would at once cry out and reveal the identity of the Imam to the public. So Jafar entered before al-Mahdi and told him what had happened. To this al-Mahdi replied, "Now that he has seen you and discovered us, better bring him in, as otherwise he may expose us." Abu Mahzul was brought before al-Mahdi. He bowed before the Imam and the latter received him kindly. Then Abu Mahzul said, "O my Lord, verily we left our houses, searching after you. Now praise be to God Who helped us to find you. My brother came with a force which besieges Damascus. I left him when he was on the point of taking it. Come back, because your position is so strong now. All purpose of our campaign was to satisfy you and to appease your anger, which was provoked by the machinations of Abul Hussain, who stirred up us against each other. And if you do not wish to come personally, write a letter to my brother, to appease him, as he is angry with me."

Imam al-Mahdi wrote a letter to his brother, asking him to forgive Abu Mahzul, and not to punish him in any way. In short, the sons of Abu Muhammad were impostors and had assumed the girdle of the Ismailism, and there came soon their end. About all these events, al-Mahdi who was staying in Ramla, was well informed. Tayyib, the tutor, was travelling between Salamia and Ramla, carrying the news. So al-Mahdi could see from Ramla what was going on with Abu Mahzul, and what he did after his retreat from Damascus to Salamia.

Jafar narrates in "*Sirat-i Jafar*" that, "I was waiting on al-Mahdi, together with Tayyib and Abu Yaqub at the table, at which al-Mahdi, the governor, al-Qaim, and Firuz were taking their food, when there entered a messenger, the same who had been sent to Damascus, carrying orders from Baghdad about our arrest, accompanied by the name and description of the appearance of al-Mahdi. The governor read the orders, and handed the paper to him. When the Imam read it also, the governor knelt before him, crying and kissing his feet, and al-Mahdi said to him: 'Keep quiet, do not cry. He, in whose hands my life is, will never permit them to catch us.'" So the governor of Ramla wrote to the governor of Damascus in reply to his above letter that no man answering the description had been

seen, and it was not known whether he had already passed the town. In case he had not yet passed, a watch would be kept for him on all roads.

Al-Mahdi had to prolong his stay in Ramla for about 2 years on account of the intensive searching of the Abbasids. Ibn Hammad (d. 628/1230) writes in his **"Akhbar al-Muluk Bani Ubayd wa Siyaratihim"** (Paris, 1927, p. 12) that, "The Abbasids were looking for al-Mahdi, sending letters to all the provincial capitals with his name and description, ordering that he be arrested as soon as he was discovered."

During one night in Ramla, according to **"Sirat-i Jafar,"** there was a shower of shooting stars, so al-Mahdi and his son, the governor and many other people ascended the roof of the house to look at the phenomenon. The town was filled with the shouts of the people. Al-Mahdi pressed with his hand the hand of the governor, and said that the phenomenon was a testimony of his high mission, and one of the signs of his success.

Al-Mahdi resumed his journey and effected his junction in Egypt, where he met **dai** Abu Ali al-Hussain bin Ahmad bin Daud bin Muhammad (d. 321/932), who had been made the chief of the treasury (**sahib bayt al-mal**) after the foundation of the Fatimid Caliphate in Maghrib. Imam told him not to accommodate him in his own house, or in the house of any one who was known as being connected with the Ismaili mission, but to arrange for him a place with a trusted outsider. Abu Ali al-Hasan therefore, caused the Imam to lodge with a certain Ibn Ayyas. The governor, Abu Musa Isa bin Muhammad Nushari had received a letter from the Abbasids for the arrest of al-Mahdi. He therefore, summoned Ibn Ayyas, and inquired about the **strange person** living with him. Ibn Ayyas, according to **"Sirat-i Jafar"** (p. 113) replied that the person staying with him, by God, was not suspicious in any way. He was a nobleman, a Hashimite, an important merchant, known by his learning, piety and wealth. And with regard to the man who was sought for, news had come that he had left for Yamen long before the arrival of Abbasid letter. The governor trusted what Ibn Ayyas said about his guest.

Journey towards Maghrib

In Egypt, al-Mahdi abandoned the likely choice to go to Yamen as expected by his entourage. This turned out to be a very wise decision, since in Yamen he would have risked the Abbasid confrontation and the menace of the rebellious Qarmatians. On the eve of his departure from Egypt, al-Mahdi revealed his intention of going to Maghrib, and few persons who accompanied him had registered disappointment, notably *dai* Firuz. W. Ivanow (1886-1970) writes in **"Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismailism"** (Holland, 1952, pp. 13-14) that, "Before his move to the remote West, al-Mahdi, according to the Ismaili tradition, had the choice of going to the Yamen where Ibn Hawshab, his able *dai*, had great success. But al-Mahdi was a clever and talented politician who could realize that the Yamen was nothing but a backwater. He therefore preferred the more risky, yet more promising Maghrib, i.e., N.W. Africa. Here the diplomatic and political talent of the Fatimids was severely tested in their dealings with the Berber tribes. As with all nomads everywhere, these people had their own mentality, their own world of ideas."

While the caravan of al-Mahdi was stirring between Egypt and Tahuna, they were attacked by the Berbers, who looted the caravan and took away some baggages of Imam's books belonging to the Holy Koran, interpretations, history etc. It grieved al-Mahdi much more than other things. When later on, al-Qaim marched in his first campaign against Egypt in 301/913, he brought the brigands and recovered the lost books. According to **"Iftitahu'd-Dawa"** (comp. in 346/957), al-Mahdi said on that occasion: "Even if this campaign had been undertaken merely to regain these books, this would have been worth while."

The caravan of al-Mahdi went to Tripoli, whose governor made an unsuccessful attempt to arrest him. Al-Mahdi thus divided his caravan into two groups. He sent forward Abul Abbas towards the Katama tribe to gauge the situation as well as to make an advance tidings of his arrival. Abul Abbas reached Kairwan (old **Kairouan**, now in Tunisia) when the Aghlabid ruler, Ibrahim bin Ahmad had died in 291/903 and was succeeded by Zaidatullah. Abul Abbas was not able to escape suspicion, and was ultimately arrested and tried. He denied all connection with al-Mahdi, insisting that he was an ordinary merchant. He was, nevertheless, imprisoned and the news about this reached to al-Mahdi.

Al-Mahdi went to Kastilla province after knowing the arrest of Abul Abbas and made a junction for few days at Tuzar. When he made sure that there was no possibility of Abul Abbas getting free, he changed his route and went as a merchant to Sijilmasa, the capital of the Midrarite Berber, and stayed in a house hired from a certain Abul Habsha.

Sijilmasa (the old *Silhmassa*) was an ancient town of Morocco, the capital of Tafilalat. It was built about 200 miles of Fas, on the outskirts of the Sahara and on the left bank of the Wadi Ziz. It was founded in 140/758 and beginning with 155/771, the town and its territory were governed by the Miknas dynasty of the Midrarite. Sijilmasa was situated in the middle of a plain with fertility, because of well watered and was surrounded by gardens and orchards which stretched along the Wadi Ziz. It grew in abundance the most delicious varieties of grapes and dates. Among the crops included cotton, cumin, carraway and henna which were exported into the whole Maghrib.

In Sijilmasa, al-Mahdi procured his friendship with the governor, al-Yasa bin Midrar (883-910). When the governor received a letter of Ziadatullah, he put al-Mahdi under house arrest in his sister's residence for about 5 years.

Conquest of Maghrib

Abu Abdullah, on the other hand, conquered almost whole Maghrib within 15 years in 296/909 and routed the Aghlabid rule of 112 years. He decisively subdued the Aghlabids near Laribus, and established supremacy over the Aghlabid empire and got an end of the Abbasid suzerainty over it in Maghrib. Six days later he entered the Aghlabid capital, Raqada which was about six miles south of Kairwan with a covered area of 6 square miles, on 1st Rajab, 296/March 26, 909 and relieved Abul Abbas in Tripoli. He started the Fatimid *Khutba* and the Shiite formula was used in the call to prayer.

Makrizi writes in his "*al-Khitat*" (Cairo, 1911, 1st vol., p. 350) that Abu Abdullah had coins struck bearing the legends "*the proof of God has arrived*" on the obverse and "*the enemies of God are dispersed*" on the reverse. Conserved in the Musee du Bardo in Tunis is a rare gold

dinar minted in Kairwan in 297/910 that bears precisely the preceding legend, vide *"Monnaies fatimites du Musée du Bardo"* (cf. *Revue Tunisienne*, 1936: 343-44, cat. no. 1 and pl. no. 1). It is a typical Aghlabid type of *dinar*, except that the legends occupy the space which would normally have held the ruler's name. Since the ruler (al-Mahdi) had not yet been revealed, these two appropriate phrases filled the void. Ibn Hammad (d. 628/1230) writes in *"Akhbar al-Muluk Bani Ubayd wa Siyaratihim"* (Paris, 1927, pp. 7-8) that the slogans were also inscribed on banners, weapons, trapping and seals. On banner: *"Soon will their multitude be put to flight and they will show their backs"* (Koran, 54:45); on weapons: *"Multitudes on God's path;"* on trapping: *"Dominion is God's;"* on Abu Abdullah's personal seal: *"Put your confidence in God and you are on the path of manifest truth"* (Koran, 27:79); on his official seal: *"The orders of your Lord have been accomplished in truth and justice. His words are immutable. He is the Hearer and the Knower"* (Koran, 6:116).

Abu Abdullah remained there for about 3 months to set the administrative machinery in motion.

March towards Sijilmasa

After setting a new fabric of administration, Abu Abdullah made preparations to finally march to Sijilmasa. He appointed his brother Abul Abbas and Abu Zaki Tamnam bin Muarik as deputy leaders and marched with a large army, having been joined by innumerable tribes who had hitherto withheld their support. He reached Sijilmasa after an arduous and dangerous journey from the remotest route. The situation at Sijilmasa was rather tricky, since al-Mahdi had been imprisoned there and any wrong move by Abu Abdullah might have endangered the life of Imam. Thus, he sent a peace mission to the governor, asking to release al-Mahdi. The governor killed the messenger, therefore, Abu Abdullah had no choice but to engage in warfare. However, after a brief battle, the governor fled and his army dispersed. Abu Abdullah then triumphantly entered Sijilmasa and liberated al-Mahdi, his son, entourage and pages.

Abu Abdullah saw his Imam for the first time, whom he had never seen before. As soon as al-Mahdi made his

appearance, Ibn al-Muttalibi said to Abu Abdullah that, "Lo, this is my master and yours and the master of all the people." There was immense rejoicing amongst the troops while beholding al-Mahdi. The faithful followers crowded around the horses of al-Mahdi and his son, al-Qaim and Abu Abdullah walked in front. Abu Abdullah dismounted, and so did Ibn al-Muttalibi and the troops. According to "Iftitahu'd-Dawa" (p. 245), Abu Abdullah was overjoyed and said to the people: "This is the Lord, mine and thine, and your Wali al-Amr, your Imam-i Zaman and your Mahdi, on whose behalf I preached you. God has fulfilled His promise about him, and assisted his supporters and troops. He is your Ulul Amr."

Al-Mahdi remained for 40 days in Sijilmasa to restore peace and finally, he embarked for Raqada via Ikjan with his son and their whole entourage, along with Abu Abdullah and his companions. An interesting account is given in "Sirat-i Jafar" that, "Al-Mahdi marched at the head of a huge army, such as no king before him could ever muster, and ultimately reached the Katama country. I remember, said Jafar, that when we were passing through the Sanhaja country, and were marching near the place in which (later on) was founded the town of Ashir, al-Mahdi asked the name of the hills that appeared before him. He was told that the name of the range was Jabal Sanhaja. And he said that a treasure was buried in these mountains."

Ashir (French, **Achir**) is an ancient fortified town in Algeria, and was founded by Ziri bin Manad, the chieftain of the Sanhaja in the mountains of Titeri about in 324/945. From Ashir, the ranges of Jabal Sanhaja, or Jabal Chelia, about 7638 feet high from sea-level are seen. Before over a thousand years, al-Mahdi had foretold that these mountains were rich with hidden treasures. In Jabal Chelia including Mount Aures and Mount Titeri in Algeria, the petroleum was discovered in 1956, and natural gas in 1980. It is estimated that the natural gas fields are among the world's largest known reserves at 35 trillion cubic feet, and estimate of oil reserves runs as high as 12 billion barrels.

Foundation of the Fatimid Caliphate

Al-Mahdi rode into Raqada in triumph wearing dark silk clothes with a matching turban. Riding behind him, his son

wore a similar ensemble in organge silk. Abu Abdullah wore mulberry-coloured clothes, a linen tunic, a turban and a scarf. The caravan of al-Mahdi arrived in Raqada on 20th Rabi II, 297/January 6, 910 and laid the foundation of the **Fatimid Caliphate**. All the notables, both Arabs and non-Arabs without exception and many other people came out to receive him. He took oath of allegiance from them. He assumed power and ordered his name mentioned in the *khutba* and inscribed on coins. He began to develop the barren land of Maghrib he dominated. He imposed the Islamic laws, enforcing strictly in the prohibition of forbidden food and drink, and punishing severely those who tried to practice freedom in it.

Rebellion of Abul Abbas

During the first few months of his rule, al-Mahdi began to consolidate all powers to himself and made drastic changes, especially the financial cells. Previously, Abu Abdullah reserved the gains for the Katama soldiers, but al-Mahdi stripped the fortunes they had gained in the battles. Abul Abbas, the brother of Abu Abdullah, however did not acquiesce but began to criticize al-Mahdi's actions and even did not like the whole power in the hands of al-Mahdi. Qadi Noman states that when Abul Abbas had been made a deputy leader at Raqada, he had acquired a taste for power and was therefore resentful of being compelled to surrender his authority to al-Mahdi and to be merely his subordinate. He exploited the discontent of the Katama chiefs who were losing power under the new administration of al-Mahdi. He also began to instigate his brother, Abu Abdullah and eventually convinced him to some extent to confront al-Mahdi.

It is recounted that once Abu Abdullah dared to suggest al-Mahdi to sit aside with all honours, while he would run the affairs of his state for him in a way that was suitable to the people, for he had known the people for a long time and was aware of their needs and how they should be treated. This gesture warned al-Mahdi of the change that had taken place in Abu Abdullah's character and stand. He however pretended to confess his advice and gave him a gentle answer. When Abu Abdullah wavered in his absolute loyalty, al-Mahdi did not waste much time in eliminating him. Al-Mahdi had his spies planted where both brothers met, and ultimately, both of them were killed on

15th Jamada II, 298/February 18, 911. Al-Mahdi offered the funeral service of Abu Abdullah to glorify his outstanding services and said: "Abu Abdullah was caught in delusion. The real traitor was Abul Abbas."

The executions of Abu Abdullah and Abul Abbas were soon followed by a riot of the Katama tribe which took place immediately after the funeral. Al-Mahdi was not at all frightened and mounted his horse, boldly rode out among the excited crowds and with that personal courage and valour characterized him, told to the rioters, according to "Iftitahu'd-Dawa" (p. 267) by Qadi Noman that: "O'people, you know the status of Abu Abdullah and Abul Abbas in Islam, but satan misguided them, resulting them being deserved for killing. I give you all the security of lives." After hearing this, the people dispersed.

Dr. Zahid Ali (1888-1958), who is not favourably deposed towards the Fatimids, writes however, about al-Mahdi in his "**Tarikh-i Fatimiyyin Misr**" (Karachi, 1963, 2nd ed., 1st. vol., p. 134) that, "If al-Mahdi had not acted wisely and determinedly at that time to quell revolt of Abul Abbas and Abu Abdullah, the Fatimid state would have disappeared for ever. It was he who made the foundation of the Fatimid dynasty so strong that it could last for nearly two hundred and fifty years. He did not remain content with the territory he got, he expanded its frontiers upto the Black Sea by conquering other parts of Africa. He vanquished the Idrisids and also tried to conquer Egypt but did not succeed. He strengthened his naval fleet thereby increasing the Fatimid marine power so much that it could compete with Byzantine, the strongest naval power of that period. He devised proper administrative measures for every department which resulted in peace in every corner of his country."

The origin of the Qarmatians

It has been observed that a group of Mubarakiiyya in Kufa among the Ismaili orbit believed in the Mahdism of Imam Muhammad bin Ismail, anticipating his return, which had never been promulgated by the official **dawa**. Granted that it was the propaganda of the Ismaili **dawa**, there would hardly be a place left for the Imams for them in the line of Muhammad bin Ismail. This small Ismaili group was expecting the return of the Imam, and a **dai** Hussain

al-Ahwazi had also a leaning towards them. He had gone to southern Iraq for propaganda and procured large converts.

Nuwayri (677-732/1279-1332) writes in "*Nihayat al-Arab*" (ed. M. Jabir A. al-Hini, Cairo, 1984, p. 189) that, "Hussain al-Ahwazi also converted Hamdan bin al-Ash'ath al-Qarmati to Ismailism in 261/874." Hamdan al-Qarmat started to reveal Ismaili doctrines and the return of Muhammad bin Ismail to the villagers and brought them in the fold of Ismailism. When Hussain al-Ahwazi died, Hamdan al-Qarmat continued his mission with his brother-in-law Abdan bin al-Rabit as his deputy. He increased his influence among the Arab and Nibati tribes in Kufa and appointed Abdan bin al-Rabit and Zikrawayh bin Mihrawayh as his assistants.

The southern Iraqi term *karmitha* or *karmutha*, unknown to Arabic elsewhere, implied an agriculturist or a villager. Later on, it was arabicised into *qarmat* or *qarmatuya* which has different meanings. In Arabic the root *qarmat* means "to walk" or "make short steps" and thence "to write closely" etc. Another view suggests that it was an Aramaic nickname, meaning "short-legged" or "red-eyed", since Hamdan possessed both peculiarities, therefore, he was widely known as Hamdan al-Qarmat. The converts of Hamdan al-Qarmat also became known as "*Qarmatians*" - a regional identity of a group of the Ismailis in southern Iraq.

Hamdan al-Qarmat maintained correspondence with the Ismaili *dais* at the headquarters in Salamia, and was quite unknown about the hidden Imams of the era of concealment. In 286/899, Hamdan received a direct letter from Imam al-Mahdi from Salamia, suggesting certain changes. He became surprised to receive a letter from an *Imam*, and consequently, he sent his envoy Abdan to Salamia to investigate. It was only at Salamia that Abdan found that al-Mahdi had succeeded to the Imamate, following the death of Imam Radi Abdullah. Abdan interviewed with the Imam without procuring result. He returned back and reported to Hamdan al-Qarmat that instead of the Mahdship of Muhammad bin Ismail, the new leader claimed the Imamate for himself in the line of Muhammad bin Ismail.

Hamdan, thus considered it as drastic deviations, and assembled his subordinate *dais*, and renounced his allegiance from the central leadership of Salamia and

officially abjured Ismailism. He also ordered his *dais* to suspend the mission in their respective districts. Soon afterwards, Hamdan went to Kalwadha, near Baghdad and was never heard of again. Abdan was also murdered in 286/899 at the instigation of Zikrawayh. Soon, however, Isa bin Musa, a nephew of Abdan, rose to lead the Qarmatians, and they were subdued by the Abbasid commander, Harun bin Gharib.

Finally, the leadership came to the hands of Zikrawayh, who dispatched his three sons, viz. Yahya, Hussain and Ali to Syria. They seized Hama, Hamnah etc., and marched towards Salamia, where Imam al-Mahdi resided. Tabari (d. 310/922) in his "*Tarikh al-Rusul wa'l Muluk*" (ed. de Goeje, Leiden, 1879-1901, 3rd vol., p. 2226) simply writes the rise of Zikrawayh around 289/901 and their massacre in 290/902. They killed many relatives of the Imam and sacked the town, taking away treasures of the Imam. Al-Mahdi had left Salamia before the coming of the Qarmatians. Finally, the Abbasid forces reached Salamia and subdued their rising. Yahya and Ali had been killed in the encounter, and Hussain was taken prisoner and beheaded in Baghdad. When Zikrawayh knew the death of his sons, he proceeded towards Kufa and captured Basra, and threatened the Abbasids near Baghdad. He was also repulsed in 294/906, causing an end of the Qarmatian power in Iraq and Syria.

The Qarmatians in Bahrain

The Qarmatians also penetrated into Bahrain by the efforts of Abu Sa'id al-Hasan bin Bahram al-Jannabi, who was born in Jannaba on the coast of Fars. He was trained by Abdan in Kufa, and Hamdan al-Qarmat sent him to Bahrain in 281/894. By 286/899, with the support of the clan of Rabi of Abdul Qafs, Abu Sa'id had brought under submission a large part of Bahrain and also captured Qatif. According to Ibn Hawakal, the leader of the Qarmatians in Bahrain, Abu Sa'id al-Jannabi took the part of Hamdan al-Qarmat and Abdan. In 287/900, the Qarmatians acquired control of Hajar, the seat of the Abbasid governor. The Abbasid caliph Mutadid (d. 289/902) sent an army of 2000 men against them, but were defeated. In 290/903, Hajar was finally subdued after a long siege laid by Abu Sa'id. He established his headquarters at al-Ahsa (or al-Lahsa), which became the capital of the Jannabid rule of the Qarmatians of Bahrain in 314/926.

Bernard Lewis writes in "The Origins of Ismailism" (London, 1940, p. 76) that, "The Carmathians of Behrain seem, according to the accounts of most of our sources, to constitute a separate movement, differing in several important aspects from other sections of the Ismaili *dawa*. They had separate leaders of their own, a distinct local tradition and history." Abu Sa'id was killed in 301/914 after ruling for fifteen years. He was succeeded by his son, Abul Kassim, who ruled for three years, and was killed by his younger brother Abu Tahir in a revolt in 304/916. Abu Tahir was a deadly enemy of the Abbasids, therefore, he started his political correspondence with the Fatimids in Maghrib. He executed a verbal undertaking with the Fatimids, which was absolutely a political pact. Accordingly, when al-Qaim, the son of Imam al-Mahdi launched a campaign of Egypt in 307/919 from Maghrib, the Qarmatians were to reach opposite direction of Egypt to put a pressure on the Egyptian army. Before the arrival of Abu Tahir at that location, al-Qaim had returned from his place to Maghrib after getting loss. Abu Tahir however reached late and returned to Bahrain. Henceforward, the above political pact between them practically became annulled.

In 317/929, the Qarmatians had spread down in Hijaz, and flooded Mecca and Kaba with the blood of pilgrims under the command of Abu Tahir. They made it a scene of fire, blood and repine for 17 days. It must be known that the Qarmatians had been severely and rigorously condemned by the Fatimids for not complying with the pact and reached late at the Egyptian border. In reprisal, the Qarmatians moved to discredit the Fatimids and recited the Fatimid *khutba* in place of the Abbasid in Hijaz during their horrible operations, so as to misguide the Muslims that their barbarian operations were directed by the Fatimids. The Qarmatians choked up the sacred spring of Zamzam, the door of the Kaba was broken open, the veil covering the Kaba was torn down, and the sacred Black Stone was removed from the Kaba and taken to their headquarters at Hajar. The Fatimid Imam al-Mahdi was highly shocked to hear this sacrilegious operation and wrote a reproachful letter to Abu Tahir, reprehending him severely for his evilish conduct. Reproaching Abu Tahir, al-Mahdi had written a letter to him. According to "*al-Mufudh al-Fatimid fi bilad al-Sham wa'l Iraq*" (Cairo, 1950, p. 36), the letter reads: "It is a contemptible matter that you have committed a grave sin under my name. Where did you commit? You have

committed in the House of God and its neighbours. This is a sacred place, where the murder was unlawful even in the age of ignorance; and the defamation of the people living in Mecca is considered inhuman. You have violated that tradition, and even rooted out the Black Stone, and brought it to your land; and now you expect that I may express my gratitude? God curse you, and be again accursed and execrable. May peace be upon him (Prophet Muhammad), whose sayings and deeds are the source of the integrity of the Muslims, who may be ready to answer hereafter what they have committed today." It must be pointed out that the letter of al-Mahdi as cited by Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., p. 427) is absolutely distorted and interpolated for the purpose of throwing the odium of sacrilege on al-Mahdi too.

In the meantime, Begkem (d. 326/941), the *amir* of Baghdad offered the Qarmatians a reward of 50,000 *dinars* to restore the sacred stone, which was refused. But the letter of al-Mahdi was more effectual than Begkem's proffered ransom. Abu Tahir apologized and promised to return the Black Stone to its original place in Kaba. It however remained in Hajar for 22 years, and was returned in 339/950 by the then Qarmatian chief, Ahmad bin Mansur. When they restored the Black Stone, they first carried it to Kufa and hung it up in the mosque for public inspection; and then they bore it to Mecca. Nasir Khusaro (d. 481/1088) had visited al-Ahsa in 443/1051 and relates the above event in his "*Safar-nama*" (tr. by W.M. Thackston, New York, 1986, pp. 88-89) that, "One of the rulers (of al-Ahsa) attacked Mecca and killed a number of people who were circumambulating the Kaba at the time. They removed the Black Stone from its corner and took it to Lahsa. They said that the Stone was a "human magnet" that attracted people, not knowing that it was the nobility and magnificence of Muhammad (peace be on him) that drew people there, for the Stone had laid there for long ages without anyone paying any particular attention to it. In the end, the Black Stone was brought back and returned to its place."

Abu Tahir died in 332/944 and had made a will of succession for his elder brother, Ahmad Abu Tahir. Some also supported Sabur, the son of Abu Tahir; therefore, it was mutually resolved that Ahmad Abu Tahir would rule with Sabur as his successor. Sabur however rebelled in vain against his uncle in 358/969; but himself was arrested and

executed. Ahmad Abu Tahir was poisoned in 359/970, and his elder brother Abul Kassim Sa'id also died after ruling for two years. In 361/972, Abu Yaqub Yousuf, the brother of Ahmad Abu Tahir began to rule until 366/977. Henceforward, the Qarmatian state of Bahrain came to be ruled jointly by six grandsons of Abu Sa'id, known as *al-sada al-zu'asa*.

Decline of the Qarmatians

Meanwhile, Hasan al-A'sam, the son of Ahmad Abu Tahir and a nephew of Abu Tahir, had become the commander of the Qarmatian forces, who was usually selecting to lead the Qarmatians in their military campaigns outside Bahrain. In 357/968, Hasan al-A'sam had taken Damascus after defeating Hasan bin Ubaidullah bin Tughj, the Ikhshidid governor of Syria. The Qarmatians also sacked Ramla and took vast riches and returned to Bahrain. About three months following the Fatimid conquest of Egypt, a Qarmatian force, commanded by al-A'sam's cousin, again came to Damascus and defeated Hasan bin Ubaidullah, the Ikhshidid governor of Syria. Finally, a peace treaty had been concluded between them, and according to which, the Ikhshidid agreed to pay an annual tribute to the Qarmatians.

In 359/970, a large Fatimid force commanded by Jafar bin Falah was sent to conquer Syria. The Ikhshidid governor, Hasan bin Ubaidullah sought necessary help from the Qarmatians. Jafar bin Falah attacked at full gallop and defeated the joint forces of the Ikhshidid and the Qarmatians near Ramla. Hasan bin Ubaidullah was taken prisoner. The Fatimid conquered Syria, resulting the loss of the tribute to the Qarmatians being paid to them previously by the Ikhshidids. This is cited as the main cause for the invasion of the Qarmatians on Syria next year.

In 360/970, being helped by the Buwahid Izz ad-Dawla Bakhtiyar (356-367/967-978) and the Hamdanid Abu Taghlib of Mosul, the Qarmatian commander, Hasan al-A'sam captured Damascus and Ramla, having defeated the Fatimids and killed Jafar bin Falah in battle. Hasan al-A'sam, who had also allied himself with the Abbasids, proclaimed the suzerainty of the Abbasids in Syria and had Imam al-Muizz cursed in the mosques of Damascus.

In 361/971, Hasan al-A'sam marched towards Egypt and reached near the gates of Cairo, but he was turned back by the Fatimids, and was obliged to retreat to al-Ahsa, but Damascus remained in the hands of the Qarmatians. In 363/974, after coming to Cairo, Imam al-Muizz wrote a letter to Hasan al-A'sam, stating the dignity of Ahl-al-Bait and his own excellence. He also recalled the early relations of the Qarmatians with the Ismailis, and also warned him to refrain from his attacks. Hasan al-A'sam took no heed of al-Muizz's reproach, and made his letter public and denounced the Fatimids. He entered Egypt in 363/974 for the second time, and went as far as Ayn Shams and besieged Cairo, and took possession of the moat. The defeat of the Fatimid force on that occasion would have been inevitable had al-Muizz not won over to his side one of the allies of the Qarmatians, named Hasan bin Jarrah, who abandoned in the thick of the fight. Hasan al-A'sam was defeated and retreated, and died at Ramla in 366/977. His cousin Jafar took charge of the Qarmatians. In 368/978, Imam al-Aziz himself took field and subdued Iftagin and the Qarmatians near Ramla. The Qarmatians agreed to a peace. Henceforward, the Qarmatians of Bahrain were reduced to a local power. Most of the Qarmatians reverted to their original Ismaili faith, and left Bahrain and settled as isolated families in Oman, Muscat, Gwadar and Makran. The rest of the power of the Qarmatians declined when the Buwahids inflicted two heavy defeats in 375/985. In 378/988, the Qarmatians suffered another humiliating defeat at the hands of al-Asfar, the chief of the clan of Muntafiq, and after that, the Qarmatians almost disappeared from history. Silvestre de Sacy writes in his **"Memoir on the dynasty of the Assassins"** (Paris, 1818, p. 5) that he had learnt from books of the Druze that the Qarmatians were still ruling in al-Ahsa in 422/1031. We also learn from the **"Safar-nama"** (pp. 87-89) of Nasir Khusaro (d. 481/1088), who was at al-Ahsa in 443/1051 that the Qarmatians were ruling under a council of six descendants of Abu Sa'id, assisted by six vizirs, in the line of Ibn Sanbar. He also writes that the Friday prayers and other rites such as fasting were not observed at al-Ahsa, where all mosques had been closed. Around 450/1058, a certain Abul Bahlul al-Awwam of the tribe of Abdul Qays, aided by his brother Abul Walid Muslim, rebelled against the Qarmatian governor of Uwal. In the following year, the rebels defeated a Qarmatian fleet, and Qatif was snatched from them very soon. The Qarmatians were then threatened by Abdullah bin Ali al-Uyuni, the

chief of the clan of Mura bin Amir of Abdul Qays, who rose against them in 462/1070 and defeated the Qarmatians and laid siege over al-Ahsa for seven years. Assisted by a force of Turkoman horsemen sent from the Abbasids, Abdullah bin Ali al-Uyuni seized al-Ahsa in 469/1076. He decisively subdued the Qarmatians in 470/1077, putting a definite end to the Qarmatian state of Bahrain, and founded a local rule of the Uyunids in eastern Arabia.

The Ismailis and the Qarmatians

It must be known that some historians have tried to establish as fact that the Qarmatians and the Ismailis constituted one and the same movement, and some have tried to prove the contrary. Ibn Rizam, an anti-Ismaili pamphleteer of the first half of the fourth/tenth century had wrongly woven stories of the Ismailis and Qarmatians, to which S.M. Stern writes in **"Studies in Early Ismailism"** (Jerusalem, 1983, p. 295) that, "One might regard this account which derives after all from a pamphleteer whose aim was to blacken the reputation of the Fatimid, with some suspicion." Historian Nuwayri (d. 732/1332) also poured unbelievable stuff, whose primary purpose was to provide entertaining reading and cared less than anything for the truth. It is however curious to note a general tendency in the Sunnite and Shiite sources, when referring to the Ismailis, often erroneously call them Qarmatians without perception of the distinction between them. The Qarmatians have been discredited invariably as the extremist and opportunistically nihilist, and their extreme activities have been wrongly conflated with the Ismailis. Syed Abid Ali writes in **"Political Theory of the Shiites"** (cf. **"A History of Muslim Philosophy"**, ed. by M.M. Sharif, Germany, 1963, 1st. vol., p. 738) that, "The Carmathian sect is not confused with the Ismailites, as the latest research has established beyond any doubt: it is the term "Ismailite" which is indicative of the true origin of the sect, other appellations being either misleading or based on hostility to this sect in general and to orthodox Shiites in particular." He also writes, "At this juncture, it is perhaps expedient to state in the most explicit terms that the Carmathians were not associated with the Ismailis; nor were they identical with them as it is sometimes wrongly supposed." (Ibid., p. 741). S.M. Stern also writes in **"Studies in Early Ismailism"** (Jerusalem, 1983, pp. 289-290) that, "It is

true that the movement to which both names (Ismailis and Qarmatians) are applied was at one moment in its history broken by a schism, and that the name "**Qarmatian**" was predominantly used in respect of the Qarmatians of Bahrayn, who were at variance with the main body of the Ismaili movement; yet even then the term "**Qarmatian**" was not exclusively reserved for them and was often used - usually in a derogatory sense - to denote any Ismaili.... The early Ismailis were seldom so denominated by their contemporaries, being called instead by such names as Qarmatians or Batinis. They themselves seem to have designated their movement simply by the name "the mission", **al-dawa**, or more formally "the right-guided mission", **al-dawa al-hadiya**; thus "to be converted to Ismailism" would be rendered by them as "to enter the mission", **dakhala'l-dawa**. (Ibid. pp. 289-90)

Returning the thread of our narrative, it is seen that al-Mahdi had to deal with the Berber tribes who were enraged by the death of Abu Abdullah. He also invaded Morocco in 309/921 and got an end of the Idrisid dynasty. He also captured Sicily and extended his rule throughout North Africa.

Fatimids influence in Sicily

Sicily (Italian **Sicilia**) is an island, covering an area of 9830 square miles. It is separated from Italy by the narrow strait of Messina, wherefrom it is about 2 miles from the toe of the Italian mainland. On the south-east it is about 90 miles from Cape Bon in Tunisia. Being a triangular in shape, it was given the name of **Trinacria** or **Triquetra** in ancient times. Following the fall of the Roman empire in 476 A.D., Sicily was occupied by the Ostrogoths. By the middle of the 6th century, it came under the rule of the Byzantine emperor. In 212/827, the Muslims captured the island, which became their cultural centre.

The Aghlabids had seized Sicily from the Byzantines in 264/878, which was inherited by the Fatimids. The Byzantines however had continued to retain the occupation of Calabria in southern Italy. Sicily was thickly populated by Lombards, Greeks, Arabs and Berbers. The first reported Fatimid governor of Sicily was Ibn Abil

Fawaris. Soon afterwards in 297/910, he was replaced by Hasan bin Ahmad, also known as Ibn Abi Khinzir. He raided the southern Italian coasts in 298/911 and also in the following year against the pirates and brought rich booty. In 299/912, the Arabs and the Berbers rebelled against him in Palermo and Girgenti due to his severity. It was al-Mahdi to have suppressed the uprisings diplomatically and appointed Ali bin Umar al-Balawi. The Sicilians opposed the new appointment and chose Ibn Qurhub as their own governor. Ibn Qurhub was against the Fatimids and declared his support to the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir (295-320/908-932). Later, the Berbers of Girgenti, joined by the inhabitants of other parts of Sicily, revolted against Ibn Qurhub, who was taken prisoner and sent to al-Mahdi, who had him executed. After this short interval of political cataclysm, Sicily again reverted to the Fatimid domain, though the political troubles continued to erupt on the island.

Expedition against Italy

The early Fatimid used Sicily as a base for launching raids against the coastal towns of Italy and France, including the islands of the western Mediterranean; and also continued to be engaged in war and diplomacy with the Byzantines.

The first reported raid against the south of Italian peninsula took place in 306/918. The Fatimid troops captured Reggio. The second incursion was launched from Mahdiya in the summer of 310/922. With a fleet of 20 galleys, the Fatimid officer Masud bin Ghalib al-Wusuli took possession of the fortress of St. Agatha. Two years later, Jafar bin Ubaid, known as Suluk, led the third expedition, with Palermo as his starting point. He captured Bruzzano and Oria and returned to Mahdiya with vast riches. The resounding success of this campaign had the effect of inducing the Byzantines to conclude a treaty with the Fatimids. But the annual tribute agreed for Calabria was slow to reach Mahdiya and hostilities resumed in 315/927. Continuing until 318/930 under the command of Sabir, the Fatimid incursions proceeded victoriously against Tarento, Salerno, Naples and Termoli. Eventually the tribute was paid and the treaty resumed in force until the death of al-Mahdi. According to *"The Encyclopaedia of Islam"* (Leiden, 1986, 5th vol., p. 1244), "Byzantium

allowed the Fatimid sovereign to subjugate Apulia and Calabria and to reinforce the supremacy of Islam in Sicily."

Expeditions against Egypt

The period under our review is noted for the Ismaili *dais* to have launched a brisk and pervasive mission in Egypt, where most of the officials and nobles had espoused Ismailism and entered into correspondence with al-Mahdi in Maghrib. Hence, Egypt offered an easier prey and to invade it was indubitably a less perilous enterprise. In 301/913, a powerful force commanded by his son, al-Qaim had been dispatched by land, and a fleet of 200 ships under Hubasa bin Yousuf against Alexandria. The Egyptian governor could not resist and acquired reinforcement from the Abbasids. Initially, the course of the expedition proceeded in al-Qaim's favour, but after capturing Alexandria, he failed before Fustat, and not being capable confronting the Egyptian army reinforced from Baghdad under the command of Munis, he retracted his steps towards Maghrib.

In 307/919, al-Mahdi returned to the attack with a second expedition commanded again by his son. This project at first progressed favourably as the preceding with the capture of Alexandria and the occupation of Fayyum. But when the Fatimid fleet encountered disaster at Rosetta due to the shortage of supplies, and the battles before Fustat turned to the advantage of the troops of Munis, al-Qaim was forced for the second time to retreat and returned to Maghrib. This time the Abbasid ships were manned by experienced Greek mariners. In sum, both invasions procured no result, but Barqa remained however in Fatimid's occupation.

Al-Mahdi seems to have organised, shortly before his death, a third expedition against Egypt. In fact, this third attempt took place in 323/935 at the beginning of the reign of his successor, al-Qaim.

Foundation of al-Mahdiyya

In 301/914, al-Mahdi founded a new city on the coast near Kairwan and gave to it the name of al-Mahdiyya, that served

as the Fatimid capital for some generations. The site selected on the Gulf of Gabes, between Susa and Sfax on a small peninsula with a narrow neck just into the sea for nearly a mile in length and less than 500 yards in breadth, which terminates the cape of Africa. It was the "**town of Africa**" of the European historians of the Middle Ages. The landscape of the new city was like a hand stretching out onto the waters of the Mediterranean Sea. There were only two entrances of castles, mosques, fortresses and warehouses and the fortification along the shore consisted of a thick wall barrier. The reflection of light and the imagery of waves on the rocks are unimaginable. There were 16 towers of which 8 belonged to the original foundation and another 8 were added in a later period.

