THE EARLY YEARS OF THE BABI MOVEMENT

BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT

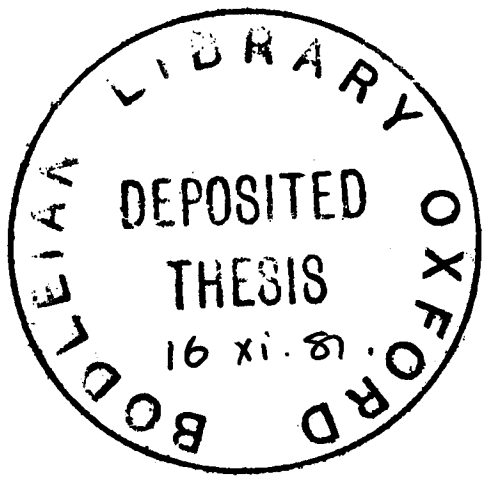
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ABSTRACT

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 ʿulama, tujjār 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 ʿAlī 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 ʿAtabāt 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.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

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 Bāb, Bābī, Shaykhī, Shīʿī, Ṣūfī, ʿulamā' appear as Bab, Babi, Shaykhi, Shiʿi, Sufi and ʿulama. Well known place-names are either written in their common forms (as in *The Oxford Atlas*) or without diacritical marks; therefore Tihrān, Iṣfahān, Shīrāz, Tabrīz are written Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz and Tabriz. The less known place-names are fully transliterated. Karbalā' is transliterated according to its Persian pronounciation, Karbilā'. Names of people are all transliterated, Persian and Persianized names as pronounced in Persian and Arabic names as in Arabic; Ḥusayn is transliterated as Ḥusain and Ṭāhira as Ṭāhirih. 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 *h* (ه غیرملفوظ) in Persian is represented by *ih* or occasionally *ah*, but in Arabic always by *a*. The Arabic definite article *al-* (ال) is not assimilated to the noun; for example *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh* and not *Nāsikh at-Tawārīkh* or *Nāsikh ut-Tawārīkh*. Persian works with Arabic titles are transliterated in their Arabic forms: *Tadhkirat al-Wafā'* and not *Tazkirat al-Vafā'*. The Letter *ʿayn* (ع) is represented by "ʿ" and *hamza* (ء), regardless of its bearer, is "'".

ABBREVIATIONS

Ahmad	Khān Bahadur, Āghā Mīrzā Muhammad (trans.). 'Some New Notes on Babiism' in *JRAS*, 1927, pp.443-69. (Extracts translated into English from the unpublished history of Mīrzā Ahmad ibn Abul Hasan Sharīf Shīrāzī Īshīk Aqāsī).
Baghdādī	Baghdādī, Āqā Muhammad Mustafā ibn Shaykh Muhammad Shībl. *Risāla*. Cairo, 1338 Q./1919.
Bayān	The Bāb, Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad Shīrāzī. *Kitāb-i Bayān-i Fārsī*. Tehran, n.d.
Browne, JRAS 1889	Browne, Edward G. 'The Bābīs of Persia: I. Sketch of Their History and Personal Experience Amongst Them; II. Their Literature and Doctrine' in *JRAS*, XXI (1899), pp. 458-526, 881-1009.
Browne, Or. MSS.	E.G. Browne's Oriental MSS., Cambridge University Library. (Browne, E.G. and Nicholson, R.A. *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental MSS. belonging to the Late E.G. Browne*, Cambridge, 1932).
al-Dharīʿa	Tihrānī, Āghā Buzurg (Muhammad Muhsin). *al-Dharīʿa ilā Tasānīf al-Shīʿa*. 25 vols., Najaf-Tehran, 1355-98 Q.
Fārs Nāmih	Fasā'ī, Hājī Mīrzā Hasan. *Fārs Nāmih-yi Nāsirī*. 2 vols. (in one), Tehran, 1312-13 Q.
Fihrist	Ibrāhīmī Kirmānī, Abul Qāsim ibn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn. *Fihrist-i Kutub-i Shaykh-i Ajall Auhad Marhum-i Shaykh Ahmad Ahsā'ī va Sā'ir-i Mashāyikh-i ʿUzām*. 2 vols. (in one), 3rd ed., Kirmān, n.d.
Fu'ādī	Fu'ādī Bushrū'ī, Hasan. *Manāzir-i Tārīkhī-yi Nihżat-i Amr-i Bahā'ī dar Khurāsān* being the first part of *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Khurāsān*. *INBA*. Lib. MS.
Gobineau	Gobineau, Comte Arthur de. *Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* Paris, 1895 (1900).
INBA. pub.	Iran National Bahā'ī Archive, private publication.
INBA. Lib.	Iran National Bahā'ī Archive, Library MSS.
Kazem-Beg	Kāzem-Beg, Mīrzā A. 'Bab et les Babis, ou le Soulèvement Politique et Religieux en Perse, de 1845 à 1853' in

Journal Asiatique, 1866, VII, pp.329-84, 457-522; VIII, pp.196-252, 357-400, 473-507.

KD — Āvārih, ʿAbd al-Husain (Āyatī). *al-Kawākib al-Durrīya fī Maʾāthir al-Bahāʾīya*. 2 vols., Cairo, 1342 Q./1923-4.

Makārim — Muʿallim Habībābādī, Muhammad ʿAlī. *Makārim al-Āthār dar Ahvāl-i Rijāl-i Daurih-i Qājār*. 5 vols., Isfahan, 1377-1396 Q./1337-1355 Sh.

Materials — Browne, Edward G. (comp.). *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion*. Cambridge, 1918.

MJQ — Qazvīnī, Mullā Jaʿfar. *Tārīkh* (Historical account of the early days of the Babi movement in Qazvīn) published in *Tārīkh-i Samandar va Mulhaqqāt*. Edited by ʿA. ʿAlāʾī, Tehran, 131 Badīʿ/1975, pp.446-500.

Nabil — Nabīl Zarandī, Shaykh Muhammad. *The Dawn-Breakers, Nabīl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahāʾī Revelation*. Translated and edited by Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, 1932.

NH — Browne, Edward G. (ed. and trans.). *The Tārīkh-i-Jadīd or New History of Mīrzā Alī Muhammad the Bāb*. Cambridge, 1893.

Nicolas — Nicolas, A.L.M. *Seyyed Ali Mohammed dit le Bab*. Paris, 1905.

NK — Browne, Edward G. (ed.). *Nuqtatuʾl-Kāf* (*Nuqtat al-Kāf*). Compiled by Hājī Mīrzā Jānī of Kāshān. London-Leiden, 1910.

NT — Sipihr, Mīrzā Muhammad Taqī (Lisān al-Mulk). *Nāsikh al-Tawārikh: Qājārīyih*. Edited by M.B. Bihbūdī, 4 vols., Tehran, 1385 Q.

Q — Tunikābunī, Muhammad. *Qisas al-ʿUlamāʾ*. Tehran, 1304 Q., 2nd edition, Tehran, n.d.

QA — The Bāb, Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad Shīrāzī. *Qayyūm al-Asmāʾ* (Commentary on Sūra Yūsuf, *Ahsan al-Qisas*). *Browne, Or. MSS*. F.11(9).

Qatīl — al-Qatīl al-Karbalāʾī. *Risāla*. Published in *Zuhūr al-Haqq*. III, appendix 2, pp.502-32.

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

RJ — Khvānsārī, Muhammad Bāqir. *Raudāt al-Jannat fī Ahwāl al-ʿUlamāʾ wa al-Sādāt*, Tehran, 1307 Q.

RS	Hidāyat, Riżā Qulī Khān. *Raudat al-Safā -yi Nāsirī*. 3rd ed., 10 vols., Tehran, 1338-9 Sh.
Samandar	Samandar Qazvīnī, Shaykh Kāzim. *Tārīkh-i Samandar* published in *Tārīkh-i Samandar va Mulhaqqāt*. Edited by ʿA. ʿAlā'ī, Tehran, 131 Badīʿ/1975.
Tabaqāt	Tihrānī, Āghā Buzurg (Muhammad Muhsin). *Tabaqāt Aʿlām al-Shīʿa*: I (3 parts): *Nuqabā' al-Bashar fī al-Qarn al-Rābiʿ ʿAshar*; II (2 parts) *al-Karām al-Barara fī al-Qarn al-Thālith al-ʿAshara*. Najaf, 1373-88 Q./1954-68.
Tarā'iq	Shīrāzī, Muhammad Maʿsūm (Maʿsūm ʿAlī Shāh, Nā'ib al-Ṣadr). *Tarā'iq al-Haqā'iq*. 2nd ed. Edited by M.J. Mahjūb, 3 vols., Tehran, 1345 Sh.
TMS	Muʿīn al-Saltanih, Hājī Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Bāqī. *Tārīkh-i Amr*. *INBA*. Lib. MS. A.
TN	Browne, Edward G. (ed. and trans.). *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bāb*. 2 vols. (text and trans.), Cambridge, 1891.
Z	Fāzil Māzandarānī, Asadallāh. *Kitāb-i Zuhūr al-Haqq*, Tehran, n.d. (1944), III.

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 idealogy[1]. The study of millenarianism both

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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 *Maʿād* or *Qīyāmat* (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 (*rafḍ*, *zandaqa*, *ḥarṭaqa*). The theoretical beliefs held by the millenarians were classified under a wide range of general terms from 'innovation' (*bidʿat*) and extremism (*ghulūv*) to disbelief (*ilḥād*) and apostasy (*irtidād*); more precisely, the claim to the advent of the Mahdi was defined as *iddiʿā-yi Mahdavīyat*. The social and political movements to which they gave rise were often referred to as *fitna* or *fitnih* (in a literal sense, revolution)[1].

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1. (cont'd). *The Second Coming, Popular Millenarianism 1780-1850*, London, 1979; Sandeen, R. *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930*, Chicago, 1970; Hill, C. *Antichrist in Seventeenth Century England*, London, 1971; Garrett, C. *Respectable Folly: Millenarians and the French Revolution in France and England*, London, 1975; *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel*, edited by P. Toon, Cambridge, 1970. On the sociological interpretation of the modern millenarian movements see Wilson, R. *Magic and the Millennium: a sociological study of religious movements of protest among tribal and Third-World peoples*, London, 1973; Lanternari, V. *The Religion of the Oppressed, a study of modern messianic cults*, translated by L. Sergio, London, 1963. Wilson's work also discusses the theory and methodology of the study of millenarian movements. Also on the theory of millenarianism see Tuveson, E.L. *Millennium and Utopia: a study in the background of the idea of progress*, New York, 1964. On Jewish messianism see Scholem, G. *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, New York, 1971; Vermes, G. *Jesus the Jew, a historian's reading of the Gospels*, London, 1973.

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 ʿAsharī Shiʿism.

In Shi'i Islam, the concept of the Advent or Manifestation (*Zuhūr*) of the Qā'im is much more deeply assimilated into the body of general doctrine. The belief in the advent of the Qā'im (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'imīyat*. Deputyship (*Nīyābat*), Gateship (*Bābīyat*), Vicegerency (*Khilāfat*) and Guardianship (*Vilāyat*) were different definitions of the same original function of representing the Qā'im in a world which was not yet prepared for the advent of *Baqīyatallāh* (the Remnant of God)[1]. 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,

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1. A general survey of Ithnā 'Asharī millenarian expectations appears in H. Corbin, 'Etude sur L'Imam Cache et la Renovation de L'Homme on Theologie Shiite' in *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, XXVIII, Zurich, 1960; A. Sachedina, 'A treatise on the Occultation of the Twelfth Imāmite Imām' in *Studia Islamica*, 48 (1978) pp.109-24; W. Montgomery Watt, 'The Muslim yearning for a Saviour: Aspects of early 'Abbāsid Shi'ism' in *The Saviour God* edited by S.G.F. Brandon, Oxford, 1963; *EI²*, GHAYBA (by D.B. Macdonald, M.G.S. Hodgson), KĀ'IM ĀL-MUḤAMMAD (by W. Madelung), ITHNĀ 'ASHARĪYA (idem), IMĀMA (idem); Donaldson, D.M. *The Shi'ite Religion*, London, 1933, pp.226-41. Also Iqbāl, 'Abbās, *Khāndān-i Nubakhtī*, Tehran, 1311 Sh.; Montgomery Watt, W. *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh, 1973.

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, outlinesmay be formulated of the chief characteristics shared by many of these movements from the early Shiʿi sects up to the Ismāʿīlī, Hurūfī, Nuqtavī, Shiʿi-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 Shiʿi 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 Shiʿi 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 Qā'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' (*maʿrifat*) and the knowledge of the 'internal' (*bāṭin*), 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 'intelligentia' 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 idealogy 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

Zuhūr, 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[1]. Currents of

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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* (*Asian Affairs*) 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

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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 Āqā Muhammad Khān 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 Karīm Khān, in a long series of civil wars, Āqā Muhammad Khān eliminated all his rivals and finally managed to establish the Qājārs on the throne. Fath ʿAlī Shāh'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 Qājār state in this period. Powerful sons of Fath ʿAlī Shāh such as ʿAbbās Mīrzā in Āzarbāījān, Husain ʿAlī Mīrzā in Fārs, Hasan ʿAlī Mīrzā Shujāʿ al-Saltanih in Kirmān (and then in Isfahan), Muhammad ʿAlī Mīrzā Daulatshāh in western Iran and Muhammad Valī Mīrzā in Khurāsān, 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-authonomous 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

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1. (cont'd) Modern Iran' in *Studia Islamica*, XXIX (1969), pp.38-41; H. Farman Farmayan, 'The Forces of Modernisation in Nineteenth Century Iran: A Historical Survey' in *Beginning of Modernisation in the Middle East, the Nineteenth Century*, edited by W.R. Polk and R.L. Chambers, Chicago, 1968, pp.119-51; C. Meredith, 'Early Qajar administration; an analysis of its development and functions' in *Iranian Studies*, 4 (1971), pp.59-84; S . Bakhash, 'The evolution of Qajar Bureaucracy: 1779-1879' in *Middle East Studies*, 7 (1971), pp.139-168. G.R.G. Hambly, 'Āqā Muhammad Khān and the establishment of the Qājār Dynasty' in *JRCAS*, 50 (1963), pp.161-74. In the course of this study other works on specific aspects of the history of the period are referred to.

occasional verbal tributes.

Under Muhammad Shāh (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[1]. 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-authonomous 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 ʿAlī Shāh's reign. What Muhammad Shāh 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 ʿAlī Mīrzā (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 Āzarbāījān 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 Qājārs' successive defeats

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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 Shāh'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 Qājārs, 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 ʿAlī 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.

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1. See for example the views expressed by Aḥmad Kasravī (*Bahā'īgarī*, Tehran, 1322 Sh.) and ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ḥasanī (*al-Bābīyūn wa al-Bahā'īyūn fī Ḥāḍirihim wa Māḍīhim*, Sidon, 1957/1376 Q.).

CHAPTER ONE

The ʿUlama in the Late 18th and Early 19th Centuries: 'Orthodoxy' and 'Heterodoxy'

I

More than eighty years of intellectual and social development in the post-Safavīd era prepared the way for one of the major events of modern Iranian history, the rise of the ʿulama in the early decades of the 19th century. Simultaneous with the rise of the Qājārs to a central political power, and almost parallel to their establishment, a new breed of the ʿulama 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 Qājārs consolidated their position in the urban centres by means of a military and administrative presence, while the ʿulama 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 ʿulama 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 Qājārs, they flourished to become the most important independent force in the urban centres. Their relation with the Qājārs 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 ʿulama 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 ʿulama 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 ʿulama 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 ʿulama 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 ʿulama and its practical implications are directly related to the doctrine of Usūlism, which in its essence, facilitates the intervention of the religious authority in the affairs of the world. The ʿulama's drive for political power can be best explained if this theoretical framework is examined in some of its relevant details. The development of Usūlī 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 ʿAtabāt in the late 18th century. The rise of the Akhbārī 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 ʿulama and finally the emergence of the Shaykhi school are three of the more significant currents which existed parallel to the development of the Usūlī school. In this chapter, some general observations will be made on the circumstances which led to the development of the Usūlī 'orthodoxy' in relation to the above mentioned 'non-orthodox' trends, with the aim of discerning an intellectual precedent within the sphere of learned Shiʿism for those ideas which later gave rise to messianic thinking.

The flight of the Iranian ʿulama to Iraq throughout the second half of the 18th century brought about some distinctive changes in the religious climate of the ʿAtabāt. This is often defined in terms of a doctrinal division between Akhbārīs and Usūlīs. The Usūlī school was first formed by those Iranian ʿulama (or ʿulama of Iranian descent) who had received their formal training in the ʿAtabāt and hence were barely influenced by Majlisī's 'traditionalist' school. Āqā Muhammad Bāqir Bihbahānī (1118-1205/1706-90), the recognised 'founder' (*mu'assis*) of the modern Usūlī school is often regarded as the first to realise the need for a new approach to *fiqh*. He was a young Isfahānī *talabih* in his

twenties when he arrived in the ʿAtabāt. 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 Yūsuf Bahrānī, Āqā Sayyid Muhammad Tabātabā'ī and Sayyid Sadr al-Dīn Qumī[1]. By general definition these scholars may all be considered as Akhbārīs 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 Yūsuf Bahrānī, for instance, who by origin and by training came from a 'traditionalist' school in Bahrain, is held to be the representative of the Akhbārī school in the ʿAtabāt, yet it was from his moderate views that the first signs of an Usūlī tendency emerged[2]. 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 Muhsin Fayż and Mullā Muhammad Amīn Astarābādī, the renowned advocates of Akhbārism[3]. This approach then seems to have been taken by Bihbahānī 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 ʿAtabāt (1159/1746-7), the decline of the Akhbārīs and their inflexibility in the face of a new social climate was witnessed by Āqā Muhammad Bāqir Bihbahānī. In his encounters with the Bahrainī, or Bahrainī-descended ʿulama in Bihbahān, where he spent twenty

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1. For Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir amongst other sources, see Davānī, A. *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, (Qum , 1378 Q./1337 Sh.) which provides a full biographical account of Bihbahānī and his family. Also *RJ*. pp.122-4; *Q*. pp.199-204; *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 1, pp.171-74; *Makārim*. I, pp.220-35. For his teachers and his chain of *mashāyikh-i ravāyat* see *Vaḥīd* op.cit. pp.180-5 and *Makārim*. I, pp.229-30.

2. His autobiography appears at the end of his well known biographical dictionary of the Baḥrainī ʿulama *Lu'lu' al-Baḥrayn*, Tehran, 1269 Q. (See *al-Dharīʿa*, XVIII, pp.379-80). Also translated in *Q*. pp.271-5. *Vaḥīd* (pp. 187-95) provides some additional information. The author of *Religion and State* (op.cit. pp.33-4) seems to be unaware of Shaykh Yūsuf's important contributions such as the above mentioned *Lu'lu'* and still better known *Ḥadā'iq al-Nāẓira (al-Dharīʿa*, VI, pp.289-90) for which the author is known as *Ṣāḥib-i Ḥadā'iq*, when he states that *Kashkūl (al-Dharīʿa*, XVIII, 81 cf. II, 465-66) by Baḥrānī, which is a relatively unknown work, was the only work amongst later Akhbārīs which attained any fame.

3. Study of *rijāl* (genealogical and biographical study of the 'sources' (*asnād*) and 'chains' (*salāsil*) of the 'transmitters' (*ruwāt*) of the 'traditions' - a primitive chronological history of the Mashāyikh in successive generations) was not enthusiastically pursued by the staunch Akhbārīs, who believed that the *aḥādīth* which were collected by the early scholars must be accepted in their entirety and without any critical analysis. Tunikābunī admits (*Q*. 274) that while being the head of the Akhbārīs in the ʿAtabāt, Shaykh Yūsuf often 'undertook the path of *ijtihād*'.

five years of his life, the sectarianism between the two major quarters in the city may have given some reason to Bihbahānī to abandon Akhbārī fundamentalism, and seek a convenient way to justify and to assert the independent position of the ʿulama[1]. 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 Safavīds, the vacuum in the religious leadership attracted many Akhbārī 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 Bihbahān for example, where in the second and third quarters of the 18th century many ʿulama had taken refuge from Afghān 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 Bihbahān paid its allegiance to two main groups of Persian and Arab ʿulama.

But nevertheless, it was in the ʿAtabāt that in the later decades of the 18th century a serious intellectual encounter took place between the representatives of the two tenets[2]. Here, while the Akhbārīs were failing to sort out the difficulties and deficiencies of the Akhbārī theory, and hence were losing their stand or simply fading away, Bihbahani and his disciples, many of them Akhbari converts, managed to develop Usūlī thought into a major theory for the newly emerged class of ʿulama. For Bihbahānī and his disciples, contrary to Akhbārīs, 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[3]. Contrary to what is

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1. For Bihbahānī's long residence in Bihbahān see *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, pp.128-30, 140-3. For some of the contemporary ʿulama in Bihbahān, including Shaykh ʿAbdullāh ibn Ṣāliḥ Baḥrainī and Sayyid ʿAbdullāh Bilādī Baḥrainī, both important Akhbārī 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 Akhbārīs and Uṣūlīs. Amongst them *Raudāt al-Jannāt* (p.34) lists thirty topics. See also Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, '*Risālih* in reply to enquiries from Isfahan' in *Majmaʿ al-Rasā'il* (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 Kāshif al-Ghitā'. He also discusses Bihbahānī's refutations of the Akhbārīs (pp.76-95) and cites some specimens. The Akhbārī view on differences with Uṣūlīs appears in the works of Mīrzā Muḥammad Akhbārī including *Ḥarz al-Ḥawās*, *al-Mumtar al-Fāsil bayn al-Ḥaqq va al-Bāṭil* and his numerous refutations of the Uṣūlīs. See *Makārim*. III, 935-40 and also below.

usually assumed, the decline of the Akhbārīs 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 Bihbahānī over his rivals[1].

Bihbahānī'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' (*ʿamal-i bi ẓann*), the maxim of the Uṣūlī doctrine which was in contrast to the Akhbārī precepts of *yaqīn* (certitude) and *ʿilm* (knowledge), enabled *mujtahids* to go far beyond the former practice both in gaining particular judgement and in formulating general principles. But Uṣūlism 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 *ḥadīth* (which by itself was the subject of great scrutiny), or through 'consensus' (*ijmāʿ*) and mere 'reasoning' (*ʿaql*)[2]. Hence, by defining terms and conditions of *ijtihād*, and by recognising the intellectual and moral advantages of mujtahids, the Uṣūlīs 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 Shiʿism, 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 Bihbahānī. Its practical implications however are more discernible in the activities of the second generation of the Uṣūlīs.

The theoretical progress of the school owed much to those ʿulama who gathered in Bihbahānī's circle. Either by producing highly specialised works on *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and to a lesser extent *ḥadīth*, or by training a new generation of students, the Uṣūlī nucleus constructed the backbone of Shiʿi orthodoxy for the whole of the 19th century. While scholars such as Shaykh Jaʿfar

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

2. In the works of Bihbahānī and his followers, on the subject of *ijtihād* the 'rational proof' (*dalīl-i ʿaql*) and the Uṣūlī treatment of the deductive reasoning is fully argued. *al-Fawāʾid al-Ḥāʾirīya* (Tehran, 1270 Q., appendix to *Fusūl* of Muḥaqiq Ṭūsī, see *al-Dharīʿa*, XVI, 330-1); *al-Ijtihād wa al-Akhbār* (appendix to *ʿIddat al-Usūl* of Shaykh Ṭūsī, Tehran, 1314 Q., see *al-Dharīʿa*, I, 269), a *Risala on the Question of Qīyās* (*Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, 179) and many other works by Bihbahānī's students while accepting the concept of reasoning, reject *qīyās* in favour of *istiḥbāb*, *barāʾa* and *ishtighāl*.

Najafī (1156-1228/1743-1813), Mīrzā Abul Qāsim Qumī (known as Mīrza-yi Qumī) (1151-1231/1738-1815), Sayyid Muhammad Tabātabā'ī (later known as Mujāhid) and Sayyid Asadallāh Kazimaynī specialised in *fiqh* and *furūʿ*, others such as Sayyid ʿAlī Tabātabā'ī (1161-1231/1748-1815) and Sayyid Muhsin Kāzimaynī concentrated on *usūl*. Some like Mīrzā Muhammad Shahristānī and Sharīf al-ʿUlamā' Āmulī devoted their time to organise a more systematic method of teaching in *tafsīr* and *fiqh*, whereas Sayyid Muhammad Mahdī Bahr al-ʿUlūm and Mullā Mahdī Narāqī attempted to attain an overall knowledge in all fields[1]. Independent works such as *Kashf al-Ghitā'* by Najafī[2], or *Qawānīn al-Usūl* by Qumī[3] were to become the classic texts in modern Shiʿi literature. Important commentaries on the works of earlier scholars such as *Rīyad al-Masā'il*[4] of Sayyid ʿAlī Tabātabā'ī were written both to satisfy a need for a concise account of Shiʿi *fiqh* and *usūl*, and to elaborate on the points essential for the justification of the Usūlī stand.

The second generation of students on the other hand were trained under Usūlī teachers in the ʿAtabāt 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 ʿAtabāt 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 ʿAtabāt. By despatching their students to various centres in Iran, and by extensive travelling to Iran, during which they maintained a dialogue with the Qājār monarchs, the ruling princes and the urban notables, these ʿulama of high descent continued their fathers' efforts to strengthen the Usūlī positions. Of these, the Tabātabā'īs (Sayyid Muhammad and his brother Sayyid Muhammad Mahdī)[5], Bihbahānīs (Āqā Muhammad ʿAlī and the others)[6] and Najafīs (Shaykh Mūsā and his brothers Shaykh ʿAlī and Shaykh

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1. Biographies of the above mentioned ʿulama appear in most 19th century biographical dictionaries. See for example *Q*. pp.125-98. The full account of Bihbahānī's students appears in *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, pp.208-335 (cf. *Makārim*, I, 231-33) who gives the biography of 31 individuals.

2. *al-Dharīʿa*, XVIII, 45. For the author see *Q*. pp.183, 188-98; *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 1, pp.248-52; *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, pp.246-57. See also below Chapter Five, Section II.

3. *al-Dharīʿa*, XVII, pp.202-3 and *Ṭabaqāt*. II, pp.52-5. For the author see *Q*. 180-3; *Makārim*, III, 911-19; *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, pp.256-265.

4. *Q*. pp.175-80; *RJ*. 414; *Makārim*, III, 901-11; *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, pp.240-6.

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

6. For descendants of Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī see Ibid., pp.356 ff.

Hasan known as Kāshif al-Ghitā')[1] are the most outstanding.

The second group were the Persian ʿulama who often came from humble origins in the towns and villages of central and northern Iran. They began to arrive in the ʿAtabāt in the late 18th century, usually after completing their preliminary studies in religious centres such as Isfahan, Qazvīn, Qum and Mashhad. Their long residence in the ʿAtabāt to study under eminent teachers and acquiring authorisation to exercise *ijtihād* (*ijāzih*), usually acquainted them with certain norms and values, and gave them specific qualities, which were characteristic of all the Usūlī ʿulama 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 ʿAtabāt and achieved high positions. In due course, these ʿulama, both in Iraq and in Iran, trained a larger number of Persian students and established a vast network of Usūlī ʿulama throughout the country. Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī, Hājī Ibrāhīm Karbāsī, Muhammad Taqī and Muhammad Husain Najafī in Isfahan, Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Qazvīnī and the Baraghānī brothers (Mullā Muhammad Sālih, Mullā Muhammad Taqī and Mullā ʿAlī) in Qazvīn, the Narāqīs (Mullā Mahdī, his son Mullā Ahmad and his grandson Mullā Muhammad and others) in Kāshān, Mīrzā Ahmad Mujtahid, Mullā Muhammad Mamaqānī (with Shaykhī leanings) in Tabrīz, Hājī Muhammad Hasan Qazvīnī Shīrāzī, Hājī Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Fasā'ī, Shaykh Husain Nāzim al-Sharīʿa, Hājī Shaykh Mahdī Kujūrī and Mullā Muhammad Mahallātī in Shiraz, Sayyid Javād Shīrāzī in Kirmān, Āqā Muhammad ʿAlī Bihbahānī in Kirmānshāh, Mīrzā Muhammad Zanjānī in Zanjān, Mīrzā Saʿīd Bārfurūshī in Bārfurūsh, Mullā Āqā Darbandī and later Mullā ʿAlī Kanī in Tehran, Sayyid Muhammad Qasīr Razavī (and other Razavīs) in Mashhad are only a few better known examples of a long list of the Usūlī mujtahids who dominated the religious and educational activities in the Iranian cities[2]. Amongst those who remained in the ʿAtabāt, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī in Karbilā' and Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī (Isfahānī) in Najaf reached the position of 'leadership' (*rīyāsat*) towards the middle of the century[3].

The third group of high ranking ʿulama consisted of those mujtahids who had mostly studied in the ʿAtabāt under Usūlī teachers but also held hereditary

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1. For their account see *Q*. pp.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 ʿulama'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 *rīyāsat* in the ʿAtabāt in the 1840's and for references to the above figures see below Chapter Five, Section I.

offices such as *imām jumʿih* and *Shaykh al-Islām*. They retained their traditional positions, some dating from as early as the time of the Ṣafavīds, 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 *Sharʿ* and the official representatives of the ʿulama 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 ʿulama of this group, the Khātūn Ābādī Imām Jumʿihs in Isfahan and later Tehran (Mīr ʿAbd al-Bāqī, 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 ʿulama in Iran[1]. The Shaykh al-Islāms of Isfahan (Hājī Mullā Murtażā)[2], Imam Jumʿihs of Shiraz (Shaykh Muhammad ʿAlī and his son Shaykh Abū Turāb and other brothers)[3], Shaykh al-Islām of Shiraz (Shaykh Abul Qāsim)[4], Shaykh al-Islāms of Tabriz (Mīrzā Muhammad Taqī, his son Mīrzā ʿAlī Asghar and his grandson Abul Qāsim)[5], Imam Jumʿihs of Tabriz (Hājī Mīrzā Muhammad Bāqir and Mīrzā Ahmad)[6], Imam Jumʿihs of Mashhad (Mīrzā Muhammad Mahdī and his brother Hājī Mīrzā-yi ʿAsgarī)[7], and Imam Jumʿihs of Zanjān (Mūsavīs: Mīrzā Abul Qāsim and his family)[8] may also be mentioned as the most influential families of official ʿulama.

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

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1. For Imam Jumʿihs of Isfahan see *Makārim*. II, pp.314-20 (and other individual entries). For relation to Imam Jumʿihs of Tehran see *Makārim*. II, pp.547-9. Also *al-Maʾāthir va al-Āthār* (Tehran, 1306 Q.) pp.141-2. See also below Chapter Six, Section II.
2. *Makārim*. III, pp.820-28.
3. For Imam Jumʿihs of Shiraz see *Fārs Nāmih*. II, pp.61-2; *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 1, pp.28-9.
4. *Fārs Nāmih*. II, pp.27-8.
5. For Shaykh al-Islāms of Tabriz see Nādir Mīrzā, *Tārīkh va Jughrāfī-yi Tabrīz*, Tehran, 1323 Q. pp.222-7; Qāzī, Muḥammad ʿAlī. *Khāndān-i ʿAbd al-Wahhāb*, *Tabaqāt*. II, 1, 57, 209 ; *Makārim*. III, pp.701-3. See also below Chapter Two, Section III.
6. *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 1, pp.77, 168; *al-Maʾāthir va al-Āthār*, op.cit. pp.173-4.
7. *Makārim*. II, pp.399-400; *al-Maʾāthir va al-Āthār*, 156; M.H. Iʿtimād al-Salṭanih, *Maṭlaʿ al-Shams*, 3 vols., Tehran, 1300-3 Q. II, p.397.
8. *al-Maʾāthir va al-Āthār*, 149; *Ṭabaqāt*, I, pp.61-2; *Makārim*. III, pp.780-2. Also Zanjānī Mūsavī, Ibrāhīm, *Tārīkh-i Zanjān, ʿUlamā' va dānishmandān*, Tehran, n.d. 175 ff.

clergy (known as *mullās* and *ākhūnds* 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 *rauẓihkhāns*, *mas'alih-gūs* and other *minbarī* mullas, high and low level *tullab*, teachers of the elementary level (*muʿallims*), *khuddām* and low level *mutavallīs* of shrines, mosques, and madrasihs, 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 ʿulama. 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 Shiʿi ʿulama, 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 ʿulama expressed that of the greater part of the religious community.

Thanks to the Usūlī doctrine of active execution of the religious law, the ʿulama 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 ʿulama 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 ʿulama to venture into the fields of trade, agriculture, money lending and property, often commissioning the same merchants and small landowners as their agents[1]. This gave them a stand far above simple theologians and jurists. Many mujtahids such

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1. See below Chapter Seven, I, the case of the Nahrī brothers in Isfahan and their cooperation with both Shaftī and Sayyid Muḥammad Imām Jumʿih.

as Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī, the Baraghānīs of Qazvīn, the Shaykh al-Islāms of Tabrīz and the Imām Jumʿihs 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 Sunnī religious hierarchy, Āqā Muhammad Bāqir Bihbahānī was acknowledged as the 'Master' (*Ustād-i kull*), the 'Founder' (*Mu'assis*) and the 'Promoter' (*Muravvij*) of the modern Usūlī school[1]. This seems to have been the motive of some Usūlī writers, most of them Bihbahānī'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 Sunnī than in Shiʿi thought[2].

After Bihbahānī 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-ʿUlūm, Bihbahānī's most prominent student and one of the outstanding ʿulama of the late 18th century (1155-1212/1742-97), as the most eminent of the ʿulama of the ʿAtabāt[3], yet from his early death up to the middle of the 1820's for almost two decades, no Shiʿi divine emerged as the prominent leader of the community. This was probably due to the fact that few of Bihbahānī's students such as Sayyid ʿAlī Tabātabā'ī, Shaykh Jaʿfar Najafī and Mīrzā-yi Qūmī 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 Qazvīnī, Shaykh Hasan Kāshif al-Ghitā' and Shaykh

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1. *Q.* pp.198-9 cf. *Makārim.* I, pp.222-3 and *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, pp.152-161 which all give various titles quoted by the contemporary sources.
2. Both Bihbahānī and his student and colleague Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Baḥr al-ʿUlum quoted traditions (apparently from Sunnī sources such as Ibn Athīr) regarding the emergence of centennial *muravvijs* during the period of the Greater Concealment (*Ghaybat-i Kubrā'*), perhaps with some sense of self-attribution. See *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, pp.152-61.
3. For his details see below.

Muhammad Hasan Najafī were considered as the chief religious authorities[1]. In the second half of the 19th century, however, Shaykh Murtażā Ansārī and after him Mīrzā Hasan Shīrāzī emerged as the sole *Marjaʿ-i Taqlīd*, and their authority was acknowledged by the ʿulama of both Arab and Persian origins.

Besides its legal and judicial implications, the emergence of *Marjaʿ* reflected a profound need in the religious community for a spiritual and moral head. Though the Usūlī doctrine equipped the high-ranking ʿulama with the weapon of *ijtihād*, yet in its essence the rationalism propounded in the Usūlī theory largely contradicted the spiritual standing attributed to the *marjaʿs* 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 Āqā Muhammad Bāqir Bihbahānī announced in the Shrine of Husain in Karbilā' that he was 'the Proof of God' (*Hujjat-i Khudā*), he did not mean to proclaim any messianic message heralding the future coming of the Mahdī[2]. What he implied was the superiority of his 'rationalist' approach over the 'traditionalist' creed. This is further evident when he continues by denouncing Shaykh Yūsuf Bahrānī and demanding a place in his pulpit and requiring Bahrānī's students to attend his lectures[3]. 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 Usūlīsm would allow the spiritual guidance of the Imam to be manifested in general 'deputyship' (*nīyābat*) of the mujtahids. In one of his sermons, Bihbahānī 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[4].

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1. See below Chapters Five, I & II, and Six, II & III for discussion on some of the above-mentioned ʿulama.
2. Shaykh ʿAbdallāh Mamaqānī, *Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl* cited in *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, pp.144-5.
3. Ibid.
4. Shaykh ʿAlī Akbar Nahāvandī, *Khazīnat al-Jawāhir* (citing a certain *Maʿdan al-Asrār*) quoted in *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, pp.166-68.

But if there was a strong emphasis on arriving at conclusions by way of deductive reasoning, this very concept of *niyābat-i ʿāmm* (general deputyship), as it was assigned to the mujtahids, was not free from elements of non-rationality from which Usūlism, at least in practice, could not escape. Judgements (*ahkām*) were not only achieved by mere rational 'effort' (*jahd*), 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 maʿsūm*). This latter concept was an Akhbārī legacy which had some precedent in the Shiʿi scholars of the past, ranging from Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn ʿĀmilī and Mullā Muhsin Fiyż 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 ʿulama towards the Usūlī 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 Shiʿi orthodoxy, amongst some ʿulama, chiefly to compensate for the widening gap which had been produced by the growth of Usūlī rationalism. These 'intuitive' experiences, though at first glance they seem to fall strictly within the lawful framework of *Sharʿ*, 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 *usūl*, first appear in Sayyid Mahdī Bahr al ʿUlūm whose efforts in bringing together the two aspects of *kashf* and *ʿaql* made him distinct amongst the early Usūlī scholars[1]. If his association with Bihbahānī qualified him as one of the pillars of the Usūlī school, his former tutelage under Akhbārīs, or his affiliation with Majlisī's school of *hadīth* and studies of *hikmat* and mysticism under Āqā Abul Qāsim Mudarris Khātūnābādī and Qutb al-Dīn Nayrīzī resulted in his acquaintance with less orthodox subjects[2]. 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 Niʿmatallāhī adept Nūr ʿAlī Shāh[3] in Karbilā' did really arouse any positive

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1. For Bahr al-ʿUlūm see *RJ*. p.648-9; *Q*. pp.168-74; *Makārim*. II, pp.414-29 (and the sources cited in ibid. 415) and *Vahīd-i Bihbahānī*, pp.212-236.

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 *Sharh Risāla Sayr va Sulūk* of Sayyid ibn Tāwūs in which Bahr al-ʿUlūm is reported to have given his spiritual ancestry. For his alleged Sufi training see *Tarā'iq*. III, pp.217, 339.

3. For his details see below Chapter Two, Section I.

response towards Sufism. *Tarā'iq al-Haqā'iq* reports that during Nūr ʿAlī's stay in the ʿAtabāt, his popular preachings moved his enemies to seek the opinion of Bahr al-ʿUlūm, who in response interviewed Nūr ʿAlī and as a result became profoundly impressed by his character[1]. However, his sympathetic attitude towards the Niʿmatallāhīs should not be exaggerated since in a brief *fatvā* which he issued in reply to Āqā Muhammad ʿAlī Bihbahānī on the question of the Niʿmatallāhīs' 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'[2]. The problem of Bahr al-ʿUlūm's Sufi affiliation became even more enigmatic when towards the end of the century a sub-branch of Niʿmatallāhīs claimed a chain of spiritual descendancy through Bahr al-ʿUlūm from Nūr ʿAlī Shāh[3].

However, if his sympathetic attitude towards Sufis may be in doubt, there is evidence which supports his preoccupation with mystical experiences. *Qisas al-ʿUlamā'* refers to 'frequent retirements' (*iʿtikāf*) and 'acts of devotion' in the mosques of Sahlah and Kufah[4]. On a few occasions the author referred to 'concealed secrets' (*khafāyā-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 zāhirīyah)* in the affairs of *Sharʿ*'[5]. These alleged visits, and other 'supernatural feats' (*karāmāt*), gave Bahr al-ʿUlūm a status above other jurists and made some sources even suggest some similarities between him and the Imam of the Age[6]. One chronogram composed on his demise reads 'Mahdī of the Lord of the Age has passed away' (*Mahdī-yi sāhib zamān zi ʿĀlam raft* = 1212 Q.)[7].

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1. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.199-200. In reply to Bahr al-ʿUlūm's enquiry on the reason for assuming the title *Shāh*, Nūr ʿAlī 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 Niʿmatallāhī's claims).
2. Burqiʿī, Abul Faẓl, *Haqīqat al-ʿIrfān*, Tehran, n.d., 161.
3. Parvīzī, S. *Tadhkirat al-Awlīyā'*, Tabriz, 1333 Sh. 88.
4. *Q*. pp.169, 171-4.
5. Ibid. 173.
6. Mīrzā Ḥusain Ṭabarsī Nūrī, *Dār al-Salām fī mā yuṭlaqa biʾl ruʾyā wa al-manām*, 2 vols., Tehran, 1306 Q., II, p.391 (citing Faẓil-i Hindī), cf. *RJ*. 680.
7. *Makārim*. II, 427.

Many students, including some of the most prominent mujtahids of the next generation, recognised Bahr al-ʿUlūm as the sole successor of Bihbahānī and thus considered it as an honour to have been among his students[1]. However, few of them seem to bear the stamp of his intuitive approach. ʿAbd al-Samad Hamadānī was later converted to the Niʿmatallāhī order[2] whereas Mīrzā Muhammad Akhbārī and Shaykh Ahmad Ahsā'ī, while remaining in the ranks of the ʿulama, 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, Mīrzā Muhammad Akhbārī (1178-1232/1764-1816), a theologian of great calibre and chief advocate of later Akhbārism, went far beyond the mild asceticism of his teacher Bahr al-ʿUlūm[3]. A strong reaction against the prevalence of Usūlism, and efforts to reintroduce a 'militant' version of Akhbārī thought which was considerably different to the moderate views of his intellectual predecessor Shaykh Yūsuf Bahrānī, turned Mīrzā Muhammad into a dangerous enemy for the high-ranking ʿulama. His challenge to them, perhaps, was the most important after the setback of the Niʿmatallahis about a decade earlier at the turn of the 19th century[4]. In his writings, as in his frequent public debates with the prominent mujtahids of his time, he sharply criticised the position of the Usūlis on *ijtihād*, and their methodology and excessive use of logical arguments[5]. But perhaps what offended the ʿulama most were his direct attacks on three arch defenders of Usūlism. He criticised Mīrzā Abul Qāsim Qumī and his disciples, whom he nicknamed *Baqāsima*, for their domination of religious circles while Sayyid ʿAlī Tabatabā'ī and his adherents, whom he called *Azāriqa*,[6] were attacked for their innovations in the field of *fiqh* and their deviations from the lawful framework of traditions. In his debates with Shaykh Jaʿfar Najafī, his skill

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1. For the list of his students see *Makārim*. II, pp.423-5.
2. *Tarā'iq*. III, pp.211-13 and *Makārim*. II, pp.600-10. Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī was one of ʿAbd al-Ṣamad's disciples.
3. For his account see *RJ*. pp.653-4 (using Mīrzā Muḥammad's own biographical account in *Ṣaḥīfat al-Ṣafā*) and *Makārim*. III, 925-44.
4. See below Chapter Two.
5. *RJ*. 518.
6. This sarcastic title may have been given to Ṭabāṭabā'ī by allusion to the original Azāriqa, one of the main branches of Khārijites 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 (*mushrik*). ʿAbd al-Qāhir Baghdādī *al-Farq Bayn al-Firaq* translated into Persian by M.J. Mashkūr *Tārīkh-i Mazāhib-i Islām*, Tabriz, 1333 Sh., pp.75-80; *EI*^{2} AZARIḲA (by R. Rubinacci).

in *jadal* (logical disputation) many times silenced the old mujtahid[1].

In many ways Mīrzā Muhammad Akhbārī should not be regarded as an Akhbārī in the traditional definition only because he rejected any dispute in the authenticity of the traditions by means of deductive reasoning. Of course Akhbārīsm provided some room for intuitive approach but his ideas and behaviour suggested a more 'heterodox' approach than that of theoretical 'intuition' (*Kashf*) of the Akhbārīs of the past generation. Preoccupation with 'hidden sciences' (*ʿulūm-i khafīyyah*) gave Mīrzā Muhammad the reputation of an eccentric scholar with supernatural powers. His bargain with Fath 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 ʿulama[2]. He also produced a number of works on the subject of the occult, of which *Anmuzaj al-Murtādīn* is an example[3]. 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 Ahsā'ī, was known for his 'universality' (*jāmiʿīyat*)[4].

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 Usūlīs, he considered the 'Gate of Knowledge' (*Bāb-i ʿIlm*) open only to those who can grasp the presence of the Imam by their intuitive experience[5]. 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- dissimilar from those of the contemporary Sufis or scholars such as Ahsā'ī and Sayyid Jaʿfar Kashfī[6]. In his poetry, with reference to a certain tradition ascribed to ʿAlī, he states: 'In the year

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1. *Q*. pp.177-8.
2. The full account given by *NT*. I, 143-5 cf. *Q*. 179.
3. Both books cited in the list of his works in *RJ*. 653 cf. *al-Dharīʿa*. VIII, 267.
4. A list of 58 works appears in *Makārim*. III, 935-40. The term *jāmiʿīyat* 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-Sīyāha* (Tehran, 1315 Q. 611) who claims that Akhbārī 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 *Naqthat al-Sudūr* Mirza Muhammad devoted some parts to the refutation of the Sufis (*Makārim*. III, 940).

ghars (غرس = with the numerical value of 1260) the earth shall be illumined by his light, and in *gharasa* (غرسه = 1265) the world shall be suffused with his glory. If thou livest until the year *gharsī* (غرسی = 1270), thou shalt witness how the nations, the rulers, the people, and the Faith of the God shall all have been renewed'[1]. Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad the Bab also seems to have been familiar with Mīrzā Muhammad's speculations, since he wrote a commentary on *al-Burhān* in which he criticised some of the author's views[2]. In *Dalā'il-i Sabʿah*, the Bab refers to Mīrzā Muhammad as one of those who forecast his imminent 'manifestation'. He quotes a certain Sayyid ʿAbd al-Husain Shūshtarī who had once met Mīrzā 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 ʿAbd 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 ʿulama', Shaykh Musā Najafī (son of Jaʿfar), in full accord with the other prominent ʿulama of the ʿAtabāt, issued a *fatvā* 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 *fatvā* was signed by all the others and Mīrzā Muhammad was killed by the mob in Kazimayn[4]. Shīrvānī states that he had even forecast his own death in a chronogram: '*saddūq ghuliba*' = 1232 Q. (the truthful was overcome)[5].

However, if the anti-Uṣūlī stand adopted by Mīrzā 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, Āqā Muhammad Bīdābādī (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

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1. *Nabīl*. pp.49-50.
2. *al-Dharīʿa*, XVIII, 114. To this criticism one of Mīrzā Muḥammad's disciples, a certain Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir Rashtī, wrote a reply with the title *al-Kalimāt al-Ḥaqqānīya*.
3. Published text, Tehran (?) n.d., pp.59-60.
4. Sayyid ʿAbdallāh Thiqat al-Islām, *Luʾlu' al-Ṣadaf dar Tārīkh-i Najaf*, Isfahan, 1379 Q., pp.134-5.
5. *Bustān al-Sīyaḥa* op.cit. 610 cf. *NT*. I, 83.

popular especially amongst the Sufis[1]. Though his alleged adherence to Qutb al-Dīn Nayrīzī cannot be proved beyond a certain point[2], his attachment to mysticism is apparent from his mystical aphorisms and sermons[3].

Another scholar, Sayyid Jaʿfar Dārābī (1189-1267/1775-1850) also claimed a similar intuitive knowledge, for which he is known as *Kashfī*[4]. He was related to a celebrated family of Bahrainī ʿulama and was the grandson of Shaykh Husain Āl-ʿUsfūr, a great Akhbārī scholar who himself was the nephew of Shaykh Yūsuf Bahrānī[5]. Shaykh Husain was a key figure in the diffusion of the Bahrainī school of thought both in the ʿAtabāt and in Southern Iran, and it is not unlikely that his views influenced Dārābī. When Kashfī 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 Akhbārī view[6]. 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. Kashfī particularly pointed out that whoever conducts this prayer 'is ambitious for *rīyāsa* and is a usurper of the right position of the venerable Imam'[7].

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)[8] who appears to have had strong Usūlī ties. He claimed to be the most knowledgeable of all the ʿulama (*aʿlam*) mainly on the ground that 'the door of the divine knowledge' was not closed on him. He was known for his revelations (*mukāshafāt*), his devotions and other qualities which are usually attributed to such figures.

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1. For his biography see *Makārim*. I, pp.66-70; *Ṭarā'iq*, III, pp.214-15; Muḥammad Hāshim Āṣif (Rustam al-Ḥukamā') *Rustam al-Tawārīkh* edited by M. Mushīrī, Tehran, 1348 Sh., pp.405-8 and ʿAbd al-Karīm Jazī, *Rijāl-i Iṣfahān yā Tadhkirat al-Qubūr*, edited by M. Mahdavī, 2nd edition, Isfahan (?) 1328 Sh., pp.79-81.
2. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.215-19.
3. *Tadhkirat al-Qubūr*, op.cit., 81.
4. For a further discussion on Kashfī see below Chapter Nine, III.
5. For Shaykh Husain, his relationship with Shaykh Yūsuf and with Kashfī, and for the Āl ʿUsfūr see *Fārs Nāmih*. II, 236; *Makārim*. II, pp.569-73 (and cited sources) and *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 1, pp.427-9.
6. Sayyid Jaʿfar Kashfī, *Kifāyat al-Ītām fī Maʿārif al-Aḥkām*, cited in *Makārim*. V, 1856.
7. Ibid.
8. For his account see *al-Maʾāthir va al-Āthār*, op.cit. 140 and *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 1, 128.

He claimed that these merits came to him as a result of a *tauqīʿ* (tablet) which was addressed to him from the Concealed Imam[1]. But nevertheless, in spite of occasional manifestations of an intuitive method, the remnants of Akhbārīsm or offshoots of this school, largely lacked the necessary impulse to leave a permanent mark. The general current of Usūlī 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 Ahsā'ī (1166-1241/1752-1825) and his visionary theophany, Shiʿi 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-Safavīd Shiʿism; the theosophic school of Isfahan (*hikmat-i ilāhī*), which itself benefited from the theoretical Sufism of Ibn ʿArabī and the 'Oriental' theosophy (*hikmat-i Ishrāq*) of Suhravardī, the Akhbārī 'traditionalist' school of Bahrain which traced its chain of transmission to the early narrators of *hadīth* mostly by the way of 'intuitive' perception and the Gnosticism which was diffused in the Shiʿi milieu and was strongly influenced by crypto-Ismāʿīlī ideas as well as other heterodoxies of southern and southwestern Iran. However, this syncretism, the zenith of the late 18th century Shiʿi 'universality' (*jāmʿīyat*) 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 '*integrisme*' (in the original sense of the word)[2], and Shaykh Ahmad himself refers to it as 'Perfect Shiʿism' (*Shiʿa al-Kāmil*). Though in the past such a theme was long pursued in Islamic intellectual history; from the Ismāʿīlī *ta'vīl* of Nāsir Khusrau and others, to

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1. *al-Ma'āthir*, op.cit.
2. Corbin, H. *L'École Shaykhie en Théologie Shiʿite* (Extrait de *L'Annuaire de l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes Section des Science Religieuses 1960-61*), Tehran, 1967, 3.

the 'Oriental' theosophy of Shaykh-i Ishrāq (i.e. Suhravardī), the theology of Rajab Bursī and Ibn Abī Jumhūr Ahsā'ī and later in the Safavīd period in the mysticism of Sayyid Haydar Āmulī and in the theosophy of Mullā Sadrā, ʿAbd al-Razzāq Lahījī and to some extent Bahā' al-Dīn ʿĀmilī and Fayż Kāshānī, yet all in all Ahsā'ī's contribution, in some respects, is new compared to his predecessors.

A comprehensive survey of Shaykhism, from the theoretical and historical point of view, is beyond the capacity of this study. Though some aspects of Ahsā'ī's have been investigated, many areas remain to be fully covered[1]. 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. Ahsā'ī's challenge in two major areas, namely the problem of spiritual authority, and the esoteric interpretation of Resurrection (*Maʿād*), posed a threat to the doctrine of the majority. As was previously the case with the early Niʿmatallāhīs and then with Mīrzā Muhammad Akhbārī, attempts were made to confront this threat by the isolation of Shaykhism almost to the point of total denunciation. Nevertheless this was a formidable challenge, since Shaykhism was equally at home with Shiʿi traditions and with philosophical argumentations. Ahsā'ī puts forward a concept of transmission which relied on the Akhbārī school without being totally committed to its fundamentalism. He asserted his propositions on the basis of his intuitions whereas the *fuqahā'* endeavoured to base their conclusions on *usūl al-fiqh*.

During his elementary education in his homeland, al-Ahsā', Shaykh Ahmad may

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1. On the theoretical aspects of Shaykhism see Corbin, H. *L'École Shaykhie*, op.cit., idem, *Terre Céleste et Corps de Résurrection*, Paris, 1960, pp. 99-174, English translation *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* by N. Pearson, Princeton, 1977, pp.51-105; idem, *En Islam iranien*, op.cit. IV, livre VI, pp.205-300. Also Nicolas, A.L.M., *Essai sur le Chéïkhisme*, III, *La Doctrine*, (extract from *Revue du Monde Musulman*) Paris, 1911, IV., *La Science de Dieu*, Paris, 1911; *TN*. II, pp.234-244; *NK*. (Persian introduction, pp. ـه-ل , English introduction, pp.XX-XXIII. For the treatment of the Shaykhi doctrine by the later Shaykhi writers see the wide range of works catalogued in *Fihrist*. II, pp.360-653. Of these the most comprehensive are Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Irshād al-ʿAwām*, 5th ed., 4 vols., Kirmān, 1353-55 Sh.; idem, *Ṭarīq al-Najāt*, 2nd edition, Kirmān, 1355 Sh.; Ḥājī Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī, *Yanābīʿ al-Ḥikma*, 3 vols., Kirmān, 1383-1396 Q; Abul Qāsim Khān Ibrāhīmī Kirmānī, *Tanzīh al-Awlīyā'*, Kirmān, 1367 Q. For a non-Shaykhi point of view see Ismāʿīl Ṭabarsī Nūrī, *Kifāyat al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, 3 vols., Tehran, n.d. I.

have been exposed to some local trends in the area[1]. Though Corbin tends to believe that he was an *uvaysī*, and had no formal training except a '*supra-sensible* (invisible) guide' (*Shaykh al-ghayba, ustād-i ghaybī*)[2], 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-ʿUlamā'* can be relied upon, Shaykh Aḥmad seems to have had access to the remnants of Ibn Abī Jumhūr Aḥsā'ī's library. By delving into his books, Tunikābunī implies that Shaykh Aḥmad found many points in common with Abī Jumhūr[3]. Indeed considering the care and attention paid by the local scholars in preserving their precious collections[4], it is not impossible that some of the texts had survived for a few centuries up to Shaykh Aḥmad's time. The fact that Shaykh Aḥmad's views on many subjects resemble those of Abī Jumhūr also supports a possible link[5], a link which throws light on the origins of his thoughts.

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

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1. Sources on the life of Shaykh Aḥmad are not rare. Besides his short autobiography (cited in *Fihrist*. I, pp.132-43), which is particularly interesting because of his own account of his dreams and spiritual experiences, some other biographies were also written by Shaykhi writers. Shaykh ʿAbdallāh ibn Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī wrote an account of his father's life; *Risālih-i Sharḥ-i Aḥvāl-i Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-Din Aḥsā'ī*, (Persian translation by Muḥammad Ṭāhir Kirmānī) 2nd. edition, Kirmān, 1387 Q. Also Āqā Sayyid Hādī Hindī, *Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn wa Surūr al-Nāẓirīn* and ʿAlī Naqī Qumī (Hindī), *Nūr al-Anwār*. More scattered references are to be found in Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, *Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn*, Kirmān, n.d., (Persian translation by Muḥammad Riża, 1261 Q., Tehran, n.d.) and Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Hidāyat al-Ṭālibīn*, 2nd edition, Kirmān, 1380 Q. Of Shiʿi biographers, *RJ*. 25-6, 285-6 and *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 337-9 gave the most impartial accounts whereas *Q*. pp.34-43 gives a distorted view. *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 88-91, *Makārim*. IV, cites new sources. In the Babi and Bāhā'ī sources, *NK*. (pp.99-100); *Nabil*. pp.1-18 and *MJQ*. (pp.447-57) provide some additional information. Corbin, H. *L'École Shaykhie*, op.cit. pp.9-24 and *Nicolas* A.L.M., *Essai sur le Chéikisme* I: *Cheïkh Ahmed Lahçahi* (Paris, 1910) also give accounts of his life.

2. *L'École Shaykhie*, op.cit. 12. 3. *Q*. 35.

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

5. For Ibn Abī Jumhūr see W. Madelung, 'Ibn Abī Gumhūr al-Ahsā'ī's synthesis of *Kalām*, philosophy and Sufism' in *Acts du 8me Congres de L'Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants*, Aix-en-Provence, 1978, pp.147-56 and the cited sources. Also *RJ*. pp.595-98 and Mīrzā Ḥusain Ṭabarsī Nūrī *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, 3 vols., Tehran, 1321 Q. III, (*Khātama)*, pp.361-65.

theological trends or even the circulation of religious and philosophical texts in a remote area like al-Ahsā' possible[1]. Yet in spite of these early influences, Shaykh Abmad's son, in a biographical account of his father, states that in al-Ahsā' besides the majority of the Sunnī population who had Sufi tendencies, the remaining Ithnā ʿAsharī ʿulama were dominated by dogmatic literalists (*ʿulamā-yi zāhirī-yi qishrī*), '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 ʿAtabāt 'in the hope of finding someone who could sympathise with his views'[2]. But in the ʿAtabāt his attendance at the lectures of Usūlīs such as Bihbahānī, Sayyid ʿAlī Tabātabā'ī and possibly Shaykh Jaʿfar Najafī, or his acquiring further *ijāzāt* from Akhbārīs such as Shaykh Husain Āl ʿUsfūr 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-ʿUlūm[3]. This approach especially appealed to Ahsā'ī who had earlier experienced revelatory dreams and and visions in which he claimed to have contacted the holy Imams and even received instructions from them[4]. 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[5].

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 Ahsā'ī and a few of his contemporaries such as Mīrzā Muhammad Akhbārī and Sayyid Jaʿfar Kashfī, 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

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1. The autobiographical accounts of Sayyid Niʿmatallāh Jazāyirī (cited in his *Anwār al-Naʿmānīya* and quoted in *Q.* pp.437-53) and that of Shaykh Yūsuf Baḥrānī (*Q.* pp.271-5) together with accounts of many other Baḥrainī ʿulama, are examples of these cultural contacts.

2. *Sharh-i Aḥwāl*, op.cit. pp.17-18.

3. For his list of *ijāzāt* see *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 1, p.91 cf. *Fihrist*. II, pp.162-3. Nearly all sources agree on the point that Shaykh Aḥmad studied under Baḥr al-ʿUlūm.

4. For recollection of his dreams and experiences in childhood see his auto-biography in *Fihrist*. I, pp.136-42.

5. See below Chapter Three, III for comparison with the Bab's experiences in childhood.

process[1]. Here, an esoteric interpretation of the unravelled 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, Aḥsā'ī 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 *Hūrqalyā* which is a purifying stage through which all beings must pass before being finally judged on the Day of Resurrection. This visionary world of *Hūrqalyā*, 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'[2]. 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[3]. The elemental corpse (*jasad al-ʿunṣurī*) 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-bāṭinī*), the celestial or astral body (*jism al-bāṭinī*) and the essential body (*jism al-aṣlī al-haqīqī*) ascends to the world of *Hūrqalyā*. 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 (*ʿamal-i kīmīyā*) and spiritual perfection appears for example in Aḥsā'ī's *Risāla al-Khāqānīya* in *Jāwamiʿ al-Kalim* (Collection of his tracts and treatises) 2 vols., Tabrīz, 1273-6 Q., II, Part 1, pp.122-4 and idem, *Sharh Kitāb al-Ḥikmat al-ʿArshīya* (of Mullā Ṣadrā), Tabrīz, 1278 Q., pp.165-6, 331-2. Also frequent references to the use of the hidden sciences and *hurūf* in his works appear in *Fihrist*. II, pp.227 (no.18 and 19), 229 (no.27), 255 (no.100, *Risāla al-Tubilīya*).

2. Aḥsā'ī, H. *Risāla* in Reply to Mullā Muḥammad Anārī in *Jawāmiʿ al-Kalim*, I, 3, pp.153-4 translation cited in *Terre Céleste*, op.cit. 297, English trans. p.193.

3. *Terre Céleste* op.cit. 146-64 and extracts from Aḥsā'ī, *Sharh al-Ziyāra al-Jāmʿia al-Kabīra*, (2 vols., Tabriz, 1276 Q., 4th edition, Kirmān, 1355 Sh., 4 vols.) cited in *Terre Céleste*, op.cit. pp.281-92 (English trans. pp.180-9).

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 Jaʿfar Ṣādiq "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 *Hūrqalyā* 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 Ishrāq who uses the term *Hūrqalyā* to describe the location of his intuitive experience, but he considers the celestial earth of *Hūrqalyā* as the earth of *Malakūt*[4]. Shaykh Ahmad himself acknowledged that he adopted the Syriac term *Hūrqalyā* from the Sabeans (Mandeans) of Basra[5]. In fact as Corbin points out, Shaykh Ahmad's concept of *Hūrqalyā* corresponds in its essence to the world of Doubles or celestial Images, *Mshunia Kushta* in Mandean cosmology[6]. More significantly the traces of Shiʿi thinkers and theosophists may also be observed in Ahsā'ī with greater clarity. The presence of mystical revelation (*Kashf*) and illumination (*ishrāq*), or the intermediary world of

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1. The *Qurān*, IV, 59.
2. Reply to Anārī, op.cit. I, 3, 154 cited in *Terre Céleste*, 299 (English translation, p.195).
3. *Terre Céleste*, pp.148-51 (English trans. pp.92-5). See also Dionysius the Areopagite *The Divine Names and the Mystical Theology* translated by C.E. Rolt, London 1940.
4. Ibid. pp.189-212 (English trans. pp.118-34) citing extracts from Suhravardī's works on the subject of *Hūrqalyā*.
5. Reply to Anārī, op.cit. I, 3, 153 cited in *Terre Céleste*, 259, (191-2).
6. Ibid. 161-3 (English trans. 102-4).

immortal images (*ʿālam-i mithāl*) together with a mystical interpretation of Shiʿi 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 incorporal shape and enjoy its pleasures, or it will be returned to the earth in the bodies of lowly animals in order to suffer punishment'[1]. The concept of reincarnation, as it appears in Abī Jumhūr is foreign to Shaykh Ahmad but on the point of the 'minor resurrection' (*al-qiyāmat 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'[2].

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 Shiʿi eschatological thinking, hence laying the theoretical foundation of a new trend of millenarianism. First by esoteric interpretation of the Qurānic verses or the Shiʿi traditions, Shaykh Ahmad redefined the concept of Resurrection contrary to the veiw held by the orthodox 'literalists'. The survival of the 'spiritual being' (*jasad al-bāṭinī* plus *jism al-haqīqī*) in the world of *Hūrqalyā*, removes the problem of corporal resurrection from the earthly grave, the concept known as *muʿād jismānī*. 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 *Hūrqalyā*, will be resurrected and recast in a new but still identical elemental corpse.

In his commentary on *Hikmat al-ʿArshīya* 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

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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 conubstantial 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 Ṣād, situated below the Throne, comes down and rains over the surface of the Earth. Then the spiritual body, made of the Elements of *Hūrqalyā* 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 *Jābalqā* and *Jābarsā*' writes Shaykh Ahmad, 'we mean the lower regions of this intermediate world. *Jābalqā* is the city of the East, that is, in the direction of the beginning. *Jābarsā* 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 *Hūrqalyā* can be experienced. This idea of a subtle, visionary state rescues the Concealed Imam from the obscure and inaccessible masses of confused Shiʿi 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 Ahsā'ī 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 *Qurʾān*, 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' (*ʿIlm hudūrī*) would lead the seeking man to the Hidden Imam. *Hūrqalyā* 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-ʿard*) enables man to grasp a static understanding of elemental creation, the 'longitudinal dimension' (*silsilat al-tūl*) transcends him to the state of *Hūrqalyā* where he would attend the presence of the Imam[1].

By introducing this 'longitudinal dimension' in which the the past is 'under our feet' and not behind us, Aḥsā'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 Ismāʿīlīsm and Sufism pondered the necessity of this 'invisible' guide in the course of man's historical perfection. The 'Perfect Shiʿi' (*Shīʿa al-Kāmil*) or *Nātiq Vāhid* in Shaykhism implies the same characteristics of *Nātiq* and *Insān-i Kāmil*[2]. After the first three principles of the 'unity of God' (*Tauhīd*), prophethood (*Nabuvvat*) and recognition of the *Imāmat*, the principal of *Vilāyat* (which is defined as the perfect Shiʿi) becomes the 'Fourth Pillar' (*Rukn al-Rābiʿ*) of the Shaykhi doctrine. Henceforth the Perfect Shiʿi is the same 'Gate' (*Bāb*) or Deputy (*Nā'ib*) who in the state of revelatory meditation

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1. *L'École Shaykhie*, op.cit., p.15. Also frequent descriptions of these concepts in Aḥsā'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 ʿAzīz al-Dīn Nasafī, *Kitāb al-Insān al-Kāmil*, edited by M. Molé, Tehran, 1962, pp.4-8 and *EI*^{2}, al-INSĀN al-KĀMIL (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[1].

These three aspects of Shaykh Aḥmad's thought, the redefinition of the Resurrection, the location of the Imam in the intermediary world of *Hūrqalyā* and the encounter between the Imam and the Perfect Shiʿi 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 Aḥmad 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 Aḥsā'ī in relation to the Ithnā ʿAsharī eschatology deserves further attention.

The Shiʿi literature on the subject of *Ghaybat* from the time of early scholars such as Shaykh Ṭūsī, Shaykh Mufīd, Murtażā ʿAlam al-Hudā, Shaykh Ṣadūq up to the time of Sayyid Dildār Hindī, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī and Sayyid Asadallāh Shaftī in the mid 19th century[2], 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 Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī to *Arkān al- Arbaʿa* and *Rukn al-Rābiʿ* (e.g. *Sharḥ al-Ziyāra*, op.cit. 4th ed., I, pp.397-400; *Fihrist*. I, pp.75-9, two letters by Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī. On *Ṣāmit* and *Nāṭiq*; *Sharḥ al-Ziyāra*, 4th ed., III, 150-51 and two letters by Rashtī, *Fihrist*. I, pp.342-8), yet it is important to notice that both writers in most of their general works (Aḥsā'ī, *Hayāt al-Nafs*, Wadham collection MS. no.282, Persian trans. by S.K. Rashtī, 2nd ed. Kirmān, n.d.; and Rashtī, Sayyid Kāẓim *Risālih-yi Fārsī dar Uṣūl-i ʿAqāyid*, *INBA*. no.4, I), compiled with the general categorisation of the Principles of Religion. However, Rashtī himself emphasises (*Uṣūl-i ʿAqāyid*, p.41) that although 'Divine Justice' (*ʿAdl*) is one of the affirmative attributes (*ṣifāt-i subūtīyih*) 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 (*Qatīl*. p.513) but the main emphasis is Kirmānī Shaykhis. In *Fihrist*. (pp.79-112) Ibrāhīmī discusses the later Shaykhi opinion of the 'Fourth Pillar' and *Vaḥdat-i Nāṭiq*. He noticeably tries to reconcile the Shaykhi concept of *Nāṭiq* and the 'Fourth Pillar' with the conventional notion of leadership in orthodox Shiʿi theory. See also Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Risālih-yi Rukn-i Rābiʿ*, Kirmān, 1368 Q. See also below Chapter Four, Section I.

2. *al-Dharīʿa*, lists forty works under *Kitāb al-Ghayba* (XVI, pp.74-84) and under *Kitāb al-Rijʿa*, (X, pp.161-3). Also see Mīrzā Ḥusain Ṭabarsī Nūrī, *al-Najm al-Thāqib dar Aḥvāl-i Imām-i Ghā'ib* (Tehran, n.d.) and especially the list of forty Shiʿi works on the subject (pp.4-5). Murtażā Mudarrisī Chāhārdihī, in *Tārīkh-i Ravābit-i Īrān va ʿIrāq* (Tehran, 1351 Sh., pp.334-7 also lists 21 works by Shiʿi scholars and 16 by Sunni writers on the subject of the Twelfth Imam. For Sunnī sources on the Mahdī see bibliographical list in *Yādnāmih-yi ʿAllāmah Amīnī*, edited by S.J. Shahīdī and M.R. Ḥakīmī, I, Tehran, 1353 Sh., pp.519-20 and Khurāsānī, H. *Maktab-i Tashayyuʿ* (Tehran, 1341 Sh.) p.183, n.1. For a concise survey of the Ithnā ʿAsharī view on *Ghaybat* and *Maʿād* see *Kifāyat al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, 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' (*Nuvvāb Arbaʿa*) 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 *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 *Ghaybat* or *Rijʿat* in no way encouraged any sincere expectation for the advent of the Qā'im. On the contrary, they implied greatest theoretical obstacles to the materialisation of any of the prophecies which were the very basis of the Ithnā ʿAsharī 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 Ahsā'ī and his successor Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī 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 *Sharh al-Ziyāra* Ahsā'ī devotes a whole section to the question of *Rijʿat* and the appearance of the Qā'im, entirely on the basis of traditions cited in the works of the previous

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1. See for example Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn*, Tehran, n.d. pp.185-212.

2. For some of these experiences and encounters with the Imam, see Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī *Biḥār al-Anwār* 1st ed. 25 vols., Tehran, 1301-15 Q., XIII, 6 (23-5) 17-24: Persian trans. Tehran, 1397 Q., pp.74-84, 119-398.

3. For prohibitions on setting a date see *Biḥār al-Anwār*, XIII, 3 : Persian trans. pp.26-7, 406-23.

4. For example *Risāla* on prohibition of naming Sāḥib al-Zamān by Shaykh Sulaymān Baḥrānī 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[1]. In his more popular works such as *Hayāt al-Nafs*[2], or a treatise in response to Muhammad ʿAlī Mīrzā[3], dealing with the question of 'Resurrection' and 'Return', Aḥsā'ī cites traditions common to all Shiʿi books of Return almost without any further elaboration on the symbolic meaning of the apocalyptic 'Signs' (*ʿAlāmāt*). The same approach may also be observed in the works of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī[4]. Aḥsā'ī'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 Baḥrānī in which he denounced a claimant who declared himself to be the deputy of the Imam of the Age (*vakīl-i Imām-i Zamān*)[5].

The ostensible contradiction between Shaykh Aḥmad'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. Aḥsā'ī'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[6].

In a Persian *risālih* in reply to Muḥammad Riżā Mīrzā on the question of 'Resurrection', Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī acknowledges these intellectual limits when in the introduction of the treatise he maintains that:

> 'elaboration on the secrets of the subject of *Maʿād*, would lead us to raise various matters which are not appropriate to our time, since the people of this age (*abnā-yi zamānih*)

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1. Op.cit. 4th ed., III, pp.54-121.
2. Op.cit. MS. folio 30a-40a; Pers. trans. pp.85-120.
3. *al- Isma'wa al-Rijʿa* in *Jawāmiʿ al-Kalim*, op.cit. Also cited in *Fihrist*. II, 242.
4. *Uṣūl-i ʿAqāyid*, 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-Mūsawīya* in *Jawāmiʿ al-Kalim*, op.cit., I, also cited in *Fihrist*. II, 244.
6. For example in *Risāla Ḥamlīya*, in *Jawāmiʿ al-Kalim*, op.cit. Also in *Fihrist*. II, 246.

> cannot tolerate them, and this would accelerate their denial, as our lord Ṣādiq, 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 Shiʿis (*khavāṣ-i Shīʿa*) constantly covered the delicate details of this subject under the cloak of "outward expressions" (*ʿibārāt-i ẓāhirīyih*) so that the secret gem would be safely protected from the encroachments of the ignorants'[1].

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 Ahsā'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[2]. In another instance he quoted a tradition in which, regarding the appearance of the Qa'im, Imam Jaʿfar Sādiq is reported to have said; 'His cause will appear and his name will arise in the year sixty (*yazhuru fī sana al-sittīn amruhu wa yaʿlū dhikruhū*. يَظْهَرُ فِي سَنَةِ السِّتِّينَ أَمْرُهُ وَيَعْلُو ذِكْرُهُ)[3].

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

> 'Regarding the possibilities (of *Ẓuhūr*?) 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 favourable. "You shall surely have news of it after a while". (وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ نَبَأَهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ)'[4].

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1. *Risālih* in reply to questions on *Maʿād*. *INBA*. no.4, II, pp.216-63 (220-1).
2. *Fā'ida* in request of Shaykh Mūsā Baḥrānī in *Jawāmiʿ al-Kalim* (*Fihrist*. II, pp.242-3).
3. *Qatīl*. (Z. 513) cited a certain *Kitāb al-Rijʿa* by Aḥsā'ī, possibly the *Risāla* in reply to Sayyid Ḥusain on the question of *Rijʿat* in *Jawāmiʿ al-Kalim*, I; *Fihrist*. II, 259.
4. *Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn*, op.cit. (Pers. trans. 52). Also *Nabil*. pp.17-18. The verse quoted in the passage is from the *Qurʾān* XXXVIII, 88.

The allusion in the above Quranic verse to 'after a while' (*baʿd-a hīn*) encouraged some Shaykhis to search for the definite date. Mullā Jaʿfar Kirmānshāhī 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' (*ʿAlāmāt al-Faraj*), he replied 'sixty eight', and when they asked for an explanation he replied with the same verse from the *Qurʾān*: '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 حين is equal to 68?'[1].

This preoccupation with the revelation of the 'Promised One' (*mauʿūd*) sometimes drew the attention of non-Shaykhi writers such as Tunikābunī who on a few occasions in *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿUlamāʾ* discusses Ahsā'ī's views on *Maʿād* and the Return of *Ṣāḥib al-Amr*[2]. 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 ʿulama who usually substantiate the existence of the Imam with the 'rule of Benevolence' (*qāʿidih-i Lutf*)[3]. 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 *fuqahāʾ*, but two of his students, Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī and Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad the Bab caused the greatest schism in the country. 'The flames of that fire are still alive'[4]. The significance of this remark is that Tunikābunī, as a representative of the dominant *Sharʿ*, 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 Shiʿi theory, if not in harmony with the prominent jurists. Rashtī accepted the Uṣūlī 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[5]. This was also aided by the

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1. *Qatīl*. (514).
2. *Q*. pp.46-54.
3. Ibid. pp.88-9 cf. 93.
4. Ibid. 52.
5. *Risālih* in reply to enquiries from Isfahan in *Majmaʿ al-Rasāʾil* (Persian), 2nd ed., Kirmān, n.d. p.305.

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[1].

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[2].

In a commentary on *Qasida Lāmīya*[3], Rashtī introduces a cyclical concept of prophethood which resembles the Isma'ili 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' (*bavātin*) 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-nabuwwa*), 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 Ahmad also is the name of the *muravvij* (promoter) and *ra'īs* (head) at the beginning of this century, and certainly he came from the best land and purest climate'[4].

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

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1. *Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn*, op.cit., pp.56, 81-2.
2. Ibid. pp.113-15. Also *risāla* in reply to Shaykh Muḥammad Qaṭīfī (cited in *Fihrist*. II, 314).
3. *Sharḥ Lāmīya 'Abd al-Bāqī al-'Amrī*, 1270 Q.
4. Ibid. Also translated in A.L.M. Nicolas, *Essai sur le Cheikhisme, II, Seyyed Kazem Rechti*, Paris, 1914, pp.37-44 (43).

Qā'im fit into this picture? Here, as far as the revelation of the Qā'im is concerned, Rashtī's enigmatic answer is open to interpretation. It is likely that he regarded Ahsā'ī 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 Ahsā'ī's theory of multifold bodies is considered. If the Imam, the internal name of the new revelation is still in the intermediary world of *Hūrqalyā*, the Gate (*Bāb*) who is the Perfect Shi'i, will be the only physical representation of him in this world. Writing in 1263 Q. (1847), al-Qatīl al-Karbalā'ī, a student of Sayyid Kāzim and a later Babi adherent, in his interpretation of the secret of *sittīn* (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 *bātin*. The representatives of this age, Ahsā'ī and Rashtī, were indeed like elemental corpses (*ajsād*) for the celestial body (*jism*) of the messenger, namely the Imam of the Age. But in the year sixty, the spiritual body (*jism haqīqī*) which is the interior of the interior (*bātin al-bātin*) appeared[1]. 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 Ahsā'ī, 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. Hājī Muhammad 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 (*bayyina*), and those who are destined to be resurrected will be resurrected by the Proof'[2]. 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

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1. *Qatīl*. (513).
2. Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-Bāṭil*, Kirmān, 1392, Q., 14.

Ramadān 1258 (1842), just before that revolt of the Shi'i population of Karbilā' and the consequent massacre of the inhabitants by the Ottoman forces[1], he openly publicised the imminence of the next *Zuhūr*.

> 'After maintaining that He (the Promised One) is clear of any physical defect and imperfection, he (Sayyid Kāẓim) then specified His heavenly name (*ism al-Samāwī*), as the Prophet said my name in Heaven is Aḥmad and on the Earth is Muḥammad. Sayyid Kāẓim 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 Karbilā', discouraged Sayyid Kāẓim from publicising his views on this particular matter. Again *Qatīl* reports that when in Ramadān 1259 (1843) Rashtī 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 Karbilā'). 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 Ramadān to 10th Dhu al-Hijja 1259 (31st December 1843), Rashtī 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 Aḥsā'ī or Rashtī themselves. Many of the early Babi sources reported that in Dhu al-Hijja 1259 during his last annual pilgrimage to Kāẓimayn, when his students showed their grief and distress over his predicted

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1. See below.
2. *Qatīl*. (507) quoting Mullā 'Alī Tabrīzī.
3. Ibid. (508).

death, he replied: 'would you not wish me to die so the cause of your Imam may be revealed?'[1] Further on his way, he warned two of his most well known students, Mullā Ḥasan Gauhar and Mīrzā Muḥīṭ Kirmānī not to dispute and disunite after his death on the question of succession since 'in thirty weeks the Cause will be revealed to you'[2]. In a gathering of his followers in Baghdād, 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'[3]. *Qatīl* adds that many people misunderstood him, but later when Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Hiravī 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' (*Abwāb*: the Four Agents of the Hidden Imam)[4].

The intention behind Sayyid Kāẓim'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[5]. 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 Aḥmad 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 *Bāb*, the 'Perfect Shiʿi', the 'Deputy of the Imam' or in fact the Imam himself is open to interpretation.

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

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1. *Qatīl*. (508) cf. *Nabil*. 45. *Qatīl* gives the list of the 14 of Rashtī's students who were present on that occasion. References to other speculations and allusions reported from Aḥsā'ī and Rashtī may be found in *NK*. pp.99-104; *Nabil*. pp.13-46; *MJQ*. (pp.462-64) and other sources.
2. *Qatīl*. (508).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. *Uṣūl-i ʿAqāyid*, op.cit. pp.186-9 and *Risālih* in reply to Muḥammad Riżā Mīrzā, op.cit., pp.220-63.

time. The crisis of succession which occurred immediately after the death of Rashtī, 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 Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān, Mullā Hasan Gauhar, Mīrzā Muhīt Kirmānī, Mullā Muhammad Mamaqānī and Mīrzā Shafīʿ Tabrīzī each justified their own assumed leaderships of the 'sect' in terms of academic and communal positions, others such as Mullā Husain Bushrūyihī, Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī, Mullā Sādiq Khurāsānī, Sayyid Javād Karbalā'ī, Mullā Yūsuf Ardabīlī and many other future Babis, regarded the age of Ahsā'ī and Rashtī merely as a preparatory period for achieving 'the interior of the interior (*bātin al-bātin*) to which Rashtī was considered as *Bāballāh al-Muqaddam* (the first Gate)[1].

The development of the theory of messianism in the ideas of Ahsā'ī and Rashtī, 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 Ahsā'ī 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 Kirmānshāh, Tehran, Mashhad, Yazd, Isfahan, Shiraz, Qazvīn, was a not uncommon practice among prominent mujtahids of the ʿAtabāt[2]. They usually visited these places by invitation of the local ʿulama, notables, governors and state officials who had a special devotion to them. Ahsā'ī also visited most Iranian cities and towns and attracted followers from the middle and lower ranks of ʿulama, local merchants, local officials and some members of the Qājār family. The diffusion of some ʿulama of Bahrainī descent in cities like Yazd, Shiraz and Kirmān, who had either in one stage studied under Ahsā'ī or were acquainted with him, or else regarded him as their head or leader, greatly facilitated these visits. These were mostly the middle rank ʿulama, possibly

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1. Early Babi sources such as *Qatīl*. (pp.502 ff) and *Nuqtat al-Kāf* (pp.99-100) occasionally addressed Ahsā'ī and Rashtī with the title *Bāb* and *Bāb-i Imām*. For the interfactional dispute within the Shaykhi school see below Chapter Four, Section I.

