

**THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF AL-JĀḤIẒ
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE
QUESTION OF *KHILĀFA* (IMĀMATE):
A CHRONOLOGICAL APPROACH**

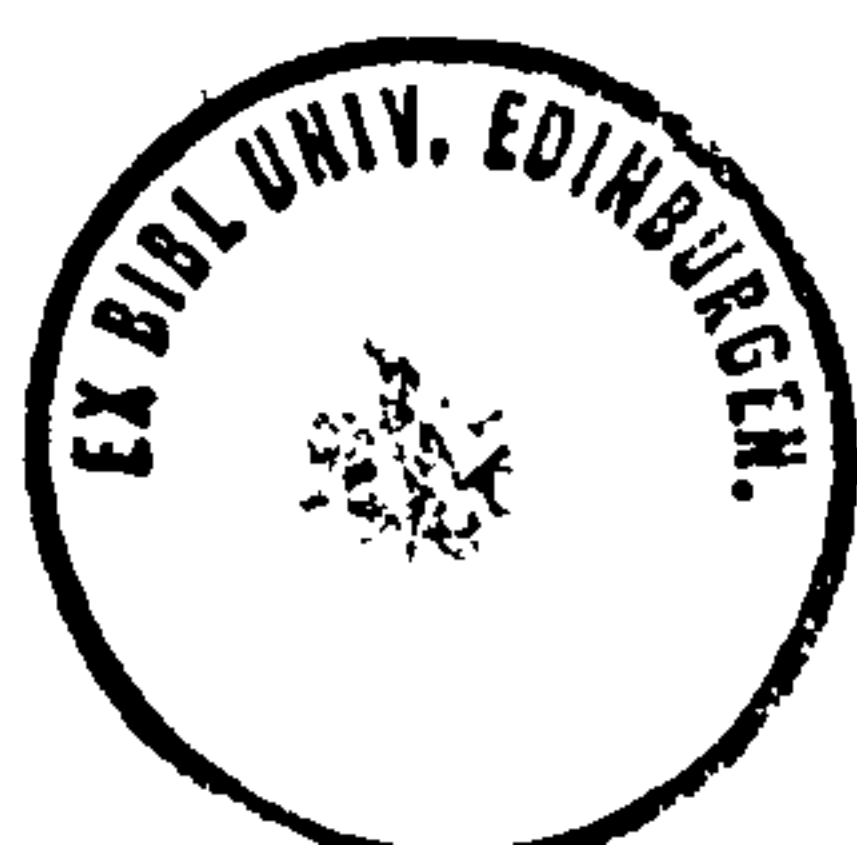
(VOLUME I)

JAMĀL F. EL-‘AṬṬĀR

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DECLARATION

**I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE WORK CONTAINED WITHIN
THIS THESIS WAS ENTIRELY COMPOSED BY MYSELF.**

Jamal F. Attar.

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

The aim of this thesis is to study some of the earliest literary works in classical Arabic Literature, namely those of the ʿAbbāsīd man of letters, al-Jāḥiẓ (160-250/776-869), that have dealt with the question of caliphate (*Imāma*), and are concerned with knowing who has the right to rule and the criteria underlying that right. The importance of this research lies in its attempt to reconstruct chronologically al-Jāḥiẓ's political works and thought by unfolding the full politico-religious heritage before al-Jāḥiẓ in order to understand the forces that had moulded his thought (Islamic, Umawī, ʿUthmānī, Muʿtazilī, Khārijī, Shīʿī, Ḥanbalī, etc.), and assist any future study of his impact on other political authors.

While benefiting from previous studies on al-Jāḥiẓ, generalizations that present him as a non-changeable entity have been avoided, in order to reach a more comprehensive judgement and fruitful understanding of al-Jāḥiẓ's political philosophy. Thus a detailed analysis of twenty seven extant Jāḥiẓian works that span half a century of ʿAbbāsīd polity must precede any global assessment of the broad lines of al-Jāḥiẓ's political theory, which has to await the laborious yet indispensable and promising task of tracing the doctrinal constants and variants displayed in al-Jāḥiẓ's political thought throughout the varying political eras.

Scholars of al-Jāḥiẓ are therefore offered a unique opportunity in which the full spectrum of his political thought is re-assembled after detecting the developmental stages and major landmarks followed, by linking them to their respective politico-religious settings and also guided by the chronological markers and contextual pointers that prove that link. My critical examination of al-Jāḥiẓ's political literature also aims at unveiling the ideological and political concerns of the ʿAbbāsīd community and caliphate and evaluating al-Jāḥiẓ's role in the propagation and shaping of ʿAbbāsīd politics. I have also tried to interpret and account for the phenomenon of the marriage between 'history' and 'contemporary politics' in al-Jāḥiẓ's time, and relate his hostile and tendentious anti-Umayyad position plus his views of the Shīʿa to the growing pro-ʿAbbāsīd historiographic activities, and his special brand of *ʿItizāl*.

Much effort has been exerted to extract al-Jāḥiẓ's political formula and doctrine by distinguishing his quoted views from his own views. The thesis is also concerned with answering the following questions: What factors underly his pro-Alid and anti-Rāfiḍī output and were they mutually irreconcilable? How do his pro-Alid writings fit in with his pro-ʿAbbāsīdism and fondness for the charismatic Hāshimī stock of Quraysh, what influence had this on his initial Baṣran (ʿUthmānī) *milieu* and how much can be gained from the totality of his heresiographic scanning in understanding the formative period of Muslim sects? Were al-Jāḥiẓ's views constantly bound by the necessity to observe the fluctuating interests of the regime or were they capable of sidestepping those pressures? Were his views on *Imāma* more concerned with the criteria according to which rulership was acquired or with the manner in which it should be practised? A full literature review is given, with an outline of the method and guidelines followed, difficulties incurred and suggestions for further studies on al-Jāḥiẓ.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

I have adopted the transliteration system followed in the 'Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam' (London: Stacey International, 1989), throughout my thesis, except for al-Tā' al-Marbūṭa, where instead of the ah/at I have used {a}.

Because of the frequency with which they occur, the titles of books in the main text have not been italicised. Titles in footnotes have been underlined for greater clarity. Some Arabic terms have either been italicised or bolded for the same purpose.

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¹ Italization of titles denotes a temporary position or a controversial chronological date.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
(arranged alphabetically by authors)

K. = Kitāb.

I Q = Islamic Quarterly.

BRISMES = British Society for Middle Eastern Studies.

J R A S = Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.

M F O = Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale.

M W = Muslim World.

R E I = Revue des Études Islamique.

al-Nazzām = al-Nazzām wa Ārā'uhu al-Kalāmiyya wa al-Falsafiyya, (Abū Rīda, A.).

al-Mughnī = al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-ʿAdl, (ʿAbd al Jabbār).

"al-Jāhiz's Anthropological Endeavour" = [forthcoming] "al-Jāhiz's Anthropological Endeavour: An analytical study of his views of coloured people /al-Sūdān", (ʿAṭṭār, J. F.)

"The Views of al-Jāhiz" = "The Views of al-Jāhiz concerning the Nations as reflected in his works", (ʿAṭṭār, J. F.)

"Some aspects" = "Some aspects of the political theology of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal," (Aḥmad, Z.)

Faḍīḥat = 'Ibn al-Riwandī's Faḍīḥat al-Muʿtazila,' (al-Aʿsam, ʿAbd al-Amīr, Ph.D dissertation).

Maqālāt = Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn, (al-Ashʿarī, Abū Mūsā).

Kitāb al-Maqālāt = Kitāb al-Maqālāt wa al-Firaq, (al-Ashʿarī, al-Qummī).

al-Tamhīd = al-Tamhīd fī al-Radd ʿalā al-Mulḥida al-Muʿaṭṭila wa al-Rāfiḍa wa al-Khawārij wa al-Muʿtazila, (al-Bāqillānī).

Early Mahdism = Early Mahdism: Politics and Religion in the Formative Period of Islam, (Blichfeldt, J. O.).

"al-Maqrizī's Exposition" = "al-Maqrizī's Exposition of the Formative Period in Islamic History and its Cosmic Significance: The Kitāb al-Nizāʿ wa-t-takhāṣum", (Bosworth, C. E.).

"al-Maqrizī's epistle" = "al-Maqrizī's epistle concerning What has come down to us about the Banū Umayya and the Banū-l-ʿAbbās," (Bosworth, C. E.).

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al-Jāḥiẓ = al-Jāḥiẓ: Ḥayātuhu wa Āthāruhu, (al-Ḥājirī, Ṭāha.).

Majmūʿ = Majmūʿ Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ, (Ḥājirī, Muḥammad Ṭāha.).

The First Dynasty of Islam. = The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate, 661-750 A.D. (Hawting, G.)

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"Kūfan Political Alignments" = "Kūfan Political Alignments and their Background in the Mid-Seventh Century," (Hinds, M.).

Min Kitāb al-Ḥayawān = Min Kitāb al-Ḥayawān li al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Sifr al-Awwal, (N. al-Ḥumsī and A al-Mulūḥī).

Nuṣūṣ = Nuṣūṣ-al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Islāmī: al-Imāma ʿinda al-Sunna, (Ibish, Y.).

Kamāl = Kamāl-al-Dīn wa Itmām al-Niʿma fī Ithbāt al-Ghayba, (Ibn Bābawayh).

Faḍā'il = Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḥāba, (Ibn Ḥanbal, A.).

The Life of Muḥammad = The Life of Muḥammad, Apostle of Allāh, (Ibn Ishāq).

Maqātil = Maqātil al-Ṭalibiyyīn, (al-Iṣfahānī, A.).

Takwīn = Takwīn al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī , (al-Jābirī, M.A.).

al-ʿAql = al-ʿAql al-Siyāsī al-ʿArabī, (al-Jābirī, M.A.).

al-Bayān = Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, (al-Jāḥiẓ).

Kitāb al-Bighāl = Kitāb al-Qawl fī al-Bighāl, (al-Jāḥiẓ).

(K.) al-Burṣān = K. al-Burṣān wa al-ʿUrjān wa al-ʿUmyān wa al-Ḥulān, (al-Jāḥiẓ).

al-Ḥayawān = Kitāb al-Ḥayawān, (al-Jāḥiẓ).

"Taṣwīb" = 'Risālat ʿAmr bin Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ fī al-Ḥakamayn wa Taṣwīb Amīr al-Mu'minin ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib fī fiʿlihi', (al-Jāḥiẓ).

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Rasā'il (Sandūbī) = Rasā'il al-Jāhiz, ed. Ḥ al-Sandūbī. (al-Jāhiz).

al-ʿUthmāniyya = Kitāb al-ʿUthmāniyya, (al-Jāhiz).

Faḍl (Hāshim) = Kitāb Faḍl Hāshim ʿalā ʿAbd Shams, (al-Jāhiz).

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(The) Occultation = The Occultation of the Twelfth Imam, (Jāssim, Ḥ.).

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Intiṣār = K. al-Intiṣār wa al-Radd ʿalā Ibn al-Riwandī al-Mulhid, (al-Khayyāt).

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Kitāb al-Nizāʿ = Kitāb al-Nizāʿ wa al-Takhāṣum fī ma bayn Banī Umayya wa Banī Hāshim, (al-Maqrīzī).

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al-Jamal = al-Jamal aw al-Nuṣra fī Ḥarb al-Baṣra, (al-Mufīd, Shaykh.).

Firaq = Firaq al-Shiʿa, (al-Nawbakhtī).

'Some Aspects' = 'Some Aspects of the ʿAbbāsīd-Ḥusaynid Relations During the Early ʿAbbāsīd Period 132-193 A.H.', (ʿOmar, F.).

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'The Term 'Khalīfa' = "The Term 'Khalīfa' in Early Exegetical Literature," al-Qāḍī, W.

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al-Milal and Niḥal = Muslim Sects and Divisions, Translation of al-Shahrastānī's *Milal and Niḥal* by Kazi, (al-Shahrastānī).

Black Banners = Black Banners from the East (The Establishment of the ʿAbbāsid State: Incubation of a Revolt, (Sharon, M.).

"La Politique Religieuse" = "La Politique Religieuse du Calife ʿAbbāside al-Ma'mūn", (Sourdel, D.).

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Ta'riḥ (Leiden) = Ta'riḥ al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk, (Leiden: 1879-1901), (al-Ṭabarī, ed. J. De Goeje.)

Ta'riḥ (New York) = The History of al-Ṭabarī, Ta'riḥ al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk, Vol. XXXII: The Reunification of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate, al-Ṭabarī.

Ta'rikh (Cairo, Dār al-Ma'ārif) = Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk, in Arabic, al-Ṭabarī.

Formative = The Formative Period of Islamic Thought, (Watt, W.M.).

"The Rāfiḍites" = "The Rāfiḍites: A Preliminary Study," (Watt, W.M.).

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The Arab Kingdom = The Arab Kingdom and its Fall, (Wellhausen, J.).

Factions = Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam, (Wellhausen, J.).

Marwiyyāt Abī Mikhnaf = Marwiyyāt Abī Mikhnaf fi Tārikh al-Ṭabarī: ʿAṣr al-Khilāfa al-Rāshida, (al-Yaḥyā., Y.).

"Insights from the ʿUthmāniyya" = "Insights from the ʿUthmāniyya of al-Jāḥiẓ into the religious Policy of al-Ma'mūn," (Zahniser, M.).

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

جَنَّبَكَ اللَّهُ الشُّبُهَةَ، وَعَصَمَكَ مِنَ الْحَيْرَةِ، وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ
الْمَعْرِفَةِ نَسَبًا، وَبَيْنَ الصِّدْقِ سَبَابًا، وَحَبَّبَ إِلَيْكَ التَّثَبُّتَ، وَزَيَّنَ فِي
عَيْنِكَ الْإِنصَافَ، وَأَذَاقَكَ حَلَاوَةَ التَّقْوَى، وَأَشْعَرَ قَلْبَكَ عِزَّ الْحَقِّ،
وَأَوْدَعَ صَدْرَكَ بَرْدَ الْيَقِينِ، وَطَرَدَ عَنْكَ ذُلَّ الْيَأْسِ، وَعَرَّفَكَ مَا فِي
الْبَاطِلِ مِنَ الذُّلَّةِ، وَمَا فِي الْجَهْلِ مِنَ الْقَلَّةِ.

(من صدر كتاب الحيوان للجاحظ.)

PART ONE

General Introduction

In the aim of fully understanding al-Jāḥiẓ's political doctrine vis-à-vis the question of caliphate, three major steps have been undertaken to realize that aim: As al-Jāḥiẓ's works cannot be extracted from their specific environment, I attempt to fit al-Jāḥiẓ's output into the exact politico-religious setting of his time and for this reason I have firstly decided to briefly recapture - to the best of my ability - the various facets and roots of the issue of the caliphate, generation after generation, since its inception with the Prophet's death and up to the times of al-Jāḥiẓ¹. Secondly, this "reconstruction" of the distant and immediate past preceding al-Jāḥiẓ does not stop with the coming of al-Jāḥiẓ but is equally applied throughout the Jāḥiẓian era too (150/776-255/869) in the hope that by adopting this evolutionary approach, one can recapture the full spectrum of ideas and forces that al-Jāḥiẓ must have met before having to say anything on the issue of Imamate, which evidently moulded his thought in the way it has reached us. A detailed chronological exposé and analysis of al-Jāḥiẓ's extant political works is followed, cutting through a period of fifty years (198-248/813-862) that cover twenty seven treatises, with the aim of linking each work to its specific politico-religious setting; once this promising yet laborious and demanding task is achieved a third major step is taken to rebuild and pull together the seemingly unrelated Jāḥiẓian views and apparently incompatible threads that, once properly re-assembled and chronologically viewed, provide one with a unique opportunity to scan the various doctrinal constants and variants in al-Jāḥiẓ's political thought, thus offering a much more coherent picture of al-Jāḥiẓ's theory of *Imāma* and producing a reasonably re-constructed political philosophy. Eventually, al-Jāḥiẓ's views - whether taken in part or collectively - appear to be strongly aspiring to lay the foundations of a more consistent political theory that was striving to cope with the unavoidable changes and transcend the political pressures of the time, in spite of having to overlook hypothetically - if not pragmatically - at times some of its basic professed ideals.

I hope that the readers of my thesis will agree that the chronological approach of my research and the importance of the results it has occasioned - which could only be established after a close analysis of a large number of works which had to be dove-tailed with an awareness of the development of the issue of *Imāma* prior to and during the time of al-Jāḥiẓ - will justify the length of the analysis.

¹ A fully-detailed survey and historical reconstruction of the development of the issue of caliphate before the ʿAbbāsīd revolution is intended to be published separately.

CHAPTER ONE:

A- Introductory Survey of the Development of the Issue of the Imamate before the ʿAbbāsīd period:

In this introductory chapter we shall present a brief survey of the developments of the issue of the caliphate and how the Muslim community reacted to it under the 'Rāshidūn' ('guided caliphs'), the Umayyads and up to the ʿAbbāsīd period. The aim of this survey is to familiarize ourselves with the ideological developments that preceded the ʿAbbāsīd revolution and consequently appreciate the religio-political and intellectual atmosphere that al-Jāhīz² met as he handled the issue of the Imāmate. By the term Imāmate is to be understood the caliphate itself, the *Imāma al-ʿuzmā*,³ or *Imāma al-kubrā*,⁴ that may have been derived from the *Imāma al-ṣughrā*, i.e., the *ṣalāṭ* prayer conducted by the *Imām*, literally leader of the prayer and now leader of the *Umma* (Muslim community).⁵

Since the question of Imāmate has been a controversial one the reader should not expect a final verdict as to some of the issues which arise here.

As Professor Ibish puts it:

To arrive at an understanding of Islamic society we must attempt to unroll - generation after generation, period by period, and century by century - the past which led to its present. There are difficulties inherent in such an investigation. Any society, at any given period, is dynamically changing and a living whole. It is an extremely complex synthesis of forces that the student of history must attempt to reconstruct, often from scanty and biased sources. Reconstruction of these forces obliges the student to arrest their movement, their perpetual action and reaction. Reader as well as student must never forget the artificiality, however academically justified, of such a procedure. Historical reconstruction can only approximate, never fully correspond to the historical reality.⁶

2 Charles Pellat, *The Life and Works of al-Jāhīz*, trans. by D. M. Hawke (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 3, and *E.I.*2, S.v. "al-Djāhīz" by Pellat.

3 Rashīd Ridā, *al-Khilāfa aw al-Imāma al-ʿUzmā* (1923).

4 Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddimma*, (Cairo: 1322 A.H.) p. 151. al-Jāhīz uses the term *Imām/Caliph* and *Ra'is or Sulṭān* interchangeably; see *Rasā'il al-Jāhīz*, 'K.al-Nisā' (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī (1399/1979) 3:147, 154, where all of these terms are used. The term *al-Ri'āsa al-Kubrā* is also mentioned there.

5 *Ibid.* More references will be made in the introduction to other titles assumed by the caliph. For a brief view of the senses of the title *Khalīfa* or caliph, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed. S.v. "Khalīfa" by A.K.S. Lambton, pp. 947-948.

6 Y. Ibish, *The Political Doctrine of al-Bāqillānī*, (Beirut: The American University of Beirut, 1966) pp. 1-2 of the Preface.

1. THE SITUATION IN THE TIME OF THE GUIDED CALIPHS

(*Rāshidūn*):

Basic to all future political discussions among Muslims was the meeting of *al-Anṣār* and *al-Muhājirūn* following the death of Prophet Muḥammad that probably gave rise to the first institutional crisis in the question of leadership. Abū Bakr whose appointment was made legal by an overwhelming *bayʿa* seems to have followed the same path of *shūrā* that had brought him to office, when he appointed ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. On the other hand, when ʿUmar was asked on his death-bed to appoint a successor, he suggested an electoral board consisting of the six most distinguished surviving Companions⁷ with whom the Prophet was pleased. Some reports assert that ʿUmar would have equally favoured either one of two persons to be caliph had they still been alive⁸. Further reports,⁹ however, say that these reports according to strictly *Isnād*/transmission standards are not authentic. It is maintained by these sources that if ʿUmar's statement were authentic, then it would have implied that the Imāmate could go to non-Qurayshites.¹⁰ ʿUthmān's reign ended dramatically with his assassination in 35/656. The actual murderers of ʿUthmān are generally regarded as being followers of ʿAbd Allāh b. Saba'¹¹ together with a group of discontented Beduin, but it is clear that dissatisfaction with the rule of ʿUthmān went much deeper than this, and it is with his death that we see the emergence of the Khawārij, who held that ʿUthmān had forfeited his right to rule by failing to observe the

7 They were: ʿAlī b. Abī-Ṭālib, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, az-Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām, Ṭalḥa b. ʿAbd Allāh, Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ and ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf. See al-Ṭabarī, Tārikh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk, Series 30 of Dhakhā'ir al-ʿArab, (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1962)5: 192.

8 al-Ṭabarī, Tārikh, 4: 227, Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Musnad, ed. A. Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1373/1954), 1:129. They were Sālim, *mawlā* Abī Ḥudhayfa, and the Qurayshī Abū ʿUbayda b. al-Jarrāh.

9 al-Dhahabī, Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalā' (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1981), 1: 170. Even Ibn Khaldūn (al-Muqaddima, p.153) maintains that ʿUmar's statement could not be taken as a guide allowing leadership to a non-Qurayshite.

10 Ibid.

11 ʿAbd Allāh b. Saba' had led a determined campaign against ʿUthmān, based chiefly according to al-Ṭabarī, Tārikh; 4: 340, 438 on the assertion that ʿAlī was God's *waṣī*. He moved from one province to another, and finally his followers came to Medina and killed ʿUthmān. Apart from the role played by Ibn Saba', the Beduin are said to have been discontented with the administrative policy of ʿUthmān, who was charged with practising nepotism. See Hawting, The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate 661-750 (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), pp. 25, 26. Refutation of these and other charges is given by Ibn al-ʿArabī, al-ʿAwāṣim min al-Qawāsim fī Taḥqīq Mawāqif al-Sahāba, ed. M. al-Khaṭīb (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿIlmiyya, 1406/1986) & M. ʿAlī, Early Caliphate (Pakistan: Aḥmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam, 1951), pp. 212-222.

prescriptions of the Qur'ān.¹² It was common practise among later Muslim writers (and modern scholars) to divide the twelve years of ʿUthmān's rule into two halves, the former being regarded as free from the disturbances witnessed by the second half. Such a division was important to later Islamic polemicists like al-Jāhiz.¹³ ʿUthmān's murder created a new dimension in the question of the Imāmate since he did not have the opportunity to solve the question of succession in the way ʿUmar had; it opened the door to an unprecedented *fitna*¹⁴ that even ʿAlī's accession could not control: the circumstances following ʿUthmān's killing not only emphasized the question of whether it was justified or not but even clouded the issue of the legitimacy of his immediate successor, ʿAlī, given the support for him of those who had carried out the killing,¹⁵ and according to some reports had threatened that they would kill ʿAlī, Ṭalḥa, and al-Zubayr if they did not choose an Imam, thus making it impossible to fulfill ʿAlī's alleged insistence to conduct a proper *shūrā*.¹⁶ ʿUthmān's death raised the yet unresolved constitutional question of whether the community should obey its leader(s) if his agenda of priorities do not (or can not) match theirs, thus the emergence of the battle of the Camel (36/656), Ṣiffīn and Nahrawān, (37/657-8) reflecting controversial concerns ranging between seeking immediate avengement of the martyred caliph, or at least having serious reservations about the circumstances surrounding ʿAlī's appointment or proclaiming the need for a real *shūrā* that was independent from the seditionists' probable role in his *bayʿa*. A general atmosphere of confusion and bewilderment prevailed until ʿAlī decided to face those who were not happy about the situation. However, these civil wars had even further-reaching negative effects on his position as caliph and on the development of the issue of Imāmate in general. The group known as the Khārijites who had supported ʿAlī in these campaigns, found an opportunity to question the legality of his authority when

12 E.I. new ed. S.v. 'Khalifa' p. 938a by Sourdél based on one interpretation of Watt on Khārijite doctrine, see Watt, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1973) p. 14 who says that Khārijites claimed continuity with the revolutionary bodies responsible for ʿUthmān's murder (Formative, p. 9). Wellhausen suggests provisionally that 'the Saba'iyya were the real assassins of ʿUthmān and therefore the common root of both the Shīʿa and of the Khawārij," see J. Wellhausen, The Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam, trans. by Ostle and Walzer (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing company, 1975) pp. 17-18.

13 See our discussion of this point in our analysis of al-Jāhiz's treatise al-Nābita'.

14 a *fitna* already signalled by a Prophetic *ḥadīth* (see Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Musnad, 8: 5953).

15 G. Hawting, The First Dynasty of Islam, p. 27.

16 al-Ṭabarī, Tārikh, 4: 428,429, 432-33, 462 and E.L. Petersen, ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya in Early Islamic Historical Writing until the end of the Ninth Century (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1964) pp. 38, 40, 119. Petersen ascribes to al-Shaʿbī, a statement, "that ʿAlī would not be content with an election by those present, and had desired a *Shūrā* in order to prevent a *fitna*". Petersen, Ibid.

he stopped fighting "the enemies of God"¹⁷ by accepting arbitration *-taḥkīm-* with Mu^ʿāwīya and dissociated themselves from him. ʿAlī had to face them at Nahrawān.¹⁸ The issue of arbitration remained unresolved until ʿAlī was assassinated in 40/661. Finally, concerning the conflict between ʿAlī and Mu^ʿāwīya, the latter is thought to have different motives and positions by different historians. Mu^ʿāwīya only recognized himself as caliph after al-Ḥasan had pledged allegiance to him in 661 (the year of reunion or *Jamāʿa*). The other interpretation is that Mu^ʿāwīya's demand for blood vengeance was "sheer pretence"¹⁹ and that he was thus a rival to ʿAlī.²⁰

2. THE SITUATION DURING THE UMAYYADS:

I- Umayyad Political Theory:

Whether the Umayyads' legitimacy initially rested on al-Ḥasan's abdication to Mu^ʿāwīya, which confirms a Qur'anic right (*sulṭān*) to the caliphate²¹ as a Divine reward to his role of blood avenger (*walī*), and whether the Umayyads took office by inheritance from their cousin ʿUthmān who became caliph after an irrefutable *shūrā*, or whether they ruled by virtue of enjoying a blood- relation to the clan of the Prophet, or simply by force: all of these justifications have their place in the historiographic literature and were probably displayed in different periods. Of particular relevance to the issue of caliphate is that access to leadership in the Umayyad era (and sooner or later by their opponents like the Shīʿites and the ʿAbbāsids) was claimed not by virtue of an exclusive quality of merit which was absolutely independent from any necessary genealogical ties to the Prophet (at least as Abū Bakr and ʿUmar manifested); it was these very genealogical ties and blood- relations to the Prophet that were becoming more popular, such that if it can be

17 Watt, *Formative*, pp. 10, 18 and al-Ashʿarī, *op.cit.*, p. 86. The only necessary qualification for the ideal Imam according to them was a demand for piety and religious excellence and a rejection of the view that he should belong to the family of the Prophet as the later Shīʿites demanded or to the wider tribe of Quraysh, as the later Sunnites required.

18 M. Shaban, *Islamic History: A New Interpretation* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 76-77.

19 Petersen, *op.cit.*, 49, 120. Petersen reflects both sides of the argument in the pages referred to.

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 37, 49.

21 al-Qurʾān, 17: 33-35 reads: 'And slay not the soul God has forbidden, except by right, whosever is slain unjustly, we have appointed to his next-of-kin authority (*sulṭān*); but let him not exceed in slaying, he shall be helped. *E.I (2)*, s.v. 'Khalifa', A.K. S. Lambton p. 948a, and Petersen, *ʿAlī and Mu^ʿāwīya*, p. 32.

shown ²² that the Manāfi Umayyads were the sole representatives of the whole Prophetic clan and "the family", one must understand that claim as directly targeted against the rebellious surviving descendants of ʿAbd Manāf's brother, ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā i.e., ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr who challenged the Umayyads from Makka between 680-692 by his constant appeal to the element of religious merit. To counter claims within the "Manāfi" line which also included current proto-Shīʿite (Hāshimī) claims, they claimed to be the sole representatives of *ahl al-bayt* and to have inherited the right to rule from the two sons of ʿAbd Manāf. In this way one notices the truth of the observation that access to leadership in the Umayyad era was progressively restricting the caliphate from the wider circle (the most meritorious Qurashī) to an increasingly shrinking and specific charismatic dynastic entity from the stock of Quraysh.²³ Their legitimacy, they claimed, was unquestionable, as they could boast of their privileged *qarāba*²⁴ to God's House and also to His Prophet via ʿUthmān who was the Prophet's son in law twice as much as ʿAlī was. "God has garlanded you with *Khilāfa* and guidance, for what God decrees (*qaḍā'*), there is no change".²⁵ This restricted theocratic notion of legitimacy was also adopted by other claimants to power, and it is important to remember this when we study the later dynastic and theocratic Shīʿite and ʿAbbāsīd concepts of ruling.

II- Merit vs. Descent:

Ibn al-Zubayr's refusal to accept the rule of Yazīd I and his short-lived state (61/680-73/692), seems to have been a protest from the minor Asad clan of Quraysh against the dynastic way of succession that had been endorsed by the Umayyads, which may have represented a greater deviation than that which his father, al-Zubayr, had met such that the Umayyad presence may have symbolized for him an attempt to crush the *shūrā* and its upholders. It is remarkable that al-Mukhtār's messianic and non-orthodox activities surrounding the new Alid charismatic figure of Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya - who represented to the Mukhtāriyya an extreme version of the pro-descent ideology - were subdued by the Zubayrids themselves. If the element of

²² "You have inherited the staff of *mulk*, not as distant relatives, from the two sons of (ʿAbd) Manāf, ʿAbd Shams and Hāshim." See also Watt, *Formative*, pp. 82-83 and al-Farazdaq's *Dīwān*, (Beirut: Dār Sādir, 1960), 2: 281, 309, 316.

²³ Watt, *Formative*, p. 95 and 'God's Caliph' in *Iran and Islam*, ed C. E. Bosworth, (Edinburgh: 1971) p. 570 (citing Jarīr).

²⁴ see Ḥ. Mu'nīs, (Ed.) al-Maqrīzī's *Kitāb al-Nizā' wa al-Takhāsum*, (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1988), p.12

²⁵ see Jarīr's *Dīwān*, (Beirut, 1960), p. 380.

merit (irrespective of noble descent) had been adopted by the *Rāshidūn*, the Zubayrids and the Khawārij, we shall find that apart from the ruling Umayyads and certain suppressed messianic movements of pro-Alid roots and aspirations, the element of belonging to "the family of the Prophet" was equally growing among the cousins of the Umayyads i.e., the Hāshimites at large and was particularly and "charismatically" accelerating among the Ṭālibī stock of Hāshim such that if the earlier worry of the Umayyads was to affix the charisma in the Manāfī line, against that of ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā, the remaining worries were in being able to affix it to the descendants of ʿAbd Shams alone. The strong resemblance between the late²⁶ Umayyad caliphal titles (God's Caliph/deputy, *Imām al-hudā*, deliverer from evil and provider of *'iṣma*²⁷) and the superior image propagated by the messianic movements around the Alids, allows one to conclude that both the Umayyads (as seen by Crone and Hinds) and their opponents (the Shīʿites and later the ʿAbbāsids) were drawing their divine basis from the same pool of non-orthodox dogmatic arguments whose goal was to use religion as a title or camouflage to hide certain opportunistic Machiavellian purposes.²⁸ If the autocratic/theocratic nature of the Umayyads was a reaction to the earlier messianic claims around ʿAlī and his progeny, the real need to understand the long-term impact of the introduction of these foreign notions to the Arabs²⁹ on the shaping of Proto-Sunnī and future Muslim political thought is not less demanding than the need to appreciate it from within its own ideological roots.

26 Crone and Hinds in God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1986), pp.5-6 believe that the title God's Caliph is attested for all Umayyad caliphs. However, Wadād al-Qāḍī, in 'The term Khalifa in early exegetical literature', in Die Welt des Islams XXVIII (1988), pp. 409, 410, says that it had not been (officially) used until towards the end of the Umayyad rule.

27 Crone and Hinds, God's Caliph, p. 1, "The Umayyads are God's chosen lineage" p. 32. and *ḥabl min ḥibāl Allāh* (lifeline to God), pp.38-39. The similarity here is that ʿUthmān is the central charismatic figure and initiator of an era of caliphatehood following that of prophethood.

28 Crone and Hinds, Ibid, pp. 100-102.

29 This was affected by the Persian community according to D.C. Dennett, "Marwān Ibn Muḥammad: The Passing of the Umayyad Caliphate", (Harvard, Ph.D thesis, 1939) p. 163, T. Arnold, The Caliphate (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1924) pp.47-48, and M. al-Jābirī, al-ʿAql al-Siyāsī al-ʿArabī, (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 1990, pp. 143, 339. The last two authors explicitly say that the autocratic hereditary character of the Muslim caliphate was an inheritance from the Persian monarchy and its political heritage, into the possession of whose dominions the Muslim community had entered; for pre-Islamic Arabic society- as Arnold puts it- "had never known any such form of political institution nor was it in harmony with the Qur'anic doctrine of the equality of believers."

III- Early Shī'ism/Proto-Shī'ism and the Hāshimītes:

Before we study the activities of the early Shī'ites up to the beginning of the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate (132/750), we would like first to refer to two basically different approaches to them. While special charismatic qualities were thought by some to have been equally reflected in all members of the clan of Hāshim, the other approach holds that such charisma belonged exclusively to certain Hāshimītes as opposed to others, more specifically to ʿAlī and the ʿAlids or the Ṭālibītes in general. Whereas this Imāmī charisma is held by the first school of thought to have been projected retrospectively after 874³⁰ onto these ʿAlid figures but not to have existed during their lifetimes, at least in any significant political sense, the other view asserts that such charisma was much more firmly rooted prior to 874; and coexisted with a chain of charismatic Imams that goes back to ʿAlī himself, forming 'a secret religious organization with adherents all over the world.'³¹ In other words, the point of controversy here is whether Shī'ism was Imāmīte (or Rāfiḍite) from its very beginning or whether it underwent developmental stages before it assumed its final definite form; this shall be substantiated below by referring to the Hāshimītes: By this term is to be understood which Hāshimī entity (Ṭālibī or ʿAbbāsī) was claiming the exclusive charismatic right to rule before the ʿAbbāsīd revolution. Shī'ī heresiographers have stressed that such a charismatic right had been claimed -from all other Hāshimī entities - by a non-interrupted series of Ḥusaynid Imams due to their privileged genealogical relation to the Prophet via his daughter, Fāṭima. This image is first upset by a report that finds the revolution of the Fāṭimid Zayd b. ʿAlī (740) to be quite independent from any such hereditary divine right³², and secondly by the wider Hāshimī charisma that is believed to have existed towards the end of the Umayyad era and prior to the rupture of the Hāshimī (Ṭālibī and ʿAbbāsī) alliance that was manifested at Abwā' in their common endeavour to reclaim the Imamship that had been so far exercised by the Umawī stock of Quraysh, not to forget the alleged transfer of Imama from the grandson of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (the celebrated Kaysānī figure Abū Hāshim) to the grandson of Ibn ʿAbbās as early as 716. We must

³⁰ This date marks the death of the eleventh Imām and the alleged disappearance of the twelfth shortly after, together with beginning of the scholarly Imāmī attempts to formulate the Imāmī dogma. See Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, (Edinburgh: University Press, 1985), pp. 61, 122 and Early Islam, (Edinburgh: University Press, 1990) pp. 160, 162.

³¹ J. Ḥusain, The Occultation of the Twelfth Imām: A Historical Background, (London: Muḥammadi Trust, 1982), pp. xiii. My underlining.

³² See Watt, 'The re-appraisal of ʿAbbāsīd Shī'ism', Early Islam, (Edinburgh: Univ. Press, 1990) pp. 40, 143, 144-145 analysing al-Nawbakhtī's *Firaq*. The same applies to Zayd's father ʿAlī (d. 713) and his brother al-Bāqir (d. 732).

remember that the Mukhtāriyya cause seems to have retrieved its momentum under the Kaysāniyya movement (after Kaysān, a *mawlā* of al-Mukhtār) by the end of the Umayyad era³³ such that the Kaysāniyya continued to be the "most important proto-Shi'ite group"³⁴ from Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya's death in 718 up to 750. The Umawī denial of the Hāshimī right at large should not, however, hide the initial common ideological background that had eventually paved the way for the revolutionary success of one of those suppressed Hāshimī allied entities, which brought the alliance to an end when al-Manṣūr became caliph, thus indirectly allowing the Ṭālibites to make up-in their own ways- for the yet unrealised rights of the Prophetic family, by inheriting most of the Kaysānī dogma and building towards a realisation of the yet undefined Imāmism. Watt and many other scholars maintain that however pro-Imamī propagandists try to retrospectively project onto certain Ṭālibī Hāshimites an image of fully-established *Shi'ī* Imāmism, in their tendentious efforts "to read into the phenomena a greater unity than one is justified in assuming that they (early Shi'ites) possess during the Umayyad period"³⁵, we should adopt an alternative term to *Shi'a* and *tashayyūc* in describing those initially sympathetic with the wider clan of Hāshim. To Watt, the nearest term to *Shi'a* in the stricter sense it later assumed as followers of 'Alī was Saba'iyya or Kaysāniyya³⁶, in view of the undeniable attachment to the Alid Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya. Given the developmental nature of the early manifestations of pro-Hāshimī feelings, Watt finds it necessary to use the term Proto-Shi'ism instead, in view of the definite absence - that is observed during his examination of the Imāmī literature³⁷- of any one continuously unified position that gathered the early Shi'ites/Ṭālibites around one specific charismatic figure throughout the Umayyad era and up to the start of the 'Abbāsīd era. Watt notices that a report cited by al-Nawbakhtī on a sect which held that there was no Imam after al-Husayn (d. 680) contradicts another cited by the same source of a 'sect' which

33 Madelung, Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran (Albany: N.Y., 1988), p. 77.

34 Watt, Formative, pp. 55-56.

35 Watt, Formative, p. 54.

36 Ibid., p. 59

37 Namely, Firaq al-Shi'a by al-Nawbakhtī see [Watt, "The Re-appraisal of 'Abbāsīd Shi'ism", op.cit.] and List of Shi'a Books by al-Ṭūsī [see Watt, "Sidelights on Early Imamite Doctrine", Early Islam, pp. 154-161] and Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology p. 122. Actually, as Watt notes, this was first proposed by C. Cahen in his article 'Points de vue sur la Revolution 'Abbāsīde', Revue Historique, 1963, 295-338. See Watt, Formative, p. 38. Cahen is quoted here to as having noticed 'the distorting influence of Imāmī propaganda on the version of events during the first two Islamic centuries (Ibid.) Watt seems to have drawn from the conclusions of Massignon (Passion I/140-51) that the Imāmī aristocratic scholars and financiers welded the divergent Rāfiḍite opinions into the Imāmīte dogma for economic reasons. See Watt, 'The Rāfiḍites': A Preliminary Study' Oriens, vol. xvi (1963), p. 120 and "The Early Stages of Imāmīte Shi'ism", Early Islam, p.168.

recognized the imamate of ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, after his father al-Ḥusayn; thus Watt concludes:

there was no widely accepted Imam between 680 and 750 ... Careful examination of the statements in Firaq al-Shiʿa shows a complete absence of any decisive evidence for widespread recognition of the imāms during their lifetime ... These probably constituted a large part of those claimed by later Imāmites as followers of the imāms during their lifetime, but this claim is almost entirely later propaganda.³⁸

What characterized early Shiʿism then?

The wide application of the name *Kaysāniyyah* is a pointer to the fact that during the later Umayyad period the Shiʿite movement was not at all Imāmite (or Rāfiḍite) in character; that is to say, the descendants of al-Ḥusayn, who later became imāms of the Imāmites, were not during their lifetime the centre of any political or religious movement of consequence.³⁹...The chief early manifestations of Shiʿite ideas were various revolts under charismatic leaders or under men who claimed to act on behalf of members of 'the family' or to represent their interests. The best known of these instances of activism was al-Ḥusayn's abortive bid for the caliphate in 680 ... the most successful was that of Mukhtār at Kūfa in 685...This charisma differed, however, from that later ascribed by the Imāmites to their imāms. For one thing it was not restricted to these imāms but might be found in almost any member of Muḥammad's clan of Hāshim. In the years round 750 it was claimed for ʿAlī's brother Jaʿfar and Muḥammad's uncle al-ʿAbbās ... Even those who took a more restricted view of the occurrence of charisma had sometimes a different account of the succession of Imāms and made Muḥammad ibn al-Hanafīyya follow al-Ḥusayn and be succeeded by his own son Abū Hāshim ... All these facts show that up to 750 the Proto-Shiʿite idea of charisma was in an extremely fluid state.⁴⁰

It appears, thence, that the Imāmi claim is diluted from within its own genealogical resources, as the fixing of the charismata was constantly oscillating among (i) Alids: Ḥasanids, Ḥusaynids, Ḥanafids), (ii) even among the non-Alid ʿAbd Allāh b. Jaʿfar (iii) let alone the coming of the ʿAbbāsids:

Shiʿite belief in the charismata attaching to the kin of Muḥammad did not restrict these charismata to the descendants of Alī and Fāṭima, still less to the descendants of al-Ḥusayn. Throughout the Umayyad period the whole clan of Hāshim was regarded as sharing in the charismata ... not only Ibn al-Hanafīyya, but ... the descendents of ʿAlī's brother, Jaʿfar and his uncle al-ʿAbbās.⁴¹

In this matter what remains to be established, is to find out from al-Jāḥiẓ's references to the Ṭālibites/Shiʿites of his age, whether they were in a definite

38 Watt, 'The Re-Appraisal', *Early Islam*, pp. 144, 145, 152.

39 Watt, 'Shiʿism Under the Umayyads' in *JRAS*, 1960, pp. 165-166. *Kaysāniyya* refers to followers of the charismatic non-Fāṭimid descendant of ʿAlī, i.e. Muḥammad b. al-Hanafīyya. See *E.I.2*, S.v. "Kaysāniyya", p. 836 by Madelung.

40 Watt, 'The Significance of the Early Stages of Imāmite Shiʿism', *Early Islam*, p. 163.

41 Watt, "Shiʿism under the Umayyads" *op. cit.*, p. 169. The revolt of ʿAbd Allāh b. Muʿāwiya b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Jaʿfar's revolt implied a real threat to the ʿAbbāsids, as he could absorb all anti-Umayyad groups under his leadership, as in fact really happened. See Wellhausen, *Factions*, pp. 164-165. Zaydis, Khārijis and Shiʿis all fought on his side.

Imāmite form or in a pre-Imāmite or other Shī'ite preliminary form; Watt has the following answer:

In dealing with material about early Shī'ism an alternative conception of the nature of Shī'ism under the 'Abbāsids is made to seem plausible. One of the main points of this alternative view is that, during their lifetime, there was little or no recognition of the twelve Imāms of the Imāmites as such, there was no organized party of followers and no underground revolutionary activities with the aim of making them caliphs. In so far as this is the case it follows that the Imāmite form of Shī'ism and probably also the Ismā'ilite did not receive the definite character familiar to scholars until shortly before 900.⁴²

It would therefore be useful to examine these conclusions - among other concerns - against al-Jāḥiẓ's own heresiographic references to the exact nature of Shī'ism of his time.⁴³ A review of the religio-political situation that immediately existed before al-Jāḥiẓ follows this section.

B- SURVEY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ISSUE OF THE IMĀMATE IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO AND DURING AL-JĀḤIẒ'S TIME: THE SITUATION IN THE TIME OF THE 'ABBĀSIDS:

I- The Political Theory of the 'Abbāsids:

The instability in the theoretical legitimacy of the Umayyads seems to have been the lot of their successors too. As Sourdel puts it: "The legitimism of the 'Abbāsids depended on various arguments whose vogue changed with the times."⁴⁴

At the beginning, the 'Abbāsids by identifying themselves with the thoughts, abortive revolts, and rights of their fellow Hāshimites, who constituted the other subdivision of the family of the Prophet which had been consuming its energy by successive yet unsuccessful revolts, could now claim that God had brought them to revive the rights of the family of the Prophet,⁴⁵ to which they too belonged and "to re-establish the guided caliphate that had turned into *mulk*"⁴⁶ with their eminent victory.

42 Watt, 'The Reappraisal of 'Abbāsīd Shī'ism' in Early Islam, p. 140. My underlining

43 i.e., whether they were fully Imāmite or still undergoing transformations from Saba'iyya-Kaysāniyya--Rāfiḍa--Zaydiyya--Ghāliya-Proto-Imāmiyya, thus offering us a first-hand knowledge of an early proto-Sunni-proto-Shī'ī polemic on the question of succession.

44 EI.² S.v. "Khalifa" by Sourdel.

45 Fārūq 'Omar, al-'Abbāsiyyūn al-Awā'il, (Baghdad: Dār al-Fikr, 1973), p. 79.

46 Ibid., p. 82.

As Shaban puts it:

The ʿAbbāsīd revolution was proclaimed in the name of *al-riḍā min Āl Muḥammad*. The time came when this member of the House of the Prophet acceptable to all, was to be selected. Although the name of the Imām of the *Hāshimiyya*,⁴⁷ Ibrāhīm, was by now circulating among the revolutionaries, it was perhaps only as a possible candidate for the office of *Amīr al-Muʿminīn*. Unfortunately the currency of the name led the Umayyad authorities to the discovery of the connection between Ibrāhīm and the revolutionaries (so that) he was promptly arrested and taken to Ḥarrān where he died, or more likely died in prison in 132/749.⁴⁸

Shaban adds that although this Ibrāhīm had appointed his brother Abū al-ʿAbbās as his successor before his death, Abū Salama, one agent of the ʿAbbāsīds, "did not take it very seriously or at least did not think that Abū al-ʿAbbās was the most acceptable member of the House of the Prophet to be installed as *Amīr al-Muʿminīn*."⁴⁹ Furthermore, Shaban raises the following points:

Meanwhile, Abū Salama corresponded with the other prominent members of the House of the Prophet, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan, and ʿUmar ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥasan ... Presumably Abū Salama offered them the office of *Amīr al-Muʿminīn* on certain conditions ... If it was a simple offer, it is difficult to understand why it was not immediately accepted by any of these candidates, especially by ʿAbdullah ibn al-Ḥasan or his son Muḥammad who was to lead an uprising against the ʿAbbāsīds thirteen years later! ... Finally, the *Khurāsāniyya*⁵⁰ took matters in their own hands and forced the selection of the ʿAbbāsīd, Abū al-ʿAbbās as the new *Amīr al-Muʿminīn*.⁵¹

47 The *Hāshimiyya* here refers not only to the descendants of Hāshim b. ʿAbd Manāf but to a religio-political faction who believed that the Imāmate had passed from the ʿAlid M. Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya to his son Abū Hāshim and from the latter to Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās. See A.K.S. Lambton, *State And Government in Medieval Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) p. 47. Hawting defines the term *Hāshimiyya* as follows: For some time, it was thought that the *Hāshimiyya* was a sect which supported the religious and political claims of the descendants of Hāshim (the ʿAbbāsīds, the Prophet, ʿAlī, and their descendants), the most prominent of whom were the family of ʿAlī. The ʿAbbāsīds, more obscure descendants of Hāshim got control of this sect. Originally (*Hāshimiyya*) referred to the party which had supported the claims to the Imāmate of Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya's son, Abū Hāshim . . . The movement which brought the ʿAbbāsīds into the caliphate was known as *al-Hāshimiyya*.' G. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate, 661-750 A.D.* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), p. 110.

48 M. Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsīd Revolution*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 164.

49 *Ibid.*

50 This term should be understood in a regional rather than a national sense, covering both Arabs and Persians from Khurāsān who participated in the success of the ʿAbbāsīd revolution. See *E.I.*², S.v. 'Abbāsīds' by B. Lewis, p. 19.

51 Shaban, *op.cit.*, pp. 164-165.

Abū Salama's removal (he was eventually put to death) on the accession of the first °Abbāsīd caliph was "for attempting to bring about the replacement of the °Abbāsīds by the °Alīds."⁵² In short, as Watt puts it, the °Abbāsīd revolution:

though not exactly a Shi°ite movement, it made use of Shi°ite ideas. From about 718 some members of the family of al-°Abbās were making plans to gain the caliphate for themselves. The leaders in this project were first Muḥammad b. °Alī (d. 743), a grandson of °Abd Allāh b. al-°Abbās and then his son Ibrāhīm (d.748) ... these men believed in the existence of a minimal degree of charismata in the house of Hāshim, but they were prepared to use agents with more extreme views ... The most famous agent of the °Abbāsīds Abū Muslim ... presumably taught some of the messianic ideas current among the Shi°ites at the time.⁵³

The success of this 'partly Shi°ite movement'⁵⁴ in 750 is considered to be "another stage in the development of Shi°ism."⁵⁵ Its link to Shi°ism is also clarified here:

It is difficult to know how prevalent in the earlier Umayyad period was this practise of designating a successor ... in one important case, the alleged appointment of an °Abbāsīd as heir by Abū Hāshim about 716, it is clear that the claim or allegation had been made public by 750. By this time, then, the idea that the Imām designated his successor must have been widely accepted. The success of the °Abbāsīds in gaining supreme power suggests that they may have been either the inventors or the first outstanding exponents of this idea.⁵⁶

It is difficult, though, to judge whether the early propaganda of the °Abbāsīds (transfer of authority to them from Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya's son) was making use of current Shi°ite ideas that now held the idea of designation (*naṣṣ*), or was in fact drawing from the 'autocratic bloc'⁵⁷ i.e., by those Persian *mawālī* and like minded groups that believed in "the divine hereditary right of Kings,"⁵⁸ presumably since Mukhtār had spread the idea of *waṣī*.⁵⁹ Was the transfer of Imamate based on simple surrendering and yielding (*tanāzul*) of °Alīd rights, or one based on the more complicated and controversial idea of designation (*waṣīyya*)?⁶⁰

52 E.I.², S.v. 'The °Abbāsīds', by B. Lewis, p. 16.

53 Watt, 'Shi°ism under the Umayyads', JRAS (1960), pp. 170-71.

54 Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, (Edinburgh: University Press, 1985), p. 18.

55 Watt, Early Islam, Selected Articles, (Edinburgh: University Press, 1990), p. 18.

56 Watt, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought, (Edinburgh: University Press, 1973) pp. 56-57. My underlining.

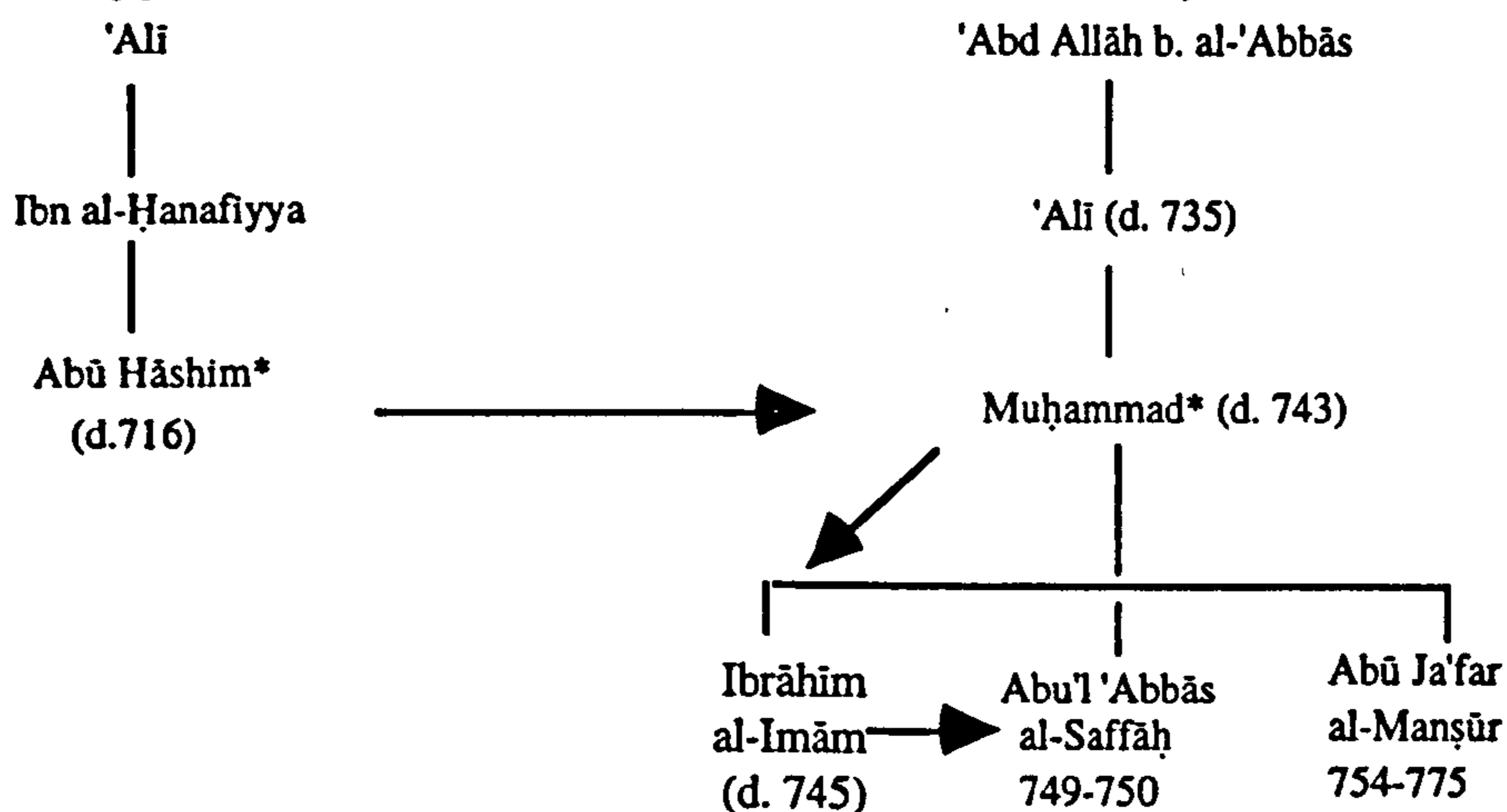
57 Watt, Early Islam, pp. 162, 165.

58 F. °Omar, Tabī°at al-Da°wa al-°Abbāsīyya: 98-132/716-749, (Beirut: Dār al-Irshād) pp. 64-65.

59 On bequeathal or transference of Imamate in early Shi°ism, see reference in Footnote 15 above

60 See S. al-Laythī, Jihād al-Shi°a fī al-°Asr al-°Abbāsī al-Awwal (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1976), pp. 41-42.