The official inauguration of the new capital was pushed forward to 8th Shawal, 308/February 20, 921. Ibn Idhari al-Marrakushi composed a poem in 308/921 in "**Bayan al-Maghrib**" (Leiden, 1948, 1st vol., p. 184) for al-Mahdi to celebrate his arrival in the new capital, whose few couplets are given as under:-

*Congratulations, O magnanimous prince,
For your arrival on which time smiles.
It is al-Mahdiya, the sacred, the protected,
Just as the sacred places are in Tihama.
As if your footprints make it,
The Maqam Ibrahim when there is no maqam (station).
O Mahdi, Dominion is itself a servant to you,
Served by time itself.
The world is yours and your progeny's wherever you are.
In it all of you will always be Imam.*

The population soon grew rapidly, therefore, a second city had to be built nearby, to which al-Mahdi gave the name of Zawila.

Mahdiya retained its originality with eye-catching architecture for over 600 years, but it had been decayed by the European ruler. The Spanish historian L. del Marmol Carajal, who was present when the entire fortifications were blown up by Charles V in 1553, vide "**Descripcion general de Affrica**" (Granda, 1573, 2nd vol., p. 270).

Fatimids ship-building

Al-Mahdi also built an impressive shipyard which soon enabled the Fatimids to create a powerful fleet. The Fatimid set up ship-building factory, and yards were opened in Tunis. In 303/915, a big dock was constructed by digging out a hill on the coast of the Mediterranean, making a surface area of about 8250 square meters, so that 200 battle ships might be kept in reserve there. These ships were called *shini* and were so big that one of them required 143 oars to move it. It had a gate and a lock that could be closed.

To maintain the stability of the empire, connecting with different parts by sea-routes, the Fatimid gave due attention in the nautical progress. Yaqut (575-626/1179-1229) writes in "*Mu'ajam al-Buldan*" (comp. 625/1228) that, "The most renowned port of Maghrib was Mahdiya. Its dock was cut out of solid rock. It was a capacious dock, and could harbour thirty ships at once. On both sides of the port there lay big chains, which were opened when a ship came in." Makrizi (1363-1442) writes in his "*al-Khitat*" (3rd vol., p. 320) that the Fatimids were the first to start mock fights at sea in the world. The Fatimid admirals also developed the techniques of attacking ships with fire-throwers which the English employed five centuries later when they routed the Spanish Armada.

Mission in Khorasan

The Ismaili mission was carried on in Khorasan around the last decade of the 3rd century/903-913 by Abu Abdullah al-Khadim, who stayed in Nishapur as the first chief *dai* of Khorasan. He was executed during the governorship of Abu Bakr bin Muhtaj (321-327/933-939), and was succeeded around 307/919 by Abu Sa'id al-Sha'rani, who was sent by al-Mahdi from Maghrib. He was followed by Hussain bin Ali al-Marwazi, who transferred his seat from Nishapur to Marw al-Rudh.

The Ismaili *dawa* was so pervasive in Khorasan that Nizam al-Mulk, an anti-observer, in fact, noticed that there existed an identifiable *Ahl Khorasan* among the Ismailis. Al-Marwazi is reputed in the annals of the Samanid dynasty, and during the rule of Ahmad bin Ismail

(295-301/907-914), he commanded the Samanid forces in Sijistan in 298/910. In 300/913, al-Marwazi led the Samanid forces in Sijistan for the second time, and returned to Bukhara in the same year. Abu Zaid Balkhi (235-322/850-934) compiled his "*Suwar al-Aqalim*" in 308/920, and makes mention of Hussain bin Ali al-Marwazi and his brother Muhammed Suluk, when the author visited his birthplace, Balkh in 301/914. Abu Zaid Balkhi also writes his close relation with al-Marwazi and the regular material assistance he acquired from him.

It is said that al-Marwazi hoped to be appointed governor of Sijistan due to his valuable services, but was disappointed. After the death of Ahmad bin Ismail and the accession of Nasr bin Ahmad in 301/914, al-Marwazi paid his allegiance to Mansur bin Ishaq, the cousin of Ahmad bin Ismail in Herat. Al-Marwazi extended his influence in Nishapur, but soon he had to return to Herat, and subsequently he again went to Nishapur and captured it. The Samanid commander, Ahmad bin Sahl (306-307/918-919) was sent against him, who took Herat and gave battle to al-Marwazi before Marw al-Rudh in 306/918. This time al-Marwazi was defeated due to shortage of supplies, and was taken prisoner to Bukhara, where he was imprisoned. He was released with the intervention of vizir al-Jayhani. After being pardoned and spending some time at Samanid court, he returned to Khorasan to organize the mission works, where he spent rest of his life.

Turbulences in Yamen

Yamen was an original plant and a vital zone of the Fatimid mission under the able and loyal headship of Ibn Hawshab. In 291/904, however, his close associate, Ali bin Fazal al-Jadani had shown signs of disloyalty, and in 299/911, he publicly renounced his allegiance to al-Mahdi. It must be noted that in Egypt, when al-Mahdi decided to go to Maghrib instead of Yamen in 291/904, the *dai* Firuz also gave up Ismaili faith and fled to Yamen, and instigated a revolt. He won the support of Ali bin Fazal. Subsequently, Firuz was killed and Ali bin Fazal endeavoured unsuccessfully to coerce the collaboration of Ibn Hawshab. The death of Ibn Hawshab took place in 303/914, and had made a will to his son Abul Hasan Mansur and his pupil Abdullah bin Abbas al-Shawiri to administer the mission in Yamen till an official appointment of a new

chief **dai** by al-Mahdi. Upon his death, al-Shawiri had sent a letter to al-Mahdi, reporting the death of Ibn Hawshab, and requesting for any chief **dai** instead. In a reply, al-Mahdi confirmed the post of al-Shawiri as a chief **dai**. Jafar, the son of Ibn Hawshab was alone among his brothers to demonstrate his loyalty to the Fatimids, but his elder brother, Abul Hasan Mansur, who was expecting to succeed his father, had defected from the mission, and returned to his castles in Miswar, where he was joined by his brothers. Jafar, noticing the inimical intentions of his brothers towards al-Shawiri, tried to persuade that a quarrel would only lead to impair the Ismaili influence in Yamen. In spite of this warning, Abul Hasan Mansur waited for his opportunity, and killed al-Shawiri and took the dominions. Jafar immediately went to Maghrib, where he reached when al-Mahdi had expired in 322/934. Imam al-Qaim charged him the mission work in Maghrib, where he also served Imam al-Mansur and Imam al-Muizz, and was commonly known as Jafar bin Mansur al-Yamen.

It must be known that Ishaq bin Imran, known as Summ Sa'a, a pioneer physician-philosopher had introduced high standard of medical education and practice at the beginning of the Fatimid period. In view of his great ability, intelligence and independent spirit, he influenced professional development through out Maghrib. His widely known and eloquent student was Abu Yaqub bin Suleman, who managed to become the personal physician of Abu Abdullah and continued his service at the Fatimid court with al-Mahdi, and died in 320/932 at Kairwan. His medical works were among the first to be translated into Latin, the task being accomplished by Constantine the African about 1080. His works exercised much influence on western medieval medicine, and were still being read in the 17th century. Robert Burton (1577-1680) quotes them freely in his **"Anatomy of Melancholy."** Ibn Suleman's medical works included **"al-Hummayat"** on fevers, which was translated into Latin and Hebrew in Europe. His another work **"Agawil fi taba'i al-Aghdhiya wal Adwiya"** deals on diet and drug. And above all, his treatise on urine dominated medicine for many centuries. Very remarkable is his small tract, extant in Hebrew translation only, called **"Guide for Physicians."** It shows a high ethical conception of the medical profession.

The medico-pharmaceutical contribution in Maghrib under al-Mahdi reached their highest expression in the works of Abu Jafar bin al-Jazzar (905-984) in Kairwan. He was the student of Ibn Suleman. He used to go to Manastir, a town in Tunisia, where, next to his regular clinic, he erected a cabin as an apothecary shop, wherein he kept his syrups, electuaries etc. His chief work, **"Provision for the Traveller"** was early translated into Latin as the **"Viaticum"**, Greek **"Ephodia"** and Hebrew.

Death of al-Mahdi

Having laid a firm foundation for Fatimid rule in Maghrib, extending from Morocco to the borders of Egypt, al-Mahdi died on 15th Rabi I, 322/February 22, 934 at the age of 61 years, 5 months and 3 days. F. Dachraoui writes in his article in **"Encyclopaedia of Islam"** (1985, 5th vol., p. 1244) that, "Mahdi had the skill and energy to conduct moderate but firm policies within his provinces, and to wage tireless warfare beyond his frontiers to affirm the right of the descendants of Fatima to lead the Muslim world. Thus, under his rule, the Fatimid empire embarked successfully on the first phase of its long history."

AL-QAIM (322-334/934-946)

He was born in 280/893 in Salamia. His name was Muhammad Nizar, surnamed al-Qaim bi-Amrillah (Firm in the ordinances of God). He married to Umm Habiba, the daughter of his uncle, and ascended in 322/934.

Expedition against Egypt

It may be remembered that al-Qaim had commanded the Fatimid naval forces in 301/913. The Fatimid fleet sailed from Mahdiya towards the northern coast of Egypt and returned to Raqada after conquering Tripoli. In the following year Hubasa bin Yousuf set off east and conquered Surt and Ajabiyya on 7th Rajab, 301, February 6, 914 he entered Barqa. On Thursday the 14th Zilhaja, 301/July 7, 914 al-Qaim followed him from Raqada with a large army. Contrary to his orders, Hubasa, without waiting for his arrival, pushed further east and invaded

Alexandria on 2nd Safar, 302/August 27, 914. Al-Qaim arrived there on Friday the 14th Rabi II, 302/November 4, 914. The Abbasids succeeded to prevent the Fatimid's entry in Egypt. At his withdrawal from Egypt, al-Qaim however left a garrison in Barqa.

In 307/919, the second attempt had been conducted at the command of al-Qaim. He set out eastward on Monday the 1st Zilkada, 306/April 5, 919. On Friday the 8th Safar, 307/July 9, 919 the vanguard of the army arrived in Alexandria. This time the Fatimid forces made an advance right upto the Egyptian capital before they were repulsed. These two invasions were launched during the period of Imam al-Mahdi. After his succession, al-Qaim made a third attempt in 323/935 under the command of Raydan. Muhammad bin Tughj al-Ikhshidid (323-334/935-946), the then governor of Egypt, repelled this attack, forcing the Fatimid forces to withdraw to Barqa. Nothing was gained in these three campaigns, but it made a way open for the next period to the Fatimid to occupy Egypt.

Abu Hatim ar-Razi

One of the most eminent Ismaili *dais* during this period was Abu Hatim ar-Razi, the *hujjat* of Ray. He was born near Ray around 260/874. He conducted the mission with great efficiency and promptness. He was a remarkably learned *dai*, and studied Ismaili doctrines, but also Arabic poetry, the religious science of Islam, comparative religion and indeed the natural and mathematical sciences of the day. He succeeded to bring the ruler of Ray, Ahmad bin Ali (307-311/920-924) to the Ismaili fold, who was formerly aggressive to the Ismailis. Abu Hatim also deputed his subordinate *dais* in Tabaristan, Ispahan, Azerbaijan and Jurjan; resulting a large conversion, including Mardav ad-Daylami, the governor of Tabaristan; Yousuf bin Abi'l Saj, the governor of Azerbaijan, and Asfar bin Shroya. Abu Hatim was a great philosopher, orator and writer. W.Ivanow writes in "A Creed of the Fatimids" (Bombay, 1936, p. 5) that, "Abu Hatim ar-Razi surely was one of the most erudite authors that Ismailism, and generally, Islam has ever produced." Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes in the introduction of "A'lam al-Nubuwwah" (ed. by Salah al-Sawy, Tehran, 1977, p. 1) that, "He is one of the most outstanding theologians and philosophers

of Islam and a major figure in that galaxy of exceptional thinkers, such as Hamid al-Din Kirmani, Nasir-i Khusraw and Qadi Numan, who produced the Ismaili philosophy of the Fatimid period."

The most acclaimed of his works is **"Kitab az-Zina"** designed as an encyclopaedia of Islamic terminologies with a large store of useful informations. Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) writes in the 5th volume of **"Uyun'l-Akhbar"** that it was greatly admired by Imam al-Qaim when it was presented to him, and he gave it to his son, al-Mansur in a gift, commanding to keep it secret.

Abu Hatim left Ray in 311/924 and sided with Asfar bin Shroya (d. 319/931). He acquired many converts in Daylam and Gilan, including Asfar bin Shroya's deputy, Mardawij bin Ziyar (d. 323/935). According to Hamiduddin Kirmani in **"al-Aqwal al-Dhahabiyya"** (Tehran, 1977, pp. 2-3), "The famous disputation between Abu Hatim and the physician-philosopher, Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Zakaria ar-Razi (251-313/865-925) took place in Mardawij's presence." The discussion concerning prophethood is given in his **"A'lam al-Mubuwwah."** He answered the questions of Zakaria ar-Razi that how he necessiated that only one nation would be favoured and given superiority over others. He also argued that his conception regarding the eternity of five principles, namely God, Soul, Matter, Space and Time was absurd. He also discussed logically the questions relating to blind faith, analogy, miracles etc.

Mardawij at first supported Abu Hatim, but started enmity against the Ismailis. Thus Abu Hatim returned to Ray, thence he proceeded to Azerbaijan and took refuge with a local ruler called, Muflih. He died in 322/934 in Daylam, and after him, the Ismailis of Khorasan and Transoxania became disordered, and finally their leadership came to the hands of Abdul Malik al-Kawkabi, who resided in Girdkuh, the future stronghold of the Nizari Ismailis.

An-Nasafi and Abu Yaqub as-Sijistani

Abu Hatim ar-Razi was followed by Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ahmad an-Nasafi and Abu Yaqub as-Sijistani staying at Ray. An-Nasafi operated the mission mostly in Khorasan and Bukhara, and gained great success in converting the Sunni ruler, Nasr bin Ahmad, who had given allegiance to Imam

al-Mahdi and paid him an annual tribute of 119 thousand **dinars**. Nasr bin Ahmad also entered into correspondence with al-Qaim in Maghrib.

The renowned poet and intellect, Abu Abdullah bin Jafar bin Muhammad bin Hakim bin Abdur Rahman bin Adam ar-Rudaki ash-Shair as-Samarkandi, known as Rudaki (d. 329/940) also found an opportunity of espousing Ismaili faith in this period. Some historians sought to explain the term **Rudaki** by saying that he was so called because he could play on **rud** (harp), which is an erroneous view. The poet himself adopted his pen-name, **Rudaki** because he hailed from a village in the district of Rudak. He was a court poet of the Samanids, and composed many verses in praise of the Fatimid Imams. In one place, Maruf of Balkh, one of the earliest Samanid poets, says: "I have heard the king of poets, Rudaki as saying, 'do not give allegiance to anyone save the Fatimids.'"

The Abbasids took notice of the rapid conversion of the Ismailis in Khorasan, notably Nasr bin Ahmad, and insinuated Nuh bin Nasr (331-343/943-954), the son of Nasr bin Ahmad; against his father and the Ismailis. Nuh bin Nasr dethroned his father and conducted a barbarous massacre of the Ismailis in 331/942, known in the Ismaili history as **al-masnat al-uzama** (great calamity) in Khorasan and Transoxania. An-Nasafi and his chief associates were also executed in the wild operations at Bukhara in 332/943. For this reason, Nasir Khusaro called him **Khwaj-i Shahid** and **Shaikh al-Shahid**. It resulted a setback in Ismaili mission, but was resumed under an-Nasafi's son, Masud, surnamed Dihqan and Abu Yaqub as-Sijistani. An-Nasafi is considered a leading Ismaili philosopher among the early Ismailis. He produced a major work, entitled "**Kitab al-Mahsul**" (Book of the Yield). Paul E. Walker writes in "**Abu Yaqub al-Sijistani: Intellectual Missionary**" (London, 1996, pp. 17-18) that, "So influential were al-Nasafi and this one book that, throughout the rest of the century, writers both in and outside the Ismaili fold referred to it as if it represented the intellectual heart of Ismailism."

It is generally agreed upon by the scholars that as-Sijistani was not executed with an-Nasafi in 331/942. The mistake however arose from misreading of al-Baghdadi's statement in "**al-Firaq bayn al-Firaq**," stating that both

an-Nasafi and as-Sijistani were executed. In the introduction of both **"Risalat al-Mawazin"** and **"Risalat al-Mabda wal Ma'ad,"** he himself mentions the name of Imam al-Hakim, who acceded to the throne in 386/996. Thus, it implies that he was still alive in 386/996. His death, therefore, could be placed between 386/996 and 393/1003. He had managed to escape the widespread massacre, and continued the mission in Bukhara.

Abu Yaqub Ishaq bin Ahmad as-Sijistani, nicknamed **"cotton-seed"** (Iranian, **panba-dana**, Arabic **khayshafuj**) was born in 271/883 and was trained in Yamen. He was a great philosopher and scholar and considered to be one of the major Ismaili thinkers whose share in the development of the Ismaili system of thought is considerable. Paul E. Walker writes, "Yet, from the prominence of his books and the profoundly impressive intellectual contribution they (Ismailis) represent, we discover a truly significant mind and voice - one that deserves recognition as an outstanding figure in the Ismaili past and as a major force in Islamic thought in general" (op. cit., p. 13). He was executed by Khalaf bin Ahmed (363-393/964-1003), the Saffarid ruler of Khorasan. The period of as-Sijistani saw many prominent Ismaili thinkers, such as Abul Haytham Ahmad bin Hasan al-Jurjani, an Ismaili philosopher-poet from Gurgan, who composed many poems on Ismaili doctrines. His Ismaili disciple was Muhammad bin Surkh al-Nishapuri.

Expeditions against Italy

In 323/935, the Italian pirates raided the coastal regions of the Fatimid, therefore, al-Qaim turned his attention towards Europe, and dispatched a strong squadron of 20 sailing vessels under the command of an Arab **Amir al-Bahr** (the European, **Admiral**), Yaqub bin Ishaq al-Tamimi, who made a successful attack on Italy, the south of France, and the coast of Genoa and Calabria, and a part of Lombardy was also brought into subjection. During the Italian raids, the Fatimid forces used mangonels (**arradas** or **dabbabas**), an engine missiling the heavy stones on target, which was the then most advanced weapon. Maurice Lombard writes in **"The Golden Age of Islam"** (Netherlands, 1975, p. 86) that, "Fatimid currency was in use throughout southern Italy. **Dinars** and particularly quarter **dinars** (**rub**) were in circulation and were initiated (**tarin**) a

phenomenon similar to that observed in the Christian kingdoms in northern Spain and the country of Barcelona which, in the eleventh century, initiated the Muslim gold currencies in use in the south of the peninsula."

The Fatimid fleet was unfortunately called back, according to **"Islam in Africa"** (Lahore, 1964, p. 87) by Prof. Mahmud Brelvi, "just at the moment when Qaim's navy was about to conquer the whole Italy". It was due to the domestic rebellion of Abu Yazid. Syed Zakir Hussain writes in **"Tarikh-i Islam"** (Delhi, 1935) that, "If Abu Yazid had not staged a massive revolt against the Fatimids, al-Qaim would have probably conquered the whole of Europe, resulting a loss of a great Islamic victory." R. Brunschvig also admitted the loss of Europe in the campaign, vide **"Encyclopaedia of Islam"** (1934, 4th vol., p. 850). The Fatimid fleet, returning to Mahdiya, also occupied islands of Sardinia, Corsica, Malta, Crete and Cyprus for a short while. And here we cannot but call attention to a fact that the Fatimids were the masters of the entire Mediterranean, and their fleets operated freely throughout its length and breadth.

Al-Qaim had to meet more serious rebellions hatching in the west. The principle revolt took place amongst the Zanata tribe, south of Katama territory, who were the Kharijis under the leadership of Abu Yazid. In 332/943, he marched northwards and took Baghai, Tabassa, Mermajenna and Laribus. The Fatimid forces tried to prevent his advance upon Baja, but were repulsed. Abu Yazid marched towards Kairwan, but this time he suffered defeat. He soon rallied, and took Raqada, and then pressed on to Kairwan and captured it. Mahdiya put up a vigorous resistance for almost a year, repelling Abu Yazid's repeated attempts to storm the capital. Ziri bin Manad, the **amir** of the tribe of the Sanhaja sent a new reinforcement to the Fatimids, who was a fervent Ismaili. It must be noted that in recognition of his outstanding services, al-Qaim had granted permission to Ziri bin Manad to rebuild and fortify the town of Ashir in the central Maghrib, on the western borders of the Sanhaja territory.

In 334/945, Abu Yazid ordered for massacre and plunder, and captured Tunisia. The Fatimid forces were able to regain the whole Tunisia next year. But, after an interval, Abu Yazid rallied and laid siege to the town of Susa.

We see that al-Qaim was an experienced soldier and an able commander who could lead his forces to victory. Unlike his father, he used to participate in military expeditions. He was bold and courageous, and his activities were not confined to his military operations only. He was not harsh towards his opponents and was tolerant. Prof. Mahmud Brelvi writes in **"Islam in Africa"** (Lahore, 1964, pp. 86-87) that, "Qaim was a great warrior, and was the first of the Fatimid Caliphs who created a powerful fleet in the Mediterranean. After re-establishing his authority in Mauritania, he turned his attention towards the continent of Europe. His ports had been harassed by the Italian pirates from the Ligurian coast, from Pisa and other places. In reprisal, Qaim overran Southern Italy as far as Gaeta, and his ships of war captured Genoa. A part of Lombardy was also brought into subjection. Unfortunately, the pent-up wrath of the people at the excesses of the savage Berbers, the allies of the Fatimids, burst into a furious flame just at the moment when Qaim's navy was about to conquer the whole Italy. The revolt was headed by a Khariji, named Abu Yazid."

In 325/937, Khalid bin Ishaq, the governor of Sicily laid foundation of a new city, called Khalisa, near Palermo. Its structure and design almost resembled the city of Mahdiyya. The chiefs of Sicily and other officials mostly lived in Khalisa, where most of the administration was controlled.

Prof. Masudul Hasan writes in **"History of Islam"** (Lahore, 1987, 1st vol., p. 492) that, "Al-Qaim ruled for eleven years. He was a man of courage, and did not lose nerves even in the face of great difficulty. He lost most of his territory to Abu Yazid, and was besieged in his capital Mahdiyya. In spite of a very difficult situation, he preserved, and out of the civil war which lasted for several years, the Fatimids ultimately emerged victorious. This civil war changed the course of history. But for this civil war, al-Qaim would have occupied a greater part of Italy, and that would have served a base for the conquest of Europe."

Al-Qaim died on 14th Shawal, 334/May 19, 946 at the height of Abu Yazid's rebellion, who at that time had sieged over Susa. His age was 59 years, 6 months and 27 days and the period of the Imamate and Caliphate lasted for 12 years, 6 months and 27 days.

AL-MANSUR (334-341/946-952)

He was born in 302/914 in Kairwan, the first Fatimid Imam to be born in Maghrib. His name was Ismail and **kunya** was Abu Tahir, surnamed al-Mansur bi-Amrillah (Victorious by the command of God). He acceded the throne on 334/945 during the time when Abu Yazid had laid a seige over Susa.

It may be known that **kunya** is a part of the Arab personal name, being an appellation consisting of **Abu** (father of) or **Umm** (mother of) and followed by a name, usually that of the bearer's eldest son.

Abu Yazid Khariji

Abu Yazid Khariji, or Abu Yazid Makhlad bin Kaydad, traced his tribal origin to the clan of Ifran, one of the leading branches of the Zanata. He was a schoolmaster at Taharat, and had a leaning towards the doctrines of the Kharijis. He learnt the doctrines from Abu Ammar al-A'ma. Abu Yazid had been elected then the leader of the Kharijis, and became more interested to acquire political power. After spending sometime in Taharat, he returned to Qastilia, where he started his anti-Fatimid agitation in 316/928 and soon procured a large following. With the Berbers moving quickly to his side, Abu Yazid engineered his revolt against the Fatimids in 332/944, and swiftly conquered almost all the southern regions, and seized Kairwan in 333/944. Abu Yazid advanced and laid a seige over Susa when al-Mansur ascended. Ibn Khallikan (1211-1282) writes in "**Wafayat al-A'yan**" (1st. vol., p. 219) that, "Al-Mansur was charged by his father (al-Qaim) to wage war against Abu Yazid, who had revolted against his authority. Abu Yazid Makhlad bin Kaidad belonged to the sect of Ibadites; he made an outward show of rigid devotion, but was in reality an enemy of God; he never rode but on an ass, nor wore any dress but woollen."

The first task of al-Mansur was to relieve Susa. He himself commanded the forces and inflicted a severe defeat on Abu Yazid, and drove him back to Kairwan, then he went to Sabta. Al-Mansur reached Kairwan and helped the suffered people. Al-Mansur had been warmly received in

Kairwan, and he also personally conducted a close chase, defeating Abu Yazid near Tubna and then around Masila. In 336/947, al-Mansur assisted by his general Ziri bin Manad, inflicted a final defeat on the Khariji Berbers in the mountains of Kiyana, where the rebels had entrenched themselves in a fortress, called Qalat Bani Hammad. According to Ibn Khallikan (1st Vol., p. 219), Abu Jafar al-Marwaruzi narrates the following anecdote: "I went forth with al-Mansur on the day he defeated Abu Yazid, and as I accompanied him, he dropped from time to time one of the lances which he bore in his hand; so I picked it up and wiped it, and gave it to him, pronouncing it to be a good omen, and quoting to him the following verse:

*'She threw away her staff, and a distant land
became the place of her abode; (yet, she felt)
as the traveller on his return, when his eyes
are delighted (by the sight of home)'*

On which, al-Mansur replied: *"Why did you not quote what is better and truer than that: 'And We spoke by revelation to Moses, saying, 'throw down thy rod'. And behold, it swallowed up that which they had caused falsely to appear. Wherefore the truth was confirmed, and that which they had wrought vanished. And they were overcome there, and were rendered contemptible'* (7:114-116). To this I said: "O, my Lord! you, who are the son of God's Apostle, utter that knowledge of which you are the sole possessor."

Abu Yazid was suppressed and taken prisoner, but was died of his wounds. Jafar bin Mansur (d. 365/975) is the contemporary authority, who had also composed few poems about the revolt of Abu Yazid and the marvellous actions of al-Mansur. Ibn Athir (7th vol., p. 171) tells us that, "Al-Mansur personally took charge of the military operations and put an end to Abu Yazid's menace. Had al-Mansur failed in checking this menace, it is probable that the Fatimid empire would not have survived long. With all this, al-Mansur behave generously with his implacable foe. He came to Kairwan in 334/945 and gave protection to the family of Abu Yazid who had despaired of life. He even granted his wives and children monthly allowances. He also granted Abu Yazid's request to restore his wives and children to him on condition that he would not wage war. But Abu Yazid soon broke his promise and tried to launch another insurrection."

Fazal, the son of Abu Yazid continued the revolt in the Awras for a few months until he, too, was subdued and was brought to Mahdiya by Batit bin Ya'la bin Batit in 336/948. Other sons of Abu Yazid fled to Spain and took refuge under the Umayyads. The rebellion of Abu Yazid, however, had sucked away the resources of the state, forcing the Fatimids to pay a heavy price.

"The failure of Abu Yazid's rising," writes H.U. Rahman in **"A Chronology of Islamic History"** (London, 1989, p. 153), "left the Fatimids far stronger than before and with a much firmer grip on the rein."

When al-Mansur was subduing Abu Yazid's revolt, a report reached to him about a petty uprising of Hamid Bazaltain, the chief of the Maghrib, who had laid a siege over Tahrat soon after announcing his loyalty with the Umayyads of Spain. After crushing the revolt of Abu Yazid, al-Mansur focused his attention at the new rising, and himself commanded his army. He inflicted a defeat to Hamid and appointed Yala bin Muhammad, the chief of Banu Ifran in Maghrib.

The Kalbids in Sicily

Al-Mansur was unable to pay attention towards Sicily during the revolt of Abu Yazid, where Ibn Ataf was an inefficient governor. Taking advantage of his weakness, the Byzantines stopped the payment of the tribute to the Fatimids. In the meantime, the inhabitants of Sicily also rose against Ibn Ataf, who hid himself in the old castle of Palermo.

Confronted by the chaotic situation caused by the rebellious at Palermo and Agrigento in Sicily against the Fatimid **amirs**, al-Mansur deemed it logical and sensible to entrust Sicily's administration to those whose fidelity was proven beyond doubt, and who, moreover, could maintain a neutral stand, therefore, al-Mansur appointed Hasan bin Ali al-Kalbi as the governor of Sicily in 336/946.

Hasan bin Ali al-Kalbi belonged to an influential Kalbid family, stemming from the tribe of Kalab bin Wabara of Banu Abil Hussain. Under the Aghlabids rule, the Kalabid family began to decline from public notice; but they became the main prop and stay during the Fatimids period,

and swiftly found a milieu favourable to their rise, and became a governing element of Muslim Sicily by the middle of the 4th/10th century. Ali bin Ali al-Kalbi, one of the first dynasts of the family and son-in-law of Salim bin Abi Rashid, the then Fatimid governor of Sicily, from 305/917 to 325/936, died at the siege of Agrigento in 326/938. His son Hasan bin Ali al-Kalbi, who had distinguished himself in the campaigns waged by Imam al-Qaim and Imam al-Mansur against Abu Yazid, was the first of a succession of Kalbid governors in Sicily, a kind of hereditary emirate under the Fatimids which lasted until the middle of 5th/11th century.

In Sicily, Hasan bin Ali al-Kalbi finished the internal uprisings and restored peace. He also solidified his army, forcing the Byzantine emperor to resume the payment of the tribute to the Fatimids. On al-Mansur's death in 341/952, Hasan bin Ali returned to Mansuria, leaving behind the government of the island in the hands of his son, Ahmad bin Hasan (342-358/953-969), the second Kalbid governor of Sicily.

The new Fatimid policy led to the origination of the semi-independent dynasty of the Kalbids, which ruled over Sicily for almost a century on behalf of the Fatimids, having considerable autonomy. Hasan, called al-Samsan (431-445/1040-1053) was the last Kalbid governor of Sicily. The Norman Count Roger captured Messina in 1060, and Palermo, the capital of the island fell to them in 1072. The Normans also occupied Syracuse in 1085 and by 1091 the whole of the island came to the possession of the Normans. That was the end of the Muslim rule in Sicily.

The Kalbid era was one of the most prosperous periods in the history of Muslim Sicily. The island developed vital trade and played an important role in the transmission of Islamic culture into Europe. In Sicily, the schools, colleges, mosques and hospitals were also built, the agriculture was promoted and the new industries were set up. It is interesting to note that the medical institution of Palermo was far better than that of Baghdad and Cordova. According to "Encyclopaedia of World Art" (Rome, 1958, 12th vol., p. 459), "The oldest examples of silk weaving are from southern Italy, particularly Sicily, where the first looms were probably put into operation by the Saracens in the 9th century."

The Fatimid art had certainly influenced the Italians through Sicily, and left behind many traces. A number of important pieces of gold and silver works, scattered in south Italy belonged to the Fatimids. The products of this workshop are characterized by a special technique of filigree work arranged in spirals or in vermiculated designs and by simply encased ornamented enamels in Fatimid style. According to "Encyclopaedia of World Art" (Rome, 1958, 12th vol., p. 459), "The influence of Fatimid art is seen in the two lions, each devouring a camel, that entirely cover the mantle of Roger II (1095-1154) almost as if it were half of an enormous orb. The lions are separated by a very stylized palmette. Also Fatimids are the palmettes decorating the edges of the sleeves and the hem of the dalmatic. To this were added the clearly Islamic motif of ornamental scripts - in this case, Naskhi letters, which flow elegantly to form a border."

It may be noted that the magnetic instrument indicating the direction was known as **qutb-numa** (mariner compass), which came to be used by the navigators of the Mediterranean Sea, from Sicily to Alexandria for the first time. Idrisi (494-548/1100-1154), who compiled his geographical treatise in Sicily, however, is reported to have made an earliest description of the mariner compass. The Egyptians called it **samia**, because their terms were separate from those of the navigators of the high sea. It is beyond doubt that the Europeans were indebted to the Muslims for the mariner compass, which, they knew most probably after 5th century.

Expedition against the French

In 340/951, al-Mansur was reported that the emperor Constantine VII (913-959) of France was about to invade the Fatimid territories, thus a naval forces was dispatched under Faraj Saqali. Hasan bin Ali al-Kalbi, the governor of Sicily and Faraj jointly invaded Kaloria and defeated the French forces. The French emperor was obliged to send tributes and a peace-negotiating embassy to the Fatimid court. On their way back to Maghrib, the Fatimid naval forces conquered Reggio and built there a mosque, the ruins of which have been unearthed recently.

In 335/947, al-Mansur ordered yet another new capital built a short distance southwest of Kairwan, called Mansuria. It served a new Fatimid capital after Mahdiya.

Al-Mansur died in 341/952. F.Dachraoui writes in "Encyclopaedia of Islam" (1990. 6th vol., p. 434) that, "Mansur's personality shines with an unparalleled brilliance under the pens of the Ismaili authors, who, as also the Sunni chroniclers, show great wander in relating his exalted deeds and who dwell at length on giving accounts of the battles, rebellions and other bloody events. According to their accounts, he possessed only good qualities: he was generous and benevolent, level-headed and perspicacious, above all possessing a brilliant eloquence; since his youth, he had devoted himself to piety and study, and was deeply conscious of his high calling as impeccable Imam and of his grandeur as a monarch."

AL-MUIZZ (341-365/952-975)

His name was Ma'd, and *kunya* was Abu Tamim, surnamed al-Muizz li-din'allah (Fortifier of the religion of God). He was born in Mahdiya in 319/931 when Imam al-Mahdi was alive, who had predicted that al-Muizz would be man of great glory. He was very intelligent from his infancy. Qadi Noman writes in "al-Majalis wa'l Musayarat" (2nd vol., pp. 616-617) that al-Muizz recalled his infancy that: "I am reminiscing about the day I was a small child. The day I was taken into his (al-Mahdi) presence, I had been weaned and I could understand and remember that what happened. He reached for me and kissed me and took me into his robe. He seated me by his side and ordered something for me to eat. A gold and silver platter was brought, containing apples, grapes etc. He put it before me. I did not eat anything from it. He then took it and gave it to me and said: "Go and eat what is in it and give the platter to such and such woman." I told him: "No, I will keep the platter and give the fruits to her." (Al-Mahdi) laughed and wondered at my perception. He prayed for me and said: "You will have a glorious future."

Al-Muizz ascended in 341/952, and his Caliphate is noted for the extension of the Fatimid domination from Maghrib to Egypt and Syria. His Caliphate is also acclaimed for the progress of learning and arts. He himself was a learned philosopher, scientist and astronomist. His court always remained full of jurists, traditionalists, poets and historians. The heart of al-Muizz was set on the conquest

of Egypt, the great dream ever present before his father and grandfather, which seemed now coming within the bounds of possibility.

War with the Byzantines

In 345/956, the Fatimid naval fleet inflicted a major defeat on the Byzantines in Italy, following several minor entanglements and forcing the emperor Constantine VII (913-959) to pay tribute and send a peace-negotiating embassy to al-Muizz in 346/957. In 351/962, Ahmad bin Hasan, the second Kalbid governor of Sicily had staged war against the eastern part of the island and captured Taormina, whose name was changed to **al-Muizzia** in honour of Imam al-Muizz. In 354/964, following the accession of the emperor Nicephorus II Phocas (963-969), who had deliberately stopped the customary tribute to the Fatimids, the Byzantines were severely defeated on land and sea by the joint Fatimid and Kalbid forces, and occupied Rametta, the last ashes of the Byzantium; and the simultaneous victory at sea known as the **wak'at al-majaz** (battle of the straits), which is celebrated in a turgid **qasida** of Ibn Hani (d. 362/973), vide his "**Diwan**" (Cairo, 1271 A.H., no. 40, pp. 540-59). In 356/967, a peace treaty was concluded between the Fatimids and the Byzantines, and accordingly, the Muslims sought the right to impose **jaziya** on the Christian inhabitants of Sicily. This defeat of the Byzantines was indeed celebrated with pomp through out the Islamic world.

Jawhar as-Siqilli

Abul Hasan Jawhar bin Abdullah traced his origin from his country of birth, Sicily in Italy. Imam al-Muizz had given him the **kunya** of Abul Hasan, and was also called al-Katib (secretary) and al-Qaid (general). He was born most probably between 298/911 and 300/913 in Sicily, the then island under occupation of the Byzantines, and died most probably in 381/992.

During the period of Imam al-Mansur, Jawhar was brought as a slave to Kairwan and was presented before the Imam. Realizing his potential, he was made as a personal attendant of Imam al-Mansur, and soon rose to prominence.

In 341/932, al-Muizz appointed him as his Katib and since then, he became known as Jawhar al-Katib. In 347/958, he was made the commander-in-chief of the Fatimid forces, and was assigned to subdue the remaining parts of the Maghrib. In 347/958, Jawhar led the Fatimid forces westwards and defeated near Tahrat, a large army of the Zanata Berbers commanded by Yala bin Muhammad, the chief of the Banu Ifran, and an ally of the Umayyads of Spain, who had rebelled against the Fatimids. Yala, who ruled the central Maghrib from Tahrat to Tangier was killed and thus the Ifranid influence in the central Maghrib came to an end.

He further proceeded towards Sijilmasa, then ruled by the Midrar tribe and killed its chief, Muhammad bin al-Fath in a fierce fighting. Jawhar marched against Fas after spending a year in the eastern Morocco. In 349/960, he besieged the strongest fortress of the Umayyads. He took possession of Fas and arrested its Umayyad governor. Jawhar proceeded towards the far west, and continued conquering one after another city till he reached the Atlantic ocean. He ordered some fish to be put in a pot with water, and sent it to al-Muizz to let him know symbolically that whichever cities he had crossed, he conquered them as far as the Atlantic ocean.

Conquest of Egypt

We have heretofore noticed that the Fatimid attempt to conquer Egypt began early in their reign. Al-Muizz, however, with a comprehensive and more cautious policy in the Mediterranean and the Muslim world, was able to succeed where his predecessors failed. Having completely subjected the Maghrib to his control, he was able to rally the Katama tribe under the capable leadership of Jawhar for impending expedition against Egypt.

Egypt was under the rule of the Ikhshids from 323/935 to 358/969 before the advent of the Fatimids. It was a Turkish dynasty under the Abbasid suzerainty. Muhammad Ikhshid, the founder of the rule, died in 355/966 and his two minor sons, Abu Kassim and Ali ruled after him in succession as the nominal rulers, and the virtual authority was held by an Abyssinian, called Abul Misk Kafur (camphor, the father of musk). He was an able governor, and died in 357/968 after ruling for 22 years. Kafur's death left Egypt in a state of confusion. It was a

time of acute disorders and anarchy. Famine broke out as a result of scarcity of water in Nile and it was also followed by plague. The soldiers had their pay diminished, their gratuities were in arrear. The whole administration failed to relieve the people from distress due to lack of capable governor.