2. See for example *Q*. on Shaykh Jaʿfar Najafī (pp.191-8), Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabā'ī (125-9) and Sayyid Maḥdī Ṭabāṭabā'ī (pp.124-5).

with Akhbārī tendencies, who in the second half of the 18th century, chiefly because of the Wahhābī incursions on the western coasts of the Persian Gulf, immigrated to southern and eastern Iran[1].

Besides the above group, towards the end of Ahsā'ī's life, many of the Iranian ʿulama who had studied under him in the ʿAtabāt 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, Āzarbāijān, Māzandarān and Kirmān were the first which flourished as a result of the efforts of Shaykh Ahmad's students. Distinguished mujtahids such as Hājī Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī, Mullā Muhammad Hamza' Sharīʿatmadār Māzandarānī, Mullā ʿAbd al-Kāliq Yazdī, Mullā Muhammad Mamaqānī, Mīrzā Sulaymān Yazdī, Mullā Ismāʿīl ʿAqdā'ī helped the expansion of Shaykhism in various provinces. Though Isfahan was firmly in the hand of prominent jurists such as Shaftī and Muhammad Taqī Najafī, there were still eminent ʿulama such as Hājī Mullā Ibrāhīm Karbāsī, who himself had studied under Shaykh Ahmad, and showed great respect for Ahsā'ī[2].

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 Ahsā'ī, and then studied with Sayyid Kāzim in ʿAtabāt[3]. 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 Ahsā'ī. They tended to turn Shaykhism into more of a religious school with a relatively strong nucleus in Karbilā' 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,

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1. Amongst them Ḥājī Sayyid Muḥammad Aḥsā'ī in Rafsanjān, Shaykh Niʿmatallāh Akhbārī, the imam jumʿih of Kirmān, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ḥasan Jazāyirī in Kirmān. (Mudarrisī Chāhārdihī, Murtażā *Shaykhīgarīva Bābīgarī* 2nd edition, Tehran, 1351 Sh., 125-7; citing Shaykh Yaḥyā Aḥmadī Kirmānī and Mīrzā Abul Ḥasan Kilāntarī Kirmānī). Also Shaykh ʿAbdallāh ibn Mubārak Qaṭīfī in Shiraz (*Tabaqāt*. II, 2, pp.787-9), Āl ʿUṣfūr family in Būshihr (see below) and the Baḥrānī family of Bihbahān (see above). Both Shaykh Niʿmatallāh and Ḥājī Sayyid Muḥammad were amongst the admirers of Aḥsā'ī.

2. On Ahsā'ī's reception in Iran see *Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn*, op.cit., 21; *Q*. pp.22-3 cf. 34 ff and *Sharḥ-i Aḥvāl*, op.cit., pp.22-40.

3. See below Chapter Four, Section I for some Babi examples.

with a cohesive theoretical system and definite points of difference with the opposition camp[1].

Though in this stage the Shaykhi community consisted of ʿulama 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 *Bālāsarīs* 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 mullās in jumʿih 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 Ahsā'ī'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 Ahsā'ī enjoyed put him above his contemporaries. In this sense Shaykhism, almost like the Niʿmatallāhīs, 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 ʿAtabāt.

The Usūlī 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 (*rīyāżāt-i sharʿīyih*) which were attributed by pro-Usūlī sources to eminent mujtahids such as Bihbahānī, Shaykh Jaʿfar Najafī, Shaftī and Mullā Muhammad Taqī Baraghānī may be taken as signs of a general trend amongst the *fuqahā* to add spiritual virtues to their *ijtihād* qualities, so as to form a complete image of a perfect divine. In the biographical accounts of Bihbahānī, Jaʿfar Najafī, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī, Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī and Shaykh Murtażā Ansārī,

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1. *Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn* (e.g. pp.10-11, 70-5, 138-40) gives clear indications of Sayyid Kāẓim's own notion of Shaykhism as an independent theological school.

in addition to *rīyāsat* and *marja'īyat*, there are implicit references to *nīyābat*. Though such a position was often justified in terms of attainable qualities of *ijtihād*, it still has some sense of exceptional moral values attached to it.

However, in spite of spiritual attributions, the concept of *ijtihād* 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 Aḥsā'ī's son, Shaykh Aḥmad's long residence in Yazd was chiefly due to the enthusiasm which the inhabitants showed for him, almost to the extent of extreme veneration[1]. 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[2]. The same veneration was also expressed during Aḥsā'ī's visits by the inhabitants of other important trade centres such as Isfahan, Qazvīn, Shiraz and Kirmānshāh[3].

Shaykhi links with the merchant class is further evident in Sayyid Kāzim himself who was the son of Sayyid Qāsim Harīrī, a silk merchant from Gīlān[4]. After some retirement (*i'tikāf*) in local shrines[5], Sayyid Kāzim was attracted to Aḥsā'ī's discourses in Yazd, when he was still in his early twenties[6]. 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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1. *Sharḥ-i Aḥvāl*, pp.22-3, 28, 35.
2. See A.K.S. Lambton, 'Persian trade under the early Qajars' in *Islam and the Trade of Asia*, ed. by D.S. Richards, Oxford, 1970, pp.215-44 (218-19).
3. *Sharḥ-i Aḥvāl*, pp.33-4, cf. *Q*. 35-6.
4. *KD*. I, 36 cf. *Fihrist*. I, 115.
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 Chāhārdihī in *Khāksār va Ahl-i Haqq* (Tehran, 1358 Sh., p.4) refers to Masjid-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 Ṣāḥib 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 Kāzim's students. The network of Shaykhi sympathisers developed under Sayyid Kāzim, 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[1].

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 *fuqahā'* which were partly, though not entirely, formed of the students with clerical backgrounds, and more particularly of sons and relatives of high ranking ʿulama of the ʿAtabāt 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 Kāzim provided an opportunity for his adherents to unite in a religious body distinctively independent from the rest of the scholarly community of the ʿAtabāt. 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 Karbilā' (*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[2]. 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 *fuqahā'*. Attempts first made by Mullā Muhammad Taqī Baraghānī and his allies to issue denunciations (*takfīr*) of Ahsā'ī on the ground of his disbelief[3], were further intensified during

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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 Mūsā Najafī, Sayyid ʿAbdallāh Shibr and the others, as is cited in Rashtī's own *ijāzih* 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 *Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn*, pp.52-68. See also below Chapter Four, I and Seven, III

Sayyid Kāzim'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 Ahsā'ī out of Iran and then the ʿAtabāt, again motivated them to attack Rashtī, when he gradually managed to solidify his base in Karbilā' by broadening the Shaykhi network, attracting more students or involving himself in the local politics[1].

The *fuqahā''s* response came primarily from the hereditary ʿulama families, and was then amplified by other mujtahids who claimed *rīyāsat* in the ʿAtabāt. In contrast to Shaykh Mūsā and Shaykh ʿAlī Najafī, sons of Shaykh Jaʿfar, who at the end of Aḥsā'ī's life, tried to patch up the differences between the two sides, here Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Ṭabāṭabā'ī (son of Sayyid ʿAlī and grandson of Bihbahānī) was the arch-enemy of Shaykhis and the chief instigator of numerous *takfīrs*. Others such as Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan Najafī, Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusain Najafī, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Karbalā'ī in the ʿAtabāt and Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī, Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Astarābādī, Mullā Āqā Darbandī and Mullā Saʿīd Bārfurūshī and many others in Iran assisted the ʿulama of the ʿAtabāt in their anti-Shaykhi campaign. Though the Bahrainī ʿulama generally remained silent, or occasionally sympathised with Rashtī, and though Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī, the most influential of all the *fuqahā'* in the 1830's and 40's in Iran, refused to ratify the *fatvā* of denunciation[2], 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 ʿAtabāt.

The events of Karbilā' in 1258/1842[3] 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

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1. Some more details of the ʿulamas' opposition appear in *Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn*, pp.70-113; *Q.* pp.55-6; *NK.* pp.102-3; *Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī*, 171-3 (quoting *Asrār al-Shahāda* of Mullā Muḥammad Ḥamza' Sharīʿatmadār Māzandarānī, see below).

2. See below Chapter Four, Section I.

3. The fullest account on the siege of Karbilā' by Ottoman forces and the following massacre appears in a long report from Farrant to Canning, F.O. 248/108, May 15th 1843 (partly cited in H.M. Balyuzi, *The Bāb*. Oxford, 1974, App.I, pp.193-201). Also other reports by Shiel (F.O. 60/95, 96, Feb. 1843). Other accounts given by al-Ṭuʿma, S.H., *Turāth Karbalā'*, Najaf, 1383 Q. (1964), pp.270-73; al-ʿAzzāwī, A., *Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq Bayn Iḥtilālayn*, 8 vols. Baghdad, 1373 Q., VII, pp.64-9; al-Wardī, A. *Lamaḥāt Ijtimāʿīya min Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq al-Ḥadīth*, 3 vols., Baghdad, 1971, II, pp.116-26; *Nabil*. pp.35-7 provides additional information.

persecution in the ʿAtabāt, hardly affected their performance in Iran especially in the towns and villages of Khurasan, Āẕarbāijān and Māzandarān. 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 Aḥmad 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 Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā Daulatshāh in Kirmānshāh and by Amīn al-Daulih in Yazd and Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh in the Capital, or the tributes paid by Ibrāhīm Khān Ẓahīr al-Daulih the governor of Kirmān (Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh's uncle and the father of Hājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī) towards Shaykh Aḥmad, 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 Aḥmad above the other ʿulama[1], no doubt such favour was mainly for the purpose of providing an effective opposition to the influence of *fuqahā'*. If the Niʿmatallāhī Sufism of the early years, or the Akhbārism of Mīrzā Muḥammad Akhbārī, 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*, Aḥsā'ī 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 Fatḥ 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'[2]. Indeed contrary to what is sometimes implied by modern scholars, Aḥsā'ī's opinion on this issue complied far better with a traditional non-interventionist Ithnāʿ Asharī view than with the negative way in which the ʿulama of the period

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1. For some indications of Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā's respect for Aḥsā'ī see *Q*. pp.35-6, *RJ*. 25, *Sharḥ-i Aḥvāl*, 34.

2. The text of the letter appears in *Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn*, pp.23-4 and a shorter version in *Sharḥ-i Aḥvāl*, 22 which is translated in *Religion and State*, 67.

responded to the action of the government[1].

Ahsā'ī's lack of interest in politics was partly compensated for by Sayyid Kāzim 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 ʿAlī Shāh with the Qājār princes exiled in the ʿAtabāt[2]. But he also managed to develop intimate relations with the Ottoman provincial authorities. His negotiation with Najīb Pāshā, the *valī* of Baghdād, during the events of Karbilā' (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 Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī[3]. Yet Rashtī's policy should not be seen as wholly pro-Ottoman since some of the leaders of the *Yirmāz* rebels in the city of Karbilā' such as Ibrāhīm Zaʿfarānī, a lūtī of Iranian origin who was reported to be responsible for the Karbilā' rebellion, appear to have been connected with Rashtī. The earlier references concerning Sayyid Kāzim and his preachings in Ramadān 1258 (1842), nearly two months before the Karbilā' massacre, in which he publicised the advent of the 'Divine Cause'[4], make it possible to suggest that a movement which first started with some messianic overtones later, in spite of Rashtī'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 *fuqahā'*. What was decisively effective in the outlook and the character of the close students and followers of Rashtī, was the hostility which they increasingly experienced in their encounter with their adversaries the Bālāsarīs. In spite of attempts by Rashtī 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 Rashtī, 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

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1. See for example *Religion and State*, pp.66-9.
2. *Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī*, 238.
3. See below Chapter Five, Section I.
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 Kāẓim 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 Āẕarbāījānī Shaykhis), or in the sectarianism of Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān and the Kirmānī Shaykhis, or in the quietism of Mullā Ḥasan Gauhar and Muḥīṭ Kirmānī. Thus contrary to the opinion expressed by Corbin and others that 'Babisme' was a deviatory current that 'departed from' the mainstream of Shaykhi thought[1], 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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1. *En Islam iranien*, op.cit., IV, pp.228, 283.

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 Shiʿi 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[1]. It manifested itself both in the reorganisation of the old Sufi *khāniqāhī* orders, and in the widespread preaching of the wandering dervishes. The reasons for this renewed interest remain to be fully investigated[2], 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 Shiʿi religious scholarship to the ʿAtabāt, was further increased by the less enthusiastic reception of the ʿulama under Nādir and even Karīm Khān. 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

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1. For a general survey of the 19th century revivalism in North Africa, India and Kurdistan see Trimingham, J.S. *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford, 1971), pp.105-132. On the development of messianism in some of the orders see Ziadeh, N., *Sanusiyah* (Leiden, 1958) for Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī al-Sanūsī; *EI*^{2}, Sayyid AḤMAD BRĒLWĪ (sh. Inayatullah); *Cambridge History of Islam*, 2 vols., Cambridge, 1970-71, II, pp.400-2 for Ghulām Aḥmad Qādīyānī and Aḥmadīyah, also *EI*^{2}, AḤMADIYYA (W. Cantwell Smith). On Muhammad Aḥmad of Sudan (al-Mahdī) see Holt, P.M. *The Mahdist State of the Sudan, 1881/98*, Oxford, 1958.

2. Beside primary sources dealing with Sufi orders in Iran in the 19th century and a number of Sufi biographical dictionaries written by the *quṭbs* 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 Ẕahabī, Niʿmatallāhī and Khāksār orders. N. Pourjavady and P.L. Wilson, *Kings of Love, the Poetry and History of the Niʿmatullāhī Sufi Order* (Tehran, 1978) provides a brief and not always uncommitted account of Niʿmatallāhī 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'matallāhī 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 Bahmanī and Nizām Shāhī rulers, seems to have enjoyed favour and influence. In the latter part of Riżā 'Alī Shāh's life (died circa 1214/1799), who was the last important *qutb* of the order in India[1], 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 Riżā 'Alī Shāh after the death of his patron Nizām 'Alī Khān of Deccan. Already in the 1760's, a certain Shāh Ṭāhir Dakanī, who was assigned by Riżā 'Alī, had visited Mashhad and Yazd where he busied himself with recruiting new disciples and even sending a certain Sayyid Muhammad, son of a Yazdī merchant, to his *qutb* in Deccan[2].

But it was sometime later in 1776/1190, when another well known Ni'matallahī emissary, Mīr 'Abd al-Hamīd Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh, arrived in Shiraz, that a serious effort was made to win over the public[3]. Riżā Qulī Khān Hidāyat states that Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh's despatch was the result of a demand by Persian followers for a delegation from India in order to preach the long eclipsed Ni'matallāhī cause in Iran[4]. During the two and half years of his stay in the capital of Karīm

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1. On Riza 'Alī Shāh see *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.167-8; Shīrvānī, Z. (Mast 'Alī Shāh) *Ḥadā'iq al-Sīyāḥa*, edited by N. Tābandih, Tehran, 1348 Sh., 197. On the brief account of the Indian branch of the order between the 15th and 18th centuries see *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.84-104, 160-2. Also N. Pourjavady and P.L. Wilson, 'The Descendents of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali' in *Islamic Culture*, Hyderabad, January 1974; Gramlich, op.cit., I, 3; *Kings of Love* op.cit., pp.86-8.

2. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.168-9. Not to be mistaken with the better known Shāh Ṭāhir Qazvīnī Dakanī of the 16th century.

3. On Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh, beside entries in Shīrvānī's works, see *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.170-87; Nūr 'Alī Shāh Iṣfahānī, *Masnavī-yi Jannāt al-Wiṣāl* (completed by Raunaq 'Alī Shāh Kirmānī and Nizām 'Alī Shāh Kirmānī) edited by J. Nūrbakhsh, Tehran, 1348 Sh., pp.860-7. Also *Makārim*. II, pp.405-6.

4. *Riyāḍ al-'Ārifīn* Tehran, 1316 Sh., 451 cf. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.170-71.

Khān, he succeeded in organising a small but active group of devoted followers who had been mainly recruited from the remaining survivors of the Niʿmatallāhī-Ismāʿīlī communities of eastern Iran[1]. One of his earliest converts was a certain Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Husain, known as Fayż ʿAlī Shāh, who was originally from Tūn in Quhistān. He had been the hereditary imām jumʿih 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 *jafr* and other 'hidden sciences' (*ʿulūm-i khafīyih*), before finally reaching Shiraz[2]. This remarkable change from *sharʿ* 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 Mushtāq ʿAlī Shāh, originally from Turbat Haydarīyih, Darvīsh ʿAbbās from Zaydābād in Sīrjān; the centre of Ismāʿīlī affiliated tribe of ʿAṭā'allāhīs, Raunaq ʿAlī Shāh from Bam, Muzaffar ʿAlī Shāh from Kirmān and many others from southern Khurāsān, Kirmān and Herat indicates that this area with its long crypto-Ismāʿīlī tradition was a fertile ground for the growth of popular Sufism[3].

What was preached by Maʿsūm ʿAlī and other Niʿmatallāhī *qalandars*, was more than the common guidance of the Sufi orders. In its expansion, the order largely

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1. Some valuable points on the early phase of the Niʿmatallāhīs in Iran appear in the account given by Sir John Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, (2 vols., London, 1815), II, pp.417-20.

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

3. For the above Sufi converts and other possible Ismāʿīlī-Niʿmatallāhī connections in eastern and southeastern Iran see *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.188-211, 35-7, 268-95; Gramlich, op.cit., I, 32-3. For Ismāʿīlī connections in Maḥallāt see for example under ʿIzzat ʿAlī Shāh Maḥallātī in *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.263-4. For some suggestions on the ambiguous relations between the two groups see N. Pourjavady and P.L. Wilson 'Ismāʿīlīs and Niʿmatallāhīs' in *Studia Islamica*, XLI, 1975, pp.113-35; W. Ivanow, *Ismaili Literature: a Bibliographical Survey*, Tehran, 1963, pp.183-4.

reconstructed the old pattern of hierarchy[1], and also advocated the necessity of *Shar*ʿ[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 ʿAtabāt and Kirmānshāh, saw in figures like Maʿṣūm ʿAlī and his two young disciples Nūr ʿAlī Shāh[3] and Mushtāq 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.

Maʿṣūm 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' (*irshād*) to Iran[4]. The writings of the other early Niʿmatallāhīs however, bear evidence of some spiritual claims which are unmistakably millenarian. The outstanding poetry of Nūr ʿAlī Shāh for instance, contains frequent references with clear pantheistic connotations:

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1. Many references to hierarchical titles and positions appear in *Ṭarā'iq*. (III). *Bustān al-Sīyāḥa*, op.cit. and other sources. Nūr ʿAlī Shāh was promoted by Maʿṣūm to the position of *Khalīfat al-Khulafā wa al-Murshidīn* (*Ṭarā'iq*. III 198) and Ḥusain ʿAlī Shāh acquired an *ijāzih* from Nūr ʿAlī (ibid., pp.222, 231). The texts of *ijāzihs* and instructions of some disciples appear in some Sufi Niʿmatallāhī 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 Niʿmatallāhīs.

2. See for example Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh's tract *Sī va yik Kalamih* (cited in *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.184-6) in which amongst other moral advices and instructions for Sufi life, he emphasises his respect for *Shar*ʿ. However, it should be pointed out that his definition of *Shar*ʿ differed widely from that of the contemporary *fuqahā'* - a fact which did not save him from charges of blasphemy and heresy.

3. Most of the materials on the early activities of Nūr ʿAlī Shāh came from his own account in a treatise called *Uṣūl wa al-Furūʿ* (cited in *Majmūʿih-ī az Āṡār-i Nūr ʿAlī Shāh*, (edited by J. Nūrbakhsh, Tehran, 1350 Sh., pp.56-60). For his short biography see *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.197-203 and cited sources. For the list of his works see Gramlich, I, pp.34-5.

4. *Riyaḍ al-ʿĀrifīn*, op.cit. p.451.

'I came again like Moses to reveal the Magic Hand (*Yad-i Bayżā*)
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'[1].

The same message reappears in the work of another Niʿmatallāhī poet, Muẓaffar ʿAlī, who in praise of his 'guide' Mushtāq ʿAlī, 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 (*mushtāq*) of Ḥaydarī wine.
Swear to God, I am the minstrel in this cycle,
the nightingale of the Jaʿfarī song.
Swear to God that in this cycle,
I am the deputy (*nāʿib*) to the Mahdī of the ʿAsgarī faith.
I am the sun of Truth, I am the one,
who was taught the art of fostering the inferiors.
In the path of *valī* (i.e. Shāh Niʿmatallāh) 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, Mushtāq ʿAlī made it publicly manifest,
the secret of *Qalandarī*'[2].

The above examples, two of many similar pieces, reveal a sense of 'general' messianic 'revelation' in the early Sufi converts. Nūr ʿAlī hints at a claim of deputyship in the return of the past manifestations, whereas Muẓaffar ʿAlī justifies Mushtāq's deputyship by demonstrating his Ithnā ʿAsharī commitments. References to Ḥaydar (ʿAlī), Jaʿfar (Imām Jaʿfar Ṣādiq) and ʿAsgar (Imām Ḥasan ʿAsgarī, the Eleventh Imam) are particularly important because they indicate a new development in the belief of the Niʿmatallāhīs who in the past had largely remained uncommitted to Twelver Shiʿism. Significantly, Muẓaffar, a physician with firm orthodox beliefs, like Fayż ʿAlī 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 Niʿmatallāhī 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 *valī* or the *qutb* of the time was assigned by the Concealed Imam to supervise and implement both secular and spiritual aspects of

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1. *Dīvān-i Nūr ʿAlī Shāh Iṣfahānī*, edited by J. Nūrbakhsh, Tehran, 1349 Sh., pp.105-6 (also translated in *Kings of Love*, op.cit. 201).
2. Muẓaffar ʿAlī Shāh, *Dīvān-i Mushtāqīyih*, Tehran, 1347 Sh., also cited in Abul Fażl Burqiʿī, *Ḥaqīqat al-ʿIrfān*, op.cit. 165.

the Imam's authority, Niʿmatallāhīs were content to 'vest' the secular power in theory in the 'just' ruler of the time. This was a fifteenth century heritage of Shāh Niʿmatallāh 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 Qājārs[1]. Already in the late 1770's in Shiraz, secret contacts had been made between Sayyid Maʿsūm ʿAlī Shāh and Āqā Muhammad Khān Qājār, then still under detention in Karīm Khān's court, which suggest the Niʿmatallāhīs' search for some sort of secular support[2]. Indeed Karīm Khān's suspicion of the newly arrived Sufis was not wholly unfounded, his fear being due not so much to Niʿmatallāhīs' growing popularity or the ʿulama's possible reaction, as the dervishes' political alignment with the Qājārs. This is also evident in the charges levelled against them by a certain pro-Zand Darvīsh Jānī Hindī who accused Maʿsūm and his disciples of plotting against Karīm Khān[3]. 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 ʿAlī 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 *tikīyih* which was especially built for Fayż ʿAlī, he set up a screen to manipulate numbers and read the fortune of ʿAlī Murād. But even the practice of the 'hidden sciences' could not rescue Isfahan or change the fate of the Khān[4]. Thus it is not surprising to see that when ʿAlī Murād temporarily withdrew from the city, the Niʿmatallāhīs, together with other dervishes, shifted their allegiance to the victorious Āqā Muhammad Khān Qājār, 'the Hero of Iran' (*Qahrimān-i Īrān*). On the temporary recapture of the city by Zands, the Niʿmatallāhīs were accused of having seditious ambitions similar to those of Safavīd Sayyids for bringing Qājārs to power. As a result they were humiliated, physically punished and expelled from the city.

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

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1. Nūr ʿAlī Shāh's view on the question of secular power is apparent in a tract called *Hidāyat Nāmih* cited in *Majmūʿih*, op.cit.
2. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 173.
3. *Bustān al-Sīyāḥa*, op.cit., also cited in *Kings of Love*, op.cit. pp.109-110.
4. Hidāyat, R.Q., *Uṣūl al-Fuṣūl fī Ḥuṣūl al-Wuṣūl* (MS.) cited in *Kings of Love*, op.cit., pp.114-15, cf. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 187.

(1205-6) in alliance with the head of the Ismāʿīlī sect Abul Hasan Khān the bīglarbaygī of the city, they mobilised the people of Kirmān to hold out against the desperate attempts by the Zands to recapture the city[1]. The ambiguous connections between the Ismāʿīlīs and Niʿmatallāhīs entered a new stage when the popular support for Nūr ʿAlī and Mushtāq ʿAlī was channelled against the pro-Zand faction and in favour of pro-Qājār Ismāʿīlī notables[2]. This brought confrontation with Mullā ʿAbdallāh the chief mujtahid of Kirmān, who encouraged his supporters to attack dervishes. In a public meeting in the Jumʿih mosque, the agitated public stoned Mushtāq ʿAlī to death and injured other dervishes. Nūr ʿAlī Shāh fled from Kirmān and a brief victory was achieved by the anti-Qājārs. However, shortly afterwards in 1793 when Kirmān was captured by Āqā Muhammad Khān, a brutal purge of the hostile elements was launched[3].

No doubt the Niʿmatallāhīs 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 Qājārs in the opening years of the 19th century the Niʿmatallāhīs' 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 Shiʿi ʿulama. As their sphere of influence gradually moved westward, it clashed with that of the Usūli ʿulama 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 Nūr ʿAlī Shāh and then his teacher Maʿsūm ʿAlī in the company of his close disciples, moved to the ʿAtabāt and began to preach amongst pilgrims and *tullāb* of the religious

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1. For this episode between the death of Karīm Khān and the conquest of the city by the Qājārs see *RS*. IX, pp.254-61; Aḥmad ʿAlī Khān Vazīrī Kirmānī, *Tārīkh-i Kirmān (Sālārīyih)*, edited by M.I. Bāstānī Pārīzī, Tehran, 1340 Sh., pp.332-69; Watson, R.G., *A History of Persia*, London, 1866, pp.72-75.
2. For Niʿmatallāhī involvement see 'Ismāʿīlīs and Niʿmatallāhīs', op.cit., pp.118-124. For the later Ismāʿīlī resurgence see below in this chapter.
3. For Mushtāq's life and death see *Tārīkh-i Kirmān*, op.cit., pp.346-50; *Ṭarā'iq*. pp.188-94. The original account is usually taken from *Jannāt al-Wiṣāl*, op.cit., pp.161-64, and *Masnavī-yi Gharā'ib* by Raunaq ʿAlī Shāh (edited by J. Nūrbakhsh, Tehran, 1352 Sh.) which is entirely devoted to Mushtāq. Some extracts from the above works appear in *Ṭarā'iq*. III, (ibid.).

schools[1]. Save for a few reported cases of brief dialogues with a few of the prominent ʿulama, the hostile reception of the anti-Sufi fanatics pushed Niʿmatallahis out of the ʿAtabāt and back to the border towns of Kurdistān, where they seem to have enjoyed some popularity in the areas traditionally influenced by Ahl-i Ḥaqq[2]. It is also from this period that many new disciples from western Iran who had joined the order as a result of Nūr ʿAlī'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 ʿulama who under Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh enjoyed the support of the monarch. Indeed regardless of his occasional favours to dervishes, Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh's general attitude towards Sufis was one of reticence and suspicion, a bitter irony for the Niʿmatallāhīs who in the past had supported the Qājārs so vigorously. The Shāh's attitude no doubt contributed to the increasing hostility of the ʿulama which is reflected in their numerous anti-Sufi refutations and parodies[3]. The best known of these refutations is written by Āqā Muhammad ʿAlī Bihbahānī son of Muhammad Bāqir and entitled *Risālih-i Khayrātīyih*[4]; in it the author sharply attacks Maʿsūm ʿAlī Shāh 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 *sharīʿat* (*iʿtinā bi-aḥkām-i sharʿīyih-i farʿīyih nadārand*) and condemns their tolerance towards other religions. But the ʿulama's hostility did not stop at their verbal condemnation. The execution of Maʿsūm ʿAlī Shāh, Muzaffar ʿAlī and a number of other Sufis by the hand of Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Bihbahānī, known

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1. For the episode of Nūr ʿAlī Shāh's abode in the ʿAtabāt and Baghdād see *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.199-203, cf. *Q*. pp.199-200. For some further details see *Makārim*. II, pp.443-8. It was in Baghdad under the protection of Aḥmad Pāshā, the *valī* of the province, that he wrote his *Jannāt al-Wisāl* . For a study of the content of this work see M. de Miras, *La Méthode Spirituelle d'un maitre du Soufisme iranien: Nur ʿAli-Shah* , Paris, 1974.

2. For the distribution of Ahl-i Ḥaqq in Kurdistān and Āzarbāījān see V. Minorsky, 'The sect of Ahl-i Ḥaḳḳ' in *Iranica*, Tehran, 1964, pp.306-16 (314).

3. *Catalogue of Persian MSS. in the British Museum* by C. Rieu, 3 vols., 1879-83, I, pp.33-4; also partly cited in *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.175-84 and widely discussed in *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, op.cit., pp.398-430 and in Maḥallātī, Z. *Kashf al-Ishtibāh* , pp.197-200.

4. In a biased but still useful modern refutation, *Ḥaqīqat al-ʿIrfān* (op.cit.), the author devotes a whole section (pp.33-56) to discussing works by the 19th century ʿulama such as Mīrzā Abul Qāsim Qumī's *Jāmiʿ al-Shatāt*; Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī's *Miʿrāj al-Saʿāda*; Mīrzā Ḥusain Ṭabarsī Nūrī's *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il* and Muḥammad Kāẓīm Yazdī's *ʿUrwat al-Wuthqā*, which all contain refutations of Sufis.

as *Sūfī Kush*, around 1211/1795[1] and the death of Nūr ʿAlī in Mosul[2] under suspicious circumstances, were signs of the ʿulama's increasing ability to destroy their rivals sometimes even in accord with the State's wishes. In *Khayrātīyih*, Muḥammad ʿAlī Bihbahānī himself plainly declares that 'The responsibility of such acts (i.e. execution of the Sufis) falls only within the jurisdiction of the ʿulama and the executors of *sharʿ*'[3].

In the course of the next few decades, persecution and hostility reduced the messianic zeal of the wandering *qalandars*, 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 Niʿmatallāhīs' 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 Qājār aristocracy for moral and financial support. But they lacked the commitment to a *sharīʿat* 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 ʿulama over the public and the way they successfully channelled this influence to political ends, persuaded the Qājārs, or at least the dominant faction within the ruling family, to come to terms with the ʿulama in order to avoid instability and civil strife in the cities. Therefore, the Sufis' popularity was not desired by the ʿulama or the state who equally feared the resurgence of what they labelled as 'heretical' feelings. Examples of cooperation between the ʿulama and the state in suppressing Sufi elements can be seen not only in the activities of Muḥammad ʿAlī Bihbahānī which had the blessings of the Shāh and Ḥājī Ibrāhīm Iʿtimād al-Daulih, but also in the case of two other Sufi adepts, Muẓaffar ʿAlī Shāh and Surkh ʿAlī Shāh. They were arrested and handed over to the mujtahids by the order of Fath ʿAlī Shāh. Similarly, the hostility

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1. The account of execution of Sufis appears in *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, op.cit., 392-5 and *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.174-5. On Muḥammad ʿAlī Bihbahānī see *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, pp.361-80, 96-450; *Makārim*. II, 561-67.

2. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 201, cf. *Makārim*. II, 448. A. Īzadgushasb *Nūr al-Abṣār* (Isfahan, 1325 Sh.) contradicts Malcolm's accunt of Nūr ʿAlī's death (*The History of Persia*, II, 420).

3. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 177. *Ḥaqīqat al-ʿIrfān* (op.cit., pp.161-2) produces the text of four *fatvās* by contemporary mujtahids in the ʿAtabāt; Sayyid Mahdī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (see above Chapter One, I), Sayyid ʿAlī Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Shahristānī and Mīrzā Abul Qāsim Qumī in condemnation of Maʿṣūm ʿAlī and his disciples. H. Algar in *Religion and State* (op.cit.) wrongly attributes the title *Ṣūfī Kush* and the repression of the Sufis to Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī.

of Ibrāhīm Khān Ẓahīr 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 ʿulama[1].

Some conciliatory efforts made by Husain ʿAlī Shāh, the next Niʿmatallāhī *qutb* (after Nūr ʿAlī) who himself came from a clerical background, to open a dialogue with the ʿulama 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 Majẕūb ʿAlī Shāh and Kauṣar ʿAlī Shāh[3] 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'im Maqām and the appointment of Hājī Mīrzā Āqāsī, Niʿmatallāhīs played some part. This was primarily due to the earlier influence of Sufis such as Kauṣar ʿAlī Shāh, Hājī Zayn al-ʿĀbidin Shīrvānī Mast ʿAlī Shāh[4], Mīrzā Nasrallāh Ṣadr al-Mamālik Ardabīlī[5], and Mullā ʿAbbās Īravānī (Hājī Mīrzā Āqāsī) on the royal family and the officials and courtiers of ʿAbbās Mīrzā in Āẕarbāījān. This effect is particularly visible in Muhammad Shāh's Sufi tendencies, which in turn allowed many Niʿmatallāhīs to hold prominent offices during his reign[6]. 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 Hājī Mīrzā Āqāsī's personal grip over the

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1. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.177, 181, 205-36.
2. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.223-4, Gramlich, I., pp.40-41 and cited sources.
3. On Majẕūb ʿAlī see *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 257-63; Gramlich, I., 41-3 and on Kauṣar ʿAlī see *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 264-6; Gramlich, I., 44-5; *al-Ma'āthir va al-Āthār*, op.cit., 164; *Makārim*. IV, pp.1300-1; *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 2, 549. On the division within the Niʿmatallāhīs as a result of a dispute over the leadership see Tābandih's introduction to *Ḥadā'iq al-Sīyaḥa*, op.cit.
4. For the life and works of Shīrvānī besides his autobiography in *Bustān al-Sīyāḥa* (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.
5. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.240-2.
6. For the Niʿmatallāhī involvement in the politics of the period see *Ṭarā'iq* (under above titles), *RS*. X, pp.67-8, 86-7, 96, 163 (which provides revealing evidence on the Niʿmatallāhīs' influence on the monarch. Also *Religion and State*, op.cit. 105; H. Algar, 'The Revolt of Āghā Khān Maḥallātī and the transference of the Ismāʿīlī Imamate to India' in *Studia Islamica*, XXIX (1969), pp.55-81 (74) and cited sources.

monarch[1], and his policy of restraining the ʿulama's influence in the political sphere, hardly produced any striking result. The Niʿmatallāhī 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 Hājī Mullā Sultān ʿAlī Gunābādī (1251-1327/1835-1909) the *qutb* of the Gunābādī 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 *bayʿat* (oath of allegiance) to *Valī-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 Quhistān, the home ground of many earlier trends, should not be underestimated[2].

Furthermore, a wide range of works produced by Niʿmatallāhī writers were important contributions to the development of esoteric understanding of the *Qurʾān* in the 19th century. In contrast to the *fuqahāʾs* interest in the exoteric dogmas of religion discussed in *fiqh* and *usūl al-fiqh*, the Sufi authors, in an attempt to solidify their esoteric interpretations, concentrated more on exegesis (*tafsīr*). Nūr ʿAlī Shāh's poetical work *Tafsīr-i Sūra-yi Baqara* was followed by Muzaffar ʿAlī Shāh's *Tafsīr al-Sabʿ al-Mathānī* and *Majmūʿat al-Bihār* and then by Majzūb ʿAlī Shāh's *Sharh-i duʿā-yi vārid az Amīr al-Muʾminīn*. Kausar ʿAlī Shāh's Persian commentary on the *Qurʾān*, *Durar al-Nazīm*, was an attempt to give a scholarly representation of the Sufi *tafsīr*[3]. 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 *Qurʾān* as means of giving esoteric and messianic interpretations.

The revival of the Niʿmatallāhī order was not the only example of Shiʿi-Sufi revivalism in Iran though it was the most outstanding. Other orders such as the Ẕahabī, Nūrbakhshī and Khāksār, after a long period of almost virtual eclipse, began to emerge from obscurity. In Fars, Qutb al-Dīn Muhammad Ẕahabī Nayrīzī (d. 1173/1760) gave a new impetus to the Ẕahabī order. He was a student of 'conventional' religious sciences who, after travelling to various parts of

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1. For some indications of this influence see below Chapter Four, III.
2. For his life, his claim and his works see Tābandih, N. *Nābighih-i ʿIlm va ʿIrfān*, Tehran, 1374 Q. (1333 Sh.); *Ṭarāʾiq*. III, 540-42; Gramlich, I, 64-9; *Ḥaqīqat al-ʿIrfān*, op.cit., 166-74; Ḥājī Ḥusain Qulī Jadīd al-Islām, *Minhāj al-Ṭālibīn*, Bombay, 1320, 201-2. For the concept of *Tabavvub*, or more commonly *Bābīyat*, see below Chapter Four, I and II.
3. This work is published in 1279/1862. See *al-Dharīʿa*. VIII, 83.

Iran and a long residence in Najaf, during which he taught *al-Futūhāt al-Makkīya*, 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.[1] Yet the claim of some later Ẕahabī sources regarding the pupilage of some well known ʿulama of the ʿAtabāt such as Shaykh Jaʿfar Najafī, Sayyid Mahdī Bahr al-ʿUlūm 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 Ahsā'ī while the former was residing in Ahsā', 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 Kāẓim), the most important pilgrimage place in Fars greatly assisted their stand. Yet the Ẕahabīs' claim of spiritual descent in their chain of 'guidance' from Imam Mūsā Kaẓīm which entitled them to the trusteeship of the Shrine, and the fact that they only recognised eight of the Imams specially aroused the ʿulamas' hostility. In the middle decades of the 19th century under Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Nabī Sharīfī (d. 1231/1815) and Mīrzā Abul Qāsīm Sharīfī Shīrāzī 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 *khāniqāhī* order by venturing any spectacular claim[2].

In the same period, the remnants of a branch of the Nūrbakhshī order which had survived from the pre-Safavīd times in Khurasan and then in Nā'īn, also appear to have undergone some revival. Hājī ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Nā'īnī (d. 121/1797) was the first modern *qutb* of any significance. Though references to his *Uvaysī* 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[3]. Other branches and offshoots of the Nūrbakhshī order were also known, in Quhistān and

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1. Parvīzī, S. *Tadhkirat al-Awlīyā'*, op.cit., 534 ff; *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 216-219, 339; Gramlich, I, 17-18.

2. For the development of the Ẕahabī order in modern times see *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 219, 329, 456; Gramlich, I, pp.18-23. Gramlich (pp.4-18) also traces back the spiritual descendency of the Ẕahabīs. On his visit to Shiraz the Christian missionary Henry Martyn observed the wealth and the annual income of Shāh Chirāgh and its *mutavallī* (*A Memoir of the Rev. Henry Martyn*, edited by J. Sargent, London, 1843, pp.364-5).

3. Although both *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.215-16 and Sadaqīyānlū, J. *Taḥqīq dar Aḥvāl va Āṯār-i Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh* (Tehran, 1351 Sh. pp.63-4) trace the spiritual chain of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb back to Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh.

ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam, but it was under ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and his two disciples Mīrzā Abul Qāsim Shīrāzī known as Sukūt and Ḥājī Muḥammad Ḥasan Kūzih Kanānī (Nā'īnī) that some messianic prophecies of the past Nūrbakhshī tradition was renewed[1].

The eccentric behaviour of Mīrzā Abul Qāsim (died 1239/1828), who because of his deliberate silence was nicknamed sukūt, drew the attention of many adherents in Shiraz. His contacts with the Niʿmatallāhīs and his association with some city notables and Qashqā'ī khāns gave him a strong position much disliked by the ʿulama who accused him of 'contemplating *khurūj*'[2]. The old conflict between the ʿulama 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 ʿulama. 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 Sukūt by the well known theologian Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī[3], nor the expulsion of Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Shīrvānī from the city (circa 1236/1820)[4], nor the expulsion of Muḥibb ʿAlī Shāh of the Chishtī order[5], could much weaken the Sufis' strength. It appears that up to the death of the tolerant mujtahid Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Fasā'ī (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 Ḥājī Muḥammad Ḥasan Shīrāzī and the gradual inclination from *sharīʿat* to *ṭarīqat* 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. Ḥājī Muḥammad Ḥasan (died 1240/1824) himself was a student of Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī and a staunch defender of *sharʿ*[7]. His father was a merchan. from

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1. For Sukūt and his influence on the development of Sufism in Shiraz see *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 247-50; Ruknzādih Ādamīyat, M.H. *Dānishmandān va Sukhansarāyān-i Fārs*, 4 vols., Tehran, 1337-40 Sh.III, pp.167-70; *Memoir of H. Martyn* op.cit., pp.351-3.

2. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.335-6.

3. This caused Sukūt to give his famous remark: 'An idiot of a philosopher is a novelty' (*Ḥakīm-i khar ham nubar ast*). *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 244.

4. Ibid. 389 cf. Shīrvānī, Z. *Rīyāḍ al-Sīyāḥa*, Tehran, 1339 Sh., pp.53-5.

5. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.335-6.

6. For Mīrzā Ibrāhīm see *Fārs Nāmih*. II, 29; *Dānishmandān*, op.cit., I, 52; *Memoir of H. Martyn*, op.cit., pp.355 ff.

7. For the biography of Ḥājī Muḥammad Ḥasan see *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.340-45; *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 2, 354-5; *Fārs Nāmih*. 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'.

Qazvīn who had emigrated to Karbilā' in 1761/1175. While continuing his studies, Muḥammad Ḥasan also followed his father's profession. At the time of the Wahhābī invasion of Iraq (1216/1801) he fled from Karbilā', 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, Ḥājī Muḥammad Ḥusain (died 1249/1833) and Āqā Muḥammad Shīrāzī (later titled Munavvar ʿAlī Shāh) (1224-1301/1809-1883), were converted to Sufism and became disciples of Sukūt[1]. This was followed by the grandsons of Ḥājī Muḥammad Ḥasan, who much to the mujtahid's disgust, turned to Sufism; of them the most important was the future head of the Niʿmatallāhī order, Muḥammad Ḥusain Raḥmat ʿAlī Shāh (1208-1278/1793-1861)[2]. By the time of Mīrzā Maʿṣūm Nā'ib al-Ṣadr, the great grandson of Ḥājī Muḥammad Ḥasan and the author of *Ṭarā'iq al-Ḥaqā'iq*, 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 Muḥammad Shāh's accession, owing to the moral support he had long received from Niʿmatallāhīs, Raḥmat ʿAlī Shāh was appointed to the office of Nā'ib al-Ṣadr in Shiraz[3]. This appointment, which was greatly in the Sufis' favour, provided a considerable control by Raḥmat ʿAlī Shāh over the pensions and allowances of ʿulama and *ṭullāb* 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 Muḥammad Shāh'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 Jalālī, ʿAjam and other Khāksār affiliations who in their journeys to and from India, Anatolia and central Asia,

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1. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 353; *Fārs Nāmih*. II, 124. Martyn relates that for fifteen years Muḥammad Ḥusain 'was a devoted Mohometen (*sic*. Moḥammadan); 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).
2. *Ṭarā'iq*. pp.387-94; Gramlich, I, 53-5.
3. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 391.

took up their abode in the *tikīyihs* of Shiraz[1]. Their vast network extended from Chishtī *khāniqāhs* of Punjab and Deccan to central and then western Iran, to Kurdistān and Āzarbāijān amongst the communities of Ahl-i Ḥaqq, and then further to Anatolia, Roumelia (and as far as Albania) where they were connected with Bektāshī, Naqshbandī and Mewlevī centres. In the east, they were concentrated in central Khurasan in Turbat-i Ḥaydarīyih where the tomb of Qutb-al-Dīn Ḥaydar was located[2], and from there they travelled up to Central Asia, to Marv, Khīva, Samarqand and Bukhārā, to visit the Tomb of Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥaydar and stay in Naqshbandī *khāniqāhs*. On the way back they passed through Balkh, Herat and Qandihār to end up again in northern India. Their journeys also included frequent visits to the ʿAtabāt, the Ḥijāz and southern Arabia.

Widespread travels and contacts with various orders, sects and ideas, defined as *sayr-i āfāq va anfus* (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 reintroduction and diffusion in the Iranian environment of many 'heterodox' ideas, rites, popular beliefs and behaviours which ranged from Hurūfī cabbalistic gnosticism inherited by the Bektashīs, to the extremism of Ahl-i Ḥaqq, 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 extra-ordinary acts, they were able to draw public attention.

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1. For Khāksār see Gramlich, I, 70-88; Mudarrisī Chāhārdihī, N., *Khāksār va Ahl-i Ḥaqq*; op.cit.; S.H. Amīn, 'Iṭṭilāʿāṭī dar bārih-i darvīshān-i Khāksār' in *Rāhnamā-yi Kitāb*, XX (1356), pp.229-234 (which surveys sources on the order); Mudarrisī, A. (Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh), *Ganjīnih-i Aulīyā' ya Ā'īnih-i ʿUrafā*, Tehran, 1338 Sh. For general information on wandering dervishes see *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, op.cit., pp.264-9; *EI*^{2}, *DARWĪSH* (D.B. Macdonald). On their gatherings in Shiraz in Haft Tan and Chihil Tanān see *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.490-1.

2. *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, op.cit., 39.

References in most sources hardly ever go beyond description of the appearance and the public behaviour of the wandering dervishes[1]. 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 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Gīlānī who in response to the former's evangelical preachings, likened him to the disciples of Badr al-Dīn of Samāwnā 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 protoype 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 derveesh of Geelan. Abd-ool 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

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1. References to wandering dervishes in mid-19th century travel accounts are numerous. Lady Shiel, M. *Glimpses of Life and Manner in Persia*, London, 1856, pp.152, 192-6; Wills, C.J. *The Land of Lion and Sun*, London, 1891, pp.42-52; Fraser, J.B. *Travels in Kurdistan, Mesopotamia, etc*, 2 vols., London, 1840, I, pp.289 ff: Layard, A.H. *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana and Babylonia*, London, 1894; Binning, R.B.M. *A Journal of Two Years' Travel in Persia etc.*, 2 vols., London, 1857, II, 72-3; Browne, E.G. *A Year Amongst the Persians*, London, 1893 (1926), pp.56-61. For story tellers see Malcolm, J. *Sketches of Persia*, London, 1845, pp.91-103.

2. Wolff, Rev. J. *Narrative of a Mission to Bokhara*, London, 1847, 93. On the above mentioned persons see *EI*^{2}, BĀBĀ'Ī (C.L. Cahen) and BADR AL-DĪN B.ḲAḌĪ SAMĀWNĀ (H.J. Kissling).

3. Wolff, 93.

in common - even wives and children'[1]. Wolff heard of an Afghānī 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'[2].

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 Ghengis 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 derveesh of Room'[3] 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 ʿAlī Shāh'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. *Tarā'iq al-Haqā'iq* relates that at the time there was a widespread prophecy amongst the mystics and ascetics that after Fath ʿAlī Shāh, the monarchy would be transferred to a certain Muhammad who had Sufi

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1. Ibid. 298.
2. Ibid. pp.296-7.
3. Ibid. pp.313-14.

leanings and was attached to the Niʿmatallāhī order. The author sees this as the chief reason for Fath ʿAlī Shāh's hostility towards Sufis 'since he imagined that these people (i.e. dervishes) were in favour of termination of his dynasty'[1]. He then states that some merchants sought the opinion of the ascetics, astrologers, geomancers and *jaffārs* to specify whether after Fath ʿAlī Shāh the monarchy would go to ʿAbbās Mīrzā or to Muhammad ʿAlī Mīrzā Daulat Shāh[2]. But opinions were divided. Shaykh ʿAbdallāh ibn Mubārak[3] believed that Fath ʿAlī Shāh would outlive both his sons and then after him the monarchy would go to a certain Muhammad. Sayyid Sadr al-Dīn Dizfūlī a Ẕahabī Sufi from Shiraz believed the same[4]. Hājī Muhammad Hasan Nā'īnī (died 1247/1831) the *qutb* of the Nūrbakhshīs in Nā'īn, forecast that 'this prince would ascend to the throne but because of slaying an innocent sayyid, he would not enjoy his rule'[5].

These and many other speculations suggest that towards the end of Fath ʿAlī Shāh'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[6].

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1. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 192.
2. Ibid. See below.
3. Ibid. For his biography see *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 2, pp.287-9. He had correspondence with theologians such as Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī and Mīrzā Muḥammad Akhbārī (*Fihrist*. II, 228). The Bab also refers to him (see below).
4. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 292 also states that these predictions were widespread to the extent that Muḥammad Khān, the chief of Qarā'ī tribe was also contemplating his possible accession to the throne. Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī is also credited (chiefly by his future admirers) with predicting the succession of his pupil Muḥammad Mīrzā. However as Khān Malik Sāsānī points out (*Sīyāsatgarān-i daurih-i Qājār*, 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 ʿAbbās Mīrzā to the throne was guaranteed, such a prediction hardly needed formidable insight. *Qisas al-ʿUlamā'* (p.174) also refers to a certain Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn Nahāvandī (Shūshtarī), 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 ʿAlī Shāh. *Religion and State* (op.cit. 70) wrongly attributes this to Sayyid Mahdī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm.
5. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 291 cf. 245. Khān Malik Sāsānī (*Sīyāsatgarān-i daurih-i Qājār*, 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 Abul Qāsim Qā'im Maqām was also present. When Qā'im Maqām was saying farewell to Ḥājī Muḥammad Ḥasan, to whom he was an adherent, Nā'īnī gave him a note on which was written; 'You will be killed by Muḥammad Mīrzā'. 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 *Uvaysī* approach, frequently expressed interest in the mysteries of *Zuhūr*. The Babi chronicler Shaykh Muhammad Nabīl Zarandī quotes an aged Babi, Mīrzā Muhammad Qamṣarī who had himself visited Hājī Muhammad Hasan 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 tiding 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 Hājī Muhammad Hasan 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 Hājī Muhammad Hasan 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 Ārandī Nā'īnī, one of Muhammad Hasan's disciples. *al-Ma'āthir va al-Āthār* states that Mullā Hasan's 'intuitive knowedge' was so strong, that, as has been often mentioned, he had 'forecast the harm which would come to the *Sharī'at* from the Bab's appearance'[3].

It is not a mere coincidence that Hājī Muhammad Hasan, and his disciple Mullā Hasan, though from entirely different backgrounds, both represented a recognisable *Uvaysī* approach. Hājī Muhammad Hasan was the son of a prosperous merchant of Yazd[4], whereas Mullā Hasan was a simple shepherd in the deserts around Nā'īn before 'being chosen' by Muhammad Hasan to follow the *Uvaysī* 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. *Nabil*. 8. Zarandī also relates that as a result of his acquaintance with Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, Ḥājī 'Abd 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. 'Abd al-Wahhāb spent most of his later life in Nā'īn and died there in 1212 Q. (1797) (*Ṭarā'iq*. 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 'Abdallāh Aḥsā'ī, *Risālih-i Sharḥ-i Aḥvāl-i Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī*, op.cit., 27). It is possible that Nabīl Zarandī confuses 'Abd al-Wahhāb and Ḥājī Muḥammad 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).

2. *Nabil*. 8.

3. Op.cit., 169.

4. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.244-5.

> 'He accepted no gifts or *nīyāz* (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'[1].

The same austerity, voluntary poverty and intuitive insight may also be seen in other *Uvaysīs*. The spirit of expectation in the independent ascetics, as in the wandering dervishes or the Niʿmatallāhīs, 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 *tarīqat* 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 Āṣif known as Rustam al-Ḥukamā'[2]. 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 Shāh's reign (from 1780's to 1840's)[3].

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1. Ibid. III, pp.239-40. Also see Mīrzā Ḥusain Taḥvīldār Iṣfahānī, *Jughrāfīyā-yi Iṣfahān*, edited by M. Sutūdih, Tehran, 1342 Sh., 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 *Jung-i Aḥkām va Ashʿār*, written in 1244 Q./128-9 (H. Nāṭiq, 'Qatl-i Grībāyduf dar aḥkām va ashʿār-i Rustam al-Ḥukamā'' in *Muṣībat-i Vabā va Balā-yi Ḥukūmat*, Tehran, 1358 Sh., pp.155-75) are published. Towards the end of his life, Rustam al-Ḥukamā' himself carefully compiled a list of his works (*Fihrist-i Munsha'āt va Rasā'il*) at the end of his *Naṣīḥat Nāmih* (MS. no.1270, Mīnāsīān Coll., U.C.L.A., Research Library).

3. For the analysis of Rustam al-Ḥukamā''s 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-Ḥukamā''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 *Ẓuhūr* of the Imam Mahdī. 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-Ḥukamā' tries to explain these changes in terms of millenarian events.

An example of these speculations appears in *Rustam al-Tawārīkh*. In an additional introductory passage, most probably written prior to the final draft[1], the author in the middle of an imaginary story hints at the advent of the Mahdī:

> 'By God's will in the year 1251 (1835-6) in Iran, one of the sons of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh would ascend the throne as a *nā'ib* 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 *Arż-i Gharrā'* (i.e. Madina), overthrow unbelief and polytheism and destory oppression and darkness and conquer the world'[2].

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 Qā'im 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 *Dajjāl* (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 Luristān riding his huge donkey. His minister and assistant is

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1. *Rustam al-Tawārīkh*, 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-Ḥukamā''s strange habit of deliberately changing the dates by misplacing the last digits. He also did the same at the end of *Naṣīḥat Nāmih* (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-Tawārīkh*, 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 Qā'im in 1260-2 Q. are absent. This is probably done because of the embarrassing coincidence with the date of the Bab's declaration.

[Missing page from the original document has been recreated from *Resurrection and Renewal*]

a wizardly, hemp-addicted dervish. Dajjāl's fame will extend to the seven regions of the world and whoever sees his face will become his disciple. He is an eloquent speaker and he is kind to all people. "He will battle with the Qā'im for ten to twelve years when he finally would be killed by the staff of Moses in the hand of Jesus."[1]

…

An example of these speculations appears as early as 1244/1828–1829 in his collection of poetry and prose (Jung-i Aḥkām va Āsh'ār-i Rustam al-Ḥukamā'), where he predicts that the reign of Fatḥ 'Alī Shāh will end in 1250/1834–1835 and that 'Abbās Mīrzā will succeed him on the throne.[2] In this volume, compiled just after the completion of the second round of the Russo-Persian wars (1826–1828), he expresses his apprehension of the advances of the foreign powers. He bitterly criticizes the Qajars for their political and military failures and warns that now the "domestic enemy" is plotting again to plunge Iran into war and ruin the country.[3] Soon, he adds, at the end of 1250 and the beginning of 1251/1835 a catastrophe will occur that will make the seven kingdoms of the world mourn the fate of Iran, and this is the proof of the forthcoming Ẓuhūr of the Qā'im. When the warmonger prince 'Abbās Mīrzā comes to the throne, he will bring Iran into another disastrous war with Russia. "The ill-fated Russians will conquer and dominate Iran. Even if Iran and Rūm [the Ottoman Empire] and five other countries come to alliance, they will not be able to resist the Russians. In the year 1250 they [i.e., the Russians] will rise and conquer Iran in a ferocious war."[4]

He then forecasts that in the year 1260/1844–1845 a handsome, brave youth whose name is Amīr Mahdī will appear among the Arab tribes of Kufa, Karbalā', and Najaf. "He is wearing a cloak ['abā] and those wearing cloaks [the clergy] would join him, and they would wage such a great war with those ill-fated ones [Russians] that from time immemorial no one has ever heard or

1 Rustam al-Tawārīkh 32–33. It is possible that in here describing the qualities of the minister of the Imam, Rustam al-Ḥukamā' only refers to himself. He was born in Shiraz and was a resident of Isfahan.
2 Nāṭiq Muṣībat 173.
3 idem, 170–73.
4 idem, For his equally strong anti-British feelings see Rustam al-Tawārīkh 383–84.

seen anything like it'[1]. In one of his *qaṣīdihs*, which was evidently composed in imitation of Shāh Niʿmatallāh's famous elegy[2], 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'[3].

Another example of Rustam al-Ḥukamā''s speculations appears in an epilogue to the collection of his *Naṣīḥat Nāmih* 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 *nā'ib*, 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)[4], 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 Qājārs. 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 *nā'ib-i Mahdī* of Rustam al-Ḥukamā', 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, Turkistān, India, Russia, and the seven kingdoms of Europe (*haft qirāl-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 fahm*) and susceptible to fables (*afsānih pazīr*)'[5].

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'. Again in Dhu al-Ḥijja 1260 (December 1844), he confirms that in fifteen months time, that is Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1262 (April 1846), the Qā'im would finally appear[6].

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1. Ibid.
2. For this *qaṣīdih* which has long drawn attention for its alleged messianic prophecies, see Browne, *The Literary History*, op.cit., III, pp.465-70; *Kings of Love*, op.cit., 200; *Kulliyāt-i Ashʿār-i Shāh Niʿmatallāh-i Valī*, edited by Javād Nūrbakhsh, Tehran, 1347 Sh., pp.716-19.
3. *Nāṭiq*, op.cit., pp.174-5.
4. *Rustam al-Tawārīkh*, 475.
5. *Naṣīḥat Nāmih*, (MS. op.cit.,) pp.106-7.
6. Ibid., pp.75-6.

He praises the Qā'im with the highest titles in another *qaṣīdih* in which he describes the circumstances of the *Ẓuhūr*. He confirms that this would happen in the year *Rabb-i Ghanī*, which numerologically is equal to 1262[1]. But he warns his reader to be on guard against the appearance of 'imposters'. In the list of his works, he refers to a *risālih* which he compiled 'in rejection and denial of those who claim to be the *nā'ib* of Ṣāhib al-Zamān'.

> '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 Qā'im), and those just and fair *ʿulama* in the sphere of *Sharʿ* 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-Ḥukamā' to seek for some messianic prophecies. But in spite of his long lasting anticipations, in reality Rustam al-Ḥukamā' 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 systems[3]. 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 Bab[4].

Besides ideas expressed by Rustam al-Ḥukamā', 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

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1. Ibid. 86. He titles one of his *qaṣīdihs* as '*Bishārat Nāmih-i Fīrūzī, dar ʿalāmāt-i ẓuhūr-i Ṣāḥib al-Zamān va Tārīkh-i ẓuhūrash*'.
2. Ibid. pp.94-5.
3. Amongst many other panegyrics in honour of the Qājār rulers, Rustam al-Ḥukamā' also composed two *Bishārat Nāmih* in honour of Āqā 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-Bahā'ī sources who often in order to emphasise the extraordinary aspect of the new manifestation, took care to record them. Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad the Bab himself made reference to the 'coincidences' (*iqtirānāt*) 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[1]. It may be argued that accounts in the Babi sources concerning the earlier prophecies about the *Ẓuhūr* 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 *Nuqṭat al-Kāf* or *Qatīl*, 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 *jaffār*, 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 (*fī al-nash'atayn*),
> To revitalise the religion after *rā* and *ghayn* (i.e. ر : 200 + غ : 1000 = 1200)
> Thus multiply the essence of *huwa* (i.e. هـ: 5 + و: 6 = 11 : هو) by number of its letters (i.e. 2 x 11 = 22)
> And that is the name of the pole of the two worlds'[2].

Other sources also acknowledged the Indian *jaffār* in Karbilā' who heralded the emergence of the Bab, though not surprisingly with conflicting interpretations. al-Qatīl al-Karbalā'ī maintained that the *jaffār's* mathematical calculations confirmed the authenticity of the Bab[3]. Tunikābunī on the other hand states that when Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad visited Karbilā' prior to 1260, a *murtāż* (an ascetic; usually Indian) forecast the evils which would soon arise from his claim[4]. More significantly, Sayyid Javād Karbalā'ī, a follower of

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1. Letter to Muḥammad Shāh, *INBA*. no.64, pp.103-26 (124-5) cf. *Dalā'il-i Sabʿah*, op.cit., pp.60-2.
2. *INBA*. op.cit., 124 cf. *Dalā'il*, pp.60-2, and idem, *Shu'ūnāt-i Fārsī* (written in 1264/1848), *INBA*. 64, pp.78-95 (78). From this enigmatic calculation the Bab extracted his own name; 11 [هو] x 22 [(2: the number of the letters of هو) x 11 (the numerical value of هو)] = 242 which is equal to the numerical value of ʿAlī Muḥammad. The poetry referred to by the Indian *jaffār* originally belongs to Sayyid Muḥammad Akhlāṭī, whose works on *jafr* were known to the Bab (*Dalā'il*, 62).
3. *Qatīl*. (516) quoting Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī and Mīrzā Hādī Nahrī.
4. *Q*. 59.

Rashtī and one of the earlier believers in the Bab[1], relates that speculations of the Indian ascetic known as Sāyin in Karbilā', greatly assisted him in his search for the 'Promised One'. In his brief reply to Sayyid Javād, Sāyin 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:

10	4	5	40
ی	د	ہ	م

مہدی : *Mahdī*

4	6	3	6	40
د	و	ج	و	م

موجود : *maujūd* (exist)

2	200
ب	ر

ربّ : *rab(b)* Lord

4	40	8	40	10	30	70
د	م	ح	م	ی	ل	ع

علی محمّد : *ʿAlī Muhammad*[2]

Other signs of the Indian influence on the early Babis may also be seen in Āqā Sayyid Basīr Hindī, a blind mystic from a family of Sufi dervishes in India whose search for the spiritual 'guide' eventually introduced him to Sayyid Kāzim and then the Bab[3]. He was first motivated by his forefather's prophecy regarding the appearance of the 'Perfect Soul' (*Nafs-i Kamil*) in the land of Iran[4]. The prophecies of another Indian also aroused the curiosity of Mīrzā Muhammad ʿAlī and Mīrzā Hādī Nahrī, two Babi brothers from Isfahan who once met in Karbilā' a Shiʿi 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.[5] There were other allusions which also led the 'seekers' to the Bab. Years before the appearance of the Bab, another convert, a certain Shaykh ʿAlī Khurāsānī heard some poetry from a pilgrim in Mecca that alluded to the date of *Zuhūr*[6]. Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Khurāsānī, who also was a Babi, first met a *jaffār* who extracted the name of the Mahdī by numerological calculations[7].

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1. For his details see below Chapters Three, III and Five, I.
2. Account given by Sayyid Javād Karbalā'ī to Mīrzā Abul Fażl Gulpāyigānī in *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, Tāshkand, n.d., pp.76-7. Also noted in *Dalā'il*, 60.
3. For his details see below Chapter Nine
4. *NK*. pp.255-6.
5. *Qatīl*. (516).
6. *Dalā'il*, op.cit. 60.
7. Ibid. pp.60-61.

Also the Bab refers to an Āẕarbāijānī believer who twenty years prior to the Bab's arrival in Āẕarbāijān in 1263 (1847) saw in his dreams two men who read an Arabic quatrain:

> 'Sixty and two renewed,
> the cause which was unpreceded,
> He is a Guardian (*valī*) or an assigned messenger,
> who descended from two pure branches'[1].

Indeed Āẕarbāijān 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. Ḥājī Muʿīn al-Salṭanih, himself a native of Tabrīz, 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 Tabrīzī who some time prior to 1260 used to decorate walls and gates of mosques and houses in Tabriz with a mysterious inscription ط ١٢٦٠. On one occasion when he was questioned by one of the ʿulama of the city about the meaning of this strange practice, he replied that it was an allusion to the forthcoming *Ẓuhūr* of the 'Proof of God', and that he was only performing a duty for which he had no logical explanation[2].

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 *Ẓuhūr* after the lapse of a millenium. Besides Rustam al-Ḥukamā', 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 *Yā Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq* (یاظهورالحقّ) which is equal in numerical value to 1261 was much favoured by early sources[3].

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1. Letter to Muḥammad Shāh, *INBA*. no.64, 124 and *Dalā'il*, pp.61-2, (on the authority of Mullā Yūsuf Ardabīlī relating from a certain Mīrzā 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 Muʿīn al-Salṭanih in the late 19th century, some remnants of his cryptic inscriptions survived on the wall of the Jumʿih mosque in Tabrīz.

3. See for example *NK*. 93. Also the title of Mīrzā Asadallāh Fāżil Māzandarānī's *Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq* seems to have been inspired by the same epigram.

Qatīl al-Karbalā'ī states that this point was not only noticed by the Shi'i sources, but others such as Christians, Europeans (*Farangī*), Mandaeans (*Sābi'i*), Zaroastrians and Jews as well as Ni'matallāhīs, Ismā'īlīs, Zaydīs and Vāqifīs, all acknowledged the importance of the year sixty-one[1]. 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[2]. Further he gives some examples of Sufi writings, including poetry of Shāh 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[3]. 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. Tīmūr Khvārazmī, an astrologer from Isfahan, predicted that between 1230-50 (1814-34) great upheavals would prevail[4]. Mīrzā Āqā Munajjim Isfahānī, who was an astrologer to Manūchihr Khān Mu'tamid al-Daulih in Isfahan, was more specific when he pointed out that the year 1260 Q. would witness 'incredible events'[5]. Another astrologer, Mīrzā 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[6].

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 . Mullā Muhammad Hamza'

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1. *Qatīl*. (pp.515-16).
2. Ibid. References to the Jewish prophecies and expectation of the Messiah (*Māshīah*: *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 Ḥakīm Hārūn, 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'. Hārūn 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.
4. Suhrāb, Aḥmad, *al-Risāla al-Tis'a 'Asharīya, fī Tārīkh Ḥadrat al-A'lā* Cairo, 1338Q, p.26.
5. Ibid.
6. *TMS*., 17.

Sharīʿatmadār, a student of Ahsā'ī, believed that the outbreaks of cholera and plague in the ʿAtabāt in 1830's (because of which he reckons only one tenth of the population survived) were a divine punishment for the ʿulama's negligence and enmity towards the true message of Shaykhism. He maintains that this was a prepatory measure for the emergence of the Qā'im[1]. So does another Shaykhi, Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī, 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[2]. 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 *Ẓuhūr* which people tend to neglect. In four years, probably more than one hundred thousand souls from among the Shiʿi's alone, perished, and no one is aware of its (hidden) meaning'[3].

Cholera was only one of many symptoms which were detected as 'signs' of the emergence of a comprehensive 'Revolution' (*Fitnih*, *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 *Fitnih* and *Imtihān* (torment) to describe the violent events which were to take place at the time of the Qā'im's manifestation[4]. 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 *Fitnih*, 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[5].

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1. Mullā Muḥammad Ḥamza' Sharīʿatmadār Bārfurūshī, *Asrār al-Shahāda* MS. cited in ʿAbd al-Karīm Sharīʿatmadārīyān, *Sharḥ-i Zindigī-yi Mullā Muḥammad Ḥamza' Sharīʿatmadār*, MS., *INBA*. Lib. 1009 D, pp.13-14.
2. *MJQ*. (452).
3. *Dalā'il*. op.cit., pp.63-4.
4. *NK*. pp.92-9. For references to *fitna* in Shiʿi traditions see *Safīnat al-Biḥār* compiled by Shaykh ʿAbbās 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 (*īlchī-yi Rūs va īlchī-yi Rūm*) regarding the Bab and the Babis. He believed that this was because they also had 'oppressed subjects' (*żuʿafā-yi raʿīyat*) in their own countries, but treated them better, and tried to understand their problems[1]. 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 *Farang*, from whose head *Farangis* would remove a diamond'. Finally he states that one of the 'signs' which has already been fulfilled is that the monarchy of *Farang* has collapsed and instead a republican state (*daulat-i jumhūrī*) has been established[2]. 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 БАБИАСКИЕ ВОССТАНИЯ В ИРАНЕ (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 *Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī*, 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. Hājī Mullā Iskandar, a preacher in Khuy, who was known for his *karāmāt*, over a long period of time, drew the attention of his audience to the plausible circumstances of the forthcoming *Zuhūr* and the utterance of the 'Great Name' (*Ism-i Aʿzam*), which he believed to be found in the prayers of Ramadān. His preaching created some excitement and his adherents eagerly anticipated imminent upheavals[1]. Similarly, Hājī Mullā ʿAlī Akbar the Shaykh al-Islām of Marāghih was also preoccupied with such expectations. Muʿīn al-Saltanih believes that some of the Babis from Marāghih such as Mullā Ahmad Ibdāl Marāghihī, a Letter of *Hayy*[2], Mullā Husain Dakhīl Marāghihī[3] and Mullā ʿAlī Sayyāh Marāghihī[4], were all influenced by Mullā ʿAlī Akbar's preaching before being converted to the Babi movement[5].

If the origin of these ideas and inspirations was roughly foreshadowed in the semi-rural Sufi asceticism in Āzarbāījān, the preaching of Hājī Asadallāh Saysānī had a more recognisable link with better known trends. Originally a peasant from Saysān, a village near Tabrīz (with possible Ahl-i Haqq background)[6], Asadallāh spent two years in the company of the other local ascetics (*ahl-i tanassuk*) in retirement and mystical mortifications on Mount Sahand[7]. 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

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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 Āzarbāījān 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 Ḥaḳḳ' 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 Āzarbāījānīs 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 Āzarbāījān mountains.

villagers[1]. Distinctively affected by the Shaykhi picture of the Imam, Asadallāh presented a more plausible and human image of the Qā'im and the advent of the Final Day. The Qā'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'*)[2], but by natural birth, and would live a life like any other human being. Similarly to the author of *Nuqtat al-Kāf*, Asadallāh also emphasised that the Qā'im's appearance would inevitably entail his suffering, hardship and subjugation (*maqhūrīyat*) at the hand of his enemies. The opposition of the ʿulama against the Qā'im, Asadallāh declared, was the best proof of his righteousness[3]. Their anti-clerical and sometimes anti-governmental sentiments, non-orthodox image of Qā'im and the *Qīyāmat*, and high popularity and sanctity in the community are elements which distinguish characters such as Asadallāh 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-Bahā'ī centres in Āzarbāījān[4].

Hājī Asadallāh, Hājī Mullā Iskandar and Mullā ʿAlī 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' Sharīʿatmadār Bārfurūshī (1196-1281/1781-1864), a student of Ahsā'ī and an influential figure in Bārfurūsh, Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Hujjat al-Islām Zanjānī (later known as Hujjat), an ardent Akhbārī in Zanjān (1227-1266/1811-1850), Sayyid Yahyā Dārābī, son of Sayyid Jaʿfar Kashfī (later known as Vahīd) (died 1265/1849), Hājī Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī (Quddūs), and many other prominent Babis 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.

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1. *TMS*. pp.23-4.
2. See above Chapter One, II.
3. *TMS*. 23.
4. Ibid. 26.

Sharīʿatmadār who during his tutelage, on Shaykh Ahmad's advice, retired for forty days in the mosque of Kufah, was known to the Bārfurūshīs for his asceticism and his prognostications[1]. He was also admired for his unceremonious and humble manners. He spoke and preached in local Māzandarānī 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[2]. He bitterly criticised the Usūlī ʿulama, and most of all his rival Mullā Saʿīd Bārfurūshī[3], and he was seldom in good terms with the governors and local state officials[4]. The prolonged conflicts in Bārfurūsh between Niʿmatī and Haydarī quarters was largely expressed in this period in terms of Shaykhi-Usūlī dispute between Sharīʿatmadār and Saʿīd al-ʿUlamā'. The later development of this conflict, by the time of Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī (Quddūs) who himself at one stage was a student of Sharīʿatmadār, turned to a full scale confrontation between the Babis and their enemies in the city, and became one of the origins of the Ṭabarsī uprising in 1848-9. Earlier, even before the death of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, clear signs of messianic expectations may be found in the writings of Quddūs, particularly in connection with his theological argumentations with Saʿīd al-ʿUlamā'[5]. It appears that in the late 1250's and early 1260's (1841-8), the leadership of the Shaykhi faction in the Niʿmatī quarters of Bārfurūsh was gradually transferred from the old Sharīʿatmadār 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 Sharīʿatmadarīyān, *Sharḥ-i Zindigī*, op. cit.; Z. pp.134-45; *Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī*, op.cit. pp.140-75. All these accounts used various parts of Sharīʿatmadār's yet unpublished *Asrār al-Shahāda*.

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 ʿAlī Muḥammad the Bab, and later to Quddūs and Mullā Ḥusain Bushrūyihī. 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 *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 2, 599.

4. *Sharḥ-i Zindigī*, pp.23, 27-33 and Z. pp.442-3.

5. Beside various sources on the situation in Bārfurūsh on the eve of Ṭabarsī, *Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq* (pp.405-419) provides an extensive account (including some of the despatches and correspondence of Quddūs with Saʿīd alʿUlamā') of the earlier disputes (1258-61).

Muhammad ʿAlī Ḥujjat Zanjānī[1], who unlike the above examples, was influenced by Akhbārīsm, at least in the matters of *Sharʿ*[2]. He was the son of a local Zanjānī divine, who was known for his *karāmāt*. For some years Ḥujjat was educated in the ʿAtabāt before moving to Hamadān, which in the early decades of the 19th century survived as one of the Akhbārī strongholds in Iran. On his return to Zanjān, after the death of his father, Ḥujjat 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 Ḥujjat's Akhbārī views, together with some traces of extremism (*ghulūv*) reflected in his religious discourses, provided the necessary pretext for a clash with the rival Usūlī ʿulama 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 Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī's religious policy[3], summoned Ḥujjat 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 Usūlī ʿulama and the local government[4].

In the following years, prior to his second exile to Tehran in 1847 (1263), Ḥujjat 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 Akhbārīs who took the traditions at their face value. Instead, his picture of the advent of the Qā'im, like that of some of the above mentioned Shaykhis, was closer to reality. However, the realistic prospects

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1. Beside better known Babi-Bahā'ī sources, accounts of Ḥujjat's life also appear in many narratives of the Zanjān episode. Amongst them *'Personal Reminiscences of the Bābī Insurrection at Zanjān in 1850'* by Āqā ʿAbd al-Aḥad Zanjānī (E.G. Browne Oriental MSS., Cambridge Central Library, MS. F.25 (9) no.6) translated in *JRAS*, 1897, pp.761-827; *Narrative of Āqā Mīrzā Ḥusain Zanjānī*, *INBA*. Lib. MS. no.3037; *Narrative of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Zāhid al-Zamān*, *INBA*. Lib. MS. *Narrative of Hāshim Fatḥī Muqaddam Khalkhālī*, *INBA*. Lib. MS. .

2. Most sources agree on his Akhbārī beliefs. See *Aḥmad*. 451; *NK*. 125; and *Nabil*. 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 Jaʿfar Kashfī.

3. For other examples of exiled ʿulama under Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī see below Chapter Eight, II.

4. *Narrative of Āqā Muḥammad Ḥusain Zanjānī*, op.cit., folio 2-3 cf. *Personal Reminiscences*, op.cit., pp.770-71 (trans.).

for a *Zuhūr* by no means reduced the intensity of the expectation of the Qā'im'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[1]. His conversion was followed by that of a large body of his adherents who according to one estimate, exceeded three thousand[2]. They mainly consisted of middle and lower groups of the city inhabitants and included merchants, petty merchants, traders, members of various guilds, shopkeepers, lūtīs, 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)[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 ʿulama. 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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1. The circumstances of his conversion are described in *Narrative of Āqā Muḥammad Ḥusain*, folio 4-6 in *Personal Reminiscences*, pp.771-5 and *Nabil*. pp.531-4.

2. *Personal Reminiscences*, 774.

3. For an account of this city riot and its causes see *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 Āqāsī's envoy Aḥmad Khān Navā'ī (Nāʿib Īshīk Āqāsī). 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 ʿAlī Ashraf Khān. The original report appears amongst the documents in the archives of the Iran Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tehran, file 23 (original documents). *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 Ismāʿīlīs in the 19th century, for example, was a renewal of long forgotten aspirations in an area of Iran which still preserved some aspects of Ismāʿīlī millenarianism. These aspirations might have been first inspired by similar developments in the communities of Ismāʿīlīs in India. Already in 1175/1762 amongst the Dāʾūdī community in Gujarat a certain Hibatallāh ibn Ismāʿīl 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-Ilāhī*[1]. Amongst the Nizārīs of eastern Iran, in the period under Abul Hasan Khān (Shāh), the Ismāʿīlī imam and the governor of Kirmān between 1169-1206/1756-91, the past connections between the Niʿmatallāhīs and Ismāʿīlīs were further strengthened[2]. This must have had some effect on the messianic attitude of the Ismāʿīlīs 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 Ismāʿīlī messianic claims. His efforts at organising the Ismāʿīlī sympathisers in Yazd, Kirmān and Quhistān came to an abrupt end, when he was murdered in Yazd by an excited mob who were incited by a certain mujtahid Mullā Husain Yazdī in 1817[3]. Not much is known about the nature of his *daʿwa* or the extent of his support, but from what is known about the Niʿmatallāhī influence, as well as from the revolt of his son Āqā Khān Husain ʿAlī Shāh (1843-4), one may suspect that at least in the early stages the messianic *daʿwa* was the mobilising force behind a movement which later turned into a political revolt[4].

Whatever the motives of Khalīlallāh and Āqā Khān, their actions must have

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1. Poonawala, Ismail, *Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature*, Malibu, 1977, p.13.

2. Pourjavādī and Wilson, 'Ismāʿīlīs and Niʿmatallāhīs', op.cit., pp.118-24 and cited sources. For Ismāʿīlīs in Khurāsān see below Chapter Eight Also see above for connections with Niʿmatallāhīs.

3. Amongst sources on late Ismāʿīlīs in Iran, the following give some information on Khalīlallāh: Muḥammad Jaʿfar Nāʾīnī, *Jāmiʿ Jaʿfarī*, edited by Iraj Afshār, Tehran, 1353 Sh., 558; M. Rousseau, 'Mémoire sur les Ismaelis et les Nosairis de Syrie', *Annales des Voyages de la Géographie et de l'Histoire*, vol.XIV, Paris, 1811, pp.279-80; *RS*. X, pp.551-2; Āqā Khān Maḥallātī, *ʿIbrat Afzā'*, Bombay, 1278 Q., pp.5-6; N. Shāh Husainī, 'Chigūnih Sayyid-i Quhistānī Iddiʿā-yi Imāmat Kard?' in *Iṭṭilāʿāt Māhānih*, III, 9, pp.42-5.

4. H. Algar, 'The Revolt of Āghā Khān Mahallātī and the transference of the Ismāʿīlī Imamate to India', op.cit., 55-81, and the cited sources. Also numerous reports on Āqā Khān and the Ismāʿīlī revolt of 1843-4 in British despatches (F.O. 60), between 1842-5.

planted some hopes in the hearts of some Ismā'īlī followers. Qatīl al-Karbalā'ī states that though the Ismā'īlīs are a small and insignificant community who 'are mostly illiterate and ignorant', nevertheless they also anticipate a manifestation among the descendants of Khalīlallāh[1]. He relates that once in 1258 (1842) he and his friends met in Najaf an Ismā'īlī mystic and scholar of high calibre, who prophesied the forthcoming downfall of the Qājārs and the transference of the monarchy to Āqā Khān[2].

But if the claims of Khalīlallāh hardly extended beyond the traditional limits of the Ismā'īlī *Imāmat*, 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 Āzarbāījān. As early as 1191/1777, a certain Qāsim, a shepherd from the village of Dihkhāriqān near Tabrīz, following some experience and holy dreams, claimed to be the Deputy (*Nā'ib*) of the Imam[3]. He immediately gained an immense popularity amongst the villagers in the area, and after expelling the village's local mullā, 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 Bīglarbaygī Najaf Qulī Khān Dunbulī (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 Qāsim's followers attacked the chief *faqīh* of the city, a certain Ākhūnd Mullā Ibrāhīm, and forced him to flee from Tabriz[4].

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 Tabrīz, Najaf Qulī Khān, who had a firm belief in him, or more probably was obliged to comply with public demand, erected the Shrine known as *Maqām-i Ṣāhib al-Amr* in the ruins of an old mosque[5]. His fame even gave Karīm Khān Zand a cause for

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1. *Qatīl*. (516).
2. Ibid.
3. 'Abd al-Razzāq Bayg Dunbulī (Maftūn), *Tajribat al-Aḥrār wa Taslīyat al-Abrār*, edited by H. Qāżī Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2 vols., Tabrīz, 1350 Sh., II, pp.196-7.
4. Ibid., 202-3.
5. Nādir Mīrzā, *Tārīkh va Jugrāfīyā-yi Tabrīz*, op.cit., and Bāmdād, M. *Sharḥ-i Ḥāl-i Rijāl-i Irān*, 6 vols., Tehran, 1347-54, IV, pp.332-4.

concern. Yet after two years his fame and glory gradually faded away presumably because his prophecies regarding the advent of the Qā'im did not come true. Eight years later, when in 1199 (1784) ʿAbd al-Razzāq Dunbulī met him in Tabrīz, he found a wretched wanderer in the streets of Tabrīz, who had lost all his past reputation[1]. 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, ʿAbd al-Razzāq concludes, his failure to revolt against the authority of the state, which would have secured him the whole province of Āzarbāījān, brought about his decline[2].