The ʿAbbāsīd agent Abū Salama's failure to secure an ʿAlid candidate for the Imamate⁶¹ strengthens the idea that the pendulum of charismata was in fact oscillating between these two Hāshimite poles: the ʿAlids and the ʿAbbāsīds, until the ʿAbbāsīds affixed it permanently to their side,⁶² on the basis stated above that the Imāmate had been transferred since 98/716 or 717 from the grandson of ʿAlī to the grandson of Ibn ʿAbbās i.e., from Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya's son, Abū Hāshim, to the ʿAbbāsīd Muḥammad b. ʿAlī⁶³:



By the year 132, the Alids are viewed as having missed two chances: the first in 126/744 when they allegedly held a secret meeting with the ʿAbbāsīds at Abwā'. As F. ʿOmar describes it: "this event showed that the ʿAlids - especially the Ḥusaynids - had no claim to the caliphate at that moment." Similarly, Abū Salama's offer to the Ḥasanid ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahd and the Ḥusaynid al-Ṣādiq in 132 "had taken them by surprise and they had neither a candidate nor a plan of action." ʿOmar adds:

The loyalties of ʿAlid partisans at that time were not unequivocally oriented towards a particular ʿAlid branch. They transferred their allegiance from one prominent ʿAlid to another with the greatest ease.⁶⁴

So this early ʿAbbāsīd propaganda was in a way related to al-Mukhtār's movement that was centred on Abū Hāshim's father, Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya:

61 Watt, *Formative*, p. 154.

62 Now based on *naṣṣ* from Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya's son but later this basis will be neglected after noticing its weakness. See on the weakness of this claim, Watt, *Islamic Philosophy*, p. 18.

63 See *E.I.* new ed.' S.v. "Kaysāniyya", "Hāshimiyya" and Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 47; Hawting, *First Dynasty*, p. 110.

64 See F. ʿOmar, 'Some Aspects of the ʿAbbāsīd-Ḥusaynid Relations During the Early ʿAbbāsīd Period: 132-193 A.H.', in *Arabica*, Tome XXII, Fascicule 2, pp. 171, 172, 177.

Mukhtār's movement looks to the future. There seems to be a thread running from Mukhtār to the movement which eventually overthrew the Umayyads, that of the *Hāshimiyya*. The crushing of Mukhtār's revolt did not, it seems, end support for Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya as the rightful Imām, and when he died some of his followers transferred their hopes to his son Abū Hāshim. This Abū Hāshim then, according to early ʿAbbāsīd tradition, transferred on his deathbed his rights to the Imāmate to the ʿAbbāsīd family. Thus the ʿAbbāsīds claimed to be the rightful leaders of the movement which had originally supported M. Ibn-al-Ḥanafiyya, and this seems to have been one of the ʿAbbāsīds' main claims to legitimacy in the early part of their caliphate.⁶⁵

Hawting says that such a claim (Abū Hāshim's will, transferring the Imāmate), could have been just a story designed to give the ambitions of the ʿAbbāsīds some justification but soon concludes that the common ideas between al-Mukhtār's movement and the ʿAbbāsīd one is another pointer to the existing link or indicator of the ʿAbbāsīd responsibility to continue the ideas of the ʿAlids and assume their cause:

It is difficult to see how this could have happened unless the ʿAbbāsīds had managed to convince the leaders of the party that Abū Hāshim had transferred his claims to them ... The view that it was this sect which was taken over by the ʿAbbāsīds is supported not only by the tradition of Abū Hāshim's will in favour of Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, the ʿAbbāsīd, but also by some continuity of ideas and terminology between the movement led by Mukhtār and that which brought the ʿAbbāsīds to power.⁶⁶

Pushing the political ambitions of the ʿAbbāsīds further, we may also accept Wellhausen's view that the ʿAbbāsīds - as far as their early attempts to legitimate their position are concerned - not only identified themselves with the *Hāshimiyya* cause, i.e., with the thoughts of Mukhtār and the cause of Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya but extended their political tolerance to encompass almost every ʿAlid cause, be it

65 Hawting, *The First Dynasty*, pp. 52-53. See also J. Wellhausen, *Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam*, ed. and translated by R. Ostle and R. Walzer (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Co., 1975) p. 165 and *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, trans. by M. G. Weir (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1927), pp. 505, 563-564 and *E.I.*², S.v. "Kaysāniyya", by W. Madelung, pp. 837a. For a historical review of the authenticity of this early claim by the ʿAbbāsīds, see also: F. ʿOmar, *Tabīʿat al-Daʿwa al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, pp. 110-116.

66 Hawting, *First Dynasty*, pp. 110-111. But this view which attempts to establish a continuity between al-Mukhtār's uprising and the *Hāshimiyya*-ʿAbbāsīd movement, has been described as 'futile', because the conditions, methods and chosen fields of activity were completely different. See Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsīd Revolution*, p. 151. Compare this to Hawting's observations (*Ibid.*, p. 112) that the ʿAbbāsīds used in their propaganda (*daʿwa*) the same terms used earlier by Mukhtār: "The propaganda appealed for support for a member of the family, *ahl al-bayt*, or the acceptable one of the family of Muḥammad (*al-ridā min Āl-Muḥammad*). The head of the movement in Kūfa came to bear the title *wazīr āl Muḥammad* while Abū Muslim, the leader in Khurāsān, was *amīn āl Muḥammad*, both echoing titles used in the revolt of Mukhtār", *Ibid.*, p. 112. On the ʿAbbāsīd movement see also, *E.I.*², 'ʿAbbāsīds', where B. Lewis points that "the doctrine that the Imāmate can be bequeathed or transferred by the Imām to another person is by no means infrequent in early Shiʿism" i.e., by the non-Zaydīs since the Zaydites differ from the rest of the Shiʿa in refusing the Imām the right to nominate his successor (Lambton, *State*, p. 22).

Fāṭimid or Ḥanafid⁶⁷ or extremistic, as was evident for example in Abū Muslim's attempt to play the avenger of Yaḥyā b. Zayd.⁶⁸ As Madelung says, "The ʿAbbāsīd *daʿwa* used his and his father's death to stir up anti-Umayyad sentiments without having much sympathy for their cause,"⁶⁹ and this was evident in the ʿAbbāsīds' 'temporary' appeal to their extremist *duʿāt* (advocates) such as the "*Khidāshī*"⁷⁰ movement and the "*Rāwandiyya*,"⁷¹ from which they soon had to dissociate themselves⁷²

Indeed, as Wellhausen says:

The ʿAbbāsīds reaped the benefit of these unsuccessful Shīʿite revolts. Their time came after a long period of waiting after others had prepared the way for them and shed their own blood.⁷³

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- 67 Though not Jaʿfarid since the Jaʿfarid descendant of Abū Ṭālib, ʿAbd ʿAllāh b. Muʿāwiya, could not fit into the ʿAbbāsīd scheme and was thus executed.
- 68 Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom*, p. 500. Yaḥyā b. Zayd, son of the Fāṭimid descendant of ʿAlī, Zayd b. ʿAlī.
- 69 Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (New York: University Press, Bibliotheca Persica, 1988) p. 87 and Watt, "Shīʿism under the Umayyads" *op.cit.*, p. 171. Though the ʿAbbāsīd propaganda approached the moderate and radical wings of Shīʿism, it is suggested that their resort to the former was for the purpose of winning the more realistically minded Shīʿites (Watt, *Ibid.*, p. 171). Such an approach towards moderate Shīʿites, as when claiming to seek vengeance for the blood of Zayd, might have coincided more with the future ʿAbbāsīd political agenda. Watt says "it was opportunistic, yet not devoid of concept", *Ibid.*, p. 171. This proximity to Zaydiyya is evident not only in the early ʿAbbāsīd *daʿwa* but also later as we shall discuss below. The conceptual proximity is established if we remember that both the ʿAbbāsīd *daʿwa* and Zayd's revolution claimed to abide by the *Kitāb* and *Sunna* and defend the weak; things which the Kaysāniyya lacked. The only difference, perhaps, would be Zayd's alleged attitude of disregarding Prophetic descent as a requisite for Imāmate. Later any continued approach to Kaysāniyya implied losing *ahl al-Sunna wa al-Ḥadīth*, so they were discarded. See F. ʿOmar, *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn*, 2: 90-96.
- 70 Khidāsh is one of the ʿAbbāsīd *duʿāt* in Khurāsān who held non-Islamic views and is regarded by some as the basic establisher of the ʿAbbāsīd cause there. See F. ʿOmar, *Tabīʿat al-Daʿwa*, p. 126.
- 71 The name *Rāwandiyya* held different meanings at different times. The name refers to the party tracing the Imāmate through the ʿAbbāsīd caliphs to al-ʿAbbās, the uncle of the Prophet, who should have been the first Imām after Muḥammad. See F. ʿOmar, *Tabīʿat al-Daʿwa*, pp. 120-121 citing al-Masʿūdī and al-Ashʿarī. al-ʿAbbās is said here to have received designation (*naṣṣ*) from the Prophet. *Rāwandiyya* also refers to 'a faction within the ʿAbbāsīd movement in Khurāsān, composed chiefly of *mawālī* and holding extremist views, and then extended to mean the whole ʿAbbāsīd Shīʿa. See *E.I.*², s.v. "Kaysāniyya". Watt says that the *Rāwandiyya* developed from Kaysāniyya that held extreme views, 'notably that al-Manṣūr was God and Abū Muslim his prophet ...' *Formative*, p. 155. For a review of the different meanings of *Rāwandiyya*, see F. ʿOmar, *Tabīʿat al-Daʿwa*, pp. 115, 123-128, 233-235 and Sadighi: "Les Mouvements Religieux Iraniens" (Paris, 1938) [quoted by F. ʿOmar,] and translated by him, in part, *I.C.*, vol L111, 1979, pp. 31-43.
- 72 F. ʿOmar, *Tabīʿat al-Daʿwa*, p. 116 and *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn*, 2: 76.
- 73 Wellhausen, *Factions*, p. 165.

As to the new relation between the °Alids and °Abbāsids, Wellhausen adds:

One should think that the °Abbāsids would have favoured the Shi°a with which they had originally been allied but they changed when they had attained to the chief power, turning rather as enemies against the °Alids with whom they had formerly been identified, in order to put aside their claims. Even their special adherents, that is to say the extreme Shi°ites (Rāwandites) represented in Iran, were renounced by them They denied their origin from the perimeter after they had reached the centre ... Even the Khurāsānites afterwards became inconvenient to the °Abbāsids ... Manṣūr shook off the tutelage of Abū Muslim when he did not need him any longer.⁷⁴

Having discussed the early basis for the °Abbāsīd legitimacy, we turn to the new one now introduced by the third °Abbāsīd caliph al-Mahdī (775-785), who abandoned the first one and asserted instead that the rightful Imām after the Prophet was his uncle, al-°Abbās. Thus once they had achieved power, the claim to the rights of the descendants of the Prophet's uncle, made a direct and unconcealed appearance; this occurred even in fact before *al-Mahdī*, with al-Manṣūr, the second °Abbāsīd caliph:

The principal argument employed very frequently by the caliph al-Manṣūr in his controversy with the Ḥasanid Muḥammad b. °Abd Allāh, followed the principle of right of succession: the descendants of Ibn °Abbās, son of the Prophet's uncle must take precedence over the sons of the daughter ... the sons of al-°Abbās were the best of Quraysh. This legitimism never ceased in any case to be generally recognized.⁷⁵

Watt gives the following account on this shift in °Abbāsīd propaganda:

Under the caliph al-Mahdī, a different claim was put forward namely that the Imam after Muḥammad was properly his uncle al-°Abbās ... this report must indicate that an important body of opinion had been turning towards the °Alids and away from the °Abbāsids, or rather, had been insisting that the Ḥāshimite charisma was not equally spread through all the clan but was peculiarly present in the °Alids alone ... For the °Abbāsids to claim that the Imāmate had come to them after having been in the hands of several °Alids was to give a degree of recognition to the superior claim to charisma of the °Alids. In particular, it would seem to ordinary men that they were admitting the claim that on the death of the Prophet the man best fitted to rule the believers was °Alī.⁷⁶

74 Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*, pp. 563-564. Kaysāniyya had a dual role in relation to the °Abbāsīd and Shi°ite movements. Not only was the Kaysāniyya a catalyst for both, but it was soon discarded by both of them. Remembering that Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya was once a key-figure for the Kaysāniyya, °Abbāsīyya and Shi°ism, we shall find below that the new °Abbāsīd claim for legitimacy detaches itself from him, too. The Imāmī branch of Shi°ism acts similarly (See Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, p. xxix) because it seems that Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya's presence no longer fits in the Imāmī programme. However although Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya is robbed of the authoritative charisma of his father in favour of the descendants of his brothers, al-Nawbakhtī refers to a transfer of allegiance from Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya to the Ḥusaynid Ja°far al-Ṣādiq. See Watt, *Early Islam*, pp. 144, 147.

75 *E.I.*², s.v. "Khalifa", p. 939a by Sourdél.

76 Watt, *Formative*, p. 155.

Fārūq ʿOmar, moreover, suggests too, as Sourdel, that this ʿAbbāsīd shift that was officially implemented in al-Mahdī's announcement of the distinctive right of al-ʿAbbās in succeeding the Prophet, was in fact preceded by the laborious efforts of his father, al-Manṣūr, who had victoriously fought religio-political wars against those ʿAlids who had opposed him, the victory in which gave him the opportunity to assume the title he was known by (al-Manṣūr), the victorious over the ʿAlids,⁷⁷ or "the divinely helped to achieve victory."⁷⁸

The propaganda of inheriting the right to rule from the ʿAlid Abū Hāshim had indeed been a weak point to profess, not only because it connected the ʿAbbāsīds with their new opponents, the ʿAlids, but because from the religious point of view this testimony would expose their relation to the heretics of the Kaysāniyya-Hāshimiyya secret group whose extremism could be tolerated no longer.⁷⁹

The following account may be also offered to describe the nature of the ʿAbbāsīd *daʿwa* before al-Mahdī abandoned the early ʿAbbāsīd propaganda:

Because they saw the weakness of this claim, however, in much of their propaganda they simply called for support for 'him of the family of the Prophet who shall be chosen'; and by the time it was made public who this was they were already in power. To gain the Zaydites they maintained that they were seeking vengeance for the blood of Zayd. Another of their aims was the defence of 'the weak', which in fact meant the clients or non-Arab Muslims.⁸⁰

Eventually we may say now that the *Hāshimiyya* group, or "Proto-Shīʿism" disintegrated into real Shīʿism, one definitely favouring the ʿAlids, known as the Shīʿa and another Shīʿism favouring the ʿAbbāsīds, known as the ʿAbbāsīyya,⁸¹ thus reducing the wider meaning of Shīʿa to its sub-entities, but not yet abandoning this wide meaning totally, according to Watt, until shortly after 874.⁸²

In other words, the *Hāshimiyya* soon split into the ʿAbbāsīd Shīʿa and the ʿAlid Shīʿa⁸³ and now the ʿAbbāsīds denied the Shīʿites by means of whom they had risen; yet as we shall see they did not close the political channels with them. Finally, like the Umayyads, the ʿAbbāsīds too emphasized the God-given nature of their authority:

77 F. ʿOmar, *Tabīʿat al-Daʿwa*, pp. 119-120.

78 F. ʿOmar, *al-ʿAbbāsīyyūn al-Awāʾil*, 1: 211

79 F. ʿOmar, *Tabīʿat al-Daʿwa*, p. 117 (My translation).

80 Watt, *Islamic Philosophy*, p. 18 My underlining.

81 This name is actually used by al-Jāhīz, see Charles Pellat "al-Jāhīz", in *ʿAbbāsīd Belles-lettres*, ed. J. Ashtiany et al (Cambridge: University Press, 1990) p. 84 and Ḥ. al-Sandūbī, *Rasāʾil al-Jāhīz*, (Cairo, 1933) pp. 300-303.

82 Watt, *Formative*, p. 155.

83 *Ibid.*

In a speech attributed to al-Saffāḥ (132-6/750-4) on the occasion of his receiving the oath of allegiance in Kūfa in 132/749, the claim is made that the ʿAbbāsids received their authority by divine mandate ... the speech was finished by his uncle who asserted that the ʿAbbāsids in contrast to the Umayyads, would rule according to the Qurʾān, and the example of Muḥammad. 'God', he said, 'has given us our party (*Shiʿa*) the people of Khurāsān ... and has caused a caliph to appear among you from the descendants of Hāshim and [shown favour to] you through him ... remain obedient to us ... know, - he concluded - that this authority is ours and will not leave us until we hand it over to Jesus son of Mary'.⁸⁴

As we shall see in the writings of al-Jāḥiẓ below, the ʿAbbāsids were associated with a blessing that freed the community from plagues.

Up till now we have covered the ʿAbbāsīd basis of ruling vis-à-vis other parties. However, and equally, if not more significantly, there remained to be settled the mechanism within the ʿAbbāsīd circles that would determine the fit caliphs and maintain the succession process. The problem that arose then was that when the ʿAbbāsīds boasted to have ruled by right of inheritance '*Ḥaqq-ul-ʿUmūma*', they had to meet two difficulties: (i) the difficulty of regulating the mechanism of that superior inherited right to rule within the circles of those inheritors (the ʿAbbāsīds) themselves. What criteria can work internally if all the candidates were equally ʿAbbāsīds? This problem was faced by al-Manṣūr and his uncles and nephews, then arose between al-Amīn and al-Maʿmūn and then between al-Maʿmūn and his uncle upon nomination of ʿAlī-al-Riḍā in 201 as heir apparent. (ii) The difficulty of relating to some Ṭālibites and extremists whose professed rights of inheritance proved to be dangerous at times.⁸⁵

II- Significance of ʿAbbāsīd Caliphal Titles.

In this section we shall attempt to throw some light on the ʿAbbāsīd regnal titles and their significance for their claims to the caliphate.

84 Lambton, *State and Government*, pp. 47-48. On the expected permanence of the ʿAbbāsīd era, see also, A.A. al-Dūrī, *al-ʿAsr al-ʿAbbāsī al-Awwal*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿā, 1988) p. 39 and on the God given nature of their authority see F. ʿOmar, *al-ʿAbbāsīyyūn al-Awā'il*, 2: 84-89. (al-Jāḥiẓ's reference to the inheritance issue will appear below in the treatise entitled '*al-ʿAbbāsīyya*', wherein a Prophetic tradition is quoted to imply that only economic wealth cannot be inherited from Prophets, i.e., thus political rights may be inherited!)

85 See J. Lassner, *The Shaping of ʿAbbāsīd Rule* (Princeton University Press, 1980) section on *Ḥaqq al-ʿUmūma*.

As the ʿAbbāsids now represented the "house" of the Prophet, they aimed to restore the caliphate to its guided state after a state of Umayyad *mulk*.⁸⁶ al-Saffāḥ is reported to have delivered the following speech on the day he took the *bayʿa* in Kūfa:⁸⁷

Praise be to God who hath chosen Islām for Himself and hath honoured it and exalted it and magnified it and hath chosen it for us and strengthened it by us, and made us its people, its asylum and its defence to maintain and protect it." Then he went on to mention the kinship of the *Banū ʿAbbās* alluded to in the Qurʾān until he said, "and when the Lord took to Himself His prophet, his companions stood up in authority until Banū Ḥarb and Marwān usurped it, and they were tyrannous and appropriated every thing to themselves. And God bore with them for a time until they angered Him, wherefore He took vengeance upon them by our hands, and restored unto us our right, that He might be bountiful through us upon those who are outcast (*Ustuḍʿifū*) throughout the earth, and He hath ended with us as He began with us (*wa-khatama binā kamā iftataḥa binā*) and we of the prophetic house have no grace but through God. O ye people of Kūfa ye are the seat of our regard and the abiding place of our affection ... ye are the most favoured people unto us and of these who most honour us . . . "88

Endress goes further than this in stating that the ʿAbbāsids also took upon themselves the religious expectation of the *Mahdī*.⁸⁹ How true is this statement?

Al-Manṣūr, being "the real architect of ʿAbbāsīd power and also the founder of the new capital Baghdad"⁹⁰ not only got rid of the leading men of the revolution,⁹¹ but also of those Ḥasanids from whom he had just derived his legitimacy, since he had been claiming to back their cause.⁹² Now this was no longer the case, and the two causes were no longer one and the same. Having established a victory (*naṣr*) over those Ḥasanids who threatened the newly founded caliphate in Medina and in Irāq under the leadership of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya,⁹³ he was now to be known as al-Manṣūr, the victorious, i.e., over the ʿAlids.⁹⁴ F. ʿOmar adds that there is an

86 F. ʿOmar, *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awāʾil*, p. 82 citing Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī and al-Masʿūdī.

87 al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafāʾ/History of the Caliphs*, tr. by M. Jarrett (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1881), p. 262.

88 *Ibid.* "Outcast" is a bad translation for *ustuḍʿifū*; "helpless" would be better.

89 G. Endress, *Introduction to Islam*, trans. C. Hillenbrand (Edinburgh: University Press, 1988) pp. 41-42.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

91 e.g. Abū Muslim only one year after al-Manṣūr took power (137) the group known as Muslimiyya who were proclaiming the Imāmate of Abū Muslim (ʿOmar, *Tabīʿat*, p. 116).

92 al-Manṣūr is described as being the first to create *fitna* between the ʿAlids and the ʿAbbāsids. See al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafāʾ*, pp. 261, 270.

93 See letters exchanged between al-Manṣūr and al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, III (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1986) ed. M.A. al-Dālī, 3: 210-285; and F. ʿOmār, *Tabīʿat*, pp. 313-318, and *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awāʾil*, 2: 80 where the ʿAbbāsīd victory over the Umayyads (and ʿAlids) is stressed, and hence their legitimacy is established.

94 F. ʿOmar, *Tabīʿat*, p. 119.

undeniable religious connotation underlining the title "*Manṣūr*". Calling himself "*al-Manṣūr*" was in harmony with the accumulating religious traditions and movements that included the term within the context of expecting the coming *Mahdī* or saviour who should receive *naṣr*, victory.⁹⁵

With the hopes for the coming of *al-Mahdī* still echoing from the side of the group which we may reasonably describe now as the new born Shīʿa, namely from al-Nafs al-Zakiyya whose ʿAlid father was preparing him for being the *Mahdī*,⁹⁶ al-Manṣūr now (tried to) put an end to all political hopes on the part of the Shīʿa⁹⁷ by giving his son the title *al-Mahdī* as a political act⁹⁸ to absorb all the effervescent aspiration of the groups still attached to that concept and as a counter policy against them.⁹⁹

Crone and Hinds suggest that the ʿAbbāsids were in many aspects following the Machiavellian policies of their predecessors; or at least, drawing their legitimacy from the same dogmatic socio-cultural and religious pool of thought:

The ʿAbbāsids began with the same concept of the caliphate as the Umayyads. They styled themselves deputies of God, took themselves to be trustees of God, Imams of guidance, . . . and saw themselves as rightly guided. Indeed, epithets such *al-Hādī*, *al-Mahdī*, *al-Rashīd*, *al-Amīn* which court poets had bestowed on the Umayyads, now re-appeared as regnal titles of the ʿAbbāsids, now as then with a strong redemptive overtone. Like the Umayyads, they were the best of creation after the Prophet and chosen by God to be heirs of the Prophet.¹⁰⁰ Unlike the Umayyads, they were kinsmen of the Prophet (*Ibn ʿamm al-Rasūl*, *Ibn ʿamm Muḥammad*) to whose legacy they had a hereditary right and were thus able to pride themselves on the fact that they did not make the *Rasūl* secondary in importance (*dūna*) to the *Khalīfa* In short the caliph remained indispensable for the attainment of salvation.¹⁰¹ It is because the same concept of the caliphate was involved that opportunistic poets could praise Umayyads and Hāshimites in exactly the same terms ... Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī praised al-Manṣūr as intrinsic to salvation¹⁰²

95 F. ʿOmar, *Ibid.*, p. 146, Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*, pp. 234, 245. Besides the movements of al-Mukhtār, Zayd and the ʿAbbāsīd Muḥammad b. ʿAlī who were all addressed likewise, it is reported by al-Suyūṭī that the Prophet anticipated the coming of a *Saffāḥ* (the generous), a *manṣūr*, and a *mahdī* from his house. See *Tārikh*, p. 260.

96 M. al-ʿAbda, *Harakat al-Nafs al-Zakiyya*, (Kuwait: Dār al-Arqam, 1986) pp. 55-70 i.e., by matching all conditions: name, origin, and cultural aspirations.

97 G. Endress, *Introduction to Islam*, tr. C. Hillenbrand p. 39.

98 al-Iṣfahānī, Abū al-Faraj, *Maqātil al-Tālibiyyīn*, ed. A. Ṣaqr (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1365/1946), p. 247, i.e., a political act void of any belief in its truth.

99 M. al-ʿAbda, *Ibid.*, p. 69.

100 See F. ʿOmar, *Tabīʿat*, p. 317.

101 The Imām is also regarded as indispensable for the Shīʿites, see: D. M. Donaldson, *The Shīʿite Religion, A History of Persia & Iraq* (London: Luzac and Co., 1933), pp. 113-114. al-Bāqir is reported to have said: "The Imāms were men of the House, and if they did not exist, men would perish."

102 Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, pp. 80-81, 104-105.

Sourdel has also pointed to the theocratic nature of the ʿAbbāsīd charisma:

Whatever may have been the basis of ʿAbbāsīd legitimism, it was the priority of the ruling caliphs to reinforce the theocratic nature of their power. The same expressions were employed in their case as in that of the Umayyad caliphs. al-Manṣūr declared himself, it is said, "the power of God on earth *"Sulṭān Allāh fī arḍihi"*¹⁰³... In addition, the royal titles adopted by the sovereigns stressed the charismatic quality of their power; the second caliph had named himself al-Manṣūr, "he who receives the victory from God," the third al-Mahdī, "he whom God leads in the right way", a title which tended at the same time to assimilate the caliphs to the ʿAlid Imāms ... Subsequently ... al-Amīn, al-Ma'mūn and al-Wāthiq bi-llāh ... the personal link between the caliph and the divinity guaranteeing his power remained strongly marked.¹⁰⁴

As for the title 'Imām' and its religio-political significance, Sourdel says that "from the reign of al-Ma'mūn onwards, the caliphs did not disdain the title of Imām previously considered to be of too Shīʿī a flavour."¹⁰⁵ It should be noted, however, that al-Hādī 169/785 was also addressed in this way seventeen years prior to al-Ma'mūn (198/814).¹⁰⁶

Lambton quotes Sourdel as saying that "al-Ma'mūn was the first ʿAbbāsīd caliph to take officially the title Imām"¹⁰⁷, and describes Sourdel's interpretation of al-Ma'mūn's use of this title as simply 'hazarding a guess':

He, (Sourdel), further hazards the guess that al-Ma'mūn may have been attracted by the Shīʿī concept of the Imām and may have wished to exercise the powers which the Shīʿīs accorded to the Imāms.¹⁰⁸

We shall refer to this observation in more detail when we study the effects of the pro-ʿAlid policy of al-Ma'mūn on the political works of al-Jāhīz. It is sufficient for the time being to end this section by noting that al-Ma'mūn's pro-ʿAlid policy (which took the form of designating ʿAlī al-Riḍā as heir in 201/816) was understood in terms of his general eagerness to attempt a compromise between Sunnism and Shīʿism (as Lambton says) or between the constitutional and autocratic bloc, as Watt puts it. There lies a subtle difference between Lambton, Sourdel and Watt. The former scholars find his act of designation primarily influenced by sympathy for Zaydī and not Imāmī Shīʿism¹⁰⁹ whereas Watt interprets al-Ma'mūn's act as intended to secure the support of the autocratic bloc in its totality, which was then manifested

103 This is narrated by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih in his *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*, (3: 370) and quoted by F. ʿOmar, *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awā'il*, 2: 82.

104 *E.I.*², S.v. "Khalīfa" by Sourdel p. 939 b.

105 *Ibid.*

106 See A.A. al-Dūrī, *al-ʿAsr al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAwwal*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿa, 1988), p. 106.

107 Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, p. 40.

108 *Ibid.*

109 Lambton, *State*, p. 39.

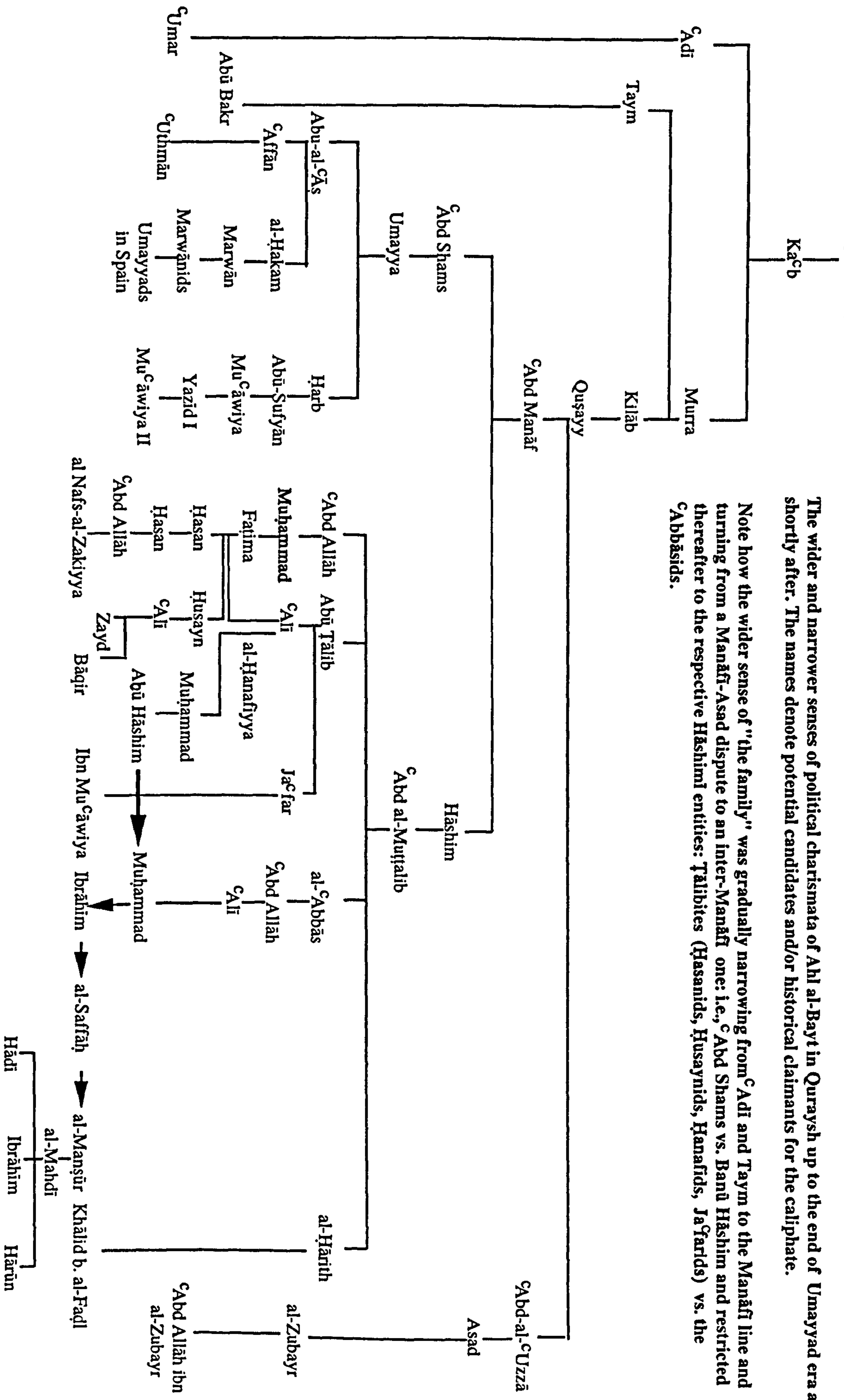
in the Zaydites and Rāfiḍites,¹¹⁰ the latter being the theological predecessors of the Imāmites.¹¹¹

The following table aims to recapture the wider and narrower senses of political charismata of *ahl al-Bayt* in Quraysh by the end of the Umayyad era and shortly after.

110 Watt, Formative, p.177.

111 Watt, Islamic Philosophy, p. 36.

Quraysh (Fihr)



The wider and narrower senses of political charisma of Ahl al-Bayt in Quraysh up to the end of Umayyad era and shortly after. The names denote potential candidates and/or historical claimants for the caliphate.

Note how the wider sense of "the family" was gradually narrowing from ʿAdi and Taym to the Manāfi line and turning from a Manāfi-Asad dispute to an inter-Manāfi one: i.e., ʿAbd Shams vs. Banū Ḥashim and restricted thereafter to the respective Ḥashimī entities: Ṭalibites (Ḥasanids, Ḥusaynids, Ḥanafids, Jaʿfarids) vs. the ʿAbbāsids.

III- Survey of the question of the Imāmate during the ʿAbbāsīd period among:

A- Shīʿites (Proto-Shīʿism under the ʿAbbāsīds)

The issue of the fluidity and indefinite nature of the Proto-Shīʿite phenomenon (versus the the definitive one) before the appearance of the ʿAbbāsīds has already been discussed above.

The revolt of the Ḥasanid al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and his brother in 145/763 reflected the disappointment of the Ṭālibites with the new ʿAbbāsīd regime. The non-militant policy of the Ḥusaynid Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Bāqir, was probably maintained after witnessing the defeat of the revolt of his uncle, Zayd b. ʿAlī, against the Umayyads and that of his two cousins, al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and his brother Ibrāhīm, against the ʿAbbāsīds. Jaʿfar is said to have refrained from entering the political stage and to have been contented with religious discussions¹¹²

It was al-Manṣūr who gave Jaʿfar the title of *al-Ṣādiq*, i.e., the truthful. Due to his non-militant nature and his disinclination to make a bid for political leadership, al-Manṣūr was pleased to have him at Medina as a deterrent to the militant ʿAlids and consequently to weaken the ʿAlid revolutionary front.¹¹³

On the other hand al-Ṣādiq's figure was also used by extremists like the "*Khaṭṭābiyya*" who imposed on him Messianic concepts that he had to dissociate from.¹¹⁴ We should recall here that it was al-Mahdī who announced that the ʿAbbāsīd legitimate title to the Caliphate had come to them from the legal heir, al-ʿAbbās, uncle of the Prophet, and hence not from the Ṭālibite Abū Hāshim, son of Ibn-al-Ḥanafiyya.¹¹⁵ The Ṭālibite discontent with the ʿAbbāsīds took either a militant or quietist form; the former was manifested in battles between the two in different areas such as Ḥijāz, Baṣra, Daylam, al-Maghrib, Khurāsān and Yemen in the reigns of Manṣūr, Mahdī, Hādī, al-Rashīd, al-Ma'mūn and al-Muʿtaṣim.¹¹⁶

112 See H. Kennedy, The Early ʿAbbāsīd Caliphate: A Political History, (London Totowa, N.J.: Croom Helm, 1981) p. 199.

113 F. ʿOmar, 'Some Aspects of the ʿAbbāsīd-Ḥusaynid Relations During the Early ʿAbbāsīd Period 132-193 A.H.', in Arabica, Tome XXII, Fascicule 2, p. 173 and al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awā'il, 1: 232.

114 F. ʿOmar, al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn, p.231.

115 Ibid., p. 215.

116 See S. M. al-Laithī, Jihād al-Shīʿa fī-al-ʿAsr-al-ʿAbbāsī al-Awwal (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1396/1976), p. 207.

During the reign of al-Mahdī, the activities of the Ḥasanid figure ʿĪsā b. Zayd b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī to claim the Imāmate were subdued in Kūfa¹¹⁷. ʿĪsā's efforts were resumed in Baghdad by another Ḥasanid, ʿAlī b. al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, but this was also controlled. The Zaydite backing for this figure marks the beginning of the infiltration of anti-ʿAbbāsīd forces into the caliphal capital itself, after having been absent during al-Manṣūr's reign.¹¹⁸ It was now that al-Mahdī claimed the ʿAbbāsīd legitimacy to have been based on the uncle of the Prophet and not on a *waṣiyya* by Abū Hāshim. The reign of al-Hādī witnessed the revolt of the Ḥasanid, al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. Abī Ṭālib, who was advised by al-Kāzīm not to do so.¹¹⁹ Mūsā al-Kāzīm, son of Jaʿfar al-Šādiq, was suspected of political activities by the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph al-Mahdī and later by al-Rashīd who is allegedly believed to have ended his life in prison. Despite al-Rashīd's orders to put the body (of Mūsā) before the public to see for themselves that he was actually dead, this step could not, however, prevent the emergence of a group known as *al-Wāqifa* that held that "Mūsā would return some day and set everything right."¹²⁰

The reign of al-Rashīd saw the revolt of the brothers of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, Yaḥyā and Idrīs, sons of ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. The former revolted in Daylam, which constituted the first eastern area of the caliphate that threatened the ʿAbbāsīd interests.¹²¹ al-Rashīd is reported to have put Yaḥyā under his supervision until he was allegedly killed.¹²²

The revolt of Idrīs in Tilmisān that resulted in a momentary emirate in 172 A.H., was soon overcome as the ʿAbbāsīds seemed determined to tolerate no more subdivisions in the western parts of the caliphate, after the emergence of the Umayyad Emirate in Spain. What is significant here is that by the time al-Ma'mūn came to power, the messianic and extremist trends had reached threatening

117 *Ibid.*, p. 245-248.

118 *Ibid.*, p. 250.

119 *Ibid.*, p. 258.

120 Watt, *Formative*, pp. 160-161.

121 al-Laythī, *Jihād-al-Shiʿa*, p. 286.

122 *Ibid.*, p. 293

proportions which necessitated further caliphal measures to reduce that growing wave centred around the Ṭālibite Imāms.¹²³

A grandson of Zayd. b. ʿAlī (Muḥammad b. Muḥammad) in 199 A.H. found after the end of the civil war between the caliphal brothers an opportunity to lead a revolt accompanied by Abūl-Sarāyā against al-Ma'mūn from Kūfa and Makka, but this did not succeed:

The end of the rebellion by Abūl-Sarāyā marked a turning point in the history of the ʿAlid movement. It was the last of the large scale popular uprisings in the central Islamic lands which had begun with Mukhtār's revolt, a century before. From this point, support for the ʿAlids which we can begin to call *Shīʿism* in the modern sense of the word, began to take different forms . . . when the revolt in Makka was crushed, many of the leading ʿAlids were taken in captivity to Marw, where Muḥammad b. Muḥammad, the Kūfan leader, was already installed. It was one of these leaders, Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar's nephew (i.e., ʿAlī b. Mūsā) who was chosen by Ma'mūn to be his heir.¹²⁴

We shall discuss at length this caliphal step of nomination by al-Ma'mūn, which aimed at maintaining closer links with the ʿAlids, when we come to al-Jāḥiẓ's parallel esteem of the ʿAlids, as echoed in his works. We should recall however, that al-Jāḥiẓ refers to the Shīʿites contemporary to him as *Ghāliya*, *Rāfiḍa* or *Zaydiyya*, as we shall see below in his works. The term Imāmites does not occur in his works and this is natural for al-Jāḥiẓ, who could not have missed such a group, died before their gathering under that name. al-Jāḥiẓ's death (255-60/869/874) coincides with the death of the tenth or eleventh Imām and precedes the Shīʿite efforts as outlined¹²⁵ by Watt to re-organize themselves under the Imāmi banner.

Even if the existence of a unified Shīʿite Imāmite dogma only came into existence shortly after the death of the 11th or 12th Shīʿite Imāms, this does not mean that Shīʿites did not gather around some Imāms to whom legal charismatic knowledge or esoteric charismatic traits were ascribed. In other words, the Imāmite dogma need not have been *fully* developed during the life of al-Ṣādiq, Mūsā al Kāẓim, ʿAlī al-Riḍā, al-Jawād, al-Hādī, and al-ʿAskarī. Equally significant is the fact that Messianic themes were being continuously advanced, (as was the case with ʿAlī

123 See Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī, *Takwīn al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 1988) p. 230.

124 'Kennedy, *op.cit.* p. 211. & F. ʿOmar, "Siyāsāt al-Ma'mūn Tujāh al-ʿAlawiyyīn: al-Thawrāt al-ʿAlawiyya fī ʿAhd-al-Ma'mūn," in *Majallat al-Jāmiʿa al-Mustansiriyya* (1972) pp. 441-42.

125 See our discussion of the development of the Proto-Shīʿite phenomenon above.

b. Abī Ṭālib) around them. From reviewing al-Jāhiz's writings on the Shi'ites, it would be interesting to find out these themes and concepts that the Shi'ites were advancing, celebrating and ascribing to their Imāms, Messianic concepts like 'iṣma, raj'a, badā', naṣṣ and special 'ilm of the Imām, concepts that were current in Imāmite literature, but which had not, as we have pointed above in our survey, assumed their full synthetic Imāmite character, which according to Watt's estimation could only have started to take shape in the twenty five years following al-Jāhiz's death. In other words, the Shi'ites then were known as 'Rāfiḍites' and not yet as 'Imāmites'. They were presumably concerned with the above themes in a period that only allowed them to engage in spiritual, not political activities. Only when these doctrines could threaten the 'Abbāsids, were men like al-Jāhiz instructed to confront esoteric or messianic doctrines, as revealed in many of his works that will be studied later.¹²⁶

As one modern scholar puts it:

The failure of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya's revolt marked the end of 'Alid claims to the *Imāma*, since they held that it was bound up with the Caliphate which they had failed to procure for themselves. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq came with a new conception of the two institutions; the Caliphate and the Imāmate. He said that it is not necessary for a rightful Imām to combine the temporal power in his person. The true Imām would be satisfied with spiritual power until such a time when God would make an Imām victorious and bestow the political authority on him.¹²⁷

B-Khārijites

The Khārijites, like the Shi'ites and other discontented religio-political factions, could not but express their dissatisfaction with the 'Abbāsīd regime that did not fulfill their aspirations nor improve their political status. The Khārijites are said to have seriously troubled the 'Abbāsīds in regions far from the capital, as in Syria, Omān, Khurāsān, Yemen, North Africa, and sometimes in the 'Abbāsīd capital itself, Baghdad, during the reigns of al-Mahdī and al-Rashīd:¹²⁸

126 On the spiritual authority and leadership among the Rāfiḍites see Kennedy, *op.cit.* 211, Watt, 'The political attitudes of the Mu'tazila' in *JRAS*, 1963 p. 49, & *Formative* p. 160, and F. 'Omar, 'Aspects of The 'Abbāsīd-Husaynid relations', *Arabica*, p. 175.

127 F. 'Omar, *op.cit.*, pp. 175-176 citing H.M. Jafir 'The Early Development of Legitimist Shi'ism with special reference to the Role of Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. (Ph.D thesis, London University, 1966, p. 191).

128 F. 'Omar, *al-'Abbāsiyyūn*, 1: 267 and Watt, 'Significance of Khārijism under the 'Abbāsīds' in *Early Islam*, (Edinburgh University Press, 1990) p. 137.

In two regions, the Khārijites succeeded in establishing their rule over extensive territories. One of these was the Maghrib (central and western North Africa) where even before 750 moderate Khārijism as taught by the Ṣufrite and Ibāḍite sub-sects had been widely adopted by the Berbers [. . .] Again in Omān the Ibāḍites had some successes in a revolt about 752, but their rule was not securely established until 793.¹²⁹

The significance of Khārijism, Watt adds, is to be seen in the formation of a relatively permanent state as in North Africa and Omān".¹³⁰ Many Khārijite leaders have claimed the title of the 'Commander of the Faithful'. Ḥamza was one such leader of Sijistān for more than three decades until his death in 213/828¹³¹. ʿAmmār b. Yāsir al-Khārijī revolted in Sijistān in 238/853 and claimed the same title. In Africa, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Rustam was recognized as Imām in Tāhart in 160/777 or 162/779 and the Rustamid dynasty founded by him lasted until 296/909.¹³² With the formation of the Ibāḍī states underlined above, it is thus evident that Khārijism was a threat to ʿAbbāsīd interests. al-Jāḥiẓ's position towards this sect shall be studied later, including analysing the Khārijī impact on al-Jāḥiẓ's view of the Imāmate.

C- Ḥanbalites (The Cult of Muʿāwiya/Neo-Umayyads)

The ʿAbbāsīds were no less troubled by the Neo-Umayyads than they were troubled by the Shiʿites and Khārijites. We shall mention here some historical instances that reflect the tension between the ʿAbbāsīds and the pro-Umayyad group that kept on venerating Muʿāwiya and his son Yazīd, in what was known then as the 'Cult of Muʿāwiya.'¹³³ If we notice that the first Umayyad dynasty in Spain was established as early as 138/756¹³⁴ which marks the first disintegration of the ʿAbbāsīd authority over the Western territories, we should suppose that - according to the following tradition - had the Umayyads not been dangerous to the ʿAbbāsīds, al-Ma'mūn would not have thought of publicly cursing Muʿāwiya:

129 Watt, *Ibid.*, p. 139.

130 *Ibid.*

131 W. Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (Albany : New York, 1988) p. 68.

132 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

133 See Pellat 'Le Culte de Muʿāwiya au IIIe siècle de l'hégire' in *Studia Islamica*, VI (Paris, 1956), p. 54 and reprinted in *Études sur l'histoire Socio-Culturelle de l'Islam*, (London: Variorum Reprints, 1976), pp. 53-66.

134 *E.I.*, old edition, S.v. "Umayyāds" and S. Lane-Poole, *The Mohammedan Dynasties: Chronological and genealogical tables with historical introductions* (Stanley Lane-Poole : N.Y., 1965) p. 21.

Yāqūt reproduces in the biography of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Madā'inī (d. ca 225/840) the following tradition: al-Ma'mūn ordered Aḥmad. b. Yūsuf to introduce me (it is al-Madā'inī who is reporting) to him; when I went in he uttered the name of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and I cited him some Ḥadīths about him by the Umayyads and I told him: "I know through Abū Salama al-Muthannā b. ʿAbd Allāh, brother of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allah al-Anṣārī the following account that someone had made to him: 'When I was in Syria', says the narrator, 'I had noticed that no one named his children ʿAlī, Ḥasan, or Ḥusayn, because I heard only Muʿāwiya, Yazīd and Walīd. One day I was passing in front of a man sitting on the threshold, and as I was thirsty I asked to drink. "Ḥasan", he called, "give him to drink" . "Did you say: "Ḥasan?", I exclaimed "Sure!", he replied, "I have children who are called Ḥasan, Ḥusayn and Jaʿfar. The Syrians give their children the names of their previous caliphs of God (the Umayyads), but as each one of us often has the occasion to address curses and insults to his children, I gave my children the names of the enemies of God (the ʿAlids) ; when I curse one, I only curse the enemies of God."¹³⁵

As Pellat comments the previous anecdote "testifies to a state of mind absolutely expected in Syria where it was normal that the hatred of the ʿAlids and the affection for the Umayyads would be more striking than anywhere else."¹³⁶ If the affection for Muʿāwiya is justified in Syria, how can we explain that affection in Iraq? Here an anecdote quotes Ibn Ḥanbal's son as being astonished at a group of people saying: "Drink for the love of Muʿāwiya". Ibn Ḥanbal is said to have explained why Muʿāwiya's name was used: "These are people who hate a man (ʿAlī) but who do not have the possibility to attack; therefore they like his enemies."¹³⁷

Hence the affection for the Umayyads was a polemic one, since it arose from hatred towards the ʿAlids (and ʿAbbāsids) in places as close as Syria and as unusual as Irāq. The pro-Umayyad group in Iraq, as Pellat concludes, "must have been large and powerful,"¹³⁸ so that al-Ma'mūn is reported in 211/826 as intending to order that Muʿāwiya be publicly cursed; but he soon changed his mind upon the advice of Qāḍī Yaḥyā b. Aktham, who had warned him against the possible reactions of the people, especially in Khurāsān.¹³⁹ These incidents suggest that the ʿAbbāsīd policy under al-Ma'mūn continued to be pro-ʿAlid, not only by nominating ʿAlī al-

135 Pellat, 'Le Culte de Muʿāwiya', p. 54.

136 *Ibid.*

137 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

138 *Ibid.*

139 See Pellat, 'Un Document Important pour l'histoire Politico-Religieuse de l'Islam: La Nābita de Djāḥiẓ' in *Annales de l'institut d'études Orientales* (Algiers) 1952, vol. x, pp.302-25. For an account of the pro-Umayyad attitude in Khurāsān see Madelung, *Religious Trends*, pp. 22-25. Ibn Ḥanbal was of Khurāsānian origin, and most of the backing for his school came from the quarters of Baghdad settled by Khurāsānians. While the Umayyad Khurāsānians were noted for their spirit of Jihād against the infidels beyond the borders of Islam, their descendants' struggle in Baghdad was more concentrated against heresy inside the world of Islam than against the infidels outside its territories. See Madelung, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

Riḍā as heir to the caliph, (201) but also by denouncing the common enemy of the Hāshimites, Muḳāwiya (in 211/826 or 212/817). This anti-Umayyad feeling was later to be manifested by the same caliph in the theological *Miḥna* he inflicted on Ibn Ḥanbal, but al-Ma'mūn's introduction of an inquisition may have served to enhance pro-Umayyad affection since it clearly demonstrated the difference in the religious policy of the two caliphates and encouraged new masses in Iraq to use Muḳāwiya as a weapon against the ʿAlids and ʿAbbāsids together.¹⁴⁰ We shall find al-Jāḥiẓ devoting a special treatise describing the doctrine of the pro-Umayyads (*al-Nābita*) and how much this group was still growing during his time.

Ibn Ḥanbal's acknowledgement of the Umayyad rule (which will be discussed in more detail in our analysis of *al-Nābita*) is significant and could have been another factor that made al-Ma'mūn persecute him. Equally important to the veneration of Muḳāwiya was the idea of the return of the expected "*Sufyānī*" to Syria to set things right. F. ʿOmar dates this expectation back to the end of the Sufyānid branch, i.e., after the death of Muḳāwiya's grandson, when the Marwānid branch of the Umayyads took over in 64/687, or back to the end of the Umayyad era altogether when the Syrians hoped to see a new Umayyad caliph relieving them from the injustice of the new ʿAbbāsīd regime.¹⁴¹ The myth of the expected *Sufyānī* was limited to the Kalbite Syrian tribes who backed the Sufyānid descendants. In spite of several Syrian revolts against the ʿAbbāsīds, the myth of the *Sufyānī* continued to be used as the "*Mahdī*" had been used in the circles of the Shīʿites and the ʿAbbāsīds themselves.¹⁴²

During the reign of al-Mahdī a Marwānid revolution broke out in Egypt but was suppressed. The reigns of al-Rashīd, al-Ma'mūn and al-Muḳtaṣim witnessed the revolts of Sufyānid Umayyads in Syria and Yemen.¹⁴³ It is interesting to note that the ʿAbbāsīds maintained good links with the Umayyads.¹⁴⁴ The pro-Umayyad group known as *Nābita* is also alleged to have encompassed, in addition to the

140 Madelung, *Religious Trends*, Ibid.

141 F. ʿOmar, *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn*, pp. 131-132. See also Watt, *Formative*, P. 168.

142 C.F. Yazīdiyya's *ghuluww* (veneration of Yazīd b. Muḳāwiya) in Pellat, 'Le Culte de Muḳāwiya', *op.cit.* p. 58.

143 F. ʿOmar, *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn*, 1: 132,149.

144 F. ʿOmar, *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn*, 1: 154 (al-Muḳtaṣim, al-Mahdī and al-Rashīd are said to have married into the Umayyads)

Hanbalites, the *Karrāmiyyah*¹⁴⁵ who held the legitimacy of the existence of two Imāms (ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya) in the Muslim world. It was obvious that the ʿAbbāsids would not tolerate any other ruler who was able to compete with them politically, for this would endanger the unity of their caliphate.¹⁴⁶

D-The Muʿtazilites.

(i) Origin:

Watt points out that scholars have differed on the origin of this school:

The late heresiographers . . . speak of the Muʿtazilite sect as founded by Wāṣil ibn ʿAṭā and as continuing from him in an unbroken line [. . .] there was no clearly defined group of followers of Wāṣil and ʿAmr until towards the middle of the ninth century [. . .] There was no clearly defined body of Muʿtazilites until 800, perhaps not until 850. Wāṣil and ʿAmr were members of the large heterogeneous group out of which developed the later body of ʿulamā and Traditionists. Part of this large group became interested perhaps about 780 or 790 in the philosophical questions involved in their religious beliefs [. . .] they probably favoured the ʿAbbāsīd movement when they came to know of it, though it seems unlikely that they were propagandists for the new dynasty, as H. S. Nyberg has maintained in view of their differences from Abū Muslim.¹⁴⁷

F. ʿOmar adds on the originality of the Muʿtazilite movement: "Though Wāṣil and ʿAmr are given the appellation 'Muʿtazilites' in historical accounts, they must not be regarded as members of a definite sect of Muʿtazila as it existed in later times."¹⁴⁸ In other words, if the question of the Imāmate was the direct cause for the formation of the religio-political sects (*firaq*) in Islam - as al-Ashʿarī maintains in his *Maqālāt*,¹⁴⁹ - the question of when did the Muʿtazilites crystallize as a definite religio-political movement should be somewhat clearer since they appeared on the scene later than the other sects.

145 Not to be confused with the Ṣūfī movement in Iran (3rd-6th C.A.H.) They represented a faction of the Sunnites in Khurāsān (see C. E. Bosworth, "The rise of the *Karrāmiyyah* in Khurāsān", *M.W.*, 50, 1960, pp. 5-14).

146 F. ʿOmar, *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn*, 1: 158.

147 Watt, "The political attitudes of the Muʿtazila", *op.cit.*, pp. 52-54.

148 F. ʿOmar, "The relation between the Muʿtazilites and the ʿAbbāsids before al-Ma'mūn, in *Sümer*, (Baghdad: Ministry of Information, 1976, vol. XXXII), p.191.

149 al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, p.1.

(ii) Relations with the ʿAbbāsīd Court

Although some ʿAbbāsīd caliphs (as al-Ma'mūn) held Muʿtazilite views, this does not mean that the Muʿtazilites were influential from the beginning of the ʿAbbāsīd period.

. . . the originator of the ʿAbbāsīd *daʿwa*, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī felt so strongly on this subject [. . .] it was the general policy of the early ʿAbbāsīds to favour all traditionists, even the pro-ʿAlid and pro-Umayyad ones in order to win them over, but it is obvious that they must have favoured the neutral non partisan traditionists most of all [. . .] among those ʿAmr was of course prominent [. . .].¹⁵⁰

The issue whether the ʿAbbāsīds used the Muʿtazilites as their propagandists (as advocated by Nyberg¹⁵¹) or whether the Muʿtazilites utilized the ʿAbbāsīds for their own purpose (as Gibb suggests¹⁵²) may be open for discussion. What concerns us here is the observation made by Watt. The fact that *ʿItizāl* became fully formed under certain caliphs, need not necessarily reflect the idea that this phenomenon goes back to the distant past, exactly as in the case of Proto-Shīʿite phenomenon which - according to Watt - had not yet assumed the Imāmite form it later did, as Imāmī scholars claim:

There was no clearly defined group of followers of Wāṣil and ʿAmr until towards the middle of the ninth century . . . Wāṣil may be taken to be the inventor of the conception of *al-Manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn* or "the intermediate status" . . . there was no clearly-defined body of Muʿtazilites until 800, perhaps not until 850.¹⁵³

Propagandists for the ʿAbbāsīds they were, but not until they developed into the group later known as Muʿtazilites, and thus not as early as the ʿAbbāsīd dynasty whose dependence was more on the group known as *Rāwandiyya* and *Hāshimiyya* than on the (moderate) and (not yet completely formed) Muʿtazilites.¹⁵⁴ Most remarkable is the following observation made by Watt about the etymological meaning of *ʿItizāl* which fits the role they played under the ʿAbbāsīds:

150 F. ʿOmar 'The Relations Between The Muʿtazilites and the ʿAbbāsīds . . . ' *op.cit.*, pp. 191-192. ʿAmr 's recognition by the authorities, must not mean that *ʿItizāl* was influential since the ʿAbbāsīds had taken over.

