Int. J. Middle East Stud. **28** (1996), 491–515. *Printed in the United States of America*

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THE CRISIS OF THE IMAMATE AND THE INSTITUTION OF OCCULTATION IN TWELVER SHIʿISM: A SOCIOHISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The formative period of Imami Shiʿism from the mid-8th century to the mid-10th century remains obscure in many respects. This study is an attempt to organize the historical information about the period around a central problematic: the twin crisis of the nature of the Imamate and the succession to this office. The crisis of the Imamate and the efforts to resolve it serve as a focal point for constructing a conceptually coherent overview of these two formative centuries from a sociohistorical perspective. This perspective requires that the endeavors to create a stable system of authority in Imami Shiʿism be considered in the context of the social change and politics of the early ʿAbbasid era: ʿAlid–ʿAbbasid relations, massive conversion of the population of Iran to Islam, and the dialogue and competition between Shiʿism and other contemporary religious and intellectual trends and movements. Our approach suggests a new periodization of the early history of Imami Shiʿism.

AUTHORITY AND ORGANIZATION IN THE IMAMI SECT DURING THE PERIOD OF REVOLUTIONARY CHILIASM: 744–818

The impressive feat of unifying sundry pro-ʿAlid groups into the Imami sect by the fifth and sixth imams, Muhammad al-Baqir (d. 733) and Jaʿfar al-Sadiq (d. 765), was premised on keeping aloof from political activism. It is remarkable that Jaʿfar al-Sadiq avoided involvement in politics during the revolutionary era that began with the murder of Walid II in April 744. In that year, the Hashemite dignitaries met at the Abwaʾ near Mecca to elect a leader, and the Talibid ʿAbd Allah ibn Muʿawiya inaugurated the Hashemite revolution on behalf of "the one agreed-upon (*al-Riḍā*) from the house of Muhammad."[1] Jaʿfar was the one dissident at the Hashemite meeting who refused to recognize his young cousin, Muhammad ibn ʿAbd Allah ibn al-Hasan, as the Mahdi of the House of the Prophet. Another Hashemite present at the meeting, the ʿAbbasid Ibrahim ibn Muhammad, was leading his father's clandestine movement in Khurasan. Ibrahim's son Muhammad studied with Jaʿfar al-Sadiq and reported traditions from him.[2] According to several traditions, Jaʿfar was

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invited by the Kufan revolutionary leader Abu Salama, presumably upon the death of the ᶜAbbasid Ibrahim al-Imam, to assume the leadership of the revolutionary movement, but he refused to get involved.[3]

Once the ᶜAbbasids emerged as the victors in the Hashemite revolution, Jaᶜfar showed no signs of opposition to the new regime and visited the second ᶜAbbasid caliph, Abu Jaᶜfar ᶜAbd Allah ibn Muhammad al-Mansur (754–75) in Iraq. Mansur, a seasoned revolutionary who is reported to have been among the participants in the Abwaᵓ meeting and who had served ᶜAbd Allah ibn Muᶜawiya, was ruthless in his violent treatment of the ᶜAlids in general. Yet his relations with Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq were good. He solicited Jaᶜfar's legal advice and reportedly restored the tomb of ᶜAli in Najaf at his request.[4] Furthermore, Mansur retained some of Jaᶜfar's important followers in his service, thus creating a permanent niche for an Imami office-holding aristocracy within the ᶜAbbasid state.

The origin of these families of Imami officials can be traced to the ᶜAlid–ᶜAbbasid revolutionary coalition against the Umayyads. Yaqtin ibn Musa (d. 801), a Persian client of the Banu Asad, was a revolutionary with a remarkable ability to change sides. He must have preferred a Talibid "Rida from the House" over an ᶜAbbasid one when operating underground in Kufa under Marwan II, and was close to Abu Salama. Yet he was called *yak dīn* by Abu Muslim;[5] changed sides again, becoming a close aide of Mansur during the power struggle at the beginning of his caliphate; and remained eminent under the Caliph al-Mahdi. Yaqtin's son ᶜAli also rose to prominence in the service of the Caliph al-Mahdi. The Yaqtin family were at the same time Imamis and followers of Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq. ᶜAli ibn Yaqtin (d. 798) served the ᶜAbbasid regime with the blessing of the seventh imam, Musa al-Kazim, and when he died, the crown prince, Muhammad al-Amin, led the funeral prayer.[6] Muhammad ibn Ismaᶜil ibn Baziᶜ, whose entire family were clients of the Caliph al-Mansur, similarly served as a high functionary of the ᶜAbbasid state with the blessing of the eighth imam, ᶜAli ibn Musa.[7] The last prominent Imami family that should be mentioned is the Banu Nawbakht. The Nawbakhtis were an aristocratic Persian family who served as the court astrologers and had descended from Mansur's Zoroastrian astrologer Nawbakht, who had converted to Islam in old age at the caliph's hand and had become his client.[8]

In the last years of his life, Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq dissociated himself from the uprising of the Hasanid Mahdi, Muhammad ibn ᶜAbd Allah, which had attracted many of his followers.[9] According to Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, these followers included his two sons, ᶜAbd Allah and Musa.[10] Jaᶜfar even named the Caliph al-Mansur an executor of his will.[11] By dint of his personal and familial charisma and scholarly authority, Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq thus managed to hold together his followers as a disciplined religious sect in revolutionary times. Nevertheless, the hierarchical and administrative organization of the Imami sect remained rudimentary. Furthermore, chiliastic belief began to make inroads into Imami Shiᶜism immediately after his death.

The idea of occultation (*ghayba*) had its origin in the chiliastic Kaysaniyya sect, whose members had considered ᶜAli's son Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya the Mahdi,[12] and "hoped for a revolution (*dawla*) that would culminate in the Resurrection before the Hour."[13] When Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya died in the year 700, the Kaysaniyya maintained that he was in concealment or occultation in the Radwa

mountains and would return as the Mahdi and the Qaᵓim. When Muhammad's son Abu Hashim in turn died childless in 717–18, some of the Kaysaniyya maintained that he was the Mahdi and was alive in concealment in the Radwa mountains. The idea of occultation was among the cluster of Kaysani beliefs, which included *rajᶜa* (return of the dead) and *badāᵓ* (God's change of mind), that entered Imami Shiᶜism.[14]

One of the important channels for the transmission of this belief into Imami Shiᶜism was the forceful poetry of the Kaysani al-Sayyid al-Himyari (d. after 787), who was also deeply attached to Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq and became his follower.[15] In the following verses, quoted in the Imami sources as a statement of their creed,[16] the Sayyid testifies:

> That the one in authority (*walī al-amr*) and the Qaᵓim . . .
> For him [is decreed] an occultation (*ghayba*); inevitably will he vanish
> And may God bless him who enacts the occultation
> He will pause a while, then manifest his cause
> And fill all the East and West with justice.[17]

Here the notion of occultation can be seen to have acquired chiliastic connotations through its association with the manifestation, or *parousia* (*ẓuhūr*), of the apocalyptic Qaᵓim, a term rich in surplus of meaning as the riser by the sword (*al-qāᵓim bi'l-sayf*), and as the redresser of truth (*al-qāᵓim bi'l-ḥaqq*) and of the (rights of) the House of Muhammad (*qāᵓim āl Muḥammad*).

As Hodgson correctly emphasized, the reorganization of the early Shiᶜis, including some of the Kaysani sympathizers and other extremist groups, and their organization into a sect by Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq went hand in hand with a firm rejection of chiliasm and armed rebellion. Like his father, Muhammad al-Baqir, Jaᶜfar denied that he was the Qaᵓim and emphasized that the latter's rising was not imminent.[18] However, Hodgson's suggestion that the religious disciplining of chiliastic extremism by Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq remained definite is misleading. Immediately after his death, a group of Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq's followers known as the Nawusiyya reverted to chiliasm, denying his death and asserting that he would reappear as the Lord of the Sword (*ṣāḥib al-sayf*), the Qaᵓim, and the Mahdi. They claimed that he had told them: "If you see my head rolling toward you from the mountain, do not believe it for I am your lord."[19]

Chiliasm was intense and widespread during the ᶜAbbasid revolution. For the ᶜAlids, it culminated in the rebellion of the Hasanid Muhammad ibn ᶜAbd Allah, al-Nafs al-Zakiyya (the Pure Soul), as the Qaᵓim and Mahdi of the House of Muhammad in Arabia. This rebellion was followed by that of his brother Ibrahim, who assumed the title of Hadi and rose in Iraq. These uprisings were supported by many Zaydis. Although Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq dissociated himself from that long-delayed uprising, he does not seem to have been able to prevent his sons from joining. Musa ibn Jaᶜfar, as was pointed out, is reported as having been among the participants in the uprising of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. He in fact learned to harness its persistent chiliasm more subtly to longer-term designs of his own.

Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq's older son, ᶜAbd Allah, was widely accepted as his successor but died only seventy days after his father.[20] The majority of his followers then accepted ᶜAbd Allah's brother, Musa, who was subsequently counted as the seventh

imam. Albeit clandestinely, Imam Musa al-Kazim (d. 799) competed in political activism with Zaydis alongside whom he had fought in 762, and followed the example of his Hasanid cousin in claiming to be the apocalyptic Qaᵓim.[21] At the same time, he firmly consolidated the rudimentary organization of the Imami sect by appointing agents (*wukalāᵓ*) to supervise the Shiᶜis in their districts. Through these agents, he regularized the collection of donations to the imam, which were sent to his treasury in Medina, at least until his imprisonment.[22]

After the Zaydi rebellions of Musa's other Hasanid cousins in Fakhkh (786), the Maghrib (789), and Daylam (792), Harun al-Rashid imprisoned Musa in 793. He was released and then imprisoned for a second time. Musa al-Kazim's two periods of imprisonment gave rise to the idea, circulated by his followers, that the Qaᵓim would have two occultations, a short one followed by a longer one extending to his rising.[23] The easiest explanation for this is Musa's messianic claim to being the Qaᵓim. The same claim can account for the widespread denial of his death in 799, and for the immediate apocalyptic expectation of Musa's appearance and uprising.[24] Some of those who maintained he had not died in prison modified the tradition that had been circulated by the Nawusiyya into a testimony of Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq on behalf of his son Musa:

> He is the (divinely-)guided redresser (*al-qāᵓim al-mahdī*); if [you see] his head rolling toward you from the mountain, do not believe it, for he is your lord (*ṣāḥib*), the Qaᵓim.[25]