Kafur was succeeded by a twelve years old Abul Fawaris Ahmad. Under his rule, there had started an animosity between the vizir Abu Jafar bin Furat and Yaqub bin Killis, the treasurer. Yaqub was imprisoned, but was relieved soon by the intervention of Sharif Muslim al-Hussain, a great grandson of Imam Hussain. Yaqub bin Killis had gone to al-Muizz in Maghrib and informed the chaotic condition of Egypt. He also requested the Imam to take possession of Egypt. On the other hand, the Abbasids also neglected Egypt because of their internal wars. The people of Egypt ultimately knocked the door of Maghrib and wrote several letters to al-Muizz, inviting him to get rid of calamities. Al-Muizz confessed the offer and ordered for the preparation of large army to conquer Egypt. According to Ibn Khallikan (5th vol., p. 226), "The preparations for expedition against Egypt are a fair witness to the efficiency of the Fatimid logistics." Four months provisions were patiently amassed at the Qasr al-Ma, near Mansuria. Wells were dug and rest-houses built along the route between Tunisia and Egypt in 354/966, about three years before the invasion.

Al-Muizz determined to entrust the invasion of Egypt to his general, Jawhar, who had already proved his efficiency in the reduction of the western provinces, but just about this time, Jawhar fell ill, that no hopes were entertained of his recovery. In this state, he was visited by al-Muizz, who according to Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., p. 341) declared that Jawhar would not only escape from death, but make the conquest of Egypt. The health of Jawhar was restored soon. Al-Muizz attended with his court to bid him farewell and according to Makrizi (1st vol., p. 378), he said: "We are in need of your bodies and minds. Be it known to you that if you act on what we say, we can hope that God will ease our attack of the eastern countries, as he did of the western parts with your cooperation." He further said, "By God, if Jawhar goes alone to conquer Egypt, he will be able to take hold of it. You people will enter Egypt within remaining in your veils without offense, and will land at the ruins of the Tulunids, where

a city shall be built, whose name shall be al-Qahira, which shall dominate the world." (Ibid.)

Thus, al-Muizz made his farewell speech to Jawhar's troops on the eve of their departure from the Maghrib in which he greatly emphasised the political and religious policy to be followed in the new dominion. He admonished his troops that **"justice was the basis of the state, not oppression."** If this principal were to be observed by all, he thought, the Katama warriors would eventually conquer the East as easily as they had conquered the West.

With the conclusion of his *khutba*, al-Muizz formally ordered Jawhar to set out, and ordered his princes to dismount and give Jawhar the salutation of departure; and this also obliged the great officers of the empire to dismount. Jawhar kissed the hand of al-Muizz, and mounted his horse and put his army on march.

Jawhar's march started from Kairwan with a huge army on 14th Rabi I, 357/February 4, 969. Ibn at-Tiqtaga in his **"al-Fakhri"** (comp. 701/1302) quotes the poet, named Muhammad bin Hani Maghribi (d. 362/973) as follows: **"No army before the army of Jawhar trotted and walked its charges by files of tens"**. Jawhar's army consisted of Arabs, Saqaliba, Rum and Berber tribes of whom the Katama was the largest. Ibn Khallikan (5th vol., p. 377) estimated at more than a hundred thousand men, and Nuwayri (d. 732/1332) writes in **"Nihayat al-Arab"** (ed. M. Jabir A. al-Hini, Cairo, 1984, p. 44) that it was later augmented by two hundred thousand men. The cost of the expedition is also given for 24 million *dinars*. More than a thousand camel loads of gold were also placed under Jawhar in order to meet extra expenses. With all his forces, Jawhar reached Barga, whose governor, Aflah received him with honour. Jawhar directed his forces towards Alexandria, and conquered it without much opposition. When the people of Fustat learned the fall of Alexandria, they sent their deputation, who met Jawhar in a village, called Taruja on Rajab, 358/June, 969. Jawhar promised them for safe-conduct in writing. On 11th Shaban, 358/June 30, 969, the Fatimid general Jawhar overwhelmed the last feeble resistance of the Ikhshid forces near Jiza, and entered Fustat by crossing the Nile. He landed at the ruins of the Tulunid dynasty (254-292/868-905) on 15th Shaban, 358/July 4, 969 where he was received with honour.

In the same year, Jawhar dispatched a messenger towards Maghrib in presence of al-Muizz with the glad tidings that Egypt had fallen to the Fatimids. Ibn Hani, ready on the spot, recited a *qasida* which began:-

*The Abbasids are saying, "Has Egypt been conquered?"
So say to them, "The matter has been decided!"*

*Jawhar has already passed Alexandria:
The heralds have announced it, and victory is his!*

It seems that Jawhar preferred to follow very closely the policy designed by al-Muizz. In his proclamation (*ahd al-aman*) to the Egyptian populace in 358/969, Jawhar outlined a sagacious policy of religious toleration, reform, justice, tranquillity, security and peace. He was there to execute Fatimid policy which was aimed at pacifying Egypt in order that it might serve as a potential centre.

Building of Cairo

It would be more accurate to describe the site of Fustat as a low-lying bank consisting of a plain and series of alluvial terraces stretching as far as the advanced spurs of the Jabal al-Muqattam, known as Jabal Yashkur. The Greeks named it Babylon, then it was known as Fustat, founded after the conquest by Amr bin al-Aas in 20/641, in the form of a camp, to the north of the ancient city. The name *Fustat* (*fistat*, *fussat* or *fissat*) means either a "military tent" or more probably, a "defensive moat" (Roman *fossaton* and Latin *fossatum*). In 258/872, Ibn Tulun, the chief of Egypt had built a huge palace at the foot of Jabal al-Muqattam and a great mosque in 261/875.

Jawhar encamped his army at the northern plain of Fustat, almost away from the crowded parts of the city. Prof. Hitti writes in "*Capital Cities of Arab Islam*" (London, 1973, p. 111) that, "The victor lost no time in laying the foundation of his new capital. The site he chose excelled that of Baghdad in the number and importance of its forerunners, and the region around the site vied with that of the earlier capital."

On 17th Shaban, 358/July 6, 969, Jawhar drew the lines of the new city, and on the same night, he laid the foundation of a new city, named **al-Qahira al-Muizzia**, or **al-Qahira** (whence **Cairo** through Italian). It is related that a lot of about 1200 yards square was marked by poles with ropes extending from one pole to the other. Mattocks in hand, labourers stood waiting for the sound of bells strung on the ropes, while the astrologers were busy calculating the most favourable conjunction of the planets to give the signal for starting digging. But a raven darted down, perched on the rope, and set the bells jingling. Down went the diggers mattocks. Mars (**qahira al-afalak**) was then at its zenith, therefore, the name of the new city was given **al-Qahira**, or **al-Qahira al-Muizzia**. It should, however, be noted that Masudi (d. 346/958) tells more or less the same story about the foundation of Alexandria by Alexander. Still from credible sources, it seems that al-Muizz had designed a plan of the city before Jawhar's departure and had selected its name as expressed in his speech.

The new city was built on a rectangular plan. Its width was about 1200 metres and spread on 340 acres of land, out of which 70 acres were occupied by the big palace. A large area was reserved for gardens and parks, and about 200 acres were distributed among the soldiers. The city was strongly fortified on all sides with iron-gates to protect from the invaders. In its north was the gate of Nasr, in south the gate of Zwellā, in east the gate of Barqiya and the gate of Mahruk, and on its west were the gates of Saadat, Faraj and Khokhal.

John J. Pool writes in "**Studies in Mohammedanism**" (London, 1892, p. 165) that, "Cairo, in the time of her real greatness, in the days when the Fatimites ruled, must have been a capital to be proud of. And not only was the city famous for her unique situation and grandeur, but she earned renown in the East, as Cordova did in the West, for her encouragement of learning." Dr. T.J. De Boer writes in "**The History of Philosophy in Islam**" (New York, 1967, pp. 5-6) that, "For a short time Aleppo, the seat of the Hamdanids, and for a longer time Cairo, built by the Fatimids in the year 969, - have a better claim to be regarded as the home of intellectual endeavour than Baghdad itself."

Jawhar ordered that all mention of the Abbasid caliph in the Friday prayers must be expunged from all official records and the Fatimid *khutba* be recited. Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., p. 344) writes that these words were added in the *khutba*:- "*O my God, bless Muhammad the chosen, Ali the accepted, Fatima the pure, and al-Hasan and al-Hussain, the grandsons of the Apostle, whom Thou hast freed from stain and thoroughly purified. O my God, bless the pure Imams, ancestors of the Commander of the faithful.*" Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., p. 345) further writes that, "Jawhar disapproved however of prayers (of *khutba*) being made for himself, and said that such was not in the direction given by his master." One of Jawhar's first acts in Egypt was to strike the Fatimid coins, bearing the name of al-Muizz. He sent a sack of coins to al-Muizz in Mansuria as a symbol of his conquest. It is recounted that al-Muizz's faithful retainer, Abu Ali Mansur al-Jawhar al-Azizi (d. 363/974) was near death due to illness on that time, therefore, al-Muizz sent him some of these Egyptian coins, and said, "I hope that God will prolong his life, so that he may make the pilgrimage with us (towards Egypt)."

The preachers in the mosques were forbidden to wear the black garment usual under the Abbasids, and were ordered to use white instead. It was also ordered that every Sunday a court should be held for the inspection of complaints for hearing of petitions against the officials. Jawhar introduced financial reforms and accelerated the economical conditions, and the peace and prosperity were restored very soon in Egypt.

Jawhar's first step after laying down the city wall with four gates was to start on the two major projects: the Imam's palace and the mosque. The palace complex occupied the central area of 116,844 square yards. It was large enough to accomodate the imperial household and servants and to provide offices for government officials and army officers. In course of time it came to have 4000 rooms.

Close by the palace rose the mosque, extending to the foot of Jabal al-Muqattam, named *Jam-i Azhar*, on 24th Jamada I, 359/April 4, 970, where a big library and school were erected. Since the title of Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad and the wife of Ali, was *Az-Zohra* (the bright) and in her honour, it was named Al-Azhar, being the

masculine form of **Az-Zohra**. Philip K. Hitti writes in **"Capital Cities of Arab Islam"** (London, 1973, p. 114) that, "It took two years (970-972) to build. Its name **al-Azhar** (the most resplendent) recalls Ali's wife and Muhammad's daughter, **Fatimah al-Zahra**." It was built with 76 pillars of marble, facing each other. The roof was made of strong wood. The first service was performed in the mosque on Saturday, the 7th Ramadan, 361/June 22, 971. Makrizi writes in **"Khitat"** (2nd vol., p. 273) that the dome above the arches was decorated with the following inscriptions:-

"In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate; according to the command for its building, from the servant of Allah, His governor Abu Tamim Ma'ad, the Imam al-Muizz li din Allah, Amir al-Mominin, for whom, and his illustrious forefathers and his sons may there be the blessings of Allah: By the hand of his servant Jawhar, the Secretary, the Siqilli, in the year 360."

De Lacy O'Leary writes in **"A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate"** (London, 1923, pp. 110-11) that, "In 378/988, the following caliph al-Aziz, devoted it especially to the learned, and from this it gradually become the leading university of Islam." "Reputed to be one of the world's oldest universities", writes John L. Esposito in **"Islam, the Straight Path"** (New York, 1991, p. 48), "al-Azhar has remained an internationally recognized centre of Islamic learning, training students from all over the Islamic world and issuing authoritative religious judgements on major issues and questions."

The students in al-Azhar were called **mujawir** (learners) and **talib al-ilm** (seekers after knowledge). The teachers and professors took pride in using the modest title **khadim al-ilm** (servants of knowledge). The relationship between the teacher and pupil was patriarchal. The students showed their tutors the great respect, kissed their hands and carried their shoes. An inspector (**nazir**) at the head of the al-Azhar was to be chosen from the high officials of the state, also known as **shaikh al-umum**, who may be

compared to the Rector of the German universities, and the office of the Rector was called *mashyakha*.

When one enters the Jama-i Azhar in Cairo through the door *bab al-muzayyinin*, the inscription on this gate will bedevil and attract his attention. It says: "*Inna' l-a'mala bi'l-niyyati wa-li-kulli mara'in ma nawa*" (verily, actions are judged by their intention and every man has what he has intended). This saying of the Holy Prophet is considered to be one of the most important principles of Islam. As such it is mentioned as one of the four basic doctrines around which Islam revolves (*maḍar al-islam*).

Syed Ameer Ali writes in "*The Spirit of Islam*" (London, 1955, pp. 336-7) that, "The Fatimides of Egypt were grand supporters of learning and science....They established colleges, public libraries, and scientific institutes, richly furnished with books, mathematical instruments, to which were attached numerous professors and attendants. Access to, and the use of, these literary treasures were free to all, and writing materials were afforded gratis. The Caliphs frequently held learned disputations at which the professors at these academies appeared, divided according to the different faculties, -logicians, mathematicians, jurists and physicians, dressed in their *khala*, or doctoral mantles. The gowns of the English universities still retain the original form of the Arabic *khala* or *kaftan*." It must be noted that *khala* (robes of honour) generally consisted of a set of clothes: an *imama* (turban), a *qamis* (shirt), *taylasan* (piece of material worn over the shoulders), a *qaba* (a kind of sleeved, close-fitting coat) or a *durra'a* (a loose outer garment). While, the *kaftan* was regarded as a characteristic dress of the Turks. It was a kind of sleeved, close-fitting coat, generally reaching the middle of the calf, divided down the front and made to overlap over the chest.

It must be known that the first university was founded in Europe on 1150 at Paris, whose grade of university was declared in 1208. The Oxford was founded in 1168 and the Cambridge in 1231, therefore, al-Azhar University, no doubt, is the first oldest University in the world. In July, 1969 more than 4,000,000 people crowded into its 83 square miles in Cairo to celebrate its thousandth anniversary with pomp and jubilation.

Al-Muizz in Egypt

Jawhar also conquered Syria, and then he invited his master, al-Muizz in Egypt. After making necessary appointments in Maghrib, al-Muizz departed from Mansuria on 21st Shawal, 361/August 15, 972 with his family and notable persons. His caravan reached Alexandria on 23rd Shaban, 362/May 29, 973. Abu Tahir Muhammad bin Ahmad, the *qadi* of Egypt, accompanied by the chief men, offered al-Muizz their salutations. Ibn Khallikan (3rd vol., p. 379) writes that, "He (al-Muizz) held a sitting near the light-house, in order to receive them and, addressing to them a long speech, he said that he had come to Egypt, not for the purpose of augmenting his dominions and his wealth, but of maintaining the true faith, protecting pilgrims and making war against the infidels. He declared his resolution to close his life in the exercise of good works and to act in conformity with the orders he had received from his ancestor, the Prophet Muhammad. He then preached to them and made a long exhortation which drew tears from some of those who were present; after which, he arrayed the *qadi* and other persons of the assembly in robes of honour, made each of them a present of a horse, ready harnessed, and dismissed them." Towards the end of the month of Shaban, al-Muizz left Alexandria and, on Saturday, the 2nd Ramdan, 363/June 6, 973, he stopped at Mina, the wharf of Egypt. He was warmly greeted by Jawhar in Jazira. Al-Muizz entered Qahira, or Cairo, henceforward, it became the capital of the Fatimids. Ibn Khallikan (3rd vol., p. 380) writes that, "On arriving at Cairo, he went to the castle and entered a hall of audience where he fell prostrate in adoration of Almighty God. He then said a prayer of two *rakats* (i.e., the genuflections of prayer)."

Jawhar continued to govern Egypt with absolute power till the arrival of his master; he preserved his high rank, dignity and authority till 364/974. He however continued in the government of Egypt for 4 years and 20 days.

The capital was placarded with al-Muizz's name and the praises of Ali. He was acclaimed by the people, who crowded to his first public audience. He was presented precious gifts by the prominent noblemen, in which the present offered by Jawhar was splendid and eye-catching. Stanley Lane Poole writes in "*History of Egypt*" (London, 1914, p. 98) that, "It includes 500 horses with saddles

and bridles encrusted with gold, amber and precious stones; tents of silk and cloth of gold, borne on Bactrian camels; dromedaries, mules, and camels of burden; filigree coffers full of gold and silver vessels; gold-mounted swords; caskets of chased silver containing precious stones; a turban set with jewels, and 900 boxes filled with samples of all the goods that Egypt produced."

The reign of al-Muizz was one of the most glorious ever recorded in Egyptian history. He displayed judgement and justice in the management of his mixed subjects. He did not allow his troops to interfere with the people. He was well disposed towards the Copts. His land revenue reforms were highly admired, which he was ably assisted by his vizir Yaqub bin Killis. Al-Muizz divided the provinces into districts and were placed under capable officers. The army was organized with a standing force and a militia to be summoned in times of war. A naval fleet was also organized to protect the coastal trade and commerce from pirates. Makrizi writes in "**al-Khitat**" (1st vol., p. 444) that, "The Franks were employed as craftsmen, making weapons for the navy and other services in Cairo." The Fatimids built a big dockyard (**dar al-sina'a**) at Alexandria and Damietta, inside the country on the Nile at Maks near Cairo and Aydhah near Sanga on the Red Sea opposite to Jeddah. The Arabic word **dar al-sina'a** for a dockyard is still current in the European languages as **arsenale** or **arsenale** in Italian and **arsenal** in Spanish, French and English. In the dockyard, more than 600 ships were built - the largest fleet that Egypt had ever seen since the Arab conquests. The commander of the naval force was called **Amir al-Bahr** (the chief of the sea), which came to be used in the European languages, such as **Amiralh** (Portuguese), **Amiral** (French) and **Admiral** (English).

One of the wonders of Alexandria was the erection of lighthouse in the shape of a towering minaret, near the shore at dangerous zone, measuring 175 hands. On the minaret were fire pans, in which a fire was kindled when the watchman saw the ships at a distance.

"Egypt under the Fatimids" writes H.U. Rahman in "**A Chronology of Islamic History**" (London, 1989, p. 160), "enjoyed an era of great prosperity; trade with India, Italy, the western Mediterranean and even, at times, with the Byzantine empire flourished. The tolerant attitude of

the regime created great intellectual vitality in the country."

It must be known on this juncture that Jawdhar (d. 363/974) was a very faithful servant of al-Muizz and never involved himself in any sort of achievement in Egypt. The *Dar al-Tiraz* (state textile factory), for instance, producing read mats and inscribed prayer rugs as well as articles of clothing continued to flourish under al-Muizz. In 354/965, al-Muizz ordered Jawdhar to have a prayer rug made. The weavers included in it not only the text the Imam wished to have, but also the usual reference to Jawdhar: "*from among the works made under the supervision of Jawdhar, client of the Commander of the Believers.*" When Jawdhar saw his name embroidered in gold thread, he was mortified, supposing that the Imam might think him guilty of self-aggrandizement. Al-Muizz, however, praised the rug as being of "*extreme beauty and perfect manufacture,*" and paid no attention to the inscription.

One of the most interesting products of the Fatimid workshops of this period must have been a "*map of the world*" woven in blue *tustari qurgubi* silk on which the climate, mountains, seas, cities, rivers and roads of the earth were shown. Included was a clear representation of Mecca and Medina. Every feature on it was identified in gold and silver, or silk writing. Across the bottom, the legend read: "*Among the things ordered by al-Muizz li-din Allah, longing for the Sanctuary of God (Mecca), and proclaiming the landmarks of His messenger, in the year 353/964.*" It is reported to have cost twenty-two thousand *dinars* to make, vide Makrizi's "*al-Khitat*" (1st vol., p. 417).

The Fatimid Caliphs combined both, the religious as well as secular powers in their persons, and were more respected than the Umayyad or Abbasid caliphs. The Caliphs wore a religious halo. Hussain Ibrahim Hasan and Taha Ahmad Sharf write in "*al-Muizz li-din'allah Maktaba al-Mahda al-Miriyya*" (Cairo, 1947, p. 139) that, "The personality of al-Muizz was clothed in the clean robes of holiness and majesty. The Fatimid Caliph was not, like his Umayyad and Abbasid rivals, a tyrant in running the affairs of the state. Neither was al-Muizz over-indulgent about pleasures. His subjects and helpers held him in high esteem as he belonged to the progeny of the Prophet."

According to Theodore Noldeke in **"Sketches from Eastern History"** (Beirut, 1963, p. 90), "After their conquest of Egypt, the Fatimids were the most powerful princes of Islam, and it seemed at times as if even the form of power had passed from the Abbasids. The Fatimids, moreover, governed excellently as a rule, and brought Egypt to a high peak of prosperity."

One of the greatest figures in this period was the physician - therapist, called Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Sa'id al-Tamimi, who hailed from Palestine. He went down to Egypt in 360/970 and practised medicine at Cairo. Soon afterwards, his fame began to spread and was welcome at the Fatimid court. He compiled several medico-pharmaceutical books. His best extant work is **"al-Murshid ila Jawahir al-Aghdhiya wa quwa al-Mufradat min al-Adwiya"** on drug origins and properties including mineral and botanical simples. He mentions the use of finely powdered white sulphur in the manufacture of safety matches - an interesting reference to its wide use at the time - made from sulphur found in abundance in the Dead Sea area. This is over five centuries before the German scientist, Georgius Agricola (1494-1555), known as **the father of mineralogy**, mentions sulphur matches (**sufuratis ellyehniis**) for use with flint and steel. Sami Hamarneh writes in **"Medicine and Pharmacy under the Fatimids"** (cf. **"Ismaili Contribution to Islamic Culture"** ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Tehran, 1977, p. 182) that, "It seems therefore appropriate to state that the manufacture of safe sulphur matches was propagated and utilized early in the Islamic civilization centuries before it was used in Europe."

Mention should also be made of the old Egyptian **mummies**. The Arabic word **mumiyah** (Persian, **mumiya'i**) means bitumen or a mineral tar, whose earliest indisputable evidence dates from about 2600 B.C. It is interesting to note that Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Sa'id al-Tamimi seems to be an earliest reporter about these **mummies** in detail in his above work. He thought that the origin of the North African **mummy** wax (**mum** or **mumia**) is the sea which throws it to its shores. He recalls, "Abul Hasan al-Basri (al-Haytham) informed me that a large piece of it was thrown on the sea-shore near Katama (Tunisia) during the reign of Caliph al-Muizz. At a first glance, it was thought to be an ambergris (a grey substance from sperm whale's

intestines). This piece was presented to the Caliph's treasury. Upon testing it, it was found dry and brittle and of the same texture as the old *mummies* found in the graves of the ancient Egyptians." Tamimi further adds, "This suggested to me that during the time of the ancient Egyptian pharaohs and nobles, as a part of honouring their dead and preserving their corpses with normal bone structure against decay, they employed skilled people to do the embalming. They took the viscera from abdomen and bowls as well as the brain and their internal liquids and filled in their places with this already heated and melted *mumia*. Then they left it to solidify, joining the ribs and the spinal vertebra tightly together. In addition they anointed the outer skin for its preservation before laying the corpses in tombs dug in the rock with cover inscribed within and without with their full life histories. Thus they are well kept from deterioration in their burial places for good. The grave diggers in our time find great amounts of this *mumia* sticking to the bones and ribs of corpses. They removed it to sell. But I do not approve of its therapeutic use by our people."

Another notable person of this period was Musa bin Ali'azar al-Israili, the author of a book on the culinary art, which he dedicated to Imam al-Muizz, entitled "**al-Kitab al-Muizzi**." He compiled another, on the therapy of coughing and chest ailments and a third, a formulary, all of which are not accessible.

Qadi Noman

Qadi Abu Hanifah an-Noman bin Abi Abdullah Muhammad bin Mansur bin Ahmad bin Hayyun at-Tamimi was a renowned Ismaili jurist in the Fatimid court. He espoused Ismaili faith early in life at Kairwan. His association with the Fatimids however began with his entry into the services of Imam al-Mahdi since 313/925. During the period of Imam al-Qaim, he concentrated mainly in the study of history, philosophy and jurisprudence and composed numerous works. Prior to the death of Imam al-Qaim in 334/945, he was appointed as a *qadi*. His status was further promoted during the time of Imam al-Mansur when he was granted the rank of Chief Qadi (*Qadi'l-qudat*). He however reached his zenith in the time of al-Muizz. Qadi Noman was greatly impressed by al-Muizz's appearance and writes that he was

struck by "the refulgence of the Imamate from his countenance."

When al-Muizz ascended, Qadi Noman had felt his post dwindled and wrote a letter to the Imam about it. He got Imam's reply, which he had quoted in his "**al-Majalis wal Musayarat.**" It reads: "O, Noman, may God protect you. I have read your letter. I regret that you are not sure of my patronage, and are trapped in fear unnecessarily. You have no reason to fear any adverse change in my attitude towards you. Instead, you should entertain greater hopes and aspire for a higher position. I know every thing about you. My well-wishers ought to look upon you as a model. Your friend will envy your lot and your enemies will feel jealous of you. May God help you and keep you straight on true path. With regard to the position you occupied with my predecessor, nothing is hidden from my notice. We, the Imams are the roots and branches of the same tree. If my father has died physically, the line of Imamate shall continue for ever. The souls of the Imams are joined like the hooks of a chain. If your patron has gone, your Imam is present. Thank God and have a trust upon Him for your affairs. Write to me about your needs, and you will be given what you want."

When al-Muizz came to Egypt, he also brought Qadi Noman with him as his own **qadi**. He however allowed Qadi Abu Tahir Muhammad bin Ahamad bin Abdullah to remain as the **qadi** of Cairo. Abu Tahir, however, always consulted Qadi Noman and asked him to revise his verdicts. Qadi Noman was not formally appointed to a higher official position, his rank as a judicial officer was however superior than that of Abu Tahir.

Qadi Noman was a man of great talent, learning and accomplishments, diligent as a scholar, prolific as a writer and upright as a judge. He was the founder and exponent of Ismaili jurisprudence. He died in 363/974 at Cairo and al-Muizz led the funeral prayers. He was a erudite and versatile author and the name of 44 of his works have survived. Of these 20 are totally lost, and 18 are wholly, and the rest are preserved in the private collection.

Jafar bin Mansur al-Yamen

It has been discussed heretofore that Jafar bin Mansur, the son of Ibn Hawshab was greatly distressed by the internal quarrels in which his brother, Abul Hasan Mansur played a conspiracy in killing Abdullah bin Abbas al-Shawiri in Yamen. Jafar bin Mansur was deadly against his brother and went to Maghrib at the Fatimid court. He reached Maghrib when Imam al-Mahdi had died in 322/934. He was however well received by Imam al-Qaim and his services were amply rewarded and was given the charge of mission. He was held in great esteem for his learning and ability. He also served whole heartedly to Imam al-Mansur and Imam al-Muizz.

Jafar bin Mansur was first to be invested the title of **Bab al-Abwab** by al-Muizz in Cairo, for which a separate mission cell was constituted. The residential palace of al-Muizz and Jafar was nearby. He always remained close to the Imam in Maghrib and Egypt as well. He rose to such a great extent that he had been given superiority over Qadi Noman, which can be judged from an event that one day, the health of Qadi Noman became impaired, therefore many visitors excluding Jafar bin Mansur came to see him. When Qadi Noman recovered, he went to see al-Muizz, who asked him as to who had come to see him while he was sick. Qadi Noman thereupon complained that many persons came except Jafar. Al-Muizz got annoyed at him and after a short while, he took out a book and gave it to Qadi Noman to read. Qadi Noman was highly astonished at the ability of its author. Al-Muizz asked him to imagine the name of its author. Qadi Noman said, "There could be no one else except the Imam himself who could write so well." And al-Muizz replied, "You have mis-judged, for the book is written by Jafar bin Mansur." Qadi Noman admitted his mistake with an apology and went to the house of Jafar to pay his respect.

Jafar bin Mansur was a prolific writer and instituted the interpretation for the school of Ismaili writings. His main works are twelve, whose few manuscripts are preserved in the University Library of Leiden. Suffice it to say that the period of al-Muizz would be barren without the intellectual, philosophical and mystical achievement of Jafar bin Mansur, who died in 365/975.

It must be known on this juncture that Abu Ali Mansur al-Jawdhar al-Azizi was the secretary of Jawhar from 350/961. He continued in his service until the death of Jawhar, then joined the services of al-Muizz and then al-Aziz, and died in 363/974. He was a prolific writer and compiled "**Sirat al-Ustadh Judhar,**" containing important biography of Jawhar. It also contains the decrees (*manshur*) issued to him from al-Mansur and al-Muizz and the letters written to them by him. It was edited and published by M. Kamil Hussain and Dr. M. Abd al-Hadi Shaira from Cairo in 1954.

Abul Fawaris Ahmad bin Yaqub (d. 413/1022) writes in "**Ar-Risala fi'l Imama**" (comp. 408/1077) that Imam al-Muizz said in a speech he delivered on the day of fast-breaking in Cairo that: "O'people, God has chosen a Messenger and Imams. He has made them superior and favoured them. He has accepted them as the guides to His creatures. He sent down His revelation upon them, and made them speak with His wisdom. They are like luminous stars: if one of them sets, another one shining, glittering and fully radiant with illumination. It is out of mercy upon those who are guided and prefer the life to come to the present life. It is in retribution to him 'who cries, lies and turns his back', and who favours the present life, and in retaliation against him who deviates from the path of guidance. God accepts from no one his deeds or his offerings, his admonition or his pursuit, except through them. He must surrender to their command, and acknowledge their bounty and their Imamate. He must surrender to them in obedience, follow their guidance and seek mercy from their part. May God bless them all."

Writing on the then Islamic empires, Robert Payne observes in "**The Holy Sword**" (London, 1959, pp. 182-3) that, "There were now three Muhammadan empires: the Umayyad caliphs ruled over Spain, Iraq and Persia remained in the hands of the Abbasids and North Africa, Egypt, Syria and Arabia were in the hands of the Fatimids."

The Ismaili mission in the period under review also penetrated to Sind and Hind, where a Fatimid state had been founded by Jaylam bin Shayban. It was dislodged by the onslaught of the Ghaznavid power in Sind, but was followed by other major principality of the mission in Mansurah, which was short-lived. The Ismailism, however, continued to remain a force that grew stronger in Sind, for it was patronised by the Sumra dynasty. For its detail

account, vide *"Ismaili Rule in Sind and Hind," Appendix No. III.*

Having considerably enhanced the power and territorial extent of the Fatimid Caliphate, al-Muizz died in 14th Rabi II, 365/December 21, 975 at the age of 44 years, after the Caliphate and Imamate of 23 years and 6 months. He ruled 20 years in Maghrib and 3½ years also in Egypt. Philip K. Hitti writes in *"Capital Cities of Arab Islam"* (London, 1973, p. 119) that, "Under the reign of the first caliph to commence his rule in Egypt, Cairo had become not only a formidable rival of Baghdad, but its superior. It had become the leading Moslem state in the eastern Mediterranean."

Stanley Lane Poole writes in *"History of Egypt"* (p. 98-99) that, "With the fourth caliph, however, al-Moizz, the conqueror of Egypt, the Fatimid entered upon a new phase. He was a man of politic temper, a born statesman, able to grasp the conditions of success, and to take advantage of every point in his favour. He was also highly educated, and not only wrote Arabic poetry and delighted in its literature, but studied Greek, mastered Berber and Sudani dialects, and even said to have taught himself Slavonic, in order to converse with his slaves from eastern Europe. His eloquence was such as to move his audience to tears. To prudent statesmanship he added a large generosity, and his love of justice was among his noblest qualities."

The famous poet, Ibn Hani (d. 362/973) had composed many verses, glorifying al-Muizz, whose few examples are given below:-

"You are Ma'ad, the heir of all the world, and this destiny is finally declared." (vide, *"Diwan"*, Cairo, 1271 A.H., p. 7)

"God's knowledge is not veiled from you, whereas it is screened from all people" (Ibid. p.8)

"He who named you the best Caliph, is subjecting fate to your desire." (Ibid.)

"O'Fatimids, you are the friends of God and you are His kin. In His world you are His righteous agents."
(Ibid. p. 63)

"He inherited the world from two fathers: Muhammad and Ali." (Ibid. p. 150)

AL-AZIZ (365-386/975-996)

He was born on 14th Muharram, 344/May 10, 955 in Mahdiya. His name was Nizar Abu Mansur, surnamed al-Aziz bi-illah (August by the grace of God). He assumed the Imamate and Caliphate on 14th Rabi II, 365/December 21, 975. He was tall, broad shouldered, with reddish hair and large eyes having a dark blue colour. He was fond of sports and showed a marked interest in literature and learning.

It was owing to his generous patronage that the University of al-Azhar could maintain itself as a unique and distinguished seat of Islamic learning. He also created an almshouse in it for 35 men. Al-Azhar contained a huge library. The royal library of al-Aziz itself contained 200,000 rare manuscripts and an equal number of manuscripts were kept at al-Azhar. It also contained 2400 illuminated copies of Holy Koran. Later, in 436/1045 a new catalogue had been prepared in al-Azhar, listing 6500 volumes of astronomy, architecture and philosophy. When Nasir Khusaro visited Cairo, he had found 317 professors and as many as 9758 students engaged in the study of various subjects in al-Azhar. Marshall W. Baldwin writes in **"A History of the Crusades"** (London, 1958, p. 102) that, "The intellectual influences of Ismailism on Islam was very great indeed. During the heyday of its expansion, the poets, philosophers, theologians and scholars flocked to the Ismailite centres and produced works of a high order."

Al-Aziz was also known for his paternal care of the people and introduced many financial reforms in the country. He introduced the system of paying a fixed stipends for services to the official and household servants and also used to give them robes and mules to ride on. Among his outstanding reforms, the most significant was that he put down bribery and corruption with a firm hand in Egypt.

Writing in the year 372/982, the anonymous writer of "**Hudud al-Alam**" (tr. by V. Minorsky, London, 1937, p. 151) describes that, "Egypt is the wealthiest country of Islam, and in it lies numerous towns, all prosperous, flourishing, wealthy, and extremely favoured by nature in many respects. It produces textiles, handkerchiefs, and robes of various kinds, than which there are none more precious in the whole world - such as Egyptian woollen goods and textiles, and handkerchiefs made of **dabiqi** (silk brocade or linen drapes) and **khazz** (tissue of silk and wool). And in this country, good asses are found of great price. Fustat is the capital of Egypt. It is the wealthiest city in the world, extremely prosperous and very pleasant. It lies to the east of the river Nile."

Conditions of the Maghrib

It must be remembered that before embarking on his historic journey from Maghrib to Egypt in 361/972, Inam al-Muizz had appointed Buluggin bin Ziri, the **amir** of the Sanhaja tribe, as the governor of Maghrib, and invested him the honorific name, **Abul Futuh Yousuf**. He was vested with the governorship of all the Fatimid dominions in the west, except for Kalbid Sicily and for Tripoli. Later on, Buluggin moved from Ashir to Kairwan, where he founded the Zirid dynasty (361-543/972-1148). He was succeeded by his son, Mansur (373-386/984-996), who fought with the Katama tribe and began to detach from the Fatimids. He also expelled the persons from different key posts being appointed by al-Aziz in Maghrib. It is related that al-Aziz deputed a **dai** Abul Fahm Hasan bin Nasr in Maghrib to collect the informations and report him back. Mansur arrested and put him to death. Al-Aziz however tried to cope with the situation of the Maghrib very politely. The Zirid ruler Mansur was succeeded by his son, Badis (386-406/996-1016), who had procured his close ties with Imam al-Hakim. The fourth Zirid ruler, al-Muizz bin Badis had however renounced the suzerainty of the Fatimids in 436/1044.

Jawhar conquered Syria in 359/969, making Jafar bin Falah as a governor. When al-Muizz was in Cairo, a Turkish commander Iftagin, under the Buwahids defeated the Fatimid governor of Damascus, and started the Abbasid **khutba**. Al-Muizz had offered him to come in Cairo, but Iftagin

declined it, and as a result, al-Muizz took field against him, but died at Balbis. Iftagin sacked Syria, thus al-Aziz sent his general, Jawhar. He besieged Damascus on 22nd Zilkada, 365/July 22, 976 for two months. Meanwhile, the Qarmatians led by Hasan al-A'sam came to the help of Iftagin. Jawhar lifted the seige, because his supplies were running short, and went to Ramla, then returned to Cairo and reported to al-Aziz. This time al-Aziz himself commanded his forces and attacked enemies with all his might at Ramla, and forced them to retreat. Iftagin and Hasan al-A'sam took their heels. Al-Aziz announced a reward for one lac *dinar* for capturing Iftagin. Ironically, Iftagin was caught by one of his friends and brought before al-Aziz. He, keeping with his nature, behaved very politely with Iftagin, and returned to him all his personal belongings and included him among his door-keepers (*hajib*), a high grade in the hierarchy of the Fatimid court. His behaviour with Iftagin was so remarkable that Iftagin himself admitted: "I blush to mount my horse in the presence of our Lord al-Aziz. I did everything to oppose him, but he did not seek revenge, and I dare not to look at him because of the gifts and favours with which he overwhelms me." The Qarmatian leader, Hasan al-A'sam was forced to flee from Ramla, and lost his influence in Damascus.

When Iftagin fought with the Fatimid at Ramla, he had left behind Kassam Sharrah in Damascus. When al-Aziz defeated Iftagin, he sent Fazal bin Saleh and Suleman bin Jafar Falah, one after another, but none could capture Damascus. Fazal bin Saleh retreated to Palestine and held a series of talks with the Hamdanid Abu Taghlib, who had been expelled from Mosul by the Buwahid Adud ad-Dawla (367-372/978-983). Abu Taghlib had also failed to occupy Damascus, therefore, he aspired to obtain at least its governorship from the Fatimid Imam al-Aziz. Abu Taghlib gave his words to Fazal bin Saleh in the campaign to conquer Damascus, but the latter had already allied himself with the Jarrahid leader, Mufraj bin Dagfal bin Jarrah of Palestine. In sum, Mufraj defeated Abu Taghlib in 369/979 and took possession of the whole territory of Palestine. His cooperation with Fazal bin Saleh was however short-lived, as he had shaken his hand with Kassam Sharrah, the chief of Damascus.

In 373/983, Imam al-Aziz sent Balaktagin, a Turkish commander of the Fatimid forces against these two rebels.

He defeated Mufraj bin Dagfal in Palestine, who managed to flee to Antioch, where he took refuge with the Byzantines. Thence, Balaktagin proceeded to Damascus and defeated Kassam, and appointed Akhlaj as a governor, who was followed by Bekjur in 373/983.

