THE EARLY YEARS OF THE BABI MOVEMENT
BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT

by

ABBAS AMANAT

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the rise of the Babi movement in its first phase (1844-47), the formative period which has been less fully explored than later phases (1847-52) but deserves a thorough critical examination. An attempt has been made to explain the complex relationship between the intellectual and social aspects of the movement; ideas, events and personalities are seen in a wide historical perspective, and the early impact of the movement on 'ulama, tujjar and other groups in Iranian urban society, and the reactions it evoked from them, are examined.

The first two chapters deal with the intellectual and social climate of Iran in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, with particular attention to the development of millenarian ideas. Chapters III and IV are concerned with the process which eventually gave birth to the movement. The early life of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad, the Bab, his family background and personal characteristics are discussed in some detail, so as to show the external influences and inner experiences which finally brought him to proclaim a new 'revelation' in 1844. The conflicts and confusions within the Shaykhi ranks, which served as a stimulus to the conversion of those Shaykhi students who formed the first Babi nucleus in Shiraz, are examined; so too the traditional Shiʿi ideas and their similarities and differences with the new doctrine.

Chapters Five to Seven study the earliest Babi attempts in the 'Atabat and Iran to spread the new message to specific groups, and to a wider public in general, and the opposition first of the religious authorities and then of the secular power. Chapter Eight is a case-study of the growth of the early Babi community in Khurasan, within the context of socio-political change, the pattern of the local economy, and inter-communal links in the small rural and urban centres. Chapter Nine, finally, looks at the Bab's own efforts to declare his mission to a wider public; however circumstances forced him to reinterpret the mission in a symbolic way, and for the first time the enormous practical problems which faced the expansion of the movement were realised.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To my wife, Fereshteh, I owe my greatest thanks for her sympathetic understanding and unstinting encouragement over the years.
The system of transliteration adopted both for Persian and Arabic is that of IJMES with modifications. Words which occur frequently appear without diacritical marks; therefore Bab, Babi, Shaykhī, Shi'i, Sufi, 'ulama' appear as Bab, Babi, Shaykhī, Shi'i, Sufi and 'ulama. Well known place-names are either written in their common forms (as in The Oxford Atlas) or without diacritical marks; therefore Tihrān, Isfahan, Shīrāz, Tabrīz are written Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz and Tabriz. The less known place-names are fully transliterated. Karbala is transliterated according to its Persian pronunciation, Karbilā'. Names of people are all transliterated, Persian and Persianized names as pronounced in Persian and Arabic names as in Arabic; Husayn is transliterated as Husain and Tāhirā as Tāhirīh. Technical terms which exist both in Persian and Arabic are transliterated according to the original language of the text; for example risāla in Arabic and risālih in Persian. The silent ُ (GHAR) in Persian is represented by īh or occasionally āh, but in Arabic always by a. The Arabic definite article al- (ال) is not assimilated to the noun; for example Nasikh al-Tawarīkh and not Nasikh at-Tawarīkh or Nasikh ut-Tawarīkh. Persian works with Arabic titles are transliterated in their Arabic forms: Tadhkirat al-Wafā' and not Taṣkīrat al-Vafā'. The Letter 'ayn (ع) is represented by "'" and ḥamza (ُ), regardless of its bearer, is "".
ABBREVIATIONS

Ahmad

Baghdadi

Bayan

Browne, JRAS 1889

Browne, Or. MSS.

al-Dhari'a

Farsi Namih
Fasai'i, Haji Mirza Hasan. Farsi Namih-yi Nasiri. 2 vols. (in one), Tehran, 1312-13 Q.

Fihrist

Fu'ad
Fu'ad Bushru'i, Hasan. Manasir-i Tarikh-i Nihbat-i Amri-i Bahaz'i dar Khurasan being the first part of Tarikh-i Amri-yi Khurasan. INBA. Lib. MS.

Gobineau

INBA. pub.
Iran National Baha'i Archive, private publication.

INBA. Lib.
Iran National Baha'i Archive, Library MSS.

Kazem-Beg
Kazem-Beg, Mirza A. Bab et les Babis, ou le Soulèvement Politique et Religieux en Perse, de 1845 à 1853' in

KD

Makārim

Materials

MJQ

Nabil

Nicolas

NK

NT

Q

QA
The Bāb, Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad Shīrāzi. Qayyum al-Asmā′ (Commentary on Sūra Yusuf, Ahsan al-Qisas). Browne, Or. MSS. F.11(9).

Qatīl

RA
Mudarris Tabrīzī Khīyābānī, Muhammad ʿAlī. Rayḥānāt al-Adab. Tehran-Tabriz, 1326-33 Sh.

RJ
Khvānsārī, Muhammad Bāqir. Raudāt al-Jannat fī Ahwāl al-ʿUlama′ wa al-Sādāt, Tehran, 1307 Q.


INTRODUCTION

This study is an attempt to write the history of the Babi movement - an effort to understand, rather than criticise or praise, the ideas and acts of people who lived in a world widely different from ours and had hopes and aspirations different from those of our time. What has been recorded of them in most accounts presents them either as condemned heretics or revered saints, depending on the point of view of the writer, and these views have rarely been impartial and still more rarely, consistent. The history of the Babi movement has not only been distorted by hostile chroniclers and biographers but often misunderstood by the pro-Babi hagiographers. In spite of the relative richness of the primary sources, little attempt has been made to give a thorough critical account of the movement or to put it in the broader context of the social and intellectual developments of the time. It is therefore necessary to go behind these accounts and try to discover what they have omitted. In order to do this it would be necessary to see the movement in connection with the main events of Iranian history in the early 19th century. Seen in this light, like any other millenarian movement, it will help us to understand people whose ideas and activities are largely absent from the historiography of the time. Millenarianism is a key to understanding the aspirations of those who were outside the circle of the learned or those who were on the border between the world of scholarship and popular belief. Although it contains ideas and beliefs which may seem totally unconventional and unacceptable even by the standards of its time, nevertheless it has its own 'logic' and system of thought. Millenarianism is a hidden current which weaves its course in and out of the political and social history of the period. It can only be clearly observed and understood if and when its inner 'logic' is understood.

The study of millenarian movements is one of the more recent undertakings of modern historiography. The contributions of western historians have largely focussed on the social and political aspects of these movements in given circumstances, and to a lesser extent on the ideas and beliefs which were held by them as a kind of political ideology. The study of millenarianism both

1. Among the large body of more recent works on European millenarianism, the following have a more pronounced socio-political approach: Cohn, N. The Pursuit of the Millennium, Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages, London, 1957; idem, 'Medieval Millenarism: its bearing on the comparative study of millenarian movements' in Millennial Dreams in Action edited by S.L. Thrupp, The Hague, 1962; Harrison, J.F.C. .../cont'd
from the theological and social points of view is a formidable task compared to other more conventional forms of historiography. This is not only because of the complexity of the issues or the multifaceted and often cryptic nature of the messianic claims, but also because records of these movements are scarce and often poorly preserved. The biased treatment of the official accounts and the low standard of historiography in modern Iran makes this task more formidable.

In the Islamic past, the distinction between millenarian thought, or what more precisely could be defined as belief in a millennium, and actual millenarian movements was very clear. As far as the theory was concerned, the expectation of the return of the Mahdi was linked with principles of Ma‘ād or Qiyāmat (Resurrection) and therefore was integrated into the body of Islamic popular belief. In practice, however, any attempt to realise these expectations or to anticipate their near fulfilment naturally met with the greatest resistance from the religious authorities. These movements in general were usually referred to as constituting heresy (rafd, zandaqa, hartaqa). The theoretical beliefs held by the millenarians were classified under a wide range of general terms from 'innovation' (bid‘at) and extremism (ghulūd) to disbelief (i‘tīdād) and apostasy (i‘tīdād); more precisely, the claim to the advent of the Mahdi was defined as idā‘a-yi Ma‘ādāviyat. The social and political movements to which they gave rise were often referred to as fitna or fitnih (in a literal sense, revolution)\(^1\).


1. Very few general studies have been carried out on the subject of Islamic messianism. Blochet, E. Le Messianisme dans L'heterodoxie Musulman (Paris, 1903) and Darmesteter, J. Le Mahdi. Paris, 1885 are two of the best known, though both are out of date, and mostly lack critical analysis. They mainly concentrate on early and medieval movements, and rarely give any significant account of modern times. Corbin, H. En Islam iranien, Aspects spirituels et philosophiques, (4 vols., Paris, 1972), IV (VII) pp.303-460, throws some light on the subject of the Concealed Imam in Ithnā‘ Ashārī Shi‘ism.
In Shi'i Islam, the concept of the Advent or Manifestation (Zuhūr) of the Qā'īm is much more deeply assimilated into the body of general doctrine. The belief in the advent of the Qā'īm (the Twelfth Imam, Muhammad ibn Hasan in Ithnā 'Asharī Shi'ism) which is prophesied in innumerable eschatological traditions, made Shi'ism the most appropriate ground for the continuous renewal of millenarian claims. Indeed it may be argued that the whole of the Shi'ism is bound up with these expectations. Throughout Ithnā 'Asharī history, the belief in the continual presence of the Twelfth Imam in Concealment inspired many to claim that they were delegated by him rather than themselves claiming the position of Qā'īmiyat. Deputyship (Nīyābat), Gateship (Bābīyat), Vicegerency (Khīlafat) and Guardianship (Vilāyat) were different definitions of the same original function of representing the Qā'īm in a world which was not yet prepared for the advent of Baqiyatallah (the Remnant of God). In Shi'i society this yearning for the Zuhūr penetrated deeply into the minds of ordinary people who saw in the appearance of the Imam, or to a lesser extent in the appearance of his assumed agents and representatives, some hope for Salvation.

A brief survey of the intellectual history of Shi'ism, from the earliest days up to modern times, reveals that the two major currents of thought, which may be loosely defined as 'orthodoxy' and 'heterodoxy', developed parallel to each other. The informal trends of 'heterodoxy' survived in the Shi'i environment in spite of constant opposition from the secular authorities. Sometimes covered by a cloak of mysticism, sometimes as a minor part of the main body of religious doctrine, but more often in full contrast to the dominant religious institutions, they were highly influential in the course of social and political history, and more so in the formation and evolution of Shi'i popular ideas. Except for a few better known trends, their study as separate entities has hardly gone beyond some general remarks. In spite of striking similarities, it is an exacting, even in some cases impossible, task to establish a direct chronological line between successive trends, as has sometimes been suggested by scholars fascinated by their degree of resemblance. It is equally difficult,

and perhaps misleading, to draw a clear line between 'orthodoxy' and 'heterodoxy'. It has often been the case that after a short outburst of millenarian activities, the ideas and beliefs which they had left behind gradually created a whole spectrum of beliefs and practices which could hardly be classified under either of those two general definitions. Nevertheless, outlines may be formulated of the chief characteristics shared by many of these movements from the early Shi'i sects up to the Isma'ili, Hurufi, Nuqtavi, Shi'i-Sufi orders and Shaykhis. But the similarities which exist do so more as a result of factors such as identical textual and oral traditions, comparable social and intellectual circumstances and the presence of similar forces of opposition than because of any direct link. These factors often led to the rediscovery of esoteric themes which were always present in the Shi'i environment.

'Heterodox' doctrines are identifiable by their strong emphasis on eschatological aspects of religion. Almost without exception they contain some form of redemptive, resurrective or prognostic message which is primarily based on the extensive, and often diverse Shi'i millenarian traditions. Depending on the direction in which these doctrines are developed, it is believed that either the forthcoming Final Day or the advent of the Qa'im is preceeded by a forerunner whose function is to expound the impending events in terms of past prophecies. It is this strong emphasis on the eschatological future which has provided the necessary pretext for the messianic leaders or their followers to question the legitimacy of the established system. By claiming a direct and intuitive contact with the divine source, the preachers of messianism by-passed the formal barriers of established authority.

Such systems of thought had certain predominant characteristics. The first was the presence of a 'holy' figure who was regarded by the believers as the source of divine inspiration and the only link between this world and the world beyond. The second was the existence of esoteric forms of 'knowledge' as well as symbolic practices. Though the 'holy' figure was not always responsible for the actions or the aspirations of his followers, his sole existence was regarded as the major proof of the legitimacy and truthfulness of the new mission. His visible austerity and piety, his preoccupation with esoteric and unconventional knowledge, and his mortifications and sufferings, sufficed to put him in the eyes of believers above any religious or temporal authority.

A wide range of esoteric symbols and images which had special appeal to believers was used in order to explain the inner secrets of the new 'revelation'. These 'secrets' were meant to clarify the ambiguities of the Book and the traditions only to a close circle of intimate followers who were capable of 'tolerating' the 'truth' which ordinary people might find 'terrifying' and
 unacceptable. Special attention was paid to 'cognition' (ma'rifat) and the knowledge of the 'internal' (batin), in order to enable the followers to go beyond the boundaries of 'dogma' and into the realm of 'pure religion'. The messianic future which was promised by millenarians, was indeed a nostalgic and symbolic one: a return to an idealised past which they believed could only be materialised with the return of the equally idealised 'Promised One' who had 'true' descent from the 'holy branch' of the prophethood and possessed qualities of 'infallibility', 'divine inspiration' and material superiority.

Messianic movements no doubt had a concealed socio-political message. The concepts of Resurrection, the Final Judgement, vengeance against the oppressors and the ultimate victory of 'good' against 'evil' had a general appeal to the underprivileged and less educated public as well as to many sophisticated and more learned groups. The millenarian mission made it possible for individuals from different backgrounds to envisage a common cause and a common destiny since spiritual salvation inflamed a hope for a final victory against the dominating forces of the time. The message evoked the inner emotions and aspirations of men who saw in the new 'revelation' all the divine attributes, and through it wished to gain immortality and salvation. The teachings of these movements, contrary to those of 'scholastic' theological disciplines, were chiefly based on the non-rational and mystical aspects of religion which elevated the believers from their troublesome world of appearance to the fascinating realm of saints and prophets, and allowed them to imagine themselves as symbolic embodiments of past heroes.

It is for this reason that millenarian thought often gave rise to active social and political movements. Three main features may be identified in such movements. The first is that a majority of them were urban phenomena. It was in the cities that messianic ideas could grow into full scale movements. To say this is not to rule out the possibility of millenarian claims arising in non-urban settings. There are examples of messianic ideas which first appeared in a rural and tribal environment, but with few exceptions they all later transferred to cities where they found the suitable conditions to grow into a movement. In cities the dissident urban 'intelligencia' had the opportunity to mobilise the urban public or certain sections of it, under the messianic banner. Groups which did not necessarily lack economic means, but were threatened by political or economic upheavals, were particularly attracted to movements which promised them spiritual consolation for their worldly sufferings and agonies.

Secondly, these movements usually appeared at times of crisis, but more particularly at those moments when some degree of security and prosperity was still maintained in the community. Contrary to what might appear in the first
instance, the effects of messianic movements at times of total insecurity and anarchy were minimal. This was because in these circumstances the collapse of the internal urban order, which was usually caused by violent incursions from outside, did not allow the popular forces with a messianic ideology to be formed. A majority of these movements emerged when the cities could afford some degree of internal order, but only enough to show the sharp contrasts between conflicting interests, contrasts which were often sharpened by sudden changes in population, fluctuations in the local economy and threats from outside forces. Yet the relationship between the socio-political situation and the rise of messianic movements was much more subtle than some have suggested. Contrary to what might first appear, the public move towards messianism was not made in order to regain or to improve a threatened or a lost political or economic status but to take refuge from material problems in the world of utopian hopes and promises. Thirdly, the message of these movements, however crude and incoherent in comparison to orthodoxy, served as a popular ideology for the ordinary man. In most cases it preached a radical and even violent change and in some, it compensated for the lack of clear political orientation and the passivity of the religious leadership. This sense of extremism not infrequently caused the retreat, defeat and even total annihilation of the movement after a certain period of time but occasionally it also resulted in an internal reconstruction of the movement as a tolerant and compromising 'sect' capable of producing a new 'orthodoxy' or submerging itself in the existing one.

Millenarianism expressed itself in various forms. Sometimes it showed itself in those moderate expectations and speculations which may frequently be found in the works of theologians and other serious writers as well as in the words of preachers, wandering dervishes and other popular figures. However implicit or indeed insignificant and trivial these prognostications may appear to the mind of the modern man, yet even in their most concealed forms they were regarded by 'orthodoxy' as signs of deviation and disbelief. The other forms of messianic expression appeared in the claims and divinations of those individuals who because of their assumed 'inspiration', their piety, their holy descent, or their 'divine' knowledge, regarded themselves as standing in close proximity to a sacred character whose imminent manifestation was expected in the near future. But as far as the established authorities were concerned, the threat of these sporadic claims was not so great as long as they were confined within their limits and had no determined following or coherent doctrine. The real threat came from another form of millenarian expression. Messianic movements and revolts which usually appeared at the end of a long period of widespread speculation and in an atmosphere which was charged with anticipations of
Zuhur, presented the real danger to the established doctrine. They contained controversial ideas, which in spite of their logical or practical shortcomings were still capable of convincing large multitudes of their legitimacy. These movements were formed around a central figure and consisted of a nucleus of devoted followers who together had the collective aim of fulfilling the 'Signs' of the Final Day. The ideas and messages adopted by these forms of millenarianism were often a popularised version of themes which had been previously contemplated by earlier generations of 'serious' and 'learned' divines and scholars. Though in their theological content they seldom passed the limits of the accepted prophecies, it was in the interpretation of these prophecies, and still further in the purpose for which such interpretations were made, that they widely differed from their learned predecessors. The theoretical framework of millenarian movements may have remained more or less the same, but it was the hopes and the expectations of the converts which changed in the course of time.

In spite of their diversity in both theory and action, the essence of these movements, whether they took the form of pure theological speculation, popular preaching, prophetic claims or proper millenarian movements, was of a similar nature. For all of them there was a yearning for change from old to new. It was the idea of establishing the 'true' order which caught the imagination of the millenarians over the centuries but nevertheless, the realisation of this 'true' order, no matter how much it was interpreted or justified in terms of past ideals and inherited values, was still an attempt to establish a different order to what already existed. The message of millenarianism was the message of a changing age which was expressed in the language of a distant past.

The transitional period of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries marks the start of a new era in the history of modern Shi'i millenarianism. General developments in the history of Iran during this period, from the last years of Karīm Khān's reign (1163-1193/1750-79) up to the middle of the nineteenth century, hastened the formation of new trends. Currents of

1. Besides the existing primary and secondary sources for the narrative history of the Qājārs in the first half of the 19th century, some preliminary attempts have also been made to interpret general aspects of the political, social and religious history of this period. Amongst them see A.K.S. Lambton, 'Persian society under the Qājārs' in JRCAS (Asiat Affaires) 1961, pp.123-39; E. Abrahamian 'Oriental despotism: the case of Qājār Iran' in IJMES, 5 (1974), 3-31; A. Ashraf and H. Hekmat, 'The State of the Bourgeoisie in Nineteenth Century Iran', unpublished paper (delivered in Princeton University), 1974; N.R. Keddie, 'The Roots of the Ulama power in
messianism continued to function as the voices of protest, while the forces of the secular and religious authorities constantly suppressed their successive outbursts. The interplay between nostalgic idealism and material necessities created moments in which messianism occurred as a natural response to the problems of a changing age.

From the political point of view, this period begins with the rise of Aqa Muhammad Khan to power (1779-97) and ends with the appearance of the earliest symptoms of a significant change in the power structure of the state in the 1840's. The period consisted of successive sequences of political turmoil followed by phases of relative stability and security. After the death of Karim Khan, in a long series of civil wars, Aqa Muhammad Khan eliminated all his rivals and finally managed to establish the Qajars on the throne. Fath 'Ali Shah's reign (1797-1834) brought a relative calm and stability to the country, yet throughout this period signs of conflict and chronic disorder hardly ever disappeared. A central government which relied for its stability on a growing bureaucracy, a tribal military force and a network of princes and notables who governed provinces, was the basis of the Qajar state in this period. Powerful sons of Fath 'Ali Shah such as Abbas Mirza in Azarbajjan, Husain 'Ali Mirza in Fars, Hasan 'Ali Mirza Shuja' al-Saltanih in Kirmân (and then in Isfahan), Muhammad 'Ali Mirza Daulatshah in western Iran and Muhammad Vali Mirza in Khurasân, created well-established, almost autonomous provincial governments with their own courts, bureaucracy and military forces. Ruthless and efficient as they might appear, the provincial governments were only partly able to control (sometimes only within the boundaries of provincial cities) those semi-autonomous local powers who were quick to react against the government when there was any threat to their carefully guarded interests. When they could come to terms with this local power, however, the provincial governments were able to establish self-contained provincial units which were almost free from intervention by the central government. Some sort of understanding between the provincial government and the urban notables, the tribal chiefs and major landowners in the province secured the interests of all parties involved while it often forced the central government to be contented with an unguaranteed annual revenue and

 occasional verbal tributes.

Under Muhammad Shah (1834-48/1250-64) the pattern began to change. Though the structure of the bureaucracy and military remained as before, their power and efficiency started to decline, thus affecting in a broader way the central administration which itself was suffering from mismanagement, rivalry and foreign intervention. The effectiveness of the provincial governments was reduced, mainly because of a change which took place in the methods of appointing governors. The financial difficulties of the central government were not helped by the chronic deterioration in the collection of taxes and revenues. Yet changes within the central government were not felt by the ordinary man directly as much as by way of their local repercussions. It may be argued that centralisation, or indeed the lack of it, was always the chronic problem for any political system in pre-modern Iran. Nevertheless it should be noted that this semi-autonomous provincial system worked reasonably well for the greater part of the period between the turn of the century and the beginning of the 1830's before deteriorating towards the end of Fath 'Ali Shah's reign. What Muhammad Shah inherited from his predecessor was a weaker provincial administration and a stronger local resistance which could not easily be controlled by the unstable and often incompetent officials.

This process of change from a relatively stable to an unstable provincial government can be seen in the province of Fars in a way which was broadly similar to other provinces. Under the governorship of Husain 'Ali Mirza (1810-35) some revival in the local trade and economy (in continuation of Karīm Khān's time) made Fars the second most prosperous province after ʿAzarbājān in the whole of the country. Yet this fragile security seldom prevented the intensification of internal conflicts both in and out of the city. Frequent tribal resurgences, inter-tribal clashes, incursions into towns and villages, and the disruption in the security of the roads are particularly visible from the beginning of the 1830's onwards. To this must be added an increase in the urban conflicts between the city notables which often resulted in violent clashes between city divisions and full-scale riots.

If the chronic vacillations inside the socio-political system were instrumental in preparing the social ground for the emergence of millenarian responses, the threat from external forces also facilitated this process. During the first few decades of the 19th century the threat of the neighbouring powers was first seriously felt in the north. The Qajārs' successive defeats

1. See below Chapter Six, Section I.
in two rounds of Russo-Persian wars, which resulted in considerable territorial losses to their expansionist neighbour, generated fear of a total takeover not only amongst members of the political elite, but in a wider scale among the ordinary people. The further consolidation of the British position on the other hand, particularly after the annexation of Sind in 1843, created a similar anxiety in the south. Indeed, from the time of Muhammad Shah's unsuccessful Herat campaign in 1835-6, which was mainly frustrated because of a change in British policy in Afghanistan, the presence of the British and their readiness to use military force to secure their interests in the area, were fully realised by the Iranian government. But it was from the beginning of the 1840's that the increasing interventions of the rival powers in the internal affairs of Iran went beyond the diplomatic and political levels and began to affect the whole economic, monetary and commercial structure of the country. Fears of this foreign threat, of which the real nature was largely unknown to ordinary people, hardly ever manifested themselves in a sense of patriotism or the possibility of the breakdown and fall of the Qajars, which would even have been welcomed by the people. Nor was the response to the unknown danger expressed in any effective protest at economic dislocations caused by the western powers. What caused concern to the ordinary man was rather the possible domination of Europeans over the Islamic lands. In the early stages the assumed domination of the west over Islam was interpreted more than anything in religious terms. This 'subjection' to the 'infidels' was regarded as a 'sign' of a symbolic end to the superiority of Islam rather than as an obstacle to the actual practice of religion. It was this sense of gradual decline and subjection which preoccupied the minds of a great many millenarians both in the circles of the learned divines and in the sphere of popular religion.

The purpose of this study is to examine the rise of the Babi movement as the final result of a long millenarian process. The first part of the study (Chapters One and Two) deal with various manifestations of millenarianism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This serves as a general background to the developments which eventually culminated in the Babi movement. The second part (Chapters Three and Four) deal more specifically with the formation of the Babi movement both by looking at the early life of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad Shīrāzī, the Bab, and by examining the circumstances under which the actual 'proclamation' of the Bab took shape. The third part (Chapters Five to Nine) discuss the early expansion of the movement between 1844 and 1847 (1260-63), the formation of the early circles, the persons and groups involved and the earliest setbacks which came
following the responses of the opposition. The main emphasis of the study as a whole is to illustrate the way in which a millenarian movement comes into existence, the nature of its claims, the background of the persons involved, and the circumstances under which messianic claims turn into a millenarian movement. No attempt therefore has been made to study the chronological history of the movement in a systematic way or to discuss the events of the later years (1847-52), save for some scattered references. The aim is to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of millenarianism from both the intellectual and social points of view and to show how the two aspects are inseparably intermingled. Contrary to the view which treats the movement either as a 'heresy' or in more impartial terms, as the outcome of a theological (or religious) mutation\(^1\) and contrary also to the opposite view which interprets the rise of the movement purely in economic and political terms without paying any serious attention to the theoretical content of the Babi message, here some efforts have been made to draw a parallel comparison between the two aspects in order to show the delicate and subtle relationship between intellectual and spiritual concepts on the one hand and social and political conditions on the other.

The subject of the study dictates the method and the approach. The Babi movement aimed to reconcile the spiritual and intellectual values of the learned culture with the realities of the material world in the light of a 'new revelation'. Therefore it is only appropriate to study this aspiration in its entirety without evaluating it with the logical and rational criteria of a modern mind.

\(^1\) See for example the views expressed by Ahmad Kasravi (Bahāʼīgarī, Tehran, 1322 Sh.) and 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ḥasanī (al-Bābīyūn wa al-Bahāʾīyūn fī Ḥādirihim wa Māḏīhim, Sidon, 1957/1376 Q.).
More than eighty years of intellectual and social development in the post-Safavid era prepared the way for one of the major events of modern Iranian history, the rise of the 'ulama in the early decades of the 19th century. Simultaneous with the rise of the Qajars to a central political power, and almost parallel to their establishment, a new breed of the 'ulama emerged in the form of an 'orthodoxy' with a consistent doctrine and specific social and political characteristics. These two processes, the development of the religious authority and secular power, were in many ways complementary to each other. The Qajars consolidated their position in the urban centres by means of a military and administrative presence, while the 'ulama strengthened their stand by exerting a religious authority which they considered to be their prime function. It has been said, no doubt with some justification, that the emergence of the 'ulama as an influential urban force first occurred in the last decades of the 18th century to compensate for the prolonged absence of a dominant political power. But it was in the early decades of the 19th century that, benefiting from the relative security of the cities provided by the Qajars, they flourished to become the most important independent force in the urban centres. Their relation with the Qajars may be defined as one of guarded co-existence if not implicit cooperation.

Setting aside their objection in principle to the legitimacy of any secular power, something which even in theory was seldom defined in clear terms, and in spite of the efforts which have recently been made to render a militant picture of the 'ulama as the champions of the urban 'masses' in the fight against government oppression, in practice - at least in the earlier decades of the 19th century - they frequently found themselves obliged to compromise with the secular authority, particularly at times when their own existence was endangered by other threats.

In their own sphere of influence in the cities, the 'ulama enjoyed a relative independence in their control over the non-governmental judiciary as well as the educational institutions. By supervising most of the public endowments and by receiving alms and other religious dues, they maintained a considerable financial leverage outside the traditional zone of government intervention. Through the mosques, where they preached sermons and conducted public prayers, they were able to establish direct contact with people. They often enjoyed the
support of the public who looked upon them for protection, and in particular, the backing of those groups who shared with them some common interests. This area of influence was usually recognised by the government and if there were frictions and disagreements between the 'ulama and the state they were either on issues which were not fully defined, or more often, because of each side's intention to expand its area of control beyond the recognised boundaries. Though both sides were willing to undermine the authority of the other, they were unwilling, and indeed unable, to risk any serious confrontation. As far as the 'ulama and the government were concerned, in this delicate equilibrium there was no room for any other force, neither theoretically nor politically, that could question their legitimacy. In moments of need, the survival of this balance was the most important element which brought the two sides into a united front.

The social and political role of the 'ulama and its practical implications are directly related to the doctrine of Usulism, which in its essence, facilitates the intervention of the religious authority in the affairs of the world. The 'ulama's drive for political power can be best explained if this theoretical framework is examined in some of its relevant details. The development of Usuli thinking was the outcome of a long process which occurred mostly outside the milieu of the Iranian cities and against the background of other religious trends common in the 'Atabat in the late 18th century. The rise of the Akhbari school, both in its modified form in the late 18th century, and shortly afterwards in the form of a 'heterodoxy', the ascetic and even mystical tendencies of some of the 'ulama and finally the emergence of the Shaykhi school are three of the more significant currents which existed parallel to the development of the Usuli school. In this chapter, some general observations will be made on the circumstances which led to the development of the Usuli 'orthodoxy' in relation to the above mentioned 'non-orthodox' trends, with the aim of discerning an intellectual precedent within the sphere of learned Shi'ism for those ideas which later gave rise to messianic thinking.

The flight of the Iranian 'ulama to Iraq throughout the second half of the 18th century brought about some distinctive changes in the religious climate of the 'Atabat. This is often defined in terms of a doctrinal division between Akhbaris and Usulis. The Usuli school was first formed by those Iranian 'ulama (or 'ulama of Iranian descent) who had received their formal training in the 'Atabat and hence were barely influenced by Majlisi's 'traditionalist' school. Aqa Muhammad Baqir Bihbahani (1118-1205/1706-90), the recognised 'founder' (mu'assis) of the modern Usuli school is often regarded as the first to realise the need for a new approach to figh. He was a young Isfahani talabih in his
twenties when he arrived in the Atabat. Though he received his early training from his father in Isfahan, it was in the Atabat that he seriously undertook theological studies under well known scholars such as Shaykh Yusuf Bahrānī, Āqā Sayyid Muhammad Tabātaba’ī and Sayyid Sadr al-Dīn Qumi. By general definition these scholars may all be considered as Akhbaris since their main emphasis was on the theory that beside Kitāb, the traditions (Akhbār), as they were transmitted from the past generations, were the premises for every theological investigation, yet they were not totally unaware of the need for some reconsideration of the methods and means of such an investigation. Shaykh Yusuf Bahrānī, for instance, who by origin and by training came from a 'traditionalist' school in Bahrain, is held to be the representative of the Akhbarī school in the Atabat, yet it was from his moderate views that the first signs of an Usūli tendency emerged. A kind of 'rationalist' tendency appears not only in his 'pragmatic' treatment of fiqh, or in his writings in the field of rijāl, but in his criticism of Ibn Abi al-Hadīd, and the denunciation of Mullā Muḥsin Fāyż and Mullā Muḥammad Amīn Ṭabarādī, the renowned advocates of Akhbarism. This approach then seems to have been taken by Bihbahanī and others, and developed further into a definite theological school with strong emphasis on a rational methodology.

Already, prior to his final settlement in the Atabat (1159/1746-7), the decline of the Akhbaris and their inflexibility in the face of a new social climate was witnessed by Aqā Muḥammad Baqīr Bihbahanī. In his encounters with the Bahrainī, or Bahrainī-descended ulama in Bihbahan, where he spent twenty


2. His autobiography appears at the end of his well known biographical dictionary of the Bahrainī ulama Lu’lu al-Bahrain, Tehran, 1269 Q. (See al-Dhārī’ī, XVIII, pp.379-80). Also translated in Q. pp.271-5. Vahīd (pp.187-95) provides some additional information. The author of Religion and State (op.cit. pp.33-4) seems to be unaware of Shaykh Yusuf’s important contributions such as the above mentioned Lu’lu’ and still better known Ḥadā’īq al-Nāẓira (al-Dhārī’ī, VI, pp.289-90) for which the author is known as Sāhib-i Ḥadā’īq, when he states that Kashkūl (al-Dhārī’ī, XVIII, 81 cf. II, 465-66) by Bahrānī, which is a relatively unknown work, was the only work amongst later Akhbarīs which attained any fame.

3. Study of rijāl (genealogical and biographical study of the 'sources' (aṣnād) and 'chains' (sālasīl) of the 'transmitters' (muwāt) of the 'traditions' — a primitive chronological history of the Mashāyikh in successive generations) was not enthusiastically pursued by the staunch Akhbarīs, who believed that the aḥadīth which were collected by the early scholars must be accepted in their entirety and without any critical analysis. Tunikābūnī admits (Q. 274) that while being the head of the Akhbarīs in the Atabat, Shaykh Yusuf often 'undertook the path of ijtihād'.
fifteen years of his life, the sectarianism between the two major quarters in the city may have given some reason to Bihbahānī to abandon Akhbarī fundamentalism, and seek a convenient way to justify and to assert the independent position of the ʿulama. To some extent the social and political conditions of the time had a bearing on the adoption of this new approach. After the fall of the Safavīs, the vacuum in the religious leadership attracted many Akhbarī ʿulama of Bahrain and the coasts of the Persian Gulf, who themselves were escaping from greater dangers and insecurities in their homelands, to Iranian cities. In Bihbahan for example, where in the second and third quarters of the 18th century many ʿulama had taken refuge from Afghan incursions, rivalries and frictions between the two groups of Persian and Arab ʿulama materialised in the form of a theoretical conflict. Some practical implications of this conflict may be observed in the divisions between the city quarters where each of the two main sections of the city of Bihbahan paid its allegiance to two main groups of Persian and Arab ʿulama.

But nevertheless, it was in the ʿAtabat that in the later decades of the 18th century a serious intellectual encounter took place between the representatives of the two tenets. Here, while the Akhbarīs were failing to sort out the difficulties and deficiencies of the Akhbarī theory, and hence were losing their stand or simply fading away, Bihbahānī and his disciples, many of them Akhbarī converts, managed to develop Usulī thought into a major theory for the newly emerged class of ʿulama. For Bihbahānī and his disciples, contrary to Akhbarīs, the first priority was to employ a deductive reasoning in order to draw conclusions applicable to the new circumstances, from premises inherited from the past. The major political changes at the time and the crisis of legitimacy and leadership demanded such a logical approach in order to give the ʿulama the necessary means to play their part in the affairs of the temporal world. Contrary to what is

1. For Bihbahānī's long residence in Bihbahan see Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī, pp.128-30, 140-3. For some of the contemporary ʿulama in Bihbahān, including Shaykh 'Abdullāh ibn Šāliḥ Bahraṃī and Sayyid 'Abdullāh Bilādī Bahraṃī, both important Akhbarī advocates of the later times, see ibid. pp.134-40.

2. Ibid. pp.143-56.

3. Many sources list the theoretical points of difference between the Akhbarīs and Usūlis. Amongst them Raudāt al-Jannāt (p.34) lists thirty topics. See also Sayyid Kāẓim Rashītī, 'Risālih in reply to enquiries from Isfahān' in Majmaʿ al-Rasaʿil (Persian), 2nd edition, Kirmān, n.d. pp.276-359. Davānī in Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī (pp.70-6) cites some of the differences using, among other sources, al-Ḥaqq al-Mubīn by Shaykh Jaʿfar Kāshīf al-Ghīṭā. He also discusses Bihbahānī's refutations of the Akhbarīs (pp.76-95) and cites some specimens. The Akhbarī view on differences with Usūlis appears in the works of Mīrzā Muhammad Akhbarī including Ḥāṣr al-Ḥasās, al-Muʿmāt al-Fāṣil bayn al-Ḥaqq va al-Bāṭil and his numerous refutations of the Usūlis. See Makārim. III, 935-40 and also below.
usually assumed, the decline of the Akhbarīs in the last quarter of the 18th century was the natural outcome of a long process from 'transmission' (naql) to a method of logical reasoning rather than the instant victory of Bihbahanī over his rivals.

Bihbahanī's efforts nevertheless resulted in consolidation of the position of ijtihād both in theory and in practice. The precept of 'acting in accordance with presumption' ('amal-i bi zann), the maxim of the Usūlī doctrine which was in contrast to the Akhbarī precepts of yaqān (certitude) and 'ilm (knowledge), enabled mujtahids to go far beyond the former practice both in gaining particular judgement and in formulating general principles. But Usūlīsm also made it clear that ijtihād, or more specifically the rational process of arriving at conclusions was restricted to mujtahids who, because of their specific training, acquired a prominent intellectual status which enabled them to deduce facts and draw conclusions from the Qurān or hadith (which by itself was the subject of great scrutiny), or through 'consensus' (ijmā') and mere 'reasoning' (aqīl). Hence, by defining terms and conditions of ijtihād, and by recognising the intellectual and moral advantages of mujtahids, the Usūlīs designated themselves as a religious elite entitled to rights and priorities above the others, and most of all to leadership of the community. This elitist attitude, almost unprecedented in the past history of Shi'iism, was an important element in the religious history of the 19th century. The theoretical ground for this approach is very much evident in the writings of the followers and students of Bihbahanī. Its practical implications however are more discernible in the activities of the second generation of the Usūlīs.

The theoretical progress of the school owed much to those 'ulama who gathered in Bihbahanī's circle. Either by producing highly specialised works on fiqh, usul al-fiqh, and to a lesser extent hadith, or by training a new generation of students, the Usūlī nucleus constructed the backbone of Shi'i orthodoxy for the whole of the 19th century. While scholars such as Shaykh Ja'far

1. See for example Q. 201, which is the source for Religion and State, op.cit. pp.33-6. The Akhbarī-Usūlī controversy is also discussed in G. Scarcia, 'Intorno alle Controversie tra Aḥbārī e Uṣūlī presso gli Imamiti di Persia' in Rivista degli Studi Orientali, XXXIII (1958), pp.211-50.

2. In the works of Bihbahanī and his followers, on the subject of ijtihād the 'rational proof' (da'i'il-i aql) and the Usūlī treatment of the deductive reasoning is fully argued. al-Fawā'id al-Ḥa'ir Wa al-Akhbār (Tehran, 1270 Q., appendix to Fusul of Muḥaqiq Tūsī, see al-Dhārt'a, XVI, 330-1); al-Ijtihād wa al-Akhbār (appendix to 'Idādat al-Uṣūl of Shaykh Tūsī, Tehran, 1314 Q., see al-Dhārt'a, I, 269 ), Risāla on the Question of Qiyās (Vaḥīdat-i Bihbahanī, 179) and many other works by Bihbahanī's students while accepting the concept of reasoning, reject qiyās in favour of istihbāb, barā'a and ishtighal.
Najafi (1156-1228/1743-1813), Mīrzā Abul Qasim Qumi (known as Mīrzā-yi Qumi) (1151-1231/1738-1815), Sayyid Muhammad Tabātabā’ī (later known as Mujahid) and Sayyid Asadallah Kazimaynī specialised in fiqh and furū’, others such as Sayyid ‘Alī Tabātabā’ī (1161-1231/1748-1815) and Sayyid Muhsin Kazimaynī concentrated on usul. Some like Mīrzā Muhammad Shahristānī and Sharīf al-Ulama’ Amuli devoted their time to organise a more systematic method of teaching in tafsīr and fiqh, whereas Sayyid Muhammad Mahdī Bahr al-Ulūm and Mullā Mahdī Naraqi attempted to attain an overall knowledge in all fields. Independent works such as Kashf al-Ghitā’ by Najafi2, or Qawanīn al-USUL by Qumi3 were to become the classic texts in modern Shi‘i literature. Important commentaries on the works of earlier scholars such as Riyad al-Masa’il of Sayyid ‘Alī Tabātabā’ī were written both to satisfy a need for a concise account of Shi‘i fiqh and usul, and to elaborate on the points essential for the justification of the Usuli stand.

The second generation of students on the other hand were trained under Usuli teachers in the 'Atabat and were responsible for broadening the mujtahid’s sphere of influence beyond academic circles and into the community. They consisted of three major groups. The first was that of sons and grandsons of some eminent mujtahids of the 'Atabat who following their fathers' career and often in close family contact with each other, managed to maintain some form of monopoly, or at least control, over teaching circles in the 'Atabat. By despatching their students to various centres in Iran, and by extensive travelling to Iran, during which they maintained a dialogue with the Qajar monarchs, the ruling princes and the urban notables, these 'ulama of high descent continued their fathers' efforts to strengthen the Usuli positions. Of these, the Tabātabā’īs (Sayyid Muhammad and his brother Sayyid Muhammad Mahdī)5, Bihbahānīs (Aqā Muhammad ‘Alī and the others)6 and Najafīs (Shaykh Musā and his brothers Shaykh ‘Alī and Shaykh


2. al-Dharī‘a, XVIII, 45. For the author see Q. pp.183, 188-98; Tabaqāt, II, 1, pp.248-52; Vahīd-i Bihbahānī, pp.246-57. See also below Chapter Five, Section II.

3. al-Dharī‘a, XVII, pp.202-3 and Tabaqāt. II, pp.52-5. For the author see Q. 180-3; Makārim, III, 911-19; Vahīd-i Bihbahānī, pp.256-265.

4. Q. pp.175-80; Rā. 414; Makārim, III, 901-11; Vahīd-i Bihbahānī, pp.240-6.

5. For their accounts see Q. pp.124-9; Vahīd-i Bihbahānī, pp.342-56.

6. For descendants of Aqā Muhammad Bāqir Bihbahānī see Ibid., pp.356 ff.
Hasan known as Kashif al-Ghita are the most outstanding.

The second group were the Persian ulama who often came from humble origins in the towns and villages of central and northern Iran. They began to arrive in the 'Atabat in the late 18th century, usually after completing their preliminary studies in religious centres such as Isfahan, Qazvin, Qum and Mashhad. Their long residence in the 'Atabat to study under eminent teachers and acquiring authorisation to exercise *ijtihad* (*ijazat*), usually acquainted them with certain norms and values, and gave them specific qualities, which were characteristic of all the Usuli ulama in the 19th century. A majority of them on their return to Iran made their home towns, or main provincial centres, their permanent residence, while only a few remained in the 'Atabat and achieved high positions. In due course, these ulama, both in Iraq and in Iran, trained a larger number of Persian students and established a vast network of Usuli ulama throughout the country. Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Shafti, Haji Ibrahimi Karbasi, Muhammad Taqi and Muhammad Husain Najafi in Isfahan, Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Qazvini and the Baraghani brothers (Mulla Muhammad Salih, Mulla Muhammad Taqi and Mulla Al) in Qazvin, the Naraqis (Mulla Mahdi, his son Mulla Ahmad and his grandson Mulla Muhammad and others) in Kashan, Mirza Ahmad Mujtahid, Mulla Muhammad Mamaqani (with ShaykhI leanings) in Tabriz, Haji Muhammad Hasan Qazvini Shirazi, Haji Mirza Ibrahimi Fasai, Shaykh Husain Nazim al-Sharifa, Haji Shaykh Mahdi Kujuri and Mulla Muhammad Mahallatiin Shiraz, Sayyid Javad Shirazi in Kirman, Aqa Muhammad AlI Bihbahani in Kirmanshah, Mirza Muhammad Zanjani in Zanjran, Mirza Sa'id Barfurushi in Barfurush, Mulla Aqa Darbandi and later Mulla AlI Kan in Tehran, Sayyid Muhammad Qasir Raavi (and other Raavis) in Mashhad are only a few better known examples of a long list of the Usuli mujtahids who dominated the religious and educational activities in the Iranian cities. Amongst those who remained in the 'Atabat, Sayyid Ibrahimi Qazvini in Karbila and Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafi (Isfahani) in Najaf reached the position of 'leadership' (*riyasat*) towards the middle of the century.

The third group of high ranking ulama consisted of those mujtahids who had mostly studied in the 'Atabat under Usuli teachers but also held hereditary

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1. For their account see Q.p. 183-8 and below Chapter Five, Section II.
2. Beside scattered references in the course of the following chapters, the above outline is only intended to give some idea of the ulama's geographical distribution. Ample information in the 19th century sources demands a separate investigation of their social position and their intellectual contribution which is beyond the capacity of this chapter.
3. For *riyasat* in the 'Atabat in the 1840's and for references to the above figures see below Chapter Five, Section I.
offices such as imān jumʿīh and Shaykh al-Islām. They retained their traditional positions, some dating from as early as the time of the Safavīds, in the more important urban centres of Iran. Throughout the 19th century these families of official divines, sometimes in cooperation but often in competition with the other independent mujtahids, retained their position as the executors of šan and the official representatives of the ulama class. No doubt the support given by the government assisted them in maintaining their authority, but cases of conflicts with the state policies were not rare. Amongst the ulama of this group, the Khātūn Ābādī Imam Jumʿīhs in Isfahan and later Tehran (Mīr ʿAbbād al-ʿAbbāsī, his son Mīr Muhammad Husain, his grandson Mīr Muhammad Hasan, and two of his great grandsons Mīr Muhammad Mahdī and Mīr Sayyid Muhammad) appear to be the oldest family of the ulama in Iran. The Shaykh al-Islāms of Isfahan (Ḥājī Mulla Murtaza), Imam Jumʿīhs of Shiraz (Shaykh Muhammad ʿAlī and his son Shaykh Ṭurābī and other brothers), Shaykh al-Islām of Shiraz (Shaykh Abul Qasim), Shaykh al-Islām of Tabriz (Mīrzā Muhammad Taqī, his son Mīrzā ʿAlī Asghar and his grandson Abul Qasim), Imam Jumʿīhs of Mashhad (Mīrzā Muhammad Mahdī and his brother Ḥājī Mīrza-yi Ṭabarqānī), and Imam Jumʿīhs of Zanjān (Muṣavi: Mīrzā Abul Qasim and his family) may also be mentioned as the most influential families of official ulama.

These three groups formed the highest layers of a religious body which also embraced other groups of middle and lower ranking ulama. The middle rank.

1. For Imam Jumʿīhs of Isfahan see Makārim. II, pp.314-20 (and other individual entries). For relation to Imam Jumʿīhs of Tehran see Makārim. II, pp.547-9. Also al-Maʿathir wa al-Athar (Tehran, 1306 Q.) pp.141-2. See also below Chapter Six, Section II.
5. For Shaykh al-Islāms of Tabriz see Nādir ʿAbbāsī, Ṭabaqāt wa Ṭabarqānī Tabriz, Tehran, 1323 Q. pp.222-7; Qāzī, Muhammad ʿAlī. Khāndān-i ʿAbbāsī, Tabarzān, Tabaqat. II, 1, 57, 209 ; Makārim. III, pp.701-3. See also below Chapter Two, Section III.
clergy (known as mullās and akhunds in a general sense) included clergy in the smaller cities, towns and large villages, the aides and entourage of prominent mujtahids, mudarrisīn (teachers of the intermediary level) in the local theological schools, or secretaries of the religious courts, while the low rank clergy including rauż-ikhāns, masʿalīh-gūs and other minbarī mullās, high and low level tullāb, teachers of the elementary level (mu'allims), khuddām and low level mutavallis of shrines, mosques, and madrasīhs, semi-professional and rural mullās and sayyids with no fixed occupations, all provided an important support for the mujtahids. Being financially and hierarchically dependent on their superiors, they often functioned as means of influence and if necessary instruments of propaganda and incitement in the community. But the lower ranks did not always follow the general guide lines of the mujtahids. Many sparks of protest, dissidence and revolt first flared amongst these very groups, who according to their training, their background, or their attachment to various individuals or doctrines, occasionally reacted against the domination of the high-ranking 'ulama. It took a long time however before these primitive signs of discontent could be fully expressed in any significant movement of protest. The loosely formed hierarchy of the Shi'i 'ulama, though allowed the occasional upsurges of discontent, also prevented a concerted reaction. Hence, up to the first quarter of the 19th century, the voice of the higher 'ulama expressed that of the greater part of the religious community.

Thanks to the Usūli doctrine of active execution of the religious law, the 'ulama enjoyed a legal status not only different from the members of the secular judicial system, but in many ways superior to it. They also enjoyed an economic and financial position largely independent from the secular power. These advantages not only gave them the necessary resources to support their students, aides and subordinates, but also put them in constant touch with other urban groups, most noticeably merchants and landlords. Later some of the 'ulama themselves entered the economic market and became rivals to both merchants and landowners. Various factors such as the absence of a centralised judicial power, the chronic weaknesses of the state in controlling its holdings, and the common misappropriation of the endowment revenues, encouraged the 'ulama to venture into the fields of trade, agriculture, money lending and property, often commissioning the same merchants and small landowners as their agents. This gave them a stand far above simple theologians and jurists. Many mujtahids such

1. See below Chapter Seven, I, the case of the Nahri brothers in Isfahan and their cooperation with both Shaftī and Sayyid Muhammad Imām Jum'īh.
as Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī, the Baraghānīs of Qazvīn, the Shaykh al-Islāms of Tabrīz and the Imām Jum'ahs of Isfahan owed their power and influence, more than anything else, to the very economic power which no doubt facilitated their involvement in the political and religious spheres.

The integration of this clerical body into a coherent entity, in such a manner that it could guarantee the high position of the mujtahids, necessitated the adoption of more systematic lines of authority. Above all, the recognition of a 'head' or a leader fulfilled the need for a superior theological authority who, by embodying both rational capacity and moral piety, could sanctify the high authority of other members of the hierarchy. Already in late 18th century, perhaps with some attention to the great scholars of the past and in comparison with the Sunni religious hierarchy, Āqa Muhammad Bāqir Bihbahanī was acknowledged as the 'Master' (Ustād-i kull), the 'Founder' (Mu'assis) and the 'Promoter' (Muravvi) of the modern Usuli school. This seems to have been the motive of some Usuli writers, most of them Bihbahanī's own students, in regarding him as the Renewer of the beginning of the century (Mujaddid-i ra's-i ma'ā), a concept more familiar in Sunni than in Shi'i thought.

After Bihbahanī however, this implicit problem of recognition of a 'head' seems to have remained unresolved for the next few decades. Though some regarded Sayyid Mahdī Bahr al-'Ulum, Bihbahanī's most prominent student and one of the outstanding 'ulama of the late 18th century (1155-1212/1742-97), as the most eminent of the 'ulama of the 'Atabat, yet from his early death up to the middle of the 1820's for almost two decades, no Shi'i divine emerged as the prominent leader of the community. This was probably due to the fact that few of Bihbahanī's students such as Sayyid 'Alī Tabātabā'ī, Shaykh Ja'far Najafi and Mīrzā-yī Qumī enjoyed an equal degree of academic respect and popular support. Later however, when almost all the students of the first generation had died, a few mujtahids of the second generation emerged as leaders. Between the 1820's and 1840's, Sayyid Muhammad Tabātabā'ī, Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī (Hujjat al-Islām), Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvinī, Shaykh Hasan Kashif al-Ghitā' and Shaykh

1. Q. pp.198-9 cf. Makārim. I, pp.222-3 and Vahīd-i Bihbahanī, pp.152-161 which all give various titles quoted by the contemporary sources.

2. Both Bihbahanī and his student and colleague Sayyid Muhammad Mahdī Bahr al-'Ulum quoted traditions (apparently from Sunni sources such as Ibn Athīr) regarding the emergence of centennial muravvije during the period of the Greater Concealment (Ghaybat-i Kubra'), perhaps with some sense of self-attribution. See Vahīd-i Bihbahanī, pp.152-61.

3. For his details see below.
Muhammad Hasan Najafi were considered as the chief religious authorities. In the second half of the 19th century, however, Shaykh Murtaza Ansari and after him Mirza Hasan Shirazi emerged as the sole Marja’-i Taqlid, and their authority was acknowledged by the ulama of both Arab and Persian origins.

Besides its legal and judicial implications, the emergence of Marja’ reflected a profound need in the religious community for a spiritual and moral head. Though the Usuli doctrine equipped the high-ranking ulama with the weapon of ijtihad, yet in its essence the rationalism propounded in the Usuli theory largely contradicted the spiritual standing attributed to the marja’s in order to enhance their prestige in the eyes of their followers. To conceal this paradox, attributions of unworldly qualities such as piety, lack of temporal desire, devotion and asceticism may frequently be found in reference to prominent mujtahids. Hence, many of the characteristics and modes of behaviour of mujtahids may be interpreted in the light of their attempt either to reconcile these conflicting aspects or to compensate for lack of worldly detachment. When for instance Aqa Muhammad Baqir Bihbahani announced in the Shrine of Husain in Karbila that he was 'the Proof of God' (Huqiat-i Khuda), he did not mean to proclaim any messianic message heralding the future coming of the Mahdi. What he implied was the superiority of his 'rationalist' approach over the 'traditionalist' creed. This is further evident when he continues by denouncing Shaykh Yusuf Bahrani and demanding a place in his pulpit and requiring Bahrani's students to attend his lectures. Indeed his logical approach would not have allowed him to expect an obscure and cumbersome 'Saviour' who was supposed to appear under the most unimaginable circumstances. Instead, his Usulism would allow the spiritual guidance of the Imam to be manifested in general 'deputyship' (niyabat) of the mujtahids. In one of his sermons, Bihbahani even implied the futility of awaiting the 'Departure' of the Imam, arguing that present circumstances would not tolerate the austerity and burden of his 'advent'. This was a claim which temporarily put him out of favour and even endangered his life.

1. See below Chapters Five, I & II, and Six, II & III for discussion on some of the above-mentioned ulama.
3. Ibid.
But if there was a strong emphasis on arriving at conclusions by way of deductive reasoning, this very concept of *niyabat-i *amm (general deputyship), as it was assigned to the mujtahids, was not free from elements of non-rationality from which *Usulīsm, at least in practice, could not escape. Judgements (*ahkām) were not only achieved by mere rational 'effort' (*jahād), for which the *fuqahā' were called mujtahids, but also by an 'intuitive' and 'illuminative' perception from the word of the 'infallible' (*kashf-i qaul-i ma'sūm). This latter concept was an *Akhbarī legacy which had some precedent in the *Shi‘ī scholars of the past, ranging from Shaykh Bahā‘ al-Dīn ‘Āmilī and Mullā Muhsin Fiyāz Kāshānī to Mullā Muhammad Taqī and Mullā Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī. Later on, from the last quarter of the 18th century onwards, in spite of a general orientation of the 'ulama towards the *Usulī kind of rationalism and their efforts to consolidate the foundations of *fiqh, distinctive examples of asceticism and mystical experience are still discernible in certain individuals. This tendency developed, often in peace with *Shi‘ī orthodoxy, amongst some 'ulama, chiefly to compensate for the widening gap which had been produced by the growth of *Usulī rationalism. These 'intuitive' experiences, though at first glance they seem to fall strictly within the lawful framework of *Sharī‘, upon closer examination reveal traces of millenarian expectations which contradicted the very basis of orthodoxy.

Signs of 'intuitive' experiences, asceticism and holy dreams parallel to the preoccupation with *fiqh and *usul, first appear in Sayyid Mahdi Bahr al-‘Ulūm whose efforts in bringing together the two aspects of *kashf and *aqīl made him distinct amongst the early *Usulī scholars. If his association with Bihbahānī qualified him as one of the pillars of the *Usulī school, his former tutelage under *Akhbārīs, or his affiliation with Majlisī's school of *hadīth and studies of *hikmat and mysticism under Aqa Abul Qasim Mudarris Khātunabādī and Qutb al-Dīn Nayrizī resulted in his acquaintance with less orthodox subjects. It is not known to what extent the seclusion and retreat of the last years of his life were due to ascetic motives, nor is it certain that his alleged interviews with the *Ni‘matallāhī adept Nur ‘Ali Shah in Karbila did really arouse any positive

2. *Vahīd-i Bihbahānī* (pp.224-32) cited a few anecdotes from various sources on his piety and his mystical experiences. For the list of his works see *Makārim*. II, pp.419-22. Amongst his works there is one commentary on *Sharī‘ Risāla Sayr va Suluk* of Sayyid ibn Ṭawūs in which Bahr al-‘Ulūm is reported to have given his spiritual ancestry. For his alleged Sufi training see *Tara‘īq*. III, pp.217, 339.
3. For his details see below Chapter Two, Section I.
response towards Sufism. Tarā'īq al-Haqā'īq reports that during Nur 'Alī's stay in the 'Atabaq, his popular preachings moved his enemies to seek the opinion of Bahr al-'Ulūm, who in response interviewed Nur 'Alī and as a result became profoundly impressed by his character. However, his sympathetic attitude towards the Ni'matallahīs should not be exaggerated since in a brief fatwā which he issued in reply to Aqā Muhammad 'Alī Bihbānī on the question of the Ni'matallahīs' activities, he emphasised, in a thinly veiled reference, that 'Beyond any doubt, the deviation of this condemned group from the path of rightfulness and true guidance, and their efforts to provoke discontent and to corrupt people of the cities, have become obvious and apparent.' The problem of Bahr al-'Ulūm's Sufi affiliation became even more enigmatic when towards the end of the century a sub-branch of Ni'matallahīs claimed a chain of spiritual descendancy through Bahr al-'Ulūm from Nur 'Alī Shāh.

However, if his sympathetic attitude towards Sufis may be in doubt, there is evidence which supports his preoccupation with mystical experiences. Qisas al-'Ulūmī refers to 'frequent retirements' (tikāf) and 'acts of devotion' in the mosques of Sahlah and Kufah. On a few occasions the author referred to 'concealed secrets' (khafayā-yi asrār) and mystical 'encounters' in the course of which he visited the Concealed Imam both in dreams and in the state of wakefulness. During one encounter with Sāhib al-Amr, in reply to his enquiry on certain points of fiqh, he was even instructed by the Imam 'to follow the path of "apparent reasons" (adallah-yi zāhirīyāh) in the affairs of Sharī'ah. These alleged visits, and other 'supernatural feats' (karamāt), gave Bahr al-'Ulūm a status above other jurists and made some sources even suggest some similarities between him and the Imam of the Age. One chronogram composed on his demise reads 'Mahdī of the Lord of the Age has passed away' (Mahdī-yi sāhib zamān zi 'Alam raft = 1212 Q.).

1. Tarā'īq. III, pp.199-200. In reply to Bahr al-'Ulūm's enquiry on the reason for assuming the title Shāh, Nur 'Alī Shāh replied that he has 'sovereignty, domination and power' over his own soul and that of the others. (See also below Chapter Two, I, for Ni'matallahī's claims).
Many students, including some of the most prominent mujtahids of the next generation, recognised Bahr al-’Ulum as the sole successor of Bihbahání and thus considered it as an honour to have been among his students. However, few of them seem to bear the stamp of his intuitive approach. ’Abd al-Samad Hamadaní was later converted to the Ni‘matallahí order whereas Mírzá Muhammad Akhbarí and Shaykh Ahmad Ahsání, while remaining in the ranks of the ’ulama, maintained diverse mystical and ‘non-orthodox’ interests different from those of Sufism.

In his unorthodox approach to the question of the cognition of the Imam, Mírzá Muhammad Akhbarí (1178-1232/1764-1816), a theologian of great calibre and chief advocate of later Akhbarísm, went far beyond the mild asceticism of his teacher Bahr al-’Ulum. A strong reaction against the prevalence of Usúlísm, and efforts to reintroduce a ‘militant’ version of Akhbarí thought which was considerably different to the moderate views of his intellectual predecessor Shaykh Yusuf Bahrání, turned Mírzá Muhammad into a dangerous enemy for the high-ranking ’ulama. His challenge to them, perhaps, was the most important after the setback of the Ni‘matallahís about a decade earlier at the turn of the 19th century. In his writings, as in his frequent public debates with the prominent mujtahids of his time, he sharply criticised the position of the Usúís on ittihád, and their methodology and excessive use of logical arguments. But perhaps what offended the ’ulama most were his direct attacks on three arch defenders of Usúlísm. He criticised Mírzá Abul Qasim Qumi and his disciples, whom he nicknamed Baqasíma, for their domination of religious circles while Sayyid ‘Alí Tabatabáí and his adherents, whom he called Asáriqa, were attacked for their innovations in the field of fiqh and their deviations from the lawful framework of traditions. In his debates with Shaykh Ja’far Najafi, his skill

1. For the list of his students see Makárim. II, pp.423-5.
2. Tará’iqa. III, pp.211-13 and Makárim. II, pp.600-10. Ḥājí Mírzá Ḥáqáí was one of ’Abd al-Samad’s disciples.
3. For his account see RJ. pp.653-4 (using Mírzá Muhammad’s own biographical account in Sahífat al-Ṣafá) and Makárim. III, 925-44.
4. See below Chapter Two.
5. RJ. 518.
6. This sarcastic title may have been given to Tabátabáí by allusion to the original Azáriqa, one of the main branches of Khárijites in first century A.H., who believed that all other Muslims who hold beliefs opposite to theirs or all those who did not join their ranks were to be considered as polytheists (mashrík). ’Abd al-Qahir Baghdádí al-Farq Bâyn al-Píraq translated into Persian by M.J. Mashkúr Tártkh-i Maqáhib-i Islám, Tabriz, 1333 Sh., pp.75-80; EI² AZÁRIKA (by R. Rubinacci).
in jadal (logical disputation) many times silenced the old mujtahid.  

In many ways Mīrzā Muhammad Akhbarī should not be regarded as an Akhbarī in the traditional definition only because he rejected any dispute in the authenticity of the traditions by means of deductive reasoning. Of course Akhbarismo provided some room for intuitive approach but his ideas and behaviour suggested a more 'heterodox' approach than that of theoretical 'intuition' (Kashf) of the Akhbarīs of the past generation. Preoccupation with 'hidden sciences' ('ulūm-i khāfīyyah) gave Mīrzā Muhammad the reputation of an eccentric scholar with supernatural powers. His bargain with Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh to bring the head of the Russian commander Tsitsianov by magical practices in exchange for eradication of the mujtahids' influence is reminiscent of earlier Sufi attempts to attract the secular power in the hope of defeating the ṣulama. He also produced a number of works on the subject of the occult, of which Anmuzaj al-Murtadin is an example. However, his works are not limited to refutations and 'occult sciences'. He was a prolific writer who, like his teacher Bahr al-ʿUlūm and his contemporary Shaykh Ahmad Ahsāʾī, was known for his 'universality' (fām-i ḥiyat). 

His views on the question of the Concealed Imam, discussed in Fath al-Bāb and Haqīqat al-Shuhūd, imply that contrary to the 'general deputyship' of the Usūlis, he considered the 'Gate of Knowledge' (Bāb-i Iʿlm) open only to those who can grasp the presence of the Imam by their intuitive experience. This approach contained elements of messianism which could even be taken as a precursor of later trends. Numerological prognostications often quoted from him lay stress on expectations no less dissimilar from those of the contemporary Sufis or scholars such as Ahsāʾī and Sayyid Jaʿfar Kashifī. In his poetry, with reference to a certain tradition ascribed to ʿAlī, he states: 'In the year

1. Q. pp.177-8.
2. The full account given by NT. I, 143-5 cf. Q. 179.
4. A list of 58 works appears in Makārim. III, 935-40. The term fām-i ḥiyat may more accurately be translated as 'comprehensive understanding of all the sciences of the age'.
5. Ibid. 938.
6. See below. Also Zayn al-ʿAbīdīn Shīrvānī Bustān al-ṣīyāha (Tehran, 1315 Q. 611) who claims that Akhbarī was a friend and supporter of the Sufis and even alleges that he was himself affiliated to the Mahdīya order. However, it is not known to what order the author refers since no trace of the Mahdīya could be found. Nonetheless in one of his works Naqṭat al-Sudar Mirza Muhammad devoted some parts to the refutation of the Sufis (Makārim. III, 940).
ghars ( = with the numerical value of 1260) the earth shall be illuminated by his light, and in gharasa ( = 1265) the world shall be suffused with his glory. If thou livest until the year ghariz ( = 1270), thou shalt witness how the nations, the rulers, the people, and the Faith of the God shall all have been renewed1. Sayyid (Ali Muhammad the Bab also seems to have been familiar with Mirzā Muhammad's speculations, since he wrote a commentary on al-Burhan in which he criticised some of the author's views2. In Dalā'il-i Sab'ah, the Bab refers to Mirzā Muhammad as one of those who forecast his imminent 'manifestation'. He quotes a certain Sayyid 'Abd al-Husain Shushtari who had once met Mirzā Muhammad in a gathering in Kāzimayn. When the latter was asked about the Zuhūr of the Imam, he looked at the audience and pointed at 'Abd al-Husain, assuring him that 'you will witness the time of the Zuhūr'3. But more than his speculations, it was his unreserved opposition to the mujtahids that put him in constant danger, and finally cost him his life. Charging him with heresy, blasphemy and 'constant abuse of the 'ulama', Shaykh Musā Najafi (son of Ja'far), in full accord with the other prominent 'ulama of the 'Atabat, issued a fatva declaring that 'his execution is a religious obligation, and whoever participates in the shedding of his blood, his entrance to Heaven will be guaranteed'. The fatva was signed by all the others and Mirzā Muhammad was killed by the mob in Kāzimayn4. Shīrvānī states that he had even forecast his own death in a chronogram: 'sadāq ghuliba' = 1232 Q. (the truthful was overcome)5.

However, if the anti-Uṣūlī stand adopted by Mirzā Muhammad was largely an unsuccessful attempt to check the power of the mujtahids, his intuitive approach on the other hand, was not uncommon amongst some other distinguished divines. Already, a few decades earlier, Aqa Muhammad Bidabādi (died 1197/1782-3), who was one of the last survivors of the old Isfahan school, had shown interest in mystical experiences. Though he had a distinguished orthodox training, it was his piety, lack of worldly ambitions, interest in alchemy and other 'hidden sciences', mainly derived from his family's mystical background, which made him

2. al-Dhāri'ī, XVIII, 114. To this criticism one of Mirzā Muḥammad's disciples, a certain Mirzā Muḥammad Bāqīr Rashtī, wrote a reply with the title al-Kalimāt al-Haqqāniyya.
popular especially amongst the Sufis. Though his alleged adherence to Qutb al-Din Nayrizi cannot be proved beyond a certain point, his attachment to mysticism is apparent from his mystical aphorisms and sermons.

Another scholar, Sayyid Ja'far Darabi (1189-1267/1775-1850) also claimed a similar intuitive knowledge, for which he is known as Kashfi. He was related to a celebrated family of Bahraini 'ulama and was the grandson of Shaykh Husain Al-'Usfur, a great Akhbari scholar who himself was the nephew of Shaykh Yusuf Bahraini. Shaykh Husain was a key figure in the diffusion of the Bahraini school of thought both in the 'Atabat and in Southern Iran, and it is not unlikely that his views influenced Darabi. When Kashfi for example emphasises that, as a result of a revealing dream he has realised that the Friday communal prayer during the Greater Concealment is unlawful, he echoes an Akhbari view. The symbolic significance of this statement lies in the fact that it allows the exercise of religious authority only after the emergence of the Imam. Kashfi particularly pointed out that whoever conducts this prayer 'is ambitious for riyasa and is a usurper of the right position of the venerable Imam.'

The same attitude is also shared by Mullā Asadallāh Burūjirdī Hujjat al-Islām, a faqīh of the middle decades of the 19th century (died 1271 Q./1854) who appears to have had strong Usūlī ties. He claimed to be the most knowledgeable of all the 'ulama (a'ilam) mainly on the ground that 'the door of the divine knowledge' was not closed on him. He was known for his revelations (mukāshafat), his devotions and other qualities which are usually attributed to such figures.

4. For a further discussion on Kashfi see below Chapter Nine, III.
5. For Shaykh Husain, his relationship with Shaykh Yusuf and with Kashfi, and for the Al-'Usfur see Fārs Nāmeh. II, 236; Makārim. II, pp.569-73 (and cited sources) and Tabaqāt. II, 1, pp.427-9.
7. Ibid.
8. For his account see al-Ma'āthir va al-Āthār, op.cit. 140 and Tabaqāt. II, 1, 128.
He claimed that these merits came to him as a result of a *tauqi* (tablet) which was addressed to him from the Concealed Imam. But nevertheless, in spite of occasional manifestations of an intuitive method, the remnants of Akhbarism or offshoots of this school, largely lacked the necessary impulse to leave a permanent mark. The general current of Usuli orthodoxy, then in its full flow, was powerful enough not to be affected by any outburst of protest. Yet some elements of this survived, either by direct transmission or in the form of diffused ideas and influences, to be exploited in later movements.

II

With Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i (1166-1241/1752-1825) and his visionary theophany, Shi'i thought generated a new synthesis which was essential for a new phase of millenarianism, a phase which eventually ended in the formation of the Babi movement. The Babi movement derived both its theoretical formation and its converts more from Shaykhism than from any other school. But such a close relationship can be best appreciated when Shaykhism in itself is considered as the final outcome of a fusion between three major trends of thought in post-Safavid Shi'ism; the theosophic school of Isfahan (*hikmat-i ilahi*), which itself benefited from the theoretical Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi and the 'Oriental' theosophy (*hikmat-i Iskraq*) of Suhravardi, the Akhbari 'traditionalist' school of Bahrain which traced its chain of transmission to the early narrators of hadith mostly by the way of 'intuitive' perception and the Gnosticism which was diffused in the Shi'i milieu and was strongly influenced by crypto-Isma'ili ideas as well as other heterodoxies of southern and southwestern Iran. However, this syncretism, the zenith of the late 18th century Shi'i 'universalism' (*jam'iyyat*) does not detract from the originality of Shaykh Ahmad's thought, since he attempted to incorporate both *zāhir* (exoteric) and *bātin* (esoteric) aspects in one comprehensive system. This required as much philosophical scepticism as intuitive experience and knowledge of *kalām* and traditions, in order to achieve an overall insight which Corbin defines as 'intégrisme' (in the original sense of the word), and Shaykh Ahmad himself refers to it as 'Perfect Shi'ism' (*Shi'a al-Kamil*). Though in the past such a theme was long pursued in Islamic intellectual history; from the Isma'ili *ta'vi'i* of Nasir Khusrau and others, to

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1. *al-Ma'āthir*, op.cit.
the 'Oriental' theosophy of Shaykh-i Ishraq (i.e. Suhravardi), the theology of Rajab Bursi and Ibn Abi Jumhur Ahsai and later in the Safavid period in the mysticism of Sayyid Haydar Amuli and in the theosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ, 'Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji and to some extent Baha' al-Din Amili and Fayz Kashani, yet all in all Ahsai's contribution, in some respects, is new compared to his predecessors.

A comprehensive survey of Shaykism, from the theoretical and historical point of view, is beyond the capacity of this study. Though some aspects of Ahsai's have been investigated, many areas remain to be fully covered. Here however, the main emphasis is on those eschatological aspects which gave rise to messianic expectations and hence were regarded by the opponents of the school as contrary to the course of orthodoxy. Ahsai's challenge in two major areas, namely the problem of spiritual authority, and the esoteric interpretation of Resurrection (Ma'add), posed a threat to the doctrine of the majority. As was previously the case with the early Ni'matallahis and then with Mirza Muhammad Akhbari, attempts were made to confront this threat by the isolation of Shaykism almost to the point of total denunciation. Nevertheless this was a formidable challenge, since Shaykism was equally at home with Shi'i traditions and with philosophical argumentations. Ahsai puts forward a concept of transmission which relied on the Akhbari school without being totally committed to its fundamentalism. He asserted his propositions on the basis of his intuitions whereas the fuqaha endeavoured to base their conclusions on usul al-fiqh.

During his elementary education in his homeland, al-Ahsai, Shaykh Ahmad may...
have been exposed to some local trends in the area. Though Corbin tends to believe that he was an *uwayṣī*, and had no formal training except a 'supra-sensible (invisible) guide' (*Shaykh al-hayba, ʿustād-i ḥaybī*), there are reasons to believe that by way of self education he benefited from available sources in his vicinity. If the words of Qisas al-ʿUlamāʾ can be relied upon, Shaykh Ahmad seems to have had access to the remnants of Ibn Abī Jumhūr Aḥsāʾī's library. By delving into his books, Tunikabunī implies that Shaykh Ahmad found many points in common with Abī Jumhūr. Indeed considering the care and attention paid by the local scholars in preserving their precious collections, it is not impossible that some of the texts had survived for a few centuries up to Shaykh Ahmad's time. The fact that Shaykh Ahmad's views on many subjects resemble those of Abī Jumhūr also supports a possible link, a link which throws light on the origins of his thoughts.

Furthermore, the continuous contacts of the Bahrainī ʿulama with centres of learning in Iran throughout the 17th and 18th century made the diffusion of some

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3. *Q*. 35.

4. See for example the efforts of Shaykh Yūsuf Bahranī and his father to preserve their books at the time of insecurity and strife in Bahrain. (Lu'luʾ al-Bahrayn op.cit. cited in *Q*. 271).

theological trends or even the circulation of religious and philosophical texts in a remote area like al-Ahsa' possible. Yet in spite of these early influences, Shaykh Abmad's son, in a biographical account of his father, states that in al-Ahsa' besides the majority of the Sunni population who had Sufi tendencies, the remaining Ithna 'Ashari 'ulama were dominated by dogmatic literalists ('ulama-yi zahiri-yi qishri), 'who had nothing to do with theosophy (hikmat), let alone with the secrets of creation'. He maintains that this attitude obliged Shaykh Ahmad to emigrate to the 'Atabat 'in the hope of finding someone who could sympathise with his views'. But in the 'Atabat his attendance at the lectures of Usulis such as Bihbahanî, Sayyid 'Ali Tabataba'i and possibly Shaykh Ja'far Najafi, or his acquiring further ijazat from Akhbarîs such as Shaykh Husain Al 'Usfur did not convert him to either of these two schools, and to a large extent he remained loyal to an ascetic approach pioneered by Bahr al-‘Ulum. This approach especially appealed to Ahsa 'I who had earlier experienced revelatory dreams and visions in which he claimed to have contacted the holy Imams and even received instructions from them. These visions indicated his enthusiasm for the world hereafter. The symbolic interpretation of these dreams provided a ground for Shaykh Ahmad to posit the existence of an intermediary world beyond the terrestrial life, thus opening new horizons for future intuitive meditations to be based on visionary experiences.

Besides preoccupations with asceticism and holy dreams, another familiar aspect in Shaykh Ahmad's thought was his keen interest in 'hidden sciences' in general and alchemy in particular. Although in this context there is some resemblance between Ahsa' and a few of his contemporaries such as Mîrza Muhammad Akhbarî and Sayyid Ja'far Kashfî, yet his use of these symbolic expressions was more for the purpose of exploring a kind of philosophical methodology. In the course of his discussions on the transcendental evolution of the body and soul, he frequently makes analogies with the alchemical

1. The autobiographical accounts of Sayyid Ni'matallah Jazâyirî (cited in his Amâr al-Nâmâyîya and quoted in Q. pp.437-53) and that of Shaykh Yusuf Bahramî (Q. pp.271-5) together with accounts of many other Bahramî 'ulama, are examples of these cultural contacts.
3. For his list of ijazat see Tabaqât. II, 1, p.91 cf. Fihrist. II, pp.162-3. Nearly all sources agree on the point that Shaykh Ahmad studied under Bahr al-'Ulum.
4. For recollection of his dreams and experiences in childhood see his autobiography in Fihrist. I, pp.136-42.
5. See below Chapter Three, III for comparison with the Bab's experiences in childhood.
process. Here, an esoteric interpretation of the unraveled secrets of alchemy served as an instrument or a method for attaining an intuitive perception of the complex states of man's existence. By elaborating an eschatological system in which the nature of the individual and collective resurrection have been discussed at great length, Ahsa'i goes beyond the limits of his contemporaries.

In a cyclic process, a divine substance accompanies the spirit in its descent from the realm of the eternal truth (malakūt) to terrestrial earth and after passing through earthly life, eventually ascends to its origin. But in this journey, man's being passes through an intermediary realm which neither belongs to the elemental existence, nor to the realm of malakūt.

This is the celestial world of Ḥurqalyā which is a purifying stage through which all beings must pass before being finally judged on the Day of Resurrection. This visionary world of Ḥurqalyā, this archetypal barzakh (purgatory) or the world of forms and images, is the 'earth' of the soul, because it is the soul's vision—a world whose state is neither the absolutely subtle state of separate substances, nor the opaque density of the material things of our world.

According to this theory man's being is comprised of a fourfold body. It consists of a twofold 'accidental' body and a twofold 'essential' body. The elemental corpse (jasad al-ʿunjūrī) which is a compound of 'sublunar' (physical) elements, perishes after death, decomposes to its original elements and will never return, whereas the 'subtle spiritual corpse' (jasad al-tātīnī), the celestial or astral body (jism al-tātīnī) and the essential body (jism al-asli al-haqīqi) ascends to the world of Ḥurqalyā. In this celestial conservatory, the threefold body remains till the Day when man will be resurrected to reclaim a new elemental existence and to meet the Final Judgement. Then he will again be stripped of all bodily existence (except the essential body) in order to be

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1. A comparison between the alchemical process ('amal-i kīmiyā) and spiritual perfection appears for example in Ahsa'i's Risāla al-Khāqānīya in Jawami' al-Kalīm (Collection of his tracts and treatises) 2 vols., Tabriz, 1273-6 Q., II, Part 1, pp.122-4 and idem, Sharḥ Kitāb al-Ḥikmat al-Ārshiyya (of Mullā Sadrā), Tabriz, 1278 Q., pp.165-6, 331-2. Also frequent references to the use of the hidden sciences and ḥurūf in his works appear in Fihrist. II, pp.227 (no. 18 and 19), 229 (no.27); 255 (no.100, Risāla al-Tubīlīya).


reunited with the original essence.

'Thus when the spirit enters *post mortem* the world of *barzakh*, it exists there in the archetypal body, to which a body originating in this *barzakh* provisionally adheres. In fact the latter is not a part of it, but is a temporary accident. On the Resurrection Day, man in his wholeness returns and leaves behind him that which was not part of him, which was not *himself*. Compare this: Break your seal; see how the form of it departs. Refashion it, now you see the first seal, returned to its original form, identical to itself. Nevertheless, the first form has not returned and never will. This is the esoteric meaning of the verse: "Each time their skin is consumed, we will replace it with another skin"\(^1\). Although the skin substituted may be identical to the first, it is called *other* because the first form has departed from it and has been replaced by another form. This what is emphasised in the commentary on this verse by Imam Ja'far Šādiq "It is the same and yet it is another"\(^2\).

Now the question may be asked about the significance of the multifold existence in this imaginary world of Ḥūrqālyā since the same theme was previously pondered upon by earlier thinkers. A comparison may be found with Platonic archetypal images as they are interpreted amongst neoplatonists such as Proclus and Dionysius\(^3\). The Neoplatonic influence may also be observed through the 'Oriental' theosophy of Shaykh Išhrāq who uses the term Ḥūrqālyā to describe the location of his intuitive experience, but he considers the celestial earth of Ḥūrqālyā as the earth of *Malakūt*\(^4\). Shaykh Ahmad himself acknowledged that he adopted the Syriac term Ḥūrqālyā from the Sabeans (Mandeans) of Basra\(^5\). In fact as Corbin points out, Shaykh Ahmad's concept of Ḥūrqālyā corresponds in its essence to the world of Doubles or celestial Images, *Mshunia Kushta* in Mandean cosmology\(^6\). More significantly the traces of Shi'i thinkers and theosophists may also be observed in Aḥsā'ī with greater clarity. The presence of mystical revelation (*kashf*) and illumination (*ishrāq*), or the intermediary world of

\(^1\) The *Qurān*, IV, 59.
\(^4\) Ibid. pp.189-212 (English trans. pp.118-34) citing extracts from Suhravardī's works on the subject of Ḥūrqālyā.
\(^6\) Ibid. 161-3 (English trans. 102-4).
immortal images (‘ālam-i mithāl) together with a mystical interpretation of Shi‘i theology and traditions, confirms a possible influence by Ibn Abī Jumhūr Ahsā‘ī on the ideas of Shaykh Ahmad. Abī Jumhūr maintains that 'the Imam's soul does not disintegrate at the time of death'. As for other people, in accordance with the form the soul has acquired through its good and evil actions, it will either enter the "World of Images" in an incorporeal shape and enjoy its pleasures, or it will be returned to the earth in the bodies of lowly animals in order to suffer punishment. The concept of reincarnation, as it appears in Abī Jumhūr is foreign to Shaykh Ahmad but on the point of the 'minor resurrection' (al-qīyāmat al-sughrā) or the individual resurrection of man in the intermediary world, some resemblance may be discerned. Later, in more modern times, Fayż Kāshānī describes his world of Barzakh as 'a world through which bodies are spiritualised, and spirits embodied'.

But in spite of earlier interpretations, Shaykh Ahmad's definition of the celestial world pointed in a specific messianic direction. By introducing this intermediary stage, he tried to resolve some of the major obstacles in the way of Shi‘i eschatological thinking, hence laying the theoretical foundation of a new trend of millenarianism. First by esoteric interpretation of the Qurānic verses or the Shi‘i traditions, Shaykh Ahmad redefined the concept of Resurrection contrary to the view held by the orthodox 'literalists'. The survival of the 'spiritual being' (jasad al-bātini plus ġism al-haqiqi) in the world of Ḥurqalya, removes the problem of corporal resurrection from the earthly grave, the concept known as mu'ād ġismānī. The corporal elemental cast perishes and will never return. The spiritual corpse however, which is maintained in the celestial grave as a shapeless, luminous and refined substance composed of elements of the world of Ḥurqalya, will be resurrected and recast in a new but still identical elemental corpse.

In his commentary on Hīkmat al-‘Areṣīya of Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, Shaykh Ahmad describes the final Resurrection in the following words:

> 'When the divine Will intends to renew Creation and to cause the seeds from the preceding existence to germinate, Seraph is commanded to blow into the Trumpet the breath of the great Awakening. As opposed to the "blazing sound", this is a propulsive breath. Entering the sixth dwelling, it propels the intellect towards the pneuma in the fifth dwelling; next it propels intellect and pneuma together

1. Madelung, 'Ibn Abī Gumhūr', op.cit. 149.
2. Terre Céleste, 159 (101).
towards the soul in the fourth dwelling; then it propels all three together, intellect, pneuma, and soul, towards the subtle consubstantial matter in the second dwelling; finally it propels all five toward the Image or archetypal Form in the first dwelling. Then the "I" spirit finds again its composition and structure, its consciousness and capacity to feel.

On the other hand, before the vibration of the breath of the great Awakening, the water of the sea of Sad, situated below the Throne, comes down and rains over the surface of the Earth. Then the spiritual body, made of the Elements of Hurqalyā serves as a "vehicle" for the new form, the "second accident" referred to above. Its structure being completed, its "I" spirit enters it. This is what is meant when the "headstone of the tomb's bursting" is symbolically mentioned. For then the individual arises in his imperishable Form, shaking the terrestrial dust from his head. "As you were made in the beginning, that you will again become" as it is said\(^1\).

Secondly, the Earth of the intermediary world provides a location for the visionary encounter with the Concealed Imam. It is from the West of this world that the Imam will appear. "When we speak of Jabalqa and Jabarsa" writes Shaykh Ahmad, "we mean the lower regions of this intermediate world. Jabalqa is the city of the East, that is, in the direction of the beginning. Jabarsa is the city of the West, that is, in the direction of the return and ending.\(^2\) It is only in this visionary world of meditation that the existence of the Imam and his eternal presence in the world of Hurqalya can be experienced. This idea of a subtle, visionary state rescues the Concealed Imam from the obscure and inaccessible masses of confused Shi'i traditions. Again, contrary to the orthodox eschatological literature produced on the subject of concealment, with the definite purpose of undermining and even denying the possibility of any tangible existence of the Imam, relegating him to the oblivion of a never coming future and thus diminishing the chances of any possible 'revelation', here Shaykh Ahmad paves the way not only for an esoteric encounter with the Imam, but for his reappearance from the celestial world in the world of elemental existence. Ironically, the very school which preached rationalism and a logical approach discouraged and even condemned the flesh and blood image of the Qā'im, leaving it to the mystical and pensive Ahsa'i to yearn for a Qā'im who in his very being promulgated a historical necessity.

Nevertheless, this necessity was never discussed beyond the point of metaphorical allusions. What is more clearly emphasised is the possibility of

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1. Ibid. 327 (217-18). The verse referred to is from the Qur'an, VII, 28.
2. Ibid. 295-6 (192).
an encounter with the Imam in the world of visions and dreams. This is the third aspect of Shaykh Ahmad's eschatology. He maintains that so long as the Imam remains in the Concealment, while the world still undergoes the process of final separation between good and evil, only the 'presential knowledge' (‘Ilm hudūrī) would lead the seeking man to the Hidden Imam.Hurqalyā is not only an intermediary world which one enters after physical death, but is the very state of intuitive imagination perceptible by acquirement of a transcendental consciousness. If thinking in a 'horizontal dimension' (silsilat al-‘ārd) enables man to grasp a static understanding of elemental creation, the 'longitudinal dimension' (silsilat al-tul) transcends him to the state of Hurqalyā where he would attend the presence of the Imam.

By introducing this 'longitudinal dimension' in which the the past is 'under our feet' and not behind us, Ahsā‘ī proposes a collective historical consciousness shared by all those who are elevated to the state of 'presence' (hudūr) and thus can visualise this all embracing state of consciousness, as symbolised in the person of the Imam. This was not an unprecedented concept in Islamic history. Both Isma‘īlism and Sufism pondered the necessity of this 'invisible' guide in the course of man's historical perfection. The 'Perfect Shi‘ī' (Shī‘a al-Kāmil) or Nāṭiq Vāhid in Shaykhism implies the same characteristics of Nāṭiq and Insān–i Kāmil. After the first three principles of the 'unity of God' (Tauhīd), prophethood (Nabuwat) and recognition of the Imāmat, the principal of Vīlayat (which is defined as the perfect Shi‘ī) becomes the 'Fourth Pillar' (Rūk n al-Rābi‘) of the Shaykhi doctrine. Henceforth the Perfect Shi‘ī is the same 'Gate' (Bāb) or Deputy (Nā‘īb) who in the state of revelatory meditation

1. L’École Shaykhie, op.cit., p.15. Also frequent descriptions of these concepts in Ahsā‘ī’s works. See Fihrist. II, 282-3, no.124. Also Irshād al-‘Awām, op.cit., II, 57 ff.

2. For comparison with Sufi concept of Insān–i Kāmil see ‘Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī, Kitāb al-Insān al-Kāmil, edited by M. Molé, Tehran, 1962, pp.4-8 and E2, al-INSAN al-KAMIL (R. Arnaldez). For comparison with Suhravardī see En Islam iranien, II, pp.67-80. After indicating different names and attributes of the Perfect Man by which he is identified in various trends and schools of thought, Nasafī maintains: 'The Perfect Man is always (present) in the world and there is never more than one (at a time), inasmuch as all beings together are like one man, and the Perfect Man is the Heart of this man, and beings cannot live without a heart ... There are many wise men in the world but that which is the heart of the world may not be more than one. Others are at various stages, each at his own level. When that Unique One passes away, the next one reaches his level and seats himself in his place. Therefore the world (always) has its heart' (al-Insān al-Kāmil. pp.4-5).
comes into the presence of the Concealed Imam.

These three aspects of Shaykh Ahmad's thought, the redefinition of the Resurrection, the location of the Imam in the intermediary world of *Hurqalyā* and the encounter between the Imam and the Perfect Shi'i in the state of meditation, more than any other factor consolidated the foundation of millenarian thinking. This process, in spite of attempts made by the successors of Shaykh Ahmad to readjust the Shaykhi doctrine at the orthodox theory of 'Concealment', remained largely independent of the dominant orthodoxy and was bound to come into collision with it later. The position of Ahsāʾī in relation to the Ithnā 'Ashari eschatology deserves further attention.

The Shi'i literature on the subject of Ghaybat from the time of early scholars such as Shaykh Tusī, Shaykh Mufīd, Murtaḍā (Alam al-Huda, Shaykh Saddūq up to the time of Sayyid Dīdār Hindi, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī and Sayyid ʿAṣadallah Shaftī in the mid 19th century, was chiefly designed to prove the possibility

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1. Unlike the definition of *Shīʿī al-Kāmil*, the question of the 'Fourth Pillar' always remained a controversial issue in the later Shaykhi school. Though there are occasional references in the works of Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kāẓim Rastī to *Arkān al-Arbaʿa* and Rukn al-Rābīʾ (e.g. *Sharḥ al-Ziyāra*, op.cit. 4th ed., I, pp.397-400; *Fihrīst*. I, pp.75-9, two letters by Sayyid Kāẓim Rastī. On *Jāmiʿ* and Nāṭiq, *Sharḥ al-Ziyāra*, 4th ed., III, 150-51 and two letters by Rashīdī, *Fihrīst*. I, pp.342-8), yet it is important to notice that both writers in most of their general works (Aḥsāʾī, *Hayāt al-Nafs*, Wadham collection MS. no.282, Persian trans. by S.K. Rastī, 2nd ed. Kirmān, n.d.; and Rastī, Sayyid Kāẓim *Risālīh-yi Fārsī dar Uṣūl-i 'Aqāyīd*, INBA. no.4, I), compiled with the general categorisation of the Principles of Religion. However, Rastī himself emphasises (Uṣūl-i 'Aqāyīd, p.41) that although 'Divine Justice' ('Adī) is one of the affirmative attributes (*qifāt-i subūṭiyī*) and thus may not be considered as a Principle, he compiled his work with the traditional division. After the time of Sayyid Kāẓim, passing references to the 'Fourth Pillar' appear in early Babi works (*Gātīl*. p.513) but the main emphasis is Kirmānī Shaykhis. In *Fihrīst*. (pp.79-112) Ibrāhīmī discusses the later Shaykhi opinion of the 'Fourth Pillar' and *Vahdat-i Nāṭiq*. He noticeably tries to reconcile the Shaykhi concept of Nāṭiq and the 'Fourth Pillar' with the conventional notion of leadership in orthodox Shi'i theory. See also Kārīm Khān Kirmānī, *Risālīh-yi Rukn-i Rābīʾ*, Kirmān, 1368 Q. See also below Chapter Four, Section I.

2. *al-Dhārīʾa*, lists forty works under *Kitāb al-Ghayba* (XVI, pp.74-84) and under *Kitāb al-Riḍāʾa*, (X, pp.161-3). Also see *Mīrāz Ḥusain Tabarst Nūrī, al-Najm al-Thaqīb dar Ḥāvāl-i Imam-i Ghūb* (Tehran, n.d.) and especially the list of forty Shi'i works on the subject (pp.4-9). Murtaḍā Mudarrisī Chāhārdīhī, in *Tārīḵ-i Ravāḥšt-i Iran va 'Irāq* (Tehran, 1351 Sh., pp.334-7 also lists 21 works by Shi'i scholars and 16 by Sunni writers on the subject of the Twelfth Imam. For Sunnī sources on the Mahdī see bibliographical list in *Yadnamāh-ye 'Allāmah Aminī*, edited by S.J. Shahidī and M.R. Ḥakīmī, I, Tehran, 1353 Sh., pp.519-20 and Khurāsānī, H. *Maktāb-i Tashayyuʾ* (Tehran, 1341 Sh.) p.183, n.1. For a concise survey of the Ithnā 'Asharī view on Ghaybat and Maʿād see *Kifāyat al-Muwahhidīn*, op.cit. II and III.
of the Imam's existence in the material world by emphasising that a prolonged biological life for the Imam was not impossible\(^1\). But since the Imam was in Concealment, and since after the completion of 'Lesser Concealment' and the time of the 'Four Agents' (\textit{Maw\=a\=b} \textit{Arba'\=a}) the chances of any regular contact with the Imam were remote, it was the responsibility of the mujtahids to guide the believers during this interregnum. However, this attitude did not prevent the accumulation of a large number of intuitive experiences\(^2\). Part of the literature of \textit{Ghaybat} was exclusively devoted to these experiences, mainly to prove three points: first, to provide some evidence for the abiding presence of the Imam and to stretch his presence in the material world; secondly, to sanctify the position of the mujtahids as true representatives of the Imam, and thirdly, to compensate for the scarcity of supernatural experiences in orthodoxy in a lawful way.

But these experiences hardly ever went beyond a subsidiary support. Indeed the contents of the books of \textit{Ghaybat} or \textit{Rij'\=at} in no way encouraged any sincere expectation for the advent of the Q\={a}'\=im. On the contrary, they implied greatest theoretical obstacles to the materialisation of any of the prophecies which were the very basis of the Ithn\={a} 'Ashar\={i} theory of Concealment. The prohibition on setting a date for the 'revelation', on identifying any specific name for the Imam, or the possibility of declaring specific deputyship, naturally made any attempt to fulfil the prophecies, or even any speculation on the subject, a matter of controversy if not heresy\(^3\). A considerable number of treatises, written to remove doubts about any single point of prohibition, indicate the potential danger which the unconventional approach might have for 'orthodoxy'\(^4\).

In this context the position of Ahs\={a}\={i} and his successor Sayyid Kaz\={i}m Rasht\={i} is somewhat complicated. On the one hand it is apparent that in spite of his philosophical orientation, in instances, at least on the surface, he agrees with the common orthodox interpretation. In \textit{Sharh al-Ziy\=ara} Ahs\={a}\={i}\(^7\) devotes a whole section to the question of \textit{Rij'\=at} and the appearance of the Q\={a}'\=im, entirely on the basis of traditions cited in the works of the previous

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1. See for example Mu\={h}ammad B\={a}qir Maj\=lis\={i}, \textit{Haqq al-Yaq\=\=in}, Tehran, n.d. pp.185-212.
2. For some of these experiences and encounters with the Imam, see Mu\={h}ammad B\={a}qir Maj\=lis\={i} \textit{Bih\=ar al-An\=war} 1st ed. 25 vols., Tehran, 1301-15 Q., XIII, 6 (23-5) 17-24: Persian trans. Tehran, 1397 Q., pp.74-84, 119-398.
4. For example \textit{Ris\=a\=la} on prohibition of naming S\={a}h\={i}b al-Zam\={a}n by Shaykh Sulaym\={a}n Bahr\={a}n\={i} cited in Q. p.277.
scholars. Though remarkable in providing a systematic and consistent account of the existing traditions, and equally remarkable for demonstrating their messianic messages, he barely touches on the esoteric themes. In his more popular works such as Hayāt al-Nafs, or a treatise in response to Muhammad 'Ali Mīrza, dealing with the question of 'Resurrection' and 'Return', Ahsā'i cites traditions common to all Shi'i books of Return almost without any further elaboration on the symbolic meaning of the apocalyptic 'Signs' ('Alamat'). The same approach may also be observed in the works of Sayyid Kāẓîm Rashtī. Ahsā'i's opinion about some messianic tendencies of his own time also confirms this conservative outlook. He wrote a short tract in reply to Shaykh Mūsā Bahrānī in which he denounced a claimant who declared himself to be the deputy of the Imam of the Age (vakīl-i Imām-i Zamān).

The ostensible contradiction between Shaykh Ahmad's theoretical assumptions and his practical position could only partly be justified by his efforts to combine the 'internal' (bātin) and the 'external' (zāhir). For the most part however it was the practice of taqīya (prudential dissimulation) which was responsible for the confinement of the Shaykhi eschatology to philosophical and academic arguments. Ahsā'i's frequent references to the necessity of taqīya owing to the limited capacity of the ordinary man to grasp the true meaning of the secrets of religion, bears clear signs of his hesitation to declare his controversial views.

In a Persian risālah in reply to Muhammad Rīzā Mīrza on the question of 'Resurrection', Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī acknowledges these intellectual limits when in the introduction of the treatise he maintains that:

'elaboration on the secrets of the subject of Ma'ād, would lead us to raise various matters which are not appropriate to our time, since the people of this age (abnā-yī zamānīn)'

4. Usūl-i 'Aqāiyd, op.cit., pp.185-215; idem, Risāla in reply to a few questions, Wadham Coll., MS. (also Fihrist. II, 353, no.295) folio 113-121.
5. Risāla al-Muṣawīya in Jawāmi' al-Kalim, op.cit., I, also cited in Fihrist. II, 244.
6. For example in Risāla Ḥamlīya, in Jawāmi' al-Kalim, op.cit. Also in Fihrist. II, 246.
cannot tolerate them, and this would accelerate their
denial, as our lord Sadiq, peace be upon him, has said:
"Not all that is known is to be said, and not the right
time has come for all that is to be said, and not all
appropriate sayings should be said to those who are
incompetent of understanding". Therefore, owing to
their complexity, references to these matters, without
full explanation, are beyond public comprehension. This
is the reason why the holy Imams and the eminent Shi'is
(akhvās-i Shi'a) constantly covered the delicate details
of this subject under the cloak of "outward expressions"
('ibārat-i zahiriyih) so that the secret gem would be
safely protected from the encroachments of the ignorants'.

Prudence and secrecy inspired an allegorical language which is not uncommon in
other proto-millenarian ideas of the past. Signs of these allegorical
speculations may be detected in Ahsa'ī's works which on one occasion for example
specified the date of birth and the date of 'Revelation' of the Qā'im in a
codified message. In another instance he quoted a tradition in which, regarding
the appearance of the Qa'im, Imam Ja'far Sadiq is reported to have said; 'His
cause will appear and his name will arise in the year sixty (yāshuru fi sana
al-cittin amruhu wa ya{lī dhikruhu.

Some cryptic speculations are also evident in a brief letter written by
Shaykh Ahmad to Sayyid Kazim in response to the complaints made by the latter
of the persecutions inflicted upon Shaykhis in the 'Atabāt, and perhaps with
reference to Rashtī's enquiries about the time when the appearance of the Imam
would resolve the hostilities. Ahsa'ī replies with an enigmatic sentence:

'Regarding the possibilities (of Zuhur?) mentioned (in
traditions), there is no other way but to wait ... There
is no alteration in this cause, and for every call there
is a deliverer but setting a precise date is not favour­
able. "You shall surely have news of it after a while".

1. Risālih in reply to questions on Ma'ād. INBA. no.4, II, pp.216-63 (220-1).
2. Fa'ida in request of Shaykh Musa Baqrānī in Jawāmi' al-Kalim (Fihrist. II,
pp.242-3).
3. Qasīl. (Z. 513) cited a certain Kitāb al-Rijā‘a by Ahsa'ī, possibly the
Risāla in reply to Sayyid Husain on the question of Rijā‘at in Jawāmi' al-
Kalim, I; Fihrist. II, 259.
The verse quoted in the passage is from the Qurān XXXVIII, 88.
The allusion in the above Quranic verse to 'after a while' (ba'ad-a hān) encouraged some Shaykhis to search for the definite date. Mulla Ja'far Kirmānshāḥī who met Ahsā'ī in 1241 Q. in the last months of the latter's life, related that when a group of his companions asked Shaykh Ahmad to indicate 'Signs of Deliverance' (AlAmāt al-Faraj), he replied 'sixty eight', and when they asked for an explanation he replied with the same verse from the Qurān: 'You shall surely have news of it after a while'. Then they asked for further elaboration, to which Ahsā'ī replied: 'Is it not that the numerical value of 68 is equal to 68?'

This preoccupation with the revelation of the 'Promised One' (mau'ud) sometimes drew the attention of non-Shaykhi writers such as Tunikābunī who on a few occasions in Qisas al-Ulam discusses Ahsā'ī's views on Ma'ād and the Return of Ṣāḥib al-Amr. He states that according to Ahsā'ī the existence of the Imam in this world is an assumption which could not be reached by deductive reasoning. Although Tunikābunī believes that this is a 'firm and complete argument', yet he states that this view differs from the majority of the 'ulama who usually substantiate the existence of the Imam with the 'rule of Benevolence' (qā'idih-i Lutf). On another occasion, Tunikābunī recalls that in one of his lectures Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī was commenting on a verse by Shaykh Ahmad; 'The smoke you see shall ascend after me, I am the ignitor of that flame'. The author then remarks that this prophecy was fully realised. Not only did a great animosity exist between Sayyid Kāzim and the fuqahā', but two of his students, Ḥāji Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī and Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad the Bab caused the greatest schism in the country. 'The flames of that fire are still alive'. The significance of this remark is that Tunikābunī, as a representative of the dominant Shārī', notices a continuous line between the ideas of Ahsā'ī and the emergence of the Babi movement.

Cryptic speculations during the time of Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī, and the close circle of his followers, continued to develop on the theme of spiritual 'Resurrection', yet in spite of its messianic undercurrent, Shaykhism remained a school, close in many ways to the orthodox Shi'i theory, if not in harmony with the prominent jurists. Rashtī accepted the Usūlī approach to 'external' matters, and went to great lengths to represent the Shaykhi point of view on fiqh, usūl and traditions in a purely academic manner. This was also aided by the

increasing pressure which was put on the Shaykhis during incessant waves of condemnation at the end of Ahsā'ī's life and throughout Rashtī's leadership. In response to charges of 'deviation' and blasphemy levelled against them, Rashtī tried to clarify, and even in some instances, readjust the Shaykhi positions in accordance with current Shi'i principles.

Nevertheless, in his numerous works on the true meaning of Resurrection, the inner secrets of the Quranic verse and traditions and methods for achieving the spiritual purification, he also paid attention to the problems of the Concealed Imam. In Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn, as in his other works on the question of vilāyat, he sharply criticises the contemporary 'ulama for their misinterpretation of this concept. He maintains that contrary to the Sunni view for adopting which he condemns the Shi'i 'ulama, vilāyat of the Imam should not only be defined in terms of 'affection' (muhabbat), since vilāyat according to the Shi'i principles must be regarded as active 'intervention' (tasarruf) of the Imam in the affairs of the world. Such a definition necessitates that in theory the Imam is the only rightful source of authority whose function cannot be replaced by the process of reasoning.

In a commentary on Qasīda Lāmīya, Rashtī introduces a cyclical concept of prophethood which resembles the Ismā'īlī view of history. He maintains that at the end of the twelfth century, the first cycle of prophethood, which corresponded to the Prophet and eleven Imams, came to an end. This was the cycle of 'exteriors' (zavāhir) which was designed to perfect the 'external' capacities of human 'soul'. The new cycle which is the cycle of 'interiors' (bavātīn) or the cycle of unveiling secrets, is to perfect the capacities of the human 'spirit'. As the first cycle was an embryonic phase for spiritual evolution, the second cycle is the age of adolescence.

Thus when the first solar cycle of the prophethood (shams al-nabwaw), which belongs to the perfection of exteriors and corresponds to the revelation of the name of Muḥammad, is completed, there begins the second solar cycle of prophethood for the perfection of interiors, and exteriors in this cycle are subordinates (as in the first cycle the interiors were subordinates). And in this second cycle the name of the messenger of God in Heaven is Aḥmad, and Aḥmad also is the name of the murāvij (promoter) and ra'īs (head) at the beginning of this century, and certainly he came from the best land and purest climate.

Here, a new cycle of prophethood is contemplated which starts in the thirteenth century A.H. The divine Sun manifests itself again in Aḥmad, who is the heavenly prototype of Muḥammad in the past cycle, and whose reflection on the Earth illuminated the initiator of the new cycle namely Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī. But if Shaykh Aḥmad is the initiator of the cyle of internal, where does the

3. Sharīr Lāmīya 'Abd al-Baqī al-'Amrī, 1270 Q.
Qāʾīm fit into this picture? Here, as far as the revelation of the Qāʾīm is concerned, Rashtī's enigmatic answer is open to interpretation. It is likely that he regarded Aḥsāʾī and possibly himself as precursors, Gates or even reflections of the Concealed Imam whose celestial existence is to justify the unravelling of the interior. This is more understandable if Aḥsāʾī's theory of multifold bodies is considered. If the Imam, the internal name of the new revelation is still in the intermediary world of Ḥūrqalī, the Gate (Bāb) who is the Perfect Shiʿī, will be the only physical representation of him in this world. Writing in 1263 Q. (1847), al-Qatīl al-Karbālāʾī, a student of Sayyid Kāzim and a later Babi adherent, in his interpretation of the secret of ʾittin (sixty) complies with the same opinion. He states that in the course of the second cycle, from the beginning of the century up to the end of Sayyid Kāzim's life (1259/1844) was the age of ʾbatīn. The representatives of this age, Aḥsāʾī and Rashtī, were indeed like elemental corpses (ajsād) for the celestial body (jīsm) of the messenger, namely the Imam of the Age. But in the year sixty, the spiritual body (jīsm haqīqī) which is the interior of the interior (ʾbatīn al-ʾbatīn) appeared. One may assume that in this stage of the development of the Shaykhi thought under Rashtī, while the 'gate' of the recognition of the Imam is regarded as being reopened by Aḥsāʾī, his corporal return is still to be awaited.

Further hints of the future appearance of the Imam may also be found in the oral accounts related from Rashtī. Considering the danger of any open speculation, it is not unnatural that these oral references were confined to a small circle of devoted students. Almost all the accounts agree that towards the end of his life, he became increasingly interested in the advent of the 'Promised One' who would appear after him. Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, who because of his opposition to the Babis constantly tries in his works to play down the messianic content of Rashtī's teachings, still agrees that when Rashtī was asked about his successor, he replied "Soon the cause of God would reach its maturity". On many occasions in reply to the same question, he hinted; 'those who are destined to be destroyed will be destroyed by the Proof (bayyīna), and those who are destined to be resurrected will be resurrected by the Proof'.

It is also related that after twenty years during which Sayyid Kāzim had implicitly propounded the circumstance of the advent of the 'Promised One', in

1. Qatīl. (513).
Ramadan 1258 (1842), just before that revolt of the Shi'ite population of Karbila', and the consequent massacre of the inhabitants by the Ottoman forces, he openly publicised the imminence of the next Zuhur.

"After maintaining that He (the Promised One) is clear of any physical defect and imperfection, he (Sayyid Kazim) then specified His heavenly name (ism al-Samawi'), as the Prophet said my name in Heaven is Ahmad and on the Earth is Muhammad. Sayyid Kazim ended that month in describing His virtues, perfections and characteristics."2

It appears however, that the increasing hostility of his opponents, and the allegations brought against him regarding his role in the events of Karbila', discouraged Sayyid Kazim from publicising his views on this particular matter. Again Qattīl reports that when in Ramadan 1259 (1843) Rashti was asked by his students to disclose the secrets of the 'Perfect Shi'i' and the 'Fourth Pillar', he replied:

"Last year we paid the greatest attention and fully discussed (this question), but we saw neither any enthusiastic response from the companions, nor any acceptance from our opponents, until what befell them from the sword in that horrific disaster (reference to the massacre of Karbila'). Now, if I want to begin explaining and repeating what I have already said, I do not see in you the right capacities and you are not capable of understanding; therefore, it is better to leave the matter and alter the style"3.

In spite of his reluctance to speak in public, in the remaining three months of his life, from Ramadan to 10th Dhu al-Hijja 1259 (31st December 1843), Rashti never failed to emphasise to his close companions the possibility of the 'revelation of the cause of God' soon after his own death, which he implied would occur in the near future. Though he never made it clear to whom or to what position he exactly refers by this revelation, amongst his students some tended to believe that this was a reference to the appearance of a messianic figure more significant than Ahsa'i or Rashti themselves. Many of the early Babi sources reported that in Dhu al-Hijja 1259 during his last annual pilgrimage to Kazimayn, when his students showed their grief and distress over his predicted

1. See below.
2. Qattīl. (507) quoting Mullā 'Alī Tabrizī.
3. Ibid. (508).
death, he replied: 'would you not wish me to die so the cause of your Imam may
be revealed?' Further on his way, he warned two of his most well known students,
Mulla Hasan Gauhar and Mirza Muhit Kirmani not to dispute and disunite after his
death on the question of succession since 'in thirty weeks the Cause will be
revealed to you'. In a gathering of his followers in Baghdad, he pointed to a
sword in front of him and repeated three times: 'Swear to God, the sword is
closer than what you might imagine'. QatZI adds that many people misunderstood
him, but later when Mulla Muhammad Taqi Hiravi asked him the real meaning of his
allusion he replied: 'the cause of God would reach its maturity' and added 'but
our cause is not the same as that of the Gates' (Abwâb: the Four Agents of the
Hidden Imam).

The intention behind Sayyid Kazim's allusive remarks is not precisely clear,
but at least two conclusions may be reached. The first is his preoccupation
with messianic prophecies, the fulfilment of which he anticipated in the near
future, when the evolution of the cycle would reach its maturity. However, so
far as can be judged, it is unlikely that this was an anticipation of the
emergence of the Twelfth Imam in its full traditional definition, since his own
writings made such emergence conditional on the fulfilment of a series of complex
eschatological processes. But he also attached far greater importance to the
spiritual position of this 'Promised One' and to the circumstances of his
'revelation', than that of any Agent of the Imam. In a sense he implied that
the process which was started by Shaykh Ahmad at the beginning of the century
was a preliminary phase that would reach its culmination during the next critical
stage. Whether this 'Promised One' could be defined as the Bab, the 'Perfect
Shi'i', the 'Deputy of the Imam' or in fact the Imam himself is open to inter­
pretation.

Secondly, the teaching of Shaykh Ahmad and the esoteric interpretation
alluded to by Sayyid Kazim, motivated many of his students and followers to
adopt a messianic outlook, often in contrast with the academic norms of their

1. QatZI. (508) cf. Nabil. 45. QatZI gives the list of the 14 of Rashti's
students who were present on that occasion. References to other speculations
and allusions reported from Ahsâ'i and Rashti may be found in NK. pp.99-104;
Nabil. pp.13-46; MJQ. (pp.462-64) and other sources.
2. QatZI. (508). 3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Usul-i 'Aqâiyd, op.cit. pp.186-9 and Risâlth in reply to Muhammed Rižâ
time. The crisis of succession which occurred immediately after the death of Rashti, and the widening difference between the 'conservative' and 'progressive' factions in the Shaykhi school, may be best explained in terms of such messianic anticipations. While Haji Muhammad Karim Khan, Mullâ Hasan Gauhar, Mirzâ Muhît Kirmanîî, Mullâ Muhammad Mamaqani and Mirzâ Shafig Tabrizî each justified their own assumed leaderships of the 'sect' in terms of academic and communal positions, others such as Mullâ Husain Bushruyîhî, Mullâ 'Alî Bastamî, Mullâ Sâdîq Khurâsanî, Sayyid Javad Karbala'i, Mullâ Yusuf Ardabîlî and many other future Babîs, regarded the age of Ahsâ'î and Rashti merely as a preparatory period for achieving 'the interior of the interior (bâtin al-bâtin) to which Rashti was considered as Baballah al-Muqaddam (the first Gate)."

The development of the theory of messianism in the ideas of Ahsâ'î and Rashti, was only partly responsible for the enthusiastic reception, or equally hostile response, which the Shaykhi school received in its forty years of activity in Iraq and in Iran. The actual progress of the school and the practical implications of this growth formed another factor influential in its appeal to certain groups in the society. Elements such as pronounced piety and lack of worldly interests in the Shaykhi leaders, and the very fact that Ahsâ'î for nearly twenty years (circa 1221-1240/1806-24), with the exception of a few intervals, spent his life visiting most of the important cities in western, central and eastern Iran, greatly assisted the formation of a community of followers throughout the country. Indeed paying visits at least of shorter duration to cities such as Kirmânsâh, Tehran, Mashhad, Yazd, Isfahan, Shiraz, Qazvin, was a not uncommon practice among prominent mujtahids of the 'Atabât. They usually visited these places by invitation of the local 'ulama, notables, governors and state officials who had a special devotion to them. Ahsâ'î also visited most Iranian cities and towns and attracted followers from the middle and lower ranks of 'ulama, local merchants, local officials and some members of the Qâjâr family. The diffusion of some 'ulama of Bahrainî descent in cities like Yazd, Shiraz and Kirmân, who had either in one stage studied under Ahsâ'î or were acquainted with him, or else regarded him as their head or leader, greatly facilitated these visits. These were mostly the middle rank 'ulama, possibly

1. Early Babi sources such as Qâtîlî. (pp.502 ff) and Nuqtat al-Kaf (pp.99-100) occasionally addressed Ahsâ'î and Rashti with the title Bab and Bab-i Imam. For the interfactional dispute within the Shaykhi school see below Chapter Four, Section I.

2. See for example Q. on Shaykh Ja'far Najafi (pp.191-8), Sayyid Muhammam Tabâtabâ'î (125-9) and Sayyid Mahdî Tabâtabâ'î (pp.124-5).
with Akhbari tendencies, who in the second half of the 18th century, chiefly because of the Wahhabi incursions on the western coasts of the Persian Gulf, immigrated to southern and eastern Iran.

Besides the above group, towards the end of Ahsa'i's life, many of the Iranian ulama who had studied under him in the Atabat or met him during his visits to Iran, and were influenced by his views, upon returning to their home towns or villages, some of them remote, began to set up local teaching circles and drew public attention to the Shaykhi cause. Shaykhi communities in Yazd, Azarbajjan, Mazandaran and Kirmān were the first which flourished as a result of the efforts of Shaykh Ahmad's students. Distinguished mujtahids such as Ḥājī Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhab Qazvīnī, Mullā Muḥammad Hamza ʿSharīʿatmadār Mazandarānī, Mullā ʿAbd al-Kāliq Yazdī, Mullā Muḥammad Mamaqānī, Mīrzā Sulaymān Yazdī, Mullā ʿIsā ʿAqḍāʾ helped the expansion of Shaykhism in various provinces. Though Isfahan was firmly in the hand of prominent jurists such as Shaftī and Muḥammad Taqī Najafsī, there were still eminent ulama such as Ḥājī Mullā ʿĪbrāhīm Karbāsī, who himself had studied under Shaykh Ahmad, and showed great respect for Ahsa'i.

During Rashtī's leadership (1241-59/1825-43), the expansion of these early circles was further boosted by the activities of the second generation of Shaykhi students who had first been brought up in the local centres of learning in Iran, often under students of Ahsa'i, and then studied with Sayyid Kazīm in Atabat. They were more actively and firmly committed to Shaykhi teachings than their predecessors whose attachment to Shaykhism rarely went beyond sympathy or personal admiration for Ahsa'i. They tended to turn Shaykhism into more of a religious school with a relatively strong nucleus in Karbila' and with a growing network of students and followers in Iran, Iraq and India. Though from a practical angle Shaykhism was still within the boundary of religious orthodoxy, yet by the time of Rashtī, it was beginning to be defined as an independent school, if not sect.
with a cohesive theoretical system and definite points of difference with the opposition camp.

Though in this stage the Shaykhi community consisted of 'ulama and the religious students, it was also dependent on other groups who gave them their allegiance. Thus the points of distinction between Shaykhis and non-Shaykhis known to Shaykhis as Balasaris were not entirely based on theoretical differences. Many of the Shaykhi sympathisers had a limited understanding of or interest in the theoretical subtleties which differentiated Shaykh Ahmad from the others. Many of the merchants, small landowners, local state officials and other educated and semi-educated groups who together with the middle and lower rank mullas, were attracted to Shaykhism, often had a theological training too limited to allow them to follow any philosophical argument. What interested them, as was the case with multitudes of town dwellers and villagers who followed Shaykhi mullas in jum'ih prayers or Shaykhi mujtahids in cities, was the moral and spiritual values which they attributed to these leaders.

The sense of piety, devotion and austerity which characterised so emphatically all the accounts of Ahsâ'î's life, and usually exaggerated the reality of his life, corresponded more than any other thing to this public need for a saintly figure who could exemplify these highly admirable values. The veneration and popularity which Ahsâ'î enjoyed put him above his contemporaries. In this sense Shaykhism, almost like the Ni'matallahis, responded to a public demand for a spiritual leadership, which by its purity and unworldliness, could stand above any temporal or 'orthodox' authority. This need became even more tangible when during the first quarter of the 19th century, the growing power of orthodoxy gradually reclaimed its ground by eliminating most of the unorthodox elements and weakening the rival influences of the Sufis in Iran and the 'Atabat.

The Usuli orthodoxy, owing to its very essence, and owing to its limited margin for any intuitive meditation, was only partly able to satisfy this public demand for a holy man. References to excessive devotion and lawful asceticism (riyâzat-i shari'iyih) which were attributed by pro-Usuli sources to eminent mujtahids such as Bihbahâni, Shaykh Ja'far Najafî, Shaftî and Mullâ Muhammad Taqî Baraghâni may be taken as signs of a general trend amongst the fuqahâ to add spiritual virtues to their ijtihad qualities, so as to form a complete image of a perfect divine. In the biographical accounts of Bihbahâni, Ja'far Najafî, Sayyid Ibrahim Qazvînî, Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafî and Shaykh Murtaza Ansari,

1. Dalî al-Mutahayyîrin (e.g. pp.10-11, 70-5, 138-40) gives clear indications of Sayyid Râşîm's own notion of Shaykhism as an independent theological school.
in addition to riyāsat and marja'iyat, there are implicit references to niyyābat. Though such a position was often justified in terms of attainable qualities of ijtīhād, it still has some sense of exceptional moral values attached to it.

However, in spite of spiritual attributions, the concept of ijtīhād was always predominant. Thus one may suggest that the vacuum which emerged as a result of the fuqaha’'s domination, was filled by Shaykhism, when all other trends were effectively barred by orthodoxy. This emphasis on moral and spiritual values seems to have appealed especially to certain sections of society, of which the most noticeable were merchants and the middle rank mullās who both traditionally looked towards the 'ulama for support, as they had the greatest respect for their piety and godliness. As is reported by Ahsā'ī's son, Shaykh Ahmad's long residence in Yazd was chiefly due to the enthusiasm which the inhabitants showed for him, almost to the extent of extreme veneration. It is interesting to notice that the bulk of this favourable response came from tujjār since Yazd was one of the prosperous cities and perhaps the most important trade centre in the whole of southern Iran in the first quarter of the 19th century. The same veneration was also expressed during Ahsā'ī's visits by the inhabitants of other important trade centres such as Isfahan, Qazvīn, Shiraz and Kirmānsāh.

Shaykhi links with the merchant class is further evident in Sayyid Kazīm himself who was the son of Sayyid Qāsim Harīrī, a silk merchant from Gilān. After some retirement (istīkāf) in local shrines, Sayyid Kazīm was attracted to Ahsā'ī's discourses in Yazd, when he was still in his early twenties. Though such mystical preoccupation, or attention to religious studies was not unprecedented in the merchant families, still this was an important indication of the popularity of the Shaykhis amongst the merchants. More examples of Shaykhi

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5. *Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī* (op.cit., pp.135-6) and TN. II, 238 maintaining that his retirement was in the shrine of Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn Ardabīlī in Ardabīl. However Nūr al-Dīn Mudarrisī Chāhārdīhī in *Khāksār va Ahl-i Ḥaqq* (Tehran, 1358 Sh., p.4) refers to Masjīd-i Ṣafī in Rasht to which according to the author Shaykh Ṣafī used to retire. The mosque is well known for the mysterious well, known as Chāh-i Sāhib al-Zamān. It is probable that Rashtī retired to this mosque rather than in the Shrine in Ardabīl.
6. TN. 238; *Nabil*. pp.9-11.
merchants, or *tullāb* with mercantile background may also be detected among Sayyid Kazim's students. The network of Shaykhi sympathisers developed under Sayyid Kazim, played an important role in the future progress of the Babi movement. Some aspects of this mercantile involvement will be discussed in the following chapters, but lack of sufficient information on the causes and nature of this involvement prevents any further elaboration.  

The second group of followers who became increasingly attracted to the school were those local mullās and religious students who often came from a humble social background. Contrary to the circles of the prominent *fuqaha* which were partly, though not entirely, formed of the students with clerical backgrounds, and more particularly of sons and relatives of high ranking *ulama* of the *'Atabāt* and Iran, the majority of the students in Rashtī's circle, with the exception of a few, were alike in their humble origins. Further attention will be paid to this aspect of Shaykhism in the following chapters, but what needs to be emphasised is the fact that Shaykhism under Sayyid Kazim provided an opportunity for his adherents to unite in a religious body distinctively independent from the rest of the scholarly community of the *'Atabāt*. This sense of solidarity and common identity was further strengthened by the critical circumstances in which Rashtī and his students found themselves almost immediately after his succession to Ahsā'ī.  

It should be noticed that at the time when Rashtī was appointed by Ahsā'ī to establish a teaching circle in Karbila *(circa 1240/1824)*, he was only twenty nine years of age and thus had barely experienced the conventional training which qualified most of his contemporaries for establishing teaching circles. However, as can be judged from his numerous works, he was a talented writer, a sophisticated philosopher and a skilful theologian who tried with some success to continue the 'universality' of his teacher, though he hardly ever claimed to have any of the personal mystical experience which was so characteristic of Ahsā'ī. From the very beginning of his leadership up to the end of his life, he was continuously attacked from the side of the *fuqaha*. Attempts first made by Mulla Muhammad Taqi Baraghānī and his allies to issue denunciations (*takfīr*) of Ahsā'ī on the ground of his disbelief, were further intensified during

1. See below Chapters Three, Seven and Eight.
2. None of the available sources on the life of Rashtī specify his study under any particular teacher besides Ahsā'ī. However, he had *ijāzāt* for transmitting traditions from Shaykh Muṣā Najaffī, Sayyid 'Abdallāh Shībr and the others, as is cited in Rashtī's own *ijāzāt* for Aqā Muḥammad Sharīf Kirmānī cited in *Fihrist*. I, 126-7.
3. Account of denunciation of Ahsā'ī is given by some contemporary sources amongst them Q. pp.42-6 and *Dal'il al-Mutahayyirīn*, pp.52-68. See also below Chapter Four, I and Seven, III.
Sayyid Kazim’s time who was less able than his teacher to rely on his position and public respect. The same consideration which encouraged the mujtahid's to drive Ahsa’i out of Iran and then the 'Atabat, again motivated them to attack Rashti, when he gradually managed to solidify his base in Karbila by broadening the Shaykhi network, attracting more students or involving himself in the local politics.

The fuqaha's response came primarily from the hereditary 'ulama families, and was then amplified by other mujtahids who claimed ḥiyasat in the 'Atabat. In contrast to Shaykh Musa and Shaykh 'Ali Najafi, sons of Shaykh Ja'far, who at the end of Ahsa’i’s life, tried to patch up the differences between the two sides, here Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi Tabataba'i (son of Sayyid 'Ali and grandson of Bihbahanī) was the arch-enemy of Shaykhis and the chief instigator of numerous takfīrs. Others such as Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafi, Shaykh Muhammad Husain Najafi, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Karbala'i in the 'Atabat and Mullā Muhammad Taqī Baraghānī, Mullā Muhammad Ja'far Astarabādī, Mullā Aqā Darbandī and Mullā Sa'id Barfurūshī and many others in Iran assisted the 'ulama of the 'Atabat in their anti-Shaykhi campaign. Though the Bahrainī 'ulama generally remained silent, or occasionally sympathised with Rashti, and though Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Shaftī, the most influential of all the fuqaha in the 1830's and 40's in Iran, refused to ratify the fatva of denunciation, the result of the takfīrs was still effective. As a result of this dispute which every now and then was renewed over a new issue, Shaykhis were gradually forced into a defensive position, and then were isolated at least in the 'Atabat.

The events of Karbila in 1258/1842 temporarily strengthened the Shaykhis hand from a political standpoint, though it further damaged their relation with their adversaries. But it appears that Shaykhis isolation, and occasional

1. Some more details of the 'ulamas'opposition appear in Da'i li al-Mutaḥayyirīn, pp.70-113; Q. pp.55-6; NK. pp.102-3; Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī, 171-3 (quoting Asrār al-Shahāda of Mullā Muhammad Ḥamza' Sharīfatmadār Māzandarānī, see below).

2. See below Chapter Four, Section I.

persecution in the Ḍatābāt, hardly affected their performance in Iran especially in the towns and villages of Khurasan, ʿAzarbājān and Mazandarān. Indeed this seems to have been a source of anxiety for many opponents of the school who saw danger in this expansion. This anxiety was even further increased by the signs of the Qājārs' inclination towards the Shaykhi leaders. Throughout his journeys, Shaykh Ahmad was enthusiastically received, and on many occasions invited by the Qājār princes and governors who in some cases even argued with each other over his place of residence. But the hospitality and devotion shown by Prince Muhammad ʿAlī Mīrzā Daulatshāh in Kirmānshāh and by Amin al-Daulih in Yazd and Fath ʿAlī Shāh in the Capital, or the tributes paid by Ibrāhīm Khān Zāhir al-Daulih the governor of Kirmān (Fath ʿAlī Shāh's uncle and the father of Ḥājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī) towards Shaykh Ahmad, should not entirely be taken as gestures of religiosity and devotion. Although some genuine religious motives may be found in Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā who always treated Shaykh Ahmad above the other 'ulama, no doubt such favour was mainly for the purpose of providing an effective opposition to the influence of fuqahā. If the Niʿmatullāhī Sufism of the early years, or the Akhbarīsm of Mirza Muhammad Akhbarī, because of their eccentricity and extremism reduced their chances as a reliable force of opposition, Shaykhi doctrine, and its lack of interest in temporal power, and the fact that it presented an alternative 'orthodoxy' (and not heterodoxy) in the traditional context, provided a possibility of cooperation with the state.

However, in practice such cooperation hardly ever materialised. Contrary to many contemporary mujtahids who justified their indecisive relation with the government by practising taqīyah, Aḥsāʾī openly declared his position towards the state. Maintaining that 'all the kings and governors enforce their edicts and orders by means of oppression', in his letter in reply to Fath ʿAlī Shāh, he implies that since there is no other sensible alternative, no contravention should occur between the affairs of religion and state; '... My intervention with the King can have only one of two results: either he will accept it, and thus his rule will be suspended; or he will reject it, and I will be humiliated'. Indeed contrary to what is sometimes implied by modern scholars, Aḥsāʾī's opinion on this issue complied far better with a traditional non-interventionist Ithnāʾ Asharī view than with the negative way in which the 'ulama of the period

1. For some indications of Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā's respect for Aḥsāʾī see Q. pp.35-6, RJ. 25, Sharḥ-i ʿAḥvaūl, 34.
2. The text of the letter appears in Dalūl al-Mutoḥhayyīn, pp.23-4 and a shorter version in Sharḥ-i ʿAḥvaūl, 22 which is translated in Religion and State, 67.
responded to the action of the government.\textsuperscript{1} 

Ahsā'ī's lack of interest in politics was partly compensated for by Sayyid Kazim who, in search of allies, became involved in the local politics of Iraq. He maintained a limited but friendly relation with the Qājārs, and especially after the death of Fath ʿĀlī Shāh with the Qājār princes exiled in the ʿAtabāt.\textsuperscript{2} But he also managed to develop intimate relations with the Ottoman provincial authorities. His negotiation with Najīb Pāshā, the valī of Baghdaḍ, during the events of Karbila' (1842), and the safe conduct which he secured for his followers when the Ottomans sacked the city and massacred the inhabitants, is a sign of a friendly relation which was chiefly developed in contrast to the line taken by the other mujtahids such as Sayyid Ibrahim Qazvīnī.\textsuperscript{3} Yet Rashti's policy should not be seen as wholly pro-Ottoman since some of the leaders of the Yirmāz rebels in the city of Karbila' such as Ibrahim Za'farānī, a lūtī of Iranian origin who was reported to be responsible for the Karbila' rebellion, appear to have been connected with Rashti. The earlier references concerning Sayyid Kazim and his preachings in Ramadan 1258 (1842), nearly two months before the Karbila' massacre, in which he publicised the advent of the 'Divine Cause', make it possible to suggest that a movement which first started with some messianic overtones later, in spite of Rashti's intention, went out of hand and turned into a full scale rebellion with disastrous consequences.

By and large, however, involvement in politics remained always a secondary issue for Shaykhism, compared with its main conflict with the fuqāḥā. What was decisively effective in the outlook and the character of the close students and followers of Rashti, was the hostility which they increasingly experienced in their encounter with their adversaries the Balāsaris. In spite of attempts by Rashti to reduce the tension and to follow a moderate, and on many occasions a compromising policy, the pressure from the opposition was directly felt by some members of the circle in the ʿAtabāt in the late 1830's and early 40's. The internal divisions discernible in the Shaykhi ranks, even prior to the death of Rashti, basically resulted from the differing policies recommended by each of the two factions in response to the outside threat. While one faction, for a variety of reasons, was more devoted to the messianism preached by the school

\textsuperscript{1} See for example Religion and State, pp.66-9.
\textsuperscript{2} Shaykhīgārī va Bābīgārī, 238.
\textsuperscript{3} See below Chapter Five, Section I.
\textsuperscript{4} See above.
and sought the answer to the Shaykhi prophecies in the anticipation of the
advent of a spiritual leader to fulfil what the present Bāb, namely Sayyid Kāzīm
was unable to carry out, the other faction, by undermining the messianic message
while minimising points of difference with the dominant orthodoxy, moved further
towards becoming a 'respectable' religious sect. As the first trend eventually
culminated in the Babi movement, the second trend resulted in full submission
to 'orthodoxy' (as with the Āzarbāijānī Shaykhis), or in the sectarianism of
Hājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān and the Kirmānī Shaykhis, or in the quietism of Mullā
Hasan Gauhar and Muhīt Kirmānī. Thus contrary to the opinion expressed by Corbin
and others that 'Babisme' was a deviatory current that 'departed from' the main-
stream of Shaykhi thought, it should be emphasised that not only in theory and
practice did Shaykhism offer the greatest contribution to the emergence of the
Babi movement, but in fact the latter was the natural outcome of almost half a
century of Shaykhi speculation on the problem of Resurrection.

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CHAPTER TWO

Sufism and Popular Religion

I

The theoretical discussions put forward by Shaykhis as well as by other individual scholars within the learned circles were only a part of a greater concern with the messianic expectations in the Shi'i environment. Throughout the last quarter of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century, the elements of messianism also re-emerge in two other major developments; the revival of the Sufi orders, and the widespread diffusion of popular prophecies. Though these trends seldom passed the boundaries of speculation and intuitive meditation, they were nevertheless highly influential in a process which eventually resulted in the formation of a more comprehensive movement.

The revival of the Sufi orders in Iran were part of a greater revival of Sufism in the Islamic world. It manifested itself both in the reorganisation of the old Sufi khâniqâh orders, and in the widespread preaching of the wandering dervishes. The reasons for this renewed interest remain to be fully investigated, yet it is evident that the existing vacuum in the intellectual climate in the middle of the 18th century was largely responsible. The weakening of the 'orthodox' domination which is shown in the transfer of the Shi'i religious scholarship to the 'Atabât, was further increased by the less enthusiastic reception of the 'ulama under Nâdîr and even Karîm Khân. This, to some extent, temporarily reduced their influence, and allowed the wider diffusion of the 'non-orthodox' tendencies. In the cities, especially in the central and southern Iran, the need for leadership was satisfied by local figures who often


2. Beside primary sources dealing with Sufi orders in Iran in the 19th century and a number of Sufi biographical dictionaries written by the quṭba and followers of different orders, the only comprehensive study in a European language is R. Gramlich, Die Schiitischen Derwischorden Persiens (2 vols., Wiesbaden, 1975-76) in which the author studied the history and developments in the Zahâbî, Ni'matallahî and Khâksâr orders. N. Pourjavady and P.L. Wilson, Kings of Love, the Poetry and History of the Ni'matullahî Sufi Order (Tehran, 1978) provides a brief and not always uncommitted account of Ni'matallahî history.
adopted Sufi affiliations to attract popular support. Relative prosperity in
the regional economy, the recovery of trade in the later decades and the
improvement of communication between urban centres, permitted the Sufi
missionaries to seek new bases in these centres. One of the important signs of
this mystical revivalism was in the diffusion of the Indian popular Sufism which
was reintroduced into the Shi'i environment almost a century and a half after the
decline of Sufi orders in Iran.