After Musa's death, many of his followers considered him alive and in occultation as the Qaᵓim and Mahdi. They also maintained that the imamate had thus ceased with him. This movement became known as the Waqifiyya (cessationists) and was far more significant for the direct transmission of chiliastic ideas to Imami Shiᶜism than the Kaysaniyya. Books on the occultation (singular, *Kitāb al-ghayba*) by the Waqifites were especially important for introducing many apocalyptic traditions about the return of the Qaᵓim–Mahdi, as the leading figures in the movement later rejoined the Imami fold under the eighth imam.[26]

The hierarchical administration created by Musa al-Kazim survived him, however. At first, most of his followers took the Waqifite position and thought there would be no imam after him. Some of the agents took advantage of the widespread denial of his death to appropriate funds they had collected during his imprisonment.[27] According to one report, however, fifty days after Musa's death, two of his brothers and two other witnesses testified before the Qadi that Musa had named his son ᶜAli as his legatee and successor. More importantly, ᶜAli ibn Yaqtin attested to ᶜAli's designation by the deceased Imam.[28] ᶜAli ibn Musa appears gradually to have gained control of the hierarchy of agents,[29] and many of the Waqifiyya changed their position and rejoined his Imamiyya. Serious doubts concerning his Imamate, however, are reported, as he remained childless into his late forties.[30]

The civil wars that followed the collapse of Harun al-Rashid's division of the empire between his two sons include the last ᶜAlid rebellions, in which many Imamis participated alongside the Zaydis. These rebellions were triggered in the summer of 814, less than a year after the killing of al-Amin, by Hasan al-Harsh, a condottiere formerly in command of the east bank in Baghdad at the head of sundry discharged soldiers and tribesmen. Hasan al-Harsh revived the formula of the clandestine Hash-

emite revolutionary coalition against the Umayyads by appealing to "the one agreed-upon (*al-Riḍā*) from the House of Muhammad." In January of 815, the same call to the Rida by another discharged condottiere, Abu'l-Saraya set off the great rebellion under the nominal leadership of the Hasanid Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, known as Ibn Tabataba.[31] The nominal supreme leadership soon passed to another Hasanid, Muhammad ibn Muhammad, upon the expiration of Ibn Tabataba. Two of Musa al-Kazim's sons occupied key positions in the revolutionary leadership during Abu'l-Saraya's revolt. Zayd ibn Musa was nicknamed "Zayd of the Fire" (*zayd al-nār*) because he burned alive the ᶜAbbasid partisans in Basra and set their houses ablaze. He escaped after the suppression of Abu'l-Saraya and rose in rebellion in Basra in his own right the following year.[32] His brother Ibrahim ibn Musa took possession of the Yemen for the ᶜAlid rebellion.[33] The Hijaz joined the rebellion at the instigation of other ᶜAlids who had chosen Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq's last son, Muhammad ibn Jaᶜfar al-Dibaj, as their caliph. It is to this reclusive full brother of Musa al-Kazim that the chiliastic expectations of the rebellion were explicitly attached. He assumed the title of *amīr al-muᵓminīn*, and is reported to have said that he hoped he was *al-mahdī al-qāᵓim*.[34] A letter by al-Maᵓmun in fact referred to him as "the Mahdi, Muhammad ibn Jaᶜfar al-Talibi."[35] At the time of these rebellions in 815, the eighth imam, ᶜAli ibn Musa, at last had a son, and must have been firmly in control of the Imami hierarchy. Following his grandfather's apolitical tradition, ᶜAli ibn Musa held aloof from these rebellions despite the conspicuous role of many members of his family. His uncle, Muhammad ibn Jaᶜfar al-Dibaj, appears to have sought his mediation, and is said to have sent him to Mecca to sue for peace with the ᶜAbbasid governor.[36] After the defeat of Muhammad ibn Jaᶜfar al-Dibaj, ᶜAli ibn Musa's brother, Ibrahim ibn Musa, too, was driven out of the Yemen by Maᵓmun's forces. Ibrahim took possession of Mecca, however, and submitted peacefully in 817 when Maᵓmun had come to terms with ᶜAli ibn Musa, and it must have been through the latter's mediation that he was given officially the governorship of the Yemen.[37]

After the suppression of the ᶜAlid rebellions, the Caliph al-Maᵓmun had Abu'l-Saraya's last "Rida" and the Talibid Mahdi–anti-caliph brought to him in Marv from Iraq and Arabia, respectively. ᶜAli ibn Musa, too, was required to leave Medina and to take a route that avoided the Shiᶜi centers of Kufa and Qumm to the caliph's court in Marv. Then, in March 817, Maᵓmun dashingly appropriated the defeated rebel's formula in a move to bring about a historic reunification of the ᶜAbbasid and ᶜAlid branches of the House of the Prophet, which he proclaimed as "the second calling" (*daᶜwa thāniya*)[38]—an implicit reference to the ᶜAbbasid revolution as the first calling to the one agreed upon (*al-Riḍā*) from the House of Muhammad. He conferred the title of al-Rida on ᶜAli ibn Musa, who was by then in his fifties, and made him the successor to the throne in preference to the members of the ᶜAbbasid dynasty.[39] Maᵓmun's motives in taking this startling decision against the advice of his vizier, Fadl ibn Sahl,[40] have been the subject of much inconclusive discussion. Among the pertinent considerations we must include not only ᶜAli ibn Musa's age but also his scholarly piety and return to the apolitical stand of Muhammad al-Baqir and Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq.[41] Furthermore, Maᵓmun must have been impressed by the organized hierarchy of the Imami sect, and he must have considered it an important means for rallying support from scattered Shiᶜi elements against surviving pro-Amin

loyalism in Iraq. Last but not least, Maʾmun was preoccupied with the apocalyptic expectation of the end of the ʿAbbasid caliphate.

The assumption of the messianic title of Mansur by Abu Jaʿfar, and the appropriation of the titles of Mahdi and Hadi for his son and grandson, can be considered the caliphate's response to the chiliasm of the rebellion of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. Al-Mansur's response, however, did not put an end to apocalyptic yearning any more than did Jaʿfar al-Sadiq's. ʿAbd Allah al-Maʾmun undertook his bold initiative to unify the ʿAlid and ʿAbbasid houses amid widespread expectation that he would be the last member of the ʿAbbasid dynasty to rule "before the lifting of the veil" and "the advent of the Qaʾim, the Mahdi."[42] As a letter of Maʾmun's brought to light by Madelung proves, the caliph himself shared this expectation, as he had been told by his father "on the authority of his ancestors and what he found in the Book of Revolution (*Kitāb al-dawla*) and elsewhere that after the seventh of the descendants of al-ʿAbbas no pillar will remain standing for the Banu al-ʿAbbas."[43]

The participation of Musa al-Kazim's family alongside the Hasanids in the rebellion of 815 is striking. It marks that rebellion as the final epicycle of the Hashemite revolution with the unifying call for the one agreed upon from the house of Muhammad. Maʾmun's designation of ʿAli ibn Musa as the Rida closed the cycle and, with it, the era of revolutionary chiliasm that had begun in the mid-8th century. The great rebellion of 815, furthermore, demonstrates the tenuousness of the sectarian boundary that separated the Imamiyya from the Zaydiyya. As we shall see, half a century later—with the sectarian boundary made more rigid by the nascent hierarchy of the Imami ulema, and with the late imams being called Ibn al-Rida in evocation of Maʾmun's historic move—the Zaydis' renewed call for the Rida was to fall on deaf ears among Imamis.

En route to Marv, the eighth imam was enthusiastically received by the Shiʿi community in Nishapur,[44] and his two-year stay at the capital, Marv, where he is reported to have presided over numerous disputations and conferences, must have given a tremendous boost to the spread of Imami Shiʿism in Khurasan.[45] Although some of his disciples disapproved of the historical compromise with the ʿAbbasid Caliph, the designation of ʿAli ibn Musa al-Rida as the caliph's successor greatly enhanced his authority and increased the number of his followers from rival and splinter Shiʿi groups.[46] However, he died suddenly in September 818 and was buried in Tus near the tomb of Harun al-Rashid. "It is said," reports the venerable Shaykh al-Mufid of his death, "that it was caused by the subtlest of poisons."[47] Be that as it may, ʿAli al-Rida was succeeded by a child of seven who was rumored to have been adopted and not his natural son.[48] Thus began the crisis of the imamate. Although the Caliph al-Maʾmun supported the young imam, who later became his son-in-law,[49] the effective control of the Imami hierarchy must have passed to the learned men of the community.

THE CRISIS OF THE IMAMATE, THE EXPANSION OF SHIʿISM, AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE ULEMA: 818–74

Imami Shiʿism was prone to recurrent crises of succession upon the death of the imam. Explicit designation (*naṣṣ*) of a successor was institutionalized under the fifth

and sixth imams, but this did not always work well in practice. The sixth imam's successor-designate predeceased him, as did the successor-designate of the tenth imam. But an even more serious threat to the survival of Shiᶜism was the crisis of the imamate itself. This notion requires definition.

Knowledge (*ᶜilm*) had been made the cornerstone of the doctrine of the imamate as elaborated in the mid-8th century under Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq's instructions. Muhammad al-Baqir and Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq had made the authoritative teaching of the scripture and the law the central functions of the imamate. Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq's disciple Hisham ibn al-Hakam had argued in addition for the imam's infallibility (*ᶜiṣma*).[50] Apart from divinely ordained designation by the previous imam, the imams derived their authority from their knowledge and were at times designated as "the learned one" (*ᶜālim*)[51] or even the jurist (*faqīh*).[52] According to a tradition reported by ᶜAli ibn Mahzyar (*Māzyār*), a disciple of the eighth imam, both the fifth and the sixth imams had confirmed that

> the science that descended with Adam is not lifted. Science in inherited. . . . ᶜAli was indeed the learned one (*ᶜālim*) of the community; and no learned one among us dies except when there is a successor after him who knows the like of his science.[53]

The requirement of knowledge as an indispensable condition of the imamate was intimately tied to its crisis in the 9th century. During the seventy-day imamate of ᶜAbd Allah ibn Jaᶜfar in 765 (between the imamates of Jaᶜfar and Musa), many of his followers are reported to have repudiated his imamate because they found him wanting in the requisite knowledge.[54] During the first decade of the 9th century, there was good cause for anxiety among the Shiᶜis concerning the imamate of the eighth Imam, ᶜAli ibn Musa, as he remained childless. But the problem caused by the succession of minors went to the heart of the doctrine of imamate. When the eighth imam died, many prominent figures in the Imami community asked how the new imam, a child of seven, could act as the authoritative teacher of the scripture and the law. In fact, the problem of the knowledge of the seven-year-old imam became the issue over which the Imami community splintered into several groups, with each group proposing its own solution.[55]

The same concern over the knowledge of a minor imam must have arisen once again when the ninth imam died in his twenties in 835 and was succeeded, in turn, by a seven-year-old son whose designation was reported by a servant but contested by a prominent witness present at the late imam's death bed.[56] This time, however, the leading members of the Imami hierarchy who were accustomed to directing the affairs of the community gathered immediately and reached a pragmatic decision. The witness swallowed his objection, and the child, ᶜAli ibn Muhammad, was recognized as imam upon the formal documentation of his designation by his predecessor. For the first time a crisis of succession was avoided, and the Imami Shiᶜis did not split after the death of an imam.[57] The fact that the serious intellectual crisis due to the minority of the imam did not result in any significant splintering of the Imami community after the death of the ninth imam attests to the robustness of the hierarchical organization created by Musa al-Kazim a half-century earlier. His effective control now devolved upon an emerging independent group, the learned of the community, the ulema.