151 See *E.I.*, Old Ed, S.v. "Muʿtazila" by Nyberg and Petersen, *ʿAlī & Muʿāwiya.*, *op.cit.*, p. 121.

152 See H. Gibb, *Government & Islam . . . , Elaboration De l'islam*, (Paris: 1961).

153 Watt, 'The Political Attitudes of the Muʿtazila', *op.cit.*, pp 53-54.

154 F. ʿOmar, *op.cit.*, p. 194.

The story purporting to show that the name was derived from Wāṣil's withdrawal from the circle of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is doubtless apocryphal, but suitably expresses the separation of the Muṭʿazilah (sic) from the rest of the 'Ulamā', which occurred in the ninth century.¹⁵⁵

(iii) Political Attitudes and Principles

Although the Muṭʿazilites were noted for upholding the five principles, this does not mean there were no differences between them. The best example for this difference was al-Jāḥiẓ and al-Iskāfī (d. 240/854). Although both were Muṭʿazilites, the latter was representing the infiltration of the now Shīʿite group into the circles of Muṭʿazilites such that we find the Shīʿite Muṭʿazilite al-Iskāfī refuting the arguments of a non-Shīʿite Muṭʿazilite (al-Jāḥiẓ) in his anti-ʿAlid work al-ʿUthmāniyya. Similarly, Ibn al-Rīwandī's work *Faḍīḥat al-Muṭʿazila*¹⁵⁶ shows that there existed sharp religio-political differences among the Muṭʿazilite figures.

In order to appreciate the implications and relevance of al-Jāḥiẓ's position we shall acquaint ourselves with the leading Baṣran and Baghdādī Muṭʿazilites who lived before al-Jāḥiẓ - who was initially a Baṣran Muṭʿazilite - or were contemporary to him before the Muṭʿazilites assumed their present name, and are assumed to have been active under the title of "Qadarites" who were persecuted by the Umayyads as the former propagated free will and that threatened the very basis of the "rule from above" which meant a *Jabrite* predestinarian outlook, propagated by the Umayyads to enforce their rule by appealing to supernatural and irreversible forces. The Qadarite stand had to be crushed as it permitted rebellion against the unjust Imāms and thus undermined the Jabrite-Umayyad position. As Qadarism was not totally free from the issue of Imāmate, Muṭʿazilism too, was associated with Qadarism and the question of the Imāmate.¹⁵⁷

(iv) Main Baṣrite Muṭʿazilites

(a) al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī

This figure from whose circle the early alleged group of Muṭʿazilites deserted, is said to have been a Qadarite, but did not confess it publicly for fear of

155 Watt, 'The Political Attitude of The Muṭʿazila', *op.cit.*, pp. 56-57.

156 This work has been edited by Dr. A.A. al-Aṣṣam, in his Ph.D dissertation, '*Ibn al-Rīwandī's Faḍīḥat al-Muṭʿazila*', (Cambridge University, 1972).

157 Sh. Ḥuṣṣnī, '*al-Muṭʿazila wa Mas'alat al-Imāma* with special reference to Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār'. M.A. thesis (in Arabic), (The American University of Beirut, 1980), pp. 19-25.

the Umayyads. As regards the Imāmate, al-Ḥasan is said to have acknowledged the caliphate of the *Rāshidūn* but when it came to ʿAlī he regarded his resort to *Taḥkīm* (arbitration) as bringing a halt to the bounties of God bestowed on him up to that moment.¹⁵⁸ He is also said to have condemned the killers of ʿUthmān.

(b) ʿAmr B. ʿUbayd

ʿAmr took a favourable position toward Abū Bakr¹⁵⁹, and rejected the testimony of those who fought in the Battle of the Camel, since both sides were wrong.¹⁶⁰

(c) Wāṣil b. ʿAṭā'

The alleged founder and head of the school¹⁶¹ dissociated himself from the circle of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. He is said to have refrained from taking a position against the opposing parties of the Camel and Ṣiffīn. He held a similar view on ʿUthmān, on those responsible for his death and those who deserted him. One of these parties is sinful, but which one cannot be determined. Wāṣil, however, regarded the testimony of ʿAlī, Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr as dismissable.¹⁶²

(d) Abū'l-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 235 A.H.)

Born in Baṣra about 752 (A. D.) and died in 840-850 (A.D.), he was the main founder of the philosophical theology of the Muʿtazila. He was present at discussions in which al-Ma'mūn took part, i.e., after 819 and indeed presided, having himself settled in Baghdad in 818. He was presented to al-Ma'mūn by Thumāma b. al-Ashras. He is also said to have rejected taking sides, so he associated with both sides of the battle of the Camel. He was an opponent of the Rāfiḍites, opposing their conception of the divinely guided Imām.¹⁶³ He is said to have regarded Abū Bakr as *afḍal* in his time, likewise ʿUmar and also ʿUthmān during the first six years of his

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- 158 al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, 3: 950 cited by Ḥuṣnī, *op.cit.*, as the former was not available to me.
159 Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, cited by Pellat "l'Imāmat dans la Doctrine de Ḡāḥiz" in *Studia Islamica*, XV (Paris, 1961) p. 33 .
160 al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms and Sects* (al Farq bain al-Firaq) Tr. from Arabic by K.C. Seelye (New York: AMS Press, 1966) pp. 123-124.
161 al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, Translation of al-Shahrastānī's *Milal and Niḥal* by A. Kazi & J. Flynn (London: Kegan Paul International, 1984) p.45.
162 al-Shahrastānī, *op. cit.*
163 Watt, 'The political Attitudes of the Muʿtazila', pp.48-49. and *Formative* , p. 219.

rule while ʿAlī was *afdāl* at least at the date of his coming to power. There was a tendency in Baṣra to sit on the fence and avoid decisions, such that he deliberately refused to say whether ʿUthmān was right or wrong during the last six years and whether ʿAlī or his opponents were in the right at the battle of the Camel.¹⁶⁴

(e) al-Nazzām

Born and educated in Baṣra, he died in 836 or 845 A.D. in Baghdad where he had been summoned by al-Ma'mūn about 818. He was a disciple of Abū-l-Hudhayl.¹⁶⁵ A recent scholar rejects the view circulated by al-Shahrastānī, on al-Nazzām's belief in a Prophetic designatory right of ʿAlī which ʿUmar had kept hidden and made Abū Bakr take the oath rather than ʿAlī.¹⁶⁶ al-Baghdādī, another historiographer, describes al-Nazzām's opinion of ʿUmar and the other Companions as highly critical and devoid of respect to them¹⁶⁷ simply because al-Nawbakhtī attributed to him a belief in the right of any candidate knowledgeable in the *Kitāb* and *Sunna*. al-Nazzām is said to have approved of ʿAlī's fight against Ṭalḥa and Zubayr and believed that whoever fought against him was wrong. ʿAlī's arbitration was acknowledged as right and correct as he noticed that his group was hesitant to continue the fighting so he accepted arbitration to re-unite their hearts to his cause.¹⁶⁸ al-Nazzām was critical of ʿUthmān's measure of returning al-Ḥakam b. Umayya to Medina. As for the *afdāl* and *mafdūl*, al-Nazzām was definitely for the former as the Imāmate should not be passed to the less excellent.¹⁶⁹ A view narrated by al-Ḥimyarī on al-Nazzām says that the best man need not be Arab, and may equally be a non-Arab.¹⁷⁰

(f) al-Aṣamm

Al-Aṣamm is reported by al-Ashʿarī to have taken a cautious position towards ʿAlī and the arbitration. If it were for selfish reasons then ʿAlī was to be

164 Watt, *Formative*, p. 226.

165 *Ibid.*

166 A.A. Rīda, *al-Nazzām wa Ārā'uhu al-Falsafiyya*, (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat al-Ta'lif, 1365 /1946) p. 175.

167 See al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms and Sects*, (al Farq Bain al-Firaq) pp. 153,149; namely Ṭalḥa, Zubayr, ʿĀ'isha & Muʿāwiya as they all fought ʿAlī. See *Maqālāt*, p. 456.

168 A. Rīda, *al-Nazzām*, *op cit.*, p. 176 This is also the position of the Zaydites and Murji'ites as narrated by al-Ashʿarī, in *Maqālāt*, p. 453

169 *Ibid.*, p.176

170 Nashwān b. Saʿīd al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Hūr al-ʿĪn*, Edited by K. Muṣṭafā (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānji, 1948) p. 152

blamed but if it were for the benefit of the community so that it might choose an Imām then he was right. To him, Abū Mūsā was right in deposing him to make the people agree on one Imām.¹⁷¹ In fact this contradicts his alleged cautiousness as "he is said to have been a more extreme opponent of the Rāfiḍites" (than al-ʿAllāf), since he held that ʿAlī was never Imām, because there was no *shūrā* (according to al-Nāshi') or because there was no consensus (according to Ashʿarī).¹⁷² Watt says that from the time of al-Ashʿarī onwards, al-Aṣamm becomes noted for the view that it is not necessary to have an Imām. "The non-obligatory character of the Imāmate", adds Watt, "seems to be an inference from some statement of al-Aṣamm and not something on which he vehemently insisted."¹⁷³ al-Baghdādī judges as 'heretical' al-Aṣamm's view that the Imāmship should only remain with him upon whom the consensus of the community rested, as this was an indirect attack against the Imāmship of ʿAlī that he got after a rebellion. He only accepted the Imāmship of Muʿāwiya because the people were unanimous about him.¹⁷⁴

(v) Baghdādī Scholars

(a) Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir

Founder of the Muʿtazilī school of Baghdad. He was imprisoned under al-Rashīd's reign for alleged Rāfiḍite sympathies. It is doubtful if he was ever a Rāfiḍite in any strict sense but he certainly took a favourable view of ʿAlī. It is therefore not surprising that he quickly found favour with al-Ma'mūn and in 817 appears at Merw among the signatories of the document declaring ʿAlī al-Riḍā heir to the caliphate. He presumably returned to Baghdad with al-Ma'mūn.¹⁷⁵

Bishr and the Muʿtazilites of Baghdad held the Imāmate of the *mafḍūl* in the sense that while considering ʿAlī *afḍal* in 632 they nevertheless regarded Abū Bakr as a rightful Imām despite his being *mafḍūl*. They thus differed from the Rāfiḍites for whom Abū Bakr was never Imām at all. The appointment of the *mafḍūl* was justified, and his preference for ʿAlī was shown by his dissociation from ʿUthmān in the last six years. This implied that those who killed ʿUthmān were

171 al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, p. 453.

172 Watt, *Formative*, p. 227 and al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, p. 456.

173 Watt, *Ibid.*, p. 227.

174 al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq Bayn al-Firak*, p. 170.

175 Watt, *Formative*, p. 222.

justified and that ʿAlī was right in not proceeding against them.¹⁷⁶ Bishr is said to have played a conciliatory role that was reflected in the policies of al-Ma'mūn. He agreed with the Rāfiḍites in acknowledging ʿAlī's merit and excellence and (but) in his critique of the arbiters he seems to be siding with those who wanted the community to be based on inspired texts.¹⁷⁷

(b) Thumāma Ibn al-Ashras (d. 828)

A disciple of Bishr, who had probably the most considerable political power of all the Muʿtazilites. He is said to have refused the vizierate twice from al-Ma'mūn, while continuing to exert considerable influence over him. He is another signatory of the Marw document.¹⁷⁸ He is said to have been "leader of the *Kadariyah* (sic) in the time of al-Ma'mūn, al-Muʿtaṣim and al-Wāthiq" and "the one who led al-Ma'mūn astray by making him a Muʿtazilite".¹⁷⁹

Both he and Aḥmad b. Abī Du'ād were pro-ʿAlid in the sense that they dissociated themselves from Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr b. al ʿĀṣ, and venerated ʿAlī for political reasons.¹⁸⁰ Thumāma hated Muʿāwiya greatly and could have affected al-Ma'mūn in the decree issued against him.¹⁸¹

(c) Ibn Abī Du'ād (d. 854)

Greatly honoured by al-Ma'mūn, was appointed chief *qāḍī* by al-Muʿtaṣim (833). In this post which he retained until 851 he was responsible for the conduct of the inquisition (*Miḥna*), and was its main cause.¹⁸² He left office two years after the ascension of al-Mutawakkil i.e., worked between 218-234 (A.H.) .

(d) al-Iskāfī (d. 240/854)

A Muʿtazilī of the Baghdād branch, was admired by al-Muʿtaṣim,¹⁸³ who seems to have used him as a propagandist for the Muʿtazilī doctrine. But this should

176 *Ibid.*, pp. 227-228.

177 *Ibid.*, p. 228.

178 *Ibid.*, p. 222.

179 al-Baghdādī, *al-Fark Bayn al-Firak*, p. 177.

180 A. Amīn, *Duhā al-Islām*, 3: 75, 79.

181 *Ibid.*, p. 153.

182 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

183 Watt, *Formative*, p. 224.

not reflect more than approval of his theological works such as "*Ithbāt Khalq al-Qur'ān*, *K. al-radd 'alā-al-Mushabbiha*, *K. al-Radd 'alā man ankara khalq-al-Qur'ān*". As regards his political views, he has contradicted the *K. al-'Uthmāniyya* of al-Jāhiz, and refuted his views on 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.¹⁸⁴ In view of this work, I tend to believe that al-Iskāfī whose *Ftizāl* was initially associated with pro-'Alid sentiments being taught in Baghdād, and benefiting from the pro-'Alid policy of al-Ma'mūn, changed his mild position on 'Uthmān, thus leaving the Zaydite circles who had equally recognised the legitimacy of 'Uthmān as caliph and supported the Imāmate of *al-mafḍūl* - by accelerating his esteem for 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, and obviously joining the Rāfidite circles (attacked by al-Jāhiz in *K. al-'Uthmāniyya*). It is not clear why al-Jāhiz did not react to al-Iskāfī's refutation, especially since the former survived the latter by at least ten years.¹⁸⁵

(vi) Principles in brief

Briefly the five principles adhered to by the Mu'tazilites were:

- (i) The assertion of *Tawḥīd*.
- (ii) The concern for 'Adl (Divine Justice) .
- (iii) *al-Wa'd Wa-l Wa'id* (The Promise of Paradise for the good and the threat of Hell for the bad) .
- (iv) *al-Manzila bayn al-manzilatayn*, i.e., The intermediate position of the grave sinner.
- (v) *al-Amr bi al-Ma'rūf wa-al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar* (commanding the right and forbidding the wrong) .

What concerns us here is the last two mentioned principles and how the Mu'tazilites before al-Jāhiz stand in relation to those issues.

(a) The Intermediate Position

As Pellat puts it, 'the only one question that monopolized the attention of the Mu'tazilites since the start of the movement was the theological qualification of

184 This is the only work preserved by him. See *E.I.*² S.v. "al-Iskāfī, by Sourdel. It is reproduced by Hārūn at the end of *Kitāb al-'Uthmāniyya* of al-Jāhiz.

185 al-Iskāfī is not the vizier installed by the Turks during the reign of the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Mu'tazz, who had the same surname and was not liked by the caliph because he suspected him of holding Shī'ite sympathies. See, *E.I.*² S.v. "al-Iskāfī", by Sourdel. It could be that it was because al-Jāhiz was afraid of al-Iskāfī's relation to this Shī'ite vizier that he decided to remain silent.

the fighters of the Battles of the Camel and of Şiffin'.¹⁸⁶ It was the position taken by each faction of the community that decisively defined its identity as Murji'ite, Khārijite or Muʿtazilite. The Muʿtazilites who joined the religio-political scene later than the Murji'ites and Khārijites or Shiʿites refused to condemn the fighters at the battles of the Camel and Şiffin as *kāfir* as the Khārijites have held. Neither did they totally abstain from passing a judgement as the Murji'ites did, who gave them the status of believers. Those fighters were neither *Kāfirs* nor strictly believers, but were given the intermediate position of "*fāsiqs*".

Watt sees a line of continuity between the Murji'ites and the main figures of *Iʿtizāl*: whereby Wāṣil b. ʿAṭā, ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd and al-ʿAllāf were undecided on the status of the fighters at the battle of Camel, or on the question of ʿUthmān: was he right or wrong during the last six years of his rule. Thus a form of neo-Murj'ism was implicit in these figures or positions, except that the Muʿtazilites had the further choice of putting the sinner into the status of intermediate position and condemning him as *fāsiq*, or just refraining from that judgement and returning to the Murji'ite position.¹⁸⁷

(b) Commanding the good:

We shall see later the relation between this principle and the doctrine of revolution (*khurūj*) against the usurper (i.e., how this principle fitted the ʿAbbāsid political interests in justifying their rising against the Umayyads. The principle of *khurūj* was justified on condition of the possibility of (*Imkān*).¹⁸⁸

Having recaptured the roots of the issue of the caliphate and the various facets of the politico-religious settings that were dominant in the distant and immediate past that had preceded the time of al-Jāḥiẓ, we now turn to examine al-Jāḥiẓ's sayings/works on this topic without forgetting to link them to the respective politico-religious settings that must have brought them about.

186 Pellat, "l'Imāmat ...", *op.cit.* p.50. The same is the position of Nyberg, *E.I.* S.v. "Muʿtazila", p. 788.

187 Watt, *Formative*, pp. 229-230.

188 al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, p. 452 ; in p. 278 al-Ashʿarī likens *Khurūj* to *Amr bi-l-Maʿrūf* because of their both being dependent on *Imkān*.

PART TWO

PART TWO:

The Theory of Imāmate in al-Jāḥiẓ's works: Exposition and Critique of Main Doctrinal Stands.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Literature Review, Aims, Guidelines (and acknowledgement of studies done on al-Jāḥiẓ):

Many scholars have tried to present a chronology of al-Jāḥiẓ's works,¹⁸⁹ a task made more difficult by the fact that these works were written over a long period (al-Jāḥiẓ lived more than 90 years), and because many lack a precise date (al-Jāḥiẓ did not care to date his works and that is why many of them have been ascribed to different eras), not to forget the difficulties inherent in our author's method of composition. As Pellat points out: "Literary historians would give a great deal for the exact chronology of al-Jāḥiẓ's works. It would make it possible to follow the development of the writer's thought and it might solve the annoying riddle of contradictory titles"¹⁹⁰ ascribed to him.

It is, however, my view that this chronological task is not impossible; all that is needed is a detailed internal study and comparison of these works - in this case 27 extant political and semi-political works out of a total list of 245 works ascribed to al-Jāḥiẓ - which have to be dove-tailed with an awareness of the immediate religio-political setting of the relevant work and equally of the distant past leading to the latest developments in the issue of political succession before our author.

The problems awaiting my efforts to reach this goal were, in fact, caused by the existing conflicting chronological attempts by scholars of al-Jāḥiẓ, let alone the nature of al-Jāḥiẓ's writings themselves which do not lend themselves to easy

¹⁸⁹ The earliest modern chronological study is that of Ṭāha al-Ḥājirī, al-Jāḥiẓ: Hayātuḥu wa Āthāruḥu (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1946), followed by Charles Pellat in his Le Milieu Basrien et la formation de Ḥāḥiẓ (Paris, 1953) and his provisional lists in Arabica, 1956/2 and 1984/ The work of A. Abū Muḥim Kashshāf Āthār al-Jāḥiẓ (Beirut: Dār al-Hilāl, 1987) is a translation of Pellat's former efforts in Arabica. A. Hārūn's introductory remarks in his edition of al-Hayawān and al-Bayān should also be acknowledged.

¹⁹⁰ Charles Pellat, The Life and Works of al-Jāḥiẓ, (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1969) p. 10.

analysis. This is partly because of the often defective state of texts, but basically due to our author's need to negotiate the difficult and changing (and often dangerous) political problems of his days, he often has to express his meaning in an indirect and elliptical way, provisionally leaving us with the task of drawing the line between his quoted narrations and his own personal views, or with what Pellat describes as a deliberate "untidy and confusingly digressive method of composition."¹⁹¹ However, although al-Jāḥiẓ's style is "certainly not tightly organized", it has been truly regarded by other scholars of al-Jāḥiẓ as encompassing a "definite overall plan that can be recognized easily enough if one looks for it"¹⁹² and therefore to be quite purposeful. This outlook has proved to be not only essential in my constant endeavour to look out for the key contextual internal evidences and chronological markers and in my plan to relate the specific work to its historical setting, but has also been fruitful as it provided me with the opportunity to reach a reasonable chronological assessment of al-Jāḥiẓ's political philosophy.

Before starting to reconstruct al-Jāḥiẓ's doctrinal attitudes on the question of the Imāmate, we should first acknowledge the efforts in this respect of C. Pellat¹⁹³ and Ḥ. Yehyā Moḥamed,¹⁹⁴ who have tried to present al-Jāḥiẓ's theory of Imāmate without systematically attempting, however, to fit every doctrine into the historical religio-political setting and conditions that prevailed then, i.e., their attempt was a synthetic one that did not concern itself with the task of studying any development in al-Jāḥiẓ's political theory/views. It is our belief that by attempting to fit al-Jāḥiẓ's works into the likely historical context to which they belong, not only the relation between his political thought and the current ʿAbbāsīd policy may be detected, but more significantly, one may be able to recognize the development occurring in our author's political works as he happened to have survived and witnessed the successively dominant and declining eras of the Muʿtazilite school of thought, especially as he is believed to be one of its influential figures and leader of *al-*

191 See Pellat, "al-Jāḥiẓ" in *ʿAbbāsīd Belles Lettres*, p.94.

192 See M.V. McDonald "al-Jāḥiẓ's method of composition: an analysis of *Risālat Fakhr al-Sūdān ʿalā al-Biḍān*", *BRISMES*, St. Andrews, 1992, p. 308 and D. E. P. Jackson, *Ibid.*, pp. 298 ff.

193 See C. Pellat "L'Imāmat dans La Doctrine de Ḡāḥiẓ" in *Studia Islamica*, XV, 1961.

194 See Ḥassan Y. Moḥamed "La Theorie de l'Imāmat chez al-Ḡāḥiẓ", a chapter in his doctoral thesis *al-Ḡāḥiẓ et le Chiʿisme* (Paris: Sorbonne University, 1985) pp. 18-60. The same chapter is also found in *Études Orientales*, 1987, pp. 34-48. I will make reference to both of them .

Jāḥiẓiyya,¹⁹⁵ a sub-branch of Mu^ctazilism whose disciples, unfortunately, remain obscure.

In the following pages I shall try to present a likely chronology of al-Jāḥiẓ's religio-political works, benefiting from the efforts of al-Ḥājirī and Pellat but mostly guided by al-Jāḥiẓ's few textual references in his works of the exact historical dates during which he had written them. When these references are missing, I have tried to deduce the theo-political trend that dominates in the work under investigation and safely fit it under one of the undisputed two main historical periods that have witnessed those trends i.e., namely the period of Mu^ctazilite political triumph (198-236 A.H.) followed by the period of Mu^ctazilite political decline (237-250). In effect, since al-Jāḥiẓ's political doctrine and attitudes have been greatly influenced by the policy of ^cAbbāsīd caliphs, it is our aim to try to classify al-Jāḥiẓ's political works according to the major religio-political divisions outlined above by fitting the doctrines and attitudes to the religio-political historical setting.

Literary historians have fortunately thrown some light on al-Jāḥiẓ's relation with the ^cAbbāsīd caliphal court, via the viziers or scholars with whom he had strong and lasting links. During the period of Mu^ctazilite political triumph, we have historical evidence that al-Jāḥiẓ had strong links with the following influential ^cAbbāsīd figures: Thumāma b. al-Ashras,¹⁹⁶ al-Yazīdī,¹⁹⁷ Aḥmad b. Abī Du'ād,¹⁹⁸ his son Muḥammad, and ^cAbd al-Malik b. al-Zayyāt.¹⁹⁹

Both Thumāma and Aḥmad b. Abī Du'ād are said to have played a significant role in encouraging the ^cAbbāsīd caliphs to hold and enforce their dogma of *ʿItizāl* as the state religion. al-Yazīdī is said to have introduced al-Jāḥiẓ's works to al-Ma'mūn, who seems to have ordered scholars to write on the topic of *Imāma* after

195 al-Jāḥiẓ's Mu^ctazilite teaching is said to have been spread in Spain by Abū Bakr al-Qurṭubī who had visited the east and studied with al-Jāḥiẓ. It was *al-Jāḥiẓiyya*, at bottom *al-Nazzāmiyya* that was known in Spain. See E.I.¹, S.v. "al-Mu^ctazila" p. 791a. On *al-Jāḥiẓiyya*, see the generous list of classical sources cited by Ḥātim Ṣāliḥ al-Dāmin in Min Turāth al-Jāḥiẓ (Baghdad: Ministry of Culture, 1979) p. 8.

196 Contemporary and friend of al-Jāḥiẓ, a Mu^ctazilite theologian..

197 al-Yazīdī, Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā b. al-Mubārak, grammarian of Baṣra and tutor to the future caliph al-Ma'mūn. d. 202 (817-818)

198 Mu^ctazilite chief Qāḍī, d. 240 A.H./854. A.D., to whom 'Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn' was presented.

199 ^cAbbāsīd vizier and friend of al-Jāḥiẓ to whom 'Kitāb al-Hayawān' was presented. Sourdel views both Ibn Abī Du'ād and Ibn al-Zayyāt as having "contributed to the direction of the general policy of the empire". See E.I.², S.v. 'Ibn al-Zayyāt'.

the civil war that erupted with his brother, al-Amin, and had them summoned to his court in Marw to guide him in that respect.²⁰⁰

In the following section we shall examine al-Jāḥiẓ's earliest works on *Imāma* that most probably initiated his official link with the ʿAbbāsīd court, and enabled him to gain royal recognition through the figure of al-Yazīdī, the tutor of al-Ma'mūn himself, and later through Muʿtazilī scholars and *Qāḍīs* or influential ʿAbbāsīd viziers. Our concern thus will be to deduce and analyse the respective doctrinal stands of al-Jāḥiẓ, and find out how much al-Jāḥiẓ could have been in his religio-political writings acting as an ʿAbbāsīd necessity, and reflector, if not co-shaper, of ʿAbbāsīd politics.

Pellat says that al-Jāḥiẓ should be credited for being a precursor of Islamic political thought:

The merit of al-Jāḥiẓ was in his defining the broad lines of a theory of the caliphate, when the other Muslims and Muʿtazilites did not dream of determining such lines, as they were too attached to political events. al-Jāḥiẓ wrote at a time when such a theory had not yet been seriously developed, whence the political occupations won over doctrinal speculations. Nevertheless al-Jāḥiẓ succeeded in drawing a doctrine, that was vague, imprecise and insufficiently elaborated, but already full of promises.²⁰¹

This verdict on al-Jāḥiẓ's political works is significant as it correctly echoes the observation made by scholars of al-Jāḥiẓ who admit that our author did not - for various reasons - sincerely devote himself to a fully systematic treatment of any single topic but was rather inclined to write on all topics. The advantage of this was in showing that a man of letters like al-Jāḥiẓ succeeded in introducing a new dimension into Arabic prose as it now could perfectly express all ideas that were thought to be alien to the field of Arabic literature. The disadvantage was that the reader of al-Jāḥiẓ sometimes could not follow a complete line of thought by virtue of al-Jāḥiẓ's tendency to digress from one subject to another within a single work. This being the case, we should not therefore expect from al-Jāḥiẓ a fully detailed doctrinal theory but at least as Pellat says, a promising one. We shall consider how promising al-Jāḥiẓ's political views were in the concluding part of this research-which I believe to be an essential requirement for any attempt to find out the impact al-Jāḥiẓ's

200 See al-Hājirī, *al-Jāḥiẓ*, pp. 183-184.

201 Pellat, 'L'Imāmat', *op.cit.* pp. 51-52.

political thought had on later scholars and how it related to comparable positions held by his contemporaries.

Before we detect such positions in the works of al-Jāḥiẓ, we would like to approach the Jāḥiẓian views with the following observations. As the political discussions during the time of al-Jāḥiẓ took the form of reiterating historical issues and figures, i.e., as contemporary political debates in the ʿAbbāsīd period heavily depended on the distant and near past of the Muslim community, in order to establish the present ʿAbbāsīd status quo on unquestionable historical grounds, or on rational grounds that aim to legitimize the present and extend it to the future: how the works of al-Jāḥiẓ relate to this phenomenon? In al-Jāḥiẓ's works below, political arguments are strongly dependent on the way history is re-constructed before the reading public. Watt says :

It is a notable feature of the medieval Islamic world that questions of contemporary politics are dealt with in terms of past history. . . the assertion that Abū Hāshim transferred the Imāmate to Muḥammad b. ʿAlī and the assertion that the Prophet designated al-ʿAbbās to succeed him, are examples. They are both ways of stating that ʿAbbāsīd rule in the present is valid and legitimate. In other words, it was normal for the Muslims at this period to define a contemporary political attitude by the precise view adopted on various historical matters in the past [. . .] History has been the basis of contemporary political claims [. . .] Thus a distinguished writer of the ninth century, al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868) wrote a defence of the (not adequately studied) political sect of the ʿUthmānites (ʿUthmāniyya) but the whole book of some two hundred pages consists of arguments to show that Abū Bakr was superior to ʿAlī. There is (thus) justification for the assertion that historical discussions are part of the intellectual form of the political struggle.²⁰²

If we remember the strong link between Muʿtazilism and the ʿAbbāsīds, and how the latter's political interests were asserted by the former, we should also note that while acting as the spokesmen of the ʿAbbāsīds, the Muʿtazilites sometimes were not free from the charge also raised against the historians of the period who tried to "change attitudes to the earliest history of Islam".²⁰³ Thus, "the status of historical recording in the Islamic society as well as its potentialities left a wide margin for tendentious presentation".²⁰⁴ Was the role played by the Muʿtazilites towards the ʿAbbāsīds identical to the one played by the Murji'ites towards the Umayyads? In this sense, we would like to examine the strength of the generalization that "Sunni thought on the Imāmate . . . continued to react to its changing

202 Watt, *Formative*, p. 156. See also *Islamic Political Thought*, by the same author (Edinburgh: University Press, 1968) pp. 86-87.

203 F.E. Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya*, p. 19.

204 *Ibid.*, p. 18

fortunes"²⁰⁵ i.e., in the sense of its concentrated efforts to justify the presence of the ruler for religious or political reasons. Were al-Jāḥiẓ's views on the Imāmate religiously or politically motivated and shaped?

Another object would be to further check how much al-Jāḥiẓ's ideas on the Imāmate fit within the general political pattern of his age. Was al-Jāḥiẓ's view of the Imāmate more concerned with the manner in which rulership was acquired or with the manner in which it was or should be exercised?²⁰⁶ Do we meet an indication of this in his works? If so, how does it relate to the literary genre of *Mirrors of Princes* (*Adab al-Marāyā*)? Did al-Jāḥiẓ transcend the political pressures and interests of the ʿAbbāsīd regime? Was he capable of forwarding genuine political advice that need not be too ʿAbbāsīdly motivated in outlook, or was he continuously limited and tied to the ʿAbbāsīd regime, so much that he could be described as their constant spokesman?

al-Jāḥiẓ's political views seem to perfectly reflect Madelung's observation on the fluctuations displayed by Islamic political thought. It is our aim in this thesis to trace and account for changes in al-Jāḥiẓ's political thought. al-Jāḥiẓ's positions therefore should not be treated as one integral whole, but one that is "developing in response to the current religio-political trends of the ʿAbbāsīd court", as Pellat rightly judges al-Jāḥiẓ, for this author wrote during a period when "the theory of the Imāmate had not yet been seriously developed, i.e., when the political preoccupations won over doctrinal speculations."²⁰⁷ Pellat adds: "al-Jāḥiẓ ought to be credited for having forwarded the broad lines²⁰⁸ of a theory of the caliphate", though (as we shall see it) was "not consistently systematic," but "open to changes."²⁰⁹ On a quick reading al-Jāḥiẓ's political works do seem contradictory, especially those works that cover the same topic or political group.²¹⁰ But if one can relate each position that al-Jāḥiẓ had held to its religio-political setting, then one may put one's hand on the major political positions of al-Jāḥiẓ and the major trends displayed in

205 E.I.², S.v. "Imāma" by W. Madelung, p. 1168 a.

206 This point will be addressed later with special reference to B. Lewis's The political language of Islam, (Chicago: University Press, 1988) pp. 68, 94, 99, 103.

207 Pellat, C. 'L'Imāmat d'aus le doctrine de Ĝāḥiẓ', op.cit., p. 50.

208 Ibid., p. 51.

209 Ibid., p. 52.

210 See my forthcoming article 'al-Jāḥiẓ's Anthropological Endeavour: an Analytical Study of his views on Coloured People (al-Sūdān); a paper presented at the Fifth Biennial Conference of the School of ʿAbbāsīd Studies, St. Andrews, July 1993.

each religio-political setting. We know that al-Jāḥiẓ had witnessed eleven caliphs,²¹¹ but what we lack is a systematic dated bibliography of his works. Our guide in this respect shall rest on the following guidelines and al-Jāḥiẓ's political thought will be traced according to:

(i) al-Jāḥiẓ's own direct reference(s) to the date at which he wrote a specific treatise or book (i.e., the **chronological markers** in the words of Lassner)²¹²

(ii) As for the undated works, an inference of the relation between the position of al-Jāḥiẓ in one work and the historically confirmed position of the ʿAbbāsīd court, in addition to the religio-social forces that were predominant, will be made.

In view of these observations, we shall attempt to present a likely overview of al-Jāḥiẓ's religio-political positions related to the issue of caliphate/Imāmate in view of the major socio-political forces that were active in his life. By reviewing the history witnessed by al-Jāḥiẓ, we believe that al-Jāḥiẓ's political positions can be fitted into two major categories. We propose to respectively fix al-Jāḥiẓ within the context of (a) the political flourishing of the Muʿtazilite school and (b) the period following that due to its decline i.e., the blow that the Muʿtazilites experienced when the caliphal taste no longer matched theirs.²¹³

(A) The first category of al-Jāḥiẓ's political thought would certainly belong to the time of al-Ma'mūn, al-Muʿtaṣim, al-Wāthiq's reign, and part of al-Mutawakkil's reign during which the Muʿtazilites' influence over the caliphal policy - or say when the caliphal outlook coincided with the Muʿtazilites - reached its zenith, or before the ʿAbbāsīd policy had abandoned them (up to 236).

211 Those were respectively: al-Mahdī, al-Hādī, al-Rashīd, al-Amīn, al-Ma'mūn, (al-Jāḥiẓ was 33 years old then), al-Muʿtaṣim, al-Wāthiq, al-Mutawakkil, al-Muntaṣir, al-Mustaʿīn, al-Muʿtazz.

212 See J. Lassner, Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory: An Enquiry into the Art of ʿAbbāsīd Apologetics (Connecticut: American Oriental Society, 1986), vol. 66 of American Oriental Series, p. 31.

213 See D.B. Macdonald, Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory, [Semitic Series], (London: 1903) pp. 153-162.

(B) The 2nd category of al-Jāhiz's political thought appears during the latter period of al-Mutawakkil's reign (from 237-247).

(C) A third sub-category may be added, during the reign of al-Mutawakkil's son, al-Muntaṣir, "who treated the °Alids, unlike his father, with great consideration."²¹⁴

In each of the main categories, we shall therefore try to find out al-Jāhiz's attitude - whenever the sources permit - towards the same religio-political °Abbāsid groups referred to above in the survey of the question of Imāmate.

The following table summarizes my effort to classify al-Jāhiz's political works chronologically, benefiting from the scholars mentioned above in addition to literary historians and Chroniclers such as Yāqūt, Ibn Khallikān, al-Mas°ūdī, al-Ya°qūbī, and al-Ṭabarī. Pellat's and Ḥassan Yehyā Moḥamed's²¹⁵ attempt to list al-Jāhiz's doctrinal stands as one "synthetic" whole will be avoided in the hope of reconstructing them chronologically, and relating them to their historical setting in order to trace any likely development or consistency in them, before we may see them - if this would still be useful - as one organic whole.

3. Reconstruction of al-Jāhiz's political works:

(A) Period of Political Mu°tazilī Triumph (198-231/813-846)

Ma'mūn's era: (198-218)

1. al-Jawābāt fī al-Imāma, (Wujūb al-Imāma).

al-Jāhiz's Heresiographic Review:

2. Maqālat al-Zaydiyya wa-al-Rāfiḍa (Imāmate described in Shī°ite terms.)

214 See E.I.¹, s.v. "Al-Muntaṣir", p. 726a and A. Khafājī, Abū °Uthmān al-Jāhiz (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1982) p. 80.

215 Ḥassan Yehyā Moḥamed, "La Theorie de L'Imāmat chez al-Ġāhiz", in Etudes Orientales, 1987, pp.34-48.

3. (?) Independent Jāhizian anti-Rāfiḍi campaign

- (a) K. al-Maʿrifa
- (b) K. al-ʿUthmāniyya
- (c) K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya.²¹⁶

4. Risāla fī-al-Nābita

Post-Ma'mūnid Era (218-231: al-Mu'taṣim, al-Wāthiq)

1. Theological works:²¹⁷

- Risāla fī-Nafy al-Tashbīh.
- Risāla fī-Khalq al-Qur'ān.

2. Political works:

- Kitāb Faḍl Hāshim ʿala ʿAbd Shams
- Risāla fī Taṣwīb ʿAlī.

3. [a] Period of good relations with vizier Ibn al-Zayyāt:

- (1) Risāla fī Madḥ al-Tujjār (addressed to Ibn al-Zayyāt as of 220 A.H. when he became vizier.)
- (2) Kitāb al-Tarbīʿ wa-al-Tadwīr.
- (3) Early parts of K. al-Ḥayawān, most probably started before 232 A.H., as in 233 the addressee Ibn al-Zayyāt died. It could be argued that he was given the first volumes and then al-Jāhiz continued afterwards expanding the book until 250 A.H.²¹⁸

[b] Period of unstable relations with Ibn al-Zayyāt:

- Risāla fī al-Jidd wa al-Hazl.

216 The editor of K. Faḍīḥat al-Muʿtazila says this work was written in 242 A.H., i.e., at a much later stage than I propose.

217 al-Ḥājirī suggests they were written during al-Mutawakkil's life. See al-Ḥājirī, al-Jāhiz, p. 334.

218 See A. Abū Mulḥim, Rasā'il al-Jāhiz al-Kalāmiyya and Kashshāf Āthār al-Jāhiz, (Beirut: Dār wa Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1987) p. 67 of the inventory, and Hārūn, K. al-Ḥayawān, 1: 26 and N. al-Ḥumṣī and A. al-Mulūḥī, Min Kitāb al-Ḥayawān li al-Jāhiz, (Damascus: Ministry of Education, 1979) p. 166. al-Ḥājirī has a contrary view, that al-Ḥayawān was written after the death of al-Mutawakkil. See al-Ḥājirī, al-Jāhiz, p. 397



(B) Last Phase of I'tizāl 232-236 A.H.

I. (Earlier Rule of al-Mutawakkil)

- Latter portions of K. al-Ḥayawān
- K. al-Futyā.
- K. al-Bukhalā'.
- K. al-Burṣān .
- K. al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn.
- Annex to K. al-Ḥayawān:
 - K. al-Nisā'.²¹⁹
 - al-Qawl Fī al-Bighāl.
 - fī al-Mu'allimīn.

II. Change in al-Mutawakkil's policy: (as of 236 A.H.)

Official anti-Rāfiḍī Campaign:

- K. Faḍl al-Mu'tazila/al-I'tizāl
- K. Aṣḥāb al-Ilhām

(C) Period of Mu'tazilī Political Decline: Sunnī Policy of al-Mutawakkil, (236-247 A.H.)

- K. al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā.
- K. al-Akḥbār wa Kayf taṣiḥḥ.
- K. Ḥujaj al-Nubuwwa.
- Risāla fī Manāqib al-Turk.

(D) Short-lived pro-ʿAlid sentiment, reign of al-Muntaṣir (247-248)

- Risāla fī al-Awṭān wa al-Buldān.
- Fakhr al-Sūdān 'alā al-Biḍān.

²¹⁹ al-Ḥājirī suggests that it was written as an index to and after K. al-Ḥayawān (which he thinks was written after the death of al-Mutawakkil. See al-Ḥājirī, al-Jāhiz, p. 437.

CHAPTER THREE

Chronological Analysis of al-Jāḥiẓ's Political Thought: Era Of Political Mu'tazilī Triumph:

al-Ma'mūn's Period (I):198-200

al-Jāḥiẓ's Earliest Extant Work (s) On the Imāmate:

- al-Jawābāt fī Istihqāq al-Imāma (Responsa on the Imāmate)

} extant.

- al-Dalāla 'alā anna al-Imāma Farḍ
- Kitāb Wujūb al-Imāma

} non-extant works.

al-Jawābāt fī al-Imāma:

In this treatise known as "al-Jawābāt fī-al-Imāma" (Responsa on the Imāmate),²²⁰ that may be considered as one of the earliest works²²¹ that made al-Jāḥiẓ gain caliphal recognition, we find that al-Jāḥiẓ's main concern was to refute those groups that did not share his doctrinal stands towards the institution of the Imāmate and the post of the Imām (caliph) . The political value of this treatise is that it is the earliest surviving extant work of al-Jāḥiẓ on *Imāma* that had been addressed to al-Ma'mūn before the year 202 A.H. which marks the death date of al-Yazīdī who is reported to have introduced many of these Jāḥiẓian works. al-Jāḥiẓ himself has referred to these works in two places: Firstly in al-^cUthmāniyya wherein the

220 Similar titles have been attributed to al-Jāḥiẓ but are not extant. The work under the title "*al-Dalāla 'alā-anna-al-Imāma Farḍ*", mentioned by Yāqūt (6:77) could have been the work al-Jāḥiẓ himself referred to in the preface of *al-Hayawān* (1: 12) under the name of "*Wujūb al-Imāma*". al-Jāḥiẓ's aim, he says "was to expose the theses of the anarchists who do not accept the necessity of the Imāmate and refuse to obey the Imāms, who pretend that it is more beneficial for men to be left in liberty without a guardian, that it is more advantageous for them to be left without a shepherd, and that such a situation is more suitable and profitable." See Pellat, 'L'Imāmat', p. 38.

221 Perhaps al-Jāḥiẓ's concern was first targetted towards treating the hot issues before dealing with the less urgent ones. In other words, al-Jāḥiẓ's writings on the necessity of the Imāmate should therefore have preceded those works that accept its existence.

attention of the addressee (most probably al-Ma'mūn) is directed to distinguish between two of al-Jāhiz's categories of political writings; in one he expresses his own personal political doctrines, - in al-Jāhiz's own words: "where I refuted those who belittle the value of the Imāmate, and allege that it is not necessary and cherish the possibility of having a number of Imāms at one time . . . "222 In the other category he does not allow himself to forward his own personal views and simply confines himself to a process of narrating the respective arguments of the rival sects in the best way each would have possibly put it, in the undertaken role of a neutral judge. In K. al-Bayān²²³, here is another reference to al-Jāhiz's own political works and we find al-Jāhiz rejoicing at the Caliph's pleasure with his works on the Imāmate. The value of this reference is two-fold: it informs us how well those works (presumably category one) have been welcomed by the caliph himself, and also reflects al-Jāhiz's style in his political writings as if he is suggesting to the readers that they should be able to distinguish his open personal views from those he merely narrates.

Since al-Jāhiz does not specify or name these groups, it is useful to reconstruct the immediate-religio political scene that had existed before al-Jāhiz could have attempted to put forward his views in this treatise.

1. The Immediate Religio-Political Scene

If history may be said to repeat itself, we find that as a consequence of the civil war that erupted between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn, there arose a trend similar to the one attributed to the Khārijites in relation to the civil war between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyā, in undermining any need for the institution of Imāma and the post of Imām,²²⁴ and rejecting any basis for its existence on rational or religious grounds.

Whether al-Ma'mūn was upset by the waning prestige of the caliphal institution²²⁵ and the apparent threat such calls entailed, or whether he was really overwhelmed by a state of perplexity and confusion²²⁶ as to who was most deserving to

222 al-ʿUthmāniyya, p.154.

223 al-Bayān, 3: 374-375.

224 See al-Ḥājirī, al-Jāhiz, p. 199.

225 Ibid., p. 204.

226 Ibid., p. 183-184. Although al-Ṭabarī represents al-Ma'mūn as being deeply anguished by the death of his defiant brother, we need not necessarily accept al-Ḥājirī's view that al-Ma'mūn was torn between the Arab bloc and a Shu'ūbī belief in the superiority of the Persian-Alid

rule, he eventually ordered that ʿAbbāsīd scholars should put an end to such dangerous discourses and speculations on the topic of Imāma, and provide him with their views by paying a visit to his court in Marw. al-Amīn's death was a blow to the institution of the caliphate, as Kennedy puts it:

It was a tragic day for the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate. No member of the family had been publicly killed or executed since the revolution. Now that inviolability had gone. If it could happen once, it could happen again and the prestige of the caliphs had been seriously damaged. But more than the charisma of the sovereign had been injured. The state, so carefully built up by Maṣūʿ and nurtured by his son and grandsons had torn itself apart. The old system had gone forever, it remained to be seen whether a new one could be put in its place.²²⁷

This growing indifference towards the very existence of the institution of the caliphate was exhibited by many religio-political groups, drawn from Khārijites and some Muʿtazilites. al-Jāhīz did not care to name these groups while attempting to refute their positions.

(I) Within the Khārijite group, this indifference went beyond theological circles to reach the level of military revolt. Their revolution in 202/817 in Baghdad against the ʿAbbāsīd authorities was a continuation of their radical opposition to any form of authority, that was initially directed against ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya.²²⁸ An identical open rejection of the need for the caliphate was proclaimed by a movement lead by Sahl b. Salama al-Anṣārī²²⁹ at the same time (i.e., 201-202 A.H.), which claimed that people could do without political authority as long as they acted properly and cooperated.²³⁰

(II) Within the Muʿtazilite circles, a similar position is reported by heresiographers, and ascribed to Abū Bakr al-Aṣamm, (d. 200-201/816-817), and Hishām al-Fuwaṭī which suggests that within the Muʿtazilites there was no full consensus on the obligatory nature of Imāma, and that the rebellious attitude to the Imāma had infiltrated the Muʿtazilī circles themselves.²³¹

blood. The same applies to his sympathy for ʿAlī al-Riḍā's sudden death, or for the puzzling act of nominating him as heir-apparent.

227 H. Kennedy, *The Early ʿAbbāsīd Caliphate* (London: Croom Helm, 1981) p. 148.

228 See al-Hājirī, *al-Jāhīz*, pp. 203-204.

229 See al-Hājirī, *al-Jāhīz*, p. 204 citing Ṭabarī in his *Annals* of 201-202 A.H., and H. Kennedy, *Early ʿAbbāsīd Caliphate*, p. 157, and *The History of Ṭabarī*, Tr. Bosworth, vol 32. p. 55.

230 *Ibid.* This view has also been attributed by al-Nawbakhtī (*Firaq al-Shīʿa*), pp. 10-11 to al-Nazzām.

231 al-Hājirī, *al-Jāhīz*, p. 205.

As far as Abū Bakr al-Aṣamm is concerned, whereas al-Ashʿarī had ascribed to him a belief in the non-obligatory nature of the Imāmate²³² (i.e., that it was not necessary to have an Imām), al-Nāshī' only refers to him as holding that in turbulent times it is practically impossible for anyone to function as Imām, besides saying that there may exist more than one Imām.²³³ al-Aṣamm is reported as being an extreme opponent of the Rāfiḍa since he held that ʿAlī was never Imām. According to al-Nāshī', Watt adds (in the same mentioned reference) that al-Aṣamm's reason behind that position was that there had been no real *Shūrā* or council; but according to al-Ashʿarī this can be understood in the light of the fact that there was no consensus on ʿAlī, presumably by the Muslims as a whole.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār, (d. 415/1024) the famous Muʿtazilī theologian, seems to have understood al-Aṣamm's position in a hypothetical sense. Although he ascribes to him an (alleged) denial of *Ijmāʿ* as a necessary condition for the Imāmate, he points out that *Ijmāʿ*, had in fact occurred before al-Aṣamm's position, and that that position was not really his. (i.e., he accepted *Ijmāʿ*). Furthermore, the statement which ascribed to him the view that "if people treat each other justly, and if injustice vanishes and all that punishments are made for disappears as well, then people would not have the slightest need for one to implement these punishments", should not be understood literally because of the undeniable reality which he could not have rejected of human nature, and thus the necessity of the Imāmate may be inferred from his statement.²³⁴

al-Shahrastānī ascribes this negative attitude towards the Imāma to another Muʿtazilī, Hishām b. ʿAmr al-Fuwaṭī, (or al-Fūṭī) . "Among his innovations related to the Imāmate, one must point out his thesis according to which the Imāmate must be not provided in times of trouble and dissension, and it is only possible to assign an Imām in time of peace and harmony."²³⁵ al-Shahrastānī sums up the above

232 See al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, ed. H. Ritter, 1963, p. 460. i.e., as long as they refrain from oppression, i.e. if they abstain from oppressing each other, there is no need for the Imām. See Watt, *Formative*, p. 227. al-Ashʿarī's interpretation or understanding of al-Aṣamm, is also adopted by Lambton, who also ascribed to him "the non-obligatory nature of Imāma because the ideal righteous community could do without a ruler . . . and that men would not have need of an Imām were they not prone to treat each other unjustly." See *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, pp. 37-38.

233 Watt, *Formative*, *Ibid.*

234 ʿAbd al Jabbār *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-ʿAdl* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyya li-al-Taʿlif wa al-Tarjama, n.d.), Appendix to vol 20, part one, pp. 47-48.

235 cited by Pellat, *L'Imāmate dans la doctrine de Ḡāhiz*, p. 39, f.n.1.

religio-political indifference towards the *Imāma* held by the Khārijites, namely the Najdite branch, and by the Muʿtazilites al-Aṣamm and al-Fuwaṭī as follows:

The Imāmate is not to be seen as obligatory by revelation, such that if people fail to observe it, they need to be blamed and punished; it is rather based on human conduct, so that if they act justly, cooperate in achieving morality and strive to maintain piety and righteousness, (so much so) that each of the *mukallafūn*, (those entrusted with duties by God) busies himself in fulfilling those duties, they would certainly have no need for the Imām, and the need to follow him ceases to exist ... (That is so) because everybody of the *Mujtahidūn* is exactly as his fellow man in religion, Islam, knowledge and *Ijtihād*; besides, people are as the teeth of the comb ... so on what grounds is obedience made necessary to someone who is like them?²³⁶

(III) Within ʿAbbāsīd Circles:

The civil war between the caliphal brothers is a clear indication of the conflict within the ʿAbbāsīd family over who should rule: ʿAbbāsīd right to rule depended besides its revolutionary success, (since no member of the ʿAbbāsīd society could have claimed to rival them in overthrowing the Umayyad dynasty) on being descendants of the uncle of the Prophet. That legitimacy would act as a driving force to the Imāmate, but once they had achieved political authority, the question arose as to which of the qualified members within the ʿAbbāsīd circle, had more right to rule. How did the ʿAbbāsīds solve that issue?

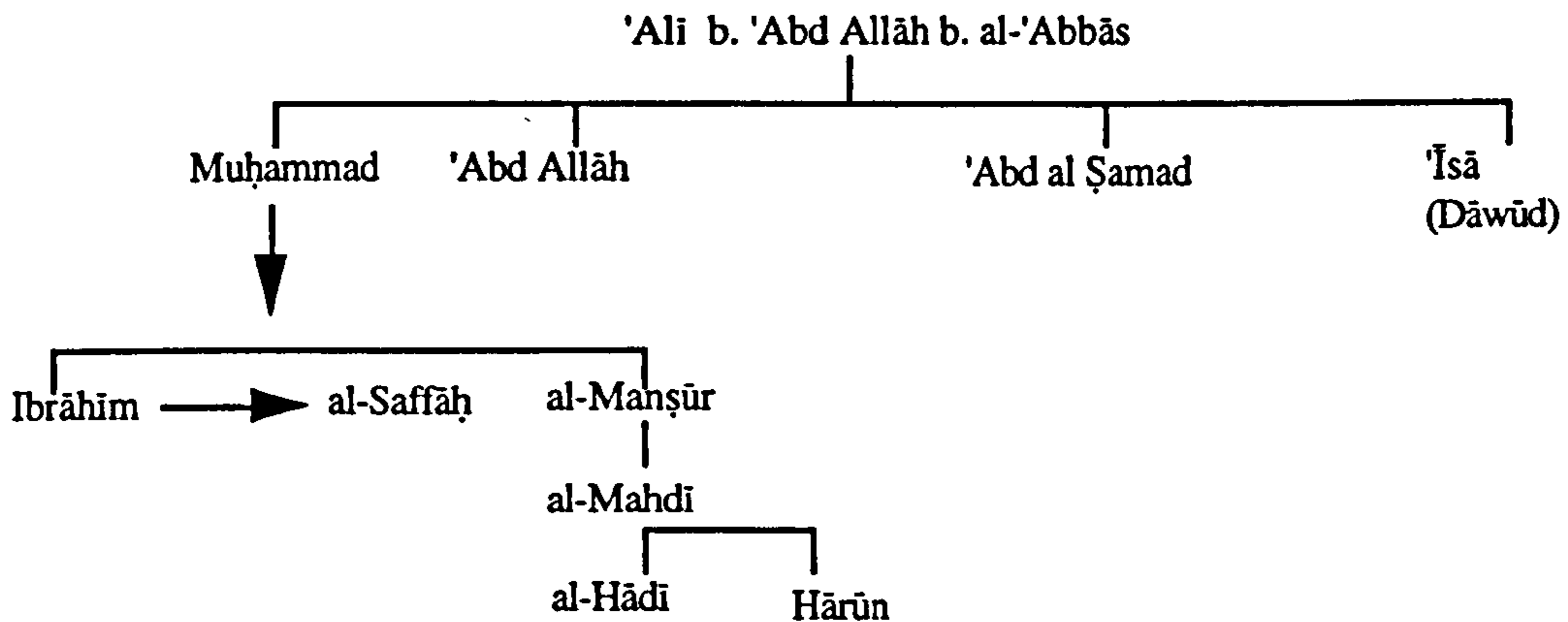
As far as the problem of succession is concerned, the ʿAbbāsīds while publicly resorting to the charismatically established principle of *Bayʿa* and by religiously appealing to the masses by a procedure whose precedent was laid down in Abū Bakr's nomination of ʿUmar, the reality of things hid something different, and the procedure of *Bayʿa* and *wilāyat al-ʿAhd* was instituted as a tool to prolong the life of the new ʿAbbāsīd state²³⁷, which, paradoxically, was not much different from the dynastic-hereditary pattern²³⁸ followed by their predecessors, the Umayyads. When

236 al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-Iqdām fī ʿilm al-Kalām*, p. 481 cited by Sh. Ḥuṣnī, *al-Muʿtazila wa Masʿalat al-Imāma*, p. 27. See also ʿAbd-al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, *op.cit.*

237 See M. Aḥmad, *State, Politics and Islam*, p. 72.

238 Conversely, it has been maintained by von Kremer that whereas the Umayyads were reflecting the "old Arab idea of seniority", the ʿAbbāsīds' view of authority strove for direct transmission from father to son. i.e., the Umayyad rule was not as dynastic. For a proof of this view, out of the Sufyānid line, only Yazīd and Muʿāwiya the 2nd succeeded in a direct line. Out of the Marwānid line, only two followed that measure. (ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān and al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik). The ʿAbbāsīds, however, displayed five successions - at least up to al-Jāḥiẓ's time - thus numerically outweighed the Umayyads. This trend was resumed by al-Muqtadir (44th ʿAbbāsīd caliph) almost uninterruptedly. See von Kremer,

power rested within the ʿAbbāsīd family, the precedent of *Bayʿa* and the historical right of inheritance to rule were not enough, now that the surviving descendants of the Prophet's uncle were all equally ʿAbbāsīds, and the actual criteria for determining the candidacy to the Imāmate, were the obvious rivalry between certain lines within the ʿAbbāsīd family; namely between the descendants of Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd-Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās, on the one hand and the brothers of this Muḥammad on the other, according to the following table:



The tension and rivalry were so great that we are told that al-Manṣūr exerted tremendous pressure to drive his uncles Dāwūd. b. ʿAlī and ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī away from competing with him on the Imāmate.²³⁹ But even when the non-Muḥammad branch was excluded, and power rested within the line of al-Manṣūr, the conflict assumed a new wave of rivalry, now among the sons of the present caliph and their uncles or cousins. al-Manṣūr doubled his efforts to secure the caliphate for his son, and succeeded in making ʿIsā b. Mūsā - his cousin who had helped him fighting the rebellious Ḥasanids - surrender his rights for his son, al-Mahdī²⁴⁰ so that the old-new principle of succession, or right of succession to the Imāmate, turned out to be nothing more than a tactic of promoting and enhancing the prestige of the caliph and his direct sons, and the ability to keep it to his own line of descent, not that of his uncles, nor his brothers or his cousins. This al-Manṣūr succeeded in establishing as a precedent²⁴¹ to be followed by all those who succeeded him; therefore the established dynastic trend assumed the pattern "from father to son", thus from al-Manṣūr to al-Mahdī, from al-Mahdī to Hārūn - who accidentally

Politics in Islam, tr. by S. Khuda Bakhsh, (Idaray-i Adabiyat-i Delli, India, 1975) pp. 110-111 contrasting Umayyad and ʿAbbasid rule.