The shrine of Sāhib al-Amr however remained one of the sacred places in Tabrīz, and attracted pilgrims from all over Āzarbāījān. Throughout the 19th century this shrine was always associated with the Shaykhi faction of the ʿulama 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, Hājī Mīrzā ʿAlī Asghar 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[3].

A similar example of agreement between 'heterodox' claimants and the local governors may be seen in Kāshān, 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 Qāsim Bayg, a dervish from the Bīrāvand tribe (whom the author of *Rawdat al-Safā'* believes to be the same person who earlier appeared under the assumed name of Mullā Bārānī, and claimed to possess the secrets of Alchemy and other 'hidden sciences'), in collaboration with an unknown sayyid

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1. *Tajribat al-Aḥrār*, op.cit., 206.
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.
3. For this incident see Nādir Mīrzā, op.cit., p.111, 245-6; Ādamīyat, F. *Amīr Kabīr va Īrān*, 3rd edition, Tehran, 1348 Sh., pp.422-25, cf. Lady Sheil, *Glimpses*, op.cit., pp.165-6.

from Kāshān who claimed to be the Deputy of the Imam, encouraged Husain Qulī Khān to rebel against his brother Fath ʿAlī Shāh for the second time and seize the throne[1]. A brief success in capturing Natanz and then Isfahan soon turned to defeat at the hand of the Qājār forces. Husain Qulī in company with Muhammad Qāsim, fled to Luristān where they might have hoped to receive some support from Bīrāvand and other affiliated tribes. Later on, however, because of disagreement between the Lur chiefs, Husain Qulī Khān fled to Qum and took refuge in the Shrine, whereas Muhammad Qāsim fled to Baghdād[2].

This was indeed not the only example of messianism with a tribal affiliation. Besides the above mentioned Shāh Khalīlallāh who was supported by the Ismāʿīlī tribe of Ata'allāhīs in the vicinity of Kirmān, other popular claimants also emerged in eastern Iran, who led tribal resurgences against the Qājārs. In 1222 (1807;8), a certain outcast Bukharā'ī dervish known as Sūfī Islām, who once had been ejected by the *Bakjān (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 Uymāqāt, and then joined forces with the rebel governor of Herat Fīrūz al-Dīn Mīrzā against the Qājār governor of Khurasan Muhammad Valī Mīrzā[3]. 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 (*hūdaj*), and was guarded by 366 of his close companions, was killed[4].

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 Yūsuf Kāshgharī, a descendant of a family of Central Asian Sufi *amīrs* who for three generations had a secular and spiritual control over Kāshghar, after some years of wandering in Kurdistān, Egypt, Bombay and Basrah, 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 Kūklān and Yamūt under a united leadership[5]. Earlier skirmishes with local government forces eventually ended in 1228 (1813) in a full scale battle in which, in spite of early success, Khvājih Yūsuf was finally killed, and the Turkoman forces of twenty thousand strong were defeated[6]. Besides Sufi

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1. *RS*. IX, 371; ʿAbd al-Razzāq Dunbulī, *Maʾāthir-i Sulṭānīyih*, Tabriz, 1242 Q., (translated by Brydges, Sir H. Jones, *The Dynasty of the Kajars*, London, 1833, 135).
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.
4. Ibid. 434-5.
5. Ibid. pp.488-9.
6. Ibid., 494. This figure also seems to be an exaggeration.

affiliation of Sūfī Islām and Khājih Yūsuf, possibly with the Naqshbandī 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 Qājār 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 Kalārdashtī (ʿAlamgīr), who claimed to be the deputy of the Imam, was just another outburst of the semi-tribal messianism of the Kurdish Ahl-i Haqq community in Māzandarān[1]. One might suggest that Ahl-i Haqq's influence in western Iran, and to a lesser extent Naqshbandī'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 Akhbārīs 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 Shiʿi community in Georgia (Gurjistān), who in the late 1830's, gained a widespread popularity in the whole area even as far as Āzarbāijān. 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'[2]. 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

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1. For details of him see Keddie, Nikki, R., *Religion and Rebellion in Iran*, London, 1966, App.I, pp.136-140; *Khāksār va Ahl-i Ḥaqq*, op.cit., 153-4; Browne, E.G., *The Persian Revolution*, Cambridge, 1910, 52.

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[1]. As is characteristic of most other messianic trends (like Shaykh Shabān), 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 Tabrīz and Urūmīyih, 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'[2].

Another interesting case is that of a certain anonymous ascetic in Karbilā' who has been mentioned by Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī as an example of a similar 'imposter' prior to the Bab[3]. He was an ascetic recluse among Sayyid Kāzim'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 Kāzim, who according to Karīm Khān, publicly expelled him from his circle[4]. Karīm Khān Kirmānī also vaguely refers to two other claimants who seem to have appeared in the last years of Sayyid Kāzim. One person used to send to Sayyid Kāzim, 'tablets' of incomprehensible words, presumably calling upon Rashtī to recognise his claims. There was also a certain Mullā Sādiq in Āzarbāījān, who apparently with some inspiration from Shaykhi teachings on the emergence of the 'Renovator' (*muravvij*) of the thirteenth century, promised the advent of *Zuhūr*, and managed to secure a large following in the area[5]. To these claimants, showing Shaykhi influence, may also be added Mullā Muhammad Tāhir 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 Kāzim Rashtī but nevertheless it was in the closing years of the century that he expounded his ideas in his work *Nasīhat al-ʿĀlam* which was a combination of religious moral recommendations and Sufi popular beliefs[6]. Finally Hājī Muhammad

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid. 307.
3. *Izhāq al-Bāṭil*, Kirmān, 1392 Q., p.105.
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 Rashtī who all later converted to the Babi movement. See below Chapter Four, I.
5. Ibid.106.
6. An account of him appears in *Minhāj al-Ṭalibīn*, op.cit., pp.200-1.

Karīm Khān's own claim, that he had reached the position of the 'Fourth Pillar' (*Rukn-i Rābiʿ*), 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 Kirmānī's works underwent a drastic change, mainly to fit within the boundaries of Shiʿi orthodoxy, and thus secure the claimant from charges of blasphemy[1].

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 Shiʿi 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 apocalpytic 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 Qā'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 whould proceed the advent of the Imam. Significantly, none of the claimants openly assumed the position of *Mahdavīyat*, or *Qā'imīyat*. 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 *Zuhūr* under the name of the Qā'im.

Thus in the interim period, prior to the appearance of the Mahdī, 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 *Zuhūr*. 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 Rābiʿ* (Kirmān, 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 tranquillity 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 Qājārs throughout Iran, encouraged this process, both on the theoretical and practical level. Throughout the reign of Fath ʿAlī Shāh and Muhammad 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 ʿulama, 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 ʿulama's hostile response led some Sufis, such as the Niʿmatallāhīs 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 ʿulama, 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'im, not only by rescuing him from the web of Shi'i 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 *Fitnih* 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb: the early years

Our chief motive for the study of the early life of the Bab, 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 Babi 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad, later known as the Bab, was born in 1235 Q. (1819) in Shiraz[1]. He was the only child of Sayyid Muḥammad Riżā[2], a small merchant in the Bāzār of Shiraz. His family were originally from Shiraz, and it appears that they lived in the city for generations. Though Mīrzā Aḥmad Shīrāzī Īshīk-āqāsī, one of the closest sources to the Bab's family, believes that the Bab's forefathers belonged to the sayyids of Herat (Harāt), and even maintains that Sayyid Muḥammad Riżā himself emigrated from Herat and settled in Shiraz[3], 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 Aḥmad and his family 'maintained an intimate relation' with the family of the Bab, and it is also true that the title *Mīr*, which is used by some sources instead of 'sayyid' for the Bab and his forbears, sometimes refers to Shiʿi 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 Bab is not confirmed by any other source. On the contrary the

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1. In *al-Ṣaḥīfa Bayn al-Ḥaramayn* the Bab 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. *Aḥmad*. 446.

available evidence on the background of the Bab suggests the opposite[1].

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 Mīr Muhammad Mumin Husainī Najafī Shīrāzī[2]. It is difficult to reconcile these two contradictory opinions unless one assumes that Sayyid Muhammad Riżā, or his ascendents, immigrated to Herat at some stage, and then returned to their home town. His mother Fāṭimih/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 ʿAlī Muhammad, were traditionally engaged in large scale trade. As the *Fārs Nāmih* confirms, they were counted amongst the old and reputable merchants of Shiraz[3]. Though in the Bab's family, *sīyādat* did not indicate any specific religious or clerical advantage above that of other sādāt families in the city, yet it greatly contributed to the high esteem and veneration which they enjoyed in Shiraz. The claim to an impeccable *sīyādat*, 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 *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Shīrāz* or *Tārīkh-i Muʿīn al-Saltanih* imply that Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad's family on his father's side were also involved in large scale trade, but it appears that as far as Sayyid Muhammad Riżā was concerned, he was more of a local merchant than a big merchant like his brother-

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1. For Heratī 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 ʿAjam (Cheikh-oul-Adjam), says about the name and the origin of the Bab's father (VII, 334, n.3) that his name was Salib (*sic*) and he was born in Tchaharchenbeh-pich, is only the misreading of Ṣālih which in fact was the name of the father of Mīrzā ʿAlī Muḥammad Bārfurūshī (Quddūs). The confusion between the Bab and Quddūs seems to have occurred because in the later years of the movement, the title of *Ḥażrat-i Aʿlā*, originally assumed by the Bab, was given by him to his loyal follower Quddūs, 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-Ṣaḥīfa Bayn al-Ḥaramayn*, (op.cit.). Mīrzā Habīballāh Afnān, *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Shīrāz*, MS. (*INBA*, no.1227 D); Fayżī, M.A., *Khāndān-i Afnān*, Tehran, 127 Badīʿ (1971); *Ṭabaqāt*., I, p.443 (under Mīrzā Hasan Shirazi) and *Fārs Nāmih*. II. *TMS*. (p.28) speaks of a genealogy preserved in the Afnan family in which the Bab's ancestory is traced back to Imam Ḥusain ibn ʿAlī. No sign of this genealogy has yet been found. Considering the Bab's own reference, the order of ascendancy in *Mīrzā Habīballāh* (p.1) and *Nabil*.(p.Iix Genealogy of the Bab) are both slightly confused.

3. II, 45 cf. 131.

Genealogy of the Bab

m: merchant
muj: mujtahid

Sayyid Muḥammad

Mīr Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (ʿĀbid)

Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī (m)

Mīr Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusain (m) d. circa 1250/1834-5

S. Ḥasan ʿAlī (m)

S. ʿAlī 1211-66/1746-1850 (m)

S. Muḥammad d.1293/1876 (m)

Fāṭimih Bayġum

Khadījih Khānūm d.1299/1874

Javād d. in childhood

Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad the Bab. 1235-66/1819-50

Mīrzā Āqā (m) d.1321/1903-4

Zahrā d.1307/1899

Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh 1292-1368/1875-1948

Mīrzā Āgā

Mahdī

Jaʿfar

Ḥusain

Mīrzā Buzurg (m)

Muḥ. Taqī Vakīl al-Ḥaqq (m) b.1246/1830 d.after 1325/1907

Muḥammad ʿAlī (m). d. circa 1314/1845-6

Aḥmad d. in childhood 1254/1843

Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥasan Afnān Kabīr (m) circa 1225-1310/1810-92

Abul Qāsim 1226-1305/1811-87

Alī Muḥammad Muvaqqar al-Daulih

Mīr Muḥammad Mumin Ḥusainī Shīrazī Najafī

Mīr Lutfallāh

Mīr Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn

Mīr Faḥallāh (small m)

Mīr Ibrāhīm (small m)

Sayyid Muḥammad Riżā d. circa 1243/1826-7 (s. m)

?

Sayyid Javād Shīrāzī d.1287/1870-1 (muj.)

Mīr Ismāʿīl

Mīrzā Maḥmūd

Mīrzā Ḥasan (muj.) 1230-1312/1815-1894

Mīrza Asad-allāh

Mīrza Aḥmad

Mīrzā Āghā Shīrāzī

Supplement to page 101.

in-laws. This is evident from a remark made by the Bab's wife Khadījih Khānum who says that her father-in-law was 'engaged in retail trade' (*tijārat-i juz'ī*)[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 (*bazzāzī*) in the bazar of Shiraz'[2]. Hence Sayyid Muhammad Riżā 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 Rughanī 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 bāzārī retail traders with strong religious ties, and the well established prosperous families of big merchants (*tujjār*) 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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1. Account recorded by Munīrih Khānum, cited in *Khāndān-i Afnān*, op.cit., p.162.

2. *Ahmad*. 446 cf. *NT*. III, 39. Also *Kazem Beg*. VII, 334 and Mīrzā Abul Fażl Gulpāyigānī, *Tārīkh-i Ẓuhūr-i Dīyānat-i Ḥażrat-i Bāb va Ḥażrat-i Bāhā'allāh*, *INBA*, pub. 9, p.3.

3. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh* op.cit. cf. *Khāndān-i Afnān*. pp.204 ff.

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

5. The age of Sayyid Muhammad Riżā could be worked out from Mullā Fathallāh Khādim's account citèd in *Mīrzā Habiballāh*. pp.4, 9. What *TMS* (30) and Gulpāyigānī (*Tārīkh-i Ẓuhūr* 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 Nāṭiq, H., *Muṣībat-i vabā va balā-yi ḥukūmat*, 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 Shāhzādih quarter. These two Haydarī 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 Niʿmatīs 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[1].

Little is known about Sayyid ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī Muhammad was sent to the nearby *maktab* of a certain Shaykh Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn[2] in Tikkiyih of Qahvih-yi Aulīyā 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 Mullā Fathallāh Khādim, who was in the same maktab as the Bab, this school was exclusively for the children of 'tujjār, notables and dignitaries', since Shaykh ʿĀbid 'never admitted anybody's child, especially those of shopkeepers of bazar, because of their ill behaviour and their filthy clothes'[3]. 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'[4]. An example of this private tuition is Mīrzā

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1. See *Fārs Nāmih*. II, pp.27-47 (Bāzār-i Murgh) and pp.54-60 (Darb-i Shāhzādih). An unpublished study on the basis of the information in *Fārs Nāmih* is carried out by A. 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 ʿĀbid, Shaykh-i Anām, Shaykh-i Muʿallim and Shaykhuā.

3. Op.cit., p.4.

4. Binning, R.B.M., *A Journal of Two Years' Travel in Persia etc.*, 2 vols., London, 1857. I, 283.

Hasan Shīrāzī (born 1230 Q./1814-15), a distant cousin of the Bab, and future *marjaʿ-i taqlīd* of the late nineteenth century who first started his elementary schooling at the age of four at home[1]. Whether Sayyid ʿAlī 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 Muʿallim, he appears to have received attention and respect greater than was given to a simple maktabdār. As his title 'Muʿallim' 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 ṭalabihs of elementary level[2]. His acquaintance with Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad's father and his uncle Hājī Sayyid ʿAlī 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 ʿĀbid, like many similar middle rank mullas and muʿallims, was a follower of the Shaykhi school[3], and thus in conformity with relatives of the Bab who also seem to have been followers of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī[4]. 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[5]. His school was situated in a relatively new and unknown tikkīyih (Qahvih-yi Aulīyā), 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. *Ṭabaqāt*, I, p.437. See below for further details.
2. Account by Āqā Muḥammad Ibrāhīm b. Ismāʿīl Bayg Tājir cited in *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*.
3. Ibid., p.4.
4. Years later when the cause of the Bab was publicised in Shiraz, Shaykh ʿĀbid first denied the claims of his former pupil. But later, as a result of an interview with Sayyid Javad Karbala'i, he modified his attitude. (Mīrzā Abul Fażl Gulpāyigānī & Mīrzā Mahdī Gulpāyigānī, *Kashf al-Ghiṭa' ʿan Ḥīyal al-Aʿdā'*, op.cit., p.82 account by Sayyid Javad Karbala'i). It is also said that there is a manuscript of a tract by Shaykh ʿĀbid, in which he stated his recollections of the Bab's school days, which his descendants are reluctant to divulge its contents. (A. Afnan *notes* cf. H.M. Balyuzi, *The Bāb*, Oxford, 1973, p.231). See also M.A. Fayżī, *Ḥażrat-i Nuqṭih-i Ūlā* (Tehran, 132 Badiʿ/1352 Sh., pp.178-9 n.) for further details. Shaykhʿ Ābid 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' (*ʿilm-i ladunnī*). 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 *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh* 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 *Bayān* he calls upon a certain Muhammad Muʿallim, an unknown teacher of his, not to flog (or bastinado) his students more than a limited number of lashes[5], and in the Persian *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 Furṣat al-Daulih Shīrāzī, *Āthār al-ʿAjam*. Oddly enough neither *Fārs Nāmih* nor *Ṭarā'iq* (under *Tarjamih-yi Shīrāz* , III, pp.477-95) have mentioned this tikkiyih. M.A. Fayżī, who himself visited the site states that one of the tombs belongs to a certain Darvīsh Aulīyā' who died in 1119 Q. (1707). (*Nuqṭih-i Ūlā* op.cit., pp.74-5).
2. See below this chapter.
3. III, 39.
4. e.g. *The Bāb*, op.cit., p.48. Sayyid Javād Karbalā'ī once saw some remarkable samples of his writing in Shiraz when Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad was a young child. (*Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, op.cit., p.56). Later in his life, the Bab developed a skill in *shikastih*, which he himself especially favoured and even recommended in *Bayān* as the best style of calligraphy (IX, 2, p.313).
5. Cited in *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[1]. 'On his father's death' as Mīrzā Aḥmad states, 'his maternal uncles undertook his education, especially Hājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī, who was reputed to be the most sympathetic of the brothers'[2]. The care and attention given by Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī was not confined to his education, or investing in trade the capital left by his brother-in-law to support the orphan[3], 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad's hours, as he continued to work there, now in the office of his uncles[4]. 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad's own lack of enthusiasm for formal school teaching finally forced Shaykh ʿĀbid to send him back to his mother complaining of his strange remarks which were, he thought, beyond the capacity of an ordinary child[5], another account insists that when Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad was taken out of school in order to work full time in the bazar, the same Shaykh ʿĀbid 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'[6].

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

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1. *Ahmad*. 447.
2. Ibid cf. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. p.9.
3. A. Afnān, *notes*.
4. *Nuqṭih-i Ūlā*, op.cit., p.82 without mentioning the source.
5. A. Afnān, *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 ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Qazvīnī suggests that after a few years, when Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad was about fifteen years old (*circa* 1835) his uncle arranged for him to resume his studies under Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq Yazdī (then the imām of jimāʿat in Shīrāz and a student of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsā'ī) but he lacked the basic knowledge essential for any further religious studies;

> 'In Mashad, I visited Ākhūnd Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq Yazdī who was one of the eminent ʿulama and a follower of Shaykh (Ahmad Ahsa'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 imam (of jimāʿat) in Shiraz 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 (*muqaddamāt*). He first must learn *Amthala*, and teaching *Amthala* is not suitable to my position". After that they sent him to Būshihr 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 Muhammad Ḥamza' Sharīʿatmadār Bārfurūshī who with regard to the Bab's later attempts to restart religious studies, states that he did not study elementary texts (*muqaddamāt*) beyond *Suyūṭī* and *Ḥāshiya* of Mullā ʿAbdallāh[2]. 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 (*ṣarf va naḥv*)[3].

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

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1. Cited in *Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq*, p.172. n. The Bab himself alluded to his pupillage under Mullā ʿAbd al-Khaliq (see below Chapter Eight, III and cited references). The name of the younger son of Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq is unknown, but his elder son later became a follower of the Bab and died in Ṭabarsī. For his details see below Chapter Eight, III.
2. Sharīʿatmadārīyān, *Sharḥ-i Zindigī*, op.cit. (MS. p.15) quoting *Asrār al-Shahāda*. Also Z. 437. For the titles cited in the above quotations see *al-Dharīʿa*.
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[1]. 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 Ahsā'ī and some of his contemporaries. What made the Bab to escape learning of '*muqaddamāt*', 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 madrasihs of *Dār al-ʿIlm* 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'[2]. 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'[3].

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 *uṣūl-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.

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1. *Ahmad*. 447.
2. Op.cit., I, pp.282-3.
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[1]. 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-i shubahāt*) 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*)...'[2].

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 (*ʿilm al-ʿayān*), and I do not know a word of the rules of the philologists (*aḥl al-bayan*), 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-ṣarf va al-naḥw*), and I am proud of it, since God in the day of *Qiyama* will prove to all that I was assisted by his generosity ...'[3].

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 ʿAlī Muḥammad's antipathy for conventional

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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 Bushrūyihī's reply to Mullā Muḥammad Narāqī on the Babi's point of view regarding Arabic grammar. Also Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, *Izhāq al-Bāṭil*, op.cit., pp.83 ff) for the earliest criticism by his Shaykhi opponents.
2. *Ṣaḥīfah-yi ʿAdlīyah* , Persian, *INBA*. 82, p.155.
3. *Tafsīr al-Hā*, *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. Ḥāji Sayyid Javād Shīrāzī (Kirmānī), a distant cousin of the Bab, whose father was also a merchant in Shiraz, after obtaining his *ijāzih* in ʿAtabāt, 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 ʿAlī Shāh he settled there. A few years later in 1253 Q. (1837-8) he assumed the office of imām jumʿih 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 *Maṣnavī* of Rūmī, something unusual for a Shiʿi mujtahid, attracted students from other places to Kirmān, including the celebrated philosopher Hājī Mullā Hādī Sabzivārī[1]. He was also the chief rival of Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, and therefore friend of his enemies. His tendencies towards *ḥikmat*, and his previous acquaintance with Rashtī's students in ʿAtabāt, 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[2].

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 Hasan Shīrāzī known as Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī or Mujaddid-i Shīrāzī, the celebrated mujtahid and *marjaʿ-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 Riżā[3] (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[4].

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1. Shaykh Yaḥyā Kirmānī, *Farmāndihān-i Kirmān*, edited by Bāstānī Pārīzī, Tehran, 1344 sh. (*Irān Zamīn*, XI), pp.26, 50 cf; M.H. Iʿtimād al-Saltanih, *al-Maʾāthir va al-Āthar*, Tehran, 1306 Q., p.153 and *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 1, 317.
2. *Nabil*. pp.181-7 cf. *Samandar*. 167.
3. See Table of Genealogy.
4. *Fārs Nāmih*, II, 54 cf. A. Afnān, *notes*.

Mīrżā Hasan was born in 1230 Q. (1815-16) five years earlier than Sayyid ʿAlī 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 uṣūl before moving to Isfahan as a young ṭalabih of eighteen where he acquired his *ijāzih* from Hājī Mullā Ibrāhīm Karbāsī[1]. Being a talented student he soon passed all the conventional stages in advanced religious education. He moved to ʿAtabāt in the mid 1840's, and there, after a long period of study under Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī[2] and then Shaykh Murtażā Ansārī, he reached the stage of *Aʿlamīyat*. He settled in Sāmirrā and later emerged as *marjaʿ*, and finally died there in 1312 Q. (1894/5)[3].

These two examples of highly esteemed mujtahids on the paternal side of Sayyid ʿAlī 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. Mīrzā Sayyid Hasan Shīrāzī, son of Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī Tājir, (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 (*mutifannin*), 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 Mīrzā Hasan Shīrāzī around the early 1260's[4]. Though by profession he was a merchant, throughout his life he maintained a serious

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1. For his details see references in Chapter Six, II.
2. For his details see Chapter Five, I.
3. For his details see *Ṭabaqāt*, I, pp.436-41; *Religion and State*, op.cit. pp.210-11 and cited sources. His brother Mīrzā Asadallāh Tabīb to whom *Fārs Nāmih* (II, 54) gives the religious title of Ḥujjat al-Islām, and his nephew Āghā Sayyid Mīrzā Shīrāzī, were both resident in ʿAtabāt. (*Ṭabaqāt*, I, p.172). An interesting interview between Mīrzā Hasan and Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad (Nūr al-Dīn) Afnān, on the last year of the former's life in Sāmirrā'(cited in *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*, pp.179-93) suggests that Mīrzā Ḥasan like his predecessor, and his teacher, Shaykh Murtażā 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 Manuchihr Khan Muʿtamid al-Daulih replying to the enquiries of the ʿulama and ṭullāb (pp.189-90).
4. ʿAbd al-Bahā', ʿAbbās. *Tadhkirat al-Wafā'*, Haifa 1342 Q. (1924), pp.39-40, and *Khāndān-i Afnān*, op.cit., pp.246-255.

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 (*funūn-i shatā*), 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'[1]. While still a ṭalabih in Isfahan, he specialised in uṣūl-i fiqh, and according to one source, was even authorised by Ḥājī Ibrāhīm Karbāsī[2]. In a letter to Mīrzā Sayyid Ḥasan, the Bāb refers to a recent work on uṣūl which was produced by the former. He condemns the study of uṣūl and urges his brother-in-law to abandon these useless speculations[3]. Even before the Bab's marriage, Sayyid Ḥasan was in close contact with the Bab's immediate family. In fact by the death of Sayyid Ḥasan's father, like Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad's, the guardianship of his family was entrusted to the Bab's eldest uncle[4]. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that both Sayyid ʿAlī 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[5].

A reference should also be made to another brother-in-law of the Bab; Ḥājī Muḥammad Mahdī Ḥijāb Shīrāzī[6]. 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

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1. *Tadhkirt al-Wafā'*, 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 Findīk 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 Khadījih Khānūm the Bab's wife and also brother-in-law of Ḥajī Sayyid ʿAlī the Bab'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'[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[2].

The above examples suggest three common characteristics: first, that in the family of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad, 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 ṭalabih like Mīrzā Ḥasan Shīrāzī or Sayyid Javād Shīrāzī, both from non clerical backgrounds, to reach high positions in religious rank, or certain merchants such as Mīrzā Sayyid Ḥasan Afnān Kabīr or Ḥijāb Shīrāzī 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad, his disillusion with school, when combined with a need 'for earning his livelihood'[3], left no other choice but to become an assistant to his uncles in their trade in the port of Būshihr. As he himself mentioned in the *'Letter to the ʿulamā'*; 'When this youth reached the age of compulsory learning, in the tradition of the Prophet of God in the past, he arrived in *Jazīrat al-Baḥr* (i.e. Būshihr). He did not study your scientific methods with any of you (i.e. with the ʿulama) and thus in the preserved tablet of the divine order, he is an uneducated (*ummī*), ʿAjamī and descendent

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1. *Ṭarā'iq*, III, 471-2 and *Fārs Nāmih*, II, 44.
2. A. Afnan, *notes*.
3. *Ahmad*. 447.

of the Prophet of God'[1].

II

Throughout his five years residence in Būshihr (1835-40/1250-6) sometimes in the company of one of his uncles, and most of the time in their absence, Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad 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 ʿAbbās 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 (*sīyāq*) of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad between 1250-56 (1835-40)[4] show that their trade with the interior of Iran

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1. *INBA*, pub. 91, XXII, pp.75-6 cf. *Browne Or. MSS.*, No. F 21(9), Letter No. 32, pp.224-235, Arabic, written about 1262 (1846).

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.O.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, Kāshān 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 Būshihr. Mīr Ismā'īl, the Bab's paternal grandfather, himself sometime during Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad's childhood lived in Būshihr, had trade links with his uncles[1]. The extent of the family business sometimes even stretched to those members who were not directly involved in trade. The above-mentioned Sayyid Javād Shīrāzī, while on his way to the Hijāz for further studies, still sold his father's merchandise in the Muscat market[2].

But the large scale trade in the family really flourished at the time of his elder uncle Hājī Sayyid Muhammad whose marriage to one of the oldest and most reputable tujjār families known as 'Abd al-Husainī must have partly contributed to his success[3]. In spite of chronic waves of political insecurity and risks of economic failure, the 'Abd al-Husainī managed to establish a trade in Būshihr which according to *Fārs Nāmih*,'extended from the remotest parts of India to the farthest corners of Farangistān'[4], and survived for generations.

Hājī Sayyid Muhammad himself, his brothers Hājī Sayyid 'Alī and Hājī Sayyid Hasan 'Alī and their relatives and descendents, later known as Afnāns[5], throughout the nineteenth century and up to the early decades of the present century, operated large scale trade from Shiraz, Yazd, Būshihr and Bandar 'Abbās inside Iran, and Bombay, Hong Kong, Ishqābād (Ashkhabad) and Beirut outside Iran. Muḥammad 'Alī Afnān, one of the three sons of Hājī 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[6]. Another son, Hājī Muhammad Taqī Vakīl al-Haqq, who succeeded the

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1. A. Afnān, *notes*.
2. Ibid.
3. *Khāndān-i Afnān*, p.46, cf. *Fārs Nāmih*, II, 76-7.
4. II, pp.76-7.
5. The title Afnān (lit. branches, i.e. of the Bab's family) conferred upon them by Bahā'allāh.
6. *Fārs Nāmih*, II, p.45 under Mīrzā Āqā family; *Khāndān-i Afnān*, pp.81-100.

Bab in the Būshihr office in the 1840's, later moved to Yazd and then to Ashkhabad[1]. Also Ḥājī Sayyid Muḥammad's five grandsons were all engaged in land and trade[2]. The younger uncle of the Bab, Ḥājī Sayyid Ḥasan ʿAlī was based in Yazd. He married the daughter of another reputable merchant of Shiraz, Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Rasūl Tājir Shīrāzī, and in collaboration with his brothers, handled their trade in the eastern markets of Kirmān, Mashhad, and Ṭabas[3].

The Bab's father-in-law, Ḥājī Mīrzā ʿAlī 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 Khānih-ī, born 1226/1811-12) also participated in the Būshihr trade. *Fārs Nāmih* confirms that Mīrzā Abul Qāsim's trade was substantial. 'As he embarked on his forefathers' trade, he commissioned commercial agents in every corner'[4] When Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad 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 Gumruk in the bazar of Shiraz near the office of his brother-in-law[5].

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

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1. *Khāndān-i Afnān*, (pp.100-131) gives details of him and his descendents who were merchants and land owners in Yazd.
2. Ibid. pp.40-81. *Fārs Nāmih* (II, 45) states 'in the past few years, since trade had declined and commercial transactions were abandoned', the descendents of Ḥājī Sayyid Muḥammad '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.
3. *Khāndān-i Afnān*, pp.140-58. *Nabīl* (p.126) refers to the partners of the Bab's uncles in Yazd and Ṭabas.
4. II, p.131. Afterwards, Mīrzā Abul Qāsim left his trade in the hands of his four sons (Ibid.) Also *Khāndān-i Afnān*, 256-285.
5. *Aḥmad*. 449 and *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. 256. Later in the events of 1262 Q.(1848) when the Bab managed to free himself from detention in the house of the dārūghih 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 tujjār 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[1]. Teachings which praised honesty and godliness in trade, and warned the evildoers, and the very fact that trade was the profession of Muḥammad al-Amīn, had a special meaning for the merchants. It was these teachings which

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1. For traditions regarding trade and merchants see *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musalman*, ed. by A.J. Wensinck and others, Liden, 1936-69, 7 vols., I, pp.264-6 and cited sources. Also *EI*[1], TIDJĀRA by Heffening and *EI*[2], BAYʿ (by Schacht) and cited sources. For the Shiʿi point of view, see *Biḥār al-Anwār*, op.cit. XXIII, and sections under *makāsib* and *muʿāmilāt* in 19th century fiqh works such as Muḥammad Ḥasan Najafī's *Jawāhir al-Kalām* (Isfahan, 1271 Q.) and Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥusain Nūrī Tabarsī *Mustadrak al-Wasāʿil* (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 *Fārs Nāmih*, may be better appreciated when compared to the contemporary European accounts. In *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 distrustful 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].

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1. Hadīth quoted from the Prophet in Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, Cairo, 1313 Q., Tijārāt, I, 1.
2. Ibid. Other similar traditions quoted in Ibn al-Farrā', Abū Muḥammad al-Baghāwī, *Mishkāt al-Masābih*, English translation by J. Robson, 2 vols., Lahore, 1975 (2nd edition), I, Book XII, 599.
3. Arthur de Gobineau, Paris, 1859, p.392-3 translated in *The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914*, op.cit. 36.
4. Ibid.

Almost the same universal characteristics are also detected by Malcolm who on his second visit (circa 1810) to Iran met merchants in Būshihr, 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'[1].

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'[2]. Whereas Edward Burgess himself a merchant in Tabriz (between 1828-55) on a few occasions praises the honesty and thoroughness of Tabrīzī merchants who are 'so regular in their payments that upon most occasions I have not even to send a servant for the money ...'[3]. 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'[4]. To this, Binning adds:

> '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,

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1. Malcolm, Sir John, *Sketches of Persia*, (One volume ed.), London, 1845, pp.132-3.
2. *A Tour to Sheeraz*, London, 1807, p.77.
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 Iṣfahānī merchants, since he believes that 'honesty cannot be expected in Ispahani 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'[1].

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. *Fārs Nāmih's* brief mention of the uncles of the Bab that 'for generations they were engaged in trade and are known for their honesty'[2] goes beyond a casual complimentary remark when Mīrzā Aḥmad Shīrāzī states that 'all of them (i.e. uncles of the Bab) are trustworthy merchants and reputed to be noble Sayyids'[3]. The same qualities have also been attributed to the Bab,

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1. II, p.34.
2. II, 131.
3. *Aḥmad*. 446. According to A. Afnān (*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 Būshihr. 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 Būshihr, a certain Ḥājī Mīrzā Abul Ḥasan 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 Būshihr, Sayyid ʿAlī 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[1]. On another occasion, the sale of a cargo of indigo was agreed between Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad and some merchants in Būshihr. After the delivery of the goods, at the time of the payment, the purchasers came back to Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad and asked for a discount; a general method of after sale bargaining practised in all Iranian markets and known as *dabbih*[2]. 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad for not 'acting in accordance with people's wishes and neglecting accepted customs and

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1. *TMS*. (p.78), without specifying his source, only saying that this has been reported by the opponents of the Bab. *Nabil*. (p.79) quotes Sayyid Javād Karbalā'ī relating a similar account. The above-mentioned merchant is probably the father of Aḥmad ibn Abul Ḥasan Sharīf Shīrāzī (later Ishīk Āqāsī) 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 *dabbih* 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 Isphahani'. *The Land of the Lion and the Sun*, op.cit., p.188. In the case of the Bab *ṣighih* (contract) had been issued and *tankhāhgardān* (deposit) had been exchanged.

practices'[1].

Although the author of *Nuqṭat al-Kāf* believes that the Bab during his residence in Būshihr, was successful in his business 'to the extent that the chiefs of tujjār took notice of his holiness' mastery in commercial matters'[2], 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[3]. One may assume that it is this attitude which made the continuation of the partnership with his uncles a formidable task. As Mu'īn al-Salṭanih points out; 'considering the existing necessities of the time', the Bab finally separated from his uncles and set up his own independent trade[4].

The above evidence illustrates that for young Sayyid ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī 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'[5]

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[6], who states that Sayyid ʿAlī 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'[7].

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1. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*, pp.12-14 citing an account by ʿAbd al-Bahā', cf. *NK*. 109.
2. *NK*. 109. 3. Ibid. 4. *TMS*. 78.
5. Arabic letter cited in *TMS*. 28.
6. For his details see below Chapter Seven, II.
7. *NK*. 110.

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 *Shar'*, 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'[1]. On the subject of foreigners, he emphasises that only those Christian merchants (*ḥurūf-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[2]. 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[3]. 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[4].

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 idealogy. This implies that the effect of professional background in the personality and teachings of the Bab is much more subtle than a direct

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1. *Bayān*, V, 18 (p.181).
2. Ibid. VII, 16, (p.263).
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 Muḥammad, 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[1]. 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[2]. 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 ʿAlī 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'[3]. Dreams in particular seem to have played a significant role in the Bab's own

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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. Afnān, *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, Ḥājī Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusain, himself a merchant, 'was known to the people of Būshihr not only for his piety and godliness, but also for certain miraculous feats (*karāmāt*) which are reported of him'. *Khāndān-i Afnān*, (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 Imām Jaʿfar Ṣādiq, a character who in Shiʿi 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[1]. In *Ṣaḥīfah-yi ʿAdlīyah*, 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 (*ʿulūm-i ladunnī*) is because of a dream which I once had of the holy head of the Master of Martyrs (*Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* i.e. Imām Ḥusain) 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'[2].

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 Imām Ḥusain'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[3]. 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 Shiʿi esoteric thinking[4] of visiting the Prophet and Imamsand particularly the Twelfth Imam. In particular these dreams have a striking similarity to those described by Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī - dreams which disclose the secret of the Book, unfold the dubious points of Akhbār, and

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1. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. Also *TMS*. 29-30 and *KD*, I, 33.
2. *INBA*. 82, pp.134-205 (160). In the Tabriz trial of 1848, some of the ʿulama present in the gathering made sarcastic remarks about this very dream. See *Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī*, op.cit., p.313 citing a manuscript written by Mullā Muḥammad Taqī ibn Mullā Muḥammad Mamaqānī.
3. Commentary on verse 35 of *Sura al-Nūr* (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.
4. For the significance of dreams in Shiʿi thinking see Vajda, G. 'Le probleme de la vision de Dieu (*ruʾya*) d'après qelques auteurs shiʿites duodecimains', in *Le Shīʿīsm imāmite*, Colloque de Strasbourg (6-9 mai 1968), Paris, 1970, pp.31-54. Also see *The dream and human societies*, ed. by G.E. von Grunebaum and R. Caillois, L.A., 1966. (Articles by von Grunebaum, H. Corbin, T. Fahd, J. Lecerf and F. Rahman).

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 ʿAlī Muḥammad 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' (*Huwa al-Fattāḥ al-ʿAlīm*)[2] he insisted first on understanding the meaning, and thus enraged Shaykh ʿĀbid[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 Ḥāfiz; 'Hearest thou not the whistle's call, this snare should now thy prison be'[4]. Mīrzā Sayyid Muḥammad Sahhāf, one of his school friends remembered that while other students were playing games, in his seclusion Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad spent his time in prayers[5]. Sayyid Javād Karbalā'ī 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad 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 khānih-i jaddam būdam*), 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 Sabzpūshān in the neighbourhood of Shiraz, his uncle Ḥājī Sayyid ʿAlī 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].

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1. For dreams of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī see autobiographical *risāla* cited in *Fihrist*, I, pp.136-143; *L'É cole Shaykhie*, op.cit. pp.11-12; *Risālih-i Sharḥ-i Aḥvāl-i Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī*, op.cit. p.9-17. Also compare with dreams reported by Shaykh Aḥmad's teacher Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm cited in *Q*. pp.171-4. *Q*. (206) and *Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī* (83) give some interpretation of the authenticity of *ruʾyā* .
2. *Qur'ān* XXXIV, 25.
3. Account given by Mullā Fathallāh cited in *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. pp.6-7.
4. Account given by Āqā Ibrāhim b. Ismāʿīl Bayg Tājir cited in *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. pp.7-8. Couplet translated by A.J. Arberry, *Ḥāfiz*, Cambridge, 1962, p.89.
5. Cited in *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'* , op.cit. p.84.
6. Ibid. pp.83-4.
7. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. pp.10-11. Similar recollections about childhood devotion, seclusion and reluctance in associating with other children have also been narrated of both Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī (*Sharḥ-i Aḥvāl*, op.cit. pp.5-9 and his autobiography in *Fihrist*. I, pp.132-5) and Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī (*MJQ*. (455) quoting Mīrzā ʿAlī Aṣghar Samīʿ Rashtī a childhood friend of Rashtī).

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 Būshihr 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. Hājī Sayyid Javād who once dwelt for six months in the house of the Bab in Būshihr 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'[1]. 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'[2]. But a more interesting account comes from a certain Hājī Muhammad Husain, a colleague of the Bab in Būshihr 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 Sarāy-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'[3].

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 (*rīyāżāt*) on the roof of his trade house in

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1. Cited in *Nabil*. 79.
2. *Ahmad*. pp.446-7.
3. M.H. Ruknzādih Ādamīyat, *Dānishmandān va Sukhansarāyān-i Fārs*, Tehran, 1337-40 Sh., 4 vols., I, 387-8 citing his grandfather's uncle.

Būshihr. Attacking the Bab's deviation from the path of 'true religion', *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh* states that 'when evil temptations and selfish ambitions encouraged him, in spite of (the order of) the holy *Shar*ʿ, he yielded towards arduous purifications (*riyāżāt-i shāqqih*), and tended to reach the high stages (*maʿārij-iʿālīyih*). As I have heard, once in Būshihr, 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 (*awrād*)'[1]. To this Hidāyat adds that the purpose of ascetic exercises was to 'dominate the sun' (*taskhīr-i shams*)[2]. However implausible these reports might appear, they are in line with Mīrzā Aḥmad's reference to the Bab's intention for 'mastering the science of planets, particularly the sun'[3]. Even Nabīl Zarandī confirms that in the oppressive heat of Būshihr, each Friday while exposed to the fierce rays of the noontide sun, he devoted several hours to continuous worship upon the roof of his house[4]. 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 Hidāyat 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

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1. III. 39.
2. *RS*. X, 310.
3. *Ahmad*. 447.
4. *Nabil*. pp.77-8.
5. Ibid.
6. *NT*. III, 39.
7. *RS*. X, 310.

caused some of his contemporaries such as Mirza Kazem Beg to suggest that; 'En société il s'entretenait plus volontiers avec les savants ou écoutait les récits des voyageure qui affluaient dans cette ville comerçante; aussi se plaisait-on à le ranger au nombre des sectateurs du *Tarikat*, fort respectés dan le peuple'[1].

The Bab's association with Sufi orders, or seeking guidance from a Sufi *quṭb* were rejected by the author of *Nuqtat al-Kāf*, but Ḥājī Mīrzā Jānī, 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 (*murshid*) is nothing but mere accusation and absolute fabrication, since in appearance that point of perfection (*nuqṭih-i ghinā*) under no circumstances was in need of anyone, but nevertheless in reality he was a seeker of the beloved (*faqīr-i īla al-maḥbūb*)'[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 Būshihr was one of the strongholds of those Akhbārī ʿulama who were originally from Bahrain[3]. Their significance in this context becomes more evident since similar interests in austerity, and *ʿulūm-i gharībih* can be traced among leading Akhbārī figures such as the well known Mīrzā Muḥammad Akhbārī[4]. Besides, long established contacts between Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī and his successor Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī with the Akhbārī ʿulama of Bahrain and also the ʿulama of the Āl ʿUṣfūr family in Būshihr, to whome 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 *Ṣaḥīfah-yi ʿAdlīyāh* suggests that at least in the later years of his life the Bab regarded all important currents in contemporary Shiʿi thinking as deviant and misdirected;

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

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1. *Kazem Beg*. VII, 335.
2. *NK*. pp.109-110. For the mystical tendencies of Ḥājī Mīrzā Jānī 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 Akhbārīs 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 Aḥmad 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 (*bāṭin*) is in their hand, and yet they remained far and isolated from both outward and inward (*ẓāhir va bāṭin*), 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 Ṣadrā (*Ṣadrā'īyūn*) 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 Liylī'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 Aḥmad'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 Būshihr[2]. This seems to have coincided with the production of some of his earliest writings. Nicolas makes a passing reference to certain *Risāla Fiqhīya* written in Būshihr, in which 'il montre une vraie piété une effusion islamique qui semblaint lui présager un brillant avenir dans les liens de l'orthodoxie chiite'[3]. Apparently it is these writings (written towards the end of his residence in Būshihr, around 1257 Q.) which being unorthodox in their contents, worried the uncle Ḥājī Sayyid Muḥammad, 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].

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1. *INBA*. 82, pp.156-7.
2. *KD*. I, 34 cf. *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'* op.cit. pp.56-7 and *Nabil*. 79.
3. *Nicolas*. 190.
4. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh* (pp.11-12) citing Mīrzā Abul Faẓl Gulpāyigānī 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 Karbilā', these writings led Sayyid Javād to identify Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad (see below Chapter Five, I.

Preoccupation with these ideas and practices gradually isolated Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad from his commercial duties, and led him to abandon his business and leave Būshihr for ʿAtabāt. 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad who was determined in his decision, himself settled all the accounts and made all the necessary arrangements before leaving for ʿAtabāt sometime in 1256-7 (1840-41) after more than five years' residence in Būshihr. Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh maintains that the Bab's action greatly enraged his elder uncle, who, beside other anxieties, worried about his own commercial reputation[1].

His departure from Būshihr was not the end of Sayyid ʿAlī 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. ʿAtabāt) lasted less than a year as he himself specificed[2], and although of his eleven months of residence he spent eight in Karbilā' and three in various other holy cities[3], 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

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1. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. 15.
2. Cited in a *tawqīʿ* written in Chihrīq (1265 Q./1845) (*Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī*, 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 Būshihr, he spent a year in ʿAtabāt.
3. *Qatīl*. 529 cf. *NK*. 110, and other sources which believe that he only spent three months in Karbilā'.

unusual and 'magnetic' character of the young Sayyid from Shiraz. The same characteristic which had given him a halo of innocence in Būshihr, appeared even more emphatically here in his ritualism on his frequent visits to the Shrine of Imām Ḥusain.

Beside Sayyid Javād Karbalā'ī, among other would-be followers of the Bab, Mullā Ṣādiq Khurāsānī - 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 ʿAlī 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'[1]. This behaviour of the Bab is better understandable when in his *Ziyārat Nāmih*, 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)'[2].

Referring to the circumstances of the Bab's visit *Nuqṭat al-Kāf* 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 visting the shrine, and the state of presence (*ḥuẓur*) in which he was seen, astonished a great number of people'[3]. To this, Hājī 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[4]. Other Shaykhis such as the Nahrī brothers, two young merchants from Isfahan attending Sayyid Kāẓim's lectures in Karbilā'[5], and Hājī Mīrzā Riżā Javāhirī Iṣfahānī, also a merchant[6], and Shaykh Ḥasan Zunūzī[7], all had the same impression when they met the Bab in

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1. *Nicolas*. pp.191-2 and M.A. Malik Khusravī, *Tārīkh-i Shuhadā-yi Amr*, Tehran, 130 Badīʿ (1972), 3 vols., II, p.50 both quoting from the biography of Muqaddas written by his son Ibn Aṣdaq. For further details on Muqaddas see below Chapter Six, I. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh* (pp.16-17) relates a similar account about Mullā Ḥusain Bushrūyihī, 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).
2. Translation cited in *Browne, JRAS*. 1899, 900.
3. *NK*. 110.
4. *MJQ*. (464) cf. *Z*. 379 and *Samandar*. 17.
5. For their details see below Chapter Seven, I.
6. *Z*. 101.
7. *Nabil*. 30.

Karbilā'. Even the unsympathetic Mīrzā Muhammad Tunikābunī, the author of *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿUlamā'*, who at the time was a ṭalabih, 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 Imām 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 Mīr ʿAlī Muhammad Shīrāzī, and he is a student of Sayyid Kāẓim". 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 (*ziyārat*) is one of the devotions (*ʿibādāt*), 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 (*namāz-i nāfilih*) 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 Tunikābunī's account alludes, is chiefly due to the preference which this act of devotion received in the Shiʿi 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 Ahsā'ī, 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 *Bālāsarīs*, 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, Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī, one of the *mashāyikh* of Shaykh Ahmad, visited the shrine of Ḥusain in a spirit of submission and grief which is not far different

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1. *Q*. 59. Also translated by Browne in *JRAS*. 1889, pp.894-5. The identity of the above mentioned Muqaddas-i Ṣālih is unknown. However, there is a good possibility that he refers to the above mentioned Mullā Ṣādiq Muqaddas whom he inaccurately named Sālih. Browne overlooks the possibility that Muqaddas is a name and therefore translates it as a "holy and just person".
2. See *Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī*, op.cit. p.237; *RJ*. 287 and *Fihrist*. II, 642 which refers to *Risālih-i Vādī-al-Salām* by Mīrzā Abul Qāsim Khān on the manners of visiting the innocent Imams, especially, II, 2 on the visitation of the Shrine of Ḥusain.

from the practice of the Shaykhis or that of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad the Bab[1].

In some of his early writings the Bab went to great lengths to discuss the details of the rites of visitation, and the secret of every action and movement. In *al-Ṣaḥīfah Bayn al-Ḥaramayn*, written at the beginning of 1261[2], 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 *zīyārat*[3]. As is evident from some of his instructions[4], the Bab adopted a method of *zīyārat* which was influenced by current Shaykhi ideas both in rituals and in esoteric interpretation[5]. 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, *Zīyārat Nāmih-i Āl Allāh* which judging from its contents, must have been written during, or immediately after his journey to ʿAtabāt. 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'[6]. The contents of this work, like the *Ṣaḥīfa*, 'reflects the doctrines of the Bab's masters, but an undercurrent of new ideas, still hardly defined, is discernible in places'[7].

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1. *Q*. 202.
2. For details of this work see below Chapter Nine, III.
3. *Browne Or. MSS*. no. F.7(9), pp.101-122.
4. Ibid. 112.
5. Among many other Shiʿi 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-Dharīʿa*. II, Nos. 169, 188, 208 and *Fihrist*. II, 2, 288-359. Also Arabic *Risāla* in reply to four questions by Sayyid Kāẓim (Mīnāsīān Coll. MS. No.382, Wadham. Also mentioned in *Fihrist*. 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 *Zīyārat Nāmih* pp.896-902). In spite of a lengthy discussion on the identity of this work, Browne confuses this work with *Saḥīfa* (op.cit.) and yet still another *Zīyārat Nāmih* written in 1260 (1844) for the shrine of ʿAlī and given to Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī (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'[1] 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 Mullā Ṣādiq 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 Mullā Ḥusain Bushrūyihī recited some of the poetry of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī[2].

The public gathering to which the Bab was invited was most probably the Dīwān al-Rashtī, 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[3]. 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 ʿulama 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 Ḥasan Zunūzī, an intimate disciple of Rashtī, and a later follower of the Bab[4],

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1. *Ṣaḥīfa*, op.cit. 113.
2. *Nicolas*. pp.192-4 quotes Ibn Aṣdaq cf. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. pp.17-19.
3. al-Ṭuʿma, Salmān, H. *Turāth Karbalā'*, 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 Karbilā'. 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
4. Possibly the same Mīrzā Ḥasan Zunūzī mentioned in *Ṭabaqāt*. I, 36.

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 Siyyidu'sh-Shuhadā' had failed to excite'[1]. 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 ṭalabih of Rashtī. *Nāsikh 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'[2]. The author of *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿUlamā'* who claims to have been present at Sayyid Kāẓim's lecture at the time, writes: 'Mīr ʿAlī 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'[3]. Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, in his refutation *Izhāq al-Bāṭil* (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'[4]. 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 *Sharʿ*, he was not then able to reveal what he had in his heart'[5]. The official chronicler Hidāyat even suggests that the Bab 'was encircled in the teaching circles of the ʿulama of the time, especially that of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī'[6]

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

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1. *Nabil*. pp.25-7.
2. *NT*. III, 39.
3. *Q*., 59 translated in *Browne JRAS*. 1889, 894.
4. Kirmān, 1392 Q., p.104.
5. Ibid., pp.105-6.
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 muaʿizih*) of the late Sayyid'[1]. It was in these gatherings that Shaykh Hasan Zunūzī noticed the presence of the Shīrāzī youth and noticed an enigmatic allusion by his master, which in his eyes was a clear indication of Sayyid Kāzim's special attention towards the Bab. As soon as Sayyid Kāzim'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 Kāzim, 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"'[2]. 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 Kāzim 'benefited from the inner light (*nūr-i bātin*)' of Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad, as it is suggested by Hājī Mīrzā Janī[3], can only be measured by the zealousness of those Babi 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 Karbalā'ī, one of the earliest Babi polemists, and himself a student under Sayyid Kāzim for ten years. When in 1263 (1847) in reply to Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān's attacks, he described his recollections of the Bab's abode in Karbilā', 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 Kāzim. 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-Dhikr al-Akbar* i.e. the Bab) God bless him and may my soul be a sacrifice for him ... during his residence in Karbilā' 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'[4].

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

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1. *NK.*, 110.
2. *Nabīl.* pp.27-8.
3. *NK.*, 110.
4. *Qatīl.* (529). This seems also in conformity with Mullā Jaʿfar 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'[1]. In fact Mullā Ṣādiq Muqaddas himself not only confirmed that once in Karbilā' he was asked to teach Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad, but that he was also determined to convert him to the Shaykhi doctrine[2].

One year in ʿAtabāt was just enough to make Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad 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 Būshihr, put an unwanted end to his residence in Iraq. His uncle Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī especially journeyed to Karbilā' 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 Kāẓim also contributed to this reluctance, since in a visit to Sayyid ʿAlī, Muqaddas made some effort to convince the former to allow his nephew to stay for further studies. But Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī 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 ʿAtabāt any longer.

It is said that the Bab's resistance finally forced Ḥājī Sayyid ʿAlī to seek the advice of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī. Sayyid Kāẓim first declined to give any personal opinion, leaving all in the hands of the Bab himself, but later because of Sayyid ʿAlī's insistence, reluctantly allowed him to return. Thus Sayyid ʿAlī was able to encourage the Bab to leave Karbilā' and return, at least temporarily, to Shiraz[4].

An answer to the question whether the Bab studied under Sayyid Kāẓim 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 Karbilā'

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1. *Ahmad*. 447.
2. *Nicolas*. pp.194-5.
3. Ibid. quoting Mullā Ṣadiq himself.
4. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. pp.19-20.

to fully grasp the essence of his teachings, it is questionable why he should have paid homage to Aḥsā'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 Aḥsā'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 *Sharḥ al-Ziyāra* of Aḥsā'ī and *Sharḥ al-Qaṣīda* of Rashtī[1]. 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 three[3]. His marriage, as it is implied by Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh, was particularly arranged to dissuade the Bab from his prime intention of returning to ʿAtabāt[4]. He married on 8th Rajab 1258 (1842). His wife Khadījih 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 Gumruk[5].

During the next two years, in spite of the frequent recurrence of riots and civil disturbances in Shiraz[6], 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 Mākū (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.
3. *Khāndān-i Afnān*. pp.160-2. (Notes recorded by Munīrih Khānūm).
4. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. pp.20-21.
5. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh* and *Ahmad*. 448 n.
6. See below Chapter Nine, I.

remembered those 'happy days' (*ayyām-i surūr*) with some nostalgia[1]. 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 ʿAtabāt, he gradually 'eased off his commercial dealings and his business transactions'[2]. 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'[3]. 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" (*īn daftar-i ḥisāb-i khalāyiq ast*), and if someone unexpectedly called upon him, he would cover the papers with a cloth'[4]. Here, the Bab clearly alluded to the 'reckoning' (*ḥisāb*) which according to the *Qurʾān* and traditions, God will require from every man on the 'Day of Reading of Accounts' (*Yaum 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'[5] 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[6]. A cousin of his, Muḥammad Taqī Vakīl al-Ḥaqq was once given a piece by the Bab which 'resembled the prayers of *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādīya*'[7]. 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

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1. *Bayān*. VI, 11, (p.218.) 2. *NK*. 110.
3. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. (pp.22-3) citing an account by Khadījih Baygum.
4. Munīrih Khānūm notes cited in *Khāndān-i Afnān*, 163.
5. *Qurʾān*, II, 200 etc. For full details see ḤISĀB in *EI*^{2} and cited sources. For Shiʿi point of view see *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 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 *Khāndān-i Afnān*, p.111. *Al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādīya* (Tehran, 1374 Q) is a collection of 54 prayers which is said to be written by ʿAlī b. Ḥusain Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (Sajjād), and compiled by ʿAmīd al-Ruasāʾ.

popularity and recognition in the character of a mystic or a hermit. 'As the fame of his devotion and piety grew' Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad 'became known as *Sayyid-i Ẕikr*'[1]. If the reference in *Kazem Beg* could be relied on, even during his stay in Karbilā', due to his 'singularity' and his 'austerity' he acquired the epithet *Majẕūb*. 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 a une profonde sagesse. C'est surtout par les pèlerins de Chiraz, gens du peuple qui revenaient de Kerbèla, 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 Seïd 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 Housseïn, 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"'[2].

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 ʿAlī Muḥammad 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'[3]. The Bab himself referred to these well known

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1. *KD*. I, 34.
2. *Kazem Beg*. VII. 339. The term *Majẕūb*, which according to this source was given to the Bab, is usually conferred on an unorthodox mystic who according to ʿAbd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, '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'. (*Istilāḥāt-i Sūfīyih* in the margin of *Manāzil al-Sāyirīn*, Tehran 1315 Sh., p. 122). More exquisitely, Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Lāhījī defines *Majẕub-i Muṭlaq* as the one who, after the stage of annihilation (*fanā*), '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 insanes. And one cannot deny these people nor follow them'. (*Mafātīḥ al-Iʿjāz fī Sharḥ-i Gulshan-i Rāz*, Tehran, 1337 Sh., p.285).
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 (*Nuqṭih-i Bayān*); prior to his revelation his merits were obvious to all those who knew him'[1].

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 'presential knowledge' (*ʿilm -i ḥuzūrī*), it was also the result of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad's preoccupation with forces which he thought were leading him towards an inescapable destiny. The example of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, the widespread esoteric tradition, and his interest in hidden sciences drew his attention towards eschatological thinking[2]. 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 ʿulama, 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 Muʿīn al-Salṭanih, prior to 1844 he expressed his mission that he was chosen to accomplish God's command (*Ṣāḥib al-Amr*) to his mother and his uncle Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī, 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[3]. 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'[4]. But this veneration and

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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 Ḥabīballāh* makes a few passing references to the Bab's interest in numeralogy, 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.
4. *Khāndān-i Afnān*. 163.

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'[1]. But as Hashtrūdī reports, in spite of strong protests, after some discussions, the Bab was able to win over his uncle Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī. 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'[2].

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 *Ẓuhūr* without any direct or distinct indication of the exact nature, identity or position of the promised one[3]. Secondly, the fact that Ḥājī Sayyid ʿAlī 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 *Ẓuhūr* to say the least. Vakīl al-Ḥaqq in his brief but important reference makes it clear that Ḥājī Sayyid ʿAlī 'four years prior to the year sixty (1260) abandoned his trade and withdrew from the public, and was expectant (for *Ẓuhūr*). At the time of *Ẓuhūr*, when the cause was declared, he immediately recognised it'[4]. The above references to seclusion, abandoning material pursuits and vigilant expectations, provide some clues to the intellectual state of many people like Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī[5]. On one

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1. *TMS*. pp.77-9 citing the same narrative.
2. Ibid.
3. See above Chapter Two, II.
4. Notes cited in *Khāndān-i Afnān*. 110. What Muhammad Taqī Vakīl al-Ḥaqq states about Sayyid ʿAlī'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 Sayyid ʿAlī 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 (*bi ʿilm al-yaqīn va ḥaqq al-yaqīn*)' of the rectitude of the new cause[1].

In the years after, Ḥājī 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 Ḥajj, in an important letter from Būshihr to his brother in Shiraz, Ḥājī Sayyid ʿAlī openly expressed his full commitment to the Bab[2]. 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 Ḥusain Khān Ājūdānbāshī, Ḥājī Sayyid ʿ Alī consented to guarantee bail and act as sponsor to his nephew[3]. Throughout the Bab's house arrest (1261-2/1845-6), Ḥājī 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 Chihrīq. 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 Sabzih 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'[4].

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1. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. (pp.7-9) quoting an account by Zahrā Baygum, the Bab's sister-in-law.
2. The letter is partly cited in *Khāndān-i Afnān*, pp.25-31. The author of the above work believes that these letters were written by the elder brother Ḥājī Mīrzā Sayyid Muḥammad, 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 Ḥājī Sayyid ʿAlī in Būshihr at the time (see below Chapter Five, I). proves that the writer is none but Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī.
3. *Nabīl*. 151 cf. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. pp.45-6 and *NK*. 113.
4. *Nabīl*. pp.442-64 (447). The full incident is recorded in various sources including *NK*. pp.215-222.

Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī'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 ʿAlī 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 movement[2].

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), Ḥājī Sayyid ʿAlī's role could be assessed from the contents of a letter which is quoted in *Kawākib al-Durrīya*. Writing in 1843 (1259) from Būshihr to Shiraz, the Bab asks his uncle to inform the ṭullāb 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 Rashtī 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

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1. *Nabil*. 446.

2. The scene recorded by Mīrzā Aḥmad clearly depicts Ḥājī Sayyid ʿAlī's attitude towards the Bab. When after the Bab's return from Ḥijāz, Mīrzā Aḥmad inquired about him from his uncle saying 'In what condition is Ḥājī Mīrzā ʿAlī Muḥammad?', he noticed that Sayyid ʿAlī 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" (*Aḥmad*. 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 *Ẓuhūr*, and attributed to him certain virtues which were beyond the recognised limits of common religious beliefs. Secondly, that at the time Sayyid ʿAlī 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 Bushrūyihī and his companions from Karbilā' to Būshihr and then Shiraz in 1260[1]. Perhaps it is not unrealistic to assume that some of these ṭullāb, even if they were not the same as those who came from Karbilā', were at least in contact with the Shaykhis in ʿAtabāt. 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 ʿAtabāt, 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 ʿAlī 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 (*ummī*) 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

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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 ʿulama. 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 ʿAtabāt had a mutual effect both on the Bab and some of the students of Sayyid Kāẓim 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 Shiʿi 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 Shiʿi-Shaykhi theophany.

On the other hand, it seems as though during his residence in ʿAtabāt, 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad had a special appeal. This visit to ʿAtabāt 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

I

The death of Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī on 11th Dhu al-Hijja 1259 (1st January 1844)[1] marked the end of the second stage in the development of the Shaykhi school[2]. 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 ʿAtabāt. 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[3].

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 Kāzim. 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 Rābiʿ* and *Bābīyat*. The emphasis in Rashtī's teachings on 'imminence of the Revelation' (*qurb-i Zuhūr*), 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 Jaʿfar Qazvīnī, both agree that some time before

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1. *Qatīl*. (509) cf. *Fihrist*. I, 159 and *Nabīl*. 45. Chronograms *'ghāba Nūrun'* (غاب نور) and *'ghāba badr al-hudā'* (غاب بدر الهدیٰ) in *Makārim*. I, 220.

2. For earlier developments see above Chapter One, II.

3. *Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn*, op.cit. pp.51 ff. cf. *NK*. 100-3; *Nabīl*. 36-40; *MJQ*. pp.461-3.

Rashtī had temporarily set Mullā Ḥasan Gauhar over the students in ʿAtabāt, while affirming that the day when they would hear of the advent of the 'Promised One' was at hand[1]:

> 'Then someone asked, "After you, with whom should we take refuge?" He (Sayyid Kāẓim) replied "With none, for it is not permitted (*bi aḥadī jāyiz na*). Stay for a few days around Mullā Ḥasan Gauhar, God shall not leave you in darkness. The Truth (*Ḥaqq*) is bound to appear". Then he confirmed that Mullā Ḥasan'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'[2].

But in spite of Rashtī's strong advice to Mīrzā Muhīt Kirmānī and Gauhar against personal rivalries and sectarianism[3], disagreement over the future of the school was bound to happen. As Gauhar was assumed to be the executor of Rashtī's will (*vaṣīy*), Mīrzā Muhīt claimed to be the supervisor and the guardian of Rashtī's family (*nāẓir*); claims which in those uncertain times encouraged them to assume some spiritual leadership for themselves[4]. 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 *Ẓuhūr*, Gauhar denied any previous references to it in Rashtī's words, whereas Muhīt replied: 'I remember something, but he (i.e. Rashtī) did not say that he would appear immediately. Therefore, it is your duty not to be dispersed from Karbilā', 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"'[5]. Qatīl then points out that such an attitude, though for a few months it persuaded the students to remain in Karbilā', eventually disillusioned them with Muhīt and Gauhar, and thus they left Karbilā' for various destinations[6].

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1. *MJQ*. (463) and *Qatīl*. (508-10).
2. *MJQ*. (463).
3. *Qatīl*. (510). For Mullā Ḥasan Qarachihdāghī (Gauhar) see *Ṭabaqāt*. I, 2, 341 and *Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn*, 98. For his claim of succession *Ṭarā'iq*. III, pp.338, 345 and Iʿtiżad al-Salṭanih, *Mutanabbi'īn* (edited by G. Navā'ī as *Fitnih-i Bāb*, 2nd edition, Tehran, 1350) margin of the original MS. by Hishmat al-Salṭanih (p.232). Also remark cited by Muḥammad Taqī Hashtrūdī in *Abwāb al-Hudā* cited in *TMS*. pp.54-6. On Muḥīṭ Kirmānī see below Chapter Nine, III and cited sources.
4. *Qatīl*. (510).
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid. In the later years, as Muḥīṭ tended more towards Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān in Kirmān, Gauhar instead developed a mild pro-fuqahā' attitude (see below Chapter Five, II). *Ṭarā'iq* remarks (III, 338) that according to Gauhar neither the Bābīs nor the Kirmānī Shaykhis 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 fuqahā', and thus continued Shaykhism more as a teaching circle in ʿAtabāt, another contestant in Kirmān, Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, tended to create a new independent centre for Shaykhism away from the conflicts in ʿAtabāt. 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 Khān 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 Kāzim 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 ʿAtabāt. The propaganda of a certain Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī, Rashtī's secretary and one of the influential figures in the circle, who as Qatīl alleges, had forged a *risālih* in the name of Sayyid Kāzim to justify Karīm Khān's succession,at least temporarily attracted the attention of some Shaykhi followers in Karbilā'[1].

Similarly to Muḥīṭ and Gauhar, Karīm Khān also failed to attract the bulk of Shaykhi students, not only because he was away from ʿAtabāt 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 Bushrūyihī. No matter what the real intentions of Rashtī 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 Karbilā' from Khurasan, after a year of absence from ʿAtabāt, just after Rashtī'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 Rashtī, but the intentions of the two 'moderate' Shaykhis were far less ambitious. They had resolved to stay in Karbilā', and eventually occupy Rahstī's place[2].

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1. Ibid. (518).
2. *Nabil*. 48.

Mullā Husain on the other hand represented a more radical and uncompromising attitude. If Gauhar and Muhīt were fearful of the number and strength of the 'enemies' of the Shaykhis and thus preferred to remain in Karbilā' and 'guard the vacant seat'[1] of Rashtī, 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.

Mullā Muhammad Husain, the elder son of a small landowner and cloth-dyer, was born in the hamlet of Zīrak near Bushrūyih, a small agricultural town on the edge of the Khurasan desert, around 1229 Q./ 1813-14. His father Hājī Mullā ʿAbdallāh Sabbāgh originally came from Yasār (outside Bushrūyih) and 'owned land and property'[2]. He was a relatively affluent man, and possessed a number of shops in which he employed some of his relatives[3]. The title *Sabbāgh* (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 madrasih[4]. Later he was sent to Mashhad to study in Madrasih Mīrzā Jaʿfar[5], 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'[6].

He left Bushrūyih around 1241 (1826-7) when he was a child of twelve[7]. In Mashhad, like many other Khurāsānī tullāb, he studied under Sayyid Muhammad Qasīr Razavī, himself a student of Bihbahānī and Bahr al-ʿUlūm and a well known *mudarris* in the city[8]. Qatīl, on the authority of Qasīr's son, states that in

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1. Ibid.
2. Narrative of Muḥammad Nabīl Zarandī cited in Z. 112.
3. *Fu'ādī*. 23 based on oral accounts.
4. Ibid. on the authority of Karbalā'ī Mīrzā ʿAlī the attendant of the Madrasih-i Bushrūyih.
5. Ibid. For Madrasih-i Mīrzā Jaʿfar see *Maṭlaʿ al-Shams*, op.cit. II, pp.247-50.
6. *Fu'ādī*. 23.
7. Ibid. 25, referring to a few verses inscribed on the wall of Mullā Ḥusain's house in Bushrūyih signed: *'Ḥurrara aqall al-ṭullāb Muḥammad Ḥusain'*, and dated 1241 Q. For a photograph of the house see *Nabil*. 49.
8. *Qatīl*. (521). For Qasīr see *Makārim*. V, 1487-8; *Fihrist-i Kitābkhānih-i Āstān-i Quds-i Razavī*, edited by Uktā'ī, 7vols. Mashhad, 1305-46 Sh. V, 460; *Maṭlaʿ al-Shams*, and *Vaḥīd-i Bihbahānī*, op.cit. 323-5.

spite of his youth, Mullā Husain's talent and enthusiasm attracted Qasīr, who in turn authorised him to issue minor religious judgements[1]. Later, he moved to Isfahan, and studied with Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī, Mullā Muhammad Taqī Najafī and possibly Hājī Ibrāhīm Karbāsī[2]. 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 Ahsā'ī and Rashtī[3]. Perhaps his decision to study in ʿAtabāt came not only as a result of a general tradition of following higher studies in the teaching circles of Najaf and Karbilā', but also from specific plans to attend Sayyid Kāzim's discourses. But before setting out for ʿAtabāt, he returned to his home town around 1248 (1832-3), primarily to seek his father's permission. In Bushrūyih 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 ʿAtabāt sometime about 1251 (1835-6)[4]. In Tehran, he heard of his father's death, returned to Bushrūyih, sold some of his father's possessions, and then set out for ʿAtabāt[5].

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, Mullā Husain apparently had some curious dreams of the Prophet[6], which later was followed by 'strange spiritual behaviour' (*atvār-i ruhīyih-i gharībih*)[7]; a remark which may be taken as indication of his mystical preoccupation. When still in Isfahan, it was his striving to acquire 'knowledge' (*ʿilm*) and pass the 'stages of mysticism' (*maqāmāt-i ʿirfān*) which seems to have attracted his attention to Shaykhism[8]. These early interests have some significance in his later career. Like some other Khurāsānī students who later converted to the Babi movement, and some of whom were Mullā Husain's fellow students, Bushrūyihī came from Quhistān in central Khurasan, which because of its past history was known for heterodox, and particularly crypto-Ismāʿīlī ideas, which in one form or another had survived in the shape of common beliefs if not in well defined theories[9].

In ʿAtabāt, Mullā Husain joined the Shaykhi circle in Karbilā'. He seems

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1. *Qatīl*. (521).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. cf. Nabīl Zarandī in Z. 113.
4. *Qatīl*. (521).
5. Nabīl Zarandī in Z. 113.
6. *Fu'ādī*. 24 cf. Z. 113.
7. Z. 113. (اطواروحیه غریبه)
8. *Qatīl*. (521).
9. See below Chapter Eight, II.

to have exclusively studied with Sayyid Kāzim since there is no evidence to suggest his pupilship under any other teacher. Soon, as Qatīl reports, he distinguished himself amongst the Shaykhi *ṭullāb* by demonstrating considerable skill in the study of the Shaykhi texts[1] to the extent that he was entrusted with the task of supervising the junior students and dealing with some of Rashtī's correspondence. *Qatīl* 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 Bushrūyihī'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[2]. Amongst them, many Khurāsānīs such as Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq Yazdī, Mullā Muhammad Taqī Hiravī and Mīrzā Ahmad Azghandī[3] and Arabs such as Sayyid ʿAlī Bushr, Shaykh Bashīr Najafī and Shaykh Ahmad Shakūr Najafī were later converted to the Babi movement[4]. This may be taken as an indication of the significance of previous personal relations in the later formation of the Babi network.

While in ʿAtabāt, Mullā Husain compiled two long works and a number of tracts and apologetical treatises in the Shaykhi tradition[5]. One work, *Sharḥ 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[6]. Of what have survived of his writings however, there is an Arabic commentary on messianic *akhbār* (compiled in Qazvīn *circa* 1262-3/1846-7) which argues mostly on the basis of various Shiʿi works such as *Kitāb al-ʿAwālim*

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1. *Qatīl*. (521) particularly refers to *Lawāmiʿ al-Ḥusaynīya* by Rashtī (Tabriz, 1271 Q.), a philosophical work on the subject of 'triple beings' (*wujūdāt al-thulathā*) (*Fihrist*. II, 302 and *al-Dharīʿa*, XVIII, 366).

2. *Qatīl*. (pp.521-2) names eleven.

3. For Yazdī and Azghandī see below Chapter Eight, III.
For Hiravī see below Chapter Six, III . According to *Qatīl*. (522) Hiravī studied *Sharḥ al-Fawā'id* of Aḥsā'ī (2nd ed., 1274 Q., *Fihrist*. II, 227) with Mullā Ḥusain.

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

5. *Qatīl*. 522.

6. Ibid. cf. *Nabīl*. 48. Both sources again lay stress on Mullā Ḥusain's popularity amongst Shaykhi students, an indication of his strong position in the Shaykhi circle.

of Nūrallāh Bahrāni[1] and *Kitāb al-Ghayba* of Tūsī, the authenticity of those traditions which emphasise the role of the Persians and particularly Khurāsānīs in assisting the Qā'im at the event of his *Khurūj*[2]. Judging by the quality of this work, which was written on the eve of the Babi uprising of Tabarsī, 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 Rashtī and his students were interested in this matter, one may suspect that most of Bushrūyihī's writings were on the same theme.

In Karbilā' Mullā Husain lived the humble life of a devoted *ṭalabih*. As Mullā Husain Dakhīl Marāghihī, who was an intimate friend of Bushrūyihī in Karbilā' 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 Rashtī[5].

Another characteristic of Mulla Husain which is mentioned by most sources was his physical condition. *Qatīl* indicates that when he first arrived in Karbilā', he suffered from bad health[6]. *Nuqtat al-Kāf* reports the trembling

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1. *al-Dharī'a*, XV, 356. A largely unknown encyclopaedic work of enormous volume written by a student of Majlisī on the style of *Biḥār al-Anwār* 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 *Dīvān* of elegies (*maraṣī*) has been published in Tabriz (*al-Dharī'a*, IX, i, 320). His biography appears in Mīlānī M.H. *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Āẕarbāījān*. *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 Rashtī, some Shi'i mujtahids having various endowments and bequests under their control (for example Bālāsarīs such as Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī in Karbilā', 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.

6. *Qatīl*. (521).

hands and even epilepsy which had to be treated with tincture of gold[1]. Others mentioned heart palpitations[2], anxiety and restlessness[3], although apparently he was partly relieved from his sufferings in later years. Mullā Muhammad Furūghī rejected the idea which was put forward by *Raudat al-Safā* that Mullā 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'[4]. 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 Māzandarān'[5].

Bushrūyihī 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 Bālāsarīs. However, as factional harassment and anti-Shaykhi allegations intensified, particularly towards the end of Rashtī's life, and hence Sayyid Kāzim became more isolated amongst the high ranking ʿulama, his reliance on the support of his students and followers increased[6].

Towards the beginning of the 1840's, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī, one of the leading mujtahids of ʿAtabāt[7] in pursuit of his earlier activities and in collaboration with Sayyid Muhammad Mahdī Tabātabā'ī, Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī and others, renewed their call for a unanimous denunciation of the Shaykhis[8]. Their *fatvā* received a considerable response from *fuqahā'* all around

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1. *NK.* 156.
2. *NH.* 34.
3. *Fu'adī.* pp.25-6.
4. *RS.* X, 432 and not *NT.* as it is referred to in *Nabil.* 333.
5. Account recorded in *Nabil.* 333-4.
6. Sources such as *Qatīl.* (511); *NK.* 102; *Nabil.* 34; Sharīʿatmadār Māzandarānī's *Asrār al-Shahāda* (cited in *Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī*, op.cit. 172); *Fihrist.* I, 148 and *Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn*, pp.51ff give various accounts of the persecution of Shaykhis in ʿAtabāt during Rashtī's time.
7. For his details see below Chapter Five, II.
8. The accounts of this new wave of Bālāsarī opposition is fully pictured in *Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn*, pp.70ff.

Iran and Iraq[1]. To be more effective however, it required the approval of Mullā Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī[2]. Shaftī, who saw the consequences of sanctioning such a *fatvā* and for a variety of reasons did not want the total separation of Shaykhism from the body of the Shi'i orthodoxy, decided to postpone his ratification, appending it to the reply to a letter he despatched to Rashtī inviting him to Isfahan to defend Shaykhis[3]. This encouraged Sayyid Kāzim to approach Shaftī with the intention of 'securing the support and good will' of Shaftī since he rightly thought that Shaftī's friendship might well protect him against the opposition of the Bālāsarīs of 'Atabāt.

Rashtī designated Mullā Husain to represent him in Isfahan. In this appointment, he perhaps considered the delicacy of the mission since neither Mullā Hasan Gauhar, who had once been nominated to present the Shaykhi case to the jurists of Najaf[4], nor Mullā Muhīt Kirmānī who himself volunteered for this mission[5] was chosen. Rashtī'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 Shaftī's decision to ratify the *fatvā*. This would have caused him humiliation and disrepute. It was with this consideration that Mullā Husain was assigned to return to Iran. Although there is no reference to confirm that he acquired his *ijāzih* for *ijtihād* , yet it is possible to assume that having spent more than nine years in 'Atabāt[6], he had finished his studies and was himself willing to return to his homeland.

Mullā Husain's appearance at Shaftī'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 Shaftī about

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1. *Q.* gives the list of the most important mujtahids who approved the Shaykhi denunciation.
2. *Qatīl.* (522) cf. *Nabil.* pp.20-24 and *Nicolas.* 251-4.
3. *Z.* 114.
4. *Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn*, 98.
5. *Nabil.* 20.
6. *Z.* 135, on the authority of Nabīl Zarandī.
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 ṭalabih' (*yik ṭalabih-i pīrhan chāk*) (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 *'abā*. (*Nabil.* 23). All this confirms his austerity and humble appearance.

the 'heretical beliefs' which were alleged in the proposed *fatvā*[1]. 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 Rābiʿ*[2]. As almost all the sources agree, his argument was convincing enough to oblige Shaftī to deny his backing for the *takfīr*[3]. Instead, he tore up the *fatvā* and invited Mullā Husain to address the public on the subject of the Shaykhi beliefs[4]. He also wrote a conciliatory letter to Rashtī in which he praised Ahsā'ī by calling him '*Sayyid al-ʿUlamā*'[5]. When Mullā Husain clarified the Shaykhis' position from the pulpit by reading from *Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn* and discussed the views of Ahsā'ī and Rashtī, it is reported that Shaftī himself applauded him for his courage and obedience[6]. As it was Shaftī's custom to give financial assistance to *tullāb* 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 Isfahan[9].

No doubt in addition to Mullā Husain's impressive performance, there were other influential elements in Shaftī's decision to quash the *fatvā*. His long and intimate friendship with Hājī Mullā Ibrāhīm Karbāsī may have effected this move[10]. Karbāsī, who obtained his *ijāzih* from Ahsā'ī, though never committed to Shaykhism[11], had always offered his support to Shaykhis in times of distress. Furthermore, Shaftī might have thought that the approval of the *fatvā* could be interpreted as the sign of his full support for the ʿulama of ʿAtabāt and hence prove their supremacy as the heads of the Shiʿi community. He perhaps needed the friendship of Rashtī 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 Najafī[12].

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1. *Qatīl*. (522).
2. *Z*. 115.
3. *Nabil*. pp.21-2 and *Qatīl*. (522).
4. *Qatīl*. (522).
5. *Nabil*. 23.
6. Ibid.
7. *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 1, 194.
8. The *Qurʾān* LXXXVI, 9. Indicated by both *Nabil*. 23 and *Qatīl*. (522).
9. *Qatīl*. (522).
10. *Q*. pp.140-41.
11. Ibid. 118-22.
12. For some discussion on the leadership of the Shiʿi 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[1].

Shaftī's cooperation was an important victory for the Shaykhis. The Bab's reference in *Dalā'il-i Sabʿah* 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 Ḥusain) whose knowledge and virtue is acknowledged by Shaykhi and Sayyidī (i.e. the followers of Rashtī) ʿulama as well as by the others. When I arrived at Isfahan, even the children were saying that a ragged robe *ṭalabih* came on behalf of the Sayyid (i.e. Rashtī) and with reasoning and proofs, vanquished a certain Muḥammad Bāqir who was the greatest divine in that land'[2].

This success no doubt promoted Mullā Husain's position in the eyes of Rashtī 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, Rashtī greatly appreciated his efforts. Calling him his brother, Sayyid Kāẓim, 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'[3].

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 *Qatīl.* (523) and in a *risālih* by Ṭāhirih (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 Rashtī to this mission. Bushrūyihī's interview with Mīrzā-yi ʿAsgarī, the influential mujtahids of Mashhad, was indeed in compliance with the same explanatory mission[1].