The neglected social context of the history of Shi^{c}ism in this period is the massive conversion of the population of the ^{c}Abbasid empire to Islam.[58] The wave of conversion, to which Imami Shi^{c}ism contributed in competition with other proselytizing groups, created a new profession for the disciples of the imams—and one very different from that of the pro-^{c}Alid tribal condottieri of the civil-war era such as Abu'l-Saraya. Ja^{c}far al-Sadiq is considered a great traditionist, and most of his energy had been devoted to the training of a large number of his followers in the transmission of traditions and development of Shi^{c}i law. However, he also sanctioned theological debates by his followers for the propagation of Shi^{c}ism. The point needs emphasis, for theology was to play the decisive role in the eventual resolution of the crisis of the imamate. It should also be pointed out that four of the five prominent theologians of his generation were non-Arab clients (*mawālī*) from Kufa, while only one was an Arab.[59] In the 9th century, we begin to notice independent legal scholarship by some of the agents of the eighth, ninth, and tenth imams, such as Yunus ibn ^{c}Abd al-Rahman, an early supporter, close disciple, and agent (*wakīl*) of ^{c}Ali al-Rida, and ^{c}Ali ibn Mahzyar, who also transmitted the latter's traditions and became the agent of the two subsequent imams.[60] Both of these agents of the imams were clients (*mawālī*). ^{c}Ali ibn Mahzyar from Ahwaz, an area of expansion of Imami Shi^{c}ism, was a convert from Christianity. Yunus, son of ^{c}Abd al-Rahman (a typical name for a convert) from Qumm, another center of missionary activity,[61] was a client of the Persian vizier, ^{c}Ali ibn Yaqtin. Yunus was frequently called a Manichaean (*zindīq*) by the opponents of rational theology and by the eighth imam himself after Yunus fell out with him. More typically Persian still are the names of some of Yunus ibn ^{c}Abd al-Rahman's disciples: Yunus ibn Bahman and Shadhan ibn al-Khalil of Nishapur, whose son Fadl ibn Shadhan became the most prominent theologian of the next generation. Though Fadl was a leading figure in the Imami community in Nishapur, an active proselytizer who had sought to win over the Tahirid ruler of Khurasan,[62] he does not appear to have acted as an agent for the later imams and in fact challenged the authority of the eleventh imam.[63]

The emerging hierarchy of agents survived the crises of succession to the eighth and ninth imams, and remained under the control of the holy seat of the imam (*al-nāḥiya al-muqaddasa*). During the fifty years of the imamate of the ninth and tenth imams, the chiliastic political orientation prevalent under the seventh imam dissipated, while the hierarchical administration that he created was taken over by the new professional class of ulema. This hierarchical administration was used to expand the community of the faithful during a continuous wave of conversion to Islam.

One of the last acts of the ninth imam, Muhammad ibn ^{c}Ali al-Jawad, in the year of his premature death in 835, was to order the regular collection of *khums*.[64] His son, the tenth imam, ^{c}Ali ibn Muhammad (later al-Hadi) grew out of his minority to become an effective leader and organizer of the expanding Imami communities in Iraq and Iran. His secretariat at the holy seat, directed with considerable vigor by ^{c}Uthman ibn Sa^{c}id al-^{c}Amri, regularized the collection of *khums* for the imam and consulted regularly with various Imami communities on matters of law and ritual. *Khums* was now exacted from the believers as "an obedience to God that guaranteed lawfulness and cleanliness of their wealth and the protection of God for their lives."[65]

Two simultaneous letters of appointment by the tenth imam dated 232 (847–8) divide the presumably expanded "diocese" of a certain ᶜAli ibn al-Husayn ibn ᶜAbd Rabbihi (ᶜAli, son of al-Husayn, son of the servant of his Lord—could one ask for a better name for the son of a convert?) between two new agents. These decrees of investiture are carefully phrased, with a view to establishing the authority of the hierarchy on a firm normative basis. Another directive issued by the tenth imam orders two agents to confine their exercise of authority to their respective diocese and not to accept (collect) contributions from Baghdad, Madaᵓin, or any district other than their own.[66]

The expansion of Shiᶜism in the mid-9th century prompted the Caliph al-Mutawakkil's persecution. In 848, he ordered that Imam ᶜAli al-Hadi be brought to the capital so that he could be kept under close supervision. The secretariat at the seat of the imam also moved from Medina to Samarraᵓ in Iraq. For the next quarter-century, the imams resided in Samarraᵓ rather than in distant Arabia. Samarraᵓ was closer to Ahwaz, Qumm, and Nishapur in Iran, and gave the holy seat easier access to thriving Imami communities in those areas. There was a further eastward shift in the sociological center of gravity in Imami Shiᶜism when the decline of the old Shiᶜi center of Iraq, Kufa, set in a decade or two later.

Mutawakkil had been put on the throne by Turkish slave guards who murdered him in 861. The Shiᶜi martyrological account of the lives of the later imams[67] overlooks the fact that the subsequent ᶜAbbasid caliphs were too weak vis-à-vis the Turkish praetorian slaves, and too preoccupied with the rebellions of the Zaydis and the Zanj, to worry about the rivalry of the late imams who were their non-militant ᶜAlid cousins. One general, Salih ibn Wasif, did imprison the eleventh imam, Hasan al-ᶜAskari, during the short reign of the Caliph al-Muhtadi (869–70),[68] but even so, the imam fared much better than did Muhtadi and the other caliphs at the hands of the Turkish praetorians during that turbulent decade. In other words, persecution of the Imami community must have abated after Mutawakkil. With an abortive uprising in Kufa by the Zaydi ᶜAlid, Yahya ibn ᶜUmar, which began in 864 with the call to "the Rida from the House of Muhammad"[69] and was followed by a successful Zaydi rebellion in Tabaristan in the same year, the ᶜAbbasid caliphs had reason to draw closer to the tenth and eleventh imams, who were called Ibn al-Rida, an appellation evocative of al-Maᵓmun's ᶜAbbasid–ᶜAlid pact. The brother of the Caliph al-Muᶜtazz led the prayer on his behalf at the funeral of the tenth imam, ᶜAli ibn Muhammad al-Hadi, in 868.[70] The eleventh imam frequented the caliphal court as an honored ᶜAlid cousin. When Hasan ibn ᶜAli al-ᶜAskari died in 874, the brother of the Caliph al-Muᶜtamid led the funeral prayer.[71]

The imams, however, faced internal problems within the Imami community. The maintenance of sectarian religious discipline may not have been easy. The period, as has been noted, was marked by the expansion of Shiᶜism in Iran, where chiliasm had strong Zoroastrian and Mazdakite roots. After the Muslim conquest, millennialist Zoroastrian beliefs were given sharpened political form in a number of oracles that variously predicted the return of the savior–king Vahram and that of Peshyotan son of Vishtasp from the legendary Kangdiz fortress.[72] The Iranian masses were led by the *mawālī,* who had been courted and converted by missionaries from various Islamic movements, notably Kharijism, Murjiᶜism, and ᶜAbbasid Shiᶜism.[73] Many

of these recent converts remained prone to neo-Mazdakite and millenarian beliefs, became the followers of Abu Muslim and his partisans during the ᶜAbbasid revolution, and rebelled after his death in 755. They formed a host of Islamico–neo-Mazdakite religious-political movements in the second half of the 8th and the first half of the 9th century.[74] The sundry groupings that had followed Abu Muslim denied his death, maintaining that he was residing in a copper fortress with Mazdak and the Mahdi. The three of them would rise together. These groups later came to believe that Abu Muslim's grandson through his daughter, Fatima, was the Mahdi (Mahdi ibn Firuz, the learned child [*kūdak-e dānā*]).[75] The expansion of Imami Shiᶜism in Nishapur, Qazwin, and Rayy in the 9th century can be assumed to have resulted from massive recruitment from these groups. In the latter part of the 9th century, many neo-Mazdakite areas became centers of expansion of the emergent Ismaᶜili Shiᶜism.[76] The new converts brought their chiliastic propensities, which were satisfied in Ismaᶜili Shiᶜism by the belief in the imminent manifestation of Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq's grandson, Muhammad ibn Ismaᶜil, as the Qaᵓim and Mahdi.[77] Imami Shiᶜism, too, had to accommodate and contain the chiliasm of the new converts. The Persian Imami ulema played an important role in sublimating this chiliasm by relating a large number of traditions that projected it into the future reign of the Qaᵓim. A set of traditions reflecting the aspirations of the new Persian converts during and after the ᶜAbbasid revolution thus made their appearance in Imami literature, predicting that the companions of the Mahdi–Qaᵓim would be the non-Arabs (*ᶜajam*) who would fight the Arabs to avenge the wrong done to the imams.[78] More generally, the Persian traditionists in the 9th century played a key role in the reception of chiliastic traditions into the Imami corpus.[79] The learned Persian *mawālī* ᶜAli ibn Mahzyar and Fadl ibn Shadhan, for instance, figure prominently among the transmitters of apocalyptic traditions: a *Book of Calamities* (of the end of time, *malāḥim*) and a *Book of the Qaᵓim* are attributed to the former, and a *Book of Occultation* to the latter.[80] ᶜAbbad ibn Yaᶜqub al-Usfuri (d. 864), a Zaydi who converted to Imami Shiᶜism, reported a tradition which, despite its dissonance, made its way into the Imami canon among the "four hundred principles" (*uṣūl arba ᶜumiᵓa*). According to the tradition cited by Usfuri in his "principle," there would be eleven (*sic*) imams, who were not named, the last of whom would be the Qaᵓim.[81]