Bekjur was a slave of Sa'd ad-Dawla (356-381/967-991), the Hamdanid chief of Aleppo. When Balaktagin had taken field against Kassam Sharrab in Damascus, Bekjur had provided necessary provisions to the Fatimid forces from Aleppo, and therefore, he was made the governor of Damascus after Akhlaj in appreciation of his aids. In the meantime, Bekjur sought permission from al-Aziz to conquer Aleppo, and soon afterwards, he besieged Aleppo. Sa'd ad-Dawla, the chief of Aleppo sought reinforcement from the Byzantine, forcing Bekjur to lift the siege and retreat to Damascus.

Al-Aziz however retained Bekjur's governorship in Damascus, but was expelled later in 378/988. He persuaded al-Aziz to assign him with the command of a new expedition against Aleppo. He however acquired little help from the local Fatimid forces, but was defeated and killed in 381/991 by Sa'd ad-Dawla, who was aided as usual by the Byzantines.

Few years later, al-Aziz once again turned his attention to conquer Aleppo. This time the Fatimid forces besieged Aleppo in 385/995 for several months at the command of Manjutagin. Meanwhile, the Byzantine emperor Basil II (975-1025) himself came with a large force to help Sa'd ad-Dawla's son, Sa'id ad-Dawla (381-392/992-1002) and saved Aleppo from going into Fatimid hands.

In spite of political differences between the Fatimids and the Umayyads of Spain, there had been cultural and commercial transactions between the two Muslim empires. During al-Aziz's period, the relations between him and Umayyad caliph al-Hakam II (350-366/961-976) were improved and there had been diplomatic correspondence between them as is learnt from a letter of al-Aziz, vide "**Nihayat al-Arab**" (p. 58) by Nuwayri (d. 732/1332). Their relations can also be ascertained from the fact that the Umayyad Prince Muhammad bin Abdul Malik bin Abdur Rehman al-Nasir composed few verses in praise of Imam al-Aziz.

Military reforms

During the Fatimid expansion into Syria, the Fatimids were confronted with armies superior to their own which was mainly composed of Berber forces. In the Byzantine and Muslim armies which the Fatimids fought in Syria, the archers played prominent role. The Katama Berbers in general did not make use of the bow as a weapon. The absence of archers among the Fatimid ranks hindered their military performances. The only possible way for al-Aziz to overcome the military inferiority of his Berber troops was to incorporate ethnic groups skilled in archery into his army. This policy was inaugurated following al-Aziz's victory over an anti-Fatimid coalition in Palestine headed by Iftagin. Thus, the Turks and Iranians were introduced for the first time in the Fatimid army, who were skilled as mounted archers, while the Berbers were the horsemen carrying lances and shields.

In Egypt, these new elements were enlisted in the Fatimid army as professional soldiers and given special accomodation areas in Cairo, known as **harat al-Atrak** (barrack of the Turks), and **harat al-Daylam** (barrack of the Iranians). This new fighting element sponsored by al-Aziz, grew rapidly and before long its chiefs were appointed as commanders. In 381/991, the command of the Fatimid army was given to one of these men, called Manjutagin, with the title **amir al-juyush al-mansura** (commander of the victorious armies). He was charged to put down the disturbances in Syria, strike at the Byzantines in the north and bring Aleppo under the direct control of the Fatimids.

It must also be known that the Katama Berbers enjoyed special privileges in the Fatimid army since beginning and were exempted from taxation. In Egypt, they began to dominate almost in all state affairs and wielded political influences. They were known in Egypt as **Maghriba** (the westerners). In contrast, the Turks and Iranians were called as **Mashriqa** (the easterners), who were also a counterpoise against the growing influence of the Berbers.

In 380/990, al-Aziz also erected an army corp named **al-Azizia**. In 385/995, **al-Azizia** together with other corps, was dispatched to reinforce the Fatimid contingents in Syria.

Ismaili mission

The Ismaili **dawa** was brisk in this period through a network of the **dais**. In 385/995, Abul Jabbar Hamdani, the Mutazalite chief Qadi of Ray (325-415/936-1025) gives a list of the **dais**, who visited Cairo in his "**Tathbit Dala'il Nubuwwat**" (p. 180) as follows:- Abu Jabala Ibrahim bin Ghassan, Jabir al-Manufi, Abul Fawaris al-Hasan bin Muhammad al-Mimadhi, Abul Hussain Ahmad bin Muhammad bin al-Kumayt, Abu Muhammad al-Tabari, Abul Hasan al-Halabi, Abu Tamim Abul Kassim al-Bukhari, Abul Wafa al-Daylami, Ibn Abi'l Dibs, Khuzayma bin Abi Khuzayma and Abu Abdullah bin al-Naman. These all **dais** belonged to Cairo, Tyre, Acre, Askalan, Damascus, Baghdad and Central Asia. Abul Jabbar also writes that, "At the court of the fifth Fatimid Imam al-Aziz, there are many visitors from Khwarizm and Multan, and other countries, carrying money and presents."

It must be known that the initial slip of employing the **dais** with officials and regular payment appeared during al-Aziz's reign. Makrizi writes in "**Rihlat**" (2nd vol., p. 273) that, "In 378/988, the vizir Yaqub bin Killis employed 35 men and provided them with accomodation near the mosque of al-Azhar. From thence the idea developed and in Imam al-Hakim's period, the services of the **dais** became a full time and well remunerated profession."

Yaqub bin Killis

Abul Faraj Yaqub bin Yousuf, known as Ibn Killis was born in a reputed Jewish family of Baghdad on 318/930. When he grew young, he came with his father to Egypt and began his political career at the court of Abul Misk Kafur. Very soon, he secured key position in the court because of being intelligent, honest and efficient. He embraced Islam in 357/968 and Kafur too died in the same year. The new vizir Abu Jafar Furat had imprisoned him in enmity, but was relieved soon by the intervention of Sharif Muslim al-Hussain. He finally quitted Egypt and entered into the Fatimid services in Maghrib. Imam al-Muizz had assigned him the tasks of accelerating the economy of Maghrib, which he discharged efficiently. He also accompanied Imam al-Muizz to Egypt and was handed over the administration

in 363/974. He was a man of great ability and is credited with having organised the fiscal and administrative system.

Imam al-Aziz appointed him as *Vizir al-Ajall* (chief minister) in 367/977 and became the first Fatimid vizir. Qalqashandi (d. 821/1418) writes in "*Subh al-A'asha*" (3rd vol., p. 483) that, "The first man to be addressed as vizir during the Fatimid Caliphate was Yaqub bin Killis, the minister of al-Aziz." He created different cells for the administration of the state, and promoted the output of agriculture, reformed trade and stabilized currency, causing increase of state revenue. In 373/983, he had fallen from his office because he is said to have ill-treated with one of the court prisoners of al-Aziz whom the Imam had promised all honours. Thus, al-Aziz penalised him with the fine of 200,000 *dinars* and after one year, he was reinstated in the office.

One can well judged the status of Yaqub bin Killis in the eyes of the Imam, when he fell seriously ill in 380/991. Al-Aziz visited him and said, "O Yaqub! if your recovery is to be gained through spending wealth, then I am prepared to give away the whole wealth of the state. If your life is saved by sacrificing any life, I am ready to sacrifice my own son."

Yaqub bin Killis died in 380/991 and his death was mourned through out Egypt and all the people assembled in the street leading from the citadel to his house. His shroud was decorated with 50 pieces of clothes of which 30 were embroidered with gold threads. Al-Aziz came forth, evidently much afflicted; he was mounted on a mule, and, contrary to his usual custom when riding out, no parasol was borne over him. He offered the funeral service over him; and said, "O vizir! how long shall I grieve for you." Ibn Khallikan writes that hundred of poets composed lamenting stanzas and every poet earned his reward from al-Aziz. In Cairo, a place was named *al-Barat al-Viziria* in his memory.

During the festival of *Id al-nahr*, the principle celebration took place at the open praying ground outside Cairo. The Imam used to go there in a splendid procession to perform prayer and deliver sermon. Upon his return to the palace, the people were repasted with delicious meals. Makrizi writes in "*Khitat*" (2nd vol., p. 220) that, "Al-

Aziz introduced an innovation by building in Cairo a special house (*dar al-fitra*), in which meals were served during the festival of *Id al-Fitr*."

The period of al-Aziz on the whole was one of peace and prosperity. He also patronised scholars and encouraged learning. His generosity became so popular that the common people were comparatively happier in his regime. The trade flourished to such extent that the industry of Cairo produced such a fine cloth that a whole robe could be passed through a finger ring. In 365/976, al-Aziz built the first market in Cairo alongwith the first bathhouses.

One of the famous persons during al-Aziz's period was Abul Hussain Ali bin Qadi Noman, who attained a high rank of chief justice (*qadi al-qudat*) after the death of Qadi Abu Tahir in 367/977. His appointment was proclaimed at the summit of the mosque of al-Azhar and Jam-i'l Atiq in Cairo. He was also assigned with the supervision of cases of inheritance, the mint and the quality of gold and silver coins. He appointed his brother, Muhammad bin Noman as his deputy and the *qadi* of Mediterranean towns of Farama, Tunnis and Damietta. Qadi Abdul Hussain Ali was a prolific writer, upright as a judge, talented in Arabic literature and well steeped in poetry. He died on 5th Rajab, 374/December 3, 984 in Cairo, and al-Aziz had offered his funeral prayer.

After the death of Qadi Abul Hussain Ali bin Noman, al-Aziz wrote to his brother, Abu Abdullah Muhammad to take over the charge of the office of *qadi al-qudat* to fill the gap of his brother. In 382/992, Qadi Abdullah Muhammad had established a juridical office in the old mosque to give legal opinion according to the Fatimid law. He was also a man of great talent, skilled in the system of jurisprudence and diligent as a scholar. He died on 4th Safar, 389/January 25, 998 in Cairo. Imam al-Hakim led his funeral prayer.

Joel Carmichael writes in "*The Shaping of the Arabs*" (London, 1969, pp. 242-3) that, "The Fatimid age was one of great prosperity, with a thorough awareness of the vital importance of commerce, both economically and politically, for the extension of Fatimid political influence. Egyptian trade before the Fatimids had been quite limited in scope, but under the impulse of the financial administration founded by Ibn Killis whole

plantations and industries were developed in the countryside and Egyptian products began being exported in quantity, while at the same time an extensive network of trade relations evolved both with Europe and with India. The Fatimids, while still based in Tunisia, had had lively trade relations with southern Europe, and when they got to Egypt their business connections with Italy, especially Pisa, Amalfi and Venice, were resumed and extended. Egyptian ships and traders, based at two great harbours, Alexandria in Egypt and Tripoli in Syria, went as far west as Spain. Indeed, the whole of the eastern Mediterranean was dominated by the ships of the Fatimid regime."

Hamilton A.R. Gibb writes in **"Studies on the Civilization of Islam"** (Boston, 1962, p. 20) that, "The significance of the Fatimid movement in the Islamic Renaissance is not to be measured only by the contributions of its professed adherents or sympathizers, but by the encouragement which it gave to intellectual activities of all kinds, even among its political or religious opponents, and its influence long survived the fall of the Fatimid Caliphate in 1171. It spread a spirit of free enquiry, individuals endeavour, and interaction of ideas, which expressed itself in the works of almost all the outstanding writers of Persia and Iraq in the fourth century, and most notably in Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and found echoes even in Muslim Spain, in spite of the restrictive tendencies of the orthodox Maliki school and the Almoravid rulers."

It should be known that a rare pear-shaped ewer made of rock crystal, bearing a Kufic inscription with the name of al-Aziz, represents one of the finest achievements of Islamic rock-crystal carvings. It is decorated with two seated lions confronting a tree of life, which is preserved in the treasury of St. Mark's in Venice.

It will be interesting to note that Makrizi quotes in his **"Khitat"** (1st vol., p. 121) an Egyptian poet, Abdul Wahab bin al-Hajib (d. 387/997) speaking of the two gigantic pyramids in his time in the following words:-

"Tis as though the country, parched with thirst, had bared her two towering breasts, invoking God's help; like a woman bereft of her child. And then the Almighty made her a gift of the Nile, which supplies a copious draught to her."

In 375/985, one Muhallabi drew up an itinerary for the Fatimid Imam al-Aziz which, for the first time, gave accurate information about the Sudan of which the other geographers of that century knew very little. His book was named, "**al-Aziz**" which he dedicated to al-Aziz, and had become the main source of Yaqut (d. 626/1229) for the Sudan.

Ibn Taghri Birdi (4th vol., p. 152) writes that al-Aziz had signed a truce for seven years with the Byzantine emperor in 377/987, stipulating three terms:- the release of 5000 Muslim prisoners captured by the Byzantines, the recitation of the Fatimid **khutba** in the grand mosque of Constantinople and the supply of the merchandise needed for the Egyptians.

Yaqub bin Killis was followed in rapid succession by six vizirs. In 380/991, al-Aziz appointed a Coptic Christian, Isa bin Nestorius (d. 387/397) as his vizir, and the latter appointed a Jew, Manasseh bin Ibrahim al-Kazzaz as his deputy in Syria and Palestine. The vizir began to favour the Christians in Egypt and his deputy to the Jews in Syria and Palestine. When the Muslims made the complaints, al-Aziz at once dismissed them in 385/995 and seized 300,000 **dinars** from Isa bin Nestorius and a large sum from Manasseh bin Ibrahim.

In 382/992, Abul Darda Muhammad bin al-Musayyib Uqayti (d. 386/996), the governor of Mosul, declared his loyalty to al-Aziz and recited the Fatimid **khutba** in Mosul.

In 386/996, al-Aziz had personally set out to command the Fatimid armies against the joint forces of the Hamdanids of Aleppo and the Byzantines, but he at once fell ill at Bilbis, the first junction on his route to Syria. When al-Aziz felt that the shadows of his death were closing upon him, he summoned Ibn Ammar and Qadi Muhammad bin Noman and declared to them his son, al-Hakim as his successor. Both are said to have sworn loyalty and obedience to al-Aziz's command. On 28th Ramadan, 386/October 14, 996, al-Aziz met sudden death, from a stone in the kidney in the town of Bilbis.

Philip K. Hitti writes in "**Capital Cities of Arab Islam**" (London, 1973, p. 119), "Before his (al-Aziz) death at the age of forty-one, his name was cited in the Friday sermons from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, from southern Yemen to

northern Syria, and at least once in northern Iraq." According to Sayyid Fayyaz Mahmud in **"Short History of Islam"** (Karachi, 1960, p. 214), "The Fatimid power reached its peak in the days of the fifth Caliph, Nizar al-Aziz, whose dominions were greater in area than those of the Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad. There was inevitably keen rivalry between the two, and no love was lost between them either, for they divided the Muslim world into two halves, the Sunni East and the Shiite West of the Fatimids." Rom Landau writes in **"Islam and the Arabs"** (London, 1958, p. 63) that, "During the reign of the fifth Fatimid Caliph, Nizar al-Aziz, the dynasty reached its highest point in power, prosperity and extent. The development of trade, the building up of plantations and the encouragement of industry so increased the power of this dynasty that it was able to exert its influence in Syria, Arabia, much of North Africa, and, on one occasion, even in Baghdad." Dr. Amir Hasan Siddiqui writes in **"Cultural Centres of Islam"** (Karachi, 1970, pp. 61-62) that, "The Caliph al-Aziz was himself a poet and lover of learning. It was he who made the Azhar mosque and academy. He also built dwellings for a large number of professors and students, who were paid salaries and stipends respectively."

The famous poet, al-Amir Tamim bin al-Muizz (d. 375/985) in his **"Diwan al-Amir Tamim"** (Ms. in the private collection of Dr. Kamil Hussain) had composed many verses in praise of al-Aziz, whose few examples are given below:-

"Surely, you are the chosen Caliph by obedience to whom we become nearer to God." (p. 23)

"Without al-Aziz, the deputy of God, I would not have dared to resort to God or seek His help." (p. 51)

"You alone of the kings of the world have a divine soul in a mortal body." (p. 52)

"You are the chosen of God from among all his creatures, and you are the visible aspect of the majesty of God." (p. 61)

"You are the God's sign which sheds light among us and you possess the treasure of knowledge." (p. 63)

"Those who sin and doubt and commit inequity, you lead in the path of righteousness." (Ibid.)

AL-HAKIM (386-411/996-1021)

He was born on 23rd Rabi I, 375/August 14, 985 in Cairo, and was the first Fatimid Imam born on Egyptian soil. His name was al-Mansur Abu Ali, surnamed al-Hakim bi-Amrillah (He who governs by the orders of God). In 383/993, he was however declared as a successor of his father, following the death of his brother Muhammad. On that occasion, a traditional procession to al-Azhar was used for a public proclamation in this context. Al-Hakim acceded the throne in 386/996 at the age of 11 years, 5 months and 6 days.

Ibn Khallikan (3rd vol., p. 525), Ibn Muyassar (p. 51) and other chroniclers quote Musabbihi as narrating the incident of succession as related by al-Hakim himself that:- "My father called be before his death. His body was naked except for bandages and pieces of cloth. He hugged me and kissed me and said, 'I am grieved about you, O my heart's love.' His eyes were full of tears, then he said, 'Go dear and play, I am all right.' I went out and occupied myself as children do when they play until God transferred al-Aziz to Him. Barjawan came to me while I was at the top of a sycamore tree which was in the yard of the house. He said, 'Descend, may God be with you.' I dismounted; he put the diamond turban on my head, kissed the ground before me and said, 'May peace be upon you, **Amir al-mominin**, God's mercy and blessings.' He took me out to the people and they all kissed the ground before me and greeted me as Caliph."

Makrizi writes in "Itti'az" (p. 386) when al-Hakim assumed Imamate and Caliphate that, "On the following morning the dignitaries assembled in the Grand Hall to await the new Caliph. Al-Mansur, wearing the diamond turban, entered the Hall and walked to the golden throne, the assembly bowing to the ground meanwhile. They greeted him with the **baya** as Imam and the title **al-Hakim bi-Amrillah** by which he was thereafter known." Upon the termination of the ceremony, Qadi Muhammad bin Noman went to the cathedral mosque, led the prayer and delivered the **khutba** in the name of **al-Hakim bi-Amrillah**.

Al-Hakim, however assumed full power of the empire at the age of fourteen, and thus it does not appear to have affected his early education. He had a good command of Arabic tongue, and a fine knowledge of poetry at an early age. Makrizi writes in "Itti'az" (p. 387) that, "Al-Hakim had skillfulness in the knowledge of poetry which no other man had in Egypt. At his court, the poets would gather to recite their poetry, while he would listen carefully and ask for the repetition of every verse which held exceptional meaning. Each of them would receive gifts of money in accordance with the quality of his works." He was a mere twelve years of age when he gained this reputation. The astronomy was also included in his course of studies. Antaki (d. 458/1065) writes in "**Tarikh-i Antaki**" (Beirut, 1909, p. 217) that, "He appears as a pleasant man with a sense of humour, and often exchanged jokes with those to whom he spoke in the streets." Antaki also writes, "Al-Hakim would frequently pause in the streets of his capital to exchange greetings or answer questions from his poor subjects." (Ibid. p. 200) Marshall Hodgson writes in "**The Venture of Islam**" (London, 1974, 2nd vol., p. 26) that, "Al-Hakim wished, above all, to be the perfect ruler; widely generous, enforcing strict good order, and absolutely just to all the people. Personally, he avoided all luxury and mounted a simple donkey for his excursions."

Al-Hakim is described as generous and brave by the chroniclers. His clothes were simple, made chiefly of wool, and chose to ride on an ass. He disliked diamond turban and wore plain white scarf. His food was simple, and that too cooked by his mother only. He was an impressive figure, tall and broad-shouldered with a powerful voice. His large eyes were dark blue and flecked with deep reddish gold.

Abul Fawaris Ahmad bin Yaqub (d. 413/1022) writes in "**Ar-Risala fi'l Imama**" (comp. 408/1077) that Imam al-Hakim delivered his first speech from the pulpit of a mosque in Cairo on 386/996 and said: "O'people, surely God has made us superior by the word of Imamate. He has eternalized it in us, so that it may last until the day of doom. The one of us receives it from the other and the son inherits it from the father. This is the bounty of God, He gives it to whomever He wishes, and God is of bounty abounding."

Clash between *Maghriba* and *Mashriqa*

The Berbers dominated the Fatimid army, known in Egypt as *Maghriba* (the westerners). Al-Aziz had introduced the Turkish and Iranian soldiers in the army, known as *Mashriqa* (the easterners), as a counterpoise against the fast growing influence of the Berbers. Only two days after the death of Imam al-Aziz, the *Maghriba* faction in the army began to raise and stipulated that no one but Ibn Ammar should be the *wasita* (chief minister). Ibn Ammar negotiated with them, securing their goodwill in exchange for increased payment. Al-Hakim capitulated and responded to their demands, and appointed Ibn Ammar with a title of *amin ad-dawla* (trustee of the state).

Ibn Ammar intended to establish a purely Berber government in Egypt. His rule, indeed, was characterized by unmasked favourism of the *Maghriba*. Rudhrawari (d. 488/1095) writes that, "The aim of the *Maghriba* was to abolish the institution of the Fatimid Imam and build an empire of their own. Ibn Ammar's friends advised him to kill al-Hakim. Ibn Ammar, who intended to follow their advices, but dissuaded later on because al-Hakim was too young and harmless." (cf. "*Tajarib al-Umam*" by Miskawayh, p. 222). The Berber tribe of Katama, known as *Maghriba* appears to have been the centres of this change, as they considered that they had been the conquerors of Maghrib and of Egypt, and why should the fruits of this conquest be laid at the feet of an Arab dynasty in the progeny of Ali. Immediately after his appointment, Ibn Ammar began to allocate high positions to his supporters. He dismissed the Turkish and Iranian soldiers, known as the *Mashriqa*, from the high posts, and restored the power of the Berbers. He also curtailed the power of Abul Futuh Barjawan, the regent of the Imam, and confined him as a tutor of al-Hakim in the palace. The chiefs of *Mashriqa* thus had been dismissed and some of their supporters were even executed. Annual allowances to them were stopped, and many of them fled from Egypt fearing being killed.

On the day when Ibn Ammar was proclaimed *wasita*, every *Maghriba* received 20 *dinars*, and each was promised an additional 64 *dinars* annually. On one occasion, he gave 1500 horses to Katama supporters.

Downfall of Ibn Ammar

Barjawan allied himself with the Turkish commander called, Manjutagin, who himself was a great force in Syria. He readily espoused to Barjawan's faction, and formed an alliance with some of the Bedouin chiefs and left Damascus at the head of six thousand troops to march towards Egypt. Ibn Ammar mobilized his troops under the leadership of Suleman bin Falah and provided him with the large sums of money to be used in diverting the loyalty of the Bedouin chiefs against Manjutagin. The two armies clashed between Ramla and Askalan, and after three days of minor encounters, they fought the final battle. Manjutagin was subdued and taken prisoner and sent captive to Cairo. The battle resulted in victory for the *Maghriba*, but impugned a dangerous problem to the state, a fast growing opposition between the *Maghriba* and *Mashriqa* in Egypt. The defeated *Mashriqa* arrived in Cairo and threatened Ibn Ammar's rule, while the majority of *Maghriba* were in Syria with Suleman bin Falah. To overcome the problem, Ibn Ammar planned to increase his supporters and at the same time adopted a moderate line of policy towards *Mashriqa*, and pardoned Manjutagin. Suleman bin Falah also followed a similar policy in Syria and tried to convince its inhabitants that his plans were for peace and security. He dismissed Jaysh Ibn Samsama from the governorship of Tripoli and replaced him with his own brother Ali.

Thus, Jaysh, a powerful Katama chief, went to Cairo to revenge himself by attempting to overthrow Ibn Ammar. He made an alliance with Barjawan and the chiefs of *Mashriqa*. Barjawan's opportunity to gain power came with the presence of Jaysh in Egypt. He provoked riots and disturbances in Cairo and threw the blames on Ibn Ammar and his supporters. Ibn Ammar invited them to his palace under the pretext to discuss the riots between Berbers and Turks, but secretly had planned their executions. However, Barjawan, who had planted many spies in Ibn Ammar's palace, was informed of this and formed a counterplan. He and his supporters decided to accept the invitation. They planned to foil the attack by retreating among them, thus exposing Ibn Ammar's treasonable intentions. Barjawan's plan succeeded and he and his allies returned to the royal palace, declared Ibn Ammar to be a traitor and prepared to fight. With as many supporters as he could muster, Ibn Ammar left Cairo and camped in the desert. Barjawan

followed him and in a battle which lasted half a day, Ibn Ammar was defeated, and fled. By the overthrow of Ibn Ammar in 387/997, Barjawan assumed the office of *wasita* (chief minister) after Ibn Ammar had held office for a little less than eleven months. Barjawan took out al-Hakim in public to demonstrate his loyalty towards the Fatimids.

Barjawan pardoned Ibn Ammar and granted him the same monthly allowances and supplies that he had received during the period of Imam al-Aziz.

End of Abul Futuh Barjawan

With his accession to power, Abul Futuh Barjawan had to face a number of problems. He however handled the situation, and endeavoured to get an end of it, or at least to lessen the rivalry between *Maghriba* and *Mashriqa*. In the appointment of key posts, he tried to create equality which would satisfy the average persons of both groups. He appointed Ismail bin Fahl al-Katami, a *Maghriba* chief as the governor of Tyre and Bushara al-Ikhshidi, a *Mashriqa* chief as the governor of Damascus. For the governor generalship of Syria and the supreme command of the Fatimid forces stationing there, he chose Jaysb ibn Samsama, a powerful *Maghriba* chief. He made an efficient Christian, Fahd bin Ibrahim al-Katib as his personal secretary and invested him the title of *al-Rais* (the master).

Barjawan now governed the state with unbounded authority. In 388/998, he gave his friends key posts: Khawad was made the head of the police in Egypt; Malik as the chief of navy, Maysur as the governor of Tripoli in Syria; Yamim, his own brother, as the governor of Askalan and Qayd as the chief of the police department in Cairo. He now began to take major decisions without Imam's consent. He wanted to make the Imam merely an ornamented figure in the palace, and bring him out to grace only in the state functions. He treated al-Hakim, even after his succession to the Caliphate, in the same manner in which he did previously, overlooking the fact that he was no longer a child. He treated al-Hakim as helpless child and did not allow him even to ride on horseback. Makrizi writes in "*Itti'az*" (p. 390) that al-Hakim once said, "Barjawan was extremely ill-mannered. I summoned him one day while we

were riding on horseback. He came, putting his foot on the neck of his horse, and while I was speaking to him, the sole of his shoe was turned towards my face and he did not seem to think it was wrong. Incidents like this were so many that it would take a long time to mention them." Ibn Muyassar in "**Akhbar al-Misr**" (p. 56) and Makrizi in "**Khitat**" (2nd vol., p. 4) consider such treatment as dictatorship (*istibdad*), causing al-Hakim's resentment which resulted his death.

Ibn Qalanisi (p. 51) writes that, "Abul Fazal Raydan, the bearer of the royal parasol (*mizalla*), once said to al-Hakim, 'Barjawan is planning to emulate the career of Malik Kafur (d. 357/968) and purposes to deal with you as Malik Kafur dealt with Ikhshidi's son by isolating you and eliminating your power. The right thing to do is his immediate murder and administer your state alone.' Al-Hakim replied, 'If this is your opinion and advice, then I need your help.'"

Barjawan was finally slain on 16th Rabi II, 390/March 25, 1000 by Abul Fazal Raydan, who carried out the murder with his associates in a place called Bustan Duwayrat al-Tin, a garden near the royal palace where Barjawan was walking with al-Hakim. Barjawan held his office for 2 years, 7 months and 29 days. In terms of wealth and power, Barjawan was typical of the top echelon of the ruling circles. Ibn Bassam (d. 542/1148) writes in "**al-Dhakhira fi Mahasin al-Jazira**" (Cairo, 1945, p. 232) that after the death of Barjawan, an officer of central treasury found in his house: one hundred scarves (*mandil*) of different colours, one hundred another kind of scarves (*sharabiya*), one thousand pairs of trousers (*sirwal*), one Armenian silk (*takka*), an uncountable quantity of clothes, jewels, gold, perfumes and furniture, three hundred thousand *dinars*, one hundred and fifty horses and mules in his personal stable, three hundred pack horses and mules and a hundred and fifty saddles, twenty of which were pure gold.

Henceforward, Imam al-Hakim took over the power into hand at the age of fourteen years. Barjawan's execution provoked some apprehension among the people, but al-Hakim skillfully navigated the storm. He went out to the people and declared: "I have been informed of an intrigue which Barjawan made against me, and for that I caused him to be executed." Makrizi writes in "**Itti'az**" (2nd vol., p. 27)

that al-Hakim speaking before an assembly next day of state dignitaries (*shuyukh ad-dawla*), the leaders of Katama and Turks, said: "Barjawan was my slave and I employed him. He acted in good faith and I treated him with favours. He then began to misbehave, so I killed him." The death of Barjawan marks the beginning of the second period of al-Hakim's reign.

The period between 390/1000 and 396/1007 was critical because of famine and economical distress. There was also a general deterioration of economic and social life between 395/1004 and 411/1021 when most of the royal decrees (*manshur*) covering religious and social legislation were issued by al-Hakim. Vatikiotis writes in **"The Fatimid Theory of State"** (Lahore, 1957, pp. 152-3) that, "Although such legislation may have appeared maniacal to al-Hakim's contemporaries, it is astounding how modern historians, who could have conducted a more dispassionate investigation, have accepted such verdict. His forbidding extravagant spending in entertainments when the Nile was exceptionally low in 398/1008 and his fight against profiteering from high prices during the famine crisis are examples of sensible legislation for the public welfare. For example, his handling of thieves and vagrants was amazing and probably very effective at the time. A spy system to report thieves to the "man" inside the "sphinx" statue is commendable, if that were a way to stop hooliganism. In the evening, al-Hakim would hold open forum, where the merchants would report to the "sphinx" the missing items from their stores. The latter would, through previous information, deliver the name of the robber. This seems an interesting and brilliant method of coping with vagrant thieves rampant in a period of depression. Al-Hakim no doubt understood the psychological power of miracles and their effect upon the masses."

Hence, al-Hakim had to take drastic measures by pressure of circumstances. On account of his extreme measures to meet the challenges, he became a controversial figure. Historians have held different opinions for him. Abul Fida, Ibn Athir and Ibn Khallikan depict him as an heretic and wily tyrant. Prof. Hitti, on the other hand, defends him, and writes in **"The Origins of the Druze People and Religion"** (New York, 1928, p. 27) that, "The fact that al-Hakim introduced many reforms regulating weights and measures, fought immorality with police ordinances

amidst a hostile milieu indicates that he was not the kind of maniac or fool whose biography these early writers have left us."

It must be noted that Antaki and Ibn al-Sabi's records discrediting al-Hakim's personality should be treated with a degree of caution since both historians were aggressive to al-Hakim and lived in distant countries. Al-Hakim's so called cruelty may have been the result of the circumstances rather than the acts of a sadist, or were perhaps exaggerated according to the view of the hostile historians. He ascended when he was still a child and witnessed fierce struggle and rivalry for power among the high officials of his state. This may have created a sense of insecurity which led him to resort to so called cruelty as a tool of maintaining his power. Ibn al-Futi, who is quoted by Makrizi in "*Itti'az*" (p. 411) suggests that, "al-Hakim's cruelty was both part of his policy to abolish the corruption resulting from his father's great tolerance, and vengeance against those who oppose the Islamic law of the state." In "*The Encyclopaedia of Islam*" (Leiden, 1971, 3rd vol., p. 80), M. Canard writes that, "It cannot, however, be said that his reign was particularly unfortunate for Egypt."

Muhammad Abdullah al-Inan writes in his "*al-Hakim bi-Amrillah wa Asrar al-Dawa al-Fatimiya*" (Cairo, 1937, p. 173) that, "We are however unable to understand different political enigmas of al-Hakim, but it is beyond doubt that the ordinances and injunctions he imposed were not against the Islamic traditions to a little extent. These were also not the result of the whimsical thoughts, but based on the ordinary reformations of the state, therefore, the wisdom and strategy motivated behind them can never be ruled out." Dozy also writes in the same vein in "*Essai sur l'histoire de l'Islamisme*" (Leiden, 1879, p. 148) that, "We fail to know the enigmatic personality of the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim, therefore, it is not plausible to draw a conclusion that these were the outcome of whimsical thoughts."

Policy towards the wasīta

It must be remembered however that the constant struggle for power between the two elements in the Fatimid's army

presented al-Hakim with a very serious problem. His position was also threatened by the growing influence of *mudabbir ad-dawla* (the administrator of state affairs), better known as *wasita* (the mediator, executor of the Caliph's orders or chief minister), simply an intermediary between the Imam and the people. Both Ibn Ammar and Barjawan had forcefully seized power and became themselves as *wasitas*, and misused the office. This was the first crack in the political structure. In the face of this trend, al-Hakim's attitude towards each successive *wasita* during the last twenty years of his Caliphate, was well and carefully planned to control his exercise of power. He did not abolish the institution of *wasita*, but restricted its power. Makrizi writes in "Itti'az" (p. 390) that, "After the appointment of al-Hussain bin Jawhar as *wasita* in 390/1000, he was ordered not to receive or deal with petitions in his own house or in public streets; those who had cases of complaints should be told to deliver them to him only at the office in the palace." Hussain bin Jawhar together with his secretary, Fahd bin Ibrahim, would come early to the palace, receive the petitions, study them and carry them to the Imam for final judgement. Except for Hussain bin Jawhar and Ali bin Falah, none of the *wasita* had a military background. None was powerful tribal chief nor a chief of any element of the army. Most of them were from poor class. No *wasita* was allowed to remain in office for a long period. In the course of his twenty years of rule of al-Hakim, more than fifteen *wasita* were employed, some held office for as little as ten days. Severity was the prominent feature in al-Hakim's attitude towards his *wasitas*, and the majority of those who occupied that office were executed. Thus, Ibn Hammad (d. 628/1230) writes in "Akhbar al-Muluk Bani Ubayd wa Siyaratihim" (p. 57) that al-Jarjara'i, a high official who had lost both hands by the command of al-Hakim, would tell those who remarked upon such treatment that: "This was a punishment which I deserved for betraying amir al-mominin's orders." According to Marshall Hodgson in "The Venture of Islam" (London, 1974, 2nd vol., p. 27), "He was merciless to any of the great who, he thought, took advantage of their position."

Historians have generally shown al-Hakim's attitude as a tyrant and blood-thirsty. Such commitments, however, do not seem to be quite accurate, and many have been hastily arrayed without a thorough investigation. P.J. Vatikiotis

writes in **"The Fatimid Theory of State"** (Lahore, 1957, p. 149), that, "These presentations have been hastily arrayed without a genuine investigation of al-Hakim's reign." This part of al-Hakim's policy cannot be described as blood-thirsty or insane.

Al-Hakim was extremely engaged in a deadly struggle of retaining the Fatimid Caliphate. He was not fighting only the secular tendencies of political power groups, but also attempting to rally the fast disintegrating Fatimid ranks in the face of impending danger.

It is a common method which most rulers used to adopt to silence opposition and prevent threats to their own powers. There is no evidence suggesting that, at any time, al-Hakim ordered the execution of someone just for the sake of killing. His bursts of killing, as M.G.S. Hodgson says in **"al-Darazi and Hamza in the Origin of the Druze Religion"** (JAOS, 82, 1962, p. 14), "were most obviously turned against the great and the proud, the holders of positions and those ambitious to be such." There were more precisely against those from whom al-Hakim anticipated danger or considered a threat to his power. A comparative study of his attitude towards **qadi al-qudat** (chief judge) with the manner in which he treated the **wasita** and military chiefs illustrates this point. It was only **Qadis** who opposed his policy who were executed; others were treated quite normally. During his entire reign, al-Hakim employed five persons to that post of **Qadi al-qudat**. Muhammad bin Noman died in 389/998 and al-Hakim himself led the prayer at his funeral. His successor, Hussain bin Noman served until 395/1004 when he was executed after being found guilty of theft. Muhammad bin Yousuf al-Kindi (d. 330/951) writes in **"Kitab al-Umra wa'l Kitab al-Qudat"** (London, 1912, p. 608) that, "Hussain bin Noman stole twenty thousand **dinars** from an orphan whose father entrusted the money to him. His trial was personally conducted by al-Hakim." Abdul Aziz bin Noman succeeded until 399/1008 when he was dismissed, and two years later executed for opposing al-Hakim and supporting Hussain bin Jawhar. Malik bin Sa'id al-Fariqi served for 6 years, 9 months and 10 days (399/1008 to 405/1014) and was executed for opposing al-Hakim's policy for imposing Islamic laws. In 405/1014, al-Hakim appointed Muhammad bin Abi'l Awwam as **Qadi al-qudat** and Khatgin as a **Dai al-qudat**,

and both remained in office until the end of al-Hakim's rule because of their loyalty with the rules imposed.

Jaysh ibn Samsama

Barjawan was able to overcome the chronic problems in Syria, and appointment of Jaysh ibn Samsama as a governor general and the commander of the Fatimid forces, indicates a shrewd policy. Jaysh was a powerful **Maghriba** leader and was also a popular figure among the **Mashriqa**. Initially, he had four major problems to be confronted when he reached Syria: the rebellion in Tyre, the rebellion of Mufraj bin Dagfal, the unrest in Damascus and the Byzantine invasions into the Fatimid territory.

Jaysh at first moved into the action to subdue the rebellion in Tyre, an important port on the Mediterranean coast; whose inhabitants, supported by the Byzantines, had rose against the Fatimid suzerainty during the clash between Barjawan and Ibn Ammar. Their leader, a sailor called Ullaqah had declared Tyre an independent, and issued new coinage with the slogan, "Dignity and plenty instead of humility and poverty. Amir Ullaqah" (**uzzun ba'da faqah al-amir Ullaqah**). Jaysh appointed Abu Abdullah al-Hussain and Ibn Nasir ad-Dawla al-Hamdani to lead the expedition against Tyre, and himself stayed with the rest of the forces in Palestine, preparing another expedition against Mufraj bin Dagfal. He also ordered the governors of Tripoli and Sidon to join together with their warships in the forthcoming fighting against Tyre. In the ensuing battle, the Fatimid forces ravaged the Byzantine ships, and at length, Tyre fell before the onslaught of the Fatimid forces. The Fatimid troops entered the city and declared immunity (**aman**) and safe-conduct for all who remained in their homes. Ullaqah was arrested and sent to Cairo.

After suppression of rebellion in Tyre, Jaysh proceeded towards Palestine, where Mufraj bin Dagfal was plundering the towns and attacking the pilgrim caravans. When confronted with the big army of Jaysh, Mufraj capitulated and sent a delegation, asking for safe-conduct and promised to advance his loyalty to the Fatimids. Jaysh, who was pressed by more serious problems in northern Syria, accepted the offer of Mufraj and pardoned him, and withdrew his army to the north.