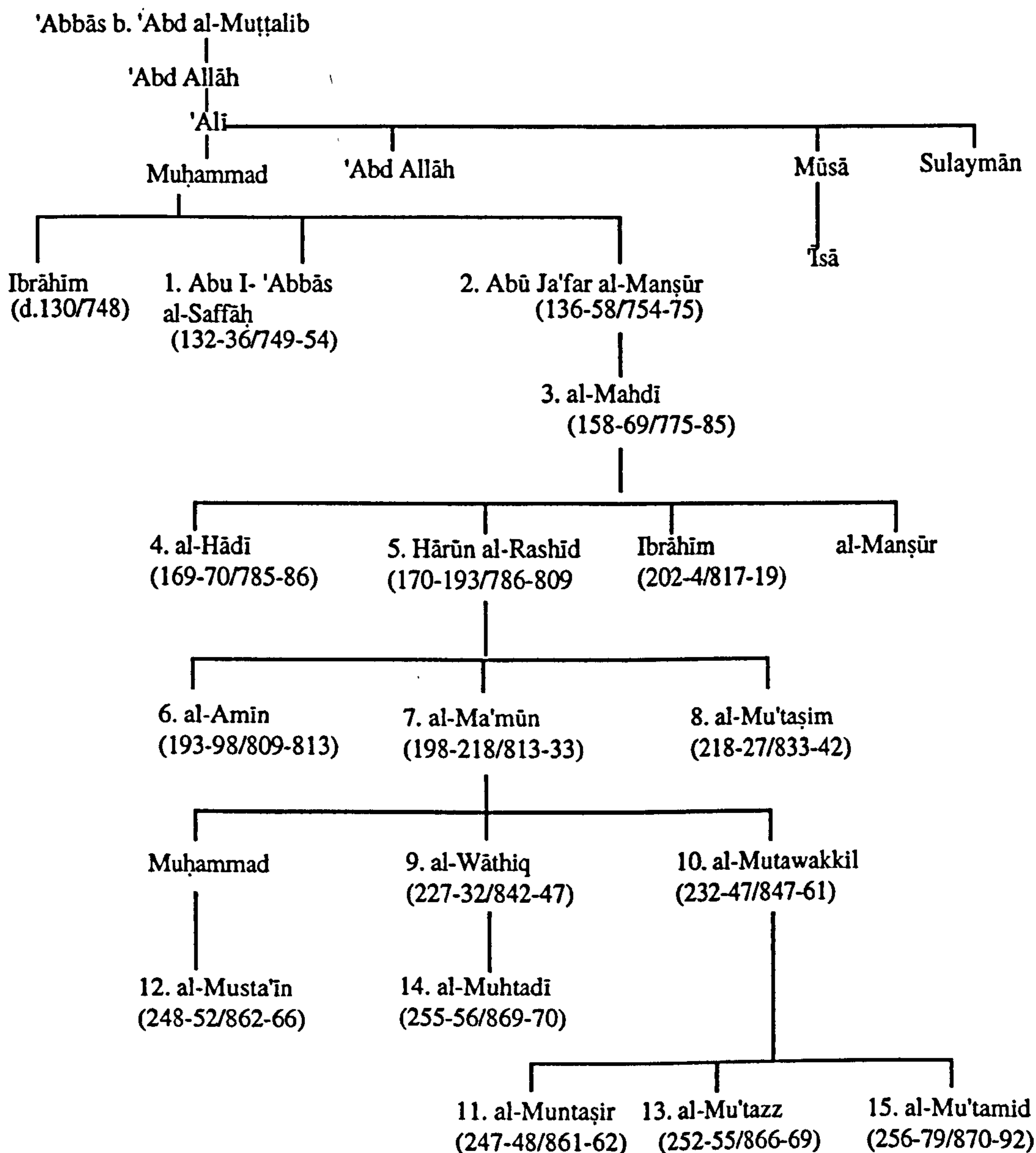
239 See F. ʿOmar, 'The Problem of Succession', pp.31-32.

240 See *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

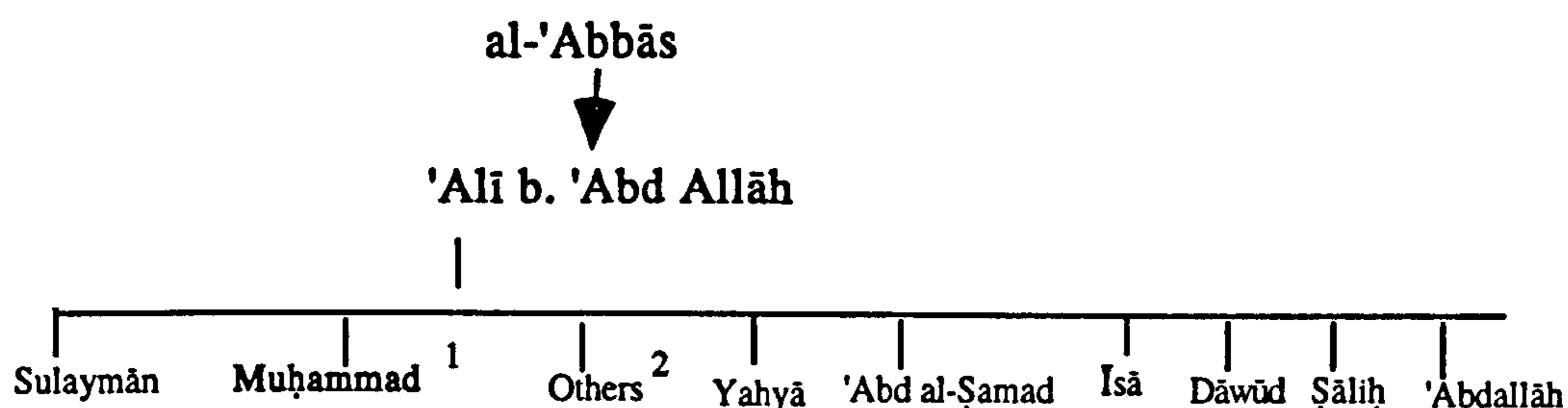
241 *Ibid.*, p.41.

received it from his brother, al-Hādī - from Hārūn to his three sons : al-Amin, al Ma'mūn, al-Mu'taṣim. Then from al-Ma'mūn to (his brother) al-Mu'taṣim, (and back to his sons) al-Wāthiq and al-Mutawakkil, and from the latter (most of) the rest of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty: the following table demonstrate this rivalry within the 'Abbāsīd circle:

The 'Abbāsīd succession restricted within the Manṣūrīd line:



From J. Lassner, The Shaping Of 'Abbāsīd Rule, (Princeton: University Press,) 1980 p. 253.



1. Gives rise to °Abbāsīd Caliphs.

2. Bishr, Aḥmad, Ishāq, Mubashshir and others. Obscure and leave no offspring.

(From J. Lassner, The Shaping of °Abbāsīd Rule, Princeton: University Press, 1980, p. 253).

What concerns us here is the problem of succession as left by the caliph Hārūn concerning his three sons, al-Amīn, al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim. As al-Amīn had allegedly violated the Meccan documents by proclaiming his son as first heir, at the expense of al-Ma'mūn²⁴² the problem of succession within the °Abbāsīd family was echoing al-Manṣūr's successful attempt to confine the Caliphate to his line and exclude his uncles. Thus we see that the civil war between the caliph brothers was a continuation of the same dynastic conflict that was exhibited by the founders of that dynasty themselves.

It is remarkable that in no place do we find al-Jāḥiẓ addressing himself to tackling or analysing - as he skillfully did with other topics - the problem of succession within the °Abbāsīd family. We only find very quick remarks and we could only deduce a deliberate decision to free himself from bringing into question the very basis of the °Abbāsīd caliphate that proved to be shaky at times, and to fall short of the true Islamic ideals it professed to promote.²⁴³

It would be interesting to examine in this research, whether al-Jāḥiẓ while posing as the staunchest supporter of the °Abbāsīd caliphate, ever went beyond that diplomatic role into another less diplomatic one, i.e., were his political views on the Imāmate solely motivated by personal political interest or by genuine religious standards? It may be here that one could find out the grounds which have made the

242 See E.I.² S.v. "al-Ma'mūn b. Hārūn al-Rashīd" p. 332 b. and E.I.² S.v. "al-Amīn".

243 See N. Ḥumṣī and A. Mulūḥī, Min Kitāb al-Hayawān, p. 8 (reference to lack of *Shūrā* in °Abbāsīd policy).

phenomenon of 'hereditary dynasties'²⁴⁴ palatable and acceptable in the eyes of Muslim jurists and thinkers.

2. Exposé & Critique of doctrinal stands of al-Jawābāt (Responsa):

al-Jāhiz in the introductory paragraph of this treatise summarizes the position of the anarchists without, however, naming them; these people are gathered under the following rebellious claims:

Some people allege that the Imāmate is not required for one man, specifically from one group, nor for one man from the majority of the people, even though he was the most excellent and most capable of the Muslims, after being unique (in his qualification) for the Imāmate without another person being equal to him. However, if the people do not establish one Imām, then it would be possible for them without them going astray, or being rebellious or being unbelievers simply by not establishing him. On the other hand, if they do establish an Imām, that would be a judgement which they had made and not doing it would not be remiss of them.

It is possible for them to establish two Imāms and they could establish more than that (number), and it would not matter if these Imāms were non-Arabs and *Mawālī*. [But there must be a judge whether one or more in any circumstance and it is not possible that a man should be a judge over himself to carry out the *hudūd* upon himself]. No one can say absolutely that there need not be law and a judge but they differ in their arguments and their understandings.

However that may be ... it is the duty of the people to desist from things which they have been forbidden and abandon wicked actions among themselves, and desist from feebleness in the face of misfortune which may affect them whether from an enemy who attacks them from outside their group or a saboteur who terrorizes their roads from amongst themselves.²⁴⁵

Against this rebellious group that questioned the necessity of the existence of the institution of the *Imāma*, al-Jāhiz forwards the antithesis of their claims. He first says that a group of people claims that if the Imāmate is necessary, then that necessity ought to originate from a logical line of reasoning pointing to its need (*‘aqlun yadullu ‘alā Sababihā*) or from an authentic report that was passed down to us. The text that has reached us shows al-Jāhiz's effort to refute the alleged position that the Imāmate was not necessary, because history was not consistent in its reports over the *Saqīfa* incident following the death of the Prophet. al-Jāhiz's aim is to show that the Imāmate was necessary by the same criteria that the adversary's claim was based on (i.e., historical grounds) . Such a ground - al-Jāhiz believes - inevitably points to the necessary nature of the Imāmate. Although in no place we

244 see F. Osmān, "Bai‘at al-Imām" in *State, Politics and Islam*, pp. 69.

245 al-Jāhiz, 'Risālat al-Jawābāt wa-Istihqāq al-Imāma', *Rasā'il al-Jāhiz*, ed. Hārūn, vol. 4: 285-286.

can detect - from the surviving portions of the text - a clear cut saying on the nature of the necessity of the Imāmate [i.e., whether it is based on *khavar* (tradition), or on reason], I have taken the liberty of assuming that all other portions which do not address reports of tradition (*khavar*) to have constituted al-Jāhiz's view of the necessary nature of the Imāmate on rational grounds i.e., on reason. Despite this distinction, one may nevertheless rightly argue as we shall see below, that such a distinct separation need not have reflected al-Jāhiz's personal view when he was hypothetically assuming the position of the adversary. In other words, al-Jāhiz's view of that necessity was probably more synthetic and less discrete, as one could always detect reason and revelation coming together in one argument. Thus for purposes of clarity we shall fit al-Jāhiz's ideas into the suggested frame of revelation and reason, without forgetting that while both factors may be present in one argument, sometimes more emphasis is put to one than on the other.

Against the position of the group that claims that the Imāmate is not obligatory, al-Jāhiz forwards the anti-thesis of this position in his attempt to show that the Imāmate is necessary from the legal and logical points of view.

I. Religious Proofs for the necessity of Imāmate:

A. Necessity of Imāma by (implicit) Revelation ... seeds for the argument of implicit text/indication (*al-Naṣṣ al-khafī*)

In what may be considered as an early reflection of the doctrine of *al-naṣṣ al-khafī*²⁴⁶ (implicit text, the implicit textual reference of revelation as deduced by men of reason/*ḥikma*), al-Jāhiz believes that although we have not received an explicit legal text calling for the establishment of the office of Imām²⁴⁷, God, by leaving the question implicit was in fact choosing that which was more wise and beneficial for His creation and more reflective of His infinite mercy and generosity towards them than if He had explicitly stipulated an Imām for them. Furthermore, that implicitness should not lead us to discard the significance of the Imāmate simply because of the confusion and dispute that may have risen because of that implicit

246 This is certainly neither the one allegedly ascribed to Ibn Ḥanbal on the Prophet's implicit indication to the Imāmate of Abū Bakr (see Abū Ya'ālā al-Farrā', *Nusūs al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Islāmī*, edited by Y. Ibish, (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī'a, 1966) p. 196 nor the one circulated by Zaydī Shī'ites on the Imāmate of 'Alī.

247 'Risāla fī al-Jawābāt', *Rasā'il*, 4: 289.

attitude. As al-Jāhīz sees it, we should always observe the continuous link between Prophethood and *Imāma*:

The wise (Imām) should always go for the wise thing (i.e., establish the Imāmate) whether its value is acknowledged by others or not, exactly as God's knowledge of the increasingly blasphemous reaction towards His Prophet Muḥammad, did not prevent Him from sending him to them . . . to provide them with all that was conducive to their well being in matters of religion and worldly matters.²⁴⁸

The obligation to set up an Imām is therefore fundamental and follows as a direct corollary from God's sending prophets. The Imām should therefore act in resemblance to God, and his duty should assume that role God had asked his messengers to exercise.²⁴⁹ Thus he elaborates the doctrine that Imāms are the *khulafā'* (immediate successors) of prophets²⁵⁰, in the permanent vital role - played by them all - of re-inforcing God's policy to His creation i.e., the policy of *targhib* and *tarhib*²⁵¹ implemented through punishment - (*qiṣāṣ*) or adjusting and balancing (*ta'dīl*).

Commenting on God's implicit attitude towards the Imāmate, al-Jāhīz adds:

God's infinite mercy and generosity dictated that (condition) which in fact is more merciful, more generous and more brilliant than the situation would have been had He made His goal explicit and His road easily paved, while keeping - at the same time - His promise of maximum reward and punishment to His servants, whom He has entrusted to obey Him.²⁵²

We may relate the above opinion that stresses the obligatory nature of the Imāma - although revelation was seemingly silent about it - to the Mu'tazilī doctrine of enjoining good and forbidding evil, which can be translated to mean the obligation to be undertaken by all people (but mostly by the elite) to infer the necessity of the *Imāma* as the sole way of securing social justice and avoiding corruption. al-Jāhīz's views on the necessary nature of Imāmate on grounds of revelation read:

All Muslims have been ordered to abandon things which will cause corruption . . . if we had not established one Imām, then the people would have been in the

248 *Ibid.*, p. 288.

249 Muḥammad al-Jābirī finds in al-Jāhīz's view an indication of an existing ideological trend that is representative of medieval political thought, whereby God is metaphorically paralleled by the Caliph. The illustration Jābirī gives comes from the dubious work *al-Tāj fī Akhlāq al-Mulūk* allegedly written by al-Jāhīz. See al-Jābirī, *al-^cAql al-Siyāsī al-^cArabī* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-^cArabiyya, 1990) pp.353-356.

250 al-Jāhīz, 'Risāla fī al-Jawābāt', *Rasā'il*, 4: 302

251 *Ibid.*, see also 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya' and 'Risāla fī Ḥujaj al-Nubuwwa'.

252 'Risāla fī al-Jawābat', *Rasā'il*, 4: 302.

predicament which we have described. This would be the cause for suspension of law, and bringing about corruption.²⁵³

This text reflects an explicit commandment by revelation. However, Revelation was only definitely explicit in making clear the obligation to avoid corruption, and maintain justice by implementing laws and calling men to use their reason to bring about their welfare. The call for establishing the Imāmate has been kept implicit as the call for enjoining good and avoiding evil has been fully and explicitly elaborated. The call for Imāmate has therefore taken the way of stressing the benefits of implementing God's laws that obviously could not be implemented or observed without the existence of an Imām. We shall see al-Jāhīz elaborating this point in K. al-^cUthmāniyya. We are to infer that God chose His commands to be explicit but left the one who should put them into practise implicit. al-Jāhīz's explanation for this divine action goes as follows:

Since God has made mankind responsible to reason for themselves, through the use of reason (*Nazar*) and to bring about the fulfilment of His blessing (*Ni^cma*)²⁵⁴ over themselves, and made them responsible to forsake the risks of destruction and avoid exposing the community to danger²⁵⁵, they were not more responsible for what He had enabled them to do, than having to be wary and keeping away from the risk of danger. No circumstance fulfills that to a greater degree than what we have described, simply because (*Imāma*) is the most likely thing that will provide *maṣlaḥa* (public benefit) and the enjoyment of security and *Ni^cma*.²⁵⁶

Hence we may summarize al-Jāhīz's stand in this respect as follows: The necessity of the post of Imām and institution of Imāmate is implicitly implied in the explicit call to implement God's laws and frequent injunctions to avoid evil, and arrived at by reason.

B. Doctrine of *Ijmā^c* (Consensus of opinion among believers)

The other line of reasoning that al-Jāhīz presents in this treatise to show that the *Imāma* is obligatory through revelation takes a historical dialectical approach. Here al-Jāhīz, as other non-Shi^cite theologians did, had to resort to history in an effort to prove a contemporary issue. This dependance on history is very significant in Islamic political thought, and perhaps the marriage between history and

253 'al-Jawābāt', *Rasā'il*, 4: 287. This commandment by revelation can be easily substantiated from the Qur'ān (Sūra 16, verse 90).

254 i.e., the bounty of Imāmate.

255 i.e., by avoiding leaving them unattended.

256 'al-Jawābāt', *Rasā'il*, 4: 303-304.

politics had never been so systematically invoked and put forward before al-Jāhiz's time: al-Jāhiz therefore represents a sample of how one school of thought - one among several others - had felt the necessity of bringing history to the forefront and tried to re-interpret history with the aim of influencing the present and hopefully 'manufacturing or maintaining' the future.

Of course al-Jāhiz's efforts in this *reconstruction or interpretation of history* were not the first. One recent study suggests that the first political theory among (proto-) Sunnī theologians had had to wait the coming of al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820) who is credited with laying out the basis of Sunnī thought as he had laid down the basics of Islamic jurisprudence (*al-Qur'ān, Sunna, Ijmā'* and *Qiyās*).

In this fashion, the past is given the prestige of law, and the present may be justified in relation to the reservoir of the past events; thus the process of re-constructing the past became a vital necessity. So, in order that Sunnī theologians and jurists would discredit the claim that the Imāmate was based on *naṣṣ* (designation) and prove that it was rather based on election (*Ikhtiyār*), they had to add to the style of historical narration, (as practised by the author of *K. al-Imāma wa al-Siyāsa*) the element of *Ijmā'*, i.e., consensus of *believers*, over Abū Bakr's caliphate, . . . and similarly *Ijtihād* or *Qiyās* (analogy) will be the key to understanding difficult positions such as the Companions' political conduct.²⁵⁷

Within al-Jāhiz's efforts to reconstruct history, the element of *Ijmā'* is not explicitly stated but one can easily deduce the concept implicitly. The implicitness may be in part due to the fact that al-Shāfi'ī's concept has not been widely popularized yet, in a period that was witnessing the birth of many sciences such as *fiqh* and politics.²⁵⁸

At first, al-Jāhiz does not deny that the Prophet did not designate a specific person to succeed him. This, al-Jāhiz says, was the basis underlying the adversary's reason for assuming the non-obligatory nature of the *Imāma*. They further strengthen their argument by referring to the statement of al-Anṣār, said to the *Muhājirūn*: "One *Amīr* from us, and one from amongst you".

According to al-Jāhiz, the same position of *al-Anṣār*, paradoxically, may be taken as an evidence for the necessity of establishing of the Imāmate, when analysed within the overall political positions of the Companions of the Prophet and

²⁵⁷ al-Jābirī, *Takwīn al-^cAql al-^cArabī*, pp.110-111.

²⁵⁸ We should remember that al-Jāhiz's time is known as the formative period of Muslim thinking. See Khafājī, *al-Jāhiz*, pp. 188-189, 243 and Pellat's *The Life & Works of al-Jāhiz*, p. 22.

the obvious consent exhibited by the community of believers at the *Saqifa* incident and those events following it.

If the sayings of the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*, and those competing in disputes according to our description of the *Saqifa* meeting, and if Abū Bakr's action and his statement to Ṭalḥa on ʿUmar (and) if ʿUmar's course of action as he laid down the *shūrā* and his threatening to kill them if they failed to choose an Imām before the set time lapsed, and the *fitna* appeared, (and) if ʿUthmān's action, sayings and his patience to the extent that he was killed while holding the office as he was not removed from it, and if the sayings of Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr, ʿĀ'isha, ʿAlī - may the mercy of God fall upon them all - if all of this is not a proof to what we have said, then there is no other convincing proof on earth! This (common) evidence behind all these instances invariably shows that the Companions have unanimously found that the establishment of an Imām was a compelling obligation ... as the Imāmate combined the welfare (*ṣalāḥ*) of religion and the goodness of the present life and the one in the hereafter.²⁵⁹

As we have pointed out earlier, al-Jāḥiẓ is resorting to history in solving a problem of present concern by implicitly employing the principle of *Ijmāʿ* (consensus of the community of believers) and *qiyās* (analogy) i.e., the political vacuum, the social strife and philosophical speculations on the need for the Imāmate that followed the civil war between the caliph brothers, have turned the issue once more to the first historical debate between the *Muhājirūn and Anṣār*, whereby a multiplicity of Imāms (one from each group) was vehemently rejected. Similarly, by the same token of *qiyās*, al-Jāḥiẓ is hinting here that only one Imām should be ruling, especially that a form of implicit consensus could not be denied and was continuously maintained by the leading figures among the Companions.

But it should be pointed out here that al-Shāfiʿī's concept of *Ijmāʿ* differs from that of al-Jāḥiẓ. The former is concerned with establishing the infallibility of the *Umma*²⁶⁰, through the channel of *Ijmāʿ* as long as it is equally practised by all the 'thinking' masses of the *Umma* i.e., as long as the crucial decisions do not solely rest in the hands of one school of thought i.e., one specific *Madhhab*. So, if all schools of thought are equally enjoying that right of participation in decisions leading to *Ijmāʿ*, why should the *Umma* ever be fallible? and consequently, if *Ijmāʿ* is "not geographically limited to the seat of the school in question and does recognize the existence of other doctrines in other centres"²⁶¹ why should the *Umma* commit errors?

259 al-Jāḥiẓ "al-Jawābāt", *Rasā'il* 4 : 306. On the first *Ijmāʿ* that occurred in Medina, see M. Kamālī, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 1989, p. 214.

260 See Schacht, *Introduction to Islamic Law*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 47-48.

261 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Therefore, *Ijmāʿ* is not only seen as guaranteeing the *Qurʾān* and *Sunna* of the Prophet (i.e., in acknowledging them as permanent guides) but it is also concerned in determining the body to best interpret them influentially and correctly.²⁶² al-Jāhīz agrees with the premise of this statement as long - however - as the interpretation is exercised by the Muʿtazilite school of thought i.e., by the *Mutakallimūn* without whom the *Umma*, in al-Jāhīz's view, would crumble (*lawlā al-Mutakallimūn lahalaka al-ʿAwāmm*).²⁶³ al-Jāhīz is equally concerned with the infallibility of the *Umma* and eager about its well being, (*maṣlaḥa*) but he seems to have understood the infallibility as being possible only if such a privileged school of thought as his is exercising the *Ijmāʿ* and exclusively deciding on behalf of the *Umma*. (It may appear that al-Jāhīz's concept of *Ijmāʿ* is that of the elite, not of the *Umma*, as Shāfiʿī recommended). While al-Jāhīz aimed to restrict the *Ijmāʿ* to an elite (the Muʿtazila), al-Shāfiʿī's concept of *Ijmāʿ* was much broader and more democratic.²⁶⁴ In fact, al-Jāhīz's notion of *Ijmāʿ* that he restricted to the Muʿtazila group may be compared to some Mālikites who against the spirit of their master (i.e., Mālik) tried to bestow on their *Ijmāʿ* a binding and authoritative dimension²⁶⁵, an infallibility (*ʿIṣma*), that is promised by God to be bestowed on the whole of the community, so "it would therefore be improper to turn the property of the entire community into a privilege of the *mujtahidūn*" (i.e., of one locality or school).²⁶⁶ What matters to al-Shāfiʿī is the general consensus of all Muslims on essentials.²⁶⁷ This thesis according to Schacht meant breaking with the school of Medina²⁶⁸ or with any similar school that may claim to monopolize legal judgements by virtue of a prestigious or privileged local or ideological consensus.²⁶⁹ However, there are reports transmitted on behalf of the head of the *Mālikī* school that deny any intention of monopolizing *Ijmāʿ* from Medina, as Mālik himself rejected al-Manṣūr's request

262 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

263 See al-Jāhīz, *K. al-Hayawān*. 4:206.

264 See on the broad meaning of *Ijmāʿ*, Kamālī, *op.cit* and A. Ismāʿīl, '*al-Adilla al-Mukhtalaf fihā wa Āthāruhā fi al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, (Cairo: Dār al-Muslim, n.d.) pp. 360-362.

265 See A. Ismāʿīl, *al-Adilla*, p. 363.

266 See Kamālī, *Ibid.*, p. 217.

267 Schacht, *Ibid.*, p.47.

268 *Ibid.*, p. 58.

269 *Ibid.*, pp. 30,61.

to impose his *Muwatta'*²⁷⁰ which represented the practises and *fiqh* of the people of the Medina.

II. Intellectual Proof for the Necessity Of *Imāma*.

A. Necessity Of *Imāma* By Reason:

al-Jāhiz describes the reasons underlying the position of the group that does not find the *Imāmate* necessary as follows:

The welfare of the people could be achieved without the existence of an *Imām*, provided that they abstain from mischief amongst themselves and cooperate together in meeting their external enemy i.e., they should act justly and cooperate to implement the revealed legal punishments (*hadd*) freely i.e., without the presence of an *Imām* ... Absence of the *Imām* and rulers is good as it encourages capable members of the community to be self-sufficient in matters of protection and defence²⁷¹, as is the case when the public and anarchists rose in protest when the prestige of the *Sulṭān* waned, but were nevertheless suppressed by those virtuous men who acted morally when the forces of the authority were absent.²⁷²

Against this position, we shall see al-Jāhiz presenting the counter-argument of the above view that has built illusory promises on human nature when freed from the presence of the authority of rulers. al-Jāhiz's argument aims at presenting a contrary picture of human nature, thus creating a difficulty that could not be resolved without the existence of the *Imām* who is divinely meant to be a corrector and guardian of human nature, and maintainer of a just state of affairs among his subjects who continuously need his advice, given their imperfect abilities.

B. Human Nature:

al-Jāhiz found human nature to be such that when left under the sole influence of its passionate instincts and desires, a state of total mischief would follow leading to 'general disorder and the non-enforcement of revealed legal punishments (*ḥudūd*).²⁷³ This is so because "it is in man's nature to rush towards immediate

270 See al-Dardir, *al-Sharh al-Saghir 'alā Aqrab al-Masālik ilā-Madhhab al-Imām Mālik*, edited by Muṣṭafā Waṣfī, (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1986, vol. 1), p. 10 of preface. The report is narrated by al Wāqidī through Ibn Sa'd.

271 'al-Jawābāt', *Rasā'il*, 4: 290, 286-287, 289.

272 *Ibid.*, 4: 289.

273 'al-Jawābāt', *Rasā'il*, 4: 287.

pleasure and flee from an imminent danger, or something unpleasant, while attempting to evade the enforcement of deserved penalties."²⁷⁴

Does this predatory nature of man, or this classical Epicurean image of human conduct - whereby man is locked by his tendency to seek short-lived pleasures and avoid imminent pain - represent "human nature" fully as conceived by al-Jāḥiẓ? In fact, al-Jāḥiẓ's understanding of human nature was not at all confined to this Epicurean outlook, but was rather more open and less rigid in stressing the capacity man enjoys as an agent entrusted with duty by God (*mukallaf*); one whose intellect can check his passionate nature and looks to the long-term effects as having priority over the immediate attractions of any action. In other words, al-Jāḥiẓ maintains that man as *mukallaf* does not contradict his very basic nature. Man is entrusted with the duty to observe "justice" in his conduct, via the presence of a 'just Imām' in order to praise "God's justice", i.e., human nature is such that without the authoritative deterring presence of an Imām, it fails to observe that ideal state of conduct. In this fashion, human and Divine justice are interwoven and tied through the existence of Prophets and Imāms, who are the successors (*khulafā'*) of the former.

But are Prophets, Imāms and human beings confronted with an impossible task? Is *Taklif* possible in the light of the Epicurean image of man's nature? al-Jāḥiẓ's way of answering this question is interesting, because God would not ask of men that which they cannot fulfil; here al-Jāḥiẓ resorts to the Mu'tazilī principle of "Divine justice" (*ʿAdl*):

God exalted is not the one to lay down justice as a set scale among His creation and as a measuring of His servants while He knows that His decree for them could not be other than the inborn given dispositions which He has given in order for them to find and praise the goodness and beauty of His decree, thus deserving His love . . . God is not the one to ask the opposite of what He openly has made easy for them, and conceal the opposite when He knows that what He has decreed for them is that which He has created within them, so that they should find it good and beautiful . . . It is inconceivable of God to have asked from His creation other than what they had been ideally and naturally created for, other than what He had caused them to find beautiful.²⁷⁵

al-Jāḥiẓ therefore acknowledges the possibility of virtuous conduct,²⁷⁶ thanks to the Divine justice/will that has entrusted Prophets and Imāms with the

274 *Ibid.* This point is common in al-Jāḥiẓ's works, often mentioned in the context of discarding the possibility that God has left man to this fatal nature; see *Ibid.*, 4: 302.

275 'al-Jawābāt', *Rasā'il*, 4: 299 (The text is somehow corrupt).

276 al-Jāḥiẓ's critique of the Epicurean moral philosophy reads: "And what is more fatal than a nature which is eventually destructive and a desire which causes oppression, and a man who

possible task of adjusting man's conduct and keeping his passionate nature under check. So despite this nature, man could exercise *Taklif* but only in the presence of a powerful ruler, entrusted with the duty of guiding them from being driven by the short-term effect of actions and making them aware of the long term effects and benefits.²⁷⁷

In short, man can only act justly and virtuously in the full awareness of a deterring agent, i.e., the Imām; the existence of the Imām seems indispensable and is brought about by two forces: one from within human nature, and one from without (Divine justice) so that man is not left a victim of his fatal desires, by making him aware of the doctrine of immediate reward and punishment exercised by the Imāms before the coming of the permanent ones.

In this treatise al-Jāhiz aimed at demonstrating the undeniable significance of the mechanism of *qiṣāṣ* i.e., immediate legal punishment at the social and individual levels, and comes to the conclusion that the deterring measures underlying *qiṣāṣ* should be the proof or cause (*ḥujja*) for establishing the Imāmate, and that human welfare (*maṣlaḥa*) rotates around the axis of *qiṣāṣ* that had been divinely recommended:

We list the following deterrent measures that are pre-requisite for adjusting man's conduct, and we consider them as the main cause (*ḥujja*) for establishment of the *Imāma*. Welfare exists whenever these measures are observed, because such is human nature that it frequently resorts to what is fatal thus endangering its existence in this life and corrupting its religion - although the public are more frequent in this than the elite - that in both we find that their nature would prove fatal unless (the following deterring measures are practised) they are deterred by immediate suppression (*qamʿ*) chosen from the appropriate and "just" punishments (*qiṣāṣ*) then by exemplary retaliation for the committed crime, (in response to) not maintaining justice, together with attributing to criminals shameful descriptions and ridiculed titles, then by inspiring great fear among the criminals of lengthy imprisonment, and exile to foreign lands, and by threatening them with eternal hell and the loss of paradise.²⁷⁸

only considers horrific, that which is painful at the time . . . ?" *Ibid.*, p. 303. In another treatise, al-Jāhiz in referring to the struggle between man's Epicurean nature of loving women and the duty (as *Mukallaf*) to avoid adultery, implies the above conclusion that human nature need not necessarily contradict *Taklif* (see *Risāla fī Kitmān al-Sirr*, *Rasā'il*, 3: 145.) Man can act justly and virtuously if he allows God's agent in him, i.e., his *ʿaql* to preside over his passions (see 'Risālat al-Maʿāsh', *Rasā'il*, 1: 92)

277 See 'al-Jawābāt,' *Rasā'il*, 4: 302-303.

278 'al-Jawābāt', *Ibid.*, 4: 300.

The significance of *Qiṣāṣ* at the individual level is described by al-Jāhiz in the following psychological analysis:

God exalted has provided such measures to help the intellect adjust the instincts (and control it) . This is so because it is only when man foresees the unpleasant consequences and deterring measures (implemented), that you see him refraining from approaching a short-lasting pleasure. Man is such that when strongly driven by anger, envy, miserliness, cowardliness, lust, and love of women, pride and conceit, he is expected to follow these compelling passions as long as he finds there is no one to immediately punish him for the sin he has committed against himself or against others. Have you not seen him foolishly disposing of his wealth, neglecting the long-term consequences of things religious and profane, until the *walī* of Muslims imprisons him to make him experience the bitterness and humiliation of such an imprisonment, the pain of being left discarded, in addition to addressing him in an ugly language, putting him under the ruthless company of more grave sinners ... in short to make all the above measures act as a deterrent to his knowledge and reason... 279

In another passage al-Jāhiz beautifully describes the mechanism of fear of *qiṣāṣ* within the soul of the *mukallaf* as follows:

Don't you know that fear extinguishes lust, calms anger, purifies conceit, reminds of the consequences of action, helps the intellect, assists good opinion, brings about wit, until the psychological composition of someone whose passions have taken over his reason, and screened him from proper thinking, is eventually adjusted (and brought into an equilibrium).²⁸⁰

As pointed above, the argument on human nature has been classified under the rational proof for the necessity of the Imāmate, although we cannot ignore the divine elements included in such a rational view.

III. Quality of the Imām :

As to the qualities of the Ideal Imām, al-Jāhiz gives the following portrait:

If we are asked : what is the image of the best? (Imām) we reply : His most marked trait should be intelligence (*ʿaql*), his intellectual ability should go hand in hand with a lively intellectual curiosity and wide erudition, and these qualities should be associated with good habits. When learning is allied to intellect, energy to learning and decisiveness to energy, there is no need [to look further]. It may happen that a man who in some respects falls short [of this ideal] is worthy of the office of Imām, and the rank of caliph, but he must be the best of his contemporaries. Respect for God's Messenger requires that only men as like him as possible should in each age occupy the position he held. To put someone in his place who was unlike him and did not follow in his footsteps would be to insult his memory. The Imām is only like the Messenger by virtue of the fact that adopting his *Sīra* (Prophet's practice) is not to any one but him. As for equalling him, that is impossible, and not within the bounds of hopes or prayers.²⁸¹

279 'al-Jawābāt', *Rasā'il*, 4: 299-301.

280 *Ibid.*, 4: 302.

281 *Ibid.*, 4: 305-306. Note that al-Jāhiz here categorically refuses to accept for the Imāmate, one who is less excellent (*mafḍūl*).

al-Jāhiz's insistence on the intellectual precedence of the Imām is remarkable, for if the leader does not enjoy that intellectual power that can check his own instincts, he will be less able to check his subjects' instincts as well. Furthermore, al-Jāhiz seems to be holding the view that the chosen Imām should be elected from a specific tribe i.e., *Quraysh* in light of a Prophetic tradition that he incorporated in his work for that purpose, reading: '*al-A'immat min Quraysh*'.

Unfortunately, al-Jāhiz's analysis of this point is not extant, as one may have expected from his introductory note on those who did not mind choosing the Imām from any social group²⁸² within the Arabs or even from within the non-Arabs (*ʿAjam*) and clients (*mawālī*)²⁸³ as the Khārijites had maintained,

282 On the Prophetic traditions, concerning the Imām being from Quraysh see A.J. Wensinck, *Concordance de la Tradition Musulmane*, (Leyden Brill, 1936), S.v., 'Amīr, Imām'. The most direct tradition that ascribes leadership (Imāma) to Quraysh is mentioned by Ibn Ḥanbal (*al-Musnad*, 3: 129, 183): "The Imāms are from Quraysh. They have a right upon you : *Inna Lahum ḥaqq^{an} ʿalaykum* - and you have a right upon them as long as they are compassionate whenever asked to be, fulfil their oaths and rule justly, otherwise may the curse of God (*laʿnat Allāh*), of His angels and of the people fall on upon them". In another tradition, the Prophet said: "I have a right on Quraysh: (*Inna li ʿalā Quraysh Ḥaqq^{an} wa inna li Quraysh ʿalaykum ḥaqq^{an}* - and Quraysh has a right over you, if they rule justly, fulfill their oaths and be compassionate whenever asked to be" (Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 2: 270.) In another tradition a group of eighty men from Quraysh are addressed by the Prophetic *ḥadīth*: "You, the group of Quraysh, are the most fit for this, if you do not disobey God. If you do, God shall send unto you someone who would strip it [i.e., the Imāma] from you, remove you as this piece of wood may be stripped, and so he made the wood stripped for illustration . . ." (Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 1: 458.) So Prophet Muḥammad has entrusted Quraysh with the (conditional) right to lead his *Umma*: "This right/*Amr* of leadership or statesmanship shall never leave you and you are its leaders (*Wulātuhu*) until you commit things that are intolerable ... If you do them, God shall set over you the most evil of his creation (*al-Musnad*, 5: 274). In another narration, Quraysh are also described as the *wulāt-al-Nās*, in good and bad up to the day of Judgement. (*al-Musnad* 4: 203 & *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, K. al-Fitan: 49) or *wulāt hādihā al-Amr* (*al-Musnad*, 1: 5). They are the leaders too, in addition to being the Imāms: "The leaders are from Quraysh if they do three things . . ." (*al-Musnad*, 4: 421, 424). The continuity of this right entrusted to Quraysh by the Prophet is to last up to the day of Judgement: (i) (even) if only two Qurayshites remain (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, K. al-Aḥkām, 2) and *Sunan al-Dārimī*, K. al-Siyar: 78. (ii) or even if two of the people exist (*Sahīh Muslim*, K. al-Imāra: 4). None shall oppose Quraysh but that whose face shall be flung to the earth by God as long as Quraysh maintains the religion (*Ibid*, (i)). The people, then, should be the followers of Quraysh "in this matter". Another reading mentions "in good and ill." (*Sahīh Muslim*, K. al-Imāra: 4). So as long as Quraysh maintains the religion, this '*Amr*' shall not leave them: (*Ibid*, (i)). Finally, this right is conditional upon the behaviour of Quraysh and its continuity shall be interrupted accordingly. Out of the Qurayshite leaders to rule, twelve of them shall have the *Umma* gathered around them (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, K. al-Mahdī: 1); i.e., many others may rule, but only twelve will be truly guided. This tradition is equally narrated by the Imāmīte figure of Ibn Bābawayh in *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Itmām al-Niʿma fi Ithbāt al-ghayba*. (Tehrān: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1395 A.H.) 1: 271-274.

283 see '*al-Jawābāt*', *Rasā'il*, 4: 285 & 293. We should recall here al-Dhahabī's refutation of the authenticity of Umar's statement in which he favoured Sālim, a client of Abū Ḥudhayfa, to succeed him. Even Ibn Khaldūn (*al-Muqaddima*, p. 153) maintains that ʿUmar's statement could not be taken as a guide, and compares it with the Prophetic tradition that says: "Obey

IV. Unity of the Caliphal post as conducive to the solidarity and unity of the *Umma*

Another concern of al-Jāhiz in this treatise was to stress the unity of the caliphal post (i.e., there should not be more than one Imām at one time) . By observing this unity, the solidarity of the society is maintained and its benefit/*ṣalāḥ* established.

But we say : It is not right that the government of Muslims, according to the dictates of reason, firmness and prudence, should be entrusted to more than one person; for rulers and chieftains, when they are of comparable merit and have similar aims, are greatly tempted to try to gain the ascendancy, and their rivalry increases. This is what happens between members of the same calling, as for instance theology, astronomy, medicine, the giving of legal opinions, poetry, grammar, etc. . . . they know by experience that when they are of comparable merit and belong to closely related groups they have a great urge to try to gain the ascendancy . . . The stronger their motives, the more their souls are prone to confusion; the more their strength falters, the less scope there is for mature reflection, and the more Satan lusts for dominion over them, the graver is the danger that threatens them and the closer they are to the fomenters of chaos.²⁸⁴

As a modern critic puts it, al-Jāhiz rejected the multiplicity of Imāms for the following reasons:

(i) If the governors are numerous, they will strongly desire to exclusively have the post for themselves. This is in the nature of man. He is ambitious, greedy for fame and glory and seeks to eclipse his rivals especially if they are his relatives or if they share with him a government or a domain, for example: the dogmatic science(*Kalām*), judicial science, *fiqh*, syntax, astrology, prosody, commerce, painting and agriculture.

(ii) It is history that reveals to us that the multiplicity of Imāms is harmful. This leads al-Jāhiz to ask us this important question: "Have you seen two Kings or two Arab or foreign chiefs during the period of ignorance (*Jāhiliyya*) or the Islamic

even if you were ruled by an Abyssinian", which he understands metaphorically as indicating the necessity to obey phrased in an exaggerated manner, rather than allowing the giving of leadership to a non-Qurayshite.

284

al-Jāhiz, 'al-Jawābāt', *Rasā'il*, 4: 303, translated by Hawkein Pellat, *The Life and works of al-Jāhiz*, pp. 64-65. Pellat has inferred from his analysis of the above text, "the necessary existence at all times of a man worthy of the caliphate". Pellat, 'L'Imāmat dans la Doctrine De Ğāhiz', p. 42. I think the passage that really reflects the permanent nature of the caliphate is a different one in the same work, and we shall study it under the next heading 'Establishment of the Imām'.

period without continuous competitions, jealousy, rivalries and wars?"²⁸⁵ Although al-Jāhiz does not name the sect which had adopted a multiplicity of Imāms, the same scholar benefits from al-Shahrastānī's mention of the fact that it was the Zaydites who accepted the simultaneous existence of two Imāms or governors in two different places on condition that each one had the qualities cherished by the Zaydites, whereby the Muslims must submit to each one of them.²⁸⁶

al-Jāhiz thus concludes:

The best thing for rulers and chieftains - men's souls, and motives being as we have said - is to remove all scope for envy and rivalry, all desire to outshine and gain the ascendancy, so that harmony may reign and peace be assured at the heart of the empire and in the outlying provinces . . .²⁸⁷

V. Establishment of the Imām

But is that 'matchless Imām' available for establishing in view of the rivalry surrounding him to outstrip or equal him? What mechanism should bring him on to the political scene?

al-Jāhiz only says that rivalry among the subjects should considerably decrease when the Imām exclusively possesses perfect virtues. In other words, al-Jāhiz is putting forward the doctrine of *Ikhtiyār* underlying the establishment of the Imām: This Imām therefore is a matter of choice, and of things accessible to human free choice; choosing the Imām seems to be amongst these choices. While al-Jāhiz is implying the difficulties underlying this choice, by acknowledging the rivalry that rotates around the candidates for Imāmate, he is however suggesting a divine solution for that difficulty, as God's provision of the Imām with the superior qualities that are unique to him should save the community from the hardship usually associated with candidates of equal merit. al-Jāhiz's view is clear: God's justice would not allow such a chaotic situation to arise from comparable Imāms, i.e., He would always provide the community with an Imām of incomparable merit. The fact that He always does provide him is an indication of His justice. The fact that rivalry may exist is a call to look for the most excellent, i.e., the foremost and basic religious duty of the community is to look for the most distinguished candidate whom God has

285 Hassan Yehyā Moḥamed, 'La Theorie de L'Imāmat chez Ġāhiz', p. 47.

286 *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115, quoting from al-Shahrastānī's al-Milal wa al-Nihal.

287 'al-Jawābāt', Rasā'il, 4: 303-304.

provided, and shall always provide as long as the community exerts the objective effort to nominate and choose the most excellent "as long as they will want him" (*Irādatihim lahu*) and rush to his side (*qaṣḍihim ilayhi*).

This passage is significant as it reflects al-Jāḥiẓ's belief in *the* permanent nature of the institution of the caliphate i.e., al-Jāḥiẓ's coupling of Divine justice, (*ʿadl*), public welfare (*maṣlaḥa*) and the single Imām in one uninterrupted sequence reflects the theoretical or theological belief in the permanent nature of the caliphate. The actual practice that may fall short of the oneness of the caliphal post and/or of the community's welfare should therefore not be ascribed to the Divine circle but to the human one i.e., to their bad choice.²⁸⁸ The following quotation expresses al-Jāḥiẓ's resort to the argument of Divine justice that had originally paved the way for man's welfare by providing him with that matchless Imām:

If God so designed the world and its inhabitants, if He made them such that they are better off with a single Imām, it is so that the latter may exist when they want him and seek him; for it is only common sense that God cannot compel human beings to set up that which does not exist or to raise up that which they do not know. Man's part is to submit to God, and God's part is to give him the means to do so.²⁸⁹

3. Critique of Work Cited

Historical relevance and Political Significance

al-Jāḥiẓ's *Risāla 'fī al-Jawābāt'* is politically significant in the way it reflects the hypothesis - that we shall gradually expound - that al-Jāḥiẓ was an ʿAbbāsīd necessity.²⁹⁰ al-Jāḥiẓ's demonstration of a hyper-concern for the necessary existence of the institution of the *Imāma* should be seen within the historical context that witnessed the birth of those rebellious movements and attitudes as regards the Imāmate. al-Jāḥiẓ's work, "Responsa" was a direct reaction to those groups that emanated as a result of the civil war between the caliph brothers. It was probably written in response to the caliphal request of al-Ma'mūn, when he deemed it necessary to silence such anarchists after establishing his unique control of the caliphate. In this sense, al-Jāḥiẓ's further insistence on the unity of the caliphal post, and the risks that threaten the solidarity of the community if it fails to maintain that

288 Referred to as "*taqṣīr*" by Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 1: 50.

289 'al-Jawābāt', *Rasā'il*, 4: 303-304.

290 This description was first suggested by Ṭ. al-Ḥājirī, in *al-Jāḥiẓ, Hayātuhu wa Āthāruhu*, p. 360.

oneness, and his reference to the ideal Imām may be seen as a clever reminder by al-Jāḥiẓ to avoid the chaotic situation that prevailed in the ʿAbbāsīd community when more than one Imām was recognized i.e., be it al-Ma'mūn's brother, al-Amin, or his uncle, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī who is said to have successfully competed with his nephew al-Ma'mūn for the post of caliph for two years.²⁹¹ al-Jāḥiẓ's concern for the unity of the post could also be accounted for - historically - as being directed against the separatistic movements already appearing in North Africa and Spain.²⁹²

In this way al-Jāḥiẓ's political career as an ʿAbbāsīd necessity was initiated. No wonder that al-Jāḥiẓ succeeded in pleasing the ʿAbbāsīd authorities, as he was singing their praise. Thanks to his good relations with the Baṣran grammarian and tutor of al-Ma'mūn himself, al-Yazīdī, the 'political' al-Jāḥiẓ was given a chance to be royally recognized, says Pellat:

al-Jāḥiẓ had been encouraged if not commissioned to write on the Imāmate . . . and his efforts had been very well received by the caliph al-Ma'mūn . . . al-Jāḥiẓ's whole career was largely determined by his early writings on the Imāmate, writings which led to a series of works designed to legitimate the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate or to justify important government measures. In other words, al-Jāḥiẓ acted as an adviser to and apologist for the government and seems to have exercised that role quite openly, for though he was not the intimate of caliphs, he maintained close links with viziers.²⁹³

al-Jāḥiẓ's own testimony²⁹⁴ to the good effect his political works had had on al-Ma'mūn himself runs as follows:

After al-Ma'mūn had checked my books on the Imāmate and found that they were in accordance with his instructions, he directed al-Yazīdī to go through them and report to him on their contents. Then he sent for me and said: "Someone whose intelligence we respect and whose reports enjoy our confidence has given us an account of the sound workmanship and abundant interest these books contain." We said to him: "Description, it is said, sometimes casts a better light than personal scrutiny, but having now read them ourselves we see that personal scrutiny casts a better light even than the description you gave us. On careful re-reading they show themselves better still, just as the first reading disclosed greater merit than the original report. Here is a book which does not require [to be understood] the presence of its author and needs no advocate; the subject is conscientiously dealt with, and profound thinking goes hand in hand with elegance and lucidity; its appeal is both to princes and the common people, to the elite and the masses."²⁹⁵

291 See al-Ṭabarī, in his *Annals of the year*.

292 See "Abbāsīd Caliphate" in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1970), vol 1. p. 116. The Ḥasanīd Idrīs had founded in 172/788 the Idrīsīd Kingdom in Maghrib.

293 Pellat, "al-Jāḥiẓ", in *ʿAbbāsīd Belles-Lettres*, ed. by J. Ashtiany et al, (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1990) pp.79-80.

294 al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān*, 3: 374-375. The translation is that of Hawke to Pellat's translated work : *The life and works of al-Jāḥiẓ*, pp. 108-109.

295 *Ibid.*

Although the opinions of al-Ma'mūn on al-Jāhiz's works on *Imāma* have been questioned²⁹⁶ by later historians, this need not disprove the hypothesis suggested above by Ḥājirī and Pellat that al-Jāhiz was an ʿAbbāsīd necessity, their adviser and apologist.

Later in this research, we can find out more on al-Jāhiz's role as an ʿAbbāsīd theological and political necessity, and he will be contrasted with contemporaries like Ibn Qutayba and Ibn-al-Rīwandī who maintained that al-Jāhiz's political views were constantly shifting and devoid of any genuine consistency, thus undermining -for reasons we shall explain later - our hypothesis that al-Jāhiz, despite the spectrum of political views he had exhibited, - could be seen as maintaining a constant role towards the ʿAbbāsīds be it in the period of Muʿtazilī political triumph or that of decline, as he continued to act as the informal propagandist and adviser of state affairs, or as Ḥājirī puts it: "as a necessary component of the ʿAbbāsīd state who put his writings, knowledge and argumentative capabilities at their disposal in an attempt to solve the issues that interested the ʿAbbāsīds or troubled them".²⁹⁷

If the *Mihna* (inquisition) commissioned by al-Ma'mūn is regarded as a landmark between two different roles assumed by that caliph - the classical role expected by Traditionists (or the constitutional block as Watt names them) and that expected by Persians (the autocratic block) - do we find any political message or hint of any of these roles underlying al-Jāhiz's above portrait of the ideal Imām? In fact, judging from the surviving excerpts from the treatise "Responsa", we do not have any explicit or implicit indication as to the role al-Ma'mūn was going to assume.

Another way of looking at this issue is to find whether al-Jāhiz's portrait of the Imām and the functions expected of him make him echo the classical role of the caliph, as implementer and follower of the *Shariʿa*, or appear as an innovator and significant participant in the interpretation of revealed law, to the extent of dictating and imposing his own interpretation on the *Umma*.

296 H.Y. Moḥammad says that this Jāhizian text had been the object of a severe criticism by the historian and traditionist Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī. Ibn Ḥajar is said to have related Ibn-al-Nadīm's doubt that al-Jāhiz's boastfulness made him embellish the words of al-Ma'mūn, who may have not said them. See H.Y. Moḥamed, *al-Jāhiz et le Chiʿisme*, PhD. Thesis (Paris: Sorbonne, 1985) p. 35 citing Ibn Ḥajar's *Lisān al-Mizān*, (ed. Ḥaydarābād, 1330 A.H. pp. 435-37).

297 al-Ḥājirī, *op.cit.*, p. 360.