While returning from his home town Bushrūyih, to ʿAtabāt some time in the last days of 1259 or early days of Muharram 1260, he learned of Rashtī's death in Kirmānshāh[2]. He immediately set out for ʿAtabāt and arrived there shortly after[3]. No particular indication is given of the reason for his hasty return to Karbilā', but one may suspect that counting himself amongst the senior students of Rashtī, he felt committed to participate in the debate concerning the future of the Shaykhi school. Frequent indications in Rashtī'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 Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān and a few of the other senior students of Rashtī who established themselves in various centres, Bushrūyihī 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 ʿAtabāt was not with the intention of occupying Rashtī'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 Rashtī and Ahsā'ī portrayed in his mind. He had lived long enough in Karbilā' 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'[4]. 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 ʿAtabāt.

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1. For Mīrzā-yi ʿAsgarī see below Chapter Eight, II . Reference to Mullā Ḥusain's interview with him appears in *Nabīl*. 24.
2. Ṭāhirih's *risālih* (499) cf. *Qatīl*. (524).
3. *Nabīl*. (47) believes that he arrived in Karbilā' on the first of Muḥarram 1260/January 22nd 1844.
4. *RS*. X, 432, *'Mullā Ḥusain kih havāhā-yi buland dar sar dāsht'*.

On his return to Karbilā', Mullā Husain found himself faced with a situation which encouraged him to propose a clear guide line. He no doubt enjoyed some degree of popularity and support amongst those students who, after being disillusioned with Gauhar and Muhīt, were prepared to comply with Mullā Husain's view that they should seek the advent of the 'Promised One'. Amid the confusion and disagreement which prevailed after Rashtī, Mullā 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'[1]. This idea had some significance for those students who 'pledged their loyalty and obedience' to Mullā Husain[2]. But in spite of their support, Mullā Husain seems to have realised that if he ever wished to realise his intentions, he would not be able to do so in Karbilā' 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 Karbilā' (Muharram and Safar 1260/January-February 1844), where he witnessed quarrels, allegations and petty conflicts which were in progress between different rival factions for succeeding Rashtī and establishing teaching circles[3]. His decision to leave Karbilā' for Najaf and on the way to retire in the mosque of Kufah for a period of one *arba'īn* (forty days), was to make his position clear both to his supporters and to those who did not approve of his messianic expectations[4].

Accompanied by his brother Mullā Hasan, he started his retirement (*i'tikāf*) with prayers and contemplation[5]. But soon he was joined by other Shaykhi students who acknowledged Mullā 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 Mullā 'Alī Bastāmī and Mullā Yūsuf Ardabilī arrived in Kūfah[6]. 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

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1. *Nabil*. 47.
2. Ibid. and *Ahmad*. 448 n.
3. Some details of these early conflicts appear in two early accounts; *Qatīl* provides invaluable information on the disputes between Muḥīṭ, Gauhar and Karīm Khān Kirmānī (pp.517ff) while a *maktūb* written by Shaykh Sulṭān Karbalā'ī (Z. pp.245-59) gives some references to the involvement of Mullā Aḥmad Rashtī in the dispute. See below Chapter Five, III.
4. *Qatīl*. (510) cf. *Nabil*. 50.
5. His maternal cousin Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir 'attended to their daily needs' (*Nabil*. 50).
6. *Nabil*. 50 and *Qatīl*. (510) cf. *Kazem Beg*. VII, 464. For Mullā 'Alī and Mullā Yūsuf see below Chapter Five, I and Six, IV.

iʿtikāf[1]. This was a considerable success for Bushrūyihī who in this way managed to attract attention and outmanoeuvre the other claimants in Karbilā' at the time when according to *Qatīl* the Shaykhis were 'disillusioned and discontented with the activities and manners' of both Muhīt and Gauhar and hence 'were scattered to the wind in the deserts and wastelands and resided in the shrines and mosques'[2].

The practice of *iʿtikāf* was not unprecedented for Mullā Ḥusain and his associates. In its literal sense, *iʿtikāf* meant 'prayer and suffering of an ascetic in a mosque' and its essence was described as abstinence (*imsāk*), assertion (*iṯbāt*) and mortification (*ihlāk*). It was regarded as a means or method for investigating the Truth by abstinence from all desires, assertion of *Ḥaqq* and desctruction of falsehood[3]. 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 ʿulama. Both Ahsā'ī and Rashtī are known to have had similar experiences. On a few occasions *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿUlamā'* reports on Shaykh Ahmad's strict asceticism (*rīyāżat*). It states on the authority of Sayyid Kāzim that Ahsā'ī retired for forty *arbaʿīns* in order to be able to reach a high spiritual state[4]. This practice had also a precedent in Ahsā'ī's teacher Sayyid Mahdī Bahr al-ʿUlūm, who in his retirement in the mosque of Sahlah in Kūfah, is reported to have had visions of the Qa'im and sometimes even to have conversed with him about his problems in jurisprudence[5]. As far as Mullā Husain himself is concerned,

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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-ʿAyn. 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 Ḥusain's title *Bāb al-Bāb* 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad was in Kūfah. The Shiʿi traditions that the Qā'im would appear in the Mosque of Kūfah, which the Bab intended to fulfil in later years, must have also contributed to this muddle.

2. *Qatīl.* (510).

3. *Muʿtaqad al-Imāmīyā* (cited in Sajjādī, S.J. *Farhang-i Maʿārif-i Islām*, Tehran, 1357 Sh., I, 238-40) maintains that one of the conditions of *iʿtikāf* is to be held in one of the four mosques: Masjid al-Ḥarām; Masjid al-Nabī; Masjid al-Kūfah and Masjid al-Baṣrah. For *Iʿtikāf* see also Sajjādī, S.J. *Farhang-i Lughāt va Iṣṭilāḥāt va Taʿbīrāt-i ʿIrfānī* (Tehran, 1350 Sh., 50); RAMAḌĀN in *Shorter EI*; KHALWA in *EI*^{2}.

4. *Q.* pp.37-41.

5. Ibid. pp.173-4.

there are indications that he also had previous experiences of *iʿtikāf*. Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī in his first visit to ʿAtabāt had witnessed an earlier retirement of Mullā Husain in Kūfah[1].

The exceptional sanctity of the ruined mosque of Kūfah, where ʿAlī 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 Day[2]. The Shiʿi *ahādīth* foretold the appearance of the Mahdī in Kūfah in order to avenge the persecution and the wrong suffered there by the house of ʿAlī[3]. 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 Ressurection, 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 Shiʿi history. In this meeting place, it was always hoped, a visit from the Qa'im 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 Qā'im 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 Rashtī's instruction and with regard to his teachings that Mullā Husain entered seclusion in Kūfah[5].

However, the precedence of *iʿtikāf* 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 Qā'im 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 Karbilā', set out towards his destination'[1], whereas Qurrat al-'Ayn[2] and *Nuqtat al-Kāf*[3] 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 Īshīk Āqasī, 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 instructions[4]. Mīrzā Ahmad quoted the Shaykhi student as saying:

> 'We were a large body who accompanied Mullā Ḥusain everywhere and it was our belief that after the death of Ḥājī Sayyid Kāẓim the leadership of the Shaykhi sect would be vested in Mullā Ḥusain, 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 Ḥājī Sayyid Kāẓim's demise. Two days later one of the adherents arrived there and

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1. *Qatīl*. (510). Similarly *Nabil*. 51 gives no explanation.

2. *Risalih*. op.cit. (500). 3. *NK*. 105.

4. *Ahmad*. 448 n. Though perhaps for reasons of security, Mīrzā Aḥmad did not disclose the name of the Shaykhi student, still we may presume that he is none other than Mullā Ḥasan 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 Ḥasan of Najistān') in Shiraz in Jumādā al-Ulā' 1260 (May 1844) and later at the beginning of Ṭabarsī 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"'[1].

Although the narrator of this account does not agree with other sources on the time and duration of *i'tikāf*, all other details indicate that this is a genuine account given by someone who was present at Kūfah. A few lines below, the same account makes it clear that indeed, as Mullā Husain himself confessed later, he was not ordered to travel to Kirmān but to Fars: 'and since I did not anticipate seeing anyone in Fārs' says Mullā Husain to his followers, 'I presumed that my destination was Kirmān'[2]. This may suggest that either there was a clear instruction from Rashtī, regarding travel to Fars, of which Mullā Husain became aware after the former's death, or more likely there were allusions in the letter which were interpreted by Mullā Husain as instructions for travel to Iran. Though the tone of the above account tends to suggest that at the time Mullā Husain was unaware of the possibility of meeting anyone in Fārs, 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 Husain was prepared to accept Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān's authority, since he had already rejected the claims of the others in 'Atabāt. Mullā Muhammad Taqī Hashtrūdī particularly takes care to point out that Kirmān was only 'the apparent destination' of Mullā Husain[3]. Similarly, the accounts given by Nabīl Zarandī and *Qatīl* about the lack of support for Karīm Khān amongst the Shaykhi students[4] suggest that Mullā Husain was not particularly keen to visit Kirmān.

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1. *Ahmad*. 448 n.
2. Ibid.
3. *Abwāb al-Hudā'* cited in *TMS*. 56.
4. *Nabīl*. pp.39-40 citing the account of Shaykh Abū Turāb Ishtihārdī.

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 Mullā ʿAlī Kirmānī who because of his hostility to Mullā Hasan Gauhar over the execution of Rashtī's will, canvassed the succession of Karīm Khān with the help of a tract which he allegedly forged in the name and the style of Rashtī[1]. In this *risāla*, as we were told by *Qatīl*, Karīm Khān 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[2]. Mullā ʿAlī 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 Kirmān'[3]. On the basis of this account two points may be raised. First, perhaps even the letter which was delivered to Mullā Husain in Kūfah was no more than this very forged tract, since both the letter and the forged tract enhance the position of Karīm Khān as the source for seeking guidance. Secondly, the rumours and allegations might have encouraged Mullā Husain, or some of his associates, to visit Kirmān in order to investigate the truth of the claims which apparently were put forward by Karīm Khān in his dispatches to the Shaykhi ʿulama of Kāzimayn[4]. *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'[5].

But in addition to these 'apparent intentions', there are other indications which might be taken as the signs of a vague attention to Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad in Shiraz. If not Mullā 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 ʿAtabāt[6]. 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[7]. However, the significance of this probable contact should not be exaggerated, since the later behaviour of Mullā Husain in Shiraz proved that if indeed there had been a previous acquaintance, or even intention to visit him, it certainly was not with

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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 Būshihr via Baṣrah[2]. After a short stay there, he reached Shiraz some time in late Rabīʿ 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 ʿAlī Muhammad and after recognising him as the 'Promised One' (*Mauʿūd*), 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 ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī Muhammad at Dukkān Rīva, half a *farsakh* from Shiraz, who enquired about Mullā Husain:

> 'We pointed him out, and the negro approached Mullā Husain 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'[3].

Nabīl 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-Ulā' (22nd May)[5] while *The New History* (citing Hājī Mīrzā Jānī who relates it from

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1. *Qatīl*. (511).
2. Ibid. cf. *Nabil*. 51.
3. *Ahmad*. 448 n. For the Gumruk caravanserai see *Fārs Nāmih*. II, 146 and Binning, op.cit. I, 285. They were presumably directed to Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad's office.
4. His real name was ʿAbd al-Karīm and he was known as *Kātib*.
5. *Nabil*. 52.

Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Khurāsānī who heard it from Mullā Husain) states that since Mullā Husain was previously acquainted with Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad in ʿAtabāt, he 'at once on reaching Shiraz sought out his abode' and was received with hospitality[1]. Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī on the other hand relates from Mullā ʿAbd al-Jalīl Urūmī who was himself present in Shiraz, that Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad first attended Mullā Husain's lectures on *Sharh al-Ziyāra* in the mosque of Vakīl in Shiraz. Once in the course of these lectures, Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad asked him: 'If someone expounded better than you, what would you say?'. Mullā Husain answered: 'I will obey and listen'. Then Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad asked what would his reaction be if one expounded better than Rashtī and even Ahsā'ī himself, to which question Mullā Husain gave the same reply. Then Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad presented him with some of his writings. 'Immediately after reading them', recalls Urūmī, 'he was overwhelmed and deeply moved. But the Bab advised him to conceal his emotions'[2]. Finally Mullā Muhammad Taqī Hashtrūdī relates that having a brief acquaintance from the days of Karbilā', they again met each other in the lectures of a certain *mudarris* in Shiraz. There, Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad gradually introduced Mullā Husain to his ideas and claims[3].

The discrepancy and confusion in these five accounts are typical of much of the available information on the 'proclamation' (*izhār-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 *Nabīl* constantly tried to give a supernatural sense to their accounts in order to make it more comparable to the traditional concept of *izhār-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. Furthemore, Mullā 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'[4]. The relevant

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1. *NH*. 34.
2. *MJQ*. (472).
3. *TMS*. pp.56-7.
4. Nearly all the available materials on the Shiraz 'proclamation' are based on seven primary sources: I. Mullā Husain → ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Khurāsānī → Ḥājī Mīrzā Jānī → *NH*. (but not in *NK*.). II. Mullā Ḥusain → Mīrzā Aḥmad Qazvīnī → *Nabīl*. III. Mullā Husain (?) → Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Hashtrūdī → *TMS*. IV. Mullā Ḥasan Bajistānī → *Ahmad*. V. Mullā Jalīl Urūmī → *MJQ*. VI. *Qatīl*. VII. The writings of the Bab. Beside I and II who directly quote from Mullā Ḥusain, 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[1].

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 ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī Muhammad, there was no clear intention of 'proclaiming' his 'mission', especially to Mullā Husain Bushrūyihī. What is certain however, is that prior to this encounter and following his earlier dreams and intuitions[2], Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad became more and more convinced that he was divinely inspired and that after Rashtī he was to become the 'place of descent' (*mahbit-i vahy*) and 'source of divine emanation'. 'Nineteen days before the commencement of the revelation, he (i.e. Rashtī) joined the Heavenly Host (*Mala'-i Aʿlā*) and the beginning of 1260 was the time when the secret was first revealed'[3]. 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 Rabīʿ al-Awwal'[4]. 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 (*Arḍ al-Muqaddas*, i.e. the ʿAtabāt) 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'[5].

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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 *tauqīʿ* by the Bab with a similar content is cited in Ḥājj Ḥusain Qulī Jadīd al-Islām, *Minhāj al-Ṭālibīn fī al-radd ʿalā al-firqa al-hālaka al-Bābīya*, (Bombay, 1320 Q/pp.101-4) which contains some extra passages. The author wrongly believes that this is part of the *Bayān*.
4. *al-Kitāb al-Ḥaramayn* cited in *Nicolas*. 206. This is written in Jumādā al-Thānī 1261 (June 1845) later than *al-Ṣaḥīfa Bayn al-Ḥaramayn*. The Persian translation of *Nicolas*. (Musīyu Nīcolā, *Mazāhib-i Milal-i Mutimaddinih, Tārīkh-i Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad maʿrūf bi-Bāb*, Tehran, 1322 Sh. translated by ع.م.ف. (ʿAlī Muḥammad Farahvashī), p.210 n. quotes the original passage in Arabic.
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 Rashtī's death, but also hints at the termination of the ʿAtabāt 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 Mullā 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 Hājī Mīrzā Jānī demonstrates the process by which this anticipation had become explicit when Mullā Husain first conversed with Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad in the upper chamber of the latter's house. Mullā Husain himself related that first the Bab asked him: "'Whom do you now recognise as your Master"? "As yet", Mullā 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 Mulla Husain gave a negative answer: 'I see in you none of these qualities'. Later in the same meeting as Mullā Husain reported, he observed a commentary of *Sūra al-Baqara* on the shelf. When he asked about the author, Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad replied: 'A mere youthful beginner who nevertheless lays claim to a high degree of knowledge and greatness'[1].

These remarks, as reported by Mullā 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 *Sūra al-Baqara* to which he claimed to have written a commentary of 'the inmost of the inmost' (*bātin-i bātin*)[2]. Although Mullā 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

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1. *NH*. 35.

2. Ibid. pp.35-6. For the use of this term in Shaykhi doctrine see above Chapter One, I and *Sharḥ al-Zīyāra*, op.cit. ed. 1355 Sh.), III, pp.258-9.

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

> 'One day in the presence of the *Bāb-al-Bāb* (Mullā Ḥusain's later title) in Khurasan (probably Mashhad), we were passing a theological school (*madrasih*). He looked at the school and recited this verse: "Not one warm hearted man (*ahl-i dil*) 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 (*Ḥujjat-i Khudā*) for forty days. I realised the meaning of the saying 'knowledge is the greatest veil (*al-'ilm 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 Tabarsī upheaval, on a few occasions Mullā Husain stated: 'I wish my steps had never reached the Madrasih, 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 Urūmī 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 Āman*). The night of the 5th

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1. *TMS*. pp.62-3.
2. Account given by *Varqat al-Firdaus*, Mullā Ḥusain's sister relating it from Āqā (Mullā) Muḥammad Ḥasan Bushrūyihī, one of the *Baqīyat al-Sayf* (the Remnants of the Sword) in Ṭabarsī, cited in *Fu'ādī*, 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 ʿAlī Muhammad's claim was fully accepted by Bushrūyihī[1]. Bearing in mind the negative elements which first prevented Mullā Husain from complying with Sayyid ʿAlī 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 Shiʿi 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 ʿAlī 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'[2]. 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'[3]. 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 Kāzim Rashtī, then in Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad the Bab and finally in Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī Māzandarānī 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 madrasihs and retirement of the mosques, and whose mental preoccupation was to study *hikmat*, *hadīth* and other subjects in the Shaykhi curriculum, Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad's simplicity had a special appeal. He represented a totally different background, yet they had enough common points to

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1. *Bayān*, II, 7, p.30.
2. *Nabil*. 54.
3. Ibid. 56.

permit a dialogue. Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad was a man of piety and austerity who was also occupied with messianic 'revelations'. He also regarded Aḥsā'ī and Rashtī 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 Ḥusain represented two different types. But it was this very difference which was a source of attraction to Mullā Ḥusain and other Shaykhi companions who saw in the Shirazī merchant unusual 'holiness'. His appearance, his manner, and his 'hospitality' (*muḥabbat va luṭf-i raftār*) were all elements appealing to Bushrūyihī and others. As Mullā Ḥusain himself recalls, he was 'profoundly impressed by the gentle yet compelling manner in which that strange youth' spoke to him[1]. It was 'the music of his voice', 'the radiance of the countenance', 'the expression of affection'[2] and the 'sitting in a most dignified and majestic attitude'[3] 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 Chihrīq in Āẕarbāījān, 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'[4].

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 Shiʿi 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 Ḥusain was the 'proofs' (*ḥujaj*) which Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad rendered in justification of his claims. In this context, the latter basically stressed two points. First, he emphasised the prophecies of Sayyid Kāẓim, of which he must have become aware either at the time of his sojourn in the ʿAtabāt or later through his Shaykhi

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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'[1]. 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 Kāzim 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 Rashtī. He did not consider himself only as the successor of Rashtī 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 *Bābīyat* 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 *Risālih* of Qurrat al-ʿAyn, Rashtī had also been referred to by the title *Bāballāh al-Muqaddam*[2], 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 Rashtī and with some implication of the *Rukn-i Rābiʿ*, or this was a title which was given to Rashtī 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 *Bābīyat* was different from the past Shaykhi leaders[3]. It is not unlikely that the adjective *Muqaddam* (primary, preliminary) in Rashtī's title was applied with a sense of continuous progress in revelation. As Sayyid Kāzim was believed to be higher in his position of *Bābīyat* than the 'Four Deputies' (*Nuvvāb-i Arbaʿa*), so he himself was a preliminary 'Gate' to the next *Bāb* who would make his stand public[4]. 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

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1. *Nabīl*. 57 cf. *NH*. 35, calling himself *Ṣāḥib-i Amr* and *Ahmad*. 449 n. 'the True One'.
2. See above Chapter One, I.
3. See below.
4. Qurrat al-ʿAyn (Ṭāhirih), *Risālih*, Z. (493).

Husain also would be the preliminary 'Gate' for access to the Bab[1]. Although it is arguable that this title was given to Mullā 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 *Qurʾān* that the 'Book' which is 'sent down' to the Prophet is the 'sign' (*āyat*) from God[2]. In response to Mullā Husain's demand, he first replied to some questions raised in a short tract which Bushrūyihī had written previously on some Shaykhi topics. Then he wrote a commentary on *Sūra al-Yūsuf*, later known as *Qayyūm al-Asmāʾ*, which is one of his most important works of the early period. As it is reported, on the night of the 5th Jumādā al-Ūlāʾ he compiled the first chapter of the commentary known as *Sūra al-Mulk* and in the following days the rest of the hundred and eleven *suras* were compiled[3]. The speed with which he 'revealed verses' particularly impressed Mullā Husain who recalled: 'Not for one moment did he interrupt the flow of the verses which streamed from his pen'[4]. On another occasion Mullā Husain observed with 'amazement' the commentary which the Bab wrote on the well-known '*hadīth al-Jārīya*' since he recalled that Rashtī used to attribute the compilation of the commentary on this *hadīth* to the *Sāhib al-Amr*[5].

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 *tafsīr*. To Mullā Husain and the other early Babis, the

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1. *Nabīl*. 63. Though in most early works of the Bab prior to 1264 he is referred to as the Letter *Sīn* (*Ṣaḥīfah-yi ʿAdlīyah* , *INBA*. 82, 139); *al-Awwal man Āman* or *Avval Muʾmin* (*Dalāʾil-i Sabʿah*, op.cit. 54); *aḥabb al-khalq* (letter to Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq Yazdī, *INBA*. 91, pp.94-102).
2. XXIX, 50-51. Also see KUR'ĀN in *Shorter EI*, pp.273-4.
3. In his letter to Mullā Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī, *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. *Nabīl*. 61.
5. *NK*. 106; *TMS*. 60. The text of this commentary appears in *INBA*. 67, pp.157-60. The *hadīth* related from ʿAlī by Jārīya ibn Qudāma appears in *Biḥār al-Anwār*, VIII, Chapter 64, pp.671-7.

works of the Bab were to be valued not as examples of conventional Shi'i and non-Shi'i 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'im of a commentary on the 'Best of the Stories' (*Aḥsan al-Qiṣaṣ: 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'im[1]. 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'[2].

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'im 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'rifat*) 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 *Bābīyat* and that he was the author of those writings which are attributed to the Bab[3]. 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

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1. See below.
2. *Nabil*. 61.
3. *Qatīl*. (524).

unrealistic to think, as it is usually implied by the Babi writers, that Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad 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 Ḥusain at that particular moment had not met the Bab in Shiraz, the course of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad's spiritual development would have taken different direction. The role performed by Mullā Ḥusain 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 Shiʿi 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad's consent and 'submitted themselves to his claim' may be taken as a sign of their active role[1]. Shaykh Sulṭān Karbalā'ī also observes that if the early believers had not entered 'the Land of Safety' (*Balad al-Amn:* 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'[2].

In the days following his meeting with the Bab, Mullā Ḥusain gave lectures and public sermons in the mosque of Īlkhānī in the neighbourhood of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad's house, and soon managed to attract a number of Shaykhis amongst the inhabitants. Besides Mīrzā Aḥmad Shīrāzī who attended these meetings, and Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad who himself invited other *tujjār*[3], 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.

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1. Ibid. (520).
2. *Z.* (249).
3. *NH.* 36; *Nabīl.* 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[1]. It is for this reason that Mīrzā Ahmad noted:

> 'Mīrzā ʿAlī Muḥammad 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 ʿAlī 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'[2].

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 Rashtī's instruction, added: 'I was not ordered to Kirmān but to Fārs ... I am inclined to think that this is the man whom the Sayyid (Kāẓim) mentioned to me in his prediction about the appearance of the True One'[3]. 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 Muḥammad 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'[4]. Hashtrūdī continues:

> 'Then those ʿulama who supported his (the Bab's) claim argued with those who denied it, until each with a measure (*mīzān*) in hand to examine *Ṣāḥib-i Ẓuhūr*, 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 Ḥusain called upon Mullā ʿAlī (presumably Basṭāmī): "this is the one about whom you blamed me"'[5].

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 Īlkhānī 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

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1. *Nabīl*. pp.66-7.
2. *Ahmad*. pp.448-9.
3. Ibid. 449 n.
4. *TMS*. 65.
5. Ibid.

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 *Sīn* (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 (*Vāḥid*) was completed'[1].

Regardless of the metaphors implied in this passage[2], the above remarks make it certain that between the 5th Jumādā al-Ūlā' and the 15th Jumādā al-Thānī (July 2nd 1844) eighteen individuals were initiated as believers in the Bab. 'The second believer', after Mullā Husain, was Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī who, according to *Nabīl* 'by hearing a single verse without any other proof' recognised him[3]. In allegorical language the Bab identified him as 'ʿAlī who returned to earth with all those who believed in him and he is the second who believed in the Point after the Letter *Sīn*'. Here the Bab himself is the Point in the Letter *Bā* of *Bismallāh al-rahmān al-rahīm* (بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم) so Mullā Husain is the *Sīn* and Mulla ʿAlī and the others the remaining seventeen letters of the same verse or 'all those who believed in him'[4].

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 Muhammad Bāqir Bushrūyihī who were counted among the believers after Mullā Husain, the six remaining members of a seven man group (*rijāl sabʿa*) headed by Bastāmī, were also converted[5]. In an order which apparently corresponds to their conversion in the days of the week they are named as follows: Mullā ʿAbd al-Jalīl Urūmī, Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Qazvīnī, Mullā Hasan Bajistānī, Mullā Muhammad Mayāmay'ī, Mullā Ahmad Ibdāl Marāghihī and Mullā Mahmūd Khu'ī. Following them four other individuals, Sayyid Husain Yazdī, Mīrzā Muhammad (*Rauẓih Khān*) Yazdī, Mullā Muhammad Bāqir Tabrīzī and Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Māzandarānī (later known as Quddūs) were also named[6]. Altogether *Qatīl* named fourteen individuals. But this list in some points contradicts *Nabīl* who believes that thirteen students were in Bastāmī's group and in all seventeen individuals were in Shiraz[7]. 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[8]. Indeed if we accept that what the Bab said in 1263 about the nineteen-

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1. *Bayān*. VIII, 15 (300).
2. See below.
3. *Nabīl*. 69.
4. *Bayān*. I, 3 (8).
5. *Qatīl*. (pp.510 cf. 520).
6. Ibid. (520).
7. *Nabīl*. pp.66 cf. 80-1.

man unit (*Vāhid*) is what actually existed in 1260, then it is necessary that the extra three individuals in *Nabīl's* list should be added: Mullā Yūsuf Ardabīlī, Mullā Khudābakhsh Qūchānī and Mullā Sa'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[1]. Moreover *Nabīl* also added Mullā Hādī Qazvīnī (son of 'Abd al-Wahhāb, and brother of Mullā Muhammad 'Alī) instead of Mullā Muhammad Mayāmay'ī but in the light of what *Qatīl* says about the former, that in spite of his brother's vigour, 'he was in darkness'[1] and of the fact that in the later years he never showed any serious interest in the movement[2], it is possible to suggest with some degree of certainty that he was not among the early believers. Equally the later preachings of Mullā Muhammad Mayāmay'ī in his home-town Mayāmay may also increase the probability of his being in this group[3]. Strangely enough of other persons in *Nabīl's* list, beside Mullā Hādī, Mullā Sa'īd Hindī and Mullā Khudā Bakhsh Qūchānī 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[4]. 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 personal inquiry.

A yearning to be in the presence of the Qā'im combined with scrupulous observation is, for instance, evident in Mullā Yūsuf Ardabīlī. As *Nuqtat al-Kāf* relates, for three years on the basis of a treatise which Sayyid Kāzim wrote in reply to his queries on the identity of the *Bāb* of the Imam, Mullā Yusūf had

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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 *Nabīl*. 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 *Hayy* 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 *Nabīl*, 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 ʿAlī Muhammad as the *Bāb*[1]. There are indications which confirm that indeed not all those who were in the party recognised the Bab. According to *Nabīl* 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'[2]. This is further clarified by Shaykh Sultān Karbalā'ī who remarks:

> 'All those who set out (for Shiraz) and went on the quest to achieve the faith were amongst the *Sābiqīn* (Forerunner) but yet there were two persons from Kirmān who were not amongst the messengers (*qāṣidīn*) 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 Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān in succession to the Sayyid (Rashtī)". Hence they left the *Sābiqīn* 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"'[3].

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 ʿAtabāt party. It is agreed by all the sources that Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī 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-Ākhir*) or the Last Point (*Nuqtatal-Ukhrā*), came to Shiraz not in the company of Mullā Husain or Bastāmī but directly from Bārfurūsh[4]. He was a student of Rashtī, who after spending some time in ʿAtabāt, had returned to Bārfurūsh prior to the death of Rashtī[5]. 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[6]. However it is unreasonable to think that Bārfurūshī had started his journey to Mecca seven

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1. *NK*. 104. Perhaps it was as the result of this same treatise, that Mullā Yūsuf even at the time of Sayyid Kāẓim, freely preached ideas which were considered as *ghulūv* by some more conservative elements in the Shaykhi circle (*TMS*. pp.43-4).
2. *Nabīl*. 66.
3. *Maktūb* (*Z*. 249).
4. *Nabīl*. 59; *TMS*. pp.63-4.
5. See above Chapter Two, II.
6. *TMS*. pp.63-4.

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 Bārfurūshī, *Qatīl's* reference to three other individuals, Sayyid Husain Yazdī, Mīrzā Muhammad Yazdī and Mullā Muhammad Bāqir Tabrīzī, who joined after the 'seven man group', may also be interpreted as indicating their independent decisions to come to Shiraz[1]. Yet there is no other evidence to prove this. Another source, Āqā Mīrzā Haydar ʿAlī Uskū'ī, reported in his narrative that Mullā Ahmad Ibdāl 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)'[2]. 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[3]. The letter which was given to Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Qazvīnī (her brother-in-law) to be delivered to the 'Promised Bab' may also be seen as a sign of this previous awareness[4].

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.

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1. *Qatīl*. (520).
2. *INBA*. Lib. *MS*., p.2.
3. *Nabīl*. 314.
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'[1].

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 Hijāz or in the ʿAtabāt[2], 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 Mullā Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī, is one of the group of three who later questioned the superiority of Mullā Husain and the others and in due course defected from the movement[3]. One may suspect that even from the very early days the authority entrusted to Mullā Husain and the influence he exerted upon the rest of the members, disenchanted some who perhaps knew the Bab prior to the party from ʿAtabāt. 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 *Sābiqīn* (or *Sābiqūn*), the *Nuqabā'*, the *Nujabā'* and such like. In a letter in reply to Sayyid Jaʿfar Shibr sometime in 1262 (1846), he states that he 'entrusted his cause to the "guardians of the people" (*ūlū al-ard*)'[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 *Sahīfah-yi ʿAdlīyah* which is written at 'the height of grief and isolation' (*dar buhbūhih-yi huzn va infirād*) in 1262[5], 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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1. Letter in reply to Mullā Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī, *INBA*. 91, XXXVI, 170-80. Also cited in Z. 283-6.
2. See below Chapter Nine.
3. *Nabil*. pp.161-2.
4. *INBA*. 91, 165-66.
5. *INBA*. 82, 139.

people except to some of the *Nujabā'* who know some of them'[1]. They are the 'bearers of the emanation' (*hāmil-i fayż-and*) and responsible for the appointment of the *Nujabā'*[2]. The conduct of 'wordly affairs (*tadbīr-i arż*)' 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'[3]. The *Nujabā'* 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 *Hā'*' (هاء) (numerologically equal to seven: هـ: 5 + ا : 1 + ء : 1 = هاء : 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'[4].

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 'worldly affairs' to the hands of the *Nuqabā'* and through them to the *Nujabā'*. 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' (*maʿrifat al-sabʿa*) may be taken as a vague reference to seven of the believers in Shiraz (*rijāl sabʿa*) whereas Mullā Husain's title *Bāb al-Bāb* may indicate the level of the *Nuqabā'*.

These attempts in the writings of the Bab brought about further speculation amongst the Babis over the identity of *Nujabā'* and *Sabiqīn*. The criticism which was directed against Mullā Husain and other believers of Shiraz, mainly from three quarters[5], make it necessary for the Babi writers to provide some appropriate interpretation of the Bab's allusions in order to satisfy the

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1. Ibid. pp.188-9.
2. Ibid. 189.
3. Ibid. 190.
4. Ibid. pp.191-2.
5. The first group consisted of Mullā Javād Valīyānī, Mullā Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī and Mullā Muḥammad Hiravī. (For Valīyānī see below Chapter Six, IV). The second group was led by some Arab ʿulama in Kāẓimayn (see below Chapter Five, III). The third group which was not strictly considered as Babi consisted of Mullā Aḥmad Rashtī and his allies (see below Chapter Five, III).

curiosity of the other Babis. In her treatise, Qurrat al-ʿAyn, for example, insisted that since Mullā Husain is amongst the *Sābiqīn*, and they are 'in their position exalted, therefore no one should aspire to their status'[1]. In reply to Valiyānī's criticism of Bushrūyihī, she points out 'obedience to the *Sābiqīn* is obligatory and necessary for *Lāhiqīn* (those who joined later)'[2]. The definition of *Sābiqīn*[3] on the other hand is given in the *Maktūb* of Shaykh Sultān Karbalā'ī where he defined them as those believers who recognised the Bab prior to his pilgrimage to the Hajj:

> 'As for the *Sābiqīn*, 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 Ḥajj. Verily, the truth has not been revealed to any soul unless he was amongst the *Sābiqīn*'[4].

The same attitude in regard to criticism of the Shiraz group again encouraged Qatīl al-Karbalā'ī to elaborate on the hierarchy (*marātib*) and describe the virtues which promoted the *Sābiqīn* above the *Lāhiqīn*. On the basis of *Sahīfa-yi ʿAdlīyah* he then argues that no doubt Mullā Husain is one of the *Nujabā'* 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 *Dār al-Amn* (i.e. Shiraz) to be in their position beneath the *Nujabā'* and above the *Sulahā'*'[5].

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 *Hurūf-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

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1. Z. (500).
2. Ibid.
3. The term *Sābiqīn* (or *Sābiqūn*) is borrowed from the *Qurʾān*, 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.
4. *Maktūb*, (Z. 249).
5. *Qatīl*. (pp.527-9).

shared with the *Hurūf-i Ḥayy* 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 (*Abvāb-i ʿArbʿa*) or Lights of the Throne (*Anvār-i ʿArsh*) or bearers of Creation, Livelihood, Death and Life which total the number of *Ḥayy*. 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 *Ḥayy* is 18 (ح : 8 + ى : 10 = 18: حَیّ) and perhaps this is the basic explanation for the actual number of Letters. The word *Ḥurūf* indicates the relation of each letter (in *abjad* arrangement) with each member of the group[3]. The word *Ḥayy* 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, Fāṭima and the four Archangels. The equivalence of these two values, namely the early disciples and the Shiʿi

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1. See below
2. *Bayān*, II, 2, (7).
3. Numerology (*ḥisāb al-jumal*) and the science of letters (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*) are both considered as branches of *Jafr-i Jāmiʿa*. The tradition of *Jafr* is closely associated with Shiʿi 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 Mahdī, 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 Aḥsā'ī and Rashtī including *al-Risala al-Rashtīya* by Aḥsā'ī (*Fihrist*, II, 260-2).
4. *EI²*, ḤAYY (by J. Lecerf). Perhaps this term has its origin in the Old Testament (Genesis, III, 20). In the Crypto-Jewish sect of the Dönmeh (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 Dönmeh assumed eighteen such reincarnations of the soul of Adam and the Messiah. "Incommendancas" or "Eighteen Commands" were the basis of the Dönmeh 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 Ḥurūfī activities from the 15th to 17th century.

'infallibles' is not accidental. Representatives of the past revelation now re-emerge in the Letters of *Ḥayy* to witness the resurrection where each letter represents the corporal existence of a 'Name'. The whole of the first *Vāḥid* of *Bayān* 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[1].

But this first Unit (واحد *Vāḥid* : 19 = و : 6 + ا : 1 + ح : 8 + د :4) is not complete without the Bab who is now manifested not only as the Qā'im but as the *Nuqṭih-i Bayān* (the Point of Bayan, later *Nuqṭih-i Ūlā'*) or the 'Essence of the Seven Letters' (*Zāt-i Ḥurūf-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' (*Vāḥid-i Mubīn*) 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 Vāḥid*) flows through the *Kullu-Shay'* (the Whole Being)'[2].

The value of *Kullu-shay'* is 361 (ك : 20 + ل : 30 + ش : 300 + ء : 1 + ى : 10 = كُلُّشَيْءٍ : 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' (*Vujūd-i maujud*) or 'being conditioned to things' (*vujūd-i bishart-i shay'*). This concept originates in the *Qur'ān*: 'All things (*kullu-shay'*) perish, except His Face

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1. *Bayān*, I, 1-19 (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 'Alī to the earth: 'The first who returned to the world was God's Messenger (*Rasūl-i Khudā*, the Prophet) who was the first messenger from the Qā'im and then the Commander of the Faithful (*Amīr al-Mu'minīn*: 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib) who carries out the mission to Būshihr 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 Būshihr see below Chapter Five, I) the Bab refers to himself as the Qā'im who has instructed his disciples, the return of Muḥammad and 'Alī, to deliver his 'mission'. (Z. 224) Mīrzā Aḥmad also confirms that at the time of the Bab's first proclamation it was said 'that those who first believed in him were Muḥammad and 'Alī' (*Aḥmad*. 451). Also cf. to *NT*. III, 40-1 and *Nabil* pp.87-8).

2. *Bayān*. VII, 8 (248).

(*Vajha-hū*)'[1]. The Bab, similarly to the Sufis and Hurūfīs in the past, interpreted the 'Face of God' (وجهه : 19 = و : 6 + ج : 3 + ه : 5 + ه : 5) as the secret of the 'Whole Being'. Thus the secret of the 'Whole Being' is concealed in the first *Vāhid* and the secret of the *Vāhid* is in the Point (*Nuqtih*) of *Bayān* which is the point of *Bā* of the nineteen lettered *Bismallāh al-rahmān al-rahīm*.

This theoretical framework served as a metaphor for what the Bab intended to create in reality. In the formation of the first *Vāhid* 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'[2]. He expounded a theory in which the Letters participated in developing the 'secret of his mission'. The first *Vāhid* 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 *Vāhid*, occasionally terms such as *Mirāyā'* (Mirrors), *Adillā'* (Proofs) and *Shuhadā'* (Martyrs) were used with what could be interpreted as reference to other *Vāhids*[3]. 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 *Bayān* to *Man Yuzhiruhu Allāh* (He whom God shall manifest)[4] 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 *Bayān*, 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

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1. XXVIII, 88. كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ 2. *Bayān. Exordium*, (2).
3. *KD.* II, 227 ; *Hasht Bihisht*, pp.284-5 and *Gobineau*, pp.277-8.
4. For references to *Man Yuẓhiruhu Allāh* in *Bayān* see *NK.*, 'Index of Chief Contents of the Persian Bayān', under "He whom God shall manifest" (p.LXLX).

Āzarbāijān, two from Qazvīn, two from Yazd, one from Māzandarān and one from Inida. Both Khurasan and Āzarbāijān were the provinces where Shaykhis had a greater degree of popularity and following. Similarly in Qazvīn, Yazd and Māzandarān (in the city of Bārfurūsh in particular), the teachings of the students of Ahsā'ī provided the ground for the spread of the Shaykhi ideas[1]. Seven Khurāsānīs and three of the Āzarbāijānīs 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 Hindī). This may be interpreted as an even distribution between 'city' and 'village'[2].

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 Bārfurūshī (Quddūs) was the son of a small land owner (rice-cultivator) in the outskirts of Bārfurūsh[3]. Sayyid Husain Yazdī was son of a low-ranking Shaykhi Mullā in Yazd[4]. Mullā 'Alī Bastāmī may have come from a small land-owning family[5]. Mullā Muhammad 'Alī Qazvīnī was the only one (except Qurrat al-'Ayn) who came from a family of high-ranking Shaykhi mujtahids of Qazvīn[6], 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[7]. 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 Rashtī. 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, Bastāmī and Urūmī, there is

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1. For some indications on the spread of the Shaykhis, see above Chapter One, II.
2. Some analysis of the Khurāsānī 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-Wahhāb Qazvīnī. See below Chapter Seven, III.
7. *Qatīl*. (526) gives a comparison between Mullā Muḥammad '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-ijtihād*. Except in the three cases of Sayyid Husain Yazdī, Mullā Muhammad Qazvīnī and Qurrat al-ʿAyn, the past religious affiliation of their families is not known[1]. 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 ʿulama in attracting students and recruiting them for the Shaykhi circle in the ʿAtabāt. 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[2] and Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī[3] of these tendencies which, as far as our sources indicate, were also shared by Qurrat al-ʿAyn[4], Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī and Mullā Yūsuf Ardabīlī[5].

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 ʿAlī Bārfurūshī 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 Yūsuf 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 Yūsuf. Later he warned him against revealing 'secrets' which are only granted to *khavāṣ* by referring to a *ḥadīth*: '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 *Ḥayy*, who was also accused of *ghulūv*, was strongly condemned by Sayyid Kāẓim and even threatened with expulsion from the Shaykhi circle (*Nabīl*. 25). Such an attitude in the above individuals, both from Āẕarbāījān, perhaps may be explained by the possible existence of *Ahl-i Ḥaqq* 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 ʿAlī Bastāmī, Qurrat al-ʿAyn and in the later stages Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Māzandarānī (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 Urūmī, Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Qazvīnī, Mullā Ahmad Ibdāl Maraghihī, Mullā Muhammad Bāqir 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 Bushrūyihī, Mullā Muhammad Bāqir Bushrūyihī, Mullā Mahmūd Khu'ī and Mullā Muhammad Mayāmay'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 Raużih Khān Yazdī, Mullā Khudābakhsh Qūchānī, Mullā Saʿīd Hindī and Mullā Hasan Bajistānī.

The theoretical hierarchy of the First *Vāhid* 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[1].

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 *Ẓikr*, *Baqīyatallāh* the *Hujjat* and similar terms. He was entrusted by the Imam with heralding the nearness of the *Ẓuhūr* and the approach of the Day of Return (*Yaum al-Rijʿa*) and then the Day of Resurrection (*Yaum al-Qīyāma*). But before the advent of the

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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 ʿAlī Bastāmī who died in gaol (see below Chapter Five, II) and Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir 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 Qā'im. But this was only the facade to a more complex process which shaped the early Babi theory of *Zuhūr*. 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' (*hujjīyat*), nevertheless, neither he nor his followers escaped the overwhelming influence of the prophecies of *Rij'at* and *Qīyāmat*. In *Dalā'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 *aḥādīth* 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-Fātima*, the tradition of Āzarbāijān and the prayers of *Nudba* and *Ramadān* to make the same justification[2]. In his letter to Muhammad Shāh he concludes: 'And all the torments reported in the *akhbār*, which are cited on innumerable occasions, are now fulfilled'[3]. These traditions, whether in their original form, or in more concise forms suggested by Shaykhism[4], 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.

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1. Op.cit. 44.
2. Ibid. pp.34-50.
3. *INBA*. 64, pp.103-26 (111).
4. Examples of this approach appear in *Sharḥ al-Zīyāra* (op.cit.) under the titles: 'About *Rij'a* and *Zuhūr*' (III, pp.54-87) and 'About the meaning of the time of *Rij'a*' (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 fulfilment of those tasks which were supposed to be accomplished prior to the Resurrection. Mullā Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī for instance points out that in the period of *Rij'at* prior to the Day of *Qīyāmat*, 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*. Majlisī argues that there is no clear evidence regarding the exact time of *Rij'at*, 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 *Qīyāmat-i Kubrā'* only the 'Special Return' (*Rij'at al-Khāssa*) (as opposed to General Return: *Rij'at al-'Amma*) 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 *ḥadīth* related from 'Alī in reply to the question 'whether the dead will rise before *Qīyāmat* and die after it', he replied: 'Yes, I swear to God that the blasphemy which will take place at the time of *Rij'at* is far greater than anything which happened before'. (Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār* 1st ed. 25 vols. Tehran, 1301-15 Q. XIII, 33, . Persian translation of vol.XIII by Muḥammad Ḥasan Urūmīyihī, Tabriz, 1260 Q. (Tehran 1397 Q.) 677 cf. 693 (Pers. trans.)) where a *ḥadīth* related from Ja'far Ṣādiq interprets the *Qur'ān* (XXVII, 85) and puts a clear distinction between the two events of *Rij'at* and *Qīyāmat*.
3. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, op.cit. XIII, 33, : Pers. trans. 675.
4. Ibid. Pers. trans. pp.675-84; *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn*, pp.213-22.
5. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, XIII, 32, pp.200-9: Pers. trans. pp.640-75. Also partly translated in *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn*, pp.225-33.
6. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, XIII, 32, 202: Pers. 674.

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 (*Nuqabā'*) 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 'Alī. 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, Alī, 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 'Alī and their supporters throughout time. From Kūfah which will be the headquarters of the Qā'im, he will lead his forces to the four quarters of the earth. He will wage war against the Sufyānī Banners (*Rāyāt al-Sufyānī*) which are the symbols of evil, with the help of some other messianic figures such as the Hasanī Youth (*al-Fatī al-Hasanī*), the Pure Soul (*al-Nafs al-Dhakīya*) 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 *ahadīth* 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 *Qīyāmat* the Qā'im commences his mission in Mecca, then he marches to Medina and then goes to the Holy Land of the 'Atabāt where he begins his *Khurūj*. This appears to be the beginning of *Qīyāmat*. Throughout his campaign, whether in Kūfah, Najaf or Karbilā' or anywhere else, he and his companions are engaged in a holy war (*jihād*) and a rising (*qīyām*). The *Qā'im bi al-Sayf* (the one who shall rise with

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1. Ibid. XIII, 1, 2: Pers. 5 citing Abī Ghanām al-Khādim who is relating from Imām Ḥasan 'Asgarī. 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, ʿAlī and, perhaps the most important of all, Husain ibn ʿAlī 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 Qā'im and the other holy figures is not wholly clear. Though some optimistic traditions predict the Qā'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[1]. Perhaps the essence of the Qā'im's mission is not so much in the ultimate conquest of the 'truth' over 'evil' as in his very act of 'rising' (*qīyām*).

In a symbolic re-enactment, the Bab and his followers were to fulfil this eschatological Return. The Bab himself was convinced that though 'externally' (*ẓāhirī*) he was the 'Gate' to the Imam, but 'internally' (*bāṭinī*) 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 *Maʿād*[2] permitted these symbolic identifications[3]. 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 Shiʿi lands to provide all the 'support' necessary for the *Ẓuhūr* of the Qā'im, the Bab himself would travel to Mecca to declare the advent of the Qā'im and the imminence of the *Qīyāmat*, though not necessarily 'revealing' himself as the Qā'im; then both he and his disciples, accompanied by other 'supporters', would gather in ʿAtabāt to fulfil the next stage of the messianic prophecies[4]. In practice this meant

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1. Ibid. XIII, 6 : Pers. 66-7; *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn*, pp.185-6; *Sharḥ al-Zīyāra*, 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 Qā'im and his companions.

2. See above, Chapter One, II.

3. In *Saḥīfah-yi ʿAdlīyah* for instance the Bab argues that the essence of the cognition of the Imams is the belief in their return. *Baqīyaṭallāh* (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 Amīr al-Mu'minīn 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 *Izhāq 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 *tullāb* in the ʿAtabāt and preparing the ground for the arrival of the Bab, organising Shaykhi support inside Iran, preaching admonitory sermons and speeches, visiting the eminent ʿulama 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 ʿAtabāt 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 ʿAtabāt was to be regarded as the commencement of the *Qīyāmat* proper.

The Shiʿi traditions no doubt were the main impetus for the Bab and his followers in drawing their future plans. However his acquaintance with *Bihār al-Anwār* of Majlisī[1] and other Shiʿi collections of traditions or the Shaykhi treatment of these traditions in *Sharh al-Zīyāra* and other works of Ahsā'ī and Rashtī 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[2], 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, wherewith 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'[3].

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

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1. *Dalā'il-i Sabʿah*. op.cit. 50.
2. pp.92-4.
3. Ibid. pp.92-3.

Matthew[1]. They are sometimes chosen particularly to imply the approach of a millenarian event: 'Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land[2] ... I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day'[3].

The Bab's preoccupation with Christ and Christianity was beyond the common muslim knowledge of the time which was mainly confined to the *Qur'ān* 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[4]. 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[5]. More references in his works to Christ, and his criticism of the Christian concepts of Trinity and Atonement would also confirm this belief[6]. Dr. Cormick also reported that during the Bab's incarceration in Chihrīq (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'[7]. 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'[8].

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 *Bābīyat*, *Zikrīyat* and alike were all given a vague relationship

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1. Compare to *Matthew* V, 14-16 (cf. X, 27); XI, 27; V, 13; X, 11-14 (also Luke IX, 5),20 respectively. *Nabil* makes no specific reference to any of the Gospels.
2. *Nabil*. 94 cf. *Matthew* XI, 3.
3. *Nabil*. 93 cf. *Matthew* X, 7, 23.
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. *Gobineau*. 144.
6. *Commentary on Sura al-Baqara*, *INBA*. no.69, 298; Letter in reply to questions by Mīrzā Muḥammad Sa'īd Ardistānī, *INBA*. no.69, 424.
7. *Materials*. 262.
8. *Sahīfa fi Sharh Du'ā'ihī 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 *Shīʿī al-Kāmil* or *Rukn al-Rābiʿ*. In one of his prayers, he maintains that his 'status' (*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 Yūsuf, he describes his relation to the holy chain of the Imams:

> 'God ordained the revelation of this book as a commentary to *Aḥsan al-Qiṣaṣ* from the presence of Muḥammad, son of Ḥasan, son of ʿAlī, son of Muḥammad, son of ʿAlī, son of Mūsā, son of Jaʿfar, son of Muḥammad, son of ʿAlī, son of Ḥusain, son of ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib, to his servant. This is a perfect divine proof from *Dhikr* (*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 *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 *Ṣaḥīfah-yi ʿAdlīyah* he maintains that: 'The Concealed Imam, may God hasten his appearance, designated one of his servants amongst the Persians and all his *Nuqabā'* to protect the religion'[4] or when in his address to Muḥammad Shāh he states: 'In the year *Sittīn* (i.e. 1260)

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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 Nahrī brothers in 1261 he defined the position of *Bābīyat* beneath the positions of *anbīyā'* (prophets) and *ausīyā'* (guardians). (*INBA.* no.91, XXVIII, 137).

God filled my heart with firm evidence and positive knowledge of *Ḥażrat-i Ḥujjat*'[1] these statements are only intended to cover his real claim of *Qā'imīyat* which he only made public four years later[2]. In an important passage in *Dalā'l-i Sab'ah*, the Bab himself explains his reasons for this concealment:

> 'See how the manifestation of God (*mazhar-i innanī anallāh*) revealed himself (first) in the position of the *Bābīyat* of the Qā'im 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. *Nuqtat al-Kāf* for instance justifies it by laying down four conditions for the veracity of the claimant[4] and then applying them to the claims of the Bab in various stages[5]. *Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq* cited a conversation which is reported to be an account of the interrogation of Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Zunūzī (entitled *Anīs*) in 1266 in Tabriz, in which he confirms that the gradual manifestation of the Bab from *Bābīyat* to *Ẕikrīyat* and then to *Qā'imīyat* and *Mazharīyat* was for 'the gradual promotion of the people's spiritual status'[6]. The conversation recorded by *Tārīkh-i Samandar* between Mullā Ḥusain and Mullā Ṣādiq Muqaddas in 1261 in Isfahan indicates a difference of opinion over the exact claim of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad. No doubt it was in pursuit of the same policy that Mullā Ḥusain argues the necessity for the appearance of the 'Promised One' in familiar Shaykhi terms[7]. 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-Zêman'[8].

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1. *INBA*. no.64, 113.
2. *Nabil*. 313. The text of the tablet (*tauqīʿ*) in which he finally disclosed his claim of *Qā'imīyat* in 1264 appears in *Z*. pp.164-6. Also quoted in *NK*. 209.
3. Op.cit. 29.
4. *NK*. pp.106-7.
5. Ibid. pp.111, 208.
6. *Z*. pp.31-2.
7. *Samandar*. pp.163-4. In addition to the term *Bāb*, Mullā Ḥusain uses the term *Ḥāmil* which is often used by the Shaykhis such as Kirmanī to indicate the spiritual position of Aḥsā'ī and Rashtī as Bearers of the Knowledge or Bearers of the Pillar (*Ḥāmil-i Rukn*) (*Izhāq al-Bāṭil*, op.cit. 107).
8. *Nicolas*. 218-28 (219).

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 Qā'im, the indications for the rest of the believers were never clear enough to prevent confusion. What *Qatīl* reported (presumably on the authority of some of the disciples who had returned to ʿAtabāt)[1] 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 *Qā'im Maqām*, the term by which he refers to the Bab[2]. 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 Karbilā' ... and refuse to recognise him without proofs and arguments and without his claim being substantiated by traditions of the Qā'im and the firm proof of the *Qurān*. Thus intensify your search and multiply your enquiry'[3].

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 ʿAtabāt; a sense of anticipation for the appearance of an unidentified 'promised person' who may claim to be the Qā'im. In fact *Qatīl* himself maintains that at the time the Bab was practising a policy of dissimulation (*kitmān*)[4]. Many indications in the early writings of the Bab prove *Qatīl's* view. In a letter addressed to Mullā Husain for example, written in early Muharram 1261 (December 1844), he strongly advised Bushrūyihī 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 *taqīya* in order to avoid persecution and imprisonment ...'[5]. In *Dalā'l-i Sabʿah* he again confirms: 'Since I was aware of the limits of the public, I ordered the concealment of my name'[6]. Similarly, in other early correspondence with his disciples he strongly forbade them to divulge his identity[7].

The emphasis on *taqīyah* for protection and safety was often justified by stressing the precedents for it in the Shiʿi traditions[8]. On a few occasions

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1. See below Chapter Five, I.
2. *Qatīl*. (510).
3. Ibid. (511).
4. Ibid.
5. *INBA*. no.91, IV, pp.10-14 (13).
6. Op.cit. 59.
7. For instance in his letter to Mullā Muhammad Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī, *INBA*. no.91, XXXVI, pp.170-80 (176) or to Salmān from Masqat (Muscat) (*INBA*. no.91, XVI, pp.52-6 (55)) both written in mid 1261 (1845).
8. For references to *taqīya* in *Bihār al-Anwār* see Shaykh ʿAbbās Qumī *Safīnat al-Bihār*, 2 vols., Najaf, 1355 Q. II, pp.468-70 under *kitmān* and 679-82 under *taqīya*. Also TAKĪYA in *Shorter EI* .

the Bab quoted well-known *ahādīth* related from the Prophet and the Imams on the necessity of *taqīyah*: '*Taqīya* is my faith and the faith of my forefathers. Anyone who does not practise *taqīya* 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 *taqīyah* in mind, the Bab stated in a prayer: 'By your refined wisdom, my Lord, you made *taqīya* 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 *taqīyah* remained an overwhelming feature of the Bab's words and actions. The issue of *taqīyah* 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 *taqīyah* policy, still the

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1. Letter in reply to the believers of Qazvīn written *circa* 1263 (1847), *INBA*. no.91, XL, pp.192-4 (193).
2. *Bihār al-Anwār*, XIII, 3, pp.7-8; Pers. Trans. pp.26-8.
3. Letter to Sayyid Ja'far Shibr, *INBA*. no.91, XXXIV, pp.165-6.
4. *RS*. X, pp.423-8 cf. *Materials*. 249-56: *Miftāḥ Bāb al-Abwāb*, op.cit. pp.189-90 (reporting from his grandfather); *Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī*, op.cit. 312 (citing recollections of Mullā Muḥammad 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'im (or Mahdī) himself.
5. See below, Chapter Nine, I 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 *Bābīyat* to *Qā'imiyat* and then to *Mazharīyat* (the claim to an independent revelation) was only the outward manifestation of the Bab's whole interpretation of *Qīyāmat*.

In a gradual development, the Bab was aiming to fulfil *Qīyāmat* 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 *Qīyāmat* was an extraordinary 'event' (*vāqi'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 *Qīyāmat* 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[1]. The Day of *Qīyāmat* is 'the Day of advent of the Tree of Truth (*shajarih-i haqīqat*)'[2].

> 'No one amongst the Shi'is seems to have understood *Qīyāmat* since they have been all entangled in illusions which have no bearing on the divine truth. What is truly intended of the Day of *Qīyāmat* 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 *Qīyāmat* ... and from the moment of the appearance of the Tree of *Bayān* (i.e. the Bab himself) up to the setting of his sun, is the *Qīyāmat* of the Prophet's revelation which was promised in the *Qur'ān* ...'[3].

The Bab looks at his own proclamation as the *Qīyāmat* of Islam 'since nothing reaches its *Qīyāmat* before perfecting its course and the perfection of Islam was achieved at the beginning of this revelation'[4].

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1. *Bayān*. VII, 9, (p.269).
2. *Bayān*. II, 7, (p.30).
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 *Qīyāmat* of *Bayān* comes at the time when "He whom God shall manifest" (*Mān Yuzhiruhu Allāh*) will appear. That will be the end of the *Bayān's* process of perfection. He will appear to harvest the fruit (of *Bayān*) 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'[1].

The whole concept of 'perfection' and the gradual growth of the 'Tree of Truth' which bears fruit at the *Qīyāmat* 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[2] 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[3] 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 *Bayān*) 'is still in its embryonic state (*dar maqām-i nutfih ast*)' but by the beginning of the next revelation 'it would reach its perfection'[4], 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 *Qīyāmat* are the moments of revival when man encounters God (*liqā' allāh*) only through His prophetic manifestations[5]. Thus, he concludes that presence in the Day of *Qīyāmat* is far more important for man than all the period in between the two *Qīyāmats* since it is in this moment of time that the fruits of the previous *Zuhūr* would reach their accomplishment only to prepare the formation of the new revelation[6].

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid. (p.30) cf. VII, 15 (p.261); IX, 3 (314).
3. The *Qurān* III, 19, 85; V, 3.
4. *Bayān*, II, 7 (31) cf. VII, 15 (p.260).
5. Ibid. cf. IX, 3 (p.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'i traditions which separate the 'supporters' of the Qā'im from his 'opponents'[1]. 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 (*mīzān*) for becoming enlightened with the light of the Heaven (*jannat*) of cognition or falling into the fire of the hell of veiledness (*ihtijāb*)[2]. 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 : 256 = ر : 200 + و : 6 + ن : 50) and that of the *nār* which is 251 (نار : 251 = ر : 200 + ا : 1 + ن : 50) is 5 which is equal to the value of *Bāb* (باب : 5 = ب : 2 + ا : 1 + ب : 2).

Of course it should be noted that the idea of successive revelations had ancient precedents in theoretical Sufism as well as in some Ismā'īlī trends and with greater clarity in the Nuqtavī doctrine[3]. No doubt the Bab was acquainted, at least partly, with this idea through the writings of Ahsā'ī and Rashtī. 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 anthropocenteric '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 *Qīyāmat* 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.

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1. Ibid. II, 4 (p.24) cf. 6 (p.29); III, 3 (78).
2. Ibid. VIII, 3 (pp.279-80); III, 3 (p.78).
3. Kīyā, S. *Nuqṭavīyān yā Pisīkhānīyān* in *Īrān Kudih* series, XIII, 1320 Sh., pp.11-12, 48, 58.

The Qā'im, 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 Yūsuf 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 *Qur'ān*, 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 Joseph[4], or because the story of Joseph contained the secret of *taqīyah*, 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 Muḥammad and then the Amīr 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 Yūsuf is 156 (i.e. the numerical value) which is (equal) to the number of *Qayyūm* This refers to the Qā'im of the House of Muḥammad and he who is *Ḥayy-i Qayyūm*'[6].

In this long and complex commentary, the Bab adopted a similar classification to the *Qur'ān* 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 *Qīyāmat* 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 ʿulama. 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:

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1. *QA*. III, folio 5/a.
2. Z. 244.
3. The *Qur'ān*. XII, 3.
4. *Bayān*. IV, 4 (p.116). Traditions indicating some points of resemblance between the Qā'im and Joseph appear in *Biḥār al-Anwār* (citing Shaykh Ṣadīq in *Kamāl al-Dīn*) XIII, 6 (11): Pers. Trans. pp.101-3.
5. The *Qur'ān*, 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 *Yūsuf* commentary in forty days; each day composing a part of it, till it was completed. Whenever I intended to write something, the Holy Spirit (*Rūḥallāh*) 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* (*Z̲ikr*) with truth, for God already ordained for you and for the circle around you in the Day of *Qīyāma* standing on the final path (*ṣirāṭ*) 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 *Qīyāma* 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-Kitāb* 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-Khāliṣ*)'[1].

The *Z̲ikr* 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 *Z̲ikr*, may well refer to the Qājārs in general and Muḥammad Shāh 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 Karbilā' by the Ottomans in 1258 (1842)[2]. These invitations to worldly conquest were also justifiable for the

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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 Āqāsī:

> 'O minister of the king! (*vazīr al-malik* or *vazīr 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'[1].

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 Āqāsī 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 idolators (*mushrikīn*)'[2].

In the second chapter called *Sura al-ʿUlamā'*, 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 *Qīyāma* you will stand on the *sirāṭ* and will be answerable to the Truth. God has verily placed doubts (*ẓann*) 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-ʿilm al-khāliṣ*) from this book, and Judgement opposes the *ijtihād*'[3].

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1. *QA*. folio 3/a.
2. Ibid. Perhaps '*mushrikīn*' is a direct reference to Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī and his eccentric Sufi beliefs. The Ḥājī's influence on Muhammad Shāh is described by many sources. (See for example Jahāngīr Mīrzā, *Tārīkh-i Nau* edited by A. Iqbāl, Tehran, 1327 Sh. pp.90-2 and Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Iʿtimād al-Salṭanih, *Sadr al-Tawārīkh*, edited by M. Mushīrī, Tehran, 1349 Sh. pp.184-5). The private correspondence of Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī 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 IranMinistry of Foreign Affairs, Tehran, file no.18, original documents). *Ṭarā'iq* (III, pp.304-14) cited an interesting *risālih* by Ḥājī called *Shiyam-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 ʿulama 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 *ijtihād* and with it the position of the Usūlī 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 Akhbārīs 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 ʿulama 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 ʿulama 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 Shaykhis and the non-Shaykhi ʿulama of ʿAtabāt. Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī and Sayyid Ibrāhīm Karbilāʾī were also chosen amongst the non-Shaykhi ʿulama to be addressed. Because of their anti-Shaykhi attitude in the past, these messages were only designed to be a 'final warning' (*itmām-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 Khurasan 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 home-land Āzarbāījān 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 Mullā Muḥammad 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 *Ẓuhūr*. 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 ʿAtabāt

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, Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī, was assigned the task of delivering the message of the Bab to the prominent ʿulama of the ʿAtabāt 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 ʿAtabāt. 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 ʿAtabāt. The impact of the Babi call and its effects on the prominent Shiʿi leaders are also discussed. Then consequences of this encounter with the Shiʿi ʿulama, 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 Tāhirih's stay in ʿAtabāt and her role in the development of the earlier dispute is studied in a separate section.

Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī was one of the leading members of the small group of disciples of Shiraz of 1260 and according to Qatīl Karbalā'ī, was regarded as the third in importance after the Bab and Mullā Husain Bushrūyihī[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' (*muqaddamāt*) in his home town before moving to Mashhad for further studies. Like many Shaykhi tullāb from Khurasan he was first attracted to the Shaykhi school in this city[3]. Under the influence of the Shaykhi teacher Mullā Jaʿfar

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1. See above Chapter Four, III.
2. *Qatīl*. (524). al-Qatīl al-Karbalā'ī, himself a disciple of Rashtī and a fellow classmate of Mullā ʿAlī 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.

Kirmānshāhī, himself a student of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsā'ī[1], as Qatīl puts it: 'he gradually turned away from the superficial and shallow knowledge which is nothing but the opinion of the common people (*al-ʿilm al-zāhir al-qishr va maʿrifat al-ʿawām al-sirf*) towards the high status of contemplation (*al-jāh al-tafakkur*)'[2]. He then travelled to ʿAtabāt and studied under Sayyid Kāzim for seven years. His knowledge of Shaykhi literature and his 'piety and lack of worldly interests' gave him a distinctive character amongst the Shaykhi tullāb. According to the Babi sources he became one of the senior members of the circle and a close companion of Rashtī. After long residence in Karbilā' sometime in the mid-1250's (1830's and 40's) he returned to Bastām 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 Bastām and his commitment to his wife and family did not long keep him from Karbilā'[3].

On his return, Mullā ʿAlī accompanied Rashtī in his last annual pilgrimage to Najaf in 1259 (1843) shortly before the latter's death. Qatīl names Bastāmī amongst those who understood Rashtī'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 *tarīqa*'[4]. After the death of Rashtī he joined Bushrūyihī in his retirement in Kūfah and later led a group of twelve Shaykhi students, to whom he was the leader, to Shiraz[5]. Thus because of his seniority and his position among the Shaykhis of Iraq, it was natural that he should be chosen for the ʿAtabāt mission. Lack of further information prevents us from examining the way he was active in converting many of the Shaykhi mullas 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 Bastāmī set out on his mission to Iraq after his conversion in Shiraz, he passed on his way through Būshihr, where according to his instructions he visited the Bab's uncle, Hājī Sayyid Muhammad Shīrāzī, and gave the news of the Bab's proclamation. But, as appears from later evidence, Hājī Sayyid Muhammad

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1. *Qatīl*. (525). No further details are available on the above person, but he should not be confused with Shaykh Muḥammad Jaʿfar Kirmānshāhī, son of Āqā Muḥammad ʿAlī Bihbahānī and grandson of Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī cited in *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 1, pp.263-4.
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[1].

From Būshihr, by the sea route via Basrah, Mullā ʿAlī arrived at ʿAtabāt some time between the end of Rajab and the early days of Ramadān 1260. Following him, some of the Letters who had first accompanied Mullā ʿAlī to Shiraz also left Iran for Iraq[2]. As far as can be traced, it is almost certain that five of them: Mullā Jalīl Urūmī, Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Qazvīnī, Mullā Mahmūd Khu'ī, Mullā Khudābakhsh Qūchānī and Mullā Bāqir Tabrīzī were present in Karbilā' in the months after the proclamation. The arrival of these 'messengers' in ʿAtabāt, nearly seven months after Rashtī's death, exacerbated the leadership crisis within the Shaykhi camp[3]. As has been described in previous chapters, even those few senior followers of Sayyid Kāzim 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 Kūfah group, and remained in Karbilā', would not even submit temporarily to the authority of the acclaimed leaders such as Mullā Hasan Gauhar and Mīrzā Muhīt Kirmānī. Furthermore, the challenge from Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī spread by his ally Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī in ʿAtabāt[4], 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 ʿAtabāt, and later one of the companions of Tāhirih, in his treatise refers to certain rival factions with some differences in approach within the Shaykhi

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1. Letter by the Bab cited in *Z.* pp.223-225 and also letters by Ḥājī Sayyid ʿAlī to his family cited in *Khāndān-i Afnān*, pp.25-31. It was long after 1260, during Ḥājī Sayyid Muḥammad's pilgrimage to Atabāt in 1277 Q. (1860-61) (accompanied by his youngest brother Ḥājī Mīrzā Ḥasan ʿAlī) and following his visit to Bāhā'allāh, that he finally overcame his earlier hesitations and recognised the Bab. Bāhā'allāh's *Risālih-i Khālūyih*, later known as *Kitāb-i Iqān* (*The Book of Certitude*, trans. by Shoghī Effendī, London 1946) was written in reply to Ḥājī Sayyid Muḥammad's questions on the Shiʿi prophecies and their relation to the Bab's claim. (*Khāndān-i Afnān*, (pp.37-40) cited the text of the questions). Some recent accounts such as *Khāndān-i Afnān* (pp.25, 30-31) and subsequently A. Tāherzaden (*The Revelation of Bāhā'u'llāh*, Oxford 1974, Vol.I, pp.153-4) which hint at the partial conversion of Ḥājī Sayyid Muḥammad 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 Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmi precede the others in his journey, yet *Qatīl.* (pp.503, 511-12) remembers his arrival in ʿAtabāt 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.

4. *Qatīl.* pp.518-19.

camp[1]. 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[2]. 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. Āqā Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Baghdādī, 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" (*Ẓuhūr al-Mu'ūd*) till they came to the honour of his presence'[3].

Confusion and uncertainty amongst the Shaykhis of ʿAtabāt is clearly detectable in Qatīl's remarks when he refers to his own state of mind shortly after Rashtī's death: 'I could not decide whether I should lead my way towards *Jabrīya* or towards *Qadarīya* or towards *Bālāsarīya* who are *Mufawwaḍa* and *Dahrīya*. Then when the time elapsed, after four months and a few days, the herald called from heaven the name of Qā'im from the land of Fars'[4]. The above remark suggests that already in early Jumādā I 1260 (April 1844), the news of the proclamation in Fars had reached ʿAtabāt. 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 Shiʿi public were gathered from Baghdad, Hilla, Karbilā' and other places in Najaf to celebrate the day of *Mabʿath* (27th Rajab)[5].

On one of the earliest encounters which occurred between Babis and the Shiʿi public, Qatīl Karbalā'ī, who probably himself witnessed the event or at least

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1. Shaykh Sulṭān Karbalā'ī, apologetical *maktūb* written in circa 1263 in ʿAtabāt, *INBA*. pub. 80, pp.310;332 also cites in *Z*. pp.245;254.

2. See below. 3. *Baghdādī*. 105.

4. *Qatīl*. (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 Bālāsarīs (the non-Shaykhi Shiʿi's in ʿAtabāt) through the attributes *al-mufawwaḍa* and *al-Dahrīya* is made with a sense of rejection and disapproval since they reflect the essence of the Uṣūlī thinking, in the eyes of the Shaykhis.

5. *Qatīl*. (511).

became aware of it through an eye witness, recalls:

> 'Then they (the people) heard from one of the pseudo-jurisprudents (*mutifaqqihīn*) 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'[1].

Following this, further preliminary preaching carried out by the Babi Letters prior to the main declaration by Bastāmī 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 Rashtī'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 Mullā ʿAbd al-Jalīl Urūmī, one of the Letters of the Living and a companion of Bastāmī in the ʿAtabāt 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 *Bāb* of the Imām, and even in some cases as the successor to Rashtī, at the same time he attributed to him qualities and characteristics which were traditionally expected of the Qā'im[2]. In fact, Urūmī and the others intended to project an image of the Bab, which could encompass not only the claim of succession to Rashtī and assumption of the state of *Bābīyat*, but also prepare the public for the far greater claim of *Qā'imīyat*. To most of the Letters and to some of the distinguished believers in ʿAtabāt, it was known that this was only a preliminary tactical device to introduce the message in successive stages[3].

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1. *Qatīl*. (511). The author's reference to one of *al-mutifaqqihīn* suggests that perhaps one of the Bālāsarī ʿulama, 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 Qatīl'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 (*mutakallifīn*) of that district (ʿAtabāt) 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 Bālāsarīs and those people of Kāẓimayn who were weak in their Shiʿi beliefs, and also the attendants of the Holy Shrines and all those who in the past frequently had the honour of his presence'[1].

Beside its general implications, it is likely that by the term *mutakallifīn*, Qatīl particularly refers to the supporters whom the Babi missionaries attracted from the Shaykhis of ʿAtabāt, although this is not to deny the enthusiasm with which they were also received by the non-Shaykhis of both Persian and Arab origin[2].

One of the most important persuasive factors in this early support was the previous acquaintance of some of the later converts with Sayyid ʿAlī 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[3]. 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 Javād Karbalā'ī[4] reflects his doubts and uncertainties at the time when first he was informed of the appearance of the new Bab[5]. He states that the announcement by Mullā ʿAlī

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1. *Qatīl*. (512). By the 'people of Kāẓimayn' the author apparently refers to some Arab adherents of Rashtī mainly from Bushr tribe. Although there is no indication in any of the sources to their 'weak Shiʿi beliefs' (*al-mustadʿafīn fī al-Tashayyuʿ*), it is possible that they may have been amongst those who were attracted to the literary circle of Rashtī (*diwān al-Rashtī*) which was a centre for both Shiʿi and non-Shiʿi literary and poetical gatherings in Karbilā. (al-Ṭuʿma, S.H. *Turāth Karbalā'* 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-Ghiṭā'* op.cit., pp.70-77, recorded by Mīrzā Abul Faẓl Gulpāyigānī during his frequent visits to Sayyid Javād 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 Karbilā' and it was this influence and highly esteemed position of Mullā ʿAlī amongst the Shaykhis that were the chief reasons for the circulation of the new message[1]. But as he recalls some years later:

> 'Mullā ʿAlī 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" (*Nuqṭih-i Ūlā*, 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 ʿIlm-i Ilāhī*) 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. Rashtī), may God elevate his status'[2].

If the piety and charm of the young Shirazī Sayyid by itself was not enough for the recognition of the assumed position of *Bābīyat*, 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 Rashtī, 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 ʿAtabāt 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

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1. Ibid. 71, cf. *Qatīl*. (503).

2. *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'* op.cit. 71.

Shiraz[1]. Hence, recognition of the Bab in ʿAtabāt 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 Shiʿi society of Iraq and the pressures which were put upon them not only from the quarter of their Bālāsarī opponents, but also from the Sunni authorities[2]. Hence the recognition of the Bab by Shaykhis, or the later activities of Mullā 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 Mullā ʿAlī's mission, confirms that 'a considerable section of the Sheeahs (Shiʿis) of Najaf' supported Mullā 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 Bālāsarī 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 Kāzim. As far as can be traced, of the total of more than one hundred converts in ʿAtabāt, 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

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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 ʿAtabāt was made on the basis of information supplied in various sources including *Baghdādī*, *Qatīl*, *MJQ*., *Samandar*, *Nabil*, *Fu'ādī*, *TMS*., *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'* and biographies of some early believers in *Z*.

Najafī, a mujtahid of 75 years of age[1]; Shaykh Muhammad Shibl Baghdādī, a student of Sayyid Kāẓim who started his studies in 1243 (1827-8), and was later appointed by Rashtī as his representative in Baghdād where he lived and taught *ḥikmat* and *ḥadīth*[2]; Shaykh Sulṭān Karbalā'ī, a young mujtahid amongst the later generation of Shaykhis[3], and Sayyid Javād Karbalā'ī, a grandson of Baḥr al-ʿUlūm and one of the early students of Rashtī[4]. There were other Arab believers from the ranks of the ʿulama such as Shaykh Ṣālih Karīmāvī[5], Sayyid Muḥsin Kāẓimaynī and Sayyid ʿAlī Bushr who are better known because of their later participation in the events. Some non-clerical Arabs were also converted. Saʿīd Jabāvī seems to be amongst the adherents of Rashtī who later became a devoted follower of Ṭāhirih[6]. Ḥājī Muḥammad Karrādī, an aged *sarrāf* who was an officer in the Ottoman army before settling in Baghdad and joining Rashtī's literary circle. He composed *qaṣīdihs* in praise of Rashtī[7]. Ḥājī Sayyid Khalīl Madā'inī, one of the chiefs of the Arab tribes in the area, had studied in Karbilā' for some time with Rashtī and was even said to have participated in the Kūfah *iʿtikāf*[8].

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 Ḥasan Zunūzī who had previously met the Bab in Karbilā'[9], Mullā Ibrāhīm Mahallātī[10], Sayyid Muḥammad Gulpāyigānī[11], Sayyid Aḥmad Yazdī[12], Shaykh Abū Turāb Ishtihārdī[13],

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1. *Baghdādī*. 106.
2. Ibid. 105. See also below.
3. *Nabīl*. pp.190, 270-1; *Z*. pp.107, 244-5. His above mentioned *Maktūb* also supplies some details about himself and other Babis of Iraq.
4. His acquaintance with the Bab's family was effective in his conversion. Beside scattered references in most Babi accounts, his full biography appears in *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'* op.cit., pp.55-90 and in *Z*. pp.238-44.
5. A comparison of Ṭāhirih who was the first Babi to be executed in 1263 (1847) in Tehran. See below Chapter Six, IV.
6. He was one of the participants of Ṭabarsī who was killed in battle (*Mīrzā Luṭf ʿAlī* op.cit.).
7. *Nabīl*. 426, *Baghdādī*. pp.120-2 and *Z*. pp.261-2, cf. *Turāth Karbalā'* op.cit. pp.225-8. He was a *bīnbashī* (head of a thousand) in the army which fought against Ibrāhīm Pāshā of Egypt but apparently later in his retirement became a money-lender. He was killed in Ṭabarsī when he was about eighty years old.
8. *Z*. pp.262-3.
9. See above Chapter Three, IV.
10. One of the companions of Ṭahirih who was later executed in Qazvīn in 1263 Q. (1847). See below Chapter Seven, IV. He was earlier involved in the events of Shiraz in 1261-2 (1845-6). *INBA*. 91, XXVIII, pp.139-45 contains an important letter in reply to his questions . His biography appears in Z. pp.389-91.
11. Entitled by Ṭāhirih Fatī al-Malih. A reference to him appears in *Baghdādī*. 108; *MJQ*. (494).
12. Father of Sayyid Ḥusain and Sayyid Ḥasan Yazdī. *Baghdādī*. 108 and *KD*. 63.
13. *Samandar*. 114; *Nabīl*. pp.39, *Z*. pp.233-4.

Mullā Ahmad Muʿallim Hisārī[1] who remained in ʿAtabāt were soon converted by Bastāmī and the other Letters. A few Persian merchants with Shaykhi tendencies also joined the Babi group. Amongst them the Nahrīs, who later moved to Isfahan[2] and a certain Hājī ʿAbd al-Muttalib, 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[3]. In addition, there were groups of Shaykhis from Qazvīn, Isfahan and Mashhad who, in order to participate in the public declaration of the Bab in the beginning of 1261, hastily arrived in Karbilā'. Of these, the Qazvīn group headed by Mullā Javād Valīyānī included some of the Qazvīnī converts who later after the cancellation of the ʿAtabāt plan, returned to Shiraz and met the Bab[4].

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 Mullā 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 Tāhirih that these messianic aspirations were materialised. References to the Babis of ʿAtabāt with the name *Qurratīya* (the followers of Qurrat al-ʿAyn, i.e. Tāhirih) in some of the contemporary writers such as Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Mahmūd Ālūsī[5], may be taken as an indication of Tāhirih's significance for the continuation of the Babi circle in ʿAtabāt.

Tāhirih herself was informed of the proclamation of the Bab through a letter which was delivered to her by Mullā ʿAlī or possibly Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Qazvīnī, in reply to her earlier petition which she had presented to the unknown Bab when the Mullā Husain party were departing from ʿAtabāt a few months earlier[6].

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1. *Fu'ādī*. pp.276-97.
2. See below Chapter Seven, I. 3. *Baghdādī*. pp.122-3.
4. See below Chapter Six for Qazvīnī converts.
5. See below.
6. *Samandar*. 346 cf. 78; . pp.312-14 (citing the account of Āqā Muhammad 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' (*imān-i shuhūdī*)[1]. This corresponds to Nabīl's remark on 'the Bab's immediate response to her declarations of faith'[2] and Muʿīn al-Saltanih's remark that 'in reply to her letter, an exalted *Tauqīʿ* was revealed to her honour'[3]. However there is some degree of uncertainty regarding the date of her arrival at Karbilā' which could indicate the time and place of her full conversion. Most sources agree that she arrived shortly after Sayyid Kāzim's death in the last days of 1259 (January 1844). Later Tāhirih herself in a *risālih* in reply to Mullā Javād Valiyānī recalls the events as though she had been present in Karbilā' at the time[4]. But in this same *risālih* a few pages earlier she states that 'at the beginning of his excellency's cause (i.e. the Bab), I was in Qazvīn, but as soon as I heard of this cause, even before reading the holy commentary (i.e. *Qayyūm al-Asmā'*) or *Sahīfa al-Makhzūnīya*, I recognised it'[5] This could only be justified if we assume that she heard of the Bab before 1260 in Qazvīn. Considering the fact that through her brother-in-law Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Qazvīnī she was in touch with the developments in Karbilā' 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 Karbilā' from the latter part of 1260 onwards[6].