Serious trouble between the tenth imam and some of his Persian agents erupted toward the end of ᶜAli al-Hadi's imamate. Faris ibn Hatim ibn Mahuya al-Qazwini had been active at the frontier-proselytizing city of Qazwin near Daylam and Tabaristan, and was in charge of the collection of the *khums* and contributions from western Iran (Jibal). He became the chief fiscal agent in Samarraᵓ in 862.[82] Two years later, however, the tenth imam, ᶜAli al-Hadi, anathematized him. Faris broke away from ᶜAli al-Hadi and continued to receive the funds from certain communities which he controlled as his own splinter group. The imam was furious and took the unusual step of having him assassinated. The crisis was aggravated by the death of the imam's first son, Muhammad, whom he had designated his successor.[83] When Imam ᶜAli al-Hadi died in 868, he left his chief agent at the holy seat, ᶜUthman ibn Saᶜid al-ᶜAmri, with a default candidate. The imam's successor-designate was dead, and Faris's group, now under the strong leadership of his sister, had picked ᶜAli's younger son Jaᶜfar as its imam.[84] The group claimed that the deceased successor-

designate Muhammad had sent Jaᶜfar the sacred objects and paraphernalia of the imamate. The servant who was said to have conveyed the sacred objects was found drowned in a pool,[85] but what was done could not be undone. ᶜAmri and his supporters in the Imami hierarchy had to make do with the late imam's middle son, al-Hasan. The new imam, Hasan ibn ᶜAli, styled al-ᶜAskari, was a courtier in his twenties who was in regular attendance on the caliph.[86] His manner of life raised doubts about his moral character. He had also been found deficient in legal and and religious knowledge by some of the Imami ulema, and Fadl ibn Shadhan, the prominent Shiᶜi leader of Nishapur, became one of the most outspoken critics. When the tenth imam's oldest son and successor-designate, Muhammad, had passed away, a group of ulema are said to have examined Hasan as a candidate for the imamate and, finding him deficient in the requisite knowledge, turned to his younger brother, Jaᶜfar, calling the faction that was prepared to accept Hasan's imamate the party of the jackass (*ḥimāriyya*).[87]

Nevertheless, ᶜUthman ibn Saᶜid retained the loyalty of many, making a virtue out of the necessity of the imam's lack of interest by further professionalizing the legal consultative service at the seat of the imam. Jurists were now clearly employed in drawing up rescripts at the seat of the imam. Furthermore, a manual purporting to contain the rulings of Imam Hasan al-ᶜAskari was put into circulation; it was later discovered to be the work of another jurist. Meanwhile, religious taxes continued to be justified and collected.[88] All of this was good preparation for carrying out the functions of the imamate from the holy seat without the participation of the imam.

Modarressi argues that the period of the crisis of the imamate witnessed the polarization of the Shiᶜi positions on the nature of the imamate. An extremist position, whose proponents became known as the Mufawwida, considered the imams as supernatural beings to whom God had delegated (*fawwaḍa*) His powers of creation and command. The moderate position countered that the imams were authoritative teachers in religion and law but did not have the knowledge of the unseen, and many moderates did not even accept the "official" principle of the infallibility of the imam.[89] In Nishapur, for instance, the two groups were excommunicating each other.[90] The clash of the two tendencies was aggravated by the death of ᶜAli al-Hadi's successor-designate, which greatly undermined the idea of the imam's infallible knowledge of the unseen and forced some Imamis to resort once more to the notion of God's unexpected change of mind (*badāᵓ*),[91] an idea they had borrowed from the Kaysaniyya a century earlier when Jaᶜfar al-Sadiq's successor-designate had predeceased him.[92] The crisis of the imamate and the breakdown of control from the holy seat after the death of the tenth imam resulted in an outbreak of "extremist" chiliasm (*ghuluww*), led by a group of Qummis identified with ᶜAli ibn Hasaka, al-Qasim ibn Yaqtin, and Muhammad ibn Baba, whose aim was the deification of the deceased imam.[93]

The eleventh imam's reported complaint that none of his forefathers had been as much doubted by the faithful as he was[94] sums up the culmination of the crisis of the imamate at the end of the five years and eight months of his tenure. Hasan ibn ᶜAli al-ᶜAskari's troubled imamate came to an end with his death on Friday, 1 January 874. "He died and no offspring (*khalaf*) [or vestige (*athar*)] was seen after him. As no apparent child for him was known, his inheritance was divided between

his brother, Jaᶜfar, and his mother."[95] This clear statement in our earliest sources that Hasan died childless is corroborated by his will, in which he bequeathed his property to his mother with no mention whatsoever of a son.[96]

HIEROCRATIC AUTHORITY AFTER THE CESSATION OF THE HISTORICAL IMAMATE AND THE DOMINANCE OF THE NAWBAKHTIS: 874–941

After the cessation of the historical imamate, the leadership of the Imami community can be seen to devolve onto two groups: a fledgling hierarchy of ulema and agents loyal to the seat of the imam, and the politically powerful Imami families in the service of the caliphal state. Given the serious difficulties in institutionalizing hierocratic authority, it is not surprising that the influence of the office-holding aristocracy became predominant, especially with the rise of this class's fortunes during the caliphate of al-Muqtadir (903–32) and al-Radi (934–41). In this period, the Shiᶜi viziers of the House of Furat intermittently controlled the caliphal bureaucracy, while the members of the Nawbakhti family and other Imami Shiᶜi served as tax farmers, officials, and lesser viziers. With the absence of the imam, these families, especially the Nawbakhtis, came to exercise a preponderant influence over the perplexed Imami hierarchy and community.[97]

After the death of the eleventh imam, Hasan ibn ᶜAli, in 874, his followers splintered into some fourteen groups. The ᶜAmri father and son, who had directed the secretariat of the tenth and eleventh imams, maintained their control over a number of agents. Unlike many of the Imamiyya,[98] they refused to accept the imamate of Hasan's rival brother, Jaᶜfar, and instead opted for an allegedly minor son of the deceased imam who was said to be in occultation.[99] The father, ᶜUthman ibn Saᶜid, who carried out the funerary rites for the eleventh imam,[100] does not seem to have survived him by long, and in any event had by that time delegated his authority in the routine running of the secretariat at the seat of the imam to his son, Muhammad. Ibn al-ᶜAmri, Abu Jaᶜfar Muhammad ibn ᶜUthman, overcame significant opposition to his succeeding his father as the chief agent of the imam,[101] and appears to have remained in control of the holy seat for more than forty years, until he died in 917. At some point after the abandonment of Samarraᵓ by the caliph at the end of the 9th century, the holy seat and the imam's secretariat also moved to Baghdad. Given the uncertainties surrounding the existence of an imam after the death of the eleventh imam, Ibn al-ᶜAmri sought to draw legitimacy from having acted on behalf of the eleventh imam and on behalf of his own father after the latter's death.[102] In the 860s and early 870s, decrees and letters of the tenth and eleventh imams had been sent to various Imami communities in Muhammad ibn ᶜUthman al-ᶜAmri's handwriting. For more than two decades after the death of the eleventh imam, community leaders continued to receive letters and decrees from the seat of the hidden imam in the same handwriting (i.e., Muhammad ibn ᶜUthman's).[103] This handwriting later came to be considered that of the Lord of the House, alternatively identified as the Lord of the Age or the hidden imam.[104] At some point in the mid-890s, the issuance of decrees and letters from the hidden imam ceased, and the collection of the *khums* on his behalf was discontinued.[105] In the rescript that was probably the last to be issued in the hand of Ibn al-ᶜAmri, around 895, we find the remarkable admission

that the previous imams could not rise against the caliphs because of their oaths of allegiance, coupled with the promise that the hidden imam would rise against a ruler to whom he owed no allegiance. The rescript then compares the hidden imam to the sun when hidden behind clouds, thus giving the first central element of the future Shiᶜi theology of occultation—namely, that the benefits of the imamate as the continuous divine guidance of mankind continue despite the absence of the imam.[106]

Despite the cessation of decrees and letters from the seat of the hidden imam in the 890s, Imami hierocratic leadership appears to have maintained its ties with the community in the region around Qumm into the first decades of the 10th century, with Ahmad ibn Ishaq and Muhammad ibn Jaᶜfar al-Asadi representing it in Qumm and Rayy, respectively.[107] To enhance the unity and authority of the Imami hierarchy, Ibn al-ᶜAmri and the Nawbakhtis may also have encouraged visits from the prominent Imami scholars of Qumm. ᶜAbd Allah ibn Jaᶜfar al-Himyari al-Qummi, the "Shaykh of the Qummis," came to Iraq around 903 to lecture to the Imami Shiᶜa in Kufa. Among his writings (no longer extant) are a *Book of Occultation and Perplexity* and books on the transmission of traditions from the eighth and ninth imams, together with one on the correspondence of the scholars with the tenth imam. These are followed by tracts on *The Legal Questions Answered by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan [the Eleventh Imam] by the Hand of Muḥammad ibn ᶜUthmān al-ᶜAmrī*, *Responsa and Decrees of Abū Muḥammad*, and the *Book of Transmitters of Traditions from the Lord of the Cause (ṣāḥib al-amr)*—that is, the hidden imam. These works clearly reinforce the sense of continuity in the teaching and authority of the hierarchy between the period of occultation and that of the historical imamate. The great traditionist Muhammad ibn Yaᶜqub al-Kulayni (d. 941) also moved from Rayy to Baghdad some time in the era of the Nawbakhtis.