The most outstanding example of this revival may be seen in the activities
of Ni'matallah emissaries who had by the last quarter of the 18th century
attracted a large audience in southern and central Iran. In spite of a gradual
decline in the Iranian branch of the order during the 17th century, the Indian
branch which had survived in Deccan under Bahmani and Nizam Shahi rulers, seems
to have enjoyed favour and influence. In the latter part of Riza 'Alî Shah's
life (died circa 1214/1799), who was the last important qutb of the order in
India, some of his Indian disciples were dispatched to Iran for the purpose of
'guiding' the remnants of the order. This appears to be not unconnected with
the pressures imposed on Riza 'Alî Shah after the death of his patron Nizam 'Alî
Khan of Deccan. Already in the 1760's, a certain Shah Tahir Dakani, who was
assigned by Riza 'Alî, had visited Mashhad and Yazd where he busied himself with
recruiting new disciples and even sending a certain Sayyid Muhammad, son of a
Yazdi merchant, to his qutb in Deccan.

But it was sometime later in 1776/1190, when another well known Ni'matallah emissary, Mîr 'Abd al-Hamîd Ma'şûm 'Alî Shah, arrived in Shiraz, that a serious
effort was made to win over the public. Riza Quli Khan Hidayat states that
Ma'şûm 'Alî Shah's despatch was the result of a demand by Persian followers for
a delegation from India in order to preach the long eclipsed Ni'matallah cause
in Iran. During the two and half years of his stay in the capital of Karîm

1. On Riza 'Alî Shah see Tarâ'iq. III, pp.167-8; Shîrvâni, Z. (Mast 'Alî Shâh)
Hadâ'iq al-Styâha, edited by N. Tâbandih, Tehran, 1348 Sh., 197. On the
brief account of the Indian branch of the order between the 15th and 18th
centuries see Tarâ'iq. III, pp.84-104, 160-2. Also N. Pourjavady and P.L.
Wilson, 'The Descendents of Shah Ni'matullah Wali' in Islamic Culture,
Hyderabad, January 1974; Gramlich, op.cit., I, 3; Kings of Love op.cit.,
pp.86-8.

2. Tarâ'iq. III, pp.168-9. Not to be mistaken with the better known Shah
Tâhir Qazvîni Dakani of the 16th century.

3. On Ma'şûm 'Alî Shah, beside entries in Shîrvâni's works, see Tarâ'iq. III,
pp.170-87; Nûr 'Alî Shâh Isfahâni, Maqânî-yi Jannât al-Wisâl (completed by
Raunaq 'Alî Shâh Kirmâni and Nizâm 'Alî Shâh Kirmâni) edited by J. Nûrbakhsh,
Tehran, 1348 Sh., pp.860-7. Also Makârim. II, pp.405-6.

Khan, he succeeded in organising a small but active group of devoted followers who had been mainly recruited from the remaining survivors of the Ni'matallahī-Isma'īlī communities of eastern Iran. One of his earliest converts was a certain Mirza Abd al-Husain, known as Fayz Ali Shah, who was originally from Tun in Quhistan. He had been the hereditary imām jum'ih of the town before being converted to Sufism. It is said that the discovery of a mysterious message in his father's notes, which advised him to 'take "Knowledge" from the mouths of Men' and make it a 'lamp' for his 'path', made him abandon his position, change into old clothes, sew patches on his robe and travel to Isfahan where he studied jaf'ī and other 'hidden sciences' ('ulūm-i khaftiyih), before finally reaching Shiraz. This remarkable change from shar'ī to the practice of 'hidden sciences' and then adherence to an Indian qalandar, were familiar signs of a renewed millenarian tendency which had long persisted in communities with unpronounced heterodox traditions. The conversion of many other early disciples from towns and villages of eastern Iran such as Mushtaq Ali Shah, originally from Turbat Haydarīyih, Darvīsh Abbās from Zaydābād in Sīrjān; the centre of Isma'īlī affiliated tribe of 'Ata'allāhīs, Raunaq Ali Shah from Bam, Muzaffar Ali Shah from Kirman and many others from southern Khurasan, Kirman and Herat indicates that this area with its long crypto-Isma'īlī tradition was a fertile ground for the growth of popular Sufism.

What was preached by Ma'sūm Ali and other Ni'matallahī qalandars, was more than the common guidance of the Sufi orders. In its expansion, the order largely

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2. On Fayż Ali Shah see Tarā'īq. III, pp.187-8; Jannāt al-Wiṣāl, op.cit., pp. 864-7. Malcolm (The History of Persia, op.cit.) maintains that Fayż Ali was a member of the Nūrbakhshī order in Quhistān before being initiated by Ma'sūm Ali Shah. If we consider the long lasting influence of the Nūrbakhshī order in Qohistān, and the Sufi tendencies of Fayż Ali's forefathers, such a connection is not wholly improbable.

reconstructed the old pattern of hierarchy\textsuperscript{1}, and also advocated the necessity of \textit{Shar}\textsuperscript{2} (in spite of frequent charges of blasphemy and disbelief levelled against them by their opponents), yet in its essence it contained elements of messianic thought. The large audience which was attracted to them, first in Isfahan and then in Kirmān, Herat, Mashhad, Shiraz, the 'Atabāt and Kirmānshāh, saw in figures like \textit{Ma'ṣūm} \textit{ʿAlī} and his two young disciples \textit{Nūr} \textit{ʿAlī Shāh}\textsuperscript{3} and Mushtāq \textit{ʿAlī Shāh}, saintly characters whose detachment from the worldly affairs and material poverty had given them some exceptional superiority over the others. Their eccentricity, meditations, wanderings, voluntary poverty, and claims of prognostication as well as their assumed power of influencing the course of events, made them popular with the common people as well as with the rulers and political contestants. In the unstable political situation of the last decades of the 18th century, some of the local governors and semi-independent rulers sought the alliance of the dervishes, chiefly to gain popular support, but also because they believed in Sufi's magical powers which could be employed in their favour.

\textit{Ma'ṣūm} \textit{ʿAlī Shāh} himself appears however to have claimed no specific messianic title, though he maintained that his mission came as the result of a dream in which his master had been instructed by the Eighth Imam to send his disciples for 'guidance' (\textit{ʿirshād}) to Iran\textsuperscript{4}. The writings of the other early \textit{Nīmatallāhīs} however, bear evidence of some spiritual claims which are unmistakably millenarian. The outstanding poetry of \textit{Nūr} \textit{ʿAlī Shāh} for instance, contains frequent references with clear pantheistic connotations:

\begin{enumerate}
\item Many references to hierarchical titles and positions appear in \textit{Tārāʾiq}. (III) \textit{Bustān al-Ṣuyūṭī}, op.cit. and other sources. \textit{Nūr} \textit{ʿAlī Shāh} was promoted by \textit{Ma'ṣūm} to the position of \textit{Khalīfat al-Khulāfā wa al-Murshīdūn} (\textit{Tārāʾiq}. III 198) and Ḥusain \textit{ʿAlī Shāh} acquired an \textit{iʿjāz} from \textit{Nūr} \textit{ʿAlī} (ibid., pp.222, 231). The texts of \textit{iʿjāzāt} and instructions of some disciples appear in some Sufi \textit{Nīmatallāhī} sources but this only partly helps to explain the internal organisation of the modern order. See also Gramlich, op.cit., II, pp.139-251 for a full study of the theory of the Sufi hierarchy with references to \textit{Nīmatallāhīs}.

\item See for example \textit{Ma'ṣūm} \textit{ʿAlī Shāh}'s tract \textit{Ṣaḥṣ wa yik Kalamih} (cited in \textit{Tārāʾiq}. III, pp.184-6) in which amongst other moral advices and instructions for Sufi life, he emphasises his respect for \textit{Sharīʿa}. However, it should be pointed out that his definition of \textit{Sharīʿa} differed widely from that of the contemporary \textit{fuqahā́} - a fact which did not save him from charges of blasphemy and heresy.

\item Most of the materials on the early activities of \textit{Nūr} \textit{ʿAlī Shāh} came from his own account in a treatise called \textit{Uṣūl wa al-Furūʿ} (cited in \textit{Majmūʿ-ī Nasīr ʿAlī Shāh}, (edited by J. Nūrbakhsh, Tehran, 1350 Sh., pp.56-60). For his short biography see \textit{Tārāʾiq}. III, pp.197-203 and cited sources. For the list of his works see Gramlich, I, pp.34-5.

\end{enumerate}
'I came again like Moses to reveal the Magic Hand (Ya'd-i Bayzhā) 
Drown Pharaoh and his legions again in the Sea. 
I came again like Jesus to cut the throat of Anti-Christ. 
And by Mahdī's command resurrect the universe with a breath'.

The same message reappears in the work of another Ni'matallahi poet, Muzaffar 'Alī, who in praise of his 'guide' Mushtaq 'Alī, recites:

'I am the treasure of the prophethood. 
I am the mirror of Iskandar. 
Swear to God, I am the eternal essence of this cycle. 
I am the seeker (mushtaq) of Ḥaydarī wine. 
Swear to God, I am the minstrel in this cycle, 
the nightingale of the Ja'farī song. 
Swear to God that in this cycle, 
I am the deputy (nā'īb) to the Mahdī of the 'Asgarī faith. 
I am the sun of Truth, I am the one, 
who was taught the art of fostering the inferiors. 
In the path of vaṭī (i.e. Shāh Ni'matallāh) I am the teacher, 
like Salmān or Qanbar. 
On the spur of the moment, I remove from the King's head, 
the crown and headgear of sovereignty. 
Today, Mushtaq 'Alī made it publicly manifest, 
the secret of Qalandarī'.

The above examples, two of many similar pieces, reveal a sense of 'general' messianic 'revelation' in the early Sufi converts. Nur 'Alī hints at a claim of deputyship in the return of the past manifestations, whereas Muzaffar 'Alī justifies Mushtaq's deputyship by demonstrating his Ithna 'Asharī commitments. References to Ḥaydar ('Alī), Ja'far (Imām Ja'far Sādiq) and 'Asgar (Imām Hasan 'Asgarī, the Eleventh Imam) are particularly important because they indicate a new development in the belief of the Ni'matallahīs who in the past had largely remained uncommitted to Twelver Shi'ism. Significantly, Muzaffar, a physician with firm orthodox beliefs, like Fayż 'Alī rejected 'orthodoxy' while adopting its messianic elements into his new Sufi beliefs.

Ambiguous references to claims of deputyship and divine manifestations, not uncommon in past Ni'matallahi history, were connected to their attraction towards the 'holders of secular power'. But their preoccupation with politics in the more recent times was hardly ever expressed in terms of a militant uprising. Instead, they regarded this involvement as complementary to the spiritual aspects of vilāyat. Assuming that the vaṭī or the qutb of the time was assigned by the Concealed Imam to supervise and implement both secular and spiritual aspects of

the Imam's authority, Ni'matallahís were content to 'vest' the secular power in theory in the 'just' ruler of the time. This was a fifteenth century heritage of Shah Ni'matallah and his other contemporaries which was originally designed to reconcile the position of the qutb with that of the secular rulers, particularly those who showed favour and respect towards the Sufis. This device in the late 18th century enabled dervishes to take sides with the 'rightful' ruler in the course of struggle between the fading Zands and the rising Qajars. Already in the late 1770's in Shiraz, secret contacts had been made between Sayyid Ma'sum 'Ali Shah and Āqā Muhammad Khan Qājār, then still under detention in Karīm Khān's court, which suggest the Ni'matallahís' search for some sort of secular support. Indeed Karīm Khān's suspicion of the newly arrived Sufis was not wholly unfounded, his fear being due not so much to Ni'matallahís' growing popularity or the 'ulama's possible reaction, as the dervishes' political alignment with the Qajars. This is also evident in the charges levelled against them by a certain pro-Zand Darvīsh Jānī Hindī who accused Ma'sum and his disciples of plotting against Karīm Khān. However, when they were expelled from Shiraz in the middle of 1779/1093, they found temporary shelter in Isfahan. There they offered their support and assistance to 'Ali Murād Khān, the Zand chief and the governor of the city, in his bid for power against his numerous rivals just after Karīm Khān's death. In a tīkţykh which was especially built for Fayż 'Ali, he set up a screen to manipulate numbers and read the fortune of 'Ali Murād. But even the practice of the 'hidden sciences' could not rescue Isfahan or change the fate of the Khān. Thus it is not surprising to see that when 'Ali Murād temporarily withdrew from the city, the Ni'matallahís, together with other dervishes, shifted their allegiance to the victorious Āqā Muhammad Khan Qājār, 'the Hero of Iran' (Gahrīmān-i ʿIrān). On the temporary recapture of the city by Zands, the Ni'matallahís were accused of having seditious ambitions similar to those of Safavīd Sayyids for bringing Qajars to power. As a result they were humiliated, physically punished and expelled from the city.

Ten years later, on another occasion, the Ni'matallahís became involved in a new round of tense political conflict in the city of Kirmān, when in 1790-92

1. Nur 'Ali Shāh's view on the question of secular power is apparent in a tract called Hidayat Namīh cited in Majmūḥ, op.cit.
2. Ţarā'īq. III, 173.
(1205-6) in alliance with the head of the Isma'ili sect Abul Hasan Khan the biglarbaygi of the city, they mobilised the people of Kirman to hold out against the desperate attempts by the Zands to recapture the city\(^1\). The ambiguous connections between the Isma'ili sects and Ni'matallahis entered a new stage when the popular support for Nur 'Ali and Mushtaq 'Ali was channelled against the pro-Zand faction and in favour of pro-Qajar Isma'ili notables\(^2\). This brought confrontation with Mullâ 'Abdallah the chief mujtahid of Kirman, who encouraged his supporters to attack dervishes. In a public meeting in the Jam'ih mosque, the agitated public stoned Mushtaq 'Ali to death and injured other dervishes. Nur 'Ali Shah fled from Kirman and a brief victory was achieved by the anti-Qajars. However, shortly afterwards in 1793 when Kirman was captured by Aqa Muhammad Khan, a brutal purge of the hostile elements was launched\(^3\).

No doubt the Ni'matallahis' political activities were not independent of their messianic claims. As in the past popular Sufi trends there was room for the rise of secular rulers to be interpreted as an event with messianic significance. But after the establishment of the Qajars in the opening years of the 19th century the Ni'matallahis' role as political 'propagandists' was gradually replaced by one of influential and respected figures involved in the interfactional politics of the ruling family. Nevertheless, in the early decades of the century they were still a considerable threat to be reckoned with by the Shi'i ulama. As their sphere of influence gradually moved westward, it clashed with that of the Usuli ulama who themselves had returned to the cities of western and central Iran after the restoration of political stability. The danger was first felt when in the period between 1793-5 Nur 'Ali Shah and then his teacher Ma'sum 'Ali in the company of his close disciples, moved to the 'Atabat and began to preach amongst pilgrims and tullab of the religious

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1. For this episode between the death of Karim Khan and the conquest of the city by the Qajars see RS. IX, pp.254-61; Ahmad 'Ali Khan Vaziri Kirmani, "Tarikh-i Kirman (Salarzadeh), edited by M.I. Bastani Parizi, Tehran, 1340 Sh., pp.332-69; Watson, R.C., A History of Persia, London, 1866, pp.72-75.

2. For Ni'matallahis' involvement see 'Ismâ'ili and Ni'matallahis', op.cit., pp.118-124. For the later Isma'ili resurgence see below in this chapter.

schools. Save for a few reported cases of brief dialogues with a few of the prominent ulama, the hostile reception of the anti-Sufi fanatics pushed Ni'matallahis out of the 'Atabat and back to the border towns of Kurdistan, where they seem to have enjoyed some popularity in the areas traditionally influenced by Ahl-i Haqq. It is also from this period that many new disciples from western Iran who had joined the order as a result of Nur 'Ali's efforts, dispersed to northwest and central Iran and established permanent circles in the first two decades of the 19th century.

In spite of a large but ephemeral popularity, the Sufis were losing ground to the ulama who under Fath 'Ali Shah enjoyed the support of the monarch. Indeed regardless of his occasional favours to dervishes, Fath 'Ali Shah's general attitude towards Sufis was one of reticence and suspicion, a bitter irony for the Ni'matallahis who in the past had supported the Qajars so vigorously. The Shah's attitude no doubt contributed to the increasing hostility of the ulama which is reflected in their numerous anti-Sufi refutations and parodies. The best known of these refutations is written by Aqa Muhammad 'Ali Bihbahanî son of Muhammad Baqir and entitled Risâlih-i Khayrâtîyih; in it the author sharply attacks Ma'sum 'Ali Shah and his followers not only because of their 'corrupt beliefs' but more because of their widespread activities to draw public attention. He accuses them of 'undermining the rules of the applied shaw'at (i'tinâ bi-ahkâm-i shaw'îyih-i far'îyih nadâranda) and condemns their tolerance towards other religions. But the ulama's hostility did not stop at their verbal condemnation. The execution of Ma'sum 'Ali Shah, Muzaffar 'Ali and a number of other Sufis by the hand of Mullâ Muhammad 'Ali Bihbahanî, known

1. For the episode of Nur 'Ali Shah's abode in the 'Atabat and Baghdad see Tarâ'îq. III, pp.199-203, cf. Q. pp.199-200. For some further details see Makârim. II, pp.443-4. It was in Baghdad under the protection of Ahmad Pashâ, the valî of the province, that he wrote his Jannât al-Wisâl. For a study of the content of this work see M. de Miras, La Méthode Spirituelle d'un maître du Soufisme iranien: Nur 'Ali-Shah , Paris, 1974.


4. In a biased but still useful modern refutation, Haqîqat al-'Irân (op.cit.), the author devotes a whole section (pp.33-56) to discussing works by the 19th century ulama such as Mîrzâ Abul Qâsim Qumi's Jâmî 'al-Shâtâtî; Mullâ Ahmad Narâqî's Mi'râj al-Sa'âda; Mîrzâ Husain Tabarsi 'Urfî's Mustadrok al-Wasâ'il and Muhammad Kâzîm Yazdî's 'Ursât al-Wuthqâ, which all contain refutations of Sufis.
as Sufī Kush, around 1211/1795 and the death of Nur Alī in Mosul under suspicious circumstances, were signs of the 'ulama's increasing ability to destroy their rivals sometimes even in accord with the State's wishes. In Khayrātīyih, Muhammad Alī Bihbahānī himself plainly declares that 'The responsibility of such acts (i.e. execution of the Sufis) falls only within the jurisdiction of the 'ulama and the executors of sharī'ah'.

In the course of the next few decades, persecution and hostility reduced the messianic zeal of the wandering qaランドars, giving way to the urbanised quietism of influential and often well versed Sufis who behaved no more as eccentric figures, but as revered heads of an organised order. Beside the theoretical ground for a conflict, the unanimous opposition of the clergy should be seen in the light of their tense competition with the Sufis for the moral leadership of the community. In this struggle the Niṣmatallahis' efforts created a nucleus of devoted disciples who were able to recruit urban crowds or appeal to groups of merchants, notables, local rulers and the Qajar aristocracy for moral and financial support. But they lacked the commitment to a sharī'ah which gave strength to their rivals and greatly facilitated their establishment. To this must be added the attitude adopted by the state representatives. The influence of the 'ulama over the public and the way they successfully channelled this influence to political ends, persuaded the Qajars, or at least the dominant faction within the ruling family, to come to terms with the 'ulama in order to avoid instability and civil strife in the cities. Therefore, the Sufis' popularity was not desired by the 'ulama or the state who equally feared the resurgence of what they labelled as 'heretical' feelings. Examples of cooperation between the 'ulama and the state in suppressing Sufi elements can be seen not only in the activities of Muhammad Alī Bihbahānī which had the blessings of the Shah and Haji Ibrahim I'timad al-Daulah, but also in the case of two other Sufi adepts, Muzaffar Alī Shah and Surkh Alī Shah. They were arrested and handed over to the mujtahids by the order of Fath Alī Shah. Similarly, the hostility


3. Tārīq qī. III, 177. Haqīqat al-'Irshād (op.cit., pp.161-2) produces the text of four fatwās by contemporary mujtahids in the 'Atabāt; Sayyid Mahdī Bahr al-'Ulūm (see above Chapter One, I), Sayyid Alī Tabātabā'i, Sayyid Muhammad Mahdī Shahrīstānī and Mīrzā Abul Qāsim Qumī in condemnation of Maṣūm Alī and his disciples. H. Algar in Religion and State (op.cit.) wrongly attributes the title Sufī Kush and the repression of the Sufis to Aqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī.
of Ibrāhīm Khañ Zahīr al-Daulih the governor of Kirmān was not without the approval of the mujtahids. Yet it appears that in most cases the local government only interfered when such actions were necessary to appease the 'ulama.²

Some conciliatory efforts made by Husain 'Alī Shāh, the next Ni'matallahī qutb (after Nur 'Alī) who himself came from a clerical background, to open a dialogue with the 'ulama of Isfahan, or to appease the Qājār monarch, seem to have been in vain since they only increased the isolation of the order.² It is in the face of this problem that from the time of his two disciples Majzūb 'Alī Shāh and Kausār 'Alī Shāh³ some attempts to seek support from the pro-Sufi elements in the Qājār state are visible. In the later years, in the course of Muhammad Shāh's accession to the throne (1834/1250), and subsequently during the events which led to the downfall of Qā'īm Maqām and the appointment of Haji Mīrzā 'Aqāsī, Ni'matallahīs played some part. This was primarily due to the earlier influence of Sufis such as Kausar 'Alī Shāh, Haji Zayn al-Abīdīn Shīrvānī Mast 'Alī Shāh, Mīrzā Nasrallah Sādūr al-Māmālik Ardabīlī⁴, and Mulla 'Abbas Iravānī (Haji Mīrzā 'Aqāsī) on the royal family and the officials and courtiers of 'Abbas Mīrzā in Aṣgarbāījān. This effect is particularly visible in Muhammad Shāh's Sufi tendencies, which in turn allowed many Ni'matallahīs to hold prominent offices during his reign.⁵ In many ways the reign of Muhammad Shāh was an era of renewed Sufi activities which were only achieved by a substantial modification, if not total sacrifice of the earlier messianic aspirations. Muhammad Shāh's reverence and respect for the Sufis, only if and when it did not interfere with Haji Mīrzā 'Aqāsī's personal grip over the

1. Ṭarā'īq. III, pp.177, 181, 205-36.
3. On Majzūb 'Alī see Ṭarā'īq. III, 257-63; Gramlich, I., 41-3 and on Kausar 'Alī see Ṭarā'īq. III, 264-6; Gramlich, I., 44-5; al-Ma'āthīr va al-Āthār, op.cit., 164; Makārim. IV, pp.1300-1; Ṭabaqāt. II, 2, 549. On the division within the Ni'matallahīs as a result of a dispute over the leadership see Tābandih's introduction to Ḥadā'īq al-Siyāha, op.cit.
4. For the life and works of Shīrvānī besides his autobiography in Bustān al-Siyāha (op.cit., 348-50) and other biographical dictionaries, see Gramlich, I., pp.50-53 and Browne, E.G., A Literary History of Persia, 4 vols., Cambridge, 1902-1924, IV, pp.450-2.
6. For the Ni'matallahī involvement in the politics of the period see Ṭarā'īq (under above titles), RS. X, pp.67-8, 86-7, 96, 163 (which provides revealing evidence on the Ni'matallahīs' influence on the monarch. Also Religion and State, op.cit. 105; H. Algar, 'The Revolt of Āghā Khañ Maḥallātī and the transference of the Ismā'īlī Imamate to India' in Studia Islamica, XXIX (1969), pp.55-81 (74) and cited sources.
monarch, and his policy of restraining the 'ulama's influence in the political sphere, hardly produced any striking result. The Ni'matallahî order was largely alienated from its original claims and was unable to recapture the public attention and save for a few minor cases, the order remained passive throughout the rest of the 19th century. The exception was Haji Mulla Sultan 'Ali Gunabadi (1231-1327/1835-1909) the 'ulamâ of the Gunabadi suborder, who re-emphasised the position of the qutb not only as the 'guide', but as the representative and gate to the Imam of the Age. The concepts of Tabavvub (Gateship) and bay'at (oath of allegiance) to Vali-yi Amr, may well be interpreted as a renewal of the older traditions, yet the influence of the other messianic trends and the fact that he originated in the area of Quhistan, the home ground of many earlier trends, should not be underestimated.

Furthermore, a wide range of works produced by Ni'matallahî writers were important contributions to the development of esoteric understanding of the Qur'an in the 19th century. In contrast to the fuqahâ's interest in the exoteric dogmas of religion discussed in fiqh and usul al-fiqh, the Sufi authors, in an attempt to solidify their esoteric interpretations, concentrated more on exegesis (tafsir). Nur 'Ali Shah's poetical work Tafsir-i Sura-yi Baqara was followed by Muzaffar 'Ali Shah's Tafsir al-Sab' al-Mathani and Majfûl al-Bihâr and then by Majzûb 'Ali Shah's Sharh-i Sura-yi Badr as Amîr al-Mu'minîn. Kauşar 'Ali Shah's Persian commentary on the Qur'an, Durar al-Mazîm, was an attempt to give a scholarly representation of the Sufi tafsir. This tradition of writing commentaries, more than the actual content of these works, seems to have had some influence on those later claimants who also used the commentaries on the Qur'an as means of giving esoteric and messianic interpretations.

The revival of the Ni'matallahî order was not the only example of Shi'i-Sufi revivalism in Iran though it was the most outstanding. Other orders such as the Zahabî, Nurbakhshî and Khâksar, after a long period of almost virtual eclipse, began to emerge from obscurity. In Fars, Qutb al-Dîn Muhammad Zahabî Nayrizi (d. 1173/1760) gave a new impetus to the Zahabî order. He was a student of 'conventional' religious sciences who, after travelling to various parts of

1. For some indications of this influence see below Chapter Four, III.
2. For his life, his claim and his works see Tâbandih, N. Nâhibî, T. (Tehran, 1374 Q. (1333 Sh.)); Tâlâtîq. III, 540-42; Gramlich, I, 64-9; Haqiqat al-'Irân, op.cit., 166-7; Hâjî Husain Quî Jâdîd al-Islâm, Minhaj al-Qâlidîn, Bombay, 1320, 201-2. For the concept of Tabavvub, or more commonly Fâbîyat, see below Chapter Four, I and II.
3. This work is published in 1279/1862. See al-Dhârî, a. VIII, 83.
Iran and a long residence in Najaf, during which he taught *al-Futūhat al-Makkiya*, settled in Shiraz, where he lived and taught for the rest of his life. Some important Sufis of the next generation, often from different orders, studied under him. Yet the claim of some later Ṣahabī sources regarding the pupilage of some well known 'ulama of the 'Atabat such as Shaykh Ja'far Najafi, Sayyid Mahdi Bahr al-Ūlüm and Mullā Mihrāb Gīlānī, and that they were instructed by Qutb al-Dīn for spiritual guidance, should only be accepted with some reservations. Still further, the assumed connection with Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'ī while the former was residing in Ahsa' seems almost impossible if we consider the chronological difference. In the next few decades the successors of Qutb al-Dīn promoted the order in Shiraz and attracted some local notables. The trusteeship of the Shrine of Shāh Chirāgh (Ahmad b. Mūsā son of Imām Mūsā Kāzim), the most important pilgrimage place in Fars greatly assisted their stand. Yet the Ṣahabīs' claim of spiritual descent in their chain of 'guidance' from Imam Mūsā Kāzīm which entitled them to the trusteeship of the Shrine, and the fact that they only recognised eight of the Imams specially aroused the 'ulamas' hostility. In the middle decades of the 19th century under Mīrzā 'Abd al-Nabī Sharīfī (d. 1231/1815) and Mīrzā Abul Qāsim Sharīfī Shirāzī known as Mīrzā Bābā the order enjoyed some significance both in its social standing and in the field of mystical and literary works, but in no way it infringed the norms of a formal khāniqāhi order by venturing any spectacular claim.

In the same period, the remnants of a branch of the Nūrbakhshī order which had survived from the pre-Safavid times in Khurasan and then in Nā'īn, also appear to have undergone some revival. Ḥājī 'Abd al-Wahhāb Na'īnī (d. 121/1797) was the first modern *qutb* of any significance. Though references to his *Uvaysi* attitude (one who is able to attain spiritual knowledge without a visible 'guide') illustrate an 'intuitive' approach similar to Sayyid Muhammad Nūrbakhsh, it also gives his affiliation with the order something of a loose nature. Other branches and offshoots of the Nūrbakhshī order were also known, in Quhistan and

2. For the development of the Ṣahabī order in modern times see *Tara'īq*. III, 219, 329, 456; Gramlich, I, pp.18-23. Gramlich (pp.4-18) also traces back the spiritual descendancy of the Ṣahabīs. On his visit to Shiraz the Christian missionary Henry Martyn observed the wealth and the annual income of Shāh Chirāgh and its *mutavalli* (*A Memoir of the Rev. Henry Martyn*, edited by J. Sargent, London, 1843, pp.364-5).
Iraqi Ajam, but it was under Abd al-Wahhab and his two disciples Mirza Abul Qasim Shirazi known as Sukut and Hajji Muhammad Hasan Kuzih Kanani (Na'ini) that some messianic prophecies of the past Nurbakhshi tradition was renewed.1

The eccentric behaviour of Mirza Abul Qasim (died 1239/1828), who because of his deliberate silence was nicknamed sukut, drew the attention of many adherents in Shiraz. His contacts with the Ni'matallahis and his association with some city notables and Qashqai khans gave him a strong position much disliked by the ulama who accused him of 'contemplating khuruj'2. The old conflict between the ulama and the Sufis continued to create animosity in Shiraz from the 1820's to the 1840's. But in Shiraz the climate was not always in favour of the ulama. In spite of chronic waves of persecution and violent attacks by the mob, the Sufis seemed to have held out against their opponents. Neither the denunciation of Sukut by the well known theologian Mulla Ali Nurri, nor the expulsion of Zayn al-Abidin Shivrani from the city (circa 1236/1820)4, nor the expulsion of Muhibb Ali Shah of the Chishti order5, could much weaken the Sufis' strength. It appears that up to the death of the tolerant mujtahid Mirza Ibrahim Fasa'i (died 1255/1839), the Sufis were accepted as part of the religious elite in the city.6

The change which occurred in the religious orientation of the family of Hajji Muhammad Hasan Shirazi and the gradual inclination from shar'i'at to tariqat in the course of three generations, is an example of the Sufis' success in Shiraz in recruiting new converts from both merchants and religious students. Hajji Muhammad Hasan (died 1240/1824) himself was a student of Aqa Muhammad Baqir Bihbahani and a staunch defender of shar'i. His father was a merchant from

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3. This caused Sukut to give his famous remark: 'An idiot of a philosopher is a novelty' (Hakim-i khair ham nubar ast). Taraiq. III, 244.


6. For Mirza Ibrahim see Fare Namit. II, 29; Dinishmandan, op.cit., I, 52; Memoir of H. Martyn, op.cit., pp.355 ff.

7. For the biography of Hajji Muhammad Hasan see Taraiq. III, pp.340-45; Tabaqat. II, 2, 354-5; Fare Namit. II, 123; Memoirs of H. Martyn op.cit., 360, 363. Martyn notes 'this preacher is famous for letting out his money for interest; and therefore, in spite of his eloquence, is not very popular'.
Qazvin who had emigrated to Karbila in 1761/1175. While continuing his studies, Muhammad Hasan also followed his father's profession. At the time of the Wahhabi invasion of Iraq (1216/1801) he fled from Karbila, and eventually ended in Shiraz where he was well received as a prominent mujtahid and continued as a prosperous merchant and money lender. Though his sons continued their father's dual profession, two of them, Hajj Muhammad Husain (died 1249/1833) and Aqa Muhammad Shirazi (later titled Munawwar Ali Shah) (1224-1301/1809-1883), were converted to Sufism and became disciples of Sukut. This was followed by the grandsons of Hajj Muhammad Hasan, who much to the mujtahid's disgust, turned to Sufism; of them the most important was the future head of the Ni'matallah order, Muhammad Husain Rahmat Ali Shah (1208-1278/1793-1861). By the time of Mirza Mustafa al-Sadr, the great grandson of Hajj Muhammad Hasan and the author of Taraiq al-Haqiq, the whole family were committed to the order.

But it was not because of their financial strength that they were able to encourage Sufism in the city. In 1250/1834-5 after Muhammad Shah's accession, owing to the moral support he had long received from Ni'matallah's, Rahmat Ali Shah was appointed to the office of Naib al-Sadr in Shiraz. This appointment, which was greatly in the Sufis' favour, provided a considerable control by Rahmat Ali Shah over the pensions and allowances of ulama and tulabb in Shiraz, as well as over the collection and distribution of the income from endowments in the province. This gave the Sufis some official backing which lasted up to the end of Muhammad Shah's reign.

Thus, in the period between 1790's to 1840's, the growth and establishment of three major orders, which were all represented in Shiraz, turned this city into one of the important centres of Sufism in the central and southern Iran. This in turn allowed the emergence of an intellectual climate hardly discernible in any other part. But besides the established Sufi orders, the city also hosted a great number of wandering dervishes with Jalali, Ajam and other Khaksar affiliations who in their journeys to and from India, Anatolia and central Asia,

1. Taraiq. III, 353; Pars Namih. II, 124. Martyn relates that for fifteen years Muhammad Husain was a devoted Mohometen (sic. Mohammadan); visited the sacred places, and said many prayers. Finding no benefit from austerities, he threw up muhametineism (sic.) altogether, and attached himself to the Soofie master. I asked him what his objective was, all that time? He said he did not know but was unhappy'. (Memoirs of H. Martyn, p.362).
took up their abode in the *vikāyīha* of Shiraz\(^1\). Their vast network extended from Chishti *khānīqāhs* of Punjab and Deccan to central and then western Iran, to Kurdistan and Aẓarbājān amongst the communities of Ahl-i Haqq, and then further to Anatolia, Roumelia (and as far as Albania) where they were connected with Bekṭāshī, Naqshbandī and Mewlevi centres. In the east, they were concentrated in central Khurāsān in Turbat-i Haydarīyīh where the tomb of Qutb-al-Dīn Haydar was located\(^2\), and from there they travelled up to Central Asia, to Marv, Khīva, Samarqand and Bukhārā, to visit the Tomb of Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn Haydar and stay in Naqshbandī *khānīqāhs*. On the way back they passed through Balkh, Herat and Qandīhār to end up again in northern India. Their journeys also included frequent visits to the 'Atābāt, the Hijāz and southern Arabia.

Widespread travels and contacts with various orders, sects and ideas, defined as *sāy-r-i āfāq va anfūs* (exploring horizons and souls), which in theory was to purify the 'seeker' so as to give him a material detachment and moral insight, in reality opened the wandering qalandars to an amalgamation of broad and diverse 'heterodox' ideas and attitudes. They seem not to have had a firm hierarchical order and lacked a well defined doctrine, yet on a popular level, their function as intermediary agents between various schools of Sufism and over a large geographical territory, was highly significant. The wandering dervishes were indeed responsible for the re-introduction and diffusion in the Iranian environment of many 'heterodox' ideas, rites, popular beliefs and behaviours which ranged from Hurūfī cabalistic gnosticism inherited by the Bektāshīs, to the extremism of Ahl-i Haqq, Nusayrism in western Iran (or others in Central Asia), popular Indian pantheism, and pagan pre-Islamic beliefs of Arabia. Their ideas and expressions were often too eccentric and spectacular to be taken seriously. Henceforth they rarely caused any concern for the authorities, and if they ever did create any trouble they were easily thrown out of towns. But their eccentricity gave them a chance to transmit messages and ideas which could not be conveyed otherwise. By way of entertainment, story telling, singing and reciting poetry, or by performing magical and other extraordinary acts, they were able to draw public attention.

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References in most sources hardly ever go beyond description of the appearance and the public behaviour of the wandering dervishes. Some hints, however, in the accounts of encounters with dervishes of Jalālī, Bektāshī and Mewlavī orders shed some light on their attitudes, particularly with regard to the new developments which were taking place around them. The way they saw and interpreted the superiority of the 'Christians' over 'Moslems' is an example of the apprehension which by the 1840's was beginning to develop amongst the ordinary people of Iran, Turkey and Central Asia, mostly in response to the imminent threat by the neighbouring powers. The widely travelled dervishes were amongst the first to notice and interpret these changes by identifying them with the past calamities or with the familiar examples of messianic movements. On his way from Tabriz to Tehran Dr. Wolff, for instance, records meeting a 'learned' dervish called 'Abd al-Wahhab Gilānī who in response to the former's evangelical preachings, likened him to the disciples of Badr al-Dīn of Samāwānā who believed that 'the property of men ought to be used in common'. The dervish then gave an account of the 15th century revolt of Burkoluj Muṣṭafā who 'he believed was still alive'\(^2\). He considered Wolff as the prototype of the 'farangīs', and with the usual mixture of satire and fantasy added:

'I heard of you at Delhi where you have conversed with Akbar Shah, the king of Delhi, and mewlevees there, and I have heard of you at Cashmere. You have been a Jew, and all great events proceeded from the followers of Moses, and will proceed again until Eesa (Jesus) will again make his appearance. When these events shall take place, and you shall see yourself surrounded by your followers, then remember dervēsh of Geelan. Abd-oool Wahab has not succeeded in reforming the world, but you will'\(^3\).

Again on another occasion on his way back from Bukhārā, Wolff met a party of dervishes who warned him that 'the time will come when there shall be no difference between rich and poor, between high and low, when property shall be'


\(^3\) Wolff, 93.
in common— even wives and children. Wolff heard of an Afghan sayyid that:

'I know these Frankee derveeshes— I know these English derveeshes. They go into a country, spy out mountains and valleys, seas and rivers; find out a convenient adit, and then go home, inform a gentleman there—a chief, who has the name of Company, who sends soldiers, and takes the country'.

This idea was repeated by other dervishes. In a gathering in Marv a dervish while relating the deeds of Timur, suddenly broke off, and turning to Wolff, said:

'The English people are now Timur, for they are descendants of Chengis Khan. The Inglees will be the conquerors of the world. On my pilgrimage to Mecca, I came to Aden, where they keep a strong force, and from whence they may march to Mecca wherever they please; and march towards Mecca they shall'.

Wolff relates that when a Turkoman in the audience said; 'the Russians shall be the conquerors of the world' and 'all is over with Islam', another dervish agreed with him: 'the great mullas of Samarcand assert that Russia is the Jaaj-Majooj (Gog and Magog), and this has been already predicted by Ameer Sultan, the great dervesh of Room'. Only to a limited degree should the above remarks be taken as signs of a general alarm, but nonetheless they convey an impending sense of millenarian yearning. It is evident how the fear of a superior alien power whose nature is not clearly known, can stimulate the imagination of ordinary people to look into their own past and their eschatological future in order to find an identity for this unknown danger.

The wandering dervishes were not the only group who were speculating on the political changes. By the second quarter of the 19th century, particularly in the uncertain times of Fath 'Ali Shah's later years, there was a tendency in Sufi circles to prognosticate political changes and more specifically the future of the monarchy. The Sufi adepts who had by then abandoned their own independent extreme claims, now tried to solidify further their links with the secular rulers not only by means of converting members of the ruling family and high rank state officials to their orders, but by predicting the future accession to the throne of a pro-Sufi prince. Tarâ'iq al-Haqa'iq relates that at the time there was a widespread prophecy amongst the mystics and ascetics that after Fath 'Ali Shah, the monarchy would be transferred to a certain Muhammad who had Sufi

1. Ibid. 298. 2. Ibid. pp. 296-7. 3. Ibid. pp. 313-14.
leanings and was attached to the Ni'matallahī order. The author sees this as the chief reason for Fath 'Ali Shah's hostility towards Sufis 'since he imagined that these people (i.e. dervishes) were in favour of termination of his dynasty'.

He then states that some merchants sought the opinion of the ascetics, astrologers, geomancers and jaffars to specify whether after Fath 'Ali Shah the monarchy would go to 'Abbas Mirzā or to Muhammad 'Ali Mirzā Daulat Shah. But opinions were divided. Shaykh Abdallah ibn Mubarak believed that Fath 'Ali Shah would outlive both his sons and then after him the monarchy would go to a certain Muhammad. Sayyid Sadr al-Dīn Dizfūlī a Zahabi Sufi from Shiraz believed the same. Hāji Muhammad Hasan Nā'īnī (died 1247/1831) the qutb of the Nurbakhshis in Nā'in, forecast that 'this prince would ascend to the throne but because of slaying an innocent sayyid, he would not enjoy his rule'.

These and many other speculations suggest that towards the end of Fath 'Ali Shah's reign, the uncertainty on the question of succession, a growing power struggle between rival contestants and the increasing threat of the outside powers, encouraged speculations which were in some cases vital for the interests of the various supporting groups.

1. Ṭarā'īq. III, 192. 2. Ibid. See below.
3. Ibid. For his biography see Tabaqāt. II, 2, pp.287-9. He had correspondence with theologians such as Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī and Mīrzā Muḥammad Akhbārī (Fīhrīst. II, 228). The Bab also refers to him (see below).
4. Ṭarā'īq. III, 292 also states that these predictions were widespread to the extent that Muḥammad Khān, the chief of Qārā'I tribe was also contemplating his possible accession to the throne. Hāji Mirzā Aqāsī is also credited (chiefly by his future admirers) with predicting the succession of his pupil Muḥammad Mirzā. However as Khān Malīk Sāsānī points out (Ṣiyāsatgarān-i daurih-i Qājar, 2 vols., Tehran, 1346 Sh., II, pp.52-3) after the ratification of the treaty of Turkmanchāy (1828), in which the hereditary right of the descendants of 'Abbas Mirzā to the throne was guaranteed, such a prediction hardly needed formidable insight. Qīsas al-ʿUlamā (p.174) also refers to a certain Sayyid Sadr al-Dīn Nahavandī (Shushtarī), an ascetic known for his Karāmāt. Qājār princes accorded him great respect in the hope that his influence might determine the choice of a successor to Fath 'Ali Shah. Religion and State (op.cit. 70) wrongly attributes this to Sayyid Mahdī Bahr al-ʿUlūm.
5. Ṭarā'īq. III, 291 cf. 245. Khān Malīk Sāsānī (Ṣiyāsatgarān-i daurih-i Qājar, op.cit., II, pp.40-41) quoting a certain Shams al-Dīn Ḥakīm Ilāhī also describes the same occasion which took place in 1246 (1830-31) during which Sayyid Abūl Qāsim Qā'im Maqām was also present. When Qā'im Maqām was saying farewell to Hāji Muḥammad Ḥasan, to whom he was an adherent, Nā'īnī gave him a note on which was written; 'You will be killed by Muḥammad Mirzā'. Ḥakīm Ilāhī says that Qā'im Maqām was always aware of this warning.
6. See below.
But these prognostications were not confined to the future of the monarchy. Some mystics with an *Uvayṣ* approach, frequently expressed interest in the mysteries of *Zuhur*. The Babi chronicler Shaykh Muhammad *Nābil* Zarandi quotes an aged Babi, Mīrzā Muhammad Qamsari who had himself visited Ḥājī Muhammad Ḥasan *Nā‘īnī*. In his youth while he was in Kāshān, Mīrzā Muhammad heard of 'a certain man in Nā‘īn who had arisen to announce the tidings of a new Revelation, and under whose spell fell all who heard him, whether scholars, officials of the government, or the uneducated among the people'\(^1\). In search of the truth of this claim, Mīrzā Muhammad proceeded to Nā‘īn where he himself heard Ḥājī Muhammad Ḥasan declaring 'Ere long will the earth be turned into a paradise. Ere long will Persia be made the Shrine around which will circle the people of the earth'. On another occasion Ḥājī Muhammad Ḥasan during his *zikr* even informed Mīrzā Muhammad 'that which I have announcing to you is now revealed'. At this very hour the light of the 'Promised One' has broken and is shedding illumination upon the world\(^2\). This intuitive prognostication may also be detected in another ascetic, Mullā Hasan Arandi *Nā‘īnī*, one of Muhammad Ḥasan's disciples. *al-Naṭāhir va al-Aṭhār* states that Mullā Ḥasan's 'intuitive knowledge' was so strong, that, as has been often mentioned, he had 'forecast the harm which would come to the *Shi'at* from the Bab's appearance'\(^3\).

It is not a mere coincidence that Ḥājī Muhammad Ḥasan, and his disciple Mullā Ḥasan, though from entirely different backgrounds, both represented a recognisable *Uvayṣ* approach. Ḥājī Muhammad Ḥasan was the son of a prosperous merchant of Yazd\(^4\), whereas Mullā Ḥasan was a simple shepherd in the deserts around Nā‘īn before 'being chosen' by Muhammad Ḥasan to follow the *Uvayṣ* path. Indeed the latter's life is characteristic of Sufi asceticism. For sixty years he lived in a single room in Madrasih-i Nīmāvard in Isfahan.

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1. *Nābil*. 8. Zarandi also relates that as a result of his acquaintance with Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā‘ī, Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Nā‘īnī was 'awakened by the message' as a result of which he retired from society and came to be regarded as a Sufi. However, such acquaintance between Nā‘īnī and Aḥsā‘ī is highly impossible. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb spent most of his later life in Nā‘īn and died there in 1212 Q. (1797) (*Ṭarā‘īq*. III, 215) when he was 95 years old, whereas Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā‘ī arrived for the first time in Yazd in 1221 Q. (1806) at the age of 55 (Shaykh ʿAbdallāh Aḥsā‘ī, *Risālīh-i Sharḥ-i Ahwāl-i Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā‘ī*, op.cit., 27). It is possible that Nābil Zarandi confuses ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and Ḥājī Muhammad Ḥasan Nā‘īnī since not only the latter fits better the description of 'a modest and illiterate' man, but most probably he was still in Yazd at the time of Aḥsā‘ī's frequent visits between 1221-34 (1806-18).


4. *Ṭarā‘īq*. III, pp.244-5.
'He accepted no gifts or ṣellipsis move (Sufi alms). His annual livelihood was limited to ten to twenty days gleaning at the harvest time in the villages around Isfahan ... In summer and winter he had no bed and slept only a few hours in a tattered rag ... He rarely went out of his room, and at nights only the light of his heart was glimmering. He had no books, not even a single leaf, but he was a master in divine ḥikmat, and in all branches of mathematics'.

The same austerity, voluntary poverty and intuitive insight may also be seen in other Ṣawāṣ. The spirit of expectation in the independent ascetics, as in the wandering dervishes or the Ni'matallāhīs, had little direct effect on the course of the later messianic developments, but nevertheless its echoes survived in the heterodox milieu only to recur in the course of the messianism of the later decades.

II

Theories and speculations which developed among ascetics and Sufis often served as primary motives for a wide range of popular prognostications and anticipations. What developed in ṭarīqat or amongst individual ascetics in many instances revitalised incoherent expectations which already existed on a popular level. Occasionally traces of theoretical messianism are clearly visible in popular beliefs, but usually it had an effect in a diffused form on individuals who were on the borderline between popular religion and the world of scholarship.

A clear example may be perceived in the works of Muhammad Hāshim Asif known as Rustam al-Ḥukamā'. He belongs to a generation of the urban dwellers who in their lifetime witnessed the change in the sixty years span between the fall of the Zands and the end of Muhammad Shah's reign (from 1780's to 1840's)².

1. Ibid. III, pp.239-40. Also see Mīrzā Ḥusain Tahvīldār Isfahānī, Ḥujjāt al-Islām-yi Isfahān, edited by M. Sutūdīh, Tehran, 1342 Šh., p.68.

2. Rustam al-Ḥukamā' was a prolific writer, although only the full text of one of his works, Rustam al-Tawārīkh (op.cit.), and some extracts of his Īfīg-i Āhkām va Ash'ār, written in 1244 Q./1289 (H. Nāṭiq, 'Qatl-i Gīrābdūf dar āhkām va ash'ār-i Rustam al-Ḥukamā' in Maṣḥībat-i Vābah va Bālā-yi Ḥukumat, Tehran, 1358 Šh., pp.155-75) are published. Towards the end of his life, Rustam al-Ḥukamā' himself carefully compiled a list of his works (Fikhrīst-i Munsha'āt va Rasā'il) at the end of his Naṣīḥat Namih (MS. no.1270, Mīnāsīān Coll., U.C.L.A., Research Library).

3. For the analysis of Rustam al-Ḥukamā'is views on political theory, economics and history expressed in Rustam al-Tawārīkh, see A.K.S. Lambton, 'Some new trends in Islamic political thought in late 18th and early 19th century Persia' in Studia Islamica, XXXIX (1974), pp.95-128 (97-113). Also H. Nāṭiq, op.cit. particularly with regard to the events of the 1820's and 30's. For his biography see Rustam al-Tawārīkh, pp.55 ff. In an epilogue to the above MS. (UCLA MS. p.71 ff) he also gives some information on his background.
His concise and simple, yet sometimes deliberately pompous, rhythmical and sarcastic style, his imaginary characters, titles, positions and events, as well as his constant shifts from reality to fiction, suggest a strong influence of popular narratives in his work. Rustam al-Hukamā'ī's interpretations of historical facts and political realities are often mixed with his apocalyptic fictions. This is evident in his references to the circumstances of the imminent Zuḥr of the Imam Mahdi. They reflect the political upheavals which by the second and third decades of the 19th century were beginning to affect the Iranian public. Similar to the Sufis and the wandering dervishes, Rustam al-Hukamā' tries to explain these changes in terms of millenarian events.

An example of these speculations appears in Rustam al-Tawarīkh. In an additional introductory passage, most probably written prior to the final draft, the author in the middle of an imaginary story hints at the advent of the Mahdi:

"By God's will in the year 1251 (1835-6) in Iran, one of the sons of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah would ascend the throne as a nāṭeb of the excellency (i.e. the Twelfth Imam), and would follow the path of justice and equity. But in the year 1262 (1846-7) after unbelief (kufr) has been victorious over Islam, the Imam himself would appear from Arbaʿī Gharra (i.e. Madina), overthrow unbelief and polytheism and destroy oppression and darkness and conquer the world."

With the assistance of his minister, an old man from Fars who would be perfect in all virtues, embellished with honesty and faithfulness and skilled in all sciences, the Qāʾīm would rule with justice. "But the people of the world would never be content with justice and equity, and therefore when He is away to conquer the distant countries of the world, the people of Isfahan would rebel against Him and would claim that He is a Sufyānī ruler'. Then from the notables of Isfahan Dajjal (anti-Christ) would appear. He would be one-eyed and a strong man, who is shrewd, atheist, ambitious, rich and generous. He starts his rebellion from Luristan riding his huge donkey. His minister and assistant is

1. Rustam al-Tawarīkh, 475. The date of completion should be read Muḥarram 1251 Q. (1835) and not 1215 (see Lambton, op.cit. 104). The confusion occurs because of Rustam al-Hukamā'ī's strange habit of deliberately changing the dates by misplacing the last digits. He also did the same at the end of Naṣīḥat Namāk (MS., op.cit., p.76) dating 1206 instead of 1260 (1844), while in the text he makes it quite clear that he is writing in 1260 Q. This riddle-like dating is not an unprecedented practice, especially when the author is making unusual and somewhat dangerous remarks.

2. Rustam al-Tawarīkh, 32. Summary translation in Lambton, op.cit., pp.103-4. Part of this paragraph from line 5 to 14 in the original text is deliberately omitted by the editor in later reprints of the text. Similarly other passages and sentences in the text (such as line 8-14 of p.475) which contained precise speculations on the appearance of the Qāʾīm in 1260-2 Q. are absent. This is probably done because of the embarrassing coincidence with the date of the Bab's declaration.
seen anything like it. In one of his qas'idāh, which was evidently composed in imitation of Shāh Ni'matallah's famous elegy, he again states that the shortcomings and failures of the Muslims would bring forth a disastrous defeat by the Russians. But the pressure of the oppressors would not last long:

'The Qā'im of the house of Muṣṭafā would appear
I see in him the glory,
He is the guide to all the misled in the world
I see the celebrated Mahdī.'

Another example of Rustam al-Ḥukamā'ī's speculations appears in an epilogue to the collection of his Naṣīḥat Nāmīh which was written in 1260-61 (1844-5) when he was almost eighty years old. Here, he lays emphasis more on the Mahdī and less on the na'tib, whom he vigorously expects to appear in 1250. Already in the epilogue of Rustam al-Tawārīkh he had postponed the date of the 'great disaster' to 1252-3 (1835-6), but here after ten years it appears that he is no more interested in the appearance of the 'deputy' of the Imam whom he had anticipated to be one of the Qājarīs. It is difficult to know if his lack of interest was because of the poor performance of Muhammad Shāh, who could hardly match the glorious na'ib-i Mahdī of Rustam al-Ḥukamā'ī, or because of a change in his attitude towards the 'ill-fated Christians' whom he so gravely feared. Nevertheless, in a short passage written in 1262 he admires the people of Rum, Turkistan, India, Russia, and the seven kingdoms of Europe (haft qirāt-i farang).

'In those places, there is justice, equity and order, and in every matter law and order is prevalent in its highest degree, whereas in Iran, contrary to these places, the people are only capable of understanding traditional knowledge (manqūl fahrī) and susceptible to fables (afsānīh pazīr).'

In spite, however, of his earlier disappointments about the time of the Zuhūr, the idea of the advent of the Qā'im reoccurs in the writing of Rustam al-Ḥukamā'ī. Again in Dhu al-Hijja 1260 (December 1844), he confirms that in fifteen months time, that is Rabī' al-Awwal 1262 (April 1846), the Qā'im would finally appear.

1. Ibid.
4. Rustam al-Tawārīkh, 475.
6. Ibid., pp.75-6.
He praises the Qa'im with the highest titles in another qasidih in which he describes the circumstances of the Zuhur. He confirms that this would happen in the year Rabbi Ghani, which numerologically is equal to 12621. But he warns his reader to be on guard against the appearance of 'imposters'. In the list of his works, he refers to a risalih which he compiled 'in rejection and denial of those who claim to be the na'ib of Sahib al-Zaman'.

'Whoever makes such claims is either insane or melancholic or else under the influence of hemp and other drugs. He may also be possessed by jinns and devils in which case he may even perform many supernatural feats which would fascinate the laymen and the ignorant. This seeker of truth (i.e. himself) has witnessed in the past many stories of this nature, and all the claimants were eventually either killed or stoned to death. Therefore let it be known to those with reason that those just kings who take refuge in Islam in their reigns, are the deputies of The Excellency (i.e. the Qa'im), and those just and fair 'ulama in the sphere of Shar' are also the deputies of The Excellency'2.

Fear and admiration for the West, in comparison to instability, insecurity and decline at home, led Rustam al-Hukama' to seek for some messianic prophecies. But in spite of his long lasting anticipations, in reality Rustam al-Hukama' still firmly recognises the 'just king' and the 'just divine', as the true holders of a divine mandate. His condemnation of those who claimed to be the deputy of the Imam leaves no doubt that his expectations were entirely within the boundaries of the existing secular and religious systems3. Although in theory he expects an Arab youth to rise, in reality he is not prepared to see anyone but the accepted authorities as the deputy of the Imam. This might suggest that his condemnation of the 'imposters' is perhaps referring to the Babis, who had at the time begun to propagate the advent of the Bab4.

Besides ideas expressed by Rustam al-Hukama', there are other popular prophecies and speculations which indicate the widespread diffusion of millenarianism in this period. Such ideas had distinctive effects on the later currents of thought. For instance they not only influenced the conversion of

1. Ibid. 86. He titles one of his qasidihs as 'Bisharat Namih-i Firuṣ, dar 'alāmāt-i zuhūr-i Sahib al-Zamān va Tāriḵ-i zuhūrash'.
2. Ibid. pp.94-5.
3. Amongst many other panegyrics in honour of the Qajar rulers, Rustam al-Hukama' also composed two Bisharat Namih in honour of Aqa Muḥammad Khān's khurūj.
4. See below Chapter Six, II for the beginning of the Babi activities in Isfahan.
many individuals to the Babi movement, but affected the entire formation of
the movement in its early days. These themes particularly caught the attention
of the Babi-Bahá’í sources who often in order to emphasise the extraordinary
aspect of the new manifestation, took care to record them. Sayyid ‘Alí Muhammad
the Bab himself made reference to the 'coincidences' (iqtiránát) and the
circumstantial 'signs' and 'prophecies' which he believed to have been
emphatically pointed towards his revelation, while maintaining that in spite of
their sincerity and true inspiration, they could be taken only as secondary
proofs of his claim. It may be argued that accounts in the Babi sources
concerning the earlier prophecies about the Zuhúr may have been assembled with
a hindsight in order to justify the 'cause' of the Bab. Nevertheless the fact
that the early accounts such as Nuqat al-Káf or Qatíl, as well as the writings
of the Bab himself make use of such ideas shows that they were greatly influenced
by prognostications and speculations of their time.

Amongst other things, the Bab occasionally referred to an Indian jaffár,
who with his knowledge of numerology even prognosticated his name and the date
of his revelation:

'The Lord will return to you amid the two initiations (fi al-nash'atayn),
To revitalise the religion after rā and ghayn (i.e. ۶٩: ۱۰۰۰ = 1200)
Thus multiply the essence of huwa (i.e. ۶۵: ۶۱: ۲۲) by number of its letters (i.e. ۶۲ (2 x 11 = 22)
And that is the name of the pole of the two worlds.

Other sources also acknowledged the Indian jaffár in Kárbila’ who heralded
the emergence of the Bab, though not surprisingly with conflicting inter-
pretations. al-Qatíl al-Kárbílá’í maintained that the jaffár’s mathematical
calculations confirmed the authenticity of the Bab. Tunikábúni on the other
hand states that when Sayyid ‘Alí Muhammad visited Kárbíla’ prior to 1260, a
murtáz (an ascetic; usually Indian) forecast the evils which would soon arise
from his claim. More significantly, Sayyid Javád Kárbílá’í, a follower of

2. INBA. op.cit., 124 cf. Dalá’il-i, pp.60-2, and idem, Shu’únát-i Fársí (written
in 1264/1848), INBA. 64, pp.78-95 (78). From this enigmatic calculation
the Bab extracted his own name; ۶۱ (۶۵: ۲۲ (2: the number of the
letters of ۶۵: ۶۱)) x 11 (the numerical value of ۶۵: ۶۱) = 242 which is equal
to the numerical value of ‘Alí Muhammad. The poetry referred to by the
Indian jaffár originally belongs to Sayyid Muḥammad Akhlaqí, whose works
on jafv were known to the Bab (Dalá’il, 62).
4. Q. 59.
Rashti and one of the earlier believers in the Bab, relates that speculations of the Indian ascetic known as Sayin in Karbila', greatly assisted him in his search for the 'Promised One'. In his brief reply to Sayyid Javād, Sayin wrote a short message containing a series of mysterious figures. When Sayyid Javād eventually deciphered the message, he noticed that by employing hisāb-i jumal, each figure contains a message:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
10 & 4 & 5 & 40 \\
\text{Mahdī} & \text{mawjūd (exist)} \\
& & & \\
2 & 200 & 4 & 40 \\
\text{rap(b)} & \text{Lord} & \text{Ali Muhammad} \\
\end{array}
\]

Other signs of the Indian influence on the early Babis may also be seen in Aqā Sayyid Bāsir Hindī, a blind mystic from a family of Sufi dervishes in India whose search for the spiritual 'guide' eventually introduced him to Sayyid Kazīm and then the Bab. He was first motivated by his forefather's prophecy regarding the appearance of the 'Perfect Soul' (Nafs—i Kamil) in the land of Iran. The prophecies of another Indian also aroused the curiosity of Mīrzā Muhammad 'Alī and Mīrzā Hādī Nahrī, two Babi brothers from Isfahan who once met in Karbila' a Shi'ī pilgrim from the 'remote parts of India' who in reply to their query, told them that according to the traditions circulating in his homeland, the revelation of the Qā'im would occur in the thirteenth century A.H. There were other allusions which also led the 'seekers' to the Bab. Years before the appearance of the Bab, another convert, a certain Shaykh 'Alī Khurāsānī heard some poetry from a pilgrim in Mecca that alluded to the date of Zuhur. Mīrzā 'Abd al-Wahhab Khurāsānī, who also was a Babi, first met a jaffār who extracted the name of the Mahdī by numerological calculations.

1. For his details see below Chapters Three, III and Five, I.
3. For his details see below Chapter Nine
5. Qatīl. (516).
6. Dalā'īl, op.cit. 60.
Also the Bab refers to an Azarbaijani believer who twenty years prior to the Bab's arrival in Azarbaijan in 1263 (1847) saw in his dreams two men who read an Arabic quatrain:

'Sixty and two renewed,  
the cause which was unprecedented,  
He is a Guardian (vaVT) or an assigned messenger,  
who descended from two pure branches'.

Indeed Azarbaijan was a breeding ground for a variety of popular speculations in this period. One may assume that this is not unrelated to a rich popular mysticism in the towns and villages of the province which survived up to the 19th century. Ḥāfīz Muṣṭafā al-Saltānī, himself a native of Tabriz, in a section devoted to the 'heralds of the Revelation', describes a number of individuals who at various levels were influenced by these popular messianic ideas. Amongst them was a humble old Tabrizi who some time prior to 1260 used to decorate walls and gates of mosques and houses in Tabriz with a mysterious inscription. On one occasion when he was questioned by one of the 'ulama of the city about the meaning of this strange practice, he replied that it was an allusion to the forthcoming Zuhūr of the 'Proof of God', and that he was only performing a duty for which he had no logical explanation.

In spite of an evident contradiction with the traditions about setting a date for the revelation of the Imam, emphasis on the significance of 1260 may be observed in the popular beliefs of the time. The widespread circulation of ambiguous accounts concerning the death of the Eleventh Imam and the Concealment of the Twelfth Imam in 260 A.H. (873-4) was a source of inspiration for many popular figures, and for those who were preoccupied with messianic prophecies, to speculate on the occurrence of the Zuhūr after the lapse of a millenium. Besides Rustam al-Hukamāʾ, the Indian Jaffār, or the old man from Tabriz, many other popular prognosticators in the 19th century were also obsessed with setting the precise date. The numerological chronogram Ya Zuhūr al-Ḥaqq (يا ظهير الحق ) which is equal in numerical value to 1261 was much favoured by early sources.

1. Letter to Muḥammad Shāh, INBA. no.64, 124 and Dalāʾīl, pp.61-2 (on the authority of Mullā Yūsuf Arābī relating from a certain Mīrizā Masʿūd). It is not known who the original compiler of this quatrain may be.

2. TMS. pp.6-7. Even up to the time of Muṣṭafā al-Saltānī in the late 19th century, some remnants of his cryptic inscriptions survived on the wall of the Jum'ah mosque in Tabriz.

3. See for example NK. 93. Also the title of Mīrizā Asadallāh Fāżil Māzandarānī's Zuhūr al-Ḥaqq seems to have been inspired by the same epigram.
Qatīl al-Karbala’ī states that this point was not only noticed by the Shi’ī sources, but others such as Christians, Europeans (Fārangī), Mandaeans (Sābī’ī), Zoroastrians and Jews as well as Ni’matallāhīs, Ismā’īlīs, Zaydis and Vaqīfīs, all acknowledged the importance of the year sixty-one. To strengthen his argument, he refers to the Jews who he believes were expecting the coming of the messenger in Rabī’ al-Awwal of that year. Further he gives some examples of Sufi writings, including poetry of Shahr Ni’matallāh Valī and Muhī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, who, as Qatīl alleges, both prophesied the occurrence of the Zuhūr in the year sixty one. Qatīl’s tone, like most other Babi sources, tends to emphasise that in spite of their clear implications, which he believed were solely directed towards the Bab’s revelation, these prophecies had been misinterpreted by the followers of these creeds.

Some astrologers (munajjims) were also credited with predicting the date, or confirming the magnitude of the new revelation. Timur Khvārazmī, an astrologer from Isfahan, predicted that between 1230-50 (1814-34) great upheavals would prevail. Mīrza Aqa Munajjīm Isfahānī, who was an astrologer to Manūchehr Khān Mu’tamīd al-Daulih in Isfahan, was more specific when he pointed out that the year 1260 Q. would witness ‘incredible events’. Another astrologer, Mīrza Ja’far Tabrīzī believed that his astrological tables made it certain that the cause of the young Sayyid ‘Alī Muhammad, then at the beginning of his ‘mission’, would expand in the world and would last for a millennium.

Not only astrological coincidences, but disasters and human miseries, were also taken as signs that would precede greater apocalyptic upheavals. In particular, the outbreaks of cholera which up to the end of the 18th century was unknown in Iran, generated some speculation. Mulla Muhammad Hamza’

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1. Qatīl. (pp.515-16).
2. Ibid. References to the Jewish prophecies and expectation of the Messiah (Mashih: ha-milikh) in 19th century Iran may be found in some early 19th century accounts of the Christian missionaries. Amongst them Stern, H.A. Dawning of Light in the East, London, 1854, pp.254-60 and Southgate, H. Narrative of a Tour through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia and Mesopotamia 2 vols. New York, 1840, II, 102-3. Stern (op.cit., pp.254-5) refers to his visit of Ḩakim Harūn, a well known Jewish physician in Kāshān, who professed that ‘Christian salvation was in perfect harmony with the Scriptures, and far superior to the fanciful system of Rabbinism’. Harūn assured Stern that many of the Jews in Kāshān ‘will as intently love Christ and his Gospel, as they formerly rejected the one and despised the other’.
3. Ibid. Qatīl point out that twenty five years ago (1238 Q./1822-3) he had heard from Ni’matallāhīs that manifestation would take place in the year sixty one as prophesied by the Imams.
5. Ibid.
6. TMS., 17.
Sharī'atmadār, a student of Ahsā'ī, believed that the outbreaks of cholera and plague in the 'Atabāt in 1830's (because of which he reckons only one tenth of the population survived) were a divine punishment for the 'ulama's negligence and enmity towards the true message of Shaykhism. He maintains that this was a preparatory measure for the emergence of the Qā'im. So does another Shaykhi, Mulla Ja'far Qazvini, who relates that while Shaykh Ahmad Ahsā'ī was staying in Kirmānshāh, he warned the public of the imminent outbreak of cholera and plague as a sign of revelation. The Bab himself also implies that the cholera was a punishment for negligence towards his message, and states that:

'From the beginning of the Revelation, see the multitudes who lost their lives because of cholera. This is one of the signs of the Zuhūr which people tend to neglect. In four years, probably more than one hundred thousand souls from among the Shi'i's alone, perished, and no one is aware of its (hidden) meaning.'

Cholera was only one of many symptoms which were detected as 'signs' of the emergence of a comprehensive 'Revolution' (Fitnīh, Fitna) at the End of the Time. Though the Bab himself, chiefly because of his peaceful nature, was very cautious in using the term, others such as the author of Nuqtat al-kāf did not hesitate to use the words Fitnīh and Imtīhān (torment) to describe the violent events which were to take place at the time of the Qā'im's manifestation. The author states that the speculations of the astrologers, the poetry of the mystics, and other fallible evidences, would only confirm the proofs of hikmat, the Quranic verses and Imam's sayings in establishing the occurrence of an inevitable some time after the year sixty. He points out that though 'common people may assume that the emergence of the Qā'im, may peace be upon him, will be immediately followed by a mass conversion' in reality it is almost impossible for him to prevail without being engaged in a violent struggle with his enemies. Basing his arguments on the traditions about Fitnīh, he further emphasises that the severity of such trial is such that even amongst the Qā'im's Companions (Nuqabā'), only a small group would be able to hold their allegiance up to the very end.

2. MJQ. (452).
4. NK. pp.92-9. For references to fitnā in Shi'i traditions see Safīnāt al-Bihār compiled by Shaykh 'Abbās Qumī, 2 vols., Najaf, 1355 Q., II, 345. For further details see also below Chapter Four, III.
5. Ibid.
Similarly to Qatīl, in the mind of Hājī Mīrzā Jānī, the 'signs' of the manifestation and the upheavals of the Final Day were not confined to the lands of Islam, but stretched beyond to European lands (mulk-i Farang). When for example describing the events following the execution of the Bab in Tabrīz in 1266 (1850), the author refers to the enquiry made by the Russian and the Ottoman envoys (īlohi-yi Rus va īlohi-yi Rūm) regarding the Bab and the Babis. He believed that this was because they also had 'oppressed subjects' (buʿafā-yi raʿīyat) in their own countries, but treated them better, and tried to understand their problems. Yet in the author's view, the prime cause for the Farangīs' enquiries was that in their traditions (akhbār), the 'Promised One' would draw the sign of the Cross (Khāj): something which in the author's view is identical with the Bab's numerous calligraphic inscriptions in the shape of the haykal. Also in their Akhbār, Nuqtat al-Kāf notifies, 'a dragon would appear in the Land of Parang, from whose head Parang-is would remove a diamond'. Finally he states that one of the 'signs' which has already been fulfilled is that the monarchy of Parang has collapsed and instead a republican state (daulat-i jumhūrī) has been established. Strange fantasies aside, the connection between the 'suffering subjects', the fall of the monarchy and the establishment of a republican state in Europe, and the 'signs' of a messianic Fitnih, should not be underestimated. Beyond the official chroniclers, perhaps this is one of the earliest interpretations which were made of the political developments in Europe. This deserves more attention, since such events were treated with the familiar concepts of a traditional system of thought, rather than being accepted or rejected in any subjective way as was the case for some thinkers in the late 19th century Iran.

However exciting this new awareness of the European developments may sound, the popular messianism was still very much envisaged in terms of traditional

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1. Ibid. pp.266-7. Such enquiries on the doctrine of the Bab and the state of the Babis were carried out by foreign envoys in Iran. Prince D. Dolgorukov's despatches to the Russian Foreign Ministry written between 1848-52 (excerpts published in M.S. Ivanov's BAGHRAWNE GOSTAHNÀ S KHÁNE (1848-52) (The Babi Uprising in Iran), Moscow, 1939, App.I, pp.141-59, and partly translated into English by F. Kazemzadeh in World Order, Fall, 1966, pp.17-24, and into Persian in Shāykhīgārī va Bābīgārī, op.cit., pp.269-89) and J. Sheil's special report to Palmerston, F.O. 60/152, No.72, June 21st 1850 (with two enclosures) are two examples. Kazem Beg used reports which were prepared by the Russian Consul in Tabriz (Kazem Beg. I, 332, n.2 which is also confirmed by NK. 267), where as Nicolas used French reports filed in the French Embassy in Tehran. (Archive de la Légation de France à Téhéran et celles du Ministère des Affaires étrangeres à Paris. Nicolas. 53).

2. NK. 267.
eschatology. But some middle and low rank Mullās who conveyed the message to
the public also became in their own right conscious of a more realistic image
of the advent of the Imam. Ḥājī Mullā Iskandar, a preacher in Khuy, who was
known for his karamāt, over a long period of time, drew the attention of his
audience to the plausible circumstances of the forthcoming Zuḥūr and the
utterance of the 'Great Name' (Ism-i Ḥasan), which he believed to be found in
the prayers of Ramadān. His preaching created some excitement and his adherents
eagerly anticipated imminent upheavals. Similarly, Ḥājī Mullā ʿAlī Akbar the
Shaykh al-Islām of Marāghih was also preoccupied with such expectations. Muṭīn
al-Saltanī believes that some of the Babis from Marāghih such as Mullā Ahmad
Ibdal Marāghihī, a Letter of Hayy, Mullā Husain Dakhīl Marāghihī and Mullā ʿAlī
Sayyāḥ Marāghihī, were all influenced by Mullā ʿAlī Akbar's preaching before
being converted to the Babi movement.

If the origin of these ideas and inspirations was roughly foreshadowed in
the semi-rural Sufi asceticism in Āzarbāijān, the preaching of Ḥājī Asadallāh
Saysānī had a more recognisable link with better known trends. Originally a
peasant from Saysan, a village near Tabrīz (with possible Ahl-i Haqq background),
Asadallāh spent two years in the company of the other local ascetics (ahl-i
tanassuk) in retirement and mystical mortifications on Mount Sahand. After
that in his wanderings around the country he came across Shaykh Ahmad Ahsāʾī
(possibly in Kirmānshāh, a centre of Ahl-i Haqq), and was deeply influenced by
his teachings. On his return to Saysān, his preaching, mostly composed of
messianic admonitions, gained him popularity, sanctity and respect amongst the

1. TMS. pp.17-21. 2. See below Chapter Four, I.
3. See below Chapter Four, II.
4. For his details see Nabil. pp.431-3 and Z. pp.59-60.
5. TMS. pp.21-2.
6. In Āzarbāijān the Turkish speaking Ahl-i Ḥaqq are mainly concentrated in the
region of Tabrīz-Marāghih (around Mt. Sahand), and in Mākū. (V. Minorsky,
'The Ahl-i Ḥaqq' in Iranica, Twenty Articles, op.cit., pp.306-16 (314) and
cited sources).
7. TMS. pp.22-9. Both Mount Sahand and Mount Savalān (Sabalān), because of
the legends which were attached to them were locally regarded as sacred
places, and visited by the pilgrims. Lady Sheil (Glimpses, op.cit. 102) and
Edward Burgess (Letters from Persia, 1828-1855, edited by B. Schwartz, N.Y.
1942, p.44) gave accounts regarding the legends of a prophet whom
Āzarbāijānīs believed to be buried at the summit of Savalān. 'The age in
which this prophet lived is not known, nor his name but the Persians claim
for him greater antiquity than the Christian era'. (Burgess, 44). This
may be connected with the legends regarding the retreat of Zoroaster in the
Āzarbāijān mountains.
villagers'. Distinctively affected by the Shaykhi picture of the Imam, Asadallah presented a more plausible and human image of the Qa'im and the advent of the Final Day. The Qa'im would come to this world not by ascending from the Eight Climate or the cities of Jābulqā and Jābarsā (which Shaykhis believed were misunderstood by the fuqahā')

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but by natural birth, and would live a life like any other human being. Similarly to the author of Nuqtat al-Kaf, Asadallah also emphasised that the Qa'im's appearance would inevitably entail his suffering, hardship and subjugation (maqṣūriyyat) at the hand of his enemies. The opposition of the 'ulama against the Qa'im, Asadallah declared, was the best proof of his righteousness.

3

Their anti-clerical and sometimes anti-governmental sentiments, non-orthodox image of Qa'im and the qiyāmat, and high popularity and sanctity in the community are elements which distinguish characters such as Asadallah Saysānī as intermediaries, whose function was to popularise the speculative messianic theories of 'high culture' for ordinary men. It is not surprising to see that after his death in circa 1258 (1842), in the early stages of the Babi movement, almost the entire village of Saysān embraced the new 'cause', and in due time the village became one of the Babi-Baha'i centres in Azarbaijan.

Hājī Asadallah, Hājī Mullā Iskandar and Mullā 'Alī Akbar were by no means isolated cases since other examples of this popular millenarian preaching may be found in many communities around the country. Hājī Mullā Muhammad Hamza' Sharīʻatmadar Bārfurūshī (1196-1281/1781-1864), a student of Ahsā'ī and an influential figure in Bārfūrūsh, Mullā Muhammad 'Alī Hujjat al-Islām Zanjānī (later known as Hujjat), an ardent Akhbarī in Zanjān (1227-1266/1811-1850), Sayyid Yahyā Darābī, son of Sayyid Ja'far Kashfi (later known as Vahīd) (died 1265/1849), Hājī Mullā Muhammad 'Alī Bārfūrūshī (Quddūs), and many other prominent Babīs of the future who were responsible for mobilising local communities under the Babi banners, performed the same intermediary function. It is beyond the capacity of this chapter to give a thorough study of these figures but something at least should be said about each of them. They all shared similar characteristics. They are all known for their anti-clerical and occasionally anti-governmental feelings. Also they have in common strong bonds with the communities of adherents, skilful oratory, and above all association with certain trends of non-orthodox thought either because of their family background or their training.

1. TMS. pp.23-4. 2. See above Chapter One, II. 3. TMS. 23. 4. Ibid. 26.
Shari'atmadar who during his tutelage, on Shaykh Ahmad's advice, retired for forty days in the mosque of Kufah, was known to the Barfurushis for his asceticism and his prognostications. He was also admired for his unceremonious and humble manners. He spoke and preached in local Mazandaranī dialect, and often dressed like local shepherds. He excited his audience from the pulpit by stressing the speculative themes which were common amongst the Shaykhis. He bitterly criticised the Usuli ulama, and most of all his rival Mullā Sa'id Barfurushi, and he was seldom in good terms with the governors and local state officials. The prolonged conflicts in Barfurush between Ni'matī and Haydari quarters was largely expressed in this period in terms of Shaykhi-Usuli dispute between Shari'atmadar and Sa'id al-'Ulama'. The later development of this conflict, by the time of MullāMuhammad 'AlīBarfurushi (Quddūs) who himself at one stage was a student of Shari'atmadar, turned to a full scale confrontation between the Babis and their enemies in the city, and became one of the origins of the Tabarsi uprising in 1848-9. Earlier, even before the death of Sayyid KazimRashtī, clear signs of messianic expectations may be found in the writings of Quddūs, particularly in connection with his theological argumentations with Sa'id al-'Ulama'. It appears that in the late 1250's and early 1260's (1841-8), the leadership of the Shaykhi faction in the Ni'matīquarters of Barfurush was gradually transferred from the old Shari'atmadar to a young and militant Quddūs, who in turn mobilised the inhabitants in the newly emerged Babi movement.

The same pattern may also be detected in the ideas and activities of Mullā

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1. The account of his life appears in Shari'atmadarīyān, Sharḥ-i Zindigī, op. cit.; Z. pp.134-45; Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī, op.cit. pp.140-75. All these accounts used various parts of Shari'atmadar's yet unpublished Asvār al-Bahada.

2. Sharḥ-i Zindigī, pp.14, 18 cf. Z. 437-41 n. (which discusses his interpretation of the position of Bābīyat as it is applied to Sayyid 'AlīMuḥammad the Bab, and later to Quddūs and Mullā Husain Bushrūyīhī. For further details see below Chapter Four, II.

3. Details of this zealous enemy of the Shaykhis, and in later times, Babis among other sources may be found in Z. pp.430-3 and Tabaqāt. II, 2, 599.


5. Beside various sources on the situation in Bāfarūsh on the eve of Tabarsi, Zuhūr al-Ḥaqq (pp.405-419) provides an extensive account (including some of the despatches and correspondence of Quddūs with Sa'id al'Ulama') of the earlier disputes (1258-61).
Muhammad 'Ali Hujjat Zanjānī, who unlike the above examples, was influenced by Akhbarism, at least in the matters of Shari'a. He was the son of a local Zanjānī divine, who was known for his karamat. For some years Hujjat was educated in the Atabāt before moving to Hamadān, which in the early decades of the 19th century survived as one of the Akhbarī strongholds in Iran. On his return to Zanjān, after the death of his father, Hujjat enjoyed immense popularity in those quarters of the city which had previously been loyal to his father. The introduction of a series of severe juristic prohibitions, which was inspired by Hujjat's Akhbarī views, together with some traces of extremism (ghulūw) reflected in his religious discourses, provided the necessary pretext for a clash with the rival Usulī 'ulama in the city. The extension of this conflict in the mid 1250's (late 1830's) resulted in the intervention of the local and then central authorities, which in accordance with Hājī Mirzā 'Aqā's religious policy, summoned Hujjat and kept him in exile in the capital. After spending some time in Tehran, his triumphal return to Zanjān increased his popularity, even to the extent of zealous devotion, mostly at the expense of both Usulī 'ulama and the local government.

In the following years, prior to his second exile to Tehran in 1847 (1263), Hujjat became increasingly preoccupied with the inevitability of a prophetic revelation. He was convinced that divine revelation would manifest itself in the form of a human being with no physical or supernatural imparity. In their essence, his views on the appearance of the 'Promised One' did not comply with the teachings of the Akhbarīs who took the traditions at their face value. Instead, his picture of the advent of the Qa'im, like that of some of the above mentioned Shaykhis, was closer to reality. However, the realistic prospects

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2. Most sources agree on his Akhbarī beliefs. See Ahmad. 451; NK. 125; and Nābit. pp.178, 531-4. However KD. (I, pp.68-9) stated that he also spent some time in Burūjird, which may suggest some influence from Sayyid Ja'far Kashti.

3. For other examples of exiled 'ulama under Hājī Mirzā 'Aqā see below Chapter Eight, II.

for a \textit{Zuhur} by no means reduced the intensity of the expectation of the Qā'īm's advent. The unreserved support offered by Hujjat in the early stages of the movement following the Bab's proclamation, even though no meeting ever took place between the two of them, indicates the enthusiasm and vigour with which Hujjat anticipated a manifestation\textsuperscript{1}. His conversion was followed by that of a large body of his adherents who according to one estimate, exceeded three thousand\textsuperscript{2}. They mainly consisted of middle and lower groups of the city inhabitants and included merchants, petty merchants, traders, members of various guilds, shopkeepers, lutūs, religious students, and low ranking army personnel.

The revolutionary zeal of what by now had become the Babi faction, which had once already expressed itself in the scandalous expulsion of the oppressive Qājār governor (1847/1263)\textsuperscript{3}, reached its zenith during the Zanjān siege (1266/1850) when Hujjat and his followers put up a stiff resistance against the joint forces of the government and the local fūlama. The episode of Zanjān, one of the most exciting chapters in the history of the Babi movement, fully demonstrates a complete process of messianism; from expectations to revelation and then to militancy, confrontation, defeat and submission.

Throughout Iran, other communities in Fars, Yazd and Khurasan were also motivated by individuals who like the above examples, were inspired by the messianic messages. The preparatory teachings of these figures are of prime importance since not only were they vehicles for the adaptation of past ideas and beliefs to the new circumstances, but to a large extent they prepared the way for the interpretation of social and political realities of the time in a messianic language which would be understandable to the ordinary public.

III

If these trends for the most part were absorbed into the Babi movement there

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\textsuperscript{1} The circumstances of his conversion are described in \textit{Narrative of Āqā Muḥammad Ḥusain}, folio 4-6 in \textit{Personal Reminiscences}, pp.771-5 and \textit{Nabil}. pp.531-4.

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Personal Reminiscences}, 774.

\textsuperscript{3} For an account of this city riot and its causes see \textit{NT}. III, 131. This account seems to have been partly based on the official report of an inquiry which was made after the event by Ḥājī Mīrzā Aqāšī's envoy Āḥmad Khān Navā'ī (Nā'īb Iṣḥāk Aqāšī). Contrary to the contents of the report, the account of Sipihr tends to play down the general anti-Qājār sentiments of the inhabitants of Zanjān who were outraged by the excesses of the governor 'Ālī Ashraf Khān. The original report appears amongst the documents in the archives of the Iran Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tehran, file 23 (original documents). \textit{NK}. (130, quoting Muḥammad Bayg Chāpārchī) also gave a brief version of the event.
were others which, independently of the Babi development, though on a smaller scale, proceeded from theoretical speculation to the stage of proclamation and fulfilment of the prophecies. The revival of the Isma'īlis in the 19th century, for example, was a renewal of long forgotten aspirations in an area of Iran which still preserved some aspects of Isma'īli millenarianism. These aspirations might have been first inspired by similar developments in the communities of Isma'īlis in India. Already in 1175/1762 amongst the Da'ūdī community in Gujarat a certain Hibatallah ibn Isma'īl had claimed that he was in direct contact with the Concealed Imam, and had been appointed by him to the rank of al-Hujjat al-Ildhi. Amongst the Niẓāris of eastern Iran, in the period under Abul Hasan Khan (Shāh), the Isma'īli imam and the governor of Kirmān between 1169-1206/1756-91, the past connections between the Ni'matallahīs and Isma'īlis were further strengthened. This must have had some effect on the messianic attitude of the Isma'īlis since the next imam, Shāh Khalīlallāh son of Abul Hasan Shāh, despite some pure political amibitions which brought him close to the Qājārs, appears to have revived some of the Isma'īli messianic claims. His efforts at organising the Isma'īli sympathisers in Yazd, Kirmān and Quhistan came to an abrupt end, when he was murdered in Yazd by an excited mob who were incited by a certain mujtahid Muḥammad Husayn Yazdi in 1817. Not much is known about the nature of his da'wā or the extent of his support, but from what is known about the Ni'matallahī influence, as well as from the revolt of his son Aqa Khan Husain 'Alī Shāh (1843-4), one may suspect that at least in the early stages the messianic da'wā was the mobilising force behind a movement which later turned into a political revolt.

Whatever the motives of Khalīlallāh and Aqa Khan, their actions must have


2. Pourjavādī and Wilson, 'Isma'īlīs and Ni'matallahīs', op.cit., pp.118-24 and cited sources. For Isma'īlīs in Khurasān see below Chapter Eight. Also see above for connections with Ni'matallahīs.


4. H. Algar, 'The Revolt of Aghā Khan Mahallātī and the transference of the Isma'īlī Imamate to India', op.cit., 55-81, and the cited sources. Also numerous reports on Aqa Khan and the Isma'īlī revolt of 1843-4 in British despatches (F.O. 60), between 1842-5.
planted some hopes in the hearts of some Isma'īlī followers. Qatīl al-Karbala'i states that though the Isma'īlīs are a small and insignificant community who 'are mostly illiterate and ignorant', nevertheless they also anticipate a manifestation among the descendants of Khalīlallah. He relates that once in 1258 (1842) he and his friends met in Najaf an Isma'īlī mystic and scholar of high calibre, who prophesied the forthcoming downfall of the Qajars and the transference of the monarchy to Aqa Khan.

But if the claims of Khalīlallah hardly extended beyond the traditional limits of the Isma'īlī Imamat, there were others who put forward more independent, and at the same time less sophisticated claims. A good example of this kind of millenarianism, which often appears in the garb of rural sainthood, can be traced in the communities of Ahl-i Haqq in Azerbaijan. As early as 1191/1777, a certain Qasim, a shepherd from the village of Dikhkariqan near Tabriz, following some experience and holy dreams, claimed to be the Deputy (Naʾīb) of the Imam. He immediately gained an immense popularity amongst the villagers in the area, and after expelling the village's local mulla, became an unchallenged holy 'saint' in the whole area. Pilgrims came to the village to visit Shaykh Shabān and pay tribute to the new 'Deputy' who allegedly could cure the sick and give sight to the blind. The increasing number of his followers gave him such significance that Biglarbaygi Najaf Quli Khan Dunbuli (died 1199/1784) invited him to visit the city. He was warmly received by the governor and the inhabitants of Tabriz and was put up in the governor's private quarters. However, he was again opposed by the ulama of the city, who contrary to the Sufis, denied his supernatural capacities. In response Shaykh Qasim's followers attacked the chief faqīh of the city, a certain Akhund Mulla Ibrahim, and forced him to flee from Tabriz.

For some time, his popularity remained at its height. Because of a dream in which he saw the Mahdi performing prayers in a certain mosque in Tabriz, Najaf Quli Khan, who had a firm belief in him, or more probably was obliged to comply with public demand, erected the Shrine known as Maqam-i Sahib al-Amr in the ruins of an old mosque. His fame even gave Karim Khan Zand a cause for

1. Qatīl. (516).
2. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 202-3.
concern. Yet after two years his fame and glory gradually faded away presumably because his prophecies regarding the advent of the Qā'īm did not come true. Eight years later, when in 1199 (1784) ʻAbd al-Razzāq Dunbulī met him in Tabrīz, he found a wretched wanderer in the streets of Tabrīz, who had lost all his past reputation. Dunbulī points out that had it not been for his fervent supporters who gathered around him, and publicised his claim amongst the ignorant public, he might have never gained such a high position and instead would have remained a simple shepherd in his own village. Yet when he reached such a high degree of popularity, ʻAbd al-Razzāq concludes, his failure to revolt against the authority of the state, which would have secured him the whole province of ʻAzarbājān, brought about his decline.

The shrine of Şahīb al-Amr however remained one of the sacred places in Tabrīz, and attracted pilgrims from all over ʻAzarbājān. Throughout the 19th century this shrine was always associated with the Shaykhi faction of the ʻulama in Tabrīz. In 1848 (1264) following an alleged miracle, in which a cow fled from the slaughter-house and took refuge in the Shrine, a riot broke out in the city in which the Shaykhi Shaykh al-Islām of the city, Ḥājī Mīrzā ʻAlī Aṣghar played the major part. This riot, like many other sectarian conflicts in Tabrīz, should be seen in the light of a division of the quarters between the Shaykhi and non-Shaykhi factions. With much difficulty, the central government finally managed to reassert its control over Tabrīz, and exile the Shaykh al-Islām and his son to Tehran.

A similar example of agreement between 'heterodox' claimants and the local governors may be seen in Kashān, this time directed against the authority of the central government. In 1261 Q. (1801-2), during the governorship of Husain Qulī Khān, a certain Muhammad Qasim Bayg, a dervish from the Birāvand tribe (whom the author of Rawdat al-Safā believes to be the same person who earlier appeared under the assumed name of Mulla Bārānī, and claimed to possess the secrets of Alchemy and other 'hidden sciences'), in collaboration with an unknown sayyid

2. Ibid. Regardless of his messianic claims, a comparison may be made between Shaykh Shabān and Taqī Khān Darānī, another shepherd on the outskirts of Kirmān. He rebelled against the Zand governor of the city, and with the help of the inhabitants managed to defeat the Zand forces. He ruled Kirmān for several years before being captured and executed in Shiraz (circa 1179/1765). See *Tārīkh-i Kirmān*, op.cit., pp.322-9.
from Kashān who claimed to be the Deputy of the Imam, encouraged Husain Quli Khan to rebel against his brother Fath 'Alī Shāh for the second time and seize the throne. A brief success in capturing Natanz and then Isfahan soon turned to defeat at the hand of the Qajar forces. Husain Quli in company with Muhammad Qasim, fled to Luristan where they might have hoped to receive some support from Biravand and other affiliated tribes. Later on, however, because of disagreement between the Lur chiefs, Husain Quli Khan fled to Qum and took refuge in the Shrine, whereas Muhammad Qasim fled to Baghdad.

This was indeed not the only example of messianism with a tribal affiliation. Besides the above mentioned Shāh Khalīlallāh who was supported by the Ismā'īlī tribe of Aṭā'īllāhīs in the vicinity of Kirmān, other popular claimants also emerged in eastern Iran, who led tribal resurgences against the Qajārs. In 1222 (1807/8), a certain outcast Bukhārī dervish known as Sūfī Islām, who once had been ejected by the Bakjan (amīr) of Bukhārā, managed to gain a wide acceptance among the nomads of eastern Khurasan. It is claimed that he organised fifty thousand horsemen from Afghān and Uymaqāt, and then joined forces with the rebel governor of Herat Fīrūz al-Dīn Mīrzā against the Qajar governor of Khurasan Muhammad Valī Mīrzā. In the course of a fatal battle, the Afghāns suffered a heavy defeat and Sūfī Islām, who himself supervised his forces from a golden houda (hudafī), and was guarded by 366 of his close companions, was killed.

A few years later, another Sufi figure appeared in Central Asia, who also tried to unify the Turkoman nomads of the north-eastern frontiers against the central government. Khvājih Yusuf Kashgharī, a descendant of a family of Central Asian Sufi amīrs who for three generations had a secular and spiritual control over Kashghar, after some years of wandering in Kurdistan, Egypt, Bombay and Bašrah, Shiraz and Tehran (which seems to have sharpened his militant attitude) finally went amongst the Turkomans in Gurgān, and tried to organise various sub-branches of Kuklān and Yamūt under a united leadership. Earlier skirmishes with local government forces eventually ended in 1228 (1813) in a full scale battle in which, in spite of early success, Khvājih Yusuf was finally killed, and the Turkoman forces of twenty thousand strong were defeated. Besides Sufi

2. RS. IX, pp.372-4.
3. Ibid. 433. The chronicler's figure seems to be a mere exaggeration designed to show the immensity of the enemy's forces.
6. Ibid., 494. This figure also seems to be an exaggeration.
affiliation of Sufi Islam and Khajih Yusuf, possibly with the Naqshbandi order, very little is known about their characters or the nature of their preachings. What is clear, however, is that both figures tried, though with not much success, to exploit the potentials of tribal mobility, as well as their possible Sufi affiliations, to create an independent power in the existing vacuum between a declining central government and the semi-autonomous centres in the periphery. In both cases they failed, not because of the superiority of the Qajar forces, but because of the fragile unity within the tribal ranks.

It is important to notice that these tribal resurgences were rooted in the rural and semi-tribal heterodox traditions which in the past had inspired many important messianic movements. Even as late as 1891, the revolt of a man of Kurdish origin, Sayyid Husain Kalardashti ('Alamgîr), who claimed to be the deputy of the Imam, was just another outburst of the semi-tribal messianism of the Kurdish Ahl-i Haq community in Mazandaran. One might suggest that Ahl-i Haq's influence in western Iran, and to a lesser extent Naqshbandi's influence on the eastern borders, kept the spirit of messianism alive in the rural and tribal communities, in much the same way as other urban trends such as later Akhbaris and the Sufis did in the cities.

Only a few cases of claimants with open messianic messages could however be found in non-Sufi circles. One example is an anonymous Persian-speaking mulla from the Shi'i community in Georgia (Gurjistan), who in the late 1830's, gained a widespread popularity in the whole area even as far as Azarbâijân. His 'pretentions', as it is reported by an English observer, were 'very humble' and confined to a restoration of 'the ancient purity', or opposition to 'the vices of the people, and the unfaithfulness of the priests'. The twenty thousand armed men who reportedly gathered round him, worried the Russians, who saw in his claims the possible insurrection of the Moslem population against the Russian aggression. 'The corruption which had fallen' on the Religion (i.e. Islam), as preached by this claimant, could have been a dangerous allusion to the subjection of the Moslems by the Russian 'infidels'; a humiliation which had already motivated the second round of Russo-Persian wars. In spite therefore of the will of his 'enraged followers', who were prepared to resist, he was escorted to

2. Southgate, Narrative of a Tour (op.cit., I, 308) quoting an English friend who at the time was in Georgia.
Tiflis, where he appeared to have spent some time in captivity. As is characteristic of most other messianic trends (like Shaykh Shaban), his claims were exaggerated by his eager believers, who appear to have attributed to him far greater claims than what he originally intended. Though 'he declared that he had no power to work miracles', the enthusiastic public in the neighbouring Tabriz and Urumiyih, not only ascribed to him various miracles and feats, but even received his Persian 'Book', a combination of 'hyperbole and moral disquisitions', as a sign that 'he might after all be the expected Imam'.

Another interesting case is that of a certain anonymous ascetic in Karbila* who has been mentioned by Ḥājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī as an example of a similar 'imposter' prior to the Bab. He was an ascetic recluse among Sayyid Kazim's students who seems to have enjoyed the wide popularity in the circle. As Kirmānī describes him, he was a knowledgeable scholar, who could resolve other students' problems. His reputation for piety was such that he led the Shaykhis in their prayers. But because of his unusual mortifications and isolation, he 'had been possessed by the devil'. Thus he put forward 'blasphemous claims' which were 'beyond human capacity'. As a result, he was disowned by Sayyid Kazim, who according to Karīm Khān, publicly expelled him from his circle. Karīm Khān Kirmānī also vaguely refers to two other claimants who seem to have appeared in the last years of Sayyid Kazim. One person used to send to Sayyid Kazim, 'tablets' of incomprehensible words, presumably calling upon Rashti to recognise his claims. There was also a certain Mullā Sadiq in Azarbaijān, who apparently with some inspiration from Shaykhi teachings on the emergence of the 'Renovator' (murāvvi) of the thirteenth century, promised the advent of Zuhūr, and managed to secure a large following in the area. To these claimants, showing Shaykhi influence, may also be added Mullā Muhammad Tahir Hakkāk Khurāsānī, who towards the end of the 19th century, claimed to have a divine mission for reforming the world and unifying divided mankind in one universal community. It is said that in his youth he was a student of Sayyid Kazim Rashti but nevertheless it was in the closing years of the century that he expounded his ideas in his work Nasīḥat al-Ālam which was a combination of religious moral recommendations and Sufi popular beliefs. Finally Ḥājī Muhammad

1. Ibid. 2. Ibid. 307.
4. Ibid. No other source mentions anything about the above person. Even Kirmānī seems to be deliberately vague about his identity. Similar examples of extremism and strong yearning for the Zuhūr, though in milder forms, may also be found amongst other students of Rashti who all later converted to the Babi movement. See below Chapter Four, I.
5. Ibid.106.
Karîm Khân's own claim, that he had reached the position of the 'Fourth Pillar' (Rukn-i Rabi'), should also be taken as a non-orthodox if not messianic claim. However, as time passed, in the decades following the emergence of the Babi movement, the interpretation of the position of the 'Fourth Pillar' in Kirmanî's works underwent a drastic change, mainly to fit within the boundaries of Shi'i orthodoxy, and thus secure the claimant from charges of blasphemy.

From what has been discussed in this chapter, it may be concluded that in the period under study, the process of popular millenarianism was mainly expressed in three traditional forms of Sufi and non-Sufi asceticism, popular divination and prophetic proclamations. The formal Shi'i traditions aside, these trends were often used as vehicles for conveying complex and heterogeneous messages, which survived over centuries in an imperceptible network of oral and written traditions. The imperishable desire for a 'saviour', and for fulfilling apocalyptic events, time and again reappeared in manifestations, which in their apparent form were not far different from those in the past; either by the way of direct continuation, or by inconspicuous influence from diffused traditions. However, in rekindling the messianic zeal, the chain effects of other contemporary ideas should not be neglected. The image of the Qa'im, the focal point of almost all prophecies in this period, as 'the one who is supported by the Truth', and thus will 'fill the world with justice in the same way that it had been filled with inequity', remained largely unchanged. So did the image of the precursor or 'Deputy' who would proceed the advent of the Imam. Significantly, none of the claimants openly assumed the position of Mahdavîyat, or Qa'timîyat. Instead, in all the proto-messianic 'revelations', the claimants were content to regard themselves as agents, representatives, or mere contacts of the Concealed Imam. Neither the theoretical framework, nor the attitude of the public, even amongst the most eager millenarians, allowed the full scale Zuhûr under the name of the Qa'im.

Thus in the interim period, prior to the appearance of the Mahdî, the real message of the claimants consisted not only of 'warnings' and 'admonitions', but of allusions to the 'secrets' which were yet to be revealed fully at the time of Zuhûr. They were 'assigned' to render some hidden aspects of a 'true order' and a 'pure religion' of which they believed the dogmatic 'literalists' tend to see only the facade. The 'superficial' relationship governing this external

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1. Amongst other works on this subject, his Rukn-i Rabi'î (Kirmân, 1368 Q.) presents a conservative interpretation of the concept of the 'Fourth Pillar'. See for further details below Chapter Four, I.
system was either criticised by the claimants, or else accepted in part, only when a prior understanding was reached about its symbolic value. In other words, the traditional messianism, if not yet in revolt against the current norms, at least urged substantial revisions in practices, which it held to have been exploited both by religious and secular authorities.

What gave the emergence of these ideas a distinctive character were the circumstances under which they were born and bred. The growth of these ideas and movements, which was further accelerated by the sense of urgency in their message, and by recruitment from the ordinary people, inevitably disturbed the tranquility of a traditional balance in society, and brought the claimants into collision with the forces of opposition. A constant oscillation between security and instability in the 'town' and 'countryside' always provided a fertile ground for millenarianism. Regardless of their short term effects, the events of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, which eventually established the Qajars throughout Iran, encouraged this process, both on the theoretical and practical level. Throughout the reign of Fath 'Alī Shāh and Muḥammad Shāh, a limited degree of internal security made possible the revival of religious and academic activities. On the other hand, a constant political conflict, and threats of outside forces, led some mystics and prognosticators such as Rustam al-Hukamā' to try to explain the situation in terms of messianic events.

Preoccupation with 'orthodoxy', more than any other factor, exhausted the forces of millenarianism. In confrontation with the 'ulama, the messianic trends were either totally crushed and annihilated, or else reduced to harmless semi-cryptic sections which were unable to cause any serious threat to the dominant 'orthodoxy'. In some instances the 'ulama's hostile response led some Sufis, such as the Ni'matallahīs or popular claimants such as Shaykh Shabān to appeal for the support of the secular authorities. Yet the alliance between the state and heterodox claimants could seldom last long. Either the claimant would lose his millenarian zeal in earnest (and with it his messianic following), and serve the secular power as propagandist of political legitimacy, or the irrational, unworldly aspects of the movement would be so strong as to make any compromise with the state impossible. The prolonged conflict between the state and the 'ulama, as two sources of control over the community, encouraged the public to search for a third alternative which could express their grievances. In spite of their deficiencies, the millenarian trends expressed this voice of protest and public discontent against the authorities. Regardless of the fact that an outdated message, insufficient means and methods of preaching, the limited span of geographical diffusion, and a weak theoretical foundation, eventually caused
the decline of most of them, their very continuation throughout the period was an indication of a strong drive in some sections of the society to create a more consistent response.

The emergence of the Shaykhi doctrine, which in its essence was a fusion of various trends of esotericism, asceticism and popular beliefs, contributed both in theory and in practice to the development of a new approach. The Shaykhi school provided more favourable circumstances for the emergence of the Qā'īm, not only by rescuing him from the web of Shi'ī traditions, which prevented his presence in any historical circumstances, but also by depicting a tangible human face for the 'saviour', whose extraordinary qualities lay in his moral and spiritual merits rather than in his super-physical and supernatural capabilities.

In view of Shaykhism, the revelation of the Imam would be the inevitable consequence of the 'maturing' of man's intellectual evolution in the course of history, rather than a supernatural punishment which would be inflicted upon mankind from the world above. His appearance would not bring an immediate victory over the forces of falsehood, but only begin a long and painful Fitnīh in the course of which many of the opponents as well as his supporters, would be destroyed. It was this 'realistic' concept of Resurrection and the Return which was essential in providing a coherent sense of expectation amongst the close followers of the Shaykhi leaders, as amongst other individuals or communities who shared a similar opinion. This was the first step in the direction of a more comprehensive 'revelation'.
CHAPTER THREE
Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb: the early years

Our chief motive for the study of the early life of the Bāb, which is the subject of this chapter, is to examine various aspects of his background, his upbringing, his material life and his intellectual experiences, which appear to have contributed to the development of his complex personality; first as a pious merchant, then as a vigorous ascetic, and finally as an inspired precursor who claimed to be chosen for the delivery of a long awaited mission.

Some general themes which were related to the emergence of the Bābi movement in a broader sense, were discussed in previous chapters and will be discussed further in the following chapters. What particularly interests us at this stage is to see what special merits Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad Shīrāzī, rather than any other individual, possessed which caused him to be regarded by himself and his followers as qualified, to put forward unorthodox claims, and more important, to be accepted by a large group of followers.

I

Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad, later known as the Bāb, was born in 1235 Q. (1819) in Shirāz. He was the only child of Sayyid Muhammad Rižā, a small merchant in the Bazār of Shirāz. His family were originally from Shirāz, and it appears that they lived in the city for generations. Though Mīrzā Ahmad Shīrāzī Īshīk-āqāsī, one of the closest sources to the Bāb's family, believes that the Bāb's forefathers belonged to the sayyids of Herat (Harat), and even maintains that Sayyid Muhammad Rižā himself emigrated from Herat and settled in Shirāz, nonetheless the accuracy of this remark, which is not helped by the ambiguous style of the text, is open to question. It is true that Mīrzā Ahmad and his family 'maintained an intimate relation' with the family of the Bāb, and it is also true that the title Mīrzā, which is used by some sources instead of 'sayyid' for the Bāb and his forbears, sometimes refers to Shi'i sayyids of Heratī origin, and that in the early decades of the nineteenth century they not infrequently immigrated to towns and cities of Iran, but still the Heratī origin of the Bāb is not confirmed by any other source. On the contrary the

1. In al-Sāhīfā Bayn al-Haramayn the Bāb specifies the date of his birth as first Muḥarram 1235 Q. (20 October 1819). (Browne Or. MSS F(9)).
2. Born circa 1195 Q. (1780).
3. Ahmad. 446.
available evidence on the background of the Bab suggests the opposite.  

As far as the genealogy of the Bab can be traced, it appears that up to the sixth generation his paternal ancestors were all sayyids coming from Shiraz, and his great grandfather in the sixth generation was a certain Mîr Muhammad Mûmin Hüsainî Najafî Shirâzî. It is difficult to reconcile these two contradictory opinions unless one assumes that Sayyid Muhammad Rižâ, or his ascendants, immigrated to Herat at some stage, and then returned to their home town. His mother Fatîmih/Baygum, who had a strong influence on the early life of the Bab, also descended from a relatively well known family of sayyids of Shiraz. Her brothers, and most of her paternal relatives, one of whose daughters later married Sayyid ‘Alî Muhammad, were traditionally engaged in large scale trade. As the Fârsa Nâmith confirms, they were counted amongst the old and reputable merchants of Shiraz. Though in the Bab’s family, stîyâdat did not indicate any specific religious or clerical advantage above that of other sadît families in the city, yet it greatly contributed to the high esteem and veneration which they enjoyed in Shiraz. The claim to an impeccable stîyâdat, in the later years, assisted the Bab and his followers, as a major proof in the justification of his holy descendancy.

Some sources such as Târîkh-i Amr-i Shirâz or Târîkh-i Mu’ân al-Saltanîh imply that Sayyid ‘Alî Muhammad’s family on his father’s side were also involved in large scale trade, but it appears that as far as Sayyid Muhammad Rižâ was concerned, he was more of a local merchant than a big merchant like his brother-

1. For Heratî immigrants see below Chapter Eight. With regard to the Bab’s Table of Genealogy (see supplement) it seems that what Kazem Beg on the basis of the unknown account of Shaykh ‘Ajam (Cheikh-oul-Adjam), says about the name and the origin of the Bab’s father (VII, 334, n.3) that his name was Salib (ṣâlîb) and he was born in Tchaharchenbeh-pich, is only the misreading of Šâlîh which in fact was the name of the father of Mîrza ‘Alî Muhammad Bârfurûshî (Quddûs). The confusion between the Bab and Quddûs seems to have occurred because in the later years of the movement, the title of Habrat-i A’la, originally assumed by the Bab, was given by him to his loyal follower Quddûs, and therefore both persons were regarded as one by Kazem Beg.

2. See Table of Genealogy. This table was produced from information supplied in Al-Ṣaḥîfa Bayn al-Haramayn, (op.cit.). Mîrza Habîbalâh Afânî, Târîkh-i Amr-i Shirâz, MS. (INBA, no.1227 D); Fayţî, M.A., Khânûn-i Afânîn, Tehran, 127 Badi’ (1971); Tabagât-, I, p.443 (under Mîrza Hasan Shirâzî) and Fârsa Nâmith. II, TMS. (p.28) speaks of a genealogy preserved in the Afân family in which the Bab’s ancestory is traced back to Imam Hüsain ibn ‘Alî. No sign of this genealogy has yet been found. Considering the Bab’s own reference, the order of ascendancy in Mîrza Habîbalâh (p.1) and Nabiî. (p.Ix Genealogy of the Bab) are both slightly confused.

3. II, 45 cf. 131.
Genealogy of the Bab

- m: merchant
- muj: mujtahid

Mir Muhammad Muhammud Husaini Shirazi Najafi
  └── Mir Lutfallah
    └── Mir Zayn al-'Abidin
      └── Mir Fahallah (small m)

Sayyid Muhammad (m) d. circa 1250/1834-5
  └── Mir Sayyid Muhammad Husain (m) d. circa 1293/1876
      └── Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad the Bab. 1235-66/1819-50

Sayyid Muhammad Riza (m) d. circa 1243/1826-7
  └── Sayyid Javad Mirza Mahmu d.1287/1870-1

Mir Ibrahim (small m) d. circa 1250/1834-5
  └── Mir Isma'il

S. 'Ali (m) 1211-66/1746-1850 (m)
  └── S. Hasan 'Ali (m)

Hajji Mirza Sayyid 'Ali (m)
  └── Mir Sayyid Muhammad Husain (m) d. circa 1293/1876
      └── Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad the Bab. 1235-66/1819-50

S. Muhammad Fatimih Baygun (s. m)
  └── Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad the Bab. 1235-66/1819-50

Mirza Agha Shahriz
  └── Mirza Ahamd

Mirza Aqai (m) d.1307/1894
  └── Mirza Aqai Zahra d.1307/1894

Mirza Aqai (m) d.1307/1894
  └── Mirza Aqai Zahra d.1307/1894

Ali Muhammad d.1226-1305/1811-92
  └── Ali Muhammad Novagjar al-Daulih 1226-1305/1811-92

Axam Mirza Husain d. 1321/1903-4
  └── Zahir Mirza Buzurg Vakil al-
      └── Muhammad (m) d. circa 1314/1894-6

Muj. Taqi Muhammad 'Ali
  └── Muhammad (m) 1314/1845-6
      └── Haqq (m) 1314/1845-6

Mirza Aqai (m) d.1307/1894
  └── Mirza Aqai Zahra d.1307/1894

Ahmad
  └── Ahmad d. in childhood 1254/1843
in-laws. This is evident from a remark made by the Bab's wife Khadijih Khānum who says that her father-in-law was 'engaged in retail trade' (tijārat-i juz[r])\(^1\). This is also confirmed by other sources such as Mīrzā Ahmad and Sipihr who state that the Bab's father 'carried on a clothier's business (bazzār-i)

This is also confirmed by other sources such as Mirza Ahmad and Sipihr who state that the Bab's father 'carried on a clothier's business (bazzār-i)

in the bazar of Shiraz\(^2\). Hence Sayyid Muhammad Rižā should not be regarded as an exceptionally prosperous trader. Yet he inherited a small house in the quarter of Bāzār-i Murgh\(^3\), and a shop in Sarā-yi Rughānī at the entrance of the Bāzār-i Vakīl\(^4\), married into a family of big merchants, and left enough savings to support his wife and his son when he died prematurely at the age of forty nine, possibly in one of the outbreaks of cholera in Fars (circa 1243 Q./1826-7)\(^5\). The shop owned by his father contained a family business which could be traced back to the Zand period and beyond\(^6\).

Indeed, the pattern of the Bab's immediate family suggests a social position which emerged as a hybrid between the lower-middle stratum of traditional bāzāri retail traders with strong religious ties, and the well established prosperous families of big merchants (tujjūr) in the city - a union which not infrequently allows the lower stratum to benefit from social and economic advantages, and thus ascend the social ladder, often, in the next generation. The Bab's childhood, his education and his later engagement in trade, is a clear example of such a union that benefited from the norms and

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2. Ahmad, 446 cf. NT, III, 39. Also Kazem Beg. VII, 334 and Mīrzā Abul Fażl Gulpāyīgānī, Tarīkh-i Žuhur-i Djāmat-i Ḥākrat-i Bab va Ḥākrat-i Bāhā'allah, INBA., pub. 9, p.3.


4. Abul Qāsim Afnān son of Mīrzā Ḥabīballah, unpublished notes on the history of Afnān family.

5. The age of Sayyid Muhammad Rižā could be worked out from Mullā Fathallah Khādim's account cited in Mīrzā Ḥabīballah, pp.4, 9. What TMS (30) and Gulpāyīgānī (Tarīkh-i Žuhur op.cit., p.3) say about his death at an earlier time is incorrect. Strangely enough, the Bab himself did not refer in his writings to his father's death. For the outbreak of cholera in the 1820's and 30's in southern Iran see Lorimer, op.cit. I, part 2, App. M, pp.2517-2662 and Nātīq, H., Muṣībat-i vadb va balā-yi ḥukumat, op.cit., pp.12-16.

6. A. Afnān, notes.
values of both traditions.

Perhaps an indication of the Bab's family status, is the quarter in which he and his family resided. His father's house on the street of Shamshīrgarhā was located in Bāzār-i Murgh quarter, whereas his maternal uncle's house was situated in the neighbouring Darb-i Shāhzādīh quarter. These two Haydari quarters encapsuled the whole of the bazar complex, as well as some of the most important shrines and mosques in the city. Bāzār-i Murgh located in the centre and on the border line between the rival Haydarīs and Ni'matīs in a city dominated by internal factions, housed most of the commercial premises and the dwellings of the middle and lower merchant classes and their associates.

Though probably the most important economic and religious quarter in the city, Bāzār-i Murgh was susceptible to pressures exerted from rival poles of power. Frequently the inhabitants witnessed their quarter being turned into a battle ground of the rival forces, their prime objective being the control of the bazar. One may assume that the loyalty of the inhabitants of Bāzār-i Murgh primarily laid in their group interest rather than any factional affiliation.

Little is known about Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad's childhood apart from anecdotes which were directly aimed and especially related to illustrate the 'extraordinary' aspects of the Bab's character. Like most children coming from a family of urban 'middle class', Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad was sent to the nearby maktab of a certain Shaykh Zayn al-Abidīn in Tikkiyih of Qahvih-yi Auliya in the same quarter of Bāzār-i Murgh, where he received some elementary tuition. Mīrzā Habīballāh takes particular care to say that, according to his source, a certain Mulla Fathallah Khādīm, who was in the same maktab as the Bab, this school was exclusively for the children of 'tujjār, notables and dignitaries', since Shaykh Abid 'never admitted anybody's child, especially those of shopkeepers of bazar, because of their ill behaviour and their filthy clothes'. However there are reasons to doubt the accuracy of this remark. Binning, the English traveller who visited Shiraz in 1850 states that elementary schools 'are very numerous' but 'the children of the wealthy are generally educated at home, by a tutor'. An example of this private tuition is Mīrzā

1. See Fārs Nāmīth. II, pp.27-47 (Bāzār-i Murgh) and pp.54-60 (Darb-i Shāhzādīh). An unpublished study on the basis of the information in Fārs Nāmīth is carried out by Banuazizi and A. Ashraf on the social history of Shiraz. See also below Chapter Nine, I, for city disturbances in Shiraz in 1844.

2. Known as Shaykh Abid, Shaykh-i Anām, Shaykh-i Mu'allim and Shaykhmī.


Hasan Shīrāzī (born 1230 Q./1814-15), a distant cousin of the Bab, and future marja'-i taqlīd of the late nineteenth century who first started his elementary schooling at the age of four at home. Whether Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad was less privileged than his cousin, or whether there was any other reason, he was sent to the local maktabkhānih, which contrary to what is quoted, seems to have been for the children of a humble background as well as for those of the more affluent families.

As for Shaykhi Mu'allim, he appears to have received attention and respect greater than was given to a simple maktabdār. As his title 'Mu'allim' implies, being a mulla of middle status, he taught religious texts to pupils at a higher level, and as is confirmed by one source, to young ṭalabīhs of elementary level. His acquaintance with Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad's father and his uncle Ḥājī Sayyid 'Alī was not only due to their residence in the same quarter, or the occasional recitation of the Qur'ān in the house of the uncles of the Bab, but more particularly because Shaykh ʿAbīd, like many similar middle rank mullas and mu'allims, was a follower of the Shaykhi school, and thus in conformity with relatives of the Bab who also seem to have been followers of Shaykh Ahmad Aḥṣā'ī. Though the commitment of the Bab's relatives to the Shaykhi school is not directly mentioned in any of the sources, many indications suggest that at least they had a strong sympathy towards the Shaykhi leaders and maintained constant contacts with the Shaykhi followers.

His school was situated in a relatively new and unknown tikkiyih (Qahvih-yi Auliya), which like many other Sufi gathering places in the city, was originally the tomb of certain Sufis. It is probable that even at the time of the Bab, it

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1. Tabaqāt, I, p.437. See below for further details.
3. Ibid., p.4.
4. Years later when the cause of the Bab was publicised in Shiraz, Shaykh ʿAbīd first denied the claims of his former pupil. But later, as a result of an interview with Sayyid Javād Karbala'i, he modified his attitude. (Mirzā Abul Fażl Gulpayigānī & Mirzā Mahdī Gulpayigānī, Kashf al-ṣhīrat al-Ḥiyal al-ʿĀlī, ḏār al-kutub al-ʿarabīyā, op.cit., p.82 account by Sayyid Javād Karbala'i). It is also said that there is a manuscript of a tract by Shaykh ʿAbīd, in which he stated his recollections of the Bab's school days, which his descendants are reluctant to divulge its contents. (A. Afīn notes cf. H.M. Balyuzi, The Bab, Oxford, 1973, p.231). See also M.A. Fayzī, Ḥabrat-i Nuqṭih-i ʿUljā (Tehran, 132 Badrī/1352 Sh., pp.178-9 n.) for further details. Shaykh ʿAbīd died in 1263 (1847).
5. See below.
was used by dervishes for their nightly prayers and solitary retirements\(^1\).

The Bab's formal education, both in his childhood and his adolescence, was always a point of disagreement between the chroniclers and apologists, since it formed part of a greater controversy to prove or to reject one of the essential grounds for allowing his claims; namely his 'unlearned knowledge' \(\text{('ilm-i ladun\text{\textregistered})}\). Perhaps it is useful to pay attention to some details, which may at first glance seem unimportant or indeed irrelevant, but can in fact give a better picture of the Bab and his somewhat misunderstood character. It is fairly clear that during his years of pupillage in the maktab between the age of five and ten, he had hardly received a solid and regular education, even by comparison with the standard of his own classmates. However as far as the accounts in the existing sources imply, he enjoyed an unusual level of intelligence and perception\(^2\). The brief remark in \textit{Nāsikh al-Tawārikh} that in his early years he studied subjects in Persian and some elementary Arabic\(^3\), gives some indication of his training, whereas samples of his handwriting, and his exceptional enthusiasm for calligraphy, show some of his early interests\(^4\). On the other hand his irregular presence in the school, and complaints by his teacher of his preoccupation with his own imaginary world suggest that he could not effectively cope with a school system which is often described as cruel, archaic and monotonous. Signs of his hatred for school atmosphere are particularly reflected in his later remarks on corporal punishment, where in the Arabic \textit{Bayān} he calls upon a certain Muhammad Mu'allim, an unknown teacher of his, not to flog (or bastinado) his students more than a limited number of lashes\(^5\), and in the Persian \textit{Bayān} he even specifies the limit: 'It is forbidden to all to discipline children, even verbally, or cause any grief to them before the age of five, and (even) after reaching that age, punishment should not exceed more than five light lashes and not even on bare flesh'\(^6\). This no doubt

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1. For a brief description of the place see \textit{Fursat al-Daulih Shirāzī, Āthār al-\'Ajam}. Oddly enough neither \textit{Fars Nāmik nor Tārā'iq} (under \textit{Tārā'īn-yi Shirāz}, III, pp.477-95) have mentioned this tikkīyih. M.A. Fayzi, who himself visited the site states that one of the tombs belongs to a certain Darvīsh Auliya' who died in 1119 Q. (1707). (\textit{Nuqtih-i Uld} op.cit., pp.74-5).

2. See below this chapter.

3. III, 39.

4. e.g. \textit{The Bāb}, op.cit., p.48. Sayyid Javād Karbala'i once saw some remarkable samples of his writing in Shiraz when Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad was a young child. (\textit{Kashf al-Ghitā}, op.cit., p.56). Later in his life, the Bāb developed a skill in \textit{shikastih}, which he himself especially favoured and even recommended in \textit{Bayān} as the best style of calligraphy (IX, 2, p.313).

5. Cited in \textit{TMS}, p.34.

6. VI, 11, p.216.
is a sign of the Bab's personal experience of the rough treatment which children received in the traditional school system.

In his spare hours, even in his father's lifetime, when he was only a boy of eight or nine years, like many children of his age and background, he spent part of his time in his father's shop. 'On his father's death' as Mirza Ahmad states, "his maternal uncles undertook his education, especially Hajj Mirza Sayyid Ali, who was reputed to be the most sympathetic of the brothers." The care and attention given by Mirza Sayyid Ali was not confined to his education, or investing in trade the capital left by his brother-in-law to support the orphan, but extended to a deep sympathy towards his somewhat unusual nephew. Indeed he was later to play a significant role in the development of the Bab's early claims and to take an important part in the events of the first two years of the Bab's residence in Shiraz after his declaration. But nevertheless, it appears that with the death of his father, the time spent in the bazar occupied most of Sayyid Ali Muhammad's hours, as he continued to work there, now in the office of his uncles. Whether this was because of the Bab's own disinclination to continue school, his poor record in the maktab, lack of financial support, or more probably, the concern of his uncles with his future as a merchant rather than anything else, the question of his future studies was neglected and gradually set aside. While one account states that Sayyid Ali Muhammad's own lack of enthusiasm for formal school teaching finally forced Shaykh Abid to send him back to his mother complaining of his strange remarks which were, he thought, beyond the capacity of an ordinary child, another account insists that when Sayyid Ali Muhammad was taken out of school in order to work full time in the bazar, the same Shaykh Abid remarked that 'if the father of this child were alive, he would never have let his son be deprived from learning, and instead be engaged in trade.'

Whatever the reasons might have been, one may conclude that the inconsistent and disrupted education of Sayyid Ali Muhammad was not only due to his early orphanage, or his unsuitable schooling, but was more because of the fact that

1. Ahmad. 447.
3. A. Afnan, notes.
4. Nuqtih-i Ula, op.cit., p.82 without mentioning the source.
5. A. Afnan, notes.
6. TMS. 35.
the whole system was designed to prevent the development of an imaginative and unusually talented mind in a direction different to the accepted norms and standards of the society. This, no doubt, was an important element in the Bab's later inclination towards discoveries in the unconventional fields of imagination and spiritual experience.

An interesting account given by Mullā 'Abd al-Raḥīm Qazwīnī suggests that after a few years, when Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad was about fifteen years old (circa 1835) his uncle arranged for him to resume his studies under Mullā 'Abd al-Khāliq Yazdī (then the imām of jama'at in Shirāz and a student of Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsa'ī) but he lacked the basic knowledge essential for any further religious studies;

"In Mashad, I visited Akhūnd Mullā 'Abd al-Khāliq Yazdī who was one of the eminent ulama and a follower of Shaykh (Ahmad Aḥsa'i). On one occasion, when a remark was made about His holiness (i.e. the Bab), he said; "I am bewildered of such great claims. I was the imām (of jama'at) in Shirāz and held teaching lectures there. Once the uncle of this reverent man (i.e. the Bab) brought him to me saying that "this is a soul who is adorned with piety and austerity, but lacks learning, and I beg you to pay him some attention". After I had admitted him, I left him in the custody of my younger son. A few days later my son came back to me complaining that "the person you left me to teach had not accomplished any of the elementaries (muqaddamat). He first must learn Amthala, and teaching Amthala is not suitable to my position". After that they sent him to Bushir for the purpose of trade. Now I see such magnificent writings and unequalled verses as to make me astonished"."1

The same indication is also given by Mullā Muḥammad Ḥamzā Ṣarīfatmadar Bārfūrūshī who with regard to the Bab's later attempts to restart religious studies, states that he did not study elementary texts (muqaddamat) beyond Ṣuyūṭī and Ẓāhīrya of Mullā 'Abdallāh2. It seems however, that neither the study of Arabic grammar, nor logic or other of the elementaries attracted the Bab, since in Bayān on two occasions, he bans the believers of the excessive study of grammar (sarf va nahv)3.

But nonetheless, in spite of his distaste for the conventional religious

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1. Cited in Zuhur al-Ḥaqq, p.172. n. The Bab himself alluded to his pupillage under Mullā 'Abd al-Khāliq (see below Chapter Eight, III and cited references). The name of the younger son of Mullā 'Abd al-Khāliq is unknown, but his elder son later became a follower of the Bab and died in Ṭabarsi. For his details see below Chapter Eight, III.


3. IV. 10 and VIII. 2.
education, and perhaps as a result of that, he developed some interest in the then less common subjects such as mathematics and astrology. This attention towards subjects which in spite of their rich background in Islamic tradition, were overshadowed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by more formal and orthodox theological subjects, can be explained by the survival of such themes, sometimes in the garb of 'popular' or 'hidden' sciences, encouraged through the works of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i and some of his contemporaries. What made the Bab to escape learning of 'muqaddamat', and instead enjoy the more amusing, and certainly more mysterious field of 'hidden sciences', seems to have been his desire to achieve perfection by abandoning the traditional methods by which subjects were taught in the nineteenth century schools.

Despite his usual bias and hostility towards Persian institutions Binning is not unperceptive when he observes, about a decade later, that the ten madrasis of Dar al-'Ilm of Shiraz, either because of lack of funds, or because of the general decline in the standard of scholarship were sunk into the condition of mere schools where little is taught, except simple elementary instructions. He adds that:

'The usual studies in Persian colleges are the Persian and Arabic languages, the Koran and commentaries upon it, theology, law, moral philosophy and logic. Of natural philosophy, geography, and general history, nothing is taught or known. Mathematics are but little studied, though they possess Euclid's Elements. The dry study of Arabic language is in general held more in estimation and repute than any other pursuit. The grammar of Arabic is complicated and difficult, and their grammarians have endeavoured with all their might to make it more so. Volumes have been written on philological trifles and subtleties, which are calculated to perplex and confuse, rather than to assist and enlighten the student.'

It is precisely this 'dry study of the Arabic language' and its complicated grammar, partly the result of an excessive scrutiny of the details of usul-i fiqh, that the Bab never could, or in fact desired, to master. Years later, when his claims were published, his lack of sufficient knowledge of Arabic, in which he wrote some of his works, was constantly attacked by his critics.

3. Ibid. The author also maintains that the study of astronomy has 'gradually merged in the absurdities of astrology' and chemistry is 'degenerated into alchemy'. If in the view of a western writer like Binning, lack of interest towards experimental sciences meant ignorance, nevertheless, astrology, alchemy and other 'hidden sciences', in certain less orthodox circles, were employed as a comparative methodology to explain some theoretical problems (see above Chapter One).
Whether in his trial at Tabriz in 1848, or in interviews between his disciples and their adversaries, or in refutations written by his opponents, there are numerous references to his 'weakness' in Arabic and other elementaries. Though this is regarded by his critics as a great handicap totally improper to his claims and constant reminder of his poor educational background, it was considered by him as a divine merit demonstrating his 'intuitive knowledge';

'The fact that on some occasions words were altered or words uttered contrary to the rules of the people of doubt (aḥl-šahibahāt) is because people would be able to make certain that the claimant of this position (a reference to himself) received these verses and this knowledge not by the way of learning, but because his heart is illuminated with the divine knowledge. (Therefore) he justifies (lit. refers) these innovative alterations and what is contrary to rules, with the divine rules, as the same matter frequently occurred in the Book of God (i.e. Qur'ān)'...  

The same theme was also expressed in another of his Arabic tablets addressed to a divine, this time with more emphasis on his lack of school education:

'I swear on my own soul that I did not read a word of the conventional sciences (îl īm al-‘ayān), and I do not know a word of the rules of the philologists (aḥl al-bayān), and in the past there were no books of sciences with me whose words I have memorized, and there is no reason for this divine gift but God's generosity and His benevolence; Today if someone asks me of various scholarly matters cited in books, I swear to God that I do not know the answer, and I do not even know the grammar and syntax (al-‘araf va al-nahw), and I am proud of it, since God in the day of Qiyāma will prove to all that I was assisted by his generosity ...'  

But emphasis on his lack of formal education and his ignorance of the 'conventional sciences' which is also confirmed by other sources, by no means implies that coming from a merchant family, he was solely engaged in commercial activities; for even from his early days, he regarded his trade as secondary matter compared to his vigorous search for moral and spiritual perfection. As far as his family is concerned, as was not uncommon amongst members of the merchant class, their traditional esteem for moral values; piety, godliness and honesty, seems to have developed into a noticeable interest in learning and scholarship. Contrary to Sayyid ‘Alī Muhammad's antipathy for conventional

1. For questions raised during the Tabriz trial regarding the Bab's weakness in Arabic and other elementaries, and the Bab's response to these criticisms, amongst other sources see RS.X, 423-8. Also see below Chapter Six for Mullā Ḥusain Bushru’iyih’s reply to Mullā Muḥammad Naraqī on the Babi’s point of view regarding Arabic grammar. Aīsā Ḥajj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kīrmānī, Iṣḥāq al-Bāṭil, op.cit., pp.83 ff) for the earliest criticism by his Shaykhi opponents.


3. Tafsīr al-Hāfiz, INBA, pub. 67, pp.1-84 (56-7).
sciences, some of his relatives of the same social status were attracted towards religious, mystical and even secular sciences.

In order to examine more closely the intellectual background of the Bab it is worth investigating the careers of some other members of his family. Hājī Sayyid Javād Shīrāzī (Kirmānī), a distant cousin of the Bab, whose father was also a merchant in Shiraz, after obtaining his ijāzāt in 'Atabāt, and then spending some time in the religious circles of Mecca and Medina, had returned to Shiraz around the mid 1240's (1820's), where he held lectures on theology and mysticism. Later, he was invited to Kirmān (circa 1248/1832-3) and by the order of Fath 'Alī Shah he settled there. A few years later in 1253 Q. (1837-8) he assumed the office of imām jum'īh of Kirmān, which he held till the end of his life (1287/1870-1). He was a moderately orthodox divine with mystical tendencies, whose lectures on the Magnāvī of Rūmī, something unusual for a Shī'i mujtahid, attracted students from other places to Kirmān, including the celebrated philosopher Hājī Mullā Hādī Sabzīvārī. He was also the chief rival of Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, and therefore friend of his enemies. His tendencies towards ḥiknāt, and his previous acquaintance with Rashtī's students in 'Atabāt, gave him the opportunity to behave favourably towards the Babis in 1261-2 (1845-6). In spite of Muhammad Karīm Khān's fierce denunciation of the Babi emissaries, on a few occasions he saved the Babis against the attacks of the mob.

What is of particular interest as regards the family of the Bab, is the continuing movement which took place amongst those from mercantile background to a life of religious scholarship. A later and much better known example of the relatives of the Bab who moved to religious studies is Hājī Sayyid Muhammad Ḥasām Shīrāzī known as Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī or Mujaddīd-i Shīrāzī, the celebrated mujtahid and marja'-i taqlīd of the late nineteenth century, who is particularly known because of his role in the Tobacco Protest of 1891-2. His father Mīrzā Muhammad Husain Shīrāzī, a cousin of Sayyid Muhammad Rīzā (the Bab's father), was a distinguished calligrapher, who in spite of his mercantile background and some participation in trade and land-owning, was himself a tutor in Shiraz.