By the end of Ramadān 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 Ramadān (6th October 1844)[7], following earlier arrangements, Mullā ʿAlī officially made the declaration of the Babi cause, and presented the people of Karbilā' with fragments of the new *Furqān*. A week later, at the time of *ʿīd al-Fitr* (Saturday, 1st Shawwāl 1260 = 14th October 1844)[8] he again announced the 'approaching advent' of Qā'im 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 Mahdī'[9].

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1. *NK.* 140.
2. *Nabil.* 269.
3. *TMS.* (Appendix to MS.B: *Sharḥ-i Ḥāl-i Ṭāhirih*, *Qurrat al-ʿAyn* p.3).
4. Cited in *Z.* Appendix I, pp.499-500.
5. Ibid. 494.
6. See below.
7. *Qatīl.* (512).
8. Ibid.
9. F.O. 248/114, No.1, Rawlinson to Sheil. According to *Baghdādī* (106), Mullā ʿAlī first appeared in Kūfah 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 ʿAlī Basṭāmī with the Bab, and seems to have had Basṭāmī's journey in mind when without mentioning any recorded source she states that: 'after some changes he settled in Kazemein (Kāẓimayn) 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 Ramadān is, according to some traditions, regarded as '*Laylat al-Qadr*'[1], the night which is 'better than a thousand months'[2]. It was on this night that the first *suras* of the *Qurʾān* were sent down to Muhammad: 'Behold, we sent it down on the Night of Qadr'[3]. Here again the Babi actions are particularly designed to accord with the Shiʿi prophecies on the Night of Qadr. In addition the term *Furqān*, which in many Babi sources appears in the same context as the *Qurʾān* and *Kitāb*, generally refers to the Bab's first major work *Qayyūm al-Asmāʾ*[4]. It is precisely in this context, and according to this Quranic tradition that *Qayyūm al-Asmāʾ* was first represented to the public by Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī. 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 *Qayyūm al-Asmāʾ* as *Furqān*[5] others use terms such as *Qurʾān*[6], *Qurʾān-i Ṣāḥib al-Zamān*[7] and *Kitāb*[8]. Several references in *Qayyūm al-Asmāʾ* to *Furqān* could be regarded as the origin of the use of the word in Babi terminology: 'Thus God sent down the *Qurʾān* to his servants in order to inform people that he has power over beings. He is the one who sent down *Furqān* in Arabic to his servant without an deviation for the sake of pure truth'[9].

In Quranic tradition, the term has a broad and rather complicated meaning. The word occurs in various connections in the *Qurʾān* 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'[10]. However in the Babi literature, the term is not only used for the

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1. The date varies between 21st to 31st of Ramadān according to different sources. See Art., IʿTIKĀF and RAMAḌĀN in *Shorter EI.*
2. *Qurʾān*. XCII, 3.
3. Ibid.
4. For *QA*. see above Chapter Four
5. *Qatīl*. (pp.512, 530-31) and *Izhāq al-Bāṭil*. pp.14-15. See *NK*. (p.59v for references) but usually substituted for *Bayān* in later years.
6. *NT*. III, 40; *Izḥāq al-Baṭil*, 109 and Rawlinson F.O. 248/114, No.1 .
7. *Q*. pp.60, 185-6.
8. *Baghdādī*. 106; *Qatīl*. (503).
9. *QA*. III. *Sūra al-Mubāhala*, folio 5a.
10. See *EI*^{2}, FURḲĀN (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 *Bāb al-Nuqṭa* from the hidden *Bā'*[1]. Qatīl al-Karbalā'ī quotes the above mentioned verses of *Qayyūm al-Asmā'* towards the end of his account where he discusses in full the new *Furqān* of the Bab[2]. In reply to Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān's attack on *Izhāq al-Bāṭil* on the Bab's 'falsely compiled *Furqān*'[3], Qatīl argues that the new *Furqān* is the inner truth (*bāṭin*) of Muḥammad's *Qurʾān* which is fundamentally reinterpreted and reappeared in its complete version[4]. 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 theological argument between the two controversial works, namely those of *Izhāq al-Bāṭil* and *Qatīl*, who are both amongst the nearest sources to the period, suggests that the question of the newly compiled *Qurʾān* 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 ʿulama 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 Aḥsā'ī and Rashtī. 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 Karbilā', no doubt persuaded the Bab and his disciples to express their disapproval of the fuqahā''s conduct in plain and straight terms[5].

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1. *QA*. Ibid., folio 6b.
2. *Qatīl*. (pp.530-31).
3. *Izhāq al-Bāṭil* pp.14-15.
4. The author also cites a tradition by Ṣādiq which reads: 'The Book (*al-Kitāb* i.e. the *Qurʾān*) is the brief version (*mujmal*) and the *Furqān* is the comprehensive (*mufaṣṣal*) one, which appears according to the time (*vaqt*). *Qatīl*. (pp.530-31).
5. For Shaykhi-Bālāsarī 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 ʿulama to the test of the new revelation.

As a beginning to this task, Mullā ʿAlī addressed Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī, the chief jurist (*Shaykh al-fuqahā*)[1] and one of the leaders of the Bālāsarīs, with the words and writings of the Bab[2]. Shaykh Muhammad Hasan the author of *Jawāhir al-Kalām fī Sharh Sharā'iʿ al-Islām*[3], one of the most celebrated faqīhs of the whole nineteenth century, accomplished his studies under Shaykh Jaʿfar Najafī and other important jurists of the early nineteenth century[4]. 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 Shiʿis (*riyāsat-i Imāmīyih*)[5]. The author of *Raudāt al-Jannāt* particularly states that 'the leadership of the Imamis in our time among Arab and ʿAjam devolved on him when in 1262 he reached his seventies'[6] Indeed one may see the earliest formation of the position of *Marjaʿ-i taqlīd* when towards the end of his life he designated one of his students, Shaykh Murtażā Ansārī as his successor. According to one source Shaykh Najafī 'appointed him before his departure as the "appointed *Khalīfa* and special deputy" and he was later recognised by the public as the first general Deputy of the Imam (*Nāi'b-i Imām*)'[7]. This suggests that perhaps Shaykh Muhammad Hasan himself assumed this title (*Nā'ib-i Imām*) after which he was then able to deliver it to his successor[8]. On the other hand, Tunikābunī, the author of *Qisas al-ʿUlamā'* whowas primarily an adherent of Sayyid

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1. *RA*. II, 420. Also mentioned by his title '*Shaykh-i Kabīr*' in Sayyid Kāẓim's *Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn*, 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 Shiʿi jurisprudence. It is originally compiled in twenty five volumes and covers in detail all aspects of Ithnā ʿAsharī jurisprudence. Najafī 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 Asadallāh Shaftī Iṣfahanī (*al-Dharīʿa* V. pp.275-7).
4. *Q*. 103; *RJ*. 181.
5. *Q*. 103; *RJ*. 181; M.H. Iʿtimād al-Salṭanih, *al-Ma'āthir-i va al-Āthār*, op.cit. pp.135-6.
6. *RJ*. 182.
7. *al-Ma'āthir va al-Āthār*, pp.135-6.
8. Āghā Buzurg Ṭihrānī also hints at the same assumed title by saying that 'he (i.e. Shaykh Najafī) took the burdens of "deputyship" (*al-khilāfa*) and obligations of "leadership" (*al-ziʿāma*) and "precedence" (*al-imāma*)'. (*Ṭabaqāt*, II, 1, 311).

Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī[1] places Najafī's leadership chronologically later than Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī and then Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī[2], which also corresponds to Khvānsārī's above mentioned remarks. However, it is clear from the above sources that by the year 1260, while both Qazvīnī and Shaftī were still alive, Shaykh Muhammad Hasan enjoyed a prominent position in the Shi'i community, particularly in Najaf.

Thus, the choice of Shaykh Najafī 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, Bastāmi's address to Najafī 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 *ijāzih* from Shaykh Ahmad Ahsā'ī[3], he did not hesitate to denounce the Shaykhi cause in later years. In the early years of the 1240's Q. (*circa* 1823-26), during the first denunciation of the Shaykhis, Shaykh Muhammad Hasan, following other fuqahā' also expressed his opposition by issuing a *fatvā* condemning Shaykhi doctrine[4]. 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 Imāmī ahādīth[5]. Sayyid Kāzim alludes to the direct involvement of Shaykh Najafī in later pressure upon Shaykhis after the death of Ahsā'ī, when in a new initiative against them[6], Najafī together with Sayyid Mahdī Karbalā'ī and Shaykh Husain Najafī reasserted their condemnation of the Shaykhi leader[7]. In the view of Sayyid Kāzim, 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 *ijāzih* is cited in the appendix of the third volume of *Jawāhir al-Kalām* 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.
6. *Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn* pp.70-115.
7. Ibid. pp.88-102. The content of the *fatvā* which was issued by the Mujtahids of Najaf appears in Ibid. p.90. Sayyid Kāzim 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 ʿAtabāt, since eminent mujtahids such as Najafī were greatly concerned with this popularity and 'fearing that the public may abandon their "obedience"'[1].

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-ʿUlamāʾ* quoted him as saying 'It was to abolish *hikmat* that God chose Muhammad ibn ʿAbdallāh'[2]. In fact Tunikābunī does not venerate Shaykh Najafī in the same manner as other influential mujtahids. He, in conformity with other sources[3] gives some evidence of Najafī's wealth and worldly possessions and vaguely hints that even his laxity and lack of clear discipline in bestowing certificates (*ijāzih*) and confirmation (*tasdīq*) on his students were not only due to his weak judgement, but to his desire to strengthen his position in the struggle for leadership[4].

No doubt Mullā ʿAlī was aware of Najafī's characteristics when he approached him in Najaf to inform him of 'the immediate manifestation of the Imam'[5]. Addressing him in his class in the presence of students and followers, Bastāmī openly proclaimed the appearance of the Hujjat[6] and supplied Najafī with at least two works of the Bab; a special *tauqīʿ* addressed to the Shaykh together with sections of *Qayyūm al-Asmāʾ*[7]. Basing his argument on *Sūrat al-ʿUlamāʾ*, Bastāmī maintained that 'in the year 1261, the mystery will be revealed and the victorious cause (of God) will dominate'[8]. As the second *sura* of *Qayyūm al-Asmāʾ* questions the legitimacy of *ijtihād*, Mullā ʿAlī reminds the Shaykh that as the head of the Shiʿi community, he is bound to respond to a message which calls for re-evaluation of the ʿulama's position and only permits the attainment of the 'pure knowledge' (*al-ʿilm al-khālis*) as an alternative to the principle of *ijtihād*[9]. 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

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1. Ibid. 90.
2. *Q*. 105.
3. *al-Maʾāthir va al-Āthār*, pp.135-6 and *Ṭabaqāt* II, 1, 314.
4. *Q*. pp.10, 104.
5. F.O. 248/114, No.1.
6. *Nabil*. 90, cf. *Qatīl*. (512).
7. *Samandar*. 347 particularly refers to the *tauqīʿ* for Najafī which was delivered by Bastāmī.
8. *Qatīl*. (512).
9. *QA*. II, folio 5 (verses 13-15).

authority on the earth[1]. 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 Mullā ʿAlī 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 Mullā ʿAlī as a heretic' and expelled him from the assembly[2]. But what perhaps was less predictable for Bastāmī 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 ʿulama of Najaf and Karbilā' under the direct influence of Shaykh Muhammad Hasan formally denounced the newly born movement[3]. Furthermore, a number of the Shaykhi ʿulama also took part in the action[4]. It seems that the widespread Babi preaching alarmed some individuals such as Mullā Hasan Gauhar who, in spite of their earlier acquaintance with Bastāmī, were anxious to use the occasion to express their opposition. As Nabīl states 'even the Shaykhis who already testified to Mullā ʿAlī's piety, sincerity and learning' joined hands with the disciples of Najafī, who were originally their adversaries[5] to warn Bastāmī 'of the danger which he incurred in giving currency' to the Babi prophecies[6].

Nevertheless, in spite of these threats, a large section of the Shaykhis of ʿAtabat continued to support Mullā ʿAlī, regarding him as the representative of the true *Hujjat*. They were 'in avowed expectation of the speedy advent of the Imām ... and declared themselves ready to join the Precursor, as soon as he should appear amongst them'[7]. Because of this very support, Mullā ʿAlī 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 Shawwāl 1260 (end of October 1844), the opponents of Bastāmī were able to draw the attention of Turkish authorities to the danger of the new 'heresy'.

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1. *Nabil*. 90, cf. *QA*. II, verses 7-8 and III, verses 2-3.
2. F.O. 248/114, No.1, cf. *Nabil*. 90.
3. F.O. 248/114, No.1.
4. *Nabil*. pp.90-91.
5. Ibid. 91.
6. F.O. 248/114, No.1.
7. Ibid. Rawlinson's remark indeed verifies the reports of the Babi sources regarding the sense of messianic expectations in ʿAtabāt at the time of Bastāmī's propagation.

The widespread distribution of the new Qurān provided some concrete proof for some Shi'i elements to accuse the Babis of what Rawlinson calls 'local dissuasions'[1]. Nabīl Zarandī 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 authorities[2]. But whatever the circumstances were, it is clear that his arrest was with the cooperation of the Shi'i 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 Mullā 'Alī Bastāmī by the Ottoman authorities gave a new dimension to what was originally an internal Shi'i 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 Shi'i and non-Shi'i, 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 Shi'i public. In the words of Rawlinson:

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1. F.O. 248/114, No.1.
2. *Nabīl*. 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-Ḥijja 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 *Qatīl's* date. *Baghdādī*, on the other hand, mentions (p.107) that Mullā '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'[1].

In the renewal of these sectarian tensions, the events of the previous years and particularly the memory of the massacre of Karbilā' in 1843 by the order of Najīb Pāshā the governor of the province, had some part and no doubt the Shi'i public was alert and watchful of the outcome of Bastāmī's arrest. One may even suspect that the swift arrest and handing over of Bastāmī by the followers of Najafī was also intended to deprive the Ottoman authorities of any pretext to cause further trouble. The appointment of Najīb Pāshā (1842) as the *vālī* of Iraq in place of the more lenient and tolerant Muhammad Riżā Pāshā noticeably increased the fears of the Shi'i 'ulama who particularly after the reassertion of the Turkish authority in Karbilā' were more submissive to the Ottomans than before[2].

This change in the political climate of the province was further boosted by the attempt to impose more powerful and centralised government[3]. Najīb Pāshā was a ruthless governor who combined intelligence and courage with strong Sunni convictions[4]. He descended from a noble and influential family in Istanbul which enjoyed close contact with the Ottoman court[5]. His appointment to the troublesome and relatively backward *pāshālīq* of Baghdad was partly due to the intention of the Tanzīmāt reformers to introduce some degree of reform into the affairs of the province. In fact the harsh suppression of the Karbilā' rebellion would seem to have been an aspect of the application of the policy of greater centralisation which was Najīb's mandate on his appointment[6].

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

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1. F.O. 248/114, No.1.
2. al-Azzāwī, A. *Tārīkh al-'Irāq Bayn Iḥtilālayn* 8 vols., Baghdad.VII, 1955 (1375 Q.), pp.58-63 and Longrigg, S.T. *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq*, Oxford 1925, pp.282-3.
3. Longrigg, S.T. *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq*, Oxford, 1925, pp.278, 281.
4. F.O. 248/114, No.1.
5. Longrigg, op.cit., p.283 and al- Azzāwī, op.cit., p.64 quotes Al-Shāwī, M. *Tārīkh al-Shāwī*, MS. p.14.
6. For the events which led to Karbila' rebellion, see above Chapter One and the cited sources.

efficiency[1], 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[2]. This policy was regarded particularly unfavourable by the Shiʿi public which traditionally felt some sympathy with Persia and therefore regarded the Turkish *vālī* as an oppressor whose efforts were directed towards the elimination of their traditional liberties. Furthermore problems such as the Shiʿi resistance to Ottoman legal authority in Holy Cities, the persistance of the Shiʿi mujtahids in maintaining some form of local autonomy[3], dissatisfaction of the Persian merchant community in Baghdad with the newly imposed levies[4], 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[5] exasperated the already grave relations between the *vālī* and the Persian backed Shiʿi community.

In dealing with the religious resistance, Najīb hardly tolerated any challenge to the authority of the Ottoman jurisdiction. On a few occasions he strongly condemned the chief mujtahid of Karbilā', Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī, for exercising Shiʿi jurisdiction in issuing *fatvās* on legal questions instead of referring the matter to Ottoman Hanafī courts. In his letter to Sayyid Ibrāhīm 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

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1. Najīb'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.
3. F.O. 248/114, No.12 and 195/237, No.23. June 23rd 1845, Rawlinson to Canning.
4. In his dispatches to Canning, the Baghdad consul reports that the recent 4% tax which Najīb 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'[1].

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 Hanafī *sharʿ*[2]. However, Shiʿi mujtahids such as Shaykh Hasan Najafī Kāshif al-Ghitā', who feared for his personal safety, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī who was practising *taqīyah*[3] and Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī, in order to be protected against his opponents[4], 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 Karbilā' for example, Shaykh Hasan Kāshif al-Ghitā', whose maternal uncle had already been executed at the time of the previous *vālī* for a minor charge of contempt to Sunni *sharʿ*, had every reason to act cautiously when he received Najīb Pāshāh in Najaf. For three days Shaykh Hasan provided every hospitality for the *vālī* and his retinue in order to prevent Najīb from carrying out similar reprisals on the Shiʿis of Najaf[5].

Under these circumstances, while the Shiʿi population of Iraq was undergoing some constraint, relations with the authorities did not improve even if they did not actually worsen. The case of Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī became the focal point for the aspirations of that section of the community which after the massacre of Karbilā', 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 Mullā ʿAlī 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

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1. Translation enclosed in F.O. 248/114, No.12, 3rd April 1845, Rawlinson to Sheil.
2. al-ʿAzzāwī, op.cit. VII, 64 in the case of Sulaymān al-Ghannām in 1258 Q. who was executed by the order of Najīb Pāshā.
3. *Q.* pp.13-14.
4. See above Chapter One
5. *Ṭabaqāt*. (II, 1, 318) citing Shaykh ʿAbbās Kāshif al-Ghiṭā''s *Nabdhat al-Ġharrā' fī Aḥwāl al-Ḥasan al-Jaʿfarī*. Also Amīn, M. *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, Damascus 1946, XXI, pp.133-6. According to *Q.* (106) on the same journey to Najaf, Najīb took Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan Najafī with him to the shrine of ʿAlī and raised his hands and sarcastically prayed: 'O God! for the sake of my white beard, forgive all ʿAlī's sins since he shed the blood of too many muslims'.

outcome. After the event of the previous year in Karbilā' 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[1] 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 Sheeas of Nejaf'[2].

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 Mullā 'Alī, the 'ulama who represented the Sunni *Sharī'a* were ready to demonstrate their full legal power[3]. In the brief cross-examination which followed the enumeration of Bastāmī's charges, the 'ulama upheld the charge of blasphemy and recommended the maximum penalty of death for the Persian infidel[4]. Indeed as is evident from Rawlinson's report, contrary to the Pāshā'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)'[5].

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1. Referring to *Qayyūm 'al-Asmā'*.
2. F.O. 248/114, No.1 Rawlinson to Sheil
3. *Nabil*. 91, cf. *Q*. 185. *Qiṣaṣ al-'ulamā'* refers to 'Sunni *quḍāt*, *muftīs* and *effendīs*' 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 Ḥājī Hāshim 'Aṭṭār, states that in this session the celebrated chief *muftī* of Baghdad Shaykh Maḥmūd Ālūsī (see below for his details) was also present, when on account of some disagreement he hastily left the gathering. Since *Nabil's* information concerning Basṭāmī's trial and his final fate is incomplete and somewhat chronologically inaccurate, the presence of Ālūsī 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 Basṭāmī 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 Basṭāmī. However further evidence may also suggest that this was either the name Basṭāmī 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 Pāshā 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, Najīb Pāshā, 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 Najīb Pāshā's real intentions was one of caution and mistrust. At this time there was being held the Erzeroum (*Arz-i Rūm*) 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 Najīb Pāshā'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 Karbilā' massacre[4]. 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.
4. For full discussion on the Erzeroum conference see amongst other sources; Ādamīyat, F. *Amīr Kabīr va Irān*, 3rd edition, Tehran, 1348, pp.64-153. Curzon, R. *Armenia: a year at Erzeroum, and on the frontiers of Russia, Turkey and Persia*, London, 1854.

'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'[1].

Muhibb ʿAlī Khān Mākūī, the governor of Kirmānshāh, who was probably acting with Hājī Mīrzā Āqāsī's approval, had already protested at the improper arrest and imprisonment of a Persian subject on 'mere accusation'[2]. In a friendly letter to the British Consul in Baghdad[3], regarding the long detention of the 'inferior Priest of Shiraz'[4], Muhibb ʿAlī Khān 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 Najīb Pāshā 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

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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 Shiʿi internal divisions, confuses the titles of the two Shiʿi schools of Shaykhīyah and Uṣūlīyah. While he wrongly identifies Shaykhis and Uṣūlis, he surprisingly translates 'ūṣūlī' as 'transcendentalists' which in fact approximates to the other well known title of Shaykhis known as Kashfīyah.

2. Muḥibb ʿAlī Khān was Governor of Kirmānshāh during the latter part of Muḥammad Shāh's reign. He was amongst the large number of Īravānī (Muhājirs) and Mākū'ī officials who came to power and almost monopolised local and provincial offices mainly because of their connection with Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī. Acting as political entourage to Ḥājī, they were regarded as his chief instrument for ruling the country. Muḥibb ʿAlī Khān who was promoted towards the end of his career to the rank of *Mīr Panj*, was finally disgraced and lost his office as a result of local disturbances and riots which followed the death of Muḥammad Shāh in 1264 (1848). *NT*. III, 166 cf. Khūrmūjī, M.J. *Ḥaqāyiq al-Akhbār-i Nāṣirī* 2nd edition, Tehran, 1344 Sh. p.44.

3. Muḥibb ʿAlī Khān's friendship with the British consul in Baghdad was apparently established during Rawlinson's journey to Kirmānshāh in the previous year. (F.O. 248/114, 1844). Translation of his letter enclosed in dispatch F.O. 248/114, No.1.

4. It is interesting to see that in the Governor's letter, which relies on 'accounts which have reached (him) from Baghdad', Basṭāmī was also referred to as 'Shirazi'. This suggests that probably according to earlier instructions for *taqīyah*, Mullā ʿAlī concealed his real identity.

be at once released and set at liberty'[1]. But it was clear that the motives of the Persian authorities in acting in support of Bastāmī 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'[2]. 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..'[3]. 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'[4], 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[5], 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'[6].

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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 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'[1]

This provided a precedence for the British consul to intervene in the matter by forcing the stubborn Pāshā to refer the case to the authorities in Istanbul for further instruction. It seems, however, that Najīb Pāshā 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'i) sect have any further protective privilege than that of seeing justice duly administrated according to the forms and usages of Soonee tribunals ...'[2].

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 Pāshā 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'i public, the Pāshā 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 Pāshā 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 Soonee religion in Baghdad'[3].

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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, Najīb 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, Najīb Pāshā needed to balance the different parties represented in the tribunal. A brief study of the ʿulama who were present at the Baghdad trial reveals that the *vālī* carefully invited only those parties who would foil each others' initiatives. On the one hand, the Sunni delegation headed by the muftī of Baghdad was eager to oppose the growing Shiʿi self-awareness and on the other hand the Shiʿi delegation composed of comparatively conciliatory mujtahids such as Mullā Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī and Shaykh Ḥasan Kāshif al-Ghiṭā', 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 Shiʿis.

The most eminent of the Sunni ʿulama who participated in the trial was Shaykh Abū al-Thanā' Shihāb al-Dīn Mahmūd Ālūsī, the influential muftī of Baghdad and the author of a number of well known theological works[2], who seems to have made use of the occasion to remind both the governor and Shiʿi 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 pāshās. During the Baghdad siege of 1831, he collaborated with the Mamlūk *vālī*, Dāud Pāshā against the Ottoman supremacy in Iraq[3], but later, during the governorship of ʿAlī Riżā Pāshā, after a long struggle with other rivals, he managed to secure his religious position by allying with the *vālī*. Subsequently he was promoted to the office of chief muftī of Baghdad when he was still in his late thirties[4]. His support for Ottoman sovereignty during the critical years of the

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1. Ibid.

2. Most important of all, his comprehensive and highly respected commentary on the *Qurʾān*; *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm va al-Sabʿ al-Mathānī* (written between circa 1254-1267 Q.), Būlāq 1301-10 (1883-92). (Also Cairo 1345 Q. 30 vol.). A comprehensive list of his works appeared in ʿAbd al-Hamīd, M. *Ālūsī mufassiran*, Baghdad 1969, and there is a shorter version in *EI*^{2}, ĀLŪSĪ (2). For his references to the Babis of Iraq see below.

3. ʿA. Nawār, *Mawāqif Sīyāsīya li-Abī al-Thanā' Maḥmūd Ālūsī*, al-Majalla al-Tārīkhīya al-Miṣrīya, XIV. Cairo 1968, pp.52-149 cited in al-Vardī, ʿAlī. *Lamaḥāt Ijtimāʿīya min Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq al-Ḥadīth*, 3 vols. II, Baghdad 1971, p.101. There are also some remarks by Ālusī in his book *Qaṭf al-Ẓahr min Rawd al-ʿIbar* on the events of the Baghdad siege 1246 Q. Mentioned in *Ālūsī Mufassiran*, op.cit. p.139.

4. al-ʿAzzāwī, ʿAbbās, *Dhikrā Abī al-Thanā' al-Ālūsī*, Baghdad, pp.50-52.

1830's came at the time when the Ottoman central government was in dire need of local support against Muhammad ʿAlī's threat to Iraq. In a well known work *al-Tibyān fī Sharh al-Burhān fī Itāʿat al-Sultān*[1], which was commissioned by ʿAlī Riżā Pāshā[2], Ālūsī not only glorified the Ottoman Sultān, 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 *Sharīʿa*[3]. Thus with rare exceptions, as a whole Ālūsī was firmly on the side of the Ottomans and their representatives in the province.

Ālūsī's view, however, in relation to Shiʿism, seems to have undergone some changes over the years. In 1249 (1833) he devoted a whole chapter in his above mentioned *al-Tibyān* to the subject of Imama where he strongly criticised the Shiʿi theory and particularly attacked Shiʿi views on the expected Imam[4]. This may be regarded as the Sunni response to the Shiʿi anti-Ottoman feelings of the time which were particularly expressed in some Shiʿi circles. But Ālūsī's opposition to Shiʿism seems to have been modified towards the end of his life when the danger of Shiʿi supremacy was over. In his last work *Nahj al-Salāma ilā Mabāhith al-Imamā*[5] written in 1278 (1861-2), when he deals with contemporary schools such as Shaykhīyah and Bābīyah, he tries to maintain an impartial approach to Shiʿism and its internal divisions[6]. As a whole Ālūsī's treatment of Shiʿism suggests that he was prepared to tolerate a co-existence with Shiʿis only as long as they did not pose a serious threat to the superiority of the Sunni Sharʿ[7].

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1. Listed in *Ālūsī Mufassiran* op.cit., pp.109-111 (MS. written in 1249 Q.), No.5616, *Awqāf ʿAmma* Library, Baghdad.
2. *Lamahāt Ijtimāʿīya* op.cit., 104.
3. *Ālūsī Mufassiran* op.cit. 109.
4. *Ālūsī Mufassiran* op.cit. pp.109-111. Also in his work *al-Nafahāt al-Qudsīya fī al-Radd ʿalā al-Imāmīya*, written in 1269 (1853-4) (MS. cited in *Ālūsī Mufassiran* p.122), he attacks the Shiʿi theory of Imāma.
5. Unfinished MS. (Awqāf Library, Baghdad, No. ٤/٦٧٨ 4/678 listed in *Ālūsī Mufassiran*, p.125).
6. Ibid.
7. Claims of some Shiʿi sources that Ālūsī's support for the Ottoman Sulṭān and his opposition to Shiʿism were because of the practising *taqīyah* seem to be a sheer fabrication (*Q*. pp.186-7 cf. *Lamahāt Ijtimāʿīya*, op.cit., pp.105-6). It is interesting to see how Tunikābunī treats this matter. He claims that although on some occasions Ālūsī challenged the views of Shiʿi mujtahids, towards the end of his life because of his acquaintance with some Shiʿi ʿulama he gradually converted to Shiʿism.

On the Shiʿi side the two major mujtahids, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī and Shaykh Hasan Kāshif al-Ghitā', in the words of Rawlinson, were 'most unwilling' to attend the Baghdad trial[1]. The reluctance of the Shiʿi ʿulama 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 *vālī* and the Sunni Muftī who would oppose the Shiʿi 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 ʿulama. Perhaps this very consideration prevented Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī from participating in the trial though, as he was the first person who handed over Bastāmī 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 Shiʿi jurists was implied. Further, participation in the trial, so long as it did not result in the ratification of a severe anti-Shiʿi verdict, could even elevate their position in the internal Shiʿi clerical structure, particularly those mujtahids who were prepared to come to terms with the Ottoman authorities.

Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī in particular according to his student Mīrzā Muhammad Tunikābunī, was 'very prudent, and no-one ever heard him saying a word of condemnation or criticism in a gathering or in public'[2]. He was the chief mujtahid of the Bālāsarī majority in Karbilā'[3], and is mostly known because of his work *Dawābiṭ al-Usūl*[4]. Being a meticulous and zealous faqīh, he spent most of his life promoting and expanding the science of *Usūl-i fiqh*[5]. His prolonged struggle with his chief rival Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī was not limited only to theoretical differences but extended even to political disagreements[6]. In addition, the rapid expansion of Shaykhism in ʿAtabāt, Iran and India at the

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1. F.O. 248/114, No.1.
2. *Q.* pp.55-56, cf. 14.
3. Ibid. 10.
4. First published in 1271 Q. (1854-55) (*al-Dharīʿa* XV, pp.119) (A detailed account of his numerous works appeared in *RJ.* pp.12-13 and *Ṭabaqāt* II, 1, pp.10-11). *Q.* (pp.5-6) states that Sayyid Ibrāhīm compiled *Ḍawābiṭ* in two months in Mecca during the plague year (1245 Q. = 1829-30).
5. Ibid. pp.17-18.
6. Ibid. 7.

expense of the Bālāsarīs, caused Qazvīnī to be more apprehensive of his own standing[1]. 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'ān* and hadīth[2]. Later, he even tried to prevent one of his adherents, Shaykh Mahdī Kujūrī, from publishing a refutation which was intended to reply to Sayyid Kāzim's *Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn*[3].

Qazvīnī was also for a long time, the receiver and distributor of the Oudh Bequest and other endowments in Karbilā'[4]. 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 Muhammad Hasan Najafī used all means at their disposal to receive the lion's share[5], but also others such as covetous tullāb[6] or even the head of the Yarmāzīyah brigandage in Karbilā' virtually blackmailed him in order to get part of the annual benefits[7]. Although Qazvīnī's relations with the Turkish authorities were occasionally troubled by issues such as the validity of his juristic authority[8] or by his frequent defence of the Shi'i community, thanks to his policy of *taqīyah* he was able to maintain his influence in local politics[9]. Noticeably, on several occasions Sayyid Ibrāhīm's intervention saved the lives of Shi'is in Sunni official courts[10]. One may suspect that perhaps his

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1. *Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn*. op.cit., 90.
2. Ibid. 4-10 cf. *Q*. pp.55-6.
3. *Q*. 56. For the details of Kujūrī see below Chapter Six , I . It seems that *Q*.'s allegation (ibid.) concerning Sayyid Kāẓim's reproaching Sayyid Ibrāhīm has no real basis. Throughout *Dalīl* the author deliberately, it seems, avoids any personal attack on Qazvīnī, yet some allusions (pp.6-7) confirm indirect acknowledgement of Sayyid Ibrāhīm's *fatvā*.
4. *Q*. pp.7-10. The Shi'i ruler of Oudh and Lucknow Sulṭān Ghāzī al-Dīn Ḥaydar 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 Karbilā' for distribution amongst ṭullāb and other deserving people. (Mahmūd, M. *Tarīkh-i Ravābiṭ-i Sīyasī-yi Irān va Inglīs dar Qarn-i Nūzdahum-i Mīlādī*, 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.
9. *Q*. pp.13-15.
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 Qazvīnī's prominent position.

Shaykh Hasan Kāshif al-Ghitā' who mainly represented the Arab faction of the Shi'is of Iraq in the Baghdad trial, was also an outstanding jurist[1]. His personal position, his family descent, his scholarship, and his popularity, made him no less important than his contemporaries[2]. *Qisas al-'Ulamā'* held him above Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī in his knowledge of jurisprudence[3], whereas *Rawdāt al-Jannāt* stated that his *riyāsat* over some factions of 'ulama made him to be highly respected by both Shi'is and Sunnis alike[4]. Thanks to the friendly relations between Kāshif al-Ghitā''s family and Ahsā'ī it seems that Shaykh Hasan's attitude towards the Shaykhis was moderate compared to many of his contemporaries. *Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn* refers to Ahsā'ī's occasional visits to Shaykh Ja'far Najafī, father of Shaykh Hasan, and quotes part of his *ijāzih* for Shaykh Ahmad in which the author praised Shaykh Ahmad for his scholarly treatise on the question of *jabr* and *'adl*[5]. Later, during the subsequent waves of condemnation and persecution Shaykh Mūsā and Shaykh 'Alī, both elder brothers of Shaykh Hasan tried to abate the Bālāsarī enmity and even to bring about a reconciliation between the two parties. Shaykh Hasan's good relations with the Ottoman *vālī*, were also instrumental in his appointment as the chief representative from Najaf.

The final composition of the 'ulama who attended the Baghdad trial suggests

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1. *RJ*. 182.
2. *RA*. III, 343; *Q*. pp.184-6. *Tabaqāt* II, 1, pp.316-320. Also for Shaykh Hasan's family see *EI*^{2}, KĀSHIF AL-GHITĀ' (by W. Madelung) and above Chapter One, I . *Qisas al-'ulamā'* (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 Āl Kāshif al-Ghitā' confirms that; 'He was an Ūsūlī mujtahid with insight into Akhbār and Arabic philology. He was also an eloquent writer and poet' (MS. *al-Husūn al-Manī'a* cited in *Tabaqāt*. II, 1, 318).
4. *RJ*. 182 and *RA*. III, 343 who believes that Shaykh Hasan had a joint *riyāsat* with Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī over the Shi'i community. *Tabaqāt* (II, 1, 317) quoting Sayyid Muhammad al-Hindī's *Nazm al-Li'āl* also refers to his joint leadership.
5. *Dalīl*. op.cit., pp.33-4, 103-6.

that the Turkish governor was anxious for all different factions within the Shiʿi and Sunni camps to be represented[1]. The eight known Shiʿi ʿulama who were invited, represented almost all the different tendencies on the Shiʿi side. In addition to fuqahā' from Karbilā', Najaf and Kāzimayn, the Shaykhis were also represented by Mullā Hasan Gauhar[2]. His presence side by side with other jurists at the trial in which the future of a Shaykhi was at stake confirms Mullā Hasan's conciliatory attitude. In fact his unclarified stand tilted him so much in the opposite direction that even Āghā Buzurg Tihrānī states that; 'It is not possible to say that he was an absolute Shaykhi single because he studied under the above mentioned (i.e. Ahsā'ī and Rashtī) and therefore he should be regarded as being of the *Mutisharriʿa*'[3]. His anti-Babi attitude is also noted by Nā'ib al-Sadr who points out that although 'he was one of the close adherents of the late Sayyid, he rejected both factions' of Bābī and Ruknī (presumably the followers of Karīm Khān Kirmānī)[4]. At the time when he was still regarded by some as the temporary successor of Rashtī[5], this inclination towards non-Shaykhis seems to have further weakened his position amongst the majority of Shaykhis[6]. Thus, his presence at the trial should be regarded as an attempt to retrieve his position. Another Shaykhi dignitary, Shaykh Muhammad Shibl Baghdādī, was also invited presumably to represent the Arab followers of Rashtī. 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 *vālī* intended to obtain approval for the refutation of the cause of God[7]'.

On the Sunni side however, it seems that the entire delegation was under the influence of Ālūsī. Muhammad Amīn al-Wāʿiz, a public orator and the head

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1. See table supplemented.
2. Shaykh ʿAbbās ibn Shaykh Ḥasan Kāshif al-Ghiṭā', *Nabdhat al-Gharrā'* MS. cited in *Ṭabaqāt*, 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 Shiʿi ʿulama.
3. *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 1, pp.341-2 under al-Shaykh Mullā Ḥasan al-Qarachihdāghī.
4. *Ṭarā'iq*. III, 338.
5. See above Chapter Four, I.
6. *Qatīl's* reference (508) to two Shaykhi ʿulama, Shaykh Ahmad Mashkūr al-Najafī and Shaykh Radī Qasīr who accepted Gauhar's leadership would indicate some support for Mullā Ḥasan. (See also above Chapter Four, I). Yet later when writing a 'treatise to establish Karīm Khān's delusion' (*Ṭabaqāt*, II, 1, 342) it looks as though Mullā Ḥasan is fighting an already lost battle with his rivals.
7. *Baghdādī*. 107.

of the Qādirī order in Baghdad who was a former pupil of Ālūsī who maintained friendly relations with his teacher[1]. The previous *muftī* of Baghdad Muhammad Saʿīd Afandī who had been previously dismissed by Muhammad Riżā Pāshā, was also a Naqshbandī Sūfī originally from Irbīl[2]. No doubt Ālūsī's sympathy for Sūfism brought him closer to the other two Sunni participants of whom he speaks in his writings with reverence and respect[3]. But it appears that this Sūfī attachment in no way lessened the commitment of the Sunni ʿulama to the exercise of *Sharʿ*.

The composition of the tribunal would indicate that the mere occurrence of the Shiʿi/Sunni encounter was striking enough to affect the whole of the Shiʿi public. It is possible to suggest that Najīb Pāshā's attempt to hold the Baghdad trial was a primary experiment with the introduction of a provincial *majlis* recommended by the Tanzīmāt. Thus Shiʿis 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 Shiʿi notables. This is illustrated in Āl Kubba, a highly influential Shiʿi family of Baghdad who were anxious to provide all necessities including a new robe for Shaykh Hasan Kāshif al-Ghitā' in order to dignify the appearance of the Shiʿi ʿulama in the eyes of their opposition[4].

Far from the excitement and publicity which surrounded his case, Mullā ʿAlī 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. *Baghdādī* reports; 'My father, Shaykh Muhammad, who visited the "messenger" every day in the gaol, heard from him the "Word of God" (*Kalamatallāh*) for the period of three months. He (i.e. Shaykh Muhammad) then delivered whatever he

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1. Ālūsī, ʿAlī ʿAlā al-Dīn, *al-Durr al-Muntathar fī Rijāl al-Qarn al-Thānī ʿAshar va al-Thālith ʿAshar* ed. J. Ālūsī and A. al-Jabūrī, Baghdad, 1976, p.28, cf. 92 citing Maḥmūd Ālūsī's reference to him in *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, vol.I, op.cit. He is the author of a number of works in Ḥanafī fiqh.

2. *Tarā'iq*. III, 560. His dismissal, according to most sources, was principally caused by the *muftī's* disregard for the previous *vālī's* Shiʿi sentiments. (*Dhikrā Abi al-Thanā' Ālūsī*, op.cit. pp.51-2, *al-Durr al-Muntathar*, op.cit. p.170). Yet, *Baghdādī's* remark (p.107) concerning Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿīd's Shāfiʿī attitude, suggests that perhaps his dismissal had some connection with Ottoman religious policy in Iraq. The succession of a Ḥanafī, Shaykh Ālūsī, was more in line with the Ḥanafī religious law practised in the province.

3. *Tarā'iq*. III, 560-61 citing Ālūsī's *Nashwat al-Shumūl*.

4. *Lamaḥāt Ijtimāʿiya*. op.cit. II, 139-40. Recollections of an old Baghdādī 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. Basṭāmī), 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 *Qayyūm 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 *Qayyūm al-Asmā'* was motivated by divine inspiration. Further, Ālūsī's involvement is also apparent from the report which shows that the chief *muftī* 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. *Baghdādī* 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 (*'Āshūrā'*)[5], when

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1. *Baghdādī*. 106.
2. F.O. 248/114, No.1.
3. *Baghdādī*. pp.106-7.
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-Wasā'il*, Epilogue, cited in *Ṭabaqāt* II, 1, p.319).
5. A sacred day both in Sunni and Shi'i traditions. (*EI*^{2}, 'ĀSHŪRĀ' and *Shorter EI*, MUḤARRAM). According to Shi'i accounts, the day on which the Qā'im in his Khurūj would enter Karbilā' to avenge the 'martyrdom' of Ḥusain which happened on the same day.

according to Babi predictions, the unknown Bab himself would appear in the Holy Land (i.e. ʿAtabāt) and start his *Khurūj*[1]. This timing would suggest that Najīb who was anxious about the possible revolt of the pro-Bastāmī 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 Pāshā 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'[2]. Both sides were well aware of the potential danger of the pronouncement in *Surat al-ʿUlamā'*, calling for the mujtahids' resignation in favour of the promised *Ẓikr*[3]. The court also agreed that 'parties avowing a belief in the readings which it contained were to be liable to the punishment of death'[4] Though the Babis were not specifically mentioned by name, this was the first known *fatvā* of the ʿulama 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 Mullā ʿAlī's personal belief[5]. Here, it seems that the court decision was meant not only to affect Bastāmī, but to set an example for other Babi activists, but Shiʿi and Sunni points of view were widely divergent over this matter. The Sunnis who represented the dominating Hanafī law on the basis of earlier conclusions argued that since 'this book is an innovation (*bidʿa*), its bearer is also an innovator (*mubdiʿ*) and amongst the "corrupters of the earth"[6], and therefore liable to death'[7]. In reply, Shaykh Hasan Kāshif al-Ghitā', expressing the Shiʿi 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' (*lā ʿamal fī al-qirtās*)[8] and so long as its bearer is unaware of its contents and does not believe in its claims, it is

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1. See above Chapter Four, III.
2. F.O. 248/114, No.2.
3. See above Chapter Four, III.
4. F.O. 248/114, No.2.
5. Ibid.
6. *'mufsidin fī al-ard'* from the *Qurān*, II, 11.
7. *Q.* 186
8. Ibid.

impossible to pass the sentence of death[1]. Kāshif al-Ghitā''s objection, which was primarily designed to save the life of Bastāmī, demonstrated to his Sunni counterparts Shaykh Hasan's skill in dealing with juristic problems and knowledge of Hanafī law.

As a result of this objection, Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī was closely cross-examined. Nearly all sources agree that his belief in the contents of the new *Furqān* was scrutinised by the court. But his reply differs from one source to another. *Baghdādī* states that in reply to the court's question about the identity of Sāhib al-Amr, Bastāmī maintained that; 'He is the righteous expected soul. He appeared and he is the one who was anticipated by the Holy Books'[2]. The author even goes as far as to suggest that Mullā ʿAlī '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[3]. Contrary to the above account, Rawlinson in conjunction with his earlier remarks reports that 'he (i.e. Bastāmī) himself distinctly repudiated the charge'[4], while *Qisas al-ʿUlamā* 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[5]. Such sharp contrast between the above sources, prevents a firm conclusion regarding Bastāmī's response being reached[6]. Yet, it is most probable that Bastami, bearing in mind the Bab's recommendation of *taqiyah*, the danger of making any public confession, and the Shiʿi-Sunni conflict, acknowledges the mujtahid's assistance and avoided any direct commitment to the 'Book'.

Here, the chief *muftī*, trying to substantiate the charge against the Shiʿi objection, presented his witnesses to the court[7]. 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 Mullā ʿAlī there was another Babi on trial.
2. *Baghdādī*. 107.
3. Ibid.
4. F.O. 248/114, No.2.
5. *Q*. 186.
6. *Baghdādī* 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 Basṭāmī perhaps prevented him or his father from saying something which in their mind could damage the image of Mullā ʿAlī. Rawlinson, on the other hand, who was probably informed of the proceedings of the trial through Mullā ʿAbd al- Azīz, the Persian agent in Baghdad, though he tried to be precise, still reported a second hand account. *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿUlamā'* 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 Basṭāmī in gaol.

hardly able to provide any firm evidence against Mullā ʿAlī. '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 Shiʿi divines were disposed to give him the benefit of his present disavowal'[1]. In accordance with the above account, the author of *Nabdhat al-Gharrā'* also indicates that it was Shaykh Hasan who, in spite of the muftī's persistence, once again made an objection and referring to Mullā ʿAlī's own statement, maintained that 'Since he repented, according to Sharīʿa, I accept his penitence'[2]. Following these remarks by Kāshif al-Ghitā' a long discussion took place between the two sides during the course of which, according to Shiʿi sources, Shaykh Hasan finally established his point on the basis of Hanafī jurisprudence and with detailed references to relevant sources[3]. 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 Bastāmī'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 Sheeahs returned a verdict, that he was only guilty of dissemination of blasphemy and liable in consequence to no heavier punishment than imprisonment or banishment'[4].

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'[5]. Here the British consul certainly refers to the pro-Bastāmī Shaykhis. It is possible that the growing activities and preachings of the Babis had irritated the ʿulama 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'[6]. While the Shiʿiswere 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'[7].

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-Gharrā'* 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 Bastāmī 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-ʿUlamā'* implies that the ground for the prosecution of Bastāmī was *bidāʿ muharrama* (unlawful innovation) and he was accused of being *mubtadiʿ*[1], whereas Rawlinson states that the charge of blasphemy, which perhaps could be translated as *ilhād*, was levelled. However the allusion in *Nabdhat al-Gharrā'* regarding Shaykh Hasan's acceptance of Bastāmī's penitence (*tauba*) suggests that the charge brought against the latter was most probably *irtidād* (apostasy) which is punishable both according to Shiʿi and Hanafī law, by death, particularly in the case of an apostate who was born muslim[2]. 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 Shiʿi and Sunni schools of fiqh differ in this matter. This provided a chance for the Shiʿis to challenge Ālūsī and other Sunni jurists However, according to Tunikābunī, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī was silent all through the trial because 'he was extremely timid and never abandoned the practice of *taqīyah*'[3], 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 Pāshā'[4]. This

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1. For the definition of *bidāʿ* in Islam and its various categories see *EI*^{2}, BIDĀʿ (by J. Robson). Also Goldziher, I. *Muslim Studies*, trans. by S.M. Stern, 2 vols. N.Y. and London, 1967-71, II, pp.33-37 (22-27); al-Tahānawī, *A Dictionary of the Technical Terms used in the Sciences of the Musulmans*, ed. Sprenger etc. 2 vols., Calcutta, 1854-62, pp.131 ff. For a comparison with similar terms see B. Lewis 'The Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam', in *Islam in History*, London 1973, pp.217-36 and al-Tahānawī, op.cit. pp.1251-2.

2. For further discussion on the concept of *irtidād* see *Shorter EI*, MURTADD cf. *EI*^{2}, KĀFIR; Zwemer, *The Law of Apostasy in Islam*, London, 1924; *Muslim Studies*, op.cit. II, 199 ff.

3. *Q*. 186.

4. F.O. 248/114, No.2.

understanding amongst the ʿulama present at the trial supports the view that most of the quarrel between Shiʿi 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 Shiʿis 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 muftīs 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 Shiʿi ʿulama.

As far as Bastāmī 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[1] before any instruction from Istanbul concerning his case reached Baghdad. But nevertheless, the question of the Babis' 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 Karbilā' 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'[2].

But as the time arrived, and the critical period of mid Muharram passed without incident, the delay and finally the cancellation (*badā'*) of the Bab's journey to ʿAtabāt 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[3]. For Bastāmī 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 ʿAtabāt. 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

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1. *Baghdādī*. 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 ʿAtabāt see below Chapter Nine, IV.

the sympathisers or later to challenge the governor's decision to keep Bastāmī in custody. Till the emergence of Ṭāhirih 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 Ṣaffar 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'[1].

Here it may be asked why Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī was so anxious about the fate of an 'inferior priest of Persia'. After all, if Mullā ʿAlī had declared his mission in Iran and been tried under Shiʿi 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 Moolla 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'[2].

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

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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 ascendancy 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 Bastāmī as a means of demonstrating strength in its relations with Iran, decided to make a gesture of good faith. On 14th April 1845 (24th Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1261), Najīb Pāshā received instructions from Istanbul to transfer Bastāmī to the capital[4]. On 30th April 1845 (10th Rabīʿ al-Thānī 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 Mullā ʿAlī is not absolutely clear since the sources either lack any information or else are uncertain,

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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 Mullā ʿAlī was still in Baghdad prison, it seems that the ʿulama did not lose their interest in his case. *Baghdādī* reports that after Mullā ʿAlī's departure from Baghdad, three months after the trial, 'when the discussion between the ʿulama calmed down', then his father Shaykh Muhammad Shibl was able to return from Karbilā' to Baghdad. (p.107). It is not clear to which group of ʿulama in particular he is referring.

confused or contradictory. Nabīl Zarandī compresses the whole matter into a single incident[1], by quoting a certain Hājī Hāshim ʿAttār as saying that: 'On the night of that same day (i.e. Baghdad trial) he had departed to Constantinople'[2]. Then putting alternative suggestions on what eventually befell Mullā ʿAlī, he continues; 'A few believed that on his way to Constantinople he had fallen ill and died. Others maintained that he had suffered martyrdom'[3]. Mīrzā Yahyā Subh-i Azal on the other hand, states in his historical account that Mullā ʿAlī[4], who according to him was originally on his way to Rūm (i.e. Istanbul)[5], was arrested in Baghdad and after the muftī's *fatvā* was moved to Istanbul. But, he continues 'near Baghdad in a place known as Badrā'ī he was poisoned and suffered martyrdom'[6].

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 Bastāmī affair, possibly from the authorities in Tehran[7]. According to this report, about the facts of which the writer claims to have made personal enquiries, 'a certain Mullā ʿAlī' on his way to the capital, 'was

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1. *Qatīl* (pp.511-12, p.527).
2. *Nabil*. 91.
3. Ibid.
4. Strangely enough, the author claims that Mullā ʿAlī Basṭāmī, who was reputed for his piety, was also known as 'Muqaddas Khurāsanī'. No other source confirms this title for Basṭāmī, since it is usually identified with Mullā Ṣādiq Khurāsānī (Muqaddas).
5. This important remark by Subḥ-i Azal, which is partly supported by the Bab's own comments, suggests that there were to have been further stages in Basṭāmī's mission.
6. *A Succinct Account of the Babi Movement written by Mīrzā Yaḥyā Subḥ-i Ezel*, English translation, *NH*. Appendix III, 401 (original text, *NH*. pp.٥—١).
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 *Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq*, 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 Muḥammad. 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), Mīrzā Jaʿfar Muhandis al-Mamālik (Mushīr al-Daulih), the official Persian ambassador in Istanbul, was in Tehran due to illness. According to Ādamīyat, Mīrzā Aḥmad Khān Vaqāyiʿnigār Shīrazī was responsible for the embassy in the absence of Mushīr al-Daulih). (*Amīr Kabīr va Irān*, op.cit. 70-71). Beside the difference in the names, it is hard to believe that an able writer such as Vaqāyiʿnigār would write a dispatch with obvious grammatical errors. The dispatch is written in reply to the letter of 10th Dhulqʿada 1262 (8th January 1846) which reached Istanbul a month later. The date of the dispatch is 14th Dhulḥijja 1262 (12th Feb. 1846).

held for a while in a place known as Būlī[1], before being moved to the capital'[2]. He adds, 'they (i.e. the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul) summoned him (i.e. Mullā ʿAlī) to a gathering (*majlis*) and enquired about certain matters, and he, without thinking of practising any *taqīyah*, made certain verbal confessions. Therefore according to the declaration of the Baghdādī ʿulama and in view of of his own confession, he was banished to Kurk (*sic*. presumably Kirkūk) for the time being'[3]. The above remarks throw some light on the final stages of the Bastāmī affair in Istanbul. It is clear that Mullā ʿAlī 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'[4], which according to the Shiʿi view in the trial, was punishable only by imprisonment or banishment[5].

One month after Bastāmī's exile the same Iranian representative in Istanbul sent one of his officials to the Porte to protest against Mullā ʿAlī'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'[6]. 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 persistance they gave way'[7].

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'[8]. 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

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1. Arabic name for 'Bolu' (Turkey, National Intelligence Division, B.R. 507 Geographical Handbook Series, 1942, Vol.I, p.16). Centre of a large province in Anatolia 260 km. east of Istanbul.
2. Z. 109 (Sup.).
3. Ibid. The route on which Mullā ʿAlī 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[1]. However, it is arguable that had he survived he could hardly have escaped a similar fate in his own country.

Bastāmī's mission to ʿAtabāt 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 Bastāmī's mission at a time when following their conflicts with the Bālāsarīs and because of the lack of any clear orientation after Rashtī, 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 ʿulama of the Bālāsarī faction, the Babi policy of *itmām-i hujjat* was faced with total opposition. The growing sympathy of the public to the new movement induced some of the ʿulama 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 Shiʿis' expectation, the Ottomans, in cooperation with the Sunni muftīs, took up the issue to tighten their control over the Shiʿi community. Thus contrary to their will, the Shiʿi ʿulama 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 Shiʿi ʿulama 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 muftīs, 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. Bastāmī was not executed by the verdict of the Sunni muftīs, but he was banished from ʿAtabāt and with that, at least temporarily, were subsided the expectations of his followers.

III

From the early months of 1261 (1845) Ṭāhirih gradually emerged as the new leader of the Babi community in ʿAtabāt. In spite of the disadvantage of being a woman, she was capable of taking her place amongst the ex-students of Rashtī.

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1. Lorimer, J.H. *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and the Central Arabia*, 2 vols., Calcutta, 1915. I, 1, pp.2517-19.

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[1].

Fāṭimih Zarrīn Tāj surnamed Umm al-Salma and titled Qurrat al-ʿAyn by Rashtī and Ṭāhirih by the Bab[2], was born in Qazvīn (*circa* 1233/1817-18) to a well known family of ʿulama of Qazvīn. Her father, Mullā Muhammad Sālih and her two uncles who were originally from the village of Baraghān (in the Sāvujbulāgh district

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1. In spite of a relatively large number of short biographies and other secondary sources on Ṭāhirih, 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 Karbalā'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 *Kazem 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'ī sources such as *Samandar*, *Baghdādī*, *Nabil*, *NH.* and *Tadhkirat al-Wafā'* (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. *MJQ.* and *Qatīl.* however are surprisingly silent. Though *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'* (op.cit. pp.92-111), *TMS.*, *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 Ṭāhirih's death with the title *Qurrat al-ʿAyn* (1368 Q./1949) and another short book by Nuqabā'ī, H. *Ṭāhirih (Qurrat al-ʿAyn)* (Tehran, 128 Badīʿ/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 *Tārīkh-i Shuhadā-yi Amr* (3 vols., Tehran, III). Occasionally the Bab's writings or the writings of Ṭāhirih 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. Ṭāhirih'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 Zakīyah according to *Nabil.* 628. *NT.* III, 220 and Ālūsī (see below) are both inaccurate on her titles.

north of Karaj and east of Qazvīn) came to Qazvīn in the early years of the 19th century[1]. Later, the two elder brothers moved to Qum, Isfahan and then ʿAtabāt 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 Qazvīn, 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 Qazvīn 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.

Ṭāhirih's father Mullā Muhammad Sālih, was mostly known for his scholarly works in *tafsīr* such as *Bahr al-ʿIrfān*, in *fiqh* such as *Ghanīmat al-Maʿād fī Sharḥ al-Irshād* and in *musībat* and tragic elegies (*marāthī*)[3], though he was also known for the exercise of religious law. In the execution of legal punishments (*hudūd*), as Tunikābunī who himself was his student related, 'he was rigid and firm in *amr-i bi maʿruf va nahy-i az munkar*'[4]. Mullā Muhammad Taqī however, was a typical Usūlī faqīh. He owed his fame chiefly to his ambition to overcome his rivals in Qazvīn and later to his notorious denunciation of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsā'ī and his successor[5]. The younger brother Mullā ʿAlī on the other hand, in contrast to his elder brothers, adopted Shaykhi views and became a firm follower of Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī[6].

Ṭāhirih and her sister Marżīyih 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, Ṭāhirih 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.
2. *Q*. pp.19, 91; *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 1, pp.226-8, 660-61.
3. For the list of his works see *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 2, pp.660-61. Also *al-Dharīʿa*, XVI, 71.
4. *Q*. 91.
5. See above Chapter One, II and below Chapter Seven, III.
6. For his details see below Chapter Seven.
7. *Samandar*. 344 and *Tadhkirat al-Wafā'*, op.cit., 291.

in spite of her studies which apparently brought her even to the level of *ijtihād*[1], and in spite of her promising literary and poetic talents which she developed in those years[2], 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 Baraghānī, son of Mullā Muhammad Taqī and later Imam Jum'ih of Qazvīn. Of this marriage she had two sons and one daughter when she was still under twenty five[3].

Tāhirih probably became first acquainted with Shaykhism through her maternal cousin Mullā Javād Valīyānī who provided for her some of Ahsā'ī's writings[4]. 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[5]. However, she seems to have enjoyed some support from her younger uncle, Mullā 'Alī, Mullā Javād and later her brother-in-law Mullā Muhammad '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' (*ya qurrat al-'aynī wa ruh al-fu'ād*)[6]. 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 Muhammad Taqī. Yet such a consideration should not be interpreted as though Tāhirih herself did not merit such high praise.

The ideological disagreements within the Baraghānī family were so deeply rooted that even the marriage bond could not prevent the inevitable separation.

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1. She never acquired *ijtihād* because according to *Samandar* 'it is not customary to give *ijāzih* of *ijtihād* to women' (345).
2. *Tadhkirat al-Wafā'*, op.cit. pp.291-2., and *TMS*. (MS. B, appendix 'Sharḥ-i ḥāl-i Ṭāhirih, Qurrat al-'Ayn', p.2).
3. Her two sons, Ibrāhīm (*Ṭabaqāt*, I, 23) and Ismā'īl (*Ṭabaqāt*, I, 164) later became mujtahids and the latter succeeded his father in the office of Imām Jum'ih.
4. *Tadhkirat al-Wafā'*, 292. For Mullā Javād see below Chapter Six, IV.
5. Ibid. pp.293-4, cf. *TMS*. (2). Some sources believe that she first became interested in Shaykhism before her marriage.
6. *Nabil*. 83, cf. Ālūsī (see below).

Ṭāhirih'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 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī who was a prominent Shaykhi figure in Qazvīn[1]. Shortly afterwards, in spite of all the obstacles she decided, with the advice and assistance of Mullā ʿAlī who perhaps had seen in Ṭāhirih an exceptional aptitude, to join the Shaykhi circle in Karbilā'[2].

Together with her sister Marżīyih, she set out for ʿAtabāt towards the end of 1259 (1843)[3]. 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[4]. Her later collaboration with Bushrūyihī and his faction, as well as her own remarks confirm that she was watchful for some form of revelation[5]. 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 Karbilā' in the last days of 1259 shortly after the death of Rashtī[6], she found herself faced with the controversy which divided the Shaykhi students. Although some reports regarding her participation in the *iʿtikāf* in the Kūfah mosque should not be relied upon[7], it is certain that from the very early stages she was supporting the Bushrūyihī faction.

Ṭāhirih settled in the house of Sayyid Kāẓim 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 ʿAlī Qazvīnī, her brother-in-law (Z. 313).
4. See above.
5. *Tadhkirat al-Wafā'* (295) reports a 'veracious dream' (*rauyā'-yi ṣādiqih*) in which Ṭāhirih visited the Bab prior to his claims. This is another indication of the function of dreams to illustrate the 'watchfulness' for a messianic *Ẓuhūr* 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 Rashtī's wife and the other women in the household, but with the students and adherents of the late Sayyid[1]. By staying in Rashtī's house, Ṭāhirih benefited from the reputation of Rashtī to strengthen her position amongst the students and adherents. Moreover, by allying herself with the wife of Rashtī, Ṭāhirih organised amongst the Shaykhi women a much needed support for the cause of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad the Bab and his disciples. Such support was important for the legitimacy of the movement: in the confusion which prevailed after the death of Rashtī, not only Rashtī's young son Mullā Aḥmad[2], with the persuasion of certain Mullā Ḥusain Khādim and others and with the tacit approval of Gauhar and Muḥīt, put forward certain claims about his succession to his father[3], but the two distinguished students of Rashtī, namely Gauhar and Muḥīt, by emphasising their self-assumed trusteeship (*visāyat*), attempted to exercise some authority over the private affairs of their late teacher[4]. Although the details of these factional differences are not fully clear, at least it is certain that Qurrat al-ʿAyn played a major role in orientation of the Shaykhi students towards the Bab. Shaykh Sulṭān Karbalā'ī's account makes it clear that it was largely because of Ṭāhirih's efforts that eventually a united party of the Shaykhi-Babis were formed which could hold against both the Shaykhi and Bālāsarī hostility and intrigue.

Holding regular gatherings in the outer chambers of Rashtī's house, Ṭāhirih, who spoke to the audience from behind a curtain, gradually gathered a large body of Arab and Persian Shaykhis who after Bastāmī, offered their loyalty to her[5]. 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

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1. Shaykh Sulṭān Karbalā'ī, *Maktūb* (Z. 246); *Samandar*. 346.
2. Not much is known about this Mullā Aḥmad beside the references in *Maktūb*. In fact there is some uncertainty (Z. 257 n.) whether he was the same Mullā Aḥmad Rashtī, son of Sayyid Kāẓim. However a reference by the Bab cited in *Maktūb* (254) makes it clear that he was Rashtī's son. He is also mentioned in *Ṭabaqāt* (II, 1, 102) and *Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī* (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 Aḥmad's often discreet but sometimes public oppositions to the Babi figures. His arguments with Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Tabrīzī and with Ṭāhirih 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 Bālāsarī opposition.
4. *Qatīl*. (510).
5. *NK*. 140; *KD*. I, 61.

on those who saw in her signs of prophetic inspiration. For the greater part, the teachings of Ṭāhirih 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' (*Nuqṭih-i Ilmīyih-i Ilāhīyih*) which would imply that perhaps she considered some revelatory status for herself[1]. The fact that she had her own independent views on the matters of *furūʿ* which were clearly contradictory to the Islamic code, and the fact that she adopted certain ascetic practices such as devotional prayers[2] and abstaining from having meat, and cooked food[3] 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 Ṭahirih's works from this early period testify to her considerable skill in making use of the *Qurʾān*, ḥadīth and tafsīr for arguing the theory of progressive revelations[4]. For instance in a treatise written in

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1. *Z.* 314, cf. *Gobineau.* 167.
2. *Tadhkirat al-Wafāʾ* 295.
3. *KD.* I, 61.
4. Of a large number of tracts, treatises, letters, poems and prayers which Ṭāhirih wrote in her short life, some are published but the majority either remained unknown or else have perished. Of her published works, beside a *risālih* (in Persian) in reply to Mullā Javād Valīyanī (*Z.* appendix I, pp. 484-501, written in 1261), *Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq* produces six other works in prose: Letter to Mullā Ḥusain (in Arabic, 334-8); two public addresses to Babis and Shiʿis written in circa 1863 (338-65); letter addressed to Ālūsī (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 *Qurrat al-ʿAyn* (op.cit. pp.36-52) produced six new Persian prayers and letters. *Kashf al-Ghitāʾ*, 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 Ḥātif Iṣfahānī and Ṣuḥbat 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 Zukāʾī Bayẓāʾī in *Tazkirih-i Shuʿarā-yi Qarn-i Avval-i Bahāʾī*, (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 Valīyanī (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 ʿAlī Muhammad the Bab in relation to that of Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kāzim, since this was a question which preoccupied many of the Shaykhis in this period, she concludes that the *Hujjatallāh al-ʿuzmā'*, 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[1].

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 (*Aulīya'*) or 'the *abwāb* to the infallibles' (i.e. Ahsā'ī and Rashtī) which prevents the occurrence of such complimentary revelations[2]. To acknowledge this unfolding process, she points out, it is necessary to bear in mind that 'the divine norm' (*sunnat-i ilāhī*) basically differs from 'the human norm' (*sunnat-i basharī*) or indeed ffom the habits of the past, and therefore 'the norms for testing the truthfulness of the Proof of God are not apparent to the people'[3]. 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' (*sirr al-asrār*) of the new revelation[4].

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[5]. This would imply that contrary to her verbal rejection of the contemporary Sufis, in many respects she is

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1. Z. (*Risālih*, 488).
2. Ibid. 493.
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*)[1].

But in Tāhirih's view, this intuitive approach is inseparable from *hikmat* reasoning (*dalīl-i hikmat*)[2]. 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 (*hāmil*) and interpretor who would supervise in all matters'[3]. 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'[4]. The rational outcome of such an assumption was the percept of 'progress' which the Bab, and following him the Babi writers such as Tāhirih, adapted in their arguments. Here the maxim: 'the cycle is in progress' (*Kaur dar taraqīst*)[5] 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 Tāhirih's prime concern in seeking a 'revelation' since at the basis of the Bab's theory of successive resurrections[6] 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, Tāhirih'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 *Qīyāmat*, she made a distinction between the 'believers' and the 'denouncers'. For example, it was in 'Atabāt that she advised her followers not to buy food from the market because in her view those people who denouced the Bab were infidels and thus eating their

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1. Ibid. 491.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid. 494.
6. *Bayān*. VI, 2, pp.30-2.

food was unlawful[1]. 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[2]. 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' (*kharq-i hudūd*) 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 of her followers which by any standards was unacceptable, even to some of the Babis in ʿAtabāt[3]. Still more 'blasphemous' and 'heretical' to her opponents were her hints that the compulsory obligations (*takālīf*) should be lifted because 'the age of interval' (*ayyām-i fatrat*) prior to the advent of the next dispensation had started[4].

She advocated these ideas at a time when every infringement of the conventional rules of religion met with strongest resistance from the ʿulama. Her courage is admirable, but what is perhaps more important are the ideas which lay behind her action. Perhaps Tāhirih 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 Tāhirih exemplified a heroine of intellectual and moral reforms. They were educated and enlightened women who were all later distinguished for their Babi commitment. Khurshīd Bagum entitled Shams al-Żuhā (wife of Mīrzā Muhammad ʿAlī Nahrī)[5] and Marżīyih (Tāhirih's sister) were both deeply influenced by her. Also known to us are Mullā Husain Bushrūyihī's mother who herself was a poetess, Bībī Kūchak (Mullā Husain's sister and wife of Shaykh Abū Turāb Ishtihārdī and later entitled Varqat

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1. *NK*. pp.140-41.
2. Ibid.
3. *Baghdādī*. 109. The author specifies that Tāhirih '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 Kāzim Rashtī who was originally from Shiraz[2] and Tāhirih's maid known as Qānitih[3]. In the later years in Qazvīn, daughters of Hājī Asadallāh Farhādī, Khātūn Jān, Shīrīn and Sāhibih also became her faithful followers. As will be discussed later, it was Khātūn Jān who assisted Tāhirih in her escape from Qazvīn[4]. On her return from ʿAtabāt in 1263 Tāhirih also attracted the attention of the wives of the local notables in Hamadān and particularly impressed two women: Shāhzādih Zubiydih Khānūm known as Firishtih the daughter of Fath ʿAlī Shāh and mother of Amīr Muhammad Husain Khān Hisām al-Mulk (the vālī of Kurdistān) who was a poetess with the pen name Jahān[5], and Hājiyih Khānūm, wife of Mahmūd Khān Nāsir al-Mulk[6]. The influence of Tāhirih may also be seen in another Babi poetess Shams Jahān, the daughter of Muhammad Riżā Mīrzā and granddaughter of Fath ʿAlī Shāh with the pen name Fitnih who in her *Masnavī* gave an account of her first acquaintance with Tāhirih when she was imprisoned in the house of Mahmūd Khān the kalāntar of Tehran between 1266-8 (1850-2)[7].

However it should be pointed out that what was advocated by Tāhirih and the women around her concerning the position of women was very different from the 'emancipation of women' in the western sense which appeared in Iran much later after the constitutional revolution. The source of encouragement for Tāhirih and other Babi women to unveil was primarily a religious innovation rather than the modern concept of 'women's rights'. It is likely that Tāhirih 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 Tāhirih, 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'ādī*. 23 cf. *Tadhkirat al-Wafā'*, 297.
2. *Nabil*. pp.270-71.
3. *NK*. 141.
4. See below Chapter Seven
5. *KD*. I, 117. cf. Ishrāq Khāvarī, 'A. *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Hamadān*, MS., pp.2-4 and *Kashf al-Ghitā'*, 105. Her details and some samples of her poetry appear in *Tārīkh-i ʿAżudī*, op.cit., pp.14-16.
6. *KD*. I, 117. For Nāṣir al-Mulk see *Bāmdād*. IV, pp.54-9.
7. Zukā'ī Bayżā'ī, op.cit., pp.167-202 gives an account of her life and some parts of her *masnavī*.
8. Still it is interesting to see some remote signs of Ṭāhirih's influence amongst the advocates of emancipation of women from 1910 onwards. Ṣadīqih Daulatābādī and other women of the Daulatābādī family came from a Bābi-Azalī background and regarded her as the pioneer of women's rights. Similarly many Bahā'ī women of this generation, and indeed earlier generations, looked on Ṭāhirih as an ideal example.

Tāhirih's attempt to unveil brought some reactions from inside the Babi community. In 1263 (1847) a group of Babis of ʿAtabāt who disapproved of Tāhirih's activities wrote to the Bab and sought his opinion[1]. No doubt the manner in which Tāhirih publicized her ideas as well as unreserved criticism of her adversaries was also for those traditional Babi ʿulama such as Sayyid ʿAlī Bushr Kāzimaynī who still tended to see the Babi movement within the Shaykhi context. Furthermore as Shaykh Sultān Karbalā'ī reported, the false accusations and allegations against Tāhirih which were circulated in ʿAtabāt by Mullā Ahmad Rashtī and his allies were also effective in turning some of the Babis away from her[2]. In reply to these criticisms, the Bab publicly defended Qurrat al-ʿAyn and her positions, and to show his disapproval of the allegations of immorality, entitled her Tāhirih (pure). The Bab's response not only approved of Tāhirih in person and her leadership over the Babis of ʿAtabāt, but significantly acknowledged a liberal tendency in the movement even at the expense of losing some of the fundamentalist followers[3]. When his reply was read to a gathering of seventy Babis in Kāzimayn, 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[4]. Later, in a commentary on *Sura al-Hamd* which is probably addressed to Bushr and his faction, again the Bab confirmed his approval of Tāhirih while in the meantime trying to convince the defecting followers by urging them to set themselves free of these 'non-essential matters' (*shu'ūnat al-ʿaradīya*)[5]. 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 ʿAtabāt abided by the Bab's judgement. However, the opposition of the non-Babi ʿulama 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 ʿulama who had long been seeking

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1. This is reported by most sources including *Baghdādī*, pp.109-110 and *NK*. 141 which are the basis for most of the others.
2. *Maktūb*, op.cit. (257).
3. The Bab's reply came from Mākū some time in mid 1263 (1847). Parts of this letter cited in *Maktūb* (pp.247 ff). Also a quotation appears in *Baghdādī* 110. No trace of the full text of the letter has yet been found.
4. *Baghdādī*, 109. Of the Kāẓimaynī 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, Tāhirih advised the Babis to celebrate the anniversary of the birthday of the Bab in spite of the annual mourning throughout this month for the Karbilā' martyrs[1]. 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 Rashtī and his allies. As can be understood from Shaykh Sultān's account, it was the Shaykhi 'ulama who took the initiative of protesting to the local governor of Karbilā' and to incite the mob to attack Rashtī's house[2]. To prevent any further disturbance the governor of the city interfered in the dispute by putting Tāhirih under arrest in the Rashtī's house for a period of about three months, pending her release by the decision of the Baghdad authorities[3].

Apparently it is in this period that Tāhirih, 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 *mubāhala*[4]. Naturally the 'ulama were not prepared to risk such an encounter and indeed perhaps this was a manoeuvre on behalf of Tāhirih 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, Tāhirih, who perhaps was exposed to further criticism and threat, persuaded the governor to allow her to leave Karbilā' and took up her quarters in the house of Shaykh Muhammad Shibl Baghdādī in Baghdad[5]. No doubt the death of Sayyid Kāzim's widow, who was a follower and supporter of Tāhirih at the beginning of 1262, gave new reasons to Mullā Ahmad Rashtī to press for his demand for the removal of Tāhirih and the return of the Dīwān to his control[6]. However, as Baghdādī

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1. *Samandar*. pp.78, 346-7.
2. *Maktūb* 257 cf. *Tadhkirat al-Wafā'* 296 .
3. *NK*. 141 cf. *Tadhkirat al-Wafā'*, pp.296-7.
4. *Samandar*. 347; *KD*. I, 62. For *mubāhala* and its significance in the Bab context see below Chapter Nine, III.
5. *NK*. 141; *Tadhkirat 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 Rashtī.

confirms 'she was sent to Baghdad by the order of the *vālī*' who probably had decided on this as a result of Shaykh Muhammad Shibl's intervention[1]. This precautionary measure temporarily defused tension and mob excitement in the Holy Cities since by the transfer of Ṭāhirih, 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 Ṭāhirih in Baghdad again faced Najīb Pāshā with the risk of provoking factional discontent if he should leave Ṭāhirih to continue her anti-ʿulama preaching. So this time instead of calling for a tribunal of Shiʿi/Sunni ʿulama he simply summoned Ṭāhirih 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[2]. Hence, perhaps it was for the purpose of further investigation by the chief muftī that Najīb ordered the transfer of Ṭāhirih to the house of Shaykh Maḥmūd Ālūsī, while in the meantime her case was referred to the Sublime Porte[3]. The Pāshā's milder response to the renewal of Babi activities may have resulted from the fact that on the previous occasion, in the case of Bastāmī, no definite result had been achieved from the trial except for the tacit victory of the Shiʿi's, who sagaciously caused the banishment of Bastāmī from ʿAtabāt. 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[4]. Finally, if there was a trial, Ṭāhirih's skilful tactics and her oratory might have worked in her favour and provided her with an opportunity to publicise her views even further[5].

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1. *Baghdādī*. 108.
2. *Samandar*. pp.347-8.
3. *Baghdādī*. 109, cf. *NH*. 272.
4. A woman, according to both Hanafī and Shiʿi 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 Shiʿite, 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 Ālūsī, who seems, in passing a verdict on Qurrat al-ʿAyn, to reserve his highest praise for her:

> 'She was one of those who followed the Bab after the death of Rashtī, but later even disagreed with Rashtī in many matters such as on the question of the obligatories (*takālīf*). Some people alleged that Qurrat al-ʿAyn 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 *taqīyah* or apprehension. Verily, I saw in her such a degree of merit and accomplishment (*al-faḍl 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 Bābīya 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 ʿAsharīs and they denounce them and avoid them'[1].

The tone of Ālūsī in reference to Ṭāhirih would imply that during her two month stay in his house there was an occasion for a sincere dialogue between Ṭāhirih 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[2]. Apparently at the same time as Ṭāhirih was in his house a gathering was held in the same place which the Sunni ʿulama and muftīs attended. The details of such an assembly are not known[3].

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1. Cited in *KQ* (I, 63) and partly in *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'* (op.cit. pp.94-6) both without clear reference to the title of Ālūsī's work. However it is almost certain that this quotation is taken from Ālūsī's incomplete and unpublished work *Nahj al-salāma ilā mabāhith al-Imāma* which is the author's last work written in 1270 Q. (MS. no. 4/678 in Library of *Awqāf ʿAmma*, Baghdad) in which according to *Ālūsī Mufassiran* (op.cit. 125) the author discussed Shaykhīya, Rashtīya, Bābīya and Qurratīya with impartiality.

2. Part of this tablet cited in *Minhāj al-Ṭālibīn* (op.cit. pp.342-6). A direct quotation in *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'* (op.cit. 96 taken from a servant in Ālūsī's house) which report Ālūsī as saying: 'O Qurrat al-ʿAyn! I swear by God that I share in thy belief. I am apprehensive, however, of the sowards of the family of Uthmān' should be regarded as mere exaggeration, though at most, it may point out Ālūsī's sympathetic approach to Ṭāhirih's views.

3. Only *Samandar*. (pp.348-9) reported of a certain Ḥakīm Masīḥ, an Arab Babi of Jewish descent, who saw Qurrat al-ʿAyn in Baghdad conversing with the Sunni ʿulama.

Shortly afterwards the orders came from Istanbul for the deportation of Ṭāhirih. Though the contents of the Porte's instruction are not known, yet another passage from Ālūsī, this time from *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, gives some insight into the situation which finally persuaded the Pāshā to arrange for the banishment of Ṭāhirih and her followers:

> '... And thus appeared on that time (i.e. early 1260's) a group of Shiʿi ghulāt calling themselves Bābīya ... 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 vālī Najīb, about whose zeal and religiousity 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 ...'[1]

These reproachful remarks sound contradictory to his above mentioned praise of Ṭāhirih if one does not consider the muftī's apprehension of the potential threat from the Babis for the removal of which he praised Najīb Pāshā so flatteringly. The second passage is written in *circa* 1265-6 (1849-50) when the Babi uprisings in Iran made it appropriate for Ālūsī to make explicit his resentment at the resurgence of yet another Shiʿi extremism, whereas the first passage regarding Qurrat al-ʿAyn 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 Ṭāhirih when the diminishing anxieties of the Muftī allowed him to write a less biased account.

As was rightly noticed by Ālūsī, the deportation of Ṭāhirih was the end of the effective presence of the Babis (or indeed the Shaykhis) in ʿAtabāt for the next five years, before the arrival of Bahā'allāh and his party who were exiled to Iraq towards the middle of 1269 (1853)[2]. In the early months of 1263 (1847) accompanied by an Ottoman officer, Ṭāhirih was sent to Khānaqīn on the Iranian border. With her was travelling a body of about thirty of her followers. Her journey from Baghdad to Qazvīn took about three months in the course of which she passed through Karand, Kirmānshāh and Hamadān before reaching Qazvīn towards

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1. Op.cit. Vol. Seven, XXII, 39. Other references may also be found in *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī* to Ālūsī's discussions with Qurrat al-ʿAyn.

2. Both *Samandar* (349) and *Nicolas* (pp.274-6) reported that an envoy was sent by Ṭāhirih's family, possibly at the request of the Shiʿi ʿulama of ʿAtabāt, to take her back to Qazvīn. Recollections of Ḥājī Mullā Muḥammad Ḥammāmī, 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 Ṭāhirih to return to Iran. One might thus conclude that the Pāshā's decision was in accordance with Ṭāhirih's own intention to leave Baghdad.

the middle of 1263 (1847). All along the way she, together with her disciples such as Mullā Ibrāhīm Mahallātī, Mullā Sālih Karīmāvī and Shaykh Sultān Karbalā'ī, publicly propagated the new cause[1]. 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 ʿAtabāt, 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)[2]. 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 Māzandarān, 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[3]. 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 Andarmānī and then at the end of Dhīqaʿda 1268 (September 1852) was taken to Bāgh Īlkhānī. She was strangled and her body dumped in a shallow well

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1. The names of a number of her followers who accompanied her are given in *Baghdādī*. 111 and *Nabil*. 273.
2. For further details see below Chapter Seven
3. Some new details on the occasion of her arrest appear in *Tārīkh-i Shuhadā-yi Amr*, op.cit. III, pp.204-6.

at the back of the garden[1].

Two major features may be identified in Ṭāhirih's life, particularly with regard to the episode of her stay in ʿAtabāt: 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' (*shīftih-yi balā'*)[2]; a total commitment, with heart and mind, to an apocalpytic 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 Shiʿi in its *weltanschauung* and that the Babi history was a re-enactment of the idealised Shiʿi past[3], yet at the core of this fascination with suffering and martyrdom lay the seed of a progressive dynamism of which Ṭāhirih's ideas were a good example. In her intellectual development she benefited from two conflicting currents; the orthodox rationalist Uṣūlism 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 Shiʿi intelligentsia who were already acquainted with the origins of this thought. Ṭāhirih 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 ʿAtabāt proved to Ṭāhirih 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.

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1. Amongst the few accounts on the last days of Ṭāhirih, *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 Nigāristān palace where she met Nāṣir al-Dīn 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. *TN*. note Q, pp.312-14).

2. The full line reads as follows: '*dar rah-i ʿishqat iy ṣanam shīftih-yi balā' manam, chand mughāyirat kunī, bā ghamat āshinā 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 ʿUlama

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)[1]. 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 ʿAtabāt. His task primarily was to inform those Shaykhis of Iran already acquainted with an impending *Zuhūr* of the claims of Sayyid ʿAlī 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-Asmāʾ* 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[2]. But contrary to Bastāmī's mission, which due to the fierce opposition it faced failed to penetrate the Shiʿi community in ʿAtabāt[3] and could not achieve the results hoped for even amongst the Shaykhis, 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 ʿulama 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 Sādiq 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

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1. See above Chapter Four, III.
2. *Nabīl*. 96. This source implies that Mullā Ḥusain would have preferred to accompany the Bab in his journey to the Ḥijāz, but no other source confirms this.
3. See above Chapter Five, I.