By the beginning of the 10th century, we find Abu Sahl Ismaᶜil ibn ᶜAli (d. 923), the head of the Nawbakhti family and a prominent and cultivated bureaucrat, the leader of the Imami Shiᶜa in Baghdad. Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti played a critical role in the darkest era of Imami Shiᶜism at both the practical and the intellectual level. To ensure the survival of Shiᶜism in the absence of an imam, he helped make the occultation of the imam a permanent feature of the Imami hierarchical organization. He also made occultation a central ingredient in the doctrine of the imamate, which, according to Iqbal, he was the first to cast into the framework of systematic theology.[108] At the practical level, the Nawbakhtis were close to Ibn al-ᶜAmri, whose forceful daughter, Umm Kulthum, had married a Nawbakhti. Abu Sahl endorsed Ibn al-ᶜAmri's unique hierocratic authority as sole surviving member of the inner circle of the eleventh imam.[109] When Ibn al-ᶜAmri died in 917, the direction of the holy seat of the imam was taken over by a member of the Nawbakhti family, Husayn ibn Ruh, who is improbably said to have been active at the bureau even under the tenth imam.[110]

Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti's more crucial contribution to the resolution of the crisis of the imamate in the long run, however, was at the intellectual level. Muᶜtazilite theology, the main rationalist trend in medieval Islam, was a powerful element in the culture of 9th- and 10th-century Baghdad. Although there is no evidence that Nawbakhti studied at any Muᶜtazilite school, he was familiar with this group's ideas and wished to equip Imami Shiᶜis with the most advanced rational tools so that they could both withstand the extremist splinter groups (*ghulāt*) and the revolutionary

Isma^{c}ili Shi^{c}ism of the Qarmatians, and vie with mainstream Sunnism. To this end, it is probable that it was he, as the leader of the Imami community of Baghdad, who commissioned Ibn al-Rawandi, a former Mu^{c}tazilite, non-Imami, practitioner of the *kalām* (rational theology) with whom he engaged in debate on other topics, to write a book for thirty dinars on the imamate from the Imami point of view.[111] The reason for this unusual measure appears to have been the paucity of trained theologians within an overwhelmingly traditionalist Imami community. Qumm, where the staunchest traditionalism prevailed, had become the major center of Imami learning in the last quarter of the 9th century. Consequently, as Madelung points out, Shi^{c}ism and Mu^{c}tazilism were poles apart at the end of the 9th century.[112] The picture was changing, however, and we know of two instances of individuals with theological training who had converted from Mu^{c}tazilism to Shi^{c}ism in central Iran using their skills to defend Shi^{c}i beliefs by rationalist means.[113] At this juncture, Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti himself and his nephew Hasan ibn Musa (d. between 912 and 922) became leading proponents of theology in Imami Shi^{c}ism.

The strategy chosen by Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti and the former Mu^{c}tazilites was to find a theological solution to the problems of imamate and occultation, using rational argumentation rather than adducing traditions. The rationale of any theological argument would tend to conjoin the occurrence of occultation and the nature of the imamate, thereby establishing the necessity of occultation. Nawbakhti's political orientation and hierocratic interests required that the idea of occultation be detached from its chiliastic matrix. His intellectual interests and Mu^{c}tazilite sympathies suggested that the idea could be de-apocalypticized only with the help of a *theology* of occultation.[114]

The first theological tracts on occultation appear some thirty years after the absence of the imam. The point made in the last rescript issued from the seat of the hidden imam—namely, that occultation does not obviate the benefits of divine guidance of mankind through the imamate—was taken up and developed by Muhammad ibn ^{c}Abd al-Rahman ibn Qiba, a theologian from Rayy who was a convert from the Mu^{c}tazilite school. Ibn Qiba insisted that the occultation of the imam was the logical conclusion of the doctrine of imamate.[115] Although some of his rationalist arguments were rejected in the course of the subsequent development of Shi^{c}ism, his linkage of the theories of the imamate and occultation proved definitive.

In three polemical tracts that Modarressi dates to the closing years of the 9th century, Ibn Qiba firmly places the discussion of the existence and occultation of "the son of Hasan ibn ^{c}Ali" in the broader context of the theory of imamate. When rejecting the antinomianism of the contemporary Qarmatians, Ibn Qiba al-Razi insists that "the only need for an Imam is for religion and the establishment of the rule of divine law (*ḥukm al-sharī^{c}a*)."[116] The imams are authoritative teachers in religion and law and proof of God and of His guidance of mankind. Therefore they must exist. The occultation of "the son of Hasan ibn ^{c}Ali" does not obviate the divine guidance of mankind any more than does the absence of a prophet in every community and every age.[117] Ibn Qiba uses the analogy with prophecy to establish that such a person need not be present, but may well be in occultation. In addition, he formulates an argument for the existence of an imam in occultation that is destined to be incorporated into the Shi^{c}i theology of occultation. To establish the existence of an imam in occultation, Ibn Qiba assumes the truth of the doctrine of the imamate,

which asserts that the imam is the Proof of God (*ḥujjat Allāh*)—or rather of his continued guidance for mankind; therefore, there must be an imam after the prophets. Furthermore, he modifies the condition in the doctrine—namely, that the imamate is made valid by the explicit designation (*naṣṣ*) of the previous imam—into the assertion that an imam does not pass away without explicitly designating a successor.[118] This argument is then buttressed by the testimony as to the hidden imam's designation by the inner circle, as with the previous imams, and by the fact that the close associates of the imam "communicate his existence, and his commands and prohibitions."[119]

More or less at the same time that Ibn Qiba al-Razi was debating his opponents in Rayy, Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti in Baghdad composed a *Kitāb al-tanbīh*. No doubt Abu Sahl was implicitly dissociating Imami Shiᶜism from the revolutionary chiliasm of the contemporary Ismaᶜili Qarmatians, as Ibn Qiba had done explicitly. Writing in or about 903, our Persian aristocrat was at pains to rebut the accusation that Shiᶜi held quasi-Zoroastrian beliefs:

> If they object to our holding the same claims [concerning ᶜAli] as the disciples of Zoroaster and other heretics, it would be said to them that the same objections apply to the miracles of the Prophet. . . . The position of the Shiᶜa at this time is like that of the majority of Muslims. . . . Indeed the Shiᶜite traditions are stronger because the turn in power (*dawla*) is not with them, nor is the sword, nor intimidation, nor eagerness [to seize power].

Abu Sahl correctly perceived that the problem of the absence of an imam can best be solved by rational theology:

> The matter of religion in its entirety is known through reasoning. We know God through rational proofs and do not see Him. Nor does anyone who has seen Him report to us. We know the Prophet and his existence in the world through reports, and we know his prophethood and truth through reasoning.

The substance of Abu Sahl's argument was similar to Ibn Qiba's. He maintained that as the absence of a prophet does not invalidate his religious teaching or his legal rulings, so the absence of the imam does not impair the validity of religion or of the law. Finally, Abu Sahl adopts the chiliastic neo-Waqifite notion that there can be two occultations[120] in order to explain the breakdown of communication between the hidden imam and the community:

> For him, there are two occultations, one of them harder than the other.

In the last paragraph of the *Tanbīh* that has been preserved for us,[121] Abu Sahl brags that the claim of the Imami Shiᶜis regarding the occultation of the imam is not as implausible as that of the Waqifiyya, whose imam had died 105 years before. A decade or so later, however, as we have seen, Abu Sahl's nephew and fellow theologian wrote that the eleventh imam had died with no apparent successor.[122] It is probably at this time that Abu Sahl gave up the nonchalant assertion of the existence of an actual imam in occultation. According to the testimony of Ibn al-Nadim:

> He had an idea about the Qaᵓim of the family of Muhammad which no one had held earlier. This was what he used to say: "I say that the Imam was *Muhammad* b. al-Hasan but he died in occultation, and his son has assumed his authority during the occultation, and so it will be with his son's issue, until God consummates his dominion by causing him to appear."[123]

Here Abu Sahl breaks the prohibition on naming the hidden imam, which had been backed by traditions attributed to several imams[124] and which he even mentioned in the *Tanbīh*.[125] "The son of Hasan" is now named as Muhammad, possibly for the first time by an Imami authority, but only to assert his death.[126] Furthermore, not wishing to contradict the evidence of the senses, Abu Sahl propounds the view that there is a series of imams in occultation, only the last of whom would become manifest and rise. This was not a satisfactory solution, but it reveals the problem that had to be solved to ensure the survival of Imami Shi^{c}ism. It suggests that a satisfactory non-chiliastic solution to the problem would require much greater abstraction from the historical context of succession and could take the form only of a *theology* of occultation.

Therefore it is hardly surprising that Nawbakhti's later opinion did not make it into the Shi^{c}i canon. Nevertheless, there is no good reason to reject its authenticity.[127] It seems to be an adaptation of neo-Waqifite ideas, and is perfectly in line with our reconstruction of the development of the idea of occultation. The problem with this view is not that it is implausible, but that it is nontheological. Abu Sahl may have despaired of developing his theological arguments further in the face of immediate challenges by Imami chiliasts, and simply declared dead the person they were claiming to be in communication with. Yet, as the developments in the 11th century were to demonstrate, only a theological argument could sufficiently decontextualize the issue to constitute a permanent solution to the crisis of hierocratic authority.[128]

Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti's new view on occultation makes good sense in historical context. During the last decade of his life, Abu Sahl was having great trouble with extremists within the Imami community who were claiming to be direct representatives of the hidden imam. Sometime in the early 910s an Imami mystic and millenarian who was to acquire great fame, Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj, was distributing money to the poor in Ahwaz in the style of the chiliastic figure of al-Saffah (the generous one),[129] and challenged Abu Sahl as the leader of the Shi^{c}i community by writing to him: "I am the agent (*wakīl*) of the Lord of the Age (*ṣāḥib al-zamān*)."[130] Abu Sahl probably used his considerable influence as a high functionary of the caliphal state under al-Muqtadir and his close ties with the influential Zahirite school of law—which the Imami Shi^{c}i accepted in court, because their own was not enforced—to suppress al-Hallaj and his movement.[131] Furthermore, in 914–15, shortly after Hallaj's initial challenge, a man claimed to be the son of the eleventh imam, Hasan al-^{c}Askari, returning from occultation in Baghdad.[132] Caliph al-Muqtadir required little persuasion to put the pretender behind bars, but the episode was deeply disturbing for Abu Sahl and the Imami hierarchy. It is possible that Abu Sahl's later view that the son of Hasan had died in occultation was in part a response to this last pretender, though here we can only speculate. We are on firmer historical ground in putting forward the hypothesis that the trouble with the pretenders made Abu Sahl, the aged Ibn al-^{c}Amri, and Ibn al-^{c}Amri's energetic daughter Umm Kulthum think of strengthening the authority of the director of the holy seat. A new designation, *safīr* (intermediary), seems to have been put in circulation around this time in order to upgrade the office of the chief representative as the sole official intermediary between the imam and the Shi^{c}is.[133]

The opportunity to institutionalize the office of a sole intermediary with the imam presented itself when Muhammad ibn 'Uthman al-'Amri died in 917. The secretariat of the hidden imam was by now in Baghdad. Abu'l-Qasim Husayn ibn Ruh al-Nawbakhti[134] was established as the official intermediary (*safīr*) between the hidden imam and the community. Umm Kulthum testified that her father had designated Husayn ibn Ruh as his intermediary.[135] More important than the new designation of the upgraded office was the decision of the Imami hierarchy to reopen official communication with the hidden imam after a quarter-century. On 9 April 918, the newly ensconced *safīr*, Husayn ibn Ruh al-Nawbakhti, produced the first new decree issued by the hidden imam.[136] The subject of the decree, it is interesting to note, was the confirmation of Ibn Ruh, the new head of the hierarchy. The issuance of decrees emanating from the hidden imam was thus resumed.