As far as this treatise is concerned, we can definitely conclude that there is no room, yet, for such caliphal decisions here, and so this work may reflect the classical role of Imām played by al-Ma'mūn, as propagated recently by al-Shāfi'ī who was doing his best to propagate the view that "the caliph was a mere executor of the law, chosen by the community, and that the ultimate arbiter (of the law of God) was the consensus of the entire community."²⁹⁸

Of course, the idealism behind al-Jāhiz's portrait of the recommended Imām cannot be denied, and in view of the indispensable role to be played by him to secure a psychological and social stability among his subjects, we can reasonably conclude that while the ideal image of al-Jāhiz did not reach the level of the Shī'ite expectation of their Imāms, al-Jāhiz was just one step below that position (held by Shī'ites and by him) as regards "the caliph being indispensable for the attainment of (spiritual) salvation".²⁹⁹

In this period (following the civil war) the existence of the caliph and the institution was more at stake, so that military (not spiritual) salvation was necessary and this he accomplished as he was then the unifier and binding force of the ʿAbbāsīd community. Spiritual salvation in the sense implied by Crone is missing here and we shall see it emerging when al-Ma'mūn imposed the inquisition/*Miḥna* over his subjects, or during his Pro-ʿAlid policy. In this treatise the Imām's presence is emphasized, but basically for checking the predatory nature of his subjects, to maintain their welfare; in other letters, the religious welfare of the *Umma* is stressed explicitly. Here al-Jāhiz is not worried about the spiritual role of the Imām i.e., as having influence over the revealed law, as will be seen in other works, and he is rather concerned with the psycho-sociological aspects and unifying benefits of the Imāmate, whereby the Imām's basic duty lies in his capacity to check human nature and balance its conduct in order to maintain unity and peace, social and psychological, among his subjects. He is to care for their physical lives, but when this is established, his caring for their 'social balance' does not violate the image of

²⁹⁸ See P. Crone, *God's Caliph*, p. 93. We shall find this role also stressed in the following works: *al-Nisā'*, and *al-Muʿallimīn*, which reflect the concerns of the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate (and of al-Jāhiz) on the crucial matter of the existence of the institution. Once these concerns are met and the threats are eliminated, we shall find al-Jāhiz concerned now with other arising issues, such as passing judgements on certain religio-political parties that the ʿAbbāsīd policy favoured (as we shall see in 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', and in 'Taṣwīb ʿAlī') or was against (as in 'al-Nābita', and 'al-Radd ʿalā al-Mushabbīha').

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

the Imām as proposed by Shāfi'ī. Only when he assumes the role of caring for their spiritual balance, something almost absent in this work, can we say that he is leaving al-Shāfi'ī's model for that of the Mu'tazilī-Shi'ite model where the Imām assumes exclusive responsibility (with the elite, without the 'Āmma) to cater for the spiritual affairs of his subjects. This confirms the chronological estimation of the period in which al-Jāhiz wrote this work, where the "basic" role of the Imām³⁰⁰ was prior to the spiritual role. Historians do confirm that the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn did happen before al-Ma'mūn had the chance to exercise his role as the spiritual guide of the *Umma*, in what was known as the inquisition (*Miḥna*) .

Hence the absence of the spiritual role of the Imām in *Responsa* is justified and understandable.

³⁰⁰ Which does not, however, negate his concern for their religious welfare (al-Jāhiz, "al-Jawābā", *Rasā'il*, 4: 306)

CHAPTER FOUR

al-Ma'mūn's Period II (200-202): Maqālat al-Zaydiyya or Istihqāq al-Imāma?

As for the exact nomenclature of the following treatise, a quick analysis of these two apparently different treatises could be misleading. In fact, although they are scattered in Hārūn's edition, they should have been treated as one, under a title that gives justice to the scattered titles, i.e., a likely title that unites the identical content would, in my opinion, read: *Maqālat al-Zaydiyya wa al-Rāfiḍa fī Istihqāq al-Imāma*, i.e., the discourses deemed worthy by these groups concerning the (right) entitlement of the Imāmate.

1. Preface

As to the task of deciding which work on the Imāmate was written earlier, "al-Jawābāt " or "Maqālat al-Zaydiyya", I am more inclined to suggest that "Jawābāt" is the earlier for the following reasons. Despite the common concern in both for the necessity of the Imām, and his deterring role, the fact that we find al-Jāhiz in the former more troubled with the issue of the unity of the caliphal post, should ease this task of timing these two works. Thus, it is safe to expect that al-Jāhiz wrote Responsa (al-Jawābāt) shortly before 'Maqālat' simply because the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate could have been more concerned with silencing the more urgent and dangerous doubts raised by the anarchists as a result of the civil war between the caliph brothers, before the need arose to welcome arguments such as those of the *Zaydiyya* on the Imāmate of *al-mafḍūl*, and the most meritorious (*al-fāḍil* or *al-aḍḍal*) that can be used by men like al-Jāhiz for the interests of the ʿAbbāsīds and for satisfying the Zaydites. We shall find that *Imāmat al-mafḍūl* will be carefully outlined here with the apparent link between ʿAlī's concern for the benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) of the community and the recent Muʿtazilī respect for such a *maṣlaḥa*, as perhaps it was timely then to approach such groups as the Zaydiyya and quite appropriate to start good relations with an important section of the opposition front after the unity of the caliphal post had been centred on al-Ma'mūn. Had the concern for that unity not been reflected in Responsa, I would have assumed it to have been written after "Maqālat" or "Taṣwīb", i.e., after the need for flirting with the Shīʿites via the Zaydiyya channel ceased to exist with the death of ʿAlī al-Riḍā; if step one was to

silence the anarchists, step two would be to approach such a group as the Zaydiyya, after the anarchists had been contained.

2. The immediate religio-political setting of Maqālat al-Zaydiyya

Since the undeniably pro-Alid works to be studied below in the period of Mu'tazilī political triumph such as 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', 'Taṣwīb 'Alī 'and 'Faḍl Hāshim' are mutually concerned with the Shī'ites, the immediate religio-political scene before al-Jāḥiẓ which had presumably written these works would therefore concern itself with throwing light on the immediate condition of the Shī'ites under the caliphate of Ma'mūn and his immediate pro-Mu'tazilite, pro-Alid successors.

I. The Militant Zaydites:

The militant branch of Shī'ites³⁰¹ had already displayed a dangerous record in the eyes of the 'Abbāsids in backing the Ḥasanid revolt in 145/762 in Baṣra and Medina and recently in Kūfa (in 199/815) benefitting from the excellent opportunity to rebel against the 'Abbasid regime in Kūfa and even Baghdad. It is true that al-Māmūn's forces were victorious in Baghdad but those forces led by Ḥasan b. Sahl could not face such an 'Alid threat without calling for help from his brother, al Faḍl b. Sahl, al-Mamūn's advisor and vizier who was conducting the affairs of the 'Abbāsīd state from Marw:

The trouble began in *Kūfa*. It took the form of an 'Alid uprising . . . (motivated by) the desire of 'Alid supporters to take advantage of the weakness of the government and disruption caused by the long (civil) war. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm, the 'Alid, known as Ibn Ṭabāṭabā rebelled in Kūfa in (199/815) with Abū-l-Sarāyā as his military commander, and leading adviser ... The success was temporarily interrupted by the sudden death of Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Ṭabāṭabā (who was) succeeded by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Zayd b. 'Alī, a grandson of Zayd b. 'Alī, who had made a heroic last stand against the troops of the Umayyads in that very mosque three quarters of a century before.³⁰²

301 The quietists were represented by Ja'far al-Ṣādiq who developed the view that the Imām should be a religious leader, who does not need -necessarily - to encourage his supporters to overthrow the existing regime. The Zaydis, on the other hand placed more emphasis on military action (*Khurūj*). Perhaps one of al-Ṣādiq's main contributions was to differentiate between the caliphate and Imāmate in order to allow an 'Alid Imām (or a representative head of the 'Alid house) and his Shī'ite followers to live in peace within a Sunnī society. See Kennedy, *op.cit.*, 199-201 and J. Hussain, *The Occultation Of The Twelfth Imām*, p. 33.

302 Kenendy, *op.cit.*, p. 152.

This Zaydī revolt was soon crushed, and Muḥammad was taken to al-Ma'mūn's court in Marw. The Kūfan revolt had its offshoot in Makka³⁰³ but was easily suppressed, and "many of the leading ʿAlids were taken into captivity to Marw. It was one of these leaders, ʿAlī b. Mūsā, who was chosen by Ma'mūn to be his heir."³⁰⁴

II. Reappearance of the 'Mahdī'

A. Among Umayyads:

al-Ma'mūn's policy towards the Umayyads was far less ambiguous. His ruthless stand towards them was evident in his crushing of the possibility that the expected Mahdī should rise from among the Sufyānid branch of the Umayyads³⁰⁵, and countering such claims by making his own claim that the Mahdī would come from among Banū Hāshim, not from Banū Umayya, and that he would be the most excellent.³⁰⁶ So, when the political authority was debated between Umayyads and the Hāshimites, al-Ma'mūn strongly defended the latter, because it was "Hāshim (plural), through whom the well-being of the faith and safety from discord among the Muslims is hoped."³⁰⁷

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- 303 led by ʿAlī al-Riḍā's uncle, Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Ṭalībī brother of Mūsā al-Kāzīm who claimed to be the Mahdī. See Madelung, 'New Documents', p. 337.
- 304 Kenedy, *op.cit.*, p. 211. According to the Twelver Shīʿites (*Ithnāʿashariyya*), this view is rejected as they do not agree that ʿAlī al-Riḍā took part in the revolt.
- 305 A notion current during the time of al-Amin, when it was circulated as a true Ḥadīth expecting the appearance of the Sufyānid Mahdī, after the outbreak of a quarrel within ʿAbbāsīd circles, reading "the rule of the Banū al-ʿAbbās will disintegrate in 197 or 199 and the Mahdī will rise in 200". F. ʿOmar suggests in *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awā'il* that such a notion was first current in 64 A.H. (687 A.D.) among the masses who did not like transfer of power to the Marwānid branch of the Umayyads. It reappeared towards the end of the Umayyad rule and in the early ʿAbbāsīd period (p. 133), under al-Manṣūr (p. 148), al-Rashīd, al-Amin, and even al-Ma'mūn's and al-Muʿtaṣim's reign; (*Ibid.*), all hoping for the return of the Sufyānī that would relieve the Syrians from the oppression of the ʿAbbāsīds. See F. ʿOmar, *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awā'il*, 1: pp. 132-133, 148, 149.
- 306 D. Sourdel, "The ʿAbbāsīd Caliphate", in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1 : *The Central Islamic Lands*, ed. P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 121.
- 307 Madelung, *op. cit.*, p. 336. No wonder that al-Jāḥiẓ attracted caliphal recognition by al-Ma'mūn himself. Recent scholars have seen al-Jāḥiẓ as "an apologist for al-Mamūn" see *Ibid.* and M. Zahniser, "Insights from the ʿUthmāniyya of al-Jāḥiẓ", *M.W.*, 69 (1979) p. 8. We shall soon see how al-Ma'mūn's understanding of the politico-religious significance of Hāshim is perfectly echoed in the works of al-Jāḥiẓ.

B. Among Ṭālibites

We have already seen how al-Ma'mūn's grandfather, al-Manṣūr, had reacted to the notion of the Mahdī, current then among Shī'ites, and how he employed or implemented that notion to meet his own personal interests as he counteracted the Shī'ites' expectations of a Mahdī from among the Ṭālibites, namely from among the Ḥasanid branch, by first crushing the Ḥasanid revolution and presenting his son as the real Mahdī, as the title given to him implies.

al-Ma'mūn's reaction to the recurrence of the notion of the Mahdī was different. al-Ma'mūn did crush the Shī'ite rebellions,³⁰⁸ but judging from recent research,³⁰⁹ we are left with the possibility that al-Ma'mūn's pro-ʿAlid policy was not an exact copy of his grandfather's political manoeuvre, vis-à-vis the Shī'ites; conversely, it is suggested that it was a very promising and revolutionary policy that aimed at an honest review³¹⁰ of the future of the institution of the caliphate³¹¹ and that al-Ma'mūn had still not much faith in its future if the equally valid candidates were prevented from practising their religio-political rights, i.e., if the Shī'ites were to lose their potential right to the caliphate.

Madelung's analysis maintains that al-Ma'mūn was aware of the prediction that the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate was about to collapse, and that "his reign would be followed by turmoil and the coming of the Mahdī" and that his invitation to ʿAlī al-Riḍā from Medina in 200/815 and his later initiative (the act of making him his successor) was following that prediction.

On the other hand, one wonders how al-Ma'mūn according to one interpretation offered below by Sourdel and Crone could be specially concerned with establishing good relations with the Zaydiyya, knowing that - out of all the Shī'ite groups - they had demonstrated a real threat to the interests of the ʿAbbāsīd state, and represented the most dangerous members of *ahl al-Bayt*.

308 In 199 and 200, by Abū al-Sarāya and Muḥammad al-Dibāj, (the Mahdī) see *Ibid.*, p. 337.

309 Madelung, *op.cit.*, p. 345.

310 *Ibid.*, p. 336, f.n. 22.

311 *Ibid.*, p. 346.

Below we shall expound the logical consequences of both of these views, and try to describe the various interpretations underlying Ma'mūn's act of nominating a non-ʿAbbāsīd figure to rule after him.

III. an optimistic view of al-Ma'mūn's act of designating ʿAlī al-Riḍā: al-Ma'mūn in the eyes of:

A. Some Arab historians

In the following section we are presenting a non-opportunistic view of al-Ma'mūn's character and consequently of the non-conspiratorial motives underlying his act of designating ʿAlī-al-Riḍā, son of Mūsā al-Kāẓim, in 201/816 as heir apparent.

From the historical literature, Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī in his *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh* and Ibn Bābūya's (or Bābawayh's) *ʿUyūn al-Akḥbār* and al-Majlisī's *Bihār al-Anwār* are used here to reflect this image. Ibn Aʿtham says that al-Ma'mūn was not keen to retaliate against his brother's explicit violation³¹² of the Makkan documents, and he shows that al-Ma'mūn was very agitated at the death of his brother.³¹³ His sincerity to the ʿAlid cause³¹⁴ is accepted as an aspect of the same mild character that Ibn Aʿtham had presented, especially as ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib during his caliphate was believed by al-Ma'mūn to have nominated Ibn ʿAbbās as governor of Baṣra. This act was a favour that deserved to be repaid, until al-Ma'mūn could express his gratefulness to one of his living descendants."³¹⁵

Similar reports are narrated by Ṭabarī about al-Ma'mūn's tolerance of his brother's action. As for al-Ma'mūn's act of designation, Ṭabarī says that it came after al-Ma'mūn's search for a suitable candidate to follow him, from amongst "Banū al-ʿAbbās" and "Banū ʿAlī". His appointment of ʿAlī-al-Riḍā was made because he could not find any candidate that was more meritorious in piety and religious knowledge than him.³¹⁶

312 Ibn Aʿtham, *al-Futūḥ*, vol. 8: 296 (as cited by Madelung)

313 *Ibid.*, pp. 308, 316

314 *Ibid.*, p.324.

315 *Ibid.*

316 Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 8: 554.

al-Ma'mūn was not only upset by his brother's death but equally saddened at the sudden death of his favourite candidate. The remarkable thing is that al-Ma'mūn is reported to have maintained this ʿAlid sentiment and just ten years later, in 211/826 he officially dissociated himself, and instructed people to do likewise - in what may be regarded as a political *Miḥna* - from acknowledging Muʿāwiya as having any merit, or even giving him any higher status than that of the Companions of the Prophet.³¹⁷ In 212/827, al-Ma'mūn is also said to have openly proclaimed ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib as being the best (*al-afdāl*) after the Prophet.

Such reports clearly indicate that al-Ma'mūn was attempting to be an objective ruler, fond of the concept of the most meritorious (*al-afdāl*), keen to maintain the interests of the *Umma* even if such interests should dictate that he give the caliphate to a non ʿAbbāsīd figure. This step would suggest a considerable degree of courage, and even if one may object against this by pointing out that had al-Ma'mūn really had genuinely sincere motives, he could have appointed another ʿAlid figure before his death. His motivation, judging from the sources cited, need not be undermined; perhaps he could not have found a suitable figure, one that really matched his criteria for '*afdāl*' as ʿAlī-al-Riḍā did, and the fact that he maintained good relations with the ʿAlids until his death is a good indication that despite his failure to find a suitable candidate, he felt that the post of the Imāmate need not always be confined to one specific genetic Qurayshite stock but rather should be chosen from the Ṭālibite stock as well since they were equally Qurayshites and members of the Prophetic family. In other words, al-Ma'mūn's search for the *afdāl* did not stop with the end of his rule, but was intended to continue after him, as he specifically stated in his *wasiyya* to al-Muʿtaṣim, "to maintain excellent relations with the ʿAlids, forgive the wrongdoer among them and continue to observe their annual financial stipends."³¹⁸

Unfortunately, if al-Ma'mūn was indeed what we have suggested above, only the political portion of his *wasiyya* was discarded. The ʿAlids were treated well under Muʿtaṣim and Wāthiq, but neither of them dared to continue that political search for the *afdāl*, as they naturally lacked the character of al-Ma'mūn. Thus, the ʿAlids' economic rights were acknowledged but at the expense of their political ones.

317 *Ibid.*, p. 618.

318 Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 8: 649.

This view of al-Ma'mūn's motivation is taken by Gabrieli and Madelung, with the latter assuming certain differences as to the nature and character of al-Ma'mūn.

B. Gabrieli holds that al-Ma'mūn's motivation for taking up the cause of the 'Alids was a combination of personal veneration for the descendants of 'Alī and a desire to repair the wrongs which the 'Alids had suffered at the hands of the 'Abbāsids and others."³¹⁹

C. Madelung holds the same assumption in his presentation of new historical documents concerning al-Ma'mūn, al-Faḍl b. Sahl³²⁰ and 'Alī al-Riḍā, namely those letters of al-Ma'mūn included in Ibn Bābūya's *'Uyūn al-Akḥbār* and al-Majlisī's *Bihār al-Anwār*.

Ibn Bābūya's *'Uyūn al-Akḥbār* and al-Majlisī's *Bihār al-Anwār* may be seen as elevating the non-opportunistic view of al-Ma'mūn's pro-'Alid policy to its maximum logical consequences. First, in Ibn Bābūya's *'Uyūn*, we are informed of a letter signed by al-Ma'mūn himself and his heir-apparent, striving to initiate and perpetuate a revolutionary attitude within the 'Abbāsīd block vis-a-vis their Hāshimite cousins, the Shī'ites, by nominating one from among the non-'Abbāsīds as heir-apparent.

Bihār al-Anwār of al-Majlisī completes this picture as he includes another letter by al-Ma'mūn which he is allegedly reported to have addressed to the 'Abbāsīds agitated by the transfer of authority to 'Alī al-Riḍā. Here, the method of historical flashback - i.e., of employing history at the service of politics - is employed not only by men like al-Jāḥiẓ, but by the highest authoritative figures in the caliphate, i.e., the caliph himself, with the hope of bridging the gap between the now distanced members of the house of the Prophet (*ahl al-Bayt*), by recalling the merits of 'Alī. b. Abī Ṭālib³²¹ and pointing out the advantages of appointing 'Alī al-Riḍā as his immediate successor.³²²

319 F. Gabrieli, 'al-Ma'mūn e gli 'Alī...' (Leipzig, 1929) p. 32 cited by M. Zahniser "Insights from al-'Uthmāniyya of al-Jāḥiẓ" *op.cit.*, p.8.

320 See *E.I.*², s.v. "Faḍl b. Sahl".

321 Madelung, 'New Documents' pp. 341-343.

322 *Ibid.*

I think Madelung's interpretation of al-Ma'mūn's motivation, while acknowledging its sincere basis, is almost ridiculing the caliph's grand concern for the institution of the caliphate, and his genuine courageous endeavour to maintain it under the headship of the fittest, *al-afdāl*, (the most meritorious) . A caliph like Ma'mūn, noted for his support for free thought would not - in my opinion - be solely motivated by a *Ḥadīth* that was obviously concocted and not authentic. In other words, it is difficult to accept al-Ma'mūn's plans and concern for the future of the caliphate as being determined by the prediction of an alleged *Ḥadīth* that the world was to come to an end during his reign.³²³

D. Sourdél presents the following non-opportunistic view of al-Ma'mūn's policy:

In the act of appointment, (201/817) al-Ma'mūn justified his choice by maintaining that the ʿAlid was the most suitable person to fulfil the functions of caliph after himself, but no mention was made of rules governing the succession for the future. The ʿAbbāsids were thus not *a priori* excluded from power, but al-Ma'mūn seems to have been trying to put into effect a new system by which the descendants of ʿAlī or of al-ʿAbbās might indiscriminately - by virtue of personal merit alone³²⁴ - be elevated to the caliphate. Such an interpretation finds confirmation in the writings of an author like al-Jāhīz, who, being impregnated with the Muʿtazilī ideas (professed also by al-Ma'mūn) regarded the Imāmate as depending entirely on personal merit.³²⁵

E. Watt's Intermediate View (an act of compromise)

Watt's opinion of al-Ma'mūn's act of designation is that it was taken as an act of compromise between the Persian and Arab³²⁶ forces within the ʿAbbāsīd society. As Watt describes it, these intellectually opposing groups were also different in the field of political theory, the former aspiring to "an autocratic caliph, able to overrule the interpretations of the ʿulamā', and consequently these secretaries as his officers would gain an influence at the expense of their rivals."³²⁷ In espousing the latter political attitude the ʿulamā' looked for security to the collective wisdom of a

323 See *Ibid.*, p. 346.

324 This has been documented in *al-Jawābāt (Responsa)* and will also be seen in 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', and in K. al-ʿUthmāniyya.

325 Sourdél, "The ʿAbbāsīd Caliphate" in *Cambridge History of Islam*, p. 121.

326 See Watt, *Formative*, 174.

327 *Ibid.*

charismatic community. Watt describes these 'ulamā' as the bearers of the wisdom of the community, as the constitutional block in contrast to the former autocratic block.

Watt accepts the non-neutral motives of al-Ma'mūn who, "by designating (ʿAlī al-Riḍā) . . . expected to gain the support of most of those who hoped for the appearance of an inspired ʿAlid leader, or at least to prevent them *actively* siding with any such leader who rose in revolt against the ʿAbbāsids³²⁸. Watt says that al-Ma'mūn's declaration of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib as the most excellent (*afdāl*) of the community after the Prophet Muḥammad, was a significant act of compromise. The Zaydites provided such a bridge of compromise between the extreme Rāfiḍites and the 'ulamā', who maintained the same premises and "fully accepted the rule of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar."³²⁹ Another common point between al-Ma'mūn and the Zaydites was the belief that the ruling caliph should be the most excellent of the clan of Hāshim, so that "in designating ʿAlī al-Riḍā as heir he asserted that he was *afdāl*"; al-Ma'mūn could have been suggesting the idea that "in future the caliph should be the most excellent among the ʿAlids and ʿAbbāsids."³³⁰

In effect, Watt's view of al-Ma'mūn's policy is almost that of Sourdél viewing Ma'mūn as being more concerned to please the autocratic block, as he displayed their aspirations and "acted in various ways as if he had personal authority; he was the first ʿAbbāsīd to use the title of Imām - which was much on the lips of Zaydites and Rāfiḍites."³³¹ Similarly, Watt looks at Ma'mūn's initiation of *Miḥna* in terms of the same intellectually and racially antagonistic groups, the step being closer to the autocratic block:

To say the Qur'ān was the created speech of God probably implied that he (sic) might have created it otherwise, just as he might create a man tall or short or of medium height. Uncreated speech, on the other hand, would somehow express the essence of God and so be unchangeable. This unchangeable character of the Qur'ān was part of the justification for making it the basis of the empire, and also increased the authority of the ulema as the authorized interpreters of it. A created Qur'ān had not the same prestige and there could not be the same objection to its provisions being overruled by the decree of an inspired Imām. Thus the doctrine of createdness enhanced the power of the caliph and the secretaries, that of uncreatedness the power of the 'ulemā'. . . ³³²

328 Ibid.

329 Ibid., p. 176

330 Ibid., p.177.

331 Ibid. (quoting Sourdél's article ' La Politique Religieuse'

332 Ibid., p. 179.

But such an analysis makes one wonder whether al-Ma'mūn was a puppet- ruler in the hands of the autocratic secretaries and Mu'tazilites or was he dictating his terms to both. Furthermore, if the Zaydites³³³ - during al-Ma'mūn's time - had not yet adopted the doctrine of hereditary succession among 'Alids as conducive to the post of Imāmate (as confirmed by al-Jāhīz himself in 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya'), al-Ma'mūn's policy remains perplexing: was his longing for the "*afḍal*" out of pure religious motives, one that transcended the rigidity of the hereditary succession (stressed by the Rāfiḍites and Persian or like-minded groups) or one that was wittingly forwarded by al-Ma'mūn (in describing 'Alī al-Riḍā as the *afḍal*) without intending that 'Alī al-Riḍā should be followed by his 'Alid descendants? Thus, the subtleness lies in aiming at achieving, once more, a dramatical realignment of the historical relations between Abū Bakr and 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, this time applied to his person and 'Alī al-Riḍā, thus suggesting that his rule was authentic as it had a historical precedence. 'Alī al-Riḍā was more meritorious than himself, but nevertheless the former need not really aspire to meet the political consequences of that *faḍl* simply because his grand grand predecessor ('Alī b. Abī Ṭālib) had not questioned the political rights of Abū Bakr during the rule of Abū Bakr (i.e., 'Alī did not knock him out of the political scene). As such, the nomination of 'Alī al-Riḍā was a clever manoeuvre that started and finished in itself, made its effect and pleased one portion of the Zaydites who happened to give al-Ma'mūn all the conditions and elements for his manoeuvre to succeed, such as respect for Abū Bakr and 'Umar, respect for 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, the doctrine of the *afḍal*, and the absence of the element of hereditary succession of the 'Alids. Despite the above, the evidence for the good intentions of al-Ma'mūn towards his cousins cannot be completely overruled and remains a plausible explanation of al-Ma'mūn's pro-'Alid policy. He may have had real sympathetic sentiments for the 'Alids, and by acknowledging one of them as being *afḍal* from the house of the Prophet, he appears as an objective ruler.

In effect what Watt views as a compromise ends with al-Ma'mūn taking sides with the autocratic block, i.e., it was not a real compromise.

333 As Watt maintains, *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.

IV. An opportunistic view of al-Ma'mūn's act of designating ʿAlī al-Riḍā:

Below is the opinion of other scholars who doubt the sincere motives of al-Ma'mūn as sketched above.

1. Kennedy suggests that in face of the ʿAlid uprisings in Kūfa by Abū-l-Sarāyā and in Makka by Muḥammad al-Dībāj in 199 and 200 respectively (and in view of the Umayyad ones too in Syria), al-Ma'mūn found it necessary to take a decisive step towards the Shīʿites, now that all their leaders were under his eyes in his court, and his choice of the Ḥusaynid ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Kāẓim as heir-apparent is significant, as he discarded the Zaydī leader of the revolt besides Ibrāhīm and Zayd (al-Kāẓim's own brothers who had supported the Kūfī revolt and were sent as governors to Yaman and Ahwāz, to strengthen the revolt³³⁴), in addition to discarding ʿAlī's uncle (Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Ṭālibī). This suggests that al-Ma'mūn had chosen a 'quietist' character among the activists; thus, penetrating the front of the revolutionary Shīʿites via a strategic path, in order to create a schism amongst them.

If - out of the Shīʿite groups - the Zaydites seemed most likely to threaten the political interests of the ʿAbbāsid state, i.e., of their cousins, we can understand why al-Ma'mūn aimed at initiating a new policy with his cousins, the Ṭālibites; thus in reaction to the notion of the Mahdī, which was becoming more current after the revolt of Muḥammad al Dībāj, brother of Mūsā al-Kāẓim and uncle of ʿAlī-al-Riḍā, in Makka in 200/815 who claimed to be the Mahdī³³⁵, al-Ma'mūn's act of nominating al-Riḍā is opportunistically interpreted:

The installation by the rebels of an ʿAlid caliph in Mecca with the epithet al-Mahdī threatened the authority of al-Ma'mūn. Having failed to subdue the aftermath of the revolt by force, Ma'mūn decided to resort to political methods³³⁶.

Kennedy looks at al-Ma'mūn's step as "a move designed to attract support for al-Ma'mūn's cause and to provide legitimacy for his rule."³³⁷ Kennedy adds that al-Ma'mūn aimed at attracting a significant portion of the Irāqī community, namely the militant ʿAlids in Kūfa who supported Abū-l-Sarāyā.³³⁸ Here, al-Ma'mūn is

334 Kennedy, *op.cit.*, p. 209 citing *Maqātil al Ṭālibiyyīn* of al-Iṣfahānī.

335 See Madelung, "New Documents", p. 337, f.n. 25.

336 Husain, *The Occultation of the Twelfth Imām*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1982) p. 42.

337 Kennedy, *Early ʿAbbāsid Caliphate*, p. 158. This is Sourdél's opinion.

338 *Ibid.* The opinion among Shīʿites was not unified, as there were the quietists, represented by followers of al-Ṣādiq, who developed the view that the Imām should be a religious leader,

shown to be so worried about securing peace in the site of the previous ʿAbbāsīd capital that he eventually took this reconciliatory step for that purpose: "In order to achieve peace in Iraq, he (al-Ma'mūn), had been forced to sacrifice his chief adviser, Faḍl b. Sahl and two of his main policies: the rule of the empire from Marw, and the adoption of an ʿAlid heir (both of which did not please the ʿIrāqīs)."339 Kennedy, however, regards al-Ma'mūn's designation as looking to the future, the interests of the ʿAbbāsīds. This act of recognition of ʿAlī al Riḍā did not necessarily imply recognition of the hereditary right of the family of the Prophet; ʿAlids and ʿAbbāsīds were both Hāshimites and should work together to lead the community.340 Here al-Ma'mūn is seen acting under the influence of the Persian scheme of his vizier, al-Faḍl b. Sahl, as he reflected that influence by showing "interest in the religious aspects of his office when he had proclaimed himself as Imām"341. . . One should bear in mind that al-Ma'mūn's ʿAlid policy and his Sassanian policy need not be identical. The colour of the Persians was green, but that of the Shīʿites was white.342 Furthermore, his choice of ʿAlī-al-Riḍā was significant as he happened to be the most quietist among the ʿAlids who participated in the revolts of 199 and 200 respectively.

B. J. Ḥussain states this aim more clearly, as he interprets al-Ma'mūn's step as being directly targetted against the most recent Shīʿite revolts343, (that he understood to have been a Zaydite revolt:)

The installation of al-Riḍā was in reality a political step arranged by the Persian vizier al-Faḍl b. Sahl and associated with other policies aimed at consolidating his Persian support and harming the interests of his Arab opposition in Baghdad. This can be concluded from the points mentioned below: Firstly, the fact that al-Ma'mūn continued to reside in Merv caused complaints among the military and administrative groups in Iraq, who had been the courtiers of al-Amin (193-198/808-814) and who then had to struggle for their economic and regional interests against the Persian vizier of al-Ma'mūn, al-Faḍl b. Sahl, and his brother . . . with the encouragement of his vizier, al-Ma'mūn installed al-Riḍā as his successor to the caliphate in order to divide the rebels by gaining the support of al-Riḍā's adherents

who need not necessarily encourage his supporters to overthrow the existing regime (*Ibid.*, pp. 200-201). One of Jaʿfar's main contributions was in differentiating between caliphate and Imāmate, thus allowing an ʿAlid Imām and his Shīʿī followers to live in peace in a Sunni society (*Ibid.*, p. 199). The other group was a militant one, represented by followers of "the Zaydī principle of *khurūj*, that anyone who was prepared to take military action to assert the rights of the family (of the Prophet) was entitled to leadership.

339 Kennedy, *op.cit.*, p. 164

340 *Ibid.*, p. 158.

341 *Ibid.*, and al-Dūrī, *al-ʿAsr al-ʿAbbāsī al-Awwal*, p. 162.

342 See J. Ḥusain, *The occultation of the Twelfth Imām*, p. 171 f.n. 75.

343 In Kūfa, in 199 by Abū-l-Sarāyā; and in 200 by Muḥammad, son of al-Ṣādiq, in Makka and Yemen.

and those who were hoping for the appearance of an inspired ʿAlid leader. Thirdly, by installing al-Riḍā as his successor, al-Ma'mūn succeeded in splitting the rebels by gaining the support of al-Riḍā's brothers, who accepted the conciliation of al-Ma'mūn and mentioned his name in the *Khuṭba* along with the name of al-Riḍā³⁴⁴

C. Crone and Hinds see al-Ma'mūn's act of designating ʿAlī al-Riḍā as his successor along very firmly opportunistic lines. At a time when al-Ma'mūn felt the possibility of losing his religious authority to the ʿulamā³⁴⁵, it was necessary for al-Ma'mūn to react against such a threat. In other words, there were a struggle over who should be entrusted with religious authority:

On the face of it al-Ma'mūn sought his resources for a restoration of caliphal authority in Shiʿism, first by designating the eighth Imām of the Imāmī Shiʿites as his successor and next by assuming for himself the prerogatives of this Imām, displaying the religious authority which he had won thereby in the institution of the *Miḥna* . . . Loss of legitimacy and loss of religious authority went hand in hand under the Umayyads and the ʿAbbāsids alike; the designation of ʿAlī al Riḍā might be a reaction primarily to the former, the institution of the *miḥna* primarily to the latter . . .³⁴⁶

Commenting on Madelung's opinion which sees al-Ma'mūn's measure as motivated by his worries on the Day of Judgement, Crone and Hinds add: "The letter (of al-Ma'mūn³⁴⁷) thus amounts to a restoration of the Umayyad concept of caliphate rather than to preparation for the end of the world."³⁴⁸ Furthermore, Crone and Hinds say that al-Ma'mūn's use of the title Imām is significant after a long official insistence on the titles Mahdī and Hādī. Imām is more suitable for the present time because al-Mahdī according to Sunnī Islam stands for the redeemer at the end of time³⁴⁹, whereas the title Imām could now accommodate or attract the sympathies of the ʿAlids who believed in the "Imām" without which the earth could not stay even for a second.³⁵⁰ It was natural then that he was addressed likewise to attract his moderate and radical opponents, or as Crone and Hinds say "to assume for himself the prerogatives of this Imām"³⁵¹ (the Shiʿī Imām who was designated as his successor).

344 *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

345 See Crone, *God's Caliph*, p. 19.

346 *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 94.

347 i.e., al-Ma'mūn's letter of designation of ʿAlī al-Riḍā as his successor, see a translation of this letter in Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, pp. 133-139.

348 *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

349 Crone, *God's caliph*, p.103.

350 *Ibid.*

351 *Ibid.*, p. 94

D. T. el-Hibri

A very recent analysis of the Makkan documents or Hārūn al-Rashīd's Makkan protocol of 802 aims to alter its classical authenticity, and questions the previous 'trusting reading' of the sources reporting it.³⁵² In this study we are confronted with the likely possibility of al-Ma'mūn being the one who violated the Makkan documents³⁵³, and who was actively engaged in spreading the propaganda against his brother al-Amīn, as being the one who started the conflict.³⁵⁴

The author of this study proposes that it was al-Ma'mūn who had started the plot, and after securing the caliphate for himself was concerned in the task of creating a historical legitimacy and justifying his coming after the death of his brother:

al-Amīn's execution, the first regicide in the ^ᶜAbbāsīd house, shook the legitimacy of the caliphate and created a power vacuum that invited a wave of secessionist attempts In time it also gave rise to an apologetic historiography that thought to legitimate al-Ma'mūn's overthrow of an incumbent caliph. This called for justifying the war by placing the responsibility for its outbreak on al-Amīn and his betrayal of the Mecca Protocol . . . ³⁵⁵

In view of this new evidence, it would be interesting to look at al-Jāhīz's pro-^ᶜAbbāsīd pro-Ma'mūnid works as part of that historiographic efforts, signaled by al-Ma'mūn and responded to by historians, historiographers and men of letters. al-Jāhīz's extant works do not touch this issue but we shall see how he takes side with al-Ma'mūn as he addresses the deposed caliph as '*al-makhlū^ᶜ*', thus joining the general response from the literary circles to blemish al-Amīn's record in the eyes of the masses.³⁵⁶

352 Tayeb el-Hibri, 'Hārūn el-Rashīd and the Mecca Protocol of 802', International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 24 (1992) p. 476.

353 Against the classical view taken by Gabrieli, see E.I.², S.v. "al-Amīn".

354 Tayeb el-Hibri op.cit., p. 474.

355 Ibid., p. 463.

356 See "Fi Nafy al-Tashbīh", Rasā'il, 1: 284. On the response of men of letters and poets to al-Ma'mūn's successful propaganda to criticize al-Amīn as betrayer, see: al-Dūrī, al-^ᶜAsr al-^ᶜAbbāsī al-Awwal, pp. 143-144.

E. F. °Omar

Another view on the opportunistic motives of al-Ma'mūn's politico-religious policy is taken by F. °Omar who says that it is very unlikely that al-Ma'mūn really thought of transferring the caliphate after the difficulties incurred by him to have it. As °Omar puts it:

al-Ma'mūn's step of giving the *Bay'at* to °Alī al-Riḍā was a plain political manoeuvre in order that certain °Alid figures may be uncovered and put forward to the public. The reason for this was al-Ma'mūn's annoyance at the phenomena of °Alid alienation from the social scene (fearing such steps as those faced by al-Manṣūr) which made the public associate them with prophets. al-Ma'mūn wanted to punish the °amma for their thinking that some °Alids were miraculous, so he decided to put the °Alid figures before their eyes so that they were aware of their human defects and to stop giving them that superhuman role as the *Ghāliya* was doing. Thus al-Ma'mūn would relieve himself from the growing influence of the °Alid front by having its leader exposed, and showing his weakness in the political sphere.³⁵⁷

V. Epilogue

In this section we have presented the diverse opinions concerning al-Ma'mūn's character and policies. As it is not the aim of this study to offer a final verdict and give a definitive solution on these matters, especially as the sources are ready to support either view³⁵⁸ and sometimes both views³⁵⁹, such that although al-Amīn is believed to have plotted against al-Ma'mūn, the latter is seen in no less a Machiavellian manner, and is described as "Manṣūrid" in policy i.e., like his ruthless grandfather, Abū Ja°far al-Manṣūr in his uncompromising determination to get rid of his enemies, be they among the established militants (Umayyads, °Alids) or from among his declared allies (al-Faḍl b. Sahl and °Alī al-Riḍā)³⁶⁰, since it is believed that al-Ma'mūn eventually sacrificed his °Alid and Persian policies - which rested on the Persian oriented vizier, al-Faḍl b. Sahl and the charismatic figure of °Alī al-Riḍā - after being alerted to the real centre of political power that was in Baghdad which he

357 F. °Omar, *al-Khilāfa-al-°Abbāsiyya fi °Ahd al-Fawḍā al-°Askariyya*, (Baghdad: Dār al-Muthannā, 1977,) pp. 31-34. The view is based on al-Qiftī's *Tārīkh al-Hukamā'*, Berlin edition pp. 221-222. The same position is taken by M. al-Jābirī's *Takwīn al-°Aql al-°Arabī'*, pp. 227-230. However, al-Jābirī's view of Ma'mūn's politics is taken from an ideological stand that presents al-Ma'mūn as a worried Sunnite caliph who was very eager to silence or counteract the growing trends of Gnosticism and Shi°ite esotericism. (*al-°Irfān al-Shi°ī*).

358 al-Mas°ūdī reports al-Ma'mūn's lamentation and distress at his brother's death by likening his sadness to that of °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib upon the murder of °Uthmān. See *Murūj al-Dhahab* 4:298.

359 A. al-Dūrī, *op.cit.* pp.166 and 173.

360 *Ibid.*

had neglected while he was in Merw, and so he decided to rehabilitate his sovereignty in Baghdad.³⁶¹

3. Analysis of doctrinal strands of Maqālat al-Zaydiyya

I. Support for the most meritorious Imām (*al-afḍal*): while acknowledging the Zaydī concept of *Mafḍūl*

In starting our analysis of this treatise, it is useful to recall the optimistic interpretation of al-Ma'mūn's act of designating ʿAlī al-Riḍā, namely Sourdel's opinion that al-Jāhīz was echoing the aspiration of the caliph for the most suitable candidate, as being motivated by merit and not by other factors such as descent.

al-Jāhīz first cleverly quotes the current sayings of one group of the Zaydī wing of Shiʿism,³⁶² as regards the criteria for ascendancy for the caliphate, as the

361 *Ibid.*, see pp. 166 and 162.

362 named after the Ḥusaynid figure, Zayd b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī Abī Ṭālib. The idea that Zayd's revolution was devoid of any inherited right to the Imamate is controversial. Imāmite sources mention that Zayd's revolution was made on behalf of his brother, al-Bāqir, (Donaldson, *The Shiʿite Religion*, p. 114) and 'to secure the Imāmate for al-Bāqir's appointed successor, his son Jaʿfar', see Shaykh al-Mufīd, in *Kitāb al-Irshād*, p. xxx. who adds *Ibid.*, pp. 403-404: "Many of the Shiʿa believed in his Imāmate. The reason for their belief was because of his coming out (in revolt) with the sword calling on support for the one who is acceptable from the family of Muḥammad, may God bless him and his family. Therefore they thought that he intended that for himself. However, that was not his intention because he knew of the right of his brother, peace be upon him, to the Imāmate before him and of his bequest of trusteeship (*waṣīyya*) at his death to Abū ʿAbd Allāh (i.e. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq), peace be upon him." Against this view that assumes that Zayd believed in a hereditary divine right to succession, Watt says that Zayd was acting independently of this motivation; he adds: "During their lifetime, there was little or no recognition of the twelve Imāms of the Imāmites. . . Had a series of designations to Zayd's father been generally accepted, Zayd would have based his claim on this. Silence, and the absence of counter-claims for Zayd, argue that no such claim was being made for Zayd's father ʿAlī (d. 713) or his brother Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 732) as late as 740. . . it must be noted carefully that there is nothing about a series of imams in which each was designated by his predecessor . . . there was no widely accepted imam between 680 and 750." Watt, *Early Islam*, pp. 140, 143, 144-145 (analysing al-Nawbakhtī's *Firaq*). My underlining.

As regards the position held by the Fātimid descendants of ʿAlī concerning the hereditary right of the house of the Prophet as claimed earlier by Mukhtār and echoed in Imāmite and Shiʿite sources, Watt suggests that ʿAlī's grandson, ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn and the latter's son, Zayd b. ʿAlī, may not have held that the Imām must be a descendant of ʿAlī and Fātima, a condition that they would perfectly satisfy. Watt draws a distinction between Zayd's views and the distinctive body of doctrine forming the sect of Zaydiyya during the early ʿAbbāsīd period which then adopted the hereditary view of Imāmate, Watt adds: "The assertion that Zayd restricted the Imāmate to descendants of Fātima, may rather be the teaching of later Zaydites . . . it is not clear how far these later doctrines coincide with the views of Zayd himself." Watt, *Formative*, pp. 52, 165-166. "The assertion is probably an inference by later

title of the treatise suggests. Not even one of the conditions quoted refers to prophetic descent, but nevertheless, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is presented as having deserved the caliphate by virtue of superiorly fulfilling these meritorious conditions.

In this manner al-Jāḥiẓ did not only play the role of an objective spokesman or commentator of this Zaydī faction, but skilfully opened a good yet subtle path between the state and its Shīʿite opponents as he could demonstrate that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib could be venerated, yet without necessarily undermining the other *Rāshidūn*; the subtlety of this job is therefore in acknowledging the Imāmate of ʿAlī without assuming the Imāmate to rest on Prophetic descent. Could al-Jāḥiẓ be under the influence of al-Ma'mūn's striving to institutionalize a criterion for the Imāmate without the element of Prophetic descent having any foreseeable effect? If ʿAlī was one such example, why would al-Ma'mūn - therefore - not be a second?:

According to the Zaydites, merit is acquired only by one's actions, and is of four kinds: Seniority of conversion to Islam, detachment from the world, religious knowledge and war services. A man who can claim all four must be acknowledged superior to all others; and if historians are consulted about this their advice is that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is the one who best fits the description. Such are the grounds on which this sect (the Zaydites) claim superiority and pre-eminence for ʿAlī. They say that he was the worthiest to succeed but they show less hostility to the other claimants.³⁶³

If the concept of Imāmate of the *mafdūl*³⁶⁴ is one Zaydī facet, then the other face of this Zaydī coin, the spirit underlying the concept of *mafdūl*, is that of

writers from the persons of the leaders of revolts labelled Zaydite." See Watt, 'Shīʿism under the Umayyads', p. 169. Compare to Lambton's notice of this change in the Zaydiyya outlook in *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, p. 28. and see also Hawting, *First Dynasty* p.111, where he maintains that prior to the ʿAbbāsīd rule, Imāms were not restricted to Fātimīd descendants of ʿAlī but also extended to the Ḥanafīd descendants and even to the descendants of ʿAlī's brother, Jaʿfar, all within the flexible concept of the Prophetic family, which however, later became more rigid and was confined to the Fātimīds or ʿAbbāsīds. See also Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, p. 16, on the absence of hereditary descent from Muḥammad in early Shīʿite claims, and Watt, *Formative*, p. 55, and 'Shīʿism under the Umayyads', p. 169 on the wide extension of charismata that prevailed before ʿAbbāsīds, to cover the whole clan of Hāshim. It is interesting to note that al-Jāḥiẓ's conception of the Zaydiyya of his time (at least one prominent Zaydī group) matches the views presented (by Watt and others) as to the unnecessariness of hereditary Prophetic descent as regards the Imāmate. See *Rasā'il*, ed. Hārūn 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya waal-Rāfiḍa', 4: 317, and for the absence of *naṣṣ*. See *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, p. 276.

363 al-Jāḥiẓ, 'Istihqāq al-Imāma', *Rasā'il*, 4: 207-210, which I consider to be a section of the same treatise entitled 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya wa al-Rāfiḍa' expounding their stand on 'Istihqāq al-Imāma. Compare to *Ibid.*, 4: 311-323.

364 Watt draws our attention to the fact that the phrase 'Imāmate of the inferior (*al-mafdūl*) is absent in al-Nawbakhtī's *Firaq* because it was a mocking way of referring to the Zaydī recognition of Abū Bakr, used only by those opponents known as the 'neglectors' (*ahl al-ihmāl*) who maintained that Prophet Muḥammad made no designatory arrangements versus

religious maṣlaḥa. In other words, the Zaydīs who first proposed the doctrine of the less meritorious, and accepted less excellent candidates than ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, could only have done so in light of their great veneration for ʿAlī's religious zeal and genuine altruistic motives that made him withdraw in favour of Abū Bakr:

Well aware that with regard to public interest, his (ʿAlī's) superiority over Abū Bakr would not compensate it if he were named caliph . . . (he avoided) the risk of seeing religion collapse, and endangering human lives ... therefore he preferred obscurity due to religious zeal and gave preference to future reward over immediate advantages.³⁶⁵

al-Jāḥiẓ's pleasure with the Zaydī stand - now obviously related to the caliphal stand - cannot be hidden as he himself adds that the following Zaydī ideas reflect the best view he has ever encountered amongst them:

I only mention of the doctrine of that specific Zaydī group who do not make "family relations" and genealogy (*ḥasab*) one of the reasons for the Imāmate, to the exclusion of (those groups) who make family relationships one of its reasons and causes because I have discussed that in *Kitāb al-Rāfiḍa*. I only stress this doctrine to the exclusion of the doctrine of the rest of the Zaydiyya³⁶⁶ in giving their proofs and arguments, because it is the best that I regard them as having.³⁶⁷

As to the nature of the specific Zaydī group, al-Jāḥiẓ is referring here to the Zaydī group which did not specify the hereditary ʿAlid line to be among factors conducive to the *Imāma*. It is obscure, but luckily two sources do refer to this point. First, *Kitāb al-Hūr al-ʿĪn* of Nashwān. b. Saʿīd al-Ḥimyārī specifies the *Butriyya* and

the designators' (*aṣḥāb al-naṣṣ*). Watt, *Early Islam*, p. 141. See al-Jāḥiẓ's reference to the neglectors in *al-Hayawān*, 2: 269 and our analysis of *Kitāb al-Hayawān*

365 See 'Istihqāq al Imāma'; *Rasā'il*, 4: 212-213 and 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya' *Ibid.*, 4: 316.

366 Dr. Howard suggests that by using the term *ḥasab* (family relations and genealogy) al-Jāḥiẓ is extending the criteria for the Imāmate to a totality of groups and not to one: i.e., the Zaydī view is put in an exaggerated manner to allow in the ʿAbbāsids. In short, it extends to all Banū Hāshim [ʿAbbāsids, Ṭālibids (Jaʿfarids and ʿAlids)]. So this passage need not be taken literally as it opens the candidacy for everyone, but in history this flexible credibility was emphasized by the Jaʿfarid Ṭālibites, and perhaps al-Ma'mūn was acknowledging it among their Ṭālibite comrades (the Zaydites) in order to stretch the flexibility of Imāma to include the ʿAbbāsids as well, in his constant effort to broaden the view that salvation of the *Umma* lies in the wider circle of Banū Hāshim, (see Madelung, *op.cit.* p. 336). Certainly this was a courageous yet dangerous step by al-Ma'mūn, to be echoed by al-Jāḥiẓ in *K. Fadl Hāshim* and to be elaborated one step further in *K. al-ʿUthmāniyya*, from the broad circle of Hāshim to the circle of *Faḍl* proper (merit), wherein al-Jāḥiẓ's ʿUthmānites trespass on the circle of ʿAlid and ʿAbbāsīd descent. Here, and on the basis of this Zaydī doctrine he is not diverting the caliphate for ever to the ʿAlid family as he is keeping it open: The 2nd candidate may be ʿAlid, but need not be necessarily so, he may be available from among the '*afḍal*'/'best' without having to relate genealogically to the Prophet. This has to wait until the formation of al-ʿUthmāniyya, which resembles the Khārijite thesis of rejecting *ḥasab*.

367 al-Jāḥiẓ, *Maqālat, Rasā'il*, 4: 317.

Jarīriyya from among the Zaydī block as basing the Imāmate on *Shūrā* and not on *Naṣṣ* and commonly holding the Imāmate of the *afdāl* while not rejecting the *mafḍūl*³⁶⁸ Second, from reviewing various sects of Zaydiyya, one notices that the *Sulaymāniyya* or *Butriyya* may have been related to al-Jāḥiẓ's remark. First because Sulaymān acknowledged the Imāmate of the less excellent (*al-mafḍūl*), and because *al-Butriyya* (after al-Ḥasan b. Ṣāliḥ b. Ḥayy) did acknowledge the Imāmate of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar and did not condemn ʿUthmān as infidel as Sulaymān had.³⁶⁹ So one may conclude that from these two sources (al-Ḥimyarī, and ʿAbd al-Jabbār) that among the Zaydiyya sects, the *Butriyya* and *Jarīriyya* (but not the *Sulaymāniyya*) may have held such non-hereditary views of *Imāma*, that attracted al-Jāḥiẓ's attention. The *Sulaymāniyya* could have been a modified offshoot from *Jarīriyya*, as we are told that Sulaymān was the son of Jarir.³⁷⁰

Therefore al-Jāḥiẓ in both of his early treatises on *Imāma* (i.e., *al-Jawābāt* and *Maqālat al-Zaydiyya*) was maintaining a doctrinal constant i.e., stressing that the ruler should be the most meritorious and that no other factor should count. This finding may be taken to represent a remarkably unchanged doctrine in al-Jāḥiẓ's political thought, especially if we (hypothetically) consider his political work "al-ʿUthmāniyya" to be among the latest of his works that was written during the Muʿtazilī political decline, and we shall be surprised to find al-Jāḥiẓ definitely consistent in supporting the post of the Imām for the most suitable candidate (*al-afdāl*). This view is confirmed by al-Ḥimyarī who classifies al-Jāḥiẓ with some Muʿtazilites and most Shiʿites and Murjiʿites who have held that the Imāmate should be entrusted to the most excellent, and at no time may it be given to the less excellent when the most excellent is available.³⁷¹

However, bearing in mind the opportunistic view of al-Ma'mūn's policy, al-Jāḥiẓ's artistic elaboration of the Zaydī doctrine of the *mafḍūl* is significant here as it implicitly suggests that during the era of designation - without contradicting the above premises of *fadl* and *afdāl* - that ʿAlī al-Riḍā and al-Ma'mūn should be seen in almost the same perspective as ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib had occupied with regard to Abū Bakr.

368 See *al-Hūr al-ʿĪn*, pp. 150-152 and 155.

369 See *al-Mughni*, vol. 20, part 2, (on *Imāma*) pp. 184-185.

370 See *al-Hūr*, p. 155. For such reasons al-Jāḥiẓ is accused of cherishing Zaydī views, see *al-Hayawān*, 1: 7.

371 al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Hūr*, p. 152.

The subtleness of such an analogy lies in the intended Jāhizian implication that although ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and his present descendant may be both seen as superior - in merit - to Abū Bakr and al-Ma'mūn respectively, as angels were superior to Adam, this Zaydī perspective need not violate the status quo simply as it had not been violated in the past, for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib did not - in spite of his superiority - question the validity of his predecessors, and this tolerance among the Shīʿites, is especially encouraged and wished to be held by their Zaydī wing, if not for the sake of preserving the caliphate under the ʿAbbāsīd Ma'mūn, at least to make the Zaydīs learn a lesson from history and exercise political tolerance until their candidate may come to rule in due course.

Such a recycling of this Zaydī outlook is very useful for the ʿAbbāsīds for as it allows a theoretical concession (ʿAlī Riḍā is the best in the eyes of the Zaydites and in the eyes of al-Ma'mūn) but the Zaydīs should not go too far in aspiration, and should bear in mind the ʿAbbāsīd viewpoint. In simple terms, from the ʿAbbāsīd perspective, al-Ma'mūn is the "first" best and ʿAlī Riḍā is second best, thus his nomination does not endanger his present post and should not stir the anger of the ʿAbbāsīd stock. If only al-Ma'mūn could succeed in introducing this 'just' measure to the institution of the caliphate, and convince his relatives of its soundness, i.e., that it should always rest in the hands of the best, things would have been different. Men like al-Jāhiz were instrumental for such propaganda but the reality was a different matter.

Had al-Ma'mūn thought ʿAlī al-Riḍā was really better than himself he would not have nominated him as heir-apparent but would have given the throne to him. al-Ma'mūn's action of nomination does not alter Muʿtazilī- Ma'mūnid belief in the best having the right to rule, and that same belief in the *afdāl* also dictated on him to look around for the *afdāl* after him. His search ended in finding ʿAlī al-Riḍā as the best (after him) from the circle of Banū Hāshim. The act of nomination and al-Jāhiz's reference to the Zaydī doctrine of *al-Mafḍūl* may not have totally pleased all the Shīʿites, as they regarded their candidate as *al-afdāl* and demanded that he be caliph at once, but patience had to be exercised by them to achieve that.

Similarly, it can be argued that the obvious outcome of applying the doctrine of *al-mafḍūl* to the caliph al-Ma'mūn and his heir-apparent, would not please al-Ma'mūn himself as he is viewed - from the Zaydī perspective - as the less

meritorious, which challenged his belief in himself as being the first best, thus threatening his legitimacy.