3. See Table of Genealogy.

Mīrza Hasan was born in 1230 Q. (1815-16) five years earlier than Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad, and was brought up in Shiraz where he began his elementary studies. At an early age he completed his studies in basic Persian, Arabic, fiqh and usūl before moving to Isfahan as a young talabīh of eighteen where he acquired his ijāzah from Hājī Mulla Ibrāhīm Karbāsī. Being a talented student he soon passed all the conventional stages in advanced religious education. He moved to 'Atabāt in the mid 1840's, and there, after a long period of study under Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafi and then Shaykh Murtuza Ansārī, he reached the stage of 'āfāmīyat. He settled in Sāmīrā and later emerged as marja', and finally died there in 1312 Q. (1894/5). These two examples of highly esteemed mujtahids on the paternal side of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad's family and their educational background, reflects a noticeable drift towards religious studies, at their most conventional. But there are other examples amongst the relatives of the Bab on the maternal side, who although had enjoyed the same educational background in its early stages, showed a less orthodox approach to the religious and intellectual questions of their own time. Mīrza Sayyid Hasan Shīrāzī, son of Mīrza Sayyid 'Alī Tājīr, (later known as Afnān-i Kabīr), a brother-in-law of the Bab (born in circa 1225/1810-11) was basically a merchant with a wide interest in sciences and theology. He was an amateur scholar (mutifammin), who had spent part of his early life as a religious student in Shiraz and then in Isfahan in the company of the above mentioned Mīrza Hasan Shīrāzī around the early 1260's. Though by profession he was a merchant, throughout his life he maintained a serious

1. For his details see references in Chapter Six, II.

2. For his details see Chapter Five, I.

3. For his details see Tabaqāt, I, pp.436-41; Religion and State, op.cit. pp.210-11 and cited sources. His brother Mīrza Asadallāh Tabīb to whom Fārs Nāmeh (II, 54) gives the religious title of Ḥujjat al-Īslām, and his nephew Aghā Sayyid Mīrzā Shīrāzī, were both resident in 'Atabāt. (Tabaqāt, I, p.172). An interesting interview between Mīrzā Hasan and Aqā Sayyid Muhammad (Nur al-Dīn) Afnān, on the last year of the former's life in Sāmīrā (cited in Mīrza Habībballāh, pp.179-93) suggests that Mīrzā Hasan like his predecessor, and his teacher, Shaykh Murtuza Ansārī, showed a tolerant and, in the case of the former a fairminded view towards the Bab and his cause. This is also confirmed by his general policy towards the Babis and Bahā'īs throughout the closing decades of the nineteenth century. According to this account this sympathy first began when during his residence in Isfahan he was impressed by the Bab's performance in the house of the governor Manuchir Khan Mu'tamid al-Daulih replying to the enquiries of the ulama and ʿullāb (pp.189-90).

interest in various fields of science. It is stated that beside his interest for 'complicated problems of theology, he was skilful in material sciences such as mathematics, geometry and geography, and thus (not only) was he an expert in various practical sciences (funun-i shatat), but he also had a perfect knowledge of thoughts in the past and present. During the day he spent a few hours in his business but most of his time was spent on reading and discussion. While still a šalabih in Isfahan, he specialised in usul-i fiqh, and according to one source, was even authorised by Ḥājī Iḥrām Karbāsī. In a letter to Mīrzā Sayyid Ḥasan, the Bāb refers to a recent work on usūl which was produced by the former. He condemns the study of usūl and urges his brother-in-law to abandon these useless speculations. Even before the Bāb's marriage, Sayyid Ḥasan was in close contact with the Bāb's immediate family. In fact by the death of Sayyid Ḥasan's father, like Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad, the guardianship of his family was entrusted to the Bāb's eldest uncle. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that both Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad and Mīrzā Sayyid Ḥasan (in a similar circumstance under the same guardianship), developed a certain interest in subjects such as mathematics and astrology. In the following years enthusiasm for astrology in Mīrzā Sayyid Ḥasan led him to the study of western astronomy, nightly observations, and even building a private observatory in his house in Yazd.

A reference should also be made to another brother-in-law of the Bāb; Ḥājī Muḥammad Mahdhī Hijāb Shīrāzī. Coming from the same mercantile background, he also benefited from a similar education in literature, Arabic, logic and ḥikmat and later developed some interest in poetry and mysticism. After finishing his elementary studies, he moved to India for commercial purposes and resided for a long time in Bombay, where he managed to accumulate some

1. Tadhkirt ai-Wafa', op.cit. The author states that during Sayyid Ḥasan's residence in Beirut, he was in contact with the well known scholar, a certain Khvāja Findik who is reported to have praised the former as 'an amateur scholar such as could rarely be found in the East'. The above person appears to be Dr. Van Dyck (the father), head of the American University of Beirut (A.U.B.) in the late 19th century. For his details see Antonius, G. The Arab awakening; the story of the Arab national movement. London, 1938, p.48.
2. A. Afnān, notes.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Maternal half-brother of Khādijih Khānum the Bāb's wife and also brother-in-law of Ḥājī Sayyid 'Alī the Bāb's uncle (see Table of Genealogy).
capital. Then returning to his homeland, he abandoned his trade and became acquainted with the followers of perfection and masters of ecstasy\textsuperscript{1}. Though nothing is known of his Sufi affiliation, his general tendency towards mysticism, and his poetical talent, made him a relatively well known figure in Shiraz in his own time\textsuperscript{2}.

The above examples suggest three common characteristics: first, that in the family of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad, as a typical merchant family in the middle decades of the 19th century, some distinct religious and intellectual tendencies which sometimes went beyond the usual boundaries of the merchant class, can be traced. Secondly, that these tendencies manifested themselves in various forms. It allowed a humble talabih like Mīrzā Hasan Shirāzī or Sayyid Javād Shirāzī, both from non clerical backgrounds, to reach high positions in religious rank, or certain merchants such as Mīrzā Sayyid Hasan Afnān Kabīr or Hijāb Shirāzī to develop part time interests in less orthodox fields of mysticism, or the applied sciences. Thirdly, it is important to notice that they all had a similar introductory education, and to various degrees benefited from the 'scholastic' teachings of their own time.

It is against this background that the intellectual upbringing of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad should be examined. As far as the early education of the Bab is concerned, this was his major difference with his contemporaries. He largely lacked, and in later years deliberately shunned, school education. Still, as will be discussed in the next sections, the same enthusiasm and vigour which led the above persons to various intellectual pursuits, in the Bab developed to a different, but not wholly unprecedented search for spiritual perfection. For Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad, his disillusion with school, when combined with a need 'for earning his livelihood', left no other choice but to become an assistant to his uncles in their trade in the port of Būshīhr. As he himself mentioned in the 'Letter to the 'ulamā'; 'When this youth reached the age of compulsory learning, in the tradition of the Prophet of God in the past, he arrived in Jaẓīrat al-Bahr (i.e. Būshīhr). He did not study your scientific methods with any of you (i.e. with the 'ulama) and thus in the preserved tablet of the divine order, he is an uneducated (\textit{ummi}), 'Ajamī and descendent

1. \textit{Tara'īq}, III, 471-2 and \textit{Fārs Namih}, II, 44.
2. A. Afnan, \textit{notes}.
3. \textit{Ahmad}. 447.
of the Prophet of God.\(^1\)

II

Throughout his five years residence in Bushihr (1835-40/1250-6) sometimes in the company of one of his uncles, and most of the time in their absence, Sayyid ʻAlī Muhammad participated mainly in the family business as a commercial agent. However as time passed it appears that he managed to become a partner, and even carry on some independent trade.\(^2\) Some observations of his commercial activities in this period, a brief survey of the general pattern of the family trade, and also some observations on the moral aspects of the merchant's social behaviour, would lead to a better understanding of the later changes in the ideas and attitudes of the Bab.

The trade of the Bab's uncles throughout the middle decades of the nineteenth century was based on the general pattern of the southern trade in this period.\(^3\) They should be counted among the big merchants (tujjār) of Southern Iran who were based in Shiraz and Yazd and carried import-exports from Būshihr and Bandar ʻAbbās to the Indian ports of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, as to other ports of the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea such as Muscat, Bahrain and as far as Zanzibar and Java. The trade accounts (ṣīyaq) of Sayyid ʻAlī Muhammad between 1250-56 (1835-40)\(^4\) show that their trade with the interior of Iran

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2. TMS. (MS.B) 23. This source believes that when he was about twenty years of age he abandoned his uncle's business and set up an independent trade. This is confirmed by A. Afnān notes, who maintains that along with his participation with his uncles, the Bab had invested in trade the remaining capital inherited from his father.
3. Very few studies on the trade of Southern Iran in general, and on the trade of Būshihr in particular, has yet been carried out. References in A.K.S. Lambton, 'Persian trade under the early Qajars' in Islam and the trade of Asia (Oxford, 1970, pp.215-44), pp.235 ff., and G. Hambly, 'An introduction to the economic organisation of early Qajar Iran' in Iran (II, 1964, pp.69-81) pp.79-81, provide some general analysis. However, more information may be found in the primary accounts. The reports of K.E. Abbott in F.O. especially F.0.60/165, Mr. Abbott's report on the Commerce of the south of Persia, 1849-50, 333 pp. (Abbott to Palmerston, Feb. 20th 1851) which devotes 175 pages (pp.19-194) to the trade of Būshihr; reports cited in The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914, edited by C. Issawi, Chicago, 1971, pp.82-91, and the information supplied by Lorimer, op.cit., I, 2, and other scattered information in Persian sources or 19th century travel accounts are few examples. For some further discussions on this trade see below Chapter Seven, V.
4. INBA. Collection of Documents, file No. 32.
reached the main markets of southern and central Iran. References to transactions with the local merchants in Isfahan, Kashān and Tehran, mainly concern agricultural and food exports in exchange for imports of fabrics, tea, sugar and spices. These documents also confirm that the Bab had acquired the necessary skill for keeping accurate accounts and handling commercial orders.

The commercial background on both the paternal and maternal side of the Bab's family no doubt helped him in finding his way in the mercantile community of Bushīhr. Mīr Iṣmā'īl, the Bab's paternal grandfather, himself sometime during Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad's childhood lived in Bushīhr, had trade links with his uncles. The extent of the family business sometimes even stretched to those members who were not directly involved in trade. The above-mentioned Sayyid Jawād Shīrāzī, while on his way to the Hijāz for further studies, still sold his father's merchandise in the Muscat market.

But the large scale trade in the family really flourished at the time of his elder uncle Hāji Sayyid Muhammad whose marriage to one of the oldest and most reputable tujjār families known as Ābd al-Husainī must have partly contributed to his success. In spite of chronic waves of political insecurity and risks of economic failure, the Ābd al-Husainī managed to establish a trade in Bushīhr which according to Fārs Namikh, extended from the remotest parts of India to the farthest corners of Farangistān, and survived for generations.

Hāji Sayyid Muhammad himself, his brothers Hāji Sayyid 'Alī and Hāji Sayyid Hasan 'Alī and their relatives and descendents, later known as Afnāns, throughout the nineteenth century and up to the early decades of the present century, operated large scale trade from Shiraz, Yazd, Bushīhr and Bandar 'Abbās inside Iran, and Bombay, Hong Kong, Ishqābād (Ashkhabad) and Beirut outside Iran. Muḥammad 'Alī Afnān, one of the three sons of Hāji Sayyid Muhammad and a maternal cousin of the Bab, who was of almost the same age, first started from Shiraz in the 1830's and then with the expansion of the Iranian opium trade in the 1860's and 70's, moved to Bombay and then to Hong Kong where in participation with his sons, his brothers and his brothers-in-law, he managed to control 'a large portion of the opium exports from Isfahan, Yazd and Fars' to China. Another son, Hāji Muhammad Taqī Vakīl al-Haqq, who succeeded the

1. A. Afnān, notes.
2. Ibid.
5. The title Afnān (lit. branches, i.e. of the Bab's family) conferred upon them by Bahā'ullāh.
Bab in the Būshihr office in the 1840's, later moved to Yazd and then to Ashkhabad. Also Ḥāji Sayyid Muhammad's five grandsons were all engaged in land and trade. The younger uncle of the Bab, Ḥāji Sayyid Ḥasan 'Alī was based in Yazd. He married the daughter of another reputable merchant of Shiraz, Ḥāji 'Abd al-Rasūl Tājir Shīrāzī, and in collaboration with his brothers, handled their trade in the eastern markets of Kirmān, Mashhad, and Tabas.

The Bab's father-in-law, Ḥāji Mīrzā 'Alī Tājir Shīrāzī, was also a descendent of another merchant family which was a branch of the maternal family of the Bab. He and one of his sons, Mīrzā Abul Qāsim Shīrāzī (sometimes known as Saqqā Khānīh-I, born 1226/1811-12) also participated in the Būshihr trade. Fārs Nāmīh confirms that Mīrzā Abul Qāsim's trade was substantial. 'As he embarked on his forefathers' trade, he commissioned commercial agents in every corner.' When Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad returned to Shiraz in the early 1840's and married, it seems that he started some commercial activities with Mīrzā Abul Qāsim. He established his office in Sarā-yi Gümruk in the bazar of Shiraz near the office of his brother-in-law.

The summary picture given above of the family of the Bab, as an example of merchant families in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, proves that there was a very distinctive drive towards commercial activities in the family, which in spite of various exceptional departures, often survived in remarkable conformity and harmony with its side interests, and in fact flourished in later decades, to give rise to a prosperous and affluent family

1. Khāndān-i Afvān, (pp.100-131) gives details of him and his descendents who were merchants and land owners in Yazd.
2. Ibid. pp.40-81. Fārs Nāmīh (II, 45) states 'in the past few years, since trade had declined and commercial transactions were abandoned', the descendents of Ḥāji Sayyid Muhammad 'invested part of their capital in land and property in various districts of Fars, and the other part in the opium trade which has flourished in the past ten years'. However the engagement in land should not be seen as a result of decline. On the contrary, buying land was chiefly to extend the family's control over the increasingly lucrative opium trade.
5. Ahmad. 449 and Mīrzā Hāštībāllāh. 256. Later in the events of 1262 Q.(1848) when the Bab managed to free himself from detention in the house of the dārughih of Shiraz and escape to Isfahan, Mīrzā Abul Qāsim was held responsible by the governor and forced to give a guarantee to return the Bab in a fortnight's time.
with close intercommunal links which was the nucleus for a larger commercial network. These inter-marital links between tujjar families of Shiraz, of which the marriage of the Bab, his uncle's, his cousins, and the sons and grandsons of his father-in-law are examples, are the signs of a more comprehensive interrelation, which held the merchant community of Shiraz together. The prosperity of the community, though constantly threatened by frequent political upheavals, urban disorders and economic hazards, chiefly owed its survival to these intercommunal, professional and family relations. This in turn allowed the emergence of a close community, with a cohesive and homogenous character, of which a collective response to outside threats, professional cooperation, economic flexibility, strong religious beliefs and respect for moral values are features. These characteristics were a reflection of the general norms and values of an urban 'middle class', and in a mutual interplay with the social and economic structure, an ethic was conceived with emphasis on personal and professional moral qualities.

It is in the light of this communal ethic, that the ideas and attitudes of the Bab, which are first reflected in his personal piety, professional trustworthiness, and then in vigorous asceticism and unorthodox religious and mystical themes, should be examined. This sense of moral obligation, or attention towards religious and mystical themes, was no doubt connected to the social and economic conditions which for instance enabled the merchants to afford education or other intellectual and enlightened pursuits, or encouraged strong links with religious, and to a lesser extent, mystical figures in society. Characteristics such as piety, professional honesty and integrity, were further strengthened by the weight that in theory was given to the honest and pious merchant in a religious context. The religious teachings which were embellished by the traditions and deeds of the Prophet and imams, served as a theoretical framework for the emergence of an ideal type in the mind of merchants. Teachings which praised honesty and godliness in trade, and warned the evildoers, and the very fact that trade was the profession of Muhammad al-Amīn, had a special meaning for the merchants. It was these teachings which

1. For traditions regarding trade and merchants see Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulman, ed. by A.J. Wensinck and others, Liden, 1936–69, 7 vols., I, pp.264-6 and cited sources. Also EI², TIDJARA, by Heffening and EI², BAH (by Schacht) and cited sources. For the Shi'i point of view, see Bihār al-Anwār, op.cit. XXIII, and sections under makāmil and mutamāl in 19th century fiqh works such as Muḥammad Ḥasan Najafī's Javāhir al-Kalām (Isfahan, 1271 Q) and Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥusain Nūrī Tabarsī Mustadrāk al-Wasāfīl (Tehran, 1321 Q), vol. II.
guaranteed that 'the trustworthy, just and believing merchant shall stand at
the day of judgement among the witnesses of blood'\(^1\), or reminded them that
'the merchants will be raised up on the day of resurrection as evildoers,
except those who fear God, are honest and speak the truth\(^2\).

The problem remains as to what extent these moral values, emphasised in
traditions or in the Islamic legal code for transactions and trade, were
observed in practice. No doubt a need for cooperation and mutual trust
encouraged merchants to seek some practical application in their economic
activity and even more in their personal conduct. Numerous references to the
honesty and trustworthiness of merchants in texts such as \textit{Fārs Nāmith}, may be
better appreciated when compared to the contemporary European accounts. In
\textit{Trois Ans en Asie} Gobineau gives an interesting account of Persian merchants:

'... In Persia merchants are perhaps the most respectable part
of the population. They are regarded as being very honest.
Since they do not take unnecessary risks, and as merchants are
more often than not sons of merchants who have inherited a more
or less substantial fortune which they will transmit to their
sons, they are devoid of worldly ambition and above many forms
of intrigue. They need public esteem and carefully cultivate
it. As a result, this witty, sceptical, mocking, and distrust­
ful people does not hesitate to entrust merchants with its money
for investment; in this respect merchants play the same part as
European credit institutions. They therefore hold most of the
capital of Persia, which gives them great importance in the eye
of government, which is always harassed by financial obligations
and which would not know what to do if they were not there to
help it out\(^3\).

He then points out that although 'the Persian merchant is almost always
strictly honest', in some of their practices such as delay in payment of bills
of exchange, they do not stand up to their reputation. But 'from the point of
view of morality', he maintains, 'it would perhaps be wrong to judge this mode
of behaviour with the vigour of our commercial principles. This kind of easy­
going behaviour does not stop Persian merchants from acting in good faith in
their business dealings'\(^4\).

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnotesize 1. Hadīth quoted from the Prophet in Ibn Maja, \textit{Sunan}, Cairo, 1313 Q., Tijārāt, I, 1.
  \item \footnotesize 3. Arthur de Gobineau, Paris, 1859, p.392-3 translated in \textit{The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914}, op.cit. 36.
  \item \footnotesize 4. Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Almost the same universal characteristics are also detected by Malcolm who on his second visit (circa 1810) to Iran met merchants in Bushihr, Shiraz and Isfahan, and everywhere 'found their general characters nearly the same':

'The plunder of a merchant, without some pretext, would shake all confidence, and be fatal to that commerce from which a great proportion of the public revenue is derived; the most tyrannical monarchs, therefore, have seldom committed so impolitic an act of injustice. But this class have suffered so severely in the late revolutions of the country that they continue to act with great caution ... Some few make a display of their wealth; but in general their habits are not merely frugal, but penurious'.

Other sources attributed similar characteristics. Edward Scott Waring in the first decade of the nineteenth century writes that 'the merchants of Persia are a shrewd, sensible and thrifty class of people, willing to undergo any hardship if they have a prospect of making money'. Whereas Edward Burgess himself a merchant in Tabriz (between 1828-55) on a few occasions praises the honesty and thoroughness of Tabrízi merchants who are 'so regular in their payments that upon most occasions I have not even to send a servant for the money ...'. Thus the contrary view expressed by some writers seems largely unjustified. C.J. Wills, a medical officer in Iran in the late 1860's and early 1870's believed that the 'merchant class are generally the most bigoted and penurious of the Persian race. Only on retiring from business do they dare to launch out into ostentation; for the mere suspicion of wealth in Persia exposed them to the exaction of those in power'.

'In this country, no merchant can afford to be what we should consider an honest man. If he keeps his word, pays his debts, honours bills when due, and restores money entrusted to him, he is sure to be marked as a rich man, which is tantamount to being a criminal, and he will, as surely, be liable to be persecuted, fleeced and screwed without mercy. However good his intentions may be, he must affect to put off his engagements,'

3. Charles and Edward Burgess, *Letters from Persia*, ed. by B. Schwartz, N.Y., 1942, p.34. Edward Burgess whose brother Charles because of his adventures and dishonest dealings caused great financial loss to the Persian merchants in Tabriz, due to his brother's bankruptcy for years was in debt to the merchants of this city, yet he never complains of any mistreatment or pressure on him by the local tujjār.
4. *The Land of Lion and Sun or Modern Persia*, New edition, London, 1891, p.188. The author makes this comment in the context of Isfahānī merchants, since he believes that 'honesty cannot be expected in Ispahāni or Teherani, but the Shirazi may be pretty fairly relied upon'. (Ibid.).
or to meet them with greatest difficulty; otherwise his rapacious rulers will mark him for the prey.'

Regardless of the exaggeration and bigotry of some of the above remarks, which is perhaps due to a change which occurred in the attitude of the European travellers in the second half of the nineteenth century, one may observe changes in the habits and practices of the Persian merchants over the years. Recurring references to the problems of insecurity, governmental pressure, and changes in the economic climate, suggest some links between outside factors and the moral standards of the merchants. These external threats generated certain tactical and defensive methods in order to enable the merchant community to adopt the basic principles in their code of conduct, which were no doubt vital for the survival of any mutual trust in professional relations given the changing political and economic situation. The inter-family and inter-community bonds between the big merchants, or between the various groups within the merchant community, or between merchants in different cities provided a network within which not only the process of commercial and financial transactions was regulated, but more important for this argument, a set of universal norms existed which were developed into the communities' standard ethical and ultimately intellectual values. The practical implications, or the change and modifications which appeared in these norms is beyond the capacity of this study, but what is of particular interest here is the realisation of these values in the person of the Bab, first in his trade and method of transactions, and then as independent abstract entities which formed one of the pillars of his future revelation.

These qualities of trustworthiness and honesty, as far as the principles of commercial activities are concerned, are detectable in the Bab, his family and his relatives. Farro Namîh's brief mention of the uncles of the Bab that 'for generations they were engaged in trade and are known for their honesty' goes beyond a casual complimentary remark when Mirzâ Ahmad Shîrâzî states that 'all of them (i.e. uncles of the Bab) are trustworthy merchants and reputed to be noble Sayyids.' The same qualities have also been attributed to the Bab,

1. II, p.34.
2. II, 131.
3. Ahmad, 446. According to A. Afnân (notes) the maternal family of the Bab were always regarded as a pious and trustworthy family in Shiraz. This reputation survived until very recently, in spite of their association with the Bab, or perhaps because of it.
and can be seen in a number of anecdotes narrated from his days in Būshīhr. These anecdotes more than anything suggest that his strict observation of religious precepts for a thorough and honest trade, was to some extent in contrast with the 'easy-going' behaviour of his colleagues, and in turn demanded firmer observation of the religious law.

On one occasion, a merchant in Būshīhr, a certain Ḥajī Mīrẓā Abūl Hasan Yazdī, who was on his way to the pilgrimage of Ḥajj, entrusted the Bab with some merchandise to be sold in his absence. But while he was away, the price of the merchandise fell and it was sold at a price cheaper than was expected. However, on his return to Būshīhr, Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad, contrary to the general practice of the time, which only obliged him to pay back the value of the sold merchandise, included the extra amount of 175 tūmān; the difference between the original value and the price fetched, insisting that failing to pay the original price is contrary to the code of trustworthiness. On another occasion, the sale of a cargo of indigo was agreed between Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad and some merchants in Būshīhr. After the delivery of the goods, at the time of the payment, the purchasers came back to Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad and asked for a discount; a general method of after sale bargaining practised in all Iranian markets and known as dabbiḥ. When the Bab declined to consider the customary reduction, he found himself with the purchasers' objection who argued that such reduction is a 'national custom' (rasm-i mamlikat), and should be observed by everyone. But it is reported that the Bab insisted that 'soon many unlawful customs will be abolished', and further in response to their refusal to pay the full sum, took back the merchandise and made the contract void. The merchants who regarded the cancellation of the deal and the return of the merchandise as a blow to their commercial credit, wrote complaints to his uncle Ḥāji Sayyid Muḥammad, who in turn blamed Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad for not 'acting in accordance with people's wishes and neglecting accepted customs and

1. *TMS.* (p.78), without specifying his source, only saying that this has been reported by the opponents of the Bab. *Nabīl.* (p.79) quotes Sayyid Jaʿād Karbalāʿī relating a similar account. The above-mentioned merchant is probably the father of ʿAbd Allāh Abūl Ḥasan Sharīf Shīrāzī (later Ishāk Aqāsī) who was a merchant and originally from Yazd and in close contact with the Bab's family.

2. C.J. Wills gives a description of the 'peculiar custom' of dabbiḥ which he reckons is 'possibly legal by the religious law'. He adds; 'This is frequently done either to lower the price a little or, when the article is a fluctuating one, such as opium, to take advantage of a rise or fall in the market. For this reason it is that all contracts have to be in writing, and generally something is paid on account to bind the slippery Isphahānī'. *The Land of the Lion and the Sun*, op.cit., p.188. In the case of the Bab *sighāḥ* (contract) had been issued and *tankhārgārdān* (deposit) had been exchanged.
practices. Although the author of *Nuqtat al-Kāf* believes that the Bab during his residence in Būshīhr, was successful in his business 'to the extent that the chiefs of tujjar took notice of his holiness' mastery in commercial matters', he also maintains that the Bab became known to people because of 'spending all his capital', either by giving away 70 tūmān to the poor, or being too engaged in his prayers and devotions and thus making substantial losses in the market. One may assume that it is this attitude which made the continuation of the partnership with his uncles a formidable task. As Muṭīn al-Saltanīh points out; 'considering the existing necessities of the time', the Bab finally separated from his uncles and set up his own independent trade.

The above evidence illustrates that for young Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad engagement in trade not only served as a means for earning his livelihood, but more significantly was a means of emphasising those moral aspects which were for him idealised in the words and deeds of the Prophet. In one of his letters, presumably to some merchants, he refers to these 'true' qualities:

'Say! What God formerly authorised for Muḥammad, and then for 'Alī Muḥammad, was trade, of which you have also prospered and esteemed. Praise your Lord for sending down the blessing of the Heaven and Earth and in between, to those who are engaged in trade. Those who are fair in their dealings, and love those inferior to them as they love their own souls, O God, raise them, and give them respect and prosperity, and you are the Omnipotent. Say! whoever trades for the sake of God, and is honest in his business, God will guarantee him against fraud. So, those of you who established your trade on the path of God, and thus with the "Manifestation of God", are truthful in your trade'.

This comparison between the Bab and the Prophet is also drawn in the writings of the followers of the Bab such as Hājī Mīrzā Jānī, himself a merchant, who states that Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad's engagement in trade 'was designed to "accomplish the proof" to the people, so they would not be able to claim that he lacked the capacity of dealing with people. Thus the same mysterious considerations behind the engagement of his venerated ancestor (i.e. the Prophet) in trade, could also be applied to him. So, in every sense he could be a sign of that "original light" even in his orphanhood.'

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3. Ibid.
6. For his details see below Chapter Seven, II.
This moralistic approach to various aspects of commercial transactions, which is detectable also in his scattered and often brief references in the Bayān, suggests that in fact his later teachings, though they sometimes approved of some of the accepted practices common among merchants, denounced many other customs as unlawful and improper. Thus contrary to the restricted regulations set up by Sharīʿ, but in compliance with common practice, he allows a lawful interest on the borrowed money 'as it is now practised among the merchants', or allows agreement in the extension or delay of the repayment of exchange bills. He regards the mutual satisfaction of both parties as the essential condition for the lawfulness of any contract regardless of age or position, whether they are 'under age, adults, slaves or free men'. On the subject of foreigners, he emphasises that only those Christian merchants (kurūf-i kitāb-i alif i.e. followers of the Gospel) who follow useful trades and professions are permitted to dwell in the countries of believers. On another occasion, he refers to changes in the monetary system and acknowledges that any depreciation of currency, both gold and silver, brings losses to tujjār. He hopes that in the future these fluctuations will settle. As far as prohibition of some merchandise is concerned, he strictly forbids trade of opium, intoxicating drugs and liquors for believers, but under certain conditions allows their use for medical purposes.

Compared to other professions, in most of his references, special attention was paid to the respectability of an honest, thorough and fair trade. But nonetheless, the extent of this attention should not be exaggerated. In fact the bulk of the Bab's writings in the years after his 'revelation' was mainly focused on mystical, moral, devotional and ritualistic themes, which in effect left little room for the development of any consistent social and economic ideology. This implies that the effect of professional background in the personality and teachings of the Bab is much more subtle than a direct

3. Ibid. V, 19 (p.183).
4. Ibid. IX, 8 (pp.323-4). Contrary to his recommendations, strangely enough the sons of his uncle Ḥājī Sayyid Muhammad, even after being converted to the Babi movement, were fully engaged in the opium trade with China. This highlights one of the chief contradictory features in the professional life of the merchants such as Afnāns particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century, who in spite of the extreme care for their private religious and moral standards, were able to ignore strict trade prohibitions.
reflection of the material wishes of the nineteenth century merchant class. For him this material life, and the struggle for livelihood could only be valued when it was treated as an instrument for a far more important spiritual and moral perfection. It is with regard to this interpretation that his engagement in trade, or his excessive preoccupation with moral values, find their proper place as tests for assessing this perfection. For the Bab, as he himself describes it, trade was an act of worship and veneration of God; he swears that during his days of trade, he never bowed to put a hall-mark on a bale or merchandise, unless to remember and to venerate the greatness of God. This is the attitude which underlined the Bab's approach to material life, and gradually brought him closer to an ascetic and mystical life.

III

The two aspects of professional honesty and lack of proper school education, further supplemented by references, all retrospective, to other 'extraordinary' characters, and produce a picture of a young Sayyid 'Ali Muḥammad in which asceticism, devotion and the supernatural are the main features. References to his preoccupation with prayers, revealing dreams, and extraordinary remarks during his childhood and youth explain the origins of those qualities of 'innocence' and 'holiness', which more than any other intellectual faculty led him and his followers to believe that these were signs of a divine deputation. They provide a primary justification for his later claims since they depict him to his followers as an exceptionally pure person who from the very beginning was designated to receive inspiration. Close examination of the content of these supernatural experiences may no doubt provide a more understandable answer to the question of his future 'revelation'. Dreams in particular seem to have played a significant role in the Bab's own

1. An example of this crude generalisation on the theme of the Bab's teachings, as the voice of 'the rising bourgeoisie' may be observed in Ivanov The Babi Uprising in Iran, op.cit. pp.135-7, which is also to some extent reflected in Keddie, N.R. 'Religion and irreligion in early Iranian Nationalism', in Comparative Studies in Society and History, 1962, pp.265-95 (271).

2. A. Afñān, notes. The exact words are not quoted.

3. Elements of religious devotion could be traced in the Bab's family background. Bab's maternal grandfather, Hajī Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusain, himself a merchant, 'was known to the people of Būshīr not only for his piety and godliness, but also for certain miraculous feats (karmāt) which are reported of him'. Khandān-i Afñān, (105). Recollections recorded by Vokīl al-Ḥaqq.
assumption of his spiritual faculties. It is related that in his childhood he had a dream of a huge balance suspended between heaven and earth. On one scale of the balance he saw Imam Ja'far Șâdiq, a character who in Shi'i Islam is renowned for his vast and almost comprehensive knowledge; then an unseen hand put the Bab on the other scale and his side proved heavier, and tended towards the earth. In Sāhīfah-yi Aḍāliyyah, he himself pointed to the influence of dreams on his ability to reveal verses; 'Remember! the emanation of all these verses and prayers and all these unlearnt sciences ('ulūm-i ladunni) is because of a dream which I once had of the holy head of the Master of Martyrs (Sayyid al-Shuhadā' i.e. Imam Ｕsain) upon him be peace, detached from his holy body, together with the heads of other companions. I drank seven handfuls of his holy blood with greatest joy, and it is now the blessing of that blood which illuminated my heart with such verses and prayers'.

Again in another dream in 1262 (1846) he saw that at the hour of the spring equinox, some books were sent down to him. When he opened one of them he noticed that its pages were covered with the dust of Imam Ｕsain's tomb. He looked more closely and saw a tablet in an excellent shikastih style written in red ink, and at the bottom was an astral seal with the epigram 'I entrusted my cause to God' and signed Mahdī. The contents of the tablet were confirmation of his claims. All these references to dreams and the way they implicitly prove certain spiritual and moral points, should be seen in the light of a continuous tradition of revelatory dreams in Shi'i esoteric thinking of visiting the Prophet and Imams and particularly the Twelfth Imam. In particular these dreams have a striking similarity to those described by Shaykh Ahmad Ahsâ'ī - dreams which disclose the secret of the Book, unfold the dubious points of Akh)bār, and

1. Mirza Ḥabīballah. Also TMS. 29-30 and KD, I, 33.
2. INBA. 82, pp.134-205 (160). In the Tabriz trial of 1848, some of the 'ulama present in the gathering made sarcastic remarks about this very dream. See Shaykhīgārī va Bābīgārī, op.cit., p.313 citing a manuscript written by Mullā Muḥammad Taqī ibn Mullā Muḥammad Mamaqānī.
3. Commentary on verse 35 of Sura al-Nur (XXIV), INBA, 98, pp.55-63 (57-9). After describing his dream, the Bab interprets all details of his dream with strong emphasis on numeralogy and the science of letters. Also see Chapter Four for his dream at the time of Rashtī's death.
explain various theological and mystical problems by means of direct encounter with the Prophet or Imam\(^1\). These strong prophetic allusions in the Bab's dreams, which could no doubt hardly be delivered in the state of wakefulness, should be regarded as a prelude to his later divinations.

Other reports on the early life of Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad also contributed to his image as an 'extraordinary' child. It is related that once in his early days at the maktab, when his teacher instructed him to memorise the verse 'He is the Deliverer, the All-Knowing' (Qur'an al-Fattāh al-'Alīm)\(^2\) he insisted first on understanding the meaning, and thus enraged Shaykh 'Abid\(^3\). In another instance he replied to his fellow classmate who asked him about his reluctance to follow the other students in their reading exercises with a couplet from Hāfiz; 'Hearest thou not the whistle's call, this snare should now thy prison be'? Mīrzā Sayyid Muhammad Sahhāf, one of his school friends remembered that while other students were playing games, in his seclusion Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad spent his time in prayers\(^5\). Sayyid Javād Karbala'i who was a friend of his uncles', and a frequent visitor to their house, related that he saw the Bab deeply devoted to his daily prayers when he was a child of about ten. He also related that one day, when Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad had come late to school and was questioned by the school master, he replied that he had been in the house of his ancestor (dar khanāt-i jaddam budam), referring to the Prophet. To his teacher's remonstration that as a child daily prayer is not demanded of him, he answered 'I wish to be like my ancestor'\(^6\). Again on a day trip to the shrine of Sabzpushān in the neighbourhood of Shiraz, his uncle Hājī Sayyid 'Ali was deeply impressed when he found his young nephew in a small cave in the nearby mountain reading his prayers in the middle of the night\(^7\).

1. For dreams of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'ī see autobiographical risāla cited in Fīhrīst, I, pp.136-143; L'Ecole Shaykhie, op.cit. pp.11-12; Risālāt-i Sharḥ-i Ahvāl-i Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'ī, op.cit. p.9-17. Also compare with dreams reported by Shaykh Ahmad's teacher Sayyid Muhammad Mahdī Bahr al-'Ulūm cited in Q. pp.171-4. Q. (206) and Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī (83) give some interpretation of the authenticity of ru'yā.


5. Cited in Kashf al-Chītā', op.cit. p.84.


7. Mīrzā Habīballāh. pp.10-11. Similar recollections about childhood devotion, seclusion and reluctance in associating with other children have also been narrated of both Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'ī (Sharḥ-i Ahvāl, op.cit. pp.5-9 and his autobiography in Fīhrīst. I, pp.132-5) and Sayyid Kāzim Rashti (MJQ, (455) quoting Mīrzā 'Ali Asghar Samī' Rashti a childhood friend of Rashti).
The mystery of the holy dreams and unconventional words and deeds, can only partly be interpreted by the myth, which later encompassed his image as a holy and infallible man who was born with the right qualities to carry out a prophetic mission. For the greater part, it was his own austerity and his innate obsession with a divine support, which later found a way to express itself in spiritual symbolism and the language of dream interpretation as it was commonly employed in Shaykhism.

His years of residence in Bushihr were also marked by similar accounts of devotion and austerity. In fact as time passed, this sense of religiosity and devotion developed to some mystical tendencies which were not far from self-mortification and seclusion practised by the Sufis or ascetics of the time. More than anything else it was devotion, self denial, 'extreme courtesy and the serene expression on his face' and 'his humility and lowliness' that is said to have left a favourable effect on his friends, relatives and colleagues. Ḥājī Sayyid Javād who once dwelt for six months in the house of the Bab in Bushihr recounts; 'I often heard those who were closely associated with him testify to the purity of his character, to the charm of his manner, to his self-effacement, to his high integrity and to his extreme devotion to God'.

The same impression could be seen in other accounts. Mīrzā Ahmad Shīrāzī pointed out that 'I have gathered, as a result of my inquiries, that he was very quiet, modest and shy during his childhood, and that he showed signs of piety on reaching the age of maturity'. But a more interesting account comes from a certain Ḥājī Muhammad Husain, a colleague of the Bab in Bushihr who related;

'Since the Bab was a native of Shiraz, and yet had not assumed any claims, I, in the company of other Shīrāzī merchants, used to go to Saray-i Maymandī to visit him, and we became intimate with him, But he was very taciturn, and would never utter a word unless it was necessary. He did not even answer our questions. He was constantly absorbed in his own thoughts, and was preoccupied with repetition of his prayers and verses (azkār). He was a handsome man with a thin beard, dressed in clean clothes, wearing a green shawl, and a black turban'.

Signs of sanctity and religious zeal which attracted his colleagues, also appear in his ascetic practices, and are clearly evident from a much quoted reference to his ascetic exercises (riyāzāt) on the roof of his trade house in

1. Cited in Nābil. 79.
Bushihr. Attacking the Bab's deviation from the path of 'true religion', Nasîkh al-Tawârîkh states that 'when evil temptations and selfish ambitions encouraged him, in spite of (the order of) the holy Sfar', he yielded towards arduous purifications (qirâzat-i shaqqih), and tended to reach the high stages (ma'irât-i 'aliyih). As I have heard, once in Bushihr, where hot winds are as burning as the breath of a furnace, at the peak of the heat, he ascended up to the roofs and stood in the sun bare-headed, reciting his prayers (tawrât)¹. To this Hidayat adds that the purpose of ascetic exercises was to 'dominate the sun' (taskhir-i shams)². However implausible these reports might appear, they are in line with Mîrzâ Aḥmad's reference to the Bab's intention for 'mastering the science of planets, particularly the sun'³. Even Nabil Zarandî confirms that in the oppressive heat of Bushihr, each Friday while exposed to the fierce rays of the noontide sun, he devoted several hours to continuous worship upon the roof of his house⁴. Although 'the headless and ignorant around him thought him to be enamoured with the sun itself', in fact 'from early dawn till sunshine, and from midday till late in the afternoon, he dedicated his time to meditation and pious worship'⁵.

The authors of court chronicles such as Sipihr and Hidayat in typical statements show a mixture of sarcasm, hostility and accusations made with words chosen solely to serve the purpose of the rhyme. They attack the Bab's asceticism as the symptom of 'evil temptations, which finally caused him to exhaust his body so relentlessly that his mind became defective and his brain was disturbed'⁶ or suggest that 'the effect of the sun's heat totally evaporated the moisture of his brain and led him to sun-worship'⁷. This is perhaps due to the fact that same preoccupation with asceticism and devotion which earlier were taken as the positive sign of the Bab's holiness and sanctity, after the proclamation of the Babi movement were interpreted as evidence for his 'evil' intentions. But in fact such harsh practices further motivated an unorthodox quest for achieving an exceptional level of purity and divination, not only by austerity and self denial but by paying attention to esoteric ideas and practices which were not attainable in conventional ways. These tendencies

caused some of his contemporaries such as Mirza Kazem Beg to suggest that; 'En société il s'entretienait plus volontiers avec les savants ou écoutait les récits des voyageurs qui affluaient dans cette ville commercante; aussi se plaisait-on à le ranger au nombre des sectateurs du Tarikat, fort respectés par le peuple'.

The Bab's association with Sufi orders, or seeking guidance from a Sufi quṭb were rejected by the author of Nuqtat al-Kāf, but Ḥāji Mīrza Janī, himself a merchant with Sufi tendencies, did not deny the existence of an esoteric trend in the Bab; 'What has been circulated about the Holiness's practice of mortification, or that he benefited from a pīr or a spiritual guide (marshīd) is nothing but mere accusation and absolute fabrication, since in appearance that point of perfection (nuṭīḥ-i ghinā) under no circumstances was in need of anyone, but nevertheless in reality he was a seeker of the beloved (faqīr-i ḥaṣā al-mahbūb)'2. The above remark, which was originally given in support of the Bab's unlearned knowledge, rules out affiliation to any order, or reception of spiritual guidance, but it is likely that at least to some extent the Bab was exposed to certain heterodox ideas and practices then in circulation in his environment.

It should be pointed out that Bushihr was one of the strongholds of those Akhbārī ulama who were originally from Bahrain3. Their significance in this context becomes more evident since similar interests in austerity, and (ulūm-i gharīb) can be traced among leading Akhbārī figures such as the well known Mīrza Muhammad Akhbārī4. Besides, long established contacts between Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'i and his successor Sayyid Kāzim Rashti with the Akhbārī ulama of Bahrain and also the Ulama of the Āl 'Usfūr family in Bushihr, to whom the Bab paid a special tribute, should not be overlooked. However none of the existing evidence can lead us to any firm and concrete result, since the Bab himself remained almost totally silent on the subject of his past intellectual experiences.

Yet an interesting passage in Sahīfah-yi Adliyān suggests that at least in the later years of his life the Bab regarded all important currents in contemporary Shi'i thinking as deviant and misdirected;

'Today, disagreements in the Ithnā 'Asharī camp have reached their height. Some are known as Uṣūlīs who unanimously act according to their own (deductive) reasoning (zān) and believe

2. NK. pp.109-110. For the mystical tendencies of Ḥāji Mīrza Janī see below Chapter Seven, II.
3. See above Chapter One, I. 4. For his details see above Chapter One, I.
that truth is with them, and some are known as Akhībāris who believe in illuminant and non-rational argumentation, and they think truth is with them, and some consider themselves as followers of the late Shaykh Ahmad ibn Zayn al-Dīn, may God sanctify the soil of his grave, and believe that the pure absolute truth is with them, and yet they did not even grasp the surface of his words, and some are known as Sufis who think that the inner (bāṭīn) is in their hand, and yet they remained far and isolated from both outward and inward (gāhir va bāṭīn), and instead adopted the path of darkness and polytheism "without even knowing". Amongst the followers of the four schools there is no illusion about their extreme differences, to the extent that some even denounce others of infidelity. Beside these four well known schools there are some who consider themselves superior to others such as followers of Mullā Šadrā (Šadrā Ṭyūn) and the like, and each one takes himself as the (embodiment of) pure truth and the rest as absolute falsehood. How appropriately sings the Arab poet; "They all claim that they seek Liyli's union, and at night they are restless in lamentation. But when tears flow from cheeks, then it will be known who weeps and who pretends weeping".1

The Bab's disapproval of the differences of opinion among various Shi'i schools did not however prevent him from an inclination towards Shaykh Ahmad's teachings; of him he speaks with reverence and respect. His serious interest in the Shaykhi schools first appears to have been procured by Sayyid Javād Karbalā'ī in Būshīhr2. This seems to have coincided with the production of some of his earliest writings. Nicolas makes a passing reference to certain Risāla Fi qīlīya written in Būshīhr, in which 'il montre une vraie piété une effusion islāmique qui semblait lui présager un brillant avenir dans les liens de l'orthodoxie chīte3. Apparently it is these writings (written towards the end of his residence in Būshīhr, around 1257 Q) which being unorthodox in their contents, worried the uncle Ḥājī Sayyid Muhammad, and obliged him to ask Ḥājī Sayyid Javād for assistance by advising his nephew 'not to write or to speak about certain matters, and not to reveal certain things which might arouse people's jealousy, because they cannot see how a young uneducated merchant would be able to reveal such learned words'.4

1. INBA. 82, pp.156-7.
2. KD. I, 34 cf. Kashf al-Ghībā' op.cit. pp.56-7 and Nabil. 79.
4. Mīrāz Abūl Faţl Gulpāyīgānī (pp.11-12) citing Mīrāz Abūl Faţl Gulpāyīgānī who himself reports from Sayyid Javād Karbalā'ī. Presumably, some fragments of these writings were given to Sayyid Javād before 1260 Q. A few years later when the first news of the appearance of a new Bab reached Karbīlā', these writings led Sayyid Javād to identify Sayyid Alī Muhammad (see below Chapter Five, I.)
Preoccupation with these ideas and practices gradually isolated Sayyid 'Ali Muḥammad from his commercial duties, and led him to abandon his business and leave Bushihr for 'Atabāt. If such a decision was perhaps partly due to the Bab's longing to visit the shrine of the Imams where he could, like many other ascetics, in the adjacency of the shrines pray and meditate, it was also due to his enthusiasm for visiting, and possibly attending theological circles, and in particular that of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, for whom he felt a special affection. But when he informed his family of his intention, his uncles who were already disturbed by his unusual behaviour, tried to discourage him by simply ignoring his constant requests that they settle their commercial accounts. But in spite of their deliberate delays, Sayyid 'Ali Muḥammad who was determined in his decision, himself settled all the accounts and made all the necessary arrangements before leaving for 'Atabāt sometime in 1256-7 (1840-41) after more than five years' residence in Bushihr. Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh maintains that the Bab's action greatly enraged his elder uncle, who, beside other anxieties, worried about his own commercial reputation.

His departure from Bushihr was not the end of Sayyid 'Ali Muḥammad's commercial career, but it was the sign of a noticeable change in his life. His journey to Iraq could be regarded as the victory of religious emotions over material concerns. Here, too much attention towards religious and mystical themes disrupted the traditional balance between moral values and material activities, so greatly praised among tujjār. If this change in the Bab's character was partly a reflection of his emotions, or even his obsessions, it was also the natural outcome of a strong urge on behalf of a self-educated merchant to bypass the conventional methods of acquiring knowledge and perfection by stressing those moral values inherited from his environment.

IV

Although the Bab's abode in the 'Holy Land' (Arḍ al-Muqaddas, i.e.'Atabāt) lasted less than a year as he himself specified, and although of his eleven months of residence he spent eight in Karbila and three in various other holy cities, even this short stay was enough to draw the attention of some curious observers, most of them students and followers of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, to the

1. Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh. 15.
2. Cited in a taqiyy written in Chihriq (1265 Q./1845) (Shaykhīgar va Babīgarī, op.cit. pp.305-7). In this tablet the Bab gave a brief chronological description of his early life, in which he confirms that after five years in Bushihr, he spent a year in 'Atabāt.
3. Qatīl. 529 cf. NK. 110, and other sources which believe that he only spent three months in Karbila.
unusual and 'magnetic' character of the young Sayyid from Shiraz. The same characteristic which had given him a halo of innocence inBushihr, appeared even more emphatically here in his ritualism on his frequent visits to the Shrine of Imam Ḥusain.

Beside Sayyid Javād Karbalā'ī, among other would-be followers of the Bab, Mullā Šādiq Khurāṣānī— who owing to his piety and devotion was surnamed Muqaddas— first saw the Bab in the Shrine of Ḥusain, where the lamentations and humbleness of the young Sayyid made a great effect on him. He was even more bewildered when Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad, who first even refused to reply to his greetings in the courtyard, on his exit from the shrine apologised and explained his behaviour by maintaining that the 'mosque is the place where attention should not be paid to anybody or any direction except to God'.

This behaviour of the Bab is better understandable when in his Ziyārat Nāmeh, he instructs the pilgrims to 'enter (the shrine), without uttering a single word, and walk with gravity until thou reachest (a distance of) seven paces below the foot (of the tomb)'.

Referring to the circumstances of the Bab's visit Nuqtat al-Kaf states that, 'At the time of his holiness' visit to the shrine of his holy ancestors, some strange and wonderful expositions, such as the manner of entering or visiting the shrine, and the state of presence (hukur) in which he was seen, astonished a great number of people'. To this, Ḥājī Rasūl, a Shaykhi merchant from Qazvīn adds that he never saw any other person 'whether from divines, mystics, spiritual guides, nobles and merchants' who could match 'the humility, devotion or magnificence' in his visits. Other Shaykhis such as the Nahrī brothers, two young merchants from Isfahan attending Sayyid Kāzīm's lectures in Karbīla, and Ḥājī Mīrzā Rīzā Jāvāhirī Isfāhani, also a merchant, and Shaykh Ḥasan Zunuzī, all had the same impression when they met the Bab in

1. Nicolas, pp.191-2 and M.A. Malik Khusravī, Tārikh-i Shuhāda-yi Amr, Tehran, 130 Badi' (1972), 3 vols., II, p.50 both quoting from the biography of Muqaddas written by his son Ibn Ašdaq. For further details on Muqaddas see below Chapter Six, I. Mīrzā Ḥabībalāh (pp.16-17) relates a similar account about Mullā Ḥusain Bushruyīhī, but no other source confirms this, although this would not rule out the possibility of a visit between the Bab and Mullā Ḥusain in this period (see below).


3. NK. 110.


5. For their details see below Chapter Seven, I.

6. Z. 101.

Karbila. Even the unsympathetic Mirza Muhammad Tunikabun, the author of Qisas al-Ulama, who at the time was a taalabih, noticed the Bab's unusual method of visiting the shrine:

'One day I was sitting with a certain pious (Muqaddas) above the head of his Holiness' holy tomb (i.e. tomb of Imam Husain) when we saw this Sayyid (i.e. the Bab) enter the Shrine.' He stood in the doorway, read his visitation and left without entering the Shrine. I asked Muqaddas; "who was this man?" Muqaddas replied; "He was Mir 'Ali Muhammad Shirazi, and he is a student of Sayyid Kazim". I asked "why did he visit the Shrine in this manner?"

"Because he considers this as the most respectful way" he answered. I said "this is wrong since visiting (ziyarat) is one of the devotions (‘ibadat), and therefore we should follow the way we were told and taught by our Imams, and they commanded us to approach the holy tomb and embrace it. Keeping a distance from the tomb is like failing to perform non-obligatory prayers (namaz-i riafilih) on the grounds that we are not worthy to stand in the threshold of our Lord." 1

This emphasis on the Bab's manner of visiting the shrine, to which Tunikabun's account alludes, is chiefly due to the preference which this act of devotion received in the Shi'i and especially Shaykhi teachings. In a theological system like Shaykhism with a strong esoteric element, the visit of shrines was regarded as the visit of the Imam himself with almost the same status as intuition and revealing dreams. It is because of this that the followers of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsai, at the time of visiting shrines performed carefully observed rites in order to pay their full homage, and to avoid any act which might be a desecration of the shrine, they never proceeded beyond the foot of the tomb. This method of visiting was one of the distinctive characteristics of the Shaykhis. Hence they spoke of non-Shaykhis, perhaps with a sense of disapproval, as Bazaars, or those who approach the head of the Imam's tomb 2. But nonetheless, this attention to the act of visiting and self-humiliation and unbounded abasement were not confined to the Shaykhis. As it is reported, Aqa Muhammad Baqir Bihbahani, one of the most prominent followers of Shaykh Ahmad, visited the shrine of Husain in a spirit of submission and grief which is not far different

1. Q. 59. Also translated by Browne in JRAS. 1889, pp.894-5. The identity of the above mentioned Muqaddas-i Salih is unknown. However, there is a good possibility that he refers to the above mentioned Mullā Sādiq Muqaddas whom he inaccurately named Salih. Browne overlooks the possibility that Muqaddas is a name and therefore translates it as a "holy and just person".

from the practice of the Shaykhis or that of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad the Bab

In some of his early writings the Bab went to great lengths to discuss
details of the rites of visitation, and the secret of every action and
movement. In al-Saḥīfa Bāy n al-Ḥaramayn, written at the beginning of 1261
he gave minute instructions for various acts of ritual ablution, entrance to
the shrine, and recitation of the appropriate verses and prayers, while
emphasising the numerical and alphabetical significance of every stage of
ṣiyārat. As is evident from some of his instructions, the Bab adopted a
method of ṣiyārat which was influenced by current Shaykhi ideas both in rituals
and in esoteric interpretation. Nevertheless he adopts some new values both
on visitation and on prayers which are a new departure complementing those of
Shaykhism. Indeed, signs of new developments in the Bab's thinking already
appear in one of his earlier works, Ṣiyārat Nāmih-i Āl Allāh which judging from
its contents, must have been written during, or immediately after his journey
to 'Atabāt. It is this work which E.G. Browne rightly believes has 'the utmost
interest and importance in tracing the gradual formation of the Bab's ideas',
and is so far 'the sole record of this early period of his life, before he put
forward any claim to divine inspiration'. The contents of this work, like the
Saḥīfa, 'reflects the doctrines of the Bab's masters, but an undercurrent of
new ideas, still hardly defined, is discernible in places.'

1. Q. 202.
2. For details of this work see below Chapter Nine, III.
4. Ibid. 112.
5. Among many other Shi'i writers who produced a vast literature on the
esoteric meaning of the acts of worship, Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī deals with
the 'secrets' (asrār) of various devotional prayers in a few of his works.
See al-Dhawī'a, Nos. 169, 188, 208 and Fīhrīst. II, 2, 288-359.
Also Arabic Risāla in reply to four questions by Sayyid Kāẓim (Mīnāsīān
Coll. MS. No.382, Wadham. Also mentioned in Fīhrīst. II, 2, p.353 (No.295),
n.d., 126 folio, copied in 1268 Q.). In section two where he deals with
the secrets of prayers and other religious duties (folio 5-112) he gives a
similar symbolic treatment of religious rites.
6. Browne, JRAS. 1889, II, pp.881-1088 (discussion on Ṣiyārat Nāmih pp.896-
902). In spite of a lengthy discussion on the identity of this work,
Browne confused this work with Saḥīfa (op.cit.) and yet still another
Ṣiyārat Nāmih written in 1260 (1844) for the shrine of 'Alī and given to
Mullā 'Alī Bastāmī (see below Chapter Five, I.
7. Browne, JRAS. 1899, II, 900. Further discussion on the content of this
work appears in 900-2 and also Roemer H. Die Bābī - Behā'ī, Potsdam, 1912,
pp.1-11.
This attitude of humility and detachment on behalf of the Bab at the time of "ziyārat, as though he was 'admitted in the presence of the Lord," no doubt had the greatest appeal to those who especially admired these qualities. It was the 'sanctity' and 'sinlessness' of the Bab, as well as his innocent appearance, which more than any intellectual faculty or scholarly acquirement could attract students and followers of the Shaykhi school. And in fact it was because of this admiration, that contacts were established between the Bab and the Shaykhi students. By the invitation of Mulla Šādiq Muqaddas, he attended a Friday public gathering where he was introduced to Sayyid Kāẓim and others, and reportedly received his sympathetic attention. In the same gathering, the Bab was said to have been deeply touched when Mulla Ḥusain Bushrūyīī recited some of the poetry of Shaykh Ahmad Aḥṣāʾī.

The public gathering to which the Bab was invited was most probably the Dīwān al-Rashti, a literary circle set up by Sayyid Kāẓim, which met in the building of his well known library, to allow an exchange of opinion on all poetical, literary and theological themes. A spirit of patronage was augmented by Sayyid Kāẓim's desire to broaden his sphere of intellectual and political influence. This was not a rare phenomenon in 19th century ʿAtabāt. Mostly at the expense of his rivals, it provided for Sayyid Kāẓim substantial support not only from Persian religious students, but from a large and heterogeneous body of Persian merchants, Arab origin ulama and literary and poetical figures.

Thus in the light of Sayyid Kāẓim's general enthusiasm for attracting new followers and supporters, it is not unusual to see that Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad, who came from a merchant family with Shaykhi connections, received some attention in the circle. But still it is hard to know to what extent, as it is hinted by later sources, this was a deliberate move by the Shaykhi leader to single out the Bab as an exceptional, or in fact superior person. Shaykh Hasan Zunūzī, an intimate disciple of Rashti, and a later follower of the Bab,

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1. Šahīfa, op.cit. 113.  
3. al-TeVʿma, Salmān, H. Turāth Karbālāʾ, Najaf, 1964, pp.224-9, 238-9. Dīwān Āl-Rashtī survived a century after the death of its founder, up to 1360 Q. (1941), when Rashtī's grandson, Sayyid Qāsim Rashtī died in Karbīlā. The library which at one time housed more than 10,000 books, after suffering chronic waves of looting and arson, was finally dispersed. (Ibid.). For the Dīwān see also below Chapter Five  
who accompanied his teacher to the abode of the Bab for paying a visit to 'a highly esteemed and distinguished person', is deeply bewildered by the submissive behaviour of Rashtī in front of the young Shīrāzī merchant; 'I could not explain the motive which could have induced the Sayyid to manifest such profound reverence in the presence of that youth - a reverence which even the sight of the shrine of the Siyyidū'š-Shuhada' had failed to excite. But nonetheless, beside Zunūzī's account, which may have been affected by his zeal for the new movement, as is apparent from the indirect allusions inherent in the comparison between the visit to the young Sayyid and a visit to the shrine, there is very limited evidence to prove or deny Sayyid Kāẓim's approval of the Bab as his successor.

Much has been said about the Bab's pupillage under Sayyid Kāẓim. Non-Babi sources, whose main objective is to discredit the Babis' claim of 'unlearned knowledge', insist that he was a ṭalabīh of Rashtī. Nāṣikh al-Tawārīkh for example maintains that 'he attended the teaching circle of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī and benefited from his words, and followed the path of Shaykh Aḥmad'. The author of Qīṣaq al-'Ulama who claims to have been present at Sayyid Kāẓim's lecture at the time, writes: 'Mīr 'Alī Muḥammad also used to come to his lectures, and had with him pen and ink-stand, and whatever Sayyid Kāẓim said, of moist and dry, he used to write down in the same lecture'. Hājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, in his refutation Izḥaq al-Battīl (written in 1261/1845) which is representative of the non-Babi, Shaykhi attitude, despite all his enmity towards the Bab, maintains that; 'as it is reported, he possesses (qualities) of peacefulness, gravity and dignity, but in his heart he possesses presumption and arrogance'. He then adds: 'For a while he remained in the service of Sayyid (i.e. Rashtī), but due to the immense glory and loftiness of our centre of faith and the protector of the splendid Sharif, he was not then able to reveal what he had in his heart'. The official chronicler Hidāyat even suggests that the Bab 'was encircled in the teaching circles of the 'ulama of the time, especially that of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī'.

In contrast to the above references, a second group of pro-Babi sources insist that Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad's attendance in the circle of Karbīlā'

3. Q., 59 translated in Browne JRAS. 1889, 894.
6. RS., X, 310.
was short and infrequent. *Nuqtat al-Kāf* in particular takes care to state that 'what has been said about the presence of his holiness in the lectures of the late Sayyid is not correct, but his holiness every now and then attended the preaching sessions (majlis-i mua'izih) of the late Sayyid'. It was in these gatherings that Shaykh Hasan Zunūzī noticed the presence of the Shirāzī youth and noticed an enigmatic allusion by his master, which in his eyes was a clear indication of Sayyid Kazīm's special attention towards the Bab. As soon as Sayyid Kazīm's eye fell upon the Bab sitting amidst the assembly, he discontinued his address and held his peace. 'Whereupon one of his disciples begged him to resume the argument which he had left unfinished. 'What more shall I say?'' replied Sayyid Kazīm, as he turned his face towards the Bab. "Lo, the Truth is more manifest than the ray of light that has fallen upon that lap''.

To what extent Zunūzī's account can be taken as a positive sign of Rashtī's approval of the Bab, or to what degree Sayyid Kazīm 'benefited from the inner light (nūr-i bātīn) of Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad, as it is suggested by Ḥājī Mīrzā Janī', can only be measured by the zealousness of those Bābī writers and narrators who were anxious to find at least some convincing evidence for establishing a justifiable background to the Bab's claims.

However, the real answer may lie with the better informed Qatīl Karbala'ī, one of the earliest Bābī polemists, and himself a student under Sayyid Kazīm for ten years. When in 1263 (1847) in reply to Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khan's attacks, he described his recollections of the Bab's abode in Karbila', he was more anxious to prove the Bab's 'unlearned knowledge' and his command in various sciences, rather than looking for any sign of approval by Sayyid Kazīm. He argues that

'It might possibly occur to some people that he (i.e. the Bab) might have received (his knowledge) from Sayyid-i Bāballāh al-Muqaddam (i.e. Rashtī) and learned all these sciences from him. To them I say that the great Remembrance (al-Dhīkr al-Akbar i.e. the Bab) God bless him and may my soul be a sacrifice for him ... during his residence in Karbila' attended his lectures only twice or three times; once at the beginning, once in the middle, and once towards the end of his stay, and during this period I did not hear al-Sayyid al-Bāb (i.e. Rashtī) speak of any of the above mentioned sciences'.

What Qatīl implies may be better explained by another reference by Mīrzā Ahmad who

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4. *Qatīl.* (529). This seems also in conformity with Mulla Ja'far Qazvīnī (*MJQ.* 465), who states that he himself visited the Bab three times in the Rashtī's lectures.
believes that once or twice the Bab heard 'traditions expounded by Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī' while he was still studying 'elementary subjects' with some members of the Shaykhi circle which in due course led him to become 'an adherent of the Shaykhi cause'. In fact Mullā Ṣādiq Muqaddas himself not only confirmed that once in Karbīla' he was asked to teach Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad, but that he was also determined to convert him to the Shaykhi doctrine.

One year in 'Atabāt was just enough to make Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad acquainted with the Shaykhis but was hardly sufficient for him to acquire a deep understanding of Shaykhi doctrine. Soon, the anxieties of his mother and his uncles, which were aggravated by his sudden departure from Būshīhr, put an unwanted end to his residence in Iraq. His uncle Ḥāji Mīrzā Sayyid 'Alī especially journeyed to Karbīla' to visit his nephew and possibly encourage him to return. But he found the Bab utterly reluctant to accompany him back to Shiraz. It appears that some of the students of Sayyid Kāzim also contributed to this reluctance, since in a visit to Sayyid 'Alī, Muqaddas made some effort to convince the former to allow his nephew to stay for further studies. But Ḥāji Mīrzā Sayyid 'Alī who saw that his nephew was neither interested in the family business, nor in serious theological studies, in reply to the admiration expressed by Muqaddas admitted that his nephew possessed remarkable moral qualities but as he was not engaged in any serious learning and not willing to do so, therefore he was determined not to let him stay in 'Atabāt any longer.

It is said that the Bab's resistance finally forced Ḥāji Sayyid 'Alī to seek the advice of Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī. Sayyid Kāzim first declined to give any personal opinion, leaving all in the hands of the Bab himself, but later because of Sayyid 'Alī's insistence, reluctantly allowed him to return. Thus Sayyid 'Alī was able to encourage the Bab to leave Karbīla' and return, at least temporarily, to Shiraz.

An answer to the question whether the Bab studied under Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī is important, not because it is supposed to clarify the Bab's 'unlearned knowledge' - a matter which cannot be verified by historical scrutiny - but as to define the extent of his affiliation to the Shaykhi school. If he did not attend Rashtī's lectures more than three times, as it is almost certain from mentioned statements, and at any rate he did not stay long enough in Karbīla'

3. Ibid. quoting Mullā Ṣādiq himself.
to fully grasp the essence of his teachings, it is questionable why he should have paid homage to Ahsā'ī or refer to Rashtī as his reverent teacher. As far as it can be judged from the references in his own writings, one may conclude that he had some knowledge of Shaykhi ideas and thoughts, at least to the extent that he could justify his own later claims, or even on occasions, argue or disagree with some points made by Ahsā'ī or Rashtī. Furthermore, what is known of his small collection of books, also specifies the possession of a few well known Shaykhi texts such as *Shark al-Ziyāra* of Ahsā'ī and *Shark al-Qasīda* of Rashtī. Hence, perhaps it is with regard to this benefit from their writings, or with the awareness of the fact that they were forerunners and spiritual predecessors to his manifestation, that he refers to Rashtī as 'the revered scholar and my intimate teacher'². This should not be taken literally, but as a symbolic acknowledgement of their spiritual affinity.

V

The Bab's return to Shiraz in the beginning of 1842 (1257-8) was soon followed by his marriage at the age of twenty three³. His marriage, as it is implied by Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh, was particularly arranged to dissuade the Bab from his prime intention of returning to Ṭabāt.⁴ He married on 8th Rajab 1258 (1842). His wife Khadijih Baygum herself described the circumstances which led to her marriage. He settled with his wife and his mother in his own house and resumed his trade, this time with greater independence, in an office in Sarā-yi Gümruk⁵.

During the next two years, in spite of the frequent recurrence of riots and civil disturbances in Shiraz⁶, Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad, owing to his respected profession and his renowned piousness, seemed to pass a tranquil and relatively prosperous life. Some years later, during his imprisonment in Māḵū (1847-8) he

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1. A. Afnān, notes.
2. Commentary on Sūra al-Baqara, cf. Shikhīgarī va Bābīgarī op.cit. 319. See also below Chapter Four, II.
5. Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh and Ahmad. 448 n.
6. See below Chapter Nine, I.
remembered those 'happy days' (ayyām-i surūr) with some nostalgia. This life allowed him enough time to meditate and to concentrate on his newly discovered eagerness for writing verses. Particularly, as one source points out, after his return from 'Atabāt, he gradually 'eased off his commercial dealings and his business transactions'. Every morning, before dawn, he would spend some time in prayers and meditation in his private room before leaving for his office. Upon his return, an hour after sunset, he performed his evening prayers, and after supper 'as it was customary amongst merchants, he asked for his account books'. But as his wife recollected; 'I noticed that those did not resemble commercial accounts. But whenever I asked him what those papers were, he smilingly replied "this is the people's book of deeds" (in daftar-i hisāb-i khālayiq ast), and if someone unexpectedly called upon him, he would cover the papers with a cloth. Here, the Bab clearly alluded to the 'reckoning' (hisāb) which according to the Qurʾān and traditions, God will require from every man on the 'Day of Reading of Accounts' (Yawm al-Ḥisāb) or the Day of Judgement. Each man will receive a 'book' on which his actions are inscribed, and God 'is prompt in demanding an account'. Very little is known about the Bab's writing of this period, but the above reference, together with other occasional references, suggest that prior to his proclamation, he was preoccupied with writings which had some redemptive and even messianic connotations. A cousin of his, Muhammad Taqī Vakīl al-Ḥaq was once given a piece by the Bab which 'resembled the prayers of al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjadiyya'. Whatever the style and the content of these writings might have been, they were the earliest signs of an inner development, which ultimately gave the Bab the necessary assurance to claim the 'divine inspiration'.

However at the time, it was his piety and austerity which brought him some

1. Bayān. VI, 11, (p.218.)
2. NK. 110.
3. Mīrzā Habīb Allāh. (pp.22-3) citing an account by Khadijih Baygum.
5. Qurʾān, II, 200 etc. For full details see HISĀB in EI and cited sources. For Shi' point of view see Bithār al-Amwār, III, 45, pp.264 ff. and M.B. Majlisī, Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn, Tehran, 1954, V, VI.
6. For the commentary on Sūra al-Baqara, written at the eve of his proclamation see below Chapter Four, II.
7. Notes cited in Khandān-i Afna, p.111. Al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjadiyya (Tehran, 1374 Q) is a collection of 54 prayers which is said to be written by Ḥusain Zayn al-ʿAbidīn (Sajjadi), and compiled by 'Amīd al-Ruāsān.
popularity and recognition in the character of a mystic or a hermit. 'As the
close of his devotion and piety grew' Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad 'became known as
Sayyid-i Zikr'. If the reference in Kazem Beg could be relied on, even during
his stay in Karbila', due to his 'singularity' and his 'austerity' he acquired
the epithet Majzub. He adds that;

'Avant qu'il eût quitté "le lieu saint" où la dévotion amenait
les musulmans de tous les points de la Perse, on parlait déjà de
lui comme d'un jeune homme extraordinaire. On lui supposait de
grandes connaissances en mysticisme, et quant à ses singularités
et à ses paroles incompréhensibles, on les attribuait à une
profonde sagesse. C'est surtout par les pèlerins de Chiraz,
gens du peuple qui revenaient de Kerbêla, que le bruit de sa
rÉputation se répandit dans son pays. "Avez-vous entendu", se
disaient les uns aux autres les gens de Chiraz qui avaient connu
le jeune fils du marchand, "avez-vous entendu parler de notre
Séid Ali-Mohammed? Il n'est plus ce qu'il était, il n'est plus
comme nous autres pécheurs; il est devenu célèbre, et, sur le
seuil de l'imam Houssein, il a mérité le nom de l'Élu de Dieu;
il fait des miracles! Tous, petits et grands, ont recours à
lui dans leurs maux; quel bonheur pour ceux de sa famille et
pour sa race".

It is not known from what source Kazem Beg acquired this information, but
regardless of his euphuistic language and sometimes inaccurate details it is hard
to imagine that the whole of the above account has no base in fact. This would
perhaps confirm the other hints that even before 1844 Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad must
have aroused more excitement than is usually suggested. But no matter how much
he was known for his intuitions or his austerity, he was still only a young
merchant with an exemplary degree of piety and integrity. 'He still retained
his popularity by reason of his piety and honesty. No one suspected in him any
ulterior or evil motives'. The Bab himself referred to these well known

1. KD. I, 34.
2. Kazem Beg. VII. 339. The term Majzub, which according to this source was given
to the Bab, is usually conferred on an unorthodox mystic who according to
'Abd al-Razzâq Kâshânî, 'is designated by God, and purified by the water
of sanctity, and thus without suffering or striving or hardship could reach
the highest spiritual positions'. (Istilâhit-i Sûfîyân in the margin of
Manzâ'il al-Sayirin, Tehran 1315 Sh., p.122). More exquisitely, Shaykh
Shams al-Din Muhammad Lânîjî defines Majzub-i Mutlaq as the one who, after
the stage of annihilation (fani), 'totally shuns reason and remains in the
state of intoxication and unconsciousness ... and there is no obligation
for them since obligation applies to reason and they are divine insanés.
And one cannot deny these people nor follow them'. (Mafarid al-I'jân fi
3. Ahmad. 447.
virtues when drawing a comparison between the mission of the Prophet and that of his own: "Prior to the descent of the Divine Command, (people) testified to the godliness, nobility and excellence of the Prophet of God. But see what they said about him, after the revelation of Furqān, that even the pen is ashamed of mentioning it. In the same manner look at the Point of Bayān (Mutūth-i Bayān); prior to his revelation his merits were obvious to all those who knew him."

It appears that throughout 1842-4, his ideas and practices brought him near to spontaneous intuition and inspiration. If this development was partly the outcome of the Shaykhi ontological approach to attain 'presentational knowledge' (ilm-i ḥaṣīr), it was also the result of Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad's preoccupation with forces which he thought were leading him towards an inescapable destiny. The example of Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā'ī, the widespread esoteric tradition, and his interest in hidden sciences drew his attention towards eschatological thinking.

He was beginning to believe that due to his singular characteristics he must have been chosen for a divine mission, a mission which brought him into direct contact, not with any particular holy figure or certain Imam, or even Concealed Imam, as was common in the visions of mystics or orthodox 'ulama, but with a divine source beyond any boundary.

Though the nature of this mission and his spiritual position in relation to other holy figures was still not clear to him, its earliest indications came shortly before 1844, when he expressed his sincere inner beliefs to his family. According to Muḥīn al-Saltānī, prior to 1844 he expressed his mission that he was chosen to accomplish God's command (Ṣāhib al-Amr) to his mother and his uncle Ḥāji Mīrzā Sayyid 'Alī, for the first time. To substantiate his sincerity, the Bab again refers to his religious devotion and personal integrity, stressing that he only reflected what had been revealed to him. The Bab's wife, who with great astonishment and perhaps even fear, witnessed the earliest signs of a strange development in the character of the Bab, related that for the member of the family 'who saw him being preoccupied most of the time with prayers and worship, it was only clear that his holiness was a superior person, and we therefore showed the greatest respect towards him'.

1. Bayān. VI, 11, (p.218.)
2. For the background on the eschatological and teleological aspects of the Shaykhis and other trends of the time see above Chapter One, II. Mīrzā Ḥabībollāh makes a few passing references to the Bab's interest in numerology, talismans and other popular cults. See also below Chapter Four, III for examples of the mystical use of numbers and letters.
3. TMS. pp.77-9 citing from narrative of Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Hashtrūdī.
respect came to a critical moment when his family 'greatly horrified and
distressed by hearing such words, sharply blamed him and strongly advised him
to repent from his blasphemy and return to God and never again utter any such
words'. But as Hashtrūdī reports, in spite of strong protests, after some
discussions, the Bab was able to win over his uncle Ḥājī Mīrzā ṢayyidʿAlī. Convincing him of the "righteousness" of his mission, the Bab maintained that
his claim must remain a secret since 'the will of God has not yet rested upon
disclosure and publication'.

What is quoted about the recognition of the Bab by his uncle, seems rather
unconvincing, and in fact simplistic, if two facts were not taken into account.
First, that at the time, the position which the Bab claimed had broad and
rather vague implications, and could still be fitted within the acceptable
framework of common religious beliefs. As it is already noted, the Shaykhi
ideas, as well as other manifestations of millenarianism advocated a sense of
expectation for Zuḥūr without any direct or distinct indication of the exact
nature, identity or position of the promised one. Secondly, the fact that
Ḥājī ṢayyidʿAlī himself appeared to have been highly influenced by millenarian
expectations, and his brief Shaykhi contacts made him watchful and vigilant for
the appearance of the promised Zuḥūr to say the least. Vakīl al-Ḥaqq in his
brief but important reference makes it clear that Ḥājī ṢayyidʿAlī 'four years
prior to the year sixty (1260) abandoned his trade and withdrew from the public,
and was expectant (for Zuḥūr). At the time of Zuḥūr, when the cause was
declared, he immediately recognised it. The above references to seclusion,
abandoning material pursuits and vigilant expectations, provide some clues to
the intellectual state of many people like Ḥājī Mīrzā ṢayyidʿAlī. On one

1. TMS. pp.77-9 citing the same narrative.
2. Ibid.
3. See above Chapter Two, II.
states about ṢayyidʿAlī's abandonment of his trade has probably not been
remembered accurately because of the amount of time which elapsed (he was
writing in 1905 at the age of 79. He himself refers to the weakness of
his memory: "No memory has remained and it is impossible to be accurate")
before he recorded his memoirs. In fact it appears that up to 1261 (1845)
Ḥājī SayyidʿAlī did not completely abandon his trade. It seems there were
references to commercial transactions in his letters to his brother Ḥājī
Sayyid Muhammad. Therefore it is possible that he gradually withdrew from
trade about 1260.
5. See above Chapter One for similar examples.
occasion in reply to his younger brother Hājī Sayyid Ḥasan (ʿAlī who disputed the righteousness of the Bab, Ḥājī Sayyid (ʿAlī stated that all the signs of piety and uniqueness which he had witnessed in the past in his nephew 'convinced him beyond any doubt (biʿilm al-yaqīn wa ḥaqq al-yaqīn)' of the rectitude of the new cause).

In the years after, Hājī Sayyid (ʿAlī never abandoned his sincere convictions towards the Bab, and up to the end he remained one of the advocates of the new cause. In contrast to his other two brothers, and most other members of his family who showed apprehension and embarrassment on the publication of the new claims, he lost no opportunity to vindicate the cause. In 1261 (1845) after the Bab's return from Hajj, in an important letter from Būshihr to his brother in Shiraz, Hājī Sayyid (ʿAlī openly expressed his full commitment to the Bab. A few months later during the first round of the anti-Babi persecution, when the Bab was taken into custody by the Governor of Fars Husain Khān Ājūdbāshī, Ḥājī Sayyid (ʿAlī consented to guarantee bail and act as sponsor to his nephew.

Throughout the Bab's house arrest (1261–2/1845–6), Hājī Mīrzā Sayyid (ʿAlī played the important role of intermediary between the Bab and his eager followers. Even after the Bab's departure from Shiraz he never lost his contact with him or with his disciples. In 1265 (1849) he visited the Bab for the last time in the fortress of Chirīq. A few months later, at the beginning of 1266 (1850) while he was in Tehran, he was arrested, together with a number of other Babis, by the order of Mīrzā Taqī Khān Amīr Kabīr. Admitting his total commitment to the Babi cause and refusing to retract, together with six other renowned Babis, he was charged with conspiracy and corruption of belief, and they were put to death in the Sabzīh Maydān market in the capital. At the time he was about fifty five years of age. It is reported that, to save his life 'eminent merchants of Shiraz and Tehran' including Malik al-Tujjār himself, interceded, offering his ransom, but 'he refused to heed their counsel and faced, until his last hour, with complete resignation, the persecution to which he was subjected'.

1. Mīrzā Habīballāh. (pp.7-9) quoting an account by Zahrā Baygum, the Bab's sister-in-law.
2. The letter is partly cited in Khāndān-i Afūnān, pp.25-31. The author of the above work believes that these letters were written by the elder brother Hājī Mīrzā Sayyid Muhammad, but the contents of the letter, the fact that at the time the other brothers showed no sympathy towards the new claim, and the presence of Hājī Sayyid (ʿAlī in Būshihr at the time (see below Chapter Five, I). proves that the writer is none but Mīrzā Sayyid (ʿAlī.
Mīrzā Sayyid ʻAlī's attachment to his nephew should not be regarded as a one sided relationship. No doubt prior to his proclamation, and in the early days of the movement, he was a source of encouragement for Sayyid ʻAlī Muḥammad. 'It was he who surrounded him, while under his care, with unfailing solicitude, who served him with such devotion, and who acted as intermediary between him and the host of his followers who flocked to Shiraz to see him'¹. This intermediary role gave him an outstanding position in the early diffusion of the movement².

These early signs of the new development in the character of the Bab lead us to the assumption that by this time he was already beginning to move in the direction of certain new revelations. The nature of this progress and the manner in which he expressed his spiritual state of mind is hardly clear, but nevertheless some scattered evidence suggest that these changes in the attitude were not completely unknown to a certain number of the people. Even prior to 1260 Q.(1844), Ḥajī Sayyid ʻAlī's role could be assessed from the contents of a letter which is quoted in Kawākib al-Dawʾīya. Writing in 1843 (1259) from Bushihr to Shiraz, the Bab asks his uncle to inform the ʿullāb that 'the cause (of God) is still not ripened, and the time has not matured. Therefore, if anyone attributes anything to me but submission to Islamic laws and beliefs, I and my holy ancestors will be discontented with him both in this world and in the next'³.

However, since the origin of this partly quoted letter is not clearly known, it is only fair to acknowledge that it is not possible to make other than general speculations. This would mean that first, by the year 1259 when Sayyid Kāẓim Rashti was still alive (since he died in the last days of 1259) the Bab's name was known to some people, or groups at least in a local level, to the extent that there were some students who regarded him as the embodiment

1. Nabil. 446.
2. The scene recorded by Mīrzā Ahmad clearly depicts Ḥajī Sayyid ʻAlī's attitude towards the Bab. When after the Bab's return from Hijaz, Mīrzā Ahmad inquired about him from his uncle saying, 'in what condition is Ḥajī Mīrzā ʻAlī Muḥammad?', he noticed that Sayyid ʻAlī considered it impolite to mention his name. 'He blamed me for mentioning his name and ordered me to be respectful; whereupon I inquired jokingly whether he (the Bab) had attained to the position of a saint or Prophet. He said; 'He is more exalted than thou wottest of'. I asked whether I could meet him. He said; 'You can if he permits, otherwise no' (Ahmad. pp.451-2).
3. KD. I, pp.35-6. Unfortunately the author failed to produce the full text of the letter which could have other important references. So far no sign of this letter, which the author of the above work found in the course of his research, can be traced.
of some form of ḥikār, and attributed to him certain virtues which were beyond the recognised limits of common religious beliefs. Secondly, that at the time Sayyid 'Abd al-Muḥammad himself assumed a certain position, and contemplated a new doctrine, though he believed that the time of its publication had still not arrived. Thirdly, this would explain, at least to some degree, the later arrival of Mullā Ḥusain Bushhirī and his companions from Karbila to Bushihr and then Shiraz in 1260. Perhaps it is not unrealistic to assume that some of these ṭūllāb, even if they were not the same as those who came from Karbila, were at least in contact with the Shaykhis in 'Atabāt. Mullā Ṣādiq Muqaddas, who at the time was travelling between Isfahan, Shiraz and Khurasan, may have been a vital link. However these speculations can only be extended as far as a possible link between the Bab, probably through his uncle, with the Shaykhis in 'Atabāt, a link which is vital for the understanding of the inexplicable conversion of a large number of Shaykhi students to the Babi cause.

What is discussed in the above pages leads us back to the original question: under what circumstances could Sayyid 'Abd al-Muḥammad Shīrāzī claim to be a divinely inspired figure? As far as the Bab himself is concerned, he represented three major characteristics which were considered as crucial for at least some intellectual currents of the time, and certainly for the popular version of millenarian beliefs. First, he was an uneducated (ummm) layman, who never truly benefited from the conventional knowledge of the time. Secondly, he possessed a degree of piety, devotion and sanctity that was considered as exceptional. Thirdly, in his intellectual and mystical pursuits he had a non-rational and unorthodox approach. These characteristics, if unprecedented, were at least in conformity with the heterodox and messianic trends of the time.

Nevertheless, they developed in a new circumstance mainly as a result of an interplay between two major themes in the early life of the Bab; the mercantile ethic and esoteric beliefs. As a merchant who was brought up in a traditional merchant family, he inherited a code of personal and social practices which was one of the chief characteristics of the merchant class. The earliest manifestations of this can be seen in the Bab's business practices. However, these moral values did not stop within their own traditional sphere of controlling personal and professional relations. In the Bab, and some members of his own family, these ethical values gradually gave rise to some other intellectual

1. See below Chapter Four, I.
interests. Some were attracted to religious scholarship, mysticism and even secular sciences, and some of them were fully absorbed into scholarly and theological circles to become well known 'ulama. But for the Bab, such a departure from the basic practical ethic took a different shape. His lack of school education, whether voluntary or else the outcome of his failure to cope with conventional methods of learning, brought him close to an unorthodox approach to religion. His strivings to reach the 'Truth' by way of asceticism and austerity, his constant imitation of holy figures of the past, and his deliberate comparisons with the deeds of the Prophet and Imams, his reluctance to comply with or even to grasp the basis of theology, Arabic and the other formal sciences and instead his attention towards mastering the secrets of gnostic knowledge are all features of various aspects of the same approach. Being distant, but not totally isolated from the esoteric trends of his time, he was able to set foot on a self styled asceticism, and to some extent ritualistic path which ultimately led him to an 'intuitive knowledge' with distinct eschatological and millenarian connotations.

Contacts with the Shaykhi circle in 'Atabat had a mutual effect both on the Bab and some of the students of Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī. But contrary to what is usually believed, the influence of the Shaykhi school on the person of the Bab, though not on the Babi movement, is far less than what may have been expected. However it is fair to say that at this stage prior to the proclamation, the millenarian message of the Shaykhi school, and its treatment of Shi'i eschatology, contributed to the Bab's inner search for identifying his own spiritual status. These contacts helped the Bab to see his position, his methods, and his 'inspirations' in the broader prospect of Shi'i-Shaykhi theophany.

On the other hand, it seems as though during his residence in 'Atabat, the impact which the Bab had on the students of the Shaykhi circle, was considerable. To some members in the circle who, under the influence of Shaykhi ideas, were seeking a new 'holy man', the young uneducated pious and 'innocent' Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad had a special appeal. This visit to 'Atabat seems to have originated many later conversions among the students and other followers alike, who saw in the person and in the behaviour of the Bab, some exceptional qualities which equipped him for extraordinary claims.
CHAPTER FOUR

The Emergence of the Babi Movement

The death of Sayyid Kazim Rashtī on 11th Dhu al-Hijja 1259 (1st January 1844) marked the end of the second stage in the development of the Shaykhi school. Even before his death, the problem of his succession, and the hidden struggle between the conflicting factions, had caused some frictions within the circle of his intimate followers. Rashtī's reluctance to acknowledge any of his disciples as his permanent successor accelerated the process of dissolution in the Shaykhi school. His hesitation was partly due to his emphasis on the messianic revelation, and partly the result of his frustration in the tense environment of 'Atabāt. This process was further intensified by the very internal conflict in the school, which prevented him from deciding on any of his students as the sole leader.

The high regard felt for Rashtī by his followers also to large extent prevented them from subordinating themselves to the authority of the new leader, unless they should observe in him the right signs and qualities, which they believed had been often meticulously described by Sayyid Kazim. It was not just the academic ties, but a sense of spiritual devotion which bound them to their late teacher, elevating him to the position of Rukn-i Rabī' and Bābiyat. The emphasis in Rashtī's teachings on 'imminence of the Revelation' (qurb-i Zuhr), and his occasional hints of the occurrence of critical events in the near future, encouraged some disciples, in spite of the wishes of the 'moderate' faction, to search for the unknown leader after Rashtī's death. In the last years of his life, Rashtī's effort to preserve the unity of the school by advising his students to guard their 'unity and integrity' in case of his death, and by appointing a temporary or caretaker head, did not prevent an inevitable breach.

These doubts and confusions were further intensified by the premature death of Rashtī, still in his late fifties. Yet, two of the early sources, Qatīl Karbalā'ī and Mullā Ja'far Qazvīnī, both agree that some time before

2. For earlier developments see above Chapter One, II.
Rashti had temporarily set Mulla Hasan Gauhar over the students in Atabat, while affirming that the day when they would hear of the advent of the 'Promised One' was at hand:

'Then someone asked, "After you, with whom should we take refuge?" He (Sayyid Kāzim) replied "With none, for it is not permitted (bi ʿaḥadī ʿaytis na). Stay for a few days around Mulla ʿHasan Gauhar, God shall not leave you in darkness. The Truth (Haqq) is bound to appear". Then he confirmed that Mulla ʿHasan's leadership would not exceed forty-five days, and at the end of that period He would appear to enlighten the world with the eternal beauty of his light.'

But in spite of Rashti's strong advice to Mīrzā Muhīt Kirmānī and Gauhar against personal rivalries and sectarianism, disagreement over the future of the school was bound to happen. As Gauhar was assumed to be the executor of Rashti's will (vāṣṭa), Mīrzā Muhīt claimed to be the supervisor and the guardian of Rashti's family (nāẓīr), claims which in those uncertain times encouraged them to assume some spiritual leadership for themselves. Nevertheless, since neither of them, owing to his personal character and his conciliatory attitude was capable of satisfying that group of the students who were in search for a charismatic 'guide', they both failed to attract any serious following. Qatīl relates that after a few weeks, when they were reminded of Rashti's promises of the nearness of Zuhūr, Gauhar denied any previous references to it in Rashti's words, whereas Muhīt replied: 'I remember something, but he (i.e. Rashti) did not say that he would appear immediately. Therefore, it is your duty not to be dispersed from Karbila', and make it known amongst people that many claimants are not justified in their claims, since our master said that "the cause will appear a year after me". Qatīl then points out that such an attitude, though for a few months it persuaded the students to remain in Karbila, eventually disillusioned them with Muhīt and Gauhar, and thus they left Karbila for various destinations.

1. MJQ. (463) and Qatīl. (508-10). 2. MJQ. (463).
6. Ibid. In the later years, as Muhīt tended more towards Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān in Kirmān, Gauhar instead developed a mild pro-fuqahā' attitude (see below Chapter Five, II). Tarāʿīq remarks (III, 338) that according to Gauhar neither the Bābis nor the Kirmānī Shaykhs had any real understanding of the Shaykhi teachings and only used them as a means for justifying their own claims.
But if Mīrzā Muhīt and Mullā Hasan Gauhar by their conciliatory attitude and their disregard for the messianic side of Shaykhi teachings, tried to minimise their differences with the fuqaha', and thus continued Shaykhism more as a teaching circle in 'Atabāt, another contestant in Kirmān, Ḥājī Muhammad Karīm Khan Kirmānī, tended to create a new independent centre for Shaykhism away from the conflicts in 'Atabāt. Thanks to his family wealth and influence in Kirmān, which put him in an advanced place above the other students, and also owing to his talent and intelligence, especially in popularising Shaykhism almost to the level of a religious 'sect', Karīm Khan was able to establish himself not so much as a messianic leader, but as a respectable head of a 'sect'. Though in theory he heavily relied on the authority of the Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kazīm to justify his own claims, in reality he was only satisfying a need for leadership in a city which had long been torn by sectarianism. Of course this did not prevent him from claiming a broader leadership over the whole Shaykhi community including students in 'Atabāt. The propaganda of a certain Sayyid 'Alī Kirmānī, Rashti's secretary and one of the influential figures in the circle, who as Qatīl alleges, had forged a risālīh in the name of Sayyid Kazīm to justify Karīm Khan's succession, at least temporarily attracted the attention of some Shaykhi followers in Karbila. 1

Similarly to Muhīt and Gauhar, Karīm Khan also failed to attract the bulk of Shaykhi students, not only because he was away from 'Atabāt and in far distant Kirmān, but because his personal 'conservative' attitude as well as his Qājār background, prevented him from being the ideal 'Bāb' and the 'spiritual guide' for those who were already charged with millenarianism. Indeed the reluctance of any of the three figures to comply with the messianic expectations, left those who were expecting the Zuhūr with the only other alternative offered by Mullā Husain Bushruyihi. No matter what the real intentions of Rashti in his allusions to Zuhūr were, for Mullā Husain and those who followed him in his search, the emergence of an unconventional and, by any standard superior figure, was the ultimate aim. When Mullā Husain arrived in Karbila from Khurasan, after a year of absence from 'Atabāt, just after Rashti's death, he must have decided at least on his rejection of any conventional claim of succession coming from the ex-students. In discussion with Gauhar and Muhīt, he expressed his commitment to the promises of Rashti, but the intentions of the two 'moderate' Shaykhis were far less ambitious. They had resolved to stay in Karbila, and eventually occupy Rahstī's place. 2

1. Ibid. (518).
Mulla Husain on the other hand represented a more radical and uncompromising attitude. If Gauhar and Muhit were fearful of the number and strength of the 'enemies' of the Shaykhis and thus preferred to remain in Karbila' and 'guard the vacant seat' of Rashti, he inclined to fulfil a more idealistic mission which he believed to be in contrast with any further scholastic and academic endeavour. His life and character exemplify many features which were shared by many who had similar intentions.

Mulla Muhammad Husain, the elder son of a small landowner and cloth-dyer, was born in the hamlet of Zirak near Bushruyih, a small agricultural town on the edge of the Khurasan desert, around 1229 Q./1813-14. His father Haji Mullâ 'Abdallah Sabbagh originally came from Yasar (outside Bushruyih) and 'owned land and property'. He was a relatively affluent man, and possessed a number of shops in which he employed some of his relatives. The title Sabbagh (cloth dyer) suggests that perhaps this was his main profession, while the title Mulla indicates a religious status, possibly a part-time engagement as leader of prayers in a local mosque. He was brought up in his native town where he received his early education in the local religious madrasah. Later he was sent to Mashhad to study in Madrasih Mirza Ja'far, probably to fulfil his parents' ambitions that he should become a religious man. His mother was a source of encouragement to him and had a personal interest in his education. She was 'a knowledgeable poet' of some talent who 'enjoyed respect amongst people'.

He left Bushruyih around 1241 (1826-7) when he was a child of twelve. In Mashhad, like many other Khurasani tullab, he studied under Sayyid Muhammad Qasir Ra'zavi, himself a student of Bihbahani and Bahr al-Ulum and a well known mudarris in the city. Qatil, on the authority of Qasir's son, states that in

1. Ibid.
3. Fu'âdî. 23 based on oral accounts.
4. Ibid. on the authority of Karbalâ'I Mîrzâ 'Ali the attendant of the Madrasih-i Bushruyih.
5. Ibid. For Madrasih-i Mîrzâ Ja'far see Matla' al-Shams, op.cit. II, pp.247-50.
6. Fu'âdî. 23.
7. Ibid. 25, referring to a few verses inscribed on the wall of Mullâ Husain's house in Bushruyih signed: 'Hurrara aqall al-tullab Muhammad Husain', and dated 1241 Q. For a photograph of the house see Nabîl. 49.
spite of his youth, Mullâ Husain's talent and enthusiasm attracted Qâṣîr, who in turn authorised him to issue minor religious judgements. Later, he moved to Isfahan, and studied with Sayyid Muhammad Bâqir Shaftî, Mullâ Muhammad Taqî Najafî and possibly Hajî Ibrahim Karbâsî. Since there is little indication of any Shaykhi attachment in his family background, one may assume that possibly in Mashhad he first became acquainted with the teachings of Ahsâ'î and Rashtî. Perhaps his decision to study in 'Atabât came not only as a result of a general tradition of following higher studies in the teaching circles of Najaf and Karbîlâ', but also from specific plans to attend Sayyid Kazîm's discourses. But before setting out for 'Atabât, he returned to his home town around 1248 (1832-3), primarily to seek his father's permission. In Bushrûyih he was enthusiastically received by the local governor who urged him to stay in town presumably to take a religious position which he declined to accept, and eventually he headed towards 'Atabât sometime about 1251 (1835-6). In Tehran, he heard of his father's death, returned to Bushrûyih, sold some of his father's possessions, and then set out for 'Atabât.

His growing interest in Shaykhism seems to be not unconnected with his personal experiences. If the account of some of the sources could be relied upon, even in his early youth, Mullâ Husain apparently had some curious dreams of the Prophet, which later was followed by 'strange spiritual behaviour' (atvar-i ruhî-yi gharîbîh); a remark which may be taken as indication of his mystical preoccupation. When still in Isfahan, it was his striving to acquire 'knowledge' (ilm) and pass the 'stages of mysticism' (maqâmât-i 'irfân) which seems to have attracted his attention to Shaykhism. These early interests have some significance in his later career. Like some other Khurâsânî students who later converted to the Babi movement, and some of whom were Mullâ Husain's fellow students, Bushrûyih came from Quhistân in central Khurasan, which because of its past history was known for heterodox, and particularly crypto-Isma'îlî ideas, which in one form or another had survived in the shape of common beliefs if not in well defined theories.

In 'Atabât, Mullâ Husain joined the Shaykhi circle in Karbîlâ'. He seems

1. Qatîl. (521).
2. Ibid.
7. Z. 113. (اطورزويه غريبه)
8. Qatîl. (521).
9. See below Chapter Eight, II.
to have exclusively studied with Sayyid Kazim since there is no evidence to suggest his pupilship under any other teacher. Soon, as Qatîl reports, he distinguished himself amongst the Shaykhi tullāb by demonstrating considerable skill in the study of the Shaykhi texts to the extent that he was entrusted with the task of supervising the junior students and dealing with some of Rashtī's correspondence. Qatîl takes particular care to point out that his position amongst the students was superior both in knowledge and steadfastness and in order not to be accused of exaggerating on Bushruyihi's personality, he then gives as witness the names of a number of Shaykhis who either studied with him various Shaykhi texts, or regarded him as a trustworthy and dedicated student. Amongst them, many Khurasanis such as Mullā 'Abd al-Khaliq Yazdī, Mullā Muhammad Taqī Hiravī and Mīrzā Ahmad Azghandī and Arabs such as Sayyid 'Ali Bushr, Shaykh Bashīr Najafī and Shaykh Ahmad Shakūr Najafī were later converted to the Babi movement. This may be taken as an indication of the significance of previous personal relations in the later formation of the Babi network.

While in 'Atabāt, Mullā Husain compiled two long works and a number of tracts and apologetical treatises in the Shaykhi tradition. One work, Shark Sura al-Kawthar, which was a commentary in Shaykhi style received Rashtī's high commendation. His praises of Mullā Husain on the pulpit induced many Shaykhis to think that perhaps Mullā Husain was the successor to Rashtī. The circulation of such speculations compelled Mullā Husain openly to deny any particular claim. Of what have survived of his writings however, there is an Arabic commentary on messianic akhbar (compiled in Qazvīn circa 1262-3/1846-7) which argues mostly on the basis of various Shi‘ī works such as Kitāb al-‘Awālim

1. Qatîl. (521) particularly refers to Lawāmi‘ al-‘Usaynīya by Rashtī (Tabriz, 1271 Q.), a philosophical work on the subject of 'triple beings' (wujiḍat al-thulathā) (Fihrist. II, 302 and al-Dharm‘a, XVIII, 366).

2. Qatîl. (pp. 521-2) names eleven.

3. For Yazdī and Azghandī see below Chapter Eight, III. For Hiravī see below Chapter Six, III. According to Qatîl. (522) Hiravī studied Shark al-Fawā'id of Ahsā‘ī (2nd ed., 1274 Q., Fihrist. II, 227) with Mullā Husain.

4. For some details on the above mentioned, see below Chapter Five, I.

5. Qatîl. 522.

of Nurallah Bahrani¹ and Kitāb al-Ghayba of Tusi, the authenticity of those traditions which emphasise the role of the Persians and particularly Khurasanīs in assisting the Qā’im at the event of his Khuruj.² Judging by the quality of this work, which was written on the eve of the Babi uprising of Tabarsi, perhaps to justify the public call for the gathering of the Babis in Khurasan, one may assume that Mullā Husain was well versed in Shi’i traditions. His preoccupation with messianic traditions no doubt was not an isolated case. Considering the extent to which Rashti and his students were interested in this matter, one may suspect that most of Bushrūyihī’s writings were on the same theme.

In Karbīla’ Mullā Husain lived the humble life of a devoted ṭalabīh. As Mullā Husain Dakhīl Marāghihī, who was an intimate friend of Bushrūyihī in Karbīla’ relates, for their living expenses they were dependent on copying Shaykh Ahmad’s works.³ Another report confirms that, while in Isfahan, for seven months Mullā Husain lived entirely on his own personal labour. 'He was working one day a week as a hired labourer while he was living contentedly and mostly fasting.'⁴ This may suggest that apparently there was no customary pension for Mullā Husain even in his mission to Isfahan on the instruction of Rashti⁵.

Another characteristic of Mullā Husain which is mentioned by most sources was his physical condition. Qatīl indicates that when he first arrived in Karbīla’, he suffered from bad health.⁶ Nuqtat al-kāf reports the trembling

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1. al-Dhārī’a, XV, 356. A largely unknown encyclopaedic work of enormous volume written by a student of Majlisī on the style of Biḥār al-Amwār partly published in 1318 Q. Volumes 41 to 54 deal with Ghaybat and the description of Ḥujjat.

2. INBA. 80, II, pp.198-211. Z. (pp.136-9) cited part of another Arabic treatise by him and indicated that other works of him have also survived.

3. Z. pp.54-5. Dakhīl himself is a well known elegist. His Āzarī Dīwān of elegies (maragţ) has been published in Tabriz (al-Dhārī’a, IX, i, 320). His biography appears in Milanī M.H. Tārīkh-i Amr-t-yi Āzarbājджan. INBA. MS. III, 11-12.

4. Z. 114, not specifying his source.

5. See below. This is particularly significant when it is noted that unlike Rashti, some Shi’i mujtahids having various endowments and bequests under their control (for example Bālāsārīs such as Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī in Karbīla’, who for some time was in charge of the distribution of the Oudh Bequest: see below Chapter Five, II ) were in a position to attract many students to their circle and thus broaden their sphere of influence. Naturally ṭullāb’s attraction to a certain teacher was not unrelated to their need for financial support.

hands and even epilepsy which had to be treated with tincture of gold. Others mentioned heart palpitations, anxiety and restlessness, although apparently he was partly relieved from his sufferings in later years. Mulla Muhammad Furughī rejected the idea which was put forward by Raudat al-Safa that Mulla Husain had 'in his early youth been instructed in the art of swordsmanship' and that he acquired his proficiency only after a considerable period of training. Furughī affirmed:

'This is sheer fabrication. I have known him as a classmate and friend for a long time. I have never known him to be possessed of such a strength and power ... His hand trembled as he wrote, and he often expressed his inability to write as fully and frequently as he wished. He was greatly handicapped in this respect, and he continued to suffer from its effects until his journey to Mazandaran.'

Bushrūyīhī was an ardent supporter and admirer of Rashtī who seems to have had a magnetic influence on him as on many other of his students and followers. This personal charisma was a crucial factor in absorbing tullāb into the Shaykhi circle and charging them with enthusiasm and zeal, since only Rashtī's affection and care for his adherents could compensate for the lack of financial reward, or even more crucial, the humiliation and persecution which they suffered at the hands of the Bālāsārīs. However, as factional harassment and anti-Shaykhi allegations intensified, particularly towards the end of Rashtī's life, and hence Sayyid Kazim became more isolated amongst the high ranking ulama, his reliance on the support of his students and followers increased.

Towards the beginning of the 1840's, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī, one of the leading mujtahids of 'Atabāt in pursuit of his earlier activities and in collaboration with Sayyid Muhammad Mahdī Tabātabaī, Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī and others, renewed their call for a unanimous denunciation of the Shaykhis. Their fatwa received a considerable response from fuqahā' all around.
Iran and Iraq\(^1\). To be more effective however, it required the approval of Mullah Muhammad Baqir Shafti\(^2\). Shafti, who saw the consequences of sanctioning such a fatwa and for a variety of reasons did not want the total separation of Shaykhism from the body of the Shi'ite orthodoxy, decided to postpone his ratification, appending it to the reply to a letter he despatched to Rashti inviting him to Isfahan to defend Shaykhis\(^3\). This encouraged Sayyid Kazim to approach Shafti with the intention of 'securing the support and good will' of Shafti since he rightly thought that Shafti's friendship might well protect him against the opposition of the Balasaris of 'Atabat.

Rashti designated Mullah Husain to represent him in Isfahan. In this appointment, he perhaps considered the delicacy of the mission since neither Mullah Hasan Gauhar, who had once been nominated to present the Shaykhi case to the jurists of Najaf\(^4\), nor Mullah Muhiit Kirmanii who himself volunteered for this mission\(^5\) was chosen. Rashti's reluctance to travel himself to Isfahan, may be explained by his apprehension that his presence might have provoked further controversy and in turn influenced Shafti's decision to ratify the fatwa. This would have caused him humiliation and disrepute. It was with this consideration that Mullah Husain was assigned to return to Iran. Although there is no reference to confirm that he acquired his ijazih for ijtihad, yet it is possible to assume that having spent more than nine years in 'Atabat\(^6\), he had finished his studies and was himself willing to return to his homeland.

Mullah Husain's appearance at Shafti's lecture in Isfahan in his long Arab shirt, tattered and ragged from the hardships of his journey, attracted considerable attention\(^7\). For three days he privately conversed with Shafti about

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1. Q. gives the list of the most important mujtahids who approved the Shaykhi denunciation.
3. Z. 114.
5. Nabil. 20.
6. Z. 135, on the authority of Nabil Zarandi.
7. Nabil. (20) refers to his appearance; 'clad in mean attire, and laden with the dust of travel'. The Bab also refers to him as 'a ragged robe talabih' (yik talabih-i pirhan chak) (see below). In the madrasih in which he was residing, he used to lie down upon a mat with nothing to cover him except an 'abda. (Nabil. 23). All this confirms his austerity and humble appearance.
the 'heretical beliefs' which were alleged in the proposed *fatva*. In these sessions, Mullā Husain argued the Shaykhi viewpoints on 'the eternal presence and the unceasing vigilance of the Imam' and discredited the accusations of holding extremist views (*ghulūv*) on the authority of *Rukn-i Rābi*². As almost all the sources agree, his argument was convincing enough to oblige Shaftī to deny his backing for the *takfīr*. Instead, he tore up the *fatva* and invited Mullā Husain to address the public on the subject of the Shaykhi beliefs. He also wrote a conciliatory letter to Rashti in which he praised Ahsā'I by calling him 'Sayyid al-'Ulama'⁵. When Mullā Husain clarified the Shaykhis' position from the pulpit by reading from *Dalīl al-Mutahayyīn* and discussed the views of Ahsā'I and Rashti, it is reported that Shaftī himself applauded him for his courage and obedience⁶. As it was Shaftī's custom to give financial assistance to *tu'llab* and 'possessor of knowledge'⁷, Mullā Husain was also offered a bonus of one hundred *tumāns* which he sent back with the retort: 'We nourish your soul for the sake of God; we seek from you neither recompense nor thanks'.⁸ Qatīl reports that when he left Isfahan for Khurasan without notice, Shaftī sent after him and invited him to return to Isfahan⁹.

No doubt in addition to Mullā Husain's impressive performance, there were other influential elements in Shaftī's decision to quash the *fatva*. His long and intimate friendship with Hājī Mullā Ibrāhīm Karbāsī may have effected this move. Karbāsī, who obtained his *ijāzih* from Ahsā'I, though never committed to Shaykhism, had always offered his support to Shaykhis in times of distress. Furthermore, Shaftī might have thought that the approval of the *fatva* could be interpreted as the sign of his full support for the *'ulama* of 'Atabāt and hence prove their supremacy as the heads of the Shi'i community. He perhaps needed the friendship of Rashti because in the later years of his life his waning authority was in danger of being overshadowed by Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī and Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī¹².

5. Nabil. 23. 6. Ibid.
8. The *Qawān* LXXVI, 9. Indicated by both *Nabil*. 23 and Qatīl. (522).
11. Ibid. 118-22.
12. For some discussion on the leadership of the Shi'i community see above Chapter One and below Chapter Five.
Finally one may suspect that his close relation with Shaykhi merchants such as the Nahrīs in Isfahan might have prevented him from allowing any drastic rejection of the Shaykhi school.

Shaftī's cooperation was an important victory for the Shaykhis. The Bab's reference in *Dalā'īl-i Sab'ah* to Mullā Husain's achievement in Isfahan indicates the admiration and respect which he received as a result of this mission:

"You yourself know the first believer (a reference to Mullā Husain) whose knowledge and virtue is acknowledged by Shaykhi and Sayyidī (i.e. the followers of Rashti) ʿulama as well as by the others. When I arrived at Isfahan, even the children were saying that a ragged robe ṭalābīḥ came on behalf of the Sayyid (i.e. Rashti) and with reasoning and proofs, vanquished a certain Muḥammad Bāqir who was the greatest divine in that land."

This success no doubt promoted Mullā Husain's position in the eyes of Rashti and his students and in due course gave him a greater say in the future of the movement. In a letter addressed to Mullā Husain in Mashhad, presumably in reply to the report of his activities in Isfahan, Rashti greatly appreciated his efforts. Calling him his brother, Sayyid Kāzim, who was clearly delighted with the performance of his student, states:

"You have revealed the truth and rooted out the forces of falsehood. This is greater for you than all the devotions and prayers since all these are subsidiary to this essential cause. Praise be to God, it was with the blessings of our lord the Imam of the Age, may God hasten his emergence, that you received this support and confirmation. Do not fear, the firmly committed are not fearful, and thus God is the defender of those who believe in Truth. Though his friends are few in number, they are not afraid of this faithless and evil people ... Your return to Isfahan is much recommended. Concerning the matters you raised, you should act with the utmost piety and circumspection, guarding the tongue from whatever may provoke suspicion and cause disorder. I entrust you to God."

The reassurance and advice given in this letter to Mullā Husain and the recommendation for return to Isfahan, possibly in response to Shaftī's request, would

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1. For Nahrīs see below Chapter Seven, I.
2. Pp.54-5. Also translated by Nicolas, A.L.M. *Le Livre des Sept Preuves*, Paris, 1902, p.54. For the Bab's sojourn in Isfahan see below Chapter Six, II.
3. The full text of the letter appears in *Z.* pp.114-15. It is also partly cited in *Qatżi.* (523) and in a *risālah* by Ṭāhirīḥ (Qurrat al-ʿAyn) in reply to Mullā Javād Valīyānī (*Z.* appendix I, pp.484-501 (499)). For this work see below Chapter Five, III.
indicate the degree of attention paid by Rashtí to this mission. Bushruyihi's interview with Mírzá-yi 'Asgarí, the influential mujtahids of Mashhad, was indeed in compliance with the same explanatory mission.

While returning from his home town Bushruyih, to 'Atabat some time in the last days of 1259 or early days of Muharram 1260, he learned of Rashtí's death in Kirmanshah. He immediately set out for 'Atabat and arrived there shortly after. No particular indication is given of the reason for his hasty return to Karbila', but one may suspect that counting himself amongst the senior students of Rashtí, he felt committed to participate in the debate concerning the future of the Shaykhi school. Frequent indications in Rashtí's discourses regarding the nearness of the Time, no doubt, made the issue far more important than that of a conventional succession in an academic or even a Sufi circle. Unlike Haji Muhammad Karím Khan and a few of the other senior students of Rashtí who established themselves in various centres, Bushruyihi was not willing to settle, and indeed, as became more apparent in the course of the next few months, he was opposed to the continuation of any academic pursuit. Thus his return to 'Atabat was not with the intention of occupying Rashtí's place. Neither was he prepared to yield to the authority of any other of the students. He was a firm and resolute man with the dedication and zeal of a millenarian. He was a good orator, a knowledgeable student of Shaykhism and a sharp and astute man in his relations with others. He perhaps did not clearly know what he wanted, but he certainly knew what he was prepared to reject. Equally, he never wished to assume any independent position or authority for himself, not out of modesty or lack of self-confidence, but because he did not believe that either he or any of the others around him possessed the qualities that could match the ideal type which the teachings of Rashtí and Ahsá'í portrayed in his mind. He had lived long enough in Karbila to know the shortcomings and weaknesses of his colleagues and was fairminded enough to realise his own imperfections. The very essence of messianism no doubt perpetuated these 'high expectations'. For him, as for those who later joined him, the idealised image of the guide or leader was still not fully developed in their minds, but yet they were certain that he should not be sought in the madrasahs of 'Atabat.

1. For Mírzá-yi 'Asgarí see below Chapter Eight, II. Reference to Mullá Husain's interview with him appears in Nabil. 24.
3. Nabil. (47) believes that he arrived in Karbila' on the first of Muharram 1260/January 22nd 1844.
4. RS. X, 432, 'Mullá Husain kih haváhá-yi buland dar sar ðasht'.
On his return to Karbila', Mullâ Husain found himself faced with a situation which encouraged him to propose a clear guideline. He no doubt enjoyed some degree of popularity and support amongst those students who, after being disillusioned with Gauhar and Muhît, were prepared to comply with Mullâ Husain's view that they should seek the advent of the 'Promised One'. Amid the confusion and disagreement which prevailed after Rashtî, Mullâ Husain stressed the earlier advice of the late teacher 'to quit their homes, scatter far and wide, purge their hearts from every ideal desire, and dedicate themselves to the quest of Him'. This idea had some significance for those students who 'pledged their loyalty and obedience' to Mullâ Husain. But in spite of their support, Mullâ Husain seems to have realised that if he ever wished to realise his intentions, he would not be able to do so in Karbila' where he encountered the apathy, if not the opposition, of other senior students. This became more apparent to him during his two month stay in Karbila' (Muḥarram and Ṣafar 1260/January-February 1844), where he witnessed quarrels, allegations and petty conflicts which were in progress between different rival factions for succeeding Rashtî and establishing teaching circles. His decision to leave Karbila' for Najaf and on the way to retire in the mosque of Kufah for a period of one ḍairah (forty days), was to make his position clear both to his supporters and to those who did not approve of his messianic expectations.

Accompanied by his brother Mullâ Hasan, he started his retirement (iṣṭikâf) with prayers and contemplation. But soon he was joined by other Shaykhi students who acknowledged Mullâ Husain's symbolic gesture in his 'search' for the 'Perfect Shi'i'. Some individually, and some in the company of other senior students such as Mullâ 'Alî Bastâmî and Mullâ Yûsuf Ardabilî arrived in Kufah. Although neither the identity nor the number of all the participants is clear, it is almost certain that between fifteen to twenty Shaykhis attended the

1. Nabil. 47.
2. Ibid. and Ahmad. 448 n.
3. Some details of these early conflicts appear in two early accounts; Qâṭîl provides invaluable information on the disputes between Muhît, Gauhar and Karîm Khân Kirmâni (pp.517ff) while a maktûb written by Shaykh Sultân Karbalâ'î (Z. pp.245-59) gives some references to the involvement of Mullâ Ahmad Rashtî in the dispute. See below Chapter Five, III.
5. His maternal cousin Mullâ Muḥammad Bâqir 'attended to their daily needs' (Nabil. 50).
6. Nabil. 50 and Qâṭîl. (510) cf. Kazem Beg. VII, 464. For Mullâ 'Alî and Mullâ Yûsuf see below Chapter Five, I and Six, IV.
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This was a considerable success for Bushruihi who in this way managed to attract attention and outmanoeuvre the other claimants in Karbila at the time when according to Qatiz the Shaykhis were 'disillusioned and discontented with the activities and manners' of both Muhit and Gauhar and hence 'were scattered to the wind in the deserts and wastelands and resided in the shrines and mosques'.

The practice of \(i'tikaf\) was not unprecedented for Mullā Husain and his associates. In its literal sense, \(i'tikaf\) meant 'prayer and suffering of an ascetic in a mosque' and its essence was described as abstinence (\(i'māak\)), assertion (\(i'sbāt\)) and mortification (\(i'hāk\)). It was regarded as a means or method for investigating the Truth by abstinence from all desires, assertion of \(Haqq\) and destruction of falsehood. In practice, it was a period of devotion, nightly vigilance, fasting and abstinence from food. Though in its origin it was a Sufi practice, it was also widely common amongst Shaykhis and indeed amongst many other non-Shaykhi ulama. Both Ahsa'ī and Rashtī are known to have had similar experiences. On a few occasions Qisas al-\(Ulayma\) reports on Shaykh Ahmad's strict asceticism (\(rāyāt\)). It states on the authority of Sayyid Kazim that Ahsa'ī retired for forty \(arba'īns\) in order to be able to reach a high spiritual state. This practice had also a precedent in Ahsa'ī's teacher Sayyid Mahdī Bahr al-\(Ulūm\), who in his retirement in the mosque of Sahlah in Kūfah, is reported to have had visions of the Qā'īm and sometimes even to have conversed with him about his problems in jurisprudence. As far as Mullā Husain himself is concerned,

1. None of the sources give any detailed list of the participants but on the basis of those who later recognised the Bab in Shiraz, it is possible to identify more than sixteen (see below). Z. and TN. also add new names. TMS. (possibly on the basis of Hashtrūdī) raises the number to more than forty, adding some women such as Qurrat al-\(Ayn\). The author of NT. (III, pp.39-40) and after him many other accounts such as Gobineau. (146) and Kazem Beg (VII, 388) wrongly note that the Bab was also present in Kūfah and even mention that he was the leader of the group. This confusion perhaps occurred as the result of Mullā Husain's title \(Bab al-Bab\) conferred on him by the Bab. Later in 1848, he was granted the title of 'Bāb'. This caused the author of NT. to conflate the two similar titles and assume that Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad was in Kūfah. The Shi'i traditions that the Qā'īm would appear in the Mosque of Kūfah, which the Bab intended to fulfil in later years, must have also contributed to this muddle.

2. Qatiz. (510).

3. Mu'taquad al-\(Imāmīyā\) (cited in Sajjādī, S.J. Farhang-i Ma'ārif-i Islām, Tehran, 1357 Sh., I, 238-40) maintains that one of the conditions of \(i'tikaf\) is to be held in one of the four mosques: Masjid al-\(Nārām\); Masjid al-\(Nābī\); Masjid al-Kūfah and Masjid al-\(Baṣrāh\). For \(I'tikaf\) see also Sajjādī, S.J. Farhang-i Lughāt va Igtiṣālahāt va Ta'bīrāt-i 'Irāfī (Tehran, 1350 Sh., 50); RAMADAN in Shorter ET; KHALWA in ET².


there are indications that he also had previous experiences of *'itikāf*. Mullā Ja'far Qazvīnī in his first visit to 'Atabāt had witnessed an earlier retirement of Mullā Husain in Kūfah¹.

The exceptional sanctity of the ruined mosque of Kūfah, where 'Alī was struck with a poisoned sword in 39 A.H. (656), made it a suitable place for the occurrence of messianic events at the Final Day². The Shi'i *ahādīth* foretold the appearance of the Mahdi in Kūfah in order to avenge the persecution and the wrong suffered there by the house of 'Alī³. This aspect was underlined in the Shaykhi teachings. Even in a popular work such as *Hayāt al-Nafs*, on the subject of the 'return of the believers' souls to their bodies' on the Day of Resurrection, Shaykh Ahmad states:

'... and then they (i.e. the believers) will arrive at the Vādī al-Salām behind Kūfah and will remain there till the end of the Day (lit. beginning of sunset) ... and those who died in this world will return to be killed anew, and thus God will raise Muḥammad and his descendants from the earth and revive mankind for forty days'⁴.

That is the reason for the many holy dreams and visitations of the Imam in the Kūfah mosque throughout Shi'i history. In this meeting place, it was always hoped, a visit from the Qa'īm would take place, in dream or in vision, or at least some indication of his presence could be sensed. For Shaykhis like Mullā Husain and his companions this was not a far-fetched and irrational idea. For them the presence of the Qa'īm was an undisputable fact and so was his contact with those who were seriously and faithfully searching for him. Indeed Hājī Mīrzā Jānī maintains that it was according to Rashti's instruction and with regard to his teachings that Mullā Husain entered seclusion in Kūfah⁵.

However, the precedence of *'itikāf* amongst Shaykhis and the emphasis on Kūfah in the traditions, may be taken as secondary motives for Mullā Husain, whose primary intention for the retirement was to gather a coherent body of Shaykhi

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1. *MJQ.* (448) not giving any date.
2. For the religious significance of the mosque of Kūfah see KŪFA in *EI*.²
3. See below.
4. Op.cit. (Wadham MS., folio 37a: trans. 92). Also for other references to messianic events in Kūfah see ibid. pp.120-1. 'The Qa'īm will establish himself in Kūfah. His residence will be in the mosque of Sahlah and he will execute his judgements from the mosque of Kūfah'.
5. *NK.* 105.
students who could identify themselves with a common goal. The significance of this experience lay in the fact that it provided an opportunity for the group to embark upon the task of searching for the 'Perfect Shi'i'. It was the existence of this collective consciousness that allowed Mullā Husain to put his views across and share them with the others. The days of retirement in Kūfah are wrapped in ambiguity to an extent that prevents us from reaching any definite conclusion. Yet there are some indications which allow us to speculate on the motives which finally resulted in the departure of Mullā Husain and his followers for Iran in mid Rabī' al-Thānī 1260.

Most Babi sources either simply give no explanation for the departure or, not surprisingly, attribute it to some supernatural inspiration. Qatīl, for instance, states that Mullā Husain remained in retirement in Kūfah till he was put out of his patience 'and then after visiting the Shrine in Karbila', set out towards his destination1, whereas Qurrat al-'Ayn2 and Nuqtat al-Kāf3 both imply that his departure came after an intuitive awareness which he acquired in his prayers and asceticism. This may suggest that in spite of their proximity to the time of the event, the authors of the above accounts had no clear knowledge of Mullā Husain's intentions. Equally, one may assume that indeed there was no clear motive for Mullā Husain's journey to Iran. However, Mīrzā Ahmad Ḥishkārī, on the authority of a certain unnamed Shaykhi who claimed to have been present in Kūfah, believes that Mullā Husain's decision was related to Rashtī's earlier instructions4. Mīrzā Ahmad quoted the Shaykhi student as saying:

'We were a large body who accompanied Mullā Husain everywhere and it was our belief that after the death of Hājī Sayyid Kāzim the leadership of the Shaykhi sect would be vested in Mullā Husain, because we did not know anyone more pious than he. He was a hermit and ascetic in the mosque of Kūfah at the time of Hājī Sayyid Kāzim's demise. Two days later one of the adherents arrived there and

1. Qatīl. (510). Similarly Nabil. 51 gives no explanation.
2. Risālīh. op.cit. (500).
3. NK. 105.
4. Ahmad. 448 n. Though perhaps for reasons of security, Mīrzā Ahmad did not disclose the name of the Shaykhi student, still we may presume that he is none other than Mullā Hasan Bajistānī, one of the early believers in Shiraz. So far as we know he was the only one who was present in Kūfah (Brown misread him in NH. 33 as 'Mullā Hasan of Najistān') in Shiraz in Jumādā al-Ulā' 1260 (May 1844) and later at the beginning of Tabarsi upheaval in the fortress which he left prior to the fatal fighting. He later travelled to Khurasan and resided there. This background corresponds fairly well with Ahmad's information about his unrevealed source. Furthermore the tone of the account given in Ahmad suggests that the narrator was no longer a Babi; this again corresponds to Bajistānī who later abandoned his Babi beliefs.
handed a letter to Mullā Ḥusain from the Sayyid. We felt certain that the Sayyid had constituted him as his successor and leader of the sect. On reading it Mullā Ḥusain decided to leave, despite the fact that the purpose for which he had stayed there had not been completed. We asked him the reason for his departure, and he said: "I am ordered to undertake a journey and to go to the service of a great personage". We said: "We presumed that this is your turn to be leader". He burst into tears, saying: "How far from me! Where am I and where are these positions?" He, thereupon, prepared to go to Shiraz, and used to tell me, en route: "It has not been determined where I am to go, but I believe that I may go to Kirmān and see Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān, as it may be that the Sayyid meant that I should enter the service of the Imam through him".

Although the narrator of this account does not agree with other sources on the time and duration of 'ītikāf, all other details indicate that this is a genuine account given by someone who was present at Kufah. A few lines below, the same account makes it clear that indeed, as Mullā Ḥusain himself confessed later, he was not ordered to travel to Kirmān but to Fars: 'and since I did not anticipate seeing anyone in Fars' says Mullā Ḥusain to his followers, 'I presumed that my destination was Kirmān'. This may suggest that either there was a clear instruction from Rashtī, regarding travel to Fars, of which Mullā Ḥusain became aware after the former's death, or more likely there were allusions in the letter which were interpreted by Mullā Ḥusain as instructions for travel to Iran. Though the tone of the above account tends to suggest that at the time Mullā Ḥusain was unaware of the possibility of meeting anyone in Fars, one may still think that his apparent intention to visit Kirmān was a purely tactical move in order to convince others of the necessity of undertaking such a journey. It is hard to believe - as indeed almost all the available evidence suggests the opposite - that Mullā Ḥusain was prepared to accept Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān's authority, since he had already rejected the claims of the others in 'Atabāt. Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Hashtrūdī particularly takes care to point out that Kirmān was only 'the apparent destination' of Mullā Ḥusain. Similarly, the accounts given by Nabīl Zarandī and Qatīl about the lack of support for Karīm Khān amongst the Shaykhi students suggest that Mullā Ḥusain was not particularly keen to visit Kirmān.

However, the matter appears to be even more engimatic when another passage in Qatīl's narrative is considered. Here the author describes the activities of the above mentioned Mulla Ālī Kirmani who because of his hostility to Mulla Hasan Gauhar over the execution of Rashti's will, canvassed the succession of Karīm Khan with the help of a tract which he allegedly forged in the name and the style of Rashti. In this risāla, as we were told by Qatīl, Karīm Khan was praised in highest terms. He was described as (the one who is aware of the'Point of Knowledge' and admired as the 'most deserving of the students' through whom the others must seek guidance. Mulla Ālī later admitted to this forgery and because of it was forced to flee to Mecca, but at the time, the publication of this risāla, as Qatīl maintains, created some excitement amongst the Shaykhis and 'was one of the reasons for some to go to Shiraz with the intention of travelling to Kirman'. On the basis of this account two points may be raised. First, perhaps even the letter which was delivered to Mulla Husain in Kufah was no more than this very forged tract, since both the letter and the forged tract enhance the position of Karīm Khan as the source for seeking guidance. Secondly, the rumours and allegations might have encouraged Mulla Husain, or some of his associates, to visit Kirman in order to investigate the truth of the claims which apparently were put forward by Karīm Khan in his dispatches to the Shaykhi 'ulama of Kazimayn. Qatīl alleges that even in these letters he claimed to be 'the Qā'im bi al-Amr who appeared after being concealed from the public'.

But in addition to these 'apparent intentions', there are other indications which might be taken as the signs of a vague attention to Sayyid Ālī Muhammad in Shiraz. If not Mulla Husain himself, at least some of his friends and colleagues had already become acquainted with the Bab, and reportedly were impressed by him at the time of his pilgrimage to 'Atabat. Furthermore, the letter by the Bab cited in the previous chapter, which was written in late 1259 and hinted at a connection between him and some unknown tullāb and the possibility of a 'revelation' in the near future, may also be taken into account. However, the significance of this probable contact should not be exaggerated, since the later behaviour of Mulla Husain in Shiraz proved that if indeed there had been a previous acquaintance, or even intention to visit him, it certainly was not with

1. Qatīl. (pp.518-19).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. See above Chapter Three, IV & V.
7. Ibid.
any clear idea of his acclaimed position.

II

On his return to Iran, Mullā Husain apparently was ahead of other Shaykhi tullāb who seemed to be still engaged in the forty days retirement\(^1\). Accompanied by his brother and his cousin, he arrived in Bushihr via Basrah\(^2\). After a short stay there, he reached Shiraz some time in late Rabī‘ al-Thānī or early Jumādā al-Ūlā’ 1260 (mid May 1844). The other tullāb followed him shortly afterwards on the same route. There, they met Sayyid ʻAlī Muhammad and after recognising him as the 'Promised One' (Mustaʿṣīd), formed the first group of his disciples, later known as Hurūf-i Hayy. In spite of its importance in the formation of the early Babi nucleus and in spite of numerous accounts related by various primary and secondary sources, still the manner in which Mullā Husain and his companions were first acquainted with Sayyid ʻAlī Muhammad is not fully clear.

The Shaykhi student who is quoted by Mīrzā Ahmad relates that when the whole party reached the outskirts of Shiraz, they were received by the Abyssinian servant of Sayyid ʻAlī Muhammad at Dukkan Riva, half a farsakh from Shiraz, who enquired about Mullā Husain:

'We pointed him out, and the negro approached Mullā Ḥusain and stopped him, whispering certain words in his ears while he remained on his horse. We saw Mullā Husain dismount, his attitude greatly changed. He made the negro walk ahead of him and he followed in his wake. We asked what we should do, and the negro told us to go to the Gumruk caravanserai. We followed. On reaching the caravanserai, the same negro guided us to a room. We went in, and there we saw Mullā Husain sitting most reverently opposite a sayyid. They were engaged in a discussion. A little later both got up and went to the sayyid’s house, giving us another residence'.

Nābil Zarandī, on the other hand, (citing Mullā Ahmad Qazvīnī\(^4\) who relates the story from Mullā Husain himself) maintains that Mullā Husain met the Bab accidentally outside the city gates in the afternoon of the 5th Jumādā al-Ūlā’ (22nd May)\(^5\) while The New History (citing Hājī Mīrzā Jānī who relates it from

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1. Qaṭīl. (511).
2. Ibid. cf. Nābil. 51.
3. Ahmad. 448 n. For the Gumruk caravanserai see Fāres Nāmīth. II, 146 and Binning, op.cit. I, 285. They were presumably directed to Sayyid ʻAlī Muhammad’s office.
4. His real name was ʻAbd al-Karīm and he was known as Kāṭīb.
5. Nābil. 52.
Mulla (Abd al-Wahhab Khurasani who heard it from Mulla Husain) states that since Mulla Husain was previously acquainted with Sayyid Ali Muhammad in Aatabat, he 'at once on reaching Shiraz sought out his abode' and was received with hospitality. Mulla Ja'far Qazvini on the other hand relates from Mulla Ab al-Jalil Urumi who was himself present in Shiraz, that Sayyid Ali Muhammad first attended Mulla Husain's lectures on Shark al-Ziyara in the mosque of Vakil in Shiraz. Once in the course of these lectures, Sayyid Ali Muhammad asked him: 'If someone expounded better than you, what would you say?'. Mulla Husain answered: 'I will obey and listen'. Then Sayyid Ali Muhammad asked what would his reaction be if one expounded better than Rashti and even Ahsaii himself, to which question Mulla Husain gave the same reply. Then Sayyid Ali Muhammad presented him with some of his writings. 'Immediately after reading them', recalls Urumi, 'he was overwhelmed and deeply moved. But the Bab advised him to conceal his emotions'. Finally Mulla Muhammad Taqi Hashtrudi relates that having a brief acquaintance from the days of Karbila, they again met each other in the lectures of a certain mudarris in Shiraz. There, Sayyid Ali Muhammad gradually introduced Mulla Husain to his ideas and claims.

The discrepancy and confusion in these five accounts are typical of much of the available information on the 'proclamation' (izhar-i amr) of the Bab and the formation of the early circle. But this should not be regarded merely as the inaccuracy of the sources. More probably, it should be attributed to a somewhat deeper problem in the formation of the first Babi nucleus and its treatment by the sources. Some later sources such as Nabil constantly tried to give a supernatural sense to their accounts in order to make it more comparable to the traditional concept of tahar-i amr prevailing in their minds. Such treatment no doubt puts emphasis on extraordinary aspects while disregarding, if not deliberately neglecting, the actual process of events. Furthermore, Mulla Husain himself was the origin of most of the existing accounts, and this implies that perhaps his later attitudes and sympathies after 'conversion' had influenced his narration and led him to explain the 'proclamation' in terms of 'divine will'.

1. NH. 34. 2. MJQ. (472).
3. TMS. pp.56-7.
VII. The writings of the Bab. Beside I and II who directly quote from Mulla Husain, III, IV, V and VI are partly based on his account. VII only provides scattered references.
accounts also suffer from the secrecy and concealment adopted by the Bab and early believers throughout the early stages of the movement.

Taking into account all the confusions and disagreements, it is still possible however to render a relatively plausible version of the process which eventually resulted in the formation of the movement. It is almost certain that even if Mullā Husain had a vague image of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad as an exceptionally holy man, he had no previous intention of visiting him with the purpose of finding in him the 'Promised One' for whom he was searching. Their encounter might not have been accidental, but still, even on the part of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad, there was no clear intention of 'proclaiming' his 'mission', especially to Mullā Husain Bushrū'iyī. What is certain however, is that prior to this encounter and following his earlier dreams and intuitions, Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad became more and more convinced that he was divinely inspired and that after Rashti he was to become the 'place of descent' (mahbūt-i vāḥy) and 'source of divine emanation'.

'Nineteen days before the commencement of the revelation, he (i.e. Rashti) joined the Heavenly Host (Mala‘-i ʿA‘lā) and the beginning of 1260 was the time when the secret was first revealed'. Then, sometime after, he became fully aware of these 'revelations'. 'In truth, the first day that the spirit descended in the heart of this slave, was the fifteenth of the month of Rabī' al-Āwval'. His image of the mission which he believed was entrusted to him is illustrated in a khutba on the commentary on Sura al-Baqara, one of his earliest works:

'O, My Lord! You instructed me on the day when I started composing this book. Verily I saw, on that night in a dream, the Holy Land (Ard al-Muqaddas, i.e. the 'Atabāt) fallen in pieces and lifted in the air till it stopped in front of my house. Then afterwards, news came of my teacher's death, the great, kind scholar, may God have mercy upon him'.