Ibn Ruh appears to have strengthened the holy seat's ties with its compatriots in Iran. He is reported to have spoken the Persian dialect of Avah with a woman from that area who was visiting him.[137] With the resumption of communication between the imam and his Shi'is, Ibn Ruh corresponded regularly with the Imami communities in Iran. In one decree issued under Ibn Ruh, intended no doubt to strengthen his ties with the community in Qumm, the hidden imam congratulated the traditionist 'Ali ibn Babuya on the birth of his son, whom he blessed.[138]

CONCLUSION: THE CRISIS OF HIEROCRATIC AUTHORITY AND THE DECLARATION OF THE COMPLETE OCCULTATION

Abu Sahl died in a troubled period which resulted in the fall of the House of Furat. Ibn Ruh was imprisoned when his patrons, Abu'l Hasan al-Furat and his son Muhsin, were executed in 924. Ibn Ruh's deputy, Shalmaghani, another protégé of the Banu al-Furat in the caliphal bureaucracy, fled to Mosul. Until then, Shalmaghani had served Ibn Ruh in the secretariat of the hidden imam and had written many books dealing with legal matters for use by the Imami community.[139] Among these was a *Book of Duties* (*kitāb al-taklīf*) that Shalmaghani had composed in close consultation with Ibn Ruh and upon his request; the contents had been approved by the jurists of Qumm except for one ruling.[140] Shalmaghani then fell out with Ibn Ruh and claimed deputyship of the hidden imam for himself. Ibn Ruh's reaction from prison was to issue, in March 926, a decree purporting to emanate from the hidden imam which excommunicated Shalmaghani.[141] As an insider of the secretariat of the absent imam, Shalmaghani knew, as did Ibn Ruh, that everything was up for grabs—or, as he put it, "[W]e were wrangling over this matter like dogs over a corpse."[142]

Shalmaghani used his claim to be the gate of the hidden imam to push Hallajian heterodoxy to the utmost, creating a dualistic religion that was no longer recognizable as Islam and identifying the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad with Satan. Particularly alarming was Shalmaghani's adoption of the late-Zoroastrian chiliastic oracles on the return of a Persian savior–king in connection with the idea of occultation as expressed in a poem by one of his followers:

> Verily is He [i.e., God] a unity without qualification
> Uniting with every unitarian,

Mixing with light and darkness.
O Seeker of the House of Hashim [Muhammad's House]
And denier of the House of the Chosroes
Of non-Arab descent is he who is indeed in occultation [*ghāba*]
In the Persian is the agreeable merit
As Luʾayy once appeared among the Arabs.[143]

This follower of Shalmaghani, the jurist-turned-pantheistic-chiliast, omits all reference to the putative "son of Hasan," and like many Iranian converts expects the return from occultation of a savior from the Persian royal house.

Upon his release from prison in 929, Husayn ibn Ruh came to terms with the agent in Mosul and brought the fiscal administration of the region back under the control of the holy seat.[144] He also used his return to political power and the favorable disposition of al-Radi, who became caliph in 934, to destroy his chiliastic enemy, Shalmaghani, as Abu Sahl before him had done with Shalmaghani's inspirer, Hallaj. Shalmaghani was arrested and tried with his followers, and was eventually executed in November 935.[145]

It is worth noting that during the seven decades of the crisis of the imamate and absence of the imam, women played a prominent role in the Shiʿi community. The sister of Faris al-Qazwini became the leader of her brother's followers after his assassination, aligning them with Jaʿfar and against the eleventh imam. The eleventh imam's mother played an important role after his death, on the opposite side from Faris's sister, opposing Jaʿfar and claiming that the deceased Hasan al-ʿAskari had left behind a pregnant concubine. The eleventh imam's aunt and sister were also drawn into this struggle.[146] Finally, Umm Kulthum, the daughter of Muhammad ibn ʿUthman al-ʿAmri, played an important role in securing the succession of her husband's kinsman, Ibn Ruh al-Nawbakhti, to her father and thus creating the institution of *sifāra*. She also supported Ibn Ruh in the struggle against chiliasm and Shalmaghani.[147]

Ibn Ruh did not survive his foe for long: he died in June 938. According to the official Shiʿi history, which anachronistically counts the ʿAmris as *safīr*s, Ibn Ruh was the "third" *safīr* to the hidden imam and was succeeded by ʿAli ibn Muhammad al-Samari as the fourth and last *safīr*. As a historical figure, Samari is pale indeed. He is essentially on the record for performing a single task: the abolition of the short-lived institution of *sifāra* by the proclamation of the complete (*tāmma*) occultation to last until the end of time. As Ibn Ruh's claim to reopened communication with the hidden imam had generated disturbing counterclaims of the putative *abwāb*s (gates), it is not unreasonable to regard Samari as a cipher for the failed project to institutionalize central hierocratic authority in the form of *sifāra*. Six days before his death in 941, Samari reportedly produced a decree from the hidden Imam:

> In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. O, ʿAli ibn Muhammad al-Samari . . . you will die in six days. Settle your affairs, and leave no testament in favor of anyone to fill your office after your death. Indeed, the second [variant: the complete (*tāmma*)] occultation has occurred, and there will be no *parousia* save with God's permission.[148]

Foreseeing trouble like that faced by the Nawbakhtis, the decree continues:

There will soon be among my Shi^{c}a those who claim to have seen me. Indeed, whoever claims seeing me before the rising of the Sufyani and the cosmic battle cry (*ṣaiḥa*) is a slanderous liar.

This declaration could not deter other claimants to gatehood, including a nephew of Ibn al-^{c}Amri, from rising after Samari's death.[149] When reportedly asked whether he would appoint a successor six days later, Samari quipped: "The matter is God's; He will make it reach completion."[150] With these words he died, leaving behind no successor and no doctrine of occultation.

The multiplication of extremist claimants to the "gatehood" of the hidden imam, and the cessation of communication between the imam's holy seat and the Shi^{c}i community for a second time,[151] deepened the sense of trial (*miḥna*) in this period of perplexity (*ḥayra*), and many Imami Shi^{c}is left the fold, threatening Imami Shi^{c}ism with extinction.[152] In the short run, the theoretical solution to the crisis of the imamate by Nawbakhti and Ibn Qiba al-Razi was not accompanied by a practical solution to the crisis of hierocratic authority and had little immediate effect on the morale of the Shi^{c}i community. In the long run, however, a permanent solution required recovering these pioneering theological statements, as was done by Ibn Babuya in the latter part of the 10th century.[153] It was in fact upon the foundations that these statements had laid that the idea of occultation was detached from its chiliastic context during the 11th century, the period of the maximal Mu^{c}tazilite impact on Imami Shi^{c}ism. The 11th-century Imami doctors could then integrate the doctrine of the occultation of the last imam into their rational theology. The idea of occultation was deapocalypticized and transformed into a fixed component of the Shi^{c}i theodicy and theology. At the same time, hierocratic authority became institutionalized in a manner consistent with the nomocratic theology of occultation.[154]

NOTES

Author's note: I am grateful to Professor Wilferd Madelung for his comments on an earlier draft of this article.

[1]H. Halm, *Die Schia* (Darmstadt, 1988), 27–30; P. Crone, "On the Meaning of the ^{c}Abbasid Call to *al-Riḍā*," in *The Islamic World. Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, ed. C. E. Bosworth, C. Issawi, R. Savory, and A. L. Udovitch (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1989), 98–99.

[2]The correspondence between Ibrahim and Ja^{c}far al-Sadiq was still extant in the eleventh century (Aḥmad ibn ^{c}Alī al-Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī* [Qumm, 1986–87], 355–56).

[3]S. Husain M. Jafri, *Origins and Development of Shi^{c}a Islam* (London and New York: Longman, 1979), 273.

[4]Muḥammad ibn ^{c}Umar al-Kashshī, *Rijāl*, abridged by Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī as *Ikhtiyār Ma^{c}rifat al-Rijāl*, ed. H. Muṣṭafavī, (Mashhad, 1970), 245; Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Nu^{c}mān, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād* (Qumm: Baṣiratī, n.d.), 12–13, English trans. I. K. A. Howard, *Kitāb al-Irshād. The Book of Guidance* (London: The Muhammadi Trust, 1981), 6; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl-i Abī-Tālib* (Najaf, 1956), 3:378–79, 389. For an overview, see Halm, *Die Schia*, 34–35.

[5]Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta$^{\supset}$rīkh*, 3:103; English trans., *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 28: *^{c}Abbasid Authority Affirmed*, trans. J. D. McAuliffe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 24. See also the references cited in McAuliffe's note (23, n. 117), especially *Akhbār al-Dawlah* (231), and Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 273. *Yaqṭīn* (meaning pumpkin) must be an Arabicization of Abu Muslim's appellation, *yak dīn* ([man of] one religion), designed to attest the sincerity and pure monotheism of a new convert.

[6]W. Madelung, "A Treatise of the Sharīf al-Murtaḍā on the Legality of Working for Government (*mas$^{\supset}$ala fī'l-^{c}amal ma^{c}a'l- ṣultān)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43, 1 (1980): 18.

[7]The seventh imam praised ʿAli ibn Yaqtin for being among God's friends placed with oppressors "in order to protect His friends through them" (Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 433). The eighth imam similarly considered Muhammad ibn Ismaʿil ibn Baziʿ among those placed at the gates of the oppressors "in order to protect His friends through them; through them God promotes the affairs of the Muslims, and with them is the refuge of the believers from harm" (Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 331).

[8]The first member of the family to convert may have been his son, whose string of unpronounceable patrilineal Persian names made the caliph smile and call him Abu Sahl (father of the easy) (ʿA. Iqbāl, *Khāndān-e Nawbakhtī* [Tehran, 1932], 11). The fact that Abu Sahl's son, Fadl, personally reports his difference of opinion with other astrologers concerning the ominousness of the hour of the designation of ʿAli al-Rida in the Imami collections suggests that the family soon became Imamis, even if they did not have that affiliation from the beginning (ibid., 20; Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Bābūya, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-riḍā*, 2 vols., ed. M. M. al-Kharsānī [Naja, 1970], 2:145–47).

[9]Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, *Kitāb Firaq al-Shīʿa*, ed. H. Ritter, (Istanbul, 1931), 53–54; Saʿd ibn ʿAbd Allah al-Ashʿarī al-Qummī, *Kitāb al-Maqālāt wa'l-Firaq*, ed. M. J. Mashkūr, (Tehran, 1963), 76. The branch of Muhammad al-Baqir's Shiʿi who are said to have accepted the Hasanid Muhammad ibn ʿAbd Allah as Qaᵓim and Mahdi evidently did so long after the fifth imam's death.