The act of nomination of ʿAlī al-Riḍā simplifies this discussion. al-Ma'mūn might not have chosen ʿAlī al-Riḍā for his (present) place, but in his place after him. The conflict between the rivals' demand to put 'the best' in caliphal office is solved. No dramatic concession has to be necessarily made by al-Ma'mūn or the Shīʿites' candidate; each may still regard himself the best. The only expectation requested by this step of nomination is to make the Zaydites happy with their nominated candidate whose superiority should not compete with al-Ma'mūn's post even if al-Ma'mūn's act had given them the impression that he is the second best, i.e., the concession made is theoretical and does not endanger the actual caliphal post of al-Ma'mūn. It only makes him look second best to ʿAlī al-Riḍā from the Zaydī perspective. This can be tolerated by Ma'mūn for genuine altruistic motives or conversely for tactical selfish reasons i.e., pleasing the Shīʿites in order to control them. al-Jāhīz says on behalf of the Zaydī view of ʿAlī's delayed Imāmate and their justification of the caliphate of Abū Bakr:

A man may be the most excellent of the people and yet one who is less than him in excellence may have authority over him, so that God has made it the duty of the most excellent to obey and give precedence to the less excellent, either for public benefit or to guard against discord; as we have mentioned and explained earlier. Or it may be to make his testing harder and to make his trial and discomfort more severe, as God said to the angels: (Prostrate before Adam and they all prostrated except Iblīs who refused) The angels were more excellent than Adam yet God made them experience more discomfort (by submitting to him). The angels were more excellent than Adam, because Gabriel, Michael and Isrāfil were among those who were close to God for a long time before the creation of Adam. Therefore they took precedence in worshipping Him yet had to endure the burden of prostrating to Adam.³⁷²

In this treatise, al-Jāhīz was not only recycling how the Zaydis viewed the pre-historic Qur'ānic narrated past i.e., acceptance of angels to prostrate before Adam but was even keen to follow their Qur'ānic argument when they found it applicable to the analogous situation witnessed by ʿAlī after the death of the Prophet. Here the Zaydī historical vision or flashback aims to stress ʿAlī's superior motives (and even status) underlying his acceptance of Abū Bakr's Imāmate, in order not to poison the situation that was already loaded with danger; according to the Zaydis the Muslim community suffered from the existence of anarchists:

³⁷² al-Jāhīz, 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', Rasā'il, 4: 317-318.

Among them are savage men and anarchist groups who were devoid of all knowledge: evil and cruel nomads or semi nomads. Once united they break up and then unite again. Thus in their agitation rioting proves inevitable. Their calm is not a sign of confidence; when they have money, they become tyrants. When they are poor they are stubborn. They have the custom of hating the leaders and the benefactors. They aspire for disgrace, rejoice in misfortune of others. They are glad to make ambushes against the Muslims . . . ʿAlī, Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, Abū ʿUbayda and the first of the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* saw that men were divided in categories. In Medina there were hypocrites who bit out of anger the ends of their fingers. There were like minded men who knew well the critical situation but were cautious and awaiting the right opportunity. This was realized at the same time when the apostasy (*ridḍa*) of some of the Arabs occurred in the neighbourhood of Medina, after they threatened to make it during the sickness of the Prophet. The situation was aggravated by the meeting of the *Anṣār* and the *Muhājirūn*, and the suggestion by the former : "Let there be an *Amīr* from amongst us and one from amongst you". ʿAlī then feared to make his intention to rule the people explicit, lest a spectator from those people we have described should stir more disorder because the hearts of the hypocrites, *ahl al-Ridda* and the disposition of al-*Anṣār* were as we have narrated.

Therefore, ʿAlī's religious prudence led him to withdraw from the political scene. He knew that had they realised his superiority to Abū Bakr and made him Imām, such a step would not have been worth taking as it would put things upside down by endangering human lives and making religion collapse. Thus his withdrawal incarnated his farsightedness and religio-political tolerance and exemplary wisdom.³⁷³

Of course, al-Jāhīz's pro-ʿAbbāsīd intention behind this report on behalf of the Zaydiyya need not be upset by the minor detail that alludes to ʿAlī's superiority over Abū Bakr - as long as both al-Jāhīz and this Zaydī group are united (unlike the Rāfiḍa) in viewing Abū Bakr's caliphate as authentic. al-Jāhīz does not wish now to criticize the Zaydī principle of this authenticity, i.e., it was authentic for religious reasons, yet ʿAlī was more deserving; this has to await the composition of K. al-ʿUthmāniyya when the doctrine of the most meritorious, *al-afdāl*, is outspokenly and explicitly elaborated against the Rāfiḍa and even the Zaydiyya.³⁷⁴ As to the outspoken attack on Zaydis, this should have been elaborated in the non-extant Jāhīzian work "al-Radd ʿalā al-Zaydiyya."³⁷⁵

II A. Necessity of the post of Imām

In this treatise (*Maqālat al-Zaydiyya*) that may safely be included under al-Jāhīz's early works on the Imāmate, al-Jāhīz's argument for the necessity of the Imām is similar to the one portrayed above, in al-Jawābāt. God, Prophets and Imāms plus human nature are tied in again here. The new element, however, is al-Jāhīz's

373 al-Jāhīz, 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', *Ibid.*, 4: 314-316.

374 H. Yehya Moḥamed, 'Ġāhīz et le Chiʿisme', Thesis, p. 101.

375 See al-Jāhīz's own bibliography in *al-Hayawān*, 1: Preface.

reference to man's 'permanent' need for the messengers, Prophets and Imāms in view of his permanent lack of understanding, triumphant (passionate) nature, and limited intelligence or capacity to achieve what befits him now and in the hereafter. The other new element in this treatise explains the reason for having an Imām. It is mainly to have his subjects adjusted and raised to the acquired level of obedience, hence to actualize God's intended goal underlying the creation of this world, says al-Jāhiz:³⁷⁶

Barely able to obtain all that relates to their material existence, still less are they capable of what befits their spiritual life. For spiritual understanding stems from worldly understanding, but whereas the latter is manifest, or nearly so, the former is occult, and is to be attained only through great virtue and unremitting effort, assisted by the teaching of the Imāms.

B. Concept of *Aṣlah*/Divine Justice in relation to the necessity of an Imām:

In this treatise, al-Jāhiz's above argument for the necessary existence of the Imām/caliph is continued here, based on the undeniable weaknesses in human nature. al-Jāhiz again elaborates this religio-political theme by drawing from the domains of theology, psychology and political thought. The theological element is reflected in al-Jāhiz's firm belief that God's Divine Justice would not have allowed human nature to be left on its own. God willed their benefit by creating them, and such a benefit cannot obviously be maintained if they were not under (the supervision of) an Imām who directs them to all beneficial targets, now and in the hereafter. Divine justice, the Imām's existence and human nature plus social benefit are interwoven together to stress al-Jāhiz's point above in a hypothetical manner:

Had people been confined to their limited intelligence, and been left to their passionate forces and overpowering instincts and great ignorances, the like of which is reflected in the rate by which they incline to that which is fatal and corruptive; and were they to know by themselves that which is beneficial from that which is harmful, He would have charged them with that which is redundant, or handed them over to their enemy and kept them occupied from obedience to Him which is the best and most beneficial matter for them.³⁷⁷

Here, al-Jāhiz's portrait of human nature is completed. We are before an incapacitated being that could not have survived without God's provision, justice and hidden grace (*lutf*). This Divine provision or presence cannot be denied, for since the

376 Pellat, *Life and Works*, Tr. by Hawke. p. 63 (This passage corresponds to 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', *op.cit.*, pp. 318-321.)

377 al-Jāhiz, 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', *Rasā'il*, 4: 318-319.

moment of creation, man was constantly corrected, upgraded and Divinely raised to the level of worship. The new element in this argument is God's eternal concern for His creation to properly worship Him. Given the above factors, which might impede this Divine aim, it was optimal "to keep them (*tabqiyatihim*)."³⁷⁸

Thus, although al-Jāhiz acknowledges the existence of the uncorrected dimension in man, it only serves to stress his thesis that God's justice and the human permanent need for an Imām go together. The argument based on a generally defective human nature is continued here. Man could have been left to his (fatal) condition outlined above, but al-Jāhiz is concerned to point out another option: man's lack of understanding and predatory nature when alienated from Divine guidance and left to work on their own, are another form of Divine presence and an indication of God's blessing to mankind as they potentially and significantly call for and await that which can check human nature and bring it back to its proper form, i.e., Prophets and Imāms. Here al-Jāhiz unveils his Mu'tazilī notion of the relation between Reason and Revelation:

The deterring forces of legal command and prohibition (*Amr wa nahy*) give meaning to perfecting and correcting human nature . . . for . . . men are unable to resist their own worse natures - but by harsh scolding (*zajr shadīd*) and threatening of severe punishment in this world and a terrible one in the next. . . Were men able of themselves to obtain all that relates to their material and spiritual life, there would be little point or advantage in God's sending prophets. If men, in the course of preferring that which is lasting, seeking to better themselves and longing for that which is adequate, cannot of themselves understand and arrange all this, (though knowledge of all this is clear and manifest ...) how much more will they be *unable* to distinguish *ta'dīl* from *tajwīr*, to understand the importance of exegesis, the science of the transmission of traditions and the foundations of faith? This being so, we appreciate that men need an Imām to teach them all that befits them...³⁷⁹

It is here that al-Jāhiz expresses his hierarchical view of the differences between Prophets, messengers³⁸⁰ and Imāms. While all reflect God's justice and

378 The text is not explicit here but the point is implied from the context: they have to be preserved under Divine supervision, now entrusted to the Imām. An alternative reading could be that their benefit is "maintained" by "*taswiyatihim*" i.e., perfecting and normalising their behaviour (by sending Prophets and Imāms) - *Ibid.*, p. 319.

379 *Ibid.*, 4: 320-321.

380 The difference between prophets and messengers is that (i) the former are those sent by God as preachers and *nadhīr* to their people, but are not the head of an *Umma* like the *rasūl*. (ii) The *rusul* are less numerous than prophets (iii) *Rusul* are law-givers and provided with a book such as Adam, Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, ʿĪsā and Muḥammad. List of Prophets is longer including, besides the majority of *rusul*, Biblical or quasi-Biblical characters like Ibrāhīm, Ishāq, Yaʿqūb, Hārūn, Dāwūd, Sulaymān, Ayyūb, Dhu'l-Nūn. See The Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, (Leiden and London, 1961) s.v., *Rasūl*.

provision, al-Jāhiz remarkably distinguishes that the messenger is the best of men, then comes Prophets, then Imāms:

Had people been unable to understand Divine guidance and accept advice, they would have, therefore, been left discarded (*hamal^{an}*), unattended and the provision for ordering good and forbidding evil would have collapsed.³⁸¹

The very observable fact that they can distinguish right from wrong when it is (Divinely) passed to them, is an indication that they can never avoid by themselves the agony of corruption and mischief if they were to confine themselves to their limited wits, and if they distance themselves from the Prophetic guidance and instruction (*talqin*) of Imāms.³⁸²

In this way the coming of Prophets and the existence of Imāms are crucial to the physical and spiritual salvation of the community as their guidance is relief to the society from the fatal risks of trial and error.

III. The Imām, the Prophet, and the Messenger:

We have seen al-Jāhiz earlier in his portrait of the ideal Imām insisting that the Imām should be the most intelligent and reasonable amongst his contemporaries, one who bases his conduct on that of the Prophet. In this treatise, the hierarchy is maintained as the Imām should be the next best to the Prophet Muḥammad i.e., the one who ranks after the messenger of God. This is so because of the latter's superior function and role, al-Jāhiz says:

Thus we observe that men need an Imām to make them aware of all their welfare (*Jamī' maṣāliḥihim*). The Imāms are of three types: A messenger of God (*Rasūl*), a prophet (*Nabi*) and a simple imām. The messenger of God is a Prophet and an Imām at the same time. A Prophet is an Imām also, but not a messenger of God, while the simple Imām is neither a messenger of God nor a Prophet. Their names have differed as have their ranks by virtue of the differing norms and natures, as some divinely rank higher in the hierarchical order, as they differ in their degree of resolution, way of formation, and changing times due to a change in objectives and transformation in the *Shari'ah* (Legal duties). The best of men is the messenger, followed by a Prophet then comes the Imām. The messenger of God is the one who establishes the dogma and initiates the spreading of a particular belief (in his nation) by generally making known to people the right path, because men by nature are not initially able to learn more than the generalities. A messenger of God may be an Arab or a foreigner, his origin is not important but he must be endowed with Divine signs - that make all kinds of people venerate him . . . The Prophet differs from the messenger of God in his not being a carrier of a message or religion. His role is to confirm and spread good news that a messenger of God had brought, or to smooth the way before a messenger of God, who will come after him.³⁸³ (In fact he is only an auxiliary to the messenger).

381 al-Jāhiz, 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', *Rasā'il*, 4: 322.

382 *Ibid.*

383 See 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', 4: 321-323.

IV. Main strata of society: The Elite and the Public

al-Jāhiz in this treatise narrates, on behalf of the Zaydis, a classical Greek division of society that he employs here to strengthen the notion of *Imāma*. The corruption and vices displayed by the public towards ʿAlī seem to stress not only the Zaydī view which prevented ʿAlī from stepping into the political scene, but also al-Jāhiz's view of the ʿ*amma*, as is evident in al-Jāhiz's other works.³⁸⁴

For it must be said that the Arabs and especially the Qurayshites were deeply divided on ʿAlī: One portion of people consisted of anarchists and thugs who respected neither law nor religion ... waiting for the slightest excuse, the first sign of dissension, to spring like lions ...they were the wicked public, the lower society ... ʿAlī described them: "We seek refuge in God from a group of people for when they unite they are uncontrollable and when they separate are unrecognisable. These are like those."

Another portion are knowledgable in religion, and respect the significance and need for Imāmate, the truth has convinced them. ... But they are few among many, the chosen of each generation. ...³⁸⁵

4. Critique and Significance of "Maqālat al-Zaydiyya"

al-Jāhiz's open preference for one Zaydī group that allowed an Imām to come from any genetic pool is significant. This is so first of all because of its diplomatic way of putting all the Hāshimites on the same potential footing or eligibility for the Imāmate (here the ʿAlids and ʿAbbāsids have thus equal rights). As the argument is presented it does leave the way open for consideration of the Umayyads as well as the Hāshimites and as it stands as present it could leave the Imāmate open to the meritorious men as the Khārijites wanted, by regarding as appropriate one who has no distinct social status, but relies solely on *faḍl*. If this is taken to reflect one of al-Jāhiz's earliest positions, then one may wonder what was al-Jāhiz's real aim behind that openness to the question of Imāmate as shared by himself, the caliph, and one Zaydī faction of the Shīʿites. Was it targeted to please the Khārijite rebels whose historical hatred for descent and support of the most meritorious was celebrated in al-Jāhiz's literature?³⁸⁶

Such a proximity to this particular Zaydī stand was evident during al-Jāhiz's time, so much so that al-Jāhiz was accused of being Zaydī himself.³⁸⁷

384 Such as Kitāb al ʿUthmāniyya.

385 *Ibid.*, 4 : 315, and "Istihqāq al-Imāma", *Rasā'il*, 4: 210-211.

386 See for example *al-Hayawān*, 2: 101-102.

387 See *al-Hayawān* 1: 7.

But was al-Jāhīz Zaydī himself or was he trying to attract the Zaydīs to the Muʿtazilī school?³⁸⁸ Pellat answers this question by reference to that fact that al-Jāhīz differed from the Zaydīs by categorically holding the Imāmate for the most perfect man, *al-afdāl*, i.e., "he shows himself on this point to be very demanding and does not accept theoretically the *mafḍūl*"³⁸⁹ However, having read al-Jāhīz's own opinion above, it should be noted that Pellat's remark reflects al-Jāhīz's position in the first treatise (Responsa/al-Jawābāt) but not necessarily in the second (Maqālat al-Zaydiyya) wherein his exposition of the Zaydī doctrine of *Mafḍūl* is eloquently expressed. Does this reflect the influence of Zaydism on *ʿItizāl* or the influence of *ʿItizāl* (through al-Jāhīz) on Zaydism, which essentially share with him a longing for the *afdāl*, (it is the best solution for both Muʿtazilites and Zaydīs) though for valid reasons, the less excellent is legitimised and accepted?

It should be noted that at no point in al-Jāhīz's presentation of the Zaydī doctrine of the Imāmate of *mafḍūl* does al-Jāhīz criticize it. Whether this means that he has modified his earlier doctrine of the necessity of the Imām being continuously *al-afdāl* is difficult to say. But one would have expected some criticism of the doctrine of *the mafḍūl* if he has not modified his position. Most fully stated, the doctrine of *mafḍūl* is left without criticism. But why? If al-Jāhīz is for *afdāl* why does he not criticize it? Either al-Jāhīz changed his mind, or he was reflecting how al-Ma'mūn was under the influence of Zaydī circles or ideas. By not criticizing, he is being a propogandist for their doctrine, yet he has not bluntly stated an acceptance. Pellat says al-Jāhīz never 'theoretically accepts' *mafḍūl* but we have seen the contrary. What are the implications of that?

If Zaydism was exerting its influence on *ʿItizāl* al-Jāhīz could be seen to have ostensibly accepted the doctrine of the less excellent - at least theoretically - as if he had implicitly put himself in the position of the Zaydites and tactfully viewed his ʿAbbāsīd Imām as less excellent than the Zaydī/Shīʿī Imām (i.e. ʿAlī al-Riḍā) who is the *afdāl*. Thus the political reasons to satisfy the Zaydīs may have been behind quoting their view of the *mafḍūl*. As regards the particular doctrine of *ḥasab* of the group of Zaydīs favoured by al-Jāhīz, however, we find in it an invitation to the Zaydīs (and to Shīʿites at large) to exercise tolerance towards the ʿAbbāsīd Imām; thus insinuating that if the ʿAbbāsīd Imām could rank next to the ʿAlid Imām, exactly

388 See Pellat, 'L'Imāmat dans le doctrine de Ğāhīz', p. 51.

389 Ibid.

as Abū Bakr -in the opinion of Zaydīs - ranked next to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the message sent to the Shīʿites is that the ʿAbbāsids have an equal access to the *Imāma*. No wonder al-Jāḥiẓ was categorized as a Zaydī scholar, but al-Jāḥiẓ's quotation of the Zaydī concept of *al-mafḍūl* need not be literally accepted as reflecting a change or diversion from his original thesis of *al-afḍal*. As we have implied above, al-Jāḥiẓ could have put forward the Zaydī concept without holding its implication, i.e., it could have been one tricky way of infiltrating the Zaydī/Shīʿite circles by 'theoretically' but not 'really' accepting the logical and practical consequences of the *mafḍūl*, which would have obviously meant putting (*al-afḍal*) ʿAlī al-Riḍā in the very place of the ʿAbbāsīd caliph himself (*al-mafḍūl*) and not his heir-apparent . . . but since nothing of the sort was happening, one may see this treatise as having been written during the peak of ʿAbbāsīd-Zaydī relationship when certain Zaydī axioms were used and played with, not for what they negatively implied, but for the positive political values they offered to the ʿAbbāsīds. Here the expectation from the axiom of merit and negation of *ḥasab* is either to create a schism within the Shīʿites via the Zaydī channel, or probably to turn the political rules of the game upside down and show how the ʿAbbāsīd caliph himself was probably now setting an example before all the *Umma* that descent does not matter at all in the Imāmate, and consequently all Hāshimites are equal candidates to that post thus diminishing the growing super charisma of one Hāshimite block over the other but not reaching the ideal example of the Khārijites who removed the Imām from that Qurashite genetic pool altogether and freed him from any genealogical requirements.

Therefore, although al-Jāḥiẓ is not criticising the concept of *mafḍūl*, his essential position may have been constant as regards his high regard for the *afḍal*. If this were the case, he was sincere to the teaching of al-Nazzām, that the Imāmate 'should never be transferred to the less excellent',³⁹⁰ and the Zaydī view was provisionally accommodated as long as they did not share the Rāfiḍī position that the Prophet had designated the ʿAlids to the post of Imām/caliph.

As to the relation between revelation and reason, we find al-Jāḥiẓ describing reason as being in great need of revelation which is indispensable for men's welfare (*maṣlaḥa*),³⁹¹ otherwise they would fall victims to the dangerous roads of trials and fatal errors. But is al-Jāḥiẓ speaking of the reasoning abilities of man

³⁹⁰ See al-Ḥimyārī, *al-Hūr al-ʿĪn*, p. 152 & A. Abū Rīda, *al-Nazzām*, p. 176, quoting al-Baghdādī's *Uṣūl al Dīn*, p. 293.

³⁹¹ See 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', *Rasā'il*, 4: 322.

absolutely i.e., does this cover all the layers of society? At one point al-Jāḥiẓ has described reason as God's agent (*wakīl*) in man, but it seems from the above that the helpless condition of man's reasoning is reflective of the public but not generally of the elite to which al-Jāḥiẓ belongs. This should not mean that neither the Imām (representing the highest reasoning power of the community) nor the Prophet, do not need revelation, but rather, one may conclude that because of their high reasoning-faculties they are the most aware of the significance of revelation to supplement their natural weaknesses and lift it to the recommended reasoning standards of revelation.

Reasoning at its best is to be found in the Messenger, the Prophet, the Imām, and then in the elite and at its least among the public whose reasoning powers are obstructed by their passions which need to be checked by a less passionately-dominated section of the community, the elite, who are or should be guided by its most intellectually-gifted member, the Imām.

al-Jāḥiẓ could be seen in this treatise to have served the ʿAbbāsīd interests, namely the caliphal outlook, in several instances which they both shared.

(i) in echoing the ʿAlid-ʿAbbāsīd proximity as he praised the Zaydī stand concerning *Imāmat al-mafḍūl* in view of ʿAlī's notion of *maṣlaḥa* of the *Umma*.

(ii) in reflecting al-Ma'mūn's longing for the most meritorious Imām (more explicit in *Responso*, implicit here).

(iii) in stressing the need for an Imām (from the point of securing physical and spiritual salvation³⁹² of the *Umma*). Thus a shift from the classical image of the Imām to that of one who is securing the spiritual-no less than the physical-salvation of the *Umma* is achieved. The Imām here is essentially enjoying the extra dimension of "providing guidance", in his capacity of "instructing them"; thus the phraseology of al-Jāḥiẓ "instruction of Imāms" is justified³⁹³ as the *Umma* is before the Imām in the very humble status of the student before the instructor.

(iv) As a corollary to the above statement, al-Jāḥiẓ perfectly echoed al-Ma'mūn's outlook on the public which was seen by both as "corrupt and helpless" without the sovereign, and even ignorant of the significance of the institution of the

392 *Ibid.*, 4: 320-322.

393 *Ibid.*, pp. 320,322.

caliphate and value of the Imām: The resemblance between al-Jāḥiẓ's words (which are used to describe the Zaydī version of events) and those of al-Ma'mūn is striking:

The commander of the Faithful knows that the great multitudes, the mass of insignificant folk and vulgar public who in all regions and countries are without insight and deep reflection ... are people ignorant of God and too blind to see Him . . . because of the weakness of their views, the deficiency of their understanding and their turning aside from reflection and recollection.³⁹⁴

(v) To complete the picture that al-Jāḥiẓ's text had implicitly hinted at concerning al-Ma'mūn's role as arbiter of the sacred law and spiritual saviour of his subjects, this should be directly sought in his own letters which were sent to the various parts of the caliphate, upon his institution of the *Miḥna*, when he intended to "resume the old caliphal role of curing spiritual blindness"³⁹⁵, says al-Ma'mūn:

God has made it incumbent upon the Imāms of the Muslims, their caliphs, to strive for the maintenance of the religion of God with which He had entrusted them, the heritage of Prophethood of which He has made them legatees, and the transmission of Knowledge which He has committed to their care.³⁹⁶

(vi) Finally, through our survey of the development of the question of the Imāmate, we have maintained the position that the Shī'ites of al-Jāḥiẓ's time had not yet assumed their full Imāmite character, and that they were pre-Imāmite. What do al-Jāḥiẓ's references to the Shī'ites have to offer in the justification of this hypothesis? Does he regard them as "Imāmites" or else as what? How does he name them? In fact, the introductory words of this treatise have categorically classified the Shī'ites of al-Jāḥiẓ's time as either Zaydī or Rāfiḍī.³⁹⁷ Such a classification is significant and it would be useful to find out whether al-Jāḥiẓ continues to use such a terminology or not. Those groups that are neither Zaydī nor Rāfiḍī are neglected. The reason for this is probably because they are -as al-Jāḥiẓ described them- scattered and divided amongst themselves, "*badad*", and not possible to gather. One scholar suggests a less likely reason, that they represent the *ghulāt* whom al-Jāḥiẓ decided to discard, as they have been rejected by all Muslims.³⁹⁸

394 Crone, *God's Caliph*, p. 96.

395 *Ibid.*

396 *Ibid.*

397 See 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', *Rasā'il*, 4: 207, 311.

398 See H. Yehyā Moḥamed, 'Ġāḥiẓ et le Chi'isme', thesis, p. 63.

CHAPTER FIVE

al-Ma'mūn's Period III (203-211), al-Jāhiz's Political Survey continued

1-Kitāb al-Masā'il wa-al-Jawābāt fī al-Ma'rifa:

This book is said by Pellat to have been written before 232 A.H.³⁹⁹, i.e., before the coming of al-Mutawakkil and the change of State policy from Mu'tazilism to Sunnism.

This work may reflect an independent Mu'tazilī endeavour to criticize the theses of those Shī'ite groups that believed in gnosticism (*Ilhām*). al-Jāhiz's attempt to attack such a road to knowledge (a feature that was exclusively associated with the infallible Imam and with the Ṣūfī movement) should be understood in the same way and context that would later drive al-Jāhiz to write Kitāb al-Tarbīc where we will find al-Jāhiz ridiculing *Ilhām* and stressing the role of reason because the former ideology was threatening the basis of the 'Abbāsīd regime. Judging from Dr. al-Aṣsam's thesis on the ex-Mu'tazilite figure of Ibn al-Rīwandī, who is said to have exchanged *I'tizāl* for Shī'ism, the content of K. al-Ma'rifa seems identical to the non-extant "K. al-Ilhām" which was judged by Ibn al-Rīwandī to be a Jāhizian work that attacked Shī'ism. The two Jāhizian works specified by Ibn-al-Rīwandī as directed by al-Jāhiz against Shī'ism are K. al-Ilhām and K. al-'Abbāsiyya.⁴⁰⁰

As to the date of K. al-Masā'il wa-al-Jawābāt fī-al-Ma'rifa, Pellat suggests that it was written before 232 A.H. External evidence to back this assumption can be easily detected from al-Jāhiz's 'Uthmāniyya (if al-'Uthmāniyya as I propose was completed and given to al-Ma'mūn as we shall see below) wherein al-Jāhiz alludes to this work under 'Kitāb al-Ma'rifa', as being completed before K. al-'Uthmāniyya,⁴⁰¹ and as such this work is symbolic of the flexible era of al-Ma'mūn that allowed for

399 See Pellat, 'Nouvel Essai d'inventaire de L'oeuvre Ġāhizienne', *Arabica*, XXXI, 1984 pp. 141, and pp. 147-148. The work on Ma'rifa however has been classified by Pellat under four titles 'Kitāb al-Ma'rifa', K. al-Jawābāt fī al-Ma'rifa', K. Masā'il Kitāb al-Ma'rifa', and K. al-Masā'il; nevertheless we only have access to the first one, which has been given the name 'Kitāb al-Masā'il wa al-Jawābāt fī al-Ma'rifa', see Hārūn, *Rasā'il al-Jāhiz*, IV: 47-65. al-Jāhiz has alluded to this work in his Kitāb al-'Uthmāniyya, p. 261.

400 See A. al-Aṣsam, 'Kitāb Faḍīḥat al-Mu'tazila of Ibn al-Rīwandī', Ph.D thesis, (Cambridge Universtiy, 1972) p. 42. These books and K. Faḍl al-I'tizāl of al-Jāhiz (see reference to it in al-Jāhiz's introduction to K. al-Ḥayawān), seem to constitute a considerable portion of the Mu'tazilī campaign against Shī'ism. See al-Aṣsam, p. 23.

401 See al-'Uthmāniyya, p. 261.

such theological debates that obviously were not devoid of a contemporary political connotation i.e., the claims raised by the Shi'ite theologians on the superior faculties of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in comparison to the other Companions of the Prophet. The main theme of this work that concerns us here has been signalled by Pellat, as he says:

Kitāb al-Masā'il wa 'l-Jawābāt fī al-Ma'rifā (Questions and Answers on the Subject of Knowledge) must have been an account of the teachings of the different Mu'tazili schools on the knowledge of God,⁴⁰² the only surviving fragment of which suggests that al-Jāhiz believed that God can only be known by a process of [acquired] ratiocination by *Iktisāb* and not by [necessary] intuition, (*Iḍtirār*) which implies that 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib could not have had an innate knowledge of God, and could not therefore be seen as having had an intrinsically better claim than other Muslim converts to the Imamate after the Prophet's death.⁴⁰³

al-Jāhiz's passage that seems relevant here reads:

In reply to those who ask whether knowledge is acquired or innate, I say that man knows God only through His messengers, not through concepts such as motion and stillness, union and separation [. . .] If they ask me: Was their recognition of the truthfulness of the messengers by acquisition (*Iktisāb*) or by a priori knowledge (*Iḍtirār*) I reply: By *Iḍtirār*, innateness⁴⁰⁴ [. . .] The onlooker is convinced by evidence only if he already has experience of the world and is acquainted with its ways and its laws. If he had not enough experience to recognize the limitations of human devices . . . to distinguish the possible from the impossible, . . . it would mean nothing to him. They may say: But how did he see, understand and experience the world, if he came upon the Prophet's signs (or the Prophet and his signs forced themselves on him) when he was an innocent child or a young man - for a man is still an infant until he reaches the age of reason? Was it by means of a direct and sudden comprehension [i.e., *Ilhām*]? In which of the two cases had he seen, understood and experienced the world? Was it when he was an innocent child . . . or after growing up and coming into possession of all his faculties?⁴⁰⁵

The above question is quite significant: in raising the issue as to how do innate knowledge and acquired knowledge relate, and which precedes the other or whether they co-exist? In fact, al-Jāhiz has answered his addressee's quest by acknowledging acquisition and innateness (*Iktisāb* and obvious compelling or proofless apriori knowledge, *Iḍtirār*). In another passage al-Jāhiz suggests that real appreciation of the significance of the Prophet and his signs - which takes the form of spontaneous submission and acceptance - could only follow the necessary

402 i.e. Knowing about Him, by use of reason.

403 Pellat, 'al-Jāhiz' in *Abbāsīd Belles Lettres*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1990), pp. 85.

404 Innateness is not the right translation here, the word necessity *Iḍtirār* is better. See "K. al-Masā'il wa al-Jawābāt fī al-Ma'rifā ", *Rasā'il*, 4: 60, where al-Jāhiz is referring to an overwhelming and incumbent acceptance of mature people witnessing the signs of Prophets.

405 Pellat, *The Life and Works of al-Jāhiz*, pp. 34-37. This argument will be recycled in al-Jāhiz's K.al-'Uthmāniyya, pp. 7-9.

developmental stage of adulthood. Only after the person has been properly trained to distinguish the realities of life and acquire the capacity to differentiate the possible from the impossible, is he capable of appreciating the truth and impact of what has been forwarded by Messengers and Prophets, whether he witnessed them personally, by *ʿIyān* or only heard of them, by true *burhān* and strong evidence (*khābar*). For those who witness the demonstrated miracles, once the common sense of the *mukallaf* is sufficiently developed, (by *Iktisāb*), he is most probably expected to exhibit an a priori acceptance, a commonsensical submission to the Prophet's demonstrated miracles, by a process of *Iḍṭirār*.⁴⁰⁶ The idea of *Iḍṭirār* has often been described as a typical Jāhīzian doctrine of epistemology.⁴⁰⁷ When the mental faculties of man have been fully developed, he is then ready to recognize the presence of God, "This is the time when God [through a true messenger], puts comforting words in his ears (*khābar*) and/or compelling signs before his eyes"⁴⁰⁸ and his knowledge is described as "acquired", but his acceptance of it - however - is "innately" undertaken; i.e., "when he sees one of God's messengers bringing the dead back to life, healing lepers or men blind from birth, or cleaving the waves of the sea, he needs not to take thought or be urged on or be shown proofs or [further] experiences, he has already passed that stage, and his understanding is perfect."⁴⁰⁹ This (necessary acceptance) i.e., innateness cannot, however, be assumed to have had an exclusive precedence over rational cognition: it can only follow it; it cannot replace it or assume its role; as al-Jāhīz puts it:

The onlooker is convinced by religious evidence (and can emit such an intuitive reflex of acceptance) only if he already has experience of the world and is acquainted with its ways and laws: if he had not enough experience to recognize the limitations of human devices and contrivances to distinguish the possible from the impossible and tell what can happen by accident what cannot, it [the signs and miracles] would mean nothing to him.⁴¹⁰

In this sense, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib could not be accepted by the Baṣrite Muʿtazilite figure of al-Jāhīz, to have been enjoying a 'superhuman' innate path to religious truth, as al-Jāhīz himself admits this case to be' extraordinary and against

406 See K. al-Masā'il wa al-Jawābāt fi al-Maʿrifa, *Rasā'il*, 4 : 63-65.

407 i.e., that *al-Maʿārif darūrat Ṭibāʿ*, See Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jābbār, *Sharh al-Uṣūl al-Khamṣa* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1965) pp. 54-55 where al-Jāhīz's claim that knowledge [of] God is by *Iḍṭirār* is criticized, and ʿAbd al-Jābbār says it is possible by *Istidlāl*.

408 Pellat, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

409 *Ibid.* This reminds one of the stage of "ʿAyn al-Yaqīn", following the stage of "ʿilm al-Yaqīn".

410 Pellat, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

nature.⁴¹¹ It is this very theme that al-Jāhiz will soon develop in his famous work "al-ʿUthmāniyya".

This passage therefore marks a moment in al-Jāhiz's thinking (to be immediately developed in al-ʿUthmāniyya) that aims to undermine the Shīʿite image of ʿAlī, by paving the way for such a purpose as al-Jāhiz demonstrated in his concept of acquired and *a priori* knowledge. As the latter can only be recognized/achieved by someone who has gained the acquired ability to reason, it follows that no child - even if *Iḍṭirār* is potentially there - can '*a priori*' accept religious truth and distinguish between a true prophet and a false one simply because he has not acquired enough knowledge of the world, i.e., he has not gained enough 'acquired' knowledge conducive to the state of compulsory intuitive acceptance (*Iḍṭirār*).

411 Pellat., p. 36. It is inconceivable for al-Jāhiz to expect a maturely intuitive reflex and necessary acceptance of religious truth to come before the subject has matured and gained experience, so as to make him distinguish the *ḥujja* of the *nabī* from the *ḥīla* (trick) of the *mutanabbī* (see *Rasā'il*; 4:60, 62) i.e., it is against human nature to expect or believe that a child of nine had been endowed with such a dimension, as early as that age.

2-Kitāb al-ʿUthmāniyya

Below is an outline of the main points to be discussed in our analysis of K. al-ʿUthmāniyya:

1. Preface:

- I- Meanings of the Term ʿUthmānī.
- II- al-Jāḥiẓ's brand of ʿUthmānism.
- III- Setting and Time of composition.
- IV- al-Ḥājirī (232 A.H.) vs. Zahniser (201 A.H.).
- V- My opinion (203-212 A.H.) [External (al-Ṭabarī, Yāqūt) + contextual evidences].

2. Analysis:

- I- Issue of *Tafdīl*.
- II- Position of al-ʿUthmāniyya contrasted to that of al-Jāḥiẓ.
- III- al-Jāḥiẓ's approach to the caliph and method in treating the issue
- IV- al-ʿUthmāniyya's basis for Abū Bakr's Imamate:
 - A. Era of Prophet:
 - (1) Prophetic approval.
 - (2) Qur'anic reference.
 - (3) Further Qur'anic reference.
 - B. Era of Ṣaḥāba.
- V- ʿUthmānī defence of Abū Bakr's Imamate by refuting:
 - A. Rāfiḍa's interpretations of Abū Bakr's speeches
 - B. Rāfiḍa's claims of opposition fronts against Abū Bakr:
Salmān, Khālid b. Saʿīd, Bilāl, Miqdād, ʿAmmār, Abū Dharr,
Usāma b. Zayd, al-Zubayr, al-Anṣār, ʿAlī.
- VI- ʿUthmānī Critique of the Rāfiḍa's arguments on ʿAlī's:
 - A- *taqiyya*.
 - B- special ʿilm and *Ilhām*.
 - C- caliphate:
 - (i) designatory rights (*naṣṣ*; Qur'anic/Prophetic basis).
 - (ii) opposition blocks met by ʿAlī.
- VII A- ʿUthmānī doctrine of Imamate:(based on merit not on descent).
 - B- modes of choosing the Imam:
 - i- popular acclamation.
 - ii- ʿAhd (to ʿUmar).

iii- *Shūrā* (to ʿUthmān).

iv- Revolution (how are the ʿAbbāsids justified).

VIII. Significance of K. al-ʿUthmāniyya:

A- al-Jāhiz's role.

B- Watt's view.

C- was al-Jāhiz successful?

Kitāb al-ʿUthmāniyya

I. Meanings of the Term ʿUthmānī

Watt has rightly observed the different applications of the adjective ʿUthmānī in different periods. Although information on this little used term is scanty,⁴¹² he suggests that a study of this term is promising as it gives "further insight into the complex character of the general religious movement and the variety of political attitudes to be found in it."⁴¹³

Out of the conflicting definitions of the term cited by different sources, I propose the following sketch to cater for the varieties that the term had assumed and been applied in different eras. The term ʿUthmāniyya has been applied in the following ways:

- 1 - Loyalists supportive of ʿUthmān's caliphate and the view that he legally got office.⁴¹⁴

412 There is no definition of the term in Shahrīstānī's *Milāl*, and many other Muslim historiographers. Masʿūdī's and Ṭabarī's use of the term is contextual, i.e., needs to be inferred from the context. Watt seems to have touched this point in a fair yet not extensive manner, but Lammens has brilliantly traced the term in the historical and literary sources and furnished us with a good index to these sources. See H. Lammens, "Études Sur Le Regne du Calife Omayyade Mo'awia I^{er}", Deuxième Série, *Le Parti des ʿOtmaniya et des Moʿtazila*", *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale*, (Beirut: Université Saint Joseph, 1907) pp. 1-17. Of course, Lammens's suggestion that the ʿAbbāsīd Muʿtazila are similar to those who politically withdrew from battles against ʿAlī or Muʿāwiya has some truth, yet we do not need to connect *ʿtizāl* to the days of ʿUthmān.

413 Watt, *Formative*, pp. 76-77. This conclusion will be verified below. See the following table illustrating the changing meanings of the term, especially of the time of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī and that of Muʿāwiya.

414 See Pellat, 'L'imamat', p. 33, and Lammens, "Le Parti Des ʿOtmaniya," pp. 5, 11.

- 2 - repudiators of those who revolted against him and those who held he was unjustly killed,⁴¹⁵ seeking to revenge his blood but not holding ʿAlī responsible.
- 3 - Those who preferred ʿUthmān over ʿAlī in merit, and ahead of him in faḍl, in opposition to the ʿAlawī Shīʿīs who apply the same outlook to ʿAlī in relation to ʿUthmān.⁴¹⁶
- 4- Rejectors of ʿAlī's caliphate, including those:
- a accusing him of a possible role in ʿUthmān's death.⁴¹⁷
 - b rallying around Muʿāwiya who assumed the role of blood avenger of ʿUthmān.⁴¹⁸ Hence those ʿUthmānīs became Umawīs, but not all ʿUthmānīs were pro-Umayyad; Some ʿUthmānīs were:
 - c not necessarily rallying around Muʿāwiya,⁴¹⁹ but supportive of ʿUthmān in Egypt.⁴²⁰
 - d raising a demand for a *Shūrā*: (Ṭalḥa, ʿĀ'isha, al-Zubayr) i.e., by the upholders of the principle of the early caliphate i.e., the right of the families of the non-Hāshimī early Companions, now living in Medina.⁴²¹ The term ʿUthmānī was applied to one that did not favour either Muʿāwiya, (since he did not belong to the early Companions but was

415 See Madelung, *E.I.*² S.v., 'Imāma', Lammens describes these as protesters who could have formed the nucleus of the ʿUthmāniyya party. These protesters or loyalists to the martyred caliph (Shīʿat ʿUthmān) included Ḥassān b. Thābit, Kaʿb b. Mālik, al-Nuʿmān b. Bashir, Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, Ṭalḥa, Zubayr, and ʿĀ'isha. Lammens refers for this to Ibn Saʿd's *Tabaqāt*, and al- Iṣfahānī's *Aghānī*

416 See Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Die Klassen der Muʿtaziliten, [Tabaqāt al-Muʿtazila]* (al-Nashrāt al-Islāmiyya of German Orientalists, Beirut: Lebanon, 1380/1961), 21: 48. Ibn al-Murtaḍā describes al-Jāhīz's teacher, al-ʿAllāf (d. 235?) as preferring ʿAlī over ʿUthmān, and thus describes him as a typical Shīʿī of that era. The ʿUthmānī, therefore he adds, was one who preferred ʿUthmān over ʿAlī.

417 See al-Jāhīz, 'Taṣwīb ʿAlī'. The ʿUthmānī accusation rests on the Shīʿī-Khārijī claims that they were proud of ʿAlī's alleged killing of ʿUthmān. Lammens, *op cit.*, p. 11 says that the pro-Muʿāwiya ʿUthmānīs have become convinced of ʿAlī's share in the revolt of Medina, without giving any reference.

418 See Lammens, quoted by Pellat, *Ibid.*

419 Pellat', *Le Milieu Basrien*, (Arabic Translation), p. 256.

420 See Watt, *Formative*, pp. 76-77.

421 Madelung, *Ibid.*

accepted for the sake of unity) or ʿAlī's succession.⁴²² In al-Ṭabari's chronicles of the year 61A.H.(Karbalā'), we are informed of one of this type, Zuhayr b. al-Qayn, who had never backed ʿAlī in his rule yet rushed to rescue al-Ḥusayn for religious motives.⁴²³

- e With the rule of Yazīd I (60-63/680-683), ʿUthmānis break up into being pro-Zubayrid or pro-Umayyad. The ʿUthmānī al-Nuʿmān b. Bashīr, the governor of Kūfa installed by Muʿāwiya, joins the revolt of Ibn al Zubayr⁴²⁴ (60-72/680-692). Under the Marwānids (63-132/683-750), other ʿUthmānis become openly pro-Umayyad (the cult of ʿUthmān) and others remain ʿUthmānī without becoming Umawīs.⁴²⁵

- 5 - accepters of ʿAlī's sound character who abstained from cursing him,⁴²⁶ yet contrast him with ʿUthmān to the advantage of the latter against the Rāfiḍī portrait of the former,⁴²⁷ presumably practised by the ʿUthmānī scholars of Baṣra and of a Kūfan mosque,⁴²⁸ and still operative - according to Ibn al-Murtaḍā - in al-Jāḥiẓ's own time as reflected by al-ʿAllāf, who is described as a Shiʿī.⁴²⁹

The above applications obviously cut through a long period of time, from ʿUthmān's death, to ʿAlī's time, passing through Umayyad rule and ending at al-Jāḥiẓ's group of ʿUthmāniyya. Watt's remark on the different applications of the term has echoes here, as the above uses do reflect evolutionary and developmental stages in the formative period of Islamic thought and society. The same term takes us from (a) Umayyad ʿUthmānis, to (b) non-Umayyad ʿUthmānis. It would be interesting here to relate the pro-Umayyad ʿUthmānis (i.e., ʿUthmānī remnants of the Umayyad era) to the appearing cult of Muʿāwiya (Nābita) of al-Jāḥiẓ's time, and the evolving

422 Madelung, *Ibid.*

423 Ṭabari, *Tārīkh*, (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1963), 5: 417.

424 Lammens, "Le Parti..." p. 15.

425 *Ibid.*, p. 17, such as the Muftī of Egypt Yazīd b. Ḥabīb (d.128/745)

426 al-Jāḥiẓ, *K. al-ʿUthmāniyya.*, Ed. by A. Hārūn, (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1374/1955) pp. 48, 93-94.

427 al-Jāḥiẓ, *Ibid.*, and *K. al-Hayawān*, VII: 7 where ʿUthmānī is equated with the objection to the superior virtues of ʿAlī and to his claims to have been the immediate successor of the Prophet. The Muftī of Egypt Yazīd b. Ḥabīb (d. 128 A.H.) is described as ʿUthmānī without being pro-Umayyad. See Watt, *Formative*, pp. 76-77.

428 Watt, *Formative*, p. 77 and Pellat, *Le Milieu*, p. 256 (in Arabic).

429 See Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *op.cit.*

group of *ahl-al-Sunna*, including the ʿUthmānīs of al-Jāḥiẓ's pro-ʿAbbāsīd type. This line of connection from the original historical ʿUthmānīs to the pro-Umayyad and ʿAbbāsīd brands is confirmed by al-Jāḥiẓ when he couples the ʿUthmāniyya of his time to the contemporaneous *ahl-al-ḥadīth*⁴³⁰ and *ḥashwiyya*.⁴³¹ By recalling first al-Jāḥiẓ's unique references in his treatise "Taṣwīb ʿAlī" to that Baṣran mosque which was used by the Muʿtazilites and the Nābita at the same time,⁴³² and the other reference in the same source where *Nawābit* and *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* are coupled together in their position to abstain from dwelling on ʿUthmān's murder in the way used by *ahl al-Kalām* against the criteria of *Sunna* and *Jamāʿa*,⁴³³ it becomes less difficult to accept finding the Muʿtazilī al-Jāḥiẓ among the Traditionists.⁴³⁴ From these references (in ʿUthmāniyya and Taṣwīb), an initial relation between *ahl al-Ḥadīth* and the Muʿtazila, can safely be assumed i.e., that the Muʿtazila of al-Jāḥiẓ's Baṣra were originally ʿUthmānī *muḥaddithūn* before they assumed the distinguishing features of ʿUthmānism and/or *Iʿtizāl*, so that those ʿUthmānī *muḥaddithūn and fuqahā'* who survived the Umayyads, could equally have become:

- 1 - Muʿtazilī ʿUthmānīds (pro-ʿAbbāsīd, Anti-Umayyad, pro-ʿAlid) like al-Jāḥiẓ.
- 2 - Nābitites (pro-Muʿāwiya), anti-ʿAlid, rehabilitating Muʿāwiya as a means to oppose the ʿAbbāsīd regime.
- 3 - Ḥanbalite Traditionists (pro-ʿAbbāsīd, pro-Umayyad, pro-ʿAlid) who were part and forerunners of what became known as *Ahl al-Sunna* or Sunnites.⁴³⁵

Ibn al-Rīwandī's future puzzling remark that al-Jāḥiẓ was a Nābitite is thus resolved: If some of the ʿUthmānīs became *Nābita* and cherished the cult of Muʿāwiya, (i.e., opposing ʿAlī) this should not make us mistake al-Jāḥiẓ for being a Nābitī. al-Jāḥiẓ was a ʿUthmānī in the sense that "ʿUthmānītes were primarily

430 ʿUthmāniyya, p. 176.

431 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

432 'Taṣwīb', parag. 12.

433 *Ibid.*, parag. 44.

434 See Watt, *Formative*, p. 167 and this relation is also confirmed by Pellat, *Le Milieu*, pp. 135-137.

435 See *Ibid.*, F. ʿOmar has the same opinion, with the addition that the transformation of the ʿUthmāniyya into *ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa*, was due to the ʿAbbāsīd religious efforts and policy to create a Sunnī orthodox basis that could sustain their new state and religious policy. See ʿOmar, *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awā'il*, 2: 93.

concerned to oppose the undue exaltation of ʿAlī by the Rāfiḍites."⁴³⁶ The only common point between *Nābita* and ʿUthmāniyya is criticism of ʿAlī and after that they diverge in cherishing or not cherishing the figure of Muʿāwiya. Watt's suggestion that a group of the ʿUthmāniyya became at least a section of the forerunners of *ahl al-Sunna* justifies the above transformation that the ʿUthmāniyya may have undergone, in the sense that Traditionists from the ʿUthmānī circles or from other places (such as Ḥanbalites of Khurāsān) merged together in what is known as *ahl al-Sunna*. In this framework, Watt regards the Sunnī view that arranges merit of the first four caliphs in the chronological order of ruling, "as a result of arguments such as those of al-Jāḥiẓ,"⁴³⁷ which proves his point on the relation between *ahl al-Sunna* and the ʿUthmānīs.

Now that we are discussing the issue of transformation within sects, it should be stated here, contrary to what has been held of al-Jāḥiẓ, that al-Jāḥiẓ started as a scholar of Ḥadīth, but being disappointed with those traditionists who accepted traditions non-critically and literally,⁴³⁸ he decided to remain critical of those rigid ʿUthmānī Baṣran Traditionists. That does not mean, as Sandūbī rightly points out, that the Muʿtazilī al-Jāḥiẓ abandoned *Ḥadīth* altogether: It was the literal unexamining approach to understanding certain *Ḥadīths* and the unexamined chains of *Isnād* that he opposed, as his literature is full of authentic *Ḥadīths* against those forwarded by the *Ḥashwiyya* (literalists), of the very same school of *Ḥadīth* in Baṣra that they came from.

al-Jāḥiẓ's celebration of the famous Sunnī traditionist Abū Dāwūd is significant; when Abū Dāwūd introduced himself as a man from '*Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth*', al-Jāḥiẓ was angry at being mistaken as a man of the *Ḥashwiyya*. When Abū Dāwūd pronounced his name, al-Jāḥiẓ at once welcomed him. This relation between the Muʿtazilite al-Jāḥiẓ and the Traditionist suggests that the feud between *ʿItizāl* and *ahl al-Ḥadīth* needs further investigation. al-Jāḥiẓ did not reject those authentic narrators whose standards of authenticity were as high as his, as is evident in his ʿUthmāniyya. The following table summarizes the change in the application of the term ʿUthmānī from ʿUthmān's death up to al-Jāḥiẓ's time:

436 Watt, *Formative*, p. 166.

437 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

438 See al-Sandūbī, *Adab al-Jāḥiẓ*, (Cairo: 1931) pp. 24-25. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in his *Tārīkh* is cited here as attributing to al-Jāḥiẓ his role in transmitting *Ḥadīth*. Abū Dāwūd, the famous transmitter, paid a visit to al-Jāḥiẓ's residence for the sake of gathering a *Ḥadīth*.

Caliph	Time/Period	Definition of °Uthmānī and its Representatives
°Uthmān	d. 35/656 upon °Uthmān's death	• Neutralists, siding neither to °Alī nor with Mu°āwiya (Lammens, pp. 5-6)
°Alī	35-40/656-661 36/656 37/657	• °Uthmānī Loyalists Ḥassān, Ka°b, Sa°d, al-Nu°mān, Ṭalḥa, Zubayr) convinced of °Uthmān's innocence, seek to revenge him, protest against °Alī's rule without holding him responsible for martyred caliph (Lammens, pp. 5, 11). : Protest at battle of the Camel : Protest at Ṣiffīn (by rallying with Mu°āwiya's demand to avenge °Uthmān, were not yet Umawī partisans: [°Ubayd Allāh b. °Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Abū Hurayra, 4000 Qur'ān readers] plus 10,000 °Uthmānis in Egypt, Yemen, °Iraq who found in Mu°āwiya instrument of revenge (Lammens, pp. 7-8, 15)
Yazīd I (al-Ḥusayn)	60-63/680-683	• Some °Uthmānī loyalists have become convinced of °Alī's role in revolt of Medina, refuse °Alī's Imamate [without being Umawīs] (Lammens, p. 11) TRANSFORMATIONS: - Ex-°Uthmānī (Z. b. al-Qayn) sides with Ḥusayn at Karbalā' in 680 though he had never backed °Alī. - Ex-°Uthmānī (Ṣuḥār b. al-°Abbās al-°Abdī) sides with the Khawāri (Lammens, p. 13). - Ex-°Uthmānī (A. Ibn Hammām) sides with Mukhtār's revolt in Kūfa.
Ibn al-Zubayr	60-72/680-692	- °Uthmānīs break into pro-Zubayrid or pro-Umayyad. (al-Nu°mān b. Bashīr joins Ibn al-Zubayr's revolt), (Lammens, p. 15)
Marwānī Umayyads	63-132/683-750	- other °Uthmānīs become pro-Umayyad (cult of °Uthmān) (Lammens, p. 17), but Muftī of Egypt (d. 128) remained a non-Umawī °Uthmānī (Watt, Formative).
°Abbāsids: al-Rashīd	170-193/786-809	- Provincial governor, a blood descendant of °Uthmān. - Başrans: Non-Umawī, °Uthmānī scholars indicate failure of Umayyad and °Abbāsīd measures to convert them (Lammens, citing Ibn Sa°d's Ṭabaqāt).
al-Ma'mūn (al-Jāḥiẓ)	198-218/813-833	al-Jāḥiẓ's °Uthmāniyya recycles the non-Umawī Zubayrid °Uthmānī call for <i>Shūrā</i> (i.e., that <i>Khilāfa</i> should not be based on <i>Qarāba</i>). They were critical of <u>Umawī</u> , <u>Shi°ī</u> and <u>°Abbāsī</u> criterion of caliphate based on descent and were possibly remnants of the Zubayrid group.

II. al-Jāhiz's Brand of 'Uthmānism:

al-Jāhiz should be seen as a product of the remnants of the supporters of 'Uthmān who were still surviving in Baṣra, the place that witnessed the first revolt against the murder of 'Uthmān (party of 'Ā'isha-Ṭalḥa-Zubayr). Those doubts on the murder, including 'Alī's possible share in it could have continued to exist in the hearts of the (Khārijī-Shī'ite) Baṣrans. al-Jāhiz's 'Uthmānism obviously meant an approval of 'Uthmān's legitimate caliphate, but what distinguishes him from his Baṣran comrades (such as the Khārijites who are said to believe that the murderers of 'Uthmān were their spiritual ancestors),⁴³⁹ or from those Muslims who are quoted by him as regarding 'Alī's killing of 'Uthmān as one of his noblest deeds,⁴⁴⁰ is that he never accuses 'Alī of 'Uthmān's blood.⁴⁴¹

In al-Jāhiz's time, the term 'Uthmānī should be seen within the new politico-religious concerns of the community, in the sense that it was re-habilitated by those Baṣran Mu'tazilites who formed a group ('*Uthmāniyyūn*), praising 'Uthmān (up to the first six years of his rule and without having to defend him indefinitely), as a political tool of ninth century politics that retrieves history in order to assert contemporary political concerns, namely in reaction to the claims of the Rāfiḍites and their hostility towards the first three caliphs.⁴⁴² So what distinguished al-Jāhiz from some of the 'Uthmāniyya, is that he was not pro-Umayyad, and from the other ones, is that he did not accuse 'Alī of 'Uthmān's death and accepted 'Alī's Imamate. His rehabilitation of the figure of 'Uthmān matches the general Baṣran line of *ʿIzāl* that used his figure for political purposes, without having nonetheless to defend him. Thus the historical 'Uthmān is invoked to serve the following political aims:

- 1- To emphasize the legitimacy of the patriarchal Caliphs, against the Rāfiḍi-Zaydī claims that opposed the above premise.