1. See below. 2. See above Chapter Three, III.
3. Letter addressed to his family while in captivity in Mākū. INBA. 58, pp.160-2, also partly cited in Z. pp.223-5 and facsimile in 264. A tauqīf by the Bab with a similar content is cited in Ḥājj Husain Qulī Jadīd al-Īslām, Minhāj al-Tālibīn fi al-radd ʿalā al-firqa al-hālaka al-Babīya, (Bombay, 1320 Q/pp.101-4) which contains some extra passages. The author wrongly believes that this is part of the Bayān.
5. INBA. 98, IV, pp.23-7 (27), also cited in MJQ. (471). This was written in Muḥarram 1260 (January-February, 1844).
The allusions in this dream not only tend to explain the new claims by the announcement of the Rashti's death, but also hints at the termination of the 'Atabat era which in his view is concurrent with the commencement of the new 'dispensation'.

With a remarkable self-reliance which perhaps sprang from his confidence in the authenticity of his 'inspirations', he met with Mullâ Husain. First with allegorical remarks and then with complete clarity he announced his claim. His manner, words and writings make us believe that indeed he was sincere in his inner convictions. Such conviction had a special meaning for those Shaykhis who were expectant for some sort of 'revelation' since throughout the course of these early encounters, the spirit of messianism which dominated over the claimant as well as the converts, was a decisive factor in the occurrence of conversions. The account recorded by Haji Mirzâ Janî demonstrates the process by which this anticipation had become explicit when Mullâ Husain first conversed with Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad in the upper chamber of the latter's house. Mullâ Husain himself related that first the Bab asked him: "Whom do you now recognise as your Master"? "As yet", Mullâ Husain replied, "we have recognised no one". "What manner of man", asked he, "must the Master be"? Thereupon I enumerated some of the requisite qualifications and characteristics. "Do you observe these in me"? he asked. To this suggestion Mullâ Husain gave a negative answer: 'I see in you none of these qualities'. Later in the same meeting as Mullâ Husain reported, he observed a commentary of Sûra al-Baqara on the shelf. When he asked about the author, Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad replied: 'A mere youthful beginner who nevertheless lays claim to a high degree of knowledge and greatness'.

These remarks, as reported by Mullâ Husain, created a torment and inner struggle in him which lasted for several days. On the one hand, he was impressed by his host, and on the other hand, he saw in front of him 'a youthful merchant' who lacked theological training even to the extent that he could not correctly read the verses of Sûra al-Baqara to which he claimed to have written a commentary of 'the inmost of the inmost' (bâtin-i bâtin). Although Mullâ Husain himself later attributed this inner crisis to the persistence of scholastic values in his judgement and evaluation of the Bab, it is apparent that in no circumstances could an instant 'conversion', such as is suggested by some sources, have taken place. A few years later he confessed that his

1. NH. 35.

insistence on the traditional conditions set by the Shi'ī prophecies led him to dispute with the Bab. Āqā Sayyid Mu'min Khurasanī related that:

'One day in the presence of the Bāb-al-Bāb (Mulla Husain's later title) in Khurasan (probably Mashhad), we were passing a theological school (madrasa). He looked at the school and recited this verse: "Not one warm hearted man (ahl-i dīl) has ever come out of a school. Down with these schools which are houses of ignorance". I said "By the Grace of God, eminent individuals like yourself have come out of these schools, why are you condemning them"? He replied: "Do not say that, Sayyid Mu'min, all that I ever learned in these wretched places was to make me argue with and oppose the Proof of God (Hujjat-i Khudā) for forty days. I realised the meaning of the saying 'knowledge is the greatest veil (al-ʿilm hijāb al-akbar)' through the fruits of this ruined place. I wished I had no education".¹

Such words demonstrate Mullā Husain's contempt for theological values which he now believed to have been the source of his earlier disregard for the Bab, though either he or Sayyid Mu'min might have exaggerated its duration. Another report indicates that, in the course of the Tabarsi upheaval, on a few occasions Mullā Husain stated: 'I wish my steps had never reached the Madrasah, so I would never have bothered the Proof of God for three days and nights'².

This difference of opinion has also been observed by Mīrzā Ahmad's source who maintains that: 'We could see that there was some difference (of opinion) between the Sayyid (i.e. the Bab) and Mullā Husain; but at every subsequent meeting Mullā Husain showed more respect and loyalty (to the Sayyid) than on the previous occasion'³. Even after the first few meetings with the Bab, Mullā Husain reported to his friends: 'However, I have not satisfied my mind completely. We must hold several other conversations; and I must obtain full discernment, for the matter of religion is a difficult one'⁴. To this, Mullā Jalīl Urumī adds that Mullā Husain 'could not sleep the whole night for his inner struggle and mental occupation'⁵.

However, after overcoming these uncertainties, a short time later, perhaps as short as three days - as he has been quoted to say - Mullā Husain recognised the Bab and became his 'First Disciple' (Awwal man ṣaman). The night of the 5th

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1. TMS. pp.62-3.
2. Account given by Varqat al-Firdaws, Mullā Husain's sister relating it from Āqā (Mulla) Mūhammad Ḥasan Bushrūyī,ī, one of the Banṣyat al-Sayf (the Remnants of the Sword) in Ṭabarsī, cited in Fuʿādī, 28.
3. Ahmad. 448-9 n. ⁴. Ibid.
5. MJQ. (472).
Jumādā al-Ulā 1260 (22nd May 1844) is set as the formal beginning of the movement, since all the sources confirm that it was on this night that Sayyid ‘Alī Muhammad’s claim was fully accepted by Bushruyīhī. Bearing in mind the negative elements which first prevented Mullā Husain from complying with Sayyid ‘Alī Muhammad’s claims, it should now be asked what motives encouraged him to become the first believer.

First of all Mullā Husain and his companions were influenced by a sense of messianic expectation. As has already been discussed, such anticipation psychologically prepared them for expecting the 'Promised One' to be revealed in someone who might not fulfil all those extraordinary and often impossible 'conditions' which had long been regarded in Shi‘i circles as 'signs' of the 'Expected One' but could certainly materialise the more realistic and plausible conditions set by the late Shaykhi teachers. All through the account given by Mullā Ahmad Qazvīnī, symptoms of Mullā Husain’s 'unrelaxing vigilance' and 'singleness of mind' in searching for and identifying the 'Promised One' are apparent. When Mullā Husain first entered Sayyid ‘Alī Muhammad’s house he thought: 'Might not my visit to this house enable me to draw nearer to the object of my quest? Might it not hasten the period of intense longing, of strenuous search, of increasing anxiety, which such a quest involves'? Again, when he stood beside the Bab for prayers he breathed this prayer: 'I have striven with all my soul, O my God, and until now have failed to find thy promised messenger. I testify that thy word fails not, and that thy promise is sure'. Even if the tone and the style of the recollections can be attributed to the terminology which later Mullā Husain adopted to express his enthusiasm, or to exaggeration of Qazvīnī or even more probably of Nabil’s sentimental and often bombastic style, still it is not unrealistic to detect such an attitude in a person who all through his life had been in search of an ideal guide: first in Sayyid Kazīm Rashtī, then in Sayyid ‘Alī Muhammad the Bab and finally in Mullā Muḥammad ‘Alī Mazandarānī Quddūs. The image of the 'Fourth Pillar' as it was developed in Shaykhi teachings greatly contributed to the picture of this 'ideal' leader with which Mullā Husain’s mind was particularly preoccupied.

Secondly, for a talabah like Mullā Husain who had spent all his life in the isolation of the madrasahs and retirement of the mosques, and whose mental preoccupation was to study ḥikmat, ḥadīth and other subjects in the Shaykhi curriculum, Sayyid ‘Alī Muhammad’s simplicity had a special appeal. He represented a totally different background, yet they had enough common points to

1. Bayān, II, 7, p.30. 2. Nabil. 54. 3. Ibid. 56.
permit a dialogue. Sayyid ‘Alī Muhammad was a man of piety and austerity who was also occupied with messianic 'revelations'. He also regarded Ahsā'ī and Rashī with high respect and was interested in their teachings. But beyond that, in their training, their social background and even their outlook, he and Mullā Husain represented two different types. But it was this very difference which was a source of attraction to Mullā Husain and other Shaykhi companions who saw in the Shirazi merchant unusual 'holiness'. His appearance, his manner, and his 'hospitality' (muhabbat va lutf-ī rafāt) were all elements appealing to Bushruyihī and others. As Mullā Husain himself recalls, he was 'profoundly impressed by the gentle yet compelling manner in which that strange youth' spoke to him. It was 'the music of his voice', 'the radiance of the countenance', 'the expression of affection' and the 'sitting in a most dignified and majestic attitude' which fascinated him and brought him to the point of 'conversion'. Indeed this was not an uncommon attraction since, in the course of the next few years, the Bab's appearance was often one of the most important factors in the conversion of those believers who chanced to meet him. The picture sketched by Dr. Cormick, an English physician who visited the Bab in 1264-5 (1848-9) in the castle of Chihriq in Āzarbāijān, helps to explain the impression which he often made on his visitors. 'He was a very mild and delicate-looking man, rather small in stature and very fair for a Persian, with a melodious soft voice, which struck me much. ... In fact his whole look and deportment went far to dispose one in his favour'.

In a traditional society in which manner, public appearance and physical features were noted both by the common people and by the educated as a distinctive part of one's character, it is not surprising that these features played an important role in arousing loyalty and sympathy towards a messianic character. The description given of the Qā'im in the Shi'ī traditions, idealised not only the holy lineage and the personal virtues of the Imam, but featured him as the 'ideal' of beauty and perfection.

The third element instrumental in the conversion of Mullā Husain was the 'proofs' (hujaj) which Sayyid ‘Alī Muhammad rendered in justification of his claims. In this context, the latter basically stressed two points. First, he emphasised the prophecies of Sayyid Kazīm, of which he must have become aware either at the time of his sojourn in the 'Atabāt or later through his Shaykhi

1. Ibid. 53. 2. Ibid. pp. 52-62. 3. NH. 37. 4. Extracts from letter written to Rev. B. Labtee cited in Materials. 262.
contacts. Hence, he laid claim to an ambiguous position which throughout the early encounters was often described as that of the 'Promised One'. Neither the Bab nor Mullā Husain have clearly defined the term as though at the time they were reluctant to refer to any particular title. It is not implausible that Sayyid Kazim was also deliberately vague on this point. However what seems to be finally agreed upon in these early discussions was that Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad held a position above what was usually attributed to Rashti. He did not consider himself only as the successor of Rashti or the head of the Shaykhis but assumed a position much nearer to a messianic intermediary. It is with this consideration that titles like the Bāb, the Zikr and alike were adopted. These positions of Bābiyat and Zikrīyat were assumed with a vague sense of deputyship or delegation from the Concealed Imam. Although, as has already been noted, in some Shaykhi-Babi texts such as Qatīl and the Risālīh of Qurrat al-ʿAyn, Rashti had also been referred to by the title Bāballāh al-Muqaddam, it is in regard to Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad that the title directly points towards the advent of a messianic revelation in the near future. One may even suspect that the title Bāballāh al-Muqaddam was either in use in a small circle of Shaykhis in the later years of Rashti and with some implication of the Rukn-i Rābiʾ, or this was a title which was given to Rashti by the Babi writers posthumously in order to provide some sort of viable precedent for Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad’s claim. In either case it was not a widely known title and in fact had a cryptic meaning. As was to become more apparent to the Shaykhi converts in the course of the next few years, Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad’s aim in assuming Bābiyat was different from the past Shaykhi leaders. It is not unlikely that the adjective Muqaddam (primary, preliminary) in Rashti’s title was applied with a sense of continuous progress in revelation. As Sayyid Kazim was believed to be higher in his position of Bābiyat than the 'Four Deputies' (Nuvvāb-i Arbaʾa), so he himself was a preliminary 'Gate' to the next Bāb who would make his stand public. The same consideration, it appears, was Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad’s motive in conferring the title of Bāb al-Bāb (the Gate of the Gate) on his first follower. Hence Mullā

1. Nabil. 57 cf. NH. 35, calling himself ʿAbīh-i Amr and Ahmad. 449 n. 'the True One'.
2. See above Chapter One, I.
3. See below.
Husain also would be the preliminary 'Gate' for access to the Bab. Although it is arguable that this title was given to Mullâ Husain in the early stage, nevertheless it signifies the high position he held in the later process of the announcement of the movement.

The second point put forward by the Bab as 'proof' of his veracity was his writing and especially his assumed skill and efficiency in producing and compiling numerous works. This was the most positive 'proof' he continuously furnished up to the end of his life as the obvious miracle of his 'mission'.

No doubt, this was a 'proof' postulated with direct attention to the saying of the Qur'ân that the 'Book' which is 'sent down' to the Prophet is the 'sign' (âyat) from God. In response to Mullâ Husain's demand, he first replied to some questions raised in a short tract which Bushruyiî had written previously on some Shaykhi topics. Then he wrote a commentary on Sûra al-Yusuf, later known as Qayyuâm al-Asmâ', which is one of his most important works of the early period. As it is reported, on the night of the 5th Jumâdâ al-Ülâ he compiled the first chapter of the commentary known as Sûra al-Mulk and in the following days the rest of the hundred and eleven suras were compiled. The speed with which he 'revealed verses' particularly impressed Mullâ Husain who recalled: 'Not for one moment did he interrupt the flow of the verses which streamed from his pen'.

On another occasion Mullâ Husain observed with 'amazement' the commentary which the Bab wrote on the well-known hadîth al-Jariya since he recalled that Rashtî used to attribute the compilation of the commentary on this hadîth to the Sahîh al-Amr.

As far as can be verified from the available sources, up to this time the Bab did not produce any work of significance and it was only during his encounter with his early believers that he first became aware of his 'exceptional' talent for producing works of tafsîr. To Mullâ Husain and the other early Babîs, the

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1. Nabilî. 63. Though in most early works of the Bab prior to 1264 he is referred to as the Letter Sin (Saǧîfah-yi 'Adliyah, INBA. 82, 139); al-Awval man Āman or Avval Mu' mín (Dalā'il-i Sab'ah, op.cit. 54); ahabb al-khalq (letter to Mullâ 'Abd al-Khâliq Yazdî, INBA. 91, pp.94-102).

2. XXIX, 50-51. Also see KUR'ÂN in Shorter EI, pp.273-4.

3. In his letter to Mullâ İbîrahîm Shîrzî, INBA. XXXVI, pp.170-80 (174) written in 1261 the Bab specifies that he had finished this work in forty days. For details of this work see Browne JRAS, 1889, pp.904-9 and 1892, 261-8, 699-701. See also below.

4. Nabilî. 61.

5. NK. 106; TMS. 60. The text of this commentary appears in INBA. 67, pp.157-60. The hadîth related from 'Alî by Jâriya ibn Qudâma appears in Bihâr al-Anwâr, VIII, Chapter 64, pp.671-7.
works of the Bab were to be valued not as examples of conventional Shi'ī and non-Shi'ī exegesis but because of their novelty of style and messianic content. Again the preconceived attributes of the traditions which required the revelation by the Qā'īm of a commentary on the 'Best of the Stories' (Aḥsan al-Qisas: Sūra al-Yūsuf), convinced the Bab as much as his believers, that his writings possessed all the 'extraordinary' qualities which are special to the Qā'īm. However while emphasising these two aspects, the Bab still asserted that his mere 'proclamation' sufficed for the credibility of his claim, and that indeed even if he was not able to produce any 'sign', this did not nullify his revelation. He told Mullā Husain:

'Where I fail to resolve your perplexities, could the reality that shines within me be regarded as powerless, or my knowledge be accused as faulty? Nay, by the righteousness of God! it behoves on this day the peoples and nations of both the East and the West to hasten to this threshold, and here seek to obtain the revivifying grace of the Merciful'.

The above considerations explain Mullā Husain's commitment to the presumption that Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad was indeed the one he was in search for. This process typifies what is usually regarded as 'conversion' into the movement. At least in this early stage, conversion was not purely a commitment to a set of ideas and beliefs or even merely devotion to the person of the Bab as an individual. More fundamentally, the obligation to 'support' (nusrat) the Imam required from the believers that they search for and recognise the Qā'īm and his companions once any indication of them appeared and therefore conversion was an obligation which was required by religion to be accomplished. Thus the 'cognition' (ma'rūfat) of the truthfulness of the claimant was the chief motive for Mullā Husain and the others in their conversion.

But this interpretation is contradictory to the idea suggested by some, even as early as the time of Qatīl, that indeed it was mainly Mullā Husain who instigated and induced Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad to claim Bābiyat and that he was the author of those writings which are attributed to the Bab. It is however too simple to assume that Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad was no more than an instrument in the hand of Mullā Husain or that indeed Mullā Husain had the intention of manipulating the so-called 'simplicity' of the Bab for his own purposes. There is enough historical proof in the course of the events in the next four years of the movement to establish the baselessness of this assumption. Yet, it is equally

1. See below. 2. Nabil. 61. 3. Qatīl. (524).
unrealistic to think, as it is usually implied by the Babi writers, that Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad was purely independent and free from any outside influence in the course of his 'proclamation'.

Such committed views from either side should not however prevent us from stressing the fact that in specific circumstances, the encounter between two millenarians, one with a strong desire to discern the 'Signs' and the other with sincere belief in his own 'inspiration', would naturally result in a messianic claim in which both parties played an active role. One may suggest then, that if Mullā Husain at that particular moment had not met the Bab in Shiraz, the course of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad's spiritual development would have taken different direction. The role performed by Mullā Husain and other early believers was far greater than what is usually attributed to them, since they were the ones who directed this undefined and sometimes unintelligible 'revelation' of the Bab into the ready-made theoretical framework of Shaykhi prophecies. Although the ideas and images contained in the Bab's writings soon created a theoretical system different from that of the Shaykhi or in some instances Shi'ī thought, yet in practice the early believers elaborated on these ideas and themes, mostly with the benefit of their own Shaykhi orientated outlook, and then spread these interpretations amongst others who shared with them the same outlook.

The position of the early believers in the writings of the Bab is highly exalted, mostly in order to stress this very contribution. Similarly, the brief and enigmatic remark made by Qatīl that the Shaykhi tullāb first entered Shiraz without Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad's consent and 'submitted themselves to his claim' may be taken as a sign of their active role. Shaykh Sultan Karbala'i also observes that if the early believers had not entered 'the Land of Safety' (Balad al-Āmm: Shiraz), 'the cause of God would never have emerged. When God's will rested upon that, then they were sent towards the Imam (i.e. the Bab), may peace be upon him'.

In the days following his meeting with the Bab, Mullā Husain gave lectures and public sermons in the mosque of Īlkhānī in the neighbourhood of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad's house, and soon managed to attract a number of Shaykhis amongst the inhabitants. Besides Mīrzā Ahmad Shīrāzī who attended these meetings, and Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad who himself invited other tujjār, the identities of the rest of the participants are not clear. However these sessions served the purpose of acquainting the Bab with other Shaykhi tullāb who mostly resided in the mosque.

1. Ibid. (520). 2. Z. (249). 3. NH. 36; Nabil. 65.
After the conversion of Mullā Husain it was agreed between him and the Bab that prior to the time of public proclamation the matter must remain secret to all but a few. It is for this reason that Mīrzā Ahmad noted:

'Mīrzā 'Alī Muhammad used to attend the assemblage, and each of them evinced the utmost respect for the other. On leaving the public gathering, they used to retire to a small mosque near Hājī Mīrzā 'Alī Muḥammad's house, and there they busied themselves in composing and writing correspondence. No one at the time knew what they were doing, except one or two men who enjoyed their full confidence [1].

Nevertheless the Shaykhi students were kept informed by Mullā Husain of his encounters with the Bab. When he was questioned by the rest of the party for the reasons of their prolonged stay in Shiraz he replied: 'I am stranded here' and referring to Rashti's instruction, added: 'I was not ordered to Kirman but to Fars ... I am inclined to think that this is the man whom the Sayyid (Kāzīm) mentioned to me in his prediction about the appearance of the True One'. These revelations caused some disagreement and commotion among the students, even though they were generally obedient to Mullā Husain. But these differences were mostly resolved, as Mullā Muhammad Taqī Hashtrūdī states, when they were taken by Mullā Husain to the house of the Bab. 'We had faith in you' said one of the students to Mullā Husain. He replied: 'Here is he whom we had been seeking' [2].

Hashtrūdī continues:

'Then those 'ulama who supported his (the Bab's) claim argued with those who denied it, until each with a measure (mīzān) in hand to examine Gāhib-ī Zuhur, some with traditions and others with difficult problems came into his presence. In his presence whether by written verses or orally, each received his answer before raising his prepared question, and somehow the dilemma of each of them was resolved until they all recognised him. Then Mullā Husain called upon Mullā 'Alī (presumably Baṣṭāmī): "this is the one about whom you blamed me" [3].

Although narratives such as Nabīl and The New History in their usual manner attribute the conversion of the rest of the group to guiding dreams and inspirations, yet it is almost certain that gatherings in the Īlkhanī mosque and discussions with Mullā Husain and assurances given by him that the Bab 'in truth was the very man whose advent was promised', brought about their final

acceptance. This was a slow process. The Bab himself mentioned in Bayān the duration of this period:

'For forty days none except first the Letter Sin (the cipher title for Mullā Ḥusain) believed in the Bā (the Bab) and then gradually the other Letters of Bismallāh (Bismallāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm) adorned the cloak of recognition, till the first Unit (Vāhīd) was completed'.

Regardless of the metaphors implied in this passage, the above remarks make it certain that between the 5th Jumāda al-Ūlā* and the 15th Jumāda al-Thānī (July 2nd 1844) eighteen individuals were initiated as believers in the Bab.

'The second believer', after Mullā Ḥusain, was Mullā Ṭā'ī Bastāmī who, according to Nābīl 'by hearing a single verse without any other proof' recognised him. In allegorical language the Bab identified him as 'Ṭā'ī who returned to earth with all those who believed in him and he is the second who believed in the Point after the Letter Sin’. Here the Bab himself is the Point in the Letter Bā of Bismallāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm (بَعْضَ اللَّهِ الْرَّحْمَنِ الْرَّحِيمِ) so Mullā Ḥusain is the Sin and Mullā Ṭā'ī and the others the remaining seventeen letters of the same verse or 'all those who believed in him'.

But who were these other believers? Although no clear chronological order can be established, it is evident from Qatīl that in addition to Mullā Muhammad Hasan and Mullā Muḥammad Bāqīr Bushrūyīhī who were counted among the believers after Mullā Ḥusain, the six remaining members of a seven man group (rijāl sab‘a) headed by Bastāmī, were also converted. In an order which apparently corresponds to their conversion in the days of the week they are named as follows: Mullā ‘Abd al-Jalīl Urumī, Mullā Muḥammad ‘Ṭā'ī Qazvīnī, Mullā Ḥasan Bajistānī, Mullā Muḥammad Mayāmāyī, Mullā Ahmad Ibdāl Marāḡhihī and Mullā Mahmūd Khu‘ī. Following them four other individuals, Sayyid Ḥusain Yazdī, Mīrza Muḥammad (Rauṣūḥ Khan) Yazdī, Mullā Muḥammad Bāqīr Tabrīzī and Mullā Muḥammad ‘Ṭā'ī Māzandarānī (later known as Quddūs) were also named. Altogether Qatīl named fourteen individuals. But this list in some points contradicts Nābīl who believes that thirteen students were in Bastāmī's group and in all seventeen individuals were in Shiraz. Although Qatīl is the oldest of all the sources which gave the list of the early believers, it is not the most comprehensive since, for instance, it omits Mullā Yūsuf Ardabīlī who reportedly was present in Kūfah and Shiraz. Indeed if we accept that what the Bab said in 1263 about the nineteen-
man unit (Vāhid) is what actually existed in 1260, then it is necessary that the extra three individuals in Nābil’s list should be added: Mulla Yusuf Ardabīlī, Mulla Khudābakhsh Quchānī and Mulla Sā‘īd Hindī. The eighteenth was Qurrat al-‘Ayn whose name, according to the sources compiled after 1263, was included amongst the believers in her absence. Moreover Nābil also added Mulla Hādī Qazvīnī (son of ʻAbd al-Wahhāb, and brother of Mulla Muhammad ʻAlī) instead of Mulla Muhammad Mayamayī but in the light of what Qatīl says about the former, that in spite of his brother’s vigour, ‘he was in darkness’ and of the fact that in the later years he never showed any serious interest in the movement, it is possible to suggest with some degree of certainty that he was not among the early believers. Equally the later preachings of Mulla Muhammad Mayamayī in his home-town Mayamay may also increase the probability of his being in this group. Strangely enough of other persons in Nābil’s list, beside Mulla Hādī, Mulla Sā‘īd Hindī and Mulla Khudā Bakhsh Quchānī either remained largely inactive or in the case of the former, completely obscure.

Such a discrepancy over the identity and number of the believers can be mainly explained by the secrecy which covered all the activities of the early days. Furthermore, the Bab’s later attempts to put his early believers into a hierarchical order and the difference of opinion which arose over this distinction may have contributed to these inaccuracies. At any rate, it is clear that between fourteen to seventeen people recognised the Bab. But this by no means suggests that in all cases the conversions were achieved in easy ways. At least in the case of senior students, the process was the result of some person’s inquiry.

A yearning to be in the presence of the Qā‘īm combined with scrupulous observation is, for instance, evident in Mulla Yusuf Ardabīlī. As Nuqtat al-Kāf relates, for three years on the basis of a treatise which Sayyid Kazim wrote in reply to his queries on the identity of the Bab of the Imam, Mulla Yusuf had

1. Qatīl. (526).
2. Z. 306.
3. See below Chapter Eight, III.
4. The facsimiles of the nineteen 'tablets' which appear in the English edition of Nābil. XI and are described as the Bab’s 'autograph tablets addressed to the Letters of the Living' have no indication of the names or the identities of the Letters and appear to have been written by the Bab towards the end of his life. 'The nineteenth Letter of the Living' which is described as 'the Bab himself' could not logically exist, as Haykal is numerologically equal to 18. It seems that in this 'tablet' he refers to himself as Haykal. Besides the largely undiscovered information given in Qatīl, up to very recently before the publication of Nābil, even the identity of most of the Letters was not known. See for example Azal’s reply to Browne (NH. 417) Gobineau, pp.277-9.
examined all the possible candidates before finally recognising Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad as the Bab. There are indications which confirm that indeed not all those who were in the party recognised the Bab. According to \textit{Nabîl} the Bab warned Mullā Husain that 'certain ones amongst them will be counted, in the sight of God, as his chosen and favoured disciples. Like the others they will tread the middle way. The fate of the rest will remain undeclared until the hour when all that is hidden shall be made manifest'. This is further clarified by Shaykh Sultan Karbalāʾī who remarks:

'All those who set out (for Shiraz) and went on the quest to achieve the faith were amongst the Šabiqin (Forerunner) but yet there were two persons from Kirmān who were not amongst the messengers (qāsidin) of this cause and when he (i.e. the Bab) revealed himself and the cause was delivered to them, they did not accept it and said that "we did not intend to recognise anyone but Hajī Muḥammad Karīm Khān in succession to the Sayyid (Rashti)". Hence they left the Šabiqin and distanced themselves from them. He (the Bab) said to his first believer; "tell those two souls who are travelling to the land of malice that they are searching in vain".'

Another important point concerning the formation of the early group is that some of the converts might have been informed directly of the proclamation of the Bab or at least the possibility of such action, independently of the 'Atabat party. It is agreed by all the sources that Mullā Muḥammad 'Alī Bārfurūshī (Quddūs) who was the last to be counted amongst the early circle and was later entitled by the Bab as the Last (Letter in the) Name of God (Ismallāh al-Ākhīr) or the Last Point (Nuqtatal-Ukhrā), came to Shiraz not in the company of Mullā Husain or Bastāmī but directly from Bārfurūshī. He was a student of Rashtī, who after spending some time in 'Atabāt, had returned to Bārfurūshī prior to the death of Rashtī. His arrival in Shiraz towards the end of Jumādā al-Ūlā may not have been accidental. It has been said that while passing through Shiraz on his way to the Mecca pilgrimage, Bārfurūshī, owing to his previous acquaintance with other Shaykhis, eventually recognised the Bab. However it is unreasonable to think that Bārfurūshī had started his journey to Mecca seven

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{NK.} 104. Perhaps it was as the result of this same treatise, that Mullā Yusuf even at the time of Sayyid Kāzīm, freely preached ideas which were considered as ghulūv by some more conservative elements in the Shaykhi circle (TMS. pp.43-4).
\item \textit{Nabîl.} 66.
\item \textit{Maktūb} (Z. 249).
\item \textit{Nabîl.} 59; TMS. pp.63-4.
\item See above Chapter Two, II.
\item TMS. pp.63-4.
\end{enumerate}
months prior to the actual time of the pilgrimage without taking into consideration the possibility of his having some previous knowledge of Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad and perhaps intending to join the others.

Besides Barfurūshī, Qatīl's reference to three other individuals, Sayyid Husain Yazdī, Mīrzā Muḥammad Yazdī and Mullā Muḥammad Baqir Tabrizī, who joined after the 'seven man group', may also be interpreted as indicating their independent decisions to come to Shiraz. Yet there is no other evidence to prove this. Another source, Aqa Mīrzā Haydar ʿAlī Uskūṭī, reported in his narrative that Mullā Ahmad ʾĪbdāl Marāghihī, another of the early believers, 'before the proclamation (of the Bab) took up his staff and set out from Marāghih to Shiraz where he was honoured (by visiting the Bab)' 1. This too is not confirmed by any other source but still may reflect some advanced knowledge of the Bab's presence in Shiraz. Finally Qurrat al-ʿAyn (Zarrīn Tāj, later known as Tāhirih) was also counted amongst the first believers. The circumstances of her conversion will be discussed in the next chapter but here it suffices to say that she had been informed by the Shaykhi students of the search for the 'Promised One' when she first arrived in the ʿAtabāt. As she herself says in one of her works, she had a vague idea of the possibility of the 'revelation' in Shiraz 2. The letter which was given to Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Qazvīnī (her brother-in-law) to be delivered to the 'Promised Bab' may also be seen as a sign of this previous awareness 3.

The formation of the Babi nucleus and its relevance to the later development of the movement, should be looked at from two different angles; first, from the theoretical point of view where each and all the members of the group, often regardless of their real identity, maintained a function in the Babi theoretical system, and secondly, from that of their actual contribution to the development of the movement. As far as the theoretical distinction is concerned, the concept of 'the early believers' underwent some changes which to some extent were responsible for the problem of leadership, or indeed the lack of it, in the movement. So far as can be traced, one of the earliest references in the writings of the Bab to the formation of the group is in a letter written in mid-1261 (May-June 1845), in which he states:

'After the death of the late Sayyid (i.e. Rashtī) someone like him must exist in their sect (Shaykhis) in every age.'

1. Qatīl. (520).  
2. INBA. Lib. MS., p.2.  
4. Z. (494). See also below Chapter Five, I & II.
Nevertheless no one left the darkness except those humble men who emigrated from the Holy Land. They are recorded in the book of the True Imam as the most virtuous people although in appearance no one pays attention to them.

Here, the early believers were only described as the 'virtuous people' without any other hierarchical distinction being attached to them. But considering the date of this letter written after the Bab's return from the Hajj, when he was disillusioned with the possibility of any mass conversion in the Hijaz or in the 'Atabat, it is evident that he began to realise the importance of the early disciples as the main support for the expansion of the movement. Moreover, the person to whom this letter is addressed, a certain Mulla Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī, is one of the group of three who later questioned the superiority of Mulla Husain and the others and in due course defected from the movement. One may suspect that even from the very early days the authority entrusted to Mulla Husain and the influence he exerted upon the rest of the members, disenchanted some who perhaps knew the Bab prior to the party from 'Atabat. But in the course of the next three years (1261-3/1845-7), as the pressure on the Bab from both outside and inside increased, his unpredicted isolation weighed further in favour of the 'early believers' and in particular a handful of the more active ones.

It is for this reason that in his writings and correspondence of this period, the Bab exalted the disciples of Shiraz with distinctive titles such as the Sabiqūn (or Sabiqūm), the Nuqabā', the Nujabā' and such like. In a letter in reply to Sayyid Ja'far Shibr sometime in 1262 (1846), he states that he 'entrusted his cause to the "guardians of the people" (ulu al-arḍ)'4, an allusion which may be taken as indicating his intention to leave the practical aspects of his 'cause' to his chief disciples. Sometime later in Sahifish-yi 'Adliyah which is written at 'the height of grief and isolation' (dar buhūth-yi huzn va infirād) in 12625, the Bab elaborated an eschatological hierarchy to demonstrate further his own stand with regard to the position of the early disciples.

Beneath the position of the Imam in his classification, he makes it essential for the believers to have the 'cognition' of the two other successive groups, the Nuqabā' and the Nujabā'. The Nuqabā' are the closest to the Imam. Their number is not determined and they could be as many as thirty. 'They are amongst the people and are intimate with them, but their identities are not known to

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2. See below Chapter Nine.
4. INBA. 91, 165-66.
5. INBA. 82, 139.
people except to some of the Nujaba who know some of them. They are the 'bearers of the emanation' (hamil-i fayz-and) and responsible for the appointment of the Nujaba. The conduct of 'wordly affairs' (tadbir-i arb) is bestowed upon them. If ever any of the believers enquires about their identity, 'the Imam will come to him in a dream and make it known to him in a truthful manner.' The Nujaba on the other hand are known to the people but still their real status and title is not clear. Their number is not certain but a few of them whose number is equal to 'the soul of Ha' (numerologically equal to seven: $\text{Ha} : 5 + 1:1+ \cdot:1 = \text{La} : 7$) are the closest to the sublime sight. They are hidden from the public, but the identities of some of them are divulged because of the hostility of some 'devils in human guise'.

From these enigmatic references at least three points can be derived: the first is that, in view of the increasing difficulties, the Bab felt it necessary to create a systematic order by borrowing from the existing messianic terminology, but the incomplete process of 'revelation', particularly in the uncertain years of 1261-3, prevented him from adopting a clear guideline. Secondly, secrecy is a dominating theme in the writings of the Bab in this period. With some justification, he tries to protect the movement from hostile forces by covering his own real acclaimed position as well as that of his disciples. Thirdly, he makes an important concession by entrusting 'wordly affairs' to the hands of the Nuqaba and through them to the Nujaba. Although in this particular stage the Bab was not willing to identify himself with any particular title, it is certain that he ranks his early disciples in one or other of the two groups. The allusion to 'the cognition of the seven' (ma'rifat al-ab'a) may be taken as a vague reference to seven of the believers in Shiraz (rifal sab'a) whereas Mullâ Husain's title Bab al-Bab may indicate the level of the Nuqaba.

These attempts in the writings of the Bab brought about further speculation amongst the Babis over the identity of Nujaba and Sabiqân. The criticism which was directed against Mullâ Husain and other believers of Shiraz, mainly from three quarters, make it necessary for the Babi writers to provide some appropriate interpretation of the Bab's allusions in order to satisfy the

1. Ibid. pp.188-9. 2. Ibid. 189. 3. Ibid. 190. 4. Ibid. pp.191-2. 5. The first group consisted of Mullâ Javâd Valîyânî, Mullâ Ibrâhîm Shîrâzi and Mullâ Muḥammad Hiravî. (For Valîyânî see below Chapter Six, IV ). The second group was led by some Arab 'ulama in Kazimayn (see below Chapter Five, III ). The third group which was not strictly considered as Babi consisted of Mullâ Ahmad Rashtî and his allies (see below Chapter Five, III).
curiosity of the other Babis. In her treatise, Qurrat al-'Ayn, for example, insisted that since Mullā Husain is amongst the Sabiqīn, and they are 'in their position exalted, therefore no one should aspire to their status'. In reply to Valīyānī's criticism of Bushru'īyihī, she points out 'obedience to the Sabiqīn is obligatory and necessary for Lāhiqīn (those who joined later)'. The definition of Sabiqīn on the other hand is given in the Maktūb of Shaykh Sultan Karbalā'ī where he defined them as those believers who recognised the Bab prior to his pilgrimage to the Hajj:

'As for the Sabiqīn, may peace be upon them, who in the Book are praised as muqarribīn (those near to the Throne), they recognised the Dhikr (Zikr) of the name of the Lord (i.e. the Bab) prior to the Hajj. Verily, the truth has not been revealed to any soul unless he was amongst the Sabiqīn'.

The same attitude in regard to criticism of the Shiraz group again encouraged Qatīl al-Karbālā'ī to elaborate on the hierarchy (marātib) and describe the virtues which promoted the Sabiqīn above the Lāhiqīn. On the basis of Sahīfa-yi 'Adliyah he then argues that no doubt Mullā Husain is one of the Nujaba' and hence he is above the Fuqahā' and the Sulahā' (the learned and the virtuous). However he considered the rest of the Sabiqūn 'those who accompanied Mullā Husain to Dar al-Amm (i.e. Shiraz) to be in their position beneath the Nujaba' and above the Sulahā'.

The speculations and interpretations of the Bab and the Babis in their writings may seem trivial or at most an excessive preoccupation with numerology. Yet in reality, in the face of the mounting pressure on the movement, they indicated an urgent need for an assertion of leadership to fill the gap which gradually emerged after the captivity of the Bab in 1262. In response to this need the Bab made some attempt to clarify in the new terminology the position and the number, but not the identity, of his early disciples. As has already been shown, he alluded in the Bayān to their number when he stated that the first Vāhid is equal to the letters of Bismallāh al-rahmān al-rahīm. Then for the first time in 1263 he referred to the Huruf-i Hayy (the Letters of the Living) as the eighteen members of the first Vāhid of nineteen headed by himself. The significance of this new classification lay in the fact that here the Bab

1. Z. (500). 2. Ibid.
3. The term Sabiqīn (or Sabiqūn) is borrowed from the Qurān, IX, 100 and LVI, 10. It occurs in some of the Bab's early writings and correspondence such as the letter to Mullā Husain, Muharram 1261 (January 1845), INBA. 91, IV, 14.
shared with the Hurūf-i Hayy in the formation of a unit which in his theory is the basis of the 'Whole Being' (Kullu-Shay')\(^1\).

In Bayān he reveals the metaphorical identity of the Letters:

'And for the Best Names (Asmā' al-Ḥusnā), God specified in this cycle (Kaur) the names of the Letters of the Living, because there were fourteen sacred, hidden and secure souls together with the Four Gates (Abvār-i 'Arb'ā) or Lights of the Throne (Anvār-i 'Arsh) or bearers of Creation, Livelihood, Death and Life which total the number of Hayy. These are the most proximate Names of God and the rest of the names will follow their guidance'\(^2\).

The numerological value of the word Hayy is 18 (١٨: ٨ + ١٠ = ١٨) and perhaps this is the basic explanation for the actual number of Letters. The word Hurūf indicates the relation of each letter (in abjad arrangement) with each member of the group\(^3\). The word Hayy on the other hand means not only 'living' and 'alive' but more specifically 'clan' or 'tribe'. Thus a sense of grouping as well as revitalisation or giving birth is attached to the word\(^4\).

In the Babi doctrine the number eighteen represents the fourteen 'Infallibles' namely the Prophet Muhammad, the Twelve Imams, Fātima and the four Archangels. The equivalence of these two values, namely the early disciples and the Shi'i

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3. Numerology (hisāb al-jumal) and the science of letters ('ilm al-hurūf) are both considered as branches of Jafrī Jami'a. The tradition of Jafr is closely associated with Shi'i heterodox and esoteric beliefs. It is regarded as an exclusive knowledge granted to the members of the Prophet's family and their descendants. A strong apocalyptic tradition is also associated with Jafr. 'Only the Mahdi, expected at the end of the time, would be capable of understanding its true significance' (EI2, DJAFR by T. Fahd). In the Babi doctrine Jafr plays an important role. The transposition of one letter in a word by another, representation of a secret name or a concept by one letter and substitution of words with equal numerical values can throw some light on certain unresolved problems in the Babi writings. In most cases these techniques were used to create cryptic codes for those names and concepts which should have remained secret within the community of believers. Numerous references to Jafr may be found in the writings of Aḥṣā'ī and Raštī including al-Risala al-Raštīya by Aḥṣā'ī (Fihrist, II, 260-2).

4. EI2, HAYY (by J. Lecerf). Perhaps this term has its origin in the Old Testament (Genesis, III, 20). In the Crypto-Jewish sect of the Dönme (Sabbatai Zevi) of the seventeenth century, we can recognise the use of the same term and its sacred numerological value. 'In the nineteenth century' writes G. Scholem 'the Dönme assumed eighteen such reincarnations of the soul of Adam and the Messiah. "Incommendacnas" or "Eighteen Commands" were the basis of the Dönme conduct. The Eighteen Commands correspond to the "Eighteen Benedictions" which are the basic prayers of the daily Jewish liturgy; eighteen also possesses the numerical value of the hebrew word "hai" (living). (The Messianic Ideas in Judaism, N.Y. 1971, pp.146-8). One may assume that the widespread use of holy numbers in Turkey is due to the Hurūfī activities from the 15th to 17th century.
'infallibles' is not accidental. Representatives of the past revelation now re-emerge in the Letters of Hayy to witness the resurrection where each letter represents the corporal existence of a 'Name'. The whole of the first Vahid of Bayan deals with the 'Return' (Rij'at) of the Imams and the 'Four Gates' in the Babi revelation. Each chapter refers to one Letter of the Living as the Rij'at of one character, which also includes the return of those who were accompanying him.

But this first Unit (Vahid: 19 = 6 + 8 + 1 : 6 + 1 : 8 + 1 : 4) is not complete without the Bab who is now manifested not only as the Qa'im but as the Nuqtih-i Bayan (the Point of Bayan, later Nuqtih-i Ula') or the 'Essence of the Seven Letters' (Zat-i Huruf-i Sab'). Both titles are indications of the formation of a new independent 'revelation'. Therefore the number nineteen plays an important role in the Babi doctrine. It not only indicates the formation of the first Unit, but as the 'Explanatory Unit' (Vahid-i Mubin) it originates the Kullu-Shay'.

In this revelation the result is the multiplication of the First Unit, until the Heavens, the earth and that which is in between is completed ... and all these units in their degrees end in the First Unit. If you divide the whole universe into units, each one is supported by one above it, till it reaches the last one. This is the First Unit which everybody is bound to recognise ... It is evident that the secret of the Unit (sirr-i Vahid) flows through the Kullu-Shay' (the Whole Being)'.

The value of Kullu-shay' is 361 (ك : 20 + ال : 30 + ش : 300 + ی : 1 + ح : 10 = كُلُّ: 361) which is also equal to nineteen units of the value of nineteen. Here Kullu-Shay' has a broad and complex meaning. Since it represents the 'Whole Being', one can identify it with 'material being' (Vujud-i ma'ujud) or 'being conditioned to things' (Vujud-i bishart-i shay'). This concept originates in the Qur'an: 'All things (kullu-shay') perish, except His Face

1. Bayan, I, l-19 (4-10). In a letter written in 1266 (1850-1) the Bab openly declares that his first two disciples were the return of the Prophet and 'Ali to the earth: 'The first who returned to the world was God's Messenger (Rasul-i Khuda) who was the first messenger from the Qa'im and then the Commander of the Faithful (Amir al-Mu'minin: 'Ali ibn Abi Talib) who carries out the mission to Bushihr and he came to you and you did not recognise him'. In this letter which is addressed to the Bab's elder uncle (for the mission of Bushihr see below Chapter Five, I ) the Bab refers to himself as the Qa'im who has instructed his disciples, the return of Muhammad and 'Ali, to deliver his 'mission'. (Z. 224) Mirzâ Ahmad also confirms that at the time of the Bab's first proclamation it was said 'that those who first believed in him were Muhammad and 'Ali' (Ahmad. 451). Also cf. to NT. III, 40-1 and Nabil pp.87-8).

The Bab, similarly to the Sufis and Hurufis in the past, interpreted the 'Face of God' as the secret of the 'Whole Being'. Thus the secret of the 'Whole Being' is concealed in the first Vahid and the secret of the Vahid is in the Point (Nuqtah) of Bayan which is the point of Ba of the nineteen lettered Bismallah al-rahman al-rahim.

This theoretical framework served as a metaphor for what the Bab intended to create in reality. In the formation of the first Vahid he implied a collective responsibility shared by other Letters: 'God the one and only provided for his own revelation (i.e. the Bab's) eighteen souls who had been created before Kullu-Shay' for his soul (i.e. the Bab's) and established the sign of their recognition within the existence of all things. He expounded a theory in which the Letters participated in developing the 'secret of his mission'. The first Vahid and the eighteen successive Units which follow in the process of the formation of Kullu-Shay in theory are the structure of the whole Babi organisation. Although this 'sacred' order never materialised beyond the first Vahid, occasionally terms such as Miraya (Mirrors), Adilla (Proofs) and Shuhada (Martyrs) were used with what could be interpreted as reference to other Vahids. But in spite of these elaborations and in spite of the theoretical significance given to the Letters, the question of practical leadership to a large extent remained unsolved. The Bab's references in Bayan to Man Yuzhiruhu Allah (He whom God shall manifest) was an attempt to append further action and indeed the whole future of the Babi cause to the appearance of another messianic character who, as can be understood from Bayan, was due to appear after the Bab. In reality however the responsibility entrusted to the Letters of Hayy took a different course.

The actual part played by the early disciples differed to some extent from the theoretical hierarchy set up by the Bab. The insufficient details supplied by the sources only to a limited extent inform us of the geographical distribution, the social background and the past religious affiliations of the early believers. But bearing in mind the problems of identification, it is still possible to make a general analysis. Of the eighteen individuals who were counted amongst the early believers, seven were from Khurasan, five from

1. XXVIII, 88.
4. For references to Man Yuzhiruhu Allah in Bayan see NK., 'Index of Chief Contents of the Persian Bayan', under "He whom God shall manifest" (p.LXLX).
Азарбайжан, two from Qazvin, two from Yazd, one from Mazandaran and one from Индиа. Both Khurasan and Азарбайжан were the provinces where Shaykhis had a greater degree of popularity and following. Similarly in Qazvin, Yazd and Mazandaran (in the city of Barfurush in particular), the teachings of the students of Ahsa'i provided the ground for the spread of the Shaykhi ideas. Seven Khurasanis and three of the Azarbaijanis originated in small rural or semi-rural towns whereas the remaining seven were from commercial and provincial centres. (There is no indication of the origin of Sa'īd Hindi). This may be interpreted as an even distribution between 'city' and 'village'.

From the point of social background, however, such a distinction may not seem very explicit. All the disciples with the exception of two, were from humble or relatively modest backgrounds. Though not much is known about their past, there is enough evidence to suggest that they were mostly from families similar to Mullā Husain's. Mullā Muhammad 'Alī Barfurushī (Qudūs) was the son of a small land owner (rice-cultivator) in the outskirts of Barfurush. Sayyid Husain Yazdi was son of a low-ranking Shaykhi Mullā in Yazd. Mullā 'Alī Bastami may have come from a small land-owning family. Mullā Muhammad 'Alī Qazvini was the only one (except Qurrat al-'Ayn) who came from a family of high-ranking Shayki mujtahids of Qazvin, but as Qatīl points out he was not typical of the sons of eminent 'ulama and did not show their usual ambition to inherit their father's position. This relatively homogeneous background no doubt had some bearings on the integration and coherence of the early disciples and in due course influenced the pattern of conversion in the early Babi community.

These two elements of geographical distribution and social background are complementary to the religious bonds which existed in the group. They were all Shaykhis and students of Rashti. Though there are various references, both in the Babi and non-Babi sources to the theological knowledge, steadfastness and piety of senior students such as Mullā Husain, Bastami and Urūmī, there is

1. For some indications on the spread of the Shaykhis, see above Chapter One, II.
2. Some analysis of the Khurasanī Babi community is given in Chapter Eight.
3. NK. 199.
4. Z. 459.
5. Qatīl. (524). For his details see below Chapter Five.
6. He was son of Mullā 'Abd al-Wahhab Qazvinī. See below Chapter Seven, III.
7. Qatīl. (526) gives a comparison between Mullā Muhammad 'Alī and sons of other important mujtahids of the time whom he accuses as being ambitious and preoccupied with worldly affairs.
no indication to confirm that indeed any of them had acquired authorisation for *ijtihād*. Therefore in the absence of any further information it is only fair to classify them as senior *tullāb* or *qarīb al-ījtihād*. Except in the three cases of Sayyid Husain Yazdī, Mullā Muhammad Qazvīnī and Qurrat al-‘Ayn, the past religious affiliation of their families is not known. But in most cases they themselves were converted to Shaykhism either when they were still in their home towns, or in the early stages of their studies in provincial centres such as Isfahan, Mashhad or Tabrīz. Almost in all cases their earlier interest in Shaykhism was followed by their later study under Rashtī - an indication of the importance of the local Shaykhi 'ulama in attracting students and recruiting them for the Shaykhi circle in the 'Atabāt. But what was perhaps distinctive in their version of Shaykhism, was that they were all deeply motivated by messianic ideas. Reference has already been made to the presence in Mullā Husain and Mullā Muhammad 'Alī Barfurūshī of these tendencies which, as far as our sources indicate, were also shared by Qurrat al-'Ayn, Mullā 'Alī Bāstāmī and Mullā Yusuf Ardabīlī.

These elements would explain the similarity of the early disciples in their intentions, but nevertheless they would not indicate an equal participation in the future of the movement. In the course of the first four years, up to the time of the Badasht gathering and the events which led to the upheaval of Tabarsī, the group of early disciples hardly had the opportunity to act collectively or indeed to implement a common policy. Thus, the efforts and activities of the members of the early group were guided by their own individual

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1. *KD*. (I, 42) maintains that Mullā Muḥammad 'Alī Barfurūshī also came from a Shaykhi background though he did not produce any source for this claim.

2. See above.

3. See above Chapter Two, II.

4. See below Chapter Five, III.

5. Such tendencies are visible in Mullā Yusuf even at the time of Rashtī. As a result of his free advocacy of messianic ideas and particularly attributing the status of the 'Promised One' to Rashtī himself, he was accused by others as being ghālī (extremist) and even heretic. Following the protest of some students to Rashtī, the latter was forced to intervene and even denounce Mullā Yusuf. Later he warned him against revealing 'secrets' which are only granted to *khavās* by referring to a hadīth: 'Whoever reveals our secrets, suffers the agony of the sword' (*TMS.* pp.43-4). Mullā Mahdī Khu'ī, brother of Mullā Mahmūd, one of the Letters of Haqq, who was also accused of ghulūv, was strongly condemned by Sayyid Kāzīm and even threatened with expulsion from the Shaykhi circle (*Nabil*. 25). Such an attitude in the above individuals, both from Azarbāījān, perhaps may be explained by the possible existence of *Ahli-i Haqq* elements in their background.
initiatives. According to their actual contribution to the progress of the movement, they can be divided into four groups. First are those who played leading parts both by converting new individuals and by expounding the Babi doctrine. Mullā Husain, Mullā 'Abbās, Ṭurrat al-Āyn and in the later stages Mullā Muhammad 'Alī Mazandarānī (Quddūs) are the most important of the early Babi leaders. The second group are those who had a major participation in the development of the movement, but could not be defined as leaders. They are Mullā Jalīl Urumī, Mullā Muhammad 'Alī Qazvīnī, Mullā Ahmad Ibdāl Marāghī, Mullā Muhammad Bāqīr Tabrīzī, Mullā Yūsuf Ardabīlī and Sayyid Husain Yazdī.

The third group were those who did not play an important part in the course of the events but yet remained dedicated Babis. Mullā Hasan Bushrūyī, Mullā Muhammad Bāqīr Bushrūyī, Mullā Mahmūd Khu′ī and Mullā Muhammad Mayamay′ī are among this group. The fourth are those who remained totally inactive or obscure, or else defected from the Babi ranks. They were Mullā Muhammad Raužīkh Khān Yazdī, Mullā Khudābakhsh Quchānī, Mullā Sa′īd Hindī and Mullā Hasan Bajistānī.

The theoretical hierarchy of the First Vahīd only partly corresponded to reality. With the exception of the limited success of the Bab in converting new individuals to the movement, the main burden of advocating the new creed rested on the shoulders of the first group who, in cooperation with the members of the second group as well as other important figures who later joined the movement, created a network which, though small in size and ability, was active enough to expand the movement beyond the community of the Shaykhis.

III

The 'proclamation' of the Bab and the formation of the Babi nucleus was the first step towards a more comprehensive 'manifestation' with the main aim of delivering the new message to a wider audience. In simple terms, the message was typical of what may be expected of a millenarian movement. It preached the appearance of a central 'holy' figure who was the sole representative of the Concealed Imam, and who was variably defined as the Bab, the Zikr, Baqīyatallah the Hujjat and similar terms. He was entrusted by the Imam with heralding the nearness of the Zuhūr and the approach of the Day of Return (Yaum al-Riḍʿa) and then the Day of Resurrection (Yaum al-Qiyāma). But before the advent of the

1. Perhaps the degree of the dedication of the early disciples could be measured by the fact that of the fourteen individuals mentioned in the first three above groups, with the exception of Mullā 'Abbās Ṭurrat al-Āyn who died in gaol (see below Chapter Five, II ) and Mullā Muhammad Bāqīr Tabrīzī who died a natural death, all were either killed in Ṭabarsī, or executed in 1268 (1852) in Tehran.
Imam himself, the Bab and his companions were commissioned to warn the people, to call them to 'recognise' the 'truth' and to join the rank of the 'supporters' of the Qa'im. But this was only the facade to a more complex process which shaped the early Babi theory of Zuhur. Plans and policies for the 'declaration' of the advent of the Imam, the various dimensions of the position claimed by the Bab, the appeal of the movement to the public and its warning to the secular and religious authorities, were features which gave distinctive characteristics to the new message.

To justify their claims, the Bab and his followers relied more than anything on the past messianic prophecies. Although on a few occasions, particularly in his later works, the Bab tried to minimise the significance of the Shi'i traditions in justifying his 'truthfulness' (hujiyat), nevertheless, neither he nor his followers escaped the overwhelming influence of the prophecies of Rij'at and Qiyamat. In Dala'il-i Sab'ah for instance the Bab points out that 'Since your orientation is still towards the past words of the "People of the House" (Ahl-i Bayt, i.e. The Prophet and the Imams), thus you search in the ahādīth to find justifications. However, it is not right to establish the (truthfulness) of the possessor of the proofs and signs (i.e. the Bab himself) by means of the past traditions since the return of the authors of these traditions would be brought about by his words'¹.

Yet in the same work he refers to traditions related by Mufaddal, Abī Lubayd Makhzūnī, Ibn 'Abbās, to al-Khutba al-Tutunjīya attributed to 'Alī, the tradition of Lauh al-Fatīma, the tradition of Azarbaijān and the prayers of Nudba and Ramadan to make the same justification². In his letter to Muhammad Shah he concludes: 'And all the torments reported in the ḥaḥrār, which are cited on innumerable occasions, are now fulfilled'. These traditions, whether in their original form, or in more concise forms suggested by Shaykhism³, remained at the centre of the activities planned to be carried out in the early stages of the movement. In this adoption of the past prophecies, the Babis tended towards a more symbolic presentation of the Resurrection, yet the idealistic aspect of their interpretation was dominant enough to remain as the basic 'scenario' for what they tried to fulfil.

3. INBA. 64, pp.103-26 (111).
4. Examples of this approach appear in Shark al-Ziyara (op.cit.) under the titles: 'About Rij'ā and Zuhūr' (III, pp.54-87) and 'About the meaning of the time of Rij'ā' (III, 357). See also above, Chapter One for further details.
Setting aside all the discrepancies and differences of opinion in the Shi'i messianic traditions, it is still possible to discern an implicit distinction between the Day of Return and the Day of Resurrection. Such a distinction has some bearing on our argument. It appears that for the Babis, this Day of Return was the period when they, as the symbolic reincarnations of the past holy figures, were responsible for the fulfillment of those tasks which were supposed to be accomplished prior to the Resurrection. Mullā Muhammad Bāqīr Majlīsī for instance points out that in the period of Ṣaḥīḥ prior to the Day of Qiyāmat, and simultaneous with the appearance of the Qā'im, 'some of the best of the people and the worst of the evil will return to the earth'\(^1\). It is in this period that the Prophet, 'Alī, the other Imams, the saints and the prophets of the past will return to accompany the Qā'im in his Khurūj. Majlīsī argues that there is no clear evidence regarding the exact time of Ṣaḥīḥ, yet it is most probable that it will take place just before Resurrection\(^2\). As is implied by most of the sources, this Return 'is not applicable to all creatures. Only those believers return who are perfect in their beliefs or those whose beliefs are sheer blasphemy\(^3\). Thus in this period prior to Qiyāmat-i Kubrā only the 'Special Return' (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Khāṣṣa) (as opposed to General Return: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Āmma) would occur to allow the Qā'im and his companions to prepare themselves against the forces of evil\(^4\).

Amongst the traditions recorded about the Day of Return, the well known hadīth related by al-Mufaddal ibn 'Umar from Imam Ja'far Sādiq\(^5\), further clarifies the circumstances of the 'Special Return'. According to this hadīth the Qā'im will first appear in Mecca at the time of the annual pilgrimage. 'He will stand between the Rukn and the Maqām and call loudly: 'O! My noble men and my companions and those whom God spared for the purpose of my assistance prior to the day of my appearance on the earth, now come to me'\(^6\). Thus God will

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1. Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn, op.cit. 212.
2. Ibid. pp.210-12 cf. 224. In a hadīth related from 'Alī in reply to the question 'whether the dead will rise before Qiyāmat and die after it', he replied: 'Yes, I swear to God that the blasphemy which will take place at the time of Ṣaḥīḥ is far greater than anything which happened before'. (Muhammad Bāqīr Majlīsī, Bīhār al-Anwār 1st ed. 25 vols. Tehran, 1301-15 Q. XIII, 33, Persian translation of vol.XIII by Muhammad Ḥasan Urūmīyīlī, Tabrīz, 1260 Q. (Tehran 1397 Q.) 677 cf. 693 (Pers. trans.)) where a hadīth related from Ja'far Sādiq interprets the Qurān (XXVII, 85) and puts a clear distinction between the two events of Ṣaḥīḥ and Qiyāmat.
deliver his call to the companions wherever they may be throughout the world. Then after declaring his manifestation to the people of Mecca and preaching 'with truthfulness and wisdom', he will call his companions to come to his 'assistance' (nusra). In response three hundred and thirteen Shi'i noblemen (Muqāba') will join him and swear to him the oath of allegiance. On his arrival in Madīna, he will put the inhabitants to a test, to examine their faithfulness to the House of ʿAlī. He will punish the sinful and reward the faithful who will all join him in his holy Khurūj. Then he will set out for Kūfah where 'on the land between Najaf and Kūfah', he will be received by his great ancestors. The Prophet, ʿAlī, his son Husain and all other Imams, prophets and saints, companions and firm believers will be resurrected to join the Imam of the Age. From the outskirts of Kūfah, he will start his holy Khurūj against the forces of evil in order to revenge the wrong and oppression suffered by the House of ʿAlī and their supporters throughout time. From Kūfah which will be the headquarters of the Qā'īm, he will lead his forces to the four quarters of the earth. He will wage war against the Sufyānī Banners (Nayāt al-Sufyānī) which are the symbols of evil, with the help of some other messianic figures such as the Hasanī Youth (al-Patī al-Hasanī), the Pure Soul (al-Nafs al-Dhakiya) and the warriors of Tāliqān, Khurasan, Yemen and Arabia. After fierce battles, he will finally crush all the forces of his enemies and conquer the world. Thus 'when the earth is filled with oppression and tyranny, he will rise to fill it with justice and equity'\(^1\).

This schematic account given of the events of the time in the hadīth of Mufaddal differs in some of its details from numerous other hadīth on this subject, to the extent that it is hardly possible to draw an overall picture of this eschatological event. No attempt has been made here to unravel the complexities of this highly confused issue or to give an explanation for this discrepancy. What is intended however, is to show the general impact of these traditions, if not in their minute details, on the behaviour of the early Babis. It is clear from the account of Mufaddal, that some time prior to the Qiyāmat the Qā'īm commences his mission in Mecca, then he marches to Medina and then goes to the Holy Land of the Ḥatabāt where he begins his Khurūj. This appears to be the beginning of Qiyāmat. Throughout his campaign, whether in Kūfah, Najaf or Karbila or anywhere else, he and his companions are engaged in a holy war (jihād) and a rising (qiyām). The Qā'īm bi al-Sayf (the one who shall rise with

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\(^1\) Ibid. XIII, 1, 2: Pers. 5 citing Abī Ghanām al-Khādīm who is relating from Imam Ḥasan ʿAsgārī. Also related from the Prophet (ibid. XIII, 6/a, Pers. pp.64-5).
the sword) therefore is fulfilling the historic revenge which was postponed by the Imams to a proper moment in the future. These events could not take place without the participation of the same holy characters who were involved in the original events. Hence the Prophet, 'Ali and, perhaps the most important of all, Husain ibn 'Ali are bound to return to the same scenes. But yet in spite of all the fighting and even the conquest of the world, the fate of the Qa'im and the other holy figures is not wholly clear. Though some optimistic traditions predict the Qa'im's long reign over the world and the total annihilation of all the evil forces, others forecast his death in battle or at the hand of the evil-doers a few years after his appearance. Perhaps the essence of the Qa'im's mission is not so much in the ultimate conquest of the 'truth' over 'evil' as in his very act of 'rising' (qiyam).

In a symbolic re-enactment, the Bab and his followers were to fulfil this eschatological Return. The Bab himself was convinced that though 'externally' (zāhirī) he was the 'Gate' to the Imam, but 'internally' (bātini) he was the Imam himself. So each of his followers was to fulfil the return of the Imams and the saints. The traditions gave the general guidance, whereas the theoretical preparations in the Shaykhi theory of non-material Ma'ād permitted these symbolic identifications. Scanty references to the early ideas and plans of the Shiraz group at least make it clear that they were only vaguely conscious of this messianic Return, but they were less in the dark about their immediate targets. The traditions drew the principal lines for the future plans of the movement: the disciples would disperse all through the Shi'i lands to provide all the 'support' necessary for the Zuhūr of the Qa'im, the Bab himself would travel to Mecca to declare the advent of the Qa'im and the imminence of the Qiyamat, though not necessarily 'revealing' himself as the Qa'im; then both he and his disciples, accompanied by other 'supporters', would gather in 'Atabāt to fulfil the next stage of the messianic prophecies. In practice this meant

1. Ibid. XIII, 6: Pers. 66-7; Ḥaqq al-Yaqūn, pp.185-6; Sharḥ al-Ziyāra, III, pp.57-61; Ḥayāt al-Nafs, MS. folio 36: pp.121-2 and NK. 201. All the above sources supply different traditions regarding the fate of the Qa'im and his companions.

2. See above, Chapter One, II.

3. In Sahifah-yi 'Adīyāh for instance the Bab argues that the essence of the cognition of the Imams is the belief in their return. Baqīyatallah (the Remnant of God) who is the Imam of the Age would lead the return of the other Imams. 'Belief in the Concealment is equal to the belief in the Return and the greatest sign of the Return is the emergence of the Amir al-Mu'minin whose body is wrapped in the cloak of light. Though he is evident, people are in darkness'. (op.cit. pp.183-6).

4. Both the non-Babi sources such as Ishāq al-Bāṭil and the early Babi sources such as NK. 111 and Hashtrūdī (cited in TMS. 70) confirm this plan.
the accomplishment of three main tasks: first to inform those Shaykhi elements who, because of a similar outlook to that of the early disciples, were likely to recognise the Bab; secondly, to prepare the public for the general declaration; and thirdly to address the religious and secular authorities with warnings from the Bab. These objectives were to be achieved by mobilising the Shaykhi tullab in the 'Atabat and preparing the ground for the arrival of the Bab, organising Shaykhi support inside Iran, preaching admonitory sermons and speeches, visiting the eminent 'ulama and mujtahids in important religious centres and addressing the monarch and the state authorities. These were preliminary measures which were to be carried out simultaneously with the Bab's journey to Mecca and then to the 'Atabat where he would declare his mission to the public and divulge his real claim and identity. Though this was never clearly pronounced, the assembly of the Bab and his followers in the 'Atabat was to be regarded as the commencement of the Qiyamat proper.

The Shi'i traditions no doubt were the main impetus for the Bab and his followers in drawing their future plans. However his acquaintance with Bihār al-Anwar of Majlisi and other Shi'i collections of traditions or the Shaykhi treatment of these traditions in Sharḥ al-Ziyara and other works of Ahsā'ī and Rashti were not the only source of inspiration for the Bab. In a speech which the Bab delivered to his disciples in the summer of 1844, just before their departure to their assigned missions, traces of Christian influence may also be detected. If Nabil could be relied on for the content of this address, the Bab even drew a direct comparison with Christ and his disciples. After expressing his hopes for the future progress of the movement and emphasising the moral strength and sacrifice needed for fulfilling their mission, the Bab warns his followers of any hesitation or weakness which may lead them to retreat and silence. He then directly refers to the words of Christ when he warns his disciples:

'Ye are even as the fire which in the darkness of the night has been kindled upon the mountain-top. Let your light shine before the eyes of men ... You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savour, where-with shall it be salted? ... The Heavenly Father is ever with you and keeps watch over you ... and will exalt you above all the rulers and kings of the world'.

These and other remarks in this speech appear to be somewhat free references to

1. Dalā'il-i Sab'ah op.cit. 50. 2. pp.92-4. 3. Ibid. pp.92-3.
Matthew. They are sometimes chosen particularly to imply the approach of a millenarian event: 'Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land ... I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day'.

The Bab's preoccupation with Christ and Christianity was beyond the common Muslim knowledge of the time which was mainly confined to the Qur'an and other Islamic sources. Most probably he must have taken his references directly from the Gospels. The new Persian translation of the New Testament was available in Iran from the 1810's and it is possible that he extracted his quotations from this translation. Gobineau adds the translation of the New Testament by the 'Protestant missionaries' to the list of the early works which had been studied by the Bab. More references in his works to Christ, and his criticism of the Christian concepts of Trinity and Atonement would also confirm this belief.

Dr. Cormick also reported that during the Bab's incarceration in Chihriq (1264-6/1848-50) 'he was seen by some Armenian carpenters who were sent to make some repairs in his prison, reading the Bible, and he took no pains to conceal it, but on the contrary told them of it'. Perhaps it was this preoccupation with Christ and Christianity which later in 1261-2 (1845-6) encouraged some of his opponents to 'accuse' him of believing in Christianity and preaching the Trinity.

Whatever the effect of Christianity on the ideas of the Bab might have been, he was still firmly tied to the concept of Zuhūr as it was interpreted in Shi'i-Shaykhi terms. Such an attachment was not only apparent in the objectives which the Babis set for themselves, or the style, the terminology and the criteria used by them, but also in the titles which the Bab assumed for himself, particularly in the early stages of his 'mission'. As has already been pointed out, the claims of Bābiyat, Zikrīyat and alike were all given a vague relationship.


4. This was the translation mainly done by Henry Martyn. See W.J. Fischel, 'The Bible in Persian Translation: a Contribution to the History of Bible Translations in Persia and India' in Harvard Theological Review, 1952, pp.4-45. A Memoir of the Rev. Henry Martyn, op.cit., Chapters VIII-X.

5. Cobineau. 144.

6. Commentary on Sura al-Baqara, INBA. no.69, 298; Letter in reply to questions by Mirzā Muḥammad Sa'īd Ardīstānī, INBA. no.69, 424.

7. Materials. 262.

8. Sahifā fi Sharīq Dū'ā'īhī fī Zamān al-Ghayba, INBA. no.98, 87-94.
to the ideas propounded by the past Shaykhi teachers\(^1\). But it was apparent even from the early days that he postulated a position beyond what was usually intended by titles such as \(\text{Shi}^\text{i} \ 	ext{al-Kamil} \) or \(\text{Rukn} \ 	ext{al-Rabi}'\). In one of his prayers, he maintains that his 'status' (\(\text{sha'n}\)) was not known by anyone before the time of his proclamation:

'I was alone in my own abode and nobody was aware of my status. Then You brought out some of (Your) humble servants from their dwellings and sent them to me. Afterwards You made Your cause my main concern and rewarded me with Your proof, till I received Your order to acquire Your covenant from the heart of those who recognised Your cause, and they submitted in such a way that no one from this small group denied me\(^2\).

The above passage indicates the Bab's regard for his own 'status' as a divine gift which is only made apparent when the 'humble servants' or his early disciples recognised him. Yet in his early works he tends to explain this 'status' by attaching it to a sacred genealogy. In the opening of the commentary on the Sura of Yusuf, he describes his relation to the holy chain of the Imams:

'God ordained the revelation of this book as a commentary to \(\text{Ahsan} \ 	ext{al-Qisas}\) from the presence of Muhammad, son of Hasan, son of \(\text{Al}^\text{i}\), son of Muhammad, son of \(\text{Al}^\text{i}\), son of Musa, son of Ja'far, son of Muhammad, son of \(\text{Al}^\text{i}\), son of Husain, son of \(\text{Al}^\text{i}\) ibn Abi-Talib, to his servant. This is a perfect divine proof from \(\text{Dhikr} \ (\text{Zikr})\) to the world\(^3\).

This perhaps is the most direct reference which the Bab made in his early works to his relation to the Concealed Imam. But still the authority which is entrusted to the \(\text{Zikr}\) is regarded by the Bab as purely hypothetical. It is almost certain that references to the Concealed Imam in the works of the Bab are, even from the early stages, references to the status which inwardly he claimed for himself. When for instance in \(\text{Sahifah}-\text{yi} \ (\text{Adliyah})\) he maintains that: 'The Concealed Imam, may God hasten his appearance, designated one of his servants amongst the Persians and all his \(\text{Nuqaba}'\) to protect the religion\(^4\) or when in his address to Muhammad Shah he states: 'In the year \(\text{Sittin} \ (\text{i.e. 1260})\)

\(^1\) See above.
\(^2\) Arabic prayer written in 1261-2 (1845-6) and cited in Z. 269.
\(^3\) QA. (Browne Or. MSS.) folio 1/a cf. Commentary on Sura al-Baqara, INBA. no.69, 294.
\(^4\) Op.cit. 159 cf. 146-50. Also in a letter addressed to Nahrî brothers in 1261 he defined the position of \(\text{Babzyat}\) beneath the positions of \(\text{anbtya}'\) (prophets) and \(\text{ausbya}'\) (guardians). (INBA. no.91, XXVIII, 137).
God filled my heart with firm evidence and positive knowledge of Hazrat-i Hujjat¹ these statements are only intended to cover his real claim of Qaʿimiyat which he only made public four years later². In an important passage in Dalāʾīl-i Sabʿāh, the Bab himself explains his reasons for this concealment:

'See how the manifestation of God (mazhav-i innanā anallāh) revealed himself (first) in the position of the Babiyat of the Qāʿim and even reaffirmed in his first book the validity of the Qurān in order to prevent people from being agitated by the coming of the new book and the new cause and to persuade them to recognise and identify it with themselves and not to remain in the darkness or ignorance of what has been provided for them,'³.

This policy of gradual publication was not only designed to acquaint the public with the movement in successive stages, but was adopted to protect the Bab and his followers from being exposed to unnecessary criticism and opposition. The Babi disciples also adopted this tactic in their attempts to win over new converts. A few of the early Babi sources discussed the Bab's step by step policy. Nuqṭat al-Kāf for instance justifies it by laying down four conditions for the veracity of the claimant⁴ and then applying them to the claims of the Bab in various stages⁵. Zuḥūr al-Aḥaq cited a conversation which is reported to be an account of the interrogation of Mīrzā Muhammad 'Alī Ṣunūzī (entitled Anis) in 1266 in Tabriz, in which he confirms that the gradual manifestation of the Bab from Babiyat to Zikrıyat and then to Qaʿimiyat and Masharīyat was for 'the gradual promotion of the people's spiritual status'⁶. The conversation recorded by Tārīkh-i Samandar between Mullā Husain and Mullā Sādiq Muqaddas in 1261 in Isfahan indicates a difference of opinion over the exact claim of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad. No doubt it was in pursuit of the same policy that Mullā Husain argues the necessity for the appearance of the 'Promised One' in familiar Shaykhi terms⁷. Thus Nicolas seems to be justified when he maintains: 'Or, se prétendre la Porte, c'est revendiquer par cela même le titre de Sahib-ouz-Zēman'⁸.

1. INBA. no.64, 113.
2. Nabil. 313. The text of the tablet (taqīf) in which he finally disclosed his claim of Qaʿimiyat in 1264 appears in Z. pp.164-6. Also quoted in NK. 209.
5. Ibid. pp.111, 208.
6. Z. pp.31-2.
7. Samandar. pp.163-4. In addition to the term Bab, Mullā Husain uses the term Ḥāmil which is often used by the Shaykhis such as Kirmani to indicate the spiritual position of Aḥsāʿī and Rashtī as Bearers of the Knowledge or Bearers of the Pillar (Ḥāmil-i Rukn) (Ishāq al-Bāṭil, op.cit. 107).
Nevertheless, the uncertainties over the real status of the Bab created a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding. Though for the majority of the close disciples it was almost certain that the real intention of the Bab was to declare himself as the Qa'im, the indications for the rest of the believers were never clear enough to prevent confusion. What Qat'il reported (presumably on the authority of some of the disciples who had returned to 'Atabat) of the instructions of the Bab to his followers in Shiraz, is typical of what most of the early Babis outside the circle of the early disciples knew of the claims and plans of the Qa'im Maqām, the term by which he refers to the Bab. He quotes the Bab as saying to his followers:

'I have been ordered to explain only up to a point and neither to specify the person nor reveal the name. Return to your homelands till the promised person appears in Karbila"... and refuse to recognise him without proofs and arguments and without his claim being substantiated by traditions of the Qa'im and the firm proof of the Qur'an. Thus intensify your search and multiply your enquiry.'

This indeed was the impression that the Bab and his disciples wished to transmit to the public and even to the other believers, prior to the assembly of the 'Atabat; a sense of anticipation for the appearance of an unidentified 'promised person' who may claim to be the Qa'im. In fact Qat'il himself maintains that at the time the Bab was practising a policy of dissimulation (kitmān).

Many indications in the early writings of the Bab prove Qat'il's view. In a letter addressed to Mullā Husain for example, written in early Muharram 1261 (December 1844), he strongly advised Bushruiyihī not to reveal his identity and his claim to those who may oppose him. 'Do not reveal the word of your Lord to those who would deny it ... observe the practice of tāqiya in order to avoid persecution and imprisonment ...'. In Dašāl-i Sab'āh he again confirms: 'Since I was aware of the limits of the public, I ordered the concealment of my name'. Similarly, in other early correspondence with his disciples he strongly forbade them to divulge his identity.

The emphasis on tāqiya for protection and safety was often justified by stressing the precedents for it in the Shi'i traditions. On a few occasions

1. See below Chapter Five, I.  
2. Qat'il. (510).  
3. Ibid. (511).  
4. Ibid.  
5. INBA. no.91, IV, pp.10-14 (13).  
7. For instance in his letter to Mullā Muhammad Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī, INBA. no.91, XXXVI, pp.170-80 (176) or to Salmān from Masqāt (Muscot) (INBA. no.91, XVI, pp.52-6 (55)) both written in mid 1261 (1845).

8. For references to tāqiya in Bihār al-Anwār see Shaykh 'Abbās Qumī Safīnāt al-Bihār, 2 vols., Najaf, 1355 Q. II, pp.468-70 under kitmān and 679-82 under tāqiya. Also TAKIYA in Shorter EI.
the Bab quoted well-known *ahadīth* related from the Prophet and the Imams on the necessity of *taqiyyah*: 'Taqiyya is my faith and the faith of my forefathers. Anyone who does not practise taqiyya has no faith'\(^1\). In the case of the concealed Imam in particular, a series of traditions strongly prohibit even mentioning his name\(^2\). Having this frequent use of *taqiyyah* in mind, the Bab stated in a prayer: 'By your refined wisdom, my Lord, you made taqiyya your command, thus people practised it from the beginning of the Ghayba up to now and that practise was the testimony to (people's) eagerness to come to your presence'\(^3\).

Nevertheless, even with these justifications, the ambiguity of the position claimed by the Bab, his hesitation to reveal his identity, his reluctance to hold a consistent stand in the face of criticism and danger, and his constant reminder to his disciples to act with the utmost caution, were among the major obstacles in the way of the movement's achieving its prime targets. Up to 1264 (1848) when circumstances forced the Bab to abandon his previous hesitation and declare his claim of *Qā'imīyat* in the trial of Tabriz\(^4\), the concept of *taqiyyah* remained an overwhelming feature of the Bab's words and actions. The issue of *taqiyyah* was an unspoken point of difference in policy between the Bab and his followers. While he intended to introduce his 'mission' in a gradual and rather secretive way, his disciples were willing to take the risk of opposition from both secular and religious quarters\(^5\). This duality in aims and objectives, rooted in a difference in the background and the outlook of the Bab from the rest of his disciples, was the source of a two-fold process in the history of the movement. As the Bab resigned himself further to an isolation which was forced upon him, his disciples turned their attention more towards an open appeal to the public which eventually led them to confrontation with the secular and religious authorities.

Taking into account all the set-backs of the *taqiyyah* policy, still the

1. Letter in reply to the believers of Qazvīn written *circa* 1263 (1847), *INBA*. no.91, XL, pp.192-4 (193).
4. RS. X, pp.423-8 cf. *Materials*. 249-56: *Miftah Bab al-Abwāb*, op.cit. pp.189-90 (reporting from his grandfather); *Shaykhīgārī va Bābīgārī*, op.cit. 312 (citing recollections of Mullā Muhammad Taqī Mamaqānī). All the above sources agree that although at the beginning of the interrogation the Bab admitted to being the Bāb of the Imam, he later in the same session claimed to be the Qā'īm (or Mahdī) himself.
5. See below, Chapter Nine, for some indications of this difference.
original plan to introduce the real claim of the movement in successive stages seems to have been a sound device for drawing the attention of the favourable elements in society without causing serious agitation and distress. It may even be asked whether if the introduction of the movement had taken place according to what the Bab originally intended, he would have been able to save himself and the movement from persecution and ultimate destruction. In reality, however, this is a groundless speculation. The Bab's message, no matter how skilfully hidden in a labyrinth of metaphors and multifaceted terms, was, in its essence, in opposition to the whole Shi'i concept of 'expectation'. The step by step progress from Babiyat to Qâ'umiyat and then to Masharîyat (the claim to an independent revelation) was only the outward manifestation of the Bab's whole interpretation of Qiyâmat.

In a gradual development, the Bab was aiming to fulfil Qiyâmat not only as a re-enactment of the past events in the symbolic embodiment of the past holy characters, but as the end of an era and the commencement of another. For him the apocalypse of Qiyâmat was an extraordinary 'event' (vaq'i'ah) of immense proportions, which occurred not to terminate the course of the time in any material or physical way, as is so often implied by the Shi'i traditions, but to apply a new shape and pattern to man's relation with the divine truth. As he himself puts it, although the Day of the Qiyâmat is called the 'most great Day' (Yaum-i A'zam), it is externally like any other day, and passes by while many are unaware of it. The Day of Qiyâmat is 'the Day of advent of the Tree of Truth (shajarih-i haqiqat). No one amongst the Shi'is seems to have understood Qiyâmat since they have been all entangled in illusions which have no bearing on the divine truth. What is truly intended of the Day of Qiyâmat in the word of God and amongst the seekers of the truth, is that the time of the advent of the Tree of the Truth, in whatever name he may have appeared in every age, is the beginning of Qiyâmat ... and from the moment of the appearance of the Tree of Bayân (i.e. the Bab himself) up to the setting of his sun, is the Qiyâmat of the Prophet's revelation which was promised in the Qa'âb...''

The Bab looks at his own proclamation as the Qiyâmat of Islam 'since nothing reaches its Qiyâmat before perfecting its course and the perfection of Islam was achieved at the beginning of this revelation'.

3. Ibid. 4. Ibid. (p.31)
'From the rise of Islam up to its decline, the Tree of Islam bore all its fruits and (similarly) the Qiyamat of Bayan comes at the time when "He whom God shall manifest" (Main Yuzhiruhu Allah) will appear. That will be the end of the Bayan's process of perfection. He will appear to harvest the fruit (of Bayan) as, in this present time, the revelation of the Qā'im of the House of Muḥammad, which is identical with the revelation of the Prophet, appeared only to harvest the fruit of Islam from (the tree) of the Quranic verses which he (i.e. the Prophet) planted in the hearts of the people. This fruit would not ripen except by recognition of him (i.e. the Qā'im) and conversion to his cause.'

The whole concept of 'perfection' and the gradual growth of the 'Tree of Truth' which bears fruit at the Qiyamat of each revelation was foreign to the main body of Shi'i orthodox thinking. The idea that prophethood from Moses to Jesus and from Jesus to Muhammad and from Muhammad to the Qā'im and from Qā'im to 'He whom God shall manifest' and from him to the next was aimed to cause a gradual exaltation of mankind, was irreconcilable with the dogma that Islam is the 'best' and 'the most perfect' of religions and that 'the best of the times' was the time of the Prophet. When the Bab voices his view that now his revelation (which he names Bayan) 'is still in its embryonic state (dar maqām-i mutfīh ast)' but by the beginning of the next revelation 'it would reach its perfection', he in fact inclines towards a progressive thinking which is not in line with the 'static' view of orthodox Shi'ism. In contrast to the Shi'i theory of a prolonged lapse in time (fatrat) during Concealment he believed that behind this process of perfection, there is the dynamic force of 'revelations' which moves mankind forward in successive stages. The Days of Qiyamat are the moments of revival when man encounters God (liqa' allah) only through His prophetic manifestations. Thus, he concludes that presence in the Day of Qiyamat is far more important for man than all the period in between the two Qiyamats since it is in this moment of time that the fruits of the previous Zuhur would reach their accomplishment only to prepare the formation of the new revelation.

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid. (p.30) cf. VII, 15 (p.261); IX, 3 (314).
3. The Quran III, 19, 85; V, 3.
5. Ibid. cf. IX, 3 (314).
6. Ibid. II, 4 (p.24) cf. 6 (p.29); III, 3 (78).
To distinguish between the good and the evil therefore, the people will be put to a test. The distinction which the Bab often defines as the difference between the light (nūr) and the fire (nār) is therefore made with regard to those Shi'ī traditions which separate the 'supporters' of the Qā'im from his 'opponents'. In this Day the standard for belief or blasphemy is not any more the sole recognition of the past revelations but is in the awareness of the advent of the Time. The 'cognition of the manifestation' is the measure (miṣān) for becoming enlightened with the light of the Heaven (jannat) or falling into the fire of the hell of veiledness (iḥtijab). Explaining this in his usual symbolic language, the Bab puts the recognition of his status the critical distance between light and fire. The difference in the numerological value of nūr which is 256 (نور = 200 + 6 + 50 + 6) and that of the nār which is 251 (نار = 200 + 1 + 50 + 1) is 5 which is equal to the value of Bab (باب = 2 + 1 + 2 = 5).

Of course it should be noted that the idea of successive revelations had ancient precedents in theoretical Sufism as well as in some Isma'īlī trends and with greater clarity in the Nuqtavī doctrine. No doubt the Bab was acquainted, at least partly, with this idea through the writings of Ahsā'ī and Rashti. It should be equally pointed out that the Bab's theory of progressive revelations is firmly based on divine emanation and therefore could not be regarded as a prototype or an equivalent of the anthropocentric 'Philosophy of Progress' in the western sense. However some points of general resemblance may be traced. A characteristic which made the Babi theory distinguishable from the above mentioned Islamic trends and brought it perhaps closer to the western outlook was that this theory attached a far greater importance to the position of man in his process of perfection. In its essence, but not in its theophanic appearance, this theory held the believers responsible for the development and the ultimate destiny of the revelation. Now the Qiyamat is materialised and an attempt is made to distinguish between the 'letters of light' and the 'letters of fire' as the first step toward defining this human responsibility. Though it may be rightly argued that in this distinction the Bab is influenced by the Quranic division of the world into the 'believers' and the 'infidels', nevertheless in its depth there is an emphasis on man's responsibility for his ultimate choice.

1. Ibid. II, 4 (p.24) cf. 6 (p.29); III, 3 (78).
2. Ibid. VIII, 3 (pp.279-80); III, 3 (p.78).
The Qā'īm, who is the initiator of a new revelation, provides new norms and values for making the distinction between the 'truth' and the 'falsehood'. In the early stages of his 'revelation', the Bab regarded the commentary on the Sura of Yusuf as this major 'Differentiator' (Furqān)¹: 'At the beginning of his appearance', writes the Bab, 'he (i.e. himself) interpreted the Sura of his own name and entitled each chapter (of this commentary) with one verse from the Qurān, so that it be the indication that he is the Point of Furqān in the Bā of Bismallāh'². The Bab saw 'the best of the stories'³ as the allegorical account of his own prophecy, not only because he found in himself a resemblance to Joseph⁴, or because the story of Joseph contained the secret of taqīyān, but also because of a sense of collective commitment which he shared with the other 'letters' of Bismallāh, and through them with the Kullu-Shay which is the whole of mankind.

'At the time of revelation, the first who swore allegiance to him (i.e. the Bab) was Muhammad and then the Amir al-Mu'minīn and then the Imams on whom be peace. This is the secret of the verse "When Joseph said to his father: "Father, I saw eleven stars, and the sun and the moon; I saw them bowing down before me"⁵. The number of Yusuf is 156 (i.e. the numerical value) which is (equal) to the number of Qayyūm. This refers to the Qā'īm of the House of Muhammad and he who is Ḥayy-i Qayyūm⁶.

In this long and complex commentary, the Bab adopted a similar classification to the Qurān and attempted to open the gate of the 'divine inspiration' and resolve the unintelligible problem of the Book. According to certain traditions the secret of the Qiyāmat is embedded in this Sura. But perhaps the most significant aspect of this commentary is in the attention paid in the first two chapters to the two sources of power, the state and the 'ulama. Such an address to the secular and religious authorities demonstrates the importance attached to them as leaders responsible for the community. In the opening chapter of Qayyūm al-Asmā' called Sura al-Mulk the Bab declares:

1. QA. III, folio 5/a.  2. Z. 244.
3. The Qurān. XII, 3.
5. The Qurān, XII, 4.
6. INBA. no.58, pp.160-2. In a letter from Mākū concerning the date of this commentary the Bab writes: 'This humble servant (of God) accomplished the Yusuf commentary in forty days; each day composing a part of it, till it was completed. Whenever I intended to write something, the Holy Spirit (Mūhāllāh) was a support' (Z. 285).
'O! assembly of the rulers of the earth and descendants of rulers. Resign yourselves every one of you to the Kingdom of God for the sake of truth to the Truth. O! ruler of the Muslims, support the book of the greatest Dhikr (Zikr) with truth, for God already ordained for you and for the circle around you in the Day of Qiyama standing on the final path (ṣīrāt) responsible to the Truth. Beware, O King, I swear by God that if you turn not towards the Dhikr, God will judge you on the Day of Qiyama amongst the rulers with fire, and you will not find on that Day any support except God the Sublime, for the truth by the Truth. O King! purify the Sacred Land of the people who are rejecting the Book before that Day when the Dhikr will arrive all of a sudden and relentlessly, by the leave of God the Sublime for a potent cause. Verily, God has prescribed for you that you should submit to the Dhikr and his cause and subdue the countries with the Truth and by his leave, for in this world you have been mercifully granted dominion and in the next you will dwell amongst the people of the Paradise of His approval around the seat of Holiness (Quds). Let not sovereignty blind you for verily "All souls will taste death", for this is written by the order of God the Truth for sovereignty, as it is recorded in the Umm al-Kitab by the hand of God, is the prerogative of the Dhikr. Assist the cause of God with your souls and your swords vigorously in the shadow of the greatest Dhikr on behalf of the Pure Religion (al-Dīn al-Khalis). The Zikr or the manifestation of the Truth assumes for himself the real possession of 'sovereignty' (mulk) but he will entrust it to the King (malik) only on the condition that he will be 'content with the Ordinance of God'. Thus the Bab confirms the legitimacy of the secular power if the soul and the sword of the King will be in his service to 'subdue the countries' and 'purify the Sacred Land from ahl al-radd'. This clearly demonstrates the Bab's view on the question of political power. However in this address to the Kings, the 'descendants of the kings' and the 'circle around' them, there is a consciousness of the realities of the time. The admonitory warnings in this passage, warning the ruler of the Muslims not to be blinded by power and that he must answer for his actions to the Zikr, may well refer to the Qajars in general and Muhammad Shah in particular. The idea of purification of the Sacred Land may also be taken as the Bab's response to the persecution and pressure on the Shi'is in 'Atabāt which had culminated in the massacre of Karbila' by the Ottomans in 1258 (1842). These invitations to worldly conquest were also justifiable for the

1. QA. I, folio 2a-3b.
2. See above Chapter One, II.
Bab in view of his plans for the final *Khurūj* from the Holy Land.

But criticism of the government is still better voiced in the passage in which he explicitly addresses the Prime Minister Ḥājī Mīrzā ʿAqāī:

'O minister of the king! (vāṣīr al-malik or vāṣīr al-mulk) be fearful of God, for there is no God except he who is the Truth, the Just. Withdraw your soul from the King (or the state). Verily, I am the one who has inherited the earth and whatsoever is upon it by the leave of God the Wise'.

The Bab is not only concerned with the theoretical legitimacy of the temporal power but also with the realities of the political situation in Iran. He rightly recognises Ḥājī Mīrzā ʿAqāī as the chief initiator of the state's policy and denounces the authority which he holds only by means of influence over the Shāh. He makes his attack on the state more open when he states: 'Your sovereignty is futile and God has placed worldly possession in the hand of the idolaters (*mushrīkūn*)'.

In the second chapter called *Sura al-ʿUlama*, the Bab deals primarily with the responsibility of religious authority. Remarkably, he identifies the *ʿulama* as a strong force which exercises great influence in the society.

'O! assembly of *ʿulama*, fear God in your verdicts from this day for the *Dhikr* is among you from our presence and truly he is the witness and the judge. Shun all that you are receiving from other than the Book of God, the Truth. For on the Day of *Qiyāma* you will stand on the *ṣirāt* and will be answerable to the Truth. God has verily placed doubts (ʿann) in every tablet (lauḥ) which is sinful, and haply God may forgive you for whatever you acquired for yourself before the Day, and God is merciful and forgiving to those who repent. Verily God has made unlawful to you any but the Pure Knowledge (al-ʿiḥlām al-khalīṣ) from this book, and Judgement opposes the *ijtihād*.'

1. QA. folio 3/a.

2. Ibid. Perhaps 'mushrīkūn' is a direct reference to Ḥājī Mīrzā ʿAqāī and his eccentric Sufi beliefs. The Ḥājī's influence on Muhammad Shāh is described by many sources. (See for example Jahāngīr Mīrzā, *Fārīkh-i Nau* edited by A. Iqbāl, Tehran, 1327 Sh. pp.90-2 and Muhammad Hasan Khān Iftimād al-Salṭānī, *Sadr al-Tawārīkh*, edited by M. Mushīrī, Tehran, 1349 Sh. pp.184-5). The private correspondence of Ḥājī Mīrzā ʿAqāī also throw some light on the nature of this relationship. On many occasions Ḥājī humbly and piously denies any official authority and confesses his 'total dependence' on the Shāh. Yet, he constantly applies pressure to compel the Shāh to ratify his decisions. He uses his peculiar Sufi terminology to gain the Shāh's sanction and support for strengthening his position. (Archives of Iran Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tehran, file no.18, original documents). *Tārīq* (III, pp.304-14) cited an interesting *risālī* by Ḥājī called *Shiyām-i Fakhrī* in which he alludes to his spiritual authority over the Shāh.

3. QA. II, folio 3/a-b.
In the same admonitory style imitative of the Qurʾān, the Bab calls upon the ulama to base their verdicts upon 'pure knowledge'. Though his tone is not as critical as in the first chapter dealing with the secular power, he still categorically denies ijtihad and with it the position of the Usuli mujtahids. Both the return to the concept of Pure Religion and Pure Knowledge and the open denial of rational striving may suggest the presence of 'radical' trends in the ideas of the Bab. As often in the past, the idea of 'purification' is interwoven with millenarian beliefs, yet this attention to the 'pure' values of the past should not be confused with the fundamentalist trends of the Akhbaris or the Wahhabis. Here emphasis on the 'purity' and 'sanctity' of the past is because of the idealistic message of the movement which tends to employ a language of symbols and terms with esoteric connotation. Thus the concept of the 'pure religion' is not so much a return to the standards and values of the past, as it is an assertion of the new interpretation of these values which the Bab believed to have originated from the same divine source.

The two above mentioned chapters in Qayyūm al-Asmāʾ summarise the views of the Bab and the Babis towards the state and the ulama in the early days and therefore play an important role in explaining the practical policies of the movement. It was partly to deliver this message to the ulama and the secular authorities that the early disciples were assigned to their missions. Besides the general assignment for all the disciples to attract favourable elements to the movement, some were especially entrusted with specific tasks. As far as can be understood from the sources, as indeed from the course of the events, Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī and a few others such as Mullā Jalīl Urūmī and Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Qazvīnī were assigned to deliver the message to the Shaykhīs and the non-Shaykhi ulama of ʿAtabāt. Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī and Sayyid Ibrāhīm Karbīlāʾī were also chosen amongst the non-Shaykhi ulama to be addressed. Because of their anti-Shaykhi attitude in the past, these messages were only designed to be a 'final warning' (ītnām-i hujjat), so that when the 'Time' arrived they would be held responsible for their actions. Mullā Husain on the other hand was assigned to undertake the mission inside Iran and to travel to Isfahan, Tehran, and Khurāsān where, after gathering the 'supporters', he would lead them to the ʿAtabāt. Also in this journey, he was instructed to deliver the message of the Bab in Qayyūm al-Asmāʾ (and possibly some other works of the Bab) to the state authorities in Tehran. Mullā Yūsuf Ardabīlī returned to his homeland Azarbājān perhaps with the same intention of gathering new converts to accompany him to ʿAtabāt. A few others also returned to their home towns. The
Bab himself accompanied by Mulla Muhammad ʿAlī Barfurūshī, was to travel to the Hijāz later in the same year.

The episode of Shiraz may well be defined as the moment of birth for the Babi movement. In a pattern familiar to most messianic movements, after a period of intense messianic expectation, a 'revelation' occurred to fulfil some particular prophecies. In its actual occurrence, this was a spontaneous process which involved the claimant and the converts almost without any previous intention on their part. In its theoretical background, however, it was the fruit of a long advance towards a more realistic and plausible image of the Zuhūr. The fulfilment of the past prophecies may seem to be an irrational indulgence in some predestined fantasies of the past undertaken by a handful of mystified individuals who were isolated from the realities of their time. Nevertheless, owing to its very formation, the Babi movement was an attempt to employ the ideals of the past, an almost mythological rather than historical past, to interpret a changing age. The Bab and his disciples were perhaps unaware of the nature and even sometimes the symptoms of this change, or were vague about the ways of facing it, but in their own ways they had a historical consciousness of the inadequacies of the ideas and values which dominated their time. They were too preoccupied with the past ideals to be able to plan a sensible and effective policy and, as we will see, too inconsistent to execute it, but they had a dynamism in their outlook and the will to put their message across to others who shared the same awareness with them.
CHAPTER FIVE

The Episode of the ′Atabāt

I

After the primary discussions in Shiraz 1260, the first and the largest group of the early believers set out for the 'Holy Land' (Ard al-Muqaddas)\(^1\). A prominent member of this group, Mulla ′Alī Bastāmī, was assigned the task of delivering the message of the Bab to the prominent ′ulama of the ′Atabāt and also informing the members of the Shaykhi circle of the advent of the Bab and preparing them for his forthcoming public call in the ′Atabāt. This was regarded by the Bab and his disciples as an important test for the future success of the movement.

In this chapter some attention is first paid to Bastāmī and then the achievements of his mission are examined in the light of the general situation in the ′Atabāt. The impact of the Babi call and its effects on the prominent Shi′ī leaders are also discussed. Then consequences of this encounter with the Shi′ī ′ulama, the outcome of the introduction of the new messianic element into the already tense religious situation, and the way this affected the balance between various religious factions are looked at in some detail. Finally, the episode of Tahirih's stay in ′Atabāt and her role in the development of the earlier dispute is studied in a separate section.

Mulla ′Alī Bastāmī was one of the leading members of the small group of disciples of Shiraz of 1260 and according to Qatīl Karbala′Ī, was regarded as the third in importance after the Bab and Mulla Ḥusain Bushrūyīhī\(^2\). He was born in Bastām, a small agricultural town on the north western border of Khurasan sometime in the early 1230′s (1810′s). He first studied the 'elementaries' (muqaddāmāt) in his home town before moving to Mashhad for further studies. Like many Shaykhi tuullāb from Khurasan he was first attracted to the Shaykhi school in this city\(^3\). Under the influence of the Shaykhi teacher Mulla Ja′far

\(^1\) See above Chapter Four, III.

\(^2\) Qatīl. (524). al-Qatīl al-Karbala′Ī, himself a disciple of Rashti and a fellow classmate of Mulla ′Alī provides us with the only known account on the early life of Bastāmī (pp.524-6).

\(^3\) For further details on Khurasanī Shaykhis, see below Chapter Nine.
Kirmanshahi, himself a student of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsai, as Qatil puts it:

'he gradually turned away from the superficial and shallow knowledge which is nothing but the opinion of the common people (al-'ilm al-zahir al-qishr va ma'rifat al-'awam al-sirf) towards the high status of contemplation (al-jah al-tafakkur). He then travelled to 'Atabat and studied under Sayyid Kazim for seven years. His knowledge of Shaykhi literature and his 'piety and lack of worldly interests' gave him a distinctive character amongst the Shaykhi tullab.

According to the Babi sources he became one of the senior members of the circle and a close companion of Rashti. After long residence in Karbila sometimes in the mid-1250's (1830's and 40's) he returned to Bastam mainly because of family pressure but he could not stay in his home town more than two years before returning to Iraq. It seems that his life in Bastam and his commitment to his wife and family did not long keep him from Karbila.

On his return, Mulla 'Ali accompanied Rashti in his last annual pilgrimage to Najaf in 1259 (1843) shortly before the latter's death. Qatil names Bastami amongst those who understood Rashti's allusions and responded to his allegorical remarks. 'He grasped the secret of knowledge in the whole circle of ascent and descent, that is spirituality and tariqa'. After the death of Rashti he joined Bushruyihi in his retirement in Kufah and later led a group of twelve Shaykhi students, to whom he was the leader, to Shiraz. Thus because of his seniority and his position among the Shaykhis of Iraq, it was natural that he should be chosen for the 'Atabat mission. Lack of further information prevents us from examining the way he was active in converting many of the Shaykhi mallas who followed him to Shiraz, but no doubt the veneration of the Babi sources and the high qualities which were attributed to him are not without any real basis.

When Bastami set out on his mission to Iraq after his conversion in Shiraz, he passed on his way through Bushihr, where according to his instructions he visited the Bab's uncle, Haji Sayyid Muhammad Shirazi, and gave the news of the Bab's proclamation. But, as appears from later evidence, Haji Sayyid Muhammad

2. Ibid. (525).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. See above Chapter Four, I & III.
did not respond to the Bab's call and at that time did not even realise the significance of his claims.

From Bushihr, by the sea route via Basrah, Mulla 'Ali arrived at 'Atabât some time between the end of Rajab and the early days of Ramadan 1260. Following him, some of the Letters who had first accompanied Mulla 'Ali to Shiraz also left Iran for Iraq. As far as can be traced, it is almost certain that five of them: Mulla Jalîl Urumî, Mulla Muhammad 'Alî Qazvînî, Mulla Mahmûd Khû'î, Mulla Khudâbakhsh Quchânî and Mulla Bâqir Tabrizî were present in Karbila' in the months after the proclamation. The arrival of these 'messengers' in 'Atabât, nearly seven months after Rashti's death, exacerbated the leadership crisis within the Shaykhi camp. As has been described in previous chapters, even those few senior followers of Sayyid Kazîm who had assumed leadership, at least on a temporary basis, did not enjoy the full support of the students. Those Shaykhi followers who did not join the Kufah group, and remained in Karbila', would not even submit temporarily to the authority of the acclaimed leaders such as Mulla Hasan Gauhar and Mîrzâ Muhît Kirmani. Furthermore, the challenge from Hâjî Muhammad Karîm Khân Kirmani spread by his ally Sayyid 'Alî Kirmani in 'Atabât, as well as the rivalry between different groups and factions made it impossible for any of the senior followers to unite all the students under one leadership. Shaykh Sultan Karbala'i, himself one of the early believers of 'Atabât, and later one of the companions of Tahirih, in his treatise refers to certain rival factions with some differences in approach within the Shaykhi

1. Letter by the Bab cited in Z. pp.223-225 and also letters by Hâjî Sayyid 'Alî to his family cited in Khândân-i Afnân, pp.25-31. It was long after 1260, during Hâjî Sayyid Muhammâd's pilgrimage to 'Atabât in 1277 Q. (1860-61) (accompanies by his youngest brother Hâjî Mîrzâ Hasan 'Alî) and following his visit to Bâhâ'ullâh, that he finally overcame his earlier hesitations and recognised the Bab. Bâhâ'ullâh's Risâlîh-i Khâlîyâh, later known as Kitâb-i Iqân (The Book of Certitude, trans. by Shoghi Effendi, London 1946) was written in reply to Hâjî Sayyid Muhammâd's questions on the Shi'î prophecies and their relation to the Bab's claim. (Khândân-i Afnân, (pp.37-40) cited the text of the questions). Some recent accounts such as Khândân-i Afnân (pp.25, 30-31) and subsequently A. Tâherzâden (The Revelation of Bâhâ'ullâh, Oxford 1974, Vol.I, pp.153-4) which hint at the partial conversion of Hâjî Sayyid Muhammâd in 1260-61, seem to contradict the Bab's own reference in circa 1263 (cited above Chapter Three, V ) to his uncle's refusal to accept his message in 1260.

2. There is some confusion over the departure date. Nabil. 87 makes Mulla 'Alî Baştâmi precede the others in his journey, yet Qâtîl. (pp.503, 511-12) remembers his arrival in 'Atabât shortly after the others. But it is almost certain that he travelled by himself apart from the rest of the group.

3. See above Chapter Four, I.

camp. Though his main attention is focused on the events of 1261-3 (1845-7), it is also evident that in the early months of 1260 the formation of these factions was in progress. In fact, this spirit of messianic expectation caused the Shaykhis to be unwilling to comply with the choice of a leader from amongst their own ranks. Hence for this reason they welcomed the promulgation of the new message as a solution to the existing deadlock. Aqa Muhammad Mustafa al-Baghdadi, whose father was a well known mujtahid amongst the Shaykhis, records that before the appearance of the Bab 'all the adherants (i.e. Shaykhis) in Baghdad and its outskirts were mournful at the departure of the late Sayyid, but in the meantime they remained vigilant and watchful for the appearance of the "Promised One" (Zuhur al-Mu'ud) till they came to the honour of his presence.

Confusion and uncertainty amongst the Shaykhis of 'Atabat is clearly detectable in Qatil's remarks when he refers to his own state of mind shortly after Rashti's death: 'I could not decide whether I should lead my way towards Jabriya or towards Qadariya or towards Balasariya who are Mufawwada and Dahriya. Then when the time elapsed, after four months and a few days, the herald called from heaven the name of Qa'im from the land of Fars'. The above remark suggests that already in early Jumada I 1260 (April 1844), the news of the proclamation in Fars had reached 'Atabat. But it took nearly three more months before the first group of believers from Shiraz returned and confirmed the rumours and at least partly clarified the appearance of the new Bab.

The announcement by the Babi Letters on 26th Rajab 1260 in Najaf took place according to plan, with the utmost precaution in order to avoid any trouble from an unexpected quarter when the Shi'i public were gathered from Baghdad, Hilla, Karbila' and other places in Najaf to celebrate the day of Mob'ath (27th Rajab).

On one of the earliest encounters which occurred between Babis and the Shi'i public, Qatil Karbalai', who probably himself witnessed the event or at least

1. Shaykh Sultan Karbalai', apologetical maktub written in circa 1263 in 'Atabat, INBA. pub. 80, pp.310;332 also cites in Z. pp.245;254.
4. Qatil. (502). The author's references to the early theological and philosophical schools are apparently made in a metaphorical sense. It is possible to assume that his reference to the Balsaris (the non-Shaykhi Shi'i's in 'Atabat) through the attributes al-mufawwada and al-Dahriya is made with a sense of rejection and disapproval since they reflect the essence of the Usuli thinking, in the eyes of the Shaykhis.
5. Qatil. (511).
became aware of it through an eye witness, recalls:

'Then they (the people) heard from one of the pseudo-jurisprudents (mutifaaqiqihin) that they (the Letters) had returned. They gathered around them and enquired about the news and the manner in which they had achieved their goal. They (the Letters) revealed to the seekers what knowledge they had in their possession and what they were allowed to utter, but concealed what they saw of their new master; emanation and the mysteries they witnessed, fearing that the best of the people might not tolerate this and the worst of them might cause agitation and strife. (Therefore) obeying the orders of the virtuous Imams, they did not speak of what might have accelerated (public) opinion towards denial.'

Following this, further preliminary preaching carried out by the Babi Letters prior to the main declaration by Bastami which was due to take place later.

These efforts were mainly concentrated on the Shaykhis and particularly on those who had a greater degree of sympathy and understanding of Rashti's later messianic ideas. But as had previously been agreed upon, the message of these preachings was limited to general admonitions without exact reference to the identity of the Bab. Rarely in this period was the identity of the Bab publicly revealed, and when in private his name was mentioned, it was only to those whose loyalty and thoroughness had been examined.

The general tone of the Babi missionaries was to prepare the public for the forthcoming arrival of the Bab. This is well illustrated in the preachings of Mulla 'Abd al-Jalil Urumi, one of the Letters of the Living and a companion of Bastami in the 'Atabat mission, who particularly emphasized the 'extraordinary' events which were due to take place at the time of the advent of the Imam. In his talks no specific reference was made to the precise name of the 'Promised One' and although he referred to him as the Bab of the Imam, and even in some cases as the successor to Rashti, at the same time he attributed to him qualities and characteristics which were traditionally expected of the Qa'im. In fact, Urumi and the others intended to project an image of the Bab, which could encompass not only the claim of succession to Rashti and assumption of the state of Babiyat, but also prepare the public for the far greater claim of Qa'imiyat. To most of the Letters and to some of the distinguished believers in 'Atabat, it was known that this was only a preliminary tactical device to introduce the message in successive stages.

1. Qatl. (511). The author's reference to one of al-mutifaaqiqihin suggests that perhaps one of the Balasari 'ulama, who for an unknown reason had some knowledge of the new message, encouraged or even provoked the public to question the Babi disciples.
2. Ibid.
3. See above Chapter Four, II & III.
The effect of these early preachings is clear from Qatîl's account when he reports that:

'After Rajab (1260 Q.) the cause of the Imam, peace be upon him, became so well known that no one from the committed people (mutakallifîn) of that district ('Atabât) remained who had not heard or did not understand ... and all those who had seen the Bab previously said that if the claimant is the one we know of, then we will be amongst his followers. There were even some believers amongst the Bâlâsaris and those people of Kâzimayn who were weak in their Shi'î beliefs, and also the attendants of the Holy Shrines and all those who in the past frequently had the honour of his presence'.

Beside its general implications, it is likely that by the term mutakallifîn, Qatîl particularly refers to the supporters whom the Babi missionaries attracted from the Shaykhis of 'Atabât, although this is not to deny the enthusiasm with which they were also received by the non-Shaykhis of both Persian and Arab origin.

One of the most important persuasive factors in this early support was the previous acquaintance of some of the later converts with Sayyid 'Alî Muhammad at the time of his pilgrimage to the Holy Places of Iraq, which had impressed them to the extent that even after a few years, the memory of him had not faded.

Even those who did not have the chance to see him on that journey seem to have been impressed by the oral accounts and stories which magnified the piety and innocence of the young Sayyid. But still the recognition of supernatural claims from an unknown and uneducated Sayyid was a formidable problem even to the most vigilant Shaykhis. In the account of his conversion, Sayyid Jâvâd Karbalânî reflects his doubts and uncertainties at the time when first he was informed of the appearance of the new Bab. He states that the announcement by Mullâ 'Alî

1. Qatîl. (512). By the 'people of Kâzimayn' the author apparently refers to some Arab adherents of Rashtî mainly from Bushr tribe. Although there is no indication in any of the sources to their 'weak Shi'î beliefs' (al-mustâ'dafûn fi al-Tashayyu'), it is possible that they may have been amongst those who were attracted to the literary circle of Rashtî (dîwân al-Rashtî) which was a centre for both Shi'î and non-Shi'î literary and poetical gatherings in Karbîlân. (al-Ţu'ma, S.H. Turâth Karbalânî op.cit., pp.224-9. See also above Chapter Three, IV.

2. See below.

3. See above Chapter Three ( IV ) for this journey.

4. For some more details on him see above Chapter Three, I & III.

5. Kashf al-Ghita3 op.cit., pp.70-77, recorded by Mîrzâ Abul Fazl Gulpâyîgânî during his frequent visits to Sayyid Jâvâd between 1293-9 (1876-81) in Tehran during the latter's last years.
Bastāmī regarding his knowledge of the new Bab created great excitement amongst the learned men of Karbila and it was this influence and highly esteemed position of Mullā 'Alī amongst the Shaykhis that were the chief reasons for the circulation of the new message. But as he recalls some years later:

"Mullā 'Alī was only content to reveal the title of his excellency and absolutely refused to mention his name. He said: 'the Bab has appeared and we had the honour of his presence but he (the Bab) forbade us to mention his venerated name or origin. Soon his call will be fully revealed and his identity and his origin will become apparent to all". The issue of the appearance of the Bab was discussed in every circle and caused great excitement in Iraq. Everybody had an opinion and every soul predicted a particular person to be the Bab. But the quarter that no one ever expected was the "Primal Point" (Naqṭīh-i ʻUlā, the title assumed by the Bab in his later years) glory be to his name, since because of his excellency's youth and his involvement in trade, nobody had any thought about him. They unanimously anticipated and were even firmly confident that "the Gate of the Divine Knowledge" (Bāb-i ʻIlm-i ʻIlāhī) would come from a house of knowledge and learning and not from the ranks of the guilds and trades. A majority, particularly amongst Shaykhis, presumed that he would surely be one of the senior students of the Sayyid (i.e. Rashti), may God elevate his status.

If the piety and charm of the young Shirazi Sayyid by itself was not enough for the recognition of the assumed position of Babiyat, what other elements attracted a large group of Shaykhis towards the Bab? As has already been discussed, the influential position of Bastāmī, and to a lesser extent the other Letters, amongst both the junior and the senior followers of Rashti, facilitated these conversions particularly at the time when a considerable degree of confusion and scepticism lingered over the question of the succession. Furthermore, the Bab's claim was still wrapped in mystery and very few in 'Acabāt knew precisely the nature of his claims. This secrecy by itself was a source of attraction.

These were perhaps the symptoms of a deeper problem which divided the Shaykhi community into the two camps of the 'millenarians' and the moderates, a division which had already caused the split of the group which consisted of Bushrūyihī, Bastāmī and the others and led them towards the proclamation of the Bab in

1. Ibid. 71, cf. Qāṭīl. (503).
Shiraz\(^1\). Hence, recognition of the Bab in \(\text{'Atabat}\) reflected polarisation in the Shaykhi ranks, and the intention of the extremist 'millenarians' to strengthen their position against the moderates. While one side wished to fulfil the messianic expectations, the other side tried to undermine the messianic side or confine it to the boundaries of mere academic argument. As has been previously discussed such division was directly co-related to the position of the Shaykhis in the Shi'i society of Iraq and the pressures which were put upon them not only from the quarter of their Balāsari opponents, but also from the Sunni authorities\(^2\). Hence the recognition of the Bab by Shaykhis, or the later activities of Mulla ʿAlī to broaden the sphere of the movement beyond the Shaykhi community\(^3\), may best be interpreted as manifestations of the millenarians' response in the face of these mounting pressures.

The Babi community which formed around the nucleus of the early believers between 1260-63 (1844-7) absorbed Shaykhis, and occasionally non-Shaykhis from various backgrounds and with different degrees of attachment to the Shaykhi school. Some sources allude to the existence of a considerable number of sympathisers. Rawlinson, the contemporary British representative in Baghdad who recorded certain details about Mulla ʿAlī's mission, confirms that 'a considerable section of the Sheehas (Shi'is) of Najaf' supported Mulla ʿAlī\(^4\), while Āqā Muhammad Mustafā Baghdādī mentions various groups of students and adherents who following their mujtahids, were attracted to the new movement\(^5\). Qatīl also confirms the overwhelming support of the Shaykhis prior to the occurrence of the first signs of strong Balāsari opposition\(^6\).

However the majority of those who were regarded as confirmed believers were Shaykhi students or those who previously held some relation with Sayyid Kazim. As far as can be traced, of the total of more than one hundred converts in \\(\text{'Atabat}\), nearly half were either Persian or of Persian origin. Of the remaining half more than two-thirds were natives of Iraq who resided in Karbilā', Najaf, Baghdad and its neighbourhood. The origin of the remaining one-third is not known\(^7\). The Arab group included some mujtahids of relative importance such as Shaykh Bashīr

\(^1\) See above Chapter Three. \(^2\) See above Chapter One, II. \(^3\) See below. \(^4\) F.O. 248/114, No.1, Jan. 8th 1845, Rawlinson to Sheil. \(^5\) Baghdādī. 106. \(^6\) Qatīl. (512). \(^7\) This rough estimate of the number of Babis in \\(\text{'Atabat}\) was made on the basis of information supplied in various sources including Baghdādī, Qatīl, Mus., Samandar, Nabil, Fu'ādī, TMS., Kashf al-Ghiṭā and biographies of some early believers in Z.
Najafi, a mujtahid of 75 years of age; Shaykh Muhammad Shibli Baghdādī, a student of Sayyid Kazīm who started his studies in 1243 (1827-8), and was later appointed by Rashtī as his representative in Baghdad where he lived and taught ḥikmat and ḥadīth; Shaykh Sulṭān Karbalā'ī, a young mujtahid amongst the later generation of Shaykhs, and Sayyid Javād Karbalā'ī, a grandson of Bahr al-Ūlūm and one of the early students of Rashtī. There were other Arab believers from the ranks of the 'ulama such as Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Karīmāvī, Sayyid Muḥsin Kāzīmaynī and Sayyid ʿAlī Bushr who are better known because of their later participation in the events. Some non-clerical Arabs were also converted. Saʿīd Jābāvī seems to be amongst the adherents of Rashtī who later became a devoted follower of Tahirih. Hājī Muḥammad Karradī, an aged ṣarrāf who was an officer in the Ottoman army before settling in Baghdad and joining Rashfi's literary circle. He composed qaṣīdahs in praise of Rashtī. Hājī Sayyid Khalīl Mādaʾīnī, one of the chiefs of the Arab tribes in the area, had studied in Karbīlā' for some time with Rashtī and was even said to have participated in the Kufah tīzīkhīfāt.

The Persian converts, though larger in number, were less prominent in clerical rank, since the majority of Persians who completed their studies left ʿAtabāt prior to or just after Rashtī's death. Yet some, such as Shaykh Hasan Zunūzī who had previously met the Bab in Karbīlā'9, Mulla ʿĪbrāhīm Mahallātī10, Sayyid Muḥammad Gulpaygānī, Sayyid Ahmad Yazdī12, Shaykh ʿAbū Turāb Ishtihārdī13.
Mulla Ahmad Mu'allim Hisarī who remained in 'Atabāt were soon converted by Bastāmī and the other Letters. A few Persian merchants with Shaykhi tendencies also joined the Babi group. Amongst them the Nahris, who later moved to Isfahan and a certain Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, a resident of Kāzimayn, who later in 1264 provided the necessary means for fifty Arab and Persian Babis of Iraq to travel to Iran and participate in the march from Khurasan to Māzandarān, may be mentioned. In addition, there were groups of Shaykhis from Qazvin, Isfahan and Mashhad who, in order to participate in the public declaration of the Bab in the beginning of 1261, hastily arrived in Karbila. Of these, the Qazvin group headed by Mulla Javad Valīyānī included some of the Qazvīnī converts who later after the cancellation of the ʿAtabāt plan, returned to Shiraz and met the Bab.

As a whole, the composition of the ʿAtabāt group makes it clear that neither Arab or Persian origin nor clerical rank was the prime factor in the shape of the Babi grouping. However, as with many other Babi groups in Iran, the majority of the converts were from the lower and middle rank ʿulama. But more than any other factor, it appears that dedication and attachment to the head and leader was the prime cause for the coherence of the group which held them together in spite of outside pressure. It is true that the preaching of Mulla ʿAlī Bastāmī which heralded the advent of the Bab, was the main impetus for the majority of the Shaykhis who joined the movement, but in the course of the next few years, it was in the charismatic and highly influential personality of Tahirih that these messianic aspirations were materialised. References to the Babis of ʿAtabāt with the name Qurratīyya (the followers of Qurrat al-ʿAyn, i.e. Tahirih) in some of the contemporary writers such as Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Mahmūd ʿAlūsī, may be taken as an indication of Tahirih's significance for the continuation of the Babi circle in ʿAtabāt.

Tahirih herself was informed of the proclamation of the Bab through a letter which was delivered to her by Mulla ʿAlī or possibly Mulla Muḥammad ʿAlī Qazvīnī, in reply to her earlier petition which she had presented to the unknown Bab when the Mulla Husain party were departing from ʿAtabāt a few months earlier.

2. See below Chapter Seven, I.
4. See below Chapter Six for Qazvīnī converts.
5. See below.
6. Samandar. 346 cf. 78; . pp.312-14 (citing the account of Āqā Muḥammad Javād Farhādī); KD. pp.61-2.
Nuqtat al-Kāf confirms that after reading the writings of the Bab, 'she reached the state of testimonial certitude' (īmān-i shuhudī). This corresponds to Nabīl's remark on 'the Bab's immediate response to her declarations of faith' and Muḥin al-Saltanih's remark that 'in reply to her letter, an exalted Tauqī was revealed to her honour'. However there is some degree of uncertainty regarding the date of her arrival at Karbila which could indicate the time and place of her full conversion. Most sources agree that she arrived shortly after Sayyid Kazim's death in the last days of 1259 (January 1844). Later Tahirih herself in a risālīh in reply to Mullā Javaḏ Valīyānī recalls the events as though she had been present in Karbila at the time. But in this same risālīh a few pages earlier she states that 'at the beginning of his excellency's cause (i.e. the Bab), I was in Qazvin, but as soon as I heard of this cause, even before reading the holy commentary (i.e. Qayyūm al-Āsma') or Sahifa al-Makhsūniyā, I recognised it'. This could only be justified if we assume that she heard of the Bab before 1260 in Qazvin. Considering the fact that through her brother-in-law Mullā Muḥammad Ṭāhirī she was in touch with the developments in Karbila and therefore even before arriving at Iraq, she was aware of the possible succession of the Bab, this is not a far fetched assumption. But at any rate it is certain that she was in Karbila from the latter part of 1260 onwards.

By the end of Ramadan 1260 (October 1844), about two months after the arrival of the Babi party, the propagation of the new message reached a new stage. On Friday 23rd of Ramadan (6th October 1844), following earlier arrangements, Mullā Ṭāhirī officially made the declaration of the Babi cause, and presented the people of Karbila with fragments of the new Furqān. A week later, at the time of 'Ṭād al-Fitr (Saturday, 1st Shawwal 1260 = 14th October 1844) he again announced the 'approaching advent' of Qā'īm to the people of Najaf, while 'bearing a copy of the Koran (Qurān) which he stated to have been delivered to him by the forerunner of Imam Mahdi.'

1. NK. 140. 2. Nabīl. 269.
3. TMS. (Appendix to MS.B:Sharīḥ-i Ḥāl-i Ṭāhirī, Qurrat al-ʿAyn p.3).
8. Ibid.
9. F.O. 248/114, No.1, Rawlinson to Sheil. According to Baghdādī (106), Mullā Ṭāhirī first appeared in Kīfah but no doubt in this matter Qatīl is a more reliable source. Lady Sheil (the wife of the British envoy in Tehran) on the other hand when writing about the origin of the Babi movement, apparently confused Mullā Ṭāhirī with the Bab, and seems to have had Bastāmī's journey in mind when without mentioning any recorded source she states that: 'after some changes he settled in Kazemein (Ḵāzīmān) near Baghdad, where he first divulged his pretentions to the character of a prophet' (Glimpses of: Life and Manners, op.cit. 177).
It is not a coincidence that on both occasions an Islamic holy feast was chosen for the declaration. The night of 23rd of Ramadan is, according to some traditions, regarded as 'Laylat al-Qadr', the night which is 'better than a thousand months'. It was on this night that the first suras of the Qur'an were sent down to Muhammad: 'Behold, we sent it down on the Night of Qadr'. Here again the Babi actions are particularly designed to accord with the Shi'i prophecies on the Night of Qadr. In addition the term Furqan, which in many Babi sources appears in the same context as the Qur'an and Kitab, generally refers to the Bab's first major work Qayyum al-Asma. It is precisely in this context, and according to this Quranic tradition that Qayyum al-Asma was first represented to the public by Mulla Ali Bastami. The significance of such representation in the name of a 'proof' and 'divine Book' is clear from most of the sources. While some sources refer to Qayyum al-Asma as Furqan others use terms such as Qur'an-i Sahib al-Zaman and Kitab. Several references in Qayyum al-Asma to Furqan could be regarded as the origin of the use of the word in Babi terminology: 'Thus God sent down the Qur'an to his servants in order to inform people that he has power over beings. He is the one who sent down Furqan in Arabic to his servant without an deviation for the sake of pure truth'.

In Quranic tradition, the term has a broad and rather complicated meaning. The word occurs in various connections in the Qur'an and in most cases corresponds to the concept of 'deliverance', 'redemption' and 'salvation from Judgement'. In a broader sense the word indicates the holy scripture in each revelation and particularly in Islam as a 'sign which confirms the prophethood'. The term also represents 'the separation of an accepted religious community from the unbelievers'. However in the Babi literature, the term is not only used for the

1. The date varies between 21st to 31st of Ramadan according to different sources. See Art., I'TIKAF and RAMADAN in Shorter EI.
2. Qur'an. XCII, 3. 3. Ibid.
3. For QA. see above Chapter Four
4. Qatil. (pp.512, 530-31) and Ishaq al-Batil. pp.14-15. See NK. (p.59v for references) but usually substituted for Bayan in later years.
6. Q. pp.60, 185-6.
8. Q. III. Sura al-Mubahala, folio 5a.
9. QA. III. Sura al-Mubahala, folio 5a.
10. See EI², FURKHAN (by R. Paret).
past scriptures, but also to stress the point of unity and conformity between past and present revelations: 'And thus God taught you the knowledge of the Book from Furqān and Gospel and Torah and Psalms (Zabūr) and other scriptures and you were aware in the presence of your Lord, of the Bab al-Nuqta from the hidden Sa' Qatīl al-Karbala'ī quotes the above mentioned verses of Qayyum al-Asmā' towards the end of his account where he discusses in full the new Furqān of the Bab. In reply to Hajī Muḥammad Karīm Khān's attack on Ishaq al-Bātīl on the Bab's 'falsely compiled Furqān', Qatīl argues that the new Furqān is the inner truth (bātin) of Muḥammad's Qur'ān which is fundamentally reinterpreted and reappeared in its complete version. On this basis, the author suggests that in fact the Bab's Furqān is a new version of the Qur'ān which contains revelations according to the necessities of its time in order to explain the unintelligible passages of the Book.

The theoretical argument between the two controversial works, namely those of Ishaq al-Bātīl and Qatīl, who are both amongst the nearest sources to the period, suggests that the question of the newly compiled Qur'ān had great significance in the earliest controversies between the Babis and their opponents in ʿAtabāt. Indeed, the very use of the term Furqān confirms that what was propagated by Bastāmī and others regarding the position of the new Bab, was not simply concerned with the succession of Rashti, but more significantly hinted at the advent of a new 'revelation' which appeared to complement the previous Book and resolve the 'ambiguities' and 'shortcomings'.

The sharp edge of these messianic promulgations, however, was directed towards those non-Shaykhi 'ulama of ʿAtabāt who because of their previous opposition to Shaykhism, were held responsible for the 'ignorance' of the majority of the Shiʿis about the teachings of Ahsāʾī and Rashti. The increasing hostility of the past few years and the intensification of sectarian hatred against the Shaykhis under two eminent mujtahids, Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan Najafī in Najaf and Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī in Karbīla', no doubt persuaded the Bab and his disciples to express their disapproval of the fuqaha's conduct in plain and straight terms.

1. QA. Ibid., folio 6b. 2. Qatīl. (pp.530-31).
4. The author also cites a tradition by Sādiq which reads: 'The Book (al-Kitāb i.e. the Qur'ān) is the brief version (mujmal) and the Furqān is the comprehensive (muṭaffāṣal) one, which appears according to the time (vaqt). Qatīl. (pp.530-31).
5. For Shaykhi-Bālāsari conflicts and for other details on the general religious climate in ʿAtabāt in the early 19th century see above, Chapter One, I.
The Babi missionaries did so only to put the 'ulama to the test of the new revelation.

As a beginning to this task, Mullā 'Alī addressed Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafi, the chief jurist (Shaykh al-fuqahā) and one of the leaders of the Bālāsaris, with the words and writings of the Bab. Shaykh Muhammad Hasan the author of Jawahir al-Kalâm fi Sharh Sharā'īf al-Islām, one of the most celebrated faqīhs of the whole nineteenth century, accomplished his studies under Shaykh Ja'far Najafi and other important jurists of the early nineteenth century.

Towards the end of his life, Shaykh Muhammad Hasan was recognised by most of his contemporaries, and particularly by a considerable number of fuqahā as the head of the Shi'is (riyāsat-i Imāmiyih). The author of Raudat al-Jannat particularly states that 'the leadership of the Imams in our time among Arab and 'Ajam devolved on him when in 1262 he reached his seventies'. Indeed one may see the earliest formation of the position of Marja'-i taqiyya when towards the end of his life he designated one of his students, Shaykh Murtaza Ansārī as his successor. According to one source Shaykh Najafi 'appointed him before his departure as the "appointed Khalifa and special deputy" and he was later recognised by the public as the first general Deputy of the Imam (Nā'īb-i Imām). This suggests that perhaps Shaykh Muhammad Hasan himself assumed this title (Nā'īb-i Imām) after which he was then able to deliver it to his successor. On the other hand, Tunikabunī, the author of Qisas al-'Ulāma' who was primarily an adherent of Sayyid

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1. RA. II, 420. Also mentioned by his title 'Shaykh-i Kabīr' in Sayyid Kāzīm's Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn, op.cit., p.96.
2. Nabil. 90, cf. F.O. 60/114, No.1, Rawlinson to Sheil.
3. One of the significant and comprehensive works in Shi'ī jurisprudence. It is originally compiled in twenty five volumes and covers in detail all aspects of Ithnā 'Asharī jurisprudence. Najafi spent more than thirty years in compiling this work which finally ended in 1257 Q. (1841). It was first published in fourty four volumes in 1271 Q. (1853-54) from the endowment of Sayyid Asadallah Shaftī Isfahānī (al-Dhartīa V. pp.275-7).
4. Q. 103; RJ. 181.
6. RJ. 182.
7. al-Ma'āthir va al-Āthār, pp.135-6.
8. Āghā Buzurg Tihrānī also hints at the same assumed title by saying that 'he (i.e. Shaykh Najafi) took the burdens of "deputyship" (al-khilāfa) and obligations of "leadership" (al-zi'āma) and "precedence" (al-imāma)'. (Tabaqāt, II, 1, 311).
Ibrahim Qazvini places Najafi’s leadership chronologically later than Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Shafti and then Sayyid Ibrahim Qazvini, which also corresponds to Khvansari's above mentioned remarks. However, it is clear from the above sources that by the year 1260, while both Qazvini and Shafti were still alive, Shaykh Muhammad Hasan enjoyed a prominent position in the Shi'i community, particularly in Najaf.

Thus, the choice of Shaykh Najafi as the first mujtahid to be informed of the Babis' message was not accidental. His prominent position, his lifelong efforts to promote the science of fiqh in place of the less dogmatic branches of Shi'i knowledge, and above all his long and bitter rejection of the Shaykhi doctrine, made him the living embodiment of Shi'i orthodoxy. Thus, Bastami's address to Najafi signified more than anything else the final stage of this prolonged conflict which eventually turned to open hostility between the two opposite sides. Although Shaykh Muhammad Hasan, according to some sources, even received an ijazih from Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i, he did not hesitate to denounce the Shaykhi cause in later years. In the early years of the 1240's Q. (c1223-26), during the first denunciation of the Shaykhis, Shaykh Muhammad Hasan, following other fuqaha also expressed his opposition by issuing a fatwa condemning Shaykhi doctrine. His condemnation of the Shaykhis was not only aimed at Shaykhi discontent with the ever increasing influence of jurists but also directed at their treatment of Imami ahadith. Sayyid Kazim alludes to the direct involvement of Shaykh Najafi in later pressure upon Shaykhis after the death of Ahsa'i, when in a new initiative against them, Najafi together with Sayyid Mahdi Karbala'i and Shaykh Husain Najafi reasserted their condemnation of the Shaykhi leader. In the view of Sayyid Kazim, the chief motive for the whole anti-Shaykhi drive which

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1. See below for his details. 2. Q. pp.10, 103.
3. The text of this ijazih is cited in the appendix of the third volume of Jawahir al-Kalâm which was finished some time before 1230 Q. (1814-15). (al-Dhari'a pp.275-7).
4. Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn op.cit. pp.52-69 and Q. 44.
5. Q. pp.54-58 and Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn pp.72-3.
7. Ibid. pp.88-102. The content of the fatwā which was issued by the Mujtahids of Najaf appears in Ibid. p.90. Sayyid Kazim refers to the triangle of Atabāt mujtahids who, with the help of their supporters, activated hostility and disturbance.
even extended to India, was the increasing popularity of Shaykhism, both in and 
out of 'Atabat, since eminent mujtahids such as Najafi were greatly concerned 
with this popularity and 'fearing that the public may abandon their "obedience"'.

Shaykh Muhammad Hasan did not confine his opposition to the Shaykhi school 
alone but included in it the other unorthodox tendencies. The author of Qisas 
al-’Ulāmā quoted him as saying 'It was to abolish hikmat that God chose Muhammad 
ibn ‘Abdallah'. In fact Tunikānī does not venerate Shaykh Najafi in the same 
manner as other influential mujtahids. He, in conformity with other sources 
gives some evidence of Najafi's wealth and worldly possessions and vaguely hints 
that even his laxity and lack of clear discipline in bestowing certificates 
(ijāzi) and confirmation (tasdiq) on his students were not only due to his weak 
judgement, but to his desire to strengthen his position in the struggle for 
leadership.