Jaysh thence advanced towards Damascus, and as soon as he entered the city, according to Ibn Athir (9th vol., p. 50), he declared that his prime objective was to wage war against the Byzantine and establish peace and security in Damascus. He also announced the death penalty for any one, whether his soldiers or other citizens, who proved guilty of disturbing the peace in the city. Jaysh then moved towards Hims, where the governor of Tripoli and his troops and a number of volunteers, augmented Jaysh's army in his fight against the Byzantines, who had besieged Afamiya at that time.

Jaysah arrived at Afamiya during the hour when the city was in great distress and about to fall into the hands of Byzantines. In the ensuing battle lasted for a few days, Jaysh faced defeat in the beginning. In the interim, a Muslim soldier managed to kill the Byzantine commander, causing demoralization among the Christian troops. The Byzantine troops were defeated, who took wild flight from the field. Jaysh followed the defeated Byzantines as far as Antioch and besieged the city for a few days, but he at once lifted the siege and returned to Damascus.

It must be remembered that Ibn Ammar had instituted a group of the young men (**ahdath**) from among the **Maghriba** in Damascus against the **Mashriqa**. The **Ahdath**, an urban militia, commanded by **al-Rais** (master) or **al-Rais al-Bilad**, whose influence exceeded that of the **qadi**. As armed and pugnacious men of the native-born population, the **Ahdath** had constituted in face of the political authorities. The **Ahdath** had assumed the principal power and were the main cause of the troubles in Damascus. Jaysah tried to cope with these elements and finally decided to eliminate them once and for all. During his early arrival in Damasus, he delayed his plan owing to the raids of the Byzantines on northern Syria. After suppression of the Byzantine influence in Tyre and the troubles created by Mufraj bin Dagfal, he returned to Damscus to strike a final blow on the **Ahdath**. According to Qalanisi (p. 51), he invited the chiefs of **Ahdath** to his camp which he had pitched outside the city, and had them killed. He at once besieged the city and sent his troops inside to search and kill the remaining ashes of **Ahdath**. This operation clean-up cost the death toll of 1200 persons and brought fear to the inhabitants, but Jaysh declared for their safe-conduct and promised security and

peace under the suzerainty of the Fatimids. This was of course a bloody operation, but at the same time it was a last resort and the only effective solution to solve the problems of Damascus, where peace was restored for a long time. In sum, the major threat to the suzerainty of the Fatimids in Damascus was avoided.

During the first three years of al-Hakim's rule, two major anti-Fatimid uprisings occurred in Damascus. It was the untiring efforts of Jaysh ibn Samsama that these rebellions had been subdued in 388/998. Al-Hakim's aim was to win the loyalty, therefore, he paid due attention to the welfare of Damascus and appointed considerable governors, some of whom were recalled after only a few months. Thus, 21 governors are reported to have been appointed in Syria during the 22 years of al-Hakim's rule. He did not hesitate to dismiss any governor who exceeded his authority or caused discontent among the inhabitants.

Jaysh ibn Samsama died on 390/1000 at Damascus. His son went to Cairo with a paper on which his father had written his will and a detailed statement of all his property: all this, he declared, belonged to al-Hakim; his children had no rights. The property thus valued was estimated at 200,000 pieces of gold. His son brought all this before al-Hakim, who said, "I have read your father's will and the statement of the money and goods of which he has disposed by his will. Take it, and enjoy it in tranquility and for your happiness."

Condition of Aleppo

The Fatimid Imam al-Hakim had also contemplated to extend his authority to Aleppo, the greatest centre of northern Syria. The last Hamdanid ruler, Sa'id ad-Dawla had been killed in 392/1002 by the conspiracy of his minister, called Lulu; who abolished the Hamdanid dynasty in Aleppo and established his own. The real power behind Aleppo was however the Byzantines, who used to be called when their help needed to the rulers. Thus, al-Hakim made a non-aggression pact (*hudna*) with Basil II, the emperor of Byzantine and weakened the reliance of Aleppo on Byzantine help.

There appears different of views as to the negotiation of non-aggression pact (*hudna*) between the Muslim and Christian empires. Ibn Qalanisi (p. 54) writes that in 390/1000, Barjawan moved first by sending a friendly letter through his Christian secretary, Fahd bin Ibrahim al-Katib, expressing the Fatimid desire for the pact. Antaki (p. 184) however states that the Byzantine emperor, Basil II took the initiative by deputing his two envoys to negotiate peace with the Fatimids. In sum, the agreement was initially for a period of ten years, but it remained enforced through out al-Hakim's period, and the relations between them were strengthened. Envoys and presents were exchanged between the two rulers and trade and commercial activities continued uninterrupted except for a brief period.

The events which occurred in Aleppo after the death of its ruler, Lulu in 399/1008 facilitated al-Hakim's policy and assisted him to achieve his goal. Lulu's son Mansur, succeeding his father, was faced with numerous enemies, including Abul Hayja, the Hamdanid prince who came from Byzantium with Byzantine support to restore the rule of his ancestors. Mansur received investiture from al-Hakim and virtually became a Fatimid vassal. Al-Hakim supported Mansur against Abul Hayja, who had taken field and defeated.

In 406/1016, Mansur was defeated in a battle by Saleh bin Mirdas, the chief of the Banu Kilab. Mansur took refuge with the Byzantines after leaving a citadel under the control of a certain Fath, who was secretly in contact with al-Hakim. Thus, al-Hakim granted the title of **Asad ad-Dawla** (lion of the state) to Saleh bin Mirdas and **Mubarak ad-Dawla** (blessed of the state) to Fath. On the other hand, al-Hakim commanded his troops encamped in Syria to move towards Aleppo to prevent any pact between Saleh and Fath against the Fatimids. In 407/1017, the first Fatimid governor appointed by al-Hakim entered Aleppo, called Fatik, bearing the title of **Aziz ad-Dawla**. Ibn al-Adim (d. 660/1262) writes in "**Zubdat al-Halab fi Tarikh Halab**" (Damascus, 1951, 1st vol., p. 214) that al-Hakim issued an edict addressing to the inhabitants of Aleppo that, "When **Amir al-mu'minin** learned of the tyranny and ill treatment you suffered from those in powers, burdening you with taxes and harsh imposts out of all proportion to the ways of Islam, he, may God strengthen

his power, ordered supplies to be sent to you from the state's stores and to exempt you from the *kharaaj* until the year 407. By this you will know that the light of righteousness has risen and the darkness of tyranny has been dispelled."

The Byzantine emperor however opposed the Fatimid foothold in Aleppo, but did not break the non-aggression pact (*hubna*) with the Fatimids. He put restrictions upon the trade with Aleppo and cemented his close ties with the Mirdasids in order to employ them against Fatik. The remote distance of Cairo, the threats and offers of his Byzantine contacts and his personal ambition, made it easy for Fatik to show his back to the Fatimids. Soon afterwards, Fatik began to rule as an independent ruler in Aleppo and dismissed the officials appointed by al-Hakim and employed men of his own choice.

On this juncture, al-Hakim realized that a demonstration of the Fatimid arm forces was necessary to maintain his authority in Aleppo, therefore, he ordered his governor in Syria to prepare for a quick expedition against Fatik. On the other side, the troops of the Byzantine also came into action and started moving from the north to the south to support their interests. It was only the sudden death of al-Hakim that had prevented the two empires from breaking peace which had lasted between them for more than 20 years.

Condition of Maghrib

We have heretofore discussed that al-Muizz had vested Buluggin bin Ziri (d. 373/984) with the governorship of all the Fatimid dominions in the Maghrib except for the Kalbid Sicily and Tripoli in 361/972. Later on, Buluggin asked Imam al-Aziz to give him rule over Tripoli as well. His request was granted and from 365/975, Tripoli began to be ruled by the Zirids. Buluggin appointed Tamsulat bin Bakkar as the *amir* of Tripoli, who governed the province for 20 years. In 386/996, after the death of Mansur, the second Zirid ruler, the relation between Tamsulat and Badis (d. 406/1016), the third Zirid ruler were strained. Tamsulat wrote to Cairo, asking Barjawan to send a new *amir* for Tripoli. Barjawan's error was that without the consent of Badis, he appointed Yanis as the *amir* of

Tripoli in 388/998, who was then the *amir* of Barqa. Badis wrote a letter to Yanis, asking for an explanation of his move from Barqa to Tripoli, but he received no satisfactory reply. Realizing the danger that Yanis represented, Badis sent his troops into battle against him. In the ensuing battle, Yanis was killed and his forces retreated to Tripoli, where they barricaded themselves awaiting help from Cairo.

The above military actions of Barjawan in Tripoli supported no decree from al-Hakim. It however affected the relations between the Fatimids and the Zirids. In addition, Tripoli, over which the dispute had begun, was occupied neither by the Fatimids nor by the Zirids, but it came in the hands of the enemy of both, i.e., the Banu Zanata. Fulful (d. 402/1011), the chief of Zanata tribe had taken an opportunity and proceeded towards Tripoli. He entered the city and declared his support against the Zirids and proclaimed his loyalty to the Umayyads of Spain.

Hence, the Fatimids lost Tripoli for about ten years (390-400/999-1009). After restoration of peace in Egypt, al-Hakim turned his attention towards Tripoli. He dispatched his forces at the command of Yahya al-Andulusi as a new *amir* of Tripoli, and commanded Raydan at Tripoli to give Yahya a sum of money for expenses. Raydan, who most probably appropriated the money, instead gave Yahya a signed order to collect money from Barqa. When Yahya reached Barqa, he found the state treasury depleted. Most of the soldiers in his troops belonged to Banu Qorra, whom he had promised generous payment. Thus, Yahya faced difficulties in the field. Banu Qorra not only deserted Yahya, but they also raided his camps in angry and pillaged whatever they found and returned to their territory. Henceforward, Yahya entered Tripoli with the remaining troops. He was overpowered by the Zanata chief, Fulful, who humiliated him and took control of Tripoli, proclaiming his loyalty to the Umayyads of Spain. On other side, al-Hakim did not send any reinforcement to regain Tripoli, and as a result, the Fatimids lost their suzerainty in Maghrib. Their relations with the Zirids also deteriorated, and the Sanhaja tribe ruled there independently. Later on, the Fatimid *khutba* was also removed.

Revolt of Abu Raqwa

In 395/1004, al-Hakim faced the most serious challenge to his authority against the rebellion that shook and rocked the foundation of his state. This was the rebellion of Abu Raqwa, an Umayyad prince who united the forces of Berbers of Zanata with those of the Arab tribe of Banu Qorra to lead them against the Fatimids. Little is known of Abu Raqwa's background. Most of the historians gave his name as Walid bin Hisham, and Abu Raqwa was his nickname given him by the Egyptians. The word **raqwa** means "leather bag", in which travellers, especially the Sufis, carried water during journey. He was an Umayyad prince from the line of Marwan bin Hakam. In his twenties, he fled from Spain when Mansur bin Amir took over power and began persecuting members of the Umayyad family. He travelled to Maghrib, Egypt, Yamen, Mecca and Syria; testing the possibility of creating a group strong enough to support the Umayyad cause. At length, he succeeded to generate a large following in Maghrib and proclaimed himself as an **amir**.

Besides the rooted opposition of Zanata and the dissatisfaction of Banu Qorra with the Fatimids, the economic factors also appears to have been the main cause behind the rebellion of Abu Raqwa. The province of Barqa in Maghrib was very poor, and its treasury was even insufficient to supply the needs of the small army which al-Hakim sent in 391/1000 to restore Fatimid suzerainty in Tripoli. Its commercial life was limited and its income depended upon its limited agricultural output. The whole of Maghrib preceding the rebellion was caught with economic crisis, resulting a sort of catastrophe in 395/1004. Ibn Idhari (d. 712/1312) writes in "**Akhbar al-Andalus wa'l Maghrib**" (1st. vol., p. 256) that, "In 395/1004, there was a catastrophe in Africa. The poor died and the money of the rich vanished. Prices rose and food became impossible to find. The people of Badia left their homes. Houses became empty and there was no one to occupy them. With all this there was a plague of cholera." Abu Raqwa understood the difficulties of the tribesmen, their overwhelming desire to solve their problems, and therefore, he concentrated his effort to this point. The situation turned in his favour as an effective tool of his rebellion. When the people agreed to follow his rebellious leadership, the first pact he executed with the people concerning the booty and gains resulting from war.

It was resolved to divide the booty into three shares: one for each tribe and one third to be retained under Abu Raqwa's control in order to form a treasury to help during the war. He also promised to give the chiefs the palaces and houses of the Fatimid state in Cairo and other fertile regions in Egypt.

After being assured himself of sufficient support from the two principal tribes, Abu Raqwa canvassed neighboring districts, where he delivered speeches about Islam in a revolutionary manner. The tribesmen were fascinated by his eloquence, and assembled under his leadership against the Fatimids. Sandal, the Fatimid chief of Barqa had immediately reported to al-Hakim and asked permission to campaign against him. According to Ibn Athir (9th vol., p. 82), "Al-Hakim, who apparently did not realize the urgency of the problem, neither gave permission nor sent help but recommended diplomacy, not militant stance as a solution." Sandal's action failed, and Abu Raqwa with his troops swiftly marched to invade the city of Barqa. Sandal and his troops met them outside the city, and was subdued after a fierce fighting. Sandal retreated and barricaded himself inside the city. Sandal also contacted Ibn Taybun, the chief of the Berber tribe of Lawata, who came to the rescue and forced Abu Raqwa to break the siege, but failed to defeat him. Abu Raqwa then inflicted a heavy defeat on Lawata's forces and got the loss of many fighters including Ibn Taybun. The inhabitants of Barqa with their chief Sandal took advantage of Abu Raqwa's temporary withdrawal from their city, and strongly fortified its walls, digging huge trenches around them and storing as much food and supplies as they could. When Abu Raqwa returned to the siege, he found the city in a much stronger position to defend than before. Several months of siege, he failed to, convince Sandal to surrender. Meanwhile, al-Hakim sent an army of five thousand men under the leadership of Yanal to relieve Barqa. Yanal had to cross considerable stretch of desert before he reached Barqa, and Abu Raqwa sent a body of cavalry across the route to fill in the wells. He then waited at the point farthest from Egypt to meet Yanal's forces, who arrived tired, exhausted and thirsty. Yanal was defeated and was scourged to death. Abu Raqwa sacked his all equipments and supplies, and returned to Barqa. Sandal, together with his family, fled to Cairo. In the month of Zilhaja, 395/October, 1005, Abu Raqwa captured Barqa, and declared himself *amir al-mominin*, and adopted the title of *al-Nasir*

11-Dinillah (the assistant of God's order). This was struck on the coinage too, and the *khutba* was read in his name and the Sunni law was declared. Al-Musabbihi (d. 420/1029) writes that Abu Raqwa's supporters regarded him as a caliph.

About a year after his occupation of Barqa, Abu Raqwa was driven out by the threat of famine and plague. He and his supporters left Barqa as if they were migrating from one land to another, and proceeded towards Alexandria. Al-Hakim began his preparations to quell the rebellion, and appointed Fazal bin Saleh to arrange a large force to meet Abu Raqwa in the field. Meanwhile, a news arrived of Abu Raqwa's movement towards Alexandria. Fazal sent a detachment at the command of Qabil to intercept the rebels, and prevent them from reaching the city. The two armies met in Dhat al-Hamam in Alexandria, where Abu Raqwa won a victory over Qabil. Thence, Abu Raqwa resumed his march towards Alexandria. He besieged it for several months, provoking extreme alarms in Cairo, and a large force had been dispatched from Cairo in command of Fazal bin Saleh. Abu Raqwa failed to capture Alexandria, so he turned towards Cairo. He reached at Fayyum and camped to plan the final blow against the Fatimids. Al-Hakim raised reinforcement of four thousand horsemen at the command of Ali bin Falah to Jiza to prevent Abu Raqwa's troops from raiding areas close to Cairo. Knowing this, Abu Raqwa sent a division of his troops which ambushed Ali bin Falah, killed many of his men. Skirmishes between the two forces continued until they finally met at Ra's al-Barqa in Fayyum district.

It should be noted that a secret pact between Abu Raqwa and the Bedouin chiefs in the Fatimid forces had stipulated that when he would attack, they would withdraw from Fazal bin Saleh's side to create fear and confusion. Fazal was fully aware of this, and on the day of the battle, he summoned all the Bedouin chiefs to his tent. When the attack took place, the Bedouin chiefs, being the prisoners virtually in Fazal's tent, were unable to play their part in accord with the pact with Abu Raqwa, and their troops, unaware of their masters' pact with Abu Raqwa, fought fiercely. Expecting a victory, the troops of Abu Raqwa were easily ambushed and defeated, and he himself fled to the south, and then to Nubia, a large country stretching from Aswan to Khartoum, and from Red Sea to the Libyan desert. Abu Raqwa reached at Dimgula, the

capital of Nubia, where he pretended to be an ambassador of the Fatimid at the court of the Nubian king. Fazal followed close behind to the Nubian frontier and managed to find out Abu Raḡwa, and took him prisoner in 397/1004. He was brought to Cairo, and was paraded through the streets. Ibn Qalanisi (d. 555/1160) writes in **"Tarikh-i Dimashq"** (p. 65) that Abu Raḡwa had written a poetical letter to al-Hakim, begging him for mercy, but al-Hakim refused pardon. But al-Musabbihi (d. 420/1029) as quoted by Makrizi in **"Itti'az"** (p. 396) however refutes it and suggests that al-Hakim intended to pardon Abu Raḡwa as al-Hakim had personally told him while talking about Abu Raḡwa, "I did not want to kill him and what happened to him was not of my choosing." Ibn Athir (9th vol., p. 84) writes that, "Abu Raḡwa died from humiliation and the cruel treatment during the parade, but was not executed." It transpires that al-Hakim did not wish to execute him and was waiting the termination of the parade to grant him mercy, but he was died.

The rebellion of Abu Raḡwa lasted for two years, which almost sucked away the national economy and depleted the royal treasury. In 398/1005, the Nile rising only 16 yards and 16 fingers flow with the result that there was a great rise in prices and hardship. The single bread (**al-khubz**) became so dear that it could be obtained with great difficulty. It was followed by disease and plague together with malnutrition. Al-Hakim immediately exempted the taxes and formulated strict measures to cope with the situation and instituted death penalty for those who inflated prices or hoarded commodities, which produced the desired effect very soon.

Rebellion of Mufraj bin Dagfal

Created by Arab tribes in Palestine, headed by Mufraj bin Dagfal al-Jarrah Taiy, al-Hakim had to face another rebellion hatched in 397/1004, which lasted for about three years. This was the rebellion of the tribe of Banu Jarrah, a part of the Yameni tribe, called Taiy, who had settled in southern parts of Palestine in the Balqa region. Unlike the revolt of Abu Raḡwa, Mufraj's rising was not influenced by religious teaching, nor was it a serious threat to the Fatimids. He began to plunder the pilgrims, and planned to occupy Palestine to establish his family rule. In 400/1009, al-Hakim appointed his general

Yarkhtagin to Aleppo to suppress the rebellions, but Mufraj intercepted him at Askalan and raided. Mufraj sacked his materials and captured him. The rebels also occupied Ramla.

Mufraj went to Hijaz and swore allegiance to Hasan bin Jafar (d. 430/1038), surnamed Abul Fatuh as an *amir*, and brought him to Ramla. Thus, Mufraj dominated both in Palestine and Hijaz, and started coinage in the name of Abul Fatuh. Al-Hakim was much alarmed by these events in his state and tried to suppress the rebellion before it assumed serious proportions. He wrote a letter of remonstrance to Mufraj and offered him a sum of 50,000 *dinars* in return for the safety of Yarkhtagin. Al-Hakim also threatened him with severe consequences if he harmed his general. Soon afterwards, the Fatimid general Yarkhtagin had been executed.

To discredit Abul Fatuh in Mecca and regain Hijaz, al-Hakim communicated with another in Mecca, known as Ibn Abu Tayyib and helped him, resulting re-occupation of Hijaz by the Fatimid. Al-Hakim wrote to Mufraj, promising him estates and other gifts if he would cease from rebellion. Mufraj resolved to abandon Abul Fatuh, who returned to Hijaz. Meanwhile, Mufraj accepted the offer of al-Hakim and took his money. He however retained his mastery over Palestine and continued to menace the peace and security. The pilgrims from Egypt could no longer travel to Hijaz to perform *hajj* as their caravans were used to be sacked.

At length, al-Hakim was impelled to take field against Mufraj. In 404/1013, he sent 20,000 horsemen under Ali bin Falah, whom he invested the title *qutb ad-dawla* (magnate of the state), and ordered the chief of Damascus to join the campaign. Meanwhile, Mufraj died and his supporters scattered. Ali bin Falah captured Ramla and restored law and order.

Reforms of al-Hakim

After suppression of revolts, al-Hakim's administration became very liberal. The rebellions and the risings during his period had badly shaken the commercial life in Egypt by the fluctuation of the *dhiram*. In 395/1004, the market value of one *dinar* became equal to 26 *dhirams*. In

397/1006, the same problem occurred and one *dinar* valued equal to 34 *dhirams*. To cope with the monetary problem, new *dhirams* had been minted for circulation and the old ones withdrawn. The official value of a new *dhiram* was fixed at the rate 18 pieces to the *dinar*. The people were given three days to exchange the coins. This method controlled the monetary system to great extent.

In Egypt, the prices of merchandise, like units of measures and weight were not under direct control of the rule. This resulted price inflation and the people were at the mercy of the shopkeepers and merchants, profiteering high prices, therefore, al-Hakim stabilized the units of weight and measure and fixed the price under government control. In 395/1004, an ordinance was issued to this effect, commanding the stabilization of the units and threatening those who deliberately mishandled them. In 397/1006, the prices of certain commodities were fixed. Severe punishment was inflicted upon the shopkeepers and merchants, who infringed these rules and also paraded in the streets who disobeyed these ordinances.

The relaxation in tax appears to have been an important feature in al-Hakim's reformations. During the years of low Nile which affected agriculture, the land-owners were exempted from paying imposts and taxes. Sometimes, certain areas were declared tax-free zones and at other times it covered the whole country. All the important commodities were relaxed from taxation along with local industries, such as silk, soap and refreshments.

The agriculture in Egypt used to be a target of the scanty of water during bad Nile and the loss of cattle from epidemics, therefore, al-Hakim had taken important measures to reduce the problem as much as possible. He ordered water courses and troughs to be cleaned regularly. In 403/1013, he expended 15,000 *dinars* for the cleaning of the canal of Alexandria. He also employed Ibn al-Haytham, a famous engineer from Basra to solve the problem of low Nile. To ensure the supply of cattle for agriculture purpose, al-Hakim ordered that cows should not be slaughtered except on occasions of religious festivals or if they were unfit to pull the plough. Ibn Taghri Birdi (d. 874/1470) writes in "*al-Nujum al-Zahira fi Muluk Misr wa al-Qahira*" (Cairo, 1929, 4th vol., p. 252) that, "His food laws like the slaughtering of safe and healthy cows,

which was limited to perpetuate the cattle breed, and the killing of all dogs in the country were promulgated for sanitary purposes."

Al-Hakim also granted most of the state land to his subjects and it was not only officials and friends who benefited the facility, but any person who petitioned for his aids. He also curtailed the expenses of the palaces and confiscated most of the properties of his family members, notably of his mother and sisters and added them to the state treasury in 399/1009.

Al-Hakim's forbidding extravagant spending in entertainments when the Nile was exceptionally low and his fight against profiteering from high prices during the famine crisis are examples of sensible legislation for the public welfare. Ibn Taghri Birdi also discusses at some length al-Hakim's charitable and university endowments; his leniency with taxation, depending on the ability of people and commensurate with the prosperity of Egypt over a particular year (op. cit., 4th vol., p. 180).

There are also other noteworthy reforms of al-Hakim in Egypt. "Nudity in public baths" says Makrizi in his "Itti'az al-Hunafa" (Cairo, 1948, p. 391), "was prohibited and people were ordered to wear towel around the waist." In 397/1006, Makrizi adds, a decree (*manshur*) was read, commanding the fixation of prices of bread, meat and other commodities. According to "The Renaissance of Islam" (Patna, 1937, p. 399), "The Caliph al-Hakim, who sought to restore the original Islam, enacted stringent measures against wine-drinking. When his Christian physician, Ibn Anastas prescribed wine and music for his melancholy, the people reverted with joy to the old vice. But the physician soon died and the Caliph became a yet greater opponent of alcohol. He even forbade the sale of raisins and honey and destroyed the casks wherein wine was kept."

Makrizi further writes in his "al-Khitat" (Cairo, 1911, 2nd vol., p. 285) that, "He enforced an Islamic law forbidding the making, selling and drinking of wine. A total and complete enforcement of this law never exercised by any Muslim caliph but al-Hakim was determined to enforce it." In 402/1012, al-Hakim had forbidden the use of beer under a decree (*manshur*), and according to Ibn Khallikan (3rd vol., p. 450), "The usual law against wine was strictly enforced. Now he forbade the sale of dried

raisins because they were used by some for making wine. He forbade their importation into the country, and ordered all found in stores to be destroyed, in consequence of which some 2340 boxes of dried raisins were burned, the value being put at 500 pieces of gold. He next forbade the sale of fresh grapes, exceeding four pounds at a time; in any markets, and strict prohibition was made against squeezing out the juice. The grapes found on sale were confiscated, and either trodden in the street or thrown into the Nile. The vine at Gizeh were cut down and oxen employed to tread the fruit into the mire. Orders were issued that the same was to be done throughout the provinces. But honey as well as grapes can be used in preparing fermented liquor, so the Caliph's seal was affixed to the stores of honey at Gizeh, and some 5051 jars of honey were broken and their contents poured into the Nile, as well as 51 cruises of date honey."

De Lacy O'Leary quotes an example to this effect in "**A Short History of the Fatimid Khilafat**" (London, 1923, pp. 165-6) that a certain merchant had all his money invested in the prohibited fruit, and lost everything by the seizure and destruction of his goods. He appeared before the *qadi* and summoned al-Hakim to appear and make good the destruction caused by his officials. The Caliph appeared to answer the charge preferred against him, the *qadi* treating him like any other citizen against whom complaint had been lodged. The merchant asked for compensation to the amount of 1000 pieces of gold. Al-Hakim in his defence said that the fruits destroyed were intended to be used in the preparation of drinks forbidden by the law of Holy Koran, but that if the merchant will answer that they were not intended for this purpose, but only to be eaten he was willing to pay their price. The merchant swore that the fruit was intended only for eating. He then received the money and gave the Caliph a formal receipt. When the case was concluded, the *qadi*, who had upto this point treated both parties as ordinary suitors, rose from his seat and gave the Caliph the salute customary at court. Al-Hakim admired the *qadi*'s conduct, and made him valuable presents in recognition of his treatment of the case.

The historians concur that the life of frivolity in Egypt seems to have been against the principles of al-Hakim, and according to Antaki (p. 202), "He banned the profession of singers and dancers in Egypt." He also forbade unveiled

women to follow a funeral, prohibiting the weeping and howling and procession of mourning women with drums and pipes. Thus, the tearing of clothes, the blackening of faces and clipping of hair were forbidden and women, employed for lamenting the dead, were imprisoned. O'Leary writes that, "No doubt the nocturnal festivities of Cairo, well suited to the pleasure loving character of the Egyptians, led to many abuses, and so in 391/1001 a strict order was issued, forbidding women to go out of doors by night, and a little later this was followed by a general order prohibiting the opening of the shops by night." (op. cit., p. 133)

In sum, al-Hakim always protected the Islamic interest like his ancestors. Ibn al-Muqaffa in "**Tarikh Batarikat al-Kanisa al-Misriyya**" (2nd vol., p. 125) and Bar Hebraeus in "**Chronographia**" (London, 1923, p. 184) state that al-Hakim threatened those who did not follow Islam and honoured those who did. Ibn Khallikan (3rd vol., p. 451) writes that, "In 408/1017, al-Hakim forbade the kissing of the ground in his presence and annulled the prayer made for him in the *khutba* and in the writings addressed to him. Instead of that prayer, they were ordered to employ these words: **Salutation to the Commander of the Faithful.**"

The famous decree of al-Hakim

According to "**Tarikh**" (4th vol., p. 60) by Ibn Khaldun, "**Tarikh-i Antaki**" (p. 195) by Antaki and "**Khitat**" (2nd vol., p. 287) by Makrizi, al-Hakim issued his famous ordinance in 399/1008, which was read on the pulpit of the mosque of al-Azhar as under:-

"This is to inform that **Amir al-mominin al-Hakim bi-Amrillah** recites the verse of God's manifest Book before you that: **"There is no compulsion in religion; truly the right path is now distinct from error. He that renounces idol-worship and puts his faith in God, he indeed has laid hold on the firmest handle, which shall not break off, and God is Hearing and Knowing."** (2:256)

Yesterday passed away in prosperity and today came up with its necessities. O'multitude of Muslims! I am an *Imam* and you are the *Ummah*. Verily, all Muslims are brothers with

one another, therefore, you seek unity with the brothers and fear God. It is hoped that you shall be graced with mercy. One who confesses the **tauhid** (Unity of God) and **risalat** (Prophethood of Muhammad), and one who does not boost disunity between the two persons, they all are included in the bond of Islamic Brotherhood. God saved those who had saved themselves through it. And those whom were to stop, they were stopped from all unlawful things, i.e., from slaughter, means and materials, and the forbidden women. Best understanding and the following on the true path are good and excellent. The quarrels and dissensions are not good. The past events should not be repeated and given up as extremely harmful for the present time. It should not be remembered what occurred in the past, notably those events and occurrences being taken place during the rules of my ancestors. Who they were? They were Mahdi billah, Qaim bi-Amrillah, Mansur billah, Muizz li-dinillah and other (i.e. al-Aziz), who adopted the true path. The condition of Mahdiya, Mansuria and Kairwan is quite apparent, not hidden from any one, nor even it is secret.

The fast-keepers may keep fast and break in accordance with their rites. One should have no objection with the person who keeps and breaks fast (according to his own belief). Those who offer five obligatory prayers, they must continue it. No one should restrict or forbid one who offers the **salat al-dus** and **tarawih** (prayers in the month of Ramadan). Those who recite five **taqbir** (act of extolling greatness of God) on the funeral prayers, they should do so, and no person should forbid to those who offer four **taqbir**. The **muzin** should recite "**haiya ala khair al-amal**" (come to the best work) in the call to prayer. One should not be however teased who does not recite these words in the call to prayer.

No ill words should be uttered to revile the Companions of the past, and one should have no objection against the eulogies being extolled for them. Let him oppose who is against them. Each Muslim **mujtahid** is responsible for himself in the decision of religion matters. Verily, he has to return to God. He has his own book of deeds, whereupon depend his accounts.

O'God's servants! you follow the injunctions of above decree being enforced today. No Muslim should hemper into the faith of other Muslims, and no person should oppose

the beliefs of his friends. *Amir al-mominin* has written down all these points for you (explicitly) in his decree. Nay, God says, "O'believers! you are accountable for none but yourselves; he that goes astray cannot harm you if you are on the right path. You shall all return to God, and He will declare to you what you have done" (5:106). May peace be upon you and the divine grace."

In Egypt, al-Hakim thus is reported to have removed the differences of the Shia and Sunni Muslims. Ibn Khallikan (3rd vol., p. 450) writes that, "He gave orders that the persons who uttered curses against the Companions should be flogged and paraded ignominiously through the streets." Antaki (p. 195) writes that, "He publicly praised the Companions of the Prophet and commanded his subjects to do the same." In sum, the Sunni and Shia enjoyed toleration and equal rights. Many Sunni jurists were also employed in the Dar al-Hikmah and the appointment of a Sunni *qadi*, called Abul Abbas bin Awam Hanbali is best example in this context. In 400/1009, al-Hakim also established a school of law offering instructions in the Malikite rite, whose incharge was Abu Bakr Antaki.

In sum, al-Hakim restored peace and prosperity in the country, attracting the Muslims of Baghdad and Cordova to settle in Cairo. He brought the Fatimid rule to its zenith. Dr. G. Kheirallah writes in "*Druze History*" (Detroit, 1952, p.160) that, "During the life and reign of al-Hakim, the Fatimite Egypt reached its highest position of influence and prestige - no other state could then vie with Egypt for power, wealth or enlightenment; the Arabian art and crafts were at their zenith, and affluence and ease became the lot of the Egyptians". According to Antaki (d. 458/1065) in "*Tarikh-i Antaki*" (Beirut, 1909, p. 206), "Al-Hakim provided such kind of justice that his subjects had never known before. They slept in their homes secured in the possession of their properties." Ibn Ayyas (d. 930/1524) writes in "*Bada'i al-Zuhur*" (Cairo, 1896, 1st vol., p. 52) that, "His justice became the favourite theme of both writers of story and myth as well as poets. Much of their works, praising and picturing al-Hakim as the champion of justice, shows the impression his rule left on people's imaginations." Al-Hakim adopted severity in observance of Islamic law, which enormously helped to reduce crimes. Ibn al-Zafir (d. 613/1216) writes in "*al-Duwal al-Munqatia*" (p. 59) that, "At times of prayers, the

shopkeepers would have their shops open and unguarded without fear of theft." Ibn Ayyas (op. cit., p. 54) reports a story of a man who lost his purse full of money in the street of Cairo, and when, after few days, he passed the same street, he found it untouched. None dare to touch it for fear of al-Hakim's punishment. In sum, there is an Egyptian fragment of Hebrew writing, evidently from al-Hakim's period, praising and eulogizing his unparalleled justice with sincerity, vide Dr. A. Neubauer's "Egyptian Fragment" (FQR, IX, pp. 24-6).

The problems of *Ahl Dhimma*

According to Islamic law, the non-Muslims inhabited in the Islamic state were called *ahlu dh-dhimmati* (people of protection) or simply *al-Dhimma* or *dhimmis*. They included the Christian, Jewish, Magian, Samaritan and Sabian. *Ahl Dhimma* were prohibited in the Muslim state from holding public religious ceremonies, from raising their voices loudly when praying and even from ringing their church bells aloud. All schools agree that it is not allowed to build new churches, synagogues, convent, hermitage or cell in towns or cities of *Dar al-Islam* (Muslim lands). When these injunctions were disobeyed, the Muslim leaders were authorized to treat the offenders as dwellers in *Dar al-Harb* (non-Muslim lands) and not as *Ahl Dhimma* in *Dar al-Islam* (Muslim lands), vide "*Subh al-A'asha fi Sina'at al-Insha*" (Cairo, 1922, 13th vol., p. 356) by Qalaqashandi (d. 821/1418).

When the Fatimids arrived in Egypt, the need for a stable financial administration provided an opportunity to the talented minorities of *Ahl Dhimma* (Christians and Jews) to find employment in state offices. They were massively employed from low to high ranking posts in the state. In return, the policy of the Fatimid Caliphs towards them was of great toleration. The Fatimids granted land to churches. The Jewish religious institutions, such as the Jerusalem Yeshiva was also financially supported by the Fatimid authorities. As time passed their influences grew so rapidly through out the state that they became almost a threat to the Fatimids. Most of the high officials of finance departments, the deputies and staffs were remarkably non-Muslims, who also became a source of tension for the Muslims. When Imam al-Aziz dismissed and

arrested his vizir Yaqub bin Killis in 373/983, the functioning of the administration became almost frozen, impelling al-Aziz to release and restore Yaqub bin Killis to his former office. Al-Aziz is also reported to have reappointed few other dismissed officials, confirming the foothold of the non-Muslims in the Fatimid dominion.

Wustenfled writes in "**Geschichte der Fatimiden Chalifen**" (Gottingen, 1881, 2nd vol., p. 64) about Isa bin Nestorius, a Christian vizir of the Fatimids that, "He was hard-hearted and an usurer who grasped for himself every lucrative business, and agumented very much the taxes. He favoured his co-religionists and placed them in the important offices of state, while removing the former Muslims secretaries and tax-collectors. As his chief deputy in Syria he chose a Jew, Menasse bin Ibrahim, who showed there the same regard for the Jews as Isa did for the Christians in Egypt, by reducing their taxes and appointing them as officials. Thus the followers of these two religions ruled the state. This caused great indignation amongst the Muslims."

The **Ahl Dhimma**, mainly the Christians, were thickly populated in Egypt. They were rich, powerful, influential and dominated in the political and social orbits. Ibn Athir (9th vol., p. 48) quotes Hasan bin Bishar of Damascus, who made mention of the growing influences of the Christians in the Fatimid empire in his poetry that:-

*Be Christian (as) today is the time of Christianity.
Believe in nothing, but in the holy trinity.
Yaqub is the father, Aziz is the son.
And for the holy ghost, Fazal is the one.*

The people roused to anger against the poet and situation gradually exploded in civil disturbances. When the people clamoured for the punishment of the poet, al-Aziz demonstrated a big heart and told to Yaqub bin Killis and Fazal bin Saleh to expel the poet from the city as soon as possible.

Towards the end of al-Aziz's reign, the antagonism had reached its climax. The policy of assigning high administrative offices to Christians and Jews was

basically in the line with the religious toleration adopted by the Fatimids. It however appears that al-Aziz went further than his predecessors, and the non-Muslims exceeded to take its unnecessary advantage. In a letter purported to have been delivered to al-Aziz, the writer accused him as saying, "By the Lord who honoured the Christians through Isa bin Nestorius, and the Jews through Menasse bin Ibrahim al-Kazzaz and humiliated the Muslims through you." (vide **"Khitat"**, 2nd vol., p. 195). On that juncture, the Fatimid Imam kept patience and did not take any action against the non-Muslims.

The fast growth of the influences of the Christianity and Judaism began to menace the Islamic interest in the Fatimid state. Even the continued hatred and rivalry between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Fatimid dominion also necessitated that the Imam should find a solution, and thus al-Hakim was destined to come into the actions.

According to al-Musabbihi (cf. **"Khitat"**, 2nd vol., p. 195), about five naval ships together with their equipment were burnt in 386/995. The Christians, who lived near the port, were accused of purposely causing the fire. Thus, the Muslims sailors attacked them and killed 107 persons and threw their dead bodies into the streets, and pillaged their houses. The vizir Isa bin Nestorius, representing al-Aziz in his absence, brought a police force to the area. He investigated the incident and arrested large number of the Muslims. He crucified 20 Muslims and severely punished the other. The death toll of this riot indicates a large number of the people, and the reason however given to this effect was the fire caught accidentally in the ships. But, the manner in which the Muslims behaved, according to the description of al-Musabbihi, confirms that the hatred and animosity was at the very root of the riot.

Like the Christians, the Jews had also wielded their influence in Egypt with the help of Menasse bin Ibrahim. Jacob Mann writes in **"The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs"** (London, 1919, 1st vol., pp. 20-21) that, "Menasse was a general like Joab bin Seruyah and his banner shone with royal splendour. His name was 'healing and life' to his people (i.e., the Jews), who greatly rejoiced at his dignity....A number of Arab tribes were humiliated by him. But he looked after the interests of his co-religionists....Menasse's brief management of

Syria and Palestine must have been beneficial to the Jews."