- 2- To try to win al-Ma'mūn to the side of al-Jāhiz and Baṣran Mu'tazilites from the growing influences of the Baghdādī scholars over al-Ma'mūn's position towards 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib; i.e., to win al-Ma'mūn to the orthodox position that the merits of the *Rāshidūn* follow their respective chronological order of rulership, in the following

439 See Watt, *Formative*, p. 76.

440 See 'Taṣwīb', parag. 44.

441 See Pellat, 'L'imamat', p. 31, and the 'Uthmāniyya.

442 See *Ibid.*, p. 51 and Watt, *Formative*, p. 166.

sequence: Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, ʿAlī against the Baghdādī Zaydī proposition of *al-mafdūl* i.e., that ʿAlī was the most excellent, without denying Abū Bakr's caliphate, such that excellence does not have to follow the historical order of ruling.

3 - Probably to justify the absence of the ʿAbbāsids from the political scene during that time, without forgetting to hint at the legitimate basis for their forthcoming rule (This, as we shall find below, depends on al-Jāḥiẓ's subtle argument on the quality of merit that paved the way for the *Rāshidūn*, justified the ʿAbbāsīd absence, yet keeps room for them in the way they combined merit and descent, not to forget an allusion to revolution, through which al-Jāḥiẓ could have accounted for the coming of the ʿAbbāsids too.

It seems quite likely to me that the ʿUthmāniyya as a group could have encompassed all or some of the above quoted variations in outlook; I say variations, because the onlookers themselves were varied and belonged to different groups: the remnants of the *Shūrā* at Medina (those non-Hāshimites who put merit above descent and called for *Shūrā*) were ʿUthmānids, in the sense they approved of ʿUthmān's legal caliphate throughout his rule, (ʿĀisha-Ṭalha-Zubayr group). Later, this group could have been represented by *muḥaddithūn*, who narrated the Prophetic tradition that ʿUthmān will be killed unjustly (*yuqtal maẓlūm^{an}*). Rehabilitation of Muʿāwiya and even ʿAlī had already been found in Ibn Ḥanbal, who is a case of an ʿUthmānī who was equally pro-ʿAbbāsīd. al-Jāḥiẓ, however, represents a divergence from this type of ʿUthmānism, in the sense that while sharing the Khārijite Baṣran climate that believed in the exclusive superiority of merit over noble descent, and accepting ʿUthmān (owing to his Baṣrite-ʿUthmānid origin) he was, however, influenced by the Khārijites who had rejected ʿUthmān's rule by saying that his rule was only valid in the first six years. Against the Baṣran *Muḥaddithūn*, al-Jāḥiẓ, however, did not extend his ʿUthmānism and respect of ʿUthmān to the level reached by the *Nābita* when they used his figure and that of Muʿāwiya as a tool to tease the ʿAbbāsīds. As we shall see below the assassinated caliph, ʿUthmān, was used as a tool to suit other purposes, such as a means to justify the caliphate of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar and hence tease the Rāfiḍī block which had rejected the Imamship of both. Therefore one should be careful in using this term, as it had been used respectively by:

- a - early Companions (Hāshimī or non-Hāshimī).
- b - the Muḥaddithūn⁴⁴³ (Umayyads or ʿAbbāsids).
- c - the pro-Umayyad Nābita (critical of ʿAlī).
- d - the pro-ʿAbbāsīd al-Jāḥiẓ, who seems to forward his own brand of ʿUthmāniyya, although he hates to be classified as anything other than a Muʿtazilī judge⁴⁴⁴ among the various sects, namely the extreme *Bakriyya* and the extreme ʿAlawiyya.

Hence the term "ʿUthmānī" was a quite flexible one that encompassed several incompatible positions. Ṭalḥa-Zubayr's party was one (ʿUthmānīs) as they believed ʿUthmān was killed unjustly and were suspicious of the conditions surrounding ʿAlī's Imamate to the level of rejecting it (battle of the Camel) and were also rejecting Muʿāwiya and Umayyads (Ibn al-Zubayr's rebellion), in their constant unachieved request for a *Shūrā*. But an ʿUthmānī could have been pro-Umayyad in the way the Syrian troops rallied around Muʿāwiya, the relative and *Walī*, blood avenger of ʿUthmān, but whether they should be described as ʿUthmānī is problematic, for we do not hear in *K. al-ʿUthmāniyya* any significant reference to Muʿāwiya and the Umayyad dynasty or even to the *nawābit*. As such, the Zubayrids and not pro-Umayyads, could have best represented the ʿUthmānī outlook, or conversely, these ʿUthmānīs of al-Jāḥiẓ could have been remnants of the Zubayrid party.

This can be confirmed if we remember the common politico-religious opinion between them (a) that the caliphate should be based on *Shūrā* and solely based on merit (b) the caliphate should belong to the *Muhājirūn* and their descendants in the fashion laid by ʿUmar, and it should not belong to descendants of *Ṭulaqā'* (Umayyads) (c) they had high esteem for the Companions (d) claimed vengeance for ʿUthmān's death and (e) criticized ʿAlī's Imamate and approved that of ʿUthmān.

As such, although the term ʿUthmānī could have accommodated anti-Umayyad (Zubayrid) as well as pro-Muʿāwiya trends, (Ḥanbalites) the ʿUthmānīs of al-Jāḥiẓ were actually reflective of the former and not the latter.

443 These were critical and suspicious of ʿAlī. See *K. al-ʿUthmāniyya*.

444 See *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.

In the ʿAbbāsīd period, suspicion or rejection of ʿAlī is preserved among the remnants of the Zubayrid party in Baṣra and Egypt, besides the Khawārij. The Muʿtazilite al-Jāḥiẓ stands in an intermediate position between the ʿUthmānīs - described in al-ʿUthmāniyya as one group of *Muḥaddithūn* and *fuqahāʾ* who were suspicious of and rejected ʿAlī's Imamate, yet without declaring him a *Kāfir* - and the Khārijites who viewed him as a *Kāfir* besides the Rāfiḍa who rejected the first three patriarchal caliphs . The following table summarises the situation before al-Jāḥiẓ:

	Abū Bakr	ʿUthmān	ʿAlī	Muʿāwīya/ Umayyads	ʿAbbāsids
(Ṭalḥa Zubayr, ʿĀ'isha)	accepted	accepted (seen as the martyred caliph)	rejected (received office in dubious conditions)	rejected (by son of al-Zubayr)	---
Z. b. al-Qayn	accepted	accepted	rejected but later backed Ḥusayn at Karbalā'	rejected	----
Ibn al-Zubayr	accepted	accepted	? fought at battle of Camel	rejected	----
Shīʿāt ʿUthmān in Egypt (656 A.D.)	accepted	accepted	rejected	not necessarily supporting	----
ʿUthmānī Muftī of Egypt Yazīd b. Ḥabīb d. 128)	accepted	highly merited	dismerted	not Umawī	----
Troops backing Muʿāwīya	accepted	accepted	rejected	supported	----
Başran ʿUthmānī scholars	accepted	accepted (seen as the martyred caliph)	rejected Imamate, without dismeriting or cursing	Objectionable to any dynastic rule	rejected!
Başran Khārijites	accepted	rejected policy (accused him of nepotism) although accepted first six years.	rejected	rejected	rejected
The Başran al-Jāhiz	accepted	accepted in ʿUthmāniyya, but (only first six years of ruling) in al-Nābita.	accepted best after ʿUthmān	rejected and seen as blasphemers	supported
ʿAbbāsīd Muḥaddithūn: 1- al-Nābita	accepted	accepted	rejected	supported	rejected
2 - Ibn Ḥanbal	accepted	accepted	accepted best after ʿUthmān	accepted	accepted
Zaydī Shīʿites:	accepted as <i>al-mafdūl</i>	- accepted as <i>al-mafdūl</i> (for the 1st six years)	accepted as <i>al-afdāl</i> after Prophet	rejected	possibly accepted ʿAbbāsids as <i>mafdūl</i>
Rāfiḍī (Imāmī) Shīʿites	rejected	rejected	accepted as the only <i>afdāl</i>	rejected	rejected
al-Nazzām	- accepted	?	defended ⁴⁴⁵	rejected	- supported
al-ʿAllāf	- accepted	- accepted	preferred over ʿUthmān ⁴⁴⁶	rejected	- defended

445 See A. Abū Ridā, *al-Nazzām*, p. 176.

446 See Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *op.cit.*

III. Setting and Time of Composition:

The thorny issue of timing al-Jāḥiẓ's works reaches its peak when one tries to date this Kitāb that is "the most complete of all the extant works on the Imamate from the pen of al-Jāḥiẓ."⁴⁴⁷ It has been suggested that this work was composed during the period of al-Ma'mūn (198-218 A.H.) or during the reign of al-Mutawakkil (232-248 A.H.); al-Ḥājirī argues on the basis of the anti-ʿAlid tone in the ʿUthmāniyya that the work belongs to the period when anti-ʿAlid policies were pursued by al-Mutawakkil. These seem to have been initiated four years after he came to power (in 236 A.H.).⁴⁴⁸ According to this view, the date of the ʿUthmāniyya would be somewhere between the years 232 to 247 A.H.⁴⁴⁹

On the other hand, Zahniser argues that the book is one of the early works by al-Jāḥiẓ on the Imamate which were submitted to al-Ma'mūn before 202 A.H. because they were submitted by al-Yazīdī who died in that year. In support of this, he cites the following external and internal evidences:

The first external evidence is based on Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's reference to a refutation of this book by one al-Iskāfī, who died in 240/854. Of course this information can be used against Zahniser's proposal (that al-Mutawakkil could not have been the intended reader of the treatise). Zahniser himself has noticed that if the ʿUthmāniyya could not have been written after 240, al-Iskāfī's refutation could be used to indicate the presence of eight years of al-Mutawakkil's reign (232-240) during which al-Jāḥiẓ may have written the work. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's deduction that al-Iskāfī refuted the work in his youth is not helpful and is slightly weakened by the fact that we do not know Iskāfī's exact age when he died.

The second external evidence that Zahniser uses to confirm his conclusion rests on al-Jāḥiẓ's own reference in his introduction to K. al-Ḥayawān to *qawl al-ʿUthmāniyya*. As K. al-Ḥayawān was addressed to Ibn al-Zayyāt who died in 233/Nov. 847, Zahniser suggests it would be unlikely to assume that Jāḥiẓ had

447 Mathias Zahniser, "Insights from the ʿUthmāniyya of al-Jāḥiẓ into the Religious Policy of al-Ma'mūn", *MW*, 69 (1979). p. 10.

448 See Ṭabarī's annals of the year 236.

449 al-Ḥājirī, *al-Jāḥiẓ*, pp. 187 and 181.

completed it in the four months period between the accession of al-Mutawakkil in August of 847 and the death of al-Zayyāt, given the poor health conditions of al-Jāhiz at that time.

This evidence is, in my view, equally slightly weakened by the fact that al-Jāhiz composed many works after 232 A.H. I owe this information to the editor of K. al-Ḥayawān who has suggested that al-Jāhiz's illness in the latter portion of his life did not, in fact, prevent him from writing.⁴⁵⁰

Furthermore, I have noticed that the present introduction of K. al-Ḥayawān appears to have been re-written (hence *qawl al-°Uthmāniyya* need not have necessarily preceded the year 232 A.H.) as there are obvious attacks on the addressee in it. This is hardly appropriate as a recommendation of the work to Ibn al-Zayyāt, and was probably included in the original introduction after Ibn al-Zayyāt's disgrace.

Zahniser, however, depends on internal contextual evidences to back his proposal. Zahniser has noticed that the "decidedly Mu°tazilite stamp upon the treatise" such as strong dislike for *taqlīd*, repeated appeals to the mean between extremes in deciding questions of historical accuracy, his critical theory concerning the use and value of Prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) and other historical data of proof, and his views of what it is possible that God 'should do' viewed from the Mu°tazilite conviction that God's actions be consistent with His unity and justice strongly indicate the categories of reason and dogma championed by the Mu°tazilī movement, thus he confirms: "under these circumstances, al-Mutawakkil could not conceivably have been the intended reader of the treatise since his opposition to Mu°tazilism was nearly as strong as his opposition to the supporters of °Alī."⁴⁵¹

But knowing from chroniclers like Ibn Khallikān⁴⁵² and Ṭabarī, that al-Mutawakkil did not immediately expel the Mu°tazilī Qāḍī Aḥmad Ibn Abī Du'ād from office, for he and his son Muḥammad continued to administer "*mazālim al-°Askar and qadā*", before he sacked them in 237, we may conclude that al-Mutawakkil's anti-Mu°tazilite policy was not fully implemented until 237, and this leaves a period of five years when pro-Mu°tazilite expressions by al-Jāhiz in his

450 See Hārūn's introductory remarks on *al-Ḥayawān*, vol. 1.

451 Zahniser, *Ibid.*, p. 12.

452 See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A°yān*, 1: 89.

works may not have displeased the caliph (i.e., this gives room for al-ʿUthmāniyya then.)

In trying to fix the date of Kitāb al-ʿUthmāniyya to before 202 A.H., Zahniser argues that it is part of a series of books on the Imamate introduced to al-Ma'mūn (and not to al-Mutawakkil) by al-Yazīdī, who died in 202. He suggests that al-Jāhiz himself states this⁴⁵³ when he says:

If it were not for the fact that those whom the Prophet left as leaders in Medina during the various raids were included in . . . all *Sīra* literature, I would have included them in my book which I wrote for you (sg.) . . . in which I refuted those who belittle the value of the Imamate and allege that it is not necessary, and that it is possible to have a number of Imams at the same time: Except for this book/kind of writings my (other) books do not reflect my own point of view; rather I let the book explain itself as I assume the position of each adversary and keep myself neutral (*ʿadl^{an}*) amongst them. This of course follows my unshaken confidence in the predominance of truth over falsehood. It is evidently illegal now (not *ḥalāl*) to hide such falsehood (and contrast it against truth), now that *taqiyya* is unnecessary, the *dahr* is fortunately good, and the judge (*al-qayyim*) is just.⁴⁵⁴

That al-Ma'mūn was the intended reader of this passage in ʿUthmāniyya, is dependent on accepting first that al-Jāhiz's (earliest) works on Imamate were really addressed to al-Ma'mūn. This we know from al-Jāhiz's rejoicing at Ma'mūn's pleasure with 'my works on Imamate' passed to him via al-Yazīdī.⁴⁵⁵

Zahniser also cites other quotations from the ʿUthmāniyya in support of his view:

We will present to you the treatise (*maqālat*) of the ʿAbbāsiyya and the facets of their argumentations after we have finished with the treatise on the ʿUthmāniyya in the most comprehensive way possible, by paying justice to each one of them, to enable you to choose for yourself by your own intellect (*ʿaql*), after that these statements have been presented in the most explicit and lucid way in order to make you clearly knowledgeable on them.⁴⁵⁶

Although Zahniser has reasonably demonstrated the link between al-Jāhiz's ʿUthmāniyya and its addressee, al-Ma'mūn, his attempt to fix it before 202 remains questionable if not unsubstantiated. The passages cited above need not be taken as a conclusive evidence to include K. al-ʿUthmāniyya, among al-Jāhiz's early series of

453 Zahniser, *Ibid.*, p. 12.

454 K. al-ʿUthmāniyya, p.154.

455 al-Jāhiz, *al-Bayān*, 3: 374-375.

456 K. al-ʿUthmāniyya, p. 187.

works on the Imamate i.e., as being amongst the works which had pleased al-Ma'mūn, according to al-Jāhīz's allusion in K. al-Bayān. Even Zahniser's use of the passage in °Uthmāniyya,⁴⁵⁷ where the caliph is reminded of his bias, cannot be taken as an evidence to fix the work before 202. A.H.

This is, in my opinion, due to the fact that al-Jāhīz's warning to his addressee against allowing his natural biases to stand in the way of objective evaluation, cannot be necessarily taken to indicate which stage of al-Ma'mūn's (biased) religious policy it is exactly meant to address. My point is that al-Jāhīz's reference to the caliphal bias should be contextually tied to all the other direct addressees made to the caliph, in order to understand the specific themes that are stressed there and fix it in the right time. In fact, I have been able to gather at least thirty five direct addresses to the caliph, and to study their content, which is concerned with passing a balanced orthodox judgement on the respective merits of the patriarchal caliphs, against the exaggerated and excessive claims of the groups cited (Zaydiyya, Rāfiḍa vs. °Uthmāniyya), and in the light of the historical fact that al-Ma'mūn issued a decree in 212 declaring his own personal judgement on the exclusively superior merits of °Alī, and it is therefore much more reasonable to link al-Jāhīz's allusion to the caliphal bias to the year 212, or at least the decisive moments preceding the caliphal decree. Furthermore, Ṭabarī's chronicles of the year 205⁴⁵⁸ in which al-Ma'mūn was chairing discourses on the issue of Imamate, and even Yāqūt's⁴⁵⁹ reference to Zaydī and pro-Imāmīte scholars who were discussing Shī'ism (*tashayyu'*) before al-Ma'mūn, could be seen as external evidences that allow us eventually to date al-°Uthmāniyya between the death of °Alī al-Riḍa in 203 A.H. and Ma'mūn's declaration in 212 (hence after 202); thus it was not among those books on the Imamate which al-Yazidī had brought to the attention of al-Ma'mūn, especially as we know there had been ongoing debates during this period (203-212) among the scholars that al-Ma'mūn had gathered around him, on the issue of *tafḍīl* i.e., preference of that single Companion of the Prophet that was the most meritorious after him.

As for al-Jāhīz's key contextual references that support this alternative dating, and fix his allusion to the caliphal "bias" in the exact politico - religious setting and

457 *Ibid.*, pp. 279-280.

458 al-Ṭabarī, annals of year 205. This does not deny that al-Ma'mūn had chaired discourses before 205, and as early as 198 A.H. There is one report cited by Ibn Qutayba (°Uyūn al-Akḥbār, Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1346/1926), 2: 140-141, that alludes to a discussion between al-Ma'mūn and °Alī al-Riḍa.

459 Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al Udabā'* (London: Luzac & Co., 1929), Ed. Margoliouth, 5: 457.

clarify the real issue it meant to address, i.e., that of *tafdīl al-fāḍil or al-maḥdūl* 460 which must have been the issue of debate then, between 203-212 al-Jāḥiẓ clearly states to al-Ma'mūn:

What indicates the broadness of his (Abū Bakr's) knowledge, and the basic fact that he was the person to be sought in difficulties (*al-maḥza*), is that when *al-Muhājirūn* in general and the *Banū Hāshim* in particular differed where to bury the Prophet, may God blessings fall upon him, . . . Abū Bakr came to them with the solution as heard from the Prophet. They said to him: what did you hear? he said: I heard the Prophet, may the blessings of God be upon him, saying: "When a Prophet dies he is (to be) buried in the place he dies" . . . We did not hear that people asked for evidence from Abū Bakr, and not even two persons differed on him. Doubt was not even displayed by one person, close or remote. Mind you, the site was the house of the Abū Bakr's daughter, yet Abū Bakr's opinion was respected. Hence, he who was never accused of narrating on behalf of the Prophet in such circumstances such that his opinion preceded over all others, is evidently deserving not to have anyone be put before him in excellence (*qadr*), knowledge (*ilm*), trustworthiness (*amāna*) and honesty (*sidq*).⁴⁶¹

In another passage, the caliph's attention is drawn to passing an impartial judgement on Abū Bakr's successor, ʿUmar, who is cited here by way of advising the caliph to be cautious in matters of *tafdīl*:

. . . Can you not see that ʿUmar followed the true path of religion and wherever religion went he lead the first step towards it . . . His will that recommended Ṣuhayb - the non Arab - to lead the death prayer and to lead prayers until the *Shūrā* decided on the coming caliph, is an indication that these men (Companions) put nothing before religious merit and dedicated precedence in Islam . . . His calling to ʿAmmār, Bilāl, Ṣuhayb and Salmān to enter his office while the most notable Arabs and Qurashites were waiting at his door, is another indication of putting religious merit before ethnic and social hierarchy . . . His utterance on his death bed . . . "that had Sālim - the client of Abū Hudhayfa b. ʿUtba - been alive, I would have recommended him for the caliphate", is the biggest evidence . . . For this, I strongly advise (you) not to pass a judgement on the Companions of The Prophet, may the blessing of God be upon him, (*Aṣḥāb Muḥammad*), before establishing firm knowledge of them in all their situations: It is obviously not guaranteed for any theologian who is least knowledgeable and informed about them, to be driven by such ignorance to belittle some of the Companions or believe that they have gone astray and hence excommunicate them, thus making the theologian suffer severe fatalities now and in the hereafter.⁴⁶²

Pointing to the Rāfiḍa's unfounded assertions that Abū Bakr was hiding his "*Kufr*" from the Prophet and the Ṣaḥāba, al-Jāḥiẓ adds in the same passage:

You, the group of seeming theologians and thinkers should be the first to realize that Muḥammad's disciples were not his enemies; in fact, those who have accused ʿUmar of

460 al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, p. 127 and see p. 76

461 *Ibid.*, pp. 83-83. al-Jāḥiẓ adds that Abū Bakr's opinion was to be later rejected by the *ghālī* faction of the Rawāfiḍ. *Ibid.*

462 *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, pp. 216-221.

ʿAṣabiyya were two types of people: A *Rāfiḍī*, who wanted to blemish his image before the ʿAjam and *mawālī*, and a *Mutaʿarrib*, (extreme pro-Arabist) who knew that ʿUmar was a model, and he accused ʿUmar of that to back his position: so beware of those and know that well!⁴⁶³

This text, and similarly other addresses in ʿUthmāniyya, would mean that al-Jāhiz's ʿUthmāniyya represents an attempt by al-Jāhiz to put forward the views of the Baṣran Muʿtazila - against those of the Baghdādī ones, who were now under the influence of the Rāfiḍa, on the order of merit of the first four caliphs, and that Abū Bakr's Imamate followed his exclusive superiority in religious merit and *fiqh* over the rest of the Ṣaḥāba.⁴⁶⁴

This can be substantiated by an examination of those of al-Jāhiz's ʿUthmāni arguments that are strongly tied to the issue of preference (*tafḍīl*). In one text, al-Jāhiz says:

I have discussed this for you to make you aware of the privileged statuses (of Companions other than ʿAlī), after all the trouble, mischief, terror and oppression they have encountered; we - however - have not heard that ʿAlī equalled them in those respects.⁴⁶⁵

In another passage al-Jāhiz says: "can't you realize his generosity and noble deeds and the qualities of leadership in him? (in Abū Bakr) In such and similar matters can you not check his status in Makka, among his people and in the opinion of the Prophet - peace be upon him - and even among the Companions?"⁴⁶⁶

The attention of al-Ma'mūn is therefore drawn to the conclusion that Abū Bakr has been evidently the most meritorious Companion of the Prophet during the era of Prophethood and after the Prophet's death:

Abū Bakr was the most learned of Arabs about Arabs, and the most notable transmitter of their virtues and vices, and knowledgeable of their strength and weaknesses, goodness and badness: That is why the Prophet recommended Ḥassān - despite his eminence in poetry - in his attempt to

463 *Ibid.*, p. 221. This important conclusion follows a detailed analysis of ʿUmar's just policy that was solely based on religious merit: His belittling of Persians after conquering them is judged to be exactly as wise as his warning against their strength before the conquest, and should not mean he was racist (p. 214) for he acknowledged merits of certain non-Arab Muslims over Arab Muslims, (pp. 212, 213, 217).

464 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

465 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

466 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

refute Abū Sufyān b. al-Ḥārith, to seek the advice of Abū Bakr who was the most knowledgeable about the clan of ʿAbd Manāf.⁴⁶⁷

In another passage, the same conclusion is stated, this time in comparison to ʿAlī:

ʿAlī, therefore has not displayed a position that can be claimed to have eclipsed Abū Bakr's positions: Abū Bakr, in fact, has superiorly eclipsed those of ʿAlī and has exclusively exhibited actions that are not found in ʿAlī or all the other Companions.⁴⁶⁸

2. Analysis of K. al-ʿUthmāniyya

I- The Issue of *Tafḍīl*/Preference

In each of the thirty five Jāḥiẓian addresses that were most probably directed to al-Ma'mūn, one notices that the main issue stressed in each one of those addresses, does in fact revolve around the thorny issue of passing a judgement of preference between Abū Bakr and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. By examining these addresses it is quite obvious that the author holds a view that is opposite to the addressee and as such every effort is taken to make the addressee re-examine his position concerning the superiority of ʿAlī over the rest of the Companions of the Prophet, and possibly come to the conclusion of al-Jāḥiẓ whose acknowledgement of ʿAlī's virtues and merits does not prevent him from acknowledging the more meritorious and virtuous Abū Bakr, i.e., while ʿAlī was an excellent and virtuous Companion of the Prophet, Abū Bakr was more virtuous and thus deserved to be the first *Imām*. This is one of the basic themes of the treatise.

However, al-Jāḥiẓ is very careful to indicate that in putting forward the views of the ʿUthmāniyya in answer to the problems raised by the Zaydiyya and the Rāfiḍa, he does not necessarily hold them himself. He is only trying to be as objective as possible in presenting their views by describing them in the way that they would do so. This, of course, gives al-Jāḥiẓ a way out if the ʿUthmānī arguments fail to convince Ma'mūn:

Because Sects, like individuals, have different 'personalities'/images: (*ṣuwar*) and just as some personalities are more compatible with your (sg.) basic nature than others, prettier to your eyes and lighter to your soul . . . so a given sect may have an analagous effect that makes it more palatable to desires, (*shahawāt*), in harmony with one's preferences

467 *Ibid.*, p. 24

468 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

(*ahwā'*), and acceptable to souls. Therefore beware of the (sect's) appeal to your desires and its compatibility to your spirit! It is more invisible and difficult to detect than the delicate and more delicate than the invisible! This is true when the meaning and sectarian point of view (*madhhab*) are plainly and openly presented; how much more true if the proponent embellishes and decorates his argument with sweet words and well turned, elegant phrases . . . If this reaches the ears of a fanatic (who is obsessed with the figure of one of his predecessors) who is addressed by a man of whims, he will fall prey to blind imitation (*taqlīd*).⁴⁶⁹ So beware of this possibility and do not mock my advice.⁴⁷⁰

Aware of the growing influences of members of the Baghdādī Mu'tazila on al-Ma'mūn, who must have been showing signs that fell short of that ideal head of the *Umma*, it was time to rescue the caliph from the non orthodox dangers of taking sides with one specific ʿAbbāsīd group, as this certainly upsets the developing orthodox view which puts the order of merit of the *Rāshidūn* as following their order of rule.

In other words, al-Jāhīz wants al-Ma'mūn to be continuously able to look at things in the balanced, flexible and open minded spirit of a neutral statesman by pointing to him the politico-religious hazards that are committed should he decide to hold fast to his unexpected 'impartial position' concerning Abū Bakr and ʿAlī. For this reason, al-Jāhīz furnishes al-Ma'mūn with the arguments of the ʿUthmāniyya and the ʿAlawiyya (Shīʿites, Zaydīs, Rāfiḍa, Ghāliya), and promises to provide him soon with that of al-ʿAbbāsiyya, so that al-Ma'mūn would hopefully be able to independently choose for himself, once a complete non-partial scanning of all politico-religious factions is placed before him. For this reason, al-Jāhīz is very keen to conduct and present these views in the spirit of a neutral judge and it is quite likely that he was expecting his addressee, al-Ma'mūn, to act likewise, such that his fondness of ʿAlī would not - according to the criteria that al-Jāhīz is forwarding - eclipse Abū Bakr's established merits:

Be confident that the author of any book cannot maintain impartiality and neutrality (*ʿadl*) among the various adversaries, and attract the consent of those who are judicious (*ahl al-naẓar*) until he can comprehensively forward the theses of his enemy in the most exhaustive way that he provides for himself, such that if the reader only reads the arguments of the author's foe, he would assume that it must have been that religious doctrine which the author had chosen for himself. But I would not have allowed myself to portray the (adversary's) arguments, in the most extensive and exhaustive way possible, and to assume the standpoint of the opponents, had I not been confident that falsehood can never overpower or surpass truth!⁴⁷¹

469 See *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, pp. 7, 10, 17.

470 *Ibid.*, p. 280.

471 *Ibid.*

II. Exposition of the position of the °Uthmāniyya group (and how al-Jāhiz stands in respect to it.)

It is interesting to find that the group described by al-Jāhiz as °Uthmāniyya, (and equally °Umariyya,⁴⁷² Ḥashwiyya,⁴⁷³) is defined as the group loyal to °Uthmān who believe in his authentic Imamate and that it was bestowed upon him legally⁴⁷⁴ and hence that of Abū Bakr and °Umar, as the former is presented as the basis (*aṣl*) for the group of °Umariyya, and the reason for discord with °Alī's group (Shi'at °Alī).⁴⁷⁵ This °Uthmāniyya is described as categorically rejecting °Alī's Imāmate "lam yakun fī-al-ard °Uthmānī illā ta°lamūn annahu munkir" li-Imāmatihī", and this statement is ascribed to the numerous body of "°Uthmānī fuqahā' and muḥaddithūn"⁴⁷⁶ (presumably not all *fuqahā'* but those Baṣrites whom al-Jāhiz has mixed with).⁴⁷⁷

Despite al-°Uthmāniyya's rejection of °Alī's Imamate, it is significant to point out that this group:

(a) lays great emphasis on the issue of merit (irrespective of descent),

(b) never accuses °Alī of °Uthmān's murder,

(c) never attacks °Alī by rejecting his merits. They only criticize the Rāfiḍa's exaggerated portrait of °Alī and their attack on Abū Bakr's merits and/Imamate. They openly maintain a policy of not imitating the Rāfiḍa by avoiding ridiculing °Alī in the same way al-Rāfiḍa has ridiculed Abū Bakr, °Umar and °Uthmān. In this spirit they keep aloof from the Rāfiḍa's style, by acknowledging the merits of °Alī yet without giving that acknowledgement the political connotations attached to him by the Rāfiḍa. From this, one can understand the deep reason underlying the Rāfiḍa's position, in which no realization of any merit of the caliphs preceding °Alī was made, because such an acceptance of merits (however trivial) would be incompatible

472 See *Ibid.*, pp. 223, 92, 94.

473 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

474 See *Ibid.*, p. 243

475 *Ibid.*, 233.

476 *Ibid.*, 176.

477 Like Muḥammad b. °Ā'isha b. Ḥafṣ, and other Baṣrans whose views al-Jāhiz narrates, although he has not met them for a long time. See *Ibid.*, p. 225. The same figure appears in *al-Hayawān*, 2: 12.

with their exaggerated view of ʿAlī, and hence had to be abandoned altogether to keep ʿAlī the exclusively unrivalled Companion of the Prophet.

al-ʿUthmāniyyā's key statement in this respect reads, concerning their position on ʿAlī:

Yet, he was undeniably *faqīh^{an}*, *ʿĀlim^{an}*, has taken his share in excellence in all domains and we do not say of him - that we belong to al-ʿUthmāniyya wa al-ʿUmariyya - what you do say of ʿUmar and ʿUthmān . . .⁴⁷⁸

The instances in which ʿAlī's merits are listed and acknowledged by the ʿUthmāniyya are numerous⁴⁷⁹ and aim to pay justice to ʿAlī's character but without allowing themselves to accept ʿAlī's Imamate. In this point al-Jāhiz differs from them, hence he has a motive to act as a judge between those who reject ʿAlī's Imamate and those who reject Abū Bakr's Imamate, by trying to bridge that gap, which is reflected in his generalization that 'people are either *ʿUmari* or *ʿAlawi*, in that they consider either Abū Bakr or ʿAlī to be exclusively the more meritorious!⁴⁸⁰ This is achieved by highlighting al-ʿUthmāniyya's respect and objective approach to ʿAlī (without having to be misunderstood as him adopting all their views) and hence developing many of their theses and arguments against the equally developed theses of their adversaries, with the intention that the addressee would hopefully avoid the line of extremism altogether - among all factions - basically by benefiting from al-ʿUthmāniyya's more moderate approach (to ʿAlī) compared to the extremist position of the Rāfiḍa, (to Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, etc.) and thus extending that ʿUthmāni moderation to the more complete Jāhizian concept of Muʿtazilī moderation. It is quite possible that the ʿUthmāniyya have been cleverly chosen and used as a tool to cool al-Ma'mūn's obsession with ʿAlī, by suggesting to him that the supreme judge of the *Umma* ought not pursue that outspoken bias towards one of the guided caliphs to the disfavour of those who have preceded him, because such a bias to ʿAlī, in the politico-religious realities of the times and as al-Jāhiz has cleverly conveyed, bears serious consequences on the established orthodoxy of the *Umma*, (that has accepted ʿAlī and the caliphs before him) and puts question marks on the future model of the Islamic orthodox government that the ʿAbbāsīd *dawla* and *daʿwa* have claimed to continue. In short, al-Jāhiz is hinting to al-Ma'mūn that his admiration of ʿAlī (which is quite orthodox) should not be extended and used to demerit those guided caliphs

478 *Ibid.*, p. 93-94.

479 See *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 48, 75, 76, 93, 153, 9-10.

480 See *Ibid.*, p. 140.

before him, which puts him on the non-orthodox road of the Rāfiḍa and endangers the dimension of orthodoxy stressed by his predecessors.⁴⁸¹

One would usually expect a discussion between the merits of two historical figures to be logically remote from ʿAbbāsīd political debates, but as we have pointed out above, the contemporary political discussions of al-Jāḥiẓ's time were assuming this fashion of recollecting (and possibly reshaping) the immediate and distant historical past. Every effort is taken by al-ʿUthmāniyya not to undermine ʿAlī's merits, and their view of him should therefore not be taken literally but as a reaction to (and possibly corrective measure) to the Rāfiḍī non-orthodox dimensions attached to ʿAlī as we shall see below.

Hence al-Jāḥiẓ's aim was to rid al-Ma'mūn of the excessive standpoints of the ʿAlawiyya, (al-Zaydiyya wa-al-Rāfiḍa) and less of the ʿUthmāniyya, in the hope that he could win him back to the Muʿtazilī stand that he sees as the most objective and just position to be followed, a position that has room for respect for all the guided caliphs, which seems to draw from the Baṣrite fountain of ʿUthmānī fuqahā' and muḥaddithūn as much as it depends on the more solid basis of *al-Qur'ān* and *Ijmāʿ al-Salaf*. It is this school of *al-Jāḥiẓiyya*, a distinct brand of Muʿtazilism and one offshoot of ʿUthmānism that is quite versed in orthodoxy that we shall analyse. One should therefore be prepared to reject the unsound claims that assume *Iʿtizāl* and orthodoxy (here meaning *ahl al-Ḥadīth*) to be incompatible.

A quick reading of al-Jāḥiẓ's ʿUthmāniyya (and of his other works) seems to me quite reflective of a man who was well established in the domain of *Ḥadīth*, and the quarrels that are found in the biographical literature between the Muʿtazila and *ahl al-Ḥadīth* should be re-examined. At least they should reflect the developing tension which al-Jāḥiẓ's non-literal approach to *Ḥadīth*, (i.e., his talent in the science of *fiqh al-Ḥadīth*) caused him with those literal narrators,⁴⁸² be they among the

481 See F. ʿOmar, *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awā'il*, 2: 75-82, 90-95, M. Sharon, *Black Banners*, pp. 19-27.

482 See Pellat's remarks on al-Jāḥiẓ being a master in the science of *Ḥadīth* in Pellat, *Le Milieu Basrien*, (in Arabic) pp. 135-137. Not only did al-Jāḥiẓ frequent *Ḥadīth* circles, but he is described as a narrator too, from Qāḍī Abū Yūsuf directly (d. 182). This experience will also be used later when he writes on *futyā* to Ibn Abī Du'ād, which uncovers-as al Ḥājirī suggests, al-Jāḥiẓ's talent in the principles of Islamic Jurisprudence. See Ḥājirī, *al-Jāḥiẓ*, p. 313 where Ḥājirī says that the extant *K al-Futyā* represents one of the earliest attempts in the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. See al-Jāḥiẓ's other extant work "Risāla fī Kitmān al-Sirr, *Rasā'il*, 1: 162 (where his own non-literalistic understanding of religion is outlined in brief in the way he understands *Dhikr as Subḥān Allāh*, *al-Ḥamdu lillāh and Allāh Akbar* to also transcend the

Sunnīs or Rāfiḍīs. This could partly justify the way he forwards himself as a neutral judge between the ʿUthmānīs (who, like him draw from the source of *Ḥadīth*, but unlike him, in a literalistic way) and the Shīʿites.

III. al-Jāḥiẓ's approach

As for the approach followed by al-Jāḥiẓ to express the above themes, one can detect the following lines of reasoning despite al-Jāḥiẓ's inclination to digress at certain points:

- A keen attempt to pull out and defend Abū Bakr's virtues in reaction to the Rāfiḍī attempt to blemish his noble record is made on behalf of the ʿUthmānī spokesmen in the belief that merit and Imamate had been inseparable and hence al-ʿUthmāniyyā's inventory of Abū Bakr's virtues is acknowledged to stress their causal link to his authentic Imamate. In other words, Abū Bakr's Imamate was a direct consequence and function of his established merits, in the Prophetic and post-Prophetic eras.

- ʿAlī's virtuous figure and Imamate should never be applied to eclipse that of Abū Bakr, by undermining his merits and rejecting his Imamate as the Rāfiḍa did.

- Any attempt to pass a sound comparative judgement on the respective virtues of the Prophet's Companions should only be undertaken once the following skills are mastered:

(a) Full knowledge of the **Companions' actions and merits** in the Prophetic and post-Prophetic eras should be noted before passing a judgement among them. al-Jāḥiẓ - through the ʿUthmāniyya's spokesmen - is critical of their Rāfiḍī adversaries' rejection of Abū Bakr's Imamate. The dispute is tactfully settled by drawing the attention of the addressee to the fact that such an undermining of Abū Bakr is an equal if not stronger rejection of the approval that has been confirmed for him by (a) The Prophet (b) The Qurʾān (c) The Ṣaḥāba. (d) The Tābiʿūn (e) The narrators whom we shall expound below.

literal recitation of them to the level of applying them in actions, such that the practical application of *Takbīr* is - al-Jāḥiẓ says - in its power to drive one to all actions that please God, or in its deterring effect by making one avoid the actions that are sinful.

(b) The theologian should be well versed in the nature of proofs, (*hujaj*) and be able to distinguish refutable from irrefutable sound proofs,⁴⁸³ and fully aware of the differences in matters (*furūq al-Umūr*).⁴⁸⁴ The last requirement connects theology with Ḥadīth, and one is astonished at al-Jāhīz's frequent appeals to the body of *Muḥaddithūn* as an extra evidence to the argument discussed, based on their established narration, once he has exhaustively covered the delicately different meanings and interpretations that some *Ḥadīths* have been given, against their real meaning, in what reveals al-Jāhīz as a forerunner in the science of *fiqh al-Ḥadīth*.

(c) Some effort should be taken to avoid being a victim to one sect (i.e., other than al-Jāhīz's), and an objective rendering of the disputing sects is furnished, in the Jāhīzian perspective outlined above, to help the caliph arrive at a free choice.⁴⁸⁵

IV. al-ʿUthmāniyya's basis for Abū Bakr's Imamate:

From reviewing the arguments of the ʿUthmāniyya, one can safely detect their criteria for establishing the sound Imamate of Abū Bakr. This rests on the collateral approval of the Prophet, *al-Qurʾān*, the *Ṣaḥāba*, the *Tābiʿūn*, the consensus of the *Salaf* and the *Umma* and the body of *Muḥaddithūn* and *fuqahāʾ* contemporary to al-Jāhīz that constitute the majority of the group al-ʿUthmāniyya. The ʿUthmāniyyā's criteria for any candidate's *faḍl* stems from critically examining who was the one single person that, when the Prophet died, was the best of all Muslims (*afḍal al-Muslimīn*) and most knowledgeable (*afqah fī al-dīn*), more correct (*aṣwab raʾy*) and most patient and enduring to hardship, in the day that the candidate was chosen to succeed the Prophet.⁴⁸⁶ To demonstrate that Abū Bakr fulfilled this, they cite the following incidents that were very vital in making him be chosen as successor to the Prophet.

483 *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, pp. 142, 148.

484 *Ibid.*, p. 181

485 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

486 *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76

(A) Era of Prophethood:

(i) The Prophetic approval of Abū Bakr (Incidents that reflect Abū Bakr's *faḍl* in the era of Prophethood):

In addition to holding that Abū Bakr was the first Companion to embrace Islam,⁴⁸⁷ his *faḍl* is shown in the Prophet's naming of him as *al-Ṣiddīq*,⁴⁸⁸ and describing him as his *Khalīl*,⁴⁸⁹ his equation of his *Īmān* as outweighing that of the whole Muslim *Umma*,⁴⁹⁰ the Prophet's profession that Abū Bakr (and ʿUmar) are the most privileged of the adults in paradise,⁴⁹¹ the Prophetic advice that guidance ought to be sought from them,⁴⁹² and the Prophetic wish that Abū Bakr may soon have an associate⁴⁹³ (to leave Makka), which was actualized in their *Hijra*, and the privileged companionships with the Prophet from Makka to Medina⁴⁹⁴ in addition to the exclusive tolerance exhibited by Abū Bakr concerning the Prophet's action in the *Hudaybiyya* incident⁴⁹⁵ (which was not known for either ʿAlī or ʿUmar), and by virtue of the fact Abū Bakr's *faḍl* was demonstratively reflected in the same incident by putting his signature immediately after the Prophet's.⁴⁹⁶

In addition to that, Abū Sufyān's rushing first to Abū Bakr on the day of the conquest of Makka, reflects that he was "*al-maqṣad wa-al-muʿtamad, al-mafzāʿ wa al-murshid/murshad baʿd rasūl-illāh.*"⁴⁹⁷ The Prophetic designation of Abū Bakr as head of the pilgrimage expedition in 9 A.H.,⁴⁹⁸ besides other incidents that show him as the most courageous,⁴⁹⁹ patient⁵⁰⁰ and learned⁵⁰¹ (*afqahuhum*) among the

487 *Ibid.*, p. 3. Also first in the way his acceptance of Islam differs from ʿAlī's alleged acceptance when he was much younger.

488 *Ibid.*, pp. 123-127, 128, 239.

489 *Ibid.*, pp. 135, 148.

490 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

491 *Ibid.*, p. 148.

492 *Ibid.*, p. 135.

493 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

494 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

495 *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

496 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

497 *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 76.

498 *Ibid.*, p. 129.

499 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

500 *Ibid.*, p. 103. Most patient in the way he stayed with the Prophet when many Companions have already left Makka to avoid Quraysh's oppression.

501 *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 77-78.

Ṣaḥāba, should ultimately, the ʿUthmāniyya conclude, have been behind the Prophet's orders to choose Abū Bakr to lead the prayers⁵⁰² while the Prophet was on his death bed, thus to reflect the consistent Prophetic acknowledgement of Abū Bakr's merits up to the last moments of the Prophet's life.

(ii) Qur'anic reference to Abū Bakr's *faḍl*:

al-Jāḥiẓ here cites the unanimous views of Qur'anic commentators (*ahl al-Ta'wīl*) apart from what is adhered to by the Rāfiḍī scholars, on Abū Bakr being the direct subject of several Qur'anic verses.

For instance, the Qur'anic reference⁵⁰³ to the one who walks blindly and the one who walks vigilantly is referring to Abū Jahl and Abū Bakr respectively, by citing two extremes, the head of *kufr* and the head of *īmān*. The other Qur'anic reference⁵⁰⁴ on the generous and pious is understood to allude to Abū Bakr after his notable philanthropic deeds to those oppressed slaves by freeing them from their condition.

Furthermore, the Qur'anic reference⁵⁰⁵ to the aggressive people that *al-Aʿrāb* will be summoned to fight with the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*, is to the *Banū Ḥanīfa* whom Abū Bakr was called to fight. The Qur'anic order to the believers to take the side of the pious and honest points to Abū Bakr and ʿUmar.⁵⁰⁶ These same figures are said by those commentators to have embodied God's reference to the people who love and were beloved by God according to the authority of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.⁵⁰⁷

(iii) Further Qur'anic/Divine reference to Abū Bakr's *faḍl*: and its political connotation to the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate

In spite of the leading role of one Miṣṭah b. Uthātha in circulating the forged scandal on ʿĀ'isha, Abū Bakr's daughter and the Prophet's wife, the Qur'ān has implicitly referred to Abū Bakr by encouraging him to forgive that man, who was his

502 *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 166.

503 *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

504 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

505 *Ibid.*

506 *Ibid.*

507 *Ibid.*, p. 115.

servant (*mawlā*) and the son of his cousin, despite his role in *ḥadīth al-Ifk*; and to continue his favours to him and to his children. al-Jāḥiẓ after citing the Qur'anic address to Abū Bakr as one who is privileged with *Faḍl*⁵⁰⁸ which promised him more rewards and forgiveness should he forgive his *mawlā*⁵⁰⁹ goes on to say:

Who is more superior in status (*a^czam qadr^{an}*) from a person whom God has privileged by addressing and acknowledging his status (*sha'n*), by allowing his merits to be narrated on his behalf by the Archangel Gabriel and His Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon them.⁵¹⁰

al-Jāḥiẓ cites other Qur'anic references to Abū Bakr, such as the verse that reads: "*wa anzala sakīnatahu 'alayhi*" i.e., when God's calmness was bestowed upon Abū Bakr, as the Prophet lacked none. In this instance al-Jāḥiẓ steps out from the historical context to draw the attention of the addressee to the difference that distinguished the Prophet from Abū Bakr, despite their excellences, yet the Prophet has surpassed him. From this, al-Jāḥiẓ wittingly suggests to his addressee that a hierarchical system of *faḍl* has existed, (first between the Prophet and Abū Bakr, then between Abū Bakr and ʿUmar as ʿUmar is described as the one who has emigrated earlier than Abū Bakr),⁵¹¹ hence he was less superior than him, whereas Abū Bakr was more meritorious as he was the last to join the category of emigrants. The political message behind this analysis is quite significant as al-Jāḥiẓ's ʿUthmānī spokesman is used to make the ʿAbbāsīd caliph's confidence in himself unshakable: This interpretation could carry a lot of significance, and al-Jāḥiẓ's conclusion that the difference in merit between the Prophet and Abū Bakr, (also between Abū Bakr and ʿUmar) has (or should have) a contemporary parallel, i.e., to put it in al-Jāḥiẓ's words:

. . . this difference between the Prophet and his successor, with all that it reflects on the outweighing merits of the former over the latter, is the same difference witnessed between the caliph and his heir-apparent ...⁵¹²

This text could therefore be taken - in addition to other contextual markers - as a very likely indication of al-Jāḥiẓ's efforts to put an end to the caliph's recurring worries on the question of succession and rulership by insinuating to him that he should never lose confidence in himself as the *afdāl* amongst his community, a Ma'mūnid disposition which was exposed when al-Amin died, and now stirred by

508 *Ibid.*, p. 112 and al-Qur'ān, 22: 24 (Sūrat al-Nūr /Chapter of Light).

509 *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, p. 112.

510 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

511 See *Ibid.*, p. 107.

512 *Ibid.*

the Shi'ite (Zaydī infiltration to Mu'tazilite circles) suggestion that 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and his descendants enjoy an inherent charismatic right to succession. A Rāfiḍī-Mu'tazilī clash seems quite active in the struggle of both camps to bring the 'lost' caliph to their side. Watt's analysis of the symbolic significance of the statements about the first four caliphs and how relevant were they to ninth century politics is worth quoting:

Kitāb al-ʿUthmāniyya is actually for the most part an argument for the superiority of Abū Bakr to 'Alī . . . The ʿUthmānites were primarily concerned to oppose the undue exaltation of 'Alī by the Rāfiḍites . . . Most of the ʿUthmānites were men who believed that the Islamic state should be based on the principles revealed in the Qur'ān and the Traditions, and their insistence on the imāmate of Abū Bakr developed naturally as a reaction to the Rāfiḍite or Imamite insistence on the superiority of 'Alī. In the thought of such persons this superiority was linked with the superiority of imams descended from 'Alī and their immunity (ʿiṣma) from sin and error. Some went too far as to say that the Imam could abrogate the Qur'ān, and even the more moderate held that the decisions of the imam were superior to all methods of interpreting the Qur'ān approved by the Sunnites. Thus the disputes whether Abū Bakr or 'Alī succeeded the Prophet and the Traditions, in their application to the life of the community, were to be interpreted by the generally accepted methods of the scholars or by the bare decision of the imam; and this was a central question of the politics of the ninth century.⁵¹³

B Incidents that reflect Abū Bakr's *faḍl* in the Era of the Ṣaḥāba, i.e., following the Prophetic era:

One has to gather al-Jāḥiẓ's scattered arguments in order to arrive at the common heading suggested above.

al-Jāḥiẓ refers to the Ṣaḥābā's acknowledgement of Abū Bakr's *faḍl*, in addition to the notable Qurayshite and Arab clan leaders as instantly translated and embodied by their unanimous acceptance of his Imamship, which (a) follows an acquaintance with him that had extended for twenty three years⁵¹⁴ and (b) was not upset by the insignificant dismay reported by the Rāfiḍa on behalf of some of the *Ṣaḥāba*.

A fully detailed and critical defence of Abū Bakr's Imamate is given until Abū Bakr wisely passed rulership to the most meritorious then surviving figure, 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, to emphasize the overwhelming consensus of the people's contentment with his Imamate.

513 Watt, *Formative*, p. 167.

514 *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 172.

Abū Bakr's role in saving the Muslim community:

To start with, his exemplary statemanship was reflected in the exclusively wise reaction upon receiving the news of the Prophet's death which was received unorthodoxly by some members of the *Umma*.

Thus he rushed to the Muhājirūn, lest they should excessively regard Muḥammad, peace be upon him, as the Christians have done [with Jesus] . . . his agony was, however, not eased by noticing that men like ʿUmar, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and ʿUthmān were not any different, so he started with them pointing out their fallacies and excessiveness . . . ⁵¹⁵

Abū Bakr's wisdom was also reflected when his attention was drawn to the Anṣār's gathering under the Saqīfa of Banū Sāʿida, around the figure of Saʿd b. ʿUbāda, intending to choose two caliphs, one from them and the other from the *Muhājirūn*. His quick arrival of their assembly and his exemplary speech to the Anṣār in which their interest in ruling was rightly put aside in favour of the deserving *Muhājirūn* is highlighted. Abū Bakr's course of action is praised as he represented God's bounty by rescuing the *Umma* from their undue pursuit of *mulk*, after stressing that Muḥammad had really died. His action furthermore saved the community from division and hence spared them the possibility of being raided from outside Medina at their most vulnerable moment following the Prophet's death.⁵¹⁶ Such qualities, al-ʿUthmāniyya concludes, should have significantly re-enforced his established merits, among the Muslims, in the role he played as "protector, adviser, consoler, and healer"; without God's provision (of Abū Bakr), the *Umma* could have been fatally left to that short sighted outlook and erroneous choice which was about to bring about their destruction, and thus he is considered as the *Umma's* true saviour after the Prophet,⁵¹⁷ which was translated into a striking consensus over his Imamate.

Here al-Jāḥiẓ's ʿUthmānī spokesmen digresses a little by emphasizing that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib lacked the atmosphere of consensus Abū Bakr had enjoyed as Imam, and a detailed study of the opposition fronts met by both caliphs is sketched to stress Abū Bakr's sound and popular Imamate. The ʿUthmānites - who reject ʿAlī's Imamate - have singled out all the opposition fronts raised against ʿAlī, such as that of Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ when he was demanding that ʿAlī appoint another *Shūrā* (as

515 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

516 *Ibid.*, p. 200.

517 *Ibid.*

‘Umar had done), on the criterion of merit and noble deeds.⁵¹⁸ Ṭalḥa's and al-Zubayr's equal demand for *Shūrā*,⁵¹⁹ their "enforced" acceptance of his Imamate, at the hands of ‘Alī's emissaries (*rusul*),⁵²⁰ their open refusal to it that escalated to military confrontation in the battle of the Camel (together with ‘Ā'isha's dismay, in addition to that of Mu‘āwiya which resulted in another bloody confrontation), all these events should highlight the much forgotten fact, - the ‘Uthmānids say - that point to the absence of any objection raised against these people in such words as: "Why are you fighting a man or asking him to choose one who is better (for Imamship) when the Prophet had already designated him (as successor) and clarified his status?"⁵²¹

Such a wide opposition, in addition to that which ‘Alī had met from his closest associates, and the most alert in his army - who considered him as *Kāfir* and alienated him from his Imamate⁵²² - all indicate the chaotic situation and rebellion witnessed by ‘Alī and not Abū Bakr.

What is noticeable here is that al-‘Uthmāniyya who are categorically described as rejectors of ‘Alī's Imamate, hold that with ‘Alī's reign, conquests (*futūḥ*) came to an end, and the door of *fitan*⁵²³ was opened. It is said: "who else but him did the Khawārij rebel against?" However, at this point al-Jāḥiẓ's ‘Uthmānī scholars stop the argument because it falls under the category of attacking ‘Alī, and that is not their concern.⁵²⁴

518 *Ibid.*, pp. 159, 173 and 275. (Sa‘d is described as advising ‘Alī to refrain from despotism, *Ibid.*, p. 159).

519 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

520 *Ibid.*, p. 173, 159.

521 *Ibid.*, p. 275.

522 *Ibid.*, p. 174.

523 Notice the difference in describing the difficulties encountered by the contrasted caliphs. ‘Alī met/caused *fitan*, in contrast to the '*Miḥna*' that Abū Bakr has successfully contained, which no body has met nor would he ever encounter. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

524 *Ibid.*, pp. 185-186.

V. 'Uthmānī Defence of Abū Bakr's Imamate by Refuting the Rāfiḍa's Claims:

A. Refutation of Rāfiḍa's Interpretations of Abū Bakr's Speeches:

In this section the 'Uthmāniyya put Abū Bakr's speeches - related to his post as first caliph after the Prophet - in the proper context that should be understood against the far fetched interpretations assumed by the Rāfiḍa concerning those very utterances.

As for Abū Bakr's attestation that his *bay'at* was more of a '*falta*' (i.e., a lucky coincidence) than the prevailing situation would otherwise have allowed, the 'Uthmāniyya also quote 'Umar's identical attestation on Abū Bakr's Imamate who adds it was "*falta - waqā Allāh sharrahā*"⁵²⁵ i.e., a coincidence whose evil God has prevented. The danger is fully expounded, by acknowledging the existence of insurgents, oppositionists and enemies⁵²⁶ when the Prophet died, yet Abū Bakr's successful control of those difficulties in Medina against the potential ones outside is ascribed to Divine intervention and a Divine bounty that is usually bestowed on a Prophet or to a successor to the Prophet.⁵²⁷

Hence the coincidental factor is accepted, in the way sketched above that does not deny the imminent dangers surrounding the Companions, i.e., that *falta* refers to those critical moments in which the hearts of the *Ṣaḥāba* were scattered,

525 *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

526 *Ibid.*, such as (1) a person who was more noble in descent (*ḥasab*) than Abū Bakr, and wanted the caliphate to be affixed to his closest kin so that his tribe's *ḥasab* would increase (2) a person whose kinship to the Prophet made him think that lineage can relieve him from pursuit of knowledge and good deeds (3) a person whose belief was so faint that he never missed a chance of insurgence to become famous and popular (4) a person who embraced Islam out of fear, as the *munāfiqūn* of Medina (and the surrounding area) and the Beduin *A'rab* that were equally awaiting the first chance to rebellion (5) a quietist person who follows anyone who wins over (6) people as al-Anṣār whose step-given their number and their socio-economic significance-had it been followed by the Muhājirūn, of selecting an Amir from both groups, could have opened a disastrous door of corruption, not only between the Anṣār and Muhājirūn, but one that could have really alerted the enemies outside Medina to form a coalition front that could have united the *munāfiqūn*, the *murtaddūn* (who left Islam once they heard about the Prophet's death) under the leadership of Musaylima, the false Prophet, and attack Medina at that critical moment of disagreement. See *Ibid.*, pp. 196-198.