No doubt Mulla Ali was aware of Najafi's characteristics when he approached 
him in Najaf to inform him of 'the immediate manifestation of the Imam'. 
Addressing him in his class in the presence of students and followers, Bastāmī 
openly proclaimed the appearance of the Hujjat and supplied Najafi with at least 
two works of the Bab; a special taqī addressed to the Shaykh together with 
sections of Qayyūm al-Asma. Bastāmī maintained that 'in the year 1261, the mystery will be revealed and the victorious 
cause (of God) will dominate'. As the second sura of Qayyum al-Asma asks 
the legitimacy of ijtiḥād, Mulla Ali reminds the Shaykh that as the head of the 
Shi'i community, he is bound to respond to a message which calls for re-evaluation 
of the 'ulama's position and only permits the attainment of the 'pure knowledge' 
(al-‘ilm al-khalis) as an alternative to the principle of ijtiḥād. On the same 
ground Bastāmī claimed that by demonstrating an unequal ability to reveal the 
word of God, 'the unschooled Hashimite youth of Persia' is the only righteous

1. Ibid. 90. 2. Q. 105.
3. al-Ma‘āthir va al-Āthār, pp.135-6 and Tābaqät II, 1, 314.
7. Samandar. 347 particularly refers to the taqī for Najaf which was 
delivered by Bastāmī.
8. Qatīl. (512).
authority on the earth. Emphasis on 'unlearned knowledge' and the superior ability to reveal verses, were in fact two recurring arguments employed by the Bab and his disciples to justify the truthfulness of the cause.

But it is likely that, more than anything else, the two issues of divine inspiration and the 'immediate manifestation' enraged the old Shaykh. His response to the claims which were put forward by Mullâ 'Alî was harsh and uncompromising. As was to be expected, the chief mujtahid not only rejected the contents of the Bab's message as 'a blasphemous production' but also 'denounced Mullâ 'Alî as a heretic' and expelled him from the assembly. But what perhaps was less predictable for Bastamî was the extent and gravity of the measures which were adopted in response to his address. This was caused by an unexpected alliance of opposing groups against him.

A group of 'ulama of Najaf and Karbila under the direct influence of Shaykh Muhammad Hasan formally denounced the newly born movement. Furthermore, a number of the Shaykhi 'ulama also took part in the action. It seems that the widespread Babi preaching alarmed some individuals such as Mullâ Hasan Gauhar who, in spite of their earlier acquaintance with Bastamî, were anxious to use the occasion to express their opposition. As Nabîl states 'even the Shaykhis who already testified to Mullâ Hasan Gauhar who, in spite of their earlier acquaintance with Bastamî, were anxious to use the occasion to express their opposition. As Nabîl states 'even the Shaykhis who already testified to Mullâ 'Alî's piety, sincerity and learning' joined hands with the disciples of Najafî, who were originally their adversaries to warn Bastamî 'of the danger which he incurred in giving currency' to the Babi prophecies.

Nevertheless, in spite of these threats, a large section of the Shaykhis of Atabat continued to support Mullâ 'Alî, regarding him as the representative of the true Hujjat. They were 'in avowed expectation of the speedy advent of the Imam ... and declared themselves ready to join the Precursor, as soon as he should appear amongst them'. Because of this very support, Mullâ 'Alî continued his challenge and followed his previous plans to prepare the public for the arrival of the Bab. As a result of these preachings, shortly afterwards towards the middle of Shawwal 1260 (end of October 1844), the opponents of Bastamî were able to draw the attention of Turkish authorities to the danger of the new 'heresy'.

5. Ibid. 91.
7. Ibid. Rawlinson's remark indeed verifies the reports of the Babi sources regarding the sense of messianic expectations in 'Atabat at the time of Bastamî's propagation.
The widespread distribution of the new Qurān provided some concrete proof for some Shiʿi elements to accuse the Babis of what Rawlinson calls 'local dissuasions'.1 Nabil Zarandi even reports that the supporters of Shaykh Muhammad Hasan themselves took the initiative and arrested Bastāmī, put him in chains and delivered him to the local Turkish authorities2. But whatever the circumstances were, it is clear that his arrest was with the cooperation of the Shiʿi elements in Najaf who seem to have been sufficiently disturbed to bring the Ottoman authorities into the conflict. Eventually Bastāmī was arrested on charges of blasphemy and disturbing the public peace, and sent to Baghdad to await further interrogation.3

II

The arrest of Mulla 'Alī Bastāmī by the Ottoman authorities gave a new dimension to what was originally an internal Shiʿi problem. It was partly because of the existing social and political circumstances in Iraq that Bastāmī's arrest and then trial became an overwhelming issue to the province. The question of a new prophetic revelation with all its theological implications affected a wide range of political and religious interests and this eventually led to a confrontation which to some extent overshadowed the primary issue of the Babi claims. Gradually representatives of various groups and factions, both Shiʿi and non-Shiʿi, became involved in a dispute which provided the opportunity for them to demonstrate their importance. Not only the Ottoman governor of Baghdad and the representatives of the Iranian and British governments, but also Sunni religious authorities of different attitudes became in one way or another involved in a case which was no longer confined to charges brought against the 'new heresy', but had the effect of bringing to the surface the long-standing political and factional tensions between the government-supported Sunni 'ulama and the long persecuted Shiʿi public. In the words of Rawlinson:

2. Nabil. 91.
3. The estimated date of Bastāmī's arrest could be worked out by comparing different sources. Rawlinson (F.O. op.cit.) on 8th January 1845 (28th Dhu al-Hijja 1260) put the beginning of Bastāmī's public declaration which led to his arrest about three months before the actual date of the dispatch. This would be the beginning of Shawwāl 1260 (October 1844) which roughly corresponds to Qaṭīl's date. Baghdadī, on the other hand, mentions (p.107) that Mulla 'Alī was in Baghdad gaol for nearly six months before he was transferred elsewhere while Rawlinson in his report of 30th April 1845 (F.O. 195/237 Rawlinson to Canning) states that 'the priest of Shiraz was sent to Constantinople a few days before'. This gives us the date of his arrest as being towards the end of October 1844, nearly a fortnight after his first public declaration.
'Instead in fact of a mere dispute between two rival schools in the town of Najef (Najaf), the question has now become one of virulent contest between the Soonee (Sunni) and Sheah (Shi‘i) sects or which is the same thing in this part of the Ottoman Empire, between Turkish and Persian population'.

In the renewal of these sectarian tensions, the events of the previous years and particularly the memory of the massacre of Karbila* in 1843 by the order of Najib Pasha the governor of the province, had some part and no doubt the Shi‘i public was alert and watchful of the outcome of Bastami’s arrest. One may even suspect that the swift arrest and handing over of Bastami by the followers of Najafi was also intended to deprive the Ottoman authorities of any pretext to cause further trouble. The appointment of Najib Pasha (1842) as the vali* of Iraq in place of the more lenient and tolerant Muhammad Riza Pasha noticeably increased the fears of the Shi‘i ulama who particularly after the reassertion of the Turkish authority in Karbila* were more submissive to the Ottomans than before.

This change in the political climate of the province was further boosted by the attempt to impose more powerful and centralised government. Najib Pasha was a ruthless governor who combined intelligence and courage with strong Sunni convictions. He descended from a noble and influential family in Istanbul which enjoyed close contact with the Ottoman court. His appointment to the troublesome and relatively backward pashalik of Baghdad was partly due to the intention of the Tanzimat reformers to introduce some degree of reform into the affairs of the province. In fact the harsh suppression of the Karbila* rebellion would seem to have been an aspect of the application of the policy of greater centralisation which was Najib's mandate on his appointment.

Though Najib's governorship was distinguished by some degree of success and

6. For the events which led to Karbila' rebellion, see above Chapter One and the cited sources.
efficiency, it was marred by a combination of socially repressive measures, heavy taxation which seems to have been used for his private benefit and markedly discriminatory policy towards the minorities. This policy was regarded particularly unfavourable by the Shi'i public which traditionally felt some sympathy with Persia and therefore regarded the Turkish as an oppressor whose efforts were directed towards the elimination of their traditional liberties. Furthermore problems such as the Shi'i resistance to Ottoman legal authority in Holy Cities, the persistence of the Shi'i mujahids in maintaining some form of local autonomy, dissatisfaction of the Persian merchant community in Baghdad with the newly imposed levies, and the sense of grievance caused to Persian pilgrims to the Holy Cities by the imposition of passport restrictions, combined with long-standing troubles of incessant tribal clashes on the eastern frontiers, endless border disputes with the Persian government over the Kurdish boundaries and the control of the port of Muhammarah exasperated the already grave relations between the and the Persian backed Shi'i community.

In dealing with the religious resistance, Najib hardly tolerated any challenge to the authority of the Ottoman jurisdiction. On a few occasions he strongly condemned the chief mujahid of Karbila', Sayyid Ibrahim Qazvini, for exercising Shi'i jurisdiction in issuing fatwas on legal questions instead of referring the matter to Ottoman Hanafi courts. In his letter to Sayyid Ibrahim he writes:

'The object of the present address to you is to warn you that there is no legal tribunal recognised in the Ottoman domination but that which is presided over by the Kadhi or his deputy - and the naib of Karbela is thus the only constituted authority who can decide upon

1. Najib's measures to improve the administrative affairs of the province, to some extent helped the development of a new judicial and administrative system. A whole body of Ottoman administrators who gradually took over from local officials, in many ways limited the power of the local authorities. Longrigg, op.cit., pp.281-2.
2. F.O. 248/114, No.12, April 3rd, 1845, Rawlinson to Sheil.
4. In his dispatches to Canning, the Baghdad consul reports that the recent 4% tax which Najib levied on the exports of Persian merchants (F.O. 195/237, No.22, May 15th 1844) caused 'agitation amongst the mercantile community' of Baghdad (F.O. 195/237, No.25, 29th May 1844).
5. A considerable number of dispatches written by the British Consul General in Baghdad. Major H. Rawlinson (i.e. F.O. 195/237, Rawlinson to Canning 1843-6 and F.O. 248/114, Rawlinson to Sheil 1843-6) is primarily confined to the tribal and frontier disputes between Persia and the Ottoman Empire. (See also below Chapter Seven, V.)
questions of civil law in the district which you inhabit'.

In some instances he did not even hesitate to act with more severity and to punish or even execute those who tried openly to challenge the domination of the Hanafi shari’ah. However, Shi’i mujtahids such as Shaykh Hasan Najafī Kashif al-Ghitā’, who feared for his personal safety, Sayyid Ibrahim Qazvīnī who was practising taqiyyah and Sayyid Kazīm Rashīf, in order to be protected against his opponents, reconciled themselves with him, even if this compromise was against their personal or religious values and principles. On the return of Najīb from his assault on Karbila’ for example, Shaykh Hasan Kashif al-Ghita’, whose maternal uncle had already been executed at the time of the previous vażī for a minor charge of contempt to Sunni shari’ah, had every reason to act cautiously when he received Najīb Pāshā in Najaf. For three days Shaykh Hasan provided every hospitality for the vażī and his retinue in order to prevent Najīb from carrying out similar reprisals on the Shi’is of Najaf.

Under these circumstances, while the Shi’i population of Iraq was undergoing some constraint, relations with the authorities did not improve even if they did not actually worsen. The case of Mulla ‘Ali Bastāmī became the focal point for the aspirations of that section of the community which after the massacre of Karbila’, was in search for an outlet for its resentment of increasing Ottoman pressure. Thus it seems that Bastāmī’s case to some extent attracted the sympathy of the low rank tullāb, discontented Persian merchants and all those who detested the compromises made by the high ranking mujtahids.

When Mulla ‘Ali was brought to Baghdad, Najīb Pāshā, perhaps following earlier examples, treated the case as a religious matter and referred it to the official Sunni Ottoman court in the hope of reaching a mild and acceptable

1. Translation enclosed in F.O. 248/114, No. 12, 3rd April 1845, Rawlinson to Sheil.
2. al-Azzawi, op.cit. VII, 64 in the case of Sulaymān al-Channām in 1258 Q. who was executed by the order of Najīb Pāshā.
4. See above Chapter One
outcome. After the event of the previous year in Karbila' it was unlikely that Najīb, who was aware of the general Shi'i discontent, would attempt to aggravate the uneasy peace which had been achieved in the last few months. As Rawlinson reports:

'The affair created no great sensation at the time and from the moderate language which Nejib Pasha held in conversing on the subject, I thought it likely that the obnoxious book would be destroyed and that the bearer of it would merely be banished from the Turkish dominion - such indeed was the extreme punishment contemplated by the Shees of Nejaf'.

But the chief Sunni 'ulama of Baghdad seems not to have held the views which Rawlinson predicted. In the primary gathering of religious judges and officials in the Government House for the purpose of examining the charges against Mulla 'Ali, the 'ulama who represented the Sunni Shari'a were ready to demonstrate their full legal power. In the brief cross-examination which followed the enumeration of Bastami's charges, the 'ulama upheld the charge of blasphemy and recommended the maximum penalty of death for the Persian infidel. Indeed as is evident from Rawlinson's report, contrary to the Pasha's earlier reassuring platitudes, he now expressed approval of the verdict of the tribunal. A few lines later in his dispatch, Rawlinson reports that: 'Nejib Pasha, whose sectarian prejudices are excitable, has, I regret to say, allowed himself to adapt to their full extent, the views of the Soonee (Sunni) officers and I foresee that a determined effort will be made to obtain the condemnation and the execution of the unfortunate Shirazee (Shīrāzī),'.

1. Referring to Qayyūm 'al-Asma'. 2. F.O. 248/114, No.1 Rawlinson to Sheil 3. Nabil, 91, cf. Q. 185. Qī aggress al-'ulamā' refers to 'Sunni qubat, muftis and officiais' who were present in the first trial while the English edition of Nabil's Narrative call them 'notables and Government officials of that city' (i.e. Baghdad). Nabil, quoting Hājī Hāshim 'Aṭṭār, states that in this session the celebrated chief mufti of Baghdad Shaykh Mahmūd Alūsī (see below for his details) was also present, when on account of some disagreement he hastily left the gathering. Since Nabil's information concerning Baṭṭāmī's trial and his final fate is incomplete and somewhat chronologically inaccurate, the presence of Alūsī in this gathering must therefore be regarded with caution.

4. F.O. 248/114, No.1; Nabil. 91; Q. 185.
5. F.O. 248/114, No.1. By the name 'Shīrāzī' Rawlinson refers to Baṭṭāmī who throughout these reports remains unnamed. Nor is there a name reference to Babis who are only referred to as the followers of the 'new heresy'. The use of the name 'Shīrāzī' is presumably because of Rawlinson's insufficient information on the identity of Baṭṭāmī. However further evidence may also suggest that this was either the name Baṭṭāmī himself adopted, or was conferred upon him by the public who associated him with the Shīrāzī Bab (see below).
This apparent change of direction on the part of the shrewd governor may be explained in terms of internal sectarian conflict between the two rival religious bodies which he deliberately fostered in order to neutralise the considerable influence exercised by each side. The manoeuvres of the Pasha demonstrate the problem which he faced in dealing with the sensitive relations between the Shi'i and Sunni communities. The sentence passed by the Sunni court which had 'taken up the case in rancorous spirit of bigotry'\(^1\) could not be accepted by the Shi'is who regarded the sentence as an attempt by the authorities to subordinate the Shi'is to Sunni jurisdiction\(^2\). From the Shi'i point of view, compliance with such verdict was equal to submission to other restrictions which would inevitably follow this case.

In response to these apprehensions expressed from the Shi'i quarter, Najib Pasha, who feared that the 'sympathies of the entire Sheeah (Shi'i) sect'\(^3\) might be provoked, decided to postpone his ratification of the court's verdict pending further investigations. In fact, a combination of internal and external forces which were interested in the outcome of the trial, demanded a more balanced and cautious trial by a group of jurists who would represent the main parties involved.

Following a series of long and bitter conflicts between the Persian and Ottoman governments over the past few years, the response of the Iranian authorities to Najib Pasha's real intentions was one of caution and mistrust. At this time there was being held the Erzeroum (Arz-i Rum) conference which was originally convened at the instigation of the British and Russian governments to settle various border disputes between the two countries as well as other problems such as the traffic of pilgrims and the status of Persian citizens resident in the Holy Cities; important issues which were directly connected to Najib Pasha's behaviour were still at stake and the Persian government could hardly afford to be put in a more difficult position by another disaster such as the Karbila\(^4\) massacre. In the circumstances the case of a Persian subject was certainly serious enough to make the Persian authorities anxious about the consequences of the trial which was bound to affect the whole Shi'i community in Iraq and even jeopardise the already shaky equilibrium in Erzeroum. As Rawlinson indicates:

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
'In the present state of irritable feeling which exists between the governments of Persia and Turkey, I cannot doubt, but that the capital punishment of the Shirazee or the persecution of the "Transendentalists" of Nejaf, will be viewed with much exasperation by the court of Tehran.'

Muhibb 'Ali Khan Makui, the governor of Kirmanshah, who was probably acting with Haji Mirza Aqasi's approval, had already protested at the improper arrest and imprisonment of a Persian subject on 'mere accusation'. In a friendly letter to the British Consul in Baghdad, regarding the long detention of the 'inferior Priest of Shiraz', Muhibb 'Ali Khan insisted that even if he were guilty of the charges, 'he ought not to be subjected to arrest - if his crime were proved, his punishment should be that of banishment from the Turkish territory'. He then asked Rawlinson 'as a well wisher to the preservation of friendship between the two governments' to interfere in this matter and suggest to Najib Pasha that 'if the guilt of the Persian be fully substantiated, he may be sent to Kermanshah, in order that I may transfer him to Tehran for punishment, and if on the other hand, the accusation against him proves to be malicious and without foundation, he may

1. F.O. 248/114, No.1. Rawlinson who, in spite of his involvement in the case and in spite of the considerable interest he shows in his environment, is still foreign to the Shi'i internal divisions, confuses the titles of the two Shi'i schools of Shaykhiyah and Usuliyah. While he wrongly identifies Shaykhis and Usulis, he surprisingly translates 'Usuli' as 'transcendentalists' which in fact approximates to the other well known title of Shaykhis known as Kashf Tyah.

2. Muhibb 'Ali Khan was Governor of Kirmanshah during the latter part of Muhammad Shah's reign. He was amongst the large number of Iravani (Muhajirs) and Maku'i officials who came to power and almost monopolised local and provincial offices mainly because of their connection with Haji Mirza Aqasi. Acting as political entourage to Haji, they were regarded as his chief instrument for ruling the country. Muhibb 'Ali Khan who was promoted towards the end of his career to the rank of Mir Panj, was finally disgraced and lost his office as a result of local disturbances and riots which followed the death of Muhammad Shah in 1264 (1848). NT. III, 166 cf. Khurmuji, M.J. Haqayiq al-Akhbar-i Nastir-i 2nd edition, Tehran, 1344 Sh. p.44.


4. It is interesting to see that in the Governor's letter, which relies on 'accounts which have reached (him) from Baghdad', Bastami was also referred to as 'Shirazi'. This suggests that probably according to earlier instructions for taqiyah, Mullâ 'Ali concealed his real identity.
be at once released and set at liberty'. But it was clear that the motives of the Persian authorities in acting in support of Bastami did not spring from humanitarian or indeed sympathetic feelings. In fact, according to Rawlinson: 'the Persian Government has itself on several occasions sustained inconvenience from imposters, professing to be the forerunners of the Imam Mahdi'. Nor did the British representative in Baghdad show any more clemency when he declared that '... it must be thus fully cognizant of the necessity of crushing at the outset any popular movement connected with such a matter...'. Thus, his recommendation to Stratford Canning, the British ambassador in Istanbul for 'interposing the pleas both of humanity and policy in favour of the condemned parties', seems merely to reflect the British policy in the Ottoman Empire of maintaining a certain degree of freedom for the religious minorities in order to minimise the amount of sectarian conflicts in the provinces. As in the case of Iraq, such conflict could easily lead to further disturbances and consequently affect the British political and even commercial interests in the area. The British interest lay in the reduction of tension and prevention of any further deterioration of Perso-Ottoman relations.

In fact, in reporting to the ambassador, Rawlinson hoped to encourage Canning to take measures which would ultimately reverse the Baghdad verdict. It had happened in recent cases that British intervention had saved the lives of religious offenders who were convicted by the Sunni tribunals. A few months earlier, Rawlinson, in the case of a Christian who after a forced conversion, denied his new faith, reports to Canning that:

'There has been a good deal of discussion among the priesthood of this city on the subject of the concession, which your Excellency has thus happily succeeded in obtaining from the Turkish Government and I have understood that they express themselves with much fanatical rancor, but both is the Government too strong and the populace too little under the influence of the Ulama, to give any reasonable cause for apprehending danger from their bigotry or disappointment'.

1. Ibid. 2. F.O. 248/114, No.1. 3. Ibid. 4. Ibid. 5. The execution of a Christian on the charges of apostasy at the time created great excitement in Europe. An account of the event appears in Parliamentary Papers, 1844, vol.LI, pp.153-196, 'Correspondence relating to the executions in Turkey for Apostacy from Islamism'. 6. F.O. 195/237, No.20, May 1st 1844, Rawlinson to S. Canning.
Furthermore, he acknowledged that 'Najib Pasha had already received instructions from his Government to refer to Constantinople, wherever a case occurred in this Pashalic of a Christian who had embraced Islamism returning to his former faith'.

This provided a precedence for the British consul to intervene in the matter by forcing the stubborn Pashâ to refer the case to the authorities in Istanbul for further instruction. It seems, however, that Najîb Pashâ resisted, at least for the sake of appearance, any intervention or mediation by a foreign power which could only worsen his position in an already difficult situation. 'His Excellency is not disposed to listen to any foreign mediation or interference' writes Rawlinson:

'In reply to my own communication he has observed that Persian subjects residing in Turkey are in civil, criminal and religious matters, entirely subject to Ottoman law, and that neither the Persian government, nor the Consuls of that power, nor the High Priests of the Sheeah (Shi'î) sect have any further protective privilege than that of seeing justice duly administered according to the forms and usages of Soonee tribunals ...'.

Recent concessions concerning religious minorities could only cause discontent amongst those Sunni 'ulama who observed the gradual decline in their judicial power, not only by the introduction of new local officials but also by instructions from the central government. In turn, such discontent could be dangerous for the Pashâ who in the eyes of the Sunni public was held responsible for the handling of the whole affair. To tackle so sensitive a problem, which involved not only local religious figures, but the Persian and Ottoman governments, a foreign representative and above all the Sunni and Shi'î public, the Pashâ who was fully aware of the delicacy of the situation perhaps with the advice of the central government put forward the suggestion of a court of examination which would consist of representatives from the parties involved. Rawlinson reports:

'Najib Pashâ at the same time, to give all due formality to his proceedings, and to direct the affair of the appearance of mere sectarian prosecution, has brought in the chief Priests from Najef and Karbela, to hold a solemn Court of Inquisition in conjunction with the heads of the Soomee religion in Baghdad'.

1. Ibid. 2. F.O. 248/114, No.1. 3. F.O. 248/114, No.1.
Whatever the outcome of the controversial tribunal might be, Najîb was aware, as his subsequent actions show, that it would be possible for him to overrule the verdict and duly refer the case to the higher authority in Istanbul. Should it be necessary as he finally assures Rawlinson: 'he will not attempt to carry such sentence into execution either here or at Najef, pending reference to Constantinople ...'¹. But in order to arrive at a suitable result, Najîb Pâsha needed to balance the different parties represented in the tribunal. A brief study of the 'ulama who were present at the Baghdad trial reveals that the væzz carefully invited only those parties who would foil each others' initiatives. On the one hand, the Sunni delegation headed by the muftî of Baghdad was eager to oppose the growing Shi'i self-awareness and on the other hand the Shi'i delegation composed of comparatively conciliatory mujtahids such as Mullâ Ibrâhîm Qazvînî and Shaykh Hasan Kashîf al-Ghita', though reluctant to come to an open confrontation with their Sunni counterparts, were nevertheless ready to resist matters which might lead to further subordination and humiliation of the Shi'is.

The most eminent of the Sunni 'ulama who participated in the trial was Shaykh Abû al-Thâna' Shihâb al-Dîn Mahmûd Alûsî, the influential muftî of Baghdad and the author of a number of well known theological works², who seems to have made use of the occasion to remind both the governor and Shi'i mujtahids of his religious superiority. As a prominent religious figure he had not hesitated to take part in the political life of the province in the time of previous pashâs. During the Baghdad siege of 1831, he collaborated with the Mamlûk væzz, Daûd Pâsha against the Ottoman supremacy in Iraq³, but later, during the governorship of 'Alî Rîzâ Pâsha, after a long struggle with other rivals, he managed to secure his religious position by allying with the væzz. Subsequently he was promoted to the office of chief muftî of Baghdad when he was still in his late thirties⁴. His support for Ottoman sovereignty during the critical years of the

¹. Ibid.
². Most important of all, his comprehensive and highly respected commentary on the Qur'ân: Rûh al-Ma^âni` fî Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-`A`zîm va al-Salî al-Mathâni (written between circa 1254-1267 Q.), Bûlâq 1301-10 (1883-92). (Also Cairo 1345 Q. 30 vol.). A comprehensive list of his works appeared in 'Abd al-Hamîd, I. Alûsî mufassirân, Baghdad 1969, and there is a shorter version in EI2, ALUSI (2). For his references to the Babis of Iraq see below.
1830's came at the time when the Ottoman central government was in dire need of local support against Muhammad 'Ali's threat to Iraq. In a well known work al-Tibyan fi Sharh al-Burhan fi I'ta'at al-Sultan, which was commissioned by 'Ali Riza Pasha, Alusi not only glorified the Ottoman Sultan, but even went as far as to legitimise the authority of the Ottoman government and the necessity of obeying her sovereignty according to the Islamic Shari'a. Thus with rare exceptions, as a whole Alusi was firmly on the side of the Ottomans and their representatives in the province.

Alusi's view, however, in relation to Shi'ism, seems to have undergone some changes over the years. In 1249 (1833) he devoted a whole chapter in his above mentioned al-Tibyan to the subject of Imama where he strongly criticised the Shi'i theory and particularly attacked Shi'i views on the expected Imam. This may be regarded as the Sunni response to the Shi'i anti-Ottoman feelings of the time which were particularly expressed in some Shi'i circles. But Alusi's opposition to Shi'ism seems to have been modified towards the end of his life when the danger of Shi'i supremacy was over. In his last work Nahj al-Salama ila Nabaghith al-Imama written in 1278 (1861-2), when he deals with contemporary schools such as Shaykhlyah and Babiyyah, he tries to maintain an impartial approach to Shi'ism and its internal divisions. As a whole Alusi's treatment of Shi'ism suggests that he was prepared to tolerate a co-existence with Shi'is only as long as they did not pose a serious threat to the superiority of the Sunni Shar'i.

2. Lamahat Ijtima'iya op.cit., 104.
6. Ibid.
7. Claims of some Shi'i sources that Alusi's support for the Ottoman Sultan and his opposition to Shi'ism were because of the practising taqiyah seem to be a sheer fabrication (Q. pp.186-7 cf. Lamahat Ijtima'iya, op.cit., pp.105-6). It is interesting to see how Tunikabunî treats this matter. He claims that although on some occasions Alusi challenged the views of Shi'i mujtahids, towards the end of his life because of his acquaintance with some Shi'i 'ulama he gradually converted to Shi'ism.
On the Shi'i side the two major mujtahids, Sayyid Ibrahim Qazvini and Shaykh Hasan Kashif al-Ghita', in the words of Rawlinson, were 'most unwilling' to attend the Baghdad trial. The reluctance of the Shi'i ulama was presumably because of three main reasons. First, it was because of their sceptical attitude towards a case which was not only exposed to much publicity, but would also provoke an open clash with the Sunni opposition. Secondly, they were conscious of the fact that the main beneficiaries of these trials would be the vaill and the Sunni Mufti who would oppose the Shi'i defence under all circumstances. Thirdly, the adoption of an independent position different to that of the Sunni authorities would in practice mean the defence of a 'heretic' who neither because of his Shaykhi background nor because of his present stand was acceptable to the orthodox ulama. Perhaps this very consideration prevented Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafi from participating in the trial though, as he was the first person who handed over Bastami to the Turkish authorities, it is highly unlikely that he had not been invited to the gathering. Nevertheless, these disadvantages were compensated by the fact that for the first time a formal recognition of the position of the Shi'i jurists was implied. Further, participation in the trial, so long as it did not result in the ratification of a severe anti-Shi'i verdict, could even elevate their position in the internal Shi'i clerical structure, particularly those mujtahids who were prepared to come to terms with the Ottoman authorities.

Sayyid Ibrahim Qazvini in particular according to his student Mirza Muhammad Tunikabuni, was 'very prudent, and no-one ever heard him saying a word of condemnation or criticism in a gathering or in public'. He was the chief mujtahid of the Balasari majority in Karbila, and is mostly known because of his work *Dawabit al-Usul*. Being a meticulous and zealous faqih, he spent most of his life promoting and expanding the science of *Usul-i Fiqh*. His prolonged struggle with his chief rival Sayyid Kazim Rashti was not limited only to theoretical differences but extended even to political disagreements. In addition, the rapid expansion of Shaykhisin in 'Atabat, Iran and India at the

3. Ibid. 10.
6. Ibid. 7.
expense of the Balasaris, caused Qazvini to be more apprehensive of his own standing. Nevertheless his troubles with Shaykhis hardly ever came to an open confrontation. For example, in reply to a request by the Shi'is of India to give his opinion on the condemnation of the Shaykhis, he carefully answered with a few equivocal and moderate quotations from the Qur'an and hadith. Later, he even tried to prevent one of his adherents, Shaykh Mahdi Kujuri, from publishing a refutation which was intended to reply to Sayyid Kazim's Dal'il al-Muta'āhayyirin.

Qazvini was also for a long time, the receiver and distributor of the Oudh Bequest and other endowments in Karbila. This delicate task, which by itself indicated priority in the religious rank and contributed to his influential position in Iraq, caused him to incur perpetual rivalry from other quarters in the Shi'i community. On a number of occasions not only eminent mujtahids such as Shaykh Muhammed Hasan Najafi used all means at their disposal to receive the lion's share, but also others such as covetous tullab or even the head of the Yarmaziyyab brigandage in Karbila virtually blackmailed him in order to get part of the annual benefits. Although Qazvini's relations with the Turkish authorities were occasionally troubled by issues such as the validity of his juristic authority or by his frequent defence of the Shi'i community, thanks to his policy of taqiyyah he was able to maintain his influence in local politics. Noticeably, on several occasions Sayyid Ibrahīm's intervention saved the lives of Shi'is in Sunni official courts. One may suspect that perhaps his

1. Dal'il al-Muta'āhayyirin. op.cit., 90.
2. Ibid. 4-10 cf. Q. pp.55-6.
3. Q. 56. For the details of Kujuri see below Chapter Six, I. It seems that Q.'s allegation (ibid.) concerning Sayyid Kazim's reproaching Sayyid Ibrahīm has no real basis. Throughout Dal'il the author deliberately, it seems, avoids any personal attack on Qazvini, yet some allusions (pp.6-7) confirm indirect acknowledgement of Sayyid Ibrahīm's faṭwā.
4. Q. pp.7-10. The Shi'i ruler of Oudh and Lucknow Sultan Ghazi al-Dīn Haydar had established a vaqf of a hundred lakhs of rupees, the proceeds of which were to be divided among two mujtahids, one in Najaf and one in Karbila for distribution amongst tullāb and other deserving people. (Mahmūd, M. Tarikh-i Ravābīt-i Siyāsī-yi Irān va Ingilis dar Qarn-i Nūsdahum-i Milādī, 8 vols. Tehran, 1328 Sh., VI, 1742). No complete study of this important subject has yet been carried out.
5. Q. 10.
6. Qatīl. 519.
7. Q. 12.
8. See above.
10. Ibid.
connection with the British consul in Baghdad who was in charge of appointing the mujtahid responsible for the distribution of the Oudh Bequest, was also instrumental in Qazvini's prominent position.

Shaykh Hasan Kashif al-Ghita' who mainly represented the Arab faction of the Shi'is of Iraq in the Baghdad trial, was also an outstanding jurist. His personal position, his family descent, his scholarship, and his popularity, made him no less important than his contemporaries. Qiisas al-'Ulama' held him above Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafi in his knowledge of jurisprudence, whereas Rawdat al-Jannat stated that his riyasat over some factions of 'ulama made him to be highly respected by both Shi'is and Sunnis alike. Thanks to the friendly relations between Kashif al-Ghita's family and Ahsa'i it seems that Shaykh Hasan's attitude towards the Shykhis was moderate compared to many of his contemporaries. Dalil al-Mutdhayyin refers to Ahsa'i's occasional visits to Shaykh Ja'far Najafi, father of Shaykh Hasan, and quotes part of his ijazih for Shaykh Ahmad in which the author praised Shaykh Ahmad for his scholarly treatise on the question of jabr and 'adl. Later, during the subsequent waves of condemnation and persecution Shaykh Musa and Shaykh Alí, both elder brothers of Shaykh Hasan tried to abate the Bálásari enmity and even to bring about a reconciliation between the two parties. Shaykh Hasan's good relations with the Ottoman væliz, were also instrumental in his appointment as the chief representative from Najaf.

The final composition of the 'ulama who attended the Baghdad trial suggests

1. RJ. 182.
2. RA. III, 343; Q. pp.184-6. Tabaqat II, 1, pp.316-320. Also for Shaykh Hasan's family see EI², KASHIF AL-GHITA' (by W. Madelung) and above Chapter One, I. Qiisas al-'Ulama' (p.186) states that 'the whole family, whether male or female, were faqīhs so that even the uneducated members of the family who have no knowledge of Arabic are skilful in problems of jurisprudence'.
3. Q. 185. Shaykh 'Alī Al Kashif al-Ghita' confirms that; 'He was an ʿUṣūlī mujtahid with insight into Akhbār and Arabic philology. He was also an eloquent writer and poet' (MS. al-Ḥusn al-Manī cited in Tabaqat. II, 1, 318).
4. RJ. 182 and RA. III, 343 who believes that Shaykh Hasan had a joint riyaasat with Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafi over the Shi'i community. Tabaqat (II, 1, 317) quoting Sayyid Muhammad al-Hindī's Nazm al-Li'āl also refers to his joint leadership.
that the Turkish governor was anxious for all different factions within the Shi'i and Sunni camps to be represented. The eight known Shi'i ulama who were invited, represented almost all the different tendencies on the Shi'i side. In addition to fuqaha’from Karbila*, Najaf and Kazimayn, the Shaykhis were also represented by Mulla Hasan Gauhar. His presence side by side with other jurists at the trial in which the future of a Shaykhi was at stake confirms Mulla Hasan’s conciliatory attitude. In fact his unclarified stand tilted him so much in the opposite direction that even Agha Buzurg Tihrani states that; 'It is not possible to say that he was an absolute Shaykhi single because he studied under the above mentioned (i.e. Ahsa’I and Rashti) and therefore he should be regarded as being of the Mutisharri’a.’ His anti-Babi attitude is also noted by Na’ib al-Sadr who points out that although 'he was one of the close adherents of the late Sayyid, he rejected both factions' of Babi and Rukni (presumably the followers of Karim Khan Kirmani). At the time when he was still regarded by some as the temporary successor of Rashti, this inclination towards non-Shaykhis seems to have further weakened his position amongst the majority of Shaykhis. Thus, his presence at the trial should be regarded as an attempt to retrieve his position. Another Shaykhi dignitary, Shaykh Muhammad Shibl Baghdadi, was also invited presumably to represent the Arab followers of Rashti. But being a believer in the Bab he decided not to participate in the trial. 'He left Baghdad in haste since he reckoned that the vali, intended to obtain approval for the refutation of the cause of God.'

On the Sunni side however, it seems that the entire delegation was under the influence of Alusi. Muhammad Amin al-Wa’iz, a public orator and the head

1. See table supplemented.
2. Shaykh ‘Abbâs ibn Shaykh Hasan Kâshif al-Ghîţâ’, Nabdhat al-Gharrâ’ MS. cited in Tabaqat, 318. As a biography to the author’s father, it contains some valuable information about the Baghdad gathering including the list of some of the Shi‘i ulama.
5. See above Chapter Four, I.
6. Qâtîl’s reference (508) to two Shaykhi ‘ulama, Shaykh Ahmad Mashkûr al-Najafî and Shaykh Râdi Qasîr who accepted Gauhar’s leadership would indicate some support for Mullâ Hasan. (See also above Chapter Four, I ). Yet later when writing a ‘treatise to establish Karim Khan’s delusion’ (Tabaqat, II, 1, 342) it looks as though Mullâ Hasan is fighting an already lost battle with his rivals.
of the Qadiri order in Baghdad who was a former pupil of Alusi who maintained friendly relations with his teacher. The previous mufti of Baghdad Muhammad Sa'id Afandi who had been previously dismissed by Muhammad Riza Pasha, was also a Naqshbandi Sufi originally from Irbil. No doubt Alusi's sympathy for Sufism brought him closer to the other two Sunni participants of whom he speaks in his writings with reverence and respect. But it appears that this Sufi attachment in no way lessened the commitment of the Sunni 'ulama to the exercise of Shar.".

The composition of the tribunal would indicate that the mere occurrence of the Shi'i/Sunni encounter was striking enough to affect the whole of the Shi'i public. It is possible to suggest that Najib Pasha's attempt to hold the Baghdad trial was a primary experiment with the introduction of a provincial majlis recommended by the Tanzimat. Thus Shi'is in particular regarded the tribunal as a major step forward in gaining equal rights in matters of religion and legal practice. The prospects of such a gathering were encouraging enough not only to overcome the mujtahid's original apprehensions but to attract the attention of the Shi'i notables. This is illustrated in Al Kubba, a highly influential Shi'i family of Baghdad who were anxious to provide all necessities including a new robe for Shaykh Hasan Kashif al-Ghitāf in order to dignify the appearance of the Shi'i 'ulama in the eyes of their opposition.

Far from the excitement and publicity which surrounded his case, Mulla 'Ali was spending his third month in the Baghdad gaol. Through some contacts that he managed to establish with the outside, he was still able to transmit his teachings. Baghdadī reports; "My father, Shaykh Muhammad, who visited the "messenger" every day in the gaol, heard from him the "Word of God" (Kalamatallah) for the period of three months. He (i.e. Shaykh Muhammad) then delivered whatever he


2. Tārīq. III, 560. His dismissal, according to most sources, was principally caused by the mufti's disregard for the previous vāiz's Shi'i sentiments. (Dhikra Abī al-Thanū' Alūsī, op.cit. pp.51-2, al-Durr al-Muntathar, op.cit. p.170). Yet, Baghdadī's remark (p.107) concerning Shaykh Muḥammad Sa'īd's Shāfī'ī attitude, suggests that perhaps his dismissal had some connection with Ottoman religious policy in Iraq. The succession of a Ḥanafī, Shaykh Alūsī, was more in line with the Ḥanafī religious law practised in the province.


4. Lamahāt Ijtima'iyya. op.cit. II, 139-40. Recollections of an old Baghdadī from an unnamed source.
had heard (from Bastāmī) to the believers. During this brief period, a great number of people were converted.¹

Apart from Shaykh Muhammad Shibl, who perhaps due to his position was able to visit Bastāmī, other visits also took place. Rawlinson reports:

'This individual (i.e. Bastāmī), who is timid, ignorant and I should say entirely harmless, pleaded on his first arrest that he was a mere messenger not responsible for the contents of the volume entrusted to his charge, and such a defence would probably have availed him in a Court of law, but whilst in confinement he has been unfortunately seduced in the presence of witnesses, suborned for the purpose by the Soonee mufti, into declaring his belief in the inspiration of the perverted passages, and I am apprehensive, therefore, that according to Muhammedan law, whether expounded by Sheeas or Soonees, he will be convicted of blasphemy.'²

These important remarks by Rawlinson suggest that although Bastāmī, at the time of his arrest, perhaps in line with the practice of taqīyah, tried not to reveal any direct connection between his own beliefs and the text of Qayyum al-Asmā', yet he could not convince the authorities of his innocence. Later, during his confinement in Baghdad, either by his own wish, or else under the pressure of the authorities, it seems that he confessed in the presence of witnesses to the belief that the author of Qayyum al-Asmā' was motivated by divine inspiration. Further, Ālusi's involvement is also apparent from the report which shows that the chief mufti was anxious to collect evidence, even by deceit or force, in order to defeat his Shi'i opposition, as well as to discredit the preacher of a movement which, though detested by the Shi'i mujtahids, still represented the revival of certain Shi'i messianic forces.

The growing interest shown in the case by the public must, no doubt, have encouraged the vālī to set the date for the Baghdad trial. Baghdādi states: 'when the Government saw that the following of the cause (i.e. the Bābī movement) is increasing day by day, the vālī, Najīb Pāshā ordered the 'ulama to be present in Baghdad.'³ When on Monday 4th Muharram 1261 (January 13th 1845) the court finally assembled,⁴ it was less than a week to 10th Muharram ('Ashūrā')⁵, when

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4. F.O. 248/114 (also 195/237), No.2, Jan. 16th 1845, Rawlinson to Sheil. The trial was held in the 'Government House' (Dār al-'Imāra) in Baghdad. (Shaykh Husain Nurī, Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, Epilogue, cited in Tabaqāt II, 1, p.319).
5. A sacred day both in Sunni and Shi'i traditions. (EK², 'ASHŪRA' and Shorter EI, MUHARRAM). According to Shi'i accounts, the day on which the Qā'im in his Khurūj would enter Karbila' to avenge the 'martyrdom' of Husain which happened on the same day.
according to Babi predictions, the unknown Bab himself would appear in the Holy Land (i.e. 'Atabat) and start his Khuruj. This timing would suggest that Najīb who was anxious about the possible revolt of the pro-Bastami public, decided to hold the trial and gain the necessary fatvā of condemnation before the due date for the arrival of the Bab.

With Najīb Pasha presiding over the assembly the trial started. The court was chiefly concerned with three issues. The first was the nature of the prophecies contained in the Bab's new Furqān. Further, in order to prove other charges concerning the apostasy of the messenger, it was necessary to investigate the content of the text. On this point, as far as the sources are concerned, there was a unanimous belief on both sides that the book was 'a blasphemous production'. Both sides were well aware of the potential danger of the pronouncement in Surat al-'Ulamā', calling for the mujtahids' resignation in favour of the promised Zi/cp. The court also agreed that 'parties avowing a belief in the readings which it contained were to be liable to the punishment of death'. Though the Babis were not specifically mentioned by name, this was the first known fatvā of the 'ulama which required punishment of death for belief in the Babi cause.

After reaching conclusion on the first issue, the court proceeded to the second issue regarding Mulla Ali's personal belief. Here, it seems that the court decision was meant not only to affect Bastami, but to set an example for other Babi activists, but Shi'i and Sunni points of view were widely divergent over this matter. The Sunnis who represented the dominating Hanafi law on the basis of earlier conclusions argued that since 'this book is an innovation (bid'a), its bearer is also an innovator (mubâd'ī) and amongst the "corrupters of the earth", and therefore liable to death'. In reply, Shaykh Hasan Kashif al-Ghīrī, expressing the Shi'i consensus, put forward a delicate technical objection. After a long and well documented argument in support of his objection, he concluded that in this connection 'the book by itself could not be regarded as a piece of firm evidence' (īā (amāl fī al-qirtās) and so long as its bearer is unaware of its contents and does not believe in its claims, it is

1. See above Chapter Four, III. 2. F.O. 248/114, No.2.
5. Ibid.
6. 'mufṣīdin fī al-ārd' from the Qurān, II, 11.
7. Q. 186
8. Ibid.
impossible to pass the sentence of death. Kashif al-Ghita’’s objection, which was primarily designed to save the life of Bastami, demonstrated to his Sunni counterparts Shaykh Hasan’s skill in dealing with juristic problems and knowledge of Hanafi law.

As a result of this objection, Mulla Ali Bastami was closely cross-examined. Nearly all sources agree that his belief in the contents of the new Furqan was scrutinised by the court. But his reply differs from one source to another. Baghdad states that in reply to the court’s question about the identity of Sahib al-Amr, Bastami maintained that; 'He is the righteous expected soul. He appeared and he is the one who was anticipated by the Holy Books'. The author even goes as far as to suggest that Mulla Ali ‘glorified the Cause' by reciting some of the verses and prayers of the Bab to the jury and invited them to recognise the Bab’s call. Contrary to the above account, Rawlinson in conjunction with his earlier remarks reports that 'he (i.e. Bastami) himself distinctly repudiated the charge', while Qisas al-’Ulama relates that in reply to the court inquiry the accused maintained that he had no knowledge or insight into the contents of the Book and his belief was the belief of all muslims.

Such sharp contrast between the above sources, prevents a firm conclusion regarding Bastami’s response being reached. Yet, it is most probable that Bastami, bearing in mind the Bab’s recommendation of taqiyyah, the danger of making any public confession, and the Shi’i-Sunni conflict, acknowledges the mujtahid's assistance and avoided any direct commitment to the 'Book'.

Here, the chief mufti, trying to substantiate the charge against the Shi’i objection, presented his witnesses to the court. But it seems that he was

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1. Ibid. Throughout Q.’s account of the trial, the author refers to two preachers or 'the most reliable believers of the Bab' who were charged and then tried in Baghdad, yet he fails to give any details about their identity. However it is highly implausible that beside Mulla Ali there was another Babi on trial.


3. Ibid.

4. F.O. 248/114, No.2.

5. Q. 186.

6. Baghda’di a zealous Babi perhaps on this occasion only relates the recollections of his father's who in turn was absent from the trial. Further, his sympathy towards Bastami perhaps prevented him or his father from saying something which in their mind could damage the image of Mulla Ali. Rawlinson, on the other hand, who was probably informed of the proceedings of the trial through Mulla 'Abd al- Aziz, the Persian agent in Baghdad, though he tried to be precise, still reported a second hand account. Qisas al-’Ulama which does not provide any source for his account should also be treated with caution. In fact in the absence of any fresh evidence, such as reports of the proceedings in the Ottoman archives, it is hard to pass any firm verdict in this matter (see below).

7. Since there is no information on the identity of the witnesses, one may assume that they were the same people who were instigated by the Sunni authorities to interview Bastami in gaol.
hardly able to provide any firm evidence against Mulla 'Ali. Although witnesses were brought forward, who stated that he had in their presence declared his adoption of the spurious text, of which he was the bearer' reports Rawlinson, 'yet as there was reason to suspect the fidelity of their evidence, the Shi'i divines were disposed to give him the benefit of his present disavowal'. In accordance with the above account, the author of *Nabdhat al-Gharra* also indicates that it was Shaykh Hasan who, in spite of the muftī's persistence, once again made an objection and referring to Mulla 'Ali's own statement, maintained that 'Since he repented, according to Shari'a, I accept his penitence'. Following these remarks by Kashif al-Ghita, a long discussion took place between the two sides during the course of which, according to Shi'i sources, Shaykh Hasan finally established his point on the basis of Hanafī jurisprudence and with detailed references to relevant sources. But it seems that in spite of all their logical reasoning, in the end the two sides could not reach any agreement on the question of Bastami's fate. The verdicts of both parties as Rawlinson formerly predicted, had a secondary importance to the Turkish authorities. 'After much discussion the Soonee law officers adjudged the culprit to be convicted of blasphemy and passed sentence of death on him accordingly, while the Sheeas returned a verdict, that he was only guilty of dissemination of blasphemy and liable in consequence to no heavier punishment than imprisonment or banishment'.

According to Rawlinson, though this is not confirmed by any other sources, a third issue was also raised in the trial concerning 'the other parties implicated in the affair'. Here the British consul certainly refers to the pro-Bastami Shaykhs. It is possible that the growing activities and preachings of the Babis had irritated the 'ulama as much as the governor. Naturally as the report indicated; 'The same difference of opinion was found to prevail between the Sheeah and Soonee divines'. While the Shi'is were in favour of forcible removal of all 'parties openly avowing a belief in the expected immediate advent of the Imam', from the Holy Cities, the Sunnis recommended a tougher line and called for 'punishment of death'.

Here a distinction should be made between the various sources regarding the

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1. F.O. 248/114, No.2.
2. *Nabdhat al-Ghrarrā* op.cit. (pp.318-19).
3. Ibid., also Q. 186.
4. F.O. 248/114, No.2.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
charges brought against Bastami and others in the court. This has great significance for the outcome of the trial since it illustrates the way in which the penal Islamic code was adopted in the case of the new Babi 'heresy'. *Qisas al-'Ulama' implies that the ground for the prosecution of Bastami was *bid'a* unlawful innovation) and he was accused of being *mubtad'al, whereas Rawlinson states that the charge of blasphemy, which perhaps could be translated as *ihlaq, was levelled. However the allusion in *Nabāḥat al-Gharra' regarding Shaykh Hasan's acceptance of Bastami's penitence (tauba) suggests that the charge brought against the latter was most probably *irtidād (apostasy) which is punishable both according to Shi'i and Hanafi law, by death, particularly in the case of an apostate who was born Muslim. Thus it is very likely that the main difference of opinion (ikhtilāf) between the two sides was on the right of the accused to have an opportunity to repent and return to Islam since the views of the jurists in both Shi'i and Sunni schools of fiqh differ in this matter. This provided a chance for the Shi'is to challenge Alusi and other Sunni jurists. However, according to Tunikabuni, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvini was silent all through the trial because 'he was extremely timid and never abandoned the practice of *taqiyyah', and therefore the main responsibility fell on Shaykh Hasan to try to nullify the Sunni opinion on two main grounds; first, by making a distinction between the bearer (rasūl) and the content of the 'blasphemous book', and secondly, by emphasising the fact that even if the accused could be regarded as an apostate he should still have been given a chance to repent.

But whatever the opinion of the two sides might have been and however eager they were to have their verdicts prevail, it was fairly clear to all the parties involved that neither of the sentences passed was going to be put into effect before reference was made to the Sublime Porte. As Rawlinson states: 'The different opinions have been duly recorded and attested and a reference on the subject will be immediately made to Constantinople by H.E. Najīb Pasha'.


3. Q. 186.

4. F.O. 248/114, No.2.
understanding amongst the 'ulama present at the trial supports the view that most of the quarrel between Shi'i and Sunni over the case, was merely for the sake of their legal and religious standing in relation to the Ottoman central authority. Both sides were anxious to demonstrate their independence in legal and juristic matters. While the Shi'is were apprehensive that defeat in the trial might be used as an excuse for applying further pressure upon them in order to subordinate them to the Ottoman law, the Sunni muftis were anxious to demonstrate to the Sublime Porte that in their view there was no room within the newly introduced reforms for any compromise with the Shi'i 'ulama.

As far as Bastami was concerned, the result of the Baghdad trial, as might have been expected, had little effect on his situation. He remained in Baghdad gaol for another three months before any instruction from Istanbul concerning his case reached Baghdad. But nevertheless, the question of the Bab's appearance must have preoccupied him. As the date of the Bab's arrival, during mid Muharram 1261, approached, the excitement reached its highest level. A 'considerable uneasiness is beginning to display itself at Karbila' and Najef in regard to the expected manifestation of the Imam' writes Rawlinson towards the end of his dispatch; 'and I am apprehensive that the measures now in progress will rather increase than allay excitement'.

But as the time arrived, and the critical period of mid Muharram passed without incident, the delay and finally the cancellation (bada') of the Bab's journey to 'Atabāt caused bitter disillusion and resentment to those who believed that the manifestation of the Bab would end the hardship and persecution forced upon his messenger. For Bastami himself, though none of the sources recorded any information regarding the rest of his imprisonment in Baghdad, it is not impossible to assume that he himself must have been worried about the effects of cancellation both on himself and on the future of the embryonic Babi community in 'Atabāt. In practice it seems that his worries were not misplaced. In spite of the presence, at least for a period of time, of a noticeable number of Letters in the Holy Cities who are surprisingly absent from all the accounts during the period of the trial, no fresh attempt was made either to organise

1. *Baghdādi*. 107, also F.O. 248/114, No.19, April 30th, Rawlinson to Canning.
2. F.O. 248/114, No.2.
3. For the process of events which finally led the Bab to reconsider his original plan for 'Atabāt see below Chapter Nine, IV.
the sympathisers or later to challenge the governor’s decision to keep Bastāmī in custody. Till the emergence of Tāhirī as an influential leader, the early Babi community in Iraq suffered from the consequences of Bastāmī’s arrest and trial and the cancellation of the Bab’s plan to visit ʿAtabāt.

Meanwhile the efforts during the following months by the Persian and to a lesser extent British government to settle Bastāmī’s case through diplomatic channels produced no definite result. Towards the middle of February 1845 (early Saffar 1261), Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī, who by then was informed of the result of the Baghdad trial, instructed the Persian agent in Baghdad ‘to demand the delivery into his own hand of the priest of Shiraz imprisoned for blasphemy, with a view to his deportation to Persia’.

Here it may be asked why Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī was so anxious about the fate of an ‘inferior priest of Persia’. After all, if Muḥāfaẓāt Mulla Ṭāhirī had declared his mission in Iran and been tried under Shiʿī jurisdiction, he would hardly have received any better treatment from the authorities, witness the trial and persecution shortly afterwards of many of the supporters of the Bab. The answer lies in the Persian policy towards the Ottoman government. Beside all the moral and political commitments felt by the Persian government towards its subjects in Iraq, Ḥājī was obliged, perhaps because of the pressure of public opinion, to take action on a case which demonstrated clearly the growing Ottoman pressure to subdue Persian subjects fully to its authority. As is evident from the dispatch sent by Rawlinson to Sheil in February 1845, the fears and apprehensions of the Persian population of Iraq had not yet fully diminished:

‘The condemnation to death of a Persian Muolla at Baghdad for heresy has not caused here the sensation or irritation which might be anticipated arising chiefly, I conjecture, from a disbelief that the sentence will be carried into execution. I trust so extreme a penalty will not be inflicted, for with whatever indifference this government may regard his fate, as this preacher belongs to the priesthood, that fanatic and influential class might be able to raise an inconvenient excitement among the Persian population’.

A few days later, the British ambassador in Istanbul as a result of Rawlinson's report and perhaps also because of the Iranian demand, in concert

1. F.O. 248/114, No.10, April 3rd 1845 Rawlinson to Sheil. Same as F.O. 195/237 No.14, April 2nd 1845 Rawlinson to Canning.
2. F.O. 60/113, No.24, Rawlinson to Canning, 26 February 1845 enclosed in dispatch of March 1st, 1845, Sheil to Aberdeen.
with the Russian minister, impressed upon the Porte 'the expediency of issuing instruction to the Governor of Baghdad to abstain from putting the individual in question to death, inflicting on him the mildest punishment consistent with the public tranquility' \(^1\). It is probable that both the British and the Russian representatives who were concerned about the effects of this recent event on Ottoman-Persian relations, used their influence to prevent the Ottoman government from taking any drastic action. The British consul in Baghdad seems to have been conscious of the fact that Turkish persistence in carrying out any tough measures would result in further sectarian conflict; 'the more in fact these Mujtahids are degraded by the Turkish government, the more complete, I think, will be their ascendency over the minds of their disciples and the only results, therefore, which are likely to attend the proscription of their public duties, are the more complete isolation of the Persian community of this province, and an increase of the rancorous feeling with which the dominant Soonee party is regarded' \(^2\).

Finally the Ottoman government which at first seemed reluctant to make any positive response to foreign diplomatic pressure \(^3\) but preferred to use Bastam\(\)i as a means of demonstrating strength in its relations with Iran, decided to make a gesture of good faith. On 14th April 1845 (24th Rab\(\)\(\)i\(\) al-Awwal 1261), Najib Pasha received instructions from Istanbul to transfer Bastam\(\)i to the capital \(^4\). On 30th April 1845 (10th Rab\(\)\(\)i\(\) al-Thani 1261) Rawlinson reports that with the last Baghdad post, 'the Persian priest of Shiraz so long detained in confinement at this place, was sent to Constantinople' \(^5\). By the removal of the central figure from the area of controversy to Istanbul, the case was reduced to an insignificant issue in the Ottoman capital \(^6\).

After his transfer to Istanbul, the fate of Mull\(\)a 'Al\(\)i is not absolutely clear since the sources either lack any information or else are uncertain, 

\(^{1}\) F.O. 248/114, No.10. 
\(^{2}\) F.O. 195/237, No.16, April 15th 1845, Rawlinson to Canning. 
\(^{3}\) F.O. 248/114, No.10. 
\(^{4}\) F.O. 195/237, No.16. 
\(^{5}\) F.O. 195/237, No.19, April 30th 1845, Rawlinson to Canning. 
\(^{6}\) While Mull\(\)a 'Al\(\)i was still in Baghdad prison, it seems that the 'ulama did not lose their interest in his case. Baghdad\(\)i reports that after Mull\(\)a 'Al\(\)i's departure from Baghdad, three months after the trial, 'when the discussion between the 'ulama calmed down', then his father Shaykh Muhammad Shibi was able to return from Karbil\(\)a' to Baghdad. (p.107). It is not clear to which group of 'ulama in particular he is referring.
confused or contradictory. Nabil Zarandi compresses the whole matter into a single incident, by quoting a certain Haji Hashim 'Attar as saying that: 'On the night of that same day (i.e. Baghdad trial) he had departed to Constantinople.' Then putting alternative suggestions on what eventually befell Mulla 'Ali, he continues; 'A few believed that on his way to Constantinople he had fallen ill and died. Others maintained that he had suffered martyrdom.' Mirza Yahya Subh-i Azal on the other hand, states in his historical account that Mulla 'Ali7, who according to him was originally on his way to Rum (i.e. Istanbul)5, was arrested in Baghdad and after the mufti's fatwa was moved to Istanbul. But, he continues 'near Baghdad in a place known as Badra'i he was poisoned and suffered martyrdom.'

The most significant and interesting account, however, is a brief report written by the Persian representative in Istanbul in reply to some enquiries in connection with the Bastami affair, possibly from the authorities in Tehran7. According to this report, about the facts of which the writer claims to have made personal enquiries, 'a certain Mullâ 'Ali' on his way to the capital, 'was

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1. Qâbir (pp.511-12, p.527).
2. Nabil. 91. 3. Ibid.
4. Strangely enough, the author claims that Mullâ 'Ali Bastami, who was reputed for his piety, was also known as 'Muqaddas Khurasanî'. No other source confirms this title for Bastami, since it is usually identified with Mullâ Sadiq Khurasanî (Muqaddas).
5. This important remark by Subh-i Azal, which is partly supported by the Bab's own comments, suggests that there were to have been further stages in Bastami's mission.
7. This report appears to be an official dispatch from a high member of the Persian mission to Istanbul (who from here on is referred to as the Persian representative) to another official probably of the same rank in Baghdad or Tehran. (The title and style of the letter confirm this conjecture). The facsimile of the report appeared in p.109 (supplement) of Zuhûr al-Ifâq, though the author neither paid much attention to its contents nor gave any information on its origin or writer. The report also bears a seal which suggests that the name of the author might be Muhammad. Unfortunately it is hard to find out who was in charge of the Iranian mission to Istanbul in 1846 (1262), since at the beginning of the Erzeroum Conference (Feb. 1843), Mirza Javafar Muhandis al-Mamalik (Mushir al-Daulih), the official Persian ambassador in Istanbul, was in Tehran due to illness. According to Adamîyat, Mirza Ahmad Khan Vaqâyînîgar Shirazi was responsible for the embassy in the absence of Mushir al-Daulih. (Amir Kabir va Irâq, op.cit. 70-71). Beside the difference in the names, it is hard to believe that an able writer such as Vaqâyînîgar would write a dispatch with obvious grammatical errors. The dispatch is written in reply to the letter of 10th Dhulqâda 1262 (8th January 1846) which reached Istanbul a month later. The date of the dispatch is 14th Dhulhijja 1262 (12th Feb. 1846).
held for a while in a place known as Büti, before being moved to the capital. He adds, 'they (i.e. the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul) summoned him (i.e. Mulla 'Ali) to a gathering (majlis) and enquired about certain matters, and he, without thinking of practising any taqiyah, made certain verbal confessions. Therefore according to the declaration of the Baghdādī ('ulama and in view of of his own confession, he was banished to Kurk (sic. presumably Kirkūk) for the time being'. The above remarks throw some light on the final stages of the Bastāmī affair in Istanbul. It is clear that Mulla 'Alī did not hesitate to accept charges which were brought against him, but the lack of further information prevents us from specifying these charges. However, the proceedings of the Baghdad trial suggest that the enquiry was perhaps confined to the question of 'dissemination of blasphemy', which according to the Shi'ī view in the trial, was punishable only by imprisonment or banishment.

One month after Bastāmī's exile the same Iranian representative in Istanbul sent one of his officials to the Porte to protest against Mulla 'Alī's imprisonment. He was probably instructed by the Iranian government to follow the case in Istanbul. In his request to the Ottoman government he maintains that since the prisoner who was sent to Kirkūk was a Persian subject he must be extradited to his own country and 'if he is found guilty of any charges, he will be punished by the exalted Iranian government'. In response, the Ottoman authorities 'first denied that he was a Persian subject by claiming that he had been a Baghdādī citizen, but after long persistence they gave way'.

But in spite of all these efforts, the close of Bastāmī's brief mission was tragic. 'When they sent orders to Kirkūk to lift his chains and take him out of prison, he had already passed away a few days earlier and come to the mercy of God'. The cause of his death is not clear. While earlier hints concerning the possibility of poisoning should be taken into account, it is also probable

2. Z. 109 (Sup.).
3. Ibid. The route on which Mulla 'Alī was taken could be worked out as follows:

Baghdad → Mosul → Bolu → Istanbul → Kirkūk

According to Baghdādī while he was in Mosul 'he elevated the Cause' (107).
4. See above.
5. Ibid.
6. Z. 109 (Sup.).
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
that his death was due to prison hardship or some illness. The outbreak of cholera in Iraq during 1261-2 (1845-7) could provide a satisfactory answer to this question. However, it is arguable that had he survived he could hardly have escaped a similar fate in his own country.

Bastami's mission to 'Atabat and the consequent events proved first that the appeal of the new message was directed almost entirely to the Shaykhis who in pursuit of their messianic ideas supported Bastami's mission at a time when following their conflicts with the Balasaris and because of the lack of any clear orientation after Rashti, they were seeking a decisive leadership. Secondly, the expansion of the movement hardly went beyond the Shaykhi community since in their attempt to deliver the message to the leading 'ulama of the Balasari faction, the Babi policy of itmam-i hujjat was faced with total opposition. The growing sympathy of the public to the new movement induced some of the 'ulama to seek the assistance of the Turkish authorities, fearing that the revival of the messianic tendencies would bring about further troubles with the provincial government. Thirdly, perhaps contrary to the Shi'is' expectation, the Ottomans, in cooperation with the Sunni muftis, took up the issue to tighten their control over the Shi'i community. Thus contrary to their will, the Shi'i 'ulama were forced to intervene in the case, fearing that lack of action would be interpreted as resignation from their legal and juristic responsibilities. The trial of Baghdad demonstrated that in order to protect their own legal privileges, the Shi'i 'ulama were prepared to defend an individual who represented an attitude totally against their own principles. But if in their manoeuvres they failed to achieve an immediate supremacy over the Sunni muftis, at least they managed to establish an equilibrium in which the messianic zeal of the Babis was checked by the Ottoman measures without causing any serious threat to their own positions. Bastami was not executed by the verdict of the Sunni muftis, but he was banished from 'Atabat and with that, at least temporarily, were subsided the expectations of his followers.

III

From the early months of 1261 (1845) Tahirih gradually emerged as the new leader of the Babi community in 'Atabat. In spite of the disadvantage of being a woman, she was capable of taking her place amongst the ex-students of Rashti.

Her remarkable personality gave a new spirit to the Babis who as a result of the events of the past few months were disillusioned and demoralised. Although a full account of her life, character and ideas is beyond the scope of this study, it is necessary to give a short sketch of her background before discussing her role in the development of the movement, particularly during the years of her stay in Iraq.

Fatimih Zarrīn Tāj surnamed Umm al-Salma and titled Qurrat al-'Ayn by Rashti and Tahirih by the Bab, was born in Qazvin (circa 1233/1817-18) to a well known family of 'ulama of Qazvin. Her father, Mullā Muhammad Ṣālih and her two uncles who were originally from the village of Baraghān (in the Sāvujbulāgh district

1. In spite of a relatively large number of short biographies and other secondary sources on Tahirih, there is a lack of a complete factual account of her life, let alone any analysis of her ideas and works. As far as the primary sources are concerned, almost all the accounts of the history of the movement contain scattered references or sometimes a section on her. Amongst the Arabic and Persian accounts a Maktūb by Shaykh Sulṭān Karbala’ī which is written in 1263 (Z. pp.245-59) and NK. are by far the earliest though by no means the most comprehensive or even in the case of the latter the most accurate. NT. (III) and RS. (X) suffer from their usual bigotry and inaccuracy though they still contain valuable points. Of the early European accounts Kāsem Beg (VII, pp.473-6) and Gobineau (pp.167-9, 293-4 and other scattered references) are heavily based on NT. but besides, give a few new facts and even more myths and fictions which were in circulation as early as the 1860's. Later Babi-Bahā’I sources such as Samandar, Baghādat, Nābīl, NH. and Tādhkirat al-Wāfā (op.cit. pp.291-310) provide some more information on the basis of those oral accounts which remained unrecorded up to a few decades later. MUQ. and Qatāl however are surprisingly silent. Though Kashf al-Ghita (op.cit. pp.92-111), TSM., KD. and Z. usually repeat earlier accounts, they frequently add new details. Nicolas who seems to have based his account on some new oral reports (sometimes very similar to Samandar) is the fullest in European languages though far from complete. Some new details were supplied by Browne in his notes to TN. (Note Q. pp.309-16) and NH. (Appendix II, 6, pp.355-60). A small biography and a collection of a few short works and poetry published by an anonymous Babi for the centennial of Tahirih's death with the title Qurrat al-'Ayn (1368 Q./1949) and another short book by Nuqabā’ī, H. Tahirih (Qurrat al-'Ayn) (Tehran, 128 Badī’/1972) which is a collection of earlier accounts, are just repetitions, but even as late as 1974 new information came up in M.A. Malik Khusravī's Tārikh-i Shuhada-yi Amr (3 vols., Tehran, III). Occasionally the Bab's writings or the writings of Tahirih have brief references to historical events. Some European accounts such as J.E. Polak, Persien, das Land und Seine Bewohner etc. (Leipzig, 1865) give specific references to certain aspects of her life. Tahirih's life sometimes was a source of inspiration for European writers, particularly for those who were seeking in her, ideas of emancipation of women. Of these Isabella Grinevskaya's Russian play Bab, dramaticheskaya poema (St. Petersburg, 1903) is worth mentioning.

2. Also titled Zakiyah according to Nābīl. 628. NT. III, 220 and Ālusī (see below) are both inaccurate on her titles.
north of Karaj and east of Qazvin) came to Qazvin in the early years of the 19th century\(^1\). Later, the two elder brothers moved to Qum, Isfahan and then Atabāt where they were educated under well known Usūlī teachers and acquired their authorisation for *ijtihād*\(^2\). In spite of their humble background and their earlier poverty, on their return to Qazvin, both the elder brother Mullā Muhammad Taqī and Mullā Muhammad Sālih succeeded in accumulating a large fortune as well as establishing their religious domination in the city. This was at a time in the early decades of the century when Qazvin was thriving as a major trade centre between north and south. Moreover, the Baraghānīs enjoyed the full advantages of circumstances which in the first half of the 19th century brought about the rise of the high-ranking mujtahids as centres of religious and economic power.

Tāhirih's father Mullā Muhammad Sālih, was mostly known for his scholarly works in *tafsīr* such as *Bahr al-‘Irфан*, in *fiqh* such as *Ghanimat al-Ma‘ād fī Sharḥ al-Irshād* and in *muṣbāt* and tragic elegies (*marāthī*)\(^3\), though he was also known for the exercise of religious law. In the execution of legal punishments (*hudud*), as Tunikabunī who himself was his student related, 'he was rigid and firm in *amr-i b-i ma‘ruf va nahy-i as munkar'\(^4\). Mullā Muhammad Taqī however, was a typical Usūlī faqīh. He owed his fame chiefly to his ambition to overcome his rivals in Qazvin and later to his notorious denunciation of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsā’ī and his successor\(^5\). The younger brother Mullā ‘Ali on the other hand, in contrast to his elder brothers, adopted Shaykhi views and became a firm follower of Sayyid Kāzim Rashti\(^6\).

Tāhirih and her sister Marzīyih were brought up in a purely religious and yet affluent environment. In her early youth, partly because of her personal talent and partly because of her father's relatively tolerant outlook, Tāhirih found the opportunity to further her studies beyond the elementary level, something which was a novelty for a woman at the time. Under her father and her uncles she perfected her theological and juridical knowledge to the extent that it has been said that she preceded many of her father's students\(^7\). Nevertheless,

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1. For further details on Baraghānīs see below Chapter Seven, III.
3. For the list of his works see *Tabaqāt*. II, 2, pp.660-61. Also *al-Dharr‘a*, XVI, 71.
4. Q. 91.
5. See above Chapter One, II and below Chapter Seven, III.
6. For his details see below Chapter Seven.
in spite of her studies which apparently brought her even to the level of *ijtihād*, and in spite of her promising literary and poetic talents which she developed in those years, she could not escape the family pressure which perhaps against her will, obliged her to marry at an early age to her cousin Mullā Muhammad Baragānī, son of Mullā Muḥammad Taqī and later Imam Jum′īh of Qazvin. Of this marriage she had two sons and one daughter when she was still under twenty-five.

Tāhirih probably became first acquainted with Shaykhism through her maternal cousin Mullā Javād Valīyānī who provided for her some of Aḥsā’ī’s writings. They seem to have had an immense influence on her and eventually converted her to the Shaykhi school. Consequently, though she hesitated to express her views in public, still she was faced with the reproaches of her elder uncle, her husband and her father who all rebuked her for showing this devotion to Shaykhism and dissuaded her against any further pursuit of her Shaykhi studies. However, she seems to have enjoyed some support from her younger uncle, Mullā ‘Alī, Mullā Javād and later her brother-in-law Mullā Muḥammad ‘Alī Qazvīnī (son of Mullā ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī and a later Letter of Hayy) who all were firm Shaykhis. Through these contacts Tāhirih corresponded with Rashtī and sent him an apologetic treatise which she wrote in vindication of Shaykhism. In reply, Rashtī praised her and addressed her as ‘the delight of my eye and the soul of my heart’ (*yā qurrat al-aynī wa ruḥ al-fu‘ād*).

No doubt Rashtī was impressed by the talent of the young woman, but he must have been also pleased that in addition to Mullā ‘Alī, he had found another ally in the immediate family of his arch-enemy, Mullā Muḥammad Taqī, Yet such a consideration should not be interpreted as though Tāhirih herself did not merit such high praise.

The ideological disagreements within the Baragānī family were so deeply rooted that even the marriage bond could not prevent the inevitable separation.

1. She never acquired *ijtihād* because according to Samandar ‘it is not customary to give *ijāzah* of *ijtihād* to women’ (345).


3. Her two sons, Ibrāhīm (Zabaqāt, I, 23) and Ismā‘īl (Zabaqāt, I, 164) later became mujtahids and the latter succeeded his father in the office of Imam Jum‘īh.

4. *Tadhkīrat al-Wafā*, 292. For Mullā Javād see below Chapter Six, IV.


Tahirih's open devotion to Shaykhis brought increasing quarrels and confrontations with the family, particularly when her father-in-law publicly attacked and criticised Shaykhis from the pulpit. Thus, as her relations with her husband deteriorated, she decided to part with him and her children. Apparently, at this stage her father either could not discourage her from separation, or more probably agreed with her since he himself did not approve of his elder brother's public condemnation of the Shaykhis. It should be noted that his second daughter had been married to the son of Mullā 'Abd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī who was a prominent Shaykhi figure in Qazvīn. Shortly afterwards, in spite of all the obstacles she decided, with the advice and assistance of Mullā 'Alī who perhaps had seen in Tahirih an exceptional aptitude, to join the Shaykhi circle in Karbila.

Together with her sister Marzīyih, she set out for 'Atabāt towards the end of 1259 (1843). As was previously noted, her knowledge of the Bab's existence and that he soon might 'reveal' himself, may have also encouraged her in her departure. Her later collaboration with Bushrūyihī and his faction, as well as her own remarks confirm that she was watchful for some form of revelation. It is not clear whether she left Qazvīn after Rashtī's death or whether she was indeed aware of the latter's recent death. When she arrived in Karbila' in the last days of 1259 shortly after the death of Rashtī, she found herself faced with the controversy which divided the Shaykhi students. Although some reports regarding her participation in the i'tikāf in the Kūfah mosque should not be relied upon, it is certain that from the very early stages she was supporting the Bushrūyihī faction.

Tahirih settled in the house of Sayyid Kazim and became closely acquainted

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1. For his details see below Chapter Seven, III.
2. Samandar. 344.
3. Possibly accompanying them in this journey was Mullā Muḥammad 'Alī Qazvīnī, her brother-in-law (Z. 313).
4. See above.
5. Tadhkirat al-Wafā' (295) reports a 'veracious dream' (ra'yā'ī-yī ġādīqīh) in which Tahirih visited the Bab prior to his claims. This is another indication of the function of dreams to illustrate the 'watchfulness' for a messianic Zuhūr or even allude to an awareness of the identity of the claimant particularly when there is an absence of plausible facts or a need to emphasise the supernatural aspects.
6. Tadhkirat al-Wafā' (294) dates her arrival ten days after the death of Rashtī.
7. TMS. 46 without specifying his source.
not only with Rashti’s wife and the other women in the household, but with the students and adherents of the late Sayyid. By staying in Rashti’s house, Tahirih benefited from the reputation of Rashti to strengthen her position amongst the students and adherents. Moreover, by allying herself with the wife of Rashti, Tahirih organised amongst the Shaykhi women a much needed support for the cause of Sayyid ‘Alī Muhammad the Bab and his disciples. Such support was important for the legitimacy of the movement: in the confusion which prevailed after the death of Rashti, not only Rashti’s young son Mullā Ahmad, with the persuasion of certain Mullā Husain Khādim and others and with the tacit approval of Gauhar and Muhīt, put forward certain claims about his succession to his father, but the two distinguished students of Rashti, namely Gauhar and Muhīt, by emphasising their self-assumed trusteeship (wisayat), attempted to exercise some authority over the private affairs of their late teacher. Although the details of these factional differences are not fully clear, at least it is certain that Qurrat al-‘Ayn played a major role in orientation of the Shaykhi students towards the Bab. Shaykh Sultan Karbalā’ī’s account makes it clear that it was largely because of Tahirih’s efforts that eventually a united party of the Shaykhī-Babis were formed which could hold against both the Shaykhi and Bālāsārī hostility and intrigue.

Holding regular gatherings in the outer chambers of Rashti’s house, Tahirih, who spoke to the audience from behind a curtain, gradually gathered a large body of Arab and Persian Shaykhs who after Bastāmī, offered their loyalty to her. No doubt her predominance over them was primarily because of her personality, which combined with her knowledge and her oratory skills, made a great impact.

1. Shaykh Sultan Karbalā’ī, Maktūb (Z. 246); Sāmandar. 346.
2. Not much is known about this Mullā Ahmad beside the references in Maktūb. In fact there is some uncertainty (Z. 257 n.) whether he was the same Mullā Ahmad Rashti, son of Sayyid Kāzīm. However a reference by the Bab cited in Maktūb (254) makes it clear that he was Rashti’s son. He is also mentioned in Tābaqāt (II, 1, 102) and Shāykhīgārī va Bābīgārī (op.cit. pp.237-8). Later he appears to hold some authority over a faction of Shaykhis though strictly speaking he was not a Shaykhi. He was finally assassinated in 1295 (1878-9).
3. Maktūb gives some account of Mullā Ahmad’s often discreet but sometimes public oppositions to the Babi figures. His arguments with Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Tabrizī and with Tāhirih were mainly centred around his disregard for Shaykhi beliefs and practices though it is obvious that he was extremely dissatisfied with the rise of the Babi rivals who, contrary to him and other moderate Shaykhis, were not prepared to compromise with the Bālāsārī opposition.
4. Qatl. (510).
5. NK. 140; KD. I, 61.
on those who saw in her signs of prophetic inspiration. For the greater part, the teachings of Tahirih and her argumentations were based on Shaykhi ideas, though in many aspects she went far beyond the limits which hold Shaykhism within the boundary of Islam. Some sources report that in earlier stages she even assumed the title of 'the Point of the Divine Knowledge' (Nuqtih-i Ḥanātih-i Ilāhiyih) which would imply that perhaps she considered some revelatory status for herself. The fact that she had her own independent views on the matters of furū' which were clearly contradictory to the Islamic code, and the fact that she adopted certain ascetic practices such as devotional prayers and abstaining from having meat, and cooked food may also confirm her unconventional stand. Hence in this respect, her commitment to the Bab provided a framework for the realisation of her views within a new system of beliefs.

Although at this stage it is difficult to say how far her commitment was a purely emotional consequence of her messianic expectations or on the contrary was the result of her thorough investigation of the Babi beliefs, nevertheless it is certain that she truly believed in the new revelation as the inevitable outcome of the Shaykhi teachings. It is only later in 1262 (1846) that it can be proved for certain that she was aware of the ideas of the Bab as they were reflected in his writings.

The surviving samples of Tahirih's works from this early period testify to her considerable skill in making use of the Qur'an, hadith and tafsīr for arguing the theory of progressive revelations. For instance in a treatise written in

2. Tadhkira al-Wafā' 295.
3. KD. I, 61.
4. Of a large number of tracts, treatises, letters, poems and prayers which Tahirih wrote in her short life, some are published but the majority either remained unknown or else have perished. Of her published works, beside a risālīh (in Persian) in reply to Mullā Javād Valīyanī (Z. appendix I, pp. 484-501, written in 1261), Ṣuhūr al-Ḥaqq produces six other works in prose: Letter to Mullā Ḥusain (in Arabic, 334-8); two public addresses to Babis and Shi'is written in circa 1863 (338-65); letter addressed to Ālusī (356-9); apologetic tract in defence of the Bab (359-62) and two letters addressed to the Babis of Isfahan (362-66). The centennial volume Qurra al-Āyn (op.cit. pp.36-52) produced six new Persian prayers and letters. Kashf al-Ghīțā, op.cit., appendix II (1-21) added another long Arabic treatise and KD. I, pp.323-7 cited part of another apologetic tract. Browne provided the text and translation of a letter addressed to Shaykh ʿAlī ʿAẓīm (NH. App. IV, pp.343-441) and added useful notes. Of her poetry some samples were also printed in various sources. There is some degree of uncertainty on the authenticity of some of the pieces attributed to her. Such confusion has arisen from the fact that some of her poems are very similar in style to those of Ḩātif Isfahānī and Ṣuhbat Lārī. Z. produces seven poems (pp. 366-9) and the centennial volume adds eight more (pp.25-35). Browne in Materials gives the text and translation of three better known poems and Żukā'I Bayāzī'ī in Taṣkīrāt-i Shu'arā-'yi Qarn-i Avvāl-ī Bahā'-Z., (3 vols., III, Tehran, n.d. pp.107-132) gives an analysis of her style and produces some new poems. Two manuscripts in INBA. Library contain some further tracts and poetry.
1262 in reply to her cousin Mullā Javād Valīyānī (who first became a follower of the Bab but later following the events of 1261–2 abandoned the new faith and even started anti-Babi activities) she discussed some of the essential points in the Babi thinking that exemplified her argument, and perhaps that of many other early Babis, with regard to the legitimacy of the Bab. Discussing the position of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad the Bab in relation to that of Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kazīm, since this was a question which preoccupied many of the Shaykhis in this period, she concludes that the *Hujjatallāh al-‘uzmā*, the title by which she refers to the Bab, is the fulfilment of Shaykhi thought. She emphasises that those students of Rashtī who had not grasped the essence of his teachings to the extent that Rashtī expected, are naturally foreign to the concept of a continuous process of unfolding revelation.

To prove her point she states that Rashtī himself regarded his own position as being above the Four Abwāb of the Lesser Concealment and this, according to Tāhirih, is a sign that after him the process will be continued to another revelation of a greater magnitude since there is no evidence from the word of God or that of the Guardians (*Auliya*) or 'the abwāb to the infallibles' (i.e. Ahsā‘ī and Rashtī) which prevents the occurrence of such complimentary revelations. To acknowledge this unfolding process, she points out, it is necessary to bear in mind that 'the divine norm' (*sunnat-i īthāb*) basically differs from 'the human norm' (*sunnat-i basharī*) or indeed from the habits of the past, and therefore 'the norms for testing the truthfulness of the Proof of God are not apparent to the people'. Hence, to recognise the Proof, she suggests, only an inner awareness of the divine norm, as opposed to the human norm, would lead us to the right path. However, she immediately takes care to point out that this inner awareness or indeed the awareness of the Bab himself of his mission should not be confused with the theory of incarnation (*hulūl*) of the 'blasphemous Sufis' since by doing so one misses the essence or 'the secret of the secrets' (*ṣīr al-‘asrār*) of the new revelation.

To realise this 'secret of the secrets' and to prevent any false preception, she insists that the teachings of Ahsā‘ī and Rashtī should be used as a 'key' (*miftāh*) for unravelling the complexity of this revelatory process. Here she distinguishes two complementary concepts in Shaykhi thought: on the one hand she prescribes *mujāhidah* (spiritual endeavour) as opposed to *mujādalah* (rational argumentation) for distinguishing the truth. This would imply that contrary to her verbal rejection of the contemporary Sufis, in many respects she is

3. Ibid. pp.486-7. 4. Ibid. 488.
5. Ibid. pp.490-91.
influenced by the intuitive methods of Sufism. She states that the truthfulness of the Bab, as indeed that of the prophets of the past, is only conceivable 'by insight of the heart and (search) for the true essence' (bi-nazar-i fu'ād va haqīqat-i zāt).

But in Tahirih's view, this intuitive approach is inseparable from hikmat reasoning (dalīl-i hikmat). What makes such an inherence between mujāhidah and dalīl-i hikmat a necessity is that according to her, the latter is complementary to the former for acknowledgement of the fact that 'in every age there is a necessity for a bearer (hamil) and interpreter who would supervise in all matters'. This was a significant aspect of the Shaykhi-Babi thinking that employed hikmat (in this sense theosophy or more precisely theosophical methodology) in order to justify a continuous spiritual progress of man, and hence conclude that 'the emanation of God and His favour is unceasing'. The rational outcome of such an assumption was the percept of 'progress' which the Bab, and following him the Babi writers such as Tahirih, adapted in their arguments. Here the maxim: 'the cycle is in progress' (Kaur dar taraqīst) contains one of the essential concepts of Babi thought since the term cycle or Kaur which could be better defined as cycle of the universe or the forward movement of man in the rotation of celestial spheres, was used in a historical sense.

Distinguishing between the past and the present, the Babi writers alluded to a sense of betterment in the course of time which though not without precedent in Islamic history, was essentially irreconcilable with the basis of Islam. This was Tahirih's prime concern in seeking a 'revelation' since at the basis of the Bab's theory of successive resurrections lay a vision of the future which could only be materialised if a break occurred with the past. Perhaps this very interpretation should be taken as the origin of a widening difference between the Shi'i and the Babi worlds.

In practice, Tahirih's action was complementary to this belief. On the one hand she questioned and in many instances rejected the soundness of the ideas and practices of the 'past generations' in the matters of fiqh and furū', and on the other hand by emphasising the imminent advent of Qiyamat, she made a distinction between the 'believers' and the 'denouncers'. For example, it was in 'Atabat that she advised her followers not to buy food from the market because in her view those people who denounced the Bab were infidels and thus eating their

1. Ibid. 491.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid. 494.
food was unlawful. This no doubt was a defensive response to the pressure on the Babis who were now rejected as unbelievers. To purify the unlawful food however, she would then order the Babis to bring to her all the food, so that by her purifying sight she could make them suitable to use. These little devices, however trivial or indeed impractical, still show her as an astute and subtle leader in maintaining the morale of the Babis in hostile surroundings.

But not all the 'infringements of the religious law' (kharaq-i jahadi) were limited to the Babi's relations to their adversaries. Perhaps the most daring and unconventional of her acts was her appearing unveiled in the gathering of her followers which by any standards was unacceptable, even to some of the Babis in 'Atabat. Still more 'blasphemous' and 'heretical' to her opponents were her hints that the compulsory obligations (takalif) should be lifted because 'the age of interval' (ayyam-i fatrat) prior to the advent of the next dispensation had started.

She advocated these ideas at a time when every infringement of the conventional rules of religion met with strongest resistance from the 'ulama. Her courage is admirable, but what is perhaps more important are the ideas which lay behind her action. Perhaps Tahirih should be regarded as the first Persian woman in modern times who considered unveiling on her own initiative and as a result of a genuine intellectual quest. Indeed, it is in this period that a small circle of Babi women was formed around her, who under her guidance appeared to have achieved a preliminary consciousness of the deprivations and discriminations of women. For these women Tahirih exemplified a heroine of intellectual and moral reforms. They were educated and enlightened women who were all later distinguished for their Babi commitment. Khurshid Bagum entitled Shams al-2uha (wife of Mirza Muhammad 'Ali NahrI) and Marziyih (Tahirih's sister) were both deeply influenced by her. Also known to us are Mulla Husain Bushruyihi's mother who herself was a poetess, Bibi Kuchak (Mulla Husain's sister and wife of Shaykh AbU Turab IshtihardI and later entitled Varqat

1. NK. pp.140-41. 
2. Ibid.
3. Baghdad. 109. The author specifies that Tahirih 'appeared unveiled in the gatherings of believers, but in the gatherings of non-believers she spoke from behind a curtain'.
4. See below.
5. For her details see below Chapter Seven, I.
al-Firdaus)\(^1\), wife of Sayyid Kazim Rasht\(i\) who was originally from Shiraz\(^2\) and Tahirih’s maid known as G\(\text{\={a}}\)nit\(\text{\={i}}\)h\(^3\). In the later years in Qazvin, daughters of H\(\text{\={a}}\)ji Asadallah Far\(\text{\={a}}\)d\(\text{\={a}}\), Kh\(\text{\={a}}\)t\(\text{\={u}}\)n J\(\text{\={a}}\)n, Shir\(\text{\={i}}\)n and Sah\(\text{\={i}}\)bih also became her faithful followers. As will be discussed later, it was Kh\(\text{\={a}}\)t\(\text{\={u}}\)n J\(\text{\={a}}\)n who assisted Tahirih in her escape from Qazvin\(^4\). On her return from Atab\(\text{\={a}}\)t in 1263 Tahirih also attracted the attention of the wives of the local notables in Hamadan and particularly impressed two women: Shahzadih Zubiydih Khan\(\text{\={a}}\)m known as Firishtih the daughter of Fath \(\text{\={a}}\)li \(\text{\={a}}\)sh and mother of Amir Muhammad Husain Khan His\(\text{\={a}}\)m al-Mulk (the val\(\text{\={i}}\) of Kurdistan) who was a poetess with the pen name Jah\(\text{\={a}}\)n,\(^5\) and H\(\text{\={a}}\)jiyih Khan\(\text{\={a}}\)m, wife of Mahm\(\text{\={u}}\)d Khan Nasir al-Mulk\(^6\). The influence of Tahirih may also be seen in another Babi poetess Shams Jah\(\text{\={a}}\)n, the daughter of Muhammad R\(\text{\={i}}\)z\(\text{\={a}}\) Mir\(\text{\={a}}\) and granddaughter of Fath \(\text{\={a}}\)li \(\text{\={a}}\)sh with the pen name Fitn\(\text{\={i}}\)h who in her Magnav\(\text{\={i}}\) gave an account of her first acquaintance with Tahirih when she was imprisoned in the house of Mahm\(\text{\={u}}\)d Khan the kal\(\text{\={a}}\)ntar of Tehran between 1266-8 (1850-2)\(^7\).

However it should be pointed out that what was advocated by Tahirih and the women around her concerning the position of women was very different from the 'emancipation of women' in the modern sense which appeared in Iran much later after the constitutional revolution. The source of encouragement for Tahirih and other Babi women to unveil was primarily a religious innovation rather than the modern concept of 'women's rights'. It is likely that Tahirih viewed the deprivations of women in a purely religious context, and hence saw no other solution than a change in religious norms. At least this is the impression which one gets of the attitude and behaviour of Tahirih, since there is no written evidence which suggests that she was specifically preoccupied with the question of women.\(^8\)

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1. Fu'\(\text{\={a}}\)d\(\text{\={i}}\). 23 cf. Tadhkirat al-Wafa', 297.
2. Nab\(\text{\={i}}\). pp.270-71.
3. NK. 141.
4. See below Chapter Seven
5. KD. I, 117. cf. Ishrag Kh\(\text{\={a}}\)var\(\text{\={i}}\), 'A. Tar\(\text{\={i}}\)kh-i Amr\(\text{\={i}}\)-yi Hamad\(\text{\={a}}\)n, MS., pp.2-4 and Kashj al-Ghita, 105. Her details and some samples of her poetry appear in Tar\(\text{\={i}}\)kh-i 'Abudu, op.cit., pp.14-16.
6. KD. I, 117. For Nasir al-Mulk see Bamdad. IV, pp.54-9.
7. Zuka'I Bayza'I, op.cit., pp.167-202 gives an account of her life and some parts of her Magnav\(\text{\={i}}\).
8. Still it is interesting to see some remote signs of Tahirih's influence amongst the advocates of emancipation of women from 1910 onwards. Sadiqih Daulat\(\text{\={a}}\)bd\(\text{\={a}}\)i and other women of the Daulat\(\text{\={a}}\)bd\(\text{\={a}}\)i family came from a Babi-Azali background and regarded her as the pioneer of women's rights. Similarly many Bah\(\text{\={a}}\)'i women of this generation, and indeed earlier generations, looked on Tahirih as an ideal example.
Tahirih’s attempt to unveil brought some reactions from inside the Babi community. In 1263 (1847) a group of Babis of Atabat who disapproved of Tahirih’s activities wrote to the Bab and sought his opinion. No doubt the manner in which Tahirih publicized her ideas as well as unreserved criticism of her adversaries was also for those traditional Babi ulama such as Sayyid Ali Bushr Kazimayni who still tended to see the Babi movement within the Shaykhi context. Furthermore as Shaykh Sultan Karbalai reported, the false accusations and allegations against Tahirih which were circulated in Atabat by Mulla Ahmad Rashti and his allies were also effective in turning some of the Babis away from her. In reply to these criticisms, the Bab publicly defended Qurrat al- and her positions, and to show his disapproval of the allegations of immorality, entitled her Tahirih (pure). The Bab’s response not only approved of Tahirih in person and her leadership over the Babis of Atabat, but significantly acknowledged a liberal tendency in the movement even at the expense of losing some of the fundamentalist followers. When his reply was read to a gathering of seventy Babis in Kazimayn, a number of followers who saw this as an open breach of the Islamic code declined to accept the Bab’s view and consequently left the Babi ranks. Later, in a commentary on Sura al- Hamd which is probably addressed to Bushr and his faction, again the Bab confirmed his approval of Tahirih while in the meantime trying to convince the defecting followers by urging them to set themselves free of these 'non-essential matters' (shu’unat al-‘aradaya). This was an important development since perhaps for the first time the Bab openly approved the ideas and actions of his most outspoken and controversial disciple. The fact that the matter is referred to the judgement of the Bab also illustrates his significance as the core and the supreme authority in the movement.

With the exception of a few defecting members, the rest of the Babis in Atabat abided by the Bab’s judgement. However, the opposition of the non-Babi ulama was much deeper. Her ideas as a whole, her teaching sessions which were attended by more than thirty Babis and her remarks on religious obligations were enough to arouse the deepest suspicion of the ulama who had long been seeking

1. This is reported by most sources including Baghdadzi, pp.109-110 and NK. 141 which are the basis for most of the others.
3. The Bab’s reply came from Maku some time in mid 1263 (1847). Parts of this letter cited in Maktub (pp.247 ff). Also a quotation appears in Baghdadzi 110. No trace of the full text of the letter has yet been found.
4. Baghdadzi, 109. Of the Kazimayni defectors, the author names five.
5. INBA. pub. 69, 127.
an opportunity to condemn her. Such an opportunity came about in the beginning of 1262 (1846) when in the first of Muharram of that year, Tahirih advised the Babis to celebrate the anniversary of the birthday of the Bab in spite of the annual mourning throughout this month for the Karbila martyrs. Contrary to the custom of wearing black clothes in this month, she herself dressed in colour and appeared at the feast again without wearing a veil. This open disregard for the Shi'i traditions, even though it was performed in the gathering of the Babis, especially enraged the Shi'i 'ulama who seem to have been informed of the occasion by Mullā Ahmad Rashti and his allies. As can be understood from Shaykh Sultan's account, it was the Shaykhi 'ulama who took the initiative of protesting to the local governor of Karbila and to incite the mob to attack Rashti's house. To prevent any further disturbance the governor of the city interfered in the dispute by putting Tahirih under arrest in the Rashti's house for a period of about three months, pending her release by the decision of the Baghdad authorities.

Apparently it is in this period that Tahirih, who seems not to have been apprehensive of the recurrence of anti-Babi feelings, first invited the Shi'i mujtahids to an open debate and then, when none of the 'ulama accepted the challenge, called upon them to stand with her for mubahala. Naturally the 'ulama were not prepared to risk such an encounter and indeed perhaps this was a manoeuvre on behalf of Tahirih to prove her innocence to the Ottoman authorities as much as to the Shi'i public. According to some sources, at the end of the third month, presumably since no order came from Baghdad, Tahirih, who perhaps was exposed to further criticism and threat, persuaded the governor to allow her to leave Karbila and took up her quarters in the house of Shaykh Muhammad Shibli Baghdādī in Baghdad. No doubt the death of Sayyid Kazim's widow, who was a follower and supporter of Tahirih at the beginning of 1262, gave new reasons to Mullā Ahmad Rashti to press for his demand for the removal of Tahirih and the return of the Diwan to his control. However, as Baghdādī

4. Samandar. 347; KD. I, 62. For mubahala and its significance in the Bab context see below Chapter Nine, III.
5. NK. 141; Tadhkīrat al-Wafā', 297.
6. Nabil. 270 cf. Maktūb (252) which implies that Mullā Ahmad was in collaboration with the 'scum of the people' and 'the riff-raff'. This may be interpreted as some sort of cooperation with the urban brigandage in Karbila, which was not unprecedented even at the time of Rashti.
confirms 'she was sent to Baghdad by the order of the ważā'ī, who probably had decided on this as a result of Shaykh Muhammad Shībī's intervention'. This precautionary measure temporarily defused tension and mob excitement in the Holy Cities since by the transfer of Tāhirīh, most of her followers also moved to Baghdad.

But shortly afterwards in Baghdad, she again renewed her activities mostly in response to the public which was curious to find out about the woman who was advocating the advent of a new revelation. The rising fame of Tāhirīh in Baghdad again faced Najīb Pāshā with the risk of provoking factional discontent if he should leave Tāhirīh to continue her anti-"ulama preaching. So this time instead of calling for a tribunal of Shi'i/Sunni 'ulama he simply summoned Tāhirīh and questioned her about her beliefs. The details of this interrogation are not known, nor are the persons or officials who were present, but as far as Samandar informs us, it appears that Najīb, and possibly his aides, could not find any evidence which could convince them of her heretical or non-Islamic beliefs. Hence, perhaps it was for the purpose of further investigation by the chief muftī that Najīb ordered the transfer of Tāhirīh to the house of Shaykh Mahmūd Aḥūsī, while in the meantime her case was referred to the Sublime Porte. The Pāshā's milder response to the renewal of Bābi activities may have resulted from the fact that on the previous occasion, in the case of Bāstāmī, no definite result had been achieved from the trial except for the tacit victory of the Shi'ī's, who sagaciously caused the banishment of Bāstāmī from 'Abābī. Perhaps earlier instructions from Istanbul which warned him against any further factional friction were also effective. On the other hand, it was unprecedented to put a woman on trial particularly for a charge such that neither the evidence nor the laws of apostacy, as it was applied to women, showed the prospect of any definite verdict. Finally, if there was a trial, Tāhirīh's skilful tactics and her oratory might have worked in her favour and provided her with an opportunity to publicise her views even further.

4. A woman, according to both Hanafī and Shi'i law, must be imprisoned until she again adopts Islam. (MURTADD in Shorter EI).
5. Since she had already proposed to the governor of Karbilā' that 'I advance no claim save the claim of learning. Assemble the doctors both Sunnī and Shi'īte, that we may confer and dispute, so the truth and falsity of either side, and the wisdom of both parties, may be made apparent to all persons of discernment' (NH. 272).
For this speculation some ground may be found in the writings of Alusi, who seems, in passing a verdict on Qurrat al-'Ayn, to reserve his highest praise for her:

'She was one of those who followed the Bab after the death of RashtI, but later even disagreed with RashtI in many matters such as on the question of the obligatories (takālīf). Some people alleged that Qurrat al-'Ayn believes in the total abolition of all the obligatories but I do not see any truth in this though she stayed in my house about two months and so many discussions took place between me and her in which there was no taqāyah or apprehension. Verily, I saw in her such a degree of merit and accomplishment (al-fadla va al-kamāl) as I rarely saw in men. She was a wise and decent woman who was unique in virtue and chastity. I have referred to my discussions with her on another occasion; if one became aware of them, one would realise that there is no doubt about her knowledge. It became obvious to me that Bābiya and Qurratīya are the same. They believe that the time for five times obligatory prayers is over and that revelation is unsuspended and therefore the Perfect (Man) will have revelations. However these revelations are not canonical but are for explanations of what has been previously laid down. This is similar to the ideas of the Sufis ... Some of them (i.e. the Babis) are vigilant at nights with prayers and devotion. They are (all) opposed to the Ithnā 'Asharīs and they denounce them and avoid them'.

The tone of Alusi in reference to Tahirih would imply that during her two month stay in his house there was an occasion for a sincere dialogue between Tahirih and the Sunni scholar. Perhaps it is owing to this sympathetic dialogue that some months later, the Bab sent him a 'tablet' in which he called upon him to recognise his mission. Apparently at the same time as Tahirih was in his house a gathering was held in the same place which the Sunni 'ulama and muftis attended. The details of such an assembly are not known.

1. Cited in Kāh (I, 63) and partly in Kashf al-Chīrā (op.cit. pp.94-6) both without clear reference to the title of Alusi's work. However it is almost certain that this quotation is taken from Alusi's incomplete and unpublished work Nahj al-salāma ila maḥāhir al-Imāma which is the author's last work written in 1270 Q. (MS. no. 4/678 in Library of Awqaf, Baghdad) in which according to Alusi Mufassiran (op.cit. 125) the author discussed Shaykhīya, Rashtīya, Bābiya and Qurratīya with impartiality.

2. Part of this tablet cited in Minhaj al-Talibw (op.cit. pp.342-6). A direct quotation in Kashf al-Chīrā (op.cit. 96 taken from a servant in Alusi's house) which report Alusi as saying: 'O Qurrat al-'Ayn! I swear by God that I share in thy belief. I am apprehensive, however, of the sowards of the family of Uthman' should be regarded as mere exaggeration, though at most, it may point out Alusi's sympathetic approach to Tahirih's views.

3. Only Samandar (pp.348-9) reported of a certain Hakīm Masīn, an Arab Babi of Jewish descent, who saw Qurrat al-'Ayn in Baghdad conversing with the Sunni 'ulama.
Shortly afterwards the orders came from Istanbul for the deportation of Tahirih. Though the contents of the Porte's instruction are not known, yet another passage from Alusî, this time from Ruh al-Ma'ârîfî, gives some insight into the situation which finally persuaded the Pasha to arrange for the banishment of Tahirih and her followers:

'... And thus appeared on that time (i.e. early 1260's) a group of Shi'i ghulât calling themselves Bâbîya ... All those who possess wisdom would testify to their blasphemous beliefs. A group of them would have remained in Iraq if it had not been for the endeavours of the vâlî Najîb, about whose zeal and religiosity there is a consensus. He humiliated them, may God help him, and disturbed their assembly and became furious at them, may God be content with him, and disrupted their activities, may God repay him with his benevolence ...'

These reproachful remarks sound contradictory to his above mentioned praise of Tahirih if one does not consider the muftî's apprehension of the potential threat from the Babis for the removal of which he praised Najîb Pasha so flatteringly. The second passage is written in circa 1265-6 (1849-50) when the Babi uprisings in Iran made it appropriate for Alusî to make explicit his resentment at the resurgence of yet another Shi'i extremism, whereas the first passage regarding Qurrat al-'Ayn is written later (very probably in 1270 (1861-2)) before his death and two years after the final defeat of the movement and the execution of Tahirih when the diminishing anxieties of the Muftî allowed him to write a less biased account.

As was rightly noticed by Alusî, the deportation of Tahirih was the end of the effective presence of the Babîs (or indeed the Shaykhis) in 'Atâbât for the next five years, before the arrival of Baha'âlîh and his party who were exiled to Iraq towards the middle of 1269 (1853). In the early months of 1263 (1847) accompanied by an Ottoman officer, Tahirih was sent to Khanaqîn on the Iranian border. With her was travelling a body of about thirty of her followers. Her journey from Baghdad to Qazvin took about three months in the course of which she passed through Karand, Kirmânsâh and Hamadân before reaching Qazvin towards

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1. Op.cit. Vol. Seven, XXII, 39. Other references may also be found in Ruh al-Ma'ârîfî to Alusî's discussions with Qurrat al-'Ayn.

2. Both Samandar (349) and Nicolas (pp.274-6) reported that an envoy was sent by Tahirih's family, possibly at the request of the Shi'i 'ulama of 'Atâbât, to take her back to Qazvin. Recollections of Haji Mulla Muhammad Hâmmâmî, who was chosen for this mission, were the basis for Nicolas's account. According to this account it was the envoy's insistence which finally convinced Tahirih to return to Iran. One might thus conclude that the Pasha's decision was in accordance with Tahirih's own intention to leave Baghdad.
the middle of 1263 (1847). All along the way she, together with her disciples such as Mullā Ibrāhīm Mahallatī, Mullā Sālih Karīmāvī and Shaykh Sūlān Karbalāʿī, publicly propagated the new cause. In numerous gatherings she entered into discussions with the mujtahids, Sufis and notables informing them of the advent of the Bab. In spite of her disappointments in ʿAbābāt, she seems to have been in high spirits throughout the journey and did not hesitate the violent reactions which not infrequently she and her followers were faced with in the course of the journey.

Her arrival in Qazvīn opened a new phase in her activities. The troubled months of her stay in the city finally ended with the assassination of her uncle Mullā Muhammad Taqī by the Babi elements and her subsequent escape from Qazvīn to Tehran towards the middle of 1264 (1848). Later, following the general call upon the Babis to assemble in Khurasan, she left Tehran and attended the Badasht conference where she played a major role in determining the future of the movement. She indeed led the militant and uncompromising faction within the movement which called for the full separation from Islam and the declaration of a new revelation. Her struggle with Quddūs, possibly over the leadership of the movement, came to some settlement, but nevertheless its effect remained in the course of the events for the next few years.

After Badasht, between the end of 1264 to the beginning of 1266 (1848-50), she was in hiding in the Nūr region in Mazandaran, virtually escaping from village to village or hiding for about a year in a farmhouse on the outskirts of the village of Vāz, before being arrested on charges of cooperation in the assassination of her uncle, as well as her Babi associations. She was brought to Tehran in Rabiʿ al-Awwal 1266 (January 1850) to be imprisoned in the upper room of the house of Mahmūd Khān Kalāntar for the rest of her life. In late 1268 (1852) after the attempt of the Babis on the life of the Shah, it was eventually decided by the government that she should be executed. She was first interrogated by two senior mujtahids of Tehran, Mullā ʿAlī Kanī and Mullā Muhammad Andarmani and then at the end of Dhiqaʿ da 1268 (September 1852) was taken to Bagh Ilkhānī. She was strangled and her body dumped in a shallow well.

1. The names of a number of her followers who accompanied her are given in Baghdadī. I I I and Nābil. 273.
2. For further details see below Chapter Seven
at the back of the garden.

Two major features may be identified in Tahirih's life, particularly with regard to the episode of her stay in Atabat: first, from the general point of view, her life, ideas and works characterise her as an exceptional figure in pre-modern Iranian history whose thoughts and actions were ahead of her time, yet she is often misunderstood or misrepresented. She is the embodiment of what she herself described in her poetry as 'enamoured with torment' (shifteh-yi balā'); a total commitment, with heart and mind, to an apocalyptic ordeal which she was convinced to be the secret of man's historical existence. This was an approach which can only make sense in a messianic setting where reason and inspiration combine to anticipate the arrival of a changing era. Although one may partly agree with Browne that Babi thought was essentially Shi'i in its Weltanschauung and that the Babi history was a re-enactment of the idealised Shi'i past, yet at the core of this fascination with suffering and martyrdom lay the seed of a progressive dynamism of which Tahirih's ideas were a good example. In her intellectual development she benefited from two conflicting currents; the orthodox rationalist Usūlism of her affluent family background, and the mystical theosophy of Shaykhism with its popular potential. These themes, were employed, though not fully approved of, to produce a hybrid of 'dialectical' messianism.

Secondly, this synthesis only appealed to a small section of the Shi'i intelligentsia who were already acquainted with the origins of this thought. Tahirih and the other Babi disciples alike, had little chance to popularise this idea in such a way that it could appeal to the ordinary public. The period of Atabat proved to Tahirih and her followers that any attempt to advocate this change in outlook on the academic or scholastic level were bound to fail either because it would be isolated as a sectarian current and hence remain within a small circle, while if there were any attempt to broaden the sphere of its appeal, it would be suppressed by the religious and secular establishments who by their nature, were opposed to any sign of change.

1. Amongst the few accounts on the last days of Tahirih, Nicolas (pp.446-52) provides us with new details. Also Polak (op.cit.) reports that a few days prior to her execution she was taken to the Nigaristan palace where she met Nasir al-Din Shāh (then about twenty years of age) who praised her talent and her beauty before proposing to marry her on the condition that she had to abandon her heretical beliefs. Her refusal to accept the Shāh's offer brought the ratification of the verdict of her execution by the monarch. (cf. TW. note Q, pp.312-14).

2. The full line reads as follows: 'dar raḥ-i ṯishqat ʾī ẓanam shifteh-yi balāʾ manam, chand mughayirat kūnt, bā gharam ʾashinā manam' (from a ghazal cited in her centennial volume, op.cit. 25).

3. A Literary History of Persia, op.cit. IV, 197.
CHAPTER SIX

The Response of the 'Ulama

I

The departure of the early disciples of the Bab from Shiraz was finally completed when Mullā Husain set out for Isfahan sometime around 20th Jumādā al-Thānī 1260 (July 3rd 1844). As it has already been described, Bushrūyihī's journey inside Iran was carried out according to the initial plans. This was a prelude to the major campaign which was due to begin in Hijāz, and later reach its climax in 'Atabāt. His task primarily was to inform those Shaykhs of Iran already acquainted with an impending Zuhūr of the claims of Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad the Bab, while at the same time preparing the public for the open declaration. Further, the mission aimed to reveal the Bab's message in Qayyūm al-Asmā' to both the religious and secular authorities. It was for these aims that Mullā Husain left on his long journey to the central and eastern provinces. But contrary to Bastāmī's mission, which due to the fierce opposition it faced failed to penetrate the Shi'i community in 'Atabāt and could not achieve the results hoped for even amongst the Shaykhs, Mullā Husain enjoyed the advantage of a favourable environment and the sympathy of some Shaykhi circles. Furthermore, he benefited from the remarkable gift of impressing his audience and winning them over with his oratorical skills. Without his efforts perhaps the movement would never have had a broad impact on the society. For a better understanding, it is necessary to examine different aspects of his mission and try to set a pattern for the new believers, the method adopted and the reception he received from the public.

The first signs of Mullā Husain's progress appeared in Isfahan, when he drew the attention of a number of Shaykhi 'ulama of various levels to the appearance of the new Bab. He must have arrived in Isfahan in the last days of Jumādā al-Thānī, and immediately started his task. Amongst those who were first visited was Mullā Šādiq Khurāsānī. His conversion was the first in a series of early conversions, which occurred because of Mullā Husain's personal influence, and resulted in the formation of an active group who made a remarkable contribution to the progress of the movement in the next few years. After

1. See above Chapter Four, III.
2. Nabil. 96. This source implies that Mullā Husain would have preferred to accompany the Bab in his journey to the Hijāz, but no other source confirms this.
3. See above Chapter Five, I.
Isfahan, Mulla Husain headed towards Tehran in the second stage of his journey. In the absence of further reliable sources, it is hard to establish dates for his departure, or indeed for the whole of his journey from Shiraz to Khurasan. However, by comparing the available evidence, it is possible to reckon that his departure from Isfahan took place approximately in late Rajab 1260 (August 1844).

On his way Mulla Husain stopped in Kashan, where he was able to attract a number of Shaykhi sympathisers and to call upon a celebrated mujtahid of the city. He then proceeded towards Qum, where according to Nabil Zarandi, "he found the people utterly unprepared to heed his call". This is perhaps due to the absence of any Shaykhi connection in the town. The lack of support for any unorthodox doctrine, including Shaykhism, does not seem unnatural for a city which for centuries was regarded as the stronghold of the Shi'i orthodoxy. His stay in Tehran resulted in a number of conversions amongst the 'ulama and some state officials but he was also faced with the earliest criticism from the Shaykhi camp. In spite of the opposition expressed in Tehran, he was able to fulfil one of the major tasks of his mission, the delivery of the Surat al-Mulk to Muhammad Shah and Haji Mirza Aqasi. However it looks as though Mulla Husain's activities in the capital were not as open as they had been in Isfahan and later in Mashhad. At this stage, it appears that he had neither the intention nor the capacity to face any threat from the 'ulama or state.

During this journey, Mulla Husain's efforts were mainly focused on three different groups of Shaykhi sympathisers: the 'ulama, tujjar and some government officials.

2. However the celebrated mujtahid of Qum, Mirza Abul Qasim Qumi appears to have had a favourable attitude to Ahsa'i's school. According to Dalil ut-Mutiha-yi Qumi (op.cit. p.32), on his journey to Atabat, Mirza-yi Qumi visited Shaykh Ahmad and showed great respect towards him. Some of the Qumi 'ulama embraced the new cause within the next few years of the movement; amongst them was Haji Mirza Musa Qumi, son-in-law of Mirza-yi Qumi (Nabil. 101).

3. In order to apply a well known hadith to Mulla Husain's stay in Tehran, Nabil. (pp.126-8) insists that 'between the months of Jumada and Rajab, he (Mulla Husain) chanced to be in Tihram'. However, if we admit that Mulla Husain left Shiraz in late Jumada al-Thani, and consider his stops in Isfahan and Kashan, it seems almost impossible that he could be in Tehran in Jumada II 1260. A certain confusion is also noticeable in the other sources. Both Fu'ad (pp.29-30) and Tarikh-i Amri-yi Kashan (ed. Natiq Isfahani, 1309 Sh., INBA. Lib. MS No. 2016 D, 75 pp, p.1), put the date of Mulla Husain's journey further ahead in 1261 Q. This confusion occurred perhaps because of Mulla Husain's other visits to these places at later dates. The same inaccuracy is also noticeable in Nasikh al-Tawarikh III, pp.234-7.
officials. In this chapter the position of the ulama and their significance in the later expansion of the Babi doctrine is discussed in some detail.

The efforts of Mulla Husain amongst the ulama of Isfahan resulted in the early recognition of the Bab by two relatively important mujtahids: Mulla Šadiq Khurasānī (Muqaddas) and Mulla Muhammad Taqī Harātī. Their entry into the Babi circle no doubt added some weight and reputation to the new doctrine and in addition, provided an opportunity for Mulla Husain to convey his message to a greater number of the Shaykhis and non-Shaykhis in the city.

Mulla Šadiq, son of a humble mulla from Khurasan, was born and bred in Mashhad1, where he undertook his preliminary studies with a local mujtahid Haji Sayyid Muhammad Qasīr Rażavi2. Probably it was during the course of these lessons that he became acquainted with Mulla Husain who is known to have studied under the same teacher3. Later, as he himself related to Shaykh Kazīm Qazvīnī, he received the status of imām-i jamā'at, presumably in one of the Mashhad's mosques, a position usually conferred upon a pious and devoted member of the religious corps4. On his title of Muqaddas (holy, an epithet commonly used for those thought to be specially ascetic), Samandar comments: 'from the early years of his career, he was well known amongst the people as the essence of sacredness, purity and piety, and therefore was known as Muqaddas'5.

Mulla Šadiq then moved to 'Atabāt to continue his studies, where like some other Khurasānī students he subsequently became a member of the Shaykhi circle

1. Samandar. 163. His father was Āqā Mīrza Ismā'īl b. Jalīl Khurāsānī. Sources on the life of Muqaddas Khurasānī (later known by the Bahā'ī title Ismā'īl al-Aqdaq) are mainly confined to a number of accounts which he himself related to Bahā'ī-Bahā'ī historiographers. Kazīm Qazvīnī Samandar, who himself visited Mulla Šadiq towards the end of his life in 'Akkā, gives a relatively full account of his life (Samandar. pp.162-171), which was later used by others. Fustat (pp.86-99) uses the notes of Mulla Šadiq's son, known as Ibn Aqdaq, while the oral account of the same person is apparently the basis of Nicholas' account (pp.254-55). The author of Nabil (pp.100-101) and Tarikh-ı Jadīd (NB. pp.40-42) both heard direct from Muqaddas the account of his conversion.

2. Qasīr. (521). See also above Chapter Four for Qasīr.

3. Ibid.

4. Samandar. 163. The task of imāmat-i jamā'at here should be distinguished from the office of imām jum'ah which had a far greater significance in the city. The former who is also called peshmaz is the person in charge of congregational prayers in a particular mosque. For the difference between the two positions see Makārim. II. pp.317-18 and NASDJD in Shorter EI.

5. Samandar. 163.
in Karbila. Over the years he was gradually promoted to be one of the senior students of the circle, and finally received his *ijāzah* (authorisation) in Rabi' al-Awwal 1259 Q. (April 1843), a few months before Rashti's death. In this *ijāzah*, Sayyid Kazim expresses his views on his devoted student by calling him 'my trustworthy brother' and praising him as 'an accomplished scholar' who is 'superior amongst his peers because of his high understanding, his outstanding insight, and his sharp intelligence, a possessor of both rational (*ma'qūl*) and traditional (*manqūl*) sciences and holder of a high degree in *furuʿ* (branches) and *usul* (principles'). Rashti then maintains:

'Since I have found him (i.e. Mulla Sadiq) possessor of these perfections and high standards, capable of bearing the traditions (zhāhir) of the holy imams, peace be upon them so long as Heaven and Earth endure, I thus acknowledged his request with obedience, though I should confess to my own incapabilities and lack of worthy qualities in these fields and (maintain) that I wasted the essence of my life in vain, yet I seek God's guidance and by his name, authorise (him to issue) *fatwā* and therefore (to relate from me) whatever this humble servant has composed whether books, compiled works, treatises or replies to religious problems and whatever by God's will, may appear in future'.

By certifying him both to issue *fatwā* and relate traditions, Sayyid in fact granted him what has been defined as *ijāzah*-i *ijtihād* (authorization for independent exertion of religious law), and *ijāzah*-i *ravayat* (authorization for relating traditions according to the teacher's chain of mashayikh), yet it seems that he avoids using the term *ijtihād*. Such an *ijāzah* was an essential tool for any capable talabih, whether Shaykhi or non-Shaykhi, to make his way to a high status and to gain respect and authority. As *Qisas al-ʿulamāʾ* puts it:

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1. Ibid. Also *Nicolas*. pp.191, 198.
3. The facsimile of the original *ijāzah* in Arabic appears in Z. 145 (supp.). It is in three pages, and is signed and dated at the end by the Sayyid Kazim in his own handwriting and sealed.
4. Z. 145 (supp.). Despite Rashti's criticism of the Bālāsāri's over-emphasis on the aspects of *ʿilm-i fiqih*, to some extent he himself followed the same pattern of religious education.
5. *Qisas al-ʿulamāʾ* (pp.9, 24) distinguishes between two types of *ijāzah*. The root of this distinction could be found in works of the earlier Shi'i theologians. Majlisī in *Bihār al-Anwār*, devotes the whole of volumes 25 and 26 to the subject of *ijāzat*, where he discusses in detail the works of the former Shi'i faqihns. See also Q. (pp.9-10, 25-6, 67, 9), Mīrzā Husain Nūrī Ṭabaršī, *Mustadrak al-Wasīṭī* (op.cit. III, App.3, pp.374-82) and Fīhrī for various *ḥūfūl* *ijāzat*. *Fihrist*. (I, 144-51 and 126-8) gives text of *ijāzat* acquired by Aḥsāʾī and Rashti.
an ijtihād from a mujtahid of a high calibre could serve two purposes; 'Not only does it reassure the public in their taqlīd and in their judicial problems (qāṣa) but in addition a connection will occur in the chain of authorities on which the traditions are based, and the person will enter the chain of the narrators (muwāt)'¹.

Authorisation for ijtihād enabled Mullā Sādiq to claim an independent authority in his judgements. This has great bearing on his later recognition of the Bab since, being regarded as an authentic bearer of the teachings of Aḥsā'ī and Rashti, he could approve of the Bab's claims as the genuine realisation of past expectations - an approval which was essential for the general recognition of the movement by the Shaykhi followers. It is not surprising that the Babi sources, in spite of their general disapproval of the mujtahids, lay stress on this point. The Babi poet Zabīh Kāshānī particularly refers in his Masnawi to this accomplishment²:

'He was a scholar (Qālim) and a mujtahid in every field,
No mystic ever appeared as luminous as he,
Not only was he accomplished in the path of the Shaykh (Aḥsā'ī)
But he was also in love with the Lord'³.

Thus his newly acquired ijtihād, together with other characteristics, his humble clerical background along with the piety and devotion attributed to him, made Muqaddas an ideal example of the new generation of Shaykhi 'ulama, who in the early days were attracted to the Babi movement. The esoteric tendencies of the Shaykhi school inspired his messianic anticipations, whereas his early acquaintance with the Bab, during the latter's pilgrimage to 'Atabāt⁴, and his reported admiration for the young merchant, had rendered possible the acknowledgement of the new message. Like Mullā Husain, Bastāmī, and many other middle rank mujtahids who turned to the Babi cause, he was perplexed over the future of the Shaykhi school, but no doubt his loyalty to the internal grouping in the school inclined him towards Mullā Husain. The trilateral oath of fraternity between Muqaddas, Mullā Husain and Mullā Hasan Gauhar, which implied a desire for unanimity in the choice of a spiritual leader upon the death of Sayyid Kāẓim, should not be underestimated⁵.

1. Q. 24.
2. Ḥājī Muḥammad Ismā'īl Zabīh Kāshānī (Pānī), Masnawi, MS. No. 787, Mīnāsīn Collection, Wadham College, folio 82b.
3. In the last line he presumably refers to Muqaddas's later recognition of Bāhā'ullāh.
4. See above Chapter Three, IV.
5. Mīrza Ḥabībballāh. 34.
By the time Mullā Husain met Muqaddas in Isfahan in Rajab 1260, he had already visited Khurasan, and came from there to Isfahan by way of Yazd some time in early 1260\(^1\). It seems that he enjoyed a high degree of popularity and respect in Isfahan, since a Tabrizī merchant who was visiting Isfahan at the time related that Mullā Sādiq's popularity amongst the inhabitants was so great that as imām-i jama'at, about four thousand people followed him in the Friday prayer\(^2\). One can assume that, being a Shaykhi mujtahid, he received the bulk of this support from Shaykhi sympathisers in the city, but probably the volume of this popularity has been exaggerated.

Nearly all the relevant sources have given the account of his conversion as a fine example of an ardent seeker who, guided by his visions, finally finds his way towards the hidden truth. Yet at the same time, they indicate that his previous knowledge of Sayyid 'Allā Muḥammad assisted him in these visions through which he discovered the identity of the Bab. Typical of these early conversions was the manner in which the whole process of Khūrāsānī's conversion was moulded in a traditional form, adopting the mystical concept of kāshīf, where the mysterious truths behind the veil appear in their entirety. Modelled from Aḥṣāfī's dreams\(^3\), Mullā Sādiq's vision functioned as an instrument for transmitting the hidden identity of the Bab, while Mullā Husain's role, as the possessor of the secret, was to inspire the seeker to grasp the hidden name without passing the forbidden barriers\(^4\). Immediately after realising the identity of the Bab, Mullā Sādiq decided to set out for Shiraz, where he could personally meet the Bab and dispel his final uncertainties. Dressed as a humble villager\(^5\), it is reported that he travelled the distance between the two cities on foot\(^6\).

Just before his departure, Āqā Faraj Tabrizī, who recognised him in Bazār-i Isfahan, recalls in the following words:

'After greeting each other, I kissed his hand, and humbly asked: "Why are you dressed in this costume?" He replied: "I am leaving

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1. Samandar. 163 and Fudālī. pp.87-8. Both sources confirm that he departed from Karbīlā after the death of the Sayyid. Nābil's claim (p.100) that Khūrāsānī had during the last five years been residing in Isfahan seems improbable.
2. TMS. 67 quoting Āqā Faraj Tabrizī. It is worth mentioning that at this time the Shaykhi school had not yet achieved the status of a clearly defined sect. There could hardly therefore have been one particular mosque devoted to the Shaykhis.
3. See above Chapters One, II.
4. The circumstances of his conversion is recorded in Mīrza Ḥabībollāh. pp.34-5 and Samandar. pp.163-4.
5. TMS. 66.
for Shiraz". "For what purpose?" I inquired. He said: "A new call has arisen. Someone has appeared, claiming a great authority. I am going to find out the truth of his claim". I then said "Why are you troubling yourself? Why do you not despatch a reliable believer to inquire into the matter and bring you the result?" He replied "This is a matter of principles of religion (uqūl-i din), and not a question of taqlid, in which I can act on others' words". I suggested "Then please wait until I can prepare transport and a servant and provide some means for your journey". He said "All these are possible, but I would prefer to pave the path of the quest (talab) on foot". He then said farewell and went away.

The way Mullā Sādiq was trying to fulfil his 'individual duty' (farzh-i 'ayn) calls to mind the Shi'i traditions regarding the duty of the believer to support the Mahdi's cause (Nusrat); 'And when you see him (i.e. Imam Mahdi), give him your word of allegiance, even if it is necessary to make your way in the snow on hands and feet, since he is God's deputy'. This sense of suffering and asceticism which repeatedly occurs in the course of the conversions is a sign of Shi'i esoteric influence in shaping the formative period of the movement.

After some time, Mullā Sādiq arrived at Shiraz, in mid Rajab 1260 (July-August 1844). Here as a result of his interview with the Bab, he finally overcame his previous doubts and fully recognised the Bab's claims. The point which had puzzled Mullā Sādiq, like many other early believers, was that Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad did not enjoy the 'nominal accomplishments and 'official qualities' of a high ranking divine, and even lacked the basic education necessary for any Shi'i 'alabih. Yet at the same time, this very factor worked in favour of the Bab; 'The solid, firm verses and the nature of his knowledge ... revealed by the young uneducated merchant', could only be regarded as an infallible proof for his rightfullness.

However, Mullā Sādiq's journey to Shiraz was not solely for the purpose of...

2. Distinguishable from 'collective duty' (farzh-i kifāya), the fulfilment of which by a sufficient number of individual excuses other individuals from fulfilling it! (Schacht, J. *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, Oxford 1964, p.120-121.)
3. Tradition attributed to the Prophet by Ḥāfiẓ ibn Māja relating from Thawbān in Bihār, XIII, Chap.1/4, = trans. p.65. This hadith appears frequently in Bihār al-Anwār, related by different ṭawāfs of different figures. (Bihār. Chap.2/10, = p.97 and Chapter on Khuwāj = p.560).
visiting the Bab, but for the greater task of advocating the cause in the Bab's home town. Already prior to his departure from Shiraz, Mullâ Husain had publicly declared that 'manifestation of the Proof of God (zuhur-i Ha'zrat-i Ījā'at) is close at hand' and by his appearance 'all these regulations and customs which are in vogue amongst you will be abolished, and He will bring a new book and tradition'. Yet Bushrūyiḥī's reservation in revealing the identity of the Promised One puzzled some of the enthusiastic audience. Mīrzā Ahmad Shīrāzī, who himself was present at the time of Mullâ Husain's departure, objected that 'You have misguided and perplexed the people. You pretended that the True One has appeared and that these regulations will be abandoned. Now you are going, and neither has any True One appeared, nor has any sign of Him been seen. The people will remain in doubt and astonishment'. In reply Mullâ Husain pointed out:

'I was not commissioned by the lawgiver (gāhib-i sharī'at) to do more than this. He sent me to give the warning, as an act of grace to the people, and to inform them that the appearance of the True One draws near, so that when the manifestation actually happens, they may not oppose it and perish. Whatever I was not ordered to state will be made known by the one named Mullâ Šādiq, who will come two months after my departure.'

It is clear that Mullâ Husain, acting with the Bab's approval, had left the critical task of proclamation in Shiraz to Muqaddas, who was to publicise the new manifestation in conjunction with Bastāmī in 'Atabāt. After the meeting, Mīrzā Ahmad asked Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad about his opinions of Mullâ Husain's words, to which the Bab replied: 'Mullâ Husain is an honest and truthful man, and he is above making unfounded statements. Undoubtedly these words of his have a foundation'.

Mullâ Šādiq began preparation for the public declaration first by setting up lectures and preachings in the mosque of Aqa Qasim but it appears that, for

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1. Nabil. (101) states that Mullâ Šādiq was instructed by Bushrūyiḥī to 'proceed to Kirmān, and there acquaint Hājī Mīrzâ Karīm Khān Kirmānī with the Message', then travel to Shiraz. Even if Nabil could be trusted on this point, it is certain that such a journey did not take place. Instead Muqaddas preferred to set out directly for Shiraz (Fw'ādī, 90 and Samandar, 164). There is no evidence suggesting that at this stage, Mullâ Šādiq, or in fact any of the early Babis, made an attempt to visit Kirmānī.


3. Ahmad. 450.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

Najafī Isfahānī, the notorious enemy of the Babi-Baha’īs, who had temporarily moved from Isfahan to Mashhad (1877-8), put his seal of approval on the fatvā to strengthen his weakening position against the state authorities and perhaps to enhance his nationwide reputation for executing Babis. Accused of being a heretic, Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Majīd could have escaped execution if he had denied his beliefs, but to the very last moment he insisted on them and regarded his death as the only way to achieve ‘salvation’, and was therefore executed.

Amongst the early conversions, though the contribution of members of the ‘ulama and trade were predominant, the presence of a small group of low ranking local officials also deserves some attention. During his first mission to Khurasan, Mullā Husain when passing through Sabzivār, paid a brief visit to a number of local mustaufīs (revenue accountants), who had perhaps had some contact with Shaykhs in the past. Later, two brothers, Mīrzā ‘Alī Riza Mustaufī Sabzivārī, and then his brother Mīrzā Muhammad Riza (later Mu’taman al-Saltanih), and some of their relatives became supporters of the Babi cause. Though their affiliation to the movement seems to some extent to have remained secret, nevertheless their moral and material support first included funds for the Mazandaran march, and in the following years provided some comfort for the Babis at times of persecution and trouble. Towards the 1870’s (1290’s), both brothers were promoted in their offices. While Mīrzā ‘Alī Riza became one of the ‘mustaufīyān-i hākir rikāb’ (revenue accountants in the Royal presence),

1. Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqī Isfahānī, son of Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī (the author of Ḥāshiya al-Maʿālīm) and father of the famous Āqa Najafī, was the inheritor of his father’s clerical fame, and also the real founder of the Najafī’s financial power. (Tabaqāt. I, 1, pp.198-9, 247-8 and II, pp.215-17). The wealth and the influence of the Najafīs (Muḥammad Bāqī and Āqa Najafī), and their lengthy dispute with the governor of Isfahan Žill al-Sulṭān over legal and economic domination in the city, made them outstanding in the clerical history of the 19th century. Their anti-Babi-Baha’ī stand, which is apparent in Muḥammad Bāqī’s efforts to destroy the Tabātabā’ī brothers in Isfahan (see above Chapter Seven, I ) caused them to receive opprobrious treatment from the Bahā’ī sources.

2. Fiṣṣāh. (pp.56-65) contains a full account of the events which finally led to the execution of Hājī ‘Abd al-Majīd.

3. Ibid. pp.30, 67. 4. Ibid. 67.

4. Ibid. pp.67-72. The author of Tarīkh-i Amrī-yi Khurāsān, uses every kind of local source, including oral accounts from the members of the Mustaufī and Mustashār Daftar families, who were the descendents of the Mustaufī brothers. For the events of the early period, he benefited from the account of the eye witness Mīrzā Muḥammad Qulī Mustaufī, a member of the Sabzivārī family, which was narrated to him by Āqa Mīrzā Buzurg Grāyūlī Mustaufī (Ibid. pp.30, 73).

his brother occupied the office of ṣīvarat-i Khūrāsān (chief revenue accountant of Khurasan)\(^1\). Hence, since Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh was highly suspicious of Muʿtaman al-Saltānī's Bābī sentiments, he ordered his transfer to the city of Kashān where he was virtually in exile. Later, in a well-thought-out plan to eliminate Muʿtaman al-Saltānī, the Shah summoned him to the capital, and he was first obliged to marry the Shah's sister, and then forced to drink 'poisonous coffee' (qahvī-yī Qajar) from his wife's hand (1310 Q./1892-3)\(^2\).

Mīrza Muhammad Taqī Juvāynī Sabzīvarī, another Bābī figure, came from amongst the Sabzīvarī officials. Though he was a humble scribe and accountant (dabīr va āvarīhimīgār)\(^3\), in his Bābī career he showed himself to be a courageous and faithful Bābī fighter. He was born in the village of Juvāyn and encountered Mullā Husain on one of his visits to the town. Juvāynī's effective participation began when, in 1264 (1848), in the course of the Ṣabārsī upheaval he held the responsibility for receipts and expenditure of the common funds\(^4\), and on a few occasions acted as the representative of the Bābī party in negotiations with the local chiefs and state officials\(^5\). His most dramatic act, which could be seen as a final declaration of war against the government, was the slaying of Khusrau Khān Qādīkālā'ī in the forests around Barfurūsh, as a reprisal for his deceitful behaviour towards the defenceless and confused Bābī column\(^6\). In the final surrender of the Bābī fighters, Mīrza Muhammad Taqī was captured and put to death by the Qājār troops. His head was spiked on the top of a spear and carried around the city of Barfurūsh\(^7\).