[10]Abū'l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-Ṭālibīyyin*, ed. A. Ṣaqr (Cairo, 1949), 277–78.

[11]Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-ghayba*, ed. Āghā Buzurg al-Tihrānī, (Najaf, 1965), 119, 255.

[12]W. al-Qāḍī, *al-Kaysāniyya fi'l-taᵓrikh wa'l-Adab* (Beirut, 1974), 195–96; Halm, *Die Schia*, 24–26.

[13]J. van Ess, "Das *Kitāb al-Irǧāᵓ* des Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya," *Arabica* 21 (1974): 24.

[14]*Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1978), 836–38, s.v. "Kaysaniyya" (W. Madelung).

[15]The Sayyid can be taken as representative of the group of Kaysanis won over to Imami Shiʿism by the fifth and sixth imams. The existence of such a group can be inferred from the conciliatory tone of the early Imami traditions concerning Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya which allege that he accepted the imamate of his nephew (the fourth imam) before dying (ʿAlī ibn Bābūya, *al-Imāma wa'l-tabṣira min al-ḥayra*, ed. M. R. al-Husyanī [Beirut, 1987], 193–95). In one tradition, the fifth imam denies Muhammad's imamate but confirms that he had been the Mahdi (ibid., 193).

[16]Mufīd, *Irshād*, 284; English trans., 430.

[17]Ibid., 284. The version I have translated varies slightly from the one given in the printed *Kamāl* but is identical to the version found in some of its manuscripts (Ibn Bābūya, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn wa tamām al-niʿma fī ithbāt al-ghayba wa kashf al-ḥayra*, ed. A. A. Ghaffārī [Tehran, 1970], 35, n. 6–7).

[18]M. G. S. Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shiʿa Become Sectarian?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75 (1955): 12.

[19]Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 57; Ashʿarī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 79–80.

[20]Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 65–67; Ashʿarī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 87–89. Ismaʿil, the son Jaʿfar had designated as his successor, had predeceased him.

[21]When Musa's death was announced, one group among his followers could not decide whether he was dead or alive because of "the many traditions proving that he was the Qaᵓim, the Mahdi" (Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 69; Ashʿarī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 91). For instance, a tradition in which Musa affirms that he is the Qaᵓim (*al-qāᵓim bi'l-ḥaqq*) is doctored by adding the phrase "but the Qaᵓim who cleanses the earth from God's enemies and fills it with justice . . . is the fifth of my descendants for whom there is a long occultation" (Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 391). See also ʿAlī ibn Bābūya, *Imāma*, 147.

[22]H. Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shiʿite Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1993), 10–14.

[23]Ibid., 87; Mufīd, *Irshād*, 303, English trans., 456. According to a *qāᵓim* tradition attributed to the fifth imam by the Wāqifiyya in connection with Musa al-Kazim, "For the lord of this cause (*ṣāḥib hādha'l-amr*) are four precedents: a precedent (*sunna*) from Moses and a precedent from Joseph, a precedent from Jesus and a precedent from Muhammad. From Moses that he is afraid and watchful, *from Joseph the prison*, from Jesus that it was said he was dead and he did not die, and from Muhammad the sword" (ʿAlī ibn Bābūya, *Imāma*, 234–35; Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 152–53, emphasis added). A later variant attributes the saying to the sixth imam, changes the traditions of Joseph and Jesus, and substitutes the *qāᵓim* for the lord of the cause (Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 28; S. A. Arjomand, "The Consolation of

Theology: The Shiᶜite Doctrine of Occultation and the Transition from Chiliasm to Law," *Journal of Religion* 76, 4 (1996): n. 31 for English trans.

[24]To forestall this, the caliph had in vain had the dead body of Musa al-Kazim identified and inspected by the judges, the Hashemites, and the army chiefs of the capital (Aḥmad ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Yaᶜqūbī, *Taᵓrīkh [Historiae]*, 2 vols., ed. M. Th. Houtsma [Leiden, 1883], 2:499). Some fifty to seventy men from his Shiᶜa were reported to have been among those who inspected his corpse (Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 38–39). Abū'l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (*Maqātil*, 504–5) reports that the body was even put on public display on a bridge in Baghdad. Nevertheless, some extremists among the Waqifiyya, who claimed divinity for Musa, continued to believe that he was the Qaᵓim. One Muhammad ibn Bashir even claimed access to the divine Qaᵓim, and reportedly offered favored followers views of a finely dressed man (or statue) who impersonated Musa (Ashᶜarī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 62–63; Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 477–81).

[25]Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 68; Ashᶜarī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 89–90.

[26]Halm, *Die Schia*, 38–39.

[27]Modarressi, *Crisis*, 62; among cited references, see esp. Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 405, 467, and Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 300.

[28]Ibn Bābūya, *ᶜUyūn*, 1:17–18.

[29]Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 465–67, 498–99, 506–8.

[30]Ibid., 464, 553.

[31]Al-Ṭabarī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 3:976; English trans., *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 32: *The Reunification of the ᶜAbbasid Caliphate*, trans. C. E. Bosworth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 9, 12; Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil*, 523; F. Gabrieli, *Al-Maᵓmun e gli ᶜAlidi* (Leipzig, 1929), 5, 15–16.

[32]Al-Tabarī, *Taᵓrikh*, 3:986, 999; English trans., 32:26–27, 44.

[33]Ibid., 3:987–88; English trans., 32:28–30; H. Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 209.

[34]Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil*, 539. Muhammad's brother ᶜAli ibn Jaᶜfar is said to have fought with him in Mecca (ibid., 540).

[35]Madelung, "New Documents concerning al-Maᵓmun, al-Faḍl b. Sahl and ᶜAlī al-Riḍā," in *Studia Arabica & Islamica. Festschrift für Iḥsān ᶜAbbās*, ed. W. al-Qāḍī (Beirut, 1981), 337.

[36]Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil*, 540.

[37]Yaᶜqūbī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 2:545–46.

[38]Madelung, "New Documents," 336.

[39]Gabrieli, *Maᵓmun*, 32–45.

[40]Madelung, "New Documents," 338.

[41]S. A. Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 58, citing a tradition from Yaᶜqūbī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 2:500. The eighth imam strongly disapproved of his revolutionary brother, Zayd al-Nar (Ibn Bābūya, *ᶜUyūn*, 2:234–38).

[42]These phrases are used in Maᵓmun's letter to the ᶜAbbasid rebels in Baghdad (Madelung, "New Documents," 345). The *parousia* of the Mahdi was expected for the year 200 (815), and according to one apocalyptic tradition later excised from Nuᶜaym ibn Ḥammād's *Kitāb al-fitan*, the last of the Banu ᶜAbbas was called ᶜAbd Allah "and he is the last lord of the *ᶜayn* among them . . . ; he will be the key to the tribulation and sword of perdition" (cited by Madelung, "New Documents," 345).

[43]Ibid., 343; translation of "*Kitāb al-dawla*" modified.

[44]Ibn Bābūya, *ᶜUyūn*, chaps. 36–37. His "stepping station" (*qadamgāh*) in a village near Nishapur is a popular place of pilgrimage.

[45]As many pages of Ibn Bābūya's *ᶜUyūn* are devoted to these two years as to the rest of ᶜAli al-Rida's career. Although he was known as a teacher of traditions and law in the Hijaz, much of his legal teaching belongs to the vice-royal period. A considerable section (*ᶜUyūn*, chaps. 34–35), for instance, is transmitted by Fadl ibn Shadhan, who was presumably introduced to the imam in Nishapur at a young age (ibid., 2:119).

[46]Many Zaydis, presumably including the failed rebels, were among these (Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 73; Ashᶜarī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 94).

[47]Mufīd, *Irshād*, 316; English trans., 478.

[48]Modarressi, *Crisis*, 63.

[49]Yaᶜqūbī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 2:552–53; Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 27; Ashᶜarī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 93.

[50]*Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "ᶜISMA" (W. Madelung).

[51]E. Kohlberg, "Imam and Community in the Pre-Ghayba Period," in *Authority and Political Culture in Shiᶜism*, ed. S. A. Arjomand (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988), 25; Modarressi, *Crisis*, 29–31.

[52]For example, Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 228.

[53]Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 223. Another tradition by the same transmitter (on whom, see the next note) reports the sixth imam as saying: "The earth is not left in place except for a learned one who knows the permissible and whatever the people are in need of, while he does not need the people" (ibid., 223; 224 for similar traditions).

[54]Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 65; Ashᶜarī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 87.

[55]Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 74–76; Ashᶜarī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 95–99.

[56]Muhammad ibn Yaᶜqūb al-Kulaynī al-Rāzī, *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, ed. J. Muṣṭafavī, (Tehran: ᶜIlmiyya Islāmiyya, n.d.), 2:110–12; Modarressi, *Crisis*, 64.

[57]This is the only case of succession to an Imam in which no schism is reported. Only a few Imamis are said to have proposed an even younger son of the deceased Imam but soon returned to the fold (Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 77; Ashᶜarī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 99–100).

[58]R. W. Bulliet, "Conversion to Islam and the Emergence of a Muslim Society in Iran," in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. N. Levtzion (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1979), 30–51.

[59]Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, 77–81. The proportion of *mawālī* to Arabs for the Imamis is probably no different from that for the Sunni jurists and theologians in the same period.

[60]Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 253–54; 446–48. Yunus appears to have provided regular legal advice as the agent of Imam ᶜAli al-Rida, who "instructed him . . . in giving legal opinions (*futyā*)" (ibid., 446). He strongly disapproved of ᶜAli al-Rida's decision to go to al-Maᵓmun's court, and must have infuriated the imam at this point. He was later rehabilitated by the ninth imam, Muhammad al-Jawad (Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 483–88, 493, 496–99).

[61]A major Zoroastrian fire temple was located near Qumm. The city was also close to Daylam and Tabaristan, and was used by the Imami Shiᶜis as an outpost for missionary activity in those regions (A. A. Faqīhī, *Tārīkh-e Madhhabī-ye Qumm* [Qumm: ᶜIsmaᶜīliyān, n.d.], 15, 63–65).

[62]Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 539–41.

[63]Modarressi, *Crisis*, 66.

[64]Ibid., 12.

[65]Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 514; cited in Modarressi, *Crisis*, 14.

[66]Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 513–14.

[67]This account is uncritically accepted by A. A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of the Mahdi in Twelver Shiᶜism* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1981), 28–29.

[68]Mufīd, *Irshād*, 344; English trans., 521–22.

[69]Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil*, 639. It is also interesting to note that after the death of the eleventh Imam, one of the Waqifite splinter groups that had been agnostic concerning the Imamate considered that the differences among the Shiᶜa pending the manifestation of God's new Proof (*ḥujja*) should be referred to "the Rida from the House of Muhammad" (Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, 164 [source: Shahrastānī]).