527 *Ibid.*, pp. 198-199.

their voices loud and opinions disunited: Abū Bakr's presence was extremely significant in the way he made them united, tolerant and obedient.⁵²⁸

If the Rāfiḍa object to Abū Bakr's first speech addressed to the Muhājirūn and Anṣār in which he first drew the attention of the latter to the undeniable charisma of Quraysh's *nasab* and *ḥasab* - that was privileged by the genetic pool from which the Prophet Muḥammad came and was initially backed by those who accepted his message - in the sense that Abū Bakr's acknowledgement of this *faḍl* of Quraysh which is not found among the Anṣār should have inversely made him give way to the post of succession to one from Banū Hāshim, as he came from the less notable clan of Taym:⁵²⁹ the ʿUthmāniyya clarify this misunderstanding in the following manner: Abū Bakr should never be taken as holding the superiority of descent over religious merit. His reference to Quraysh's *nasab* should not be taken literally, as Abū Bakr provisionally used it while developing his doctrine of the superiority of merit over descent.

It can be argued, however, that when al-Anṣār heard Abū Bakr's reference to Quraysh's *faḍl* from the angle of descent, and were reminded that they hold no blood relation to the Prophet, and that there were people who have held such blood relationship, this kind of reasoning was not sufficient to withdraw their representative from the *Imāra* to the *wizāra*. In an earlier section of al-ʿUthmāniyya al-Jāḥiẓ confesses that the Prophetic message was mostly rejected by the various clans (*buṭūn*) of Quraysh itself, and Abū Lahab despite his kinship to the Prophet (his uncle) displayed an opposition to Muḥammad equal to that of Abū Jahl, who was not a close relative.⁵³⁰ The descendants of ʿAbd Manāf were the most vehement enemies of the Prophet despite their kinship to him.⁵³¹ So how is Abū Bakr's reference to Quraysh's *ḥasab* justified?

The ʿUthmānī spokesman here bluntly points out that his Rāfiḍī adversary has taken Abū Bakr's statement out of its full context. Abū Bakr's reference to Quraysh's *nasab* of course omitted the negative dimension of descent implied above by stressing its positiveness before the community of helpers that had a reverence for the concept of kinship (*qarāba*) and a respect for lineage, (*ḥasab*) and it is for this

528 *Ibid.*, p. 193 and 199-200.

529 *Ibid.*, pp. 200, and see pp. 201, 202.

530 See *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

531 See *Ibid.*, p. 103.

very reason that he employed these concepts in order to make them give way to those who were closer to the Prophet and/or enjoyed an equally if not a superior social *ḥasab*.⁵³² Once this reasoning had convinced them, the next decisive step, now that al-Anṣār's attention had been shifted to a group that was more prestigious in descent and lineage (at least by virtue of the undeniable fact that the Prophet stemmed from amongst a group other than them), Abū Bakr could now state his political criterion and vision: Once Quraysh's *fadl* is acknowledged in the positive sense (giving birth to the Prophet),⁵³³ Abū Bakr singles out the body of *Muhājirūn*, who were obviously not collectively Hāshimites or Qurashites, by reminding them of al-Qur'ān's reference to their established and superior *fadl* over al-Anṣār,⁵³⁴ in being the first to embrace Islam in the conditions of oppression they met in Makka when the Anṣār were still non-Muslims and enjoying life in Medina. The migration of *Muhājirūn* from their homes in Makka to Medina should definitely not undermine the virtues of the Anṣār, yet the superiority of *al-Muhājirūn* - which does not rest on descent at all and is based on precedence (*Sābiqa*) in belief and deeds - over the Anṣār remains a quality of the former by the fact that the *Muhājirūn* had to experience the further difficulty of enduring home-sickness and alienation from their homes and families.⁵³⁵

In this way Abū Bakr's first speech to the *Muhājirūn* and Anṣār is properly interpreted and analysed to reflect his true position on lineage, (*madhhabuhu fī al-aḥsāb*)⁵³⁶ against the claims of the Rāfiḍa. Yes, Abū Bakr had alluded to *nasab*, but that was the opening phrases of his speech (*ṣadr kalāmihi*)⁵³⁷ for completely different reasons than could be assumed by the Rāfiḍa, who did not follow him in the latter portions of his speech (*ʿajz kalāmihi*),⁵³⁸ in which he had most beautifully expressed the doctrine of the supporters of equality: *madhhab aṣḥāb al-taswiya*,⁵³⁹ that makes piety and moral actions (*taqwā*)⁵⁴⁰ the sole criteria for leadership.

532 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

533 *Ibid.*, p. 200.

534 *Ibid.*, p. 201. The exact Qur'anic reference is not spelled out.

535 *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203. Here an allusion is made to how the Qur'ān has put the *Muhājirūn* before al-Anṣār in the hierarchy of *Sābiqūn*, which therefore points to the Qur'anic Sūra 9 verse 100 where their eminent order cited in the Qur'anic verse, follows their precedence in Islam. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

536 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

537 *Ibid.*

538 *Ibid.*

539 *Ibid.*

540 *Ibid.*

Although the negative aspects of lineage highlighted by Abū Bakr as a premise are not explicitly rejected, the present text of al-Jāhīz can be taken to assume such a rejection has been confirmed by the immediate flow of Abū Bakr's sentences that stress the exclusive virtues of the religious merits of al-*Muhājirūn*. Hence the reasoning given to the Anṣār is as follows: If succession is based on descent - (and obviously it cannot be) - then beware of Quraysh's superiority over you in this respect (in the positive sense, of having Muḥammad coming from them). But if leadership is deserved by *faḍl in dīn*, then the *Sābiqūn* (the first Muslims) from amongst the *Muhājirūn* praised in al-Qur'ān, should be the ones to raise their right to succession. Abū Bakr's statement to al-Anṣār that this matter can not be snatched (i.e., from those who legally deserve to claim it) "*inna hādha al-amr laysa bi-khilsa*" - al-Jāhīz here says to his addressee - should reflect Abū Bakr's high confidence and clear vision as to where the Imāmate should be affixed (*‘Ārif^m bi mawāḍi‘ al-Imāma*),⁵⁴¹ and as such his speech should not be interpreted against the view that religious leadership can be based on anything but ascendancy in religion, because the institution of caliphate is the greatest manifestation of religious authority and accordingly the higher the authority sought, a parallel ascendancy in religious knowledge and deeds should be provided and accompanied.⁵⁴²

The ‘Uthmānī scholars' view of Imamate is therefore accounted for in their categorical refutation of the alleged role of *nasab* in leading to Imamship, as they are quoted holding that no one can assume headship in religion other than by religion "*aḥad lā yanāl al-riyāsa fī al-dīn bi-ghayr al-dīn*".⁵⁴³ Indeed, Abū Bakr's opening statement when detached from the whole speech can be misleading.

Another statement of Abū Bakr is also quoted to emphasize the above conclusions of the ‘Uthmāniyya, on the issue of merit versus *ḥasab/nasab*, i.e., the superiority of Abū Bakr over ‘Alī. Abū Bakr's utterance: "I have been chosen by you yet I do not have the right of claiming to be the best among you" is used by the Rāfiḍa as an evidence that the first caliph after the Prophet had confessed his weakness i.e., "if he was sincere, then this contradicts the order of merit adhered to by you (‘Uthmānīs) when you have put him first among your recognized Imams."⁵⁴⁴

541 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

542 *Ibid.*, p. 201 in which the whole reasoning is summarized.

543 *Ibid.*, p. 204.

544 *Ibid.*, p. 227.

Alternatively, "if he was not sincere, he loses credit for no one has forced him to be dishonest . . . but this is unlikely and hence his attestation that he is not the best should have prevented him from putting himself ahead of someone who is better than him (i.e., ʿAlī), and thus he was ungrateful to that person (ʿAlī) who had given him the chance to precede him.⁵⁴⁵

al-Jāḥiẓ cites the views of many figures that justify Abū Bakr's statement. ʿAlī's son, al-Ḥasan is quoted saying on this: "God knew he was the most meritorious, but the true believer usually humbles himself . . ." ⁵⁴⁶ and such a disposition is only exhibited by genuine caliphs and guided Imams.⁵⁴⁷

Qatāda is quoted as saying that Abū Bakr's denial that he was the best means that he was not coming from the best nobility of Quraysh or from al-Anṣār, and that his rulership is hence a function of his precedence in Islām, (*Sābiqa*).⁵⁴⁸

Abū Bakr's saying, "choose anyone you prefer" (ʿUmar or Abū ʿUbayda), should not mean Abū Bakr's unfitness as the Rāfiḍa claim: this statement, al-ʿUthmāniyya says, was addressed to al-Anṣār and those who were present then, the moment Abū Bakr secured their acknowledgement of the *faḍl* of *al-Muhājirūn*, that consequently meant "*Amīrs*" should be chosen from among them. Abū Bakr's statement does not reflect any sort of incompetence because after making the *Anṣār* aware of *al-Muhājirūn's faḍl*, he was quite sure of his status among the superior *Muhājirūn*,⁵⁴⁹ and as a wise politician he suggested the persons of ʿUmar and Abū ʿUbayda, avoiding to impose himself despite his recognized status.⁵⁵⁰

B. Refutation of the Rāfiḍa's Claims Of The Existence Of A Significant Opposition Block Against Abū Bakr:

When Abū Bakr asked:"does anyone wish to remove me?" ʿUmar is said to have preferred to be slaughtered than take Abū Bakr's post as caliph of the

545 Ibid.

546 Ibid.

547 Ibid., p. 229.

548 Ibid., pp. 227-228.

549 Ibid., pp. 230-231.

550 Ibid., p. 231.

Prophet.⁵⁵¹ ʿUmar's approval of Abū Bakr's *bayʿa* is highlighted by the ʿUthmānīs saying: "Which *bayʿa* was more authentic than one in which ʿUmar had accepted? knowing that the Prophet had said that ʿUmar's utterances coincided with truth".⁵⁵² Furthermore, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf's approval is also cited, taking note of the fact that the Prophet had described ʿAbd al-Raḥmān as the trustworthy '*al-Amin*'.⁵⁵³ Ibn Masʿūd's approval is also acknowledged in light of the Prophetic saying "I have accepted for my *Umma* that which is favoured by Ibn Umm ʿAbd (i.e. Ibn Masʿūd)".

Other Companions have been named by the Rāfiḍa as resenting Abū Bakr's Imamate, and after their reasons are mentioned al-Jāḥiẓ forwards the ʿUthmānī refutations that found them to be unsound allegations.

-Salmān:

Salmān's alleged objection in Persian (*kardād wa nardād* translated by al-Jāḥiẓ as *faʿaltum wa lam tafalū*. i.e., you did but have not done) to the Anṣār and *Muhājirūn* that their choice of Abū Bakr fell beneath the expected ideal nominee (i.e., ʿAlī) is criticized in detail. But how could their choice be fallible? If Abū Bakr's actions were to be accused of falling short of the standard, al-ʿUthmāniyya's answer is that Abū Bakr's rule was perfect from all sides (he did not deviate from the right path, remained faithful, rejected nepotism) in the critical moments following the Prophet's death that allow one to believe that no one has been subjected to the difficulties - nor would be subject - and reacted to them in the correct way that he has chosen.⁵⁵⁴ How could ʿAlī be assumed to have taken Abū Bakr's established role, "when we know that *futūḥ* were blocked in his reign, *fitan* raged with his rule and the Khawārij only then revolted against him." The ʿUthmānī spokesman stops here in order not to follow the Rāfiḍa's style of undermining the guided caliphs.⁵⁵⁵

551 *Ibid.*, p. 232. al-Jāḥiẓ draws the attention of the caliph to the big difference that exists between Abū Bakr's cited request (to pay allegiance to ʿUmar or Abū ʿUbayda) and between their spontaneous whole hearted wish that allegiance be solely made to him. See *Ibid.*, p. 233.

552 *Ibid.*, p. 233.

553 *Ibid.*

554 This argument is sketched in *Ibid.*, pp. 183-185, citing Abū Bakr's virtuous deeds (suppression of *ahl al-Ridda*, in al-Ḥira, and of the *munāfiqūn* in and outside Medina, killing of the false Prophet (Musaylima), victory of Yamāma, imprisonment of Ṭulayḥa, sending troops to Syria and defending Islam in every respect.

555 *Ibid.*, p. 186.

Salmān's words should be put in their Persian context i.e., in the way he was brought up to assume that if rulership was dynastic, and confined to the Prophet's house and specifically on inheritance, then this should have prevented the less notable Arabs and clever ʿAjam from seeking that post. Here al-Jāḥiẓ is putting two different visions of rulership: The Persian, - which is dependent on inheritance, and has the qualities of *ghalaba* and *ra'y* that are associated with *mulk*, - and the Islamic, which is based on Kitāb and *Sunna* and is described as *Imāma*.⁵⁵⁶ If Salmān ever said this, then this statement should be used as an evidence and basis by the group of al-ʿAbbāsiyya and al-Jāḥiẓ here promises the addressee that he will expound this group's arguments as soon as he finishes the present work. Furthermore Salmān's use of the Persian words is highly questionable before an assembly of Arabs. Furthermore, narrators of *Ḥadīth* have never reported those words which should have triggered the *Ṣaḥāba* to investigate their meaning.⁵⁵⁷

Khālid b. Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣ:

Khālid b. Sāʿīd's alleged rejection of Abū Bakr's Imamate for a period of three whole months⁵⁵⁸ is refuted by al-Jāḥiẓ's ʿUthmānites in the following manner: First, Khālid was outside Medina during that period, collecting alms from Yemen and he did pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr once he returned.⁵⁵⁹

As for Khālid's (and equally Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb's) alleged shock upon knowing that Abū Bakr had become Imam, which took the flabbergasting form of addressing the group of Banū ʿAbd Manāf:⁵⁶⁰ "How come you agreed to be led by a man from the (less notable) clan of Taym?"⁵⁶¹ al-Jāḥiẓ says that neither ʿAlī nor ʿUthmān are reported to have reacted to Khālid's objection. From here al-Jāḥiẓ elaborates the view that Khālid's objection should alert us to the fact that the Muslims' consensus over Abū Bakr should not imply that Abū Bakr got office magically i.e., with 100% approval when we know that the community was not free from a minority of dissidents, envious, ignorant, and rebellious members whose remarks should not - as they really had not - be given any degree of significance.

556 Ibid.

557 Ibid., pp. 188-189.

558 or six months Ibid., p. 167.

559 Ibid., p. 190.

560 In p. 190 the question is raised to ʿUthmān and ʿAlī.

561 Ibid., p. 167. Abū Bakr's father is also reported as raising the same question.

But even if Khālid's utterance was really spoken, then al-Jāhīz says it can be used to oppose the claims of the Rāfiḍa. Firstly, if Khālid meant that rulership should be confined and continued in the line of Banū ʿAbd Manāf in the fashion known in the Pre-Islamic time that gives priority to *ḥasab*, or by virtue of kinship to the Prophet, then - al-Jāhīz suggests - this matter should have been addressed to al-ʿAbbās who was more deserving than ʿAlī and the rest of Banū ʿAbd Manāf. If Khālid, however implied ʿAlī's exclusive right, he should not have said: "did you agree O sons of ʿAbd Manāf ..." because both ʿUthmān and ʿAlī were Manāfites. Instead he should have said: "did you agree, O family of the Prophet, or Banū Hashim or Banū ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib", and even then, ʿAbbās's right would still have been superior to that of ʿAlī! If, however, the succession should not be ascribed to one specific clan,⁵⁶² and can be conceived as having nothing to do with the close relatives and immediate clan of the Prophet (*raḥṭ al-Nabī*) or even with the most distant Manāfī, (all descendants of the great-great grandfather of the Prophet) then it is right to assume that it can be the right of the most distant member of Banū Kilāb, (the sixth ancestor of the Prophet) and hence, if that is the case, then Taym (the brother of Kilāb and equally sixth in relation to the Prophet) has the same right as Kilāb.

al-Jāhīz concludes that Khālid's use of the term ʿAbd Manāf is therefore meaningless, for if it meant the best among Quraysh in knowledge and deeds, it was redundant (in view of the fact that the best has been given this right), and if it meant the best among Quraysh in general his statement is useless (as seen above). If it meant the closest relative to the Prophet, i.e. ʿAlī) then it can be opposed by the right of al-ʿAbbās and if he meant the right of inheritance, his statement does not indicate that. If he meant a specific designated man assigned by the Prophet, he should have stated that more bluntly. . .⁵⁶³

Eventually, al-Jāhīz tends to believe that Khālid's position was not confined to the hypothetical possibilities above and that his common sense soon returned to him. His consent, however, should not overshadow that of the Anṣār-Muhājirūn towards Abū Bakr, and his alleged objection should not be used as an evidence of

562 The text in p. 190 is improperly edited and the two arguments are put without order, and misplaced.

563 See *Ibid.*, p. 191.

‘Alī's superior right to the Imamate, as we know that neither ‘Alī nor the Muslims claimed that right in times of happiness or stress.⁵⁶⁴

Bilāl

Bilāl's alleged objection to Abū Bakr and ‘Umar is refuted in the light of the fact Bilāl happily accepted ‘Umar's will to become governor of Damascus, and was highly respected by ‘Umar who equated his ‘*Aṭā* 'to that granted to ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, Ṭalḥa, Zubayr and Sa‘d. Bilāl's alleged opposition to Abū Bakr is equally rejected, as this allegation only comes from people ignorant of ‘Umar, the authentic *Sulṭān* and, the dignity of *Khilāfa* he has embodied.⁵⁶⁵

al-Miqdād

al-Miqdād's alleged objection to Abū Bakr's caliphate and acceptance of ‘Alī's is also refuted. The ‘Uthmānites insist that nothing certain or authentic has reached them in this matter, and wonder why al-Miqdād was cited. On the contrary to the Rāfiḍī allegation, the ‘Uthmānites maintain that al-Miqdād was most resentful of ‘Alī as the latter is reported to have given the Prophet a false impression of one woman's real consent to marry al-Miqdād.⁵⁶⁶

‘Ammār b. Yāsir

‘Ammār's alleged opposition to ‘Umar is equally refuted, in the sense that ‘Ammār is projected as one of the most sincere governors of ‘Umar (in Kūfa)⁵⁶⁷ and hence his opposition to Abū Bakr is out of the question.

564 See *Ibid.*, pp. 190-193.

565 *Ibid.*, p. 180.

566 *Ibid.*, p. 181 Of course, this anecdote presupposes an ethnic judgement circulated by the racial extremists (*Muta‘arribs* i.e., by the pro-Arabs) and the Rāfiḍa, that narrate on behalf of Salmān an ethnic policy of marriage conveyed to him by the Prophet and ‘Umar. Such a policy is of course condemned by the essentially non-racial ‘Uthmānīs (see *Ibid.*, pp. 217-218 & 221.) who narrate how the Prophet scolded ‘Alī as he shared Salmān's view that Arab women should not be married to non-Arab men. al-Jāhīz comments on both anecdotes as a dubious fabrication that stirs hatred between the Prophet and his Ṣaḥāba. *Ibid.*, p. 221 and projects a non-Islamic view.

567 *Ibid.*, p. 183.

Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī

The ʿUthmānī reporters emphasize that they have received no report that attacks ʿUmar's caliphate from Abū Dharr. Instead, they narrate on the latter's behalf that he heard the Prophet saying: "You will enjoy prosperity as long as ʿUmar is amongst you."⁵⁶⁸

al-ʿUthmāniyya report that extremist and antagonistic rejectors of Abū Bakr's Imamate have excommunicated the whole *Umma* from Islam charging them with *Ridda* except for Salmān, Miqdād, Abū Dharr and Bilāl, simply because they rejected ʿAlī's rights and did not object against those who did not back him.⁵⁶⁹ The ʿUthmāniyya add that if their adversaries supply them with one hundred Companions who confirm ʿAlī's right and deny Abū Bakr's caliphate, this would not add anything to the established authentic reports that they hold. The most that can be said is that those who refrained from attacking Abū Bakr (and they were many) should be seen as acceptors of his caliphate.⁵⁷⁰

Usāma b. Zayd

The Prophetic orders to send troops headed by Usāma have been used by the Rāfiḍa to show that Abū Bakr refused to join the troops and took ʿAlī's office. The ʿUthmānites, however, discredit their claim by reminding the Rāfiḍa of the Prophet's orders to have Abū Bakr lead the prayers, (he is reported to have conducted seventeen prayers).⁵⁷¹ The Muslims in their totality could not have ignored Abū Bakr's alleged *takhalluf*⁵⁷² (running from joining Usāma's army), and if the Rāfiḍa insist that Usāma - of all Muslims - could not express his resentment of Abū Bakr, out of fear, (*taqiyya*), the ʿUthmānites say: "why should he remain silent under ʿAlī's rule, when we know that ʿAlī had one hundred thousand swords behind him?"⁵⁷³ Instead, the Rāfiḍa are reminded that they should be the first to avoid quoting Usāma who is reported as backing Ṭalḥa's saying: "I pledged allegiance to ʿAlī unwillingly",

568 Ibid.
569 Ibid., p. 180.
570 Ibid., p. 183.
571 Ibid., p. 170.
572 Ibid., p. 167.
573 Ibid., p. 168.

and is thus seen as a *‘Umarī*.⁵⁷⁴ The Rāfiḍa's accusation of Abū Bakr's alleged *Takhalluf* and taking office illegally, is equivalent to the following ridiculous supposition: that a man descends on the Muslims at Medina out of the blue, lacking *nasab* and *sabab* and takes hold of the most noble and influential posts (*ashraf al-maqāmāt*) - in the presence of the Prophet's relatives and clan: such as his uncle, his cousin, his other close and distant relatives, and before the most notable men of *Anṣār*, *Muhājirūn*, Quraysh and Arabs at large - without being objected to by one single man of those listed above!⁵⁷⁵

al-Zubayr

The Rāfiḍa's claim that al-Zubayr expressed his objection to Abū Bakr at the meeting of *Saqifa* by raising his sword to Abū Bakr. The *‘Uthmānis* say:

What makes you so sure that he did not raise it for himself, or for his uncle al-*‘Abbās* b. *‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib*, and not for *‘Alī* b. *Abī Ṭālib*? How can we accept your claim when Abū Bakr approached the people at the *Saqifa* in the most peaceful manner without holding any sword or whip, and without any worldly desire for rulership. He did not say "Obey and pay allegiance to me!" but was most disinterested in having the post conferred upon him. Convinced of the superiority of the *Muhājirūn* over the *Anṣār*, he rushed to the latter to keep things in order, so why should al-Zubayr have possibly raised a sword?⁵⁷⁶ If you say that al-Zubayr rejected Abū Bakr's advisory role (to pinpoint the *fadl* of the *Muhājirūn*) out of all other *Muhājirūn* the adversaries are reminded of the high impossibility of such a claim given the tie of kinship Zubayr had to Abū Bakr (he married his daughter, and the fact Zubayr's Islam was proclaimed in front of Abū Bakr, besides Zubayr's high esteem for Abū Bakr's supporters: *‘Umar* and *‘Uthmān*).⁵⁷⁷

Finally, the Rāfiḍa are reminded that it is not clever of them to quote Zubayr as rebelling against Abū Bakr for the sake of *‘Alī*, when history informs us that he fought the latter's Imamate and insisted that he was more deserving of it, and that had *‘Alī* held a *shūrā*, al-Zubayr would have outweighed him and become Imām instead.⁵⁷⁸

Here, the *‘Uthmānis* make appeal to the historical reality or truth '*wujūd*' that has been handed to them by *‘Uthmānī* scholars of tradition (*Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth*)⁵⁷⁹ that reject the report of Zubayr's raising of the sword, and consider it highly dubious. As

574 *Ibid.*

575 *Ibid.*, p. 171.

576 *Ibid.*, p. 221-222.

577 *Ibid.*, p. 222.

578 *Ibid.*, p. 224.

579 Appeal to *Hummāl al-Ḥadīth* has been a common but basic feature of *‘Uthmāniyya*'s arguments. See *Ibid.*, p. 151, and pp. 82, 115.

for al-Zubayr's alleged statement to ʿAlī,⁵⁸⁰ this is attributed by al-Jāḥiẓ to ʿUthmānī scholars of *ʿItizāl*, whom he quotes after a long contact with them, presumably when he was in Baṣra.

The ʿUthmānīs' reaction to the Rāfiḍa's unfounded claim that Zubayr had raised the sword against Abū Bakr opens the door for al-Jāḥiẓ's theological gymnastics.

The ʿUthmāniyya says: "al-Zubayr's armed objection to back ʿAlī and dethrone Abū Bakr is flabbergasting (*ʿajab*): why did you not include al-Zubayr among those few whom you claim to have remained loyal to ʿAlī's designated right (to *Khilāfa*), i.e., why did you regard him as amongst those who became infidels (*Kāfir*)⁵⁸¹ despite his backing of ʿAlī? Why do you treat him differently to Ḥudhayfa and ʿAmmār (whom you claim were infidels until they repented during the days of ʿUthmān), and that Zubayr remained a believer until he later (i.e., after *Saqīfa*) objected to ʿAlī's rule?"⁵⁸²

al-Anṣār

al-Anṣār's objection "One Amīr from us and one from you" has been already explained, when Abū Bakr was able to change their opposition to consent.⁵⁸³ The ʿUthmānīs add here that no one can claim that al-Anṣār who were reminded of the superior *Faḍl* of the *Muhājirūn* - said in a manner that convinced everybody: "If the *Amīr* has to be one from amongst you, let it be that man (i.e., ʿAlī) because he deserves it more being *afḍal* and *aḥaqq* by virtue of *qarāba* and ʿamal.⁵⁸⁴ This illustrates that the Muslims' unanimous acceptance (*Iḥbāq*)⁵⁸⁵ to choose Abū Bakr most willingly reflected how religious merit preceded kinship and *ḥasab*, and this is

580 *Ibid.*, pp. 224-225. Here al-Zubayr is allegedly reported saying to ʿAlī "I embraced Islam when I was adult and you did in your boyhood. I was the first to raise the sword against infidels in Makka while you were hiding in Shiʿb Abī Ṭālib. I was the chevalier and you were the walker, and if you claim you are the Prophet's cousin I am the son of his aunt too! . . . In my shape angels descended and I am the Prophet's disciple." For this reason, the present ʿUthmāniyya of al-Jāḥiẓ could be very much considered as an offshoot of the ex-Zubayrid movement explained earlier.

581 See on the use of this term, *Ibid.*, p. 245, 249.

582 *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

583 *Ibid.*, p. 196.

584 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

585 *Ibid.*, p. 168 and p. 204.

another key theme of the position of ʿUthmāniyya,⁵⁸⁶ who saw that Abū Bakr received office not by force and not because he enjoyed headship over clans but by virtue of his superior religious excellences.⁵⁸⁷

It is true that the line of tribal *ḥasab* (which was quite diverse and could lead to division) was present,⁵⁸⁸ and that the factor of Prophetic kinship⁵⁸⁹ was equally available, but Abū Bakr's excellences - which were evident to them for twenty three years,⁵⁹⁰ had in fact overshadowed these lines of considerations despite the hard mentalities of Quraysh and arrogance of some Arabs,⁵⁹¹ and his subsequent choice of ʿUmar (and not ʿAlī nor ʿAbbās) is a confirmation of the superiority of the criterion of merit⁵⁹² in the issue of caliphate.

ʿAlī

Finally ʿAlī's resentment of Abū Bakr is equally denied by the ʿUthmāniyya who report ʿAlī as confirming Abū Bakr's Imamate when the latter asked: "does anyone wish that I be removed from office for another candidate?" ʿAlī is reported to have said: "By God, we shall never recommend any other but you and will let nobody dethrone you. The Messenger of God-may the blessings of God be upon him - has recommended that you lead the prayers and who, thus, can ever put you back (from position of leader)?!"⁵⁹³

The ʿUthmānis report ʿAlī narrating on behalf of the Prophet that Abū Bakr and ʿUmar are the best members of the *Umma*,⁵⁹⁴ and that they shall be masters among men in paradise with the exception of Prophets and Messengers.⁵⁹⁵ They also quote ʿAlī as determined to implement legal punishment (*ḥadd*) on whoever dares to

586 Ibid., p. 204 and ff.
587 Ibid., p. 168.
588 Ibid., p. 171.
589 Ibid.
590 Ibid., p. 132 and 172.
591 Ibid., p. 172.
592 See Ibid., pp. 86, 274.
593 Ibid., p. 235.
594 Ibid., p. 235.
595 Ibid., p. 136.

criticize Abū Bakr and ʿUmar,⁵⁹⁶ in an attempt to put forward ʿAlī's true position (*madhhab Alī fihimā*) towards them.⁵⁹⁷

VI. ʿUthmānī Critique Of The Rāfiḍa's Arguments On:

- A- ʿAlī's *taqiyya*.
- B- ʿAlī's special ʿilm.
- C- ʿAlī's designatory right to Imamate (*naṣṣ*) .

A- ʿAlī's *taqiyya*:

In another strand of the thinking of the ʿUthmāniyya, the Rāfiḍa's arguments on ʿAlī's *taqiyya*, and alleged special knowledge and designatory rights to the caliphate are criticized and refuted in detail in order to emphasize the ʿUthmānī doctrine of the real status enjoyed by Abū Bakr vis-à-vis all other Companions, and in particular ʿAlī, in line with their purpose to stress Abū Bakr's unmatched superiority over the Rāfiḍī portrait of ʿAlī. It is quite obvious (and equally orthodox) that while doing so, the ʿUthmānīs (most of whom are *fuqahā'* and *muḥaddithūn*) have committed themselves not to demerit ʿAlī and avoid as much as possible, being driven to attack the person of ʿAlī himself while they are engaged in attacking the unfounded Rāfiḍī allegations about him, who have used strong unorthodox language in passing comparative judgements on the Companions of the Prophet.⁵⁹⁸

If the Rāfiḍa reject the above ʿUthmānī evidences cited against their allegation that Abū Bakr's Imamate - which had met many oppositional fronts - was illegal, and that the legal caliph (ʿAlī) was prevented from expressing his designatory rights to the caliphate out of fear - *taqiyya*,⁵⁹⁹ the ʿUthmānīs say:

How can one logically believe your justification, and why should ʿAlī - in his ruling days - continue to hide his real view of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān, now that he had power (one hundred thousand sworded men were behind him). If he ever thought of cursing them, what then made him speak of their merits? What made him have his sons named after them? What made him allow ʿUmar to marry his daughter? If all was out of *taqiyya*, how would this fit with your image of him that he was the most courageous person: would a courageous person give his daughter to one you describe as *kāfir*?⁶⁰⁰

596 *Ibid.*, pp. 235-236.

597 *Ibid.*, pp. 235-236.

598 See *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

599 *Ibid.*, p. 241.

600 If ʿAlī was really resentful of ʿUmar's fiscal policy, why did he not change ʿUmar's *dīwāns* and ʿUmar's *ʿAṭā'* (grants), say the ʿUthmānīs (See p. 218.).

Was Abū Bakr not more courageous to fight *ahl al-Ridda* despite the few men he had available, and was ʿUthmān not courageous when he sacrificed himself for the unity of the *Umma*?⁶⁰¹

According to al-Jāhiz, the Rāfiḍa's resort to *taqiyya* is unconvincing and indicates how they could not control their biases against the caliphs preceding ʿAlī⁶⁰² thus perpetrating the view that the Prophet's designation of ʿAlī, which was met by rejection by most of the Companions, - except for three or four of them - who have become infidels, is a view that in fact ridicules ʿAlī and defeats their purpose as it is not understandable why the ruling *waṣī* should refrain from attacking the infidels and continue praising them!⁶⁰³

From here the highly apologetic mentality of the Rāfiḍa is unfolded: If Abū Bakr is mentioned as being the privileged emigrant Companion of the Prophet, they say ʿAlī's sleeping in the place of the Prophet surpasses it. If Abū Bakr is cited as *al-Ṣiddīq*, the Rāfiḍa respond that it is a fabricated *Ḥadīth* by the ʿUthmānī *Ḥashwiyya* to obscure the title of *al-Ṣiddīq al-Akbar*⁶⁰⁴ of ʿAlī. If Abū Bakr's leading of the prayer is referred to, the Rāfiḍa justify ʿAlī's absence by the fact he was nursing the Prophet. If Abū Bakr's merit in rescuing the *Umma* from going astray upon the death of the Prophet is mentioned, ʿAlī is described as helplessly silenced by grief. If Abū Bakr's role in pointing out to the Anṣār the virtues of the emigrants is mentioned, the Rāfiḍa claim that ʿAlī was afraid of doing so because of Quraysh's envy of him. If the ʿUthmāniyya say Abū Bakr's Imamate was confirmed by ʿAlī, they say the latter must have accepted that by force.

B- ʿAlī's Special ʿilm

The opening passages of Kitāb al-ʿUthmāniyya in fact can be considered as a continuation of al-Jāhiz's Kitāb al-Maʿrifa⁶⁰⁵ studied above. When ʿAlī's acceptance of Islam is contrasted to Abū Bakr's, the ʿUthmānīs are keen to emphasize that as ʿAlī had embraced Islam in his boyhood, (between 5-9 years old), his Islam cannot compete with that of Abū Bakr, who was much more mature when he accepted

601 *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.

602 *Ibid.*, p. 243.

603 *Ibid.*, p. 276.

604 al-Jāhiz comments here that this title was narrated by people who were sectarianly motivated, and were ignorant in the art of distinguishing *fāḍil* from *Mafḍūl*. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

605 In p. 261 there is acknowledgement by al-Jāhiz of this work.

Islam. In this context, they criticize the special intellectual makeup of ʿAlī's boyhood, as proposed by the Rāfiḍa to outwit Abū Bakr's:

The ʿUthmānī ʿulamāʾ, theologians and leading scholars amongst them say: had ʿAlī - in his sixth, seventh eighth or ninth years of age - been capable of distinguishing the differences between Prophets and soothsayers, messengers and magicians and the news of the astrologer and the Prophet, such that he was capable of realizing the difference between a proof and a trick, and the overpowering reasonable arguments from the seemingly overpowering apologetic statements, . . . and knew that which is possible from that which is impossible . . . and that which is expected from God from that which cannot . . . then his being in that state and quality, despite his obvious boyhood and inexperience, must be a violation of habits and norms⁶⁰⁶ that we usually know of the *Umma*. If he really enjoyed those features, he should have been a *ḥujja* over the ʿamma, and a sign of distinction. Of course, God would not have endowed him with those qualities and kept (them) secretly hidden, such that they go in vain: rather, He would have circulated their uniqueness, unveiled their peculiarity and forced men's souls to accept them, men's tongues to transmit them and men's ears to listen to them . . . This of course should not be likened to Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā whose reception of wisdom in his boyhood, and to Jesus's utterance in the cradle, which have been Qur'anically confirmed: . . . Since the Qur'ān made no reference to ʿAlī (as claimed by the Rāfiḍa), and no authentic news have reached us, then we can assume that ʿAlī's nature was not different from his uncles Ḥamza and ʿAbbās, whom we think were more meritorious than him . . . If anyone, however, claims the same qualities for his uncles, our position would still be the same (i.e., rejection).⁶⁰⁷

As for ʿAlī's alleged quality of *Ilhām* in his adulthood, and that God had revealed to him all the *fitan* the *Umma* would incur, the ʿUthmānīs object to that by saying: "how can this claim be compatible with ʿAlī's choice of Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, when his choice of ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ would certainly have proved more useful to his cause."⁶⁰⁸

If the Rāfiḍa insist on rejecting Abū Bakr's Imamate, by virtue of the unaccomplished consensus on him to succeed the Prophet, the ʿUthmānīs engage now in a new round to emphasize that it was ʿAlī and not Abū Bakr who never received *Ijmāʿ* on his Imamate:

The criticism of those few against Abū Bakr does not at all count against his perfect virtues: complete consensus is an impossibility, . . . and to ask for complete consensus is only raised by one who is ignorant of the diverse natures of men. Had Abū Bakr's Imamate been affected by this (incomplete consensus), then ʿAlī's Imamate is by far more incomplete and much weaker: for people collectively opposed him and his rejected

606 In pp. 224 and 238-239 another distinction between *Islām al-Ṭifl* and *Islām al-Kahl* is made on the basis of the witnessed reality (*al-wujūd, al-ʿiyān*) in the sense that possible witnessed realities (*al-Shāhid*) cannot be logically contradicted and eclipsed by an alleged absent reality (*Ghāʾib*).

607 *Ibid.*, pp. 6-9.

608 See *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 243.

authority (*wilāya*) to the extent they wanted to fight him. Did ʿAlī not compete with one (Muʿāwiya) who was short of his *sharaf* and religious *faḍl* yet caused enough disruption and chaos among the most sincere supporters (of ʿAlī), by using his deceit against ʿAlī's camp and rejoicing in the success his betrayal had achieved: ʿAlī sent his representative (to judge for or against him), and his adversary (*khaṣmuhu*) sent a representative to judge likewise, but ʿAlī's representative was the cheated one and Muʿāwiya's was the cheater! and succession was⁶⁰⁹ removed from him and his son (al-Ḥasan), once by trickery (*hīla*) and thence by force (*ghalaba*) to the favour of Muʿāwiya . . . We do not wish to undermine - as you do too - the width of ʿAlī's knowledge nor his evident *faḍl* and we do not claim his inferior judgement or being disgraced just because his followers have disobeyed him, when Muʿāwiya's supporters never deserted him. But you can not deny ʿAlī's losing control to his enemies, and the mockery of his enviers, so why do you stick to Salmān's rejection of Abū Bakr, and Abū Sufyān's utterance and Khālid's opposition?⁶¹⁰

In short, Abū Bakr's alleged but very insignificant opposition front cannot be compared - the ʿUthmānīs insist - to the very wide and much more serious opposition blocks ʿAlī had met. We have cited some of the ʿUthmāniyya's references to those fronts in their refutation of the Rāfiḍa's attempt to magnify the opposition to Abū Bakr. The debate between the two parties is quite fierce and sometimes it is hopeless to imagine a fruitful agreement or promising signs of reaching constructive meeting points behind the apologetic scene. The ʿUthmānīs' policy of maintaining an objective attitude to ʿAlī, all through their references to him, in such a heated atmosphere, where the figure and Imamate of the person referred to overlap, has somehow fallen short of their professed intention not to address or approach ʿAlī - as members of the ʿUmariyya-ʿUthmāniyya party - in the negative derogative fashion applied by the Rāfiḍa to Abū Bakr and most of the *Ṣaḥāba*. The ʿUthmānī scholars have been thus quite careful not to be quoted as attacking the person of ʿAlī himself, while attempting to refute the Rāfiḍī portrait of the same figure, and their consequential belief in his prophetically designated virtues and right to the Imamate. These aims may seem difficult or incompatible, but that is the position chosen by the ʿUthmānīs. Respect for the person of ʿAlī can be easily detected in the midst of their apologetic arguments on Abū Bakr's superiority:

... Not that ʿAlī was potentially short of the essence of bravery (*najda*), gallantry (*shahāma*), or instinctively lacking in vigor and courage, or that he did not come from the noblest stock and best breed (*akram ʿunṣur wa aṭyab maghras*)⁶¹¹ . . . we did not

609 This unique reference to Muʿāwiya is significant. It of course makes the difference between the pro-ʿAbbāsīd, anti-Umayyad ʿUthmānī traditionists (like al-Jāhīz) and the pro-ʿAbbāsīd-pro-Umayyad traditionists of the Hanbalites.

610 *Ibid.*, pp. 195-196.

611 *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

intend, by this argument⁶¹² to belittle ʿAlī, may the mercy of God fall upon him, nor remove him from the category of men noted for fitness and patience. We are positive that had ʿAlī lived to the days of al-Ḥasan or Ibn Sirin, his religious knowledge, *fiqh* and experience would have increased above the excellent level he achieved the day he was martyred.⁶¹³

When the issue of *ʿIṣma* (infallibility) is opened, the ʿUthmānīs maintain that this matter cannot deny that even the father of Prophets, Adam, or Yūnus, David and Solomon and even the Prophet Muḥammad, who are establishedly infallible, were not free from small slips. The ʿUthmānīs say: "why should (the Rāfiḍa) follow the mishaps of ʿUmar and ʿUthmān, when we, the ʿUmariyya-ʿUthmāniyya can furnish you with more mishaps of ʿAlī . . . when they claim that he had never erred."⁶¹⁴

When religious excellence in *fiqh*, *qirā'āt*, and *tafsīr* are raised, the ʿUthmānīs do not see ʿAlī as the most prominent, yet "acknowledge that he was *faqīh^{an}*, *ʿĀlim^{an}*, and has taken a good share of excellence in everything, and we refrain from saying of him - we, *ʿUthmāniyya and ʿUmariyya* - that which you say of ʿUmar and ʿUthmān."⁶¹⁵

C. ʿUthmānī Critique of ʿAlī's Caliphate

Within the above framework of respect for ʿAlī's person and merits, the ʿUthmāniyya nevertheless throw back the Rāfiḍa's claim on the opposition that Abū Bakr had met, to their side by claiming that it was ʿAlī who had really met such an opposition. Here starts their argument to reject ʿAlī's Imamate not only as accepted by the Rāfiḍa but also in terms of his succession to ʿUthmān in two ways:

(a) by resisting the Rāfiḍī interpretations of Prophetic *Ḥadīths* or Qur'anic text that have been erroneously used to back their view of the Prophet's specific designation of ʿAlī as his immediate sucesor.

(b) by citing the opposition blocks that rejected ʿAlī.

612 On ʿAlī's undisputed courage exhibited in fighting with the Prophet in the battles of Badr, Uḥud, Khandaq and Khaybar. See *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 48.

613 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

614 *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

615 *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

(1) **The ʿUthmānī Attack on the Idea of Prophetic Preference and Naṣṣ on ʿAlī: (The Peak of al-Jāḥiẓ's Addresses to the Caliph).**

The ʿUthmānī scholars (*fuqahāʾ* and *muḥaddithūn*) are quoted by al-Jāḥiẓ - in what may be viewed as the peak of his addresses to al-Maʾmūn - as refuting the doctrine of *naṣṣ* propogated by the Rāfiḍa on the basis that they (the Rāfiḍa) have erroneously misinterpreted certain Prophetic *Ḥadīths*⁶¹⁶ where ʿAlī is specifically mentioned by the Prophet and designated as his immediate successor.⁶¹⁷

al-Jāḥiẓ here furnishes al-Maʾmūn with Prophetic *Ḥadīths* narrated by the ʿUthmānī *Fuqahāʾ* and *Muḥaddithūn* that highly praise Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān and have no reference at all to ʿAlī in them.

Of these *Ḥadīths*, the caliphal attention is particularly drawn to the content of one, in which the Prophet explicitly orders his *Umma* to take Abū Bakr and ʿUmar as models after him, and to another, in which the Prophet referred to the consecutive additions brought by Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān of building stones to the newly raised mosque of Medina as symbolic of the future chronological successive order of rulership taken by them.⁶¹⁸

Now that al-Jāḥiẓ has provided the caliph with the Rāfiḍa's and ʿUthmāniyya's standpoints respectively, he puts himself as a neutral judge, and furnishes the caliph with an outlet from this paradox by drawing from his experience in the discipline of *fiqh al-Ḥadīth* by attempting to fix the Prophetic statements in their original intended contexts (*uṣūl makhārijihā*),⁶¹⁹ on the basis of the undeniable fact that "if what the Rāfiḍa have quoted on behalf of ʿAlī's *faḍīla* is authentic, and what the ʿUthmānī scholars have quoted on behalf of Abū Bakr's *faḍīla* is equally authentic then we are presented with a logical paradox and contradiction in terms (in fixing the Prophetic *faḍīla*), and this makes one

616 See al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, p. 134.

617 The basic *Ḥadīths* read : "Man kuntu mawlāh fa-ʿAlīyy^{un} mawlāh (Sunni version), *Allāhumma Wāli man wālāhu wa ʿĀdi man ʿĀdāhu*", (Rāfiḍī version) and "Anta minnī bimanziḥat Hārūn min Mūsā, illā annahu lā-nabiyya baʿdī", and "Allāhumma Ātinī bi Aḥabbi al-Nās ilayka yaʾkulu maʿī min hādhā al-Ṭayr", They are cited by the Rāfiḍa to indicate the Prophet's unique preference and affection he had for ʿAlī and the political rights inherent in them).

618 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

619 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

simultaneously assume that Abū Bakr is more meritorious than ʿAlī, and that ʿAlī is more meritorious than Abū Bakr, (because the *Ḥadīths* are authentic) and this is the most obvious contradiction! In fact, al-Jāḥiẓ solves this difficulty by saying "Truth cannot be self contradictory, (*al-ḥaqq lā yatanāqad*)⁶²⁰ (and as the *Ḥadīths* quoted by the Rāfiḍa are mostly authentic) the only reason that explains the ʿUthmānī Rāfiḍī conflict over the persons exclusively enjoying the Prophet's admiration and hence the right to succeed him is that the Prophetic statements must have been eventually misinterpreted and manipulated by those who have received them (from the transmitters) as holding universal significance and implications by abstracting them from their original contexts without being able to distinguish that true Prophetic statements cannot be correctly understood when they are cut from their original intended purpose (*uṣūl makhārijihā*). Such a confusion is unavoidable when the two parties are not familiar with whether the Prophetic statement (*khābar*) carries a local and specific application (*khāṣṣ*)⁶²¹ and nothing else beyond that, or whether the *khābar* is given a universal implication above its local and particular intended meaning (*ʿāmm*)⁶²². This is al-Jāḥiẓ's basic contribution where his own knowledge in *fiqh al-Ḥadīth* is deliberately forwarded to the caliph, who must have been affected by the conflicting interpretations of the Rāfiḍa and the ʿUthmāniyya, at the time al-Jāḥiẓ was addressing this treatise in his unique reconciliatory role to bridge the gap between the two camps. Of course, al-Jāḥiẓ's position here seems to reunite the Rāfiḍa and the ʿUthmāniyya - now that the cited Prophetic *Ḥadīths* are quite agreeable to both. He may also be viewed as putting himself above the problem i.e., above the ʿUthmānīs and the Rāfiḍa, but in fact the solution he is to offer in this critical issue need not - as he has pointed out in other contexts outside the treatise, - label him a strict ʿUthmānī. Indeed his constant appeal to the scholars of *Ḥadīth*, however similar it may appear to that of the ʿUthmānī *fuqahā'* and *ḥashwī*⁶²³ *muḥaddithūn*, should not necessarily put him as one amongst them, by the very criterion of his being able to distinguish the particular (*khāṣṣ*) from the universal (*ʿāmm*), which both the ʿUthmānīs and Rāfiḍīs have equally failed to recognize (in these Prophetic *Ḥadīths*.) al-Jāḥiẓ says: People are of two kinds: they are either

620 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

621 *Ibid.*

622 *Ibid.*

623 This term has been used by al-Jāḥiẓ in this treatise to describe the ʿUthmānīs. Of course, this reminds us of the group of pro-Umayyads, *al-Nābita* who were given the same description. As such, one can conclude now that *Hashwiyya* is a nickname used by al-Jāḥiẓ to reflect the narrow minded mentality which he has observed among the pro-Umayyad Traditionists and also among the anti-Umayyad, ʿUthmānī Traditionists (who based the Imamate on the sole criterion of merit, and as such they are not pro-ʿAbbāsīd but pro-merit.)

‘Umarīs or ‘Alawīs, the former absolutely venerates Abū Bakr (‘Umar & ‘Uthmān) while the latter exclusively venerates ‘Alī.

In trying to clarify his criteria of the *khāṣṣ* and ‘*āmm* meaning of Prophetic *Ḥadīths*, al-Jāḥiẓ provides his addressee with examples that are illustrative of his theory. The Prophetic reference to the honesty of the Companion Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī has been equally misunderstood by the two parties.

If you ask the *Shiya‘* (*Shī‘ite* groups), "who was regarded by the Prophet as the most honest, ‘Alī or Abū Dharr?" They collectively answer: "‘Alī". They justify ‘Alī's omission by saying that the Prophet has deliberately left him in the belief that Muslims knew that ‘Alī was the most honest.⁶²⁴

If you ask the ‘Uthmāniyya the same question, al-Jāḥiẓ adds, they would commit the same misinterpretation and say "Abū Bakr".⁶²⁵ The consensus reached by each party that someone other than Abū Dharr is the most honest Companion, is an indication of al-Jāḥiẓ's point: The Prophetic reference to Abū Dharr, in spite of its being styled in an exclusive fashion (*makhrajuhu makhraj al-‘āmm*)⁶²⁶ and expressed in a generalized tone, it nevertheless has a particular and specific application (*khāṣṣ*)⁶²⁷ even if the specific application of its particularity (without which the Prophet is also excluded) is not bluntly expressed.⁶²⁸ Similarly, the Prophetic *Ḥadīth* "Among the pious people of God, ‘Umar is the best" has been interpreted by the majority of Muslims to have omitted Abū Bakr from the statement when in fact he was the best, i.e., al-Jāḥiẓ points out - there is a consensus among Muslims that somebody other than ‘Umar has been superior to him.⁶²⁹ But people have not used this statement to establish the absolutely exclusive superiority of ‘Umar, as they have not exploited the existence of other *Ḥadīths*⁶³⁰ on other Companions - which suggests that they are regarded as short-term in their application and highly figurative in style. Had ‘Alī or Abū Bakr been included in them, the *Ḥadīths* would

624 *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

625 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

626 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

627 *Ibid.*

628 *Ibid.*

629 *Ibid.*, p. 140.

630 Such as the Prophetic saying : "I am pleased to that which Ibn Umm ‘Abd has chosen", "to each nation there is a trustworthy figure, and Abū ‘Ubayda (Ibn al-Jarrāḥ) is the trustworthy (*Amīn*) of this *Umma*", ". . . how can I not be respectful of that whom the angels are shy"? (speaking of ‘Uthmān), "God's throne was shaken by Sa‘d Ibn Mu‘ādh's murder", all these sayings - al-Jāḥiẓ says - carry more *tafḍīl* than those referring to Abū Bakr and ‘Alī. See *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

have certainly been used by the two parties as primary evidence to prove the exclusive suitability of either in the issue of *Imāma* and *tafdīl*.⁶³¹ Therefore these sayings were simply intended to give justice (*qawl^{an} ʿadl^{an}*) to the Companion named, and their general phraseology or appliance should not be extended any further, as the Prophetic expression has laid down the general wordings (*lafz*) and omitted the purposed meaning, (*maʿnā*) in his full belief that it was obviously understood and known to his addressees⁶³² such that these statements carry a general meaning, (of respect for a person, but not to the exclusion of other persons as may be literally understood).

Man Kuntu Mawlāhu Fa ʿAliyy^{un} Mawlāhu

So in light of the above examples (on the criteria of *khāṣṣ* and *ʿāmm*), al-Jāhīz draws the attention of his addressee to the way the Rāfiḍa have erroneously misinterpreted the Prophetic utterances concerning ʿAlī.

It must be concluded that from the above arguments Imamship and precedence have not had - and consequently should not have - any Prophetic basis or reference whatsoever, by virtue of the fact that Companions who were not as meritorious as Abū Bakr and ʿAlī have enjoyed Prophetic statements in which the type of Prophetic address surpassed those in which Abū Bakr or ʿAlī were mentioned.

However, if the Rāfiḍa continue to find in the Prophetic saying "*Man kuntu Mawlāh*" an explicit clear cut proof that substantiates ʿAlī's designated right for the Imamate, al-Jāhīz draws their attention to the following drawbacks: First, those non-Shīʿī traditionists who have narrated this saying did not have the extra portion which reads: "O, God, befriend whoever befriends him and oppose whoever is his enemy", (*Allāhumma wāli man wālāh wa ʿādi man ʿādāh*).

The ʿUthmānis believe that this latter addition has been concocted by the *Shiyaʿ* i.e., the numerous and diverse groups of Shīʿites⁶³³ and has no roots among

631 *Ibid.*, 141.

632 *Ibid.*, pp. 138-142.

633 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

the majority of reliable transmitters. The transmitter, al-A^cmash,⁶³⁴ who al-Jāḥiẓ suggests was a Rāfiḍite has offered a different reading of that *Ḥadīth* reading: "*man Kuntu waliyyuhu fa ʿAliyy^{un} waliyyuhu*",⁶³⁵ without having the inserted addition "*Allāhumma wāli . . . ʿĀdi*, etc.", and thus in view of the difference in wording and variable readings the *Ḥadīth* is rejected because of these signs that are indicative of its *wahan* (weakness).⁶³⁶

Another sign which undermines the trustworthiness of this *Ḥadīth* and the Rāfiḍī interpretation of it is that they also report that it was said about ʿAlī when he had had a dispute with Zayd b. Ḥāritha and he had been disputing him (*lāḥāhu*). Zayd is said to have replied to ʿAlī with similar language. At this ʿAlī had told Zayd not to speak to his *mawlā* in such a way. Zayd denied that any one was his *mawlā* except the Prophet. This made ʿAlī go to the Prophet to complain about Zayd's behaviour and denial of his status. It was this that led the Prophet to say "*Man kuntu Mawlāh fa ʿAliyy^{un} Mawlāh.*" Therefore this statement only concerns the technical relationship of *walā' niʿma* and therefore applies not only to ʿAlī but the rest of the Prophet's agnate relations like ʿAbbās etc. The report has nothing to do with the merit (*faḍl*) of ʿAlī in religion. al-Jāḥiẓ then goes on to argue that even if the additional words which he alleges the Rāfiḍa have added were accepted, (i.e., oppose whoever opposes him and befriend whoever befriends him) they would not concern anyone except Zayd because Zayd was the person being complained about.

634 al-A^cmash was not Rāfiḍī as al-Jāḥiẓ classifies him. See Ibn Ḥanbal, *Fadā'il al-Sahāba*, Ed. W. ʿAbbās (Makka: University of Umm al-Qurā, 1403/1983), vol. 2. Moreover, the editor of *Fadā'il* also reports how al-Shāfiʿī, a contemporary of al-Jāḥiẓ, interpreted *walā'* to ʿAlī as meaning *walā'* of Islam. See *Ibid.*, p. 563. Although this latter point is not clear, the Prophetic meaning of *walā'* has been beautifully explained by al-Bāqillānī, in his *Tamhīd*, whereby all the facets of *walā'* are discussed, in particular