The study of the above individuals may serve as examples for other non-clerical members of the early Bābī circle in Khurasan. As in the case of the ʿulama who were committed to the new doctrine, previous affiliations and

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2. Puʿādī. pp.70-72. For qahvī-yī Qajar see Glimpses of Life and Manners, op.cit. 92.
3. NT. III, 236. Nābil (p.417) also refers to his 'literary accomplishment'.
5. Tārīkh-i Muntazīm. op.cit. pp.22 (Negotiations with the governor of Māzandarān Khānlar Mīrzā), 34-5 (with ʿAbbās Qulī Khān Lārījānī).
6. Cited by nearly all Ṣabārsī accounts.
connections were the chief elements for the attraction of the local merchants and state officials to the movement. However, the degree of their participation and the nature of their involvement in the movement also seem to be partly determined by their occupation and rank. Both groups represented an urban provincial 'middle class' which began to form in the middle decades of the 19th century. But any attempt to establish a definite link between the conversion of these groups and their socio-political background, beyond the intermediary element of messianic expectations, could not go further than general speculation. In fact, the millenarian ideas are the strongest unifying factor in bringing individuals from different ranks and positions to acceptance of the Babi doctrine.

The appeal of the message was mainly due to the fact that the new movement, in contrast to existing religious or secular currents, was able to channel common aspirations towards a tangible goal, particularly at times when Khurasanī society, which traditionally looked to the 'ulama for protection and security, seems to have been less satisfied with the performance of the orthodox 'ulama. In these circumstances the appeal of a messianic movement was not something unpredictable, exceptionally when the power of the clergy was exhausted by private conflicts and petty revenges within the framework of city politics. Up to a point this was always a frequent characteristic of urban and religious life in Iran, but the structure and ethos of religious life in Mashhad during this decade has suggested grounds for an unusual degree of fragmentation and loss of control.

As regards the ultimate plans and goals of the movement, the formation of the Khurasan group may be counted as one of the major achievements of the early years. Its role, in theory and in practice, in the course of the general development of the movement and in particular during the events of which Tabarsī was the climax, was highly significant. At a time when Mullā Alī Bastami and other Babi Letters were entangled in increasing obstacles in 'Atabāt, in spite of their early success, and the Bab himself was disillusioned by his reception in the Hijāz, Mullā Husain, by contrast, was able to organise a community which played an important role in the progress of the movement.
CHAPTER NINE

Pilgrimage to Mecca

I

In an earlier chapter, the theological justification for announcing the Babi message in Mecca and then in Kufah was discussed, and the symbolic implications of such a declaration were examined. After the departure of the early disciples to their assignment, the Bab himself, 'according to the previous arrangements', which he made with his followers, decided to set out for Hijaz, where in the course of Hajj he intended to proclaim his mission. This was an attempt to fulfil those Shi'i traditions which emphatically required the open declaration of the Qa'im in front of the Ka'ba, prior to the final uprising (Khuruj) in the land of Kufah.

Reasserting the inevitable fulfilment of the prophecies, the Bab himself underlines the significance of the Mecca declaration in the following words:

'Thus on that month (Dhū al-Hijja) whatever is promised by your God to every young and old, will happen. Soon he will appear in the Holy Land with the word that will "split asunder" whatever is in the heavens and earth. Behold his word; the righteous Qa'im (Qa'im-i bi al-ḥaqq) who is the just Qa'im (Qa'im-i bi al-qist) will arise in Mecca according to what has been uttered: "When the Qa'im appears, give him your support together with all those who will come to his assistance from distant corners". When they (his opponents) "have corrupted the earth", then he will commence the new cause in the hinterland of Kufah.

In the Bab's mind, the fulfilment of these prophecies was attributed to a divine force beyond his control, which first assigned him to this mission to 'set out for pilgrimage to Baytallāh al-Harām' and promoted the cause 'to reach the East and the West and in between' and 'expanded the (intellectual) capacity of the people' to enable them to grasp 'the cause of the heart (hukm-i fu'ād)', before returning him from Baytallāh al-Harām to his homeland'. This is what the Bab

1. See above Chapter Four, III. 2. NT. III, 42.
3. Z. 235, Arabic Tauqīf. 'The word that "split asunder"...' most probably refers to the Qur'ān, XIX, 92 which in Shi'i prophecies is interpreted as the sign of Revelation. 'When the Qa'im appears ...' presumably is a reference to a hadith related from Imam Ja'far Ṣādiq. (Bihār al-Anwār, op.cit., trans: p.573).
4. Z. 269, Arabic prayer.
was convinced to be an irreversible course, with all its details destined to happen as was predicted.

To the above considerations for Hajj, one should also add some more tangible facts which accelerated the departure of Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad from Shiraz in 26th Sha'ban 1260 (10th September 1844)\(^1\). Various indications make it possible to assume that some considerations of a personal nature and particularly in relation to his safety, influenced his decision to leave Shiraz in some haste. In a letter to Mulla 'Abd al-Khaliq Yazdi, which is written in an invocatory style, the Bab makes a brief but important reference to the situation in which he left Shiraz:

>'O my God, you know my cause, and witness my inner intentions, and that I did not undertake this cause but to promote your pure religion (dīn-i khāliq) and your hidden message. I had warned those who know me not to reveal my name. But I set out for pilgrimage to your house when I became terrified of the accomplices of the devil who were the corrupt people.\(^2\)

The same anxiety over the publication of his identity is also expressed in another letter to Shaykh 'Ali Qā'înî, son of Mulla 'Abd al-Khâliq, in which the Bab complains bitterly of the carelessness of some of his followers: 'When I left this city (Shiraz) for the destination of Baytallāh al-Haram, if after my departure no one had divulged my name, no one would have been tormented. But my believers are responsible towards God. Now there happened what ought to happen.\(^3\)

1. Khutba al-Jidda (Arabic), INBA. 91, XIX, pp.60-73 (66). In this important Khutba, the Bab in his enigmatic style, has carefully recorded all the departure and arrival dates as well as the length of his stay in various places throughout his journey to the Hijāz. This Khutba is used in this chapter as the most reliable source for setting dates.

2. Arabic Tawqī' to Mullā 'Abd al-Khâliq Yazdí, INBA. 91, pp.94-102 (96), written after his return from Hajj. For further details see below. For details about Mullā 'Abd al-Khâliq see above Chapter Eight

3. Nicolas. (pp.61-9) who translated the letter from a certain MS. AG., failed to realise the identity of the recipient. However, the contents of the letter provide certain clues to the real identity of Shaykh 'Ali Qā'înî. In one place (p.67) the Bab sends his regards to Shaykh 'Ali's father, while on another occasion, he refers to his father as his former tutor, and complains of his silence and lack of cooperation (p.68). (For Shaykh 'Ali see above Chapter Eight, III ). Both the above-mentioned letters to father and son, which contain similar remarks on the same issue, indicate a possible enquiry or even criticism from 'Abd al-Khâliq's quarter over the Bab's change of policy (see below).
These complaints over the disclosure of his identity, even before his departure, are the first signs of the Bab's displeasure with the activities of some of his followers. He feared, perhaps with some justification, that the untimely exposure of what should have remained a closely guarded secret, brought with it unnecessary harassment and persecution. As early as Ša'bān 1260, traces of a rift can be identified in the Babi ranks, which in the next few years turned to a major crisis within the movement. At this stage, it is not possible to identify any individual or group responsible for this embarrassing disclosure. However, as far as the two prominent disciples were concerned, the statement made by Mulla Husain at the time of his departure from Shiraz, as well as the reluctance shown by Mulla 'Alī Bastāmī to reveal the name of the promised Bab in 'Atabāt, indicates that to a large extent they observed the secrecy agreed upon.

What seems to be the source of the Bab's apprehension was the fact that in the disturbed conditions of Shiraz, the widespread rumours, which stimulated peoples' curiosity to learn about the new claimant, could create harmful agitation and trouble. Hāji Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Vakīl al-Ḥaqq, the Bab's maternal cousin, who at the time was residing in the city, recollects that 'in the year 1260 in Shiraz, a rumour broke out that a noble sayyid claimed to be the deputy (nāṣib) of the Qā'im, but his sacred name was not mentioned'. In the course of one of his visits to the Bab in the month of Sha'bān, about a week before his departure, Muḥammad Taqī saw the Bab sitting on the terrace of his house and writing prayers and verses. When Vakīl al-Ḥaqq enquired about the rumours that the new Deputy of the Imam prohibited the smoking of qalīyan, the Bab confirmed it without any further comments. As in his reply to Hāji Ahmad Ishīk Aqāsī, here the Bab preserves a non-committal position on the enquiry about the new revelation.

This unwanted publicity and its effect on the Bab's decision are also reported by Mirza Kazem-Beg, who on the basis of an unspecified source, maintains that:

'Après avoir sème bon gré mal gré quelques mauvais grains dans cette terre de Chiraz si fertile en

1. Ahmad, pp.449-50. For further details see above Chapter Six, I.
2. See above Chapter Five, I. 3. See above Chapter Four, III.
5. Ibid.
préjugés et en superstitions, le Kerbèlai Séïd Ali-Mohammed se rendit en pèlerinage à la Mecque. Il quitta Chiraz seul, dans le plus grand secret, et alors qu'on s'y attendait le moins : deux ou trois de ses disciples, tout au plus, furent instruits de son départ. // A cette époque la renommée du nouveau maître était déjà fort répandue dans les provinces limitrophes; partout se reconnaissaient des gens disposés à suivre sa doctrine, et on parlait déjà de lui dans le Mazanderan et le Khorasan. En l'absence du maître, qui était parti presque en fugitif, ses disciples s'occupèrent activement à soutenir et à étendre sa renommée.

Fears of the 'devil's accomplices' and 'the corrupt people' in the 'fertile ground of prejudice and superstition' can only be fully appreciated if the matter is examined in the context of the general developments which at the time were taking place in Shiraz. A brief look at the disturbed state of Fars province reveals the nature of the threat which compelled the Bab to leave Shiraz in secret, the same threat which was to endanger him when he returned from Hajj.

A series of riots and public disturbances in the towns and villages of Fars, which had already started earlier in the year, reached their climax in the month of Sha'bân (August-September 1844) when the inner city clashes and open rebellion against an exceptionally ineffective and unpopular government brought the province to total anarchy and chaos. This is illustrated in various reports by Colonel Sheil and his agent in Shiraz throughout 1844-5, in which the typical course of an urban uprising, and its natural outcome of violence and insecurity, can be observed. With regard to the protests and agitations which followed the appointment of Mirza Nabi Khan Mazandaran to the governorship of Fars, in early August 1844 (Rajab 1260) Sheil reports: 'The province of Fars

1. Kazem Beg. VII, pp.344-5. 2. See above Chapter Six

3. A systematic coverage of the events of Fars appears in a series of F.O. dispatches between April 1844 and April 1845 (F.O. 60/104 to 113). The attention paid by Sheil to the events of Fars is mainly due to his concern for the disruption of southern trade and its effect on the British commerce through Bushihr.

4. Sometimes known as Šahîb Divvân or Amîr Dîvân Qazîvîni, he is the father of Mirza Husain Khan Mushir al-Daulih Sipahsâlîr, the celebrated prime minister of Nâşir al-Dîn Shâh. He was a minor official in the latter part of Fatih 'Ali Shâh's reign who was later promoted in the mid-1830's to the important office of Šahîb Divvân (chief official of secular jurisdiction), during Hâjî Mirza Aqâši's premiership. Though sometimes in disagreement with Hâji (and possibly in collaboration with Mirza Aqâ Khan Nûrî), he was originally one of the prime minister's partisans. Scattered references to his life and the various offices he held appear in RS. IX and X, NT. III and IV.
still remains in the same disturbed state. Mirza Nabee Khan the Governor, being perfectly destitute of authority and unable to levy the revenue. The new governor, whose only reason for being appointed was his ability to offer the highest bid for the office, not only lacked a basic support in the capital but also in the province. In fact from the early days of his office, Mirza Nabi was faced with fierce opposition from the local notables, who for a variety of reasons, did not approve of his appointment.

In order to express even further their disapproval of Mirza Nabi and his repressive measures for collecting excessive taxes, a delegation of local notables arrived in Tehran to press for his removal. The delegation from Shiraz represented all five Haydarī quarters in the city, as well as the leaders of the Ni'matī quarters and thus provided a relatively united front. The pattern of the opposition, and the channels through which the involved parties organised and expressed their protest, indicate that the current conflict not only included the influential notables at a high level, but also embraced large groups of the inhabitants at lower levels.

The deep rooted Haydarī-Ni'matī division in most Iranian cities in the 19th century, according to Persian sources, goes back to the late 15th century. Though such a division does not represent any ideological or even social difference between the two parties, it should still be regarded as a major feature in the pattern of city politics, especially at times of disturbance and turmoil. These divisions provide an insight into the origin of many urban conflicts, and the way such conflicts developed in the course of a local power struggle. As it was strictly based on divisions of city quarters, the inhabitants of each quarter had an almost compulsory affiliation to one of the two factions. Though the Kadkhudas were officially in charge of the quarter, it appears that during crises and civil strife, groups of lūtīs and their patrons were the real force in action. In one of his reports Sheil states:

"In all the principal towns of Persia, the inhabitants are divided into two parties, the Hyderees and the Ne'metesee, who engage in contests which are usually periodical and insignificant, but which increase in fierceness and

1. F.O. 60/105, No.87, Sheil to Aberdeen, 1st August 1844.
2. Regarding the practice of sale of offices under Muhammad Shah, Mirza Nabi's appointment to the governorship of Fars, like most other appointments of the time, was ratified only because he offered the highest price for the vacant post. See above Chapter Six. Both Fārs Namīk (p.299) and Sheil (F.O. 60/105, No.87) agree that beside the offering (pīshkīsh) he had no real support.
3. F.O. 60/105, No.87; Fārs Namīk, I, 299.
frequency under a weak government.1

Indeed the composition of the delegation to Tehran illustrates the strength of the two divisions in the city which in the previous ten years of Muhammad Shāh's reign had successfully brought down successive provincial governments, and made the province of Fars virtually ungovernable. Hājī Mīrzā Muhammad Khān Qavām al-Mulk, the influential and well established biglarbaygī of Fars from the Haydarī quarter of Bālā Kaft, usually found himself in alliance with Muhammad Khān Īlbaygī Qashqā'ī from the Maydān-i Shāh quarter (Haydarī) who was almost as important as Qavām. These three together with three other notables of the remaining Haydarī quarters (Haydarī Khānīkh) as well as with the tacit cooperation with the chief of Nīmatī Khānī were able to exert the same pressure which had caused the fall of Manuchihr Khān Mu'tamid al-Daulīh in 1252 (1836–7), Firaydūn Mīrzā in 1256 (1840–1) and Farhad Mīrzā in 1258 (1842–3) from the governorship of Fars.2

Various motives encouraged the local leaders to take up an independent stand towards the central government. At times they emerged as natural leaders of the public, and their challenge enjoyed the strong support of the inhabitants, who themselves suffered from the maltreatment of the government agents. To a powerful figure like Qavām al-Mulk who combined landownership with effective control over the city's affairs, the establishment of a stable government meant...
less control over the administration of the city, as well as a loss of revenue in town and countryside. Equally, for his powerful ally Muhammad Khan Ilbaygi Qashqa'i, the establishment of a strong provincial government which could control the countryside meant restrictions on the activities of the tribe as well as payment of the due taxes.

The traditional alliance which existed between bigiarbaygi, kadkhudabashis and kadkhudas on the one hand, and various elements with tribal or urban origin such as Ilbaygi, prominent 'ulama and members of the city brigandage on the other, created an impenetrable urban network which could hardly be disunited by any outside force. While Qavam al-Mulk and his officers practically controlled the city quarters, Ilbaygi guaranteed the balancing force which was necessary to check the threat of the government troops, and turbulent lutis ensured the violence and disorder which were necessary for creating embarrassment for the government. Towards the 1250's and 60's different scenes of an orchestrated resistance can be seen, in which the lutis of the rival quarters, usually under the influence of rival figures, played a major role in the development of events. In mid-August 1844, Mirza Nabi attempted to publish the ferman for commercial regulations regarding the recovery of debts due to English merchants, by reading it in the principal mosque; 'the rabble and disaffected persons in Sheeraz assembled round, and would allow no one to approach the mosque. Their supposition was probably that the Ferman contained an order to replace Mirza Nabee Khan in Government.' In mid-August 1844, Mīrzā Nābī attempted to publish the ferman for commercial regulations regarding the recovery of debts due to English merchants, by reading it in the principal mosque; 'the rabble and disaffected persons in Sheeraz assembled round, and would allow no one to approach the mosque. Their supposition was probably that the Ferman contained an order to replace Mīrzā Nabee Khan in Government.'

It is hard to establish to what extent the violence of the lutis voiced people's grievances against the government, but no doubt at times of social and political turmoil they created a major problem for the security of the quarters and the safety of the inhabitants. It seems that even the truce, or the nominal understanding, which was reached at a higher level between the representatives of quarters, was not observed by lutis such as Ahmad Sultan from Ishaq Bayg quarter, who according to the customary divisions of the quarters, lost no opportunity to settle old feuds. The eye witness account of the Shiraz agent of the British mission in Tehran provides a vivid picture of the hostilities in the city:

1. Examples of lutis' destructive clashes in Shiraz, particularly in conjunction with the struggle between conflicting poles of power in the city, are recorded in Fārs Nāmīh. I, 287ff. Also H.G. Migeod 'Die Lūtīs' in Journal of Economic and Social History of Orient, II (1959), pp.84-5.
2. P.O. 60/105, No.90, Sheil to Aberdeen, 19th August 1844.
'In Fars there is not a village or district, not to speak of Shiraz, where fighting and disturbances do not occur. To commence with Shiraz itself; a few days ago a young man belonging to the Ne'metee party happened to pass through the parish occupied by Heyederee party; some of the lootees (disorderly persons, vagabonds) of the latter class unexpectedly attacked and took him prisoner, and their chiefs gave the order for his murder; accordingly without understanding or enquiring what might be the crime of the unfortunate youth, they fell upon him with their knives and daggers, inflicted at least a hundred wounds, then stoned him and lastly tied a rope to his foot, dragged him through the streets and threw him into the town-ditch, where he lay till someone took pity on him and buried him'.

After referring to various disturbances which simultaneously occurred in other towns and villages of Fars, and also the dispute which broke out between the Simnani and Hamadani troops over their lodging in the city, the report gives an example of the damage and casualties which the inhabitants of Shiraz on one occasion suffered from gang-warfare:

'Great disturbances, originally in a dispute between the two principal divisions of Heyederees regarding a prostitute, took place in the town a few days ago. The majority of the houses and shops adjoining the scene of conflict were plundered and destroyed. During the two or three days that the fight lasted, four persons were killed and at least a hundred wounded; at length the elder of the town succeeded by prayer and entreaty in putting an end to the fighting'.

Giving some figures for the recent fighting, the report counts at least 8 dead and 132 injured in various incidents in Shiraz and 56 dead in other parts.

Finally, appealing to the British representative to intervene, the agent states:

'The people here come to me and say that they are in despair, that their representations to the Court are useless, and they beg me to inform you of the desperate state of affairs, with the hope that you may be prevailed upon to use your influence at Tehran for ameliorating their condition.

The Ameer (Meerza Nebee Khan) himself never leaves

1. F.O. 60/105, No.90, Supplement; Translation: Substance of a letter from the Agent at Shiraz to Lieutenant Colonel Sheil. According to Pars Nāmīh (II, 122) at the time of the report, Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Navvāb Hindī (1809-59), grandson of an Indian emigre of Persian origin, whose family were local governors of Masulipatam before British times, acted as the British Agent in Shiraz.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.
the citadel of Shiraz, and even on the death of his daughter he did not come out to the Mosque to attend the funeral rites, but had the burial service read in the citadel.'

Thus, in the absence of an effective governmental or civilian authority for the enforcement of law and order, and as the direct outcome of the resistance shown by the local forces towards the central government, an ideal condition prevailed for the mob to assume control of the quarters and stage a full scale war, which caused great danger and suffering for the ordinary inhabitants. The local notables who were probably the real instigators of these factional disorders, certainly had a limited ability to maintain peace and order.

Under such circumstances, the publication of a highly sensitive issue such as the mission preached by the Bab would naturally have added a new dimension to the existing situation. Here the Bab was faced with two options: either he could have proclaimed his mission in the hope of attracting the attention of the curious public, or else in spite of a growing interest towards his claims, leave the city and commence his pilgrimage to the Hajj. In choosing the first option, the absence of a powerful provincial government and the existing turmoil might have given him the chance to recruit freely without serious fear of the 'ulama's reaction, since they lacked the official backing of the government. But such publication would inevitably have meant involvement in city politics and taking sides in the Haydari-Ni'matī divisions, since in the event of any strong action from the opposing 'ulama which could have been implemented by provocation and incitement of the mob, he would have had to rely upon the opposite faction for security and protection. But such protection could not have materialised without the Bab leaning towards the leaders of these divisions and ultimately being manipulated by certain notables in the city to fulfil ambitions beyond his original claims and intentions.

Thus as soon as the Bab felt that the disclosure of his identity might lead to further trouble, he chose to leave Shiraz in haste since he had no intention of facing the dangers of an unpredictable situation. He belonged to the merchant class which, because of its functions, always held a neutral position in local

1. Ibid.
2. Regarding the long history of Qavām al-Mulk's family association with the Shirazi lustīs (see Fārs Nāmīh, I, 289ff., and cf. Haqīqī q al-Akhbār, op.cit. 307ff), it is not unrealistic to suggest that in the present round of hostilities, Qavām al-Mulk deliberately encouraged the lustīs' disturbances in order to emphasise his hostility towards Mīrzā Muḥammad 'Alī Mushīr al-Mulk, his most important rival and sometime the Vāzīr of Fārs under previous governors.
Husain's encounter with his father, or else he was briefed by his father's entourage of Mulla Husain's abilities in theological arguments. Thus, it seems that he was hesitant to take part in an argument, which would lead him into unnecessary conflict with an obscure group.

Following Sayyid Asadallah's reservations, it appears that the Babi opposition also failed to gain Karbasi's cooperation in this matter. The cautious mujtahid went only so far as to promise that if he recovered from his illness, he would 'investigate the matter himself' and 'ascertain the truth'. Karbasi, who had for years avoided major participation in the frequent power struggles or political rivalries in the city, was not prepared to risk his reputation as a just and impartial authority by passing a verdict on an ambiguous accusation against a Shaykhi disciple. During his long and intimate friendship with Sayyid Muhammed Baqir Shafti, they had come to an implicit agreement, that as a matter of principle, Karbasi should leave all judicial and legal decisions (munafisiat) to his powerful colleague, and confine himself wholly to his academic activities. Karbasi was reluctant to take part, even in minor practices such as collecting and distributing religious dues, or if he ever did he was meticulously anxious to observe all religious details. It is quite inconceivable that a mujtahid who, according to Qisas al-'Ulama', gave alms to a beggar only after calling upon witnesses to testify to his poverty, should have passed a fatwa of condemnation on a person with whom he shared a certain sympathy, even if he did not, as Nabil claims, praise his faculties.

Yet it appears that the extent of the hostility was wide enough to reach the court of Manuchihr Khan Mu'tamid al-Daulih, the powerful governor of the province. But he in turn, according to Nabil Zarandi, 'refused to interfere' in a matter which 'fell extensively within the jurisdiction of the 'ulama'. The author of

2. Ibid.
3. Karbasi's alliance with Shafti is illustrated in a number of anecdotes related by different sources such as Q. pp.119, 140-44, 168; Tabaqat. II/1, 14, Tadhkirat al-Qubur (Jazi) op.cit. 158. The significance of this friendship was perhaps due to the fact that contrary to the usual competition between the mujtahids, their alliance proved to be useful in maintaining control in the religious and even political life of the city.
4. Q. pp.118-19. The list of his theological works appears in Tabaqat II/1, 14.
5. Q. pp.118-19. 6. Ibid.
7. Though not in any sense a Shaykhi, Karbasi's respect and reverence for his late teacher Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i committed him to some sympathy for a follower of the Shaykhi doctrine.
8. For his details see below this Chapter.
Nasikh al-Tawarikh, however, goes as far as to state that the governor even defended the new cause; 'He acknowledged that the Bab is a pious man and maintained that it could be that he (the Bab) is the deputy (na‘īb) of the Hidden Imam'. In fact the successful policy adopted by the governor in the last five years, which had to some extent subordinated the important religious figures to the authority of the state, dictated non-commitment in these circumstances on behalf of the governor in a matter which was primarily religious. Considering the long history of urban disturbances and riots in the city, it is more likely that the governor only warned the intriguers 'to abstain from mischief and to cease disturbing the peace and tranquility'.

The failure of the opposition in gaining active support from the authorities, perhaps indicates that the time was still not ready for the religious leadership to wage a war against the Babi elements. The full weight of Babi teachings had not yet been felt in religious circles, and the religious leaders did not see the movement as a real threat to their position in society. Indeed the result of the unsuccessful attempt to ban Babi teaching, was that the small Babi group managed to benefit from the opportunity, and act more freely and openly in its teachings. The relatively mild policy adopted by the religious and secular powers, provided the ideal atmosphere for the arrival of the Bab in 1262. During the next two years, the internal conflict between the religious factions, particularly encouraged the provincial government to search for a new alternative. However, in spite of some claims made by the biased authors, it is highly unrealistic to assume that Mu’tamid al-Daulih, however gifted he might have been in formulating his policies, regarded the Babi movement at this stage as a strong or organised force which could be employed against the religious authorities in Isfahan. But, in addition to the natural resistance of the ulama to the distribution of an unorthodox message, there were, no doubt, other motives behind their attempt to condemn the new movement. With regard to the earlier contentions between the adherents of Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Shafti and the supporters of Imam Jum‘ih, it is possible to suggest that the same factions were also active in this instance. Though there is no clear evidence to suggest any association between

1. NT. III, 234.  
2. Nabil. 98.  
3. Claims made by the author of Miftah-i Bab al-Abwāb seem to have no bearing on reality. Muhammad Mahdi Za‘īm al-Daulih, swears on his own soul that Manūchehr Khān Mu‘tamid al-Daulih, who was no more than the agent of Christian powers in the Islamic lands, had no aim but to destroy the solidarity of Islam. His claim that Manūchehr Khān 'showed excessive kindness and hospitality' towards the disciples of the Bab, 'secured them from the threats of their opponents, provided sufficient pensions for them, and persuaded them to publicise the appearance of the Bab', seems to be no more than an unfounded exaggeration of Nasikh al-Tawarikh's brief account. (Miftah. pp.143-5).
Mulla Husain with either Imam Jum'ih or Mu'tamid al-Daulih, certain links can be traced through Harati or Nahrîs.

Mir Sayyid Muhammad Khâtûnâbâdî, who held the office of imam jum'ih of Isfahan between 1254-91 (1838-74) by right of an inheritance going back to Mulla Muhammad Baqir Majlisî, exercised a considerable influence on affairs of the city. His wealth and property, his family connections, and his function as the intermediary between the 'ulama and the government enabled him to enjoy the privileges of a respected mujtahid, a high ranking state official and a powerful landlord. Though in theory he voiced the government's religious attitude, in practice he exercised a large degree of independence, which could only be matched by powerful mujtahids such as Shaftî, Karbâsî, Muhammad Taqi Najafî, or equally powerful governors such as Mu'tamid al-Daulih and later Zîlî al-Sultan. By 1262 (1846) the death of the two leading mujtahids of Isfahan, namely Shaftî and Karbâsî, had given him the opportunity to rise to a higher position above the others, mostly at the expense of the rival faction who, due to internal discord, lacked an effective leadership. His amicable relations with Mu'tamid al-Daulih more than anything had originated in their mutual desire to tighten their control over the city.

When in Rajab 1262 (July 1846) the Bab finally managed to escape the persecution, harassment and arrest which for the past two years he and his close followers had suffered in Shiraz, it was with the assurance of Mu'tamid and the blessings of Imam Jum'ih, conveyed by the believers, that he entered Isfahan. What persuaded the Bab to seek refuge in Isfahan was the encouragement which he apparently received from a number of Isfahani believers concerning Mu'tamid's enthusiasm and sympathy towards the new call. As it is hinted, one might even assume that Haratî was behind the dignified reception of the Bab and also his residence in the house of Imam Jum'ih himself.

Manuchihr Khan's enthusiasm and interest for religious discourses no doubt played a major part in his personal attraction towards a messianic character like the Bab. This was an interest which, even if rooted in his own complex religious

1. For the background and the genealogy of the Imam Jum'ih's of Isfahan, see Makârim. I, 74, 130; II, 314-20; IV, 1324; V, 1453-4. For Mir Sayyid Muhammad see Tadhkira at-Qubûr op.cit. pp.104 (n.), 114-15; Mahdavi, Muṣlih al-Dîn. Dônîshmandân va Buzurgan-i Isfahân, Isfahan, 1348 Sh., 480. Of the Babi-Baha'i sources, Z., pp.94-6 and TMS. pp.97-8 give some fresh information.

2. TMS. 97.

3. Beside better known sources on the Isfahan episode, TMS. pp.97-118; INBA. Lib. Ms. no. 1028 D (based on recollections of Aqa Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahîm); the Bab's own writings and correspondence in this period, INBA. pub. no.40 and 64, provide some new information.
history, still had some relevance to his ambition for temporal power. Imam Jum’ih however, in his overall assessment of the Bab, seems to be more sceptical. Beside his curiosity, which appears to be further aroused by Haratī, perhaps it was the instruction of the governor which obliged him to play host to the Bab. But whatever the motives, the presence of the Bab first worked to their advantage. Because of his personal charm, his extraordinary claims and his 'miraculous deeds', news of which was spread by his close disciples in the city, the Bab gained a considerable popularity in Isfahan. This caused some apprehension amongst those 'ulama who had already been alarmed by the earlier activities of Mullā Husain and other believers. The warnings of the 'ulama of Shiraz concerning the threat of the new heresy, and the dispatches of Hajī Mīrzā Āqāsī from Tehran, who for his own reasons concerning the dangerous outcomes of an alliance between the Babis and his old rival Mu’tamid al-Daulih, urged them to take action against the new claimant, encouraged some of the 'ulama such as Mullā Muhammad Mahdī Karbāsī, son of Hājī Ibrāhīm, Mullā Husain ‘Alī Tūsīrkanī and Mīrzā Hasan Mudarris, to denounce from the pulpit the open Babi activities in the city and the official backing given to them by the governor and Imam Jum’ih.

In response, Mu’tamid was obliged to take some action in order to silence the opposition. By inviting the 'ulama to a public meeting for the purpose of interviewing the Bab, Mu’tamid hoped to put the 'ulama in an irreversible position, since he reckoned that challenging a young merchant by means of scholastic reasoning and logic would be to raise his position in the eyes of the public. Precisely for the same reason contemplated by Mu’tamid, an important group of 'ulama led by Sayyid Isadallāh Shaftī and Mullā Muhammad Ja’far Ābadīhī turned down the invitation and abstained from the meeting. Others however headed by Mullā Muhammad Mahdī Karbāsī and Mullā Muhammad Hasan Nūrī, son of Mullā ‘Alī attended the meeting. As can be judged from available sources, the arguments put forward by Karbāsī represented the fuqahā’s point of view, whereas Muhammad Hasan Nūrī expressed the opinions of hukama’and theosophists - not surprisingly both of them had inherited attitudes long advocated by their fathers.

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1. References to Manuchihr Khan Mu’tamid al-Daulih may be found in various Qājār chronicles such as RS. X and NT. II and III. Also F.O. despatches (see Chapter Seven); European travellers such as Layard, A.H. Early Adventures in Persia etc., London, 1894, pp.114-17; Burgess, Letters from Persia, op.cit. p.16; Stern, Dawning of Light, op.cit. 149-61. Persian accounts such as Ahmad Mirzā (Azud al-Daulih, Tārīkh-i ’Azud, 2nd edition, Tehran, 1328, 23ff; Rizā Quli Mirzā, Safar Nāmih, edited by A. Faramānfarā Qājār, Tehran, 1346, pp.9-170. Babi accounts NK. 116; TMS. pp.102-7.

2. TMS. 100.


4. TMS. 108 and Nabil.205.

5. Ibid.
in the teaching circles of Isfahan. In both cases the theological and philosophical questions which were posed by the mujtahids with almost total disregard for the claims of the Bab and his intuitive justifications for such claims, demonstrate the intellectual gap which separated the mujtahids from the Bab, and prevented any constructive dialogue.

If the gathering did not lead to any concrete result, the 'ulama still had at their disposal the effective weapon of takfīr, which they duly used to prevent the further expansion of the movement. When a large number of the 'ulama of Isfahan, according to one estimate more than seventy of them, signed a fatwā to condemn the Bab, and even demand his execution on the grounds of blasphemy, Imām Jum'ih, who was already through his cousin Sayyid Abūl Qasīm the Imām Jum'ih of Tehran, under pressure from Hājī Mīrzā Aqā'si's quarter, decided to withdraw his support for the Bab by issuing a half-hearted fatwā in which he testified to the Bab's true belief and piety, while at the same time stating that he is 'devoid of reason and judgement'.

Hence, after forty days of open preaching of the Babi message from the house of Imām Jum'ih, the Bab again came under strong attack. In turn Mu'tamīd was forced to retreat, and offered the Bab a secret dwelling in 'Imārat-i Khurshīd in his private quarters. The Bab, perhaps out of desperation, promptly accepted. For the next few months, till the end of Mu'tamīd's life (circa Rabi' al-Awwal 1263 Q.: March 1847), the Bab remained in hiding in Isfahan, without any further contact with the Isfahānī public. Though there were some moves by the Babis of Isfahan to show their discontent, the Bab himself, as on many other occasions, declined to recommend any violent action. Whether because of the Bab's own peaceful character or the pressure which might have been put upon them by Mu'tamīd, the Babi community of Isfahan failed to excite a mass reaction.

The Babi activities between 1260-3 (1844-7) occurred at a time when Isfahan, after a period of clerical domination, both in the religious and the political sense during the first four decades of the 19th century, entered a phase of religious decline, from which the city never fully recovered. The Babi doctrine then was a message for those groups who no longer felt the full domination of the powerful mujtahids and thus tended towards less conventional schools of thought.

1. NK. pp.116-18; KD. I, 73-105 (citing a letter from the Bab with references to the 'ulama of Isfahan); 2. pp.93-4; NT. III, 44-7; Nabil. 207-8 and INBA. pub. 64, pp.115-16 (letter to Muḥammad Shāh) all have some fragments of the discussions in the Isfahan gathering.

2. Gulpāyīgānī, Tārīkh, op.cit.


with messianic tendencies, first Shaykhism and then the Babi movement. But the extent of these messianic expectations was not big enough to overcome the mujtahids' influence. On the contrary, the new generation of mujtahids, who mostly occupied their fathers' positions and benefited from the remnants of their wealth and influence were, in spite of their internal differences, able to divert the public attention from the Babis, and, in a concerted action, isolate them in Isfahan. As in Shiraz in 1261-2 and Tabriz in 1264, in Isfahan the encounter between the Bab and the high ranking mujtahids showed the insurmountable difference between the two conflicting attitudes.

IV

Throughout his journey to Kashan and Tehran in 1260, Mulla Husain again experienced the antagonism of some important mujtahids to the publication of the Babi ideas. Their disapproval was mostly expressed in the form of mild condemnation, or personal refusal to comply with tendencies which might result in heresy. Mulla Husain's visit to Naraqi in Kashan illustrates the nature of these early encounters.

Mulla Muhammad Naraqi Hujjat al-Islam, son of Mulla Ahmad, son of Mulla Muhammad Mahdi, was brought up in a traditional 'ulama family. Like Asadallah Shafti, and many others, Mulla Muhammad also belonged to a generation of mujtahids who, more than anything, owed their positions to their celebrated fathers. Family connections, inherited wealth and influence, combined to provide them with sufficient means to establish their authority and maintain their place in the community. Naraqi received his ijazih from his father Mulla Ahmad, who is known for his contribution in fiqh as well as in philosophy and ḥikmat in the 19th century Shi'i circles. Further, he was the son-in-law of the chief mujtahid of Qum, Mīrza-yi Qumi. His family, which was originally from the village of Naraq near Kashan first moved to the city in the 1770's. The Naraqis greatly prospered under the Qajars, due to their policy of supporting some local 'ulama in large cities. Being the mutawalli of Madrasih-i Sultanī which was built by Fath 'Ali Shah with the trusteeship of its endowments bestowed indefinitely upon

his family, Mulla Muhammad enjoyed good relations with the local and central government. His local influence, as well as his relations with the Qajars, put him in a position to exercise an undisputed judicial authority in the city. It appears that these qualities, rather than his scholarly abilities which were limited to a number of works on fiqh, usul and kalam, encouraged the author of Nasikh al-Tawzrikh to praise him, rather flatteringly, as 'today's most superior scholar in Iran both in knowledge and practice'.

When Mulla Husain encountered Narāqī, the sharp difference between a well established mujtahid and a millenarian preacher was represented by the divergence of opinion over the question of the Imam's emergence. Yet beneath the theological discrepancy runs a wide gap between the social standing of the two men, both in terms of their past background and future goals. When Mulla Husain presented copies of Qayyum al-Asma' and Ziyarat Namih to Narāqī, the scrupulous mujtahid lost no time in pointing out the grammatical faults throughout the text. In reply Mulla Husain, who himself seemed to be aware of the grammatical violations in the Bab's writings, quotes the Bab with a poetical and indeed symbolic remark, which was totally foreign to the rational framework of an orthodox scholar like Mulla Muhammad; 'Up to now the nahv (i.e. 'ilm-i nahv: grammar, esp. syntax) due to a sin once committed, was enchained and incarcerated. Now I have mediated for its sin, and set it free from its chains and bonds. Therefore it is excusable if (people) pronounce an accusative (mansuḫ) instead of a nominative (marfu'), or a genitive (majru') instead of an accusative.'

Taking no notice of the metaphor borrowed by the Bab to show his disgust with the rules and regulations which so much occupied the minds of scholars, Mulla Muhammad sharply criticised the Bab by stating that 'it is an erroneous task for Persians to present 'Arabic compositions as proofs for their claims'. It is interesting that this objection came from a man whose father and teacher

2. Q. 131 on his relations with Muhammad Shāh and RS. X, pp.602-3 on his relations with Naṣir al-Dīn Shāh.
3. A list of his works appears in RA., IV, pp.183-6.
4. NT. III, 234.
5. NT. III, pp.234-5. The source of NT for his information on the meeting between the two must probably have come from Mullā Muḥammad Naṣṣir al-Dīn Shāh himself, who being from the same town provided his own recollections when his fellow citizen Sipihr was writing his account in the 1850's.
6. Ibid. Similar remarks about Arabic grammar appear in the writings of the Bab, e.g. Saḥfa-ye 'Adliyyah op.cit. 155. Also the same account about Babis' interpretation of the Bab's grammatical errors appears in Tārīkh-i Naḍ (Jahāngīr Mīrzā, edited by 'A. Iqbal, Tehran, 1327 Q., pp.297-8).
7. Ibid.
Mulla Ahmad once composed the famous line 'I wonder why a madrasih should be built in the place where a tavern could be founded'. Following his father's practice, Mulla Muhammad who himself was a poet of some talent compiled a masnavi with some mystic tendencies under the pseudonym of Sahib. However in this instance he seems to avoid 'confusing arguments' by drawing on another body of evidence (khati-i Nabhaq) which might have given some weight to Mulla Husain's remark.

As far as the contents of the Bab's writing were concerned, as Nasikh al-Tawarikh describes, Naraqi was more interested in rejecting the legitimacy of the Bab's claim than in paying attention to the actual message embedded in the Sura al-'Ulama' of Qayyum al-Asma' which was emphatically addressed to the 'ulama. As an example of scholastic responses, Naraqi argues that 'in order to prove a claim beyond the boundary of our principles (qanun), one must produce a clear justification. With these absurd deceptions and futile nonsense verses it is impossible to arrive at a realistic conclusion'. Thus nothing positive came out of a meeting which was bound to be disrupted by the mujtahid's outraged cries of disapproval. As Sipihr rightly points out, 'since the Bab's call did not go beyond the state of niyabat-i Babiyat', Mulla Muhammad preferred not to go further in his condemnation.

In spite of Naraqi's denial, others from the ranks of the clergy were attracted to Mulla Husain. Haji Mir 'Abd-al-Baqi Kashani, the imam-i juma of the same Madrasih-i Sultani, who was a fellow student of Mulla Husain in Atabat under Sayyid Kazim Rashti, and also a friend of Haji Mirza Jani, showed some interest, but felt 'unable to sacrifice rank and leadership for the message which his friend brought him'. His sceptical inclination towards the movement, apparently did not lead him to any firm recognition even after visiting the Bab in Kashan in 1263. According to Nabil Zarandi, after the departure of the Bab, 'Abd al-Baqi renounced society and led a life of unrelieved seclusion. However the authors of Tarikh-i Amri-yi Kashan and Tarikh-i Jadid believe that he fully recognised the Bab's revelation. The significance of

3. NT. III, 235. 4. Ibid.
7. See below Chapter Seven, II. 8. Nabil. 101.
9. See below Chapter Seven, II. 10. Nabil. 221.
his positive leaning lies in the fact that as the leader of the Shaykhi community in the city, 'Abd al-Baqī, who was also qualified with an ijāzah from Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Shaftī, was himself a respected mujtahid and the chief representative of a family of šāykhānī in Kashān. As the imām of the main madrasah, he might have been a challenge to the position of Mullā Muhammad Naraqī who after his father’s death, by the Shah’s decree was the sole mutawalli of the Madrasah, and controlled the khālisī endowments of the Madrasah which consisted of a number of shops in the bazar, a share of the irrigating water of the qanāts and some agricultural land.

Even some junior members of the Naraqī family, who were not of the same rank as Mullā Muhammad and were held in less public esteem in the town and its surroundings, joined the movement. Mullā Ja’far Naraqī, son of Mullā Mahdī (known as Aqa Buzurg), who was a cousin of Mullā Muhammad, together with Mullā Hashim, the youngest son of Mullā Ahmad, and later two sons of another brother of Mullā Muhammad called Mīrzā Mahmūd and Hāji Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn who were resident in Naraq, became Babis. There are some contradictions over the conversion of Mullā Ja’far who is the author of the Shi’i prayer al-Hujjat al-Balīgha. According to Zuhūr al-Haqq he first accepted the call through Mullā Husain, while Nabil believes that during his visit to the Bab in Kashān, ‘despite his consummate eloquence’, Mullā Ja’far was compelled to acknowledge outwardly the merits of the cause of his adversary (i.e. The Bab), though at heart he refused to believe in its truth. But it appears that Nabil’s disapproval of ‘the haughty and imperious’ Mullā Ja’far and emphasis on his dubious recognition is expressed in the light of his later Azali tendencies.

2. Ṣabaqāt. II/2, 698 (No.1274). His ijāzah in which his ijtihād is clearly ratified, dated 1260 Q., a few months before Shaftī’s death. According to Ṭehrānī, it resembles a public will by Shaftī.
8. Ṣabaqāt. II/1, pp.246-7 and al-Dharʾa VI, 258.
10. Nabil. 221.
11. The Babi apologetics Tadhkirat al-Ghāfilīn (Browne, Or. MSS. F.63(9) pp.80-81 and Materials. pp.227-8), written by an anonymous native of Naraq with the secret sign ‘1265’ in the year 1284 Q. (two years prior to the death of Mullā Ja’far) in a Tehran dungeon (Ambār-i Daulāt) in refutation of Bahā’-allāh and in advocacy of Subh Azalī, is perhaps composed by Mullā Ja’far Naraqī. (Also cited in Munzavi, Fihrist-i Nusakh-i Khāṭṭī-i Fārsī, Tehran 1346 Sh., VI, 1737, no.17210).
In Tehran, Mullā Husain stayed in the Madrasih-i Mīrza Ṣālih (Pā Minār), which was then a gathering place for Shaykhi tullāb in the capital. Despite his earlier success with Shaykhis, he was faced here with the firm rejection of the chief mudāris of the school. Häji Mīrza Muhammad Khurasānī (Muhāvvalātī), who according to Nābil was 'the leader of the Shaykhi community of Tihrān', strongly criticised Bushru'yihī for provoking a schism in the Shaykhi camp, at a time when there was an urgent need to deliver Shaykhism 'from the obscurity into which it was sunk'. He warned Mullā Husain that his 'subversive doctrines' would eventually endanger the existence of 'the remnants of the Shaykhis in the city'. Khurasānī, who seemed to have had some previous knowledge of Mullā Husain, expressed his regret that after the death of Sayyid Kazim, Mullā Husain did not 'strive to promote the best interests of the Shaykhi community ...'. These remarks imply that unlike the younger and more challenging students of Sayyid Kazim, Khurasānī in accordance with some other Shaykhis of moderate attitude such as Mullā Hasan Gauhar in Karbila, Mullā Muhammad Mamaqānī and Mullā Shafī Tabrīzī in ʿAzarbājān and even to some extent Häji Muhammad Karīm Khan Kirmānī, was inclined to treat the Shaykhi doctrine as a beneficial and inoffensive scholastic subject rather than paying attention to its messianic aspects. Hence, his worries about the 'obscurity' of the Shaykhi cause and the possible extinction of a declining community of believers in the face of continuous pressure from its opponents seem justified, taking into account the risk of a new wave of reaction in response to the new call. Besides it is not unlikely that Khurasānī was afraid of losing his reputation vis-à-vis an active rival like Mullā Husain, who had already begun to attract his best students.

Mullā Husain's response to the 'evasive answers' and 'contemptuous behaviour' of Häji Mīrza Muhammad appears to have been mild and even apologetic. He assures Khurasānī that he has no intention of prolonging his stay in Tehran or indeed that he aims to 'abase or suppress the teachings of the Shaykh and Sayyid'. He appears to have been under some pressure not only from the Shaykhi quarter, but perhaps also from the government to limit his activities to a

1. Nābil. 102.
2. Ibid. An account of his interview with Mullā Mahdi Khuʿī in Tehran appears in Z. 63.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
7. Nābil. 103.
minimum. In spite of this secrecy, he was still able to publicise the message and distribute some Babi literature. Perhaps with the help of some friends, he duplicated copies of *Qayyûm al-Asmâ* and distributed them amongst eighteen members of the 'ulama and officials of the capital including the chief mujtahid of Tehran, Mirzâ Mahmûd. In private he also managed to attract some tullâb and low rank mullâs, who in turn helped him by introducing him to other individuals who were beyond the immediate reach of a stranger like Bushrüyihî.

Mulla Muhammad Mu'allîm one of the favoured students of Khurâsânî, and a native of the Nûr district in Mazandarân, who happened to live next door to Mullâ Husain in Madrasih-i Mirzâ Sâlih, became interested in the new doctrine despite his teacher's condemnation. He called upon Mullâ Husain in secret at night, and after some discussion, expressed his approval of the new revelation. As his title shows, though he was still a tâlabî, he was engaged in private tuition in the houses of notables and government officials in order to meet his financial needs. After Nûrî's conversion, in the same year Mullâ Mahdî and his brother Mullâ Bâqîr Kandi (Kanî), who were both private tutors, were initiated amongst the believers. Mullâ Mahdî, in addition, acted as imâm-i jîma'at of one of the madrasîhs in the city. He maintained good relations with some members of the court, Qâjâr aristocracy and government officials in Tehran.

During the time of his residence in Tehran, Mullâ Husain's attempt to deliver the Bab's message in *Sûra al-Mulk* to Muhammad Shah and Hâji Mirzâ Aqâsi received a hostile response, but nevertheless the efforts of the Tehranî Babis soon brought about the conversion of a number of junior and middle rank government officials and young individuals close to government circles. Amongst

1. Gobineau (160) remarks:'Il passa quelques jours dans cette capitale, mais il ne s'y produisit pas en public, et se contenta d'avoir avec les personnes qui vinrent le visiter des entretiens qui pouvaient passer pour confidentiels. Il ne laissa pas que de recevoir ainsi beaucoup de monde et d'amener a ses opinions un assez grand nombre de curieux'.


3. TMS. 71. Later Mirzâ Mahmûd Mujtahid also received some of the writings of the Bab through Shaykh 'Ali Fa'izâm (z. 163). Malik Khusravî M.A. (Târîkh-i Shuhûda-yi Amr, Tehran, 130 Bâdî' 1974, III (Vaqayî'î Tîhrân), p.79) believes that he was sympathetic towards Babis.


6. For Mullâ Mahdî Kanî, Nâbil (pp.397-99) records an account of Kalîm narrated to him by an anonymous witness. A more complete version of this account appears in Kâd. I, pp.148-51. The converted mullâs, together with a few others, built the nucleus of the Babi community in Tehran. Moving accounts of Mullâ Mahdî and Mullâ Muhammad Mu'allîm during the siege of Tabarsî as it is recorded by Babi sources, depicts the strength of their conviction to the movement and its leaders.
them, Mirm Husain (ali Nur (later known as Baha'i and Baha'ullah), his brothers Mirm Musa (Kalim) and Mirm Yahya (Subh Azal), and others such as Mirm Masih Nur, nephew of Mirm Aqa Khan Nur, Mirm 'Abdallah Khan Sar-rishtindari (minor army accountant), Riza Quli Khan Turkaman, son of Muhammad Khan Mir Akhur (head of royal stables), Mirm Sulayman Quli Qhatib al-Rahman Nur (Shatir Bashi), Sulayman Khan Tabrizi, son of Yahya Khan, Riza Khan Sardar, son-in-law of Sipahsalar and Hasan Aqa Tafrishi Mustaufi are known to us. Furthermore, other mullas such as Mullal Ab al-Karim Qazvini, Mullal Ali Muhammad Kandi and his son Ashraf, and a respected theosophist Mirm Muhammad Husain Hakim Ilahi, or Sufi dervishes such as Darvish Qurban Ali Astarabadi and Mirm Mahdi Murshid entered the Tehran circle.

Mullal Husain's journeys to central and eastern Iran in the course of the first three years of the movement resulted in the formation of Babi groups and communities in the major cities based almost entirely on the previous Shaykhi network. The conversion of the Shaykhi elements in these centres created the backbone of the Babi (and then Baha'i) community of Iran, and some of these converted fulama played a crucial role in the developments of the next few years. But Mullal Husain's missions were characteristic of few other missions which were undertaken inside Iran in the same period. The efforts of Mullal Yusuf Ardabili, an ardent and energetic preacher and the Letter of Hayy, who in his numerous visits to various provinces, never stayed in any place more than a week, brought about successes similar to Mullal Husain, though on a smaller scale. First in Azarbajjan, and then in Yazd, Kirmun and Qazvin, he advocated the cause of the new Bab in towns and villages which were already exposed to Shaykhism. Mass conversion in the Shaykhi communities of Milan, Usku, Salmun (Kuhnir Shahr) and Saysan, which perhaps previously held affiliation to Ahl-i Haqq, and conversion of Shaykhi elements throughout the province including

1. Beside Z. (pp.212-33) which gives short biographies of some of the Babis of Tehran, and a short narrative by Mahmud Zarqani on the early introduction of the Babi message to Tehran (INBA. Lib. MS. 3047, 15 pp), the information on the Babis of Tehran was compiled from various sources. The response of the government to the rise of the movement in the early years has been studied in a separate article.

2. Nabil. 424. For references to Ardabili see above Chapter Four, II.

3. See above Chapter One for earlier messianic traditions in some communities of Azarbajjan.
Mulla 'Ali Maraghih-i (Sayyah), Mulla Husain Dakhil Maraghih-i, Mulla Iskandar-i Khur'ii, Mulla Muhammad Salmasi, Mulla 'Ali Ru'izkh Khan Salmasi, Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Hashtrudi, Mulla Imam Virdi Urumiyyihi and Aqa Sayyid Ahmad Ibdal Maraghih-i and other early Babis. 1

In spite of successes in the lower and middle ranks of the Shaykhi ulama, in his interviews with the well established Shaykhi mujtahids such as Mulla Muhammad Mamaqani in Tabriz and Hajji Muhammad Karim Khan in Kirman, Mulla Yusuf failed to gain their support for the Bab. Indeed both his mission and those of Mulla Muhammad 'Ali Bafurushi (Quddus) and Mulla Sadiq Muqaddas to Kirman for the purpose of delivering the Babi message to Karim Khan were faced with his strongest disapproval. 2 The tense Babi activities throughout Iran, which mainly focussed on the conversion of the Shaykhi elements, before causing any serious concern for non-Shaykhi ulama, alarmed influential Shaykhis, who saw the expansion of the Babi movement in direct contrast to their own influence and authority in the Shaykhi community, and thus employed all they had at their disposal to defy the Bab. But the opposition of Karim Khan did not prevent Mulla Muhammad Ja'far Kirmani, an ex-student of Karim Khan who, due to his disagreements over the question of Rashti's succession, broke away from his teacher, to enter discussion with Muqaddas and recognise the Bab. 3

In Yazd, in spite of the fact that from the time of Ahsa'i, a large section of the community remained sympathetic towards the Shaykhis, various attempts made by Mulla Muhammad Zakir Yazdi and Ardabili to win over the public, met with hostile reactions. In spite of the assistance they received from Mulla Ahmad Azghandi, a young Shaykhi mujtahid who already after his conversion by Mulla Husain in Khurasan was instructed to introduce the Babi message in Yazd, the Babi missions failed to attract the allegiance of the Shaykhi community primarily because of the predominant influence of Hajji Muhammad Karim Khan and his supporter Mulla Taqi Yazdi. 4 Even the implicit support given to the Babi missionaries by the non-Shaykhi mujtahid of Yazd, Sayyid Husain Azghandi and Sayyid Javad Shirazi, imam jum'ih in Kirman, did not protect them from the

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1. Amongst available sources on the Babis of Azarbajjan, TMS. (partly on the basis of now lost Abwab al-Huda by Muhammad Taqi Hashtrudi), two narratives on the Babi-Baha'i history of Azarbajjan by Mirza Haydar 'Ali Uskui (INBA. Lib. MS. 3030/a, 111 pp) and Muhammad Husain Milani (INBA. Lib. MS. 3030/b, 26 pp) and Kazem Bagh. VII, 357-8 provide some fresh information.

2. Not only the Babi-Baha'i sources such as Nabii, pp.179-82, 187-9; Qazii, 503 ff. and Z. pp.396-401 discussed the occasion, but Hajji Muhammad Karim Khan himself, in one of his refutations Iqadh al Ghafil va Ibtal al-Batil, dar Radd-i Babi-i Khurasani Ma'ab, lit. n.d. p.11 refers to Muqaddas and Quddus who brought the Bab's message to him.

3. Z. pp.401-2.

intimidations and assaults of the incited mob. This implicit support for the Babis in the early years, more than anything, was aimed towards weakening of the rival ulama factions by using the Babi issue — a motive which is comparable to the support of Imám Jum'ih of Isfahan or that of Shí'i ulama of Atabāt in the trial of Bastāmī. Nevertheless, in spite of these ephemeral supports, the anti-Babi feeling in Yazd was so predominant that it forced Mullā Muḥammad Ẓākir (a Letter of Hayy) eventually to switch sides to Karīm Khān's camp and abandon his Babi commitments. It was only later in 1266 Q. (1850), prior to the Nayriz upheaval, that the public preachings of Sayyid Yahyā Darābī (Vaḥīd) in Yazd attracted a large audience and caused some excitement.

In Qazvīn, in spite of the anti-Shaykhi sentiments long expressed by Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī, the Babi message managed not only to attract the sympathy of Hājī ʿAbd al-Wāḥḥāb Qazvīnī, an eminent mujtahid of Qazvīn whose sons Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī and Mullā Hādī were both initiated amongst the Letters of Hayy, but also to absorb mullas with Shaykhi affiliation. Mullā Taqī Qazvīnī, Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī, Mullā ʿAbd al-Husain Qazvīnī, all Shaykhis from Rūdbār, Mullā Javād Valīyānī, Mullā ʿAlī Baraghānī (brother of Mullā Muḥammad Taqī and uncle of Tāhirīh), Hājī Shaykhu Muḥammad Nabīl Qazvīnī, Mullā Hasan Kallīh, Darritī, and many other Shaykhi merchants and tradesmen were amongst the first who accepted the Bab, chiefly as a result of the activities of Mullā Jalīl Urūmī, Mullā Yūsuf Ardabīlī and later Tāhirīh.

As in Isfahan and Tabrīz, but perhaps more explicitly in Qazvīn, the widespread acceptance of the Bab by the Shaykhi mullas was the result of the past conflicts in the city between the Shaykhis and their opponents. The Babi message reached Qazvīn at a time when the Shaykhi community, due to the anti-Shaykhi campaign by Baraghānī was demoralised and thus was in need of an impulse to mobilise and reassert its position. Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī relates that when in 1260 the writings of the Bab for the first time reached Qazvīn, Mullā Javād Valīyānī, an adventurous Shaykhi who later in Shiraz of 1262 Q. (1846) caused the first split within the Babi ranks, was exhilarated by the news, exclaiming that 'Now the time has arrived for us to take our revenge from Baraghānī'.

1. Ibid. For Sayyid Javād Shīrāzī see above Chapter Three, I.
2. Z. 458.
4. Besides better known sources on the Babis of Qazvīn, Samandār., Mīq., and Z. pp.301-91 supply a great amount of new information. For Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī see Chapter Seven, III.
Next day, he ascended the pulpit and proclaimed the advent of the Bab, calling for the support of the believers. After forty days, in company with a large group of followers he set out for 'Atabât.

In the course of the next four years as the Babi community of Qazvîn expanded, the confrontation between them and their adversaries intensified. After the arrival of Tâhirih and her companions from 'Atabât in 1263 (1847), the conflict reached its height in a secret battle, which finally resulted in the assassination of Mullâ Muḥammad Taqî Baraghanî in early 1264 (1848) and following that the severe persecution of the Babis of Qazvîn. The earliest recorded executions of Babis (Shaykh Šâliḥ Karîmâvî, an Arab disciple of Tâhirih and two other Babi mullas, Mullâ Tâhir Shîrâzî and Mullâ Ibrâhîm Maḥallâtî) were carried out as a reprisal for Baraghanî's death. As in Shiraz and Isfahan in 1261-3, here in Qazvîn the hostile rejection of the 'ulama and the isolation of the Babis resulted in further militancy by the Babis and the polarisation of the Qazvîn community into a pro-Babi minority and an anti-Babi majority.

The pattern of the activities of the early Babi preachers, and the nationwide support they received from the new generation of the middle and low rank Shaykhi 'ulama, signifies the potential of the movement to absorb and mobilise a large body of the 'ulama (who formed the lower strata of the clerical structure) entirely on the grounds of their previous Shaykhi conviction. Considering the fact that they were exposed to the Shaykhi messianic prophecies, the converted 'ulama represented that section of the clergy who for some time were subjected to the domination, if not the direct pressure, of the high ranking mujtahids, both in terms of ideological and social control. If by undermining the messianic aspects of the Shaykhi teachings, the older generation of the Shaykhi mujtahids contented themselves with a marginal leadership over small communities of Shaykhi sympathisers by adopting a framework almost identical to that of their non-Shaykhi counterparts, and if, on the other hand, some Shaykhs like Karîm Khân who enjoyed exceptional privileges were able to propound a new sectarian tendency, then the majority of the younger Shaykhi mujtahids, or mullas of the lower ranks, or senior religious students (tullâb-i qarîb al-ijtihâd), who witnessed the decline and retreat of Shaykhism under the pressure of the fuqâ'î became disillusioned with the ineffectiveness of the older generation and attracted to a more drastic solution, which offered them a convincing answer not only to the problem of succession after Rashtî, but to their hesitations in

1. MJQ. (pp. 473-4).
breaking away from the 'ulama hierarchy.

Contrary to the Shaykhi support, the response of the 'ulama from a non-Shaykhi background was generally hostile. This reaction mainly came from those younger mujtahids, who in spite of their hereditary privileges or advantages from being associated with a certain eminent mujtahid, still were not able to consolidate their positions as the sole religious leaders in various cities, in the void which appeared after the death of a number of important mujtahids. Though at first they did not see the danger of the Babi activities, as some of the Shaykhis did, and though their reaction was hesitant and half-hearted, in the later stages, when the movement broadened its popular base, they reacted with alarm. Their anxieties increased further when they saw the possibility of backing for the movement coming from certain factions of the government, or from high ranking imâm jum'îhs of various cities. Imâm jum'îhs in particular, after a period of relegation to secondary positions under the independent fuqaha, had now found the chance to reassert their old domination by allying themselves with the Babis, but only to an extent that would not harm their reputation.

However, the overall support given by the state to the 'ulama, and the obedience of the public towards them, greatly assisted the mujtahids in maintaining their control, by isolating the Babi elements, and thus diminishing the chances of mass conversion in major cities. The events of the first four years above all made it clear that in spite of continuous efforts by the Babis to open a dialogue with mujtahids, the high ranking 'ulama never impartially considered the message of the Babi movement, nor tolerated its growth at any point. But they were shrewd enough to notice that the theoretical basis on which the Babi movement was founded conflicted with their own authority and their monopoly over the community. By isolating the Babi minority in the cities, and by applying all forms of pressure and persecution, the 'ulama forced the Babis into a defensive position and thus to take a more militant stance which manifested itself in the form of armed resistance.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Tujjar and Asnaf

In the early years of the movement, parallel to the conversion of the Shaykhi 'ulama, some progress was also achieved in converting members of the merchant class in the commercial and industrial centres of Iran. The conversion of the tujjar, significantly from the lower ranks but also including some important merchants, and following them the conversions of members of the Asnaf, such as industrial manufacturers, wholesalers, traders and local craftsmen, created the second largest group of believers after the 'ulama in the early Babi community. In these conversions, the role of the early Babi missionaries was instrumental, but it was the inter-communal bonds between the Shaykhi 'ulama and tujjar, as well as the family background and the past occupation of the Bab himself, which encouraged the merchants to join the new movement.

The Bab's involvement in trade has been discussed in an earlier chapter, together with his mercantile family background and the movements which took place from trade to religious scholarship in his family. In addition, the religious, mystical and pious inclinations amongst the tujjar and their implications for the intellectual development of the Bab were also examined at some length. Indeed, for a converted merchant with a similar background to that of the Bab, Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad represented an ideal type to whom he could look as his spiritual guide, and with whose mission he could identify himself.

Here a question should be asked about the nature of the involvement of the merchants and guilds in the movement, and the extent to which economic activities, or occupational inter-connections contributed to their new affiliation. Bearing in mind the economic climate of the time, it is vital to examine to what degree support of the new movement was a reflection of the growing aspirations, or for that matter dissatisfaction of the merchants who sought salvation in the fulfilment of the messianic prophecies in the new movement. Equally important is how far the educational training, religious and mystical attachments, or more important for this study, acquaintance with Shaykhi teachings, were responsible for the conversion of the above groups. When the circumstances combined both these aspects, namely economic climate and intellectual orientation, then it appears that the message of the Babi movement

1. See above Chapter Three.
found the chance to penetrate the hearts and minds of those individuals who had long been in search for a cause which would embody their expectations or console their grievances.

To demonstrate the role of the tujjār in the early days of the movement, some attention is given in this chapter to a few merchants in Isfahan, Kāšān and Qazvīn. This limited observation in no way aims to provide a comprehensive survey of all Babi merchants or guild members throughout Iran, yet it is an attempt to reach a better understanding of the character, ideas and activities of a few against the background of the general economic situation of the time.

In the early days of the publication of the new message in Qazvīn, Mullā Ja'far Qazvīnī was present at a conversation which clearly exemplifies the circumstances under which most of the conversions, sometimes contrary to the wishes of the older generation, had taken place. This sums up the way in which the two aspects of material life and spiritual values were combined together in order to prepare the way for the recognition of the Bab. When young Mīrzā Muhammad Mahdī Bāghībānbāshī writes to his father Hāji 'Abd al-Karīm, he in fact reflects the attitude of the majority of adherents, who in one way or another, in taking up the cause of the Shīrāzī merchant, were in search of new sets of values.

Enclosing a booklet which contained extracts of the Bab's writings, Muhammad Mahdī informs his father of the loss of merchandise in the course of his journey:

'Five thousand tumans worth of silk which belonged to us, to my uncle, and to others, was totally sunk in the sea. Divers and rescue workers made attempts to save it, but with no success. However God granted us an unexhaustible treasure of which not a particle will be lost if we consume till the Final Day. Here I send it to you to benefit and let others benefit without fearing of its exhaustion.'

Mullā Ja'far relates that after receiving the letter his father was weeping and saying to his friends; 'How on earth can this booklet provide money for the expenses of my family.'

Not only in the case of Bāghībānbāshī in Qazvīn, but in Isfahan, Kāšān, Tabriz, Yazd and Shiraz, the same sense of unworldliness and detachment from material possessions was the cause of attraction for young believers. Reaction against the values and standards of the older generation seems to have increased at times of general economic changes when the new generation turns its

1. MJQ. (pp.473-4). 2. Ibid. 3. See below.
attention from the traditional way of life to new alternative approaches.

Amongst the earliest converts in Isfahan, good examples of this attitude of the new generation of the Shaykhi tujjar may be observed in Sayyid Muhammad 'Alī and Sayyid Muhammad Hādī Nahrī Tabātabā'ī, two brothers descended from a well established Shaykhi family of Isfahan, who were well known because of their social and economic status. Their attention was first drawn to the new revelation when they were in 'Atabāt in 1260. They had heard of the new claims through Mulla 'Abdul Bassāmī or perhaps some other Letters since they had past acquaintance with many students of Rashī. After the publication of the message in Karbīlā, they immediately decided to set out for Shirāz, but when they arrived, the Bab had already left the city for Hijāz. On their return to Isfahan, they met Mulla Husain whom they appeared to know from 'Atabat and to whom they declared their faith. Later in 1261 (1845) they made another journey to Shirāz to pay a visit to the Bab. Afterwards Muhammad 'Alī returned to Karbīlā, whereas Hādī remained in Isfahan. As Shaykhi dignitaries both in Isfahan and Karbīlā, the Nahris were able to encourage others to give their support to the movement.

The Nahris', association with the Shi'i community of 'Atabāt started with their father Sayyid Mahdī, who emigrated from India to Najāf, and later became a devoted adherent of Ahsa'ī. He gained a good reputation by founding a number of public endowments such as a caravanserai and public bath in Najāf, and constructing a channel to supply drinking water for the inhabitants. He also invested the family fortune in land and property and acquired a number of shops in the area. Later, because of the Wahhabi invasion of Iraq, he returned to

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3. Ishrāq Khāvari, pp.16, 32, cf. 2. 97.
5. Sayyid Mahdī's father, a certain Hājī Sayyid Muḥammad Tabātabā'ī of Zavārīh emigrated to India at the end of the 18th century where he spent the rest of his life, and married into a wealthy Shi'i family there (Ishrāq Khāvari, pp.11-12 and 2. 96). The genealogy of Sayyid Muḥammad's ancestors is unknown. A. Rāfī'ī Mihrābādī, the author of Atashkadik-ī Ardīstān, a geographical and historical account of Ardīstān, (1336 Sh., vol.1) gives an extensive account of the Tabātabā'ī sādāt of Zavārīh (1, pp.166-206), but since he could not gain access to the genealogical tree of all Tabātabā'īs of Zavārīh (pp.173-4), the origin of many Iṣfahānī sādāt, including Nahris, remains largely unknown.
6. His surname Nahrī is actually derived from the word Nahr: channel, stream because of his useful endowment. KD. 410 curiously enough writes it Nahrī.
Isfahan and subsequently married a relative of Shaftī. Though he remained in Isfahan for the rest of his life, it seems that he retained his links with 'Atabāt.

Brought up in a devoted Shaykhi environment, his son Sayyid Muhammad 'Ali joined the ranks of the 'ulama. He finished his primary studies in Isfahan, and later joined Sayyid Kazim's circle in Karbila. His brother Sayyid Hādī however remained in Isfahan. Though he was a Shaykhi, he developed close relations with Shaftī, and later married his niece, Khurshid Baygum. Later, Sayyid Hādī also moved to Karbila, where he and his wife both attended Rashti's lectures. Their elder brother Sayyid Ibrahīm remained in Isfahan presumably to look after the family business.

Like their father, the Nahrī brothers represented an intermediary link between the 'ulama and tujjār. Parallel to their enthusiasm for theological studies, Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad and Sayyid Hādī were also active in the field of trade. As members of the Persian mercantile community of Iraq, they conducted their trade with Iran from their office in Baghdad. Probably Sayyid Ibrahīm, who in addition to his local ventures was also involved in trade, acted in partnership with his brothers. Yet the fortune accumulated during the next few decades was not only due to trade, but mainly the result of their investment in land, agricultural tenure and property in Isfahan. In fact, on the basis of the pattern of collaboration between Sayyid Ibrahīm and some of the religious figures in Isfahan, there is some evidence to think that Sayyid Mahdī and even Sayyid Hādī for a while acted as the economic and financial advisers and also bankers and brokers to the eminent mujtahids such as Imam Jum'ih and Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī, who were always on excellent terms with them.

1. Ishraq Khāvarī, pp.13-14. Both Sayyid Mahdī's wife as well as Shaftī's wife were Shaykhi.
2. Later known as Shams al-Zuha. A devoted Babi and a companion of Qurrat al-'Ayn, who accompanied her on her journey from Baghdad to Qazvin in 1263 (1847). Both 'Abd al-Bāhā, Tadhkīr al-wafā, op.cit. and Ishraq Khāvarī, pp.41-52 give an account of her life.
3. Z. 98.
4. KD. 410.
5. KD. 413.
6. KD. 413 and Ishraq Khāvarī, 28.
7. KD. 413 and Nabil. p.208. After their father, Sayyid Ibrahīm's sons, Sayyid Ḥasan and Sayyid Husain Ṭabāṭaba'i, both faithful and devoted followers of Bahā'ullāh, continued with the family trade in Isfahan, and ranked amongst the most well known and well reputed merchants in the city in the 1860's and 70's. In spite of their religious beliefs, they continued their collaboration with Imam Jum'ih Mīr Muḥammad Husain, which brought substantial profits for both parties. However the excessive amount of Imam Jum'ih's debt to his creditors and partners finally persuaded him to join the powerful mujtahid of the city, Aqā Muḥammad Bāqir Najafī Isfahānī in issuing a fatwā condemning the Ṭabāṭaba'i's heretical beliefs and calling for their death. The fatwā was finally confirmed by the governor Prince Zill al-Sultan and the two brothers met their death in 1296 (1879). (Ishraq Khāvarī, pp.52 ff).
But the emergence of the new movement brought about some dramatic changes in the life of the family. While still in Karbila, the two brothers met Sayyid \(\text{'Ali Muhammad the Bab during his pilgrimage (1258/1842)}, \) and like others, they too were impressed by his character. Therefore, by the time the Bab announced his mission in Isfahan, Hadi and Muhammad \(\text{'Alı were among the first to give their allegiance, whereas Sayyid Ibrāḩīm showed no great enthusiasm for the new movement at this time.} \right)\) The economic condition of the family was also affected by the new movement. It seems that after their conversion, the Baghdad trade was gradually liquidated. However it is likely that this happened as a result of the stagnation in the trade of southern Iran and in particular the Baghdad trade. At the same time, as the Nahrīs were gradually pulling out of business, they devoted their time, money and effort to the progress of the movement.

The Nahrī brothers are a clear example of the prosperous families from this social category in the mid-nineteenth century, with both religious and economic affiliations who possessed influential positions in city life. They belonged to a generation of enlightened merchants who either developed a strong inclination towards theological studies, or else provided effective support for the Shaykhi leaders. They regarded the appearance of the Bab, in the person of a young Shirāzī merchant, as the personification of the new concept of the holy man, contrary to the traditional image of the 'ulama. Thus any economic factor which may have influenced their religious commitments was certainly less important than the purely intellectual and religious tendencies which emerged as a result of the Shaykhi environment. Without such teaching, which perhaps had a greater significance for them than their economic ventures, they would have been unlikely to have joined a messianic movement, particularly at such an early stage.

The preoccupation of the Nahrīs with those Shi‘i prophecies is evident in a number of enquiries which they made in 'Atabat prior to 1260. Also in their

2. KD. 411. In a letter which is partly cited in Ishrāq Khāvari (pp.28-30), Tāhirih, writing in 1261-2 (1845-6) to Sayyid Muhammad \(\text{'Alı, advised him to return from 'Atabat to Isfahan and try to convince his elder brother Sayyid Ibrāḩīm of the truth of the Zuhur. This special attention towards Sayyid Ibrāḩīm is perhaps owing to his close relations with many of the prominent 'ulama in the city. Later in 1263, when the Bab was residing in Isfahan, Sayyid Ibrāḩīm, together with his brothers, arranged for a feast in honour of the Bab at which Mīr Sayyid Muhammad Imām Jum'ih, his brother Mīr Sayyid Huṣain, also Mullā Muhammad Taqī Harātī, Aqā Sayyid Muhammad Rīzā Pāqal'ih'i and others were present. (Ishrāq Khāvari, pp.18-20, 28, cf. Nabil. 208-9).}
3. See below.
4. Qat'ī. (516). See also above Chapter One
early correspondence with the Bab, on one occasion they asked about certain remarks in the first part of the 'Commentary of the Book' (i.e. Qayyum al-Asmā') regarding 'the signs and the evidences' (Āyāt va 'Ālāmāt) of the 'pure religion' (Dīn-i Khalīṣ)\(^1\). Further, referring to the traditions concerning the occurrence of Ṣafīt they questioned the liability of the proofs for the immediate manifestation of Qā'im\(^2\). On two other occasions, while quoting a verse from the Quran: 'God blots out and he establishes whatever He will; and with Him is the Essence of the Book',\(^3\) they enquired about the implications of the renovation of the Book in the new revelation.\(^4\) These questions, together with many others along the same lines, suggest that the Nahris, in spite of being primarily merchants, were preoccupied with messianic themes which were advocated at that time in the Shaykhi circle in 'Atabāt.

In the course of the next few years, the Nahris remained active Babis both in Isfahan and in Karbila', where in cooperation with others they were instrumental in the conversion of a number of believers from different social and occupational backgrounds. In spite of the Nahris' approach to the question of the Bab's revelation, which is best reflected in their opposition to Tahirih in the gathering of Badasht in 1264 (1848), it appears that Shams al-Žuha'\(^5\) (Sayyid Hādī's wife) held much more liberated views on the ideas and aims of the Babi movement. Immediately after the Badasht, Sayyid Muhammad Hādī was killed in the course of a night attack which was carried out by the inhabitants of the village of Niyālā against a company of the Babis who were on their way to Māzandarān. Muhammad 'Alī returned to Isfahan and after the events of Tabarsī and the execution of the Bab, remained largely inactive, though he kept his firm commitment to the Bab and later Bahā'ī beliefs.

The Nahri brothers were not the only early converts amongst merchants of Isfahan. Ḥājī Muhammad Ṣa'īd Javahiri, who was a young merchant in his twenties, was also converted to the movement when the news of the appearance of the Bab first spread in Isfahan. Like many other early Babis whose conversions were the outcome of some earlier mystical and intuitive experiences, Muhammad Ṣa'īd's recognition of the Bab was preceded by a dream in which he had visited the Imām

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1. Letter in reply to the questions of Mulla Mahmūd, Mīrzā Muḥammad 'Alī Nahri and other believers. INBA. pub.91, XXXIII, pp.154-161 (156).
2. Ibid. p.157.
4. Ibid. Also the Bab's letter in reply to questions asked by Mīrzā Muḥammad Hādī and Mīrzā Muḥammad 'Alī Nahri. INBA. pub.91.
of the Age at the time of his pilgrimage to the shrine of Husain. As it is reported, this dream was the source of inspiration for Muhammad Riza to pursue the Imam in the world of reality. He also appears to have enjoyed inherited wealth and public respect, and like the Nahris conducted trade through the Baghdad route. After his conversion, his new commitments not only cost him financial loss and then bankruptcy, but the hostility and antagonism of his close relatives. He was arrested for a brief period in 1266 (1850) and imprisoned in Anbar-i Daulati in Tehran before being freed by an Armenian merchant who paid four thousand tuman for his freedom. Later in 1268 (1852) he was arrested and executed in Tehran together with other suspected Babis.

Beside the merchants in Isfahan, there were Babi converts in other commercial centres. One of the most celebrated of them was Ĥajî Mîrzâ Jâni (sometimes called Parpâ), a young merchant from Kashân who is mostly known for the highly important historical account of Nuqtat al-Kaf, of which he was apparently the writer. He embraced the cause of the Bab when in 1260 he met Mulla Husain in Kashân.

As is evident from remarks cited in Nuqtat al-Kaf, Mîrzâ Jâni's enthusiasm for Shaykhism originated in the admiration he felt for the eminent Shaykhi leaders, rather than in a systematic study of the Shaykhi doctrine. 'Although because I had not studied the principals of the sciences (of religion) (qavā'id-ī 'ulum)' writes the author of Nuqtat al-Kaf, 'I was not formally affiliated to this highly elevated order (i.e. Shaykhism), yet out of my deepest emotions (fitrat) I adored the excellencies Babayn-'ī Nayyīn (i.e. Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kazim), and therefore was attached to their sympathisers'. Here, Ĥajî's reference to the past Shaykhi leaders as Babayn may be taken as a clue to his previous messianic inclinations.

Another quotation attributed to Ĥajî Mîrzâ Jâni, again clearly indicates his preoccupation with the problem of 'emergence', then a common question for the students of the Sayyid Kazim:

'I visited the holy shrines of Karbela (Karbila) and Nejef (Najaf) shortly after the death of Ĥajî Sayyid Kazim, and

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2. For further details on the above account and its authenticity see Bibl.
3. NK. 102.
learned from his disciples that during the last two or three years of his life he had spoken in lecture-room and pulpit of little else but the approaching advent of the promised Proof, the signs of his appearance and their signification, and the attributes by which he would be distinguished, declaring that he would be a youth of the race of Hašim, untaught in the learning of men.\(^1\)

Indeed the few passages in \textit{Tārīkh-i Jadīd} which are either directly or indirectly attributed to Hājī, imply that at the time of Shaykh's \textit{i'tikāf} in Kūfah\(^2\), Hājī must have been present in Ṭabarān\(^3\). This is not confirmed by \textit{Nuqṭat al-Kāf} or indeed by any other source, yet considering Hājī's commercial links with Baghdad\(^4\), it is not unlikely that he was in contact with the Shaykhi community, and therefore was aware of the developments within the circle.

A similar acknowledgement of the Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kazīm can also be observed in Mīrzā Jānī's younger brother Hājī Mīrzā Muḥammad Ismā'īl Kāshānī, known as Zābih\(^5\). In his \textit{Masnavī}, while Zābih drew a comparison between the Shaykhi leaders and the 'ulama of the time, he stresses the spiritual insight which enabled them to unveil the truth of the forthcoming \textit{zuhūr};

'\begin{quote}
The 'ulama of the time are the false lights. They are obstacles to the emergence of the sun, for this reason, the sun of universe ordered: "unveil the curtain from his face". The emergence of the Shaykh (Shaykh Ahmad) and Kāzīm (Sayyid Kāzīm) disclosed all the hidden veils. They lifted the false curtain from the face of the truth, therefore the 'ulama became their enemies, and prevented people from understanding.'\(^7\)
\end{quote}

Resemblance in the outlook of the Kāshānī brothers goes beyond their dedication to the Shaykhi leaders. The two works of \textit{Nuqṭat al-Kāf} and the \textit{Masnavī} of Zābih show certain similarities which in turn suggest the common

1. NH. 30.  
2. See above Chapter Four, I.  
3. NH. pp.30-3, 39 and Browne's introduction, pp.xiv-li.  
4. See below.  
5. This title, bestowed on him apparently by the Bab, alludes to the story of Ibrāhīm's offer for the sacrifice of his son Ismā'īl in Quranic stories. Besides this title, he sometimes refers to himself by his other pen-names Fānī and Ārif. Later, the title of Anīs conferred upon him by Bahā'ullāh in the tablet of Rā'ī's. (Mīrzā Abul Fažl Gulpāyigānī, \textit{Risālīth-i Iskandarīyyā}, in reply to A. Toumansky, Cairo, 1318 Q. (1900) also partly cited in \textit{Zapischi} of the Oriental Section of the Russian Imperial Archaeological Society, 1893-4, pp.33-45 and translated by E.G. Browne in \textit{The Tārīkh-i Jadīd} pp.xxxiv-xlii (p.xii). Reference to Anīs appears in \textit{Majmū' i Rā'ī} Alvār-i Mubarakīn of Bahā'ullāh, Cairo 1338 Q. (1920), Lauh-i Rā'ī's (Arabic) p.90.  
6. For details of the \textit{Masnavī} see Bibliography.  
intellectual background of their authors. Beside their general historical value, both works betray the attitudes and beliefs of the compilers. Mirzâ Muhammad Ismâ'il's *Masnavî* shows clear signs of Sufi influence, which is evident not only in the general style of the poetry and the extensive usage of Sufi vocabulary, but in its treatment of the Bab's (and later Bahá'í's) spiritual status. The same influence can be traced in the introduction of *Nuqṭat al-Kâf*, which basically gives a Shi'i-Sufi justification of the Bab's revelation which is supported by the Islamic traditions.

The origins of this Sufi inspiration are almost unknown, and there is very little evidence to suggest a previous connection with the Sufi orders of the time prior to the conversion of both brothers to the movement. Yet the possibility of such a connection, particularly through wandering dervishes should not be ruled out. On a few occasions, Hāji Mirzâ Jâni refers to dervishes who accompanied him on his journeys in Iran and Iraq both for the purpose of trade and later for visiting the Babis in other cities. Considering the spread of messianic ideas amongst wandering Sufis, it is not surprising that Hāji Mirzâ Jâni should have been influenced by these trends. Indeed the pantheistic tone of both *Nuqṭat al-Kâf* and *Masnavî* and their narrative style, as well as Hāji Mirzâ Jâni's interpretation of the 'signs' of Zuhûr, indicates the obvious influence of popular Sufism.

On the other hand it is also possible to assume that as an outcome of their Shaykhi tendencies, some of their interests were directed towards Sufi ideas and literature. At the same time, it is arguable that this influence, at least in the case of *Nuqṭat al-Kâf* was partly inspired by the writings of the Bab, which themselves have strong mystical overtones. Later this tendency was further intensified by the Sufi ideas current in Babi circles. As for Zâbih, he was also affected by the development in the early phase of the formation of the Bahá'í thought, and inevitably shared the Sufi attitudes of its founder.

1. *NK.* pp.1-98 (particularly pp.86-98).
2. *Ftâd.* 54.
3. See above Chapter Two, I.
4. For Sufi messianism and popular beliefs, and for some indication of Hāji Mirzâ Jâni's messianic expectations, see above Chapter Two.
5. *NK.* pp.252-263 gives a good example of the prevailing Babi views after the execution of the Bab. The authenticity of the above section in *NK.* is disputed (Balyuzi, H.M., *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith*, London 1970, pp.42-48), yet it could still be regarded as a sample of the tendencies of the early believers.
in this period. But still, even after considering the above influences, it is hard to imagine that such a tendency could have been developed without a previous knowledge of Sufi terminology and content. Žabih's *Masnavi* seems largely inspired by *Masnavi* of Rumi. It is divided into seven books (by comparison with the five of Rumi's *Masnavi*) and in many parts has clear signs of the allegorical stories and parables of the above work. The style of *Nuqtat al-Kaťf*, however, in some parts is reminiscent of Sufi biographical works such as 'Attar's *Tadhkîrat al-Awliya*.

This mystical tendency laid a suitable foundation for the reshaping of eschatological expectations within the framework of the Shaykhi-Sufi traditions. The sense of awe and respect for religious leaders gradually developed into a sense of anticipation for the Promised One. For Žabih as for the author of *Nuqtat al-Kaťf*, the emergence of the Imam was primarily defined in terms of the Shi'i expectation of Sahib al-Zaman, but it also benefited from the Sufi concept of the holy guide. In a passage of the *Masnavi*, which is reminiscent of the Shaykhi visitation dreams, Žabih describes a vision of Sahib al-Zaman. In this vision, which occurs only after the kind of long and laborious vigilance common amongst Sufis, Žabih became aware of the material existence of the Imam, whom he is able to visit later in reality in the character of the Bab;

'Twenty years ago, in the state of khalsîh², I saw that perfect jamāl. From then onwards, in order to come to his presence, I sought for Sahib al-Zaman. Because I was aware that the lord of universe is alive, therefore I sought for his visit. 

Whether it was a vision or a dream, I cannot say what state I was in, I only know that I saw him, twenty years prior to his emergence³.

Again in 1263 (1847), when the Bab was passing through Kashân on his way from Isfahan to Tehran, Žabih expresses his own eagerness for visiting the Bab

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1. In his *Masnavi*, Žabih refers to his visits to Baha'allah on several occasions. He met him first in Baghdad in 1265 (1849-50) (p.39b), and again in 1270-71 (1853-4) (p.41a-b). In 1285 (1868), he once again met Baha'allah in the port of Gelibolu (Galâpoli) and accompanied him on the journey to his new exile at 'Akkâ (Acre) (pp.46b-54a). His important references give a vivid picture of the Baha'allah's character and the gradual evolution of his ideas.

2. Khalsîh is a state between sleep and wakefulness in which the soul witnesses the occurrence of certain matters in advance. Tahânuwî, M. Kashshâf-i Ištîlahât al-Fîrûn va al-Ulûm, Calcutta, 1862, p.597.

in the form of another anticipatory dream:

'Before "the lord of the people" (khudavand-i anām i.e. the Bab) sets out for Kāshān, every day and night, I prayed to God for the honour of his sight. One night, I had a serene dream, that his excellency, who resembles the sun, shone in Kāshān. Next morning I said to my brother, that soon the sublime sun will rise. He said, there is no news of him in the whole world, I briefly replied; "He will come today". It so happened that his excellency arrived the same day, shining like the sun'.

It was this same visit of the Bab to Kāshān that illustrated the depth of Kāshāni brothers' devotion to the Babi cause. It also provided them with an opportunity to arrange several meetings between the Bab and some sympathisers amongst the Shaykhi ulama and tujjār. At the same time the Kāshāni Babis offered their assistance to the Bab who had shown some intention of being rescued from the government security escort which was taking him to the capital. As it is reported by Tārīkh-i Jadīd, Zabīh declared in conformity with the other believers of Kāshān that they were ready to provide the necessary means for the escape: 'It would be possible to bring you forth from hence; we pray you therefore to accord us permission, and you can go whithersoever you please, and we will attend and accompany you wherever it be; for we will thankfully and gladly give up our lives, our wealth, our wives, and our children for your sake'.

The Bab's response to this offer was the usual resignation and willingness to accept his 'destiny': 'We need the help and support of none but God, and His will only do we regard'. Nevertheless, the Bab's reluctance to take any militant action did not prevent the Kāshāni brothers from showing their loyalty and dedication to the cause of the Bab. As it is evident from Zabīh's own remarks in the course of the next few years, their zealous adherence to the movement lessened their popularity in the city of Kāshān:

'About Ārif (i.e. Zabīh) and Ḥāji people believed that; "these youths are the most pious people of the time.'

1. Masnavī, 2b.
2. In addition to other well known sources such as Nabīl, pp.217-22 and NH, pp.213-16, the account of the Bab's abode in Kāshān is also discussed by Masnavī pp.3a-4a and Nāṭiq Isfahānī, Tārīkh-i Amr-ye Kāshān, op.cit. p.1-4.
3. See below.
4. NH, 216. Also an account appears in Masnavī, 2b.
5. NH, 21b.
Both brothers are generous and openhanded, not even for one moment did they ignore the zikr of God . Both are warriors (mujahid) for the truth, they never search in the world for anything but the truth". Then the ignorant ones said; "it is a pity that these two, in spite of all their zikr and prayers, abandoned their faith and became infidels. They became Babi and shunned the truth. They deserted their forefathers' religion, and became alienated with their own souls". 1

In spite of the mounting criticism and open hostility, especially after 1265 (1849) both brothers remained 'the slaves of his (i.e. the Bab's) threshold' 2 Zabih refers to his brother as 'a lost-hearted Haji, who was ready to sacrifice his life', 3 an aspiration which soon turned into reality. After the unsuccessful attempt on the life of Nasir al-Din Shahr in 1268 (1852), together with many other Babis, he was arrested in the shrine of Shah 'Abd al- Azim near Tehran, where he probably compiled his historical account of the movement. The sanctity of the bast was ignored, and he was taken to the Anbar dungeon, only to be killed shortly after by the hand of Aqa Mahdi Malik al-Tujjar and other merchants of Tehran. 4 Zabih remembers the death of his brother in the following words:

'That lover of the truth, the adorer of the Rabb-i A'la (i.e. the Bab) he dedicated his possession and his life in the path of his Lord.

.................................

He was finally taken to the dungeon of oppression, and then they strangled him with a piece of rope. No man the like of that devoted man ever came to this world. His death burnt the heart of sorrowful Zabih. A mystic like him the world never witnessed, he finally was martyred in the path of truth. His name would remain in the book of lovers, his soul would ascend to Heaven'. 5

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1. Masnavi. 152a.  
3. Ibid.  
4. An account of the execution of Haji Mirza Jami appears amongst other sources in Vagityi-i Ittifaqiyth, no.62 (DhI al-Qa'da 10th 1268/1850) and TMS. also cited in Shuhada-yi Amr, op.cit., III, 271.  
5. Masnavi. 29a. Further information on the life of the Kashani brothers appears in a number of sources. Kashf al-Ghiza', op.cit. pp.42-5 has some remarks on their family background. Also NK. pp.113, 120-24, 259, 175-6, 198 have remarks on the journeys of Haji Mirza Jami and his meetings with the Bab and eminent Babis. On the life of Zabi besides references in Masnavi, Samandar (pp.222-3) and NH. provide further information. Short articles in ET and ET under KASHANI, Hadhiji Mirza Jami by T.W. Haig were entirely based on E.G. Browne's notes in TN,. NH. and NK., and suffer from some inaccuracies.
The Shaykhi merchants of Isfahan and Kashan were not the only converts in the ranks of the tujjar. In other cities of Iran, families of merchants with similar religious and occupational backgrounds were also attracted towards the Bab. In Qazvin the Farhādīs were amongst the first who supported the new cause in early 1261/1845. In the few decades prior to 1260, two brothers of Azarbājjanī origin, Hājī Allāh Virdī Farhādī and Hājī Asadallāh Farhādī who had long been engaged in the internal trade between Qazvin and Yazd, or sometimes between Yazd and India, managed to establish themselves amongst the well respected and affluent merchants of Qazvin. But the wealth accumulated by the Farhādīs in the silk trade, or by investment in land and property was not the only reason for their distinction since their Shaykhi affiliation differentiated them as some of the chief defenders of the Shaykhi cause. Whether it was due to their previous acquaintance with Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa’ī in Yazd, or their close association with Mullā ’Abd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī, the imam of the shāh mosque and a close student and adherent of Ahsa’ī, the Farhādīs became devoted Shaykhis and in Ahsa’ī’s last visit to Qazvin towards the end of his life, played host to him.

For merchants like the Farhādīs, commitment to Shaykhism was before any theoretical conviction, an affection for Ahsa’ī and a devotional attachment to his close disciples like Mullā ’Abd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī — an adherence which was deeply rooted in their social and occupational loyalties. In the tense struggle for religious control of Qazvin, the Farhādīs were in the camp of Mullā ’Abd al-Wahhāb and thus in opposition to the rising authority of the newly established and highly ambitious Mullā Muhammad Taqī Baraghānī (and to a lesser extent his brother Mullā Muhammad Sālih Baraghānī, the father of Tahirih) who was trained

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1. Information on the Farhādīs in most sources such as Samandar and Z. and KD. are based on the recollections of Aqa Muhammad Jāvād Farhādī. MJQ. and Nabil. provide some further details. Most accounts on Tahirih also have references to the Farhādīs.

2. Z. 372 and Samandar, 91.

3. Nabil. 165. Allāh Virdī was known in Qazvin for his holy dreams and spiritual insight, which together with his Azarbājjanī origin suggest a possible Ahl-i Ḥaqq background.

4. For ’Abd al-Wahhāb see Q. pp.22-4, 35; Tabaqāt. II, 2, pp.809-12. Tihrānī particularly states that Tunikābourī’s doubts on ’Abd al-Wahhāb’s state of ijtiḥād are entirely baseless. Also see Makārim. V, pp.1736-40 and notes for the collection of his ijāzāt.

5. KD. 95.
and authorised in a purely Usuli tradition in 'Atabāt under Sayyid 'Alī Tabataba'i. But the theoretical differences between the two mujtahids served as a pretext for a more material conflict which owed much to the territorial divisions and possibly the Haydarī-Ni'matī hostility (known in Qazvin as lūṭī bāzar) between the city quarters².

Mulla 'Abd al-Wahhab, from Dār al-Shafa' in the Darb-i Kushk quarter was a well established mujtahid of Qazvin who was respected by his fellow mujtahids in Iran and 'Atabāt mainly because he studied under all important 'ulama of the first generation in 'Atabāt such as Shaykh Ja'far Najafī, Sayyid Muhammad Tabataba'i and others³. However, by the 1840's as he grew old his religious control over Qazvin seems to have been weakened by the threat of the Baraghānis who gradually broadened their sphere of influence from the quarters of Dīmaj and Qumīaq in the west of the city towards the centre where both major mosques of Qazvin, the Jami' mosque in Khiyābān quarter and the Shāh mosque (or Khaqān-i Maghfur) in Darb-i Kushk quarter were located⁴. Control of the central mosques and advancement to the office of imām jum'ih were important not only because of the fact that they provided a larger public audience, and a greater degree of attention from the public and the government, but also because these mosques held extensive endowments both in land and property which were almost solely under the control of the mutavallis⁵.

In the early years of his stay in Qazvin after his return from 'Atabāt, Mulla Muhammad Taqi was well received by 'Abd al-Wahhab who even helped him to establish himself in the city⁶. But nevertheless this did not hinder Baraghāni's drive for power which he implemented by means of economic wealth and religious leadership. The anecdotes related by Tunikābuni in the biography of Mulla Muhammad Taqi, in a few cases clearly demonstrate that his legal and religious judgements were greatly influenced by his personal interests rather than being

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1. Q. 19 citing Muhammad Taqi's recollections. For Baraghāni's see above Chap.Five, III. For Mulla Muhammad Taqi, beside many other sources, see a long account in Q. pp.19-44. Also Ṭabaqāt, I, 1, pp.226-8 and Makārim. V, 1707-16 and notes.
2. Malcolm, J. History of Persia, op.cit. II, 6. For Qazvin's quarters in the 19th century as it is specified in Majmū'ih-yi Naqirī see Gulriz, Muhammad, Minū Dar yā Bāb al-Janna, Qazvin, Tehran 1337 Sh., 391-404, 759-60. The Haydarī-Ni'matī divisions and boundaries between quarters are not specified in the above sources.
3. Ṭabaqāt. II, 2, 809.
5. For endowments of Jami' see Bāb al-Janna, pp.514-21.
6. Q. 22.
directed by the soundness and impartiality required from a mujtahid. Either by presiding over substantial legal and financial cases of which he received a large percentage under the pretext of expenses and legal charges, or by collecting alms, expropriating the revenues of the unmanaged endowments or Khalisih villages, and even directly participating in economic activities, the Baraghanis were soon able to amass a large fortune. Hence it is not surprising that like Shafti and Karbasi, Mullā Muhammad Taqī who in his youth, when still a taalib, was in such poverty that he could not even afford to eat properly for several days, in less than two decades became amongst the richest of the 'ulama of Iran. The mosque and madrasah of Sālihiyih in the Qumlāq quarter which is one of the biggest mosques in Iran, and the mosque of the neighbouring Dimaj quarter were built in the 1250's and 60's at Mullā Muhammad Sālih's and Mullā Muhammad Taqī's own expense and were signs of their prosperity, erected in order to glorify their position.

Not only in financial and legal matters, but in gaining a superior religious leadership, Mullā Muhammad Taqī was anxious to outweight his rivals even at the expense of denying the ijtihād of his own brother. At one stage, contrary to the Usūli doctrine, he ruled for the prohibition of the Friday prayer. However when the opportunity arose he overruled his own fatva and conducted the Friday prayers of the city in the absence of another rival Hājī Sayyid Muhammad Taqī Qazvini. One may assume that one of his objectives for gaining the office of imām jum'ih and the trusteeship of the Jāmi' mosque over which he was in dispute with Hājī Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī was to control the extensive endowments of the mosque. This assumption may further be substantiated when it is considered that a portion of these endowments, including five shops and the lease of fifteen houses were located in the Qumlāq quarter where the Baraghanis had already established their authority.

Among many reasons which have been given for the opposition of Mullā Muhammad Taqī to Shaykh Ahmad Ahsā'i (which in due course gave rise to

1. Q. pp.22-3.
3. Q. 34.
4. Q. 29. The Usūlis generally considered it unlawful to perform Friday prayers (namāṣ-ī jama'ī) in the absence of the Concealed Imam. For the significance of this issue in the Akhbarī-Usūli dispute see above Chapter One
5. Bab al-Janma. 516. In mid-1260's after the death of all important mujtahids of Qazvin the office of imām jum'ih was finally transferred to the Baraghanī family and Mullā Muḥammad, son of Mullā Muḥammad Taqī became the imām jum'ih of the city.
condemnation of Ahsa'i by the fuqaha of 'Atabat and Iran) one is particularly relevant to this specific internal conflict in Qazvin. It has been reported that Mullā Muhammad Taqi Baraḵānī who in mid 1820's regarded himself as the chief mujtahid and the most knowledgeable (a'ẓom) of the 'ulama of Qazvin, expected Ahsa'i to arrive and stay in his house rather than in the house of those whom he regarded as inferior to himself. Yet Shaykh Ahmad preferred to stay in the house of ' Abd al-Wahhab. For Mullā Muhammad Taqi this was interpreted as a hostile gesture far more humiliating than a simple breach of social etiquette.

As in Yazd and Isfahan, in Qazvin the arrival of Shaykh Ahmad introduced a new dimension to the old conflict and widened the divisions between the 'ulama. No doubt receiving support from a revered scholar like Ahsa'i with his growing popularity was a blessing which could not be underestimated since for their support the 'ulama were dependent on the loyalty of the public in general and the urban notables and merchants in particular.

In the opinion of Mullā Muhammad Taqi this was a threat to his superior authority. The danger of Shaykhism's becoming an alternative to the dominant orthodoxy was further felt by Muhammad Taqi when his own younger brother Mullā 'Alī became a follower of Shaykh Ahmad. In an important letter to Mullā ' Abd al-Wahhab, Shaykh Ahmad refers to the Baraḵānī's fear of losing his economic and religious privileges when he states: 'the devil incited him (i.e. Mullā Muhammad Taqi) to declare that what I say is blasphemy, and I am blasphemous and Ākhund Mullā ' Abd al-Wahhab is blasphemous, and others in his faction helped him. Thus came persecution and hardship, and he who was the leader amongst them, may great misery be upon him, was fearful of his revenues in Iran and India (darāhim al-'Ajām-i va al-Hind)...'. This would confirm that in the condemnation of the Shaykhis, the rīyāsat of the Baraḵānī and many mujtahids alike were at stake and with it their domination over the endowments, religious courts, alms, as well as their control of madrasahs and religious students.

In this context, the deterioration of the conflict and the polarisation of

1. See above Chapter One, II.


3. Both Q. 19 and Samandar. 344 refer to his Shaykhi and then Babi beliefs which are also confirmed by his own letter to the Bab cited in INBA. pub. 98, XVIII, 110-11. The Bab himself refers to him in al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Rābi'a ʿī Sharḥ Du'ā-th ē Zamān al-Ghayba, INBA. pub.60, XIII, pp.150-4 as one of his followers. Makārīm, V, pp.1707-16, RA. I, 153, and Bāb al-Janna, op.cit. 471 also have references to him.

the city community into two camps, inevitably drew merchants like the Farhādīs further into the dispute. Primarily because of their religious loyalty, but also because of a threat to their material interests, they were concerned with the increasing power of Mullā Muhammad Taqī. Not only did the latter's anti-Shaykhi propaganda endanger their economic security, but also his ventures in land and property to some extent limited their control of their holdings. Considering the fact that many merchants like the Nahrīs in Isfahan acted as functionaries, brokers and financial consultants to the mujtahids in the management of the religious endowments, one may suspect that the decline in the influence of 'Abd al-Wahhab in terms of losses of revenue from the endowments was a source of animosity between the Farhādīs and Mullā Muhammad Taqī Baraghānī. However lack of information prevents us from coming to any definite answer, yet it is known that on occasions, Mullā Muhammad Taqī's controversial verdicts over financial transactions, commercial contracts and the like, dissatisfied merchants and forced them to take drastic measures against him.

But if in the elder generation opposition to the fuqāhā was expressed in terms of moral and financial support for the Shaykhi cause, in the younger generation this opposition turned into a more militant confrontation. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that such confrontation intensified at a time when in the 1840's the decline in the southern trade and particularly the fall in demand in the Indian market for Iranian silk and various restrictions and obstacles in the way of the tujjar active in this trade, more than ever made them dependent on their agricultural and urban holdings in Qazvīn, a source of revenue which inevitably caused frictions and clashes with Baraghānī.

The manifestation of this militancy is clearly visible after the Farhādīs recognition of the Bab. By 1260, after the death of Allah Virdī, his four sons, who had married the four daughters of their uncle Hājī Asadallāh, in collaboration with the latter continued the family business. The earliest news regarding the proclamation of the new Bab came through Hājī Mirzā Mahmūd, a merchant from Shiraz who visited Qazvīn after his pilgrimage of Hajj during which he travelled with the Bab in the same boat. Their enthusiasm for learning the identity of

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1. See for example two incidents cited in Q. (pp.32-3) concerning the discontent which was expressed by the merchants to his verdicts. Also Ibid. (p.24) for allegations of corruption and bribery.


4. Z. 372, citing Āqā Muḥammad Jawād's notes. For the Bab's pilgrimage of Hajj see below Chapter Nine.
the Sahib al-Zaman appears to have been further invigorated by the conversion of 'Abd al-Wahhab's sons Mullā Muhammad Hādī and Mullā Muhammad 'Alī who were amongst the Letters of Hayy. Thus Hājī Asadallah despatched Mullā Javād Valīyānī to Shiraz to investigate the truth of the new revelation. Afterwards, when Mullā 'Abd al-Jalīl Urmī came to Qazvin with the instruction of the Bab, the Farhādīs became totally committed to the Babi cause. Their commitment, however, was based less on theological and mystical convictions and more on occupational loyalties, since neither Asadallah nor Hādī seems to have had any theological training. In the course of the first few years, the Farhādīs were the centre of Babi activities in Qazvin and the host to many Babi missionaries and visitors who enjoyed both their hospitality, and in moments of need, their financial support.

The role of the second of the four brothers, Aqā Muhammad Hādī Farhādī, was particularly important, since he gradually emerged as one of the leaders of the Babi community of Qazvin, at the time when the forces of opposition headed by Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī were determined to eliminate the remnants of the Shaykhi-Babi influence in the city. After the death of Sayyid Kāzim, 'Abd al-Wahhab who then was in his seventies, remained undecided over the claims of the Bab, and despite some attempts by his sons and by other Babis to convince him, never publicly came to the defence of the Babis. Thus the task of the protection and security of the community was inevitably transferred to the younger generation of Shaykhi-Babi mullas and merchants such as Aqā Muhammad Hādī Farhādī who had the courage and the means of challenging the opposing 'ulama. This was an important development, since Aqā Muhammad Hādī like many other Babi merchants looked to the Bab as the symbol of the merchants' leadership.

The important role played by the tujjar in effecting the course of prolonged conflict in Qazvin is best illustrated in the events of 1264 (1848) when in the
face of mounting hostility the Farhadis used all they had at their disposal, including their wealth and their connections with the asnaf and the lutis in the city in order to defend themselves and their fellow Babis. In late 1263 (1847) after the return of Tahirih and her companions to Qazvin, the old chronic hostilities were again renewed in the form of a tense anti-Babi campaign. Shortly afterwards, the death of Mulla 'Abd al-Wahhab left the stage clear for Muhammad Taqi to attack the Babis from the pulpit by denouncing them as infidels and religiously unclean. Violence, clashes and physical attacks on the Babis followed these verbal incitements. When Mulla 'Abd al-Jallil Urumi (Urdubadi) who, under the protection of the Farhadis was preaching in Qazvin, was attacked by the mob and was dragged to the madrasih of Mulla Muhammad Taqi to be bastinadoed in his presence, it was Aqa Muhammad Hadi, his brother Aqa Muhammad Javad and their lutis who in return climbed up the wall of the madrasih and rescued 'Abd al-Jalil. In another occasion earlier in 1263 (1847) when the Bab was passing through Miyanih on his way from Tehran to Azarbajan, Aqa Muhammad Hadi and a group of his followers came to his rescue but, as on previous occasions in Kashan and Tehran, the offer of assistance was turned down by the Bab.

The Bab's refusal to be rescued by the Farhadis' aid was not because he was reluctant to escape captivity in Azarbajan, but chiefly because he considered any violent confrontation as harmful and ineffective action that would only worsen his condition. When he was passing through the outskirts of Qazvin, he wrote a letter to Mulla 'Abd al-Wahhab, calling upon him to intervene on his behalf and order the mounted escort to set him free in Qazvin. There is no

1. See above Chapter Five. A large group of her followers, according to one estimate more than seventy, accompanied her on this journey from Baghdad to Qazvin.
2. He died in Muharram 1264 Q. (December-January 1847-8) in 'Atabat. (Makarim, V, 1736).
5. KD. I, pp.95-6 and Z. 374. According to Nabil. 235 and Samandar. pp.97-9 an earlier meeting took place in Siyâh Dihan (a village 18 miles southwest of Qazvin) between the Bab and some of the Qazvinih and Zanjani followers. Mulla Ja'far Qazvini and others met the Bab in other stages in the villages around Qazvin. (Maj. pp.479-80).
6. Text of this letter appears in INBA. pub.58, 148. According to Samandar. (pp.97-8) the Bab also sent letters addressed to Mullâ Muhammad Taqi, Mullâ Muhammad Šâlih and Haji Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Imam Jum'ih making the same requests. Muhammad Taqi rebuked and ridiculed the writer, Imam Jum'ih paid no attention. 'Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad Šâlih after some consultation decided to make no move fearing that because of the conversions of their sons and daughters any sympathetic gesture towards the Bab might further endanger their positions.
evidence to suggest any connection between the Bab's letter and Farhadī's action, nevertheless both indicate the sense of desperation and discontent which then prevailed over the Bab and his followers. As the Bab in his isolation in the fortress of Maku and Chihrīq more and more adopted a fatalistic attitude towards his mission, the Babis turned more towards a militant and uncompromising position.

Signs of his attitude are discernible in the Farhādīs when Mullā Muhammad Taqī who could not directly condemn his own niece and daughter-in-law Tahirih, concentrated his attacks on her followers and companions as well as on other Babis in the city. Perhaps it is in response to this pressure that Aqā Muhammad Hādī set up a workshop in the basement of his own house to produce swords and distribute them among the followers. When Mullā Yahya Darabī (Vahīd) who appears to have been experienced in warfare, arrived in Qazvīn that year, Aqā Muhammad Hādī arranged for training sessions in his house.

The assassination of Mullā Muhammad Taqī Baraghānī at the beginning of 1264 (1848) brought the conflict to its peak. It is not clear whether the assassin or assassins were assisted by Aqā Muhammad Hādī, or whether Mīrzā (Mullā) 'Abdallāh Shīrāzī who himself claimed to be the assassin was in contact with Tahirih through the Farhādīs, or whether he was independent in his decision. These are matters which remain to be fully investigated. What is clear however, is that both Tahirih and the Farhādīs came under strongest suspicion and were accused of being the chief instigators and accomplices. The assassination of Mullā Muhammad Taqī was the earliest sign of the Babis' militant response to the pressure which was exerted upon them from the religious authorities.

In the riots which broke out in the city, the house of the Farhādīs was twice sacked by the pro-Baraghānī mob and both Hājī Asadallāh Farhādī and Aqā Muhammad Mahdī were arrested and detained in the government house together with seventy other Babis. Later, owing to the insistence of Mullā Muhammad Baraghānī,

1. Z. 374, citing Aqā Muhammad Javād.
2. Ibid.
3. All sources on the life of Tahirih or Mullā Muhammad Taqī or on the Babis of Qazvīn or the general history of Qazvīn in this period narrated and interpreted the assassination of Mullā Muhammad Taqī. The significance of assassinating a first rank mujtahid was such that after the death of Mullā Muhammad Taqī he was honoured with the title Shahīd Ẓalīq after the two earlier Shi'ī Martyrs.
4. Samandar, 92 and Z. 375.
son of Mullā Muhammad Taqī and husband of Tāhirih who now succeeded his father, Asadallāh together with Mīrzā 'Abdallāh Shīrāzī and three other Babis were sent to Tehran as the chief accomplices in the assassination\(^1\). Due to old age, suffering on the road and the hardship of prison, Asadallāh died in Tehran, whereas 'Abdallāh managed to escape. The three other Babis were brought back to Qazvīn and were executed\(^2\).

The hostility expressed by Mullā Muhammad towards the Babis, more than being motivated by a sense of vengeance, was designed to warn Tāhirih and her followers of the grave consequences of creating any more trouble. However, in spite of general apprehension amongst the Babis, Āqa Muhammad Hādi was not demoralised by the course of events. After the assassination of Baragānī, he avoided certain arrest and persecution by escaping to Tehran in disguise, but was daring enough to return to Qazvīn in the disguise of a Yazdī caravaneer and rescue his younger brother from government detention\(^3\). But Tāhirih, who was still not divorced from her husband, was under strict surveillance in her father's house guarded by trusted women of the household and a group of lutīs at the gate\(^4\). However, in spite of all the security measures, Āqa Muhammad Hādi, in collaboration with Mīrzā Husain 'Alī Bahā'allah, drew up a plan to rescue her. At night Āqa Muhammad Hādi secretly entered Qazvīn and after sending a message to Tāhirih through his wife Khātūn Jān who disguised herself as a launderess, with the help of a few friends, Āqa Hasan Najjār, Valī the peddler and Quī who were both lutīs, managed to rescue her, and then ride all the way from Qazvīn to Tehran on horses before any of the Baragānīs were able to stop them at the city gates\(^5\).

The escape of Tāhirih was a blow to Mullā Muhammad and Baragānīs' reputations. For the third time the house of the Farhādīs was attacked by tullāb and lutīs and completely looted, and the whole family underwent severe persecution and hardship. Fearing for their lives, Khātūn Jān and her three sisters took refuge in the ruined Imamzādīh Ahmad outside the city for four months before being able to return to Qazvīn\(^6\). After arrival at Tehran Āqa Muhammad Hādi remained in the company of Tāhirih on her journey to Badasht, but after the gathering of Badasht no trace of him was found. Even his brother Āqa Muhammad Javad seems to have been unaware of his ultimate fate\(^7\). As for the

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2. See above Chapter Six, IV.
other Babis, they were also persecuted, their houses and properties were confiscated by the local governor as a surety for payment of larger ransoms and they themselves were either imprisoned or forced into exile. It was some years till the Qazvīn Babi community could regain some of its past strength.

Thus in spite of some ephemeral victories, the Qazvīn episode ended in setback and disbandment of the Babi elements. As in Isfahan and Kāshān, in Qazvīn the merchants played a major role in the recruitment and organisation of the new converts, but unlike the peaceful activities of their fellow Babis in other places, they intended to put up a stiff resistance against the encroachments of their opponents. However in this task they largely failed. Although they enjoyed the cooperation of some of the ʿulama and the sympathy and assistance of some other groups, the forces of the opposing ʿulama which at moments of crisis were backed by the government, were powerful enough to crush the Babi minority. Perhaps against their original intention the merchants were forced to take a militant position. The events of Qazvīn in 1264 (1848) was a prologue to the later resistance which in the next four years dominated the course of Babi history. The upheavals of Tabarsī, Nayriz and Zanjān and the events of 1268 (1852) in Tehran in various degrees bear the signs of the merchants' militancy which only appeared when they became disillusioned with the prospect of adopting a peaceful course in their relation with their opponents.

For these merchants with identical Shaykhi attachments, family links and professional affiliations, the image of the young Shīrāzī merchant of a mystical and ascetic character formed a vision which enabled them to find a sense of identity and unity in the new movement. The list of converted merchants throughout Iran is a proof of these emerging forces which represented a distinctive professional as well as intellectual bond. In Shiraz, Hāji Abul Hasan, Āqā Muhammad Karīm, Hāji Mīrzā Abul Qasim and Hāji Mīrzā Mahmūd; in Yazd, Hāji ʿAṭrī and Āqā Muhammad Zamān; in Tabrīz, Hāji ʿAlī ʿAsgar, Āqā Faraj and Hāji Muhammad; in Qazvīn, Hāji ʿAbd al-Karīm, Hāji ʿAbd al-Husain, Hāji Rasūl (Juwaynī) and Hāji Nasīr; in Kirmānschāh, Āqā Ghulām Husain Shūshtārī and in Zanjān, Mashhadī Sulaymān Raʾīs al-Tujjar are a few examples of merchants who were converted to the new movement mainly through a network of merchant-ʿulama with Shaykhi affiliations.

The participation of the tujjar in the expansion of the movement was not limited to their direct involvement in the course of events. Their main contribution perhaps was their role as intermediaries in attracting the attention of other individuals. This is best illustrated in the conversion of members of various guilds, small manufacturers and craftsmen who were in the course of the early years increasingly attracted to the Babi ranks. Although no mass conversion of the asnaf ever took place — except in the case of Zanjan which happened later, mostly after 1264 Q. (1848) and culminated in the events of 1266-7 (1850-1) — many individuals, apparently independent from the guild organisations and mostly on the basis of local contacts and professional association with the tujjar or ulama, were directed towards the new mission.

The pattern of the journeys of Babi merchants on the trade routes of central and western Iran is one indication of the way the Babi doctrine spread in trade centres, particularly amongst the local merchants and their associated groups. Haji Mirza Jani's journey to Iraq in 1259-60 (1843-4) can be regarded not only as a pilgrimage but also as a journey connected to his trade. Zabih too was present in Baghdad on a few occasions between 1265-70 (1849-54), presumably for the same purpose. Sometime prior to 1264 (1848) we find Haji Mirza Jani in Barfurush, as he himself puts it, 'for the purpose of trade'. The mobility of the merchants bears great significance in the expansion of the movement in all directions since in the course of these journeys, by employing trade channels and connections, merchants like Haji Mirza Jani were able to attract new converts from their own rank.

A group of young local merchants and manufacturers who assembled around Haji Mirza Jani and Zabih in Kashan serves as an example for this relation which emerged in most Babi communities around the country. As far as the identity of the converts in Kashan is known, in addition to the younger brothers of Haji Mirza Jani known as Mirza Ahmad and Aqa Muhammad 'Ali, Mirza Mahdi Tajir...

1. Gobineau, with regard to the mutual relation between the asnaf and their supporters, points out: 'It is clear that these organised cooperations are backed on the one hand by the merchants for whom they work and on the other by the mullahs who, their prestige requiring that they be surrounded by the masses, are glad to take up the interests of apprentices, craftsmen (artisans), and even master craftsmen. (Trois ans en Asie, translation cited in Economic History of Iran, op.cit. 37).

2. Maqna'i, op.cit. 39b, 41a ff. 3. NK. pp.175-6.

3. Kashf al-Ghita (op.cit. 45) and KD. (I, pp.90-2) believes that the name of the fourth brother is Aqa Al Akbar, but nevertheless the information of Tarikh-i Amiri-yi Kashan (op.cit. 4) seems to be more reliable. More details on Mirza Ahmad and his fate appear in TN, pp.332, 371, NH. 391, n. Balyuji, E.G. Browne and the Baha'i Faith, op.cit. 64 and Ruh! Kirmani, Ahmad. (?) Hasht Bihisht, n.d., 282.
Kamranibaf, Haji Sayyid Mahmud, Mirza Aqa Tajir Kashani and Haji Mirza Muhammad Riiza Makhmalbaf Kashani were all manufacturers and local merchants who seem to have been in professional contact with Haji Mirza Jani. Haji Muhammad Riiza Makhmalbaf for example owned a number of velvet weaving workshops in Kashan, and even operated a trade with India, Istanbul and Baghdad, the same pattern of trade as Haji Mirza Jani and Zabih, who both seem to have been engaged in the export of silk products to Baghdad and the Caucasus.

In Isfahan however, the introduction of the movement to the members of various professions was due to the efforts of the Babi ulama rather than the merchants. In this context the role of some individuals who in addition to their main professions had some minor religious qualifications, is of some interest. Amongst the Babis of Isfahan, Mulla Ja'far Gandum Pakkun (sifter of wheat), Mulla Ahmad Saffar (tin-plater), Mulla Husain Misgar (copper-smith) and Mulla 'Ali Muhammad Sarraj (leather-worker), all were mentioned with the title of mulla. In other places converts such as Mulla Kazim Banna (mason) in Kirman, Mulla Mahdi Kurihpaz (kiln-worker), Mulla Muhammad Musa Namadmal (felt-maker) and Mulla Ja'far Muzahhib (book-gilder), all in Nayriz, would suggest that while the second part of their names indicates their main professions the title mulla was added for some extra religious engagement. Whether this was a low rank engagement such as being a zakir (one who chants the tragedies of Karbila) or qari (the reciter of the Qur'an or this was simply an acknowledgement of their religious training, is not known but at any rate they seem to have been within closer reach of the Babi missionaries.

In the early success of the movement in Isfahan, a special place is attributed to Mulla Ja'far Gandum Pakkun. Nabil Zarandi believes that he was

4. TMS. 75. 5. Ibid.
6. For this trade see below.
7. See below.
9. Z. 105. 10. Z. 398.
11. Nicolas. 402 n. citing an anonymous Babi account.
the first person to accept Mullā Husain's message in Isfahan\(^1\). However it is likely that he was only attracted to the movement in 1260 (1844) due to 'a close association with Mullā Husain\(^2\) and he only fully recognised the Bab later at the time of the latter's arrival in Isfahan in 1262 (1846)\(^3\). Yet this emphasis on the early acceptance of Gandum Pākkun perhaps is due to his low status. Indeed the Babi sources regard the conversion of Gandum Pākkun and his honest and wholehearted devotion which ended in his death in the fortress of Tabarsi\(^4\) as an example of the attention paid by the poor and underprivileged to the new message. The Bab himself explains the significance of this conversion by featuring Mullā Ja'far as a humble individual who was able to grasp the reality of his cause; 'Look at the Land of Sād (i.e. Isfahan) which in appearance is the greatest of lands where in each corner of its schools numerous students are found under the name of knowledge and ijtihād, yet, at the time of refining (jauhari) Gandum Pākkun will put on the garb of primacy (qamīs-i niqābat). This is the secret of the word of the People of the House (Ahl-i Bayt) regarding the Time of Manifestation when they say: "The lowest of the people shall become the most exalted and the most exalted shall become the lowest'\(^5\).

The conversion of some believers from the ranks of craftsmen and local producers took place because of their direct contacts with the Babi missionaries who delivered the message by distributing Babi literature. Āqā 'Alī Akbar Najjār (carpenter) and Āqā Muhammad Ḥanāsāb (henna-miller) first learned of the new Bab and his claims through Mullā Husain. Āqā Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahīm on the other hand who was one of Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī's bailiffs (mubāshir) on his holdings in the village of Siyāfshād on the outskirts of the city, first heard of the movement through Āqā Akbar Najjār\(^6\). As he himself narrated, on one of his trips to Isfahan, while in the city to complain against a recent robbery in the village, he accidentally met his close friend Āqā 'Alī Akbar Najjār and noticed in his possession a tablet written in red ink, which most probably was a copy of the earlier parts of Qayyīm al-Asma'. In reply to his enquiry, Āqā 'Alī Akbar revealed that he had received the tablet from a certain

1. Nabil. 99.
2. Ibid.
3. Both KD. I, 71 and TMS. 98 confirm that after a dream he had the night before, Mullā Ja'far was the first to recognise the Bab in Isfahan.
4. NK. 202 and Nabil. 99.
6. INBA. Lib. MS. no.1028 D, Miscellaneous notes (op.cit. pp.32-3).
scholar (ʿalīm) who had recently arrived from Shiraz. He was then directed by his friend to the quarter of Darb-i Kūshk, where in the course of the first visit to Mullā Husain he professed his acceptance of the new creed. In later years he became an active Babi after he had paid a visit to the Bab in Isfahan in 1263 and received a tablet in which he was called by the title of Ismallāh al-Muhazz†.

The above mentioned case exemplifies the way these early conversions led to the further enquiry and acceptance of other individuals mainly on the basis of friendship, occupation and religious affiliation. By 1848-50 the number of artisans, craftsmen and skilled workers who had joined the Babi ranks formed a sizeable part of the urban Babi communities. There is no record of the number, the identity and the occupation of the Babis to enable us to make any accurate assessment of these communities but even judging by the name of those who participated in specific events such as Babi resistances in Tabarsī, Nayriz and Zanjān, it is evident that a variety of occupations were represented. From the 360 participants in Tabarsī there were 41 Iṣfahanīs of whom the occupation of 32 were specified. Beside eight mullas and ūllāb (if the titles can be relied upon), there were 24 members of various guilds and professions: eleven masons (bānū with the title ʿustād); five workers in the hand-weaving industry, one hand-loom weaver (šahrbāf), two knotters (payvandī) and two cloth-stampers (chītās); four other skilled workers; one copper-smith (mīsgar); one tin-plater (ṣaffār); one leather-worker (ṣaṛrāj) and one sifter of wheat (gandūm pākkun), and four shopkeepers and traders, two apothecaries (fattār), one butcher (qassāb) and one cloth-dealer (bazzāz). Of 41 Iṣfahanīs, 40 were killed in Tabarsī and one 'Remnant of the Sword' (Baqīyat al-Sayf) was later executed in 1268 (1852) in Tehran.

In fact, if due to its wide geographical distribution the occupational pattern of the participants of Tabarsī can be taken as a reliable sample which is representative of the rest of the Babi community throughout the country around 1264 (1848), it is evident that the participation of the āsnāf in the movement is only second to the Ṽulama. As a whole, of 222 participants whose occupations are known, more than half (60%) were from the Ṽulama (mujtahids, middle and low rank mullas), less than one third (26%) were from āsnāf, about 8% were from small land owners and the remaining 6% were from tujjār, low and middle rank government officials and other professions. Of course, it is

1. Ibid. and 2. 101. 2. See supplement.
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possible to assume that of 138 participants whose occupations are unknown, a large proportion were either from asnāf or from peasants who, because of their humble occupations or because of the insufficiency of the sources, remained unspecified.

In the upheaval of Zanjān (1265-6/1849-50), as far as it can be judged from the occasional references to the names and occupations of the participants, it appears that the involvement of the asnāf was highly significant. The urban nature of the Zanjān conflict not only required this involvement, but enabled the leaders of various guilds to play leading parts in the development of the conflict. However lack of sufficient data prevents us from going beyond general speculations. In the events of 1267 (1851) in Isfahan and 1268 (1852) in Tehran, in which the Babis tried to set up urban resistance against the 'ulama and the government, again members of the asnāf under the supervision of the 'ulama and to a lesser extent merchants, played an important role. Sādiq Tabrizī, a confectioner (shīrīnī firūsh) and Mulla Fathallah Qumi, an engraver (ḥakkāk), who was the son of a book binder, were two of the three main participants who carried out the attempt on the life of Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh, and later were executed together with many other Babi merchants, small land owners and low rank state officials who were assembled from all over the country in Tehran.

The significance of the professional adherence, as an independent element in unifying merchants and traders under the Babi banner, calls for closer examination. It would be a simplification to assume that the professional identity of certain groups, and consequently the fluctuations in their economic conditions, were the only mobilising forces behind their participation in the movement. Yet, there is some positive evidence which implies that the chronological parallel between the rise of the movement and fundamental changes in the economic condition of the region could not be regarded as coincidence. This previously unrecognised correlation can be better comprehended if the position of the newly converted merchants and local traders is observed against the wider economic and commercial background of the period.

The majority of converts within tujjār ranks were not men who had recently become tujjār but had been brought up in families which were traditionally engaged in trade. Either by means of inheritance or collaboration with senior

1. Ibid.
members of the family, the new generation preserved the respect and social standing which usually accompanied a reasonable amount of capital in the form of the family business. In nearly all cases they were distinguished as 'prestigious' and 'well respected' men, and their active participation in trade was often indicated also. Yet, the existing sources say very little as far as the details of this are concerned. However, if the general economic condition of the time applied to the Babi tujjār as much as to any other, it would be possible to assume that many of them must have been affected, in one way or another, by the crises of the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Indeed, towards the end of the 1830's and in the early 40's, at the time when most of these younger tujjār, including the Bab himself, became active, the economy of the country, particularly in sections of urban industry and trade, was undergoing changes.

In the early years of the 19th century, a rapid increase in the volume of the foreign trade followed by a degree of internal security brought about an economic revival. The opening of new trade routes and a rise in the consumption of the home markets made it possible for the merchants to re-emerge as an influential group. Thanks to their professional bonds, internal and external contacts with their colleagues, financial ability and relative immunity from government pressure exerted on other sections, they seem to have prospered throughout the 1810's and 20's. By the mid-1830's and early 40's however, although commerce was still expanding, Persian merchants found themselves surrounded with unexpected difficulties. A broad survey of trade in this period suggests that a combination of independent and often complementary factors, in a limited space of time brought changes to the economic climate of the country. Yet, behind these changes a major theme constantly recurs. During this period the full impact of western commercial domination both in terms of industrial superiority as well as political presence was experienced for the first time. Communities of tujjār, together with local traders, craftsmen and those engaged in small scale urban industries each began in varying degrees to suffer the

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1. Only very limited research has yet been carried out on the position of merchants in early Qājār Iran. G. Hambly, 'An Introduction to the Economic Organisation of Early Qājār Iran', *IRAN*, II (1964), 69-81 (pp. 76 ff) throws some light on this matter. A.K.S. Lambton in her article 'The Case of Ḥājjī Ḥabīl-Allāh', *IRAN and Islam, in memory of the late Vladimir Minorsky*, edited by C.E. Bosworth, Edinburgh, 1971, pp. 331-360 makes a detailed case study in which she illustrates the role of the merchants in financing the government, the problems of nationality and protection with regard to the increasing domination of foreign powers, and the degree of their interference in the judicial framework which regulated commercial relations in the country. See also above Chapter Three, II.
effect of foreign penetration into the home market. The rapid and at the same time considerable rise in the volume of European imports, not only made Iran less self-sufficient and more dependent on external sources, but also made it susceptible to fluctuation in international trade.

In spite of the prosperity of the trade of the south which was conducted through ports of the Persian Gulf in the earlier decades of the century, by the end of the 1830's it had begun to suffer from the competition of the north-western route. The decline of the southern route, owing to the insecurity prevailing in southern Iran, piracy in the Gulf, remoteness from the markets of the more heavily populated regions of central and northern Iran, and the incompatibility of the prices of the imports from the south compared to goods on the central and northern markets jeopardised the business of many tujjar in the south, and forced them to search for other alternatives. In his *Report on Commerce*, Abbott points out that although in the past two decades (1830's and 40's) the total value of the southern trade had increased, as a whole this trade had suffered a decline. The import of cotton fabrics in particular, which at one stage in the early 1830's amounted to about two-thirds of the total volume of this trade, by the late 1840's was reduced to one-seventh of the total. But the competition of the northern route was not the only reason for this decline. In their exports the merchants of the south were also faced with obstacles. The restrictions and high tariffs imposed by the British in India, particularly with regard to the imports of opium, tobacco and wool, also highly affected this trade. Abbott emphasises that 'if some of the few exportable productions which Persia possesses continue to be prohibited as returns for what she takes from India, there is no doubt that increased difficulties will attend the future prosecution of the trade; indeed they are already beginning to be experienced without any other cause being assignable, than the gradual exhaustion


3. Op.cit., pp.40-51 (on Būshīr and Shiraz), pp.16-40 (on Yazd, Kirmān and Bandar Abbās) and the relative appendices, provide a detailed account of the southern trade in the 1840's, compare with L. Pelly, 'Remarks on the tribes, trade and resources around the shoreline of the Persian Gulf' in *Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society*, XVII, 1864, for 1860's.

4. See below.
of the country under the partial state of commercial restriction abroad, and
the continual drain upon her of the precious metals\(^1\).

The volume of the Basra-Baghdad trade with cities in western and central
Iran, seems also to have been affected by similar crises. In addition to the
frequent Ottoman attempts to redirect commercial vessels to harbour in the
Ottoman port of Basra rather than Muhammara, the insecurity on the western
frontiers and the additional custom duty levied by the Baghdad pashalik on
exports to Iran\(^2\), made it difficult for Persian merchants to operate successfully
on this route\(^3\). Writing in 1843, Edward Burgess states that the Baghdad route
is more competitive than any other trade route to Persia, yet due to a variety
of obstacles such as the 'disturbed state of the Arab tribes' which made the
river navigation 'dangerous and uncertain', and disturbed frontiers between
Iraq Arab and Persia, it is very doubtful whether this trade can survive\(^4\).

On the other hand, the long lasting border dispute between the Persian and
Ottoman governments frequently brought difficulties for Persian merchants
active on this route, and had the effect of disrupting the normal flow of
imports and exports. In addition, the Ottoman authorities lost no opportunity
to exert a 'forcible interruption in the commerce of Muhammara\(^5\), which served
as a better alternative to Basra for the Persian merchants.