The foothold of the Jews can be gauged from the fact that Suyuti (d. 911/1505) writes in *"Rusn al-Muhadara fi Akhbar Misr wa al-Qahira"* (Cairo, 1909, 2nd vol., p. 129) that a poet said of them during the Fatimid Caliphate that:-

*The Jews of our times reached the summit of their goal
and have become aristocrates.*

Theirs is the dignity, theirs the money!

*Councillors of the state and princes chosen among them
O'People of Egypt! I give you advice: Become Jews for
the heaven has become Jewish.*

Under these curious circumstances in the Islamic state, al-Hakim had no alternative but to take drastic actions against *Ahl Dhimmas*. The prime reason to impose certain restrictions upon the *Ahl Dhimma* was to curtail their growing influence and distinguish them from Muslims as well. The policy of al-Hakim appears to have been an attempt to solve a problem which has menaced his rule. On one hand was *Ahl Dhimma* being a large minority with their vital importance to the progress of the financial administration of the state, and on the other was the Muslim population which resented their pressure and the policy that prolonged their influence in the state affairs or social life. If al-Hakim dismissed all non-Muslims from the offices of state, his financial administration would have suffered a severe blow and weakening the treasury. If he had adopted tolerance, he would have endangered his popularity amongst the Muslims. *Ahl Dhimma* were rich, powerful and influential, therefore, the Muslim community was unwilling to further tolerate them. Thus, al-Hakim found the solution to his dilemma in the subjugation of *Ahl Dhimma* to Muslim law. "In general" writes M. Canard in *"The Encyclopaedia of Islam"* (Leiden, 1971, 3rd vol., p. 78), "this policy had the approval of the Muslims, who hated the Christians because of acts of misappropriation and of favourism by the Christian financial officials."

During the first ten years of al-Hakim's reign (386-395/995-1004), the Jews and Christians enjoyed the immunity and even the privileges which they had obtained

during the tolerant rule of Imam al-Aziz. When the wheel turned to reverse side, menacing his empire, al-Hakim had to curtail a part of the freedom of *Ahl Dhimma* with drastic hands.

The first decree of al-Hakim in this context issued in 395/1004, ordering the Jews and Christians to wear the *ghiyar* (garment) only when they appeared in public. When this order was disobeyed, the punishment was followed. Wearing the *ghiyar* was soon found as not enough, therefore, a distinctive religious symbol was ordered. He made Christians wear a distinctive badge hung round their necks - a cross for the Christians and the wooden images of a calf for the Jews.

The non-Muslims however resented any kind of restriction affecting their prestige. The ensuing enforcement of the new laws was a grave challenge to their position. It abolished their towering fame and even curtailed a part of their freedom. The information in the extant sources appears to indicate that these incidents resulted from circumstances and not from a planned policy to attack the religious communities.

The Christians and Jews began to wear the prescribed religious symbols made of gold or silver and used the saddles with richly coloured trappings while riding on horses. Then al-Hakim ordered the cross to be of wood, five *rotls* in weight, and made the Jews wear billets of wood of the same weight, shaped like the clapper of a bell.

In addition, the Christians and Jews alike were prohibited from riding horses and only allowed donkeys or mules for their transport. Their saddles had to be plain, with stirrups of sycamore wood and reins of black leather. If they transgressed any of these rules they were punished with banishment. He also forbade Jewesses and the Christian women to wear Arabian shoes, and made them wear footwears with legs (*sarmuz*), one red and one black. This was also ignored, therefore, next strict order came into force in 398/1007, ordering the Jews to wear a bell and Christians a cross when in public baths. Boats manned by Muslim crews were also prohibited for them. He also forbade slaves to be sold to them, and to employ Muslim servants and to take Muslim girls as concubines.

The repetition of the orders sharply indicates that they were not properly obeyed. M. Canard writes in **"The Encyclopaedia of Islam"** (Leiden, 1971, 3rd vol., p. 78) that, "It should be mentioned that these measures were perhaps not always strictly enforced, otherwise it would not have been necessary to repeat them." When continued disobedience was reported, al-Hakim permitted the Muslims in 403/1012 to spy upon **Ahl Dhimma** and report offenders to the police. At length, the **Ahl Dhimma** began to obey the orders of al-Hakim. Later, the severity of the measures was lifted. It is striking feature worthy of noting that there is no indication which suggesting that a group of **Ahl Dhimma**, was punished for transgressing these orders when it however was confirmed that such violation had actually occurred.

The historians have advanced different reasons motivated in al-Hakim's measures. Uthman al-Nabulsi (d. 532/1235) in his **"Tajrid Sayf al-Himma Lima fir Dhimmati Ahl al-Dhimma"** (p. 139) suggests they were political, that al-Hakim feared the prosperity of **Ahl Dhimma**, their growing influence both in state affairs and in the society, might encourage them to overthrow his empire. Antaki (d. 458/1066) in **"Tarikh-i Antaki"** (Paris, 1909, p. 207), Ibn al-Muqaffiq in **"Tarikh-i Batarikat al-Kanisa al-Misriyya"** (Cairo, 1948, 2nd vol., p. 124) and Bar Hebraeus (d. 684/1286) in **"Chronographia"** (London, 1932, p. 184) suggest the reasons for al-Hakim's policy was to force the Christians and Jews to accept Islam, which seems extremely doubtful. It must be known that during the years of al-Hakim's greatest pressure upon the **Ahl Dhimma**, the majority of officials in his services were non-Muslims and that he never dismissed any of them on religious ground. The **Dhimmi**s or Muslims received equal titles (**alqab**) and grants. Antaki (p. 207) further writes that the majority of his staff were **Ahl Dhimma** and too numerous to be replaced by Muslims. He made his measures so severe that he could force them to accept Islam.

The historians concur that al-Hakim respected the personal beliefs of his subjects and did never force them to subscribe to a particular religion. Musabbihi, the contemporary historian quotes al-Hakim as saying, "When I appointed Salih bin Ali as Qa'id al-Quwad, I asked Ibn Surin to write a decree and make him sworn on the Bible not to tell anyone before the time was due." (cf.

"Itti'az", p. 398). Thus, force does not seem to have been al-Hakim's method of conversion, rather he preferred arguments and discussions and his famous decree of 399/1008 begins with the Koranic verse: "*la ikraha fi al-din*" (no compulsion in religion) is an ample evidence in this context. O'Leary writes in "*A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*" (London, 1923, p. 133) that, "In his conduct generally al-Hakim was tolerant, as his predecessors had been, towards the Christians and Jews as well as towards the Muslims who did not embrace the peculiar tenets of the Shia sect." The reports of many historians make it obvious that the obedience to Islamic law, not the adoption of Islam, was al-Hakim's prime purpose, vide Ibn al-Zafir, p. 63, Ibn Athir, 9th vol., p. 131, etc.

The first edict of al-Hakim, ordering all Jews and Christians not to appear in public unless they wore a black *ghiyar* (garment) with black belts, however, was not new to *Ahl Dhimma* in Islamic state. It dates back to the time of Caliph Umar, who had made certain conditions for them, and one of them was that non-Muslims were to wear a distinctive over-coat (*al-ghiyar*), vide Qalqashandi's "*Subh al A'asha fi Sina'at al Insha*" (13th vol., p. 356), Nabulsi's "*Tajrid Sayf al-Himma*" (BIFAO, 1958-60, p. 139). It is to be noted that the Abbasid caliph Harun ar-Rashid, according to Tabari (3rd vol., p. 712) had issued an ordinance in 191/807 for *Ahl Dhimma* living in Baghdad to the effect that they should distinguish themselves from the Muslims in their dresses and mounts. Tabari (3rd vol., p. 1419) writes that in 235/850, the Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil issued a decree, ordering the Christians to wear honey-coloured hoods (*taylasan*), and the Jews the black-belts (*zunnar*) and also two buttons on their caps. In 239/854, another ordinance was imposed, ordering the Christians to wear *durra'a* and *qaba* (tunics) with two yellow *dhira* (sleeves) and forbidding them to ride horses.

The distinctive garments which the *Ahl Dhimma* had to wear during the period of al-Hakim was the *ghiyar* means "distinction", which was a piece of cloth having a patch of stipulated colour placed on the shoulder.

It must be however known that the destruction of the churches in 392/1002 in Cairo was not by the order of the

Imam. It was the result of an attack by a group of anguished Muslims. Antaki (p. 186) writes that, "The Christian Jacobites began rebuilding a ruined church in the area of Rashida, where a group of Muslims attacked them and destroyed the building and two other churches which were nearby."

Ibn Abi Tayy, who is quoted by Makrizi, suggests that, "Since Muslim laws does not allow *Ahl Dhimma* to build new churches in *Dar al-Islam*, therefore, the Muslims were angered by the rebuilding of the church, an act they interpreted as a challenge to their law." Ibn Abi Tayy further states that both Christians and Muslims complained to al-Hakim. The former said that the church existed before the Muslim conquest, and the latter argued that it was newly built. (cf. "*Khitat*", 2nd vol., p. 283)

As a matter of reconciliation, al-Hakim at length ordered his mosque to be built in the area and gave permission for the Christians to build their new churches in another area which was known as al-Hamra. This, as Antaki (p. 186) and Ibn Abi Tayy (cf. "*Khitat*", 2nd vol., p. 283) state, "was a compensation for the three churches destroyed in Rashida."

It is to be noted that such actions were never directed against the Jews, and the revenues of their synagogues were not confiscated nor were they ever destroyed by official order. Jacob Mann, a harsh Jewish critic writes in "*The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs*" (London, 1920, 1st vol., p. 33) that, "No details are given either by Lane Poole or by Wustenfeld about the destruction of the Jewish synagogues." Qalqashandi (25th vol., p. 73) however writes that, "In Cairo the district of Jaudarriya was thickly inhabited by Jews till al-Hakim was informed that they oppressed the Muslims, reviled the Islam and sang defamatory verses. In 403/1012, al-Hakim ordered one night to close their gates and had them burnt in the quarter. The Jews afterwards inhabited the street of al-Zuwaita in Cairo."

The sequestration of church revenues however had been directed against the widespread corruption which was gaining increasing momentum even among high officials. Ibn al-Muqaffa himself a bishop, affirms that, "The corruption had reached to its extreme among the Christian officials and the Patriarch Inba Zakharin sold bishops and

priesthoods to anyone rich capable to pay the price thereof. Yunis, a certain priest intended to become a bishop, but the Patriarch refused him, because he was not so rich. Yunis therefore submitted a petition to al-Hakim against the then prevalent practice of bribery rife in ecclesiastic orbits. Al-Hakim arrested the Patriarch and gave the supervision of the revenues of the church to the state **diwan**. (op. cit., 2nd vol., p. 127)

Antaki (p. 194) writes that the confiscation included only the revenues of the churches in Egypt. He also adds (p. 219) that the church revenues were not included in the state treasury, but put under al-Hakim's name in the state **diwan**, which were later restored without any loss to the church officials.

In 398/1007, the Christians further dared to violate the orders when their multitude flocked in Jerusalem to celebrate Easter in public. Antaki (p. 194) however provides some curious informations about the manner in which the Christians celebrated their annual festivals. "They continually ignored prescribed rules for **Ahl Dhimma** and opposed a number of al-Hakim's orders regarding their rituals. He thus prohibited their public parade during Easter and Epiphany."

Hatred between Muslims and non-Muslims became strong to its extreme and reacted in public, and at last a riot took place which resulted in the destruction of the Qiyamah, a famous church of the Christians in Jerusalem in 400/1015.

Ibn Kathir (d. 774/1373) in "**al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya**" (11th vol., p. 339) and Dhahabi (d. 748/1348) in "**Kitab al-Ibar**" (3rd vol., p. 67) concur that the practices of the monks and a disgrace to Islam were the root causes of the destruction of Qiyama. Antaki (p. 195) writes that, "The Muslims stirred hootest agitation and expressed their hatred of Christians by pulling down their churches and pillaged their property." Makrizi also writes in "**Khitat**" (2nd vol., p. 512) that al-Hakim warned the Muslims to refrain from such indecent actions. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsha writes in "**The Renaissance of Islam**" (Patna, 1937, p. 56) that, "This Hakim never intended or wished to be done and he stopped it as soon as he heard of it."

In conclusion, P.J. Vatikiotis writes in **"The Fatimid Theory of State"** (Lahore, 1957, p. 153) that, "His (al-Hakim) persecution of Christians and Jews and the legislation enacted for that purpose between 395/1004 and 411/1020 seem to have been a policy with a justifiable purpose."

Construction of mosques

Dr. Sadik Assad writes in **"The Reign of al-Hakim bi-Amrallah"** (Beirut, 1974, p. 86) that, "Al-Hakim also built more mosques than any of his predecessors and perhaps, more than any other Muslim caliph." He extended his benefactions to all the existing mosques, and was responsible for the building of many more. The mosque near the Bab al-Futuh, commenced by his father in 380/990 had been left incomplete. Al-Hakim completed it and made it the second congregational mosque of Cairo, known as al-Anwar. Making no distinction between public treasury and personal funds, he made lavish gifts to the mosques of Fustat and Cairo. He furnished the mosque known as Hakim's Mosque with lamps, mats and other requirements at a cost of 5000 pieces of gold. He presented to the old mosque at Fustat a candelabrum with 1200 lights which weighed 100,000 *dhirams*. So huge was his grant that in carrying it to the mosque, the road had to be dug, and the upper part of the door had to be removed to carry it into the mosque. This present was taken in a procession with the commander-in-chief in the front with drums and trumpets and amidst shouts of *tehlil* (no might save God) and *takbir* (God is great). He also presented the mosque 1290 copies of Holy Koran, some of which were written in letters of gold. He also built a huge mosque near the Mugattam hills and presented to it carpets, curtains and lamps. He also furnished various mosques the items like the copies of Holy Koran, silver lamps, mats, curtains etc." Makrizi also writes in **"Itti'az"** (2nd vol., p. 96) that al-Hakim generously allocated 9220 *dhirams* each month for the upkeep of the mosques.

The Fatimid genealogy

The Abbasid caliph Kadir billah (d. 422/1031) got his rule dwindling before his eyes. He saw Baghdad yielding its

position of prestige as the seat of culture and science to Cairo, and he found himself a virtual prisoner of the Buwahids, while the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim was ruling powerfully and absolutely. Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597/1200) writes in "*al-Muntazam fi Tarikh al-Muluk*" (Hyderabad, 1840, 7th vol., p. 237) that, "The Shia of Iraq had looked to al-Hakim as their desired Caliph in 398/1008 in Baghdad, and during a quarrel with the Sunnis, they shouted slogans, *Ya Hakim, Ya Mansur* in favour of al-Hakim."

In 401/1010, Mutamad ad-Dawla Qirwash bin Maqallid (d. 444/1052), the chief of the Ugayl tribe and governor of Mosul, Madain, Anbar and Kufa acknowledged the Fatimid Caliphate instead of the Abbasids, and started the Fatimid *khutba* and coinage. In the same year, Ali bin Mazid Asadi (d. 408/1018), the chief of the Asad tribe also proclaimed his loyalty to al-Hakim and had the Fatimid *khutba* read in Hilla and the districts he governed.

The Abbasid caliph Kadir billah alarmed over the prosperity of Egypt and growing influence of the Fatimids inside his empire, therefore, he attempted to combat with al-Hakim by another cowardice tool. He gathered a number of Shia and Sunni theologians and jurists to his court in 402/1011 and ordered them to prepare a forged manifesto that the Fatimid claim of Alid descent was false. Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) writes in "*Muqaddimah*" (tr. Franz Rosenthal, London, 1958, 1st vol., pp. 45-6) that, "The judges in Baghdad eventually prepared an official statement denying the Alid origin (of the Fatimids). The statement was witnessed by a number of prominent men, among them the Sharif ar-Radi and his brother al-Murtada, and Ibn al-Bathawi. Among the religious scholars were Abu Hamid al-Isfarayini, al-Quduri, as-Saymari, Ibn al-Akfani, al-Abiwardi, the Shia jurist Abu Abdullah bin an-Numan, and other prominent Muslims in Baghdad. The event took place one memorable day in the year 402/1011 in the time of (the Abbasid caliph) al-Qadir. The testimony was based upon heresy, on what people in Baghdad generally believed. Most of them were partisans of the Abbasids who attacked the Alid origin (of the Fatimids). The historians reported the informations as they had heard it. They handed down to us just as they remembered it. However, the truth lies behind it. Al-Mutadid's letter concerning Ubaydallah (al-Mahdi) to Aghlabid in al-Qayrawan and the Midrarid in Sijilmasah, testifies most truthfully to the correctness

of the origin (of the Fatimids) and proves it most clearly. Al-Mutadid was better qualified than anyone else to speak about the genealogy of the Prophet's house." Ibn Taghri Birdi (d. 874/1470) writes in his "**al-Mujum al-Zahira fi Muluk wa al-Qahira**" (Cairo, 1929, 4th vol., p. 236) that, "The Abbasid caliph hired theologians and paid them large sum of money to write books condemning the Fatimid cause and their doctrine."

We have three accredited Sunni historians, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), Abul Fida (1273-1331) and Makrizi (1363-1442), who were not under the pressure or influence of either the Abbasids or the Fatimids. These historians concur that the Fatimids of Egypt were the direct descendants of Ali and Fatima. The Abbasid false propaganda, however, discrediting the Fatimid lineage has been falsified through accredited sources and arguments, vide "**Genealogy of the Aga Khan**" by Muntaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali, Karachi, 1990.

Foundation of Dar al-Hikmah

Amid the surging splendour, al-Hakim emerges as an unusual personality judged by any standard. He founded **Dar al-Hikmah** (House of Wisdom), also known as **Dar al-Ilm** (House of Knowledge) in 395/1004, where the sciences including astronomy, logic, philosophy, mathematics, history, theology, languages and medicines were taught and the Shiite esoteric interpretation propagated. Qadi Abul Aziz bin Muhammad bin Noman was its first supervisor. This academy was connected with the royal palace, enriched with a huge library, and distinct conference rooms and chambers. Scholastic activities were conducted by the scientists, philosophers, professors, theologians, scholars etc. Staff of clerks and servants were employed for the upkeep of the institution. Scientists, professors and learned men were employed as lecturers. Wustenfeld writes in his "**Akademien der Araber**" (Gottingen, 1837, p. 67) that, "It was in reality the first Lay University, where also Mathematics, Astronomy, Medicine and Methaphysics were taught."

The Dar al-Hikmah was founded to facilitate the working of the Ismaili mission too, and became rapidly a cultural centre. It attracted the students from all parts of the

Muslim world, where the Imam would himself often visit the lecture-halls, joining debates and granting generous gifts to encourage notable proficiency. The lectures delivered by the *dais* were known as *majalis* and were given at different levels according to the intellectual capacity of the audience. Some were designated as *majalis al-khassa* (sessions for the selected) and others as *majalis al-amma* (sessions for the public). From the picture drawn by Musabbihi and Ibn Tuwayr, both quoted by Makrizi in his "*Khitat*" (1st vol., p. 391), it would appear that the *majalis al-khassa* were attended only by the Ismailis. In the others, the lectures read were merely explanations of the doctrines which concerned the meaning of *Imam*, the theological differences between the Shia and Sunni laws and their historical background. In al-Hakim's time, the *majalis* expanded in an endeavour to reach every group of people including even visitors to the country and women. Special meetings were divided into two. One was for the high officials and learned men and was known as *majalis al-awliya* and the other was for the ordinary officials and the branch of it was specially for women of the palace. The public sessions were divided into three - one for men of the general public, one for the women and one for the visitors to the country.

By the end of the 4th/10th century there were also regular assemblies on every Thursday and Friday for the reading of *majalis al-hikmah* (lectures on wisdom), which was flourished to its zenith. Makrizi quotes in his "*Khitat*" (1st vol., p. 391) al-Musabbihi (d. 420/1029) as giving some details of these *majalis*. According to him, "The *dai* gave many lectures in the palace, lecturing separately to the adepts, the members of the court, the common people and strangers. To women, he lectured in the Jam-i Azhar, where a separate chamber was allotted to the women of the court. The *dai* prepared the lecture in his house, after being presented its text to the Caliph, a neat copy of the lecture was prepared. The contributions (*najwa*) of the Ismailis were also collected during these lectures, which were called *majalis al-hikmah*." The fixed monetary contribution (*najwa*) was collected from the individual Ismailis during the *majalis al-hikmah*, and the lists of the contributors were kept by a special secretary (*katib al-dawa*) appointed by the chief *dai*. Makrizi writes that the wealthy Ismailis made substantial voluntary donations.

It should be noted that the term *najwa* evidently refers to the Koranic verse (58:12), which reads:- "Ye faithful! If you have something confidential to discuss (*najaytum*) with the envoy, then prior to your confidential discussion (*najwakum*) pay some alms in anticipation." So the *najwa* was a fee that the followers had to pay for being introduced into the secret assembly.

Ibn al-Tuwayri (d. 617/1220) describes the preparation of the text of the *majalis* differently. According to him as quoted by Makrizi (Ibid.), "The Ismaili theologians, housed in Dar al-Hikmah, met on Monday and Thursday and agreed on the text of a booklet called *majalis al-hikmah*. A clean copy was brought to the Chief Dai, who after checking it, presented it on to the Caliph. If possible, the Caliph read it; at any rate he put his signature on it. The Chief Dai then read the lectures in the palace in two different places - for men, sitting on the chair of the *dawat* in the great hall, for women, in his own audience-chamber. After the lecture the believers came up to kiss the hand of the Chief Dai, who stroked their heads with the booklet, so that the signature of the Caliph touched their heads."

It must be known that the *majalis al-hikmah* were interrupted in 400/1010 for some reasons. It was reopened very soon, but cancelled once again in 401/1010. It was again interrupted for the third time at the end of the year 405/1015 after the nomination of Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Awam as a *chief qadi*. Heinz Halm however writes in "The Ismaili Oath of Allegiance and the Sessions of Wisdom in Fatimid Times" (cf. "Mediaeval Ismaili History and Thought" (New York, 1996, p. 107) that, "We fail to learn precisely what the reasons were, but this closure seems to be connected with the Druze trouble, which began about this time." Al-Hakim however bestowed the title of chief *dai* on Khuttakin al-Dayf, entrusting him with the control of the room, so that it was used for the customary proceedings. Later, he also granted him the title of *al-Sadiq al-amin*. Ibn Muyassar writes in "Akhbar al-Misr" (pp. 166-7) that, "Khuttakin al-Dayf subsequently proved to be the most embittered opponent of the Druzes. When the followers of Hamza and those of Khuttakin met, they cursed each other."

Heinz Halm concludes that, "So it is quite possible that al-Hakim had the *majalis* closed either in agreement with the Ismaili *dais* or yielding to their pressure, in order to forestall the appearance of the Druze dissidents among them" (Ibid).

Ibn al-Haytham

Sami Hamarneh writes in "Medicine and Pharmacy under the Fatimids" (cf. "Ismaili Contribution to Islamic Culture" ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Tehran, 1977, p. 163) that, "It seems plausible to speculate that the generosity of al-Hakim towards scholars and scientists had attracted the migration to Fatimid Egypt of eminent figure, Abu Ali Muhammad bin al-Hasan bin al-Haytham (Latin *Alhazen*) of Basra in southern Iraq."

Ibn al-Haytham (354-429/965-1039), the greatest physicist was born in Basra, and was originally appointed to a civil post at Basra. He was avidly consumed by the desire to learn mathematics and philosophy, for which he could not get spare time in his post, therefore, he feigned madness and was dismissed as a result from the post. Our informations about his pre-Egyptian days are deficient, but according to a few accounts of his life, it is known that he managed to leave Basra in order to proceed to Egypt, where he had been invited by the Fatimid Imam al-Hakim.

It must be known on this juncture that in the summer following the rainy reason, the Nile river and the canals overflow with water, causing millions of tons of fertile silt, containing phosphoric acid, potash and nitrogen. But in the winter, the level of water fell down, making the cultivation of the crops impossible, and in annual inundation it used to cause devastation of life and property. With his brilliant mind, the famous physicist and the founder of the science of optics, Abu Ali Muhammad bin al-Hasan bin al-Haytham came to the conclusion in Iraq that if some of the surplus water available immediately after the rains, could be stored, not only could it be used in the dry season for more cultivation of land, but it would also help to prevent the periodic flood inflicting heavy damage. According to Ibn Abi Usaibia (d. 668/1270) in his "*Uyn al-Anba fi tabakat al-Attiba*" (2nd vol., p. 91), Ibn al-Haytham had also claimed that, "Had I

been in Egypt I could have done something to regulate the Nile, so that the people could derive benefit at its ebb and flow." Thus, he prepared a plan to build a three-way embankment dam near Aswan for harnessing the Nile waters, and sent his report to al-Hakim. He even suggested for a site near Aswan where the river emerged from a gorge into the flat country. Haidar Bammate writes in **"Muslim Contribution to Civilization"** (Lahore, 1981, p. 21) that, "Al-Haytham was the first to advocate the construction of a dam at Aswan to raise the level of the Nile."

Al-Hakim was deeply impressed when he received the outline of the project and sent one of his emissaries with adequate funds to Ibn al-Haytham in Basra and invited him to Cairo. He readily accepted the royal invitation and after a short stay in Cairo, he was sent up the river with a large sum of money and retinue of workers. He undertook the journey to Aswan, which is situated at a distance of over 400 miles to the south of Cairo as the crow flies. He inspected the site at Aswan and came to the conclusion that such a colossal scheme of works was not feasible under the working conditions. According to Ibn Abi Usaibia, "He saw the pyramids at first glance and became awed by the engineering and geometrical skills of the ancients. Had it been possible he thought, the ancient Egyptians must have done it before." (op. cit., 2nd vol., p. 91). Having realized the enormous magnitude of the project, he failed to execute it with the technical means he had at his disposal. Instead therefore of undertaking the start-up of the projected dam, he returned to Cairo and confessed to al-Hakim his sheer inability to go ahead with the proposed plan.

Al-Hakim assigned him some office pertaining to revenue, but he is said to have feigned madness, and retired to a place near al-Azhar university. Different stories have been advanced to discredit the personality of al-Hakim in this context. Prof. Abdul Ghafur writes in **"Ibn al-Haitham"** (cf. **"Ibn al-Haitham"**, Karachi, 1970, pp. 111-2) that, "From this, it should be obvious that, even after Ibn al-Haitham's inability to go ahead with the plan for construction of the dam at Aswan, al-Hakim had considerable respect for Ibn al-Haitham. It might be that there were monetary difficulties involved in the implementation of the scheme or some other snag. However, the reputation of Ibn al-Haitham remain unscathed in this affair. The plea of insanity was not new to Ibn al-

Haitham. He had used this subterfuge once before at Basra. It is therefore plausible to assume that he adopted this ruse in order to devote himself to studies. Qifti, Baihiqi and Ibn Abi Usaibia unanimously held that Ibn al-Haitham was a self-contented person and devoid of avarice or worldly self-aggrandizement."

Baihiqi however wrongly narrates in his "**Timat al-Sawan al-Hikmat**" that Ibn al-Haytham stealthily left Cairo at the dead night and lived in Syria. This narration contradicts the established fact that he lived in Cairo till his death. The story of the flight of Ibn al-Haytham from Cairo for fear of execution by al-Hakim is the fabrication of the historians. Had he known of his murder, he would have fled from Aswan and never came to Cairo. He however spent the last 19 years of his life in scientific pursuits and experimental research under the shadow of the domes and arches of al-Azhar university, and composed almost 209 books on mathematics, astronomy, physics, philosophy and medicine of which the most celebrated is his "**Kitab al-Manazir**" (treatise on optics), which was translated into Latin by Witelo in 1270 and published by Frederick Risner in 1572 at Basel. This was the first comprehensive treatise on optics in the world and immensely influenced the writings of Witelo, Peckham, Roger Bacon, Leonardo de Vinci and John Kepler. He is the first to have discussed the anatomy of the eye. He also discussed the propagation of light and colours, optic illusions and reflection, with experiments for testing the angles of incidence and reflection. Theorically he had almost discovered magnifying lenses through his experiments, which came into existence in Italy three centuries later. For the first time Ibn al-Haytham offered a correct explanation for the apparent increase in the size of the sun and the moon when near the horizon. His another remarkable achievement is his employment of the camera obscura.

Another notable figure was Ali bin Yunus, the great mathematician and astronomer, who invented pendulum and the sun-dial, for whom al-Hakim had the observatory built on Jabal al-Muqattam.

Hence Dar al-Hikmah became a leading academy of Islamic learning for the intellectualists. Dr. Amir Hasan Siddiqui writes in "**Cultural Centres of Islam**" (Karachi, 1970, p. 62) that, "Al-Hakim was personally interested in astrological calculations; he built on al-Muqattam an

observatory to which he often rode before dawn on his grey ass. An informant of the contemporary historian Ibn Hammad (d. 628/1230) saw the astrolabe-like copper instrument erected by al-Hakim on two towers and measured one of its signs of the Zodiac, which was three spans in length."

It is also learnt that al-Hakim had stroke his interest in collecting the old relics. Zakir Hussain writes in **"Tarikh-i Salatin Fatimiyya"** (Jabalpur, 1938, p. 87) that, "In 400/1010, al-Hakim sent Hamiduddin Kirmani to Medina with instructions that he should there find a house, which had belonged to his ancestor, Jafar Sadik, and to dig up in it some arms and books dealing with Shiite doctrines, and to bring them to him. This he did, and found a Holy Koran, a bed and some household goods."

According to **"Encyclopaedia of World Art"** (Rome, 1958, 5th vol., p. 367) that, "Rice correctly read the Arabic text carved on it, which does not simply banal good wishes to the owner of the ewer as was previously thought, but says that the ewer was made for the personal use of al-Hakim's commander."

It will be further interesting to note that Abul Kassim Ammar bin Ali al-Mausili was the most important eye-surgeon in Cairo, and acquired great prestige under the patronage of al-Hakim. He compiled **"al-Muntakhab fi ilm al-Ayn wa Mudawatiha bi'l Adwiya wal Hadid"** in 400/1010. It deals the anatomy and physiology of the eye, its diseases and treatment by drugs and surgery. To avoid the dangers of using a breakable glass tube referred to in Greek writings, Ammar invented a hollowed metallic needle used successfully in cataract operations.

The origin of the Druzes

In 407/1016, an Iranian **dai**, named Muhammad bin Ismail Nashtakin ad-Darazi came in Egypt, who professed the transmigration of souls. He also preached the divinity of al-Hakim. He came from Bukhara to Cairo in 408/1017. Finding no response he moved to Wadi al-Taymun, at the foot of Mount Hermon in Lebanon and Jabal as-Sunmaq in Syria. He was first in the public eyes being the founder of the Druze sect. In 410/1019, the Turks soldiers of the Fatimids gathered and moved towards the houses of ad-Darazi and his followers and surrounded them. Ad-Darazi

and those with him, fortified themselves in a house, fighting the besiegers from the roof and the wall. The besiegers ravaged the house and killed about forty people with az-Darazi.

About the same time, another Iranian from Farghana, named Hasan al-Akhrām also appeared as using his influence to propagate the deity of al-Hakim, and found a Druze sect about in 409/1018. He was also killed in his house just eight days following his declaration.

The most famous however among them was Hamza bin Ali bin Ahmad, born in 375/985 in Zawzan in Iran, whom the Druzes regard as their real founder. He made public declaration of his doctrines in 408/1017, which is also considered the **Era of Hamza**. He established himself in a mosque outside the Nasr Gate of Cairo, inviting the people to confess his teachings and sent out his missionaries to various parts of Egypt and Syria. The extreme to which the followers of Hamza were prepared to go also increased.

Ibn Zafir (d. 613/1216) writes in "**al-Duwal al-Munqati'a**" (Cairo, 1972, pp. 52-3) that on 12th Safar, 410/June 19, 1019, a group of Hamza's followers entered the congregational mosque of Amr in Fustat on horseback and approached the Qadi Ibn Abi al-Awwam, who belonged to Hanbali school of law. They handed him a letter from Hamza which began with these formula:- "In the name of al-Hakim, Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate." The provocation at the most important religious centre of Fustat cost Hamza's followers their lives; they were killed by the people at the mosque.

In sum, both Hamza and ad-Darazi preached the divinity of al-Hakim according to their own interpretations, but Hamza seems to have cautious, intending to build a disciplined organisation. But, ad-Darazi created such a stir that his name was affixed to the movement at large. He has been given a title of "guide of the faithful" (**hadi al-mustafibin**) in the Druze epistles.

The Druze historical accounts were written primarily to explain theological and religious issues rather than to record history. The Druze accounts were however written at a much later date, i.e., in the 16th and 17th centuries, such as "**Majra az-Zaman**" by Taqi ad-Din Zayn al-Abidin Abdu'l Gaffar in 16th century, and "**Umdat al-Arifin**" by Abdul Malik al-Ashrafani in 17th century.

Following Hamza in rank and authority was Ismail bin Muhammad al-Tamimi, the successor of Hamza. Then followed Muhammad bin Wahab al-Qoraishi, Salma bin Abdul Wahab al-Samuri and finally came Ali bin Ahmad al-Sammuqi. The five leaders embodied the five cosmic principles, and their teachings were considered irrevocable and final. According to Philip K. Hitti, the Druzes were a mixture of Iranians, Iraqi's and Persianised Arabs, vide **"The Origin of the Druze People and Religion"** (New York, 1928, p. 23). Martin Sprengling, after analyzing each argument of this theory, criticised Hitti's speculative assumption, and concludes that the Druzes were mixture of stocks in which the Arabs component largely predominated, onto which was grafted an original mountain population of Aramaic blood, vide **"The Berlin Druze Lexicon"** (*American Journal of Semitic Language*, 56, 1939, pp. 391-8).

The Druze movement became a main tool of the aggressive historians to discredit al-Hakim and contrived baseless stories around it. He had however tried to control the Druzes in Egypt and Syria with drastic measures, but most of them had migrated in the mountains of Lebanon.

Ibn al-Qalanisi (d. 555/1160), who usually follows the reports of Ibn al-Sabi (d. 448/1056), does not mention any relation between al-Hakim and the Druze leaders, nor al-Hakim's so called desire for divinity. Makrizi also does not suggest that the Druze leaders were at any time emboldened by al-Hakim. Makrizi however condemns Ibn Abi Tayy (d. 630/1232), who seems to have been influenced by the account of Ibn al-Sabi by saying, "This is extreme hostility which not one of the Egyptian historians has mentioned." (*"Itti'az"*, p. 411) Ibn Khaldun writes in his **"Tarikh"** (4th vol, p. 60) that, "These are allegations which no man of intellect would contemplate." From Ibn al-Sabi comes the statement that al-Hakim desired to claim divinity and employed a man, named al-Akhrum to declare it. A contradiction of this sharply appears in his own work when he says that al-Hakim prohibited his subjects from prostrating before him or from kissing the ground or his hand when they saw him. Kais M. Firro writes in **"History of the Druzes"** (London, 1992, p. 15) that, "In fact, however, neither the historical personalities of Hakim and the unitarian *dais* nor the history of the Fatimid Caliphate as such have any importance for the Druzes." Kais Firro further writes, "Others, comparing the

several versions given in the different chronicles, conclude that Hakim had no wish to be considered divine and did not support or encourage the unitarian *dais*." (Ibid)

Al-Hakim was anxious to promulgate Ismailism throughout the Muslim world and to convince the Muslims that he was the rightful Imam-Caliph. If this was a difficult, it would be even more so to convince them that he was an incarnation of the Divinity to boost his alleged claim. Al-Hakim's belief is seen in a personal letter which he wrote to one of his officials: "I fear no one; beg from no one except my God to whom I submit and from whom I receive all bounties. My Prophet is my grandfather; my Imam is my father and my religion is sincerity and justice." ("Itti'az", p. 403) Makrizi writes in his "*Khitat*," p. 286) that in 403/1012, al-Hakim had engraved on his seal these words: "By the help of God, the Almighty and Protector, the Imam Abu Ali is the victorious."

Besides the preceding, if al-Hakim had supported the Druze movement, he must have chosen one or both of the Druze leaders as official members of the Ismaili *dawa* to emphasize their authority. The Druze teaches that al-Hakim had no father or son. Contrary to it, al-Hakim claimed publicly that his father was al-Aziz and himself a direct descent from Prophet Muhammad, vide "*Itti'az*" (p. 386) by Makrizi. There is no evidence that al-Hakim had forced the Muslims to pay *jaziya* being levied upon the non-Muslims. But according to Druze teachings as mentioned in "*Bud al-Tawhid*" (pp. 41-42) that all the Muslims would have to pay *jaziya* if they refused to pay their creeds. The Druzes claimed that al-Hakim had written many *sijils* (treatises), but it has been to us a source of surprise that each *sijil* begins with the phrase: "*From the slave of God*" and ends with "*By the assistance of God.*"

The Druze literatures however affirm that Hamza was supported by al-Hakim and approved his teachings. But as A. Najjar in "*Mazhab al-Druze wa al-Tawhid*" (Cairo, 1965, p. 103) pointed out, "there is no substantial evidence to support such claims." According to Antaki (d. 458/1065), "When al-Hakim was informed about Druze's preaching, he was very much angry." (vide "*Tarikh-i Antaki*," p. 222) In Hamza's own writings there is a passage in which he states that some of the people refused to accept his teaching

unless Al-Hakim's own signed mandate commanded them to do so." (vide "*al-Rida wa al-Taslim*", p. 20)

The impartial readers should judge conclusively how it is possible that a pious Imam-Caliph al-Hakim had made a claim for divinity after reading the following descriptions of the Sunni historian Makrizi who writes in his "*Khitat*" (pp. 286-7) that, "He gave orders that no one was to kiss the ground in front of him, nor kiss his stirrup nor his hand when greeting him in public processions, because bowing to the ground before a mortal was an invention of the Greeks; that they should say no more than "Greeting to the Commander of the Faithful, and the mercy and blessings of God be upon him;" that in addressing him, whether in writing or in speech, they should not use the formula "May God pray for him," but that in writing to him they confine themselves to these words, "The peace of God, His favour and the abundance of His blessings upon the Commander of the Faithful;" that only the customary invocation should be used for him, and no more; that the preachers at the time of the Friday prayer should say no more than "O God, bless Muhammad Your Chosen One, give peace to the Commander of the Faithful Ali Your Well-beloved. O God, give peace to the Commanders of the Faithful the forebear of the Commanders of the Faithful. O God, give Your most precious peace to Your servant and deputy (*khalifa*)."
He forbade them to beat drums or to sound trumpets around the palace, so that they marched around without drums and trumpets. On the Id al-Fitr, al-Hakim rode on horseback to the place of prayer without adornment, sumpter animals, or any pomp, save only ten led horses with saddles and bridles adorned with light white silver, with plain flags and with a white parasol without any golden adornment. He was dressed in white without embroidery or gold braid; there were no jewels on his turban and no carpets on his pulpit. He forbade people to curse the first Muslims and had those who disobeyed flogged and publicly reviled. He prayed on the Feast of Sacrifice, as he prayed on the Id al-Fitr, without any pomp. Abd al-Rahim bin Ilyas bin Ahmad bin al-Mahdi performed the sacrifice for him. Al-Hakim often rode to the desert outside the city. He wore plain sandals on his feet and a cloth on his head." Thus, if al-Hakim had supported Hamza or ad-Darazi, not doubt, it must have been sounded in his personal life and in his activities as a ruler.