Isfahan, Mullā 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 Mullā Husain stopped in Kāshān, 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 Nabīl Zarandī, 'he found the people utterly unprepared to heed his call'[1]. 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[2]. His stay in Tehran[3] 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 *Sūrat al-Mulk* to Muhammad Shāh and Hājī Mīrzā Āqāsī. However it looks as though Mullā 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, Mullā Husain's efforts were mainly focused on three different groups of Shaykhi sympathisers: the 'ulama, tujjār and some government

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1. *Nabīl*. 101.

2. However the celebrated mujtahid of Qum, Mīrzā Abul Qāsim Qumī appears to have had a favourable attitude to Aḥsā'ī's school. According to *Dalīl ul-Mutiḥayyirīn* (op.cit. p.32), on his journey to Atabāt, Mīrzā-yi Qumī visited Shaykh Aḥmad and showed great respect towards him. Some of the Qumī 'ulama embraced the new cause within the next few years of the movement; amongst them was Ḥājī Mīrzā Musā Qumī, son-in-law of Mīrzā-yi Qumī (*Nabīl*. 101).

3. In order to apply a well known *ḥadīth* to Mullā Ḥusain's stay in Tehran, *Nabīl*. (pp.126-8) insists that 'between the months of Jumādā and Rajab, he (Mullā Ḥusain) chanced to be in Tihrān'. However, if we admit that Mullā Ḥusain left Shiraz in late Jumādā al-Thānī, and consider his stops in Isfahan and Kāshān, it seems almost impossible that he could be in Tehran in Jumādā II 1260. A certain confusion is also noticeable in the other sources. Both *Fu'ādī* (pp.29-30) and *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Kāshān* (ed. Nāṭiq Iṣfāhānī, 1309 Sh., *INBA*. Lib. MS No. 2016 D, 75 pp, p.1), put the date of Mullā Ḥusain's journey further ahead in 1261 Q. This confusion occurred perhaps because of Mullā Ḥusain's other visits to these places at later dates. The same inaccuracy is also noticeable in *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh* III, pp.234-7.

officials. In this chapter the position of the ʿulama and their significance in the later expansion of the Babi doctrine is discussed in some detail.

The efforts of Mullā Husain amongst the ʿulama of Isfahan resulted in the early recognition of the Bab by two relatively important mujtahids: Mullā Sādiq Khurāsānī (Muqaddas) and Mullā 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 Mullā Husain to convey his message to a greater number of the Shaykhis and non-Shaykhis in the city.

Mullā Sādiq, son of a humble mullā from Khurasan, was born and bred in Mashhad[1], where he undertook his preliminary studies with a local mujtahid Hājī Sayyid Muhammad Qasīr Rażavī[2]. Probably it was during the course of these lessons that he became acquainted with Mullā Husain who is known to have studied under the same teacher[3]. Later, as he himself related to Shaykh Kāzim Qazvīnī, he received the status of *imām-i jamāʿat*, presumably in one of the Mashhad's mosques, a position usually conferred upon a pious and devoted member of the religious corps[4]. 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].

Mullā Sādiq then moved to ʿAtabāt to continue his studies, where like some other Khurāsānī students he subsequently became a member of the Shaykhi circle

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1. *Samandar*.163. His father was Āqā Mīrzā Ismāʿīl b. Jalīl Khurāsānī. Sources on the life of Muqaddas Khurāsānī (later known by the Bāhā'ī title Ismallāh al-Aṣdaq) are mainly confined to a number of accounts which he himself related to Bābī-Bāhā'ī historiographers. Kāẓim Qazvīnī Samandar, who himself visited Mullā Ṣādiq towards the end of his life in ʿAkkā, gives a relatively full account of his life (*Samandar*. pp.162-171), which was later used by others. *Fu'ādī* (pp.86-99) uses the notes of Mullā Ṣādiq's son, known as Ibn Aṣdaq, while the oral account of the same person is apparently the basis of *Nicolas'* account (pp.254-55). The authorsof *Nabīl* (pp.100-101) and *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* (*NH*. pp.40-42) both heard direct from Muqaddas the account of his conversion.

2. *Qatīl*. (521). See also above Chapter Four for Qaṣīr.

3. Ibid.

4. *Samandar*. 163. The task of *imāmat-i jamāʿat* here should be distinguished from the office of *imām jumʿih* which had a far greater significance in the city. The former who is also called *pīshnamāz* 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 MASDJID in *Shorter EI*.

5. *Samandar*. 163.

in Karbilā[1]. Over the years he was gradually promoted to be one of the senior students of the circle[2], and finally received his *ijāzih* (authorisation) in Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1259 Q. (April 1843), a few months before Rashtī's death. In this *ijāzih*[3], Sayyid Kāẓim 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 (*maʿqūl*) and traditional (*manqūl*) sciences and holder of a high degree in *furuʿ* (branches) and *uṣūl* (principles)'. Rashtī then maintains:

> 'Since I have found him (i.e. Mullā Ṣādiq) possessor of these perfections and high standards, capable of bearing the traditions (*āthār*) 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'[4].

By certifying him both to issue *fatvā* and relate traditions, Sayyid in fact granted him what has been defined as *ijāzih-i ijtihād* (authorization for independent exertion of religious law), and *ijāzih-i ravāyat* (authorization for relating traditions according to the teacher's chain of mashāyikh), yet it seems that he avoids using the term *ijtihād*[5]. Such an *ijazih* was an essential tool for any capable ṭalabih, whether Shaykhi or non-Shaykhi, to make his way to a high status and to gain respect and authority. As *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamā'* puts it:

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1. Ibid. Also *Nicolas*. pp.191, 198.
2. *Samandar*. 163.
3. The facsimile of the original *ijāzih* in Arabic appears in Z. 145 (supp.). It is in three pages, and is signed and dated at the end by the Sayyid Kāẓim in his own handwriting and sealed.
4. Z. 145 (supp.). Despite Rashtī's criticism of the Bālāsarī's over-emphasis on the aspects of *ʿilm-i fiqh*, to some extent he himself followed the same pattern of religious education.
5. *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿUlamā'* (pp.9, 24) distinguishes between two types of ijāzih. The root of this distinction could be found in works of the earlier Shiʿi theologians. Majlisī in *Biḥār al-Anwār*, devotes the whole of volumes 25 and 26 to the subject of *ijāzāt*, where he discusses in detail the works of the former Shiʿi faqīhs. See also *Q*. (pp.9-10, 25-6, 67, 9), Mīrzā Ḥusain Nūrī Ṭabarsī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il* (op.cit. III, App.3, pp.374-82) and *RJ*. for various Uṣūlī *ijāzāt*. *Fihrist*. (I, 144-51 and 126-8) gives text of *ijāzāt* acquired by Aḥsā'ī and Rashtī.

an *ijāzih* 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 (*qażā*) 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 (*ruvāt*)'[1].

Authorisation for ijtihād enabled Mullā Ṣādiq 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 Rashtī, 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 *Masnavī* to this accomplishment[2]:

'He was a scholar (*ʿālim*) 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 ʿulama, 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 ʿAtabāt[4], and his reported admiration for the young merchant, had rendered possible the acknowledgement of the new message. Like Mullā Ḥusain, 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 Ḥusain. The trilateral oath of fraternity between Muqaddas, Mullā Ḥusain and Mullā Ḥasan Gauhar, which implied a desire for unanimity in the choice of a spiritual leader upon the death of Sayyid Kāẓim, should not be underestimated[5].

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1. *Q*. 24.
2. Ḥājī Muḥammad Ismāʿil Ẓabīḥ Kāshānī (Fānī), *Masnavī*, MS. No. 787, Mīnāsīān Collection, Wadham College, folio 82b.
3. In the last line he presumably refers to Muqaddas's later recognition of Bāhā'allāh.
4. See above Chapter Three, IV.
5. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. 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 Tabrīzī merchant who was visiting Isfahan at the time related that Mullā Sādiq's popularity amongst the inhabitants was so great that as imām-i jimā'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 'Alī Muhammad 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 Khurāsānī's conversion was moulded in a traditional form, adopting the mystical concept of *kashf*, where the mysterious truths behind the veil appear in their entirety. Modelled from Ahsā'ī'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 Tabrīzī, who recognised him in Bāzār-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 *Fu'ādī*. pp.87-8. Both sources confirm that he departed from Karbilā' after the death of the Sayyid. *Nabil's* claim (p.100) that Khurāsānī had during the last five years been residing in Isfahan seems improbable.
2. *TMS*. 67 quoting Āqā Faraj Tabrīzī. 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 *Mīrzā Habīballāh*. pp.34-5 and *Samandar*. pp.163-4.
5. *TMS*. 66.
6. *Samandar*. 164.

> 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 (*ūṣūl-i dīn*), and not a question of *taqlīd*, in which I can act on other's 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 (*ṭalab*) on foot". He then said farewell and went away'[1].

The way Mullā Ṣādiq was trying to fulfil his 'individual duty' (*farż-i ʿayn*)[2] calls to mind the Shīʿī traditions regarding the duty of the believer to support the Mahdī's cause (*Nuṣrat*); 'And when you see him (i.e. Imam Mahdī), 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'[3]. This sense of suffering and asceticism which repeatedly occurs in the course of the conversions is a sign of Shīʿī esoteric influence in shaping the formative period of the movement.

After some time, Mullā Ṣādiq 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[4]. The point which had puzzled Mullā Ṣādiq, like many other early believers, was that Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad did not enjoy the 'nominal accomplishments' and 'official qualities'[5] of a high ranking divine, and even lacked the basic education necessary for any Shiʿi ṭalabih. 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[6].

However, Mullā Ṣādiq's journey to Shiraz was not solely for the purpose of

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1. *TMS*. 66.
2. Distinguishable from 'collective duty' (*farż-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 *Biḥār*. XIII, Chap.1/4, = trans. p.65. This ḥadīth appears frequently in *Biḥār al-Anwār*, related by different *rāwīs* of different figures. (*Biḥār*. Chap.2/10, = p.97 and Chapter on *Khurūj* = p.560).
4. *Samandar*. 164 cf. *TMS*. pp.66-7.
5. *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* (MS.) pp.21-24 = *NH*. pp.40-42.
6. Ibid. cf. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. 36. *Samandar*. (164) however believes that he reached Shiraz after the Bab's departure for Ḥijāz.

visiting the Bab, but for the greater task of advocating the cause in the Bab's home town[1]. Already prior to his departure from Shiraz, Mullā Husain had publicly declared that 'manifestation of the Proof of God (*ẓuhūr-i Ḥażrat-i Ḥujjat*) 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'[2]. Yet Bushrūyihī's reservation in revealing the identity of the Promised One puzzled some of the enthusiastic audience. Mīrzā Aḥmad Shīrāzī, who himself was present at the time of Mullā Ḥusain'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'[3]. In reply Mullā Ḥusain pointed out:

> 'I was not commissioned by the lawgiver (*ṣāḥib-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 Mullā Ṣādiq, who will come two months after my departure'[4].

It is clear that Mulla Ḥusain, 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 ʿAtabāt. After the meeting, Mīrzā Aḥmad asked Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad about his opinions of Mullā Ḥusain's words, to which the Bab replied: 'Mullā Ḥusain is an honest and truthful man, and he is above making unfounded statements. Undoubtedly these words of his have a foundation'[5].

Mullā Ṣādiq began preparation for the public declaration first by setting up lectures and preachings in the mosque of Āqā Qāsim[6] but it appears that, for

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1. *Nabīl*. (101) states that Mullā Ṣādiq was instructed by Bushrūyihī to 'proceed to Kirmān, and there acquaint Ḥājī Mīrzā Karīm Khān Kirmānī with the Message', then travel to Shiraz. Even if *Nabīl* 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 (*Fu'ādī* . 90 and *Samandar*. 164). There is no evidence suggesting that at this stage, Mullā Ṣādiq, or in fact any of the early Babis, made an attempt to visit Kirmānī.
2. *Aḥmad*. pp.499-50.
3. *Aḥmad*. 450.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. *Aḥmad*. 451.

the next few months up to the time when the Bab returned from the Hajj[1], no clear indication of the exact nature of the 'manifestation' or the identity of the claimant was divulged, and for the most part the preachings of Muqaddas were confined to premonitory remarks already propounded by Bushrūyihī. This delay was caused partly because Muqaddas, now accompanied by some of his close students, was anxious for the outcome of the Bab's proclamation in Mecca and partly because he was waiting for the assembly of the new believers who were now gradually arriving in Shiraz to see the Bab.

However, Mullā Sādiq's hesitations for the public declaration seem to have diminished as the general atmosphere in the city further encouraged a sense of anticipation of the occurrence of a messianic event. This was at the time when, due to the absence of the governor, and the almost total lack of control from any single source of power, Shiraz was going through one of its most violent phases of insecurity and social strife. In addition to the city fightings between the local *lūtīs*, divided into the Haydarī-Niʿmatī divisions and instigated by the rival notables and officials, almost the entire Shīrāzī élite were opposed to the successive governors appointed by the central government[2]. It was not a coincidence that at the same time as the sense of expectation for *Zuhūr* reached its height the ascetics and holy men realised that the 'cryptic' inscription on the pulpit of the Jāmiʿ mosque in Shiraz heralded the impending advent of the Qā'im[3], 'most of the students sold their books, purchased arms and hastened to ʿIraq-i ʿArab so as to be present when the manifestation took place'[4] and the Shīrāzī poet Qā'ānī compiled a *qasīdih* in the honour of the Lord of the Age which closed with the *maqtaʿ*:

> Whatever I say about the circumstances of his appearance,
> The Mahdī, the Lord of the Age has appeared[5].

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1. For the Bab's pilgrimage see below Chapter Nine.
2. Beside occasional references in the Qājār chronicles to the events of Fars, *Fārs Nāmih*. (I, pp.295-300, and translation *History of Persia under Qājār Rule* by H. Busse, London and N.Y., 1972, pp.264-78) and reports on the state of Fars (F.O. 60/112-3 and 248/113, Hennell to Sheil, and Sheil to Aberdeen, 1844) provide an accurate account of the disturbances in Shiraz. For further details see below Chapter Nine, I.
3. *Khāndān-i Afnān*, op.cit., 110. (Recollections of Vakīl al-Haqq).
4. *Ahmad*. 451.
5. *TMS*. pp.67-8 cf. *TN*. 199. Muʿīn al-Salṭanih who saw this *qaṣīdih* in an MS of *Dīvān-i Qā'ānī* indicates that it was titled 'in the praise and adoration of the manifestation of Sayyid-i Bāb'. In the later printed editions however, either the *maqṭaʿ* has been changed and the *qaṣīdih* actually referred to an anonymous mujtahid, or it has been removed from the *Dīvān* altogether.

Completely disillusioned by the idea of proclamation in a foreign land, the Bab returned from Hijāz to Bushihr in Safar 1261 (February - March 1845), and immediately despatched Quddūs with specific instructions for Muqaddas concerning the public announcement of the cause in *Balad al-Amn* (the city of security, i.e. Shiraz). As it will be argued[1], he must have been perfectly aware of the hazards and insecurities in the 'city of security' when he despatched Quddūs to Shiraz, and perhaps even have hoped that the situation might act to his advantage, but certainly neither he nor Muqaddas intended to reveal the message beyond certain symbolic manoeuvres which although they would have a great impact on the public, they would not reveal the identity of the Bab[2].

To fulfil this task, Muqaddas, Quddūs, Mullā ʿAlī Akbar Ardistānī and probably others, marched through the bazar of Shiraz carrying white banners on which was a quotation from the traditions: 'The Qā'im has appeared, and *Qīyāmat* has begun' (قد ظهر القائم وقام القيامه), and exclaiming: 'We are the supporters of the Qā'im of the House of the Prophet'(ماناصران قائم آل محمد يم)[3]. Furthermore, on the instruction of Muqaddas, who led the prayers in the small mosque in Kūchih-i Shamshīrgarhā (known as Masjid-i Khiżr), Ardistānī added words set by the Bab to the traditional formula of the *adhān*: 'I bear witness that ʿAlī Muhammad (lit. ʿAlī before Muhammad: *ʿAlī-i qabl-i Nabīl*) is the Bab of the *Baqīyatallāh* (the Remnant of God)'[4]. Afterwards, by reading verses from *Qayyūm al-Asmā'* and elaborating on the theme of manifestation, Mullā Sādiq himself declared the advent of the new Bab. So far this was the most daring and open publication of the movement inside Iran, with serious consequences both for the Babi activists as well as for the Bab himself.

Three days of open publication to an audience of merchants, traders and shopkeepers of bazar who presumably had Shaykhi inclinations, was long enough to induce that faction of the ʿulama who were already concerned with the news transmitted by Shaykh Abū Hāshim Shīrāzī regarding the activities of the Bab in Hijāz[5], to appeal to the newly arrived governor Husain Khān Iravānī (Muqaddam)

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1. See below Chapter Nine, IV.
2. However there are indications that even as early as Shaʿbān 1260 Q. (September-October 1844) the identity of the Bab was known to some people in Shiraz. See below Chapter Nine, I.
3. *TMS*. 69.
4. Nabīl in numerological value is equal to Muhammad. The incident is recorded, amongst others by *Samandar*. pp.165-6; *Ahmad*. 451; *TN*. 200-3 and *Nabil*. 144-6 with some minor variations.
5. *Mīrzā Habīballāh*. 42.

the Ṣāhib Ikhtiyār (Ājūdānbāshī and later Niẓām al-Daulih)[1], to take action against the spread of the new heresy. What united the protesting faction of the ʿulama led by Shaykh Husain Nāzim al-Sharīʿa , Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Mahallātī and Shaykh Mahdī Kujūrī in their action against the Babis[2], was not only their common fear of the new movement which was now openly questioning their authority, but perhaps also their common association with the Haydarī division in the city. In the complex power politics of Shiraz, the Haydarī quarters traditionally supported the Qavām family (Hājī Mīrzā ʿAlī Akbar Qavām al-Mulk then in exile in Tehran, and his son Mīrzā Muhammad Khān Bīglarbaygī, the Kalāntar of Fars) against their rivals the Mushīr family (Mīrzā Muhammad ʿAlī Mushīr al-Mulk and his son Mīrzā Abul Hasan) who were now regaining the office of *vizārat* and the control of the local administration under Husain Khān after a tense period of power struggle[3]. In spite of the association of the family of the Bab with the Haydarī quarters, during the events of the next year and a half which led to the arrest and detention of the Bab, the implicit support given to the Bab by both Niʿmatī influentials, Shaykh Abū Turāb, the imām jumʿih of Shiraz and Mīrzā Muhammad ʿAlī Mushīr, further revealed the nature of this factional confrontation between the ʿulama of Shiraz.

Another common aspect in the above mentioned mujtahids was the fact that, as opposed to the old ʿulama families, they were newcomers to Shiraz, and thus perhaps seeking a broader popular base in the city to establish their own religious authority. Shaykh Muhammad Kujūrī, who was originally from the area of Kujūr in Māzandarān, first arrived in Shiraz in 1257 (1841-2)[4]. In ʿAtabāt he was a student of Mullā Ibrāhīm Qazvīnī, and following his teacher, he too was a staunch enemy of the Shaykhis[5]. Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Maḥallātī was also a

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1. For his biography and his past career see *Sharḥ-i Maʾmūrīyat-i Ājūdānbāshī* based on *Safar Nāmih-i ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Garmrūdī*, edited by M. Mushīrī, Tehran, 1347 Sh.; F.O. confidential papers, 1840 (*Hossain Khan*); A.K.S. Lambton, 'Persian Society under the Qājārs' in *Asian Affairs*, 1961, 123-39 (124). Also *Fārs Nāmih*. I, pp.299-303; Stern, *Dawning of Light*, op.cit. 172. The Bab himself refers to Ḥusain Khān (*INBA*. pub.64, 115, letter to Muḥammad Shāh) as 'vicious and sinister' (*khabīs-i shaqī*) who owing to his drunkenness 'was never able to pass any sound judgement'. The facsimile of the decree of Ḥusain Khān's governorship of Fars issued by Muḥammad Shāh in Ramaḍān 1260 Q.(September-November 1844) appears in *Rāhnimā-yi Kitāb*, IX, 96.
2. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. 42.
3. This pattern recurs in many incidents recorded by *Fārs Nāmih*. I, pp.287 ff. and reports such as F.O. 248/113, August 7th 1844, Hennel to Sheil. For Qavām family (Hāshimīyih) see *Fārs Nāmih*. II, pp.47-53 and for Mushīr family *Fārs Nāmih*, II, 98-103.
4. *Fārs Nāmih*. II, 54.
5. *Q*. 16.

mujtahid from Mahallāt who had just settled in Shiraz in 1260 (1844) in the quarter of Ishāq Bayg[1]. Shaykh Husain Nāzim al-Shari'a , however, was an Arab from Aḥsā' who seems to have settled in Shiraz some years earlier[2]. Contrary to similar incidents in Kirmān, Yazd and Tehran, where the progress of the movement was first hampered by the opposition of the established Shaykhi mujtahids, in Shiraz the publication of the Babi message provided a pretext for the new coalition of the non-Shaykhi 'ulama to assert their authority at the expense of the long-established 'ulama families. More significantly their hostility was directed against a young and energetic ex-Shaykhi mujtahid, namely Muqaddas, whose tense activities - sometimes preaching in five different mosques in the city - and messianic message caused greatest concern for them. Mīrzā Aḥmad explicitly states that while the newly appointed governor was still absent from Shiraz, the 'ulama kept quiet in regard to Mullā Sādiq, a fact which perhaps demonstrates their inability to act independently in the matter of turning the public against Muqaddas[3].

In response to their complaint, Ḥusain Khān ordered the arrest of the three Babi preachers who were then brought to his presence. He personally questioned Muqaddas particularly with regard to his public statements on the question of illegitimate power of the state and the 'ulama on the occasion of the manifestation of the Bab, as it was emphasised in *Qayyūm al-Asmā'*[4]. Husain Khān had been supplied with a copy seized from Mullā Sādiq while he was reading aloud its passages to an excited congregation[5]. When the governor, referring to a passage in *Sūrat al-Mulk* in which the Bab urges the rulers and kings to 'divest yourselves of the robe of sovereignty, for he who is the king in truth hath been made manifest'[6], asked Muqaddas whether according to this behest Muhammad Shāh must lay down his crown and abandon his sovereignty, and whether he as the governor should also abdicate his power and relinquish his position, Mullā Sādiq replied: 'If these words be the words of God, the abdication of Muhammad Shāh and his like can matter but little'[7].

These words uttered by Muqaddas, and the manner in which he courageously expressed his commitment to the new cause, was beyond the tolerance of Husain Khān, who, given the turbulent state of affairs in Shiraz, was eager to show his strength by punishing the most controversial but least powerful of all those

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1. *Fārs Nāmih*. II, 23.
2. *Fārs Nāmih*. I, 2 and II, 24.
3. *Ahmad*. 452.
4. See below Chapter Four, III.
5. *Samandar*. 166 and *Nabil*. 145-6.
6. *QA*. I(*Sūrat al-Mulk*), folio 2/b.
7. *Nabil*. 146 cf. *Samandar*. 166.

whom he believed were responsible for the commotion and disturbances in the city[1]. The three Babis were severely lashed, their beards were burnt and their faces were blackened as a sign of disgrace[2]. Next day, as *The Times* of November 19th 1845 reports, they were paraded through the city by the executioners (mīrghażabs), who had made holes in their noses and passed strings through them, which they sometimes 'pulled with such violence that the unfortunate fellows cried out alternately for mercy from the executioner and for vengeance from Heaven'. As was the custom of the executioners, they collected money from spectators, and particularly from the shopkeepers in bazar. 'In the evening when the pockets of the executioners were well filled with money, they led the unfortunate fellows to the city gate, and there turned them adrift'[3].

From Husain Khān's point of view, what Muqaddas claimed was no more a point of dispute between a local mujtahid and his adversaries, but a direct challenge to the authority of the state. It was not so much the real threat of an uprising, as the consequences of contempt of the monarch which worried him and persuaded him to take tough action. Being an Īravānī, Husain Khān enjoyed the support of his patron Hājī Mīrzā Āqāsī, yet his office, which he secured after spending 30,000 tumāns in the capital[4] was still susceptible to court intrigues which could be fermented by the rumours about his inability to cope with a new heresy. As far as the internal politics of Shiraz were concerned, this was a punishment adopted by the governor to warn the conflicting parties to contain themselves, and not to plot against him - a warning which appears to have been of little effect. In less than three years, in 1264 (1848), he was forced out of office, in the same manner as many other governors before him, by mass riots and street fightings[5].

However, the ʿulama who were the real winners of the anti-Babi campaign,

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1. Sheil reports (F.O. 60/113, Sheil to Aberdeen, April 3rd 1845, no.41) that Ḥusain Khān was successful in re-establishing tranquillity in the province of Fars and particularly in the city of Shiraz. He states that although as a person he has 'a number of bad qualities' he has essential qualities for good government in Persia. He captured forty of the *lūṭīs* of the city and sent them to the capital to be executed.

2. *Nabīl*. pp.146-8 (quoting a non-Babi eye-witness) and *Samandar*. 166. *NH*. pp.201-2 refers to a fourth Babi, a certain Mullā Abū Ṭālib who was persecuted along with the others.

3. Taken from the *Literary Gazette* of November 1845 based on a report by an English merchant in Shiraz.

4. Estimated by Abbott (F.O. 60/107, September 30th 1844) in his memorandum of the prices required for the government posts.

5. *Fārs Nāmih*. I, pp.302-3.

could hardly achieve their supremacy without direct assistance from the government. The events of Shiraz were the earliest case of mutual cooperation between the ʿulama and the state for the purpose of suppressing the Babi movement. But persecution and punishment of the Babi elements did not put an end to the growth of the movement in Shiraz. In the course of the next year, in spite of the arrest of the Bab on his way from Būshihr to Shiraz, his interrogation in the presence of the governor and the ʿulama, his public announcement in the mosque of Vakīl disassociating himself from all charges and accusations brought against him, and finally a period of house arrest during which the Bab tried in his seclusion to distance himself from the movement and leave 'the cause in the hands of his companions', the Babi community of Shiraz continued to grow. In the same period, the first internal split in the ranks of Babi believers occurred as a result of the Bab's initiative in leaving the leadership to Mullā Husain and this caused more hardship and persecution for the Bab which eventually induced him to seek a refuge outside Shiraz.

II

If the public declaration in Shiraz led to the immediate persecution and then isolation of the Babis, in Isfahan events took a different course. The efforts of Mullā Husain led to the conversion of some religious figures and the attraction of a few more important figures towards the Bab, to the extent that it made it difficult for the ʿulama to create any immediate threat to the spread of the new movement.

One example of the middle rank mujtahids of Isfahan, who due to previous Shaykhi tendencies welcomed the Bab's claims, was Mullā Muhammad Taqī Harātī (Hiravī). He was a native of Khurasan who had a similar educational training as Bushrūyihī and Muqaddas and no doubt his previous acquaintance with them facilitated his initiation into the new circle[1]. He was a faqīh with a wide range of interests in most aspects of Shiʿi knowledge as seen from a Shaykhi viewpoint. A native of Herat, he emigrated to Isfahan in his early youth[2] and studied under eminent teachers such as Shaftī, Shaykh Muhammad Taqī Isfahānī[3]

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1. *Qatīl*. 522.
2. *Ṭabaqāt*. II/1 pp.212-215 (p.213). He was born in Ramadān 1217 (1802).
3. A staunch faqīh and the author of the well known commentary (*ḥāshīya*) on *al-Maʿālim al-Dīn wa Malādh al-Mujtahidīn* by Shaykh Ḥasan b. Zayn al-Dīn known as *Hidāyat al-Mustarshidīn*. See *al-Dharīʿa* . IV, p.205 and *Ṭabaqāt*. II/1, pp.212-215.

and Karbāsi[1]. But later in Atabāt the scope of his studies was not limited to the traditional education of *fiqh* and *uṣūl-i fiqh*, which he accomplished under Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī[2], but extended to the more unconventional issues current in Shaykhi circles.

In contrast to most of his contemporaries who chiefly specialised in narrow fields of theology, Harātī's presence in both Usūlī and Shaykhi circles, and particularly his studies under Sayyid Kāzim[3] allowed him to develop a sophisticated taste for diverse subjects. His numerous works, mainly in the form of commentaries cover a variety of subjects from jurisprudence and *uṣūl-i fiqh* to exegesis and *kalām*, not to mention mathematics, poetry and *rijāl*[4]. In addition, he also recorded, elaborated and argued the works and lectures of two of his teachers, Shaftī and Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī[5]. On his return to Isfahan, he gave a course of lectures based on the *Qawānīn al-Usūl* of Mīrzā Abul Qāsim Qumī[6]. He was also head of the secretaries of the powerful Mīr Muhammad Imām Jum'ih[7]. Later he enjoyed the status of 'full authority' (*marja'īyat-i tāmm*) in the city[8].

It seems that Harātī's interest in the Shaykhi school first began during his abode in Isfahan. Later, according to Qatīl Karbalā'ī, who himself was acquainted with him, he was amongst those companions of Sayyid Kāzim who were present at his discussions over the question of the 'Fourth Pillar' and the nearness of *Zuhūr*[9].

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1. *Ṭabaqāt*. 213.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. A list of his works appears in *Ṭabaqāt*. pp.213-15. His biographical work *Nahāyat al-Āmāl fī Kayfīyat al-Rujū' ilā 'ilm al-Rijāl* (written in 1279 Q. = 1863) has particular value since it contains his autobiography. This was the basis of Tihrānī's account in *Ṭabaqāt*. Another work of Harātī, *Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn*, written in the latter part of his life when he abandoned his Bābī beliefs is a refutation of the Babis. According to Tihrānī, after his death, most of his books came into the possession of Mīrzā Ḥasan Shīrāzī, and some of them were later transferred to *Maktabat Ḥusaiynīyat al-Tastarīya*, where they are now kept. Harātī's works, and the above mentioned work in particular, deserve attention since they may help in clarifying some of the problems of early Babi history. For further information and a list of his works see *Makārim*. III, pp.625-31.
5. *Ṭabaqāt*. pp.213-14. One of his works, *al-Durar al-Muntaṣar* is devoted to Sayyid Kāẓim's lectures, while another, *Laṭā'if al-Fawā'id* contains a selection of Rashtī's remarks and teachings.
6. *Z*. 96.
7. Ibid.
8. *Ṭabaqāt*. 213.
9. *Qatīl*. 507. See also above Chapter One, II.

Qatīl maintains that Harātī was particularly anxious to learn about the significance of the year 1261, and the time of the manifestation[1]. The extraordinary qualities attributed by Mullā Husain to the young Shīrāzī merchant, and his collective recognition by a large group of Shaykhi students, no doubt influenced Harātī's attitude in viewing the possibility that Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad could be the one promised by the late Rashtī. Some sources such as *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh* suggest that he was so convinced of the righteousness of the Bab that he advocated publicly from the pulpit the advent of the 'Special Deputy of the Twelfth Imam' (*Nāʾib-i Khāss-i Imām-i thānī ʿAshar*)[2].

The significance of Harātī's conversion lies in the fact that he was the first important figure to embrace the movement from outside the circle of confirmed Shaykhis. Though he had strong ties with the Shaykhis, he never ceased to be a faqīh in the traditional sense. Further, the support of Harātī strengthened the newly-established Babi group in Isfahan, and in due course influenced the Bab's decision to move to Isfahan[3].

Following Harātī's conversion, it seems that Mullā Husain expanded his audience to the extent that, according to Mīrzā Ahmad Shīrāzī, he 'won over a large number of people in Isfahan'[4]. Though at this early stage, there is no firm evidence to support the above remark, and it seems that by saying this Mīrzā Ahmad, like the author of *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh*[5] had the later activities of Mullā Husain mainly in mind, a certain degree of progress had been achieved amongst the public and particularly the lower ranks of the ʿulama and ṭullāb. Lack of further information prevents us from perceiving these activites, but the identity of some of these early followers, who in one way or another were mentioned in sources, is known to us. Some people became aware of the new message through Mullā Ṣādiq Muqaddas. Mullā ʿAlī Akbar Ardistānī, who was a student of Muqaddas, followed his teacher to Shiraz in the quest for the Bab[6]. Other Ardistānīs, who were resident in Isfahan became conscious of the Bab, presumably through the same contact. Mīrzā Haydar ʿAlī, a small land owner from Ardistān, who for some unknown reason (probably religious education) was in Isfahan, met Mullā Husain

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1. Ibid. 514.
2. *NT*. III, 234, which is the source for *Mutanabbiʾīn*. 34, *Nicolas*. 255 and *Gobineau*. 158.
3. In a letter which is probably addressed to Mullā Husain (*circa* 1261-2/1845-6), the Bab sends his regards to Harātī, to whom he rėfers with the highest veneration, while instructing Mullā Husain to spell out Harātī's doubts and perplexities. (*INBA*. pub. 91, xli, 196).
4. *Ahmad*. 451.
5. *NT*. III, 234.
6. *Z*. 103.

and accepted the call[1]. An old man, Āqā Muhammad Husain, another Ardistānī, was amongst the people who heard of the new Bab and set out for Shiraz to visit him[2]. Two of the Ardistānīs, Mullā ʿAlī Akbar and Āqā Muhammad Husain, were later involved in the events in Shiraz 1261-3 Q. (1845-46)[3], whereas Mīrzā Haydar ʿAlī, together with some other believers, founded the Babi community of Ardistān, which also participated in the upheaval of Ṭabarsī[4].

Apart from the Ardistānīs, there were natives of Isfahan, such as a certain Mullā Muhammad Riżā Pāqalʿihī, who visited Mullā Husain, perhaps through the Nahrī family[5] and accepted the call[6], and four years later fought and died in Ṭabarsī[7]. Another Isfahānī, Mullā Sayyid Javād Muharrir (scribe), whose title, if it can be relied on, shows his profession, became attracted to the new message very probably due to his close friendship with Mullā Ṣādiq Muqaddas[8]. In his own account of his early conversion, Sayyid Javād relates: 'I had heard from Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Khān Munajjim Nasrābādī that in the year 1260, the Qā'im will appear. At the same time, I heard that a young man from Shiraz claimed to be the Qā'im. When I arrived at Shiraz, he had already set out for Mecca, therefore I followed in that direction till I had the honour to gain his presence in Muscat'[9]. Mullā Ibrāhīm Isfahānī, Mullā Haydar Isfahānī, two brothers: Mullā Muhammad Taqī and Mullā Muhammad Riżā Isfahānī, Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq Zabīh Isfahānī, Sayyid Muhammad Isfahānī and Mullā Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr Isfahānī are a few more low rank mullās and talabihs who joined the Isfahan circle in the course of the next few years[10].

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1. Ibid.
2. *Z*. 104 (sup).
3. See above this chapter.
4. *KD*. I, pp.182-83. The Ardistānīs participation in Ṭabarsī is described in a number of accounts of Ṭabarsī. Their number, according to Sayyid Ḥusain Mahjūr Zavārih'ī in *Tārīkh-i Mīmīyīh* (*Browne Or. MSS*. no.F.28(9) 1 & 2, p.18 and *INBA*. MS. p.18) was seven. Mīrzā Haydar ʿAlī was indeed one of the rare survivors of the fighting. (Zabīh *Masnavī*, op.cit. 6b).
5. For Nahrīs see below Chapter Seven, I.
6. *Nabil*. 100. According to *Nabil*. (422) 'a distinguished sayyid and a highly esteemed divine' in Isfahan.
7. Ibid. 422.
8. *INBA*. Lib. MS. No. 1028D. *Miscellaneous Notes* (probably compiled by Mīrzā Asadallāh Fāżīl Māzandarānī) contains pp.29-32 a biography of Sayyid Javād collected from a few oral sources and an account of his acquaintance with Muqaddas, related by Muqaddas himself (p.32), where he also praised his devotion and piety.
9. Ibid. p.29. For an account of the visits he paid to the Bab see below Chapter Nine, II.
10. References to the above mullas, together with other believers from Isfahan, may be found in various accounts of the Ṭabarsī upheaval including the account of Mīrzā Lutf ʿAlī Shīrāzī (*INBA*. Lib. MS. and *Browne Or. MSS*. F.28 (9)3); *Tārīkh-i Mīmīyih*, op.cit. and the list in *Nabil*. pp.414-29.

These mullas, together with a few merchants and some members of various guilds and professions, formed the basis of the Babi community in Isfahan[1]. The significance of this group was not so much in its size, as in its composition, as a typical early Babi cell. The dissension which has already been expressed against the domination of the mujtahids, particularly in Isfahan as the most important religious centre in the country, in the form of Shaykhi sympathy, now more explicitly appeared under the cover of the Babi movement. Though our sources are not specific about the extent of the Shaykhi popularity in Isfahan, one may assume that many pro-Shaykhi elements joined the movement on the basis of their previous expectations. The preachings of Mullā Husain and others clarified the nature of the Bab's claims, only to a limited extent, thus allowing the new followers to attach a wide variety of assumptions to the position of the new manifestation. It was only later in 1262-3 (1846-7), during the Bab's residence in Isfahan, that his character and the nature of his mission became clearer to his followers. Then they found themselves faced with a claim far more ambitious, and equally hazardous, than that which they had originally expected. The later circumstances forced them to decide on their commitments. As Harātī, precisely because of his association with the formal scholarship and with high ranking ʿulama, became disillusioned with the Bab, abandoned the movement and later turned against it, others from the lower ranks confirmed their loyalty to the Bab, and later many of them fought and died in Tabarsī.

III

The growing publicity of Babi ideas in Isfahan caused the first wave of condemnation in that city. The signs of provocation and irritation which first appeared at the time of Mullā Husain's arrival seem later to have developed into an open confrontation when the Babi message was clearly pronounced from the pulpits of the Isfahan mosques by preachers like Shaykh Muhammad Taqī Harātī. As it appears from Nabīl's account[2], a group of followers of the late Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī, who themselves witnessed, in the course of Mullā Husain's previous visit, his ability to convince the eminent Mujtahid[3], and were therefore concerned at his capacity to draw public attention, were in fact responsible for instigating a reaction from the ʿulama and the public in Isfahan[4]. Accusing Mullā Husain of upholding a heretical doctrine with 'great vehemence and vigour',

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1. For other members see below Chapter Seven, I & IV.
2. *Nabil*. 97.
3. See above Chapter Four, I.
4. *Nabil*. pp.97-98.

his opponents argued that 'the day is fast appearing when the whole of Isfahan will have embraced his Cause', and therefore called for immediate action by the eminent mujtahids in the city[1].

The publication of the Babi doctrine in Isfahan coincided with a significant vacuum in the religious life of the city. Only three months before, Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī had died after a long illness[2], while his influential friend and colleague Hājī Muhammad Ibrāhīm Karbāsī was on his death bed[3]. Shortly before his death, Shaftī had summoned his eldest son, Sayyid Asadallāh from Irāq Arab[4]. By exercising his influence, Shaftī was able to prepare the ground in such a way that the succession of Sayyid Asadallāh was not challenged by any of his students. 'At the request of the disciples, and those who benefited from him (i.e. from Shaftī)', writes Riżā Qulī Khān Hidāyat, 'his honourable son, Āqā Sayyid Asadallāh, may God protect him, who was in ʿAtabāt acquiring religious knowledge and performing the required deeds, acceeded to the chair of his revered father ...'[5]. Sayyid Asadallāh, on reaching to 'full authority' (*marjaʿīyat-i tāmm*), and public acceptance[6], was indebted more than anything to his father's wealth and influence. He may be regarded as a good example of hereditary *marjaʿīyat* among the ʿulama families in nineteenth century Iran. When he succeeded his father, he was in his early thirties[7], and had already received his *ijāzih* from well known teachers such as Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī[8]. Amongst Shaftī's numerous sons, who nearly all received a religious education[9], Sayyid Asadallāh seems to have been more prominent in the field of legal and judicial theory rather than the practice of passing judgements. However, because of his promising future as an eminent scholar, he was well placed to receive his father's blessing.

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1. Ibid.
2. *Ṭabaqāt*. (II/1, 194) gives the correct date; 2nd Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1260. *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿUlamā'* provides an interesting account of the last years of the Sayyid's life (pp.167-8).
3. *Nabīl*. 98. Karbāsī died in 8th Jumādā al-Awwal 1261 (*Ṭabaqāt*. 14).
4. *RJ*. 127.
5. *RS*. X, 286.
6. *Ṭabaqāt*. II/1, pp.124-5 and *RJ*. 126.
7. Born in Isfahan in 1227 Q (1812-13). (*Ṭabaqāt*. 124).
8. *RJ*. pp.126-7.
9. A list of Shaftī's sons appears in *Ṭabaqāt*. II/1, 196. Ṭihrānī indicates that all of them were of the ranks of the ʿulamā.

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Throughout the years, especially at the times of political and urban turmoil, Sayyid Asadallāh proved to be a moderate leader, who even to some extent abandoned the traditional opposition of the ʿulama in relation to the secular power of which his father had been a well known advocate. By contrast to his father and brothers, who on a few occasions were at the centre of anti-Government riots in Isfahan, Sayyid Asadallāh usually kept a low profile in the hostilities, and tried to maintain his neutrality[1]. His response to the events of 1262 during the Bab's residence in Isfahan illustrates this policy well. A much quoted remark by Khurāsānī concerning Sayyid Asadallāh, that he was 'superior to his father in piety and moral virtues'[2] perhaps indicates his reluctance to be involved in certain activities, such as economic and commercial enterprises, which brought economic power as well as criticism for his father[3]. In fact most of his time and effort was devoted not only to the production of a number of theological works, including one on the question of the concealment of the Imam[4], but also to a number of public endowment projects[5]. According to an unconfirmed source, in spite of the ʿulama's traditional hostility towards Sufism, he showed tolerance towards the Niʿmatallāhī order in Isfahan[6].

Nabīl's account, which is our main source in this matter, does not supply us with any further information on the identity of 'the disciples of Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir'[7], yet their appeal to the influential mujtahids shows that the opposition, without the weight of the high authorities behind them, lacked the necessary strength to carry through the ban on Mullā Husain's activities. Sayyid Asadallāh, in the early months of his *riyāsat*, seemed to be reluctant to expose himself to an extremely sensitive issue, which was directly connected with the Shaykhi-Bālāsar enmities. As Nabīl points out, he was aware of Mullā

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1. His intermediary role between the rebel leaders and the government in the events in Isfahan 1266-7 (1850-1) appears in a few accounts. Amongst them *NT*. III, pp.308-17, Chirāgh ʿAlī Khān Zanginih Kalhur *Vaqāyiʿ-i Iṣfahān*, Supp. of *Vaḥīd*·1346 Sh. Tehran, *RJ*. pp.459-66.
2. *RJ*. 126.
3. *Q*. 143.
4. *Al-Dhariʿa*. XVI, p.75. A list of his works appears in *Ṭabaqāt*. II/1, 125.
5. *Al-Maʾāthir va al-Āthār* op.cit. 139 and *Ṭabaqāt*. II/1, pp.125-6.
6. Jazī Iṣfahānī, Mullā ʿAbd al-Karīm, *Ṭadhkirat al-Qubūr (Rijāl-i Iṣfāhān)*, edited by Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Mahdavī, 2nd edition, Isfahan 1328 Sh. p.148 (f.n.).
7. *Nabīl*. 97. A list of thirteen students of Shaftī who received their *ijāzāt* from him appears in *Ṭabaqāt*. 195.

Husain's encounter with his father, or else he was briefed by his father's entourage of Mullā Husain's abilities in theological arguments[1]. 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 Asadallāh's reservations, it appears that the Babi opposition also failed to gain Karbāsī'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'[2]. Karbāsī, 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 Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī[3], they had come to an implicit agreement, that as a matter of principle, Karbāsī should leave all judicial and legal decisions (*murāfiʿāt*) to his powerful colleague, and confine himself wholly to his academic activities[4]. Karbāsī 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[5]. It is quite inconceivable that a mujtahid who, according to *Qisas al-ʿUlamā*,' gave alms to a beggar only after calling upon witnesses to testify to his poverty[6], should have passed a *fatvā* of condemnation on a person with whom he shared a certain sympathy, even if he did not, as Nabīl claims, praise his faculties[7].

Yet it appears that the extent of the hostility was wide enough to reach the court of Manūchihr Khān Muʿtamid al-Daulih, the powerful governor of the province[8]. But he in turn, according to Nabīl Zarandī, 'refused to interfere' in a matter which 'fell extensively within the jurisdiction of the ʿulama'[9]. The author of

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1. *Nabil*. pp.97-8.
2. Ibid.
3. Karbāsī's alliance with Shaftī is illustrated in a number of anecdotes related by different sources such as *Q*. pp.119, 140-44, 168; *Ṭabaqāt*. II/1, 14, *Tadhkirat al-Qubūr* (Jazī) 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 *Ṭabaqāt* II/1, 14.
5. *Q*. pp.118-19.
6. Ibid.
7. Though not in any sense a Shaykhi, Karbāsī's respect and reverence for his late teacher Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsa'ī committed him to some sympathy for a follower of the Shaykhi doctrine.
8. For his details see below this Chapter.
9. *Nabil*. 98.

Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh, 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 (*nā'ib*) of the Hidden Imam'[1]. 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'[2].

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[3]. 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 Bāqir Shaftī and the supporters of Imām 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

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1. *NT*. III, 234.
2. *Nabil*. 98.
3. Claims made by the author of *Miftaḥ-i Bāb al-Abwāb* seem to have no bearing on reality. Muḥammad Mahdī Za'īm al-Daulih, swears on his own soul that Manūchihr 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 Manūchihr 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 *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh's* brief account. (*Miftah*. pp.143-5).

Mullā Husain with either Imam Jumʿih or Muʿtamid al-Daulih, certain links can be traced through Harātī or Nahrīs.

Mīr Sayyid Muhammad Khātūnābādī, who held the office of imām jumʿih of Isfahan between 1254-91 (1838-74) by right of an inheritance going back to Mullā Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī, exercised a considerable influence on affairs of the city[1]. His wealth and property, his family connections, and his function as the intermediary between the ʿulama 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 Shaftī, Karbāsī, Muhammad Taqī Najafī, or equally powerful governors such as Muʿtamid al-Daulih and later Zill al-Sultān. By 1262 (1846) the death of the two leading mujtahids of Isfahan, namely Shaftī and Karbāsī, 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 Muʿtamid 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 Muʿtamid and the blessings of Imām Jumʿih, conveyed by the believers, that he entered Isfahan[2]. What persuaded the Bab to seek refuge in Isfahan was the encouragement which he apparently received from a number of Iṣfahānī believers concerning Muʿtamid's enthusiasm and sympathy towards the new call. As it is hinted, one might even assume that Harātī was behind the dignified reception of the Bab and also his residence in the house of Imam Jumʿih himself[3].

Manūchihr Khān'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

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1. For the background and the genealogy of the Imām Jumʿihs of Isfahan, see *Makārim*. I, 74, 130; II, 314-20; IV, 1324; V, 1453-4. For Mīr Sayyid Muhammad see *Tadhkirat al-Qubūr* op.cit. pp.104 (n.), 114-15; Mahdavī, Muṣliḥ al-Dīn. *Dānishmandān va Buzurgān-i Isfahān* , Isfahan, 1348 Sh., 480. Of the Babi-Bahā'ī 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 Āqā Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥīm); 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[1]. Imām Jumʿih however, in his overall assessment of the Bab, seems to be more sceptical. Beside his curiosity, which appears to be further aroused by Harātī, 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 ʿulama who had already been alarmed by the earlier activites of Mullā Husain and other believers. The warnings of the ʿulama of Shiraz concerning the threat of the new heresy[2], and the dispatches of Hājī Mīrzā Āqāsī from Tehran[3], who for his own reasons concerning the dangerous outcomes of an alliance between the Babis and his old rival Muʿtamid al-Daulih, urged them to take action against the new claimant, encouraged some of the ʿulama such as Mullā Muhammad Mahdī Karbāsī, son of Hājī Ibrāhīm, Mullā Husain ʿAlī Tūsirkānī 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 Imām Jumʿih[4].

In response, Muʿtamid was obliged to take some action in order to silence the opposition. By inviting the ʿulama to a public meeting for the purpose of interviewing the Bab, Muʿtamid hoped to put the ʿulama 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 Muʿtamid, an important group of ʿulama led by Sayyid Isadallāh Shaftī and Mullā Muhammad Jaʿfar Ābādih'ī turned down the invitation and abstained from the meeting[5]. Others however headed by Mullā Muhammad Mahdī Karbāsī and Mullā Muhammad Hasan Nūrī, son of Mullā ʿAlī attended the meeting. As can be judged from available sources, the arguments put forward by Karbāsī represented the fuqahās' point of view, whereas Muhammad Hasan Nūrī expressed the opinions of hukamā' and theosophists - not surprisingly both of them had inherited attitudes long advocated by their fathers

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1. References to Manūchihr Khān Muʿtamid 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 Aḥmad Mīrzā ʿAżud al-Daulih, *Tārīkh-i ʿAżudī*, 2nd edition, Tehran, 1328, 23ff; Riżā Qulī Mīrzā, *Safar Nāmih*, edited by A. Farmānfarmā Qājār, Tehran, 1346, pp.9-170. Babi accounts *NK*. 116; *TMS*. pp.102-7.
2. *TMS*. 100.
3. *Mutanabbi'īn (Fitnih-i Bāb)*, pp.121-2 and *Nabil*. pp.204-5.
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[1].

If the gathering did not lead to any concrete result, the ʿulama 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 ʿulama of Isfahan, according to one estimate more than seventy of them[2], signed a *fatvā* to condemn the Bab, and even demand his execution on the grounds of blasphemy, Imām Jumʿih, who was already through his cousin Sayyid Abul Qāsim the Imām Jumʿih of Tehran, under pressure from Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī's quarter, decided to withdraw his support for the Bab by issuing a half-hearted *fatvā* 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'[3].

Hence, after forty days of open preaching of the Babi message from the house of Imām Jumʿih, the Bab again came under strong attack. In turn Muʿtamid was forced to retreat, and offered the Bab a secret dwelling in ʿImārat-i Khurshīd in his private quarters. The Bab, perhaps out of desperation, promptly accepted. For the next few months, till the end of Muʿtamid's life (*circa* Rabīʿal-Awwal 1263 Q.: March 1847)[4], the Bab remained in hiding in Isfahan, without any further contact with the Iṣfahānī 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 Muʿtamid, 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

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1. *NK*. pp.116-18; *KD*. I, 73-105 (citing a letter from the Bab with references to the ʿulama of Isfahan); *Z*. pp.93-4; *NT*. III, 44-7; *Nabīl*. 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. Gulpāyigānī, *Tārīkh*, op.cit.
3. *Nabīl*. 209.
4. *KD*. I, 77 cf. *Nicolas*. 242 (using French diplomatic reports).

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 Kāshān and Tehran in 1260, Mullā 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. Mullā Husain's visit to Narāqī in Kāshān illustrates the nature of these early encounters.

Mullā Muhammad Narāqī Hujjat al-Islām, son of Mullā Ahmad, son of Mullā Muhammad Mahdī, was brought up in a traditional ʿulama family. Like Asadallāh Shaftī, and many others, Mullā 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. Narāqī received his *ijazih* from his father Mullā Ahmad[1], who is known for his contribution in *fiqh* as well as in philosophy and *ḥikmat* in the 19th century Shīʿī circles[2]. Further, he was the son-in-law of the chief mujtahid of Qum, Mīrzā-yi Qumī[3]. His family, which was originally from the village of Narāq near Kāshān[4] first moved to the city in the 1770's[5]. The Narāqīs greatly prospered under the Qājārs, due to their policy of supporting some local ʿulama in large cities. Being the *mutavalli* of Madrasih-i Sultānī which was built by Fath ʿAlī Shāh with the trusteeship of its endowments bestowed indefinitely upon

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1. *Makārim*. II, pp.555-56.
2. For Mullā Ahmad Narāqī; *Q*. pp.129-31, *RA*. IV, pp.183-6; *Tabaqāt*. II/1, pp.116-17. Also *Religion and State* op.cit. p.57 and fn.
3. *Makārim*. II, 556.
4. For Narāq see *Historical Gazetteer of Iran, vol. One: Tehran and North-western Iran*, edited by L.W. Adamec, Graz 1976, p.478.
5. ʿAbd al-Rahīm Kalāntar Żarrābī (Suhayl Kāshānī), *Mirāʾt al-Qāsān (Tārīkh-i Kāshān)* edited by I. Afshār, Tehran, 1341 Sh. pp.280-86 (p.280). Also on the Narāqī family and the family tree see Narāqī, Ḥasan, *Tārīkh-i Ijtimāʿī-yi Kāshān*, Tehran, 1345 Sh. , pp. 285 ff.

his family[1], Mullā Muhammad enjoyed good relations with the local and central government[2]. His local influence, as well as his relations with the Qājārs, 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, ūsūl and kalām[3], encouraged the author of *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh* to praise him, rather flatteringly, as 'today's most superior scholar in Iran both in knowledge and practice'[4].

When Mullā 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 Mullā Husain presented copies of *Qayyūm al-Asmā'* and *Ziyārat Nāmih* to Narāqī[5], the scrupulous mujtahid lost no time in pointing out the grammatical faults throughout the text. In reply Mullā 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 Mullā Muhammad; 'Up to now the *nahv* (i.e. *ʿilm-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 (*mansūb*) instead of a nominative (*marfuʿ*), or a genitive (*majrūr*) instead of an accusative'[6].

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, Mullā Muhammad sharply criticised the Bab by stating that 'it is an erroneous task for Persians to present 'Arabic compositions as proofs for their claims'[7]. It is interesting that this objection came from a man whose father and teacher

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1. *Tārīkh-i Kāshān* op.cit. pp.282-83, cf. pp.420-24.
2. *Q*. 131 on his relations with Muḥammad Shāh and *RS*. X, pp.602-3 on his relations with Nāṣir 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 Narāqī 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. *Ṣaḥīfah-yi ʿAdliyyah* op.cit. 155. Also the same account about Babis' interpretation of the Bab's grammatical errors appears in *Tārīkh-i Nau* (Jahāngīr Mīrzā, edited by ʿA. Iqbāl, Tehran, 1327 Q., pp.297-8).
7. Ibid.

Mullā Ahmad once composed the famous line 'I wonder why a madrasih should be built in the place where a tavern could be founded'[1]. Following his father's practice, Mullā Muhammad who himself was a poet of some talent compiled a *maṣnavī* with some mystic tendencies under the pseudonym of Sāhib[2]. However in this instance he seems to avoid 'confusing arguments' by drawing on another body of evidence (*khilṭ-i Mabḥaṣ*) which might have given some weight to Mullā Husain's remark.

As far as the contents of the Bab's writing were concerned, as *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh* describes, Narāqī was more interested in rejecting the legitimacy of the Bab's claim than in paying attention to the actual message embedded in the *Sūra al-ʿUlamā'* of *Qayyūm al-Asmā'* which was emphatically addressed to the ʿulamā. As an example of scholastic responses , Narāqī argues that 'in order to prove a claim beyond the boundary of our principles (*qānūn*), one must produce a clear justification. With these absurd deceptions and futile nonsense verses it is impossible to arrive at a realistic conclusion'[3]. 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 *nīyābat-i Bābīyat*'[4], Mullā Muhammad preferred not to go further in his condemnation.

In spite of Narāqī's denial, others from the ranks of the clergy were attracted to Mullā Husain. Hājī Mīr ʿAbd-al-Bāqī Kāshānī, the imām-i jimāʿat of the same Madrasih-i Sultānī[5], who was a fellow student of Mullā Husain in ʿAtabāt under Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī[6], and also a friend of Hājī Mīrzā Jānī[7], showed some interest, but felt 'unable to sacrifice rank and leadership for the message which his friend brought him'[8]. His sceptical inclination towards the movement, apparently did not lead him to any firm recognition even after visiting the Bab in Kāshān in 1263[9]. According to Nabīl Zarandī, after the departure of the Bab, ʿAbd al-Bāqī renounced society and led a life of unrelieved seclusion[10]. However the authors of *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Kāshān* and *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* believe that he fully recognised the Bab's revelation[11]. The significance of

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1. He wrote poetry under the pseudonym of Ṣafā'ī. Hidāyat, Riżā Qulī Khān. *Majmaʿ al-Fuṣaḥā'*, Tehran, 1288 Q., II, pp.330-2.
2. Mullā Muḥammad Narāqī, *Maṣnavī*, edited by Majd al-Dīn Narāqī, Tehran, 1340 Sh.
3. *NT*. III, 235.
4. Ibid.
5. *Tārīkh-i Kāshān*, op.cit. 301.
6. *Nabīl*. 101.
7. See below Chapter Seven, II.
8. *Nabīl*. 101.
9. See below Chapter Seven, II.
10. *Nabīl*. 221.
11. *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Kāshān*, op.cit., p.3, cf. *NH*. 214.

his positive leaning lies in the fact that as the leader of the Shaykhi community in the city[1], ʿAbd al-Bāqī, who was also qualified with an *ijāzih* from Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī[2], was himself a respected mujtahid and the chief representative of a family of ʿulama in Kāshān[3]. As the imām of the main madrasih, he might have been a challenge to the position of Mullā Muhammad Narāqī who after his father's death, by the Shāh's decree was the sole *mutavallī* of the Madrasih, and controlled the *khālisih* endowments of the Madrasih which consisted of a number of shops in the bazar, a share of the irrigating water of the qanāts and some agricultural land[4].

Even some junior members of the Narāqī 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 Jaʿfar Narāqī, son of Mullā Mahdī (known as Āqā Buzurg), who was a cousin of Mullā Muhammad[5], together with Mullā Hāshim, the youngest son of Mullā Ahmad[6], and later two sons of another brother of Mullā Muhammad called Mīrzā Mahmūd and Hājī Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn who were resident in Narāq, became Babis[7]. There are some contradictions over the conversion of Mullā Jaʿfar who is the author of the Shīʿī prayer *al-Hujjat al-Bāligha*[8]. According to *Zuhūr al-Haqq* he first accepted the call through Mullā Husain[9], while Nabīl believes that during his visit to the Bab in Kāshān, 'despite his consummate eloquence', Mullā Jaʿfar 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'[10]. But it appears that Nabīl's disapproval of 'the haughty and imperious' Mullā Jaʿfar and emphasis on his dubious recognition is expressed in the light of his later Azalī tendencies[11].

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1. *Nabil*. 101.
2. *Ṭabaqāt*. II/2, 698 (No.1274). His *ijāzih* in which his ijtihād is clearly ratified, dated 1260 Q., a few months before Shaftī's death. According to Ṭihrānī, it resembles a public will by Shaftī.
3. *Tārīkh-i Kāshān*, pp.301-2. 4. Ibid., pp.423-4, cf. 283.
5. Z. pp.395-6, cf. *Tārīkh-i Kāshān*. 286.
6. *Tārīkh-i Amrī-i Kāshān*. op.cit., p.3, cf. *Tārīkh-i Kāshān*, 284.
7. *Samandar*. 260 and Z. pp.395-6, cf. *Tārīkh-i Kāshān*, 284.
8. *Ṭabaqāt*. II/1, pp.246-7 and *al-Dharīʿa* VI, 258.
9. Z. pp.395-6. 10. *Nabil*. 221.
11. The Babi apology *Tadhkiratal-Ghāfilīn* (*Browne, Or. MSS*. F.63(9), pp.80-81 and *Materials*. pp.227-8), written by an anonymous native of Narāq with the secret sign '1265' in the year 1284 Q. (two years prior to the death of Mullā Jaʿfar in a Tehran dungeon (*Anbār-i Daulatī*) in refutation of Bāhā'allāh and in advocation of Ṣubḥ Azal, is perhaps composed by Mullā Jaʿfar Narāqī. (Also cited in Munzavī, *Fihrist-i Nusakh-i Khaṭṭī-i Fārsī*, Tehran 1346 Sh., VI, 1737, no.17210).

In Tehran, Mullā Husain stayed in the Madrasih-i Mīrzā Sālih (Pā Minār), which was then a gathering place for Shaykhi tullāb in the capital[1]. Despite his earlier success with Shaykhis, he was faced here with the firm rejection of the chief *mudarris* of the school. Hājī Mīrzā Muhammad Khurāsānī (Muḥavvalātī), who according to Nabīl was 'the leader of the Shaykhi community of Tihrān'[2], strongly criticised Bushrūyihī 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'[3]. He warned Mullā Husain that his 'subversive doctrines' would eventually endanger the existence of 'the remnants of the Shaykhis in the city'[4]. Khurāsānī, who seemed to have had some previous knowledge of Mullā Husain, expressed his regret that after the death of Sayyid Kāzim, Mullā Husain did not 'strive to promote the best interests of the Shaykhi community ...'[5]. These remarks imply that unlike the younger and more challenging students of Sayyid Kāzim, Khurāsānī in accordance with some other Shaykhis of moderate attitude such as Mullā Hasan Gauhār in Karbilā', Mullā Muhammad Mamaqānī and Mullā Shafī' Tabrīzī in Āzarbāijān and even to some extent Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān 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 Khurāsānī was afraid of losing his reputation vis-a-vis an active rival like Mullā Husain, who had already begun to attract his best students[6].

Mullā Husain's response to the 'evasive answers' and 'contemptuous behaviour' of Hājī Mīrzā Muhammad appears to have been mild and even apologetic. He assures Khurāsānī 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'[7]. 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

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1. *Nabil*. 102.
2. Ibid. An account of his interview with Mullā Mahdi Khu'ī in Tehran appears in Z. 63.
3. *Nabil*. pp.102-3.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. *Nabil*. 104.
7. *Nabil*. 103.

minimum[1]. In spite of this secrecy[2], he was still able to publicise the message and distribute some Babi literature. Perhaps with the help of some friends, he duplicated copies of *Qayyūm al-Asmā'*, and distributed them amongst eighteen members of the ʿulama and officials of the capital including the chief mujtahid of Tehran, Mīrzā Mahmūd[3]. In private he also managed to attract some tullāb and low rank mullās, who in turn helped him by introducing him to other individuals who were beyond the immediate reach of a stranger like Bushrūyihī.

Mullā Muhammad Muʿallim one of the favoured students of Khurāsānī, and a native of the Nūr district in Māzandarān, who happened to live next door to Mullā Husain in Madrasih-i Mīrzā Ṣālih, became interested in the new doctrine despite his teacher's condemnation. He called upon Mullā 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 talabih, he was engaged in private tuition in the houses of notables and government officials in order to meet his financial needs[4]. After Nūrī's conversion, in the same year Mullā Mahdī and his brother Mullā Bāqir Kandī (Kanī), who were both private tutors, were initiated amongst the believers[5]. Mullā Mahdī, in addition, acted as imām-i jimāʿat of one of the madrasihs in the city[6]. He maintained good relations with some members of the court, Qājār aristocracy and government officials in Tehran[7].

During the time of his residence in Tehran, Mullā Husain's attempt to deliver the Bab's message in *Sūra al-Mulk* to Muhammad Shāh and Hājī Mīrzā Āqāsī received a hostile response, but nevertheless the efforts of the Tehrānī Babis soon brought about the conversion of a number of junior and middle rank government officials and young individuals close to government circles. Amongst

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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'.

2. *Nabil*. pp.103-4.

3. *TMS*. 71. Later Mīrzā Mahmūd Mujtahid also received some of the writings of the Bab through Shaykh ʿAlī ʿAẓīm (*Z*. 163). Malik Khusravī M.A. (*Tārīkh-i Shuhadā-yi Amr*, Tehran, 130 Badīʿ 1974, III (*Vaqāyiʿ-i Tihrān*), p.79) believes that he was sympathetic towards Babis.

4. *Nabil*. pp.104, 434, recording an account of Mīrzā Mūsā Nūrī (Kalīm). Also *NK*. 194.

5. *KD*. I, pp.148-151 (148); *Z*. pp.213-14; *Nabil*. 424. 6. *Z*. p.213.

7. For Mullā Mahdī Kanī, Nabil (pp.397-99) records an account of Kalīm narrated to him by an anonymous witness. A more complete version of this account appears in *KD*. I, pp.148-51. The converted mullās, together with a few others, built the nucleus of the Babi community in Tehran. Moving accounts of Mullā Mahdī and Mullā Muhammad Muʿallim during the siege of Tabarsī as it is recorded by Babi sources, depicts the strength of their conviction to the movement and its leaders.

them, Mīrzā Husain ʿAlī Nūrī (later known as Bahā' and Bahā'allāh), his brothers Mīrzā Mūsā (Kalīm) and Mīrzā Yahyā (Ṣubh Azal), and others such as Mīrzā Masīh Nūrī, nephew of Mīrzā Āqā Khān Nūrī, Mīrzā ʿAbdallāh Khān Sar-rishtihdārī (minor army accountant), Riżā Qulī Khān Turkamān, son of Muhammad Khān Mīr Ākhur (head of royal stables), Mīrzā Sulaymān Qulī Khatīb al-Rahmān Nūrī (Shātir Bāshī), Sulaymān Khān Tabrīzī, son of Yahyā Khān, Riżā Khān Sardār, son-in-law of Sipahsālār and Hasan Āqā Tafrishī Mustaufi are known to us. Furthermore, other mullas such as Mullā ʿAbd al-Karīm Qazvīnī, Mullā ʿAlī Muhammad Kandī and his son Ashraf, and a respected theosophist Mīrzā Muhammad Husain Hakīm Ilāhī, or Sufi dervishes such as Darvīsh Qurbān ʿAlī Astarābādī and Mīrzā Mahdī Murshid entered the Tehran circle[1].

V

Mullā 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 Bahā'ī) community of Iran, and some of these converted ʿulama played a crucial role in the developments of the next few years. But Mullā Husain's missions were characteristic of few other missions which were undertaken inside Iran in the same period. The efforts of Mullā Yūsuf Ardabīlī, 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[2], brought about successes similar to Mullā Husain, though on a smaller scale. First in Āẕarbāījān, and then in Yazd, Kirmān and Qazvīn, 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 Mīlān, Uskū, Salmās (Kuhnih Shahr) and Saysān, which perhaps previously held affiliation to Ahl-i Haqq[3], and conversion of Shaykhi elements throughout the province including

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1. Beside *Z.* (pp.212-33) which gives short biographies of some of the Babis of Tehran, and a short narrative by Mahmūd Zaraqānī 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. *Nabīl*. 424. For references to Ardabīlī see above Chapter Four, II.

3. See above Chapter One for earlier messianic traditions in some communities of Āẕarbāījān.

Mullā ʿAlī Marāghih-ī (Sayyāh), Mullā Husain Dakhīl Marāghih-ī, Mullā Iskandar-i Khu'ī, Mullā Muhammad Salmāsī, Mullā ʿAlī Rużih Khān Salmāsī, Shaykh Muhammad Taqī Hashtrūdī, Mullā Imām Virdī Urumīyihī and Āqā Sayyid Ahmad Ibdāl Marāghihī and other early Babis[1].

In spite of successes in the lower and middle ranks of the Shaykhi ʿulama, in his interviews with the well established Shaykhi mujtahids such as Mullā Muhammad Mamaqānī in Tabriz and Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān in Kirmān, Mullā Yūsuf failed to gain their support for the Bab. Indeed both his mission and those of Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī (Quddūs) and Mullā Sadiq Muqaddas to Kirmān for the purpose of delivering the Babi message to Karīm Khān 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 ʿulama, 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 Karīm Khān did not prevent Mullā Muhammad Jaʿfar Kirmānī, an ex-student of Karīm Khān who, due to his disagreements over the question of Rashtī'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 Ahsā'ī, a large section of the community remained sympathetic towards the Shaykhis, various attempts made by Mullā Muhammad Zākir Yazdī and Ardabīlī to win over the public, met with hostile reactions. In spite of the assistance they received from Mullā Ahmad Azghandī, a young Shaykhi mujtahid who already after his conversion by Mullā 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 Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān and his supporter Mullā Taqī Yazdī[4]. Even the implicit support given to the Babi missionaries by the non-Shaykhi mujtahid of Yazd, Sayyid Husain Azghandī and Sayyid Javād Shīrāzī, imām jumʿih in Kirmān, did not protect them from the

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1. Amongst available sources on the Babis of Āzarbāijān, *TMS.* (partly on the basis of now lost *Abwāb al-Hudā* by Muhammad Taqī Hashtrūdī), two narratives on the Babi-Bahā'ī history of Āzarbāijān by Mīrzā Haydar ʿAlī Uskuī (*INBA.* Lib. MS. 3030/a, 111 pp) and Muhammad Husain Mīlānī (*INBA.* Lib. MS. 3030/b, 26 pp) and *Kazem Beg.* VII, 357-8 provide some fresh information.

2. Not only the Babi-Bahā'ī sources such as *Nabīl.* pp.179-82, 187-9; *Qatīl.* 503 ff. and Z. pp.396-401 discussed the occasion, but Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān himself, in one of his refutations *Īqādh al Ghāfil va Ibṭāl al-Bāṭil, dar Radd-i Bāb-i Khusrān Maāb*, lit. n.d. p.11 refers to Muqaddas and Quddūs who brought the Bab's message to him.

3. Z. pp.401-2.

4. *Nabīl.* pp.184-9.

intimidations and assaults of the incited mob[1]. This implicit support for the Babis in the early years, more than anything, was aimed towards weakening of the rival ʿulama factions by using the Babi issue - a motive which is comparable to the support of Imām Jumʿih of Isfahan or that of Shiʿi ʿulama of ʿAtabāt 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 Muhammad Zākir (a Letter of Hayy) eventually to switch sides to Karīm Khān's camp and abandon his Babi commitments[2]. It was only later in 1266 Q. (1850), prior to the Nayrīz upheaval, that the public preachings of Sayyid Yahyā Dārābī (Vahīd) in Yazd attracted a large audience and caused some excitement[3].

In Qazvīn, in spite of the anti-Shaykhi sentiments long expressed by Mullā Muhammad Taqī Baraghānī, the Babi message managed not only to attract the sympathy of Hājī ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī, an eminent mujtahid of Qazvīn whose sons Mullā Muhammad 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 Muhammad Taqī and uncle of Tāhirih), Hājī Shaykh Muhammad Nabīl Qazvīnī, Mullā Hasan Kallih Darrihī, 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 Tāhirih[4].

As in Isfahan and Tabriz, 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'.

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1. Ibid. For Sayyid Javād Shīrāzī see above Chapter Three, I.
2. *Z.* 458.
3. The events of 1266 in Yazd are recorded in various accounts as a prologue to Nayrīz upheaval. A good summary appears in *Nicolas*. pp.388-90; *Nabil*. pp.466-74; *KD*. I, pp.202-17 and *Tārīkh-i Nau*, op.cit., 343.
4. Besides better known sources on the Babis of Qazvīn, *Samandar*., *MJQ*., 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 ʿAtabāt[1].

In the course of the next four years as the Babi community of Qazvīn expanded, the confrontation between them and their adversaries intensified. After the arrival of Ṭāhirih and her companions from ʿAtabāt in 1263 (1847), the conflict reached its height in a secret battle, which finally resulted in the assassination of Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī in early 1264 (1848) and following that the severe persecution of the Babis of Qazvīn. The earliest recorded executions of Babis (Shaykh Sālih Karīmāvī, an Arab disciple of Ṭāhirih and two other Babi mullas, Mullā Ṭāhir Shīrāzī and Mullā Ibrāhīm Maḥallātī) were carried out as a reprisal for Baraghānī's death. As in Shiraz and Isfahan in 1261-3, here in Qazvīn the hostile rejection of the ʿulama and the isolation of the Babis resulted in further militancy by the Babis and the polarisation of the Qazvīn community into a pro-Babi minority and an anti-Babi majority.

The pattern of the activities of the early Babi preachers, and the nation-wide support they received from the new generation of the middle and low rank Shaykhi ʿulama, signifies the potential of the movement to absorb and mobilise a large body of the ʿulama (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 ʿulama 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 Shaykhis like Karīm Khān 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 (*tullāb-i qarīb al-ijtihād*), who witnessed the decline and retreat of Shaykhism under the pressure of thefuqahā' 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 Rashtī, but to their hesitations in

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1. *MJQ*. (pp.473-4).

breaking away from the ʿulama hierarchy.

Contrary to the Shaykhi support, the response of the ʿulama 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 imām jumʿihs of various cities. Imām jumʿihs in particular, after a period of relegation to secondary positions under the independent fuqahā, 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 ʿulama, 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 ʿulama 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 ʿulama 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

Tujjār and Asnāf

I

In the early years of the movement, parallel to the conversion of the Shaykhi ʿulama, some progress was also achieved in converting members of the merchant class in the commercial and industrial centres of Iran. The conversion of the tujjār, significantly from the lower ranks but also including some important merchants, and following them the conversions of members of the Asnāf, such as industrial manufacturers, wholesalers, traders and local craftsmen, created the second largest group of believers after the ʿulama 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 ʿulama and tujjār, 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[1]. In addition, the religious, mystical and pious inclinations amongst the tujjār 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 ʿAlī 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

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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, Kāshān 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 Jaʿfar 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 Bāghibānbāshī writes to his father Hājī ʿAbd 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 tūmāns 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 and let others benefit without fearing of its exhaustion[1].

Mullā Jaʿfar 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'[2].

Not only in the case of Bāghibānbāshī in Qazvīn, but in Isfahan, Kāshān, 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[3] when the new generation turns its

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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 tujjār may be observed in Sayyid Muhammad ʿAlī and Sayyid Muhammad Hādī Nahrī Tabātabā'ī, two brothers descended from a well established Shaykhi family of Isfahan, who were well known becuase of their social and economic status. Their attention was first drawn to the new revelation when they were in ʿAtabāt in 1260. They had heard of the new claims through Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī or perhaps some other Letters since they had past acquaintance with many students of Rashtī. After the publication of the message in Karbilā', they immediately decided to set out for Shiraz, but when they arrived, the Bab had already left the city for Hijāz[1]. On their return to Isfahan, they met Mullā Husain whom they appeared to know from ʿAtabāt and to whom they declared their faith[2]. Later in 1261 (1845) they made another journey to Shiraz to pay a visit to the Bab[3]. Afterwards Muhammad ʿAlī returned to Karbilā, whereas Hādī remained in Isfahan[4]. As Shaykhi dignitaries both in Isfahan and Karbilā', the Nahrīs were able to encourage others to give their support to the movement.

The Nahrīs' association with the Shiʿi community of ʿAtabāt started with their father Sayyid Mahdī, who emigrated from India to Najaf, and later became a devoted adherent of Ahsā'ī[5]. He gained a good reputation by founding a number of public endowments such as a caravanserai and public bath in Najaf, and constructing a channel to supply drinking water for the inhabitants[6]. He also invested the family fortune in land and property and acquired a number of shops in the area. Later, because of the Wahhābī invasion of Iraq, he returned to

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1. Ishrāq Khāvarī, ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. *Nūrayn-i Nayyirayn*, Tehran, 123 Badīʿ 1967, pp.16, 31-2, 42-3 (citing from an autobiographical *risālih* by Sayyid Muḥammad ʿAlī). Also *Z*. 97 and *KD*. 410.
2. Ishrāq Khāvarī, op.cit., pp.31-2, cf. *Nabil*. 100.
3. Ishrāq Khāvarī, pp.16, 32, cf. *Z*. 97.
4. Ishrāq Khāvarī, pp.16-17, 32, cf. *Nabil*. 159.
5. Sayyid Mahdī's father, a certain Ḥājī Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabā'ī of Zavārih emigrated to India at the end of the 18th century where he spent the rest of his life, and married into a wealthy Shiʿi family there (Ishrāq Khāvarī, pp.11-12 and *Z*. 96). The genealogy of Sayyid Muḥammad's ancestors is unknown. A. Rafīʿī Mihrābādī, the author of *Ātashkadih-i Ardistān*, a geographical and historical account of Ardistān, (1336 Sh., vol.I) gives an extensive account of the Ṭabāṭabā'ī sādāt of Zavārih (I, pp.166-206), but since he could not gain access to the genealogical tree of all Ṭabāṭabā'īs of Zavārih (pp.173-4), the origin of many Iṣfahānī sādāt, including Nahrīs, 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 Naḥrī.

Isfahan and subsequently married a relative of Shaftī[1]. Though he remained in Isfahan for the rest of his life, it seems that he retained his links with ʿAtabāt.

Brought up in a devoted Shaykhi environment, his son Sayyid Muhammad ʿAlī joined the ranks of the ʿulama. He finished his primary studies in Isfahan, and later joined Sayyid Kāzim's circle in Karbilā'. His brother Sayyid Hādī however remained in Isfahan. Though he was a Shaykhi, he developed close relations with Shaftī, and later married his niece, Khurshīd Baygum[2]. Later, Sayyid Hādī also moved to Karbilā', where he and his wife both attended Rashtī's lectures. Their elder brother Sayyid Ibrāhīm remained in Isfahan presumably to look after the family business[3].

Like their father, the Nahrī brothers represented an intermediary link between the ʿulama and tujjār. Parallel to their enthusiasm for theological studies, Sayyid ʿAlī 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[4]. Probably Sayyid Ibrāhīm, who in addition to his local ventures was also involved in trade, acted in partnership with his brothers[5]. 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[6]. In fact, on the basis of the pattern of collaboration between Sayyid Ibrāhīm 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 Imām Jumʿih and Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī, who were always on excellent terms with them[7].

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1. Ishrāq Khāvarī, pp.13-14. Both Sayyid Mahdī's wife as well as Shaftī's wife were Shaykhi.

2. Later known as *Shams al-Ḍuḥa'*. A devoted Babi and a companion of Qurrat al-ʿAyn, who accompanied her on her journey from Baghdad to Qazvīn in 1263 (1847). Both ʿAbd al-Bahā', *Tadhkirt al-Wafā'*, op.cit. and Ishrāq Khāvarī, pp.41-52 give an account of her life.

3. *Z*. 98.

4. *KD*. 410.

5. *KD*. 413.

6. *KD*. 413 and Ishrāq Khāvarī, 28.

7. *KD*. 413 and *Nabil*. p.208. After their father, Sayyid Ibrāhīm's sons, Sayyid Ḥasan and Sayyid Ḥusain Ṭabāṭabā'ī, both faithful and devoted followers of Bahā'allāh, 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 Imām Jumʿih Mīr Muḥammad Ḥusain, which brought substantial profits for both parties. However the excessive amount of Imām Jumʿih's debt to his creditors and partners finally persuaded him to join the powerful mujtahid of the city, Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir Najafī Iṣfāhānī in issuing a fatvā condemning the Ṭabāṭabā'īs' heretical beliefs and calling for their death. The fatvā was finally confirmed by the governor Prince Ẓill al-Sulṭān and the two brothers met their death in 1296 (1879). (Ishrāq 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 Karbilā', the two brothers met Sayyid ʿAli Muḥammad the Bab during his pilgrimage (1258/1842), and like others, they too were impressed by his character[1]. Therefore, by the time the Bab announced his mission in Isfahan, Hādī and Muḥammad ʿAlī were among the first to give their allegiance, whereas Sayyid Ibrāhīm showed no great enthusiasm for the new movement at this time[2]. 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[3]. 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 Shīrāzī merchant, as the personification of the new concept of the holy man, contrary to the traditional image of the ʿulama. 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 Shiʿi prophecies is evident in a number of enquiries which they made in ʿAtabāt prior to 1260[4]. Also in their

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1. Ishrāq Khāvarī. pp.15-16, 31.
2. *KD*. 411. In a letter which is partly cited in Ishrāq Khāvarī (pp.28-30), Ṭāhirih, writing in 1261-2 (1845-6) to Sayyid Muḥammad ʿAlī, advised him to return from ʿAtabāt to Isfahan and try to convince his elder brother Sayyid Ibrāhīm of the truth of the *Ẓuhūr*. This special attention towards Sayyid Ibrāhīm is perhaps owing to his close relations with many of the prominent ʿulama in the city. Later in 1263, when the Bab was residing in Isfahan, Sayyid Ibrāhīm, together with his brothers, arranged for a feast in honour of the Bab at which Mīr Sayyid Muḥammad Imām Jumʿih, his brother Mīr Sayyid Ḥusain, also Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Harātī, Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Riżā Pāqalʿih'ī and others were present. (Ishrāq Khāvarī, pp.18-20, 28, cf. *Nabīl*. 208-9).
3. See below.
4. *Qatīl*. (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-Asmāʾ*) regarding 'the signs and the evidences' (*Āyāt va ʿAlāmāt*) of the 'pure religion' (*Dīn-i Khālis*)[1]. Further, referring to the traditions concerning the occurrence of *rijaʿt* they questioned the liability of the proofs for the immediate manifestation of Qāʾim[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 Nahrīs, in spite of being primarily merchants, were preoccupied with messianic themes which were advocated at that time in the Shaykhi circle in ʿAtabāt.