Some evidence of the difficulties created by this deterioration in Ottoman-
Persian relation can be deduced from the correspondence of Manuchihr Khan
Mu'tamid al-Daulih. In March 1845, Manuchihr Khan Mu'tamid al-Daulih, by then
the governor of Isfahan, Luristan and Khuzistan, reports to Tehran that as a
result of the recent Ottoman attack on Muhammara, about 200,000 tumans worth
of merchandise belonging to Persian merchants established in Iraq Arab and
Kirmanshah was damaged and lost\(^6\). Shortly afterwards, in another report,
Manuchihr Khan strongly objects to the measure taken by the Ottoman fleet in

3. A detailed account of the trade of Baghdad and Muhammara appears in
5. F.O. 60/114, No.61, Sheil to Canning, May 28th 1845 enclose in Sheil to
Aberdeen, June 3rd 1845.
6. Manuchihr Khan Mu'tamid al-Daulih in reply to Comte de Meden's (the Russian
envoy) enquiry about the events in Muhammara. French Trans. enclosed in
Sheil to Aberdeen, F.O. 60/113, No.25, 18th March 1845.
preventing the entry of commercial vessels to the port of Muhammara and
forcibly redirecting them instead to Basra.\footnote{P.O. 60/114, No.61, supp. June 3rd 1845 (Manuchihr Khan to his agent in
Tehran, translation).}

In Baghdad itself, the unjust treatment of the Persian tujjar by Ottoman
authorities put an extra burden on the shoulders of those who were already
suffering from the insecurity of the roads on both sides of the border. The
negligence of the Persian representative in Baghdad, and the inability of the
Persian government to raise the matter with the Ottomans, made the Persian tujjar
even more susceptible to external pressures and fluctuations.\footnote{F.O. 195/237, No.25, 29th May 1844 and 248/114, No.28, 12th June 1844,
Rawlinson to Sheil.} Rawlinson, the British Consul in Baghdad reports: 'A strong feeling of dissatisfaction has
long prevailed among the numerous and wealthy Persian community of Baghdad at
the conduct of their national representative at this court. They allege
apparently with reason, that he is devoid of the local weight or influence
necessary for the due vindication of the interest committed to his charge.\footnote{In the period under consideration, some details on this trade appear in:
Lambton, 'Persian Trade', op.cit., pp.226-8, 240-41, Entner, M.L. Russo-
Persian Commercial Relations, 1828-1914, University of Florida Monographs,
No.28, 1965, Chapters I, II, pp.1-38, F.O. 60/108, Journey along the shores
of the Caspian Sea by Consul Abbott, incl. in Abbott to Aberdeen, No.8,
29 June 1844 compare to F.O. Confidential Papers No.136 (Persia), Report by
Consul Abbott of his journey to the coast of the Caspian Sea, 1847, 1848,
pp.7-8 (on Bārfūrūsh), 12-13, 23-25 (on Astarābād) and also various other
reports by Abbott including F.O. 60/117 on Trade of Tehran and Tabriz.
Also The Economic History, op cit., pp.142-146.}

The trade of northern and northwestern Iran, however, enjoyed greater
prosperity. Thanks to the flourishing Russian trade through the ports of the
Caspian, Iranian merchants as far inside as Kashān and Isfahan could export their
products to Russia. The conclusion of the treaties of Gulistān and Turkamanchāy
gave great advantages to Russia, but it was only some time later that the long-
term effects were felt in Perso-Russian trade. By the late 1830's and early
1840's an increase had occurred in the volume of Russian trade.\footnote{Charles Issawi, 'The Tabriz-Trabzon Trade, 1830-1900: Rise and Decline of a
pp.92-103.}

More significantly, the reopening of the Tabriz-Trebizond route in the mid-
1830's made the volume of the European imports soon grow to a higher level\footnote{4. Charles Issawi, 'The Tabriz-Trabzon Trade, 1830-1900: Rise and Decline of a
pp.92-103.}.
Yet irregularities in the price of imported goods, and the arrival of European entrepreneurs such as a colony of Greeks in Tabriz acting as agents and factors to the European manufacturers, created some unexpected threats to the Persian tujjār and local traders who more than anything feared a complete takeover by their privileged rivals. This resulted in a series of futile protests by the Persian merchants, and subsequently the ruination and bankruptcy of many local traders in the early years of the 1840's.

Other economic matters also contributed to the crisis. The constant drain of precious metals and the scarcity of money which prevailed as a result, the rapid fall in the value of the tuman, a sharp rise in prices which caused serious inflation, the gradual accumulation of a vast deficit in the balance of payments, the decrease in the international demand for certain Persian exports, the exaction of new limitations on Persian exports by neighbouring countries and the first real signs of the implementation of the Anglo-Iranian commercial treaty of 1841 which provided great commercial advantages for British subjects and their protégés, should all be regarded as deleterious effects of western commercial domination on a fragile traditional economy.

The amount of pressure exerted upon the economy particularly in the section of local manufacturers, craftsmen and those local merchants involved in the distribution and export of local products which more than any other section suffered from these abrupt changes, can be observed in the highly vulnerable textile industry. From the early 1830's, to the end of Fath 'Alī Shāh's reign, owing to the increased consumption of European goods, production of all sorts of cloths declined in the local weaving centres. A considerable number of cotton weaving workshops in the industrial cities of central Iran such as Isfahan and Kāshān, which had been prosperous in the earlier years of the century, were completely ruined. The introduction of a Russian regulation prohibiting the entry of silk piece goods into the Caucasus provinces also contributed to the collapse of silk weaving and the subsequent disappearance of

2. F.O. 60/107, 'Translation of the Petition from the merchants of Tabreez to the Prime Minister of Persia presented at Tehran in November 1844' enclosed in No.16 Sheil to Aberdeen, 25th November 1844. Also F.O. 60/107 Banham to Sheil, July 1st 1844, No.13, F.O. 60/107, No.53, Sheil to Aberdeen and F.O. 60/117 Abbott to Aberdeen, March 31st 1845.
3. Investigation into the causes and the extent of the above mentioned economic problems is beyond the scope of this study. A general preliminary review of some of these questions appears in various parts of The Economic History, op.cit., and 'The Persian Trade', op.cit. The bulk of consular reports on the trade and economy of the country in the mid-19th century remains to be fully investigated.
a large number of silk weaving workshops (sha'rbāfī) and other workshops dependent on their exports to southern Russia.

By the mid-1840's, the effect of this decline was felt by local manufacturers and distributors. The merchants of Kāshān and Isfahan, who like their colleagues in Shiraz, Yazd or Tabriz had been alarmed by the prospects of total bankruptcy and loss of business, could do little more than express their discontent in the form of petitions and delegations to the authorities who were either utterly unsympathetic to their cause or else incapable of any effective assistance. The Consul Abbott's dispatch in March 1845 is one of the many reports of the period which illustrates the unsuccessful attempts of Persian merchants and manufacturers to resist foreign superiority:

"My Lord I do myself the honour of reporting to Your Lordship that a short time since a memorial was forwarded to His Majesty the Shāh by the traders and manufacturers of Čašān (Kāshān) praying for protection to their commerce which they represented as suffering in consequence of the introduction of European merchandise into this country. The only notice the Shāh took of this Petition was to direct that it should be preserved until a future day.

Deputation from the traders and manufacturers both of Čašān and Isfahan have however just arrived and though it is said their principal object is to complain of some Regulations of the Russian Government by which the entry into the Caucasian Provinces of silk piece goods having gold embroidery or figuring, the manufacture of the above named towns, is prohibited, I understand they have also the intention of making observations on the injury which European trade has occasioned them. They say that in Fath 'Aly Shah's reign there were in Isfahan alone 12,000 looms in use in the manufacture of the above mentioned goods, but that in consequence of the increased consumption of European manufactures and the change in the Fashions at Court, only a very few now remain of that number, and that these as well as the manufactures of Čašān are threatened with ruin by the refusal of the Russian government to admit the goods within its frontier. They represented this before to His Majesty when at Isfahan and they were promised that the matter should be made the subject of a communication to the Russian Minister but the restriction still continues.

1. Some details on the Russian commercial and customs policy in the Caucasus and the effects of the frequent closing of the border between the 1820's and 1880's appears in Russo-Persian Commercial Relations, op.cit., pp.21-25. It is worth noticing that between 1831-46, goods passing through the Caucasus had to pay Russian customs duty, though from 1846 onward, the Russian government decided to reopen the passage (ibid., p.22).
The person whom I had the honor of alluding to in a former Despatch as having been deputed by the merchants of Tabreez (Tabriz) to make complaints against the trade of the Greek there, is still here. He can find no one to listen to him. The Prime Minister's aversion to business of any kind is too well known to leave him anything to hope for from that quarter, and the other Minister will do nothing without a sufficient bribe. I should fear the present deputations had little chance of succeeding in the avowed object of their journey.

From the 1830's onwards, most of the European observers who travelled to central Iran noticed the sharp decline in the textile industry. Eugene Flandin, who passed through Kashān in 1841, maintains that: 'Si quelques métiers y existent encore, il est triste d'en voir le plus grand nombre immobiles, en attendant qu'ils disparaissent complétement'. He states that the devastating effects of European competition, then so clearly visible in centres like Kashān, were not solely the outcome of the incompatible prices or the low cost of the British products, but were also largely due to the deliberate trade policy of the British government.

Yet, in addition to the above mentioned obstacles, the unfavourable effects of which were often beyond the power of the mercantile community to minimise, there were other elements which, to a lesser extent, accelerated the process of this decline. A change in the fashion, particularly amongst the Qājār women and their courtiers, had a major effect in the production of luxurious piece cloths. Comte de Sercey, who visited Kashān in 1840, maintains, in agreement with Abbott's remark: 'Depuis quelques années ces fabriques ont beaucoup perdu par la cherté de leurs produits et l'usage que le Roi actuel a établi de ne se servir que de drap et d'étoffe commune. Les tissus si célèbres autrefois et si pompeux ne se fabriquent presque plus que pour les circonstances exceptionnelles.'

1. F.O. 60/117, No.3, Abbott to Aberdeen, Tehran, March 31st 1845. The Persian government however, raised the matter with the Russian authorities, though not with much immediate success. (F.O. 60/116, No.127, Sheil to Aberdeen, Tehran, November 14th 1845, incl. translation of Hājī Meerza Aghasi's letter to Comte Meden).


3. Ibid.

At a time when the production of cotton fabrics was hampered by foreign competition, the legal prohibition on the use of pure silk dresses in Shi'i fiqh also prevented manufacturers from turning to silk weaving as their major product in the home market. It was sometime later, during the first years of the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah that the vigorous patronage of the Amir Kabir encouraged the manufacturers of Kashan to overcome the religious restriction by introducing new types of mixed silk-cotton fabrics known as qadak and qa'tni.

Thus the bulk of manufacturers and distributors in Kashan and Isfahan, who were heavily dependent on the sales of their products at home and abroad, came under pressure to adapt themselves to the new conditions. The critical years of the 1840's witnessed a shift in the activities of Persian merchants, while some of them managed to stay in business by turning to other fields, others went bankrupt, and simply withdrew from trade altogether.

The brief survey of trade and local manufactures in the middle decades of the 19th century more than anything would indicate three major features: decline in the level of local manufactures, decline in the export of some products and a change in the pattern of trade which is particularly distinctive in the diversion of imports from south to north-west. The pressure of this transitional period was particularly felt in the section of textiles amongst both manufacturers and exporters.

These changes no doubt must have affected the Shaykhi-Babi merchants as it affected other merchants in general. But as far as the existence of any explicit correlation between the emergence of messianic movements and the deterioration in the economy is concerned, hardly any outright conclusion can be drawn beyond the acknowledgement of this general effect. Indeed this correlation is more subtle and complex than what has sometimes been implied by some scholars. Religious devotion and adherence to a messianic saviour was much deeper than can be simply interpreted as the manifestation of economic dissatisfaction.

In spite of the severity of these economic changes, many of the Babi merchants remained in business. The Farhadis and the Kashani brothers continued their trade throughout the 1840's and onwards almost independently of their Babi commitments. In most cases the reduction in the volume of trade or total abandonment was an action resulting from religious commitment rather than any other reason. In fact the Nahris and many like them who abandoned their
trade, though affected by the economic climate, still possessed land and property which would cushion them against fluctuations in trade. Even local merchants such as Ḥājī Naṣīr Qazvīnī¹ and ʿAbd al-Majīd Nishābūrī², who temporarily abandoned their trade and participated in Tabarsī, in spite of their harrowing experience during the upheaval, after their return to their home towns resumed their trade for some years, though on a much reduced scale, before being again persecuted and finally killed because of their Babi commitment.

Thus by and large if there was any effect on the movement from the economic environment it was on the outlook of the merchants rather than being any conscious and direct action against socio-economic disadvantages and reversals. The attraction towards messianic ideals occurred when there was a sense of criticism, if not resentment and contempt for material activities and the predominance of worldly issues in their lives. Although this did not necessarily mean that in principle they were turning away from the respected practice of trade, there were nevertheless moral and even ethical questions which created an uneasy contradiction for them and, as a result, attracted some of the new generation of merchants towards Shaykhi, Sufi and similar spiritual teachings, and eventually led them towards the recognition of a figure which represented for them the achievement of a state of unworldliness and sanctity. It was this contradiction between the time-honoured values of their profession and the urge for unworldliness and salvation which reflects the economic changes and disruptions which at the same time were taking place around them.

1. Samandar pp.214-6. 2. See below Chapter Eight
CHAPTER EIGHT

The Babis of Khurasan

The previous chapters of this study attempted to give an account of events and activities in the early stages of the movement, in order to explain the diffusion of the Babi 'cause' amongst various groups and communities in the cities of central Iran. In this chapter, however, attention is focused on Khurasan and its Babi community. Indeed, this community may be taken as an example of many other communities which were formed in the course of the first decade after the emergence of the movement in other parts of Iran. The significance of Khurasan, in terms both of the number of the Babi adherents and of their contribution to the formation and development of the movement, calls for closer examination. Furthermore, the geographical distribution of the Khurasanī Babis in this province, and certain features of their social and religious background, make this community particularly appropriate for a case study.

Between 1260 and 1264 (1844-8) the main concentration of the Khurasanī Babis was in three areas. First, in central Khurasan — in the area known as Qhīstān, on the edge of the highlands which surround the Khurasan desert. The triangle between Turbat-i Haydariyih, Bushruyih and Qā'īn: from north-east to south-west, Turbat-i Haydariyih and its surrounding villages (Hisār and Nāmiq in the north, Mahnih, Khayrābād, Hasanābād, 'Abbāllāhābād, Dughābād in the west and south-west), Azghand, Tursī (Sultānābād), Muhavvalāt (Fayzābād), Bajistān, Tūn, Bushruyih and Qā'īn contained one of the largest concentrations of Babis in Iran. Secondly, on the north-western side of the borderlands of Mazandarān

particularly on the northern route to Khurasan in Bastām, Mayāmay and Biyārjmand there were also sizeable Babi communities. Thirdly, in cities such as Mashhad, Sabzīvār and Nišābūr there were a number of converts with purely urban backgrounds. As far as can be ascertained from the sources, in terms of occupations and economic activities the Babi community in Khurasan also represents a cross section of society. A large group of the 'ulama with rural backgrounds, together with small landowners, local merchants and manufacturers and a few of the local state officials, formed the backbone of this community.¹

Prior to the study of the Babis of Khurasan some attempt should be made to look at the social and economic life of the province in the light of the events and upheavals which shaped the history of Khurasan in the decades prior to the emergence of the Babi movement. This survey needs to be carried out in order to examine whether there was any tangible relationship between the general pattern of change in Khurasan and the later spread of the Babi movement. Such an investigation has some significance since it helps to verify theories which have been put forward to explain the emergence of millenarian movements purely in terms of political and economic processes.

From the political point of view, in the closing decades of the 18th and the first two decades of the 19th century the province of Khurasan remained largely independent from the rest of the country. The gradual decline in the power of the Afšār princes, and the increase in the mobility and power of tribal forces in the province, led to the formation of a semi-independent tribal confederation which dominated central and southern Khurasan almost up to the end of the 1820's, before being finally crushed and subordinated by the Qājār central government.² In this period of tribal domination, in spite of some disturbances which occurred in the complex pattern of nomadic settlements, largely because of some tribal movements and dislocations, and in spite of some territorial clashes and skirmishes between local chiefs, a relative degree of tranquillity and economic prosperity existed under the protection of powerful chiefs such as

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¹ See below.

² Some aspects of the social and political history of central Khurasan are studied in a separate paper.
Ishaq Khan Qara’ī (d.1232/1816). But as the Qājār government under Fath-ʿAlī Shāh tried to assert further its authority beyond the Mashhad region in the late 1820's and early 1830's, particularly during ʿAbbās Mīrzā's Khurasan campaign (1830-3), the whole of central Khurasan went through a phase of insecurity and unrest. In this transitory period, the limited prosperity and calm seem to have gradually diminished as the inhabitants of towns and villages suffered from army mobilisations, inter-tribal conflicts, sieges and the retaliatory raids of rebellious tribes. Such elements not only directly affected the life of the area but also weakened the tribal defence structure, and thus left the way clear for the increased incursions of Turkomans, Hazārihs and other tribes of the north and north-west.

Yet despite the hardships of this period, a decade later, by the time the Qājārs had finally managed to maintain, at least temporarily, control over the province in the late 1830's and early 1840's, it seems that a limited improvement occurred in the overall state of towns and cities which lasted up to the next major uprising in the province (1848-50) and the subsequent campaign of the central government, this time against the rebellious Ṣālār and his brothers, sons of Asif al-Daulih. This brief interlude, however temporary, was partly due to the political stability under the capable Governor General Asif al-Daulih.

1. For the tribes of Khurasan see RS, IX, pp.275-9; ET, ĪLĀT (by A.K.S. Lambton) and J. Perry, 'Forced Migration in Iran during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' in Iranian Studies, VIII, 1975, pp.199-215. Some reference to the prosperity of Khurasan in the first few decades of the 19th century can be found in J. Morier, 'Some accounts of the I'liyat or wandering tribes of Persia...' in JCRS., VII, pp.230-43 and Fraser, J.B. Narrative of a journey into Khurasan in the years 1821 and 1822, London, 1825. For Ishaq Khan see RS. IX; Malcolm, History of Persia op.cit., II, 148ff. and Watson, A History of Persia, 175-7.


3. Accounts of the Sālār rebellion, as one of the major events of the 1840's, almost parallel to the process of the Babi uprising, appear in most of the contemporary sources; Watson, op.cit. Chapter XII, NT, III, RS. X and Montazam-i Māšīrī op.cit. III, all under 1263-65, are the most obvious ones. Yet, in spite of the abundance of the primary materials, no critical analysis has yet been done.
(who had been appointed in 1833/1249 Q. in cooperation with his son, Sālār) and partly to the tacit reconciliation with the local tribes which was mainly due to Āsif al-Daulih's wish to establish an independent power base and further his aims for advancement in the central administration.

Joseph Wolff, who visited Khurasan for the second time in 1844, states: 'the change for the better I have met with in Khorassaun, since the time I was here in 1831, is surprising - a proof of what a well-regulated government is able to effect; for it is evidently now better governed by the king and his lord-lieutenant than it was under those tyrannical khans, who have been successfully exterminated in the most wonderful manner'. Later, in 1845, Ferrier also noticed that at least in western and central Khurasan, in spite of all the miseries which had left their seal on the whole province, signs of relief had yet emerged in the cities and their surroundings. Sabzivar is described as a town 'full of life', which is the centre of 'a rich district'; 'in its environs are handsome villages and well-cultivated land which stretches beyond the horizon, a sight of rare occurrence in Persia. It was the first time I had witnessed such a scene, and this is the best proof of the efficient and benevolent rule of the governor-general Assaf Doulet'. Further eastward, in the town of Nishābūr, since 'the citadel is in ruins ... it may be readily imagined the country in this environs has suffered in proportion; but the villages and the cultivation which still remain sufficiently prove that not even all this misery could induce the population wholly to retire from this valley, for in no other part of Persia would they have found such another fertile spot.

The comparative improvement in the affairs of the province in the early 1840's is also evident in Mashhad's regaining its function as a centre for a flourishing trade between central and southern Persia and Central Asia. Imports

1. A Mission to Bokhara, op.cit. 103. It is worth mentioning that Wolff's strong views on the 'tyrannical khans' should be seen in the light of his imprisonment at the hands of Muḥammad Khān Qara'I in 1831 (pp.85, 98), while his praise of the 'well-regulated government' is partly due to the assistance which he received from the Persian government on his journey to Bukhārā. The above example illustrates the way in which the treatment which foreign travellers received affected the impartiality of their descriptions. However in the light of the scarcity of available Persian material on this period, it is impossible to avoid some careful use of these travel accounts. The fact that some of these travellers had previously visited and become acquainted with the province enables us to give some weight to their accounts.


3. Ibid., 105.
of manufactured goods as well as a variety of the local products of the Khurasan province were exchanged with the raw materials and nomadic products of Central Asia in the retail shops and caravanserais of Mashhad. Products of high quality textiles such as Mashhadi carpets, shawls, light silk goods and other traditional crafts, provided a brisk market for the merchant investors who imported the raw materials, used the cheap labour, and sold the finished products with a large profit. The considerable volume of trade, revitalisation of traditional industries, constant flow of labourers and pilgrims, revenues from religious endowments and donations to the Shrine, construction of new premises, and a gradual improvement in the state of the fields and orchards in the hinterland brought some degree of prosperity to the inhabitants of the city. In fact Ferrier's picture of Mashhad in 1845 differs considerably from Fraser's description of insecurity and economic decline in 1833.

Further south of Mashhad, the extensive ruins of former villages, caravanserais and fortresses were still the significant features of the landscape. Yet in the meantime, the signs of improvements in the form of 'well inhabited' villages, or 'fertile districts which produce a handsome revenue to the Governor-General of Khorassan', are observable. It was no coincidence that new villages reappeared near the ruins of the old fortresses, as had always been the case in the past. It appears that in these years, the depopulation of central and southern Khurasan was partly compensated for by the arrival of newcomers. Ferrier notices that the town of Shahr Nau and its environs near the ruins of the once important fortress of Mahmudabad, in the east of Turbat-i Haydariyih, 'is inhabited by 2000 families of Hazarahs, who have recently emigrated from Harat to Persia'. The village Kariz, next to the ruins of the fort of Abbasabad, once a well known refuge for the rebellious tribal chiefs, 'has recently been repeopled by Hazarahs ...'.

But it appears that the change in the population pattern was not wholly due to the movements of eastern tribes. Other motives also accelerated the process of repopulation. The continuous immigration of the Shi'i's of Herat, who were...

1. Ibid. pp.124-5. 2. Ibid. pp.120-27. 3. Fraser, A Winter Journey op.cit. 4. Ibid. X, pp.134ff. 5. Ibid. 135. 6. Ibid. 137. 7. Ibid. 8. Ibid. 138.
under the persecution of their Sunnī Afghān rulers, was not a new feature in Khurāsan. However, during and after Muhammad Shāh's campaign in 1837-8, the mounting hostility of the ruling Afghāns towards the pro-Persian Shiʿi population sharply increased the number of Herātī refugees. At the time of the Qājār retreat, more than 30,000 Shiʿi refugees of the city and district of Herāt, who were afraid of Afghān retaliation, accompanied the Qājār forces back into Iran, and mostly settled in the towns and villages of Khurāsan. Not only the Herātī immigrants but refugees and immigrants from other neighbouring towns and provinces were attracted to centres such as Mashhad. Ferrier, reckoning the population of Mashhad, states: 'Since the immigration of the population of Marv and Sharaks (Sarakhs), Herāt and Kandahār, the number of resident inhabitants may be fixed at 60,000 and 30,000 pilgrims and strangers ...'.

However, the arrival of the newcomers was not always welcomed by the inhabitants of Khurāsan. The expansion of the Hazārīh, or the other tribes of the Chāhār Uymāq for instance, who because of the increase in their population were obliged to divide and migrate, was not always a peaceful process. The raids of some of the unsettled Hazārīh, who plundered villages and caravans, were by no means less destructive than those of the Turkomans, who by now extended further south as far as the district of Qā'īn, where they 'sacked villages and carried off the people to sell them to the Usbeks'. Under the Asīf al-Daulīh, measures were taken to come to some reconciliation with local tribes, yet the government's successive efforts from 1837 onwards, to punish the rebellious Uymāqāt or Turkomans in parts of the exterior of Khurāsan, did not have any decisive result. Nevertheless, the relative security in the less afflicted parts provided a more tolerable life for the inhabitants.

In the interior of Khurāsan, which, because of its climatic and geographical features, offered a small volume of agricultural surplus, the inhabitants usually allocated part of their cultivated lands to more valuable crops such as cotton, silk and opium. This was traditionally accompanied by the use of small-scale industries as an additional source of income for these communities. The production of wool from the camels and flocks of sheep of the local tribes, particularly around Tūn, Tabas, Sīryān and other southern towns, and the

1. Watson, op.cit., 298.
2. RS. X, 234.
3. Ferrier, op.cit., 121.
4. Ibid. 191.
6. RS. X, pp.211ff.
cultivation of silk and cotton throughout the districts of Turbat¹, Muhavvalat², Turshiz³, Tun⁴, Tabas⁵, Nishabur⁶ and Sabzivar⁷, provided cheap and relatively accessible sources for raw materials, and facilitated the traditional textile industry.

Manufacturers of high quality woollen clothes (barak) in Bushruyih⁸ and Bajistan⁹, silk clothes (chaddur shahi) in Bajistan¹⁰, silk embroidery (kashidi) in Kakhk¹¹, cotton clothes in and around Gunabad¹², coarse cotton clothes (kharbus), silk-cotton clothes (alijih) and woollen stuffs in Mayamay¹³, high quality carpet (both silk and woollen) in Qa’in¹⁴ and Bīrjand¹⁵, and felt carpets in Bīrjand¹⁶ were the main export items in this predominantly agricultural area. It is likely that some expansion occurred just at the time when the provincial government was effective enough to maintain some security on the roads so as to allow the agricultural and finished products to reach the markets of centres such as Mashhad and Yazd¹⁷. Other small industries and crafts such as shoe and boot production in Shahrud (Bastam)¹⁸, iron in thick wrought-iron plates in Turshiz¹⁹, or finished agricultural implements in Kakhk²⁰, turquoise in Nīshābūr and Mashhad²¹, and sheep skins in Sabzivar²², also provided other alternatives for trade.

1. Ibid. 137. Also Macdonald Kinneir, J. A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire, London, 1813. 185.
2. In the villages of Fayzābād, Dughbād, ʿAbdallāhābād and Mihand. Eastern Persia, I, 325.
5. Ibid. 439.
6. Ibid. 103.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid. 347.
14. Ferrier, op.cit. 441.
16. Ibid.
17. Ferrier. op.cit. 121. Also Lambton 'Persian Trade', op.cit., pp.218-9 and related sources.
The output of these local industries was obviously small and not significant by modern standards, yet within a traditional framework, village industry and trade attracted the peasantry, primarily no doubt the surplus population. The case of Mullā Husain's own family illustrates a combination between agriculture and local industry. Originally from a hamlet near Bushruyih, his father Mullā 'Abdallah, who seems to have been a small land-owner, moved to the town of Bushruyih, where as part of the local weaving industry, he ran a dye-house (sabbāghi) with a number of apprentices, while still maintaining his agricultural holdings in the neighbourhood.

Small semi-industrial and commercial communities which were sometimes entirely dependent on their trade and handicrafts, are discernible in some of the contemporary accounts. Dr. Forbes, for instance, notices the weaving communities in the districts of central and southern Khurasan. In the village of Delūvī, near Gunābād, 'the bulk of the population are weavers', while in Bīrjand 'since Harat began to be in a disturbed state some years ago, many of the carpet weavers emigrated from it to this place, and carpets of a good quality are now manufactured here, both by them and by the workmen of Bīrjān (Bīrjand)'.

The frequent movements of merchants from main centres such as Yazd and Kandahar indicate the volume of trade in the local markets. In Tun, Ferrier notices that due to the production of a variety of crops, 'there is a considerable commercial movement', while because of the light corn crops, 'in years of drought, wheat for consumption is obliged to be imported'. In Tabas, the export of market products was also great, and 'a large number of the population of Tubbus (Tabas) are by occupation caravaneers'.

Thus the limited improvement in the political affairs of the province between the mid-1830's and mid-1840's, and the relative calm and tranquillity in the countryside helped the revival of the economy in these semi-agricultural communities. Safer communication with the market towns and cities again allowed greater mobility, particularly for those groups who, either because of their role in the process of production, or for religious purposes, were in closer contact with the urban centres. It is worth noticing that by this time, the effects of imports from the west were less felt by the manufacturers and crafts-

1. See above Chapter Four, I.
2. Fu'ādī, 23.
4. Ibid. 161.
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. 439.
men of eastern Iran who contrary to their counterparts in western and central Iran, were still playing a much more important role in the economy of the region. But nevertheless this favourable atmosphere could hardly diminish the fear of an outside threat. As has already been noted, the end of tribal autonomy and greater centralisation under the Qajars did not solve the problem of security for these fragile and highly vulnerable communities.

II

Indeed the question of security long produced all types of responses from the people who could not turn to anyone but themselves to ensure their own safety. In the early decades of the 19th century in the villages of Quhistan, as Macdonald Kinner describes, 'the inhabitants, in constant fear of being attacked, never go unarmed. They even cultivate their gardens with their swords by their sides...'. Methods of defence, however primitive, ineffective and spontaneous, were adopted to safeguard lives and properties against enemies. For example, Fraser noted that in 1833, during the Qajar campaign, when the fields in the outskirts of Khabushan were plundered or set on fire by government troops, the Khurasani peasants took their revenge by killing a few soldiers. Other ways of negative resistance were also adopted by the villagers who simply absented themselves in order to conceal their supplies of food and livestock.

In the cities, however, these defensive measures in the form of popular protests seem to have taken more complex forms. Because of the higher population concentration, better organised resistance, the involvement of the lūlis as well as the local notables, the challenge was far more severe. Ferrier, visiting Mashhad in 1845, during the events leading up to the Sālar rebellion, witnessed a full scale battle in the streets of the city between 'the soldiers of the battalion of Kurds of the tribe of Guran' garrisoned in the city, 'and the inhabitants of the town, who have the reputation of being the most war-like citizens of Persia', which lasted for a few days. These attempts at resistance, however genuine in expressing the people's discontent, were often manipulated to serve the centrifugal tendencies in Khurasan, which were usually represented

2. Fraser, op.cit., II, 279.
3. Ibid. pp.270-71. Also noticed by other travellers of the time, e.g. Forbes, op.cit., 157.
by the joint forces of the tribal chiefs and the local notables. On the eve of
the Salar rebellion, a dispute between the central government and provincial
notables led to a series of violent clashes, assassinations and faction fighting
amongst the urban elite, which subsequently provoked riots in the city of
Mashhad.

The nature of these conflicts is well illustrated in the Mashhad rebellion
of 1264/1848 which was the culmination of a long series of power struggles
during the past few years between pro- and anti-Qajar officials. In Ramadan of
that year, a crowd of Mashhadis, headed by the baglarbaygi of Mashhad,
backed by the ex-governor of Khurasan Salar, and led by the lutis, some of the
anti-government 'ulama and some representatives of the merchant community, rose
against the local government. In a bloody riot, they slaughtered the mutavalli
of the Shrine and the darughih of the city, took all the strategic positions,
massacred more than seven hundred troops and government officials, and finally
after taking over control of the whole city, proceeded towards the citadel.
There, not only the Mashhadis citizens, but also the forces of the peasantry of
the region from up to ten farsakh's distance including Bulukat and Qara'i, joined
the crowd in their fight against the troops. After a long period of fighting,
it took the central government three months, and the lives of 2000 Mashhadis, to
suppress the rebellion, and re-establish central authority.

Summing up the motives behind the Mashhad rebellion, even a pro-Qajar
chronicle like Nasikh al-Tawarih is obliged to acknowledge the public aversion
towards the oppressive behaviour of the Qajar forces:

'AFTER THE AFSHAR AND HAMJAN troops arrived at Mashhad,
they showed insubordination by laying their hands on the
property and belongings of the inhabitants, and committed
such excesses, that people left their fields and crops in
the countryside in order to protect their wives and
children in their homes ... When troops from the camp
entered the villages and hamlets to get provisions and
fodder, they acted as though they were looters and
usurpers. They looted whatever they could find. There-
fore the people of Khurasan turned wholly against them ...'
These cases of popular revolt may perhaps be regarded as signs of a partial social awareness, which existed particularly amongst the poorer sections of the urban population. The available sources only provide brief references to the outlook of the ordinary people at the time. Yet it is possible to perceive the hazy image of a spirit of social awareness, not only amongst the ordinary inhabitants of the towns and villages of Khurasan, but also amongst the lower ranks of the 'ulama class, who more than the mujtahids of higher rank were in contact with the poorer and less privileged sections of society.

In the earlier decades of the 19th century, because of the isolation of Khurasan and the exceptional political circumstances which prevailed over the province, the high ranking 'ulama had performed a decisive role in leading the public and protecting the interests of the inhabitants of the cities in the conflict between the central government and the semi-autonomous powers. One example is Sayyid Muhammad Mahdī Mujtahid Mashhadī who, in 1217 (1802), as representative of the people of Mashhad, took sides with the Qajārs against the declining Afshārīds, and facilitated the entrance of their forces to the city - an assistance which cost him his life. Shortly before the final victory of the Qajārs he was killed at the hands of Nādir Sulṭān the Afshār prince.

In the decades after his death, the religious authority in the province largely remained in the control of his family. Both his brothers, Hāji Mīrzā-yi 'Asgarī the imām jum'īh of Mashhad and Mīrzā Hashim Mujtahid were amongst the most influential mujtahids of the city. But nevertheless influence over the

1. For instance, passing through a small rural weaving community near Gunābād, Dr. Forbes came across an old weaver 'who appeared a particularly acute and intelligent man'. When he enquired about the English laws and system of government, and showed interest in matters such as the absence of slavery or vassalage, prohibition of polygamy and the inheritance of the throne by a queen in Britain, Forbes noted 'The weavers here struck me very much as a class of operatives in Scotland, now fast disappearing, the hand-loom weavers - as similarity of habits, no doubt, begets similarity of disposition to some extent. They all appeared intelligent, given to politics, disputes, and possessed of a quaint and independent humour very different from that of the generality of Persians' (op.cit. 158).

2. The incident recorded in RS. IX, 378-9, 384-7. For some details on the above person see Makārīm. III, pp.645-8.

3. A short biographical account of Mīrzā-yi 'Asgarī appears in Maṭla' al-Shams, op.cit. II, 397. For their influential role in the affairs of Mashhad see A Mission to Bokhara, op.cit. pp.200ff. Conolly, (A Journey to the North of India overland from England through Russia, Persia and Afghanistan, 2 vols., 2nd edition, London, 1838, I, pp.226ff) provides some valuable information on the rivalry between the two brothers for religious supremacy in the city. He also noticed the considerable wealth of one of the brothers who no doubt was Mīrzā-yi 'Asgarī. Tensions and conflicts between brothers over assuming the hereditary office is a familiar feature in the families of imam jum'īhs in the 19th century.
public and involvement in the political affairs of the province seem to have been employed by them more to protect their own private interests than those of the people. This is particularly highlighted in the above mentioned riots and disturbances in Mashhad. Indeed the trusteeship and control of the endowments of the Shrine of Imām Rīzā were always a source of dispute between the government appointed mutavallī and the mujtahids of the city.

In 1263 (1847) the appointment of mutavallībāshī Mīrzā 'Abdallāh Khū'I by Ḥājī Mīrzā Ḥādisī renewed these disputes. A coalition which was formed between Mīrzā-yi 'Asgarī and the rebellious Sālār against the new mutavallī in cooperation with other local notables, merchants, tribal chiefs and some of the government officials, was primarily designed to drive the mutavallī out of office and regain control of the Shrine's endowments which were previously in the hands of Asīf al-Daulih. However involvement in the death of the mutavallī temporarily endangered the position of Mīrzā-yi 'Asgarī who was already under suspicion for his cooperation with the British in the episode of the Herat campaign (1837-8). He was summoned to the capital and there he was detained till the end of Muhammad Shāh's life. Just before his departure, at his meeting with Dr. Wolff, Mīrzā-yi 'Asgarī pointed out: 'I was suspected by Muhammad Shāh to be partial to England, and he therefore invited me to appear at Tehran. I obeyed the summons, but I could drive out the Kajar (Qajārs) from Mashhad whenever I please'. Indeed to safeguard his interests it appears that 'Asgarī was prepared to use whatever he had at his disposal to diminish the power of his rivals. On one occasion he was even prepared to support a preacher in Mashhad who propagated the futility of pilgrimage, perhaps only to check the power of the mutavallī who depended on the alms and contributions of the pilgrims.

But if Mīrzā-yi 'Asgarī and other leading mujtahids like him were able to maintain high positions and obtain a large degree of influence in the affairs of the city, this was primarily due to the loyalty to them which was shown by the public in general and by the mullas and religious students in particular. In the middle decades of the 19th century, however, this loyalty seems to have been questioned by some of the mullas and religious students who, although

1. After the death of the previous mutavallī Mīrzā Mūsā Farahānī in 1261 (1845) Asīf al-Daulih assumed the trusteeship of the Shrine but soon afterwards in 1262 (1846) he was accused of mis-managing the Shrine endowments and by the order of Muhammad Shāh, was exiled to 'Atabāt. (RS. X, pp.332-4).
4. Ibid. 201. See below.
brought up in Mashhad's religious schools under orthodox mujtahids, were gradually attracted towards non-orthodox trends. These were mainly students who came either from low rank ulama families, or more often from the families of local merchants and traders, the small landowners and occasionally artisans and asnaf of the small towns and cities of Khurasan. They were the best of the students in the local schools who came to the cities like Mashhad to seek a new career beyond the horizon of their native community. From villages to small towns, then to provincial centres and finally to the main centres of learning in Iraq: these were the successive stages of a long and selective course, which only a tiny minority was able to accomplish. Beside the traditional merits of religious studies, the quest for further knowledge, as far as the tullab of these local schools were concerned, was a sensible alternative to the stagnant, insecure and highly dependent life of the village. It was an accessible means of social mobility for under-privileged groups, by means of which they might compensate for or even supersede the advantages of power, wealth and family esteem. Though the material position of a talabih, if not worse, was certainly not better than that of most of the people, yet his social status as a seeker of knowledge put him above the ordinary man in the community. After years of laborious and often dedicated work, when the majority of these newly qualified ulama returned to their home towns and villages, they had already secured a prominent position in the community. Moreover, their involvement in the local mosques or madrasah, however insignificant it may seem, could offer them a fair chance of advancement in society.

It appears that some of the local tullab, who were born and bred in central Khurasan, and later proceeded with their higher education in the provincial centres, having passed through the customary steps in the course of their studies, experienced the austerity and seclusion of the madrasah, were later able, when they returned to their home towns, to enjoy the same venerated position in local communities. Yet, it seems that under the given conditions, they also undertook the delicate role of popular leadership of the oppressed inhabitants of the semi-urban communities. As will be discussed, some attitudes amongst this section of young mullas and tullab, though by no means unprecedented in religious circles, may still be regarded as the indirect outcome of urban social groupings in Khurasani society. Groups of urbanised villagers, small landowners, local retailers, small-scale craftsmen and low ranking clergy were brought up in an environment which, despite improvements of late 1830's and early 1840's,

1. See below
still bore the marks of chronic unrest, frequent wars, tribal incursions, oppressive rulers, and changes in the economic climate, that had been characteristic of the earlier decades of the 19th century.

Their common social background was a positive factor in attracting the lower ranking 'ulama towards a theological school such as Shaykhistism which, because of its popular and millenarian characteristics, held considerable appeal for those from central Khurasan who perhaps had in their background some distant traces of earlier messianic beliefs. It is noteworthy that traditionally Quhistan was one of the two major Isma'ili strongholds in the middle ages. After the fall of Alamut and the destruction of the Isma'ili strongholds in the 13th century, the influence of the Isma'iliis remained in Quhistan and occasionally re-emerged in the form of crypto-Isma'ili movements. Many of the villages in the Quhistan area as far north as Nishâbûr but particularly in the region around Turbat-i Haydarîyih, Turshiz, Tabas, Qa'in and as far south as Shahr-i Bâbak and Kirmân which have either held open Isma'ili beliefs or preserved signs of an Isma'ili past up to the present time, testify to the extent of this influence.

The rise of the Isma'ili Imams from their previous obscurity and their involvement in the political life in the second half of the 18th century, which is highlighted in the episode of Imam Abûl Hasan Shah in Kirmân (1756-1791/2) and later the abortive attempts of Shâh Khalîlallâh in Yazd (1817) and the revolt of Aqa Khân (1843) confirm that there was some revival of the Isma'ili communities. Furthermore, Mîrza 'Abd al-Husain Fayz 'Alî Shah, one of the most important advocates of the Na'matallahî order in its revival in the late 18th century, who was previously the imam jum'ih of Tabas, seems to have come from an Isma'ili background. However the extent of this revival should not be exaggerated, since there is no evidence to suggest that there was any direct Isma'ili element in the background of the characters who were involved in the Babi movement. Perhaps it is only possible to say that the Isma'ili ideas and beliefs which had survived in the area in oral or written form might have contributed to the emergence of a spirit of messianism amongst those who later joined the Babi movement.

The influence of Shaykhi teachings on the other hand, which by the mid-19th century had penetrated the religious circles of eastern Iran, seems to have

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2. See above Chap. Two, III and cited sources. 3. See above Chapter Two, I.
contributed to this sense of millenarianism more than anything else. It appears that Shaykh Ahmad's long residence in Yazd, then a prosperous trade centre and hence a centre for Khurasani tullāb, attracted the first serious attention towards Shaykhi ideas. According to his son Shaykh 'Abdallāh, at the time of Shaykh Ahmad's residence in Yazd (1223-28/1808-13), 'the cause of his reverence was disseminated in the towns, and publicised in the provinces. All 'ulama and scholars expressed their submission, and sent their problems to him. In reply he wrote treatises in which he revealed the mysteries suitable to their capacity, and publicised moral virtues as much as people could tolerate, till the fame of his knowledge and his virtues reached everywhere.'

Later in 1236 Q. (1820-1), he visited small cities such as Tabas and Turbat-i Haydariyih on his way from Mashhad to Yazd, and he was warmly received by the inhabitants, including the renowned chief of the Qarā'īs, Muhammad Khan, son of Ishaq Khan. This visit had laid the foundation for the later conversion of tullāb to the Shaykhi school. Many of the tullāb and mujtahids, who later joined the ranks of the Babis, appear to have been first attracted to the Shaykhi doctrine while they were in the schools of Yazd and Mashhad. In contrast to the established orthodoxy, Shaykhism, and especially its later messianic interpretations, implied new scope for changes for a better and more just society under the guidance of the Imam of the Age. Indeed the influence of the Shaykhi school in Khurasan can be better understood in the light of the intellectual climate in Mashhad in the early decades of the nineteenth century which by comparison with religious centres such as Isfahan and 'Atabāt, was less dominated by the new generation of the Usūli fuqahā and hence better allowed the spread of other less orthodox tendencies. The attraction of students such as Mulla 'Abd al-Khāliq Yazdī to Shaykh Ahmad's circle in Yazd was due to this very fact.

The diffusion of messianic beliefs, more than anything else, prepared the ground for the arrival of popular figures, in most cases bearing some controversial and often undeveloped claims for reform which were in contrast with the

1. Ibid.
3. Ibid. 37.
4. See for example above Chapter Four for Mulla Ḥusain Bushrūyīhī. Chapter Five for Mulla 'Alī Baštāmī and Chapter Six for Mulla Ṣādiq Muqaddas Khurāsānī.
5. See above Chapter One, II.
views of the established orthodoxy. In September 1844, during his short abode in Mashhad, Dr. Wolff, who because of his own millenarian beliefs often paid some attention to the religious affairs of the country, noticed the appearance of a new schism in the city:

'It is remarkable that dissenters in doctrine are now prevailing largely in the Muhammedan religion. The controversy which agitates now the Christian Church, with regard to the usefulness of ceremonies and tradition, agitates now also the Muhammedan community. A Sayed (i.e. Sayyid) at Mashhad began to teach that the Koran was quite enough, and pilgrimages unnecessary. This, in the great city of Imaum Resa (Imām Rīzā) was extraordinary doctrine ... A strong cry of heresy was raised against the Sayed, but Mirza Askere (Mīrzā-yi Asgarī) protected him. A fierce schism now prevails among the Sheahs (Shī'īs) at Mashed.'

This brief but important passage, if not a vague reference to the Babis, who at the time had just started their activities in the province, may be counted as justifiable evidence to show the existence of fundamentalist and perhaps even messianic attitudes in the religious milieu of the time. Wolff who stresses the 'diminishing power of fanaticism' throughout Iran, seems to have noticed the vacuum which in his view ought to have been appreciated by the Christian missionaries. 'I was frequently asked for copies of the Bible; and in the cities of Semnan (Simnān), Damghan (Dāmghān), Nishapoor (Nīshābūr) and Mashhad (Mashhad), I was invited to open discussions about religion with the chief Mullahs ... Writings published against Muhammedanism by the late missionary, Mr. Pfander are read at Mashhad and Nishapoor with eagerness.'

However, in view of his eccentric zealouness, Wolff's remarks on religious controversies in the province are not entirely reliable. Yet, it is fair to assume that a considerable amount of religious tension between rival factions paved the way for anti-orthodox claims to be heard not only by the public, but also to receive the blessing of the anti-government mujtahids. This was perhaps an indication of a growing tendency amongst the ordinary people to be attracted

1. A Mission to Bokhara, op.cit. 201.
2. Ibid. 88.
3. Ibid. 201. For the effect of comparative Christian missionary activites, and particularly the diffusion of Christian polemics, such as Pfander's writings, see A.A. Powell, 'Maulānā Raḥmat Allāh Kairānawī and Muslim-Christian Controversy in India in the mid-19th Century' in JRAS, 1976, pp.42-63.
4. See above.
towards low ranking mullahs and sayyids who preached certain reformistic missions.1

III

The conversion of the first Babis in Khurasan was due, more than anything, to the efforts of Mullâ Husain Bushru'iyîhî and a handful of his close Babi ex-school associates who, in their travels to various parts of Khurasan in the first four years of the movement, by converting a number of individuals in various towns and villages, founded the basis of the Babi community. Beside Mullâ Husain and Mullâ 'Alî Bastami, there were other Khurasanis amongst the early believers of Shiraz. Mullâ Muhammad Hasan, Mullâ Husain's brother, and Mullâ Muhammad Bâqir his nephew, both accompanied him on most of his journeys. Also Mullâ Hasan Bajistanî and Mullâ Khuda Bakhsh Quchanî were amongst the Letters of Hayy, but their role in the expansion of the movement was far less significant than that of Mullâ Husain.

Mullâ Husain must have reached Mashhad some time in late Sha'bân 1260 (September 1844). He stopped en route in some cities and passed on his message to a number of 'trusted' people who seem to have had connections with him because of previous Shaykhi links. In the later months of 1260, he was residing in Mashhad, where he established contacts with the Shaykhi followers and sympathisers. It was here that in collaboration with Mullâ Muhammad Bâqir Qa'înî he founded the first centre for the Babi teaching known as Bâbîyîh. Originally a small house in the region of Bala Khîyabân belonging to Mullâ Muhammad Bâqir Qa'înî, it was the residence of Mullâ Husain during his visits to Mashhad. It became a centre for Mullâ Husain's teaching, a place for frequent gatherings, the abode of the Babi disciples in the city, and the focal point for all activities in Khurasan. The role of the Bâbîyîh in the early development of the community of Khurasan is considerable. In the later years of the movement it was from here that the first recruitment was made for the march to Mazandaran.2

1. See above Chapter One.
2. Nabil. pp.126-7, Fu'âdî. pp.48-9. In the summer of 1264 (1848), Mullâ Husain on his return from Azarbâijân and Mazandaran, was able to buy in the neighbourhood of Mullâ Muhammad Bâqir's house 'a tract of land on which he began to erect the house which he had been commanded to build, and to which he gave the name of Bâbîyîh, a name that bears to the present day' (Nabil. 267).
According to the earlier arrangement with the Bab, Mullâ Husain sent a letter to Shiraz. In this letter, as Nabil Zarandî states, he gave a full report of his activities at different stages of his journey. In it, he enclosed a list of the names of those who had responded to his call, and of whose steadfastness and sincerity he was assured. If Nabil could be relied on in this point, it seems that, as had been planned formerly, the Bab was anxious to examine the public response to his call, reflected in Mullâ Husain's account, before he set out for Hijaz. Indeed the outcome of Mullâ Husain's mission, particularly during his stay in Mashhad, indicates that his efforts were generally concentrated on three major groups: 'ulama and tullâb, local merchants and a few local state officials. Although it appears that such clear distinctions were not of prime importance in Mullâ Husain's mind, and he probably approached any person whom he found prepared for his ideas, yet in this preliminary stage the above groups seem to have responded better to his message. On the other hand, it must be pointed out that drawing a distinctive line between these groups, as far as 'ulama and merchants were concerned, is sometimes difficult and even misleading.

Another difficult distinction to make is that between the urban and rural backgrounds of Mullâ Husain's early followers. Although his own personal impact was immediately felt in Mashhad, it is important to note that the groups who received his message most enthusiastically came from semi-rural regions of central and north-western Khurasan. It was the middle and lower ranking 'ulama and tullâb, teaching and studying in the provincial capital, who most readily accepted his mission. It was only to be expected that these groups in their turn were able to have considerable influence in the propagation of these new beliefs in their own home towns and villages. As far as can be assessed from the available sources, in Bushruyîh, Mullâ Husain's home town, between 1260-64 (1844-8) more than sixty individuals firmly accepted the Babi creed. Records

1. Nabil. 126.
2. Whether such a letter ever reached the Bab before his departure is a matter open to dispute. As we will see in the next chapter, the Bab, according to his own account, left Shiraz for Bushihr on 26th Sha'âbân 1260, and subsequently embarked from Bushihr for Jidda on 19th Ramađân 1260 (2nd October 1844). Therefore, concerning the approximate arrival of Mullâ Husain to Mashhad, under no circumstances can Nabil's date (p.126) for the arrival of Mullâ Husain's letter to the Bab on 27th Ramađân 1260 (10 October 1844) be justified. Some evidence suggests that he must have received the letter after his return from the Hajj (see below Chapter Nine). It should be pointed out that no trace of this report can be found other than the single reference in Nabil.
may also be found of the number and usually the identity of other early Babis in central Khurasan. In fact it is possible to count more than 57 of them: eight in Turbat-i Haydarīyih, three in Azghand, three in Ḩabāb, seven in Mahnī, ten in Ḥisār and Ṯāqī, five in Fayzābād, two in Dughābād, three in Turshīz, nine in Qā'īn (seven of them originally from Herat), two from Bāji, two from Tabas and one each from Tūn, Kākhk and Gunābād. In the north-western region also, thirty-two can be identified in Mayamay, five from Biyarjmand and a few from other places. Compared to the recorded names of the Babis in other parts of Khurasan, mostly urban centres such as Mashhad (twelve), Sabzivār (seven), Nīshābur (three) and a few in other towns, it is evident that the greater part of the Babis was concentrated in the semi-rural towns and villages of central Khurasan.

However it must be pointed out that the above figures most probably only represent a section of a larger community in the area. They are based on the names of those active Babis who are known to us because of taking part in certain events, dying in upheavals, or suffering certain persecutions. Besides, a substantial portion of those who are identified are the local mullas of the small towns and villages who had the support of their local communities. Thus it is not illogical to assume that they represented a larger Babi population in the area, particularly in the early years when, setting aside the cases of the learned ʿulama and ʾullāb, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between the converts and sympathisers amongst the ordinary people. The reference in Tarikh-i Amri-yi Khurasan that at one stage 2000 inhabitants of Bushruyīh attended Mullā Husain's preachings and were attracted to his message, may be taken as one example of this public support. Similarly the support given to Mullā Muḥammad Baqir Qāʿīnī in Mashhad or to Mullā Zayn al-ʿAbidīn, the mujtahid of Mayamay and Mullā Ṭāhā the mujtahid of Ḥisār and Ṯāqī, who were converted together with all their students and followers, may be mentioned.

The first and foremost group among the early believers, both in position and number, were those who came from the ranks of the āʿūlāma, namely low ranking mullas, newly authorised mujtahids and a few well established āʿūlāma who were mostly assembled in Mashhad. As far as can be substantiated, they were mainly of Shaykhi background, and already anticipated, in one way or another, what Mullā Husain proposed in his teachings. Given the paucity of information on the religious background of the believers, one can only go so far as to say that like Mullā Husain, most of the ʾullāb and āʿūlāma who recognised the Bab were influenced

1. Fuʿādī, pp.276-282.
at one stage of their studies by Shaykhi teachings\(^1\). The cases to be discussed below clarify the position of the Shaykhi school in the religious environment of Mashhad in the years prior to the emergence of the movement. No doubt strong ties between the Shaykhi students, who sometimes attended the lectures of one or a few teachers for years and shared a similar training, also contributed to this wide acceptance. So did the family bonds which existed between the Babi missionaries and the inhabitants of a certain town or village.

However, it may be argued that these are only outward manifestations of a much deeper motive behind the wide acceptance of the movement in the area. What has been said in the earlier sections about political and economic changes may better explain the circumstances under which such conversions took place. Of course it would be a matter of simplicity to assume that this millenarian concern was the direct outcome of the political and economic calamities of the time, but nevertheless such a coincidence between the events of the recent past, almost in the life span of most of the converts, and the wide acceptance of a messianic belief should not be underestimated. Perhaps the key to this subtle relationship may be found in the religious inclination towards heterodox ideas and beliefs which by itself served as a means of defence and resistance against the ever present pressures and threats of the outside world. With the amount of information available in the sources it is an impossible task to try to propose a more tangible link beyond the mere demonstration of such a coincidence, yet the very survival of heterodox tendencies in the area and their re-emergence in the form of Shaykhi adherence may be taken as evidence for the important part played by religion, and particularly non-orthodox religion, in reflecting the effects of socio-political changes in society.

What perhaps made some amongst this generation of 'ulama distinctive in their outlook was the fact that within their own theological framework they were able to express a tangible degree of response towards conflicts in their environment. It is arguable to what extent they were consciously aware of the causes of conflict, or whether such causality in the modern sense had any place in their intellectual mould, but nonetheless they were perhaps able to trace a pattern in the course of recent developments which was in harmony with their eschatological expectations. Therefore it is possible to suggest that they went beyond the accepted and often isolated image of the Shi'i 'ulama whose concern was confined to abstract theological arguments and to the everyday affairs of

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1. See above Chapter Four, I.
the sharīʿ. However articulate and well-cultivated they might be, they mirrored
the aspirations and frustrations of their fellow inhabitants.

Some manifestation of this role can be seen in those individuals who are
known to have been converted to the movement during Mulla Ḥusain’s first
residence in Mashhad in 1260-1 (1844-5). The first of them, Mulla ʿAbd al-Khāliq
Yazdī, a leading Shaykhi mujtahid of his time, was counted amongst ‘the senior
‘ulama’ of Khurasan. A former disciple of Ahsaʿī, he studied under him
especially during his residence in Yazd in the 1230’s (1810’s)2, and even
according to Muʿīn al-Saltāniḥ, was sometimes his host in that city3. His
father, according to Nuqtat al-ʿĀṯf, was a converted Jew originally from Yazd4,
and he himself seems to have emigrated to the district of Turbat-i Haydariyih,
where his family settled in the village of Fāzībād in Muḥāvvalat5. He
completed his studies in Ṭāḥtāb, particularly under the celebrated teacher
Sharīf al-ʿUlamā in fiqh and usul6, and eventually received a number of ijāzāt
for ijtihād7.

After spending some time in different centres such as Shiraz and Yazd8, he

1. Tabaqāt. II, 2, 723.
2. Nabil. 7. Shaykh Ahmad’s residence in Yazd was roughly between 1223-28 Q.
Karīm Khān Kirmānī Ḥidayat al-Ṭalibīn cited in Fihrist, I, pp.210, and II,
pp.198-9. At this time Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq was probably a young mujtahid
who had recently returned from Ṭāḥtāb. It is interesting to see that in
Daʾīl al-Mutahayyirīn (op.cit., pp.21-22), Sayyid ʿAzīz Rashīdī does not
mention ʿAbd al-Khāliq amongst those ‘ulama and ṭullāb who acknowledged
Shaykh Ahmad’s high status. This is perhaps due to the later rivalry
between them.
3. TMS. 42.
4. NK. pp.203, 211. Though no particular evidence is known to us, which
suggests the conversion of the Yazdī Jews at the time, yet it appears that
his conversion, either forcibly or voluntarily, was as a result of wide-
spread persecution in the late 18th and early 19th century. (Levy, H.
Also W.J. Fischel ‘The Jews of Persia, 1795-1940’ in Jewish Social Studies,
XII (1950), pp.120-124)
5. His son Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī is known to have been from Fāzībād, which
suggests that his father was also a resident of this village. Tarḵā-i
Yakhūd (op.cit. III, pp.522, 592, 634) indicates the presence of the Jews in
Turbat-i Haydarīyih. Kāyān (op.cit. II, 200) without mentioning Jews,
states that a community of Yazdī traders and craftsmen immigrants settled
in the district of Turbat. It is probable that this movement took place at
the time of Iṣḥāq Khān’s governorship.
7. Tabaqāt. op.cit. The text of his ijāzāt appears at the end of one of his
books, Muʿīn al-Mujtahidīn.
8. Matlaʿ al-Shams op.cit. III, 253. See also above Chapter Three, I on his
residence in Shiraz and his early acquaintance with the young Bab and his
finally settled in Mashhad, where he held regular preaching and teaching sessions in the *Tawhīd Khānīh* of the Shrine. He was praised by some sources for his 'eloquent oratory' and his 'vast knowledge', and the author of *Tabaqāt Aʿlām al-Shīʿa* enumerates six works by him on subjects such as the sufferings of the Imāms, usūl and strange sciences (known as *Risāla fī 'ilm al-Masa*). Perhaps following the example of his teacher, Shaykh Ahmad AhsaʾĪ, his venture into the field of sciences gave him the necessary confidence to assume a certain authority for himself in the Shaykhi camp. After AhsaʾĪ's death, according to Nābil Zaranī, he competed against and even challenged Sayyid Ḵazīm, but later in the course of time accepted his authority.

Mulla ʿAbd al-Khāliq was one of the chief defenders of the Shaykhi cause in Iran. On one occasion, when Mulla Muḥammad Jaʿfar Astarābādī, known as Sharīʿatmadār, a notorious enemy of the Shaykhis who as a result of his provocations had twice been physically attacked by the extreme Shaykhis, arrived at Mashhad, Mulla ʿAbd al-Khāliq openly challenged him in a public dispute. The extent of the controversy even reached Muhammad Shāh, who on the way back from the Herat campaign (Rajab 1254 Q./1838-9), personally intervened in the matter, and subsequently obliged Sharīʿatmadār to return to Tehran. Probably it was in connection with the same incident that, according to *Nuqtat al-Kāf*, as a result of anti-Shaykhi propaganda, Yazdī was forbidden to preach and confined in his house. Such an incident may be regarded as a clear indication of the emergence of a more challenging attitude in the Shaykhi school. Mulla Ḥusayn gained a great success in his mission by winning Mulla ʿAbd al-Khāliq's support. His recognition would have immense value for the formation of the Babi community for a number of reasons. He was a well known and influential mujtahid in his own sphere, and his acceptance of the cause might eventually bring numerous tullāb and followers to the movement. Further, his open acknowledgement of the Bab in his popular preaching was an instrument to attract a Mashhadī audience. Finally, because of his high status in the city, and also his harsh attitude towards his opponents, he could be a strong support for the embryonic

3. *Nabil*. 7. 4. Ibid. 11.
Babi circle. The importance given by the Bab to Mullâ 'Abd al-Khâliq's recognition is evident not only in his correspondence with the old mujtahid, but also in one of his letters to Muhammad Shah in 1263-4, where he designates Mullâ 'Abd al-Khâliq together with Sayyid Yahyâ Darabi (Vahîd) as the Bab's representatives, known to the Shah, to whom inquiry could be made about the truth of his cause.

As may be concluded from nâsîkh al-tawârîkh, Yazdî was amongst the first to be converted by Mullâ Husain in Khurasan. But, since nâsîkh al-tawârîkh somehow treats the events of four years (1844-48/1260-64) as one incident, more proofs must be provided in order to substantiate this claim. In a long letter addressed to Mullâ 'Abd al-Khâliq, the Bab in his usual imprecatory style discussed important matters, the revelation of which, had Yazdî been an unbeliever, would have seemed quite illogical. Further there is an important Arabic letter by Mullâ 'Abd al-Khâliq addressed to the Bab (probably in reply to his correspondence), in which he pays homage to the Bab as 'the most exalted remembrance of God (Dhi크allah) amongst 'Arab and 'Ajam. He wholly acknowledges Sayyid 'Alî Muhammad's status of Babîyat and points out:

'I do not know with what tongue I should thank God for the honour of having been in your service for a long time, and with what speech I should apologise for my ignorance of your real status, and I feel very sorry. I do not know with what words I should pray God for your writing to me, your humble obedient servant. Thus you made me hopeful, and I am hopeful, since I see myself a servant of God attendant upon the Bab. How wonderful, how wonderful that according to the promises of God's tongue, the paradise of justice (jamnât al-'adl) is definitely established. Therefore my lord, my God, I beg to be honoured by being taken into the service of my lord and my master. Thus I will be gathered amongst his pure companions and

1. Letter to Muhammad Shâh, INBA, pub. No.64, pp.103-150 (123). This letter is also partly cited in Nicolas, pp.367-376 (373).
2. NT, III, 235.
3. INBA, pub. No.91, pp.94-102.
4. See below Chapter Nine, IV.
followers, for the sake of the greater Dhikr whom God designated as a luminous sun to us.\(^1\)

The above words were written by a mujtahid of high status but they illustrate the degree to which the previous messianic influences could justify the truthfulness of the new revelation. On the other hand, the significance of Mullā 'Abd al-Khāliq's position may be measured from the Bab's reference in a letter in early 1262/1846 in which he informs Yazdī of the dispatch of Mullā Husain for the second time to Khurasan. 'Thus I dispatched by my own authority to the "Fourth Mashhad" (Mashhad al-Rābī') the dearest of all people, the first of the disciples to you and to all people. Therefore they may distinguish between good and evil, and therefore not one of them can claim that he was not informed of God's signs ...'\(^2\). This confirms the degree of importance the Bab attributed to Yazdī almost as the implicit head of the Khurasan circle.

In the years following 1260, Mullā 'Abd al-Khāliq remained one of the chief preachers of the new cause in Khurasan. Speaking from the pulpit, towards 1264 (1848) prior to the disturbances in Mashhad, he expressed his outspoken views on the truthfulness of the Bab. Faced with the governor's pressure, he adamantly refused to revoke his Babi beliefs, and instead proposed a debate with the 'ulama of the city. As a result he was again barred from jum'ih prayers, and was ordered (by the governor) to stay indoors, and consider his seclusion as a condition for his safety\(^3\). His residence in Tehran in 1265 (1848-9) was perhaps as a result of the same dispute, which finally led to his enforced detention in the capital\(^4\). As with Mullā Muhammad 'Alī Hujjat Zanjānī

1. Ibid. The authenticity of the letter seems to be confirmed by a reference in Nuqdāt al-Kāf (203) to the conversion of Mullā 'Abd al-Khāliq: '... and he presented to his excellency (i.e. the Bab) notification of conversion' ('arzīh-i tasdīqānānīh) 'with the highest degree of gratefulness'. All the evidence confirms that Mullā 'Abd al-Khāliq was amongst the first in Khurasan who was informed of the Bab's claims, yet Nabīl Zarandī (Nabīl, 125), perhaps with the advantage of hindsight as regards 'Abd al-Khāliq's fate, omits him from the list of early believers in Khurasan. (As in the case of Harātī in Isfahan). On two other occasions where Nabīl. (7, 11) mentions Yazdī's name in relation to Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kāzīm, his tone is rather critical.

2. IHBA. pub.No.91, pp.94-102. Mashhad al-Rābī' in the Bab's writings is a reference to Mashhad. It appears that it was ranked fourth after Najaf, Karbīlā' and Kazīmāyin in the order of the Shi'ī sanctuaries.

3. NT. III, 236.

4. 173. (Baha'alla'h's account cited in Nabīl Zarandī). This is one of the few passages used by the author of Zuhūr al-'Haqq, which did not appear in the English edition of Nabīl's Narrative.
and many other 'extremist' ulama who at the same time were detained in the
capital, Yazdī's forced exile was aimed at avoiding further trouble. His
presence in the capital seems to have been noticed also by Prince Khānlar Mīrzā,
who refers to his 'corrupted' beliefs when later he accuses the Babis of being
provocators and mufsidin fi al-ard 1.

In 1265, the death of his young son Shaykh 'Alī in the Tabarsi uprising,
which happened at the same time as the Bab's claim for Qā'īm, shattered the
faith of the old mujtahid, and brought him to the point of denial2. Bahā'ullāh's
references to 'Abd al-Khāliq's denunciation, clearly illustrate the latter's
disillusion in facing the consequences of the Babi upheavals. While in Tehran,
his received a letter from the Bab sent to him through Vahīd Darābī. When he
came to the sentence 'I am the righteous Qā'im whose appearance you were
promised' he threw away the letter and cried: 'Alas, my son died in vain'3.
He himself died three years later4.

Mulla 'Abd al-Khāliq was a Shaykhi from central Khurasan, who had in common
with the rest of the Babis of Khurasan, a religious and geographical background.
Yet he should still be regarded as a high ranking mujtahid of the older Shaykhi
generation whose response to Babi 'extremism' was one of hesitation and dis­
approval. Indeed in spite of his zeal and devotion, he should be regarded as
the representative of a more moderate attitude among the early Babis who still
considered the Bab as the continuation of the Shaykhi school.

Parallel with 'Abd al-Khāliq Yazdī another example of a Babi conversion
amongst the high ranking Shaykhi ulama, with the same moderate views, was
Mīrzā (Sayyid) Ahmad Azghandī. Originally from Azghand, a village in the hinter­
land of Turbat, his sphere of activities extended from Mashhad to Yazd5. He
was a Shaykhi mujtahid6, with some skill in Shi'ī hadith. Nabil Zarandī, who ranks

1. Narrative of Mīrzā Lutf 'Alī Shīrāzī, op.cit. 15.
3. Z. pp.173-74. During the final days of Tabarsi, 'Abd al-Khāliq sent a
letter to his son Mullā Shaykh 'Alī, in which he strongly urged him to
desert the fighting and come out of the fortress. In his reply however,
Mullā Shaykh 'Alī firmly rejected the idea by maintaining that since 'Abd
al-Khāliq had abandoned the truth, his obedience was no longer compulsory,
and indeed that he did not consider him as his father. (Narrative of Mīrzā
Lutf 'Alī, op.cit. 135).
4. Matla' al-Shams. op.cit.
5. Nabil. pp.125, 183-7, compare with Fu'ādī. 76.
6. According to NK. (139) 'one of the companions' of Shaykh Ahmad.
him amongst the most learned 'ulama of the province', speaks of the 'voluminous compilation' of 12,000 Islamic traditions which Azghandī provided, after spending considerable time and effort, in order to justify the Bab's manifestation.

This work must be counted among the early Babi apologetic literature, which appeared as a result of the early controversies over the veracity of the Bab's claims, perhaps in reply to Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī's refutation Izhāq al-Bāṭīl. According to Nābil, the sole copy of it was destroyed by one of his opponents, who was a supporter of Kirmānī, during Azghandī's abode in Yazd.

Yet, in the light of later developments, it appears that Mīrzā Ahmad, similar to 'Abd al-Khāliq but different to many others in the Mashhad circle, did not favour a strong reaction against the adversaries of the Babis. In a letter to Azghandī in 1264 (1848), the Bab, perhaps for the first time, briefly foresaw the occurrence of the Mazandaran upheaval. Yet, as far as our sources are concerned, Azghandī did not participate in the series of events which finally ended in the Mazandaran campaign. Further, in relation to the followers of Karīm Khān Kirmānī, who enjoyed a strong position in the city of Yazd, Azghandī, who with his uncle Sayyid Husain Azghandī was striving to hold his position, never underestimated the potential danger of his enemies. However, this cautious approach did not protect him even in his own base, Turbat-i Haydarīyah. In the course of the persecution and animosity which followed the execution of the Bab in 1266 (1850), he was arrested in Azghand and was moved to Turbat and then to Mashhad in a humiliating manner.

1. Nābil. 125.
3. Composition of Izhāq al-Bāṭīl, ended in 24th Rajab 1261 (op.cit. p.277). For further details on this refutation see Chap. Nine, IV. See also Chapter Six, IV for reaction of the Kirmānī Shaykhs against Babi preaching.
4. A certain Mīrzā Taqī, an 'ambitious' mujtahid had recently returned from Najaf. (Nābil. p.185). No more details are known about him, yet it is possible to identify him with Mīrzā Muhammad Taqī Yazdī (mentioned in Tabaqāt. II, 1, 206) who was at the time a religious authority in Yazd. Nābil's remark however, gives the impression that he was in some coalition with Kirmānī.
5. This has often been used by the Babi sources to express the Bab's approval of the Tabarsi upheaval (NK. 139, also Fīrādī. 76 and KD. I, 133). No trace of this has yet been found amongst the Bab's works.
7. Fīrādī. 76.
If Mulla 'Abd al-Khaliq and Mulla Ahmad Azghandi were representing a more moderate attitude and were only prepared to confine their dispute with their opponents within the limits of theological arguments, there were others who held stronger views in the face of the mounting hostility towards the Babis. Mulla Muhammad Baqir Qa'ini (sometimes known as Harati), a learned mujtahid of Mashhad with a relative amount of wealth and influence, was an outstanding example of this Babi radicalism. Originally from Qa'in, it was during his residence in Mashhad, perhaps due to past acquaintance, that he was eventually brought to the movement by Mulla Husain. He was the co-founder of the Babiyih and a devoted preacher of the Babi cause from the pulpit. His financial support covered the expenses of the Babiyih, and after 1263 (1847) possibly extended to the purchase of arms in Mashhad. His untiring efforts in the later years of the movement, and his participation in Tabarsi, finally ended in his violent death in the city of Amul. The account given by the Babi sources of the way he acted in the last moment of his life is a fitting conclusion to the life of an uncompromising Babi leader.

The conversion of Qa'ini, like that of many other Babi figures, naturally brought about the conversion of many other relatives and followers. In addition to his wife, his son and his brother, who embraced the new faith, according to one source, in the course of time, as a result of his open preaching, 'as many as four hundred followers gave their support to the cause'. A large group

1. Fu'ad. 49 and Z. 160.
2. His father who was originally from Herat, had settled in Qa'in. His nephew Mullâ Muhammad Qa'ini (known as Nabil Qa'ini), oddly enough, did not give any more details on his uncle's life in his version of Tarih-i Jadid known as Tarih-i Bad'i-i Bayâni.
3. Tarih-i Mityih, op.cit. (Browne, Or. MSS. 3 and INBA. 2).
5. Fu'ad. pp.48-50. Interesting accounts of the Babi armament in Mashhad appear in Fu'ad. pp.34-5 and Tarih Mityih (Browne MSS. pp.5-10 and INBA. pp.4-10).
6. NK. pp.203-4; Tarih-i Mityih (Browne MSS. 108 and INBA. 110); NH. 103.
8. Ibid.
10. Z. 160 (quoting an unknown source).
of followers who performed their prayers behind Qa'īnī in the Bābīyih, could in fact be regarded as the backbone of the Babi forces who started the Mazandarān campaign in 1264 (1848). Nearly all sources agree that Qa'īnī, 'apart from his learning, was a man of many arts and resources, and very brave and valorous, and that it was he who had planned most of the strategic movements' of the Babis in Tabarsi. Indeed, the vital role played by him in the events of 1263-65 (1847-49) emphasises his knowledge of training and warfare. Further, it demonstrates his significant place in the development of the movement towards an armed resistance. Nothing is known about his past experiences, yet during the events of 1264 in Mashhad, Qa'īnī himself trained and commanded the Babis in action.

During this phase of unrest in Khurasan, just before the beginning of the Mashhad rebellion of Ramadan, 1264/1848, it is interesting to see that the Babis, as an organised force, were amongst the first to respond with a considerable degree of militancy. Brief clashes occurred between the Babi armed parties and pro-Qājār factions in the city. There is some evidence to show that this fighting between the Mashhadi crowd and government forces had been sparked off by these early incidents, and in some sense can be seen as a continuation of them. However, the Babi involvement ended in the hasty departure of Mullā Husain and his followers in Sha'ban 1264 for Mazandarān. Later, during the Tabarsi episode, he was military adviser, and after the death of Mullā Husain, the military commander of the Babi fortress. The surviving accounts of Tabarsi give frequent references to his skilful and often spontaneous plans for the fortification of Tabarsi, his innovations in warfare, his efforts to maintain discipline amongst the Babi corps, and his personal participation in the fighting.

As a radical leader, Mullā Muhammad Bāqir, like most Babi extremists, combined two complementary abilities. As a preacher, he was not only able to mobilise people from the pulpit, and charge them with messianic aspirations, but he had also the rare ability to lead followers to open confrontation.

The fruits of Mullā Husain's preachings may also be seen in a number of

1. Tārikh-i Māmīyih. op.cit.
2. NH. 103.
3. Tārikh-i Māmīyih. op.cit.
4. Events regarding the gathering of Babis in Mashhad in 1264 (1848) are beyond the limits of this study. Among other sources, Tārikh-i Māmīyih op.cit. (INBA. pp.2-10 and Browne, Or. MSS. pp.2-10) and Nabil. pp.287-91 give an interesting account of these incidents.
converts from the lower ranks of Shaykhi mujtahids and senior tullab who shortly before Mulla Husain, mostly in the months following the death of Rashtî, had returned from Atatbat and either gathered in Mashhad, or established in their home towns as local mujtahids. Mulla Shaykh 'Ali Turshizi, titled 'Azîm, Mulla Ahmad Hisârî, Mulla Muhammad Dughâbâdi (Purüghi), Mulla Shaykh 'Ali Fayzâbâdi (son of Mulla 'Abd al-Khaliq), Mulla 'Ali Bajistanî, may all be considered as being from this group. Coming from the same area as Mulla Husain, they shared the same background and a similar primary training to Bushrûyihi.

Shaykh 'Ali 'Azîm came from Turshiz (now Kashmar), a small desert town west of Turbat-i Haydarîyih, not far from Bushrûyihi. 'One of the outstanding students of Sayyid Kazim', and an active member of the Khurasan circle, he rose to a leading position in the Babi community, especially after 1264. His extremist tendencies, which particularly developed after the fall of Tabarsi, his ability to organise Babis into clandestine groups in urban centres, his ingenious plans to overthrow both religious and state authorities, and his claims for leadership, made him an outstanding character amongst the early leaders.

His role in later years of the movement further reveals that, contrary to the policies of the moderate elements, he was committed to a militant approach. After being involved in a series of unsuccessful operations in Azarbaijân, with the ultimate purpose of releasing the Bab from his incarceration in Chihriq, 'Azîm planned a rising in Tehran in 1265 (1849), to remove Mîrzâ Taqî Khân Amîr Kabîr and Mîrzâ Abul Qasim Imam Jum'îh of Tehran in one move. This plot, while still in its primary stage, was disclosed and frustrated by the secret agents of Amîr Kabîr, but nevertheless it cost the lives of the 'Seven Martyrs'.

1. Kayhân, op.cit. 201.
2. Mutanabbi'în, op.cit. 79.
3. No real attempt has been made here to discuss fully the ideas and later activities of 'Azîm, which by themselves deserve separate investigation. A few sources such as Mutanabbi'în, Nabil, NK., and Nicolas, provide valuable materials for a fuller biography of this important Babi figure. In a series of articles written by Muḥammad Muḥî'î Tabâtabâ'i about the sources of Babi-Baha'i history, the author devotes one article to Shaykh 'Ali 'Azîm (Mihânîm-i Gauhar) in which he gives a brief and simplified account of 'Azîm's life based on limited materials. Muḥî'î's attempt, though in appearance it seems impartial and accurate, is no more than another repetition of the familiar biased approach to Babi history (VI, 178-83)
5. Ahmad, 469 and Mutanabbi'în, op.cit. pp.95-102.
6. NK. pp.259-260 and Mutanabbi'în, pp.79, 97, 103.
in Tehran. After 1266 (1850), in the leadership crisis which followed the execution of the Bab, and the death of the most important Babi figures, 'Azīm assumed the deputyship of the Bab, which in practice led to his command over the extremist elements. Again in 1268 (1852), he was the chief organiser behind the unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Nasir al-Dīn Shāh, which resulted in an extensive massacre of the Babis throughout Iran. Shaykh 'Alī himself met his death when after the massacre of all the alleged conspirators, under pressure from the government, a fatwā was issued by Imām Jum'ih approving 'Azīm's execution. Mīrzā 'Alī Kān Ḥājī Daulī and his executors jointly slaughtered him.

The conversion of Mulla (Mīrzā) Muhammad Furūghī on the other hand was an example of regional interconnection between the Babis of central Khurasan. Originally from Dughbād, a hamlet near Fayzābād in the district of Muhawalāt, south-west of Turbat-i Haydarīyih, like Azghandī, he also settled in Turbat. He knew Mulla Husain from his childhood, and associated with him as a classmate and friend for a long time. Nabil believes that among the early believers in Khurasan, his 'learning was unsurpassed except' by that of Mīrzā Ahmad Azghandī but it appears that like many other Shaykhi students, he also practiced 'ilm-i ʿadād, which signifies that, beside formal studies, he had interest in the unconventional and heterodox fields.

He was one of the rare survivors of Tabarsi (Remnants of the Sword: Baqīyat al-Sayf), who miraculously escaped death in the final massacre of the Tabarsi participants in the military camp. Having witnessed many important incidents, and being acquainted with many central figures in the early period, he is one of the most valuable sources of Nabil, who has often been quoted on different

1. Mutanabbi'īn, pp.79, Vāqāyi'-i Ittīfaqīyih, no.82 (10th Dhu al-Qa'da 1268).
2. Nabil. 637 compare with Mutanabbi'īn, 106 and Vāqāyi'-i Ittīfaqīyih, op.cit.
3. See further below.
4. Tarīq, III, 714. The village Dughbād is known in Bābā'ī literature as Fūrūgh (Fūrādī. 78).
5. Fūrādī. 78.
6. Nabil. pp.331-34. See also above Chapter Four, I.
8. Fūrādī. 86.
occasions\(^1\). Later, in the controversy between Bahá'u'lláh and Mírzá Yahyá Ñúrlí, Subh-i Azal, he wholly supported the former, and remained a devoted Bahá'í.\(^2\)

He died in 1295 Q. (1878).\(^3\)

IV

Besides the converted 'ulama, who formed the basis of the circle, as in other parts of the country, some members of the mercantile and trading community also participated in the cause. As far as our inadequate sources can aid us in identifying them, examples of merchants, local traders, commission-agents and wholesalers suggest that their contribution to the new movement was next to that of the 'ulama. Factors such as the traditional links between the 'ulama and tujjár, family and commercial interconnections and affiliations with a religious leader made it possible for them to become acquainted with the new call.

Aqá 'Alí Rižá Tajir Shírází, for instance, a well-known merchant from Shiraz who had settled in Mashhad, was an example of those who established an intermediary link between trade and religious studies. At one stage he was a taqlabih in the Madrasih of Mírzá Ja'far in Mashhad and his early recognition of the cause was due to his friendship with later Babi figures\(^4\). Some time before 1260 he had sworn an oath of fraternity ('¡hd-i barádar\(^5\)) with his classmate Mulla Muhammad 'Alí Barfurushí (Quddús).\(^5\) It also appears that he and Quddús belonged to a taqlabih group of which Mulla Husain was also a member\(^6\). At the time of his departure from Mashhad, however, Quddús withdrew his oath, since, according to Tarikh-i Khurasán, he believed that it was impossible for Aqá 'Alí

\(^1\) He seems to be Nabil's main source for the early developments of the movement especially in Khurasan (p.580), since he is one of the few early Babis who survived up to the late 1870's when Nabíl Zarandí compiled his narrative.

\(^2\) Fu'ádi. pp.79-80.

\(^3\) Z. 157.

\(^4\) Fu'ádi. 74.

\(^5\) Ibid. This was a common practice between two or more ūllāb in a school, which served not only practical purposes such as sharing meals and room, but often indicated a common theological orientation or identical primary training. After completion of studies, sometimes these links helped the promotion of the mujtahids to higher positions. As examples, the oath between Mulla Húsain and Mulla Šádíq Muqaddas (see above Chapter Six) and that of Mulla Muhammad Bāqir Shafií and Hājí Ibráhím Kurbási (Q. 140) may be mentioned. See also below Chapter Nine, II.

\(^6\) Z. p.174. The author of Zuhúr al-Ḥaqq seems to draw his information from a certain 'Abd al-Mu'mín who is perhaps identifiable with Aqá Sayyid Mu'mín cited in TMS. pp.62-3.
Riza to fulfill the strict terms of the pledge. Yet, whether the real reason behind the retraction was Aqa 'Ali Riza's engagement in trade, which in Quddus' view would inevitably distance him from talabih life, or Quddus' faith in devotional ascetism, which his counterpart was not able to match, is not known. But nonetheless, his erstwhile membership of the circle made it possible for 'Ali Riza to respond to Mullâ Husain's call, and subsequently offer his financial aid to the Khurasânî followers. During the turmoil of 1264 (1848) in Mashhad, Aqa 'Ali Riza, while preparing himself to join the Babi marchers on their way to Mazandaran, was arrested by Sam Khan the biglarbaygi of Mashhad, who coveted his assets and under the pretext of blasphemy, bastinadoed him and extorted a large sum from him.

Later in his life, perhaps because of financial troubles, he abandoned his trade and became a local 'alîf.

Haji 'Abdul Javad (Muhammad Javad) Yazdi was another example of the Babi merchants of Khurasan. A relative of Mullâ 'Abd al-Khalîq, and presumably one of his close adherents, he embraced the cause in its early days, perhaps as a result of 'Abd al-Khalîq's efforts. Established in Mashhad as a reliable broker, he was basically a commission-agent for the Yazdi merchants in the city, whilst his son-in-law, a certain Haji Ghulam Husain Tajir Yazdi, himself a Babi, acted as the representative of the Afnan brothers, uncles of the Bab, in the city of Yazd.

Being a relative of Mullâ 'Abd al-Khalîq, it is very probable that Haji 'Abd al-Javad and his son-in-law were merchants with Shaykhi tendencies. Their connection with the Afnan brothers in Shiraz and Bushihr sheds more light on the channels through which merchants like 'Abd al-Javad and Aqa 'Ali Riza Shirazi might have been encouraged to recognise the new call. Even more significant is

1. Fu'âdî. 74.
2. Ibid. S'am Sâm Khan Urus, the commander chief (sartîp) of the Armenian fauj of Bâhâdûrân, was originally a Russian officer (or perhaps refugee) in the service of the Iranian government. Except for short intervals, he was the biglarbaygi of Mashhad, up to his death in 1265 (1848-9). (RS. X, pp.329, 416-20). He was the first official in Mashhad to become aware of Mullâ Husain's activities in the city, and report to the governor Hamzih Mirzâ. (RS. X, 422). If, according to Ruq'at al-Safâ, he died in 1265, he could not have been the chief of Bâhâdûrân when the first attempt was made to execute the Bab in Tabriz in 1266, as is reported by Nabil. (pp.510-12). See also Lady Shell, Glimpses of Life and Manners op.cit. 141.

3. A local grain merchant or even possibly a vendor of fodder. Fu'âdî. 74.
4. Fu'âdî. pp.104-5. Amongst the relatives of Mullâ 'Abd al-Khalîq there were others who became Babis. Aqâ Muhammad Hasan Musâkhîb, (book illuminator), his nephew, and Mirzâ Muhammad Husain I'tizâd al-Âtibbâ, his son-in-law, who was a physician.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
the trade organised by Shaykhi merchants on the Būshīhr-Mashhad route, with representatives in Mashhd, Tabas, Yazd, Shiraz and Būshīhr, which provides convincing evidence for the existence of a Shaykhi network of merchants, always closely linked to Shaykhi ulama, throughout the country. Apart from the above mentioned tujjar, traces of the conversion of minor local traders and retailers are also detectable. Some of the jadīd al-Islām Jews of Turbat-i Haydariyih for instance, who were mainly involved in local trade and guilds, were curious about the Babi call because of their acquaintance with Babi leaders. The jadīd al-Islām Jews of Turbat, originally from Yazd, had suffered the widespread persecution and forced conversion of 1839-40 in Khurasan and were obliged to maintain a crypto-Judaic form under pressure. Already in 1266 (1850), according to Fu'ād, at the time of Mulla Ahmad Azghandī's arrest and banishment, six of the Turbatī Jews who were on friendly terms with him, sympathised with his cause, though their full conversion only took place a few years later. The real motives behind this interest which seems to have been connected with 'Abd al-Khāliq's alleged Jewish origin, may be found in the manner in which the deprived minority expressed itself in response to continuous waves of persecution, forced conversions, and the strict control exerted on jadīd al-Islāms to observe religious duties. As in other cases throughout the country, the members of the repressed community who recognised the messianic promises of the Babi message, were in fact seeking some consolation in the movement, which could restore to them, if not their security, prosperity, or lost faith, at least some hope and courage to survive in the face of hostile forces.

Yet perhaps Hāji 'Abd al-Majīd Nīshābūrī held the most remarkable place among the Babi merchants and traders of Khurasan. 'Abd al-Majīd who was a dealer in turquoise and high quality shawls, 'through his father, enjoyed an unrivalled prestige as the owner of the best-known turquoise mine in Nīshāpur. Though nothing is known about his past experience with members of the Khurasan circle,

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1. See above Chapter Seven.
2. Fu'ād. pp.183-5, compare with Tarikh-i Yahūd-i Iran op.cit. III, 634. However according to Kuhan Šidqī's notes cited in the latter source, the first Babis in Turbat-i Haydariyih were the jadīd al-Islām Jews who were originally from Mashhad. Besides Wolff's frequent references to the persecution of Jews in Khurasan in the 1830's and 40's (e.g. pp.103, 199-200) more details of forced conversions in 1840 in Mashhad appear in W.J. Fischel, 'The Jews of Persia 1795-1940' in Jewish Social Studies, Vol.XII, 1950, pp.119-160 (p.124 and sources mentioned in footnote 18). Also see RS. X, 248.
his name appears amongst the first individuals who accepted the call through Mullā Husain, possibly when he was passing through Nishābūr on his way to Mashhad. It seems he had not fully become convinced of the veracity of the cause until, like a few other Kashānī and Isfahānī merchants, he embarked on his personal quest to visit the new manifestation. After visiting the Bab, either in the Hijāz or in Shiraz, he returned to Mashhad, where he engaged in trade as a dealer in luxury goods. In the following years, his personal dedication together with his generous financial support put him amongst the prominent believers in Khurasan. On the eve of the Tabarsi episode, he accompanied Mullā Husain on his march to Mazandarān, and not only financed most of the outgoings with valuable Kashmir shawls or the wealth of the Nishābūr mine, but, despite being in his mid-fifties, he participated actively in the fighting of Tabarsi.

After the fall of Tabarsi, he was captured and brought to the city of Barfurūsh together with Quddūs and the other survivors. But unlike the others, his life was saved by the prince commander Māhdī Qulī Mīrzā, who noticed that Hāji 'Abd al-Majīd, being a prosperous man, was too valuable to be slaughtered by the crowd. Subsequently he managed to escape from the Tehran gaol after paying a ransom of a hundred tumans. In the following years, Hāji 'Abd al-Majīd remained a zealous Bābī and later Bahā’ī.

Twenty-eight years after Tabarsi in 1294 (1877-8), Hāji 'Abd al-Majīd met his death in the city of Mashhad in his mid-eighties. After much controversy, following the mujtahid’s fatwā concerning his blasphemy, Aqā Muhammad Bāqir

1. Fu’ādat. 55.
2. See above Chapter Seven
4. Most of the Tabarsi accounts, including Tārīkh-i Mīmāyīh, Narrative of Mīrzā Lutf ‘Alī and Nābil refer frequently to his role on many occasions.
6. Samandar. 175. Malik Khusraū (Tārīkh-i Shuhāda-yi Amr, op.cit. II, 75) apparently uses another version of Tārīkh-i Samandar which has specified the amount of 100 tumāns.
7. Hāji 'Abd al-Majīd’s son Mīrzā Buzurg later titled Badī’, although he was for some time in doubt about the truthfulness of his father’s new Bābī-Bahā’ī faith, later recognised Bahā’allah’s call. In the course of a mission to the court of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, to deliver the message of Bahā’allah, he died under torture and became one of the hero martyrs of Bahā’ī history. This was six years before the execution of Hāji 'Abd al-Majīd (see below).
Najafi Isfahani, the notorious enemy of the Babi-Bahá'ís, who had temporarily moved from Isfahan to Mashhad (1877-8), put his seal of approval on the fatwá to strengthen his weakening position against the state authorities and perhaps to enhance his nationwide reputation for executing Babís. Accused of being a heretic, Mírzá 'Abd al-Majíd could have escaped execution if he had denied his beliefs, but to the very last moment he insisted on them and regarded his death as the only way to achieve 'salvation', and was therefore executed.

Amongst the early conversions, though the contribution of members of the ulama and trade were predominant, the presence of a small group of low ranking local officials also deserves some attention. During his first mission to Khurasan, Mullá Husain when passing through Sabzivár, paid a brief visit to a number of local mustaufíns (revenue accountants), who had perhaps had some contact with Shaykhísh in the past. Later, two brothers, Mírzá 'Alí Rižá Mustaufí Sabzivári, and then his brother Mírzá Muhammad Rižá (later Mu'taman al-Saltáníh), and some of their relatives became supporters of the Babi cause. Though their affiliation to the movement seems to some extent to have remained secret, nevertheless their moral and material support first included funds for the Mazandarán march, and in the following years provided some comfort for the Babís at times of persecution and trouble. Towards the 1870's (1290's), both brothers were promoted in their offices. While Mírzá 'Alí Rižá became one of the 'mustaufííyan-i hàbir rikáb' (revenue accountants in the Royal presence),

1. Shaykh Muhammad Bāqir Isfahání, son of Shaykh Muhammad Taqí (the author of Fāvā'íya al-Ma'ālim) and father of the famous Āqá Najaffí, was the inheritor of his father's clerical fame, and also the real founder of the Najaffí's financial power. (Fābaqāt. I, 1, pp.198-9, 247-8 and II, pp.215-17). The wealth and the influence of the Najaffís (Muhammad Bāqir and Āqá Najaffí), and their lengthy dispute with the governor of Isfahán Zill al-Sulţán over legal and economic domination in the city, made them outstanding in the clerical history of the 19th century. Their anti-Babi-Bahá'í stand, which is apparent in Muhammad Bāqir's efforts to destroy the Tabātabá'í brothers in Isfahán (see above Chapter Seven, I ) caused them to receive opprobrious treatment from the Bahá'í sources.

2. Fū'ādat. (pp.56-65) contains a full account of the events which finally led to the execution of Hājí 'Abd al-Majíd.


4. Ibid. pp.67-72. The author of Tarikh-i Amrī-yi Khurásan, uses every kind of local source, including oral accounts from the members of the Mustaufí and Mustashār Daftar families, who were the descendents of the Mustaufí brothers. For the events of the early period, he benefited from the account of the eye witness Mírzá Muhammad Qu'lí Mustaufí, a member of the Sabzivári family, which was narrated to him by Āqá Mírzá Buzurg Grayúlî Mustaufí (Ibid. pp.30, 73).

his brother occupied the office of visarât-i Khurâsan (chief revenue accountant of Khurasan). Hence, since Nasir al-Din Shah was highly suspicious of Mu'taman al-Saltanîh's Babi sentiments, he ordered his transfer to the city of Kashân where he was virtually in exile. Later, in a well-thought-out plan to eliminate Mu'taman al-Saltanîh, the Shah summoned him to the capital, and he was first obliged to marry the Shah's sister, and then forced to drink 'poisonous coffee' (qahvih-yi Qajar) from his wife's hand (1310 Q./1892-3).

Mîrza Muhammed Taqi Juvâni Sabzivârî, another Babi figure, came from amongst the Sabzivârî officials. Though he was a humble scribe and accountant (dabîr va avârînjîgar), in his Babi career he showed himself to be a courageous and faithful Babi fighter. He was born in the village of Juvâni and encountered Mullâ Husain on one of his visits to the town. Juvâni's effective participation began when, in 1264 (1848), in the course of the Tabarsî upheaval he held the responsibility for receipts and expenditure of the common funds, and on a few occasions acted as the representative of the Babi party in negotiations with the local chiefs and state officials. His most dramatic act, which could be seen as a final declaration of war against the government, was the slaying of Khusrau Khân Qâdîkâlâ'î in the forests around Barfurush, as a reprisal for his deceitful behaviour towards the defenceless and confused Babi column. In the final surrender of the Babi fighters, Mîrza Muhammed Taqi was captured and put to death by the Qâjâr troops. His head was spiked on the top of a spear and carried around the city of Barfurush.

The study of the above individuals may serve as examples for other non-clerical members of the early Babi circle in Khurasan. As in the case of the fûlāma who were committed to the new doctrine, previous affiliations and

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2. Fu'â'd. pp.70-72. For qahvih-yi Qajar see Glimpses of Life and Manners, op.cit. 92.
3. NT. III, 236. Nabil (p.417) also refers to his 'literary accomplishment'.
5. Tarîkh-i Mîmîyîth. op.cit. pp.22 (Negotiations with the governor of Mazandaran Khânlar Mîrza), 34-5 (with 'Abbâs Qulî Khân Lârîjâni).
6. Cited by nearly all Tabarsî accounts.
connections were the chief elements for the attraction of the local merchants and state officials to the movement. However, the degree of their participation and the nature of their involvement in the movement also seem to be partly determined by their occupation and rank. Both groups represented an urban provincial 'middle class' which began to form in the middle decades of the 19th century. But any attempt to establish a definite link between the conversion of these groups and their socio-political background, beyond the intermediary element of messianic expectations, could not go further than general speculation. In fact, the millenarian ideas are the strongest unifying factor in bringing individuals from different ranks and positions to acceptance of the Babi doctrine.

The appeal of the message was mainly due to the fact that the new movement, in contrast to existing religious or secular currents, was able to channel common aspirations towards a tangible goal, particularly at times when Khurasaní society, which traditionally looked to the 'ulama for protection and security, seems to have been less satisfied with the performance of the orthodox 'ulama. In these circumstances the appeal of a messianic movement was not something unpredictable, exceptionally when the power of the clergy was exhausted by private conflicts and petty revenges within the framework of city politics. Up to a point this was always a frequent characteristic of urban and religious life in Iran, but the structure and ethos of religious life in Mashhad during this decade has suggested grounds for an unusual degree of fragmentation and loss of control.

As regards the ultimate plans and goals of the movement, the formation of the Khurasan group may be counted as one of the major achievements of the early years. Its role, in theory and in practice, in the course of the general development of the movement and in particular during the events of which Tabarsi was the climax, was highly significant. At a time when Mullā Alī Bastami and other Babi Letters were entangled in increasing obstacles in 'Atabāt, in spite of their early success, and the Bab himself was disillusioned by his reception in the Hijāz, Mullā Husain, by contrast, was able to organise a community which played an important role in the progress of the movement.
CHAPTER NINE

Pilgrimage to Mecca

In an earlier chapter, the theological justification for announcing the Babi message in Mecca and then in Kufah was discussed, and the symbolic implications of such a declaration were examined. After the departure of the early disciples to their assignment, the Bab himself, 'according to the previous arrangements', which he made with his followers, decided to set out for Hijaz, where in the course of Hajj he intended to proclaim his mission. This was an attempt to fulfill those Shi'i traditions which emphatically required the open declaration of the Qa'im in front of the Ka'ba, prior to the final uprising (Kharuj) in the land of Kufah.

Reasserting the inevitable fulfilment of the prophecies, the Bab himself underlines the significance of the Mecca declaration in the following words:

'Thus on that month (Dhū al-Ḥijja) whatever is promised by your God to every young and old, will happen. Soon he will appear in the Holy Land with the word that will "split asunder" whatever is in the heavens and earth. Behold his word; the righteous Qā'im (Qā'im-i bī al-ḥaqq) who is the just Qā'im (Qā'im-i bī al-qist') will arise in Mecca according to what has been uttered: "When the Qā'im appears, give him your support together with all those who will come to his assistance from distant corners". When they (his opponents) "have corrupted the earth", then he will commence the new cause in the hinterland of Kufah.'

In the Bab's mind, the fulfilment of these prophecies was attributed to a divine force beyond his control, which first assigned him to this mission to 'set out for pilgrimage to Baytallah al-Haram' and promoted the cause 'to reach the East and the West and in between' and 'expanded the (intellectual) capacity of the people' to enable them to grasp 'the cause of the heart (hukm-i fudād)', before 'returning him from Baytallah al-Haram to his homeland'. This is what the Bab

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1. See above Chapter Four, III.
2. NT. III, 42.
3. Z. 235, Arabic Tawqī'. 'The word that "split asunder"... most probably refers to the Qur'an, XIX, 92 which in Shi'i prophecies is interpreted as the sign of Revelation. 'When the Qā'im appears ...' presumably is a reference to a hadīth related from Imam Ja'far Sādiq. (Bihār al-Anwār, op.cit., trans. p.573).
4. Z. 269, Arabic prayer.
was convinced to be an irreversible course, with all its details destined to happen as was predicted.

To the above considerations for Hajj, one should also add some more tangible facts which accelerated the departure of Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad from Shiraz in 26th Sha'ban 1260 (10th September 1844). Various indications make it possible to assume that some considerations of a personal nature and particularly in relation to his safety, influenced his decision to leave Shiraz in some haste. In a letter to Mulla 'Abd al-Khāliq Yazdī, which is written in an invocatory style, the Bab makes a brief but important reference to the situation in which he left Shiraz:

'O my God, you know my cause, and witness my inner intentions, and that I did not undertake this cause but to promote your pure religion (din-i khāliq) and your hidden message. I had warned those who know me not to reveal my name. But I set out for pilgrimage to your house when I became terrified of the accomplices of the devil who were the corrupt people'.

The same anxiety over the publication of his identity is also expressed in another letter to Shaykh 'All Qā'īnī, son of Mulla 'Abd al-Khāliq, in which the Bab complains bitterly of the carelessness of some of his followers: 'When I left this city (Shiraz) for the destination of Baytallāh al-Harām, if after my departure no one had divulged my name, no one would have been tormented. But my believers are responsible towards God. Now there happened what ought to happen'.

1. Khutba al-Ridda (Arabic), INBA. 91, XIX, pp.60-73 (66). In this important Khutba, the Bab in his enigmatic style, has carefully recorded all the departure and arrival dates as well as the length of his stay in various places throughout his journey to the Hijāz. This Khutba is used in this chapter as the most reliable source for setting dates.

2. Arabic Tawqī' to Mulla 'Abd al-Khāliq Yazdī, INBA. 91, pp.94-102 (96), written after his return from Hajj. For further details see below. For details about Mulla 'Abd al-Khāliq see above Chapter Eight.

3. Nicolas. (pp.61-9) who translated the letter from a certain MS. AG., failed to realise the identity of the recipient. However, the contents of the letter provide certain clues to the real identity of Shaykh 'All Qā'īnī. In one place (p.67) the Bab sends his regards to Shaykh 'All's father, while on another occasion, he refers to his father as his former tutor, and complains of his silence and lack of cooperation (p.68). (For Shaykh 'All see above Chapter Eight, III ). Both the above-mentioned letters to father and son, which contain similar remarks on the same issue, indicate a possible enquiry or even criticism from 'Abd al-Khāliq's quarter over the Bab's change of policy (see below).
These complaints over the disclosure of his identity, even before his departure, are the first signs of the Bab's displeasure with the activities of some of his followers. He feared, perhaps with some justification, that the untimely exposure of what should have remained a closely guarded secret, brought with it unnecessary harassment and persecution. As early as Sha'ban 1260, traces of a rift can be identified in the Babi ranks, which in the next few years turned to a major crisis within the movement. At this stage, it is not possible to identify any individual or group responsible for this embarrassing disclosure. However, as far as the two prominent disciples were concerned, the statement made by Mullā Husain at the time of his departure from Shiraz, as well as the reluctance shown by Mullā 'Alī Bastamī to reveal the name of the promised Bab in 'Atabat, indicates that to a large extent they observed the secrecy agreed upon.

What seems to be the source of the Bab's apprehension was the fact that in the disturbed conditions of Shiraz, the widespread rumours, which stimulated people's curiosity to learn about the new claimant, could create harmful agitation and trouble. Hājī Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Vakīl al-Ḥaqq, the Bab's maternal cousin, who at the time was residing in the city, recollects that 'in the year 1260 in Shiraz, a rumour broke out that a noble sayyid claimed to be the deputy (nāṣīb) of the Qā'īm, but his sacred name was not mentioned'. In the course of one of his visits to the Bab in the month of Sha'ban, about a week before his departure, Muḥammad Taqī saw the Bab sitting on the terrace of his house and writing prayers and verses. When Vakīl al-Ḥaqq enquired about the rumours that the new Deputy of the Imam prohibited the smoking of qalīyān, the Bab confirmed it without any further comments. As in his reply to Hājī Ahmad Ḥishīk Āqāsī, here the Bab preserves a non-committal position on the enquiry about the new revelation.

This unwanted publicity and its effect on the Bab's decision are also reported by Mīrzā Kazem-Beg, who on the basis of an unspecified source, maintains that:

'Après avoir semé bon gré mal gré quelques mauvais grains dans cette terre de Shiraz si fertile en

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1. Ahmad. pp.449-50. For further details see above Chapter Six, I.
2. See above Chapter Five, I. 3. See above Chapter Four, III.
5. Ibid.
préjugés et en superstitions, le Kerbâlî Séïd Ali-Mohammed se rendit en pèlerinage à la Mecque. Il quitta Chiraz seul, dans le plus grand secret, et alors qu'on s'y attendait le moins: deux ou trois de ses disciples, tout au plus, furent instruits de son départ. // A cette époque la renommée du nouveau maître était déjà fort répandue dans les provinces limitrophes; partout se recontraient des gens disposés à suivre sa doctrine, et on parlait déjà de lui dans le Mazandarân et le Khorasan. En l'absence du maître, qui était parti presque en fugitif, ses disciples s'occupèrent activement à soutenir et à étendre sa renommée.

Fears of the 'devil's accomplices' and 'the corrupt people' in the 'fertile ground of prejudice and superstition' can only be fully appreciated if the matter is examined in the context of the general developments which at the time were taking place in Shiraz. A brief look at the disturbed state of Fars province reveals the nature of the threat which compelled the Bab to leave Shiraz in secret, the same threat which was to endanger him when he returned from Hajj.

A series of riots and public disturbances in the towns and villages of Fars, which had already started earlier in the year, reached their climax in the month of Sha'ban (August-September 1844) when the inner city clashes and open rebellion against an exceptionally ineffective and unpopular government brought the province to total anarchy and chaos. This is illustrated in various reports by Colonel Sheil and his agent in Shiraz throughout 1844-5, in which the typical course of an urban uprising, and its natural outcome of violence and insecurity, can be observed. With regard to the protests and agitations which followed the appointment of Mîrzâ Nabî Khân Mazandarâni to the governorship of Fars, in early August 1844 (Rajab 1260) Sheil reports: 'The province of Fars

1. Kazem Beg. VII, pp.344-5. 2. See above Chapter Six
3. A systematic coverage of the events of Fârs appears in a series of F.O. dispatches between April 1844 and April 1845 (F.O. 60/104 to 113). The attention paid by Sheil to the events of Fârs is mainly due to his concern for the disruption of southern trade and its effect on the British commerce through Bushîhr.
4. Sometimes known as Şâhîb Diwân or Amîr Diwân Qazvînî, he is the father of Mîrzâ Husain Khân Mushîr al-Daulîh Sipahsâlîr, the celebrated prime minister of Nâşîr al-Dîn Shâh. He was a minor official in the latter part of Fath 'Alî Shâh's reign who was later promoted in the mid-1830's to the important office of Şâhîb Diwân (chief official of secular jurisdiction), during Hâjî Mîrzâ Aqâsî's premiership. Though sometimes in disagreement with Hâjî (and possibly in collaboration with Mîrzâ Aqâ Khân Nûrî), he was originally one of the prime minister's partisans. Scattered references to his life and the various offices he held appear in RS. IX and X, NT. III and IV.
still remains in the same disturbed state. Mirza Nabee Khan the Governor, being perfectly destitute of authority and unable to levy the revenue. The new governor, whose only reason for being appointed was his ability to offer the highest bid for the office, not only lacked a basic support in the capital but also in the province. In fact from the early days of his office, Mirza Nabī was faced with fierce opposition from the local notables, who for a variety of reasons, did not approve of his appointment.

In order to express even further their disapproval of Mirza Nabī and his repressive measures for collecting excessive taxes, a delegation of local notables arrived in Tehran to press for his removal. The delegation from Shiraz represented all five Haydari quarters in the city, as well as the leaders of the Ni'matī quarters and thus provided a relatively united front. The pattern of the opposition, and the channels through which the involved parties organised and expressed their protest, indicate that the current conflict not only included the influential notables at a high level, but also embraced large groups of the inhabitants at lower levels.

The deep rooted Haydari-Ni'matī division in most Iranian cities in the 19th century, according to Persian sources, goes back to the late 15th century. Though such a division does not represent any ideological or even social difference between the two parties, it should still be regarded as a major feature in the pattern of city politics, especially at times of disturbance and turmoil. These divisions provide an insight into the origin of many urban conflicts, and the way such conflicts developed in the course of a local power struggle. As it was strictly based on divisions of city quarters, the inhabitants of each quarter had an almost compulsory affiliation to one of the two factions. Though the Kadkhudās were officially in charge of the quarter, it appears that during crises and civil strife, groups of lutīs and their patrons were the real force in action. In one of his reports Sheil states: 'In all the principal towns of Persia, the inhabitants are divided into two parties, the Hydrees and the Ne'metees, who engage in contests which are usually periodical and insignificant, but which increase in fierceness and

1. F.O. 60/105, No.87, Sheil to Aberdeen, 1st August 1844.
2. Regarding the practice of sale of offices under Muhammad Shāh, Mirza Nabī's appointment to the governorship of Fars, like most other appointments of the time, was ratified only because he offered the highest price for the vacant post. See above Chapter Six. Both Fārs Nāmīh (p.299) and Sheil (F.O. 60/105, No.87) agree that beside the offering (pishkīsh) he had no real support.
3. F.O. 60/105, No.87; Fārs Nāmīh, I, 299.
frequency under a weak government.

Indeed the composition of the delegation to Tehran illustrates the strength of the two divisions in the city which in the previous ten years of Muhammad Shah's reign had successfully brought down successive provincial governments, and made the province of Fars virtually ungovernable. Hājī Mīrzā Muhammad Khān Qavām al-Mulk, the influential and well established biglarbaygī of Fars from the Haydarī quarter of Bālā Kaft, usually found himself in alliance with Muhammad Khān Īlbaqī Qashqāī from the Maydān-i Shāh quarter (Haydarī) who was almost as important as Qavām. These three together with three other notables of the remaining Haydarī quarters (Haydarī Khānīth) as well as with the tacit cooperation with the chief of Niʿmatī Khānīth were able to exert the same pressure which had caused the fall of Manuchihr Khān Muʿtāmid al-Daulih in 1252 (1836-7), Firaydūn Mīrza in 1256 (1840-1) and Farhād Mīrza in 1258 (1842-3) from the governorship of Fars.

Various motives encouraged the local leaders to take up an independent stand towards the central government. At times they emerged as natural leaders of the public, and their challenge enjoyed the strong support of the inhabitants, who themselves suffered from the maltreatment of the government agents. To a powerful figure like Qavām al-Mulk who combined landownership with effective control over the city's affairs, the establishment of a stable government meant

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1. F.O. 60/105, No.90, Supplement (in the margin), Sheil to Aberdeen, 19th August 1844. Many scattered references to this subject can be found in 19th century sources. Sheil also gives a vivid description of Ḥaydarī-Niʿmatī fightings in Sarāb (Azarbājān) during Muḥarram religious mourning of 1835 (Glimpses of Life and Manners, op.cit. Note C, pp.322-6). Other sources such as Fārs Namīth, op.cit. II, 22 (and other scattered references) on Shiraz; Z. pp.406-7 on Bārfurūsh; Shaykhīgārī va Bābigārī, op.cit. pp.253-5 on Kirmān; Jughrafiya-yi Isfahān, op.cit. pp.89-90 on Isfahān, confirm the widespread presence of such divisions throughout Iran. The role of the lūṣūs in 19th century city politics is studied in a separate unpublished paper given to a graduate seminar, St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1975.

2. Son of Mīrza ʿAlī Akbar Khān and grandson of the celebrated Ḥājī Ibrāhīm Khān Iʿtimād al-Daulih, he succeeded his father in the office of Biglarbaygī in 1256 (1840-41) when he was 29 years old. See Fārs Namīth, I, 198ff.; II, 47-53) and Haqayiq al-Akhbār-i Naẓīrī, op.cit. pp.307-13.

3. The Qashqāī Khans played a major role in maintaining control over the countryside particularly in the 1830's and 40's. (Fārs Namīth. I, pp.285ff. and II, 115-17).

4. During the first ten years of Muḥammad Shāh's reign from 1250-60 (1835-45), of six governors and more than ten provincial ministers acting on behalf of the governors, almost all of them were either deposed because of local pressure, or else were sacked by the central government due to their failure to exercise control.
less control over the administration of the city, as well as a loss of revenue in town and countryside. Equally, for his powerful ally Muhammad Khan Ilbaygī Qashqa‘ī, the establishment of a strong provincial government which could control the countryside meant restrictions on the activities of the tribe as well as payment of the due taxes.

The traditional alliance which existed between bīglarbāyī, kadkhudābāshīs and kadkhudās on the one hand, and various elements with tribal or urban origin such as Ilbaygī, prominent ‘ulama and members of the city brigandage on the other, created an impenetrable urban network which could hardly be disunited by any outside force. While Qavām al-Mulk and his officers practically controlled the city quarters, Ilbaygī guaranteed the balancing force which was necessary to check the threat of the government troops, and turbulent lūtīs ensured the violence and disorder which were necessary for creating embarrassment for the government. Towards the 1250's and 60's different scenes of an orchestrated resistance can be seen, in which the lūtīs of the rival quarters, usually under the influence of rival figures, played a major role in the development of events. In mid-August 1844, Mīrzā Nabī attempted to publish the faʻrmān for commercial regulations regarding the recovery of debts due to English merchants, by reading it in the principal mosque; 'the rabble and disaffected persons in Sheeraz assembled round, and would allow no one to approach the mosque. Their supposition was probably that the Ferman contained an order to replace Mīrzā Nabee Khan in Government'.

It is hard to establish to what extent the violence of the lūtīs voiced people's grievances against the government, but no doubt at times of social and political turmoil they created a major problem for the security of the quarters and the safety of the inhabitants. It seems that even the truce, or the nominal understanding, which was reached at a higher level between the representatives of quarters, was not observed by lūtīs such as Ahmad Sultan from Ishaq Bayg quarter, who according to the customary divisions of the quarters, lost no opportunity to settle old feuds. The eye witness account of the Shiraz agent of the British mission in Tehran provides a vivid picture of the hostilities in the city:

1. Examples of lūtīs' destructive clashes in Shiraz, particularly in conjunction with the struggle between conflicting poles of power in the city, are recorded in Fārs Nāmīh. I, 287ff. Also H.G. Migeod 'Die Lūtīs' in Journal of Economic and Social History of Orient, II (1959), pp.84-5.
2. F.O. 60/105, No.90, Sheil to Aberdeen, 19th August 1844.
'In Fars there is not a village or district, not to speak of Shiraz, where fighting and disturbances do not occur. To commence with Shiraz itself; a few days ago a young man belonging to the Ne'metee party happened to pass through the parish occupied by Heyedere party; some of the lootees (disorderly persons, vagabonds) of the latter class unexpectedly attacked and took him prisoner, and their chiefs gave the order for his murder; accordingly without understanding or enquiring what might be the crime of the unfortunate youth, they fell upon him with their knives and daggers, inflicted at least a hundred wounds, then stoned him and lastly tied a rope to his foot, dragged him through the streets and threw him into the town-ditch, where he lay till someone took pity on him and buried him'.

After referring to various disturbances which simultaneously occurred in other towns and villages of Fars, and also the dispute which broke out between the Simnâni and Hamadâni troops over their lodging in the city, the report gives an example of the damage and casualties which the inhabitants of Shiraz on one occasion suffered from gang-warfare:

'Great disturbances, originally in a dispute between the two principal divisions of Heyederees regarding a prostitute, took place in the town a few days ago. The majority of the houses and shops adjoining the scene of conflict were plundered and destroyed. During the two or three days that the fight lasted, four persons were killed and at least a hundred wounded; at length the elder of the town succeeded by prayer and entreaty in putting an end to the fighting'.

Giving some figures for the recent fighting, the report counts at least 8 dead and 132 injured in various incidents in Shiraz and 56 dead in other parts.

Finally, appealing to the British representative to intervene, the agent states:

'The people here come to me and say that they are in despair, that their representations to the Court are useless, and they beg me to inform you of the desperate state of affairs, with the hope that you may be prevailed upon to use your influence at Tehran for ameliorating their condition.'

The Ameer (Meerza Nebee Khan) himself never leaves

1. F.O. 60/105, No.90, Supplement; Translation: Substance of a letter from the Agent at Shiraz to Lieutenant Colonel Sheil. According to Fârs Nâmeh (II, 122) at the time of the report, Mîrzâ Muhammad 'Ali Navvâb Hindî (1809-59), grandson of an Indian emigre of Persian origin, whose family were local governors of Masulipatam before British times, acted as the British Agent in Shiraz.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.
the citadel of Shiraz, and even on the death of his daughter he did not come out to the Mosque to attend the funeral rites, but had the burial service read in the citadel.\textsuperscript{1}

Thus, in the absence of an effective governmental or civilian authority for the enforcement of law and order, and as the direct outcome of the resistance shown by the local forces towards the central government, an ideal condition prevailed for the mob to assume control of the quarters and stage a full scale war, which caused great danger and suffering for the ordinary inhabitants. The local notables who were probably the real instigators of these factional disorders, certainly had a limited ability to maintain peace and order.\textsuperscript{2}

Under such circumstances, the publication of a highly sensitive issue such as the mission preached by the Bab would naturally have added a new dimension to the existing situation. Here the Bab was faced with two options: either he could have proclaimed his mission in the hope of attracting the attention of the curious public, or else in spite of a growing interest towards his claims, leave the city and commence his pilgrimage to the Hajj. In choosing the first option, the absence of a powerful provincial government and the existing turmoil might have given him the chance to recruit freely without serious fear of the 'ulama's reaction, since they lacked the official backing of the government. But such publication would inevitably have meant involvement in city politics and taking sides in the Haydari-Ni'mati divisions, since in the event of any strong action from the opposing 'ulama which could have been implemented by provocation and incitement of the mob, he would have had to rely upon the opposite faction for security and protection. But such protection could not have materialised without the Bab leaning towards the leaders of these divisions and ultimately being manipulated by certain notables in the city to fulfil ambitions beyond his original claims and intentions.

Thus as soon as the Bab felt that the disclosure of his identity might lead to further trouble, he chose to leave Shiraz in haste since he had no intention of facing the dangers of an unpredictable situation. He belonged to the merchant class which, because of its functions, always held a neutral position in local

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{2} Regarding the long history of Qavām al-Mulk's family association with the Shirazi lūtīs (see Fārs Namah, I, 289ff., and cf. Ḥaqāʾiq al-Akhbār, op.cit. 307ff), it's not unrealistic to suggest that in the present round of hostilities, Qavām al-Mulk deliberately encouraged the lūtīs' disturbances in order to emphasise his hostility towards Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Mushīr al-Mulk, his most important rival and sometime the Vazīr of Fārs under previous governors.
city politics in Shiraz. He was a sayyid and an ascetic who belonged to a respected merchant family and like most members of merchant families, held himself above these involvements. Moreover his peaceful and non-violent character made him regard his mission, sometimes even contrary to his own disciples, as being beyond political conflicts. His idealistic image of proclamation and public acceptance was too much influenced by Shi'i prophecies to be scaled down to a realistic engagement in temporal affairs. Indeed as the events of the next few years showed, he largely lacked a sense of political timing and hence never managed to exploit the situation in his own favour. Perhaps it was a wise move to leave the public declaration in Shiraz to Mulla Šādiq Muqaddas, but as we saw earlier, in spite of Muqaddas' courageous efforts, the whole mission ended in failure and later resulted in the arrest and detention of the Bab. This was because the declaration coincided with the arrival of the new governor who backed the ʿulama, but more significantly because the nature of the message was so unconventional that it could hardly attract the support of the influential factions in an effective way.

Nevertheless, the extent of the Bab's concern with his own safety should not be exaggerated. His decision to leave Shiraz before further difficulties occurred should also be interpreted as a temporary remedy to a much deeper struggle which tormented the Bab's mind, a struggle between his self-assumed duty to declare publicly his 'divine truth' only for himself and his close circle of followers. As we will see, the inner tension which had already started in Shiraz, reached its height during Hajj, and in the course of 1261-2 (1845-6). Later events bring this intellectual conflict more to the surface, and show the Bab's preoccupation with the nature of his mission and its possible implications.

II

After leaving Shiraz, the Bab arrived at the port of Būsihr in 6th Ramadān (20th September 1844) where he stayed for two weeks before boarding the sailing vessel which took the pilgrims to Jidda on 19th Ramadān. Two days after his arrival at Jasīrat al-Bahr, while still waiting for his departure, he wrote a letter to his wife in which he expressed his deep affection. Here again he refers to considerations which encouraged him to leave, and speaks of the

1. See above Chapter Six, I.
2. The title given to Būsihr by the Bab (Khutba al-Jidda, op.cit. p.66).
destiny by which he was assigned to this mission:

'God is my witness that since the time of our separation, such griefs encircled me as are beyond description. But since destiny (taqdir) is so all-powerful, it is due to a fitting purpose that this (separation) occurred in this way. May God, in the name of Five Nobles (Khamsat al-Nujabah)1 provide the means of my return as may be best. It is two days since I entered Bushihr. The weather is intensely hot, but God will protect. At any rate, it appears that in this very month the ship will sail. Gracious God shall protect us.'2

In this journey, beside his faithful Abyssinian servant Mubarak, only Mulla Muhammad Ali Bâfurûshî (Quddûs) accompanied the Bab3. Quddûs, who attended the Bab as his secretary (kâtib), seems to have been chosen by the Bab partly because of the former's original intention to perform Hajj in the same year4, and partly because of the Bab's personal affection for his young disciple, who later played a crucial role in the leadership of the movement after 1848. When he instructed his other disciples to embark on their assignments, the Bab designated Quddûs to accompany him to Mecca, where he apparently took the oath of fraternity (ṣighî-ı ukhuwat) with him5. However, it appears that Quddûs did not play any major part throughout the journey, and it was only after their return that his involvement in the events of Shiraz 1261 (1845) and Kirman 1262 (1846) gave him some significance amongst his followers.

2. Khândan-i Afrân, op.cit. pp.166-7. The letter written in a most excellent shikastîh style facsimiled in The Bab, op.cit., and partly translated on p.57. Those considerations which caused the abrupt departure of the Bab from Shiraz, even prevented him from saying farewell to his mother (ibid.).
3. Bayân, IV, 18 (p.146); Nabil. 129 and Mîrzâ Hâbiballah. 37. Nicolas (p.206) believes that Mullâ Hûsain Bushrûyîhî and Mîrzâ Sayyid 'Alî Shîrâzî, uncle of the Bab, also accompanied him, while TMS. (p.73) reckons that Mîrzâ Sayyid 'Alî Shîrâzî and Sayyid Kâzîm Zanjânî were present. However both sources seem to have wrongly identified Sayyid 'Alî Kîrmânî, mentioned in al-Sâhîfa Bayn al-Harameyn (see below) with Sayyid 'Alî Shîrâzî. As regards the other two, all the evidence confirms the opposite.
4. TMS. 63 and Z. 418 cf. NT. III, 238 and Kazem Beg. VII, p.344 n., 47/8 n. The two latter sources believe that Bâfurûshî in fact first met the Bab in the course of Hajj, but such a claim has not been substantiated by any other sources.
5. TMS. 81.
From the time of embarkation in Bushihr till their arrival at Mecca on the first Dhu al-Hijja 1260 (22nd December 1844), the sea journey took 71 days. As far as can be reckoned from various letters and addresses written en route, between the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean and then the Red Sea, the vessel stopped in Kangān, a small port half-way between Bushihr and Bandar 'Abbās on the Persian coast', Muscat, and Mocha (in Bab al-Mandab) before finally arriving at Jidda. Besides the inland caravan routes to the Hijāz, the other means of transport available to most Persian pilgrims of central and southern Iran were the sailing carriers which operated between ports of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea coast. The sailing carriers on this route, in addition to their trade journeys throughout the year, seem also to have carried passengers for the Hijāz at the pilgrimage season.

While on board, the excessively humid and hot weather, the rough sea, and the inconvenience of the sailing vessel, added to the difficulties of a slow and tiresome voyage, and left an unpleasant effect on the Bab who had never before experienced the sea. This experience seems to have been worsened because of the offensive behaviour of some fellow-pilgrims on board. In Bayān, on the subject of pilgrimage, the Bab recalls:

'On my journey to Mecca, I personally witnessed someone regarded as a respected figure in the vessel, who undertook luxurious expenses, but deprived his fellow-friend and room-mate even of a glass of water. From Bushihr to Muscat, which took us twelve days, as we were not able to take water, I contented myself with the juice of sweet lemon.'

The agony of pilgrimage so much tormented the Bab that later in Bayān, he

3. See below this Chapter.
4. Kurdī Rabbāllāh (p.38) maintains that by the time of the Bab's pilgrimage the steamers were still not operating in this route, but apparently soon after that the first commercial steamer appeared in the Persian Gulf. (Nabil. 131) The first Indian Navy steamer visited the Gulf in 1838 (Lorimer, op.cit. I, part 1, p.232). Balyuzi, The Bab (op.cit. 69) believes that the Bab's sailing vessel was called Fūtūḥ al-Rusul.
5. Bayān highly recommended journey by land and advised believers to avoid a sea voyage wherever it is possible (IV, 16, p.144).
exempted, amongst others, those who should undertake a sea voyage to Mecca from Hajj. Even for those who are obliged (mustat'ī) to make Hajj, he only prescribes a pilgrimage if 'on the way there would be no grief for the traveller, since on the sea there is nothing but grief (huzn)'\(^1\). Indeed in spite of the traditional Islamic view which sometimes even extols the sufferings of the pilgrims as a necessary purifying process, the Bab looks forward to the improvement of roads and communications in the Islamic lands. In one of his rare references to the West, he praises the rapid and secure road and communication system in Ārk-i Parangistān and regrets that even the chāpar service in Iran is monopolised by 'the possessors of authority' and is not available to the deprived and poor (mustā'īfī)\(^2\).

As a whole the Bab's impression of his fellow pilgrims throughout Hajj, indicated in many of his writings, was a mixed sense of resentment and pity. He recounts:

> 'On the way to Mecca one matter which was most disgraceful towards God, and indeed diminishing to their (original) intention, was the pilgrim's quarrels with each other, since such behaviour was prohibited, and remains so. Tradition for believers is nothing but foreboding, patience, decency and moderation. The House repudiates such people who circumambulate around it'\(^3\).

Such complaints about the behaviour of pilgrims is also acknowledged by some contemporary European travellers, who on their way to Hajj, occasionally came across groups of Persian pilgrims. George August Wallin, the Finnish traveller who ventured through Hijāz in 1845, a year later than the Bab, remarks that Persian pilgrims 'are extremely awkward and tiresome on a desert journey'\(^4\).

In addition to the general discrimination and ill treatment which all Persians experienced during Hajj, the Bab seems also to have suffered from the deliberate molesting and provocation of his fellow pilgrims. References to 'quarrels' between pilgrims, and the 'ignorance' of passengers should be seen

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1. Ibid. 144. 2. Ibid. pp.144-5. 3. Ibid. On this point the Bab seems to refer to the Qur'ān, II, 194. 'Whoso undertake the duty of pilgrimage in them shall not go in to his womenfolk, nor indulge in ungodliness and disputing in the Pilgrimage'. 4. 'Narrative of the journey from Cairo to Medina and Mecca etc. in 1845' in JRGS. 24 (1854), 115-207 (p.206), reprinted in Travels in Arabia (1845 and 1848), Cambridge, 1979, p.92. See also Burton, R. Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah & Meccah, 2 vols., London, 1873 (I, pp.205, 321, 232, 434 and II, 168) and Blunt, Lady A. A Pilgrimage to Nejd, 2 vols., London, 1881 (II, 47) for the behaviour of Persian pilgrims and their maltreatment by the native Arabs.
in the light of the criticism which was made against him. Apparently on board the vessel he had already preached hinting at the advent of the promised Imam. He himself remarks that amongst the passengers he did not see any believer in the Book, except one, 'since the rest of the pilgrims were a bunch of useless and ignorant people'. Mīrzā Abūl Hasan Shirāzī, a merchant on board the same vessel, and most probably the same believer who is mentioned by the Bab, gives an eye witness account of the Bab's constant preoccupation with his writings.

An incident on board illustrates the alarming opposition which the Bab faced in his earliest steps to publicise his claim. The expression of his real intentions for this journey, no matter how reticently and indirectly, when added to constant revelations of numerous khutbas and tablets from the young sayyid with 'extraordinary and strange behaviour', naturally created a good excuse for a fellow citizen such as Shaykh Abū Ḥashim Shirāzī to stage a strong attack against the Bab. But as the provocations and insults of Abū Ḥashim became increasingly intolerable for the other passengers as well as the Bab, the captain of the vessel who probably feared a full scale fight on board, ordered Abū Ḥashim to be seized and thrown into the sea. However in spite of the captain's determination to be rid of the Shaykh, the Bab stepped forward to intercede for him. Mīrzā Abūl Hasan recounts that 'the captain, who was impressed by the Bab's innocence and his attempt at mediation, finally accepted'. Yet Abū Ḥashim, in spite of the Bab's mediation, lost no time in creating more trouble for the Bab, by reporting his activity to the ulama even before he returned to Shiraz.

Reaching Muscat, the Bab arrived at the house of the Imam Jumʿīh of the city, where he delivered 'the message of God' to him. Though at first sight he was impressed by his writings and 'was counted amongst the rightly guided', later, as the Bab puts it, he 'followed his own worldly desires, and thus the

1. 'Letter to the 'Ulama' (Kitāb ilā al-'Ulamā'), INBA. 91, XXII, pp.81-94 (93) also Browne Or. MSS. No. F21 (9), Letter No.32, pp.224-32.
2. Nabil. 130.
3. TMS. 73.
Book judged him amongst assailants'. Similarly the effect of his message on
the pilgrims and the local dignitaries in most cases proved to be negative. Yet
there are the exceptions of individuals who anxiously undertook the pilgrimage
in pursuit of the promised Zuhur. Sayyid Javād Muḥarrir, the Isfahānī scribe
who had already heard of the advent of the Qā'im from Muḥān Fāhrī and hurriedly
arrived at Shiraz when the Bab had already left the city, finally visited in
Muscat the Shirāzī merchant whom he reckoned to be the promised Bab.

From the description given by Muḥān Fāhrī he must have had a vague idea,
if not full knowledge, of the man whom he was seeking, since in the house of
the Imām Jum'īh of Muscat he was able to find 'the signs which had been related
by the imams about the Qā'im' (i.e. his face, height, manners etc.) fully
identical with the features of Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad Shirāzī. In spite of the
Bab’s deliberate efforts not to reveal his identity, the enthusiasm shown by
Sayyid Javād should be taken as an example of the eagerness of the early
believers to affiliate themselves with the new cause. Not long after, he saw
the Bab again in Jidda and later on a few occasions in Mecca and Medina. When
he asked the Bab: 'How could I succeed in your sublime recognition', the Bab
replied: 'How did you recognise the late Shaykh (i.e. Aḥṣāʾī) and Sayyid-i
Rashtī?' I humbly said 'With intimate companionship'. He then said: 'Here you
should do the same'. This prudent answer indeed encouraged Sayyid Javād to
join a gathering of the Bab and his companions in Medina:

'The companions (aṣḥāb) sat all around while Jinnab-i
Quddūs was busy reading and collating the commentary
on Sūrat al-Baqara which had been revealed from the
Holy Pen. When he saw me he paused for a moment before

1. Letter to the 'Ulama‘, p.39. The identity of the Imām Jum'īh of Muscat
is not clear. However on the basis of the allusions in the Bab's writings
one may assume that he was Shaykh Sulaymān al-Qatīfī (died 1266/1850) who
was at the time marja' in Muscat. He was a student of Sayyid Mahdī Bahr
al-'Ullum and a prolific writer, skilful in ḥikma and logic. (Ṭabaqāt. II,
2, pp.606-7). Being from Qatīf he probably had some Akhbarī tendencies.
His correspondence with Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī (Fihrist. II, 336) may also be
an indication of his Shaykhi interests which perhaps were the prime reason
for acquaintance with the Bab.

2. See above Chapter Six, III.

3. Memoirs of Sayyid Javād Muḥarrir, op.cit. pp.29-30. It is not surprising
that Sayyid Javād should seek for 'physical signs' in the appearance of the
Bab. Traditions related from the Prophet and Imams about the general
features of Qā'im describe the most minor details of Qā'im's appearance,
e.g. Bihar al-Anwār op.cit., XIII, Chapter 6, sections 8, 17-19.

his excellency ordered him to continue. At the end (of the meeting), as I had heard that the names of (all) true followers (ṣāḥīfān) are registered in the Imam's saḥīfa, I asked whether my name is also entered. His excellency replied: "Yes"."¹

Scenes described by Sayyid Javād of his efforts to recognise the Bab illustrate the initiation which most early Babis passed through before being admitted fully to the circle of trusted followers.

After arriving in Mecca in first Dhū al-Ḥijja the Bab prepared himself for Ḥajj rituals (ma'nāsik). He performed thoroughly all the required rites of dressing in ihram, visiting the Great Mosque, circumambulation of the Ka'ba, sa'y between Safa and Marwa, ceremonies of the Ḥajj proper in 'Arafa, and the sacrifice of ʿaum al-Nafā'.² He remained in Mecca till the 23rd of the same month before moving to Medina where he visited the shrine of the Prophet. On 27th Muharram 1261 after 27 days abode in Medina (10th January to 6th February 1844) he returned to Jidda in 18th Safar 1261. Here after a brief halt he boarded the same vessel for Bushihr in 24th Safar, and arrived sometime at the end of Jumāda II 1261 (June 1845) after nearly seven months travel. On his return from Medina, it appears that the Bab reached Jidda by way of Yahbū and Rabīgh, since he did not give any indication of passing through Mecca for a second time. Around this time, the whole region was in a state of disturbance and revolt. Ibn Rūmī, the Shaykh of the Harb tribe had revolted against Ottoman administration because the Pasha had failed to pay directly to him a subsidy which he had formerly received for the safe conduct of the pilgrims through his area, and consequently signalled his displeasure by attacking the small Turkish garrison in the little port of Rabīgh.³

Thus the general insecurity of the area also affected the Bab on the road. After he departed from Medina, on first Safar 1261, in spite of the constant vigilance of his companions, a roving Bedouin suddenly appeared on the horizon, drew near to the Bab and snatching the saddlebag that had been lying on the ground beside him, 'which contained His writings and papers', vanished into

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¹. Ibid. p.31.
the desert. The loss in this robbery of various *sahifas*, *khutbas* and commentaries, which were the result of his 'revelations' in the past few months, further frustrated him. Though this was an act 'decreed by God', and he had already 'read it in the *sahifa* of his soul' beforehand, yet it added to other hardships and grievances, which no doubt affected the Bab's decision to abandon his original plan, and take the safe route to *Balad al-Amr* (i.e. Shiraz).

III

The pilgrimage to Mecca was primarily designed to fulfil the vital task of public declaration. To demonstrate the significance of this task, it is necessary to elaborate on some aspects of this attempt, which in spite of their importance, have received little attention in most historical accounts. It is important to see how, when the Bab had reached Mecca, the Holy places affected and changed the plans which had been previously formulated. Available materials, whether accounts of eye witnesses or the Bab's own references, provide a convincing picture which in some areas, nevertheless remains ambiguous. Mirza Abul Hasan Shirazi seems to be the only account which clearly states that at the end of Hajj rites, when the floor and the roof of Masjid al-Haram were fully occupied with pilgrims, in the presence of Quddus and others, the Bab stood against the wall, holding the ring knob of the Ka'ba's door and three times in 'the most eloquent and exquisite voice', announced; 'I am the Qa'im whom you were expecting.'