In the interim, al-Hakim wrote an urgent letter in 400/1009 to Hamiduddin Kirmani in Iraq with necessary instructions, so as to suppress the Druze propaganda. His letter is cited in "**Damigh al-Batil**" by Ali Muhammad bin al-Walid (d. 612/1215), whose few lines read:- "Keep up all my prescriptions to you concerning the service of God. Keep alive the tradition of our ancestor the Messenger of God, through the **dawat** to true **tawhid**. Urge the believers to remain attached to all the obligations of religious practices, to all the other obligations of their allegiance, and to the loyalty which is incumbent upon them and which is written in the book of their deeds. And know that our protection extends only to those who put into practice the Book of God and the Tradition of the Messenger of God, and who serve God through their devotion to us. Teach this to all of our friends (**awliya**) as our word."

Thus, in refuting the Druze propaganda, Hamiduddin Kirmani wrote several tracts. Addressing the Druze leader, Hasan al-Akhram al-Farghani, he said, "**Amir al-mominin al-Hakim bi-Amrillah is no more than a servant of God, obedient and subservient to Him. God has preferred him over the rest of His creatures. And how can he be worshipped while he is of body and a spirit endowed with necessary powers of eating and walking. He denies what you and your followers ascribe to him. Nay, only God is worshipped to whom Amir al-mominin bows in prayer.**" (vide "**al-Risala al-Waiza**", Cairo, 1951, pp. 21-28). Kirmani also quoted the Koranic verses (41:33, 37 and 3: 178-9) in support of his arguments.

It is also necessary to mention that the official **dais** of the Ismaili mission in Egypt declared that al-Hakim never supported or authorized Hamza or any other extremist to preach such teaching. Special literature and even official decrees (**manshur**) were circulated throughout the state to emphasize this. For instance, "**al-Risala al-Waiza**", "**al-Mabasim wa al-Bisharat**" and "**al-Risala al-Duriya**" etc. were written and circulated to condemn the Druze propaganda. Al-Musabbihi and Antaki says that immediately after the death of al-Hakim, his son az-Zahir issued a decree (**manshur**) denouncing the claims of the extremists.

Hamidu'ddin Kirmani

Ahmad bin Abdullah al-Kirmani, or Hamiduddin Kirmani was the *huffat al-Iraqin* (*huffat* of Iraq and western Iran) during this period. His family hailed from Kirman as his name indicates, but it is not known where he was born. Through out the period of his mission activities, he kept in close touch with Kirman as is shown in two of his letters dated 399/1008. In his work, "*Kitab al-Kafiyah*" he also refers to Kirman and its vicinity.

He exercised some important mission works in Baghdad and Basra. In 380/990, his mission was able to gain support of the Uqayti princes of Mosul, known as al-Musayyib. He passed most part of his life as a *dai* in Iraq and was expressly summoned in Cairo on 400/1009 for the purpose of refuting the Druzes who propagated the divinity of al-Hakim. His fame does not stem only from being a pioneer *dai*, but also from being one of the most distinguished philosophers and writers of the Ismaili mission. He returned back to Iraq, where he completed his principal work, "*Rahat al-Aqal*" in 411/1020, where he died. The exact date of his death is unknown; but it appears that he was still living in 412/1021 and died soon. He also compiled some 39 important books on different subjects. In his "*Al-Aqwal al-Dhahabiyah*" (ed. Salah al-Sawy, Tehran, 1977, p. 1), Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes in its introduction that, "Hamid al-Din was a very prolific writer who must be considered as one of the most outstanding philosophers not only of Ismailism but also of Islam in general, a figure whose works have been singularly neglected until now by the world of scholarship in general and even by specialists of Islamic philosophy and theology." In sum, Kirmani has been called "*the Shaikh of Ismaili philosophers*", vide the introduction of Kamil Hussain and Mustapha Hilmi to "*Rahat al-Aqal*" (Cairo, 1952, p. 17).

Death of al-Hakim

Al-Hakim had installed an astronomical observatory on Jabal al-Muqattam, near Cairo for Ibn Yunus. According to Ibn Khallikan, al-Hakim went out late in the night of 27th Shawal, 411/February 13, 1021 to Jabal al-Muqattam and did not return to the palace. A tracking party was

sent out, who found an ass on the top of the hill with its forelegs hacked off. Blood marks on the ground led to a spot, where they found al-Hakim's clothes pierced by daggers and buttoned up, and as such his death was officially declared on 10th Zilhaja, 411/April 4, 1021. The Druzes however believed that al-Hakim did not die but disappeared, anticipating his return on dooms-day.

He died at the age of 36 years and 7 months after the Imamate and Caliphate of 25 years and 1 month. Makrizi (2nd vol., p. 290) quotes one other tradition about al-Hakim's death on the authority of Abul Mahsin that in 415/1025, a man from Imam Hussain's family had been arrested after raising up rebellion in the southern part of upper Egypt. He confessed that it was he who had killed al-Hakim. He said that there were four accomplices of the crime, and that they afterwards fled to different parts. He also showed a piece of cotton with which he had been clothed.

Imam al-Hakim had two sons, al-Harith (395-400/1004-1009) and Ali Abul Hasan, surnamed az-Zahir. He had also a daughter, Sit al-Misr (d. 455/1063).

Muhammad bin Ali as-Suri (d. 488/1095) praises al-Hakim in his poem (vide "*al-Qasida as-Suriyya*," ed. Arif Tamir, Damascus, 1955, p. 68) in the following words:-

The perfect resides wholly in the ninth (Imam). In him the parturition is accomplished, the coming to light is done.

And the conceal and hidden appear.

In al-Hakim God established His Will in the world, and the wisdom of the Just was realized.

AZ-ZAHIR (411-427/1021-1036)

He was born on 20th Ramdan, 395/June 4, 1005. His name was Ali Abul Hasan, or Abu Ma'd, surnamed az-Zahir la-azaz dinallah (Assister in exalting the religion of God). His mother Amina was the daughter of Abdullah, the son of Imam al-Muizz. He acceded on the throne of Fatimid Caliphate and Imamate on 411/1021 at the age of 16 years. On the

occasion of his coronation, a special payment in excess (*fadl*) of 20 *dinars* was granted to each soldier.

A black eunuch Midad began his career in the service of Sit al-Mulk, the aunt of az-Zahir. She employed him as a teacher of az-Zahir. On Friday, the 18th Safar, 415/May 1, 1024, az-Zahir invested Midad the honorific title and named him Abul Fawaris. Later on, Midad was assigned the administration of the affairs of the soldiers according to a long edict read publicly in the palace.

Sit al-Mulk

Az-Zahir began his career under the tutelage of his aunt, Sit al-Mulk (the lady of the state), also known as Sif al-Nasr, who was born in 359/980. During the first four years of az-Zahir's rule, the whole power was in the hands of his aunt. The personnel of Sit al-Mulk in the administration included both men and women. Abul Abbas Ahmad bin a-Maghribi, for example, served as her agent, who was a man of laudable character and had already served the mother of Sit al-Mulk in the same capacity. She also employed a slave girl of her mother, named Takarrub, was her confidante. She also served as her informant and handled the petitions submitted to her.

It is said that at the beginning of her regency, she managed to summon Abdul Rahman bin Ilyas bin Ahmad, the great-grandson of Imam al-Mahdi and the cousin of Imam al-Hakim, who had hatched rebellion against the Fatimids at Damascus, and is reported to have made his contact with the Jarrahids of Palestine to help him in his action. Sit al-Mulk made vizir Khatir al-Mulk, Ammar bin Muhammad write a letter to Abdul Rahman. He had been arrested in Cairo and imprisoned for some four years, then fell ill and died just three days before Sit al-Mulk herself died in 416/1026.

Thus, she is reported to have wielded great influence over the masses and directly participated in the state affairs, and remained quite influential until her death in 416/1026. Ibn Khallikan (8th vol., p. 130) writes that, "She showed exceptional ability, especially in legal matters, and made herself loved by the people."

During these four years, the chief ministers changed in quick succession and thus the administration could not acquire stability. After the death of Sit al-Mulk, the principle power passed into the hands of a trio from among the court nobles, who paid daily visit to the Imam for getting decision on all important matters.

Fatimid decree against the Druzes

It appears from several Druze writings that Hamza and his followers had contacted the chiefs of the Fatimid army and the tribal chiefs, asking them to depose az-Zahir and declare Hamza as the successor of al-Hakim, vide **"Risalat al-Arab"** (p. 561) and **"Taqlid Bani al-Jarrah"** (p. 484). Another Druze work, **"al-Ghaya wa al-Nasiha"** (pp. 71-2) in this context makes az-Zahir as an imposter who usurped the rights of Hamza. On the other hand, Makrizi speaks of a Katami named, Ahmad bin Tatawa who arrived in Egypt in 415/1024 and claimed to have come from Kufa where he had been in the company of al-Hakim (vide **"Itti'az"**, p. 415). He also claimed that al-Hakim had sent him as a messenger to warn the people of their evils. Makrizi also mentions that a black servant named Anbar, who worked as a porter in al-Hakim's court, met az-Zahir and tried to convince him that his father was still alive and would return very soon. It is also known that a certain person, called Suleman whose resemblance to al-Hakim encouraged him to make an attempt to take power from az-Zahir. He entered the royal palace with his men, declaring himself as the returning Imam. His attempt was however foiled and was executed. In sum, the Druze propaganda of al-Hakim's divinity appears to be merely a mean leading to the abolition of the hereditary tradition of the Imamate, and open the door for non-Fatimids to become Imams. It also led the other individuals to mint groundless tales for al-Hakim. Before the time, the propaganda became congenial for the growth of the ambitions of the extremists, az-Zahir immediately issued an official decree (**manshur**), calling for the extermination of the extremism with iron hands from Anioch to Alexandria and Egypt. Yaacov Lev writes in **"State and Society in Fatimid Egypt"** (London, 1991, p. 36) that, "He (az-Zahir) condemned (in the official decree) those who adopted extreme views regarding the position of the Imam, and those who went beyond the pale of Islam were cursed. The regime took action against

those who adhered to the view of God being incarnated in al-Hakim; they were imprisoned and put to death."

Accordingly, the *amir* of Antioch, aided by the *amir* of Aleppo, suppressed the group of the Druzes in the Jabal as-Summaq in 423/1032, which mostly included the peasants. In Alexandria, al-Mukana tried to maintain Hamza's authority and encouraged the extremists in the Jabal as-Summaq after their defeat. At length, al-Mukana himself also withdrew in 425/1034.

Reopening of *Majalis al-Hikmah*

It has been hitherto discussed the closure of the *majalis al-hikmah* during the period of Imam al-Hakim. But it was evidently reopened by his successor, az-Zahir. He conferred the office of the *qadi* and the mission in the royal palace (*bab al-khalifa*) to Qadi Kassim bin Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad bin an-Noman in 418/1027, ordering to take charge of the mission and the proper guidance of the readings of the *majalis al-hikmah* and the spread of the science of *tawil* among the followers. He also sent an edict in this context to all his followers and also ordered the *dais* to read it out explicitly to the faithful in their respective regions. According to "Uyun'1-Akhbar" (6th vol., p. 315), the edict of az-Zahir of 5th Shaban, 417/September 21, 1026 reads:- "The gate of wisdom was open until our Lord al-Hakim bi-Amrillah thought it right to close it because of the prevailing circumstances and on political grounds (*bi-siyasti'l jumbur*). But now, continues the edict, the conditions that Commander of the Faithful has ordered the chief *dai*, Kassim bin Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad bin an-Noman to open the gate of wisdom to those who long for it, and to read the *majalis* again in the palace of the Caliphs as has been customary there before."

S.M. Stern has published a letter found in the Geniza of the synagogue in Fustat, in which a certain *dai* addresses congratulation to Kassim bin Abdul Aziz.

Hasanak and the Fatimid *khilat*

Abu Ali Hasan bin Muhammad bin Abbas (d. 423/1032), known as Hasanak had been in service of Mehmud of Ghazna since his childhood. He had gradually risen to the position of a *ra'is* in Nishapur. In 414/1023, Hasanak went on pilgrimage and allowed himself to be persuaded to return via Cairo and there to accept a robe of honour (*khil'a*) from the Fatimid Imam az-Zahir. This so offended the Abbasid caliph Kadir that he denounced him as an Ismaili and demanded his execution. After his return to Ghazna, the Abbasid caliph insisted Mehmud that he should have been executed. Mehmud clearly regarded the accusation as unfounded, and went so far as to appoint Hasanak as his vizir in 416/1025 and appeased the Abbasid caliph by sending the robe of honour, and presents received by Hasanak from the Fatimids, which had been burnt in Baghdad. During the last six years of Mehmud's reign, Hasanak exerted a remarkable influence over him, but seems to have opposed his son Masud and supported the descendants of Masud's brother, called Muhammad. This brought about his downfall after Mehmud's death in 421/1030. Hasanak was thus immediately banished to Herat, accused of offending against Masud, and mainly as a result of efforts by the finance minister, Abu Sahl Sawsani, tried on the old charge of being an Ismaili. The Abbasid caliph Kadir also, evidently offended that his wishes in 415/1024 had not been complied with, again interfered. After a long trial, Hasanak was strangled in 423/1032 and his head given in derision to his chief opponent Sawsani; his corpse remained tied to a pillory for seven years.

Meanwhile, a terrible famine broke out in Egypt as a result of a series of bad Niles, and the resultant distress lasted all through 416/1026 and 417/1027. In many cases the starving villages took to brigandage. Even the pilgrims on their way through Egypt were attacked. Regulations were passed to prevent the slaughter of cattle. The camels were scarce as many were killed because it was impossible to provide them with food, and poultry could hardly be procured. The royal treasury was practically depleted, for it was impossible to collect taxes.

Imam az-Zahir once on that perilous time was passing through Fustat when going to one of his palaces. Everywhere he encountered starving, shouting people who

cried out: "Hunger, - O' *Amir al-mu'minin!* hunger. Neither your father nor your grandfather did such things to us. In the name of God, to God we entrust our affair." These cries reflected the feeling that the regime had mishandled the situation. The Imam took its serious notice on the spot, and arranged to distribute food for them, and assured the people to take actions. On the same day, Ibn Dawwas, the market inspector was summoned to the palace; he was accused of causing the famine and blamed for bringing the town to the verge of violent outburst. The people rebuked him and said: "A document in your handwriting is evidence on your part, which serves against you that you undertook upon yourself to provide the town with bread and wheat until the time of the new harvest." Following this conversation, the millers were permitted to buy wheat from granaries (*makazin*) at a fixed price of one *tillis* (one *tillis* was equivalent to 67.5 kg.) for 2.5 *dinars*, and the price of a load of flour was determined at 4 *dinars*. The price of bread was fixed at two and half *ratls* for *dhiram*. The prices established by the market inspector were considerably lower than those of the free market. The same was applied to bread, following the sealing of the granaries, two *ratls* of black bread were sold for 1.5 *dhiram*. These swift measures brought great deal of relief. Further punitive actions were taken by the market inspectors against several flour merchants (*qannahun*), including a prominent member of the trade.

Later in a year, however, there was a good inundation, called *ziyadat al-nil* (the plentiude of the Nile) and this restored plenty, so that the country was once more under normal conditions and order was restored.

Fatimid decrees

During the period of az-Zahir, the Fatimid chancery (*diwan al-insha*) issued two decrees (*manshur*) dated 415/1024 to the monks and the Karaite Jewish community, in Cairo, reflecting the Fatimid diplomatic and chancery practice. In the first decree, az-Zahir granted privileges to the fresh petition (*ruqa*) of the monks, confirming the former decrees of Imam al-Muizz, Imam al-Aziz and Imam al-Hakim, dated Muharram, 415/March-April, 1024. This decree was published by Richard J.H. Gottheil in the *Festschrift* for A. Harkavy in 1908., whose Arabic text and translation is

published by S.M. Stern in "Fatimid Decrees" (London, 1964, pp. 15-20), and it runs as under:-

"You, the Copt monks, have submitted to the Commander of the Faithful a petition in which you enumerated the privileges granted to you in the past, namely that your cultivation, and there should be exacted from you no...assistance in war, or going out...; that those of your monks, who go out to your estates in order to obtain there their livelihood and transact the business of those of you whom they have left behind, be dealt with honourably; that you should not be obliged to pay, in respect of supplies carried by Christians and other similar things, customs and fines, little or much; that you safely enjoy your fields, crops and working-beasts; that if a monk of yours dies outside your monasteries while he is travelling in the Rif or elsewhere on your business, all his property which he leaves be not interfered with but revert to his brethren in monachal life with the exclusion of relatives and blood-relations other than they; and that the Imam al-Muizz li-Din Allah and the Imam al-Aziz billah and the Imam al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah had ordered the writing of decrees confirming all this to you. You then asked for the writing of a decree to renew all that the Imams had granted to you, to confirm the protection which they had extended to all of you and to observe these bonds and engagements due to you. The Commander of the Faithful has therefore ordered that this open decree, to deal with you according to that text and in conformity with the explanation which you have penned, be written and that it remain in your hands as a proof thereof, lasting through the passing of days and periods, so that no one dare interfere with you by way of measures imparting the efficacy of this bounty or invent an interpretation for it to turn it away from its intention; and that there be kept away from you.

Let all-our friends, governors, financial and taxation officials and all the other servants and employees of the empire according to their different states and several ranks who read this, or to whom this is read, take cognizance of this order and command of the Commander of

the Faithful and act accordingly and in conformity with it, if God wills. Written in Muharram, the year Four hundred and Fifteen.

May God bless our ancestor Muhammad, the seal of the prophets and lord of the messengers, and his pure family, the right-guided Imams, and give them peace. God is sufficient for us; how excellent a Keeper is He."

Another like decree of az-Zahir concerning the Karaite and Rabbanite Jews, dated 415/1024 is also published by S.M. Stern, vide pp. 24-28.

In 418-9/1028-9, az-Zahir was able to make a treaty with the Greek emperor, Costantine III. It was agreed that the Fatimid Caliph should be prayed for in the *khutba* in every mosque in the Byzantine dominions, and permission was granted for the restoration of the mosque at Constantinople, which had been ruined in retaliation for the destruction of the church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. Az-Zahir on his part agreed to permit the rebuilding of the church at Jerusalem.

In the meantime, the attacks which the Sicilian launched on the Byzantine coasts were reinforced by the Fatimids. The Byzantine force commanded by the general George Maniaces was badly defeated. In his negotiations with the Fatimid Imam az-Zahir in 423/1032, the emperor Romanus III Argyrus (968-1034) however expressly demanded that the Fatimids should not aid the *Sahib Sikilliyya* in the campaign against Byzantine.

Sicily became virtually independent of the Fatimids. The Kalbid governors' confined themselves to accepting retrospective investiture from Cairo. They have cemented their close ties with the Zirids, whose suzerainty the Sicilian recognized in 427/1036. Until the time of az-Zahir and even under his successor, the Sicilian coins however bore the name of the Fatimid Caliph.

The Fatimid power in Syria was seriously impugned at the time of az-Zahir's accession, but it was soon altered by the ability and enterprise of Anushtagin ad-Dizbiri. His first important action was against Saleh bin Mirdas, the

Arab chieftain who had taken Aleppo from Murtada and had now established himself as an independent prince.

In the interim, the Jarrahid Hassan bin Mufraj was once again on revolt in 415/1024 and executed a pact of new alliance with the Kalbid Sinan bin Suleman and the Kilabid Saleh bin Mirdas. According to this pact, Damascus was given to Sinan bin Suleman, Aleppo to Saleh bin Mirdas and Palestine to Hassan bin Mufraj. These allies at first defeated the Fatimid forces at Askalan. After the death of Sinan bin Suleman, the Kalbids rallied to the side of the Fatimids, enabling the Fatimid commander Anushtagin ad-Dizbiri to inflict defeat to the joint forces of Hassan bin Mufraj and Saleh bin Mirdas at Ughuwana in Palestine in 420/1030. Saleh bin Mirdas had been killed in the encounter, and Hassan bin Mufraj took refuge amongst the Greeks. Due to an effectual effort of Anushtagin, the rebels were subdued and Aleppo had been captured from the Mirdasids in 429/1038, thus the Fatimid domination was restored in Syria.

Sulayhid dynasty in Yamen

Yamen was the original base of the Fatimid propaganda, where Ibn Hawshab had formed an Ismaili state in 268/882. Long after his death, the political power slipped away from the hands of the Ismailis, but their mission continued actively. During the period of az-Zahir, the headship of the Yamenite mission had come to be vested in a certain dai Suleman bin Abdullah al-Zawahi, a learned and influential person residing in the mountainous region of Haraz. He made a large conversion and wished to re-establish the political power of the Ismailis in Yamen. It is said that a certain Hamdani chieftain, named Ali bin Muhammad al-Sulayhi, the son of the *qadi* of Haraz, once came to lead the pilgrim caravans to Mecca, and had learnt much about Ismaili doctrines from Suleman and espoused Ismailism. Ali took a leading part in the mission works in Yamen and became the assistant of Suleman, who chose him as his successor. Ali bin Muhammad al-Sulayhi generated his close contact with az-Zahir and the mission headquarters in Cairo.

In 429/1038, during the period of Imam al-Mustansir billah, Ali bin Muhammad captured Mount Masar in Haraz to the north of Yamen, and fortified it, whom he made his

centre. This marked the foundation of the Sulayhid dynasty, which ruled over Yamen as a vassal of the Fatimids for almost a century until 532/1138. He obtained support from the Hamdani, Humayri and other petty tribes of Yamen and instituted the Fatimid *khutba* everywhere. His further detail will run hereinafter.

We have discussed previously that Fatik, the governor of Aleppo had declared himself as an independent ruler on the eve of the death of Imam al-Hakim. Later on, Fatik admitted his mistakes and apologized from az-Zahir and Sit al-Mulk. In 413/1022, Badr, the commander of the stronghold of Aleppo had killed Fatik. In the following year, az-Zahir expelled Badr from Aleppo and appointed Abdullah bin Ali bin Jafar al-Katami as the governor of Aleppo and Safi ad-Dawla to administer the command of the stronghold.

During the later part of az-Zahir's rule, the Fatimid influence had become supreme in Palestine and Syria, save only in the few northern districts which remained subject to the Greek empire. It seemed indeed to be the triumph of the Fatimids.

Ali bin Suleman was a pioneer physician, philosopher, mathematician and an astronomer, who died during the early part of the Imamate of az-Zahir. Unfortunately, his works are lost; these included two important compendiums mentioned by their titles in the literature: a synopsis of "*Kitab al-Hawi fi'l Tibb*" by Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Zakaria ar-Razi (d. 313/925) of Iran, and a book on professional aphorism, ethics, experiences, anecdotes and properties of natural products compiled from the writing of the ancient sages. Ibn Abi Usaibia (d. 668/1270) explains in "*Uyun al-Anba fi tabakat al-Attiba*" (2nd vol., pp. 89-90) that he had seen a copy of this latter work in four volumes, wherein the author mentioned that he started this compilation at Cairo in 391/1000.

In Cairo, Abu Sa'ad Ibrahim (d. 440/1048) was a famous Jewish dealer in very rare and precious things and made long journey to acquire them. Imam az-Zahir used to be a frequent customer of Abu Sa'ad, from whom he bought antiques for his personal collections.

It should be remembered that the Fatimids made great contribution in the rock-crystal works in various forms,

mostly developed during the time of Imam az-Zahir, such as ewers, bottles, cups, saucers, boxes, chessmen and flasks of different shapes. One of these interesting piece is preserved in crescent shape work in the Germanisches National Museum in Nurnberg. It was originally used as an ornament for one of the horses of az-Zahir, whose name is inscribed on it. There are also another rock-crystal mugs in the collections of Lourvre, Venice, Vienna and Prague; belonging to the period of Imam az-Zahir.

The period under review is also noted for an Ismaili scientist, Abu Ali Ibn Sina, whose biography has been given in **Appendix II**.

It must be remembered on that juncture that it was az-Zahir who, in 421/1030 and again in 424/1033 rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem which had collapsed following an earthquake. He was also responsible for rebuilding the Aqsa Mosque and the repair of its mosaics.

In 427/1036, az-Zahir was detained some time by sickness. He was taken to Maks, then the port of Cairo, where he died on the 15th of Shaban, 427/June 13, 1036, leaving the Caliphate and Imamate to his son, al-Mustansir, then a child of seven years of age.

AL-MUSTANSIR (427-487/1036-1095)

He was born in Cairo on 16th Jamada II, 420/July 2, 1029, who eight months afterwards was declared to succeed his father. His name was Ma'd Abu Tamim, surnamed al-Mustansir billah (Imploring the help of God). He ascended on 15th Shaban, 427/June 13, 1036 at the age of 7 years. During the early years, the state affairs were administered by his mother. His period of Caliphate lasted for 60 years, the longest of all the caliphs, either in Egypt or elsewhere in Islamic states.

Ali bin Ahmad Jarjarai, an able vizir, whose period was one of the prosperity in Egypt, died in 436/1044. He was followed by Ibn al-Anbari and Abu Mansur Sadaqa, but none of them were competent. In 442/1050, there came forward a capable vizir Abu Muhammad Hasan bin Abdur Rehman Yazuri, who held the office for 8 years, and was an earnest reformer. He was followed by about 40 vizirs one after

another during 15 years (450-466/1058-1073), but none equated him, because they squandered the royal treasury.

Between 457/1065 and 464/1072, the famine made the condition of Egypt from bad to worse. Meanwhile, in 454/1062 and again in 459/1067, the struggle between the Turkish and Sudanese soldiery deteriorated into open warfare, ending in a victory for the Turks and their Berber allies. The Berbers in lower Egypt deliberately aggravated the distress by ravaging the country, destroying the embankments and canals, and seeking every way to reduce the capital and the neighbouring districts by sheer starvation. Makrizi sees in this incident the beginning of the crisis in Egypt, which he refers by the appellations, disorder (*fitna*), civil war (*al-shidda al-mashhura*), corruption of state (*fasad ad-dawla*) and days of calamity and dearth (*ayyam al-shidda wal ghala*).

In al-Mustansir's stable where there had been ten thousand animals there were now only three thin horses, and his escort once fainted from hunger as it accompanied him through the streets. As long as the calamity lasted, al-Mustansir alone possessed a horse, and, when he rode out, the courtiers followed on foot, having no beast to carry them. The condition of the country deteriorated with the protracted famine that followed by plague, and the whole districts were absolutely denuded of population and house after house lay empty.

Meanwhile, the Turkish mercenaries had drained the treasury, the works of art and valuables of all sorts in the palace were sold to satisfy their demands; often they themselves were the purchasers at merely nominal prices and sold the articles again at a profit. Emeralds valued at 300,000 *dinars* were bought by one Turkish general for 500 *dinars*, and in one fortnight of the year 460/1068 articles to the value of 30,000,000 *dinars* were sold off to provide pay for the Turks. The precious library which had been rendered available to the public and was one of the objects for which many visited Cairo was scattered, the books were torn up, thrown away, or used to light fires. At length, the Turks began fighting amongst themselves. Nasir ad-Dawla, the Turkish general of the Fatimid army, had attacked the city which was defended by the rival faction of the Turkish guard and, after burning part of Fustat and defeating the defenders, he entered as conqueror. When he reached the palace, he found al-

Mustansir lodged in rooms which had been stripped bare, waited on by only three slaves, and subsisting on two loaves which were sent him daily by the daughters of Ibn Babshand, the grammarian. The victorious Turks dominated Cairo, held the successive vizirs in subjection, treated al-Mustansir with contempt, and used their power to deplete the treasury by enhancing their pay to nearly twenty times its former figure. After this victory over the unhappy city, Nasir ad-Dawla became so over-bearing and tyrannical in his conduct that he provoked even his own followers, and so at length he was assassinated in 466/1074. But this only left the city in a worse condition than ever, for it was now at the mercy of the various Turkish factions which behaved no better than troops of brigands. In sum, the condition of Egypt continued to rage with unabated violence.

Mention should be made on this juncture of the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX Monomachus (1042-1055), who had maintained a friendly relation with al-Mustansir and had provided Egypt with wheat after the above mentioned famine.

Arrival of Badr al-Jamali

At this desperate juncture when these troubles were brewing, al-Mustansir was roused to action and sent a message to Badr al-Jamali, the then governor of Acre, inviting him to come to Egypt and take control. Badr al-Jamali responded swiftly. Originally an Armenian slave of the Syrian *amir*, Jamaluddin bin Ammar, he had a successful career as soldier and governor in Syria. His Armenian soldiers were loyal and reliable and he insisted on taking them with him to Egypt. Sailing from Acre in the mid-winter, he landed at Damietta and entered Cairo on 28th Jamada I, 466/January 29, 1074. Badr al-Jamali took the charge and dealt the state affairs efficiently. The swift and energetic actions of Badr al-Jamali brought peace and security to Egypt, and even measure of prosperity. The annual revenue was increased from about 2,000,000 to 3,00,000 *dinars*. It is true that his efforts were greatly assisted by the fact that the year 466/1074 saw an exceptionally good Nile, so that prosperity and abundance once more reigned through the land.

The foremost priority being given by al-Mustansir was to rebuild the library devastated by the Turks. De Lacy O'Leary writes in **"A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate"** (London, 1923, p. 207) that, "It is interesting to note that the Khalif set himself to the formation of a new library at Cairo as one of his first tasks; it helps us to realize that the Shiites were then as always the friends of learning."

In sum, Badr al-Jamali was invested the triple title, viz. **Amir al-Juyush** (commander of the army), **Badi al-Dust** (director of the missionaries) and the **Vizir**. It is however by the first of these three titles that he is usually known.

Fatimid khutba in Baghdad

In 447/1055, the Turk, Tughril Beg was recognized in Baghdad as the sultan and lieutenant of the Abbasid caliph. He drove away the Iranian soldiers from Baghdad to Syria. They assembled round Abu Harith al-Basasari, who was propagating the Fatimid mission. Meanwhile, Ebrahim Niyal rebelled in Mosul against Tughril Beg, who himself set out to crush the revolt. The absence of Tughril Beg from Baghdad gave a chance to al-Basasari to advance and capture Baghdad, which he did successfully in 450/1058 and recited the Fatimid **khutba** in the cathedral mosque of Baghdad. He also sent the royal throne, robes, pulpit and the staff to al-Mustansir in Cairo. The expelled Abbasid caliph took refuge with an Arab **amir** for one year.

After subduing the rising of his brother, Tughril Beg turned back to Baghdad with a large army. When he reached near Baghdad, al-Basasari did not come into confrontation, and began to evacuate the city on other side with his close associates. Tughril Beg thus entered the city without any opposition and reinstated the Abbasid caliphate after a year on 6th Zilkad, 451, December 14, 1059. He sent a detachment to pursue al-Basasari, who was slain in the ensuing fighting.

Maghrib was the original abode and the base of the foundation of the Fatimid Caliphate, whose chief in the time of al-Mustansir was al-Muizz bin Badis, the fourth Zirid ruler. He was a Malikite and persecuted the Shiites. It is also related that the relations between him and the

Fatimid vizir were strained, whereupon in 436/1044, al-Muizz bin Badis proclaimed Malikism in Maghrib, and recited the Abbasid *khutba* from 440/1048, resulting the whole Maghrib gone away from the Fatimid occupation in 442/1050.

It is related that al-Muizz bin Badis returned briefly later on in 446/1055 to the allegiance of the Fatimids. In the meantime, the vizir Yazuri had convinced al-Mustansir that he would punish the disloyal al-Muizz bin Badis. Thus, the vizir encouraged a number of bedouin tribes to advance towards Maghrib. The bedouins at the command of Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym, took possession of Barga and proceeded into the territories of the Maghrib. They inflicted defeat to the Zirids in 443/1052 and pillaged the towns and gained rich booty. These bedouins, being reinforced by new arrivals, gradually penetrated Maghrib, whose operation is known as the Hilali Invasion. In 449/1057, al-Muizz bin Badis had to evacuate his capital, Kairwan and sought refuge in Mahdiya, then governed by his son, Tamim bin al-Muizz (454-501/1062-1108). In sum, the Zirids were divided into petty rules in Maghrib. The last Zirid ruler, al-Hasan bin Ali was driven out of Mahdiya in 543/1148 by Roger II, the Sicilian emperor.

It must be known that the Karakhanid dynasty sprang from the ruling house of the Karluk Turks who originally belonged to the steppes of Central Asia, and whose founder was Satuk Bughra Khan. He embraced Islam and assumed the Islamic name Abdul Karim. He reigned from Kashghar and Talas over the western wing of his people. His grandson Hasan Bughra Khan occupied for a while the Samanid capital of Bukhara, which was taken over by Ilig Nasr of Ozkend in 389/999. The Fatimid *dais* had continued their mission in Bukhara, Samarkand and western Farghana. In 436/1045, a bulk of the converted Ismailis, who recognized the Imamate of al-Mustansir, had been killed in the territories of the Karkhanid rule, impelling the *dais* to adopt strict *taqiya*.

In 482/1089, Ahmad Khan bin Khizr (473-482/1081-1089), another Karakhanid ruler of Bukhara, Samarkand and western Farghana, was accused by the Sunni zealot, called Abu Tahir bin Aliyyak, of having embraced Ismailism. He had been deposed and executed due to the hootest opposition of the *ulama*.

Al-Mu'ayyad fid-din ash-Shirazi

Al-Mu'ayyad fid-din Abu Nasr Hibatullah bin Abi Imran Musa bin Daud ash-Shirazi was an outstanding *dai*, orator, prolific writer, poet and politician. He was born in 390/1000 at Shiraz. His father, tracing his link from a Daylami Ismaili family was also a *dai* with some influence in the Buwahid orbits of Pars. In one of poems he narrates in his "*Diwan al-Mu'ayyad*" (poem no. 4) that, "I wish I should get a chance to offer my life as a sacrifice for you, O my Lord. My forefathers and myself have been living in comforts under your patronage and we have never swerved an inch from our devotion to you."

In 429/1037, when al-Mu'ayyad was 39 years old, he received quick promotions in his service as a chief *dai* of Shiraz and then the *hujjat* for the whole Iran. He joined the service of the Buwahid Abu Kalijar al-Marzuban (d. 440/1048) at Shiraz. He soon converted Abu Kalijar and many of his Daylami troops. It resulted in court intrigues and a harsh Sunni reaction against him. The Abbasids also insisted on his exile from Iran. Al-Mu'ayyad was therefore obliged to migrate from Shiraz in 438/1046 and reached Cairo next year. He came into the contact of the chief *dai* al-Kassim bin Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad bin Noman, the great-grandson of Qadi Noman. He had his first audience with al-Mustansir in Cairo a few months later in Shaban, 439/February, 1048. He also procured his close ties with vizir Yazuri, who entrusted him with a section of the Fatimid chancery (*diwan al-insha*) in 440/1048. He gives the following description of his visit to the Imam in "*as-Sirat al-Mu'ayyadiyah*" that, "I was taken near the place wherefrom I saw the bright light of the Prophethood. My eyes were dazzled by the light. I shed tears of joy and felt as if I was looking at the face of the Prophet of God and of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali. I prostrated myself before the one who is the fittest person to bow to. I wanted to say something but I was awe-struck."

Al-Mustansir deputed him in 447/1055 on a mission to the Syrian *amirs*, and notably to Abu Harith al-Basasari with an army of 3000 Arab troops. Al-Mu'ayyad wrote an impassioned *qasida* on the occasion of the Fatimid occupation of Baghdad. He returned to Cairo in 449/1058, shortly before al-Basasari finally captured Baghdad and had the Fatimid *khutba* recited.

Al-Muayyad's status before al-Mustansir was as high as that of Salman al-Fars before the Prophet Muhammad. In one of his poems he says:-

*Iaw kuntu asartu al-nabiyyi Muhammadan
ma kuntu uqassiru an mada Salmanihi
wa la qala anta min ahl-i-baiti mu'linan
qawlan yakshifu an wuduhi bayanihi*

"Had I lived in the days of the Prophet, my position before him would have been, in no way less important than that of Salman. He would have said to me in unequivocal terms, *you are a member of my family*" (Ibid. poem no. 38).

He was elevated as the head of the mission, *Bab al-Abwab* in 450/1058, and later the supervisor of Dar al-Hikmah in 454/1062. He lodged in the chamber of Dar al-Hikmah and directed the affairs of the Fatimid mission, and was in close contact with the *dais* as far as in Yamen and India. The learned divines of his time who had left behind the treasures of their masterly works on Ismailism were his pupils. Even the great genius of the type of Nasir Khusaro and Hasan bin Sabbah were his pupils. Nasir Khusaro speaks of al-Muayyad in the following words:- "O Nasir, God has opened a new world of wisdom for you through the teaching of Khwaja al-Muayyad. When he stood on the pulpit to deliver his sermon to the people, intellect was ashamed of its insignificance. He turned my dark nights into bright days by his illuminating arguments. I picked up a particle from his vast wealth of knowledge and I found the revolving heaven under my feet. He showed me in myself both the worlds visible and invisible. I saw the guardian of paradise who said to me, *Lo, I am the pupil of al-Muayyad.*" (vide "*Diwan*", ed. Nasrullah Taqavi, Tehran, 1928, p. 313)

He also regularly gave lectures at Dar al-Hikmah. The "*Majalis*" of al-Muayyad, comprised of 8 volumes of one hundred lectures, deal with various theological and philosophical questions, reflecting high watermark of the Ismaili thoughts. He died in 470/1078 at Cairo and was interred inside Dar al-Hikmah, where he resided. Al-Mustansir himself led the funeral rites.

Nasir Khusaro

Hamiduddin Abu Muin Nasir bin Khusaro bin Harith al-Qubandiyani was a celebrated poet, philosopher and traveller. He is ranked as the *Real Wisdom* of the East. He was born in 394/1003 and came in Egypt in 439/1047, where he aboded for about three years, until 441/1050, during which time he had his audience with al-Mustansir. He was appointed as the *hujjat* of Khorasan and Badakhshan. It is certainly due to his tireless endeavours that there are millions of Ismailis in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, China, Chitral, Hunza, Gilgit, Pamir, Yarkand etc. He spent the rest of his life in the bleak valley of Yamghan, where he died in 481/1088. In the introductory note of "*Wajh-i Din*" (ed. by Ghulam Reza Aavani, Tehran, 1977, p. 1), Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes, "He is one of the greatest Islamic philosopher and deserves to be studied as a major intellectual figure of Islam in general and of Ismailism in particular."