[70]Yaᶜqūbī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 2:625–26.

[71]Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 79; Ashᶜarī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 102. As had been the case with Musa al-Kazim, the ᶜAlid and ᶜAbbasid dignitaries, army chiefs, judges, and jurists inspected the body and bore witness that he had died a natural death (Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 43; Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, 107).

[72]H. G. Kippenberg, "Die Geschichte der mittelpersischen apokalyptischen Traditionen," *Studia Iranica* 7 (1978): 64–80.

[73]W. Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (Bibliotheca Persica, 1988), chaps. 2, 5.

[74]Gh.-H. Sadighi, *Les Mouvements religieux iraniens au IIe et au IIIe siècle de l'hégire* (Paris, 1938). It is significant that the Abu Muslimiyya are identified with the Khurramiyya by the Imami heresiographers (Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 41–42; Ashᶜarī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 64). The neo-Mazdakite character of these movements is underlined by Yarshater, who considers them "the third stage of Mazdakism" (E. Yarshater, "Mazdakism," in *Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. E. Yarshater, vol. 3, 2: *Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods* [1983], 1001–6).

[75]These indigenous beliefs are recorded by Nizam al-Mulk, who was eager to conflate the beliefs of the Abu Muslimiyya with those of the Ismaᶜilis. See Niẓām al-Mulk (Abū ᶜAlī Ḥasan Ṭūsī), *Siyar al-Mulūk*, ed. H. Darke (Tehran, 1976), 280, 312, 320.

[76]Yarshater, "Mazdakism," 1014–15.

[77]F. Daftari, *The Isma^{c}ilis. Their History and Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 140.

[78]M. A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le guide divin dans le Shî^{c}isme original* (Paris: Verdier, 1992), 44–45, citing references to Nu^{c}mānī's *Kitāb al-Ghayba*. This set was expurgated by Ibn Bābūya a generation later (ibid., 46). This work is now available in English under the title *The Divine Guide in Early Shi^{c}ism* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1995).

[79]For a list of other unorthodox transmitters, see Modarressi, *Crisis*, 22 (n. 26).

[80]Amir-Moezzi, *Guide divin*, 251.

[81]Ibid., 250.

[82]Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 520–28; Modarressi, *Crisis*, 71–72. His name shows his father to have been a convert to Islam.

[83]Modarressi, *Crisis*, 43 (n. 135), 71–75.

[84]Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, 109.

[85]Modarressi, *Crisis*, 73–75.

[86]Ibid., 68.

[87]Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, edited and published as a supplement to ^{c}Abd Allāh al-Sallūm al-Samarrā$^{\supset}$ī, *al-Ghuluww wa$^{\supset}$l-firaq al-ghāliya fi$^{\supset}$l-ḥaḍāra al-islāmiyya* (Baghdad, 1972), 291–93; Muḥammad ibn ^{c}Abd al-Karīm Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa$^{\supset}$l-niḥal*, 2 vols., ed. A. A. Muḥannā and A. H. Fa^{c}ūr (Beirut, 1990), 1:200.

[88]Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 577–81; Modarressi, *Crisis*, 70.

[89]Modarressi, *Crisis*, chap. 2. The complex issue of the social and ethnic composition of the adherents of these rival doctrinal positions had not yet been seriously examined.

[90]Ibid., 38.

[91]Ibn Qiba al-Rāzī, *Naqḍ kitāb al-Ishhād li-Abī Zayd al-^{c}Alawī*, reproduced in Modarressi, *Crisis*, 181; English trans., 216. Ibn Qiba, however, vehemently rejected the idea and considered those who advanced it infidels.

[92]*Encyclopedia Iranica*, 3:354–55, s.v. "Badā" (W. Madelung).

[93]Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 516–20.

[94]Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 222; Modarressi, *Crisis*, 65.

[95]*Khalaf* in Ash^{c}arī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 102; *athar* in Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 79. The wording is otherwise identical in the two sources.

[96]The will was registered with the qadi and the government by the eleventh Imam's mother, and the division of his estate followed seven years of acrimonious litigation (Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 43; Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 75, 138; Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, 108). This division of the eleventh Imam's estate, which was later presumed to belong to the hidden Imam, echoed the division of the estate of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, which had left a strong impression on al-Sayyid al-Himyari, who had considered Muhammad in occultation (*Kamāl*, 35).

[97]V. Klemm, "Die vier *sufarā$^{\supset}$* des Zwölfen Imam. Zur formativen Periode der Zwölfersi^{c}a," *Die Welt des Orients* 15 (1984): 132–34.

[98]Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, 290–93.

[99]The name of the hidden Imam was kept secret on pain of anathema (Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 91; Ash^{c}arī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 104–5).

[100]Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 216.

[101]Ibid., 245–46.

[102]Ibid., 216–17.

[103]Ibid., 219–23; Modarressi, *Crisis*, 93.

[104]Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 483; Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 176.

[105]See S. A. Arjomand, "Imam *Absconditus* and the Beginnings of a Theology of Occultation: Imami Shi^{c}ism around 900 CE/280–290 AH," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117, 1 (1997), forthcoming.

[106]Ibid. for the translation of the rescript and commentary.

[107]Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 257–58.

[108]Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, chap. 6.

[109]Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 93. Sayqal (or Saqil), the slave girl who was kept under surveillance by the caliph for two years to test the allegations that she was pregnant by Hasan al-^{c}Askari, moved thereafter

to the house of a Nawbakhti and was maintained as the mother of the hidden Imam for more than twenty years (Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, 108, 245).

[110]Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, 214–16.

[111]Ibid., 91, 120. Abu Sahl and his nephew also drew on the theological tract on the Imamate by Ibn al-Rawandi's teacher, Abu ᶜIsa al-Warraq (d. 861), a Muᶜtazilite convert from Manichaeanism (ibid., 102–3).

[112]Madelung, "Imamism and Muᶜtazilite Theology," in *Le Shiᶜisme imâmite*, ed. T. Fahd, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979), 13.

[113]These were Ibn Qiba al-Razi in Rayy, to be considered later, and Muhammad ibn ᶜAbd Allah ibn Mumallak al-Isfahani, who came from Gurgan and lived in Isfahan (Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 380–81).

[114]The thesis that a viable solution to the crisis caused by the absence of the Imam required a nomocratic theology is developed in my "Consolation of Theology."

[115]Modarressi, *Crisis*, 125.

[116]*Naqḍ Kitāb al-Ishhād*, in Modarressi, *Crisis*, 178; trans., 212.

[117]*Masᵓala fi'l-Imāma* in Modarressi, *Crisis*, 138; trans., 143.

[118]Ibid., 135; trans., 139.

[119]Ibid., 136; trans., 140–41.

[120]The Waqifite position had been revived after the death of the eleventh Imam. See Arjomand, "Imam *Absconditus*."

[121]The text from which the above passages were translated is preserved in Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 90–94.

[122]See n. 96.

[123]Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel (Beirut: Khayyat Reprints, 1964 [1871]), 176.

[124]Kulaynī, *Kāfi*, 2:126–27; Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 648.

[125]Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 92–93; English trans., Arjomand, "Imam *Absconditus*."

[126]Muhammad was hardly an outlandish name. One of the splinter groups after the death of Imam Hasan al-ᶜAskari believed that he had appointed as his successor an adult son, named Muhammad, who was under cover from fear of his uncle Jaᶜfar. Another small splinter group in the Sawad of Kufa denied that the son's name was Muhammad and called him ᶜAli (Ashᶜarī al-Qummī, *Maqālāt*, 114).

[127]Iqbāl (*Khāndān*, 110–11) does not reject this report outright, but considers it a possible earlier opinion. If our analysis is correct, it is Abu Sahl's *later* view.

[128]See Arjomand, "Consolation of Theology."

[129]See Iqbāl's carefully documented account in *Khāndān*, 115–16.

[130]Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 247.

[131]Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, 113–14. Hallaj was eventually executed in 922.

[132]Klemm, "Vier *sufarāᵓ*," 141–42.

[133]Ibid., 132–41.

[134]Ibn Ruh al-Nawbakhti was, according to one report, a relatively junior figure, one of the ten representatives of Ibn al-ᶜAmri in Baghdad. He must, however, also have worked for Ibn al-ᶜAmri as a secretary at the bureau of the Imam because one of the decrees issued by the hidden imam to curse one of Ibn al-ᶜAmri's opponents appeared in his hand (Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 245).

[135]Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 227; Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, 215–16. As Klemm ("Vier *Sufarāᵓ*," 138, esp. n. 63) correctly observes, Umm Kulthum's grandson is the chief source for this period.

[136]Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 227–28; Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, 216.

[137]Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 504.

[138]Ibid., 509; Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 195–96.

[139]After Shalmaghani's defection, Ibn Ruh was asked what the Shiᶜa were to do with his books "as our houses are full of them" (Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 239). We know from a question answered by the Sharif al-Murtada that Shalmaghani's legal manuals were still in use a century later (*Rasāᵓil al-sharīf al-Murtaḍā* [Qumm: Dār al-Qurᵓān, 198?] 1:279).

[140]Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 239; Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, 230–34.

[141]Ibid., 218.

[142]Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 43, citing Tūsī, *Ghayba*, 241.

[143]Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 250. On the late Zoroastrian political oracles, see Kippenberg, "Mittelpersischen Traditionen," 64–70.

[144]Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 147–50.

[145]Ibid., 220–21; Klemm, "Vier *Sufarā$^{\supset}$*," 133.

[146]Modarressi, *Crisis*, 78–79, 82–83.

[147]Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 227, 248–50; Iqbāl, *Khāndān*, 215, 232–34.

[148]Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 516. The editor notes (n. 1) that the variant *tāmma* (complete) is found in some copies of the manuscript. The latter variant is the one given in Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 243.

[149]Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 254–56.

[150]Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 516; Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 243.

[151]Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 3.

[152]E. Kohlberg, "From Imāmiyya to Ilhnā^{c}ashariyya," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39 (1976). Modarressi, *Crisis*, 97–98. The sense of doubt pervades the short sections on the Lord of the House (*ṣāḥib al-dār*) and the occultation in Kulayni's *Kāfī* (1:117–20), and in dating one report, Kulayni uses the term perplexity (*ḥayra*) instead of occultation (*ghayba*) as the beginning of the period (2:470). A rescript issued by the secretariat at the holy seat in response to a certain Ibn Abi Ghanim similarly speaks of the believers' "doubt and perplexity (*ḥayra*) concerning those in authority" (Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 173).

[153]Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 87–93.

[154]Arjomand, "Consolation of Theology."