This was the verse which according to Mirza Abul Hasan was recited by the Bab in order to announce his mission. However, according to the Shi'ite traditions, the verse which the Qa'im is supposed to read at the time of declaration in Mecca varies from source to source. Shaykh Sadduq in *Kamal al-Din* and Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim in his *Kitab al-Ghayba* under the heading of Khuruj quoted the verse

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1. *Nabil*. (p.132) wrongly assumes that the robbery had taken place on the way from Jidda to Mecca, though *Khutbat al-Jidda* makes it clear that it happened on the above route (op.cit. p.69).


5. Ibid. 558.
from the Qa‘ran XXVI, 20: 'So I fled from you, fearing you. But my Lord gave me judgement, and made me one of the Envoys'. Mufaddal on the other hand has mentioned the verse which the Qā‘im will repeat when he will invite his companions to take the oath of allegiance; 'O believers! If you help God, He will help you, and confirm your feet. But as for the unbelievers, ill chance shall befall them!'\(^1\). But here Mīrza Abul Hasan seems to be particularly influenced by the content of those prophecies which anticipate the occurrence of the 'Outcry' (Sayha) or 'Announcement' (Nida*) on the Day of Khurūj when the Munādī (Announcer) or the Archangel Gabriel will announce in eloquent Arabic the appearance of Mahdi.\(^2\) However, the content of it could also be compared with the Ḥadīth related from Imam Muhammad Baqir in which the Qā‘im, standing against the black stone, will announce his claim.\(^3\)

Mīrza Abul Hasan then continues: 'It was extraordinary, that in spite of that noise, immediately the crowd became silent, in a way that even the flapping of the wings of a passing sparrow was audible'. He maintains that all the pilgrims heard the Bab's call, and interpreted it for each other. They discussed it, and in their letters, reported the new proclamation to the people in their homelands.\(^4\)

Although Mīrza Abul Hasan was an eye witness on this occasion, it seems likely that he allowed his imagination to colour his description. He must have exaggerated not only the general reception of the Bab's call, but indeed the manner and the extent to which the Bab uncovered his inner intentions. The combination of the massive influence of the traditions which prophesied the Qā‘im's proclamation in Mecca, and the Bab's enigmatic and multi-faceted claim no doubt affected the clarity of vision of a believer who, at the distance of some years, could no longer distinguish the puzzling stages of the revelation of the Bab.

1. XLVII, 9.
4. Mīrza Ḥabībballāh. pp.40-41. The same account is also related by other secondary sources such as TMS. 73 and KD. I, 43. On the contrary, Miṣfāṭ Bah al-Abwāb (p.99) produces seven reasons (almost all identical with each other) to reject the reported public declaration.
5. See above Chapter Four, III. Also Biḥār, XIII, Chapters 29-32 (pp.470-675 trans.) and numerous quotations in the text all emphasising the declaration of Qā‘im in Masjid al-Haram between Rukn and Maqām.
The Bab's own references to the Mecca declaration, make it clear that he did not receive any widespread response, whether favourable or unfavourable. However they never clarify to what extent he actually conveyed his mission to the public, or, considering the practical obstacles, whether indeed he was inclined to do so. Referring to himself as 'the founder of the House', the Bab acknowledges the pilgrim's general lack of insight in recognising his true position;

'One thousand two hundred and seventy years from the (Prophet's) Designation (Bț'θa) have passed and each year innumerable people have circumambulated the House. In the final year, the founder of the House himself went for Hajj and saw that by God's grace, people from all creeds had come to Hajj, but no one recognised him, and he recognised all. And the only one who recognised him was the one who accompanied him in his pilgrimage, and he is the one whose (name) is equal to eight vaḥīd, and God is proud of him.'

On another occasion he asserts that of all pilgrims only three managed to perform a correct Hajj, which again implied that not only was he disenchanted by the fact that the public paid no real attention to him, but that he only approved of the pilgrimage of those who succeeded in recognising him.

Given the general circumstances of the Hajj, when religious emotions and zeal were at their height, even if a public declaration as such could have taken place, it could hardly have had a favourable effect on the audience, if it did not in fact provoke their suspicion and anger. In the course of Hajj, and primarily as a result of his experiences with his fellow pilgrims, it seems that the Bab became increasingly aware of this fact. This is more apparent in his contacts and interviews with some known individuals in whom, because of their past views, the Bab invested some hope. The interview with Mullā Muhammad Husain Muhīt Kirmanī, to which the Bab paid special attention, clearly shows that such prophetical admonitions, no matter how dramatic they were, usually led to no positive result.

1. *Bayān*. IV, 18 (p.148). In his writing the Bab often calculates from the year of Bț'θa, the beginning of the Islamic revelation, instead of the year of Hiṣra which is the beginning of the Islamic calendar. It is interesting to see that the above remark on the position of Quddūs came at the time when he was gradually rising to the de facto leadership of the movement in 1847-8. In the *abjad* numerological system Quddūs has the numerical value of 152 which is equal to $8 \times 19$ (vaḥīd).

Being a well known member of the Shaykhi circle in Karbila', Muhit Kirmanî was regarded as one of the contenders for leadership of the Shaykhis after the death of Rashtî. His presence in Mecca in the same year as the Bab could be in connection with the news which had reached him of the conversion of his ex-associates and classmates to the cause of the new Bab in Shiraz. Qatîl Karbalâ'î maintains that few months after the death of Rashtî the remaining students in 'Atabat gradually left Karbila for various destinations and left Muhit without any following. No doubt the preachings of Mulla 'Alî Bastami played some part in diverting the attention of the Shaykhi students towards the revelation in Shiraz and the imminent journey of Sayyid 'Alî Muhammad to the Hijaz and 'Atabat. Presumably it was under the influence of these preachings that Muhit himself decided to travel to the Hijaz and meet the Bab.

Hence, the Bab seems to have taken Mirza Muhit by surprise when in the course of Hajj he approached him in the middle of the crowd. Urging him to clarify his attitude, the Bab demanded Muhit to choose either to submit himself unreservedly to his cause or to repudiate it entirely. In this 'peremptory challenge' the Bab acknowledged the outstanding position of Muhit by referring to his self assumed claim of being the direct inheritor of 'those twin great Lights', while pronouncing his own authority which by its nature superseded any other claim of leadership; 'Verily I declare, none beside me in this day, whether in the East or in the West, can claim to be the Gate (Bab) that leads men to the knowledge of God.' In this delicate statement, the Bab deliberately emphasises the title of Babîyat and avoids the open claim of Qa'imiyat, which no doubt under the circumstances would have been hazardous and unwise. Yet by maintaining that he is the 'Gate' to the knowledge of God, he seems to stress a quality which is more identified with the Qa'im, or even with an independent revelation, than with the traditional image of Bab-i Imam. For the Shaykhis the title Bab, in the sense that it was applied to previous Masters, was not unprecedented, hence it is evident that Muhit was faced with a dilemma in that

1. See above Chapter Four, I.
2. Qatîl. 510. See also above Chapter Three.
3. See above Chapter Five.
5. Ibid. A clear reference to Shaykh Ahmad Ahsâ'î and Sayyid Kazim Rashtî.
6. Ibid.
the claim had gone well beyond the boundary of the 'Perfect Shi'i'. Muhit Kirmani, as the representative of those in the Shaykhi school who tended to diverge towards 'scholasticism', and thus to undermine its messianic message, was confronted by the Bab who on the grounds of his message advocated the need for continuous spiritual guidance.

The Bab's answer to the scepticism of Muhit 'is none other than that proof whereby the truth of the Prophet Muhammad was established'\(^1\).

'If you choose to reject my message, I will not let go your hand until you pledge your word to declare publicly your repudiation of the truth which I have proclaimed. Thus shall he who speaks the Truth be made known, and he that speaks falsely shall be condemned to eternal misery and shame. Then shall the way of Truth be revealed and made manifest to all men\(^2\).

Here, a demand for rendering satisfactory proofs was met by the Bab, not by any conventional reasoning, but by direct appeal to irrevocable divine arbitration, a practice which was consciously inspired by, and no doubt was strongly reminiscent of, the Prophet's practice of mubahala with the disavowing Christians of Najran, which took place roughly at the same date (around 23rd Dhu al-Hijja in the outskirts of Medina\(^3\).

But more recent examples might have been uppermost in the Bab's mind when he made this appeal. Besides its Quranic precedence, mubahala was not an unfamiliar practice in later times, often as the last resort for settling theological disputes between two uncompromising parties with opposite views.

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1. Ibid. pp.134-5.  
2. Ibid.  
3. Mubahala could be translated as mutual execration by means of humble and sincere prayer (bahala: to curse, and ibtihāl: lamentation and prayer), in the hope of divine arbitration between good and evil. Yaum al-mubahala refers to the day when the Prophet Muhammad in the last year of his life invited the Christians of Najran to the challenge of mubahala. Accompanied by his immediate family, 'Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husain, he stood in the desert, but the leaders of the Christians failed to appear. Verses 60-65 and particularly 61 of Sura Al-Imran in the Qur'an (see below) refer to the same occasion. Various classic accounts discuss Yaum al-mubahala (e.g. Ibn al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi al-Tārikh, Leiden, 1868, II, pp.141-3, Mir Khaund, Rudat al-Safā, Tehran, 1338-9 Sh., II, pp.531-5). Quranic commentaries such as Al-Maybudi, Kashf al-Asrār, 10 vols., Tehran, 1338, II, pp.145-50; Tabarsi, Majma' al-Bayān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'an, Tehran, 1371 Q./1951, II, 451-3 also explain the significance of mubahala. See also L. Massignon, 'La Mubahala de Medine et L'Hyperdulie de Fatima' in Opera Minora, 3 vols., Beirut 1963, I, 550-572 and R. Ustādī, 'Darbārih-i mubahala va manābī'-i ān etc.' in Ayandeh, I-III, 1358 Sh., p.33.
In 19th century sources, *Qisas al-`ulamā‘*, for example, refers to a call for *mubahala* by Shaykh Ja‘far Najafi upon Mirzā Muhammad Akhbarī outside the gates of Tehran in order to distinguish the truth or the falsehood of the Akhbari creed. Although the *mubahala* never took place, the presence of the two parties with their followers turned into a test of popularity for the two rivals. More significant is the call for *mubahala* proposed by Sayyid Kazim Rashtī to Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafi in response to the latter's provocations and allegations against the Shaykhis in Najaf. Rashtī offered that the *mubahala* should take place in the Shrine of Husain or the Shrine of 'Abbās or any other of the holy places and left it to Najafi to decide whether it should be in public or private. Yet Najafi gave no reply to this call.

In his writings, the Bab also regards *mubahala* as the ultimate means for distinguishing truth from falsehood. He refers to this with the following words:

'I accomplished the proof of *mubahala* in Masjid al-Ḥaram in the presence of eye witnesses, and the one who was addressed with what has been said in *Sahifā al-Bayn al-Haramayn*, was Muhīt. Those who heard such a call, I believe, were Hajj Sayyid 'Alī Kīrnānī, Hajj Sayyid Muhammad Khurāsānī, Hajj Sulaymān Khān and Hajj Muhammad 'Alī Māzandarānī, and there were others as well.'

By the description of his claim to Muhīt, and the details recorded in *Sahifā al-Bayn al-Haramayn*, the Bab implies that by following the example of the Prophet, he has fulfilled the requirements of the prophecies:

'My God! I take you as witness to what I said in Masjid al-Ḥaram, beside the Ka‘ba of Bayt al-Ḥaram to the inquirer of these verses (i.e. Muhīt Kīrnānī), of what has been revealed in the past to your beloved friend Muhammad in the Qur‘ān; "And whoso dispute with thee, say Come now, let us call our sons and your sons, our wives and your wives, ourselves and yourselves, then let us humbly pray and so lay God's curse upon the one who lies". And swear to Your truth, and there is no God but thee, he did not respond to Your servant, and God's witness

1. Q. 178.
3. Z. 271. A letter written from Shiraz between 1261-2 (1845-6). The author of *Zuhur al-Haqq*, who does not specify his source, also wrongly believes that Mullā Hasan Gauhar was present in *mubahala*. See below for the mentioned persons.
is sufficient. O Muḥīṭ, the inquirer! Did I not call you in Masjid al-Ḥarām in front of the Ka‘ba near the Western Pillar (Rūkn al-Gharbī), where you were standing beside the Miḥrāb, in the night of the middle Dhu al-Hijja when three hours had passed from the beginning of the night, to accept my summons and stand up for muḥāhala with me beside Rūkn in front of the Ḥajjar al-‘Āswhād, so that you will stand on behalf of all the people of the Earth who renounce my covenant. Thus God will arbitrate between us with truth, and God has perfect knowledge of what has been said. So, did I not call you for the second time with these words in the Masjid al-Haram between the Miḥrāb and the Maqām facing the Ka‘ba, let God stand counsel to what has been said. So, did I not call you in the house of Mecca, the shrine of truth, with the same words for the third time and if you are not conscious of the cause of God, God is witness to what I said and to what I am revealing to you in this book; there is no pilgrimage for you without the judgement of the House (hufon-i Bayt). Whatever you have performed in Murāq, or (Arafa or al-‘Uthā or Ṭawāf or Sa‘y between Ṣafā and Marwā, or the command of wearing ihram and thawbāyin, without the consent of God, has been erased from the Book, and God is the dearest and most wise. These signs (or verses: āyāt) are the symbols in the book of your Lord, for you to learn God's commands thoroughly, and be one of those who have attained (the Truth)'.

For the Bab, the call or muḥāhala had far greater symbolic meaning than a simple delivery of his message to Muḥīṭ or a challenge for the leadership of the Shaykhi community. By performing certain rites or summoning the 'renouncers to his covenant', of which Muḥīṭ is a representative, in fact the Bab is announcing his mission to the people in 'the most sacred place on the Earth', and in the presence of the divine arbitrator, he pledges to God to be witness and the judge, between him and those who are doomed to deny him.

The unexpected challenge left Muḥīṭ in a mood of distress and embarrassment. To escape an undesirable situation, and to postpone his final decision, he proposed some theological problems to the Bab. Though mainly insignificant or even irrelevant to the case, these questions demonstrate the way Muḥīṭ looked

1. al-Ṣaḥīfa Bayn al-Ḥaramayn, Browne Or. MSS. F.7 (9), pp.14-16. For further details on the MS. see A Descriptive Catalogue, op.cit. pp.58-9. Emphasis on specific locations around the Ka‘ba in the above passage could be explained by their symbolic significance in the process of the Qā’īm’s revelation in Mecca. Among other sources Shaykh Ṭābarsī in Iḥtiṣāj (Bihār al-‘Amwār, trans. p.549) and Tūsī in his Kitāb al-‘Arwās (also Bihār al-‘Amwār, trans. p.558) locate the position of the Qā’īm between Rūkn and Maqām, whereas Kulaynī in al-Kāfī (also Bihār al-‘Amwār, trans. p.563) describes the importance of Ḥajjar al-‘Āswhād in confirming the truthfulness of the Qā’īm’s claim.

upon the Bab's claims, and how he evaluated them. On his return to Karbila', Muhîr remained unmoved by the alarming tone of Sahlîa which strongly advised him to rebuff from his soul 'those signs of (false) scrutiny', since such illusions would prevent him 'from grasping the knowledge of certitude'. In a letter to Mullâ Husain Bushrûyi, the Bab acknowledges the 'accomplishment of his proof' to Muhîr and expresses his doubts on his sincerity. But he still hopes that 'soon God will remove what Satan has implanted in his heart'. He then instructs Mullâ Husain to convey his warning to Muhîr, and remind him of the outcome of his denial. But in spite of all efforts he remained opposed to the Bab. His uncertainties, however, caused him to vacillate between maintaining an independent position, and aligning himself with Muhammad Karîm Khân Kirmânî.

The refusal of Muhîr no doubt was a set-back for the Bab, who perhaps counted on Muhîr's cooperation as an important factor in the conversion of the remaining Shaykhis. But Muhîr was not the only one who in the course of the Hajj encountered the Bab and refused to give his allegiance. Other individuals also met the Bab in Mecca but unlike the symbolic proclamation to Muhîr, less attention has been paid to these encounters. Yet they illustrate the Bab's efforts to promote his mission amongst those dignitaries who, owing to their past acquaintances, or their theological outlook, were more likely to appreciate if not fully recognise his mission.

Sayyid Ja'far Darâbî, known as Kashî (illuminated), is an example of such persons. Being outside the sphere of Shaykhi thought, but yet with certain views common to it, he developed a theology which could be regarded as a bridge

1. See below.
2. Sahlîa, op.cit. 18.
3. Letter to Mullâ Husain, 10th Muḥarram 1261 (20th January 1845) from Mecca, Arabic, INBA. 91, pp.11-12. Reference to Satan is probably an allusion to Hâjî Muhammad Karîm Khân Kirmânî. Shortly after his return from Hajj, in a letter to Mullâ Muḥammad 'Alî (probably Nahrî) the Bab recommends mubâhala to his followers as their last resort in encounters with their critics. INBA. 91, XXVIII, pp.135-6, cf. XXVI, 89.
5. Sometimes in collaboration with Mullâ Hasan Gauhar, and frequently with the direct assistance of Mullâ Ahmad (see above Chapter Five, III), he tried to neutralise the effect of the new teachings. This is shown in the account of Shaykh Sulṭân Karbalâ'î (cited in Z. 256) written in 1263 (1847). As we are told by Karbalâ'î, Muhîr also showed some inclination towards Hâjî Muḥammad Karîm Khân and perhaps assisted him in his earliest polemics against the Babís. Some further details on his later years appear in Nabil. pp.37-8.
between mysticism, in the broad sense of the word, and less rigid forms of fiqh. Kashfi remained, to a large extent, an unknown figure in Shi'i theology. But in fact he was an outstanding philosopher, moralist, and mystic, who in some aspects greatly contributed to the development of Shi'i thought in the first half of the nineteenth century. His diverse interests in Islamic subjects made him a respected scholar in many ways comparable with Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i.

Paying special attention to ways and means of attaining the pure knowledge, Kashfi tackled important issues such as Ma'ad and Qiyamat in the light of some esoteric ideas. Like the Shaykhis, he implicitly advocated the irreplaceable position of a spiritual figure, who could only be known to the seekers by mediation and vigilance. This approach is evident in Sanabarq, one of Kashfi's important theological works. The Bab, who had read this work, maintained that, in his mystical discourses, Sayyid Ja'far has only become conscious of his own soul, and therefore described his own servitude. He pointed out that the knowledge of the status of Al Allah (the House of God) is beyond the capacity of any individual, and then recommends Kashfi to study works of Shaykh Ahmad on this subject. On the other hand, regarding the question of Ma'ad, the Bab implicitly compared the Shaykhi theory of Hurgalya and the non-occurrence of the 'corporal resurrection' (Ma'ad jismani) with Sayyid Ja'far's ideas in Sanabarq and showed greater sympathy with the latter. No doubt the ideas of

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1. It is not known whether Sayyid Ja'far himself adopted the title Kashfi or whether this had been conferred on him as a sign of reverence and respect. See also above Chapter One, I for further details. Shaykhis, particularly during Sayyid Kazim's time, were sometimes referred to as Kashfiya. In Dalil al-Mutahayyibin (op.cit. pp.10-12) Sayyid Kazim has attributed this title to the revelation (kashf) of the Truth from darkness by Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i while trying to make a distinction between kashf in Shaykh Ahmad's thought and the same term in 'the refuted Sufi ideas'. Shaykh Shihab al-Din Alusi, in one of his unpublished treatises, also refers to his contemporary Shaykhis as Kashfiya and Rukniya (owing to their belief in Rukn-i Rabi). (A. al-`Azzawi, Dikra Abl al-ThandJ al-Alusl, Baghdad, 1377 Q. (1958), p.37.

2. The list of his most important works appears in Tabaqat. II, 1, pp.241-2. This includes Ijabat al-Muqtarrin on Usul al-Din (also al-Dhart'a, I, p.), Mis'at al-Muluk, a handbook of practical politics (also al-Dhart'a, XXIII, pp.326-7), Kifayat al-Itam in fiqh (also al-Dhart'a, XVIII, pp.88-9) and Sanabarq, a commentary on the prayer of Rajab (also al-Dhart'a, XII, p.232). The author of Tabaqat counts him amongst the greatest Shi'i theologians and one of the outstanding figures of his own time.

3. Qahifa fi Sharh Du'ā al-Charba, INPA. pub.60, pp.62-66. In the same work the Bab speaks highly of Darabi and refers to him as 'the support of the scholars' and 'the contemporary Master' (Sayyid al-Mu'aṣṣir va Aqīd al-Muhaqqaqin). The Bab maintains that his own point of view on the question of ma'rifat is somewhere between that of Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Ja'far Darabi (ibid. p.60).

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.
Kashfi played some part in the development of the Babi theory of Qiyamat, yet he remained silent when he was faced with the Bab, who in many aspects fulfilled his theoretical requirements. Mirza Abul Hasan Shirazi states that 'I myself met Haji Sayyid Ja'far. He was present in Mecca, he saw with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears, but he did not become a believer'. The author even claims that Kashfi was primarily attracted to Mecca because his knowledge of Jafri and other hidden sciences helped him to set the time of Zuhur in 1260. Nevertheless his lack of interest in the Bab and his message, which is also reported on a few other occasions, could be regarded as the cautious response of an aged scholar encountering highly controversial claims. Being far from the main current of orthodoxy, Kashfi in theory was in line with a doctrine which advocated the appearance of a saintly figure. In practice however, the vehemence of the Babi message proved to be too strong and hazardous to be accepted by him.

Another example of those whom the Bab encountered in Mecca was Haji Sulayman Khan Afshar Sa'idi Qal'ih entitled Amir al-Umar, son-in-law of Fath Ali Shah and one of the distinguished Afshar tribal chiefs during the reign of Muhammad Shah and the early part of the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah. Though coming from a very different background to most Shaykhis, Sulayman Khan, who was a staunch adherent of Sayyid Kazim RashtI, and father-in-law to his daughter, had many things in common with the others. He was said to have been enthusiastic to learn the Time of Zuhur when he visited Rashti shortly before his death. From

1. Mirza Rabiballah. 40.
2. This claim has not been confirmed by other accounts, yet it is not unrealistic to assume that in the light of his interest in numerology and the science of letters, he may have anticipated some sort of Zuhur in the near future.
3. In reply to the author of Nuqtat al-Kaf (p.122) who enquired about Kashfi's opinion on the Bab's claims, his son Sayyid Yahya Darabi (Vahid) maintains that his father remained silent on this question (tahar-i tavaquf minimayand). See also KD. I, 57 and Ahmad. 465.
4. Beside Z. 74-7 which gives a full account of Sulayman Khan and his Babi son Riza Quli Khan, other Qajar chronicles repeatedly refer to him and his services to the Qajar government (e.g. RS. X, under Khurasan revolt, p.371 ff. and other events pp.356-7). Also al-Ma'athir wa al-Athar, op.cit. 228.
5. Z. ibid. using an unspecified source. (cf. Qatli. 509 which relates a similar account from a certain Sulayman Mirza). Fihrist (II, pp.311-12, no.197) refers to a treatise by Sayyid Kazim Rashti in reply to Sulayman Khan's questions on various theological problems. These include a question on 'the distinctive sign of the divines with insight' (ulama'-yi 'ardf'an). His adherence to the Shaykhi cause is evident from the endowments he contributed to the promotion of the Shaykhi school.
then on he was also baffled by the delay in the emergence of the new master. However, by the time he visited the Bab in Mecca, it appears that he had already shown some sympathy, if not full support, towards Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khan Kirmanī. The Bab's allusion in the letter addressed to Sulaymān Khan from Medina is directed towards this very commitment to Kirmanī. After the Mecca pilgrimage, in later years as the nature of the Babi cause was further divulged, it became increasingly apparent for the wealthy and powerful chief that alignment with Kirmanī, who enjoyed veneration and respect amongst the Qājārs, was more realistic. However, conversion of his son Rižā Quлī Khan Sartīp (son-in-law of Rashti) to the Babi movement seems to have been a source of embarrassment for Sulaymān Khan, who perhaps as a reaction to his son's conversion, participated as the commander of the Qājār forces in the campaigns of both Tabarsi and Zanjān.

Though from entirely different backgrounds, what Kashfī had in common with Sulaymān Khan was that their sons were later converted to the Babi movement. Furthermore, they both had earlier inclinations towards ideas which anticipated some form of messianic revelation. But contrary to their sons, their non-acceptance of the Bab's call indicates the attitude of the older generation who, either on theoretical grounds or because of political loyalties, was not prepared to go as far as to recognise the 'manifestation' in the way the Bab and his followers were propagating. But not all those who met the Bab during his three week stay in Mecca remained unsympathetic towards his call. For those who lacked Kashfī's theoretical sophistication or did not enjoy the same social position as Sulaymān Khan, the Bab and his mission seem to have a special attraction.

What the Kashānī merchant Hājī Muhammad Rižā Makhmal Bāf reported to the

1. In the same letter in which the Bab referred to his mubahala (see above) he referred to Sulaymān Khan's presence as witness (Z. 271). The Bab had also written a letter to Hājī Sulaymān Khan from Medina (INBA. 91, X, pp. 29-30 and Browne Or. MSS. F.28 (9), no.7). The author of Mujmal-i Bādi' (NH. 401) mistook Sulaymān Khan Afshār for the well known Babi martyr Sulaymān Khan Tabrīzī, son of Yahyā Khan. Also Browne (NH. pp.31-2) repeats the same mistake.

2. INBA. 91, X, pp.29-30.

3. His role in the suppression of both the Tabarsi and Zanjān revolts, as the special envoy of the central government, is discussed by many Babi and non-Babi accounts; RS. X, 445; NT. III, pp.257-8; NK. 191 and NH. pp.150-62.

4. For his account see above Chapter Seven, II & IV.
author of *Nuqtat al-Kaf* about his own impression of the Bab and his message, which is almost identical to the recollections of Sayyid Javad Muharrir, illustrates the extent of this fascination. When Haji Muhammad Riza visited 'the Master of the Earth', circumambulating *Ka'ba*, he noticed such great 'devotion and submission' in him that he felt certain that 'either this person is the Qa'im of the House of Muhammad, or else he is one of his chiefs (naqiby).* Here, Makhmal Baf who is 'an honest man belonging to a tujjar family and known to be good-natured, sharp and intelligent' has in fact identified in the Bab an ambiguous state between the deputyship of the Imam and the *Qafiriyat* itself. The same attitude could also be detected in Aqa Sayyid-i Hindi later known as Basir, a young blind dervish from a 'well known family of Daghdiriyih dervishes in India', who in the course of his travels in Iran, Hijaz and 'Atabat, had visited Sayyid Kazim Rashti sometime towards the end of the latter's life. When he returned to Bombay, he learned about the *Zuhur*, perhaps from Mulla Sa'id Hindi, and as a result travelled back to Hijaz, and met the Bab in Mecca.

Though in his appearance he was blind, he recognised at once the truth of his (i.e. the Bab's) mission with the eye of his heart. He discovered the status of *Qafiriyat* (in him) and acknowledged it. Here again the main emphasis has been put on the claim of the *Qafiriyat*, which is only comprehensible to those who are prepared to learn the secret.

It is with reference to this very position of the *Qafiriyat* that on a few occasions the Bab designated some of his close disciples as the only individuals who understood the true content of his message. In a letter to Mulla Husain he points out: 'Your Lord did not testify to the faith of any one in the month of Hajj except you and the one who followed the instruction in the same manner as you and the one who accompanied me in the journey of Hajj (i.e. Quddus)'.

1. See above
2. *NK.* 111. His name is entered in the margin of the text.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid. p.256. The author of *Nuqtat al-Kaf* comments on the conversion of Basir with this odd but rather interesting comment: 'He (i.e. the Basir) sold the spice of his soul to the merchant of the Being and in exchange bought the elixir of love (kimiya-yi muhabbat), and indeed he made such good profit in this unique deal that all worldly goods could not pay for its commission'. The allegorical use of mercantile terms illustrates the association of such diverse fields of commerce and spiritual commitments in the mind of the author. *Nuqtat al-Kaf* also refers to the knowledge of Basir in *jafr* and other 'hidden sciences'.
6. Presumably a reference to Mullā 'Alī Bastāmī and his mission.
7. *INBA.* 91, IV, p.11-12.
It is presumably this position of the Qa'īm-i ʿImām the Bab had in mind when he states that in the course of Hajj only Quddūs had recognised him. This recognition did not occur because Quddūs was specially favoured, but only because 'he appreciated the essence of his Truthfulness (Hujjīyat), while the others, in spite of the allusions embedded in Qayyum al-Asma', failed to grasp it\(^1\).

The above remarks make it clearer that in the course of Hajj the Bab never embarked upon a large scale declaration of his mission. Instead he only sufficed to inform a number of individuals whom he thought were prepared to recognise his real claims and intentions. But the significance of the Hajj experience should be seen in its effect on the Bab, his aspirations and his future decisions. More than having had any influence on the general progress of the movement, this experience helped the Bab to overcome his earlier illusions of mass conversion, and gave him the opportunity to examine the realities of the outside world.

The general circumstances under which the Bab publicised his claim had a considerable impact on the nature of his prophecy. The effect of these holy surroundings, at the time of his visits to the House and the Shrine of the Prophet, is clearly visible in his constant references to these places in most of his letters, addresses, books and treatises. In fact the period of Hajj should be regarded as one of the most productive periods in the Bab's short life. As can be reckoned from the available sources\(^2\), his writings during Hajj include three independent works: Sahīfa al-Bayān al-Haramayn, Sahīfa al-ʿĀmil al-Sana, and Kātab al-Ruh, two commentaries: Commentary on ʿSūra al-ʿNūr and Commentary on ʿĀyat al-Kursī, two commentaries on Qasīda of al-Humayrī and Mīsbaḥ, 26 khutbas, numerous private letters and declarations.

But although because of his 'inspirations' he was convinced more than ever of his divine mission, yet in his contacts with the public, to whom he felt his mission was orientated, and particularly in his interviews with the above mentioned individuals, for the first time he appreciated the formidable obstacles to his task. This is clearly evident in most of his writings in this period. al-Sahīfa Bayn al-Haramayn mirrors his deepest emotions when he

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2. INBA. cf. Z, pp.288-9 and Browne Or. MSS.
encountered the pilgrims in the holy places. Here he considers himself as 'the Remembrance of God' (Dhikrallah), 'the son of God's Prophet' and 'the Arab youth' (fati al-'Arabi) who 'is inspired by the (Holy) Spirit (Ruh) at all times'. His mission is to enforce 'the command of the Remnant of God' (Baqiyatallah), a clear reference to the Qa'im, and to unfold the secret of the 'two Shrines' for the people of the Earth. He holds the 'Knowledge of the unity' and is the only one who can interpret the secrets of the Book. The responsibilities the Bab assumes for himself clearly match the picture which was given of the Qa'im in the Shi'i traditions. This image is further elaborated by constant reference to the nearness of the 'Day of Termination' (Yaum al-Fasl) and 'the Time of Catastrophe' (Zalzalat al-Sa'a).

But in spite of his 'warnings' or his 'proofs', the recipients of his message either ignored or renounced his call. The Bab refers to them in Sahlfa:

'Those who are accusing the Remembrance of the "Divine Name" (Dhikr-i Ismallah) (of blasphemy) are amongst the evil doers. They are disputing my verses and finding them empty of Quranic inspiration. They are accusing the "Word of God" (KaliwatullWi) of falsehood. So let the word of punishment be upon them. Verily they will rest in the fire (of Hell) and they will have no guardian on the Day of Judgement.'

He then warns that because of their negligence, 'God therefore suspended the

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1. Written in Muḥarram 1261 in Medina, this work consisted of an Exordium and seven chapters. The former part seems to be an answer to the questions of Mīrzā Muḥīt, whereas the latter is a direct address to a believer, most probably Sayyid 'Alī Kirmāni. In the Exordium (pp.2-10) the Bab mentioned reasons for compiling this work, emphasising his own mission and reminding people of their duties. In Chapters One and Two (pp.10-37) he refers to his meeting with Muḥīt, and maintains God's continuous emanation now manifested in his verses. In answer to the proposed questions, the Bab deals with a wide range of subjects from ḥadīth (p.26) to 'hidden sciences' and astrology (pp.27-41). In the remaining part for the first time he elaborates on various prayers and rituals for visiting holy shrines. Sahlfa should be regarded as the Bab's first attempt to develop a new shari' for the movement. On one occasion in this work the Bab commented on the necessity of 'ilm-i fiqḥ for the people of the Book and particularly for merchants (pp.80-81). The style of Sahlfa, however, is reminiscent of some Shi'i books on Ḥajj. Works such as Asrār al-Ḥajj by Sayyid Kāẓim Rashti (Fihrist. II, 303 and al-Dharī'a, II, 43) and another Asrār al-Ḥajj by Mullā Ahmad Naraqi (al-Dharī'a, II, 43), both contemporaries of the Bab could be mentioned. For further works on Ḥajj in Shi'ism see al-Dharī'a, VI, pp.249-54 which lists 42 Kitāb al-Ḥajj.

2. Sahlfa, op.cit. pp.4-10.
3. Ibid.
appearance of His signs' till that Hour when the believers would be able to 'witness the Lord'. 'And a majority of them (i.e. the people) are not among the believers and thus ridicule His verses.' Addressing the bulk of pilgrims in Mecca, his sharp criticism clearly reflects his bitter disappointment; 'The majority of the people are even less than animals in comprehending the words of the Qur'an, and most of them are ignorant.' He then turns his attention towards the leaders of the community, more specifically the 'ulama, and states:

'Those who in their selfish illusions claim to be mandated by God, they are amongst liars. They have not read a word of God's Book and thus misrepresent the words of God, of which they have no knowledge. And soon God will destroy what the devil has implanted in their souls.'

The same sense of disappointment and anger is also reflected in his other writings. In his letter to Mulla Husain he again emphasises that 'God will not testify to any of the visitors (of the House) except with words of agony and punishment. Soon God will arbitrate between me and them on the Day of Judgement. And God is not unfair towards his servants.' Again in his address to the people of Mecca he condemns those who declined to take his word seriously, and ranks them as idolators and 'companions of Fire':

'Say, 0 people of Mecca! This is God's command in his Book. So obey if you are among his worshippers. I did not see many who were believers, and I saw many of them who were mockers (mustahz-i) of God's verses. In the Book of your Lord, they are the companions of the Fire and God will not testify for the oppressors but with hatred. And "We place between thee and those who do not believe in the world to come a curtain obstructing".'

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. p.22.
4. INBA. 91, IV, pp.10-14 (11). 'Letter to Mulla Husain, 10th Muharram 1260'.
5. INBA. 91, VIII, pp.25-8, 'Tablet addressed to people of Mecca'. This tablet should not be mistaken for another tablet to the Sharif of Mecca. (Some extracts of this are cited in Selections from the Writings of the Bahá'í, trans. H. Taherzadeh, Haifa, 1976, pp.29-30). The title of the former in INBA. 91 (op.cit.) is 'Letter from Mecca to Sharif Sulaymán'. However, since the Sharif of Mecca in this period was Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Mu'in Ibn 'Awn (de Gaury, op.cit., pp.244-8), and Sulaymán is probably a reference to the Imam Jum'íih of Muscat (see above), it is most probable that this is a copyist's mistake. For the tablet to the Sharif of Mecca, see Nabil. pp. 138-9 which confirms the delivery of the tablet by Quddús. The verse quoted at the end of the passage is from Qur'an, XVII, 46.
Calling on the Ḥanafī Imam of Medina, the Bab warns the people of Medina of the forthcoming Yawm al-Qiyāma, when 'God will judge his people with utmost fairness'. As is clear from the above example, the style, as well as the content, of most of his writings in this period, were heavily influenced by the admonitory tone of the Quranic verses. He seems to be conscious, if not deliberately imitative of those verses which had long been considered as clues to the nature of the Final Day. The above warnings in the Sahifā or in the tablet to the people of Mecca for instance, bear an unmistakeable resemblance to certain verses in the Sūra Ḥud in the Qur'ān:

'And if thou sayest, "You shall surely be raised up after death", the unbelievers will say, "This is naught but a manifest sorcery". And if we postpone the chastisement for them till a reckoned moment, they will say "what is detaining it?" Surely, the day shall come to them, it shall not be turned aside from them, and they shall be encompassed by that they mocked at ... Whoso desires the present life and its adornment, we will pay them in full for their works therein, and they shall not be defrauded there; those are they for whom in the world to come there is only Fire, their deeds there will have failed, and void will be their works.'

Here, the deliberate resemblance between 'the verses of the Book' and his own writings not only supports his warnings that finally the renouncers and the mockers will be placed in the Fire, or that the end of the Time is at hand, but more significantly it justifies his first allusions to the unavoidable postponement of the promised Khurāj.

IV

The Bab's preoccupation with the nature of his mission, however, did not resolve the immediate obstacles which loomed in the way of fulfilling the next stage of the original plan. The Bab did not expect that the publication of the message would so rapidly be confronted with the serious opposition of the religious and secular authorities. The events of 'Atabāt during the previous few months of late 1844, and the hostility which developed as a result of Mullā

1. INBA. 91, VII, 'Tablet written in Medina to Ḥanafī Imam'.
2. Qur'ān. XI, 11, 18-19. In some Shi'ī commentaries the above verses were interpreted as the proofs of the Qā'im's appearance. (Commentary of 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm, cited in Bihār al-Awār. op.cit., XIII, Chapter 5, p.34 trans.).
3. See above Chapter Five.
'Ali Bastami's open teachings, demonstrated the 'ulama's resolution to fight the threat of a millenarian movement. It equally revealed the extent to which the Ottoman government was prepared to prevent the recurrence of Shi'i resurgence in 'Atabat. These unforeseen troubles in 'Atabat, no doubt, left some effect on the Bab. Being under great inner pressure, the Bab who was already disillusioned with the general response in Mecca, decided to cancel his visit to 'Atabat, and instead set out for his homeland Fars.

It is almost certain that the Bab was first informed of the troubles in 'Atabat by two ex-students of Sayyid Kazim Rashti, Sayyid 'Ali Kirmani and Mulla Hasan Khurasani, who embarked on the journey to Hajj not only to visit the Bab, but probably to convey the news of Bastami's arrest by the Ottoman authorities. Sayyid 'Ali Kirmani who was the scribe and one of the close companions of Rashti, was effectively involved in various developments which took place in 'Atabat after the death of Sayyid Kazim. After his meeting with Mulla Jalil Urumi, one of the Letters of Hayy, he declared his support of the Bab, and repented of his past falsifications against the Bab. 'When he decided to become one of the believers of this cause' writes Qatil, 'fearing his opponents, he fled (from Karbila) and made the pilgrimage to Mecca, where he had the honour of accompanying the 'Great Star' (Nayyir-i A'zam, i.e. the Bab) and sitting with him in the same mahnil.'

Implicit references to the cancellation of the 'Atabat gathering first appear in the Bab's writings after his interview with the above persons in Mecca. In the early days of Muharram 1261, at the time of the rituals of visiting the shrine of Husain, in reply to Sayyid 'Ali Kirmani the Bab in a passing reference states: 'So let it be known to you that it is not possible to visit (the shrine of Husain), unless your God's will rests upon it.' The same message is transmitted in more open terms in a letter in reply to the same Sayyid 'Ali Kirmani, probably after the latter's return to 'Atabat: 'I have read your letter. So now remember that at present it is not possible for me to meet you.' No doubt it is due to this very fact that in a letter of instruction to Mulla Husain, which is dated 10th Muharram 1261 and addressed to Kufa, (since at the time the Bab was under the impression that Mulla Husain, according to the original plan, must

1. Qatil. 519. Also see above Chapter Four, I.
2. Qatil. 519. 3. Ibid.
5. INBA. 91, IX, pp.28-9, 'Letter to Hajj Sayyid 'Ali Kirmani'.
have reached Kufah), the Bab indicated his change of decision and gave brief instructions to his followers. After referring to his encounter with Muhitt, he goes on to express his sympathy towards Mullâ Husain, while advising him to keep away from 'idolaters' who are his opponents, but not to fear any trouble in the service of his Lord. He then adds:

'And the Divine Word (Kalimatallah) would not allow his servant (a reference to himself) to embark on his Cause. And thus for every person in the Book of your Lord there is a written destiny. So when God's Word will be implemented, then the Wisdom of God's command will reveal itself. Therefore, depart from the land which God had destined for your soul, and then visit this house if you can afford to set your foot on his path ... Give the greetings of Dhikr-i Ismailâh (i.e. himself) to the Sâbiqûn, and ask them to emigrate to the Pure Land of the Safe City (al-Ard al-Muṭâhharâ, Balad al-Amîn) where they were assigned in my previous command. Give greetings to the followers (al-muṭābî′în). God is above the interpretation which oppressors make of the Great, Supreme Word. When the nobles (rîjâl) gather in the Holy Land and support this cause, advise them to wait till a new order comes from me.'

The above instruction was, no doubt, made with regard to the wave of opposition which was pointed towards Bastāmî and others. The letter to Mullâ Husain was written on 10th Muharram (20th January 1845), whereas the trial of Bastâmî in Baghdad took place on 6th Muharram (16th January). It is very likely that he was only aware of the arrest and imprisonment of Bastâmî, and therefore conscious of the danger which threatened him and his followers if he ever set foot in 'Atabât. Yet at this stage, only four days after the Baghdad trial, he certainly had not received the news of the further deterioration in the Babi's situation. But nonetheless the situation was critical enough for him to advise his followers to be prepared for departure. The news of Bastâmî's conviction appears to have reached the Bab in reports despatched by Mullâ Hasan Khurasânî, who after his return to Karbila', together with Sayyid 'Ali Khurasânî, informed the Bab of the events in 'Atabât. As can be understood from the Bab's replies to Khurasânî, the latter had expressed his deep apprehension over the outcome of the trial, and showed his strong anxiety over the doubtful possibility of any further Babi activity in 'Atabât.

It is in reply to these reports that the Bab, writing from Būshihr, instructed Mullâ Hasan Khurasânî to convey his message to 'the just divines'

1. INBA. 91, IV, pp.13-14, 10th Muḥarram 1261.
2. See above Chapter Five, II.
('ulamā‘-i 'adl), a clear reference to his close followers, and instruct them to leave their homes, and come to Balad al-Dhikr in order to testify to 'the covenant of the Remnant of God (Baqīyatallah). Meanwhile, his advice to Khurāsānī is to remain in 'Atabāt till new instructions can be issued. Later in another letter to Mullā 'Atabāt, he made an appeal to all believers in 'Atabāt; 'Say! O crowd who have gathered here, call loudly for the one who is enthroned on the throne of the Great Sacred Place (i.e. Masjid al-Harām), and then depart all of you according to the divine command, and enter Balad al-Amīn, if you are amongst the readers of this letter'.

The result of the Baghdad trial had some effects on the followers of the Bab in Iraq. Accordingly, the Bab, referring to the verdict given in the trial, tries to encourage his doubting followers; 'Do not be intimidated by the Baghdad verdict. Struggle in the path of your Lord by (means of) wisdom and firm arguments, in which there is a remedy for the denials and the denunciations of the 'ulama, if you are conscious of the Divine cause and believe in it'. Henceforth, the high hopes of some of those who had gathered in Karbila rapidly faded, or even turned to scepticism and denial when the Bab failed to fulfil his promises. The Bab was aware of this change of attitude and tried to regain the lost support by emphasising the truthfulness of his cause which would soon be manifested on 'the Day of Judgement':

'O the gathered crowd! How did you pass the verdict of falsehood on our servant (i.e. himself) who first brought to you verses of proof in the manner of the Qurān, after accepting in your souls the cause of God. So wait for the divine Day of Judgement, and then I will judge, with the mandate of your Lord, between people'.

But however damaging this postponement might have been, it is obvious that after the experience of Mecca, the Bab was convinced that his journey to 'Atabāt would serve no other purpose but to intensify the existing hostility. This is evident in a prayer addressed to Mullā 'Abd al-Khālīq Yazdī, in which the Bab explains his reasons for not attending the gathering of 'Atabāt:

'O Lord! You know of that command in which I ordered the 'ulama (i.e. the early believers) to enter the Holy Land (i.e. 'Atabāt) in order (to be prepared) for the Day of Return (Rījā)' (v), when your hidden covenant was to be

1. INBA. 91, VI, pp.18-23, 'Letter to Mullā Hasan Khurāsānī'.
2. INBA. 91, III, pp.6-10, 'Letter to Mullā Hasan Khurāsānī'. The above instruction seems to be the basis of the later action on behalf of the Babis in the city of Shiraz.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
revealed, and they were all obedient. And You know what I heard (later) in Ḥaram al-Qurān (i.e. Mecca) of the opposition of ulama and the denial your servant encountered from those who were destined away from the Truth. Therefore, I gave up my (original) goal, and did not travel to that land, hoping that the hostility (fitna) would settle and those who were obedient to you would not be humiliated, and no one would find a chance to inflict the slightest harm upon someone else. My Lord, you know what I envisaged in this decision, and you are the omniscient. O my Lord, this is your decision and this is your command. If I failed in other duties, I have not failed in (applying) your words. Therefore, you arbitrate between me and them with your justice, and forgive those who are repentent and obedient to your tradition ... You know that at the time of my return (from Hajj) I intended what you commanded me, and You directed me towards what I understood from your Book. I did not desire the kingdom of this world or the next. This was not my initiative but it was your will, You Lord, the only one!.

Here, the cancellation of the 'Atabāt plan was indeed attributed to a divine force, which under the new circumstances abrogated the earlier command. The idea of bada* is no doubt hinted at in this passage and further signalled by reference to a relevant verse in the Qurān. This has a long history in Shi'i theology which is particularly elaborated in the Shaykhi school. In the above passage, the sentence '... and forgive those who are repentent and obedient to Your tradition ...' appears to be an allusion to the Qurān (VII, 153); 'And those who do evil deeds, then repent thereafter and believe, surely thereafter thy Lord is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate'. This is one of the passages in the Qurān which is frequently asserted in support of the theory of bada*, that God will change his resolve to punish sinners when they repent. This allusion still could be further confirmed by the Bab's reference to 'what I understood from your Book' which no doubt means the Qurān.

In fact the Bab placed the responsibility of the cancellation entirely on God's "change of decision". But the divine reconsideration, however, had to be embodied in a human agency. Thus he interprets the cause of events according to

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1. INBA. 91, XXIII, pp.94-102 (97-8) 'Tablet for Mullā 'Abd al-Khāliq Yazdī probably written towards the end of 1261'.
2. El2, BADA'. Goldziher refers to 'subtleties which appear in the Shi'ite Shaykhi sect (RNM, XI, 1910, 435-8) regarding the question of Bada'. On a few occasions in his writings, Shaykh Ahmad discussed this issue, for example treatise in reply to Sayyid 'Alī Lāhījānī (question 2), and the treatise in reply to Prince Māhmūd Mīrā (question 9), both of which appeared in āl-kālīm, op.cit. (also Fihrist, II, 221, 237).
divine justification. His journey to 'Atabat, which is the most important part of his campaign, was suspended in order to prevent further hostility. The Bab was quick to realise that the chances of an overwhelming success in 'Atabat were fairly narrow, since he was faced not only with Shi'i religious opposition, but with the more important threat of the secular authorities. Considering the Bab's hesitancy and his general dislike of violence, it is not surprising to see that out of disillusion and despair, he turned his attention to his homeland where he assumed the lack of an effective local authority could at least allow him to summon his followers without fear of any serious interference or organised persecution. Therefore, the 'Holy Land' of Kufah and Karbila'i is exchanged for the 'Pure Land' of 'Balad al-Amn', in order to allow the realisation of the same prophecies in a new location, despite the fact that the time of declaration was postponed for an indefinite period.

The cancellation of the gathering in 'Atabat, no matter how skilfully justified by the Bab, had a strong effect on the conviction of those who had anticipated a swift and even violent end to the 'evil' forces of the opposition. Instead, they now witnessed, both in Bastami's trial, and in the Bab's change of decision the retreat of the movement, and a victory for its opponents. Indeed the course of events gave an unexpected chance to the critics of the Bab, especially in the Shaykhi camp, to magnify the Babi setback in 'Atabat and use it as a means for discrediting the Bab. This is well illustrated in the sharp attacks of Haji Muhammad Karim Khan Kirmani in Izhaq al-Batil as early as Rajab 1261 (July 1845);

'So first came Muharram and then Nauruz, and no revelation has come from him (i.e. the Bab). Instead his effect vanished and news of him ceased. I do not know whether he is drowned in the sea, or burnt on land. So the disillusioned (followers) remained in shadow, discredited amongst the people because of their promises. They lost their ways like blind people, and praise be to God, the back of this misled people is broken. And this was because of the deception of those who saw that people are desperately short of freedom because of the intensity of oppression and lack of moderation, and therefore were willing to overthrow the state and start a revolution'. Then he addressed them saying "Soon I will rise on the day of 'Ashura or day of Nauruz. I came on behalf of your Imam, the Lord of the Age (Ghrib al-Qamam) who will purify the Earth with justice and equity. He will not change his word, and he does not intend to postpone his day of return". He then specified that his meeting place (ritqat) is in the

1. (qad daqq-a 'alayhum al-majal min kithrat al-zulm wa khilaf al-d'tidal wa hum taliban li-taghyir al-daula wa huduth al-jaula).
Land of Karbila', in order to persuade common and ignorant people, and those who were seeking disturbance (fasād) to go to that exalted Shrine. Then he himself would arrive there. And if no one attended, then his excuse would be the people's lack of submission and failure to recognise "the Bab". Therefore he would warn them of the immediate descent of grave punishment and then he would return (home) in fear and anxiety. So see how God's rejection of his deception destroyed him. In fact people assembled in Karbila', but he was unable to join them because of troubles on the road to Mecca and difficulties for pilgrims in travelling via Jabal. So came Muḥarram, and then Naurūz, and he remained in Ḥijāz, and did not go to Karbila' fearing the Arabs and the bandits. See how God, praise be to him, disgraced him and broke his back, and thus God according to his word established truth and nullified falsehood. Henceforth his fame diminished, his effect disappeared and news of him ceased.

What Karīm Khān implies in his account, though in many ways either exaggerated or else misrepresented, still reflects the general setback which the movement suffered in its earliest attempt. It is fairly evident that Karīm Khān's claim that after the Bab's failure to fulfil his promises, the backbone of the movement was destroyed is misrepresentation of the facts. Indeed his entire effort throughout Ishaq al-Bāṭīl was directed to playing down the widespread popularity of a movement which threatened his position. However it is fair to say, that the whole affair left a shadow of doubt on the Bab's claimed authority and encouraged some less committed Babis to voice their doubts.

But perhaps more important than any other aspect is the hint in the above passage of the reasons for the emergence of the movement as a response to the 'intensity of oppression and lack of moderation'. References to 'overthrowing the state' and 'starting an uprising' should not be merely taken as allegations invented by Ḥājī Muhammad Karīm Khān in order to discredit the Babis by accusing them of having anti-Qajar attitudes. Indeed the events of later years proved

1. Ishaq al-Bāṭīl. op.cit. pp.110-111. The reference in the above passage to the lack of security on the pilgrimage routes to Mecca as the principal reason for the Bab's failure to reach Iraq should be treated with some reserve. It is true that around this time the main road between Ḥijāz and Iraq which passed through Jabal Shammar, was relatively unsafe. In 1844 owing to some internal struggle between the Sharīf of Mecca and the Wahhābī Amirs, a Shaykh of the 'Abdā division of the Shammar tribe, with the help and encouragement of Sharīf Muḥammad Ibn 'Awn marched into al-Qasīm and defeated the forces of Faisal Ibn Sa'd. But this engagement, which appears to have been over by the beginning of 1845, could not have been the main obstacle in the Bab's way, since we know that pilgrims such as Sayyid 'Alī Kirmānī, Mullā Ḥasan Kuhrāsānī and Sayyid Javād Muḥarrir reached Karbila' presumably from the same route. For further information on Jabal route see Lorimer op.cit., I, part 2, App.H, p.2351. For tribal disturbances in the area see de Gaury, op.cit. 247.
the prevalence of such attitudes in the movement. But no doubt the means of achieving these objectives differed in the course of time. Such changes may well be observed in the difference between the tone of Surat al-Mulk of Qayyûm al-Asma' and the later Babi responses after 1264 which culminated in Tabarsi and other similar events. However in this early stage, the Bab, either because of his personal uncertainties which intensified particularly as a result of his disillusion in the Hajj, or because of the growing persecution and enmity towards his disciples, was persuaded to take a more moderate line. On his return to Iran he was faced with further hostility and persecution. Both in the case of his disciples Muqaddas and Quddûs and in the event of his own arrest and detention later in 1845, he realised that the public propagation of his mission even in his own homeland faced serious consequences. It was the realisation of this more than any other factor which led the Bab to a state of resignation and seclusion. Indeed in the course of the next few years the progress of the movement was largely due to the disciples who were appointed by the Bab to lead the followers rather than the Bab himself who performed only the role of the spiritual head. This was the role which not only he himself preferred to play, but also circumstances made it unavoidable.
CONCLUSION

It has been argued throughout this study that the emergence of the Babi movement was largely a response to certain aspirations in Shi'î society which had culminated in the early years of the 1840's. As such the movement was an integral part of the whole religious development and therefore not an isolated and irrelevant event in modern Iranian history. In its origin it inherited a deeply rooted millenarian tradition which had been revived in the late 18th century and continued to reappear in different forms throughout the first half of the 19th. This tradition effected the rise of the Babi movement at two levels. On the theoretical level, an internal process within the Shi'î circles of learning brought about the revival of millenarian aspirations in the form of the Shaykhi school as the most obvious response to the dominant theology. The points of emphasis in Shaykhism gave some urgency and immediacy to the advent of the Qā'im. The main contribution of the school in this respect was to place the Imam back in the perspective of an historical development which in turn necessitated his emergence at a definite moment of time. At the popular level, the sporadic appearance of proto-millenarian responses in various forms, such as the revival of the Sufi orders, the widespread speculation on the forthcoming Zuhur and the rise of the urban and rural saints and 'Deputies' indicate the survival of the millenarian heterodox tradition from earlier centuries.

The first signs of a convergence between these two currents of scholarly and popular messianism appeared amongst some millenarians, mostly within the sphere of Shaykhism, with a more realistic interpretation of the Qā'im and the events of his Zuhur. But the fuller merger between the complex messianic theories and the popular prophetic claims occurred in the Babi movement and was brought about by those who were influenced by both these traditions. Both Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad the Bab and his early disciples were the representatives of this intellectual union. Certain characteristics of the Bab made him an appropriate person for the embodiment of this fusion. On the one hand he was self-educated and an ascetic who was barely influenced by the scholarly traditions of the time. On the other hand his personality and his behaviour were of a kind which could be regarded by the common people as saintly and exceptional. In addition, being a merchant he embodied those qualities which were often revered in the mercantile community. These characteristics were idealised, at least amongst those merchants with Shaykhi inclinations, in the shape of an ethic with a strong emphasis on asceticism, piety and unworldliness which also largely fitted the practical aspects of Shaykhi teachings.
When this mercantile ethic of the layman combined with the aspirations of a group of religious students who themselves, because of their upbringing and training were highly charged with Shi‘i messianic prophecies, then the right ingredients were provided for the emergence of a millenarian movement. The catalyst for this transference from a state of expectation to a state of fulfilment of these expectations had been provided by two important developments: first the culmination of expectation for an apocalyptic event towards the beginning of the 1840's and secondly the crisis within the Shaykhi circle in the ‘Atabat, particularly after the death of Sayyid Kazīm Rashtī. Whilst the first factor moved popular beliefs towards a more definite image of the Zuhūr, the second factor ultimately divided those Shaykhi elements who were seeking a millenarian solution from those who tended to preserve the school within its scholastic boundaries.

The moment of 'proclamation', and of the conversions of the disciples which followed it, was the moment of great change for both the claimant and his converts. The date of the proclamation was continuously emphasised by the Babi sources because it indicated for them a break with the existing norms and values of the time in the hope of entering into the realm of an eschatological future. The concept of the 'new creation' (khalq-i jadīd) symbolised this change in outlook. This urge towards change gave the Babis the mobility and zeal for challenging the existing order and thus determined the ultimate direction of the movement. Theoretically, the 'proclamation' initiated a renewal in the continuous course of divine revelations. In real terms this was interpreted as a need for a drastic change in the religious and secular institutions which could only be approved by the new Proof. This resulted in the Babis' inclination towards non-rational and unconventional methods, different from the logic and reason of the time, in order to achieve new standards for the cognition of the 'inner truth' of the religion. In its essence this new approach led to the appearance of an embryonic idea of progress in Babi thought which saw the purpose of the successive prophetic manifestations (including that of the Bab) in the promotion of the moral consciousness of mankind in an uninterruptable course. This idea was alien to the dominant logic which had sanctified its own static premises of reasoning and insistently rejected any suggestion of change.

Nevertheless, for the Babis this change was expressed in the language of Shi‘i eschatology, whose symbols, characters and terminology had revived a distant Shi‘i past and therefore were familiar to the public. This made the message of the new movement more understandable for the common man and particularly for those groups who shared the same sympathies and the same intellectual and social values with the founders of the movement. The expansion of the
movement largely followed the pattern of the geographical distribution of the Shaykhi school. Many small Babi circles were formed in provincial centres throughout Iran and in some small towns and villages, particularly in Khurasan and Azerbaijan. But this pattern of expansion also corresponded to the layout of the commercial network throughout the country. The message of the movement was transmitted through the trade routes and often by those elements who were either directly involved in the trade or were in contact with local merchants, traders and the members of various guilds. Similarly, the low and middle rank clergy and the religious students particularly in places which were less dominated by *fuqahā'* or places which were previously influenced by the Shaykhi elements, were attracted to the movement. These were groups who because of their common urban characteristics, their wider contacts with the outside world, their less dependent socio-economic status, the broader scope of their aspirations and expectations, and their strong intercommunal ties, were in a better position to be absorbed into the movement. The new movement was potentially appealing to them because they could identify themselves with its spiritual head and still more with its early propounders. It offered them a progressive outlook which was attractive because it provided them with an interpretation in a comprehensible and familiar language, and because it enhanced and idealised moral and social values which were highly revered by them. Their attraction to the movement therefore, perhaps signified the embryonic intention of these urban groups with common social and intellectual characteristics, to be organised on a more comprehensive scale and to be distinguished from the rest of the society. However inconspicuous and primitive this intention may have been, the Babi movement may still be regarded in its social context as the earliest attempt to satisfy the ideological needs of these groups in their development towards what may be loosely defined as the urban 'middle class'. Yet in spite of the wider socio-economic ties which held these individuals and groups together, their aspirations and hopes for change were still very much religious and redemptive. Indeed the economic changes of the time, vacillations in trade, political and military threats and civil disturbances and insecurity were regarded by the Babis as part of the greater decline in the affairs of the world which called for an awareness of the proximity of an apocalyptic calamity.

Yet in spite of its potential capacity to attract urban groups, in practice the movement failed to achieve any sizeable support beyond the sphere of certain selective groups. Such failure to draw the public attention towards a set of millenarian objectives which was first contemplated in the early stages of the movement, may be attributed to two series of internal and external causes. As
far as the internal causes are concerned, like many other movements, the Babi movement, because of its messianic nature, embraced many diverse social and intellectual tendencies. The most obvious example of such diversity was the dichotomy which even from the earliest days loomed large between the 'moderate' tendency represented by the Bab himself and his more affluent followers, mostly from the merchant community, and the 'militant' approach represented by the Shaykhi students from lower social backgrounds. Such a difference rarely expressed itself in an open confrontation or a break in the movement, yet the whole development of the movement from moderation to extremism, particularly after 1264 (1848), was the outcome of this internal division. As the moderate approach failed to fulfil the objectives of the movement by adopting a conciliatory attitude, the radical tendency which prevailed over the future course of action determined the final fate of the movement.

The question of leadership was inseparably related to this diversity of interests. The Bab's performance as the leader of the movement was insufficient and indecisive. Thus even from the early stages around 1261-2 (1845-6) and more definitely after his detention and captivity, largely with his own consent he was regarded as the spiritual head of the movement rather than a practical leader. The hierarchical order amongst his supporters that had been set up by the Bab to replace him in the practical leadership hardly ever functioned effectively and the efforts of some of his followers, such as Qudūs and Mullā Husain Bushrūyīhī, were only partly effective in leading them during the Babi resistance in Tabarsi. Hence up to its very end in 1268 (1852), the movement continued to suffer from the lack of a consistent and effective leadership.

This difference and duality in the outlook however, was only in part the outcome of the difference in the social background. The Babis' own pre-occupation with past prophecies also prevented them from reaching any practical and realistic objective. Inconsistency in plans and policies, methods and means of preaching the new message was often accompanied by an obsession with fulfilling the prophecies of the past or adopting manners and behaviours which were thought to be those of the past prophets and saints. The Bab's complex style of writing in his addresses and books is a good example of such an effort to 'reveal verses' similar, or in his view, superior to the Qur'ān. Such pre-occupation with Shi'i eschatology prevented the Babis from adopting a fresh approach different from the past concepts of revelation and the shari'at. Though traces of a symbolic interpretation of these prophecies may be seen in many of the Babi writings, for the greater part the Babi outlook was dominated by the concepts of martyrdom, sacrifice and predestined fate which in the past had so
overwhelmingly prevailed over the Shi'i consciousness. This inner conflict was at the heart of Babi thought. On the one hand it wished to free itself from the past, and on the other it was still enchained by its symbols and images.

If the internal inconsistencies within the movement weakened its structure, the external causes dealt the fatal blows to its entire existence. The forces of the established religion represented by the 'ulama posed the greatest and the most immediate threat. Almost without exception the attempts of the Babis to open a dialogue with the non-Shaykhi mujtahids failed to achieve the desired results. The strong reaction of the high ranking 'ulama was perhaps caused by their religious duty to oppose any deviation from the path of Sharia', but no doubt it also reflected a sense of insecurity amongst them. Though in appearance their position was relatively strong, and in some cases they were in full control of the community, in reality they had already begun to move away from their previous position as the de facto representatives of the urban public. More than thirty years of Usuli domination had created a new generation of mujtahids who because of their privileges were separated, though not fully alienated, from the rest of the community. The new movement was especially regarded as a threat to these privileges, because it was mostly represented by a rival group of low ranking and energetic 'ulama who could potentially replace them in the leadership of the community.

In the early stages the opposition of the 'ulama was only partly effective in preventing the penetration of Babi elements. Compared to the Babi preachers the 'ulama were in an advantageous position because they defended the accepted Sharia and safeguarded the values which had been sanctified through the course of time. They also held a strong, and sometimes tyrannical, control over the public through the mosques. They were able to incite the mob against their rivals and create civil riots and disturbances. Yet in spite of these advantages, in the first four years of the movement they were unable to defeat the Babis on all fronts.

Their oral and written denunciation became more effective only when they received the support of the government. Save for the few sporadic examples of government intervention in favour of the 'ulama in the earlier years, this support was only fully given to them after 1264 (1848), when for the first time the central government became seriously aware of the possible threat of the movement to its own security. In spite of the traditional opposition of the 'ulama to the government, the alliance between the two against the spread of the movement was the most significant and effective example of their cooperation in the face of a common enemy. The joint action of the religious and secular authorities brought about the persecution and suppression of the Babi community.
This in effect resulted not only in the isolation of the Babis but also in their loss of credibility in the eyes of the public, who under the influence of the authorities saw their humiliation and persecution as a right and just punishment for 'heretics' who had abandoned the 'path of Islam'. Thus it is not surprising to see that the general public gradually lost its sympathy with the Babi cause and except in a few instances when it acted in support of the movement, for most of the time they remained a silent observer, if not an instrument in the hand of the authorities. The forces of the established institutions were so strong that it hardly ever gave the movement the necessary time and opportunity to grow and establish itself in a natural way.

Both the internal and external causes which contributed to the unsatisfactory performance of the movement in its early stages, had reactions on the future course of events. From 1263 (1847) onwards, the imprisonment of the Bab in the castle of Maku and then Chihriq (1264-6/1848-50) which lasted for the rest of his life, as well as the isolation of the Babis in most urban centres, forced them towards a noticeably more militant course of action. The Bab's call to his followers at the end of 1263 (1847) in Khurasan, and the subsequent gathering of Badasht in 1264 (1848), signify the Babis' efforts to seek a more independent stand, a consistent policy and a decisive leadership in the face of the mounting hostility from outside. Equally, the Bab's open claim to Qā'īmīyat in the trial of Tabriz in 1264 (1848) was also to keep pace with the movement's acceleration towards a more open and independent stand. Such a declaration was the sign of a departure from the previous course of reconciliation and prudence. His later claim to Masharīyat - which is evident from his assumed title Rabb-i A'la - and his attempt after 1263 to create a new Sharī'at of Bayān was a further assertion of this independent position outside the sphere of Islam. He as well as his disciples had realised that they had been left with little choice but to resist and defend.

But still the line taken by the Babis in practice was largely decided by the development of events beyond their own control. Mullā Husain's march from Khurasan to Mazandarān in Sha'bān 1264 (July-August 1848) aimed to assemble and reorganise into a united party those Babis who had gathered from various provinces to join the holy crusade, though at the same time he had not seriously contemplated an armed uprising. But the course of events forced Mullā Husain and his companions to reply to the attacks of the angry mob in Bārfurūsh and later to take refuge in the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsī. Though the death of Muhammad Shāh in Shavvāl 1264 (September 1848) and the confusion which followed it helped the Babis to achieve some temporary successes, later the accession of
Nasir al-Din Shāh to the throne and the change in government worked against them.
The lenient and indecisive policy of Hājī Mīrzā Aqāsī was replaced by the care-
fully weighed and systematic action of Mīrzā Taqī Khān Farahānī, Amīr Kabīr,
who from the very beginning was determined to uproot the movement. The Babi
resistance in Tabarisi was motivated by a sheer need for defence and then turned
into a bloody confrontation with the government. It possessed all the character-
istics of a millenarian uprising and not unexpectedly - even for the Babis them-
selves - ended in their disastrous defeat and the death of many, including Mulla
Husain and Quddūs. The upheaval of Tabarisi had a chain effect on the other
Babi risings in Nayriz (led by Sayyid Yahyā Darābī, Vahīd) and Zanjan (led by
Mulla Muhammad 'Alī Zanjānī, Hujjat) (1265-7/1849-51). The immediate causes of
each of these upheavals varied and they developed in widely different circum-
stances and on a different scale to that of Tabarisi, yet they reflected the same
basic problems of isolation and insecurity.

The execution of the Bab in Tabriz on the 28th Shaban 1266 (9th July 1850)
which was ordered by Amīr Kabīr to ensure the total suppression of the movement,
had an immediate effect in demoralising the remnants of the Babi activists and
forcing them to retreat into clandestine circles. Nevertheless, the crisis in
the leadership after the execution of the Bab and the persecution and harassment
of the Babis, soon forced their activists to re-assemble in small urban groups
with the purpose of organising urban resistance. The unsuccessful attempt to
assassinate Nasir al-Din Shāh in Shawwal 1268 (August 1852) was the last, and
the most daring, act of the Babis. It was originally intended to avenge the
execution of the Bab, yet it reflected the more profound frustration and
desperation of the remaining active Babis after three years of disillusion and
defeat. In spite of the ingenious ideas of its original instigator Shaykh 'Alī
Turshīzī ('Azīm), this attempt was poorly planned and badly carried out and as
in previous examples of Babi responses, it resulted in a wide-scale loss of life.
Many of the remaining Babi activists were arrested and put to death in a wide-
spread and indiscriminate massacre. The episode of militant activities between
1264 and 1268 (1848-52) was the outcome of pressures from both within and outside
the movement. This was an effort to broaden its scope and to attract new groups
in order to survive as an alternative to the existing order. The same pressures,
however, caused its total defeat and destruction as a movement of socio-political
change. Yet for the next few decades it survived as an underground religious
sect before undergoing drastic change in its outlook and doctrine and eventually
giving birth to the Bahā'ī faith in the 1870's and 80's. Some of the Babi ideas
were also preserved in the Bābī-Azalī branch of the movement and later re-emerged
at the end of the 19th century and during the constitutional revolution, but more in the shape of a nostalgic revival.

Whatever the relative importance of the internal and external causes for failure of the movement, there is perhaps a more profound contrast between the specific outlook of the Babi movement and the prevalent orthodoxy of the period. Shi'ism contains a strong element of expectation and an idealistic hope for the establishment of a 'just' and 'divine' order. But it also holds its own antithesis. The history of Shi'ism has witnessed the rise and fall of many movements which attempted to fulfil these expectations. This eternal conflict within Shi'ism makes it appear as an unending circle in which phases of expectation and disillusion follow each other. The Babis, in the originality of their ideas, at the time of change, possessed a historical awareness which had the potentiality to break free from this cycle of inevitability. They sensed the 'decline' of Islam and, what is more important, had the urge for renewal and change both in a progressive direction and as a continuation of past achievements. However, they largely lacked a sufficiently practical ideology which could replace the established religion or fill the widening ideological gap in Iranian society which became progressively more apparent in the course of the later 19th century. But their awareness of change and their urge for progress was the result of an internal process within the framework of Shi'i thought and the outcome of a development in Iranian society without any intervention or influence from outside. This was perhaps the last attempt of its kind, before Iran's exposure, both in socio-economic and ideological terms, to an alien, dominant western civilisation which from the second half of the 19th century gradually prevailed over traditional society and continuously, up to the present time, has created a disruption in the natural course of its social and intellectual development.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

A Note on Sources

The historiography of the Babi movement is surrounded by controversies which are caused by inaccuracies and deliberate misrepresentation of both primary and secondary sources. Most of the general accounts of the history of the movement were recorded after the end of the first phase of the Babis in 1268 (1852) and thus were subjected to later interpretations. The intensity of the events during the course of the first decade and the persecution and pressure on the Babis, prevented them from making a consistent record of the events. The death of almost all the front rank followers of the Bab in the course of the first eight years further hindered this process. If the necessity for writing a general account occasionally inspired some Babis to write narratives, the pressure of hostile forces was such that it either caused their complete extinction or only allowed them to reach later generations in fragments or more often in a distorted form. A relatively poor standard of historiography and the hostility and bigotry of the non-Babi chroniclers also caused gross exaggerations and irrecoverable gaps. Furthermore, the events of the earlier period were often interpreted by later writers with the specific purpose of justifying or invalidating a certain claim or point of view. Not to mention the obvious distortion and misuse of the facts by hostile non-Babi writers, a more important example of this diverse interpretation is that which occurred as a result of the Baha'i-Azali controversy between the 1860's and the 1890's. In many ways, the outcome of this controversy affected the contents of those versions produced in this period.

Yet, in spite of these difficulties, the early Babi narratives and even in some instances, their traces in secondary accounts, have often the rare quality of recording the event with a freshness and sincerity which is lacking in most other historical accounts of the time. In most cases the Babi writers were ordinary people who recorded their observations of other ordinary men in a most natural form which differs widely from the complexities and elaborations of the chroniclers or the limitations of the secondary accounts.

In general, sources on the early history of the movement can be divided into five categories: (1) Persian and Arabic primary sources; (2) European primary accounts; (3) Persian and Arabic accounts which are in between the primary and secondary sources; (4) Persian and Arabic secondary accounts; (5) the secondary European accounts.

The first group of the Persian and Arabic primary sources are the general accounts produced in a period of more than thirty years after the execution of
the Bab in 1266 (1850). There are occasional references to an 'old' history (تاریخ قدیم) which had covered the events of the early years, and which is supposed to have been written by one of the early believers of the Bab, most probably حاجی میرزا جانی Kashani sometime prior to his execution in 1268 (1852). E.G. Browne's edition of نقطة القاف which is believed to have been the work of حاجی میرزا جانی, appears to be the nearest to this yet untraced 'old history'.

But there is no definite evidence to prove for certain that نقطة القاف is the original version of the 'old' history or indeed that it was even written by حاجی میرزا جانی. Much controversy surrounds the authenticity of some of its passages, the possibility of later distortions and the real identity of the author. Since it was first published in 1910, the text of نقطة القاف and Browne's introduction (which incidentally was written with the assistance of محمد حسین قزوینی) inspired some بابی writers such as Abul Fażl Gulpāyīgānī to try in كشف الغي타, to resolve some of the complexities of the text and to criticise some of Browne's views. Yet neither Browne's speculations, nor the efforts of Gulpāyīgānī, came to any definite answer. Similarly suggestions by later scholars such as Balyuzi (Edward Granville Browne and the Bahl-ul Faith), مهیت تاباتابائی and others, only led to a better understanding of problems rather than resolving them. What is certain, however, is that this account of a combination of two separate theological and historical parts was produced sometime in the late 1260's or early 1270's by one or a few writers (amongst whom حاجی میرزا جانی was most probably the original author) who had either witnessed the early events or reported them from other eye-witnesses. It is possible that some of the passages concerning the events of 1266-7 (1850-1) might have been added by later copyists, yet as far as the events of the earlier years are concerned, the text of نقطة القاف is largely in agreement with other reliable sources of the period.

Decades of suppression and persecution suffered by the Babis caused a sense of disillusion and frustration in the scattered communities throughout Iran which in turn led to the temporary neglect of their historical past, both in oral and written forms. Towards the 1880's however, the revival of the Babi circles in Iran demonstrated a noticeable need for the compilation of new general narratives, more in the Baha'i than in the Azali circles, in a different language and style and with an emphasis on historical events that could satisfy the new ideological orientation of these groups. The revised version of the 'old' history, known as تاریخ جدید (the New History) by میرزا حسین حمادانی under the patronage of مهیت هاتاری, the Indian Zoroastrian representative in Tehran, and with the preliminary supervision of میرزا Abul Fażl Gulpāyīgānī, was the first in a series of attempts to produce new general narratives. E.G. Browne's assessment of تاریخ جدید in his introduction to the English translation of this work (as in
his introduction to *Nuqtat al-Kāf*) demonstrates the difference in content and style, the omissions and additions as well as the different religious and political (or rather apolitical) orientation of the author in comparison to *Nuqtat al-Kāf*.

However some of the harsh criticisms by Browne of what he regarded as Bahā'ī distortions and deviations in *Tārīkh-i Jadīd*, may be questioned when it is considered that the additional information in *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* might have come from another copy of Hājī Mīrzā Jānī's 'old' history different to that of Browne. So long as no other manuscript is found which precedes in date that of Gobineau's copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale, the final verdict cannot be easily passed on this issue. Furthermore, it is possible to argue that the author of *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* did not consider himself committed to write a history identical to the 'old' version of Hājī Mīrzā Jānī and naturally, in many ways, he considered his own 'rationalised' and moderate viewpoint superior to that of the previous author.

Browne seems sometimes to have exaggerated the prime importance of some ideas and attitudes which he believed, almost entirely on the basis of *Nuqtat al-Kāf*, to be that of all the early Babis. Moreover, he had written his introduction to *Nuqtat al-Kāf* at the time when, in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution, he was actively involved in amplifying the ideas and activities of those whom he appeared to believe (though he never openly expressed this) to have been the legitimate descendants of the early Babis. Thus perhaps beyond the boundaries of historiography, he sometimes saw himself as an advocate of a cause of which he thought the Azalīs, and not the Bahā'īs, were the true representatives.

Yet accusations, counter-accusations and speculations in this controversy sometimes appear to pass the limits of historical enquiry and become purely a mental exercise, a kind of detective investigation or, worst of all, the prime material for religious refutations and apologies. What is important however, is that *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* was not a successful attempt to compile a general narrative, and as Browne rightly argues, it missed, or intended to miss, the militant spirit of the early Babi period. The changes and alterations which were carried out in the more recent versions of this history, of which *Tārīkh-i Badī'-i Bayānī* is one example, did not help to disentangle the earlier confusions either. But as far as the early period of the movement is concerned, it contains some information which can be relied upon when verified by other more reliable sources.

To compensate for the deficiencies and inaccuracies of the earlier general accounts, various other attempts such as *Maqālīh-yi Shakhsi Sayyāh* of 'Abd al-Bahā were made. This is a relatively brief account written shortly before 1890 from the view of an onlooker, a *Sayyāh* (traveller) which was loosely based on the available information in both the Babi and non-Babi oral and written sources. It
only adds some scattered fresh information to the knowledge of the early period. Yet, perhaps more significantly from the point of style and approach, it is an effort to write an account which could justify the Baha'i stand by avoiding a highly committed language. Browne's edition and translation of this work appeared a year after the Bombay edition of 1890.

Beside these two above mentioned accounts, another attempt in writing a general history of the early years was that of Shaykh Muhammad Nabîl Zarandî, known as Nabîl A'zam, which is by far the most complete of the general narratives. Written in its final version between 1305-8 (1888-90), Nabîl's narrative was based not only on his own personal observations but on the oral and written memoirs of many early Babis to whose authority he refers throughout the text. He had the assistance of Mirzâ Musâ Nûrî, brother of Bahá'ulláh, and his complete work covered the history of the movement up to the time of completion. Being himself an early Babi and also an articulate writer, he was able to compile his history in a systematic and chronological order superior to previous accounts. Yet his narrative suffers some noticeable handicaps. First is that because of his personal religious commitments and because of his subdued fatalism, which is a good example of the change of attitude in many Babi-Bahá'ís of the first generation, he sometimes in his work misuses, or in some instances intentionally ignores, the intensity and the militancy of the early Babi history, particularly by adopting a melodramatic and sensational language which he has no hesitation in putting into the mouths of his characters. Secondly, though his style and approach, at least as far as the events of the early period are concerned, rarely caused any deliberate distortion of fact, nevertheless his strong commitment to Bahá'ulláh, which like many other of the latter's companions reached the extremes of admiration and praise, made him over-emphasize certain aspects of Babi history or even to see in the earlier events a mysterious cause for the later 'manifestation' of Bahá'ulláh. Thirdly, the existing gap of about forty years between the actual events and their recording, no doubt caused inaccuracies as well as inconsistency in the sequence and details of the events for which the author tried to compensate by adding an element of the marvelous and the mysterious. These problems in some respects reduce the credibility of Nabîl's narrative and the logic of its argument. Moreover, the original Persian manuscript is not available, and the English translation by Shoghi Effendi which only covers the first part up to 1268 (1852) could be only an abridged edition of the original text. In spite of these deficiencies, however, Nabîl remains a relatively reliable source which in most cases corresponds to the facts supplied by earlier sources. A careful study of Nabîl can reveal many hidden facts which allow one to go beyond the impression which it gives at the first reading.
The second group of the Persian and Arabic primary sources are the non-Babi general accounts which were basically recorded in the years immediately following the end of the first phase of the movement in 1852. The best known of these are the two official chronicles of the mid 19th century, *Nāṣīkh al-Tawārīkh* (Tarikh-i Qājāriyih) of Sipihr and *Raudat al-Safa* of Hidayat which both paid considerable attention to the rise of the movement. In recording the events, both chroniclers are biased, sarcastic and often inaccurate. Their accounts are charged with enough abuse, exaggeration and accusations to discredit the movement and to please the authorities. Yet they both contain some interesting details and remarks which in some instances reflect the attitude of the authorities whilst elsewhere they demonstrate their own secret admiration. *Nāṣīkh al-Tawārīkh*’s account is particularly interesting since Sipihr seems to have gathered some of his information on the early years from sources close to the Babis. His detailed account of the events of Tabarsi (and particularly the details on the fortification and defence of the fortress) on the other hand, seems to have been given to him by some of the army chiefs and officials who had themselves been present at the event. Hidayat’s detailed account of the proceedings of the trial of the Bab in Tabriz in 1264 (1848) was supplied to him by the officials and ulama who were present in the gathering. Other contemporary chronicles such as Khurşūdi’s *Haqayiq al-Akhbār* or later accounts such as I’timād al-Saltani’s *Muntazam-i Naṣīrī* either give brief references or mainly repeat the descriptions of the above accounts. One exception is *Mutanabbi*’in of I’tizād al-Saltani which relies for the earlier events on *Nāṣīkh al-Tawārīkh* but adds valuable information on the events of 1267-8 in which he was indirectly involved.

Somewhat different to these official chronicles is the history of Ahmad ibn Abul Hasan Sharif Shirāzī Ishīk Aqāsī which according to the author was initially intended to rectify the discrepancies and distortions of the chronicles. His final draft completed in 1286 (1869) is partly based on his notes collected in earlier years. Coming from a Shirāzī merchant family and being in close contact with the family of the Bab, his early interest in the movement in its formative period makes his account an exceptionally important source for the understanding of this period. He is mostly an impartial and observant writer whose qualities as a historiographer were above those of most of his contemporaries. Part of this work relating to the Babi movement is translated into English by Khan Bahadur while another section of it on Mīrzā Taqī Khān Amīr Kabīr is published by the same person in its original Persian. The complete manuscript which is in private hands, remains to be published.

The third group of primary sources in Arabic and Persian are the narratives
which were written on three major Babi uprisings between 1264-7 (1848-51). These accounts usually are more reliable than the general histories not only because they are free from the elaborations and restrictions of the latter group but also because they were often written by ordinary people who had themselves participated in these events. Some of them like Mīrza Lutf iʿAlī Shīrāzī's narrative of Tabarsī were written as day to day chronicles during the course of upheaval itself. Some like Tārīkh-i Mīmūyīh by Mahjūr Zavārīh-ī or the narrative of Āqā Mīr Abū Tālib Shāhmīrzādī on Tabarsī were written a few years after the actual events, whereas others like 'The Personal Reminiscences of the Babi Insurrection at Zanjān in 1850' by Āqā Abd al-Aḥad Zanjānī or another account of Zanjān by Mīrza Ḥusain Zanjānī were written a few decades later and thus did not escape occasional mistakes in chronology and other details. The moving tone of all these narratives is clear and straightforward and perhaps they are the best specimens for understanding the ordinary Babīs, yet they are only of a limited use for the study of the formative years. In the course of this study only Tārīkh-i Mīmūyīh was of use for some observations on the Babīs of Khurāsān. Besides Āqā 'Abd al-Aḥad's 'Personal Reminiscences' and Ḥāji Nasīr Qazvinī's account on Tabarsī, the rest of these narratives have remained unpublished.

The fourth group of the primary sources are works which can be classified as memoirs and personal narratives. Though they were often written decades later and thus suffer the defects of fading memory, they contain a great deal of valuable information particularly important for the study of the early period. These are personal experiences of conversions, changes of attitude and on many occasions the narrator's account of their acquaintance with early disciples or of events witnessed by them. The Mīnavī of Ḥāji Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Zabīh Kāshānī, Ḥāji Mīrzan Jānī's brother, which is a mystical work in seven dafārās in the style of Rūmī's Mañavī, contains amongst other things, the author's own reminiscences of the early days of the movement as well as references to other historical events of his time up to the time of Bahāʾallāh's exile to Acre. This important work which was compiled probably in the 1880's towards the end of Zabīh's life, remained largely unknown and was only briefly referred to by Fāzīl (Zuhūr al-Haqq) and Bayzātī (Tazkirātī). In comparison to his description of the later period, his account of the first few years is brief and selective, but it is an important source for verifying other accounts. Indeed both Nabīl Zarandī and the author of Tārīkh-i Jadīd referred to Zabīh as one of their sources, yet it is not clear whether they also consulted his Mīnavī. On a few occasions he is confused by Browne and others with Zabīh Qanūnād and Zabīh Zavārīh-ī while elsewhere he is confused with Ḥāji Muḥammad Rižā Kāshānī who is suggested by some to be the real
author of *Nuqtat al-Kaf*. Throughout his *Masnavi* in a few places he refers to his brother Hājī Mīrzā Jānī but makes no note of *Nuqtat al-Kaf* or indeed any other work by him. The first few pages of a rare manuscript of this work in the Minasian Collection, Wadham College Library, Oxford are missing and the whole work is not free from spelling mistakes. It is not clear whether this is the original copy.

Amongst the manuscripts preserved in the Iran National Baha'í Archive, the memoirs of Sayyid Javād Muḥarrīr and Āqā Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahīm Ḥāfūzī, which both appear to be part of a greater collection of narratives on the local Babi-Baha'í history of Isfahan, also contain new information. Amongst the manuscripts in Browne's collection, the accounts of Mullā Rajab ʿAlī Qahir, Sayyid Mahdī Dahājī and Mīrzā Muhammad Javād Qazvīnī (translated by Browne in *Materials*) basically deal with the events of the later period (after 1268), but nevertheless they have scattered references to the early events.

Amongst the published sources, the personal account of Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī of the early years of the movement in Qazvīn is of great value. Being himself a middle rank Shaykhi mullā before becoming a Babi in the first year of the movement, he gives a revealing account, and in many ways is unusually forceful and uninhibited about the Shaykhi-non-Shayki conflicts in Qazvīn in the early 1840's, as well as producing some fresh information on the life of Ahsā'ī and Rashti, the introduction of the Babi movement in Qazvīn, its effects on the *ulama* and the first waves of persecution in the city. In between descriptions of the events he also adds lengthy accounts of his own dreams and intuitive experiences, a good demonstration of the Shaykhi-Babi mentality.

Another published account of this kind is that of Āqā Muhammad Mustafa Baghdādī which was compiled at the request of Abul Fażl Gulpāyīgānī. He was an Arab Babi (and later Baha'ī) still in his early youth when his father, Shaykh Muhammad Shībīl Baghdādī, became one of the early Babi converts in Iraq and a follower of Tāhirih. In his narrative, which is compiled mainly on the basis of his own and his father's recollections, he describes the mission of Bastāmī to ʿAtabāt, and gives some valuable information about Tāhirih and her supporters, particularly their journey from ʿAtabāt to Qazvīn in which Baghdādī also participated in the company of his father. He also supplies some new details on the later events up to the end of the first period.

Finally the general account written by Mīrzā Yahyā Nūrī, Subh-i Azal, entitled *Mujmal-i Bādī dar Vaqayī-i Zuhūr-i Manī* should be mentioned in this group. This is a short account which was written in reply to several enquiries by Browne. Though it contains some new details on the first eight years of the movement, in general it adds little to the knowledge of the early period and therefore should
be treated as a brief recollection rather than a general account which intended to express the Azalī point of view.

These four groups of works which were written with the intention of recording historical events, only form a part of the total corpus of primary sources. The fifth group of the primary sources however are those early Babi works which are mainly theological but contain scattered historical information. Of these, the most important are the writings of the Bab himself. A large volume of books (sahīfa), commentaries (tafsīr and sharḥ) on Quranic verses and sūras as well as on Shi'ī traditions, addresses (taqwī'ī), sermons (khutba), prayers (duʿā' and munājat), private letters, public statements and testimonies which were produced by the Bab in the course of six years between 1260 and 1266 (1844-50) have been examined for two main reasons. First, from the theoretical point of view they are the most reliable materials for the study of the Bab’s own ideas and beliefs and the way they changed in the course of this period. Secondly, from the historical point of view, they contain frequent references, whether directly or indirectly, to the Bab's personal character, his emotions, intimate revelations and private reactions to people and events. Both these aspects are important for a better understanding of the Bab and for going beyond the conventional image presented in the chronicles and general accounts. They are also essential for those aspects of early Babi history which were either totally ignored or insufficiently discussed in other accounts. Without them, any attempt to study the formative period of the movement is bound to remain immature and fragmentary.

When expressing his intuitive experiences, his emotions, his claimed 'mission' and his impressions from his environment, he is honest and sincere though not always intelligible or straightforward. In his works, he sometimes practices taqīyah merely to conceal his real claims from the dangers of a hostile environment, yet he often makes his point clear by adopting a symbolic language or by using allusions and synonyms. Perhaps three successive phases can be distinguished in the writings of the Bab. In his very early works between 1260 and 1261 such as Qayyūm al-Asmā’, Khasā’il Sab‘a and even Sahīfa Bayn al-Harāmayn he puts forward his early claims (and not his real claims) with clarity and straightforwardness. In his works between 1261 and 1263 (1845-7) however, such as Sahīfa-yi ‘Aḍliyāh, Dalā’il-i Sab‘ah and a number of statements which he was forced to write in Shiraz, he is cautious and prudent but not totally repentant. In the works after 1263 (1847) such as the Persian and Arabic Bayān, Taqwī’ī Qā’imiyat and Khutba al-Qahriyya however, he fully abandons his policy of taqīyah and openly declares his real claims. In most of his works, his complex style and his allusive and inconsequential remarks make it sometimes difficult for the reader to follow the line of argument. Furthermore, preoccupation with numerology
and \textit{jafir}, cryptic references to persons, places and dates, and his peculiar and in many respects unprecedented terminology, make the study of his works a formidable task. Yet in his own style, he is sometimes meticulous on dates and chronology which he believed important to be recorded with accuracy. Most of the writings of the Bab are still unpublished and those which are published are out of print or difficult to obtain. Manuscript copies of some of his better known works can be found in private and public collections including Browne's collection, the Iran National Bahá'í Archive and the British Library. Some less known works of the Bab, including tracts, treatises and other miscellaneous works are scarce and difficult to trace. The library of INBA contains some of these works which are often bound in volumes without any systematic order and sometimes together with the works of others. A manuscript copy of 32 letters of the Bab also exists in Browne's collection. But perhaps most outstanding of all his less well known works are those which are in private hands. A series of Xerox publications for limited private circulation (here referred to as INBA, pub.) has been made by INBA of some of these private collections. A few of these volumes (nos. 40, 64, 67, 82, 91, 98) contain some of the early letters, addresses, sermons and prayers of the Bab and are of special value for the early period. Here in the course of this study no systematic attempt has been made to assess the works of the Bab in general. Part of this task has been carried out by Browne but the complete survey remains to be done.

In addition to the works of the Bab, some of the writings of his disciples may also be looked at from an ideological or historical point of view. Among them a short tract (\textit{Zuhur al-Haqq}, pp.136-9) and a \textit{risāla} (see Bibl.) by Mullā Husain Bushrūyīhī as well as some works of Mullā Muhammad 'Ālī Bāfurūshī including some Persian apologetic tracts (\textit{Zuhur al-Haqq}, pp.407-18, 426-30) and a collection of his works entitled \textit{Abhār al-Quddūsīya} (or \textit{Āthār al-Quddūsīya}) are worth mentioning. Of greater historical significance, however, are those early apologies which were written in the first three years in order to vindicate the claims of the movement in the face of the growing criticism from Shaykhi opponents.

An Arabic \textit{risāla} in reply to Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kīrmānī (most probably in response to his first refutation \textit{Ishaq al-Bātīl}) which was compiled towards the end of 1262 (1846) by an unknown Babi who calls himself al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbala'ī, is of exceptional value. Apart from some of the early works of the Bab, perhaps this \textit{risāla} is the most important document for the study of the early years that has recently come to light. Although Fāzīl Māzandarānī published the text of this work as an appendix to his \textit{Zuhūr al-Haqq}, neither he nor any one else appears to have realised its historical significance. It may be argued that
the unclear identity of the author would have diminished the extent to which this work can be relied upon. Fāzīl's usual vagueness on the origin of his materials would certainly not help to resolve this ambiguity. Yet it is not unusual for a work of this nature with highly sensitive and sometimes controversial claims to appear under a pseudonym if indeed al-Qatīl was a pseudonym and not the real name of a Babi writer who like many other Babis of the early days has remained in obscurity.

As far as the text of the ṭisāla is concerned, the information, the style and the argument remove the slightest doubts about its authenticity and the date of its compilation. This is the best example of the Shaykhi-Babi outlook in the transitory period of 1844 to 1848 in the ʿAtabāt. Qatīl himself claims to have been a student of Rashti for ten years and no doubt the detailed information in the text on Sayyid Kāzim and his students, of whom many were his personal friends, supports this claim. A considerable amount of previously unknown details on the religious milieu in the ʿAtabāt, messianic ideas and claims of Rashti, the tensions and conflicts within the Shaykhi circle particularly after the death of Rashti, the intentions of Mullā Husain and his supporters, their social background and their training, the proclamation at Shiraz and the formation of the first Babi group, the return of the Babi disciples and the first declaration of the movement in the ʿAtabāt and the responses from within and outside the Shaykhi community, as well as the accurate dating of many events which otherwise would have remained unknown, leave no doubt that Qatīl himself was closely involved with the early Babi activities.

From the theological point of view, his strong attacks on Kirmānī's position reveal the depth of the conflict between the two divided factions. The noticeable absence throughout the account of any direct reference to Qurrat al-ʿAyn (Tahirih) who by the end of 1262 was largely regarded as the leader of the majority of the Babis in the ʿAtabāt on the other hand, may give the impression that perhaps Qatīl was not in favour of her unconventional views, and was even inclined towards the opposite party of Sayyid ʿAlī Bushr and the others who later deserted the Babi ranks. Yet, such an assumption cannot easily be justified since throughout his account, Qatīl speaks with great respect of many of the firm supporters of Tahirih.

Two other apologies, a ṭisāla in Persian by Qurrat al-ʿAyn and a maktūb by Shaykh Sultan Karbalaʾī, are written in the same period and in the same milieu and follow the similar line of argument as Qatīl but contain relatively less historical information. Tahirih's ṭisāla, which is discussed at some length in Chapter Five, like some other examples of her works, are valuable for tracing the development of new trends in Babi thought. In some instances the style and the
information of the Maktūb of Shaykh Sultan resemble those of the Qatīl. Their common view is no doubt partly to be explained by the fact that they were criticised from the same quarter. Refutations produced by Shaykhis and above all by Hājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, as well as the hostile propaganda of the defected Babis, motivated some to search for theological proofs and historical evidence. The long list of refutations written by Hājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān started with his Isḥāq al-Bātīl (Rajab 1261/September 1845), which is probably the earliest non-Babi source on the early activities of the Babis, and continued with Tūr-i Shihāb (1262/1846), Shihāb al-Thaqīb (1265/1849) and Iqadh al-Bātīl (1283/1866-7). Regardless of his theological objections to the position claimed by the Bab, which by itself is the subject of a separate study, in some of these refutations, as in his other works, he gives important indications of those activities of Babis which had caused him such anxiety and apprehension.

In his writings, Kirmānī rarely paid any serious attention to the developments of the Shaykhi school in the earlier period, and contrary to the Babi sources, seldom discussed the tensions and controversies with the Bālāsārīs or within the Shaykhis themselves. In this context the works of Rashtī himself provided some clues. Though most of his works, both published and unpublished, are devoted to answering theological queries and replying to criticisms of his opponents, they frequently contain references which are essential for understanding Shaykhi millenarianism. The nature of the questions and answers reveals the kind of issues with which the Shaykhis were preoccupied. One good example of his works however, is Dai'il al-Mutahayyirīn, which was intended to vindicate the Shaykhi position by examining the points of difference with Bālāsārīs and hence not only discussed the theological issues in dispute, but described the origin and the development of the conflict.

The opposite view in the Shaykhi-Balāsārī dispute is expressed, among other sources, in two of the important religious biographical dictionaries of the period. In a relatively long section in Qisas al-'Ulāma', Tunikabūnī treats Shaykhis in a partial and rather sarcastic language whereas Khwānsārī in Raudāt al-Jannāt speaks of Aḥsā'i with care and respect. Some fresh details may also be obtained from Qisas al-'Ulāma' on the background of the Bab and the mission of Mulla 'Ali Bastānī but in general the author borrowed most of his information from Nāṣikh al-Tawārīkh. The real significance of this work, however, lies in the kind of information it supplies on the social and political behaviour of the 'ulama, a kind of information which is somewhat unusual for a religious work of its type. The anecdotes and details of everyday life of the 'ulama are initially supplied by the author to enhance their glories. In reality however, as far as the biographies of his contemporaries are concerned, he is rendering an informal
picture which is highly revealing on those personal aspects which are so characteristic of the 'ulama throughout the 19th century. He is accused by some of exaggerating and by others of under-estimating the real position of the 'ulama and no doubt compared to *Raudat al-Jannat*, his standard of scholarship lags far behind, yet it is through these very details that the characteristics of the 'ulama and their position in the society can be assessed. Of course this should not be taken to mean that *Qisas al-'Ulама'is free from inaccuracies, gross exaggerations and distortions, but nonetheless he is a more realistic, authentic voice of the dominant *Sharif* of the time.

A group of primary and secondary biographical works such as *Tarā'īq al-Haqa'īq, Tabaqāt Aḥām al-Shi‘ā, Aḥsan al-Wadī‘a, Makārim al-Athār, Bāmdād's Ṭarīkh-i Rijāl-i Īrān* and biobibliographies such as *al-Dhāri‘a* and Ibrāhīmī’s *Fihrist-i Kutub* are of great value for obtaining further information on the background of many of the personalities involved in the events of the early years.

The second set of primary sources are those European accounts which were written during the course of the first eight years of the movement or immediately after. Of these the first group are the diplomatic dispatches and reports by the British and Russian envoys in Iran and Iraq. The two envoys in Tehran and their consuls and agents in other cities, paid no attention to the movement in its early years simply because the Babis had not yet formed a significant group and were not regarded as a serious threat to the security of the state. After 1264 (1848), however, as the Babis gained further strength and eventually came to an inevitable confrontation with the government, the foreign envoys felt it necessary to report 'the new schism in Mohammedanism' and its potential threats to the country. One exception is the reports despatched by Rawlinson, then Consul-General in Baghdad between 1844 and 1845 on the trial of Mullā 'Alī Bastāmī. Yet they are few and not free from the usual inaccuracies of other diplomatic dispatches, and they suggest Rawlinson's unfamiliarity with the Shi'i religious environment which in his case, being himself a scholar, is particularly surprising.

Similarly, the reports despatched by Prince Dimitrii Dolgorukov the Russian minister to Iran and those of Colonel Justin Sheil the British envoy (between 1839 and 1847 and again between 1849 and 1853) and his Charge d'affaires, Lieut. Col. Frances Farrant (1847-9), suffer from the same weaknesses. They are scanty, misinformed and badly presented. In some instances the causes of these inaccuracies may be traced back to the agents and servants of the missions who on matters concerning popular events were the envoys' main informants. But in spite of their deficiencies, when these reports are studied in comparison with
other sources, they can be useful, particularly on the Babi resistances in Tabarsī, Nayrīz, Yazd and Zanjān or for other major events such as the execution of the Bab and the assassination attempt of 1268 (1852) and its aftermath. Dolgorukov's 25 dispatches (between 1848 and 1852), published as an appendix to Ivanov's *The Babi Uprisings in Iran, 1848–52*, provide more systematic reporting on the development of Babi militancy. These reports should also be examined from the point of the envoys' intervention, both Russian and British, in the policies of the central government towards the Babis and especially their attitude when they considered their interests were being endangered. One example is Dolgorukov's request to the Iranian government in 1263 (1847) to transfer the Bab from the castle of Mākū near the Russian frontiers, fearing that his presence might create agitation and rebellion on both sides of the border. Besides Dolgorukov's reports, some extracts of British and Russian reports were also published by Nicolas ('Le Dossier russo-anglais de Seyyed Ali Mohammed dit le Bab') and more recently by Baluyzi (*The Bab*) and Ādāmīyat (*Ādār Kabīr va Īrān*). Regardless of those reports specifically dealing with Babi events, the diplomatic dispatches in this period provide a considerable amount of additional information on matters which though not directly connected to the movement are of great value for the study of the social, economic and political climate of the time.

The second group of European primary sources are the early travel accounts, memoirs and other published materials which either give eye-witness records of specific events or more often provide fragmentary and highly confused general accounts. Some like Polak, Vambery and Binning have a few pages on the Babis which in spite of their inaccuracies or their bigotry are still useful for their details of certain events. The brief records of the American missionaries in Āzarbājān (such as Wright) or those of other missionaries in other places (such as Stern) add some details to our knowledge of the Bab and the Babis particularly after 1264. Most of these early sources were surveyed by E.G. Browne in his *A Traveller's Narrative* (Note A, Section III) and his *Materials* (Section III), yet a more careful and painstaking study of the less known accounts may reveal more details. An exception amongst these accounts is that of Lady Sheil which, in spite of a certain confusion on the facts and misinterpretation of Babi ideas, still remains a valuable source. Some of the errors are identical to those in Colonel Sheil's reports and particularly the special report of 21 June 1850 (F.O. 60/152, no.72) which claims to be based on two accounts given by 'a disciple of the Bab' and by 'a chief priest' in Yazd which the report claims are 'correct' and 'can be trusted'. In reality, however, they reflect the rumours and fantasies then in circulation rather than observing the facts. In this
respect, both the published accounts and the diplomatic reports are useful for examining the impact of the movement on public opinion and for assessing the fears and anxieties in government circles. Frequent identification of Babi doctrine with 'socialism' and 'communism' in most of the accounts written in the late 1840's and 1850's no doubt is to be explained by the fantasies of travellers who were at pains to find Persian equivalents for the European revolutionaries of the time rather than being based on facts. No doubt such a tendency, at least in its primitive form, did exist among certain sections of the Babis, particularly during and after Tabarsi, but it is hard to believe that any of the diplomats and writers were aware of it. Their accounts clearly betray the traces of popular exaggeration and distortion.

Watson's account in *A History of Persia, 1800-1858* (1866) also falls in the same category. Though relatively free from exaggeration, the author being for a while resident in Iran, missed the opportunity to produce a more original account of the Babis and instead relied for most of his narrative on *Nāṣīkh al-Tawārikh* as well as on the British and possibly Russian diplomatic reports and hence he reflects the strength and weakness of both sources.

If the information of diplomats and travellers was brief and fragmentary, two important accounts by Arthur Gobineau and Alexander Kazem-Beg which appeared in 1865 and 1866 respectively, to some degree compensate for these weaknesses. Gobineau's *Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* is perhaps one of the most significant primary sources, not so much because of its historical narrative but for the author's general observations and interpretations. Being himself a political philosopher of some significance and one of the founders of what later emerged as the modern theory of racialism, during the time he spent as the French envoy in Iran (between 1855 and '58 and again between 1861 and '63), he devoted his attention to studying the 'intellectual' and 'emotional' characteristics of the 'Oriental people' in order to prepare the ground for the Europe to 'civilise' them, since in his view 'the political and material interests' of the West were dependent on its relations with these nations. Yet it is perhaps to his credit, that his colonialist attitudes are much more advanced (and at the same time more refined) than the crude commercial exploitation of the western powers which he sometimes deplores in his writings. Such attitude ultimately affected his interpretation of the 'Asians' (by which term he often meant Persians), yet he was still able, perhaps more than many of his contemporaries, to make an intelligent and to some extent objective, if not always impartial, observation of the intellectual and religious characteristics of Persian culture. In his long introduction which forms the first part of his work he tries to distinguish and define the main intellectual axis of Persian
society, and broadly speaking, his efforts are not always unrewarded. He regards one of the main distinctions between the modern western mind and the 'Asian' way of thought, to be the latter's excessive preoccupation with metaphysics and the world hereafter. Persian culture, he believes, is the meeting point of various ancient trends and tendencies and the outcome of a long process of intellectual diffusion. In his view, the dominant concept of a world in which there is an irreconcilable gap between appearance and reality is the key to understanding the Persian obsession with the esoteric and 'hidden sciences', the practice of taqiyyah and the fatalism prevalent in Shi'ism. Perhaps for the first time in western scholarship, he interprets Shi'ism as a manifestation of Persian intellectual identity. Moreover, he regards Sufism as the natural response of the free thinkers to the domination of rational orthodoxy.

In some respects such broad generalisations may seem out-dated, unjustified and even unfounded when set against the standard of modern scholarship, but nevertheless they demonstrate the author's efforts to fit the rise of the Babi movement in an intellectual framework which was largely unknown to other writers of his time.

In the second part of his work, Gobineau produces a historical narrative of the Babi movement. As he himself confirms, his narrative is heavily based on the account of Nasikh al-Tawarikh of which Sipihr provided a summary for his use. But beyond doubt Gobineau had other sources at his disposal. Some direct indications in the text as well as the nature of the additional materials suggest that he obtained his information from Babi oral sources. As far as can be judged from his account, he has not used and indeed was not aware of Nuqtat al-Kaf or any other Babi historical account. For the third part of his work in which he deals with the doctrine of the Bab, he relied on the works of the Bab and particularly a version of the Arabic Bayan of which he gives a full but not always accurate translation under the title Ketab-e-Hukam (Le Livre des Preceptes) in the appendix.

Gobineau regards the emergence of the Babi movement as a response to the 'ulamas' misuse of power, their negligence and the general corruption in the religious and civilian institutions. Though his picture of the Bab sometimes suffers from his idealistic presuppositions, and though to justify his views he relies excessively on speculation and circumstantial evidence, he is nevertheless able to grasp the movement's potential and also its limitations. He repeats most of Nasikh al-Tawarikh's errors and not being an accurate historian, adds some of his own, yet his account provides some useful details. On the internal structure of the Babis he is the first source who refers to the Letters of Hay.
and one of the earliest to put the Bab's claims in a historical perspective. He distinguishes between the Bab and his followers in respect of their attitudes and their policies, and holds the latter as the real cause for confrontation with the government. He is inattentive towards the social and economic background of the movement and perhaps even his image of the 'ulama and their position is not close to reality, yet he rightly attributes the collapse of the movement to the alliance between the 'ulama and the government. He emphasises the role of Amir Kabîr in such a way that it may occur to the reader that indeed he holds him as a representative of a centralised bureaucratic power responsible for suppressing the natural course of popular protest against the authorities. In his analysis of Babi theory and doctrine he is reasonably accurate and skillful. Though he misses many points, especially the significance of Shaykhisn as the breeding ground for Babi theory, he is still able to point out those aspects which distinguish Babi thought from other contemporary trends. Gobineau tries to understand the Babi movement in its historical and intellectual perspective and he is far more successful than most of his contemporaries or indeed than many in later generations. He was not a scrupulous historian or a first class scholar, but possessed a sharp and inquisitive mind thanks to which some of his ideas both on the Babi movement and on other issues, remain useful and even stimulating.

Similar to Gobineau, Kazem-Beg's account also heavily relies on Nasîkh al-Tawârîkh and also tries to see the movement in an analytical framework. But although he does not fall short of Gobineau in committing mistakes and making bold interpretations, he largely lacks Gobineau's originality and clearness of mind. His attempt to give a more systematic representation of the Babi history has maintained its importance because of the additional information he was able to inject into his account. He occasionally uses a manuscript of a Babi narrative of Tabarsi in Mazandaranî dialect by a certain unknown Shaykh al-'Ajam. This is the manuscript obtained by Dorn during his sojourn in the province in 1860 and later described by him in the Bulletin de l'Academie Imperiale de St. Petersbourg. Kazem-Beg believes that it is 'full of inexactitudes' and 'of no historical value', but no doubt if it were to become more widely available it might reveal new details on Tabarsi which remained unknown even to Russian scholars such as Ivanov who inexplicably has failed to make use of it. Moreover, Kazem-Beg uses the memoirs and notes of two of his previous students, Sevruguin, 'who for twenty years resided in Iran', and Mochenin, a Russian agent, who at the time of the Bab's imprisonment in Chihriq in 1850, appears to have seen the Bab addressing the public. On the basis of these memoirs, Kazem-Beg is able to add some new information to his account which in some cases, such as the role of the Babi disciples in the course of the events, remains unique. Yet the same sources,
especially Sevruguin's notes, seems to have been the cause of some of the distortions and exaggerations in the text. In distinguishing between the peaceful nature of the Bab's teachings and the militant tendencies of some of his followers, Kazem-Beg is largely justified and indeed some of his speculations may be supported by strong indications in other sources, but no doubt his gross exaggeration of the alleged 'mischievous' and 'deceitful' role of some of the Babi disciples such as Sayyid Husain Yazdi, whom he accuses of forgery and deception, are totally unfounded. Such interpretations more than anything else reflect Kazem-Beg's own conservative view which pictures the Bab as an inactive and powerless instrument in the hand of his followers, in order to condemn the Babis generally for a 'dangerous' and 'deviatory' militancy.

In spite of their poverty and deficiency, the European primary sources are important for the study of Babi history not so much for what they have said but for what they have not said. Their position at least enabled them to observe the movement from a different angle, relatively free from the accusations, distortions and bigotry of the non-Babi sources as well as the emotional and highly committed view of the Babi writers.

In addition to the two above mentioned categories, a third category may also be identified, of those sources which fall in between primary and secondary sources. These consist of general accounts, narratives, local histories and memoirs which were written much later, often in the first two decades of the present century and often by a generation of writers who themselves saw the last survivors of the early Babi period and recorded their recollections. They are not always accurate and consistent, but contain a considerable amount of new historical detail and complementary information which previously remained unrecorded. A series of general accounts by Baha'i writers such as Shaykh Kazim Samandar, Haji Muhammad Mu'in al-Saltanih and Mirza Abul Faiz Gulpayigan are part of these sources. Regardless of the general outlook of these writers which makes their account milder in tone and less controversial in style, from the point of historical value they are reasonably reliable but wherever possible they should be still compared with earlier sources. Mu'in al-Saltanih's general history (Tarikh) which was finally completed circa 1340 Q./1921-2 contains some fresh information on the background and the early development of the movement in Azarbaijan. He also frequently quotes from the now unobtainable Abwab al-Huda of Mullâ Muhammad Taqî Hashtrudi - a very valuable narrative by an early Shaykhi-Babi who himself witnessed many events and knew many of the early disciples. Confusions and obvious errors committed by Mu'in al-Saltanih, however, make one particularly cautious about those details which are outside the sphere of his personal experience or given without specifying his authority. This is an
unpublished account which was originally intended to cover the events up to the time of the author but in fact comes down to the end of Tabarsi. The second of the two copies in INBA (MS.A), which is the revised version by the author himself, runs to 566 pages.

Samandar's Tārīkh is also a relatively long account (370 pp. in its published form) which is written in two parts. The first part was in six chapters compiled in 1303 Q. (1885-6) and deals with the history of his own family, the Babis of Qazvīn and part of his memoirs. The second part was compiled in 1332-3 (1913-14) and is mainly arranged under biographical headings of more than seventy early Babis and Bahā'īs but also contains a considerable amount of new information both on the early period of the movement and on the later developments of the Bahā'ī-Azali controversy. Born in 1268 Q. (1852) and son of a celebrated Babi Shaykh Muhammad Nabīl Akbar Qazvīnī, he was a merchant of some significance in Qazvīn. In many instances his account clearly reflects his mercantile outlook. He based his narrative chiefly on his own eye-witness experiences, his interviews with some of the surviving Babis of the early period, and the scattered information he gathered in his home town Qazvīn. He is reasonably accurate and reliable on the Babis of Qazvīn and not only supplies fresh details on the well known Babis, but introduces a number of new characters and describes new events which were either unknown or were barely referred to in other sources.

Abul Faţl Gulpāyīgānī's Tārīkh-i Zuhūr etc. is a brief introductory account which was compiled in the style of Maqālīh-i Shakhṣī Sayyāh some time in the early years of this century. In the first two parts of this work, which cover the history of the 'Babi religion' and the 'Bahā'ī religion' up to 1892, the year of Bahā'ullāh's death, the author clearly distinguishes between the two currents though he is careful to establish an intellectual link as well as a historical continuity between the two. This is an important distinction which the Bahā'ī writers of the time had made in order to defend themselves against the accusations of deviation and deception levelled by the Azalīs. But unlike the impassioned tone of Hašht Bihisht, in reply to which, it appears, this account was written, the tone of the writer is moderate and unoffensive. The original MS. of this work in INBA in Gulpāyīgānī's own handwriting is 74 pages. His Hujaj al-Bahīya translated into English as The Bahai Proofs seems to be based on this work.

More important for the study of the early period is his Kashf al-Ghītā which was completed after Abul Faţl's death by his nephew Sayyid Mahdi Gulpāyīgānī. This is a controversial Bahā'ī apologia which initially aimed at resolving the problem of Nuqtat al-Kaf and demonstrating the distortions and forgeries.
committed in the text. Though in many ways it makes a valuable contribution to
the knowledge of the early period, and though in some instances the authors are
successful in showing discrepancies in the text of *Nuqtat al-Kaf*, in general they
created new problems and committed new errors rather than being able to resolve
the distortions of the allegedly doubtful passages. The *Kashf al-Ghitā*’s basic
argument, particularly on the section written by Abul Fażl Gulpayigani seems
convincing enough to justify the author’s doubts on the originality of those
passages which enhance Subh-i Azal’s position, yet the whole tone of this work is
so much charged with religious zeal that it can hardly defend its argument from
an impartial viewpoint. Part of the criticism in this work is directed towards
Browne’s introduction to *Nuqtat al-Kaf*, which the authors argue was exceeding the
limits of scholarly investigation by accusing the Baha’ī writers of forgery and
distortion without providing any viable evidence. Abul Fażl believes, perhaps
with some justification, that Browne’s criticism of the Baha’īs is more the
result of Azali influence than based on historical fact. As far as the events
and characters of the early period are concerned, *Kashf al-Ghitā* adds a
valuable contribution. In some instances Abul Fażl obtained his fresh
information from Hājjī Sayyid Javād Kārpālā’ī whom the author met towards the end
of his life. In spite of its defects and confusions, *Kashf al-Ghitā* is a useful
source for the critical study of *Nuqtat al-Kaf* or indeed for many other sources
on the early history of the movement.

Beside the above mentioned works, some of the treatises by Gulpayigani such as
*Risālīh-i Iskandariyih* have occasional interesting points. Another work by
Ahmad Suhrāb on the life of the Bab entitled *al-Risāla al-Tis’ā‘ Asharīyā*, which
is a collection of nineteen talks delivered in Haifa around 1918–19, is also of
some use. *Tadhkirat al-Wafā* of ‘Abd al-Baha’ is a collection of 71 biographies
compiled in 1915 on the lives of the early Babi-Baha’īs. Though this work is
mainly concerned with those Babis who after 1268 emigrated to Baghdad and then
followed Bahā’ullāh in his exile to Adrianople and Acre, it also gives many
references to earlier events and has entries under Qurrat al-‘Ayn, Nabīl Zarandī
and others.

A series of narratives on the local history of the Baha’ī communities through­
out Iran, which are often based on the accounts and memoirs of the older
generation, is also recorded in this period. Among them the narrative of Mīrzā
Habīballāh Afnān on Shiraz is of special value since it throws new light not only
on the early life of the Bab but on other Babis of Fars. Fu’ādī’s history of
the Babi-Baha’ī community of Khurasan which was compiled in 1931, relies both on
local written and oral accounts and is of great value for the study of the Babis
of Khurasan. The author, himself originally from Bushrūyih and educated in
Ashkhabad, made some effort to produce his history in a systematic way. The MS. in INBA consists of 462 pp. and is divided into ten chapters under different regions and gives detailed accounts of the history of the towns and villages of Khurasan.

Two accounts of the local history of Āzarbājān are written by Mīrzā Haydar ʿAlī Uskü’ī and Āqā Muḥammad Husain Milānī. The first one which was compiled in 1343 (1924-5) is a relatively short account (INBA. MS. 25pp.) based on Haydar ʿAlī's own memoirs of the Babis and Bahāʾīs of Uskü, Milān and other parts. The account of Muḥammad Husain Milānī, however, which was written shortly after Uskü’ī, is more comprehensive. The first part is an independent account (INBA. MS. 111 pp.) divided into four parts and deals with the Babi- Bahāʾī missions to Āzarbājān, the important converts, the 'martyrs' of Āzarbājān and finally the main events regarding the history of the community in this province. The second part contains the additional notes on Uskü’ī's account (26 pp.). Both authors are mainly concerned with the events of the late 19th and early 20th centuries but supply useful information on the people, places and events of the earlier period. Other local accounts by Nāṭiq Isfahānī on Kashān (1309 Sh., 75 pp.), Zarraqānī on Tehran, Ishraq Khavārī on Hamadān also add some new details to the early history of the local communities. These local accounts and many others on other parts such as Yazd and its vicinity, Rasht and Isfahan are important because they expand the sphere of Babi history beyond the central themes and enable us to know more about the less well known Babis and the less well known events.

Two other works by non-Babi writers may also be included in this category. Zaʿīm al-Daula’s Miftāḥ Bāb al-ʿAbwāb is an Arabic work published in 1903 as an abridged version of a longer unpublished account entitled Bāb al-ʿAbwāb. He was the editor of the Persian weekly Hikmat which was published in Cairo at the turn of the century. Part of his work was again based on Nāṣikh al-Tawārīkh but he also used other less known or quite unknown sources. He was the son of Mullā Muḥammad Taqī and grandson of Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Tabrīzī. Both his grandfather and his father were amongst the ʿulama present at the Bab's trial of 1848 in Tabriz, and as he himself confirms, part of his more reliable information is drawn from his grandfather's narrative of his interrogations of the Bab which were carried out presumably sometime between 1264 and 1266. He also counts amongst his sources a copy of the narrative of Ḥājī Mīrzā ʿJanī (without specifying any title) which he particularly maintains has no indication of the succession of Subḥ-ʾi Azal or Bahāʾallah. Though he might have inserted this remark with some attention to Browne's opposite views expressed in his introduction to The Tarīkh-i Jadīd of which Zaʿīm al-Daula was certainly aware, this is still a piece of interesting evidence on the problem of Nuqtat al-ʿlāf. Besides his written
sources, Zā'im al-Daula also met Bahā'ullāh, Ṣabd al-Bahāʾ and some well known Bahāʾis of his time, including Nābil Zarandī in Haifa. He also met Subh-i Azal in Famagusta. Throughout the 181 pages in which he deals with the early history of the Babi movement, he is reasonably impartial and objective though he occasionally makes gross mistakes and bold exaggerations. In some respects, his views have been influenced by the ideas and teaching of Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Afghānī and Shaykh Muhammad Ṣādūqī of whom he speaks with great respect. Occasionally such influences led him to pass unjustified judgements on the ideas and activities of the Babis.

A brief reference should also be made to an Azali work entitled Hasht Bihisht. This is a relatively long work produced circa 1890. It is originally designed to vindicate the Babi-Azali position which towards the end of the 19th century was seriously overshadowed by the spread of Bahāʾī teachings. Throughout the course of the Book the effort of the writer or writers (since it is alleged that this work was written by Shaykh Ahmad Ruḥī Kirmanī or ʿAqā Khan Kirmanī or both of them) is to reintroduce the Babi theology and orthodoxy in a style and language comprehensible to late 19th century Persian intelligentsia. Yet in interpreting both the theory and practice of the Babi religion they are predisposed to those ideas which at the time were popular in Persian intellectual circles outside Iran. As far as the historical value of this work is concerned, a brief and somewhat confused account of the early Babi history provided in Chapter Eight of this work demonstrates the relatively weak standard of Azali historiography. Yet it still contains some interesting points. The ugly and offensive language of the writer in the latter part of this chapter which is marred by distortions and accusations against the Bahāʾīs, further illustrates the depth of the Bahāʾī-Azali conflict in the closing decades of the 19th century.

Persian and Arabic secondary sources form the fourth category. Here no attempt has been made to survey all these accounts since most of them are of little historical value. The main focus however, is on those secondary sources which contain less accessible or unaccessible primary materials. Zuhūr al-Haqq of Fāżīl Māzandarānī is a voluminous work of nine volumes on the Babi-Bahāʾī history during its first century of which only Volume III (published circa 1944) and Parts One and Two of Volume VIII (published 1975-6) are available. Volume III is a biographical dictionary arranged alphabetically under names of provinces and refers to more than 660 Babis and other important characters of the first eight years of the movement. It is based not only on the better known chronicles and general accounts (including the Persian text of Nābil Zarandī's narrative) but also on local histories, memoirs and writings of the Bab and
early Babis. Less than half of this work (240 pp. out of 532 pp.) is a full or partial citation of fresh materials most of which cannot be found in any other source. It is this access to the less known sources which makes *Zuhūr al-Ḥaqq* an important work for the study of the early period. Yet in some ways Fāzīl is a less than meticulous historian who is at the same time bound within the limits of a traditional historiography. He makes errors on dates and personalities, and almost never discusses the origins of his sources.

Another attempt to compile a general history is a two volume work by ʿAbū al-Ḥasan Avarīh entitled *Kawākib al-Durrīya* which was published in 1923-4. The first volume deals with the Babi-Baḥāʾī history up to the end of Baḥāʾullāh's time; the second volume comes down to the end of Ḥādi Bahaʾ's period. As far as the history of the early period is concerned, *Kawākib* contains less fresh material and less new detail than *Zuhūr al-Ḥaqq* though it exceeds the latter in the number of historical errors and inaccuracies. But nevertheless it is a valuable source for study of particular events and characters. Other Baḥāʾī works such as Ḥāji Khusrūvī's *Tarikh-i Shuhadāʾ-yi Amīr* and Ḥāji Iqlīmī's *Nūr*, Fayḍī's *Khānān* and *Bahrāt-i Nuqtīh-i Uḷā*, Isḥāq Khāvārī's *Nūrayn-i Nayyīrayn*, Ṣāḥibī's *Iqān* and other works are essential for the study of particular aspects of early Babi history. In these more recent works, the authors follow the earlier traditions of Baḥāʾī historiography in their efforts to soften the militant tone of the early Babi history.

The non-Baḥāʾī secondary sources however, for the greater part, consisted of a wide range of refutations or polemics which are designed to discredit Babi history rather than add anything to our understanding. Their attitude is hostile, their use of the sources biased and their facts are distorted. Even compared to the earlier refutations of a more traditional kind their standard is surprisingly low. A good example of these traditional refutations is Husain Qulī Jadīd al-Ḥaḍarāʾī's *Mīnḥāj al-Ṭullūb* which was published in 1320 Q. (1920-3). In spite of its hostile and offensive tone, it still contains some new information, including some uncommon examples of the Bab's writings.

A small group of writers who tried to give a more scholarly character to their narratives should also be mentioned. Some like Ḥasanī's *al-BAḥāʾīyyīn wa al-Baḥāʾīyyīn* and Mudarrisī Chāhārdīhī's *Shaykhīgārī va Bābīgārī* were able to give a reasonably balanced version of the events. The latter adds some valuable new information to both Shaykhi and Babi history. K āṣrāvī's *Bābīgārī* is a short polemic of little historical value. In his criticism of the Bab and the Babis, he hardly considers the historical and intellectual circumstances. His judgement no doubt was partly influenced by his own vision of Fakārī.
A more distorted treatment of Babi history may be observed in Ādāmīyat's chapter on the Bab (Dāstān-i Bab) in his Amīr Kabīr va Īrān. Though in his introduction, the author promises to pursue an 'analytical method free from bigotry' and claims that his 'historical analysis' is 'realistic' and 'rational', he by no means is prepared to apply these much vaunted values in his own account. Besides his obvious errors in historical fact which demonstrates his insufficient knowledge and his careless methodology, throughout this chapter he does not hesitate to use a highly polemical and indeed offensive language in describing the ideas and activities of the Babis. Referring to the Bab's ideas as 'a sack-full of straw' which has no bearing on 'the world of knowledge and thought' and by calling the Babi fighters in Zanjan 'miserable idiots' and Babis themselves 'charlatans', 'murderers', 'executioners' and 'villains', he indeed gives a very real picture of the present state of that school of modern Iranian historiography of which he regards himself a pioneer. Still worse is his so-called 'analytical method' (ravish-i tahlīlī) which is an extraordinary mixture of a dated and misunderstood version of the 'philosophy of progress', and a strong urge for centralization of power which betrays itself in his glorification of Amīr Kabīr and a good deal of common naiveté and delusion. His total obsession with this idealised picture of Amīr Kabīr prevents him from maintaining a balanced view, let alone understanding the historical significance of any opposite current.

A few words should be added about the secondary works in European languages. The earliest and perhaps the most significant are the works of E.G. Browne and A.L.M. Nicolas. Though he never attempted to compile a history of the Babi movement, Browne's efforts in translating, editing, identifying, and publishing the Babi, Bahā'ī and Azalī sources were of great importance in preparing the way for a more comprehensive understanding of the Babi history. He was the first scholar who seriously undertook the study of the Babis and dedicated a great deal of his time and effort to introducing it to others. As he himself indicates, one of his first attractions towards Iran, or indeed towards the 'mysterious East' by which he was fascinated after reading Gobineau's work, was his interest in The Babis. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he writes with great sympathy and understanding towards Persians in general and Babis in particular. Most of his writings, including his A Year Amongst the Persians, and the introductions to his translations of Babi works, bear witness to this attitude. He was an orientalist in the traditional sense of the word. In his four books and three long articles on Babis, he often rendered an accurate translation and a careful edition. Moreover, he added a bulk of useful notes and comments on sources, the history and the ideology of the movement. His criticism of the Bahā'īs in the Azalī-Bahā'ī controversy, which perhaps occupies more than its fair share in his introductions
to both *The New History* and *Nuqtat al-Kaf*, is moderated to a more balanced view in his *Materials for the Study etc.* and *A Literary History of Persia* (vol.IV). He seldom attempts to interpret the Babi history in an analytical way and indeed never claims to be a historian in the more modern sense, yet some of his general comments particularly in his later works are to be taken into account.

Nicolas, a French diplomat who spent most of his life in Iran and served as Consul-General for 35 years in various cities of Iran (died 1937), shares this sympathy and understanding with Browne, but in some respects lacks the same scholarly standards. In the course of his long acquaintance with Babi history, he published a number of translations which start with the Bab's *Dalā'il-i Sab'ah* entitled *Le Livre des Sept Preuves de la Mission du Bab* and continue with translations of the Arabic *Bayān* (1905) and the Persian *Bayān* (1911-14). His most important work however, is his *Seyyed Ali Mohammed dit le Bab* (1905), which is a general history of the first phase of the movement up to 1854. Besides general chronicles and better known accounts, the author also used a number of written and oral sources which make his account an important contribution to the history of this period. At the beginning of his work, Nicolas gives a list of his sources, but throughout the text he often fails to specify them. His careless and sometimes disorganised presentation to some extent reduces the value of his work, but still in many parts, including his accounts of the upheavals of Zanja and Nayriz, the execution of Tahirih and the events of 1268 (1852), it remains an irreplaceable source. His use of the writings of the Bab is also important since he had access to some of the private correspondence of the Bab. But again here, his references are unclear and his translations are not always accurate.

Since the early decades of the present century other works have also been produced on the subject. H. Roemer's *Die Bābī-Baha'ī* (1912) is a German work devoted to the study of the Babi theology. It is based on the major writings of the Bab and makes a careful survey of the Shaykhi background of the movement, its millenarian significance, its relationship to Sufi and theosophic trends, its teachings and its political ideology. Roemer pays little attention to the historical aspect of the movement and still less to putting Babi theory into its historical context. Tag's *Le Babisme et l'Islam* (1942) is another study which concentrates on the theological aspects. Writing with some degree of Islamic commitment, the author distinguishes between the Babi theory and the Islamic orthodoxy by emphasising the heterodox nature of the former. Though little is given to establish any link, whether theoretical or historical, between the Babis and the earlier heterodox trends, the author, mainly on the basis of earlier speculations and suggestions, tends to regard them as the continuation of the same deviatory and 'foreign' tendencies. His thorough study of the principles as
well as the details of Babi theory in comparison to Islamic beliefs, in which he appears to be closer to a fundamentalist Sunni position than to a Shi'ī approach, in many ways helps to a better understanding of such a distinction.

Other more recent works have also attempted to interpret the rise of the Babi movement and its development in social, economic and political terms. Ivanov's *The Babi Uprising in Iran* (1939) pioneers a new socio-economic approach. Keddie's 'Religion and Irreligion in Early Iranian Nationalism' suggests some form of continuity between the movement and the later developments in the course of modern Iranian history. Algar's chapter in *Religion and State in Iran* discusses the responses of the 'ulama and their role both in the formation and the suppression of the movement. A detailed survey of these works and many other works on the subject is beyond the scope of this study. Most of them use well known primary and secondary sources and add little to our knowledge from the point of historical fact. However, they are of value for their attempt to analyse and interpret the Bab and the Babi movement from different angles.
I. Persian and Arabic Unpublished Sources


_____. Collection of 15 Arabic and Persian works: 7 letters and addresses (*tauqī*’); 5 treatises (*risāla*) on theology and traditions; 2 sermons (*Khutba*) and one commentary (*tafsīr*). INBA. (private publication) no. 40, 221 pp.

_____. Collection 22 Arabic commentaries on sūras and verses of the Qurān, Shi'i traditions, etc. INBA. (private publication) no. 53, 431 pp.

_____. Collection of 29 Arabic and Persian works: 21 prayers (du'a and munājāt) and 8 letters to members of his family. INBA. (private publication) no. 58, 184 pp.

_____. Collection of 12 Arabic works: 6 letters (*tauqī*’); 3 prayers (du'a); 2 commentaries (*tafsīr* and *sharḥ*) on Quranic verses and Shi'i traditions; 1 testimony. INBA. (private publication) no. 64, 161 pp.

_____. Collection of 33 Arabic works: 16 commentaries (*tafsīr* and *sharḥ*) on Quranic verses, Shi'i traditions and theological problems; 12 letters (*tauqī*’); 4 sermons (*Khutba*); 1 prayer (du'a). Completed on Ramadan 1264 Q. INBA. (private publication) no. 67, 279 pp.

_____. Collection of 9 Arabic works: 6 commentaries (*tafsīr*) on sūras of the Qurān; 3 addresses (*tauqī*’) and 1 treatise (*risāla*). INBA. (private publication) no. 69, 437 pp.

_____. Collection of 12 Arabic and Persian works: 9 prayers (du'a and munājāt); Shu'unat-i Fāreī (q.v.); Sahīfah-yi 'Adliyyah (q.v.). INBA. (private publication) no. 82, 205 pp.
Collection of 43 Arabic and Persian works: 32 letters (tauqī‘); 6 commentaries (tafsīr and sharh) on traditions and theological problems; 2 sermons (Khutba); 3 testimonies. INBA. (private publication) no. 91, 202 pp.

Collection of 17 Arabic and Persian works: 10 commentaries (tafsīr and sharh) on Quranic verses and Shi‘i traditions; 4 letters (tauqī‘); 1 prayer (du ‘a); 1 sermon (Khutba); al-Sahīfa fī Sharḥ Du‘a’ihi fī Zaman al-Ghayba (q.v.). INBA. (private publication) no. 98, 186 pp.

Collection of 32 letters in Arabic. Browne Or. MSS., F.21(9).

Collection of 4 Arabic letters. Browne Or. MSS., F.28(9), 7.

Khutba al-Jidda, INBA. (private publication) no. 91, pp.60-73.

Letter to Muhammad Shah, INBA. (private publication), no. 64, pp.103-126.

Qayyūm al-Asma‘, Commentary on Sūra Yusuf (Ahsan al-Qisas). Browne Or. MSS., F.11(9). (Also INBA. (private publication) no. 4; INBA. Lib. no. 3034C).

Sahifah-yi ‘Adlīyah, INBA. (private publication) no. 82, XII, pp.134-205.

Sahīfah Bayn al-Haramayn. Browne Or. MSS., F(9). (Also INBA. Lib. MS.).

al-Sahīfah fī Sharḥ Du‘a’ihi fī Zaman al-Ghayba, INBA. (private publication) no. 60, pp.57-154 and no. 98, pp.68-108.

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