In the course of the next few years, the Nahrīs remained active Babis both in Isfahan and in Karbilā, 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 Nahrīs' approach to the question of the Bab's revelation, which is best reflected in their opposition to Tāhirih in the gathering of Badasht in 1264 (1848), it appears that Shams al-Żuḥāʾ (Sayyid Hādī's wife) held much more liberated views on the ideas and aims of the Babi movement. Immediately after the Badasht, Sayyid Muḥammad Hādī was killed in the course of a night attack which was carried out by the inhabitants of the village of Nīyālā against a company of the Babis who were on their way to Māzandarān. Muḥammad ʿAlī 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 Babi and later Bahāʾī beliefs.

The Nahrī brothers were not the only early converts amongst merchants of Isfahan. Ḥājī Muḥammad Riżā Javāhirī, 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, Muḥammad Riżā's recognition of the Bab was preceeded by a dream in which he had visited the Imām

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1. Letter in reply to the questions of Mullā Maḥmūd, Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Nahrī and other believers. *INBA*. pub.91, XXXIII, pp.154-161 (156).
2. Ibid. p.157.
3. *Qurʾān* XIII (*al-Raʿd*), 39.
4. Ibid. Also the Bab's letter in reply to questions asked by Mīrzā Muḥammad Hādī and Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Nahrī. *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 Riżā to pursue the Imam in the world of reality. He also appears to have enjoyed inherited wealth and public respect, and like the Nahrīs 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 Anbār-i Daulatī in Tehran before being freed by an Armenian merchant who paid four thousand tumān for his freedom. Later in 1268 (1852) he was arrested and executed in Tehran together with other suspected Babis[1].

II

Beside the merchants in Isfahan, there were Babi converts in other commercial centres. One of the most celebrated of them was Hājī Mīrzā Jānī (sometimes called Parpā), a young merchant from Kāshān who is mostly known for the highly important historical account of *Nuqṭat al-Kāf*, of which he was apparently the writer[2]. He embraced the cause of the Bab when in 1260 he met Mullā Husain in Kāshān.

As is evident from remarks cited in *Nuqtat al-Kaf*, Mirza Jani'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-i 'ulūm*)' writes the author of *Nuqtat al-Kāf*, 'I was not formally affiliated to this highly elevated order (i.e. Shaykhism), yet out of my deepest emotions (*fitrat*) I adored the excellencies *Bābayn-i Nayyirayn* (i.e. Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kāzim), and therefore was attached to their sympathisers'[3]. Here, Hājī's reference to the past Shaykhi leaders as *Bābayn* may be taken as a clue to his previous messianic inclinations.

Another quotation attributed to Hājī Mīrzā Jānī, again clearly indicates his preoccupation with the problem of 'emergence', then a common question for the students of the Sayyid Kāzim:

> 'I visited the holy shrines of Karbelā (Karbilā') and Nejef (Najaf) shortly after the death of Ḥājī Sayyid Kāẓim, and

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1. Z. pp.101-3, cf. *NK*. pp.XV, 111-12 and n.
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 Hāshim, untaught in the learning of men'[1].

Indeed the few passages in *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* which are either directly or indirectly attributed to Hājī, imply that at the time of Shaykh's *iʿtikāf* in Kūfah[2], Hājī must have been present in ʿAtabāt[3]. This is not confirmed by *Nuqtat 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 Kāzim can also be observed in Mīrzā Jānī's younger brother Hājī Mīrzā Muhammad Ismāʿīl Kāshānī, known as Ẕabīḥ[5]. In his *Maṣnavī*[6], while Ẕabīḥ drew a comparison between the Shaykhi leaders and the ʿulama of the time, he stresses the spiritual insight which enabled them to unveil the truth of the forthcoming *Ẓuhūr*;

> 'The ʿulama 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 Aḥmad) and Kāẓim (Sayyid Kāẓim) disclosed all the hidden veils.
> They lifted the false curtain from the face of the truth,
> therefore the ʿulama became their enemies, and prevented people from understanding'[7].

Resemblance in the outlook of the Kāshānī brothers goes beyond their dedication to the Shaykhi leaders. The two works of *Nuqtat al-Kāf* and the *Maṣnavī* of Ẕabīḥ show certain similarities which in turn suggest the common

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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 Ismāʿīl 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'allāh in the tablet of *Raʾīs*. (Mīrzā Abul Fażl Gulpāyigānī, *Risālih-i Iskandarīyih*, in reply to A. Toumansky, Cairo, 1318 Q. (1900) also partly cited in *Zapisski* of the Oriental Section of the Russian Imperial Archaeological Society, 1893-4, pp.33-45 and translated by E.G. Browne in *The Tārīkh-i Jadīd* pp.xxxiv-xlii (p.xii). Reference to Anis appears in *Majmūʿih-i Alvāḥ-i Mūbārakih* of Bahā'allāh, Cairo 1338 Q. (1920), Lauḥ-i Raʾīs (Arabic) p.90.
6. For details of the *Maṣnavī* see Bibliography.
7. *Maṣnavī*. 68a.

intellectual background of their authors. Beside their general historical value, both works betray the attitudes and beliefs of the compilers. Mīrzā Muhammad Ismāʿīl's *Maṣnavī* 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 Bahā'allāh's) spiritual status. The same influence can be traced in the introduction of *Nuqtat al-Kāf*, which basically gives a Shiʿi-Sufi justification of the Bab's revelation which is supported by the Islamic traditions[1].

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, Hājī Mīrzā Jānī refers to dervishes who accompanied him on his journies in Iran and Iraq both for the purpose of trade and later for visiting the Babis in other cities[2]. Considering the spread of messianic ideas amongst wandering Sufis[3], it is not surprising that Hājī Mīrzā Jānī should have been influenced by these trends. Indeed the pantheistic tone of both *Nuqtat al-Kāf* and *Maṣnavī* and their narrative style, as well as Hājī Mīrzā Jānī's interpretation of the 'signs' of *Zuhūr*, indicates the obvious influence of popular Sufism[4].

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 *Nuqtat al-Kāf* 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[5]. As for Zabīḥ, he was also affected by the development in the early phase of the formation of the Bahā'ī thought, and inevitably shared the Sufi attitudes of its founder

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1. *NK*. pp.1-98 (particularly pp.86-98).
2. *Fuʾādī*. 54.
3. See above Chapter Two, I.
4. For Sufi messianism and popular beliefs, and for some indication of Hājī Mīrzā Jānī'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 Bahāʾī 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[1]. 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. Ẕabīḥ's *Maṣnavī* seems largely inspired by *Maṣnavī* of Rūmī. It is divided into seven books (by comparison with the five of Rūmī's *Maṣnavī*) and in many parts has clear signs of the allegorical stories and parables of the above work. The style of *Nuqtat al-Kāf*, however, in some parts is reminiscent of Sufi biographical works such as ʿAṭṭār's *Tadhkirat al-Awlīyā'*.

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 Ẕabīḥ as for the author of *Nuqtat al-Kāf*, the emergence of the Imam was primarily defined in terms of the Shiʿi expectation of Ṣāḥib al-Zamān, but it also benefited from the Sufi concept of the holy guide. In a passage of the *Maṣnavī*, which is reminiscent of the Shaykhi visitation dreams, Ẕabīḥ describes a vision of Ṣāḥib al-Zamān. In this vision, which occurs only after the kind of long and laborious vigilance common amongst Sufis, Ẕabīḥ 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 *khalsih*[2],
I saw that perfect *jamāl*.
From then onwards, in order to come to his presence,
I sought for Ṣāḥib al-Zamān.
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 emergence'[3].

Again in 1263 (1847), when the Bab was passing through Kāshān on his way from Isfahan to Tehran, Ẕabīḥ expresses his own eagerness for visiting the Bab

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1. In his *Maṣnavī*, Ẕabīḥ refers to his visits to Bahā'allāh 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 Bahā'allāh in the port of Gelibolu (Gāllīpolī) and accompanied him on the journey to his new exile at ʿAkkā (Acre) (pp.46b-54a). His important references give a vivid picture of the Bahā'allāh's character and the gradual evolution of his ideas.

2. *Khalsih* is a state between sleep and wakefulness in which the soul witnesses the occurrence of certain matters in advance. Tahānuwī, M. *Kashshāf-i Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn va al-ʿUlūm*, Calcutta, 1862, p.597.

3. *Maṣnavī*. pp.2b-3a.

in the form of another anticipatory dream:

> 'Before "the lord of the people" (*khudāvand-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'[1].

It was this same visit of the Bab to Kāshān[2] 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 ʿulama and tujjār[3]. At the same time the Kāshānī 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'[4].

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'[5]. Nevertheless, the Bab's reluctance to take any militant action did not prevent the Kāshānī 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 ʿĀrif (i.e. Zabīḥ) and Ḥājī people believed
> that; "these youths are the most pious people of the time.

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1. *Masnavī*. 2b.
2. In addition to other well known sources such as *Nabil*. 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 Iṣfahānī, *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi 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 (*mujāhid*) 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) threshhold'[2] Zabīḥ refers to his brother as 'a lost-hearted Hājī, who was ready to sacrifice his life'[3], an aspiration which soon turned into reality. After the unsuccessful attempt on the life of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh in 1268 (1852), together with many other Babis, he was arrested in the shrine of Shāh ʿAbd al- Azīm near Tehran, whre he probably compiled his historical account of the movement. The sanctity of the *bast* was ignored, and he was taken to the Anbār dungeon, only to be killed shortly after by the hand of Āqā Mahdī Malik al-Tujjār and other merchants of Tehran[4]. Zabīḥ remembers the death of his brother in the following words:

'That lover of the truth, the adorer of the *Rabb-i Aʿlā* (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 Zabīḥ.
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. *Maṣnavī*. 152a.
2. *Maṣnavī*. 26.
3. Ibid.
4. An account of the execution of Ḥājī Mīrzā Jānī appears amongst other sources in *Vaqāyiʿ-i Ittifāqīyih*,. no.82 (Dhī al-Qaʿda 10th 1268/1850) and *TMS*. also cited in *Shuhadā-yi Amr*, op.cit., III, 271.
5. *Maṣnavī*. 29a. Further information on the life of the Kāshānī brothers appears in a number of sources. *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, 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 Ḥājī Mīrzā Jānī and his meetings with the Bab and eminent Babis. On the life of Zabīḥ besides references in *Maṣnavī*, *Samandar* (pp.222-3) and *NH*. provide further information. Short articles in *EI*[1] and *EI*[2] under KĀSHĀNĪ, Ḥādjdjī Mīrzā Jānī by T.W. Haig were entirely based on E.G. Browne's notes in *TN*., *NH*. and *NK*., and suffer from some inaccuracies.

III

The Shaykhi merchants of Isfahan and Kāshān were not the only converts in the ranks of the tujjār. In other cities of Iran, families of merchants with similar religious and occupational backgrounds were also attracted towards the Bab. In Qazvīn the Farhādīs were amongst the first who supported the new cause in early 1261/1845[1]. In the few decades prior to 1260, two brothers of Āzarbāijāni origin, Hājī Allāh Virdī Farhādī and Hājī Asadallāh Farhādī who had long been engaged in the internal trade between Qazvīn and Yazd, or sometimes between Yazd and India, managed to establish themselves amongst the well respected and affluent merchants of Qazvīn[2]. 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[3]. Whether it was due to their previous acquaintance with Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'ī in Yazd, or their close association with Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī, the imam of the shāh mosque and a close student and adherent of Ahsā'ī[4], the Farhādīs became devoted Shaykhis and in Ahsā'ī's last visit to Qazvin towards the end of his life, played host to him[5].

For merchants like the Farhadis, commitment to Shaykhism was before any theoretical conviction, an affection for Ahsā'ī and a devotional attachment to his close disciples like Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī - an adherence which was deeply rooted in their social and occupational loyalties. In the tense struggle for religious control of Qazvīn, the Farhādīs were in the camp of Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and thus in opposition to the rising authority of the newly established and highly ambitious Mullā Muhammad Tāqī Baraghānī (and to a lesser extent his brother Mullā Muhammad Sālih Baraghānī, the father of Tāhirih) 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 Āqā Muḥammad Javād Farhādī. *MJQ.* and *Nabil.* provide some further details. Most accounts on Ṭāhirih also have references to the Farhādīs.

2. *Z.* 372 and *Samandar*, 91.

3. *Nabil.* 165. Allāh Virdī was known in Qazvīn for his holy dreams and spiritual insight, which together with his Azarbāījanī origin suggest a possible Ahl-i Ḥaqq background.

4. For ʿAbd al-Wahhāb see *Q.* pp.22-4, 35; *Ṭabaqāt.* II, 2, pp.809-12. Ṭihrānī particularly states that Tunikābunī's doubts on ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's state of ijtihād 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 Usūlī tradition in ʿAtabāt under Sayyid ʿAlī Ṭabāṭabā'ī[1]. 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-Niʿmatī hostility (known in Qazvin as *lūtī bāzār*) between the city quarters[2].

Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, from Dār al-Shafā' in the Darb-i Kūshk quarter was a well established mujtahid of Qazvīn who was respected by his fellow mujtahids in Iran and ʿAtabāt mainly because he studied under all important ʿulama of the first generation in ʿAtabāt such as Shaykh Jaʿfar Najafī, Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabā'ī and others[3]. However, by the 1840's as he grew old his religious control over Qazvīn seems to have been weakened by the threat of the Baraghānīs who gradually broadened their sphere of influence from the quarters of Dīmaj and Qumlāq in the west of the city towards the centre where both major mosques of Qazvīn, the Jāmiʿ mosque in Khīyābān quarter and the Shāh mosque (or Khāqān-i Maghfūr) in Darb-i Kūshk quarter were located[4]. Control of the central mosques and advancement to the office of imām jumʿih 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 mutavallīs[5].

In the early years of his stay in Qazvīn after his return from ʿAtabāt, Mullā Muḥammad Taqī was well received by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb who even helped him to establish himself in the city[6]. But nevertheless this did not hinder Baraghānī's drive for power which he implemented by means of economic wealth and religious leadership. The anecdotes related by Tunikābunī in the biography of Mullā Muḥammad Taqī, 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 Muḥammad Taqī's recollections. For Baraghānī's see above Chap.Five, III. For Mullā Muḥammad Taqī, 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 Qazvīn's quarters in the 19th century as it is specified in *Majmūʿih-yi Nāṣirī* see Gulrīz, Muḥammad, *Mīnū Dar yā Bāb al-Janna, Qazvīn*, Tehran 1337 Sh., 391-404, 759-60. The Ḥaydarī-Niʿmatī divisions and boundaries between quarters are not specified in the above sources.

3. *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 2, 809.

4. *Bāb al-Janna*. op.cit., pp.393-4, cf. map of the city opposite p.250.

5. For endowments of Jāmiʿ see *Bāb al-Janna*, pp.514-21.

6. *Q*. 22.

directed by the soundness and impartiality required from a mujtahid[1]. 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 *Khālisih* villages, and even directly participating in economic activities, the Baraghānīs were soon able to amass a large fortune. Hence it is not surprising that like Shaftī and Karbāsī, Mullā Muhammad Taqī who in his youth, when still a talabih, 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 ʿulama of Iran. The mosque and madrasih of Sālihīyih in the Qumlāq quarter which is one of the biggest mosques in Iran, and the mosque of the neighbouring Dīmaj 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[2].

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[3]. At one stage, contrary to the Usūlī doctrine, he ruled for the prohibition of the Friday prayer. However when the opportunity arose he overruled his own *fatvā* and conducted the Friday prayers of the city in the absence of another rival Hājī Sayyid Muhammad Taqī Qazvīnī[4]. One may assume that one of his objectives for gaining the office of imām jumʿih and the trusteeship of the Jāmiʿ 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 Baraghānīs had already established their authority[5].

Among many reasons which have been given for the opposition of Mullā Muhammad Taqī to Shaykh Ahmad Ahsā'ī (which in due course gave rise to

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1. *Q*. pp.22-3 .
2. *Bāb al-Janna*. pp.557, 574-7. Also . 91.
3. *Q*. 34.
4. *Q*. 29. The Uṣūlīs generally considered it unlawful to perform Friday prayers (*namāz-i jamāʿat*) in the absence of the Concealed Imam. For the significance of this issue in the Akhbārī-Uṣūlī dispute see above Chapter One
5. *Bāb al-Janna*. 516. In mid-1260's after the death of all important mujtahids of Qazvīn the office of imām jumʿih was finally transferred to the Baraghānī family and Mullā Muḥammad, son of Mullā Muḥammad Taqī became the imām jumʿih of the city.

condemnation of Ahsā'ī by the fuqahā' of ʿAtabāt and Iran)[1] one is particularly relevant to this specific internal conflict in Qazvīn. It has been reported that Mullā Muhammad Taqī Baraghānī who in mid 1820's regarded himself as the chief mujtahid and the most knowledgeable (*aʿlam*) of the ʿulama of Qazvīn, expected Ahsā'ī 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 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb[2]. For Mullā Muhammad Taqī this was interpreted as a hostile gesture far more humiliating than a simple breach of social etiquette. As in Yazd and Isfahan, in Qazvīn the arrival of Shaykh Ahmad introduced a new dimension to the old conflict and widened the divisions between the ʿulama. No doubt receiving support from a revered scholar like Ahsā'ī with his growing popularity was a blessing which could not be underestimated since for their support the ʿulama were dependent on the loyalty of the public in general and the urban notables and merchants in particular.

In the opinion of Mullā Muhammad Taqī 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 Taqī when his own younger brother Mullā ʿAlī became a follower of Shaykh Ahmad[3]. In an important letter to Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, Shaykh Ahmad refers to the Baraghānī's fear of losing his economic and religious privileges when he states: 'the devil incited him (i.e. Mullā Muhammad Taqī) to declare that what I say is blasphemy, and I am blasphemous and Ākhūnd Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb 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-ʿAjam-i va al-Hind*)...'[4]. This would confirm that in the condemnation of the Shaykhis, the *rīyāsat* of the Baraghānī and many mujtahids alike were at stake and with it their domination over the endowments, religious courts, alms, as well as their control of madrasihs and religious students.

In this context, the deterioration of the conflict and the polarisation of

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1. See above Chapter One , II.
2. *Fihrist*. I, pp.155-6 and *Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī*, op.cit. pp.36-7 citing Kayvān Qazvīnī, ʿAbbās ʿAlī, *ʿIrfān Nāmih* (Tehran, 1348 Q).
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-Rābiʿa fī Sharḥ Duʿā-ih fī Zamān al-Ghayba*, *INBA*. pub.60, XIII, pp.150-4 as one of his followers. *Makārim*, V, pp.1707-16, *RA*. I, 153, and *Bāb al-Janna*, op.cit. 471 also have references to him.
4. Text of the letter cited in *Fihrist*. I, 157 (II, 242, no.56).

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 Muḥammad 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 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb in terms of losses of revenue from the endowments was a source of animosity between the Farhādīs and Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Baraghānī. However lack of information prevents us from coming to any definite answer, yet it is known that on occasions, Mullā Muḥammad Taqī's controversial verdicts over financial transactions, commercial contracts and the like,dissatisfied merchants and forced them to take drastic measures against him[1].

But if in the elder generation opposition to the fuqahā' 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 tujjār active in this trade[2], 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 Allāh Virdī, his four sons, who had married the four daughters of their uncle Ḥājī Asadallāh, in collaboration with the latter continued the family business[3]. The earliest news regarding the proclamation of the new Bab came through Ḥājī Mīrzā Maḥmūd, a merchant from Shiraz who visited Qazvīn after his pilgrimage of Ḥajj during which he travelled with the Bab in the same boat[4]. 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.

2. Abbott, *Report on Commerce* (F.O. 60/165), op.cit. pp.16-17, 99-109. See also below this Chapter.

3. *Samandar*. pp.91-6, 229-31.

4. *Z.* 372, citing Āqā Muḥammad Javād's notes. For the Bab's pilgrimage of Ḥajj see below Chapter Nine.

the Ṣāhib al-Zamān appears to have been further invigorated by the conversion of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's sons Mullā Muḥammad Hādī and Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī who were amongst the Letters of Ḥayy[1]. Thus Ḥājī Asadallāh despatched Mullā Javād Valīyānī to Shiraz to investigate the truth of the new revelation[2]. Afterwards, when Mullā ʿAbd al-Jalīl Urūmī came to Qazvīn with the instruction of the Bab, the Farhādīs became totally committed to the Babi cause[3]. Their commitment, however, was based less on theological and mystical convictions and more on occupational loyalties, since neither Asadallāh 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 Qazvīn and the host to many Babi missionaries and visitors who enjoyed both their hospitality, and in moments of need, their financial support[4].

The role of the second of the four brothers, Āqā Muḥammad Hādī Farhādī, was particularly important[5], since he gradually emerged as one of the leaders of the Babi community of Qazvīn, 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 Kāẓim, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb 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[6]. 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 Āqā Muḥammad Hādī Farhādī who had the courage and the means of challenging the opposing ʿulama. This was an important development, since Āqā Muḥammad Hādī like many other Babi merchants looked to the Bab as the symbol of the merchants' leadership.

The important role played by the tujjār in effecting the course of prolonged conflict in Qazvīn is best illustrated in the events of 1264 (1848) when in the

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1. See above Chapter Four, II.
2. *Z*. 372 citing the same source. For Valīyānī see above Chapter Six, IV.
3. *Z*. 372 citing the same source.
4. *Samandar*. 353.
5. The eldest of the four, Āqā Muḥammad Rafīʿ, who was a resident of Yazd, was not a Babi. The other two were Āqā Muḥammad Mahdī and Āqā Muḥammad Javād.
6. *MJQ*. (pp.494-5).

face of mounting hostility the Farhādīs used all they had at their disposal, including their wealth and their connections with the asnāf and the lūtīs in the city in order to defend themselves and their fellow Babis. In late 1263 (1847) after the return of Ṭāhirih and her companions to Qazvīn[1], the old chronic hostilities were again renewed in the form of a tense anti-Babi campaign. Shortly afterwards, the death of Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb[2] left the stage clear for Muḥammad Taqī 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[3]. When Mullā ʿAbd al-Jalīl Urūmī (Urdūbādī) who, under the protection of the Farhādīs was preaching in Qazvīn, was attacked by the mob and was dragged to the madrasih of Mullā Muḥammad Taqī to be bastinadoed in his presence, it was Āqā Muḥammad Hādī, his brother Āqā Muḥammad Javād and their lūtīs who in return climbed up the wall of the madrasih and rescued ʿAbd al-Jalīl[4]. In another occasion earlier in 1263 (1847) when the Bab was passing through Mīyānih on his way from Tehran to Āzarbāījān, Āqā Muḥammad Hādī and a group of his followers came to his rescue but, as on previous occasions in Kāshān and Tehran, the offer of assistance was turned down by the Bab[5].

The Bab's refusal to be rescued by the Farhādīs' aid was not because he was reluctant to escape captivity in Āzarbāījān, 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 Qazvīn, he wrote a letter to Mullā ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, calling upon him to intervene on his behalf and order the mounted escort to set him free in Qazvīn[6]. There is no

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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 Qazvīn.

2. He died in Muḥarram 1264 Q.(December-January 1847-8) in ʿAtabāt. (*Makārim*, V, 1736).

3. *Samandar*. pp.351-2 and *Q*. pp.56-7.

4. *Samandar*. 352 cf. *Z*. pp.347-8 citing Āqā Muḥammad Javād Farhādī.

5. *KD*. I, pp.95-6 and *Z*. 374. According to *Nabīl*. 235 and *Samandar*. pp.97-9 an earlier meeting took place in Sīyāh Dihān (a village 18½ miles southwest of Qazvīn) between the Bab and some of the Qazvīnī and Zanjānī followers. Mullā Jaʿfar Qazvīnī and others met the Bab in other stages in the villages around Qazvīn. (*MJQ*. 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 Mullā Muḥammad Taqī, Mullā Muḥammad Ṣālih and Hājī Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Imām Jumʿih making the same requests. Muḥammad Taqī rebuked and ridiculed the writer, Imām Jumʿih paid no attention. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and Muḥammad Ṣālih 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 Farhādī'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 Makū 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 Ṭāhirih, 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 Āqā Muhammad Hādī set up a workshop in the basement of his own house to produce swords and distribute them among the followers[1]. When Mullā Yahyā Dārābī (Vaḥīd) who appears to have been experienced in warfare, arrived in Qazvīn that year, Āqā Muhammad Hādī arranged for training sessions in his house[2].

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 Āqā Muhammad Hādī, or whether Mīrzā (Mullā) ʿAbdallāh Shīrāzī who himself claimed to be the assassin was in contact with Ṭāhirih through the Farhādīs, or whether he was independent in his decision. These are matters which remain to be fully investigated[3]. What is clear however, is that both Ṭāhirih 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 Āqā Muhammad Mahdī were arrested and detained in the government house together with seventy other Babis[4]. Later, owing to the insistence of Mullā Muhammad Baraghānī,

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1. Z. 374, citing Āqā Muhammad Javād.
2. Ibid.
3. All sources on the life of Ṭāhirih 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 Sālis* after the two earlier Shiʿi 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 ʿAbdallāh 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 ʿAbdallāh 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, Āqā Muhammad Hādī was not demoralised by the course of events. After the assassination of Baraghānī, 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 lūtīs at the gate[4]. However, in spite of all the security measures, Āqā Muhammad Hādī, in collaboration with Mīrzā Husain ʿAlī Bahā'allāh, drew up a plan to rescue her. At night Āqā Muhammad Hādī 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, Āqā Hasan Najjār, Valī the peddler and Qulī who were both lūtīs, managed to rescue her, and then ride all the way from Qazvīn to Tehran on horses before any of the Baraghānīs were able to stop them at the city gates[5].

The escape of Tāhirih was a blow to Mullā Muhammad and Baraghānīs' reputations. For the third time the house of the Farhādīs was attacked by tullāb and lūtīs 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 Imāmzādih Ahmad outside the city for four months before being able to return to Qazvīn[6]. After arrival at Tehran Āqā Muhammad Hādī 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 Āqā Muhammad Javād seems to have been unaware of his ultimate fate[7]. As for the

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1. *Samandar*. 230.
2. See above Chapter Six, IV.
3. Z. 375.
4. *Samandar*. 362 and Z. 376.
5. *Samandar*. pp.363-6.
6. Z. pp.378-9 and *Samandar*. pp.369-9.
7. *Samandar*. 93 and Z. 337.

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[1]. 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 Ṭabarsī, Nayrīz 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, Ḥājī Abul Ḥasan, Āqā Muḥammad Karīm, Ḥājī Mīrzā Abul Qāsim and Ḥājī Mīrzā Maḥmūd; in Yazd, Ḥājī ʿAṭrī and Āqā Muḥammad Zamān; in Tabriz, Ḥājī ʿAlī ʿAsgar, Āqā Faraj and Ḥājī Muḥammad; in Qazvīn, Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Karīm, Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Ḥusain, Ḥājī Rasūl (Juvaynī) and Ḥājī Naṣīr; in Kirmānshāh, Āqā Ghulām Ḥusain Shushtarī and in Zanjān, Mashhadī Sulaymān Raʾīs al-Tujjār are a few examples of merchants who were converted to the new movement mainly through a network of merchant-ʿulama with Shaykhi affiliations.

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1. *MJQ*. pp.486-8 and *Samandar*. pp.21 ff.

IV

The participation of the tujjār 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 asnāf ever took place - except in the case of Zanjān 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 tujjār or ʿulama, were directed towards the new mission[1].

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. Hājī Mīrzā Jānī'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. Zabīḥ too was present in Baghdad on a few occasions between 1265-70 (1849-54), presumably for the same purpose[2]. Sometime prior to 1264 (1848) we find Hājī Mīrzā Jānī in Barfurūsh, as he himself puts it, 'for the purpose of trade'[3]. 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 Hājī Mīrzā Jānī were able to attract new converts from their own rank.

A group of young local merchants and manufacturers who assembled around Hājī Mīrzā Jānī and Zabīḥ in Kāshān 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 Kāshān is known, in addition to the younger brothers of Hājī Mīrzā Jānī known as Mīrzā Aḥmad and Āqā Muḥammad ʿAlī[4], Mīrzā Mahdī Tājir

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1. Gobineau, with regard to the mutual relation between the aṣnāf 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. *Maṣnavī*, op.cit. 39b, 41a ff. 3. *NK*. pp.175-6.

4. *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'* (op.cit. 45) and *KD*. (I, pp.90-2) believes that the name of the fourth brother is Āqā ʿAlī Akbar, but nevertheless the information of *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Kāshān* (op.cit. 4) seems to be more reliable. More details on Mīrzā Aḥmad and his fate appear in *TN*, pp.332, 371, *NH*. 391, n. Balyuzi, *E.G. Browne and the Bahā'ī Faith*, op.cit. 64 and Ruḥī Kirmānī, Aḥmad. (?) *Hasht Bihisht*, n.d., 282.

Kāmrānībāf[1], Hājī Sayyid Maḥmūd[2], Mīrzā Āqā Tājir Kāshānī[3] and Hājī Mīrzā Muhammad Riżā Makhmalbāf Kāshānī[4] were all manufacturers and local merchants who seem to have been in professional contact with Hājī Mīrzā Jānī. Hājī Muḥammad Riżā Makhmalbāf for example owned a number of velvet weaving workshops in Kāshān, and even operated a trade with India, Istanbul and Baghdad[5], the same pattern of trade as Hājī Mīrzā Jānī and Zabīḥ, who both seem to have been engaged in the export of silk products to Baghdad and the Caucasus[6].

In Isfahan however, the introduction of the movement to the members of various professions was due to the efforts of the Babi ʿulama 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, Mullā Jaʿfar Gandum Pākkun (sifter of wheat)[7], Mullā Aḥmad Saffār (tin-plater), Mullā Ḥusain Misgar (copper-smith)[8] and Mullā ʿAlī Muḥammad Sarrāj (leather-worker)[9], all were mentioned with the title of *mullā*. In other places converts such as Mullā Kāzim Bannā (mason) in Kirmān[10], Mullā Mahdī Kūrihpaz (kiln-worker), Mullā Muḥammad Mūsā Namadmāl (felt-maker) and Mullā Jaʿfar Muẓahhib (book-gilder), all in Nayrīz[11], would suggest that while the second part of their names indicates their main professions the title mullā was added for some extra religious engagement. Whether this was a low rank engagement such as being a *zākir* (one who chants the tragedies of Karbilā') or *qārī* (the reciter of the *Qur'ān* 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 Mullā Jaʿfar Gandum Pākkun. Nabīl Zarandī believes that he was

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1. *Tārīkh-ī Amrī-yi Kāshān*, op.cit. pp.4-5 and *Nabil*. 221. Mīrzā Mahdī was executed in Tehran in 1268 (1852). (*Vaqāyiʿ-i Ittifāqiyyih*, no.82 and *Recollections of Āqā Ḥusain Āshchī* cited in *Tārīkh-i Shuhadā-yi Amr*, op.cit. III, pp.310-12).
2. *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Kāshān*, op.cit. 3.
3. *Samandar*. 227.
4. *TMS*. 75.
5. Ibid.
6. For this trade see below.
7. See below.
8. *Nabil*. List of the participants in Ṭabarsī, p.421, nos. 115, 116.
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 Ṭabarsī[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 Jaʿfar 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 (*jauhargīrī*) Gandum Pākkun will put on the garb of primacy (*qamīṣ-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 ʿAlī Akbar Najjār (carpenter) and Āqā Muhammad Ḥanāsāb (henna-miller) first learned of the new Bab and his claims through Mullā Husain. Āqā Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahīm on the other hand who was one of Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Shaftī's bailiffs (*mubāshir*) on his holdings in the village of Sīyāfshād 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 ʿAlī Akbar Najjār and noticed in his possession a tablet written in red ink, which most probably was a copy of the earlier parts of *Qayyūm al-Asmā'*. In reply to his enquiry, Āqā ʿAlī Akbar revealed that he had received the tablet from a certain

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1. *Nabīl*. 99.
2. Ibid.
3. Both *KD*. I, 71 and *TMS*. 98 confirm that after a dream he had the night before, Mullā Jaʿfar was the first to recognise the Bab in Isfahan.
4. *NK*. 202 and *Nabīl*. 99.
5. *Bayān*. VIII, 14 (296). Neither Nabīl's quotation of the above remark (p.99), nor Nicolas' French translation (Nicolas, A.L.M. *Le Béyan Persan*, Paris, 1914, IV, 113) are accurate.
6. *INBA*. Lib. MS. no.1028 D, *Miscellaneous notes* (op.cit. pp.32-3).

scholar (*ʿālim*) 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'[1].

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 Ṭabarsī, Nayrīz and Zanjān, it is evident that a variety of occupations were represented. From the 360 participants in Ṭabarsī there were 41 Iṣfahānīs of whom the occupation of 32 were specified. Beside eight mullas and ṭullāb (if the titles can be relied upon), there were 24 members of various guilds and professions: eleven masons (*bannā* with the title *ustād*); five workers in the hand-weaving industry, one hand-loom weaver (*shaʿrbāf*), two knotters (*payvandī*) and two cloth-stampers (*chītsāz*); four other skilled workers; one copper-smith (*misgar*); one tin-plater (*saffār*); one leather-worker (*sarrāj*) and one sifter of wheat (*gandum pākkun*), and four shopkeepers and traders, two apothecaries (*ʿaṭṭār*), one butcher (*qaṣṣāb*) and one cloth-dealer (*bazzāz*). Of 41 Iṣfahānīs, 40 were killed in Ṭabarsī and one 'Remnant of the Sword' (*Baqīyat al-Sayf*) was later executed in 1268 (1852) in Tehran[2].

In fact, if due to its wide geographical distribution the occupational pattern of the participants of Ṭabarsī 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 asnāf in the movement is only second to the ʿulama. As a whole, of 222 participants whose occupations are known, more than half (60%) were from the ʿulama (mujtahids, middle and low rank mullas), less than one third (26%) were from asnāf, 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

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1. Ibid. and Z. 101.

2. See supplement.

Table of Geographical Distribution and Occupations of the Participants of Tabarsī

occupations / Provinces	ʿulama	asnāf	small land owners	tujjār	Gov. officials	other occup.	unknown	Total	%
Khurāsān	55	10	-	1	2	-	43	111	30
Māzandarān	27	7	14	-	1	1	36	86	23
Isfahān	8	24	-	1	-	-	8	41	11
Sangisar & Shahmīrzād	10	6	1	-	-	-	15	33	9
Qazvīn	5	2	-	2	-	-	7	15	4
Fārs	5	-	-	-	-	1	5	11	3
Ardistān	1	1	2	-	-	-	7	11	3
Āzarbāijān	6	1	-	1	-	-	2	10	2.7
Zanjān	1	-	-	1	-	-	8	10	2.7
Yazd & Kirmān	1	4	-	-	-	-	4	9	2.5
Tehran	2	-	-	-	1	1	1	5	1.3
Other places	13	3	-	-	-	-	2	18	5
Total	134	58	17	6	4	3	138	360	100
% of 222 known occupations	60	26	7.6	1.6	1.8	1.3			

Notes: This table is based on the information supplied by four major sources on Tabarsī: *Narrative of Mirzā Lutf ʿAlī Shīrāzī; Tārīkh-i Mīmīyih ; Nabil* and *Narrative of Āqā Mīr Abū Tālib Shahmīrzādī.*

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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[1].

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 ʿulama and the government, again members of the asnāf under the supervision of the ʿulama and to a lesser extent merchants, played an important role. Sādiq Tabrīzī, a confectioner (*shīrīnī furūsh*) and Mullā Fathallāh Qumī, an engraver (*hakkāk*), 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.

V

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

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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[1]. 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 ʿAbd al-Karīm. A study on the role of the Merchant in mid-nineteenth century Persia,' in *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[1].

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 tujjār in the south, and forced them to search for other alternatives[2]. 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[3]. But the competition of the northern route[4] 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

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1. A.K.S. Lambton, 'Persian Trade under the Early Qājārs', in *Islam and the Trade of Asia*, edited by D.S. Richards, Oxford, 1970, pp.215-244.

2. Some general information about the background of the trade of southern Iran in this period appears in Lambton's 'Persian Trade', op.cit., pp.235, 239; Kelly, J.B. *Britain and the Persian Gulf (1795-1880)*, Oxford, 1968, pp.260-89, 343-53; Lorimer, op.cit. I, 2, pp.1956-9, 1976-81; *Economic History*, op.cit. pp.85-91. See also notes below.

3. Op.cit., pp.40-51 (on Būshihr and Shiraz), pp.16-40 (on Yazd, Kirmān and Bandar ʿAbbās) 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 Baṣra-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 Baṣra rather than Muḥammara, 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 Muḥammara'[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 Manūchihr Khān Muʿtamid al-Daulih. In March 1845, Manūchihr Khān Muʿtamid al-Daulih, by then the governor of Isfahan, Luristān and Khūzistān, reports to Tehran that as a result of the recent Ottoman attack on Muḥammara, about 200,000 tumans worth of merchandise belonging to Persian merchants established in Iraq Arab and Kirmānshāh was damaged and lost[6]. Shortly afterwards, in another report, Manūchihr Khān strongly objects to the measure taken by the Ottoman fleet in

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1. *Report on Commerce*, op.cit., p.50.
2. F.O. 195/237, No.22, Rawlinson to Canning, May 15th, 1844.
3. A detailed account of the trade of Baghdad and Muḥammara appears in *Report on Commerce*, op.cit., pp.52-68.
4. *Letters from Persia*, op.cit., 53.
5. F.O. 60/114, No.61, Sheil to Canning, May 28th 1845 enclosed in Sheil to Aberdeen, June 3rd 1845.
6. Manūchihr Khān Muʿtamid al-Daulih in reply to Comte de Meden's (the Russian envoy) enquiry about the events in Muḥammara. 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[1].

In Baghdad itself, the unjust treatment of the Persian tujjār 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 tujjār even more susceptible to external pressures and fluctuations . 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'[2].

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 Kāshān 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[3].

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[4].

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1. F.O. 60/114, No.61, supp. June 3rd 1845 (Manūchihr Khān to his agent in Tehran, translation).

2. F.O. 195/237, No.25, 29th May 1844 and 248/114, No.28, 12th June 1844, Rawlinson to Sheil.

3. 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 Bārfurūsh), 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.

4. Charles Issawi, 'The Tabriz-Trabzon Trade, 1830-1900: Rise and Decline of a Route', *IJMES*, I (1970), pp.18-27. Also *The Economic History*, op.cit. pp.92-103.

Yet irregularities in the price of imported goods[1], 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[2].

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 tumān, 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[3].

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 ʿAlī 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

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1. Lambton, 'Persian Trade', op.cit., 241.
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[1].

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 Cāshān (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 Cāshān 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 Cāshān 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.

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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'[1].

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 Kāshān in 1841, maintains that: 'Si quelques metiers y existent encore, il est triste d'en voir le plus grand nombre immobiles, en attendant qu'ils disparaissent completement'[2]. He states that the devastating effects of European competition, then so clearly visible in centres like Kāshān, 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[3].

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 Kāshān in 1840, maintains, in agreement with Abbott's remark: 'Depuis quelques annees 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 celebres autrefois et si pompeux ne se fabriquent presque plus que pour les circonstances exceptionnelles'[4].

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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).
2. Flandin, E. and Coste, P. *Voyage en Perse de M.M. Eugene Flandin, peintre, et Pascal Coste, architecte, 1840-1*, 2 vol. Paris, 1851. I, pp.267-8.
3. Ibid.
4. Sercey, Comte de. *Une Ambassade extraordinaire. La Perse en 1839-40*, Paris, 1928, pp.226-27.

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 Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh that the vigorous patronage of the Amīr Kabīr encouraged the manufacturers of Kāshān to overcome the religious restriction by introducing new types of mixed silk-cotton fabrics known as *qadak* and *qaṭnī*[1].

Thus the bulk of manufacturers and distributors in Kāshān 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 dissatisfactions.

In spite of the severity of these economic changes, many of the Babi merchants remained in business. The Farhādīs and the Kāshānī 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 the trade or total abandonment was an action resulting from religious commitment rather than any other reason. In fact the Nahrīs and many like them who abandoned their

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1. *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia*, op.cit., additional notes (by Col. Sheil), Note H., p.378 cf. Ādamīyat, *Amīr Kabīr* op.cit. pp.386-8.

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 Qazvīnī[1] and ʿAbd al-Majīd Nīshābūrī[2], who temporarily abandoned their trade and participated in Ṭabarsī, 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.

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1. *Samandar* pp.214-6.
2. See below Chapter Eight

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Babis of Khurasan

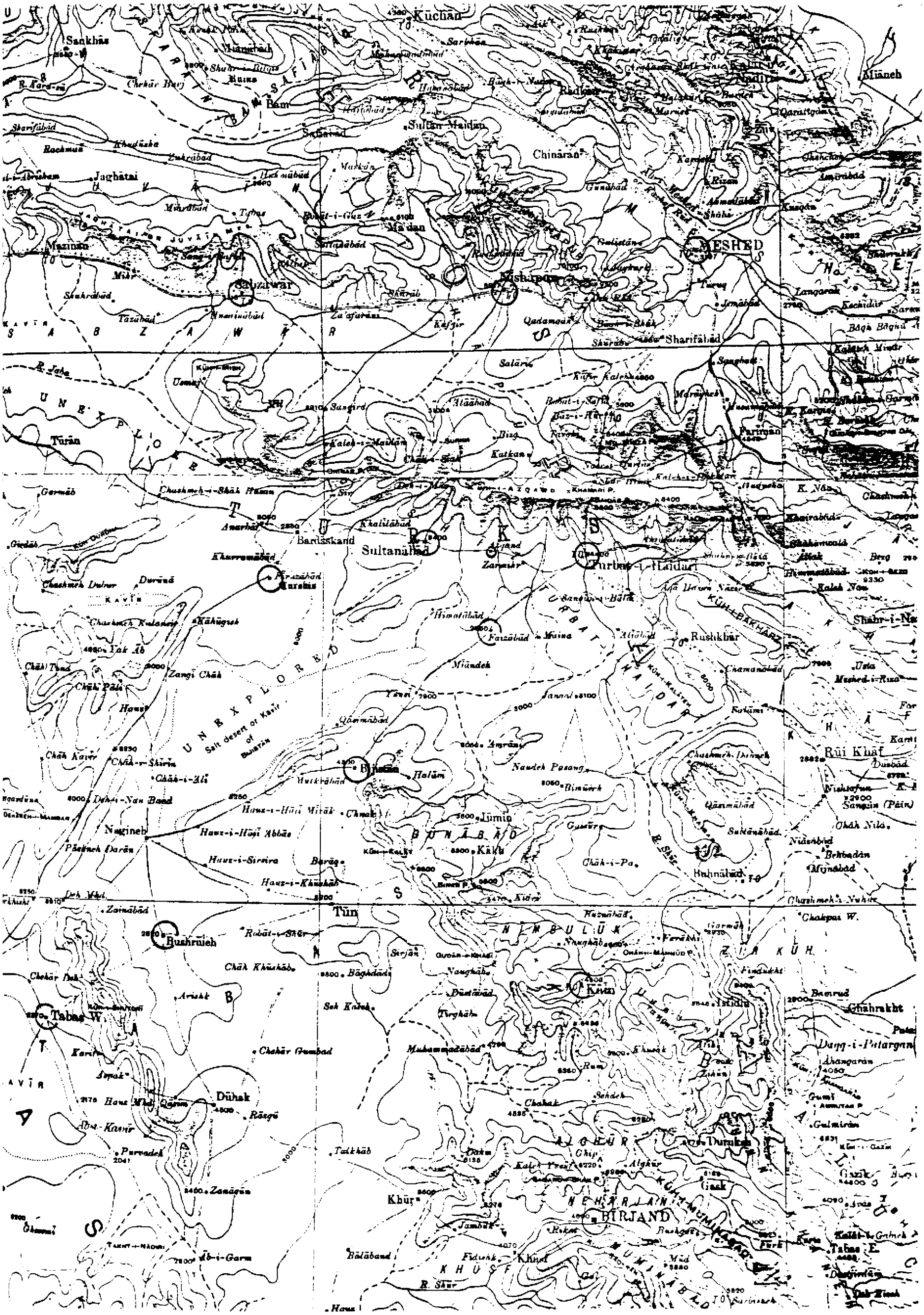
I

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 Khurāsānī 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 Khurāsānī Babis was in three areas. First, in central Khurasan - in the area known as Quhistān, on the edge of the highlands which surround the Khurasan desert[1]. The triangle between Turbat-i Haydarīyih, Bushrūyih and Qā'in: from north-east to south-west, Turbat-i Haydarīyih and its surrounding villages (Hisār and Nāmiq in the north, Mahnih, Khayrābād, Hasanabad, 'Abdallāhābād, Dūghābād in the west and south-west), Azghand, Turshīz (Sultānābād), Muhavvalāt (Fayżābād), Bajistān, Tūn, Bushrūyih and Qā'in contained one of the largest concentrations of Babis in Iran . Secondly, on the north-western side of the borderlands of Māzandarān

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1. For the geography of the area see *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Cambridge, 1968, I, pp.62-78 and Kayhān, M. *Jughrāfīyā-yi Mufaṣṣal-i Īrān*, Tehran, 1311 Sh., III, pp.179-209. For the historical geography of Quhistān see Le Strange, G. *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, Cambridge, 1905, pp.352-63. Amongst the 19th century European accounts, Fraser, J.B. *A winter journey from Constantinople to Tehran*, 2 vols, London, 1838, II, pp.167-381; *Eastern Persia: An Account of the Journey of the Persian Boundary Commission (1870-72)*, edited by F.J. Goldsmid, 2 vols, London, 1876; Curzon, G.N. *Persia and the Persian Question*, 2 vols, London, 1892, I, pp.148-293 and some of the sources cited in this chapter provide extensive accounts of Khurasan. Among the Persian sources Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān I'timād al-Saltanih, *Maṭla' al-Shams*, op.cit.; *Tarā'iq*. III, 706-21 and Āyatī, Muḥammad Ḥasan *Bahāristān dar tārīkh va tarājim-i rijāl-i Qā'ināt va Quhistān*, Tehran, 1327 Sh., pp.7-28 contain some further information. See also the map.


Kuchan
Sankhās
Bām
Sultān Maidān
Chinārān
Jughatai
Mazinān
Sabzawār
Mashhad
Sharifābād
Qadamgāh
Turān
Bardāskand
Sultanābād
Turbat-i-Haidari
Nādir
Qarātīgān
Rādkān
Kāshmar
Mīāneh
Rīzan
Kāshmar
Turuq
Jangārak
Kachidar
Tāzābād
Mihr
Shahrābād
Khusrawābād
Kāfir
Salāri
Kafir Kalah
Sangbast
Marghak
Parīyān
Katkan
Germāb
Chashmah-i-Shāh Hasan
Anarbāh
Khalīlābād
Khusrawābād
Chashmah Dulrar
Durūnā
Kāhūgird
Chāh Tīnd
Chāh Pāla
Chāh Kavīr
Chāh-i-Shīrīn
Chāh-i-Alī
Dahi-Nau Band
Nasqineh
Pāshneh Darān
Hauz-i-Hāji Abbās
Hauz-i-Sirsira
Hauz-i-Khushāb
Zainābād
Bushrūieh
Chāh Khushāb
Tabas W.
Chehār Gumbad
Dūhak
Rāsgū
Parvadeh
Zanāgān
Ab-i-Garm
Tabas
Yazdān
Qāsimābād
Amrān
Naudeh Pasang
Halūm
Jumin
Kāhū
Bīrjand
Rustikbar
Rūi Khaf
Dusbād
Nīkdarfun
Sangsin (Pain)
Shāh Nīlā
Behbadān
Mīnābād
Chashmeh-i-Nuhūr
Chakpas W.
Ghahrakht
Dang-i-Pulargan
Gumi
Gulmirān
Durukan
Gazik
Kalāt-i-Gabrik
Tabas E.
Dastjirdān
Deh Kinah
Shahr-i-Na
Kāmandān
Ustā
Mashed-i-Riza
Kuhsāmān
Khairābād
Chahārmanāl
Kalah Nau
Hasanābād
Berg
Kalah-i-Haidari
Khānī Mīrzā
Kalah-i-Mazlān
Kalah-i-Fakhar
Khamsi P.
Kalah-i-Sīāh
Dih-i-Mar
Dih-i-Nau
Sangird
Ālāābād
Bīzg
Chāh-i-Shāh
Zarmehr
Himatābād
Faizābād
Mīāndeh
Yazdī
Qārnābād
Hauz-i-Hāji Mīrāk
Chāh
Hauz-i-Khushāb
Rībāt-i-Sāgar
Sirjān
Chāh Khushāb
Bāghdānak
Arisht
Sak Kalah
Muhammadābād
Nāyband
Kūh-i-Bākharz
Kūh-i-Kalāteh
Kūh-i-Kalāt
Kūh-i-Sīāh
Kūh-i-Nimbalūk
Kūh-i-Zārkūh
Kūh-i-Alghūr
Kūh-i-Jumāl
Kūh-i-Kāmān
Kūh-i-Kumāsh
Kūh-i-Nihbandān
Kūh-i-Birjand
Kūh-i-Khūsf
Kūh-i-Kumāsh
Kūh-i-Kumāsh
Kūh-i-Kumāsh

particularly on the northern route to Khurasan in Bastām, Mayāmay and Bīyārjmand there were also sizeable Babi communities. Thirdly, in cities such as Mashhad, Sabzivār and Nīshābūr 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 ʿulama 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 Afshār 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.

Ishāq Khān Qarā'ī (d.1232/1816)[1]. 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[2].

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 Sālār and his brothers, sons of Āsif al-Daulih[3]. This brief interlude, however temporary, was partly due to the political stability under the capable Governor General Āsif al-Daulih,

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1. For the tribes of Khurasan see *RS*. IX, pp.275-9; *EI*^{2}, 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 *JRGS*., VII , pp.230-43 and Fraser, J.B. *Narrative of a journey into Khurasan in the years 1821 and 1822*, London, 1825. For Isḥāq Khān see *RS*. IX; Malcolm, *History of Persia* op.cit., II, 148ff. and Watson, *A History of Persia*, 175-7.

2. For the Khurasan campaign and its effects on the province see *RS*. IX, 713ff. and X, 9ff; H. Nāṭiq 'ʿAbbās Mīrzā va Faḥ-i Khurāsān' in *Az māst kih bar māst*, Tehran, 1345 Sh., pp.45-91. Also Fraser, *A Winter Journey*, op.cit. and Dr. F. Forbes, 'Route from Turbat Ḥaiderī, in Khorāsān, to the river Harī Rūd, on the border of Sīstān' in *JRGS*, XIV (1844), p.145-92. Accounts of the Turkoman incursions appears in Malcolm, J. *Sketches of Persia*, London, 1845, 148-54 and Ferrier, J.P. *Caravan Journeys and Wanderings in Persia etc*., London, 1857, pp.76ff.

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 *Muntaẓam-i Nāṣirī* 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'[1]. 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. Sabzivār 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'[2]. Further eastward, in the town of Nīshābūr, 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'[3].

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

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1. *A Mission to Bokhara*, op.cit. 103. It is worth mentioning that Wollf's strong views on the 'tyrannical khans' should be seen in the light of his imprisonment at the hands of Muḥammad Khān Qarā'ī 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.
2. Ferrier, J.P., op.cit., 101.
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 caravanaserais of Mashhad[1]. Products of high quality textiles such as Mashhadī 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[2]. 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[3].

Further south of Mashhad, the extensive ruins of former villages, caravanserais and fortresses were still the significant features of the landscape[4]. Yet in the meantime, the signs of improvements in the form of 'well inhabited' villages[5], or 'fertile districts which produce a handsome revenue to the Governor-General of Khorassan'[6], 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 Mahmūdābād, in the east of Turbat-i Ḥaydarīyih, 'is inhabited by 2000 families of Hazarahs, who have recently emigrated from Harat to Persia'[7]. The village Karīz, next to the ruins of the fort of ʿAbbāsābād, once a well known refuge for the rebellious tribal chiefs, 'has recently been repeopled by Hazarahs ...'[8].

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 Shiʿi's of Herat, who were

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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 Khurasan. However, during and after Muhammad Shāh's campaign in 1837-8, the mounting hostility of the ruling Afghāns towards the pro-Persian Shi'i population[1] sharply increased the number of Herātī refugees. At the time of the Qājār retreat, more than 30,000 Shi'i refugees of the city and district of Herat, who were afraid of Afghān retaliation, accompanied the Qājār forces back into Iran, and mostly settled in the towns and villages of Khurasan[2]. 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), Herat and Kandahar, the number of resident inhabitants may be fixed at 60,000 and 30,000 pilgrims and strangers ...'[3].

However the arrival of the newcomers was not always welcomed by the inhabitants of Khurasan. The expansion of the Hazārih, or the other tribes of the Chāhār Uymāq for instance, who because of the increase in their population were obliged to divide and migrate[4], was not always a peaceful process. The raids of some of the unsettled Hazārih, 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'[5]. Under the Āsif al-Daulih, 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 Khurasan, did not have any decisive result[6]. Nevertheless, the relative security in the less afflicted parts provided a more tolerable life for the inhabitants.

In the interior of Khurasan, 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[7], and the

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1. Watson, op.cit., 298.
2. *RS*. X, 234.
3. Ferrier, op.cit., 121.
4. Ibid. 191.
5. Ibid. pp.191-2.
6. *RS*. X, pp.211ff.
7. Ferrier, op.cit., pp.437-39.

cultivation of silk and cotton throughout the districts of Turbat[1], Muhavvalāt[2]. Turshīz[3], Tūn[4], Ṭabas[5], Nīshābūr[6] and Sabzivār[7], provided cheap and relatively accessible sources for raw materials, and facilitated the traditional textile industry.

Manufacturers of high quality woollen clothes (*barak*) in Bushrūyih[8] and Bajistān[9], silk clothes (*chādur shāhī*) in Bajistān[10], silk embroidery (*kashidih*) in Kākhk[11], cotton cloths in and around Gunābād[12], coarse cotton clothes (*kharbuz*), silk-cotton clothes (*alījih*) and woollen stuffs in Mayāmay[13], high quality carpet (both silk and woollen) in Qā'īn[14] and Bīrjand[15], and felt carpets in Bīrjand[16] 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 Yazd[17]. Other small industries and crafts such as shoe and boot production in Shāhrūd (Bastām)[18], iron in thick wrought-iron plates in Turshīz[19], or finished agricultural implements in Kākhk[20], turquoise in Nīshābūr and Mashhad[21], and sheep skins in Sabzivār[22], also provided other alternatives for trade.

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1. Ibid. 137. Also Macdonald Kinneir, J. *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire*, London, 1813. 185.
2. In the villages of Fayzābād, Dughābād, ʿAbdallāhābād and Mihand. *Eastern Persia*, I, 325.
3. Curzon, op.cit. I, 203.
4. Ferrier, op.cit. 438.
5. Ibid. 439.
6. Ibid. 103.
7. *Eastern Persia*. op.cit. I, 373.
8. *Ṭarāʾiq*. III, 716 and *Fuʾādī*. 366-67.
9. *Eastern Persia*. op.cit. I, 350.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid. 347.
12. Forbes, op.cit. pp.151-52.
13. Fraser, *A Winter Journey*, op.cit. II, pp.151-2.
14. Ferrier, op.cit. 441.
15. Forbes, op.cit. 161.
16. Ibid.
17. Ferrier. op.cit. 121. Also Lambton 'Persian Trade', op.cit., pp.218-9 and related sources.
18. *Eastern Persia* op.cit. I, pp.378-9.
19. Macdonald Kinneir, op.cit. 184.
20. *Eastern Persiq* op.cit. I, 347.
21. Ferrier, op.cit. pp.105-7.
22. *Eastern Persia*. op.cit. I, 173.

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 Bushrūyih[1], his father Mullā ʿAbdallāh, who seems to have been a small land-owner, moved to the town of Bushrūyih, where as part of the local weaving industry, he ran a dye-house (*sabbāghī*) with a number of apprentices[2], 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'[3], 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)'[4].

The frequent movements of merchants from main centres such as Yazd and Kandahar[5] indicate the volume of trade in the local markets. In Tūn, Ferrier notices that due to the production of a variety of crops, 'there is a considerable commercial movement'[6], while because of the light corn crops, 'in years of drought, wheat for consumption is obliged to be imported'[7]. In Tabas, the export of market products was also great, and 'a large number of the population of Tubbus (Tabas) are by occupation *caravaneers*'[8].

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-

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1. See above Chapter Four, I.
2. *Fuʾādī*, 23.
3. Forbes, op.cit., 151.
4. Ibid. 161.
5. Ibid.
6. Ferrier, op.cit., 438.
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 Qājārs 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 Quhistān, 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...'[1]. 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 Qājār campaign, when the fields in the outskirts of Khabūshān were plundered or set on fire by government troops, the Khurāsānī peasants took their revenge by killing a few soldiers[2]. 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[3].

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 lūtīs as well as the local notables, the challenge was far more severe. Ferrier, visiting Mashhad in 1845, during the events leading up to the Sālār rebellion, witnessed a full scale battle in the streets of the city between 'the soldiers of the battalion of Kurds of the tribe of Gurān' 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[4]. 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

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1. Macdonald Kinneir, op.cit., 185.
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.
4. Ferrier, op.cit., pp.132-3.

by the joint forces of the tribal chiefs and the local notables. On the eve of the Sālār 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[1].

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-Qājār officials. In Ramadān of that year, a crowd of Mashhadī people, headed by the baglarbāygi of Mashhad, backed by the ex-governor of Khurasan Sālār, and led by the lūtīs, some of the anti-government ʿulama and some representatives of the merchant community, rose against the local government[2]. In a bloody riot, they slaughtered the mutavallī of the Shrine and the dārūghih 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 Mashhadī citizens, but also the forces of the peasantry of the region from up to ten *farsakh's* distance including Būlūkāt and Qarā'ī, joined the crowd in their fight against the troops[3]. After a long period of fighting, it took the central government three months, and the lives of 2000 Mashhadīs, to suppress the rebellion, and re-establish central authority[4].

Summing up the motives behind the Mashhad rebellion, even a pro-Qājār chronicle like *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh* is obliged to acknowledge the public aversion towards the oppressive behaviour of the Qājār forces:

> 'After the Afshār and Hamadānī 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. Therefore the people of Khurasan turned wholly against them ...'[5].

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1. A description of the events of the period and the personalities involved may be obtained from *RS*. X, pp.306-7, 332-4, cf. *A Mission to Bokhara* op.cit., pp.199-200.
2. *RS*. X, pp.332-338 and *NT*. III, pp.192-201, both gave descriptive accounts of the Mashhad rebellion, which on its own merits deserves a separate study.
3. *RS*. X, 336.
4. *RS*. X, pp.335-8.
5. *NT*. III, pp.194-5.

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[1], but also amongst the lower ranks of the ʿulama 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 ʿulama 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 Qājārs against the declining Afsharīds, and facilitated the entrance of their forces to the city - an assistance which cost him his life. Shortly before the final victory of the Qājārs he was killed at the hands of Nādir Sultān the Afshār prince[2].

In the decades after his death, the religious authority in the province largely remained in the control of his family. Both his brothers, Hājī Mīrzā-yi ʿAsgarī the imām jumʿih of Mashhad and Mīrzā Hāshim Mujtahid were amongst the most influential mujtahids of the city[3]. But nevertheless influence over the

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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, disputations, 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 *Makārim*. III, pp.645-8.

3. A short biographical account of Mīrzā-yi ʿAsgarī appears in *Maṭlaʿ 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 ʿAsgarī. Tensions and conflicts between brothers over assuming the hereditary office is a familiar feature in the families of imam jumʿihs 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 Riżā 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 ʿAbdallāh Khu'ī by Hājī Mīrzā Āqāsī renewed these disputes. A coalition which was formed between Mīrzā-yi ʿAsgarī 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 Āṣif al-Daulih[1]. However involvement in the death of the mutavallī temporarily endangered the position of Mīrzā-yi ʿAsgarī 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[2]. Just before his departure, at his meeting with Dr. Wolff, Mīrzā-yi ʿAsgarī 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 (Qājārs) from Mashhad whenever I please'[3]. Indeed to safeguard his interests it appears that ʿAsgari 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[4].

But if Mīrzā-yi ʿAsgarī 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

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1. After the death of the previous mutavallī Mīrzā Mūsā Farahānī in 1261 (1845) Āṣif 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 Muḥammad Shāh, was exiled to ʿAtabāt. (*RS*. X, pp.332-4).
2. *Maṭlaʿ al-Shams*, op.cit., II, 397.
3. *A Mission to Bokhara*, op.cit., 200.
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 ʿulama families, or more often from the families of local merchants and traders, the small landowners and occasionally artisans and asnāf of the small towns and cities of Khurasan[1]. 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 tullāb 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 ʿulama 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 madrasih, however insignificant it may seem, could offer them a fair chance of advancement in society.

It appears that some of the local tullāb, 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 madrasih, 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 tullāb, though by no means unprecedented in religious circles, may still be regarded as the indirect outcome of urban social groupings in Khurāsānī 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,

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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 ʿulama towards a theological school such as Shaykhism 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 Quhistān was one of the two major Ismāʿīlī strongholds in the middle ages. After the fall of Alamūt and the destruction of the Ismāʿīlī strongholds in the 13th century, the influence of the Ismāʿīlīs remained in Quhistān and occasionally re-emerged in the form of crypto-Ismāʿīlī movements. Many of the villages in the Quhistān area as far north as Nīshābūr but particularly in the region around Turbat-i Haydarīyih, Turshīz, Ṭabas, Qā'in and as far south as Shahr-i Bābak and Kirmān which have either held open Ismāʿīlī beliefs or preserved signs of an Ismāʿīlī past up to the present time, testify to the extent of this influence[1].

The rise of the Ismāʿīlī Imāms 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 Imām Abul Hasan Shāh in Kirmān (1756-1791/2) and later the abortive attempts of Shāh Khalīlallāh in Yazd (1817) and the revolt of Āqā Khān (1843) confirm that there was some revival of the Ismāʿīlī communities[2]. Furthermore, Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Ḥusain Fayż ʿAlī Shāh, one of the most important advocates of the Niʿmatallāhī order in its revival in the late 18th century, who was previously the imām jumʿih of Ṭabas, seems to have come from an Ismāʿīlī background[3]. However the extent of this revival should not be exaggerated, since there is no evidence to suggest that there was any direct Ismāʿīlī element in the background of the characters who were involved in the Babi movement. Perhaps it is only possible to say that the Ismāʿīlī 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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1. Ivanow, W. *A Guide to Ismaili Literature*, London, 1933, pp.8-9. Sykes, P.M. *Ten thousand miles in Persia*, London, 1902, p.409. Also *EI*^{2}, ISMAʿILIYYA by W. Madelung (III, 206).

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 Khurāsānī tullāb, attracted the first serious attention towards Shaykhi ideas[1]. According to his son Shaykh ʿAbdallāh, 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 ʿulama 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'[2].

Later in 1236 Q. (1820-1), he visited small cities such as Tabas and Turbat-i Haydarīyih on his way from Mashhad to Yazd, and he was warmly received by the inhabitants, including the renowned chief of the Qarā'īs, Muhammad Khān, son of Ishāq Khān[3]. 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[4]. 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 Imām 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 ʿAtabāt, was less dominated by the new generation of the Usūlī *fuqahā* and hence better allowed the spread of other less orthodox tendencies. The attraction of students such as Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq Yazdī to Shaykh Ahmad's circle in Yazd was due to this very fact[5].

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

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1. Ibid.
2. *Sharḥ-i Aḥvāl-i Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī*, op.cit. pp.28-9.
3. Ibid. 37.
4. See for example above Chapter Four for Mullā Ḥusain Bushrūyihī. Chapter Five for Mullā ʿAlī Basṭamī and Chapter Six for Mullā 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 millennarian 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 Riżā) was extraordinary doctrine ... A strong cry of heresy was raised against the Sayed, but Mirza Askeree (Mīrzā-yi ʿAsgarī) protected him. A fierce schism now prevails among the Sheahs (Shīʿīs) at Mashed'[1].

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'[2] 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 Mashed (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 Mashed and Nishapoor with eagerness'[3].

However, in view of his eccentric zealousness, 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[4]. This was perhaps an indication of a growing tendency amongst the ordinary people to be attracted

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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 mullas 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 Mullā Husain Bushrūyihī 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 Mullā Husain and Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī, there were other Khurasanīs amongst the early believers of Shiraz. Mullā Muhammad Hasan, Mullā Husain's brother, and Mullā Muhammad Bāqir his nephew, both accompanied him on most of his journeys. Also Mullā Hasan Bajistānī and Mullā Khudā Bakhsh Qūchānī were amongst the Letters of Hayy, but their role in the expansion of the movement was far less significant than that of Mullā Husain.

Mullā Husain must have reached Mashhad some time in late Shaʿbān 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 Mullā Muhammad Bāqir Qā'inī he founded the first centre for the Babi teaching known as Bābīyih. Originally a small house in the region of Bālā Khīyābān belonging to Mullā Muhammad Bāqir Qā'inī, it was the residence of Mullā Husain during his visits to Mashhad. It became a centre for Mullā 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 Bābīyih 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 Māzandarān[2].

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1. See above Chapter One.

2. *Nabīl*. pp.126-7, *Fu'ādī*. pp.48-9. In the summer of 1264 (1848), Mullā Ḥusain on his return from Āzarbāījān and Māzandarān, was able to buy in the neighbourhood of Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir'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 Bābīyih, a name that bears to the present day'(*Nabīl*. 267).

According to the earlier arrangement with the Bab, Mullā Husain sent a letter to Shiraz. In this letter, as Nabīl Zarandī 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'[1]. If Nabīl 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 Mullā Husain's account, before he set out for Hijāz[2]. Indeed the outcome of Mullā Husain's mission, particularly during his stay in Mashhad, indicates that his efforts were generally concentrated on three major groups: ʿulama and tullāb, local merchants and a few local state officials. Although it appears that such clear distinctions were not of prime importance in Mullā 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 ʿulama and merchants were concerned, is sometimes difficult and even misleading.

Another difficult distinction to make is that between the urban and rural backgrounds of Mullā 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 ʿulama and tullāb, 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 Bushrūyih, Mullā Husain's home town, between 1260-64 (1844-8) more than sixty individuals firmly accepted the Babi creed. Records

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1. *Nabīl*. 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 Būshihr on 26th Shaʿbān 1260, and subsequently embarked from Būshihr for Jidda on 19th Ramażān 1260 (2nd October 1844). Therefore, concerning the approximate arrival of Mullā Ḥusain to Mashhad, under no circumstances can *Nabīl's* date (p.126) for the arrival of Mullā Ḥusain's letter to the Bab on 27th Ramaḍān 1260 (10 October 1844) be justified. Some evidence suggests that he must have received the letter after his return from the *Ḥajj* (see below Chapter Nine). It should be pointed out that no trace of this report can be found other than the single reference in *Nabīl*.

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 ʿAbdallāhābād, seven in Mahnih, ten in Hisār and Nāmiq, five in Fayżābād, two in Dūghābād, three in Turshīz, nine in Qā'in (seven of them originally from Herat), two from Bajistān, two from Tabas and one each from Tūn, Kākhk and Gunābād. In the north-western region also, thirty-two can be identified in Mayāmay, five from Bīyārjmand 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), Nīshābūr (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 ṭullāb, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between the converts and sympathisers amongst the ordinary people. The reference in *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Khurāsān* that at one stage 2000 inhabitants of Būshruyih 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 Muhammad Bāqir Qā'inī in Mashhad or to Mullā Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, the mujtahid of Mayāmay and Mullā Ahmad the mujtahid of Hisār and Nāmiq, who were converted together with all their students and followers, may be mentioned[1].

The first and foremost group among the early believers, both in position and number, were those who came from the ranks of the ʿulama, namely low ranking mullas, newly authorised mujtahids and a few well established ʿulama 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 ṭullāb and ʿulama who recognised the Bab were influenced

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1. *Fu'ādī*, 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 ʿulama 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 Shiʿi ʿulama 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 *sharʿ*. 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 Mullā Husain's first residence in Mashhad in 1260-1 (1844-5). The first of them, Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq Yazdī, a leading Shaykhi mujtahid of his time, was counted amongst 'the senior ʿulama' of Khurasan[1]. A former disciple of Ahsā'ī, he studied under him especially during his residence in Yazd in the 1230's (1810's)[2], and even according to Muʿīn al-Saltanih, was sometimes his host in that city[3]. His father, according to *Nuqtat al-Kāf*, was a converted Jew originally from Yazd[4], and he himself seems to have emigrated to the district of Turbat-i Haydarīyih, where his family settled in the village of Fayżābād in Muhavvalāt[5]. He completed his studies in ʿAtabāt, particularly under the celebrated teacher Sharīf al-ʿUlamā in fiqh and usūl[6], and eventually received a number of ijāzāt for ijtihād[7].

After spending some time in different centres such as Shiraz and Yazd[8], he

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1. *Tabaqat*. II, 2, 723.
2. *Nabil*. 7. Shaykh Aḥmad's residence in Yazd was roughly between 1223-28 Q. (1808-1813). *Sharḥ-i Aḥwāl*ʿ, op.cit. pp.28-35, compare with Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī *Hidāyat al-Ṭālibīn* 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 ʿAtabāt. It is interesting to see that in *Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn* (op.cit., pp.21-22), Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī does not mention ʿAbd al-Khāliq amongst those ʿulama and ṭullāb who acknowledged Shaykh Aḥmad'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. *Tārīkh-i Yahūd-i Irān* 3 vols., Tehran, 1339 Sh., III, book vi, pp.507-586. 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 Fayżābād, which suggests that his father was also a resident of this village. *Tārīkh-i Yahūd* (op.cit. III, pp.522, 592, 634) indicates the presence of the Jews in Turbat-i Haydarīyih. Kayhān (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 Isḥāq Khān's governorship.
6. *Maṭlaʿ al-Shams*, op.cit. II, 399.
7. *Ṭabaqāt*. op.cit. The text of his ijāzāt appears at the end of one of his books, *Muʿīn al-Mujtahidīn*.
8. *Maṭlaʿ 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 *Tauhīd Khānih* of the Shrine[1]. 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 ʿilm al-Māsa*)[2]. Perhaps following the example of his teacher, Shaykh Ahmad Ahsā'ī, his venture into the field of sciences gave him the necessary confidence to assume a certain authority for himself in the Shaykhi camp[3]. After Ahsā'ī's death, according to Nabīl Zarandī, he competed against and even challenged Sayyid Kāzim, but later in the course of time accepted his authority[4].

Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq was one of the chief defenders of the Shaykhi cause in Iran. On one occasion, when Mullā Muhammad 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, Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq openly challenged him in a public dispute[5]. The extent of the controversy even reached Muhammad Shāh, who on the way back from the Herat campaign (Rajab 1254 Q./1838-9)[6], personally intervened in the matter, and subsequently obliged Sharīʿatmadār to return to Tehran[7]. 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[8]. Such an incident may be regarded as a clear indication of the emergence of a more challenging attitude in the Shaykhi school. Mullā Husain gained a great success in his mission by winning Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq's support. His recognition could 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

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1. *Maṭlaʿ al-Shams*, op.cit. cf. *NK*. 101.
2. *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 2, 723; *Maṭlaʿ al-Shams*, op.cit.
3. *Nabil*. 7.
4. Ibid. 11.
5. *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 1, pp.254-5 and the mentioned sources.
6. *RS*. X, pp.243-245.
7. *Ṭabaqāt*. op.cit.
8. *NK*. 101.

Babi circle. The importance given by the Bab to Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq's recognition is evident not only in his correspondence with the old mujtahid, but also in one of his letters to Muhammad Shāh in 1263-4, where he designates Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq together with Sayyid Yahyā Dārābī (Vahīd) as the Bab's representatives, known to the Shah, to whom inquiry could be made about the truth of his cause[1].

As may be concluded from *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh*, Yazdī was amongst the first to be converted by Mullā Husain in Khurasan[2]. But, since *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh* 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 Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq[3], the Bab in his usual imprecatory style discussed important matters, the revelation of which, had Yazdī been an unbeliever, would have seemed quite illogical[4]. Further there is an important Arabic letter by Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq 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 (*Dhikrallāh*) amongst ʿArab and ʿAjam'[5]. He wholly acknowledges Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad's status of *Bābīyat* 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 (*jannat al-ʿadl*) 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

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1. Letter to Muhammad Shāh, *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.
5. *INBA*. pub.No.98, pp.109-110. (Also cited in *Z*. 172).

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 ʿAbd 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-Rābiʿ*) 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 ʿAbd 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 ʿulama of the city. As a result he was again 'barred from jumʿih 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 ʿAlī Ḥujjat Zanjānī

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1. Ibid. The authenticity of the letter seems to be confirmed by a reference in *Nuqṭat al-Kāf* (203) to the conversion of Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq: '... and he presented to his excellency (i.e. the Bab) notification of conversion' (*ʿarīzih-i taṣdīqnāmih*) 'with the highest degree of gratefulness'. All the evidence confirms that Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq was amongst the first in Khurasan who was informed of the Bab's claims, yet Nabīl Zarandī (*Nabil*. 125), perhaps with the advantage of hindsight as regards ʿAbd 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 *Nabil*. (7, 11) mentions Yazdī's name in relation to Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim, his tone is rather critical.

2. *INBA*. pub.No.91, pp.94-102. *Mashhad al-Rābiʿ* in the Bab's writings is a reference to Mashhad. It appears that it was ranked fourth after Najaf, Karbilā' and Kaẓimayn in the order of the Shiʿi sanctuaries.

3. *NT*. III, 236.

4. *Z*. 173. (Bahā'allāh's account cited in Nabīl Zarandī). This is one of the few passages used by the author of *Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq*, which did not appear in the English edition of *Nabil's Narrative*.

and many other 'extremist' ʿulama 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 *mufsidīn fī al-arḍ* [1].

In 1265, the death of his young son Shaykh ʿAlī in the Tabarsī uprising, which happened at the same time as the Bab's claim for *Qā'imiyat*, shattered the faith of the old mujtahid, and brought him to the point of denial[2]. Bahā'allāh's references to ʿAbd al-Khāliq's denunciation, clearly illustrate the latter's disillusion in facing the consequences of the Babi upheavals . While in Tehran, he received a letter from the Bab sent to him through Vahīd Dārābī. 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 later[4].

Mullā ʿAbd 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 disapproval. 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 ʿAbd al-Khāliq Yazdī another example of a Babi conversion amongst the high ranking Shaykhi ʿulama, with the same moderate views, was Mīrzā (Sayyid) Aḥmad Azghandī. Originally from Azghand, a village in the hinterland of Turbat, his sphere of activities extended from Mashhad to Yazd[5]. He was a Shaykhi mujtahid[6], with some skill in Shīʿī ḥadīth. Nabīl Zarandī, who ranks

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1. *Narrative of Mīrzā Luṭf ʿAlī Shīrāzī*, op.cit. 15.
2. *Nabil*. p.423, *NK*. p.203.
3. *Z*. pp.173-74. During the final days of Ṭabarsī, ʿAbd al-Khāliq sent a letter to his son Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī, in which he strongly urged him to desert the fighting and come out of the fortress. In his reply however, Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī firmly rejected the idea by maintaining that since ʿAbd 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 Luṭf ʿAlī* op.cit. 135).
4. *Maṭlaʿ 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 Aḥmad.

him amongst the most learned ʿulama of the province[1], 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[2]. 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-Bāṭil*[3]. According to *Nabīl*, the sole copy of it was destroyed by one of his opponents, who was a supporter of Kirmānī, during Azghandī's abode in Yazd[4].

Yet, in the light of later developments, it appears that Mīrzā Ahmad, similar to ʿAbd 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 Māzandarān upheaval[5]. Yet, as far as our sources are concerned, Azghandī did not participate in the series of events which finally ended in the Māzandarān 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[6]. However, this cautious approach did not protect him even in his own base, Turbat-i Haydarīyih. 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[7].

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1. *Nabīl*. 125.
2. *Nabīl*. pp.184-85. (Account of Mullā Ṣādiq Muqaddas, quoting a Khurāsānī friend, during his journey in mid-1261 to Yazd).
3. Composition of *Izhāq al-Bāṭil*, 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 Shaykhis against Babi preaching.
4. A certain Mīrzā Taqī, an 'ambitious' mujtahid had recently returned from Najaf. (*Nabīl*. p.185). No more details are known about him, yet it is possible to identify him with Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Yazdī (mentioned in *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 1, 206) who was at the time a religious authority in Yazd. *Nabīl'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 Ṭabarsī upheaval (*NK*. 139, also *Fuʾādī*. 76 and *KD*. I, 133). No trace of this has yet been found amongst the Bab's works.
6. *Nabīl*. 185.
7. *Fuʾādī*. 76.

If Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq and Mullā Ahmad Azghandī 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. Mullā Muhammad Bāqir Qā'inī (sometimes known as Harātī), a learned mujtahid of Mashhad with a relative amount of wealth and influence, was an outstanding example of this Babi radicalism[1]. Originally from Qā'in[2], it was during his residence in Mashhad, perhaps due to past acquaintance, that he was eventually brought to the movement by Mullā Husain[3]. He was the co-founder of the Bābīyih and a devoted preacher of the Babi cause from the pulpit[4]. His financial support covered the expenses of the Bābīyih, and after 1263 (1847) possibly extended to the purchase of arms in Mashhad[5]. His untiring efforts in the later years of the movement, and his participation in Tabarsī, finally ended in his violent death in the city of Āmul. 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[6].

The conversion of Qā'inī, like that of many other Babi figures, naturally brought about the conversion of many other relatives and followers. In addition to his wife[7], his son[8] and his brother[9], 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'[10]. A large group

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1. *Fu'ādī*. 49 and *Z*. 160.
2. His father who was originally from Herat, had settled in Qā'in. His nephew Mullā Muhammad Qā'inī (known as Nabīl Qā'inī), oddly enough, did not give any more details on his uncle's life in his version of *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* known as *Tārīkh-i Badīʿ-i Bayānī*.
3. *Tārīkh-i Mīmīyih*, op.cit. (*Browne, Or. MSS*. 3 and *INBA*. 2).
4. *Nabil*. pp.125-6.
5. *Fu'ādī*. pp.48-50. Interesting accounts of the Babi armament in Mashhad appear in *Fu'ādī*. pp.34-5 and *Tārīkh Mīmīyih* (*Browne MSS*. pp.5-10 and *INBA*. pp.4-10).
6. *NK*. pp.203-4; *Tārīkh-i Mīmīyih* (*Browne MSS*. 108 and *INBA*. 110); *NH*. 103.
7. *Fu'ādī*. pp.48-50.
8. Ibid.
9. *Narrative of Mīrzā Luṭf ʿAlī Shīrāzī*, op.cit. (*Browne Or. MSS*. F28(9) III, 61 and *INBA*. 62).
10. *Z*. 160 (quoting an unknown source).

of followers who performed their prayers behind Qā'inī in the Bābīyih, could in fact be regarded as the backbone of the Babi forces who started the Māzandarān campaign in 1264 (1848)[1]. Nearly all sources agree that Qā'inī, '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 Tabarsī[2]. 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, Qā'inī himself trained and commanded the Babis in action[3].

During this phase of unrest in Khurasan, just before the beginning of the Mashhad rebellion of Ramadān, 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 Mashhadī 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'bān 1264 for Māzandarān[4]. Later, during the Tabarsī episode, he was military adviser, and after the death of Mullā Husain, the military commander of the Babi fortress. The surviving accounts of Tabarsī give frequent references to his skilful and often spontaneous plans for the fortification of Tabarsī, 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

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1. *Tārīkh-i Mīmīyih*. op.cit.
2. *NH*. 103.
3. *Tārīkh-i Mīmīyih*. op.cit.
4. Events regarding the gathering of Babis in Mashhad in 1264 (1848) are beyond the limits of this study. Among other sources, *Tārīkh-i Mīmīyih* 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 tullāb who shortly before Mullā Husain, mostly in the months following the death of Rashtī, had returned from ʿAtabāt and either gathered in Mashhad, or established in their home towns as local mujtahids. Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Turshīzī, titled ʿAẓīm, Mullā Aḥmad Hisārī, Mullā Muḥammad Dūghābādī (Furūghī), Mullā Shaykh ʿAlī Fayżābādī (son of Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq), Mullā ʿAlī Bajistānī, may all be considered as being from this group. Coming from the same area as Mullā Husain, they shared the same background and a similar primary training to Bushrūyihī.