Besides being a great thinker and erudite writer, Nasir Khusaro was also an eminent traveller. The distance he traversed from Balkh to Egypt, and thence to Mecca and then to Fars via Basra, and ultimately back to Balkh, not counting excursions for visiting shrines and so on, was about 2220 parasangs (each one about 3¼ miles). His journey began in 437/1045, accompanied by his brother Abu Sa'id, an Indian servant and some pack-animals. He travelled first to Merv to tender his resignation from government service, and then proceeded to Nishapur where he visited the shrine of the Sufi poet, Bayazid Bistami. From there he took the overland route via Tabriz to Syria and Palestine. He thereafter visited Mecca, where he made up his mind to visit Egypt. He arrived in Cairo by way of Damascus and Jerusalem in 439/1047. As he entered the city, Nasir Khusaro felt instinctively that "here it is where you should seek for what you need."

His "*Safar-nama*" gives a lively picture of the great splendour of the Fatimid empire in vivid words during the time of al-Mustansir, with its royal palaces, gates, gardens, shops and the normal living of the people, as well as the uncountable wealth of Egypt. Writing on the city of Cairo, Nasir describes: "I estimated that there were no less than twenty thousand shops in Cairo, all of which belong to the sultan (al-Mustansir). Many shops are

rented for as much as ten *dinars* a month, and none for less than two. There is no end of caravanserais, bathhouses and other public buildings - all property of the sultan, for no one owns any property except houses and what he himself builds. I heard that in Cairo and old Cairo there are eight thousand buildings belonging to the sultan that are leased out, with the rent collected monthly. These are leased and rented to people on tenancy-at-will and no sort of coercion is employed." (p. 45) He further describes: "In the midst of the houses in the city are gardens and orchards watered by wells. In the sultan's *harem* are the most beautiful gardens imaginable. Water-wheels have been constructed to irrigate these gardens. There are trees planted and pleasure parks built even on the roofs. At the time I was there, a house on a lot twenty by twelve ells was being rented for fifteen *dinars* a month. The house was four stories tall, three of which were rented out....These houses are so magnificent and fine that you would think they were made of jewels, not of plaster, tile and stone! All the houses of Cairo are built separate one from another, so that no one's trees or outbuildings are against anyone else's walls. Cairo has four cathedral mosques where men pray on Fridays. One of these is called al-Azhar, another al-Nur, another, the Mosque of al-Hakim and the fourth the Mosque of al-Muizz. This last mosque is outside the city on the banks of the Nile. When you face the qibla in Egypt, you have to turn towards the ascent of Aries." (p. 47)

Describing the markets of Cairo, Nasir Khusaro writes: "The merchants of old Cairo are honest in their dealings, and if one of them is caught cheating a customer, he is mounted on a camel with a bell in his hand and paraded about the city, ringing the bell and crying out, 'I have committed a misdemeanor and am suffering reproach. Whosoever tells a lie is rewarded with public disgrace.' The grocers, druggists, and peddlers furnish sacks for everything they sell, whether glass, pottery, or papers; therefore, there is no need for shoppers to take their own bags with them. Lamp oil is derived from turnip seed and radish seed and is called *sayt harr*. Sesame is scarce, and the oil derived from it is expensive, while olive oil is cheap. Pistachios are more expensive than almonds, and marzipan is not more than one *dinar* for ten maunds. Merchants and shopkeepers ride on saddled donkeys, both coming and going to and from the bazar." (p. 55) Nasir also adds: "The security and welfare of the people of

Egypt have reached a point that the drapers, moneychangers and jewellers do not even lock their shops - they only lower a net across the front, and no one tampers with anything." (p. 57)

"In the year 439/1047" writes Nasir Khusaro, "the sultan ordered general rejoicing for the birth of a son: the city and bazars were so arrayed that, were they to be described, some would not believe that drapers' and moneychangers' shops could be so decorated with gold, jewels, coins, goldspun cloth, and embroidery that there was no room to sit down. The people are so secure under the sultan's reign that no one fears his agents, and they rely on him neither to inflict injustice nor to have designs on anyone's property. I saw such personal wealth there that were I to describe it, the people of Persia would never believe it. I could discover no end or limit to their wealth, and I never saw such ease and comfort anywhere." (p. 55)

The signs of the Fatimid presence in Jerusalem were uncountable. Nasir Khusaro was impressed by some of them, such as silver lamp donated to the Dome of the Rock, on which the name of al-Mustansir was inscribed in gold letter around the bottom. The Fatimid governor of Palestine also built in the area of the Haram; their inscriptions were admired by Nasir Khusaro. The Fatimid presence was no less visible at the shrine of Abraham in Hebron; which was enlarged and redecorated.

Nasir Khusaro compiled many books besides the "Diwan" and "Safar-nama." The famous among them are "Rawshana'i-nama" (Book of Light), "Wajh-i Din" (Face of Religion), "Gushayish wa Rahayish" (Release and Deliverance), "Zad al-Musafarin" (Provision for the Road), "Jami al-Hikmatayn" (Harmonization of the Wisdom), etc. Gholam Reza writes in "Nasir-i Khusraw" (Tehran, 1977, p. 14) that, "Of course, Nasir does eulogise one person: the Caliph al-Mustansir. For him, however, the Caliph is not the representative of worldly rule or secular power, but rather the spiritual master of masters, representative of the Holy Prophet, the Pole of the Age. These eulogies are not mere poetic effusions, but deeply felt songs of devotion."

Among other eminent *dais*, Abdul Malik bin Attash was also a refined literary personality. He was the chief of Ismaili mission in Fars, mainly in Ispahan. He was a great diplomat and expert in winning over the hearts of people. He was also a great military leader, and died in 500/1107.

Hasan bin Sabbah was also a renowned Ismaili *dai*. He came in Egypt in 471/1078 and had his audience with al-Mustansir. He stayed 18 months in Cairo, and being ascertained the name of Nizar as the successor personally from al-Mustansir, he quitted Cairo and reached Ispahan in 473/1081 and thence proceeded to Qazwin, and took possession of the fort of Alamut in 483/1090 and founded Nizari Ismaili state.

The Sulayhids of Yamen

In Yamen, Ali bin Muhammad al-Sulayhi had established the Sulayhid rule and introduced the Fatimid *khutba*. In 450/1058, he succeeded to expel the Zaidis from San'a, and made it his capital. In 452/1060, he captured Zabid after killing Sa'd bin Najah, the founder of the Najahid dynasty and appointed his brother-in-law, Asad bin Shihab as the governor of Zabid. In 454/1062, he conquered Adan, where he allowed Banu Ma'n to rule for sometime as tributaries of the Sulayhids. Later, in 476/1083, the Sulayhids granted the governorship of Adan to two Hamdani brothers, Abbas and Masud bin Karam, who founded the Ismaili dynasty of the Zurayids in Adnan from 476/1083 to 569/1173. In sum, Ali bin Muhammad subjugated all of Yamen in 455/1063 and also extended his influence from Mecca to Hazarmaut. Umara bin Ali al-Hakami (d. 569/1174) writes in "*Tarikh-i Yamen*" (tr. Henry C. Kay, London, 1892, pp. 24-5) that, "None of its plains or its hills, of its lands or of its waters remained unsubdued. No parallel case can be found of so rapid a conquest, either in the days of ignorance or in the days of Islam." One of the greatest achievements of Ali bin Muhammad al-Sulayhi was his success in establishing peace in Mecca on behalf of al-Mustansir.

In 454/1062, Ali bin Muhammad al-Sulayhi desired to meet al-Mustansir, therefore, he sent Iamak bin Malik al-Hammadi, the chief *qadi* of Yamen to Cairo to discuss his prospective visit.

In 454/1062, Nasir ad-Dawla had begun to ravage Egypt, therefore, **qadi** Lamak had to stay with al-Muayyad at the Dar al-Hikmah. Lamak remained in Cairo for five years and at length he had an audience with al-Mustansir. On the other hand, Ali bin Muhammad set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 459/1067 at the head of 2000 horsemen of whom 160 were the members of his household. Unfortunately, he was killed with a number of his relatives in a surprise attack by the sons of Sa'd bin Najah in reprisal of his father's death. His son Ahmad al-Mukarram was declared the head of Yamen by al-Mustansir. The rule which Ali bin Muhammad al-Sulayhi founded would have fallen to the ground if his son Ahmad al-Mukarram had not come to its rescue and restored it.

In one of the rare extant letters from Yamen to al-Mustansir, Ahmad al-Mukarram, after giving an account of the death of his father and the following events, reports that the envoys of the **dai** of India have brought him a letter, asking that permission be granted to them to pass from verbal propaganda to the use of force. It shows that there were preparations for a rising on the western coast of India, presumably in Gujrat, ruled by the then Hindu Chaulukya dynasty and establish there a Fatimid enclave. In his letter dated 461/1068, the Imam replied to the question of the **dai** Yousuf bin Hussain and left it to him to judge whether the plan was feasible. Nothing seems to have come of it. In 468/1075, Yousuf bin Hussain died in India, therefore, Ahmad al-Mukarram was commissioned to choose his successor. Yousuf's son Ahmad was proposed by him, which the Imam agreed and sent the appointment letter, adding that the country in question, i.e., the administration of its mission, was in the charge of the Sulayhid, who was also ordered to make some arrangements for Oman, which had at that time no mission. In 469/1076, the Sulayhid is charged with the government of the city of Oman. In 476/1083, the Sulayhid suggested appointment of Marzuban bin Ishaq in India and Ibrahim bin Ismail in Oman, which al-Mustansir *billah* agreed. In 481/1088, Marzuban died and his son Ahmad was recommended. In Oman, Ibrahim turned to commerce and neglected the mission, thus Hamza was recommended to succeed him.

Ahmad al-Mukarram died in 484/1091 and his wife Sayyida Hurrat al-Malika Arwa (477-532/1084-1138) then began to govern on behalf of Mukarram's minor son, Ali Abd al-Mustansir. When he too died, Sayyida Arwa took up the

reins of administration of the state and mission, and remained loyal to al-Mustansir. She however supported the Mustalian line after the death of al-Mustansir.

The Fatimid vizir Badr al-Jamali died in 487/1095, and was succeeded by his son, al-Afdal as vizir. The administration of Badr al-Jamali was especially associated with a great development of building and with the construction of new walls and gates round Cairo.

The longest Caliphate of Muslim history for 60 years and 4 months closed with the death of al-Mustansir on the 18th Zilhaja, 487/January 6, 1095 at the age of 67 years and 5 months. The Fatimid *dai*, al-Muayyad fid-din ash-Shirazi had composed a "**Diwan**" (Cairo, 1949), in which he versified few couplets in favour of al-Mustansir as under:-

"I offer my soul to al-Mustansir billah for redemption, who wins victories with the help of the hosts of heaven." (p. 201)

"It is by him only that the Koran can be explained and interpreted." (p. 273)

"I confess that you are the countenance of God by which the servants' countenances are radiant." (p. 201)

AL-NIZAR (487-490/1095-1097)

Abu Mansur al-Nizar, surnamed al-Mustapha al-dinillah (the chosen for God's religion), was born in Cairo on 437/1045. He assumed the Imamate on 18th Zilhaja, 487/January 6, 1095 at the age of 50 years. He had been however proclaimed as a successor in 480/1087 before the notables in the court by his father. His participation in state affairs is scant. In 454/1062, during the perilous period of Egypt, al-Mustansir had however sent him to the port of Damietta with the Fatimid army to execute few assignments.

One remark at least should not be omitted that **Nizar** is a Persian word, and according to "**Persian-English**

Dictionary" (London, 1892, p. 1396) by F. Steingass, it means thin, slim, slender, lean, spare or weak. As it is said "**kilki nizar**" means "a slender reed or pen." The Iranian name given to the elder son by Imam al-Mustansir billah tends to the fact that he had perceived the forthcoming bifurcation in the Ismailis, and that his real successor would be supported in the Iranian society than in the Arabian. It therefore seems that al-Mustansir had chosen the name **Nizar** to cohere him and his descendants with the Iranian culture. It may also be noted that the cause of the Nizarid was supported by the Iranian missionaries, notably Hasan bin Sabbah, Nasir Khusaro, Abdul Malik bin Attash etc.

We have seen that Imam al-Mustansir ascended at the age of seven years in 427/1036, therefore, the state was governed by his mother. The Fatimid vizir, Ali bin Ahmad Jarjarai was an able administrator, who died in 436/1044. He was subsequently followed by Ibn al-Anbari and Abu Mansur Sadaqa, but none of them proved successful. In 442/1050, Abu Muhammad Hasan bin Abdur Rehman Yazuri became the vizir for eight years. He was a great reformer, but died in 450/1058. Hence, about 40 new vizirs had been installed during the next 15 years (450-466/1058-1074), but none among them was so capable to administer the state affairs. Finally, al-Mustansir invited an Armenian, called Badr al-Jamali, who reached Cairo in 466/1074 with his Armenian troops, and took charge of the Fatimid vizirate. He efficiently dealt the state affairs and restored peace.

When Hasan bin Sabbah was yet in Cairo in 471/1078, De Lacy O'Leary writes in "**A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate**" (London, 1923, p. 209) that, "At the time, it appears, the court was divided into two factions over the question of the succession, the one party holding to the Khalif's elder son Nizar, the other to a younger son named Musta'li. In one place Nasir-i Khusaro says that the Khalif told him that his elder son Nizar was to be his heir, and the succession of the older son would be in accordance with the doctrines of the sect as already proved by their adherence to Ismail, the son of Jafar as-Sadiq. But Badr and the chief officials were on the side of the younger son Musta'li."

Badr al-Jamali thus expected the succession of Musta'li but he died in 487/1095, a month before the death of Imam al-Mustansir. The latter appointed Lawun Amin ad-Dawla as

a new vizir, but after few days, al-Afdal, the son of Badr al-Jamali managed to obtain office of vizirate when the Imam was almost on death-bed, and also became **amir al-juyush** (commander of the army). After the death of al-Mustansir, the year 487/1095 marks the triumph of vizirial prerogative over caliphal authority in the structure of the Fatimid empire. Al-Afdal however, was fearing of being deposed by Nizar, so he conspired to remove him. There is one other story purporting his enmity with Nizar. If the story quoted by Charles Francois Defremery (1822-1883) in "**Histoire des Ismaeliens ou Batiniens de la Perse**" (JA, ser. 5, XV, 1860, p. 154), is genuine, it illustrates how a little, rather a trifling thing determines great events. Al-Afdal, so the account goes, was once mounted on his horse in the passage leading from the golden gate to the entrance of the palace when Nizar passed by. Al-Afdal did not dismount to honour the Prince according to the royal custom. Nizar called out, "Get down from your horse, O'Armenian slave! How impolite you are?" Dr. Zahid Ali is of an opinion that it was a bone of contention and since that day, al-Afdal became an enemy of Nizar, vide "**Tarikh-i Fatimiyyin Misr**" (Karachi, 1963, p. 294). In sum, Nizar fell a victim to the jealousy of al-Afdal.

Makrizi also quotes the above incident, vide "**Itti'az**" (3rd vol., p. 12). It must be remembered that the phrases **al-adab fil salam** and **adab al-khidma** designated in the broadest sense in the protocol (**adab**) to be observed in the Fatimid court. It was the custom for the vizirs to ride into the palace through the golden gate (**bab al-dhahab**) and dismount at a designated spot, called "the passage of the vizirate" (**maqta al-vizara**), but al-Afdal exceeded the limit and treated impolitely with al-Nizar.

Aiming to retain the power of the state in his own hands, al-Afdal favoured the candidacy of al-Mustansir's youngest son, Abul Kassim Ahmad, surnamed Musta'li, who would entirely depend upon him. Al-Musta'li was about 20 years old, and already married to al-Afdal's daughter. Al-Afdal moved swiftly, and on the day following al-Mustansir's death, he placed the young prince on the throne with the title of al-Musta'li-billah. He quickly obtained for al-Musta'li the allegiance of the notables of the court. He also took favour of al-Mustansir's sister, who was prepared to declare a fabricated story that al-Mustansir had changed the **nass** in favour of Musta'li at very last

hour in presence of the *qadi* of Egypt, but the cause of *change of nass* was not given at all. Marshall Hodgson writes in "The Order of Assassins" (Netherland, 1955, p. 63) that, "Nizar's right to the Egyptian succession by sectarian principles was very strong. The Sunni historians assume him to have been designated heir-apparent. This *"first nass"* would clearly give him claim to Ismaili allegiance against any later nominee on the analogy of Ismail himself, whose claim could not be set aside for his brother Musa."

The Egyptian historian, Nuwayri (677-732/1279-1332) writes in "*Nihayat al-Arab*" that, "When al-Mustansir billah died, his son al-Nizar, who was the *wali'l-ahd*, took his seat on the throne and desired homage to be done to himself; but al-Afdal refused, through dislike to al-Nizar, and he had a meeting with a member of *amirs* and men of rank, to whom he said, that Nizar was come to the age of manhood, and they could not hope to escape his severity; so the best thing to be done was to do homage to his youngest brother Musta'li. This plan was approved of by all except Muhammad Ibn Massal al-Maliki". The extant sources recount that al-Afdal hastened to proclaim Musta'li and on the next day, al-Afdal sent for the other sons of al-Mustansir, bidding them to come quickly. Al-Nizar and his brothers, Abdallah and Ismail as soon as entered the palace, and saw the younger brother seated on the throne, at which they were filled with indignation. Nuwayri writes in "*Nihayat al-Arab*" that al-Afdal said to them: "Go forward and kiss the earth in the presence of God and of our lord al-Must'ali billah! Do him homage, for it is he whom the Imam al-Mustansir billah has declared as his successor to the caliphate." To this al-Nizar answered: "I would rather be cut in pieces than do homage to one younger than myself, and moreover I possess a document in the handwriting of my father by which he names me successor, and I shall go and bring it." He, thus withdrew from the court in haste.

It implies that al-Nizar and his brothers were summoned in the palace under usual manner. He must have brought the written document with him, had he known the enthronement of Musta'li. Another outstanding feature of Musta'li was that he was silent on the whole, and himself did not ask his brothers to pay him homage. It was only al-Afdal to deal the proceeding all alone. Musta'li was planned to enthrone with the firm hold of the vizir. According to

"Religion in the Middle East" (London, 1969, 2nd vol., p. 321) ed. by A.J. Arberry, "Both Ibn al-Athir and Ibn Khaldun agree that Nizar was the duly appointed heir apparent whose claims were overlooked by the energy and diplomacy of al-Afdal."

Al-Nizar in Alexandria

Al-Nizar seems well aware of the domination of al-Afdal, who had a vein of animosity in his character for him. It is possible that he thought it futile to produce the written document in the palace, because according to Ibn Khaldun (4th vol., p. 139) the sister of al-Mustansir had falsely witnessed in the court the story of *change of nass*, therefore, he did not come back to the palace and quitted Cairo. Soon afterwards, al-Nizar appeared at Alexandria, supported by his brother, Abdullah and an *amir*, Muhammad ibn Massal al-Maliki. Nasir ad-Dawla Iftagin at-Turki, the governor of Alexandria swore allegiance to al-Nizar and proclaimed his support. Jalal ad-Dawla bin Ammar, the *qadi* of Alexandria also supported the cause of al-Nizar. In Alexandria, al-Nizar promulgated the Nizarid Ismaili mission and adopted the title of *al-Mustapha li-dinillah* (the chosen for God's religion).

Nasir Khusaro and Hasan bin Sabbah were promulgating the Nizarid Ismaili mission in Badakhshan and Iran in accordance with the directions they had personally received from al-Mustansir when they had been in Cairo. Granted that the theory of *change of nass* was a genuine, then these missionaries must have been intimidated by the Fatimid authority, but it was produced only in the court as a tool to make al-Musta'li enthroned.

Al-Afdal feared the growing power of al-Nizar in Alexandria, where he spurred his horses in 488/1095, but suffered a sharp repulse in the first engagement, and retreated to Cairo. According to Ibn Athir and Ibn Khallikan, al-Nizar also got favour of the nomad Arabs and dominated the northern area of Egypt.

Al-Afdal once again took field with huge army and besieged Alexandria. He tempted the companions of al-Nizar, and fetched them to his side. Ibn Massal was the first to have deserted the field from the thick of fight, and fled with

his materials by sea towards Maghrib. It is related that Ibn Massal had a dream that he was walking on horseback, and al-Afdal was walking in his train. He consulted an astrologer, who remarked that he who walked on the earth was to possess it. On hearing this, Ibn Massal collected his wealth and fled to Lakk, a village near Barga in Maghrib. This defection marked the turning point of al-Nizar's power. In addition, the long siege resulted great fortune to al-Afdal, wherein many skirmishes took place. Al-Nizar and his faithfuls fought valiantly, but due to the treachery of his men, he was arrested and taken prisoner with Abdullah and Iftagin to Cairo.

Iftagin was executed in Cairo. According to Ibn Khallikan, al-Nizar was immured by his brother al-Musta'li's orders and al-Afdal had him shut up between two walls till he died in 490/1097. According to John Alden Williams in "*Islam*" (New York, 1967, p. 218), "The followers of al-Nizar in Abbasid territory refused to accept this and took Nizar's son to one of their mountain fortress, Alamut."

The Ismaili missionaries spread the Nizari Ismailism since the time of al-Mustansir by leaps and bounds. Hasan bin Sabbah had operated the Nizarid mission freely throughout its length and breadth and established the Nizarid rule at Alamut in Iran. Henceforward, the centre of the Nizari Imamate with a large following in Iran, Syria and Central Asia, transferred from Egypt to Iran.

Muhammad bin Ali al-Suri, the Fatimid *dai* in Syria, who died few months after al-Mustansir billah in 488/1095, had enumerated the Imams in a long Arabic poem, vide "*al-Qasida al-Suriyya*" (ed. Arif Tamir, Damascus, 1955, pp. 41-71). He is said to have given his full supports to the cause of al-Nizar in Syria and propagated to this effect in his region.

According to Ibn Khallikan, Ibn Massal received a letter from al-Afdal, inviting him to return to Egypt, which he did, and was honourably received in Cairo.

Al-Musta'li remained a puppet in the hands of al-Afdal throughout his short reign (1094-1101), during which the Crusaders first appeared in 490/1097 in the Levant to liberate the holy land of Christendom. The Crusaders easily defeated the local Fatimid garrison, and occupied Jerusalem in 492/1099. By 493/1100, the Crusaders had

gained their footholds in Palestine, and founded several principalities based on Jerusalem and other localities in Palestine and Syria. In the midst of the Fatimids' continued attempts to repel the Crusaders, al-Musta'li died in 495/1102, who made no personal contribution to the Fatimid rule. He was entirely without authority in the state, and came out only as required by al-Afdal at the public functions.

W.B. Fisher writes in **"The Middle East and North Africa"** (London, 1973, p. 243) that, "After the death of al-Mustansir, the six succeeding caliphs had no power". After Musta'li's death, al-Afdal proclaimed al-Musta'li's five year-old son, Abu Ali al-Mansur, surnamed al-Amir (d. 524/1130).

Death of al-Afdal

We have seen heretofore that al-Afdal was an absolute master of the Fatimid empire for 27 years and was murdered in 515/1121. Ibn Qalanisi writes in **"Tarikh-i Dimashq"** (tr. H.A.R. Gibb, London, 1932, p. 163) that, "It was asserted that the Batinis (Ismailis) were responsible for his assassination, but this statement is not true." Yaacov Lev writes in **"State and Society in Fatimid Egypt"** (London, 1991, p. 55) that, "On 30 Ramdan 515/12 December 1121, al-Afdal was assassinated and his twenty-seven years of military dictatorship were brought to an end. Although one of the assassins was captured, who masterminded the plot remains unknown. From reading the sources one receives the impression that the Nizari Ismailis perpetrated the killing. However, judging by the subsequent events, al-Amir must have been involved in the plot."

Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., pp. 613-4) writes that, "It was al-Afdal who, on the death of al-Musta'li, placed al-Amir, that sovereign's son on the throne; he then took the direction of public affairs into his own hands, and having confined the prince in his palace, he prevented him from indulging his passion for pleasure and amusements. This treatment induced al-Amir to plot against his vizir's life, and on the evening of Sunday, the 30th Ramdan, 515, as al-Afdal rode forth from his habitation in the imperial palace, he was attacked by the conspirators and slain while proceeding towards the river."

Al-Afdal was virtually a king of the Egyptian empire and squandered the royal treasury. According to Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., p. 614), "Al-Afdal left after him such a quantity of wealth as was never heard of before. The author (Jamaluddin Abul Hasan Ali bin Abi Mansur Tahir al-Azdi) of "**Dual al-Munkatia**" (comp. 623/1126), states that it consisted of six hundred millions of **dinars**; two hundred and fifty bushels of **dhirams**, all of full weight and coined in Egypt; seventy-five thousand satin robes; thirty camel-loads of perfume boxes in Irak gold; a gold inkhorn mounted with a precious stone valued at twelve thousand **dinars**; one hundred gold nails, each weighing one hundred **dinars**, ten of which were in each of his ten sitting rooms; and on each nail was hung a turban ready folded and embroidered in gold; each of these turbans was of a different colour, and he selected from among them whichever he was inclined to wear; he possessed besides five hundred chests of clothing for the persons in his service, all of the finest stuffs which Tennis and Damietta could produce: as for the horses, slaves, mules, saddles, perfumes, ornaments for the person, and furniture which he left after him, God alone knew their quantity. Besides all that, were cows, sheep, and buffalos in such an incredible number that no person would dare to mention it; their milk was farmed out, and in the year of his death it brought in thirty thousand **dinars**. Among his effects were found two large trunks containing gold needles for the use of the female slaves and the women."

The line of Musta'li

W.Ivanow writes in "**Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismailism**" (Holland, 1952, pp. 15-16) that, "The next two puppet rulers, Musta'li and Amir, had some claims to the title of the Imam. But when Amir was assassinated in 524/1130, leaving no male issue, al-Hafiz ascended the throne with the title of the mustawda Imam, i.e., acting as a regent on behalf of the supposed infant heir. A story was put into circulation to the effect that the baby was sent to Yamen. The faithful Musta'lians take this legend quite seriously." De Lacy O'Leary on the other hand writes in "**A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate**" (London, 1923, p. 222) that, "The Khalif al-Amir left no son, but at the time of his death, one of his wives was pregnant, and it was possible that she might give birth to an heir."

Makrizi writes in "Itti'az" (3rd vol., p. 137) that, "It was stated that Hafiz was acting as guardian for al-Amir's son to be born by one of al-Amir's pregnant women." Thus, Hafiz, the uncle of al-Amir took the power as a ruler.

Henceforward, the Fatimid rule embarked on its rapid decline. The supposed infant son of al-Amir is named, Tayyib, about two and half years old, but De Lacy O'Leary holds however that when al-Amir's wife was delivered, her child was a daughter (op. cit., p. 223). Anyhow, the chief guardian of Tayyib was Ibn Madyan, who is said to have hidden the minor Tayyib in a mosque called Masjid ar-Rahma. Makrizi tells that the infant son of al-Amir was carried in a basket after wrapping it up and covering it over with vegetables. Here in the mosque, a wet nurse cared for him. And all of this was done without Hafiz knowing anything about it. Makrizi also writes that Tayyib was arrested and killed. The followers of Tayyib in Yamen however believed that he was hidden in 524/1130 and his line exists even today in concealment.

The Hafizids and Tayyibids

Looking the situation ideal for himself, Hafiz claimed the Imamate after two years in 526/1132, resulting the Yamenite Musta'lians split into two factions, i.e., the Hafizids and the Tayyibids. In a bold move, Hafiz declared himself an Imam. Ibn Muyassar (p. 63) writes that, "Hafiz rode in the attire of the caliphs from the Festival Gate (*bab al-id*) to the Golden Gate (*bab al-dhahab*), and ordered that the following *khutba* be pronounced from the pulpit: 'O'God! bless the one through whom you have fortified your religion after your enemies tried to destroy it. Our lord and master, the Imam of our age and of our time, Abdul Majid Abul Maymun,'"

The Tayyibid group in the Musta'lians do not recognize the last four rulers including Hafiz. According to S.M. Stern in "The Succession to the Fatimid Imam al-Amir" (cf. "Orient", no.4, 1951, p. 202), "The last four Fatimid caliphs of Egypt were not regarded as Imams even by themselves and the *khutba* was read in the name of al-Qaim, the promised Imam who will come on the last day." Hafiz's vizir was Hizbar al-Mulk, but the army tenaciously recommended the office for Abu Ali Ahmad, the son of al-

Afdal. Caliph Hafiz had to appoint him in place of Hizbar al-Mulk. Immediately after assuming office, the new vizir Abu Ali Ahmad introduced a strange phenomenon in Fatimid history by announcing the religion of Ithna Ashari as an official creed of the state. This was absolutely against the very character of the Fatimid Caliphate. According to Ibn Muyassar in "*Tarikh-i Misr*" (p. 75), "He also dropped the mention of Imam Ismail bin Jafar Sadik from whom the Ismailis derive their name." Hafiz died in 544/1149, was succeeded by his son Zafir. Instead of devoting himself to the administration, Zafir exceedingly inclined to a life of pleasure. He perished at the age of 22 years in 549/1154, and was succeeded by his five years old son, Faiz. The entire power however remained with vizir Abbas. Whilst in an epileptic fit, Faiz died in 555/1160 at the age of eleven years. He was succeeded by nine years old Adid, the son of Yousuf, one of the murdered brothers of Zafir.

End of the Fatimid Caliphate

The Ayyubid ruler Saladin (d. 589/1193) at length, put an end of the Fatimid rule in 567/1171, and had the *khutba* read in Cairo in the name of Abbasid caliph al-Mustadi (d. 575/1180), thus proclaiming Abbasid suzerainty in Egypt. The helpless Adid, the last Fatimid ruler, died a few days later following an illness. Saladin had a vein of jealousy in his character for the Fatimids, and therefore, "*The Encyclopaedia of Islam*" (Leiden, 1936, 3rd vol., p. 353) writes that, "He had all the treasures of the palace, including the books, sold over a period of ten years. Many were burned, thrown into the Nile, or thrown into a great heap, which was covered with sand, so that a regular "hill of books" was formed and the soldiers used to sole their shoes with the fine bindings. The number of books said to have disposed of varies from 120,000 to 2,000,000." Thus, the Fatimid Caliphate founded in Maghrib in 297/909, embodying the greatest religio-political and cultural success of Shia Islam, had come to an end after 262 years, in which they ruled Egypt for 191 years.

Review of "al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya"

Caliph al-Amir appointed al-Mamun al-Bata'ih to the vizarate, who reopened the Dar al-Hikmah in Cairo, which had been closed by al-Afdal in 513/1119, where he immediately learnt many professions supporting the cause of Imam Nizar. Meanwhile, there raised violent reactions in other parts of the Fatimid dominion to this effect, mostly in Syria and Iran. The vizir al-Mamun feared the Nizari Ismaili influence once again penetrating in Egypt, therefore, he arranged for a grand public assembly to publicize the claims of al-Musta'li and refute the rights of Nizar. This meeting was held in 516/1122 at the great hall of the palace and was attended by numerous Fatimid princes and distinguished dignitaries, including Abu Muhammad bin Adam, the head of the Dar al-Hikmah. The Egyptian historians, such as Ibn Muyassar (1231-1278) in "**Tarikh-i Mier**" (ed. Henri Masse, Cairo, 1919, pp. 66-67) and Makrizi in "**Itti'az**" (Cairo, 1948, 3rd vol., pp. 87-88) have provided a detailed account of the proceedings. In the course of the assembly, various episodes were referred to justify the claims of al-Musta'li. Most significantly, Nizar's full sister, sitting behind a screen in an adjoining chamber, testified that al-Mustansir, on his death-bed, had designated al-Musta'li as his successor, divulging the **change of nass** to his own sister (Nizar's aunt). At the conclusion, vizir al-Mamun ordered Ibn al-Sayrafi (d. 542/1147), a secretary at the Fatimid chancery, to compile an epistle (**sijill**) in favour of al-Musta'li, to be read publicly from the pulpits of the mosques in Egypt. This epistle is known as "**al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya**" (the advices of al-Amir), or "**ar-Risalat al-Amiriyya**" (the epistle of al-Amir), which had been written about 28 years after the Nizari-Musta'lian schism. Its copies were also circulated in Syria, where it caused an uproar amongst the Nizari Ismailis in Damascus. The matter was referred to the Nizari Ismaili chief, who immediately wrote a refutation of it. This refutation was read at a meeting of the Musta'lians in Damascus, whose **dais** forwarded its copies to al-Amir in Cairo, asking him for further guidance. Soon afterwards, al-Amir sent a reply in 517/1123 to his Syrian **dais** through an epistle under the bombastic title of "**Iqa Sawa'iq al-irgham**" (the fall of the lightning of humiliation), which is treated as an appendix to "**al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya**". The original epistle reached in Syria on Thursday, the 27th Zilhaja, 517 A.H.

"*Al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya*", or in full, "*al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya li-Mawlana al-Amir fi ithbat Imamat Mawlana al-Musta'li wa'r-radd ala'n Nizariyya*", is attributed to the authorship of al-Amir quite incorrectly. It was compiled by al-Sayrafi, and the text was read over and approved by al-Amir. It is almost a bombastic, full of stylistic tricks and void of historical facts, and alludes here and there.

Asaf A.A. Fyzee (1899-1981) published the Arabic text of "*al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya*" from Calcutta in 1938 with its introduction and comments, whose few examples are given below:-

1. In the course of his argument, the author of "*al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya*", has to admit the most important fact that Nizar had been officially proclaimed the heir-apparent of his father, and that the provincial agents of the state were duly informed about it (cf. p. 21, 1.12). He further states that the appointment was first cancelled by the subsequent nomination of Nizar's younger brother, Abdullah, and later on by the *nass* to Musta'li in the last hour of al-Mustansir's life (cf. p. 18, 1.7). Fyzee comments that, "This nomination at the moment of expiring made under very suspicious circumstances, as we have seen, does not seem very convincing." (p. 5)
2. The author further emphasizes the alleged fact that Nizar and Abdullah were both given the title of *wali ahdi'l-muslimin*, while only Musta'li was called the *wali ahdi'l-mu'minin*. Fyzee writes in this context that, "The matter seems to be somewhat dark, although the difference between *islam* and *imam* in Muslim theology, and particularly in Ismaili doctrine, is well known. It is difficult to generalize whether this difference in title, even if it was real, implied any material distinction." (p. 5)
3. The most amazing thing in all this is the fact that the author quite earnestly admits, and even emphatically defends, the principle of revocation of the *nass*. Fyzee writes, "As is known, Ismailism itself came into existence as an independent sect

of Islam in circumstance closely resembling the case of Nizar, and the immediate cause of the split of the Shiite community was exactly the defence of the dogma of the irrevocability of the *nass*. The sect was formed by the followers of Ismail, the son of Imam Jafar as-Sadiq who refused to recognize the legality of the second *nass*, to Musa al-Kazim." (p. 6) He further adds, "It is difficult to believe that in its case the later *will* could cancel the preceding one, as the author tries to prove. Especially strange would it be to claim that it should be cancelled by the alleged *nass fi daqiqati'l-intiqal*, i.e. the nomination (made by the Caliph) at the moment of his death, to which the author refers several times, in view of the rather doubtful circumstances which accompanied it." (pp. 6-7) Fyze also comments, "Though the author often refers to this last moment's *nass*, he never mentions who really was the witness of such an important act. From what is known, it is quite obvious that Nizar and his party were not represented at the moment of the Caliph's death." (f.n., p. 7)

As Musta'li was only just over 18 years of age, or according to Ismaili historians, 20, at the time of al-Mustansir's death, it is obvious that his wedding could not have been celebrated more than seven years before his father died, i.e. when he was about 13 years of age. It is quite probable that in reality it took place much later. Thus it would appear that during the exceptionally long reign of al-Mustansir, something like 55 years, there was no heir-apparent, until the Caliph, at the memorable wedding, in a rather elusive way, appointed Musta'li, by bestowing upon him the title of *wali ahdi'l-mu'minin*. Fyze remarks, "All this sounds very improbable." On page 20, l.2, the author, obviously conscious of this difficulty, goes so far as to say that the *nass* to Nizar, and later on to Abdullah, was made by al-Mustansir only as a concession to the public impatience, in order to placate his followers. Fyze writes, "He apparently does not notice that this implies insincerity of the Imam in his actions." (p. 7)

With regard to the memorable occasion of the wedding of Musta'li, which plays the key role in the argument of the author, it provides, in addition to the bestowing of the title mentioned above, yet another sign of the elevation of the young prince above his brothers, namely his being seated on the right hand of his father, while all other princes had to sit on the left side. Fyzee writes, "It is difficult to find in this decisive indication as to whether such arrangement constituted something extraordinary from the point of view of the Fatimid court etiquette. As Musta'li was the centre of the celebration, the hero of the day, perhaps he might have been specially honoured on the occasion, without any prejudice to the rights and dignity of his elder brothers." (p. 8)

5. A very interesting story is given by the author (p. 14) in which he mentions the testimony of Nizar's sister. The latter, as the author narrates, in the presence of witnesses publicly denounced the claims of Nizar to the Imamate, and condemned his attitude, invoking curses upon all those who supported him. She said that on several occasions her father, the last Caliph al-Mustansir, gave her to understand that it was his intention to appoint Musta'li his heir-apparent. She added further that her brother Nizar, on the memorable occasion of Musta'li's wedding to the daughter of al-Afdal, came to her, and said that till then he still cherished the hope of being his father's successor. But after seeing the ostentation with which his father showed his favour towards the youngest prince, by giving him precedence over his elder brothers, he had to give up all hope. Thus, as she said, Nizar was quite conscious that he was acting wrongly when he rose in rebellion. Fyzee writes, "This story is really interesting in its implications: it is quite possible that a certain estrangement did take place between the father and his elder son, as may happen in any family, of high or low position. This certainly could easily be exploited for their own ends by al-Afdal and his party, whom the ascension of Nizar threatened to dislodge from their high position. But at the same time from the words of Nizar quoted by his sister, it appears that until the fateful wedding there was

no official act by which Nizar was deprived of his position as heir-apparent." (p. 9)

6. The author claims that Nizar and Abdullah swore allegiance to Musta'li on his accession (cf. p. 22, 1.12). Fyzee writes, "But there are other historians, and they are far from being pro-Nizar, who nevertheless relate that when Nizar was summoned to the palace only to find that his father was dead, and Musta'li was enthroned by the commander-in-chief, he protested, saying that he had a written document concerning his appointment as the heir. He said that he was going to fetch it, left the palace, and then escaped to Alexandria. Thus there is no certainty as to the circumstances of the alleged swearing of allegiance." (pp. 10-11)
7. Another decisive argument which the author uses against Nizar is the alleged extinction of his house (cf. p. 23, 1.11), which, according to Ismaili ideas, definitely proves the futility of a person's claims to the Imamate. Fyzee comments, "As is quite natural to expect, he refuses to believe in the fact that descendants of Nizar continue in Persia." (P. 11)