Shaykh ʿAlī ʿAẓīm came from Turshīz (now Kāshmar), a small desert town west of Turbat-i Haydarīyih, not far from Bushrūyih[1]. 'One of the outstanding students of Sayyid Kāẓim'[2], 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 Tabarsī, 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[3].

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 Āzarbāijān, with the ultimate purpose of releasing the Bab from his incarceration in Chihriq[4], ʿAẓīm planned a rising in Tehran in 1265 (1849), to remove Mīrzā Taqī Khān Amīr Kabīr and Mīrzā Abul Qāsim Imām Jumʿih of Tehran in one move[5]. This plot, while still in its primary stage, was disclosed and frustrated by the secret agents of Amīr Kabīr[6], but nevertheless it cost the lives of the 'Seven Martyrs'

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1. Kayhān, op.cit. 201.
2. *Mutanabbi'īn*. op.cit. 79.
3. No real attempt has been made here to discuss fully the ideas and later activities of ʿAẓīm, which by themselves deserve separate investigation. A few sources such as *Mutanabbi'īn*, *Nabil*, *NK.*, and *Nicolas*, provide valuable materials for a fuller biography of this important Babi figure. In a series of articles written by Muḥammad Muḥīṭ Ṭabāṭabā'ī about the sources of Babi-Bahā'ī history, the author devotes one article to Shaykh ʿAlī ʿAẓīm (*Māhnāmih-i Gauhar*) in which he gives a brief and simplified account of ʿAẓīm's life based on limited materials. Muḥīṭ'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)
4. *Nabil*. pp.301-8.
5. *Ahmad*. 469 and *Mutanabbi'īn*, op.cit. pp.95-102.
6. *NK*. pp.259-260 and *Mutanabbi'īn*, 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, ʿAẓīm assumed the deputyship of the Bab, which in practice led to his command over the extremist elements[1]. Again in 1268 (1852), he was the chief organiser behind the unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, which resulted in an extensive massacre of the Babis throughout Iran. Shaykh ʿAlī himself met his death when after the massacre of all the alleged conspirators, under pressure from the government, a fatvā was issued by Imām Jumʿih approving ʿAẓīm's execution. Mīrzā ʿAlī Khān Ḥājib al-Daulih and his executors jointly slaughtered him[2].

The conversion of Mullā (Mīrzā) Muḥammad Furūghī on the other hand was an example of regional interconnection between the Babis of central Khurasan[3]. Originally from Dūghābād, a hamlet near Fayżābād in the district of Muḥavvalāt, south-west of Turbat-i Ḥaydarīyih[4], like Azghandī, he also settled in Turbat[5]. He knew Mullā Ḥusain from his childhood, and associated with him as a classmate and friend for a long time[6]. *Nabīl* believes that among the early believers in Khurasan, his 'learning was unsurpassed except' by that of Mīrzā Aḥmad Azghandī[7], but it appears that like many other Shaykhi students, he also practiced *ʿilm-i aʿdād*[8], which signifies that, beside formal studies, he had interest in the unconventional and heterodox fields.

He was one of the rare survivors of Ṭabarsī (Remnants of the Sword: *Baqīyat al-Sayf*), who miraculously escaped death in the final massacre of the Ṭabarsī participants in the military camp[9]. 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 *Nabīl*, who has often been quoted on different

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1. *Mutanabbi'īn*, pp.79, *Vaqāyiʿ-i Ittifāqīyih*, no.82 (10th Dhu al-Qaʿda 1268).
2. *Nabīl*. 637 compare with *Mutanabbi'īn*, 106 and *Vaqāyiʿ-i Ittifāqīyih*, op.cit.
3. See further below.
4. *Tarā'iq*, III, 714. The village Dūghābād is known in Bahā'ī literature as *Furūgh* (*Fu'ādī*. 78).
5. *Fu'ādī*. 78.
6. *Nabīl*. pp.331-34. See also above Chapter Four, I.
7. *Nabīl*. 125.
8. *Fu'ādī*. 86.
9. Z. pp.155-57 n. (Account of Ustād Muḥammad Riżā Dūghābādī). Also *Fu'ādī*. pp.78-9.

occasions[1]. Later, in the controversy between Bahā'allāh and Mīrzā Yahyā Nūrī, Subh-i Azal, he wholly supported the former, and remained a devoted Bahā'ī[2]. He died in 1295 Q. (1878)[3].

IV

Besides the converted ʿulama, 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 ʿulama. Factors such as the traditional links between the ʿulama and tujjār, family and commercial interconnections and affiliations with a religious leader made it possible for them to become acquainted with the new call.

Āqā ʿAlī Riżā Tājir Shīrāzī, 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 talabih in the Madrasih of Mīrzā Jaʿfar 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 (*ʿahd-i barādarī*) with his classmate Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī (Quddūs)[5]. It also appears that he and Quddūs belonged to a talabih group of which Mullā Husain was also a member[6]. At the time of his departure from Mashhad, however, Quddūs withdrew his oath, since, according to *Tārīkh-i Khurāsān*, he believed that it was impossible for Āqā ʿAlī

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1. He seems to be *Nabīl'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 Nabīl Zarandī compiled his narrative.
2. *Fu'ādī*. pp.79-80.
3. Z. 157.
4. *Fu'ādī*. 74.
5. Ibid. This was a common practice between two or more ṭullāb 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 Mullā Ḥusain and Mullā Ṣādiq Muqaddas (see above Chapter Six) and that of Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Shaftī and Ḥājī Ibrāhīm Karbāsī (*Q*. 140) may be mentioned. See also below Chapter Nine, II.
6. Z. p.174. The author of *Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq* seems to draw his information from a certain ʿAbd al-Mu'min who is perhaps identifiable with Āqā Sayyid Mu'min cited in *TMS*. pp.62-3.

Riżā to fulfil the strict terms of the pledge[1]. Yet, whether the real reason behind the retraction was Āqā ʿAlī Riżā's engagement in trade, which in Quddūs' view would inevitably distance him from talabih life, or Quddūs' 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 ʿAlī Riżā to respond to Mullā Husain's call, and subsequently offer his financial aid to the Khurāsānī followers. During the turmoil of 1264 (1848) in Mashhad, Āqā ʿAlī Riżā, while preparing himself to join the Babi marchers on their way to Māzandarān, was arrested by Sām Khān the biglarbaygī of Mashhad, who coveted his assets and under the pretext of blasphemy, bastinadoed him and extorted a large sum from him[2]. Later in his life, perhaps because of financial troubles, he abandoned his trade and became a local *ʿallāf*[3].

Hājī ʿAbdul Javād (Muhammad Javād) Yazdī was another example of the Babi merchants of Khurasan. A relative of Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq, and presumably one of his close adherents[4], he embraced the cause in its early days, perhaps as a result of ʿAbd al-Khāliq's efforts[5]. Established in Mashhad as a reliable broker, he was basically a commission-agent for the Yazdī merchants in the city, whilst his son-in-law, a certain Hājī Ghulām Husain Tājir Yazdī, himself a Babi, acted as the representative of the Afnān brothers, uncles of the Bab, in the city of Yazd[6].

Being a relative of Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq, it is very probable that Hājī ʿAbd al-Javād and his son-in-law were merchants with Shaykhi tendencies. Their connection with the Afnān brothers in Shiraz and Būshihr sheds more light on the channels through which merchants like ʿAbd al-Javād and Āqā ʿAlī Riżā Shīrāzī might have been encouraged to recognise the new call. Even more significant is

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1. *Fu'ādī*. 74.

2. Ibid. Sām Sām Khān Urus, the commander chief (*sartīp*) of the Armenian *fauj* of Bāhādurān, was originally a Russian officer (or perhaps refugee) in the service of the Iranian government. Except for short intervals, he was the biglarbaygī 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 Mullā Ḥusain's activities in the city, and report to the governor Ḥamzih Mīrzā. (*RS*. X, 422). If, according to *Ruḍat al-Ṣafā*, he died in 1265, he could not have been the chief of Bāhādurān when the first attempt was made to execute the Bab in Tabriz in 1266, as is reported by *Nabīl*. (pp.510-12). See also Lady Sheil, *Glimpses of Life and Manners* op.cit. 141.

3. A local grain merchant or even possibly a vendor of fodder. *Fu'ādī*. 74.

4. *Fu'ādī*. pp.104-5. Amongst the relatives of Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq there were others who became Babis. Āqā Muḥammad Ḥasan *Muzahhib*, (book illuminator), his nephew, and Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥusain Iʿtiżād al-Aṭibbā, his son-in-law, who was a physician.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

the trade organised by Shaykhi merchants on the Būshihr-Mashhad route, with representatives in Mashhad, Ṭabas, Yazd, Shiraz and Būshihr, which provides convincing evidence for the existence of a Shaykhi network of merchants, always closely linked to Shaykhi ʿulama, throughout the country[1].

Apart from the above mentioned tujjār, traces of the conversion of minor local traders and retailers are also detectable. Some of the *jadīd al-Islām* Jews of Turbat-i Ḥaydarīyih 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[2]. Already in 1266 (1850), according to *Fu'ādī*, at the time of Mullā Aḥmad 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[3]. The real motives behind this interest which seems to have been connected with ʿAbd 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 Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Majīd Nīshābūrī held the most remarkable place among the Babi merchants and traders of Khurasan. ʿAbd al-Majīd who was a dealer in turquoise and high quality shawls[4], 'through his father, enjoyed an unrivalled prestige as the owner of the best-known turquoise mine in Nīshāpūr'[5]. 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'ādī*. pp.183-5, compare with *Tārīkh-i Yahūd-i Irān* op.cit. III, 634. However according to Kuhan Ṣidq's notes cited in the latter source, the first Babis in Turbat-i Ḥaydarīyih 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.
3. *Fu'ādī*. pp.76, 185-6.
4. *Fu'ādī*. 55 and *Z*. 162.
5. *Nabil*. 125.

his name appears amongst the first individuals who accepted the call through Mullā Husain, possibly when he was passing through Nīshābūr on his way to Mashhad[1]. It seems he had not fully become convinced of the veracity of the cause until, like a few other Kāshānī and Iṣfahānī merchants[2], he embarked on his personal quest to visit the new manifestation. After visiting the Bab, either in the Hijāz or in Shiraz[3], 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 Ṭabarsī episode, he accompanied Mullā Husain on his march to Māzandarān, and not only financed most of the outgoings with valuable Kashmīr shawls or the wealth of the Nīshābūr mine, but, despite being in his mid-fifties, he participated actively in the fighting of Ṭabarsī[4].

After the fall of Ṭabarsī, he was captured and brought to the city of Bārfurūsh together with Quddūs and the other survivors. But unlike the others, his life was saved by the prince commander Mahdī Qulī Mīrzā, who noticed that Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Majīd, being a prosperous man, was too valuable to be slaughtered by the crowd[5]. Subsequently he managed to escape from the Tehran gaol after paying a ransom of a hundred tumāns[6]. In the following years, Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Majīd remained a zealous Babi and later Bahā'ī[7].

Twenty eight years after Ṭabarsī in 1294 (1877-8), Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Majīd met his death in the city of Mashhad in his mid-eighties. After much controversy, following the mujtahid's fatvā concerning his blasphemy, Āqā Muḥammad Bāqir

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1. *Fu'ādī*. 55.
2. See above Chapter Seven
3. *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, op.cit. cf. Z. 162.
4. Most of the Ṭabarsī accounts, including *Tārīkh-i Mīmīyih*, *Narrative of Mīrzā Luṭf ʿAlī* and *Nabil*. refer frequently to his role on many occasions.
5. *Tārīkh-i Mīmīyih*, op.cit. 109.
6. *Samandar*. 175. Malik Khusravī (*Tārīkh-i Shuhadā-yi Amr*, op.cit. II, 75) apparently uses another version of *Tārīkh-i Samandar* which has specified the amount of 100 tumāns.
7. Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Majīd's son Mīrzā Buzurg later titled Badīʿ, although he was for some time in doubt about the truthfulness of his father's new Babi-Bāhā'ī faith, later recognised Bāhā'allāh's call. In the course of a mission to the court of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, to deliver the message of Bāhā'allāh, he died under torture and became one of the hero martyrs of Bāhā'ī history. This was six years before the execution of Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Majīd (see below).

Najafī Isfahānī[1], the notorious enemy of the Babi-Bahā'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 ʿAbd 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[2].

Amongst the early conversions, though the contribution of members of the ʿulama 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 Shaykhis in the past. Later, two brothers, Mīrzā ʿAlī Riżā Mustaufī Sabzivārī, and then his brother Mīrzā Muhammad Riżā (later Mu'taman al-Saltanih), and some of their relatives became supporters of the Babi cause[3]. 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 Māzandarān march[4], and in the following years provided some comfort for the Babis at times of persecution and trouble[5]. Towards the 1870's (1290's), both brothers were promoted in their offices. While Mīrzā ʿAlī Riżā became one of the '*mustaufīyān-i hāżir rikāb*' (revenue accountants in the Royal presence)[6],

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1. Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir Isfāhānī, son of Shaykh Muhammad Taqī (the author of *Ḥāshīya al-Maʿālim*) and father of the famous Āqā Najafī, was the inheritor of his father's clerical fame, and also the real founder of the Najafī's financial power. (*Ṭabaqāt*. I, 1, pp.198-9, 247-8 and II, pp.215-17). The wealth and the influence of the Najafīs (Muḥammad Bāqir and Āqā Najafī), and their lengthy dispute with the governor of Iṣfāhān Ẓill al-Ṣulṭān over legal and economic domination in the city, made them outstanding in the clerical history of the 19th century. Their anti-Babi-Bahā'ī stand, which is apparent in Muḥammad Bāqir's efforts to destroy the Ṭabāṭabā'ī brothers in Isfahan (see above Chapter Seven, I) caused them to receive opprobrious treatment from the Bahā'ī sources.

2. *Fu'ādī*. (pp.56-65) contains a full account of the events which finally led to the execution of Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Majīd.

3. *Fu'ādī*. pp.30, 67.

4. Ibid. 67.

5. Ibid. pp.67-72. The author of *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Khurāsān*, uses every kind of local source, including oral accounts from the members of the Mustawfī 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 Āqā Mīrzā Buzurg Grāyulī Mustaufī (Ibid. pp.30, 73).

6. Muhammad Hasan Khān Iʿtimād al-Saltanih *Mirā't al-Buldān-i Nāṣirī*, Vol.III, Tehran 1296 Q., Supp. p.12. However, in *Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Khurāsān*, nothing is said about his service in Tehran. He died in 1268 Q. in his home town (Ibid. 68).

his brother occupied the office of *vizārat-i Khurāsān* (chief revenue accountant of Khurasan)[1]. Hence, since Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh was highly suspicious of Mu'taman al-Saltanih's Babi sentiments, he ordered his transfer to the city of Kāshān where he was virtually in exile. Later, in a well-thought-out plan to eliminate Mu'taman al-Saltanih, 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)[2].

Mīrzā Muhammad Taqī Juvaynī Sabzivārī, another Babi figure, came from amongst the Sabzivārī officials. Though he was a humble scribe and accountant (*dabīr va āvārihnigār*)[3], in his Babi career he showed himself to be a courageous and faithful Babi fighter. He was born in the village of Juvayn and encountered Mullā Husain on one of his visits to the town. Juvaynī's effective participation began when, in 1264 (1848), in the course of the Ṭabarsī 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 Babi 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 Qādīkalā'ī' in the forests around Bārfurūsh, as a reprisal for his deceitful behaviour towards the defenceless and confused Babi column[6]. In the final surrender of the Babi fighters, Mīrzā 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 Bārfurūsh[7].

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 ʿulama who were committed to the new doctrine, previous affiliations and

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1. *Al-Maʾāthir va al-Āthār* (op.cit. Supp. p.29) amongst the *mustaufīyān-i ḥuẓām* (senior mustaufīs) (also p.55). According to *Tārīkh-i Muntaẓam-i Nāṣirī* (op.cit. III, Supp. p.23), in 1300 Q. he was in charge of the districts of Malāyir and Tuysīrkān.
2. *Fuʾādī*. 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'.
4. *Nabil*. 417.
5. *Tārīkh-i Mīmīyīh*. op.cit. pp.22 (Negotiations with the governor of Māzandarān Khānlar Mīrzā), 34-5 (with ʿAbbās Qulī Khān Lārījānī).
6. Cited by nearly all Ṭabarsī accounts.
7. *Nabil*. 417.

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 Khurāsānī society, which traditionally looked to the ʿulama for protection and security, seems to have been less satisfied with the performance of the orthodox ʿulama. 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 ʿAlī Bastami and other Babi Letters were entangled in increasing obstacles in ʿAtabāt, 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 Kūfah was discussed, and the symbolic implications of such a declaration were examined[1]. After the departure of the early disciples to their assignment, the Bab himself, 'according to the previous arrangements'[2], which he made with his followers, decided to set out for Hijāz, 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 Qā'im in front of the Ka'ba, prior to the final uprising (*Khurūj*) in the land of Kūfah.

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 bi al-ḥaqq*) who is the just Qā'im (*Qā'im-i bi 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 Kūfah'[3].

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'[4]. This is what the Bab

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1. See above Chapter Four, III.
2. *NT*. III, 42.
3. Z. 235, Arabic *Tauqī'*. '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 Qā'im appears ...' presumably is a reference to a hadīth related from Imam Ja'far Ṣādiq. (*Biḥār 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 ʿAlī Muhammad from Shiraz in 26th Shaʿbān 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 Mullā ʿAbd 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 (*dīn-i khāliṣ*) 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 ʿAlī Qā'inī, son of Mullā ʿAbd 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'[3].

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1. *Khuṭba al-Jidda* (Arabic), *INBA*. 91, XIX, pp.60-73 (66). In this important *Khuṭba*, 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 Ḥijāz. This *Khutba* is used in this chapter as the most reliable source for setting dates.

2. Arabic *Tawqīʿ* to Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq Yazdī, *INBA*. 91, pp.94-102 (96), written after his return from Ḥajj. For further details see below. For details about Mullā ʿAbd 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 ʿAlī Qā'inī. In one place (p.67) the Bab sends his regards to Shaykh ʿAlī'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 ʿAlī 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 ʿAbd 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 Shaʿbān 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[1], as well as the reluctance shown by Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī to reveal the name of the promised Bab in ʿAtabāt[2], indicates that to a large extent they observed the secrecy agreed upon[3].

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. Hājī Mīrzā Muhammad Taqī Vakīl al-Haqq, 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 (*nā'ib*) of the Qā'im, but his sacred name was not mentioned'[4]. In the course of one of his visits to the Bab in the month of Shaʿbān, about a week before his departure, Muhammad Taqī saw the Bab sitting on the terrace of his house and writing prayers and verses. When Vakīl al-Haqq enquired about the rumours that the new Deputy of the Imam prohibited the smoking of *qalīyān*, the Bab confirmed it without any further comments[5]. As in his reply to Hājī Ahmad Īshīk 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 Mirza 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 Chiraz 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.
4. Memoirs of Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Vakīl al-Ḥaqq, cited in *Khāndān-i Afnān*, op.cit. pp.104-117 (ii. pp.110-111).
5. Ibid.

> préjugés et en superstitions, le Kerbèlaï Seïd 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 maitre 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 Mazandéran et le Khorasan. En l'absence du maitre, qui etait parti presque en fugitif, ses disciples s'occupèrent activement à soutenir et à étendre sa renommée'[1].

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 Fārs 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 Ḥajj[2].

A series of riots and public disturbances in the towns and villages of Fārs, which had already started earlier in the year, reached their climax in the month of Shaʿbān (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[3]. With regard to the protests and agitations which followed the appointment of Mīrzā Nabī Khān Māzandarānī[4] to the governorship of Fārs, in early August 1844 (Rajab 1260) Sheil reports: 'The province of Fars

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1. *Kazem Beg*. VII, pp.344-5.
2. See above Chapter Six
3. A systematic coverage of the events of Fārs 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 Fārs is mainly due to his concern for the disruption of southern trade and its effect on the British commerce through Būshihr.
4. Sometimes known as Ṣāḥib Dīvān or Amīr Dīvān Qazvīnī, he is the father of Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān Mushīr al-Daulih Sipahsālār, the celebrated prime minister of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. He was a minor official in the latter part of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh's reign who was later promoted in the mid-1830's to the important office of Ṣāḥib Dīvān (chief official of secular jurisdiction), during Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsi's premiership. Though sometimes in disagreement with Ḥājī (and possibly in collaboration with Mīrzā Āqā Khān Nūrī), 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'[1]. 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[2]. In fact from the early days of his office, Mīrzā 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 Mīrzā 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 Ḥaydarī quarters in the city, as well as the leaders of the Niʿmatī quarters and thus provided a relatively united front[3]. 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 Ḥaydarī-Niʿmatī 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 lūṭīs 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 Neʿmetees, who engage in contests which are usually periodical and insignificant, but which increase in fierceness and

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1. F.O. 60/105, No.87, Sheil to Aberdeen, 1st August 1844.
2. Regarding the practice of sale of offices under Muḥammad Shāh, Mīrzā 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 Nāmih* (p.299) and Sheil (F.O. 60/105, No.87) agree that beside the offering (*pīshkish*) he had no real support.
3. F.O. 60/105, No.87; *Fārs Nāmih*, 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[2], usually found himself in alliance with Muhammad Khān Īlbaygī Qashqā'ī from the Maydān-i Shāh quarter (Haydarī)[3] who was almost as important as Qavām. These three together with three other notables of the remaining Haydarī quarters (*Haydarī Khānih*) as well as with the tacit cooperation with the chief of *Niʿmatī Khānih* were able to exert the same pressure which had caused the fall of Manūchihr Khān Muʿtamid al-Daulih in 1252 (1836-7), Firaydūn Mīrzā in 1256 (1840-1) and Farhād Mīrzā in 1258 (1842-3) from the governorship of Fars[4].

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 (Āzarbāījān) during Muḥarram religious mourning of 1835 (*Glimpses of Life and Manners*, op.cit. Note C, pp.322-6). Other sources such as *Fārs Nāmih*, op.cit. II, 22 (and other scattered references) on Shiraz; Z. pp.406-7 on Bārfurūsh; *Shaykhīgarī va Bābīgarī*, op.cit. pp.253-5 on Kirmān; *Jughrāfīyā-yi Iṣfāhān*, op.cit. pp.89-90 on Isfahan, confirm the widespread presence of such divisions throughout Iran. The role of the lūṭīs 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 Mīrzā 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 Nāmih*, I, 198ff.; II, 47-53) and *Ḥaqāyiq al-Akhbār-i Nāṣirī*, op.cit. pp.307-13.

3. The Qashqā'ī Khans played a major role in maintaining control over the countryside particularly in the 1830's and 40's. (*Fārs Nāmih*. 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 Khān Īlbaygī Qashqā'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 bīglarbaygī, kadkhudābāshīs and kadkhudās on the one hand, and various elements with tribal or urban origin such as Īlbaygī, prominent ʿulama 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, Īlbaygī 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[1]. In mid-August 1844, Mīrzā Nabī attempted to publish the *farmān* 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'[2].

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 Sultān from Ishāq Bayg quarter[3], 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:

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1. Examples of lūṭīs' destructive clashes in Shiraz, particularly in conjunction with the struggle between conflicting poles of power in the city, are recorded in *Fārs Nāmih*. I, 287ff. Also H.G. Migeod 'Die Lūṭīs' 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.

3. *Fārs Nāmih*. I, 299.

> '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 Neʿmetee party happened to pass through the parish occupied by Heyderee 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'[1].

After referring to various disturbances which simultaneously occurred in other towns and villages of Fars, and also the dispute which broke out between the Simnānī and Hamadānī 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 Heyderees 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'[2].

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[3]. 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

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1. F.O. 60/105, No.90, Supplement; Translation: Substance of a letter from the Agent at Shiraz to Lieutenant Colonel Sheil. According to *Fārs Nāmih* (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'[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[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 ʿulama'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 Haydarī-Niʿmatī divisions, since in the event of any strong action from the opposing ʿulama 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

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1. Ibid.
2. Regarding the long history of Qavām al-Mulk's family association with the Shirazī lūṭīs (see *Fārs Nāmih*, I, 289ff., and cf. *Ḥaqāyiq al-Akhbār*, op.cit. 307ff), it is not unrealistic to suggest that in the present round of hostilities, Qavām al-Mulk deliberately encouraged the lūṭīs' disturbances in order to emphasise his hostility towards Mīrzā Muhammad 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 Mullā Ṣādiq 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[1]. This was because the declaration coincided with the arrival of the new governor who backed the 'ulama, 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 Ḥajj, 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 Būshihr in 6th Ramaḍān (20th September 1844) where he stayed for two weeks before boarding the sailing vessel which took the pilgrims to Jidda on 19th Ramaḍān. Two days after his arrival at *Jazīrat al-Baḥr*[2], 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

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1. See above Chapter Six, I.
2. The title given to Būshihr by the Bab (*Khuṭba 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 (*taqdīr*) 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-Nujabā*)[1] provide the means of my return as may be best. It is two days since I entered Būshihr. 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 Mubārak, only Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī (Quddūs) accompanied the Bab[3]. Quddūs, who attended the Bab as his secretary (*kātib*), seems to have been chosen by the Bab partly because of the former's original intention to perform Hajj in the same year[4], 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 Quddūs to accompany him to Mecca, where he apparently took the oath of fraternity (*sīghih-i ukhuvvat*) with him[5]. However, it appears that Quddūs 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 Kirmān 1262 (1846) gave him some significance amongst his followers.

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1. A reference to the Prophet, ʿAlī, Fāṭima , Ḥasan and Ḥusain.
2. *Khāndān-i Afnān*, op.cit. pp.166-7. The letter written in a most excellent *shikastih* style facsimilied 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. *Bayān*, IV, 18 (p.146); *Nabil*. 129 and *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. 37. *Nicolas* (p.206) believes that Mullā Ḥusain Bushrūyihī and Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī Shīrāzī, uncle of the Bab, also accompanied him, while *TMS*. (p.73) reckons that Mīrzā Sayyid ʿAlī Shīrāzī and Sayyid Kāẓim Zanjānī were present. However both sources seem to have wrongly identified Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī, mentioned in *al-Ṣaḥīfa Bayn al-Ḥaramayn* (see below) with Sayyid ʿAlī Shīrāzī. 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 Bārfurūshī in fact first met the Bab in the course of Ḥajj, but such a claim has not been substantiated by any other sources.
5. *TMS*. 81.

From the time of embarkation in Būshihr till their arrival at Mecca on the first Dhū 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 Būshihr and Bandar ʿAbbās on the Persian coast[1], Muscat, and Mocha (in Bāb al-Mandab) before finally arriving at Jidda[2]. Besides the inland caravan routes to the Hijāz[3], 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[4].

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[5]. 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 Būshihr to Muscat, which took us twelve days, as we were not able to take water, I contented myself with the juice of sweet lemon'[6].

The agony of pilgrimage so much tormented the Bab that later in *Bayān*, he

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1. Lorimer, II, A. under Kangān.
2. *Z.* p.288, 'Khuṭba fī Kangān' (partly cited in *Nuqṭih-i Ulā*, op.cit. 134); *INBA*. 91, XV and XVI, pp.51-6, 'Letters from Muscat'; ibid. XVII and XVIII, p.56-60, Letters from Mocha.
3. See below this Chapter.
4. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh* (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. (*Nabīl*. 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 Fūṭūḥ 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).
6. *Bayān*, IV, 16, p.143.

exempted, amongst others, those who should undertake a sea voyage to Mecca from Hajj. Even for those who are obliged (*mustaṭīʿ*) 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 *Arż-i Farangistān* and regrets that even the *chāpārī* service in Iran is monopolised by 'the possessors of authority' and is not available to the deprived and poor (*mustażaʿfīn*)[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 forebearing, 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, 1893 (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'[1]. Mīrzā Abul Ḥasan Shīrāzī, 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[2].

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'[3], naturally created a good excuse for a fellow citizen such as Shaykh Abū Hāshim Shīrāzī[4] to stage a strong attack against the Bab. But as the provocations and insults of Abū Hāshim 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 Hāshim 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 Abul Hasan recounts that 'the captain, who was impressed by the Bab's innocence and his attempt at mediation, finally accepted'. Yet Abū Hāshim, in spite of the Bab's mediation, lost no time in creating more trouble for the Bab[5], by reporting his activity to the ʿulama even before he returned to Shiraz.

Reaching Muscat, the Bab arrived at the house of the Imam Jumʿih 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

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1. 'Letter to the ʿUlama' (*Kitāb ilā al-ʿUlamā'*), *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,
4. Son of Shaykh Muḥammad and younger brother of Shaykh Abū Turāb Imām Jumʿih of Shiraz. (*Fārs Nāmih*. II, pp.61-2).
5. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. 38-9.

Book judged him amongst assailants'[1]. 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 *Ẓuhūr*. Sayyid Javād Muḥarrir, the Isfahanī scribe who had already heard of the advent of the Qā'im from Mullā Ḥusain[2] and hurriedly arrived at Shiraz when the Bab had already left the city, finally visited in Muscat the Shirazī merchant whom he reckoned to be the promised Bab.

From the description given by Mullā Ḥusain 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'ih 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 Shīrāzī[3]. 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. Aḥsā'ī) and Sayyid-i Rashtī?' I humbly said 'With intimate companionship'. He then said: 'Here you should do the same'[4]. 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

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1. Letter to the 'Ulamā', p.39. The identity of the Imām Jum'ih 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 Baḥr al-'Ulūm and a prolific writer, skilful in *ḥikma* and logic. (*Ṭabaqāt*. II, 2, pp.606-7). Being from Qaṭīf he probably had some Akhbārī tendencies. His correspondence with Sayyid Kāẓim 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. *Biḥār al-Anwār* op.cit., XIII, Chapter 6, sections 8, 17-19.

4. *Memoirs of Sayyid Javād Muḥarrir*, op.cit. p.30.

> his excellency ordered him to continue. At the end (of the meeting), as I had heard that the names of (all) true followers (*shīʿayān*) are registered in the Imam's *ṣaḥīfa*, 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 (*manāsik*). He performed thoroughly all the required rites of dressing in *iḥrām*, visiting the Great Mosque, circumambulation of the Kaʿba, *saʿy* between Safā and Marwa, ceremonies of the Ḥajj proper in ʿArafa, and the sacrifice of *Yaum al-Naḥr*[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 Būshihr in 24th Safar, and arrived sometime at the end of Jumādā 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 Rābigh, 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 Ḥarb 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 Rābigh[3].

Thus the general insecurity of the area also affected the Bab on the road. After he departed from Medina, on first Ṣafar 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.
2. *Nabil*. p.132-3. In a symbolic process, the Bab sacrificed nineteen lambs in Minā. A full description of *manāsik* appears in many contemporary accounts; Burckhart, J.L., *Travels in Arabia*, London, 1829, 2 vols., pp. 246-91 and Burton, op.cit., II. A brief summary of pilgrim practices appears in G.E. von Grunebaum, *Muhammadan Festivals*, London, 1958, pp.15-49 (and notes) and *EI*^{2}, ḤADJDJ.
3. de Gaury, G. *Rulers of Mecca*, New York, n.d., pp.245-7.

the desert[1]. The loss in this robbery of various *sahīfas*, *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 *sahīfa* 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-Amn* (i.e. Shiraz)[2].

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. Mīrzā Abul Ḥasan Shīrāzī seems to be the only account which clearly states that at the end of Ḥajj rites, when the floor and the roof of Masjid al-Ḥarām were fully occupied with pilgrims, in the presence of Quddūs and others, the Bab stood against the wall, holding the ring knob of the Kaʿba's door and three times in 'the most eloquent and exquisite voice', announced; 'I am the Qā'im whom you were expecting. (انی انا القائم الذی کنتم به تنتظرون)[3].

This was the verse which according to Mīrzā Abul Ḥasan was recited by the Bab in order to announce his mission. However, according to the Shīʿī traditions, the verse which the Qā'im is supposed to read at the time of declaration in Mecca varies from source to source. Shaykh Saddūq in *Kamāl al-Dīn*[4] and Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm in his *Kitāb al-Ghayba*[5] under the heading of *Khurūj* quoted the verse

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1. *Nabīl*. (p.132) wrongly assumes that the robbery had taken place on the way from Jidda to Mecca, though *Khuṭbat al-Jidda* makes it clear that it happened on the above route (op.cit. p.69).
2. List of the stolen works appears in *INBA*. 91, XVII, p.57 (*Letter to Khāl*); also *Z*. pp.289-90, cf. *Khuṭbat al-Jidda*, op.cit. p.69. See below.
3. Cited in *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. pp.40-41. *TMS*. (p.37) has quoted the same verse with minor differences.
4. Cited in *Biḥār al-Anwār*, op.cit., trans. 550.
5. Ibid. 558.

from the *Qur'an* 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 Mīrzā Abul Hasan seems to be particularly influenced by the content of those prophecies which anticipate the occurrence of the 'Outcry' (*Sayha*) or 'Announcement' (*Nidā'*) on the Day of *Khurūj* when the *Munādī* (Announcer) or the Archangel Gabriel will announce in eloquent Arabic the appearance of Mahdī[2]. However, the content of it could also be compared with the ḥadīth related from Imām Muḥammad Bāqir in which the Qā'im, standing against the black stone, will announce his claim[3].

Mīrzā 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 Mīrzā 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[5], 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.

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1. XLVII, 9.
2. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, op.cit. trans. pp.646-7.
3. Shaykh Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Irshād* cited in *Biḥār al-Anwār*, op.cit. trans. pp.599-600.
4. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. pp.40-41. The same account is also related by other secondary sources such as *TMS*. 73 and *KD*. I, 43. On the contrary, *Miftāḥ Bāb 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-Harām 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 (*Bi'tha*) have passed and each year innumerable people have circumambulated the House. In the final year, the founder of the House himself went for Ḥajj 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 *vāḥid*, and God is proud of him'[1].

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[2].

Given the general circumstances of the Ḥajj, 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 Ḥajj, 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 Muḥammad Ḥusain Muḥīṭ Kirmānī, 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.

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1. *Bayān*. IV, 18 (p.148). In his writing the Bab often calculates from the year of *Bi'tha*, the beginning of the Islamic revelation, instead of the year of *Hijra* 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 x 19 (*vāḥid*).

2. *INBA*. 91, XXXVI, 172. 'Letter to Mīrzā Muḥammad Ibrāhīm' (possibly Maḥallātī) written in Būshihr in early 1261 (1845).

Being a well known member of the Shaykhi circle in Karbilā', Muhīt Kirmānī was regarded as one of the contenders for leadership of the Shaykhis after the death of Rashtī[1]. 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. Qatīl Karbalā'ī maintains that few months after the death of Rashtī the remaining students in ʿAtabāt gradually left Karbilā for various destinations and left Muhīt without any following[2]. No doubt the preachings of Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī played some part in diverting the attention of the Shaykhi students towards the revelation in Shiraz and the imminent journey of Sayyid ʿAlī Muhammad to the Hijāz and ʿAtabāt[3]. Presumably it was under the influence of these preachings that Muhīt himself decided to travel to the Hijāz and meet the Bab.

Hence, the Bab seems to have taken Mīrzā Muhīt 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 Muhīt to choose either to submit himself unreservedly to his cause or to repudiate it entirely[4]. In this 'peremptory challenge' the Bab acknowledged the outstanding position of Muhīt by referring to his self assumed claim of being the direct inheritor of 'those twin great Lights'[5], 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 (*Bāb*) that leads men to the knowledge of God'[6]. In this delicate statement, the Bab deliberately emphasises the title of *Bābīyat* and avoids the open claim of *Qā'imīyat*, 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 Qā'im, or even with an independent revelation, than with the traditional image of *Bāb-i Imām*. For the Shaykhis the title *Bāb*, in the sense that it was applied to previous Masters, was not unprecedented, hence it is evident that Muhīt was faced with a dilemma in that

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1. See above Chapter Four, I.
2. *Qatīl*. 510. See also above Chapter Three.
3. See above Chapter Five.
4. *Nabīl*. 134 quoting Mīrzā Abul Ḥasan Shīrāzī.
5. Ibid. A clear reference to Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī and Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī.
6. Ibid.

the claim had gone well beyond the boundary of the 'Perfect *Shīʿī*'. Muhīt Kirmānī, 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 Muhīt '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 *mubāhala* with the disavowing Christians of Najrān, which took place roughly at the same date (around 23rd Dhū al-Ḥijja 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, *mubāhala* 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. *Mubāhala* 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-Mubāhala* refers to the day when the Prophet Muḥammad in the last year of his life invited the Christians of Najrān to the challenge of *mubāhala*. Accompanied by his immediate family, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Husain, he stood in the desert, but the leaders of the Christians failed to appear. Verses 60-65 and particularly 61 of *Sura Āl-ʿImrān* in the *Qurʾān* (see below) refer to the same occasion. Various classic accounts discuss *Yaum al-Mubāhala* (e.g. Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, Leiden, 1868, II, pp.141-3, Mīr Khāund, *Rudat al-Ṣafā*, Tehran, 1338-9 Sh., II, pp.531-5). Quranic commentaries such as Al-Maybudī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, 10 vols., Tehran, 1338, II, pp. 145-50; Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, Tehran, 1371 Q./1951, II, 451-3 also explain the significance of *mubāhala*. 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 mubāhala va manābiʿ-i ān etc.' in *Āyandeh*, I-III, 1358 Sh., p.33.

In 19th century sources, *Qisas al-ʿulamāʾ*, for example, refers to a call for *mubāhala* by Shaykh Jaʿfar Najafī upon Mīrzā Muhammad Akhbārī to be performed outside the gates of Tehran in order to distinguish the truth or the falsehood of the Akhbārī creed. Although the *mubāhala* never took place, the presence of the two parties with their followers turned into a test of popularity for the two rivals[1]. More significant is the call for *mubāhala* proposed by Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī to Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafī in response to the latter's provocations and allegations against the Shaykhis in Najaf. Rashtī offered that the *mubāhala* should take place in the Shrine of Husain or the Shrine of ʿAbbās or any other of the holy places and left it to Najafī to decide whether it should be in public or private. Yet Najafī gave no reply to this call[2].

In his writings, the Bab also regards *mubāhala* as the ultimate means for distinguishing truth from falsehood. He refers to this with the following words:

> 'I accomplished the proof of *mubāhala* in Masjid al-Harām in the presence of eye witnesses, and the one who was addressed with what has been said in *Saḥīfa al-Bayn al-Haramayn*, was Muḥīṭ. Those who heard such a call, I believe, were Ḥājj Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī, Ḥājj Sayyid Muḥammad Khurāsānī, Ḥājj Sulaymān Khān and Ḥājj Muḥammad ʿAlī Māzandarānī, and there were others as well'[3].

By the description of his claim to Muḥīṭ, and the details recorded in *Saḥīfa 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-Ḥāram, beside the Kaʿba of Bayt al-Ḥāram to the inquirer of these verses (i.e. Muḥīṭ Kirmānī), of what has been revealed in the past to your beloved friend Muḥammad in the *Qurʾān*; "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"[4]. And swear to Your truth, and there is no God but thee, he did not respond to Your servant, and God's witness

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1. *Q.* 178.
2. *Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn*, op.cit. pp.96-9. Also *Ṭarāʾiq*. III, 197 refers to a *mubāhala* between certain Nāṣir ʿAlī Shāh Iṣfahānī and an Afżal Shāh Hindī which resulted in the latter's death.
3. *Z.* 271. A letter written from Shiraz between 1261-2 (1845-6). The author of *Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq*, who does not specify his source, also wrongly believes that Mullā Ḥasan Gauhar was present in *mubāhala*. See below for the mentioned persons.
4. *Qurʾān*. III, 61. See above.

is sufficient. O Muḥīṭ, the inquirer! Did I not call you in Masjid al-Ḥarām in front of the Kaʿba near the Western Pillar (*Rukn al-Gharbī*), where you were standing beside the *Minbar*, in the night of the middle Dhū al-Ḥijja when three hours had passed from the beginning of the night, to accept my summons and stand up for *mubāhala* with me beside *Rukn* in front of the *Ḥajar al-Aswad*, 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-Ḥarām between the *Minbar* and the *Maqām* facing the Kaʿba, 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 (*ḥukm-i Bayt*). Whatever you have performed in *Minā*, or *ʿArafāt* or *al-Ḍuḥā* or *Ṭawāf* or *Saʿy* between Ṣafā and Marwa, or the command of wearing *iḥrām* and *thawbayn*, 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)'[1].

For the Bab, the call or *mubāhala* 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[2]. 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

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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 Kaʿba in the above passage could be explained by their symbolic significance in the process of the Qā'im's revelation in Mecca. Among other sources Shaykh Ṭabarsī in *Iḥtijāj* (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, trans. p.549) and Ṭusī in his *Kitāb al-Ghayba* (also *Biḥār al-Anwār*, trans. p.558) locate the position of the Qā'im between *Rukn* and *Maqām*, whereas Kulaynī in *al-Kāfī* (also *Biḥār al-Anwār*, trans. p.563) describes the importance of *Ḥajjar al-Aswad* in confirming the truthfulness of the *Qā'im's* claim.

2. *Nabil*. 136.

upon the Bab's claims, and how he evaluated them[1]. On his return to Karbilā', Muhīt remained unmoved by the alarming tone of *Sahīfa* 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'[2]. In a letter to Mullā Husain Bushrūyihī, the Bab acknowledges the 'accomplishment of his proof' to Muhīt and expresses his doubts on his sincerity. But he still hopes that 'soon God will remove what Satan has implanted in his heart'[3]. He then instructs Mullā Husain to convey his warning to Muhīt, and remind him of the outcome of his denial[4]. 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 Karīm Khān Kirmānī[5].

The refusal of Muhīt no doubt was a set-back for the Bab, who perhaps counted on Muhīt's cooperation as an important factor in the conversion of the remaining Shaykhis. But Muhīt 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 Muhīt, 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 Darābī, known as Kashfī (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

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1. See below.
2. *Ṣaḥīfa*, op.cit. 18.
3. Letter to Mullā Ḥusain, 10th Muḥarram 1261 (20th January 1845) from Mecca, Arabic, *INBA*. 91, pp.11-12. Reference to Satan is probably an allusion to Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī. Shortly after his return from Hajj, in a letter to Mullā Muḥammad 'Alī (probably Nahrī) the Bab recommends *mubāhala* to his followers as their last resort in encounters with their critics. *INBA*. 91, XXVIII, pp.135-6, cf. XXVI, 89.
4. Letter to Mullā Ḥusain, op.cit.
5. Sometimes in collaboration with Mullā Ḥasan Gauhar, and frequently with the direct assistance of Mullā Aḥmad (see above Chapter Five, III) , he tried to neutralise the effect of the new teachings. This is shown in the account of Shaykh Sulṭān Karbalā'ī (cited in Z. 256) written in 1263 (1847). As we are told by Karbalā'ī, Muḥīṭ also showed some inclination towards Ḥājī Muḥammad Karīm Khān and perhaps assisted him in his earliest polemics against the Babis. 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[1]. Kashfī 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 Ahsā'ī[2]. Paying special attention to ways and means of attaining the pure knowledge, Kashfī tackled important issues such as *Ma'ād* and *Qiyāmat* in the light of some esoteric ideas[3]. 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 *Sanābarq*, one of Kashfī'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 Āl Allāh (the House of God) is beyond the capacity of any individual, and then recommends Kashfī to study works of Shaykh Ahmad on this subject[4]. On the other hand, regarding the question of *Ma'ād*, the Bab implicitly compared the Shaykhi theory of *Hūrqalyā* and the non-occurrence of the 'corporal resurrection' (*Ma'ād jismānī*) with Sayyid Ja'far's ideas in *Sanābarq* and showed greater sympathy with the latter[5]. No doubt the ideas of

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1. It is not known whether Sayyid Ja'far himself adopted the title Kashfī 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 Kāẓim's time, were sometimes referred to as Kashfīya In *Dalīl al-Mutaḥayyirīn* (op.cit. pp.10-12) Sayyid Kāẓim has attributed this title to the revelation (*kashf*) of the Truth from darkness by Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī while trying to make a distinction between *kashf* in Shaykh Aḥmad's thought and the same term in 'the refuted Sufi ideas'. Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Ālūsī, in one of his unpublished treatises, also refers to his contemporary Shaykhis as Kashfīya and Ruknīya (owing to their belief in *Rukn-i Rābi'*). (A. al-'Azzāwī, *Dhikrā Abī al-Thanā' al-Ālūsī*, Baghdad, 1377 Q. (1958), p.37.

2. The list of his most important works appears in *Ṭabaqāt*. II, 1, pp.241-2. This includes *Ijābat al-Muḍtarrīn* on Uṣūl al-Dīn (also *al-Dharī'a*, I, p.), *Mīzān al-Mulūk*, a handbook of practical politics (also *al-Dharī'a*, XXIII, pp.326-7), *Kifāyat al-Ītām* in fiqh (also *al-Dharī'a*, XVIII, pp.88-9) and *Sanābarq*, a commentary on the prayer of Rajab (also *al-Dharī'a*, XII, p.232). The author of *Ṭabaqāt* counts him amongst the greatest Shi'i theologians and one of the outstanding figures of his own time.

3. *Ṣaḥīfa fī Sharḥ Du'ā al-Ghayba*, *INBA*. pub.60, pp.62-66. In the same work the Bab speaks highly of Dārābī and refers to him as 'the support of the scholars' and 'the contemporary Master' (*Sayyid al-Mu'āṣir va 'Aḍud al-Muḥaqiqīn*). The Bab maintains that his own point of view on the question of *ma'rifa* is somewhere between that of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Ja'far Dārābī (ibid. p.60).

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

Kashfī played some part in the development of the Babi theory of *Qiyāmat*, yet he remained silent when he was faced with the Bab, who in many aspects fulfilled his theoretical requirements. Mīrzā Abul Ḥasan Shīrāzī states that 'I myself met Ḥājī Sayyid Jaʿfar. He was present in Mecca, he saw with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears, but he did not become a believer'[1]. The author even claims that Kashfī was primarily attracted to Mecca because his knowledge of *jafr* and other hidden sciences helped him to set the time of *Ẓuhūr* in 1260[2]. 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[3]. Being far from the main current of orthodoxy, Kashfī 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 Ḥājī Sulaymān Khān Afshār Sā'īn Qalʿih entitled Amīr al-Umarā, son-in-law of Fath ʿAlī Shāh and one of the distinguished Afshār tribal chiefs during the reign of Muḥammad Shāh and the early part of the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh[4]. Though coming from a very different background to most Shaykhis, Sulaymān Khān, who was a staunch adherent of Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī, 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 *Ẓuhūr* when he visited Rashtī shortly before his death[5]. From

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1. *Mīrzā Ḥabīballāh*. 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 *Ẓuhūr* in the near future.
3. In reply to the author of *Nuqṭat al-Kāf* (p.122) who enquired about Kashfī's opinion on the Bab's claims, his son Sayyid Yaḥyā Dārābī (Vaḥīd) maintains that his father remained silent on this question (*iẓhār-i tavaqquf mīnimāyand*). See also *KD*. I, 57 and *Aḥmad*. 465.
4. Beside *Z*. 74-7 which gives a full account of Sulaymān Khān and his Babi son Riżā Qulī Khān, other Qājār chronicles repeatedly refer to him and his services to the Qājār government (e.g. *RS*. X, under Khurasan revolt, p.371 ff. and other events pp.356-7). Also *al-Maʾāthir va al-Āthār*, op.cit. 228.
5. *Z*. ibid. using an unspecified source. (cf. *Qatīl*. 509 which relates a similar account from a certain Sulaymān Mīrzā). *Fihrist* (II, pp.311-12, no.197) refers to a treatise by Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī in reply to Sulaymān Khān's questions on various theological problems. These include a question on 'the distinctive sign of the divines with insight' (*ʿulamāʾ-yi ʿārifīn*). 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[1], it appears that he had already shown some sympathy, if not full support, towards Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī. The Bab's allusion in the letter addressed to Sulaymān Khān from Medina is directed towards this very commitment to Kirmānī.[2] 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 Kirmānī, who enjoyed veneration and respect amongst the Qājārs, was more realistic. However, conversion of his son Riżā Qulī Khān Sartīp (son-in-law of Rashtī) to the Babi movement seems to have been a source of embarrassment for Sulaymān Khān, who perhaps as a reaction to his son's conversion, participated as the commander of the Qājār forces in the campaigns of both Tabarsī and Zanjān[3].

Though from entirely different backgrounds, what Kashfī had in common with Sulaymān Khān 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 Khān, the Bab and his mission seem to have a special attraction.

What the Kāshānī merchant Hājī Muhammad Riżā Makhmal Bāf[4] reported to the

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1. In the same letter in which the Bab referred to his *mubāhala* (see above) he referred to Sulaymān Khān's presence as witness (Z. 271). The Bab had also written a letter to Ḥājī Sulaymān Khān from Medina (*INBA*. 91, X, pp. 29-30 and *Browne Or. MSS*. F.28 (9), no.7). The author of *Mujmal-i Badī'* (*NH*. 401) mistook Sulaymān Khān Afshār for the well known Babi martyr Sulaymān Khān Tabrīzī, son of Yaḥyā Khān. 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 Ṭabarsī 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-Kāf* about his own impression of the Bab and his message, which is almost identical to the recollections of Sayyid Javād Muharrir[1], illustrates the extent of this fascination. When Hājī Muhammad Riżā 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 (*naqīb*)'[2]. Here, Makhmal Bāf who is 'an honest man belonging to a tujjār family and known to be good-natured, sharp and intelligent'[3] has in fact identified in the Bab an ambiguous state between the deputyship of the Imam and the *Qā'imīyat* itself. The same attitude could also be detected in Āqā Sayyid-i Hindī later known as Basīr, a young blind dervish from a 'well known family of Dāghdārīyih dervishes in India'[4], who in the course of his travels in Iran, Hijāz and 'Atabāt, had visited Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī sometime towards the end of the latter's life. When he returned to Bombay, he learned about the *Zuhūr*, perhaps from Mulla Sa'īd Hindī, and as a result travelled back to Hijāz, 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 *Qā'imīyat* (in him) and acknowledged it'[5]. Here again the main emphasis has been put on the claim of the *Qā'imīyat*, which is only comprehensible to those who are prepared to learn the secret.

It is with reference to this very position of the *Qā'imīyat* 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 Mullā 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[6] and the one who accompanied me in the journey of Hajj (i.e. Quddūs)'[7].

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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-Kāf* comments on the conversion of Basīr with this odd but rather interesting comment: 'He (i.e. the Basīr) sold the spice of his soul to the merchant of the Being and in exchange bought the elixir of love (*kīmīyā-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-Kāf* also refers to the knowledge of Basīr 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 *Qā'imīyat* 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 *Qayyūm al-Asmā'*, 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-Bayan al-Haramayn*, *Sahīfa al-A'māl al-Sana*, and *Kītāb al-Rūh*, two commentaries: Commentary on *Sūra al-Nūr* and Commentary on *Āyat al-Kursī*, two commentaries on *Qasīda of al-Humayrī* and *Misbāh*, 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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1. *Bayān*. IV, 18 (p.148).
2. *INBA*. cf. Z. pp.288-9 and *Browne Or. MSS*.

encountered the pilgrims in the holy places[1]. Here he considers himself as 'the Remembrance of God' (*Dhikrallāh*), 'the son of God's Prophet' and 'the Arab youth' (*fatī al-ʿArabī*) who 'is inspired by the (Holy) Spirit (*Rūh*) at all times'[2]. His mission is to enforce 'the command of the Remnant of God' (*Baqīyatallāh*), a clear reference to the Qā'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[3]. The responsibilities the Bab assumes for himself clearly match the picture which was given of the Qā'im in the Shiʿi 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-Sāʿa*)[4].

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 *Sahīfa*:

> 'Those who are accusing the Remembrance of the "Divine Name" (*Dhikr-i Ismallāh*) (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" (*Kalimatallāh*) 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'[5].

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 Muḥīṭ, whereas the latter is a direct address to a believer, most probably Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī. 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 Muḥīṭ, 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. *Ṣaḥīfa* should be regarded as the Bab's first attempt to develop a new *sharʿ* for the movement. On one occasion in this work the Bab commented on the necessity of *ʿilm-i fiqh* for the people of the Book and particularly for merchants (pp.80-81). The style of *Ṣaḥīfa*, however, is reminiscent of some Shiʿi books on Hajj. Works such as *Asrār al-Ḥajj* by Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī (*Fihrist*. II, 303 and *al-Dharīʿa*, II, 43) and another *Asrār al-Ḥajj* by Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī (*al-Dharīʿa*, II, 43), both contemporaries of the Bab could be mentioned. For further works on Hajj in Shiʿism see *al-Dharīʿa*, VI, pp.249-54 which lists 42 *Kitāb al-Ḥajj*.

2. *Ṣaḥīfa*, op.cit. pp.4-10.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid. cf. pp.24-6.

5. Ibid. pp.8-9.

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'[1]. 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 *Qurān*, and most of them are ignorant'[2]. He then turns his attention towards the leaders of the community, more specifically the ʿulama, 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'[3].

The same sense of disappointment and anger is also reflected in his other writings. In his letter to Mullā 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'[4]. 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, O 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 (*mustahzi'īn*) 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"'[5].

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. p.22.
4. *INBA*. 91, IV, pp.10-14 (11). 'Letter to Mullā Ḥusain, 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 Sharīf of Mecca. (Some extracts of this are cited in *Selections from the Writings of the Bab*, trans. H. Taherzadeh, Haifa, 1976, pp.29-30). The title of the former in *INBA*. 91 (op.cit.) is 'Letter from Mecca to Sharīf Sulaymān'. However, since the Sharīf of Mecca in this period was Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Muʿīn Ibn ʿAwn (de Gaury, op.cit., pp.244-8), and Sulaymān is probably a reference to the Imām Jumʿih of Muscat (see above), it is most probable that this is a copyist's mistake. For the tablet to the Sharīf of Mecca, see *Nabil*. pp. 138-9 which confirms the delivery of the tablet by Quddūs. The verse quoted at the end of the passage is from *Qurʾān*, XVII, 46.

Calling on the Hanafī Imam of Medina, the Bab warns the people of Medina of the forthcoming *Yaum al-Qīyāma*, when 'God will judge his people with utmost fairness'[1]. 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 *Sahīfa* or in the tablet to the people of Mecca for instance, bear an unmistakeable resemblance to certain verses in the *Sūra Hūd* 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'[2].

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 *Khurūj*.

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 ʿAtabāt during the previous few months of late 1844[3], and the hostility which developed as a result of Mullā

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1. *INBA*. 91, VII, 'Tablet written in Medina to Hanafī Imām'.
2. *Qurʾān*. XI, 11, 18-19. In some Shiʿi commentaries the above verses were interpreted as the proofs of the Qā'im's appearance. (Commentary of ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm, cited in *Biḥār al-Anwār*. op.cit., XIII, Chapter 5, p.34 trans.).
3. See above Chapter Five.

ʿAlī Bastāmī's open teachings, demonstrated the ʿulama'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 Shiʿi resurgence in ʿAtabāt. These unforseen troubles in ʿAtabāt, 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 ʿAtabāt, and instead set out for his homeland Fars.

It is almost certain that the Bab was first informed of the troubles in ʿAtabāt by two ex-students of Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī, Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī and Mullā Hasan Khurāsānī, who embarked on the journey to Hajj not only to visit the Bab, but probably to convey the news of Bastāmī's arrest by the Ottoman authorities. Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī who was the scribe and one of the close companions of Rashtī, was effectively involved in various developments which took place in ʿAtabāt after the death of Sayyid Kāzim[1]. After his meeting with Mullā Jalīl Urūmī, one of the Letters of Hayy, he declared his support of the Bab, and repented of his past falsifications against the Bab[2]. 'When he decided to become one of the believers of this cause' writes Qatīl, 'fearing his opponents, he fled (from Karbilā') and made the pilgrimage to Mecca, where he had the honour of accompanying the 'Great Star' (*Nayyir-i Aʿzam*, i.e. the Bab) and sitting with him in the same *mahmil*...'[3].

Implicit references to the cancellation of the ʿAtabāt 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 ʿAlī Kirmānī 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'[4]. The same message is transmitted in more open terms in a letter in reply to the same Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī, probably after the latter's return to ʿAtabāt: 'I have read your letter. So now remember that at present it is not possible for me to meet you'[5]. No doubt it is due to this very fact that in a letter of instruction to Mullā Husain, which is dated 10th Muharram 1261 and addressed to Kūfah, (since at the time the Bab was under the impression that Mullā Husain, according to the original plan, must

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1. *Qatīl*. 519. Also see above Chapter Four, I.
2. *Qatīl*. 519.
3. Ibid.
4. *Ṣaḥīfa*. op.cit., 102.
5. *INBA*. 91, IX, pp.28-9, 'Letter to Ḥājī Sayyid ʿAlī Kirmānī'.

have reached Kūfah), the Bab indicated his change of decision and gave brief instructions to his followers. After referring to his encounter with Muhīt, he goes on to express his sympathy towards Mullā 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 (*Kalimatallāh*) 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 Ismallāh* (i.e. himself) to the *Sābiqūn*, and ask them to emigrate to the Pure Land of the Safe City (*al-Arḍ al-Muṭahhara*, *Balad al-Amn*) where they were assigned in my previous command. Give greetings to the followers (*al-mutābiʿin*). God is above the interpretation which oppressors make of the Great, Supreme Word. When the nobles (*rijāl*) gather in the Holy Land and support this cause, advise them to wait till a new order comes from me'[1].

The above instruction was, no doubt, made with regard to the wave of opposition which was pointed towards Bastāmī and others. The letter to Mullā Husain was written on 10th Muharram (20th January 1845), whereas the trial of Bastāmī in Baghdad took place on 6th Muharram (16th January)[2]. It is very likely that he was only aware of the arrest and imprisonment of Bastāmī, and therefore conscious of the danger which threatened him and his followers if he ever set foot in ʿAtabāt. 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 Bastāmī's conviction appears to have reached the Bab in reports despatched by Mullā Hasan Khurāsānī, who after his return to Karbilā', together with Sayyid ʿAlī Khurāsānī, informed the Bab of the events in ʿAtabāt. As can be understood from the Bab's replies to Khurāsānī, 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 ʿAtabāt.

It is in reply to these reports that the Bab, writing from Būshihr, instructed Mullā Hasan Khurāsānī to convey his message to 'the just divines'

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1. *INBA*. 91, IV, pp.13-14, 10th Muharram 1261.
2. See above Chapter Five , II.

(*ʿulamā-i ʿadl*), 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 (*Baqīyatallāh*). Meanwhile, his advice to Khurāsānī is to remain in ʿAtabāt till new instructions can be issued[1]. Later in another letter to Mullā Hasan Khurāsānī, he made an appeal to all believers in ʿAtabāt; '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-Amn*, if you are amongst the readers of this letter'[2].

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 ʿulama, if you are conscious of the Divine cause and believe in it'[3]. Henceforth, the high hopes of some of those who had gathered in Karbilā' 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 *Qurʾān*, 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'[4].

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 ʿAtabāt would serve no other purpose but to intensify the existing hostility. This is evident in a prayer addressed to Mullā ʿAbd al-Khālīq Yazdī, in which the Bab explains his reasons for not attending the gathering of ʿAtabāt:

> 'O Lord! You know of that command in which I ordered the ʿulama (i.e. the early believers) to enter the Holy Land (i.e. ʿAtabāt) in order (to be prepared) for the Day of Return' (*Rijʿa*), when your hidden covenant was to be

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1. *INBA*. 91, VI, pp.18-23, 'Letter to Mullā Ḥasan Khurāsānī'.
2. *INBA*. 91, III, pp.6-10, 'Letter to Mullā Ḥasan 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 *Umm al-Qurā'* (i.e. Mecca) of the opposition of ʿulama 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 Ḥajj) 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'[1].

Here, the cancellation of the ʿAtabāt plan was indeed attributed to a divine force, which under the new circumstances abrogated the earlier command. The idea of *badā'* is no doubt hinted at in this passage and further signalled by reference to a relevant verse in the *Qurʾān*. This has a long history in Shiʿi theology which is particularly elaborated in the Shaykhi school[2]. In the above passage, the sentence '... and forgive those who are repentent and obedient to Your tradition ...' appears to be an allusion to the *Qurʾān* (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 *Qurʾān* which is frequently asserted in support of the theory of *badā'*, 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 *Qurʾān*.

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 ʿAbd al-Khāliq Yazdī probably written towards the end of 1261'.
2. *EI*^{2}, *BADĀ'*. Goldziher refers to 'subtleties which appear in the Shiʿite Shaykhi sect (RMM, XI, 1910, 435-8) regarding the question of *Badā'*. On a few occasions in his writings, Shaykh Aḥmad discussed this issue, for example treatise in reply to Sayyid ʿAlī Lāhījānī (question 2), and the treatise in reply to Prince Maḥmūd Mīrzā (question 9), both of which appeared in *Jawāmiʿ al-Kalim*, op.cit. (also *Fihrist*, II, 221, 237).

divine justification. His journey to ʿAtabāt, 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 ʿAtabāt were fairly narrow, since he was faced not only with Shiʿi 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 Kūfah and Karbilā' 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 ʿAtabāt, 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 Bastāmī'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 ʿAtabāt and use it as a means for discrediting the Bab. This is well illustrated in the sharp attacks of Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī in *Izhāq al-Bāṭil* as early as Rajab 1261 (July 1845);

> 'So first came Muḥarram and then Naurūz, 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[1]. Then he addressed them saying "Soon I will rise on the day of *ʿĀshūrā* or day of Naurūz. I came on behalf of your Imam, the Lord of the Age (*Ṣaḥib al-Zamān*) 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 (*mīqāt*) is in the

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1. *(qad ḍāqq-a ʿalayhum al-majāl min kithrat al-ẓulm wa khilāf al-iʿtidāl wa hum ṭālibūn li-taghyīr al-daula wa ḥudūth al-jaula).*

> Land of Karbilā', 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 reutrn (home) in fear and anxiety. So see how God's rejection of his deception destroyed him. In fact people assembled in Karbilā', 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 Karbilā' 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'[1].

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 back-bone of the movement was destroyed is misrepresentation of the facts. Indeed his entire effort throughout *Izhaq al-Bāṭil* 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 Muḥammad Karīm Khān in order to discredit the Babis by accusing them of having anti-Qājār attitudes. Indeed the events of later years proved

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1. *Izhāq al-Baṭil*. 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 ʿAbdā division of the Shammar tribe, with the help and encouragement of Sharīf Muḥammad Ibn ʿAwn marched into al-Qasīm and defeated the forces of Faiṣal Ibn Saʿd. 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 ʿAlī Kirmānī, Mullā Ḥasan Khurāsānī and Sayyid Javād Muḥarrir reached Karbilā' 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 Sūrat al-Mulk of *Qayyūm al-Asmā'* and the later Babi responses after 1264 which culminated in Tabarsī 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 disillusions 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 Quddūs 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'i 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'i 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 *Zuhūr* 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 *Zuhūr*. 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 apocalpytic event towards the beginning of the 1840's and secondly the crisis within the Shaykhi circle in the 'Atabāt, 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 statis 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 Āẕarbāījān. 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 Quddūs and Mullā Husain Bushrūyihī, were only partly effective in leading them during the Babi resistance in Tabarsī. 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 *Qurʾān*. Such pre-occupation with Shiʿi eschatology prevented the Babis from adopting a fresh approach different from the past concepts of revelation and the *sharīʿat*. 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 *Sharī'at*, 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 Usūlī 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 *Shar'* 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 Mākū and then Chihrīq (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 Khurāsān, 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'imīyat* 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 *Mazharīyat* - which is evident from his assumed title *Rabb-i A'lā* - 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 Māzandarān 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

Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh to the throne and the change in government worked against them. The lenient and indecisive policy of Hājī Mīrzā Āqāsī was replaced by the carefully 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 Ṭabarsī was motivated by a sheer need for defence and then turned into a bloody confrontation with the government. It possessed all the characteristics of a millenarian uprising and not unexpectedly - even for the Babis themselves - ended in their disastrous defeat and the death of many, including Mullā Husain and Quddūs. The upheaval of Ṭabarsī had a chain effect on the other Babi uprisings in Nayrīz (led by Sayyid Yahyā Dārābī, Vahīd) and Zanjān (led by Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Zanjānī, Hujjat) (1265-7/1849-51). The immediate causes of each of these upheavals varied and they developed in widely different circumstances and on a different scale to that of Ṭabarsī, yet they reflected the same basic problems of isolation and insecurity.

The execution of the Bab in Tabriz on the 28th Shaʿban 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 Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh in Shavvāl 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 ʿAlī Turshīzī (ʿAzīm), 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 widespread 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. Shiʿism 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 Shiʿism has witnessed the rise and fall of many movements which attempted to fulfil these expectations. This eternal conflict within Shiʿism 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 idealogy 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 Shiʿi 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.

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A Note on Sources

The histiography 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 Bahā'ī-Azalī 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 (*tārīkh-i qadīm*) 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 Hājī Mīrzā Jānī Kāshānī sometime prior to his execution in 1268 (1852). E.G. Browne's edition of *Nuqtat al-Kāf* which is believed to have been the work of Hājī Mīrzā Jānī, appears to be the nearest to this yet untraced 'old history'. But there is no definite evidence to prove for certain that *Nuqtat al-Kāf* is the original version of the 'old' history or indeed that it was even written by Hājī Mīrzā Jānī. 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 *Nuqtat al-Kāf* and Browne's introduction (which incidentally was written with the assistance of Muhammad Qazvīnī) inspired some Bahā'ī writers such as Abul Faẓl Gulpāyigānī to try in *Kashf al-Ghitā'*, 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 Gulpāyigānī, came to any definite answer. Similarly suggestions by later scholars such as Balyuzi (*Edward Granville Browne and the Bahā'ī Faith*), Muhīt Tabātabā'ī 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 Hājī Mīrzā Jānī 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 *Nuqtat al-Kāf* 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 Bahā'ī than in the Azalī 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 *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* (the New History) by Mīrzā Husain Hamadānī under the patronage of Mānakjī Hātaryārī, the Indian Zoroastrian representative in Tehran, and with the preliminary supervision of Mīrzā Abul Faẓl Gulpāyigānī, was the first in a series of attempts to produce new general narratives. E.G. Browne's assessment of *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* 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 Bibliotheque 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 Badīʿ-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 *Maqālih-yi Shakhsī Sayyāh* of ʿAbd 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 Bahā'ī 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 Nabīl Zarandī, known as Nabīl A'zam, which is by far the most complete of the general narratives. Written in its final version between 1305-8 (1888-90), Nabīl'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 Mīrzā Mūsā Nūrī, brother of Bahā'allāh, 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-Bahā'īs 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 Bahā'allāh, which like many other of the latter's companions reached the extremes of admiration and praise, made him over-emphasise certain aspects of Babi history or even to see in the earlier events a mysterious cause for the later 'manifestation' of Bahā'allāh. 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 Nabīl'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, *Nabil* remains a relatively reliable source which in most cases corresponds to the facts supplied by earlier sources. A careful study of *Nabil* 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, *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh (Tārīkh-i Qājārīyih)* of Sipihr and *Raudat al-Safā* of Hidāyat 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. *Nāsikh 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 Tabarsī (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. Hidāyat'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 ʿulama who were present in the gathering. Other contemporary chronicles such as Khurmūjī's *Haqāyiq al-Akhbār* or later accounts such as Iʿtimād al-Saltanih's *Muntazam-i Nāsirī* either give brief references or mainly repeat the descriptions of the above accounts. One exception is *Mutanabi'in* of Iʿtizād al-Saltanih which relies for the earlier events on *Nāsikh 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 Sharīf Shīrāzī Īshīk Āqāsī 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 Shīrāzī 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 Mīrzā Lutf ʿAlī Shīrāzī's narrative of Tabarsī were written as day to day chronicles during the course of upheaval itself. Some like *Tārīkh-i Mīmīyih* by Mahjūr Zavārih-ī or the narrative of Āqā Mīr Abū Ṭālib Shahmīrzādī on Ṭabarsī 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-Ahad Zanjānī or another account of Zanjān by Mīrzā Husain 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 Babis, yet they are only of a limited use for the study of the formative years. In the course of this study only *Tārīkh-i Mīmīyih* was of use for some observations on the Babis of Khurasan. Beside Āqā ʿAbd al-Ahad's 'Personal Reminiscences' and Ḥājī Naṣīr Qazvīnī's account on Ṭabarsī, 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 *Maṣnavī* of Ḥājī Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Ẓabīḥ Kāshānī, Ḥājī Mīrzā Jānī's brother, which is a mystical work in seven *daftars* in the style of Rūmī's *Maṣnavī*, 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 Bahā'allāh's exile to Acre. This important work which was compiled probably in the 1880's towards the end of Ẓabīḥ's life, remained largely unknown and was only briefly referred to by Fāżil (*Ẓuhūr al-Ḥaqq*) and Bayżā'ī (*Taẓkirih*). 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 Ẓabīḥ as one of their sources, yet it is not clear whether they also consulted his *Maṣnavī*. On a few occasions he is confused by Browne and others with Ẓabīḥ Qannād and Ẓabīḥ Zavārih'ī while elsewhere he is confused with Ḥājī Muḥammad Riżā Kāshānī who is suggested by some to be the real

author of *Nuqtat al-Kāf*. Throughout his *Maṣnavī* in a few places he refers to his brother Hājī Mīrzā Jānī but makes no note of *Nuqtat al-Kāf* or indeed any other work by him. The first few pages of a rare manuscript of this work in the Mīnāsīān 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 Bahā'ī Archive, the memoirs of Sayyid Javād Muharrir and Āqā Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahīm Isfahānī, which both appear to be part of a greater collection of narratives on the local Babi-Bahā'ī history of Isfahan, also contain new information. Amongst the manuscripts in Browne's collection, the accounts of Mullā Rajab ʿAlī Qahīr, Sayyid Mahdī Dahajī 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 Ahsa'i and Rashti, the introduction of the Babi movement in Qazvīn, its effects on the ʿulama 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 Mustafā Baghdādī which was compiled at the request of Abul Faẓl Gulpāyigānī. He was an Arab Babi (and later Bahā'ī) still in his early youth when his father, Shaykh Muhammad Shibl 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 Badīʿ dar Vaqāyiʿ-i Zuhūr-i Manīʿ* 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 *sharh*) on Quranic verses and *sūras* as well as on Shi'i traditions, addresses (*tawqī'*), sermons (*khutba*), prayers (*du'ā* and *munājāt*), 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-Haramayn* 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 *Sahīfah-yi 'Adliyāh*, *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*, *Tawqī' Qā'imīyat* and *Khutba al-Qahrīya* 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 *jafr*, 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 Bahā'ī 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 (*Zuhūr al-Haqq*, pp.136-9) and a *risāla* (see Bibl.) by Mullā Husain Bushrūyihī as well as some works of Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī including some Persian apologetic tracts (*Zuhūr al-Haqq*, pp.407-18, 426-30) and a collection of his works entitled *Abhār al-Quddūsīya* (or *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 *risāla* in reply to Hājī Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī (most probably in response to his first refutation *Izhāq al-Bātil*) which was compiled towards the end of 1262 (1846) by an unknown Babi who calls himself al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbalā'ī, is of exceptional value. Apart from some of the early works of the Bab, perhaps this *risāla* is the most important document for the study of the early years that has recently come to light. Although Fāżil Māzandarānī published the text of this work as an appendix to his *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. Fāżil'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 *risāla* 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 Rashtī for ten years and no doubt the detailed information in the text on Sayyid Kāẓim 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 Rashtī, the tensions and conflicts within the Shaykhi circle particularly after the death of Rashtī, the intentions of Mullā Ḥusain 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 thoughout the account of any direct reference to Qurrat al-ʿAyn (Ṭāhirih) 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 Ṭāhirih.

Two other apologies, a *risālih* in Persian by Qurrat al-ʿAyn and a *maktūb* by Shaykh Sultān Karbalā'ī, 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. Ṭāhirih's *risālih*, 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 Sultān 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 Muhammad 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 Muhammad Karīm Khān started with his *Izhāq al-Bātil* (Rajab 1261/September 1845), which is probably the earliest non-Babi source on the early activities of the Babis, and continued with *Tīr-i Shihāb* (1262/1846), *Shihāb al-Thāqib* (1265/1849) and *Īqādh al-Bātil* (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 Bālāsarīs 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 *Dalīl al-Mutahayyirīn*, which was intended to vindicate the Shaykhi position by examining the points of difference with Bālāsarīs 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-ʿUlama'*, Tunikābunī treats Shaykhis in a partial and rather sarcastic language whereas Khwānsārī in *Raudāt al-Jannāt* speaks of Ahsā'ī with care and respect. Some fresh details may also be obtained from *Qisas al-ʿUlamā'* on the background of the Bab and the mission of Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī but in general the author borrowed most of his information from *Nāsikh 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 ʿulama, a kind of information which is somewhat unusual for a religious work of its type. The anecdotes and details of everyday life of the ʿulama 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 ʿulama throughout the 19th century. He is accused by some of exaggerating and by others of under-estimating the real position of the ʿulama and no doubt compared to *Raudat al-Jannāt*, his standard of scholarship lags far behind, yet it is through these very details that the characteristics of the ʿulama and their position in the society can be assessed. Of course this should not be taken to mean that *Qisas al-ʿUlamā'* is free from inaccuracies, gross exaggerations and distortions, but nonetheless he is a more realistic, authentic voice of the dominant *Sharʿ* of the time.

A group of primary and secondary biographical works such as *Tarā'iq al-Haqa'iq*, *Tabaqāt Aʿlām al-Shīʿa*, *Ahsan al-Wadīʿa*, *Makārim al-Athār*, Bāmdād's *Tārīkh-i Rijāl-i Īrān* and biobibliographies such as *al-Dharīʿa* 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 movment 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 ʿAlī Bastāmī. Yet they are few and not free from the usual inaccuracies of other diplomatic dispatches, and they suggest Rawlinson's unfamiliarity with the Shiʿi 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 Ādamīyat (*Amīr 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 Āẕarbāijān (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 Ṭabarsī, 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 *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh* 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 *taqīyah* and the fatalism prevalent in Shiʿism. Perhaps for the first time in western scholarship, he interprets Shiʿism 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 *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh* 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-Kāf* 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 *Bayān* of which he gives a full but not always accurate translation under the title *Ketab-e-Hukkam (Le Livre des Preceptes)* in the appendix.

Gobineau regards the emergence of the Babi movement as a response to the ʿulamas' 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 *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh'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 *Hayy*

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 ʿulama and their position is not close to reality, yet he rightly attributes the collapse of the movement to the alliance between the ʿulama and the government. He emphasises the role of Amīr Kabīr 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 Shaykhism 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 *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh* 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 Ṭabarsī in Māzandarānī dialect by a certain unknown Shaykh al-ʿAjam. 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 Ṭabarsī 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 Chihrīq 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 Yazdī, 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 Bahā'ī writers such as Shaykh Kāzim Samandar, Hājī Muhammad Muʿīn al-Saltanih and Mīrzā Abul Faẓl Gulpāyigānī 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. Muʿīn al-Saltanih's general history (*Tārīkh*) which was finally completed *circa* 1340 Q./1921-2 contains some fresh information on the background and the early development of the movement in Āzarbāijān. He also frequently quotes from the now unobtainable *Abwāb al-Hudā* of Mullā Muhammad Taqī Hashtrūdī - 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 Muʿīn 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 Ṭabarsī. 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-Azalī controversy. Born in 1268 Q. (1852) and son of a celebrated Babi Shaykh Muḥammad 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 Faẓl Gulpāyigānī's *Tārīkh-i Ẓuhūr etc.* is a brief introductory account which was compiled in the style of *Maqālih-i Shakhsī 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'allāh'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 *Hasht 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 Gulpāyigānī'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-Ghiṭā'* which was completed after Abul Faẓl's death by his nephew Sayyid Mahdī Gulpāyigānī. This is a controversial Bahā'ī apologia which initially aimed at resolving the problem of *Nuqṭat al-Kāf* 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-Kāf*, 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 Faẓl Gulpāyigānī 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-Kāf*, which the authors argue was exceeding the limits of scholarly investigation by accusing the Bahā'ī writers of forgery and distortion without providing any viable evidence. Abul Faẓl believes, perhaps with some justification, that Browne's criticism of the Bahā'īs is more the result of Azalī 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 Faẓl obtained his fresh information from Hājī Sayyid Javād Karbalā'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 Gulpāyigānī such as *Risālih-i Iskandarīyih* have occasional interesting points. Another work by Ahmad Suhrāb on the life of the Bab entitled *al-Risāla al-Tis'a 'Asharīya*, which is a collection of nineteen talks delivered in Haifa around 1918-19, is also of some use. *Tadhkirat al-Wafā'* of 'Abd al-Bahā' is a collection of 71 biographies compiled in 1915 on the lives of the early Babi-Bahā'īs. Though this work is mainly concerned with those Babis who after 1268 emigrated to Baghdad and then followed Bahā'allāh 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 Bahā'ī communities throughout 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'adī's history of the Babi-Bahā'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 Āẕarbāījān are written by Mīrzā Haydar ʿAlī Uskū'ī and Āqā Muhammad Husain Mīlānī. 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 Bahā'īs of Uskū, Milān and other parts. The account of Muhammad Husain Milānī, however, which was written shortly after Uskū'ī, is more comprehensive. The first part is an independent account (*INBA*. MS. 111 pp.) divided into four parts and deals with the Babi- Bahā'ī missions to Āẕarbāījān, the important converts, the 'martyrs' of Āẕarbāījān and finally the main events regarding the history of the community in this province. The second part contains the additional notes on Uskū'ī's account (26 pp.). Both authors are mainly concerned with the events of the late 19th and early 20th centuries but supply useful inforamtion on the people, places and events of the earlier period, Other local accounts by Nātiq Isfahānī on Kāshān (1309 Sh., 75 pp.), Zaraqānī on Tehran, Ishrāq Khāvarī 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 *Miftāh Bāb al-Abwāb* is an Arabic work published in 1903 as an abridged version of a longer unpublished account entitled *Bāb al-Abwāb*. 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 *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh* but he also used other less known or quite unknown sources. He was the son of Mullā Muhammad Taqī and grandson of Mullā Muhammad Jaʿfar Tabrīzī. Both his grand-father 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 Hājī Mīrzā Jānī (without specifying any title) which he particularly maintains has no indication of the succession of Subh-i Azal or Bahā'allāh. Though he might have inserted this remark with some attention to Browne's opposite views expressed in his introduction to *The Tārīkh-i Jadīd* of which Zaʿīm al-Daula was certainly aware, this is still a piece of interesting evidence on the problem of *Nuqtat al-Kāf*. Besides his written

sources, Zaʿīm al-Daula also met Bahā'allāh, ʿAbd al-Bahā' and some well known Bahā'īs of his time, including Nabīl 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 ʿAbduh 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 Azalī work entitled *Hasht Bihisht*. This is a relatively long work produced *circa* 1890. It is originally designed to vindicate the Babi-Azalī position which towards the end of the 19th century was seriously overshadowed by the spread of Bahā'ī 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 Rūhī Kirmānī or Āqā Khān Kirmānī 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 Azalī 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 Bahā'īs, further illustrates the depth of the Bahā'ī-Azalī 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 Fāżil Māzandarānī is a voluminous work of nine volumes on the Babi-Bahā'ī 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 Nabīl 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-Haqq* an important work for the study of the early period. Yet in some ways Fāżil 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 Āvārih entitled *Kawākib al-Durrīya* which was published in 1923-4. The first volume deals with the Babi-Bahā'ī history up to the end of Bahā'allāh's time; the second volume comes down to the end of ʿAbd al-Baha'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-Haqq* 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 Bahā'ī works such as Malik Khusravī's *Tārīkh-i Shuhadā-yi Amr* and *Iqlīm-i Nūr*, Fayżī's *Khāndān-i Afnān* and *Hażrat-i Nuqtih-i Ūlā*, Ishrāq Khāvarī's *Nūrayn-i Nayyirayn*, *Qamūs-i Īqān* 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 Baha'i historiography in their efforts to soften the militant tone of the early Babi history.

The non-Bahā'ī 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-Islām's *Minhāj al-Tālibin* 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 Hasanī's *al-Bābīyūn wa al-Bahā'īyūn* and Mudarrisī Chāhārdihī's *Shaykhīgari va Bābīgarī* were able to give a reasonably balanced version of the events. The latter adds some valuable new information to both Shaykhi and Babi history. Kasravī's *Bahā'īgarī* 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 *Pākdīnī*.

A more distorted treatment of Babi history may be observed in Ādamīyat's chapter on the Bab (*Dāstān-i Bāb*) 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 Zanjān '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-Kāf*, 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 Zanjān and Nayrīz, the execution of Tāhirih 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-Bahā'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'i 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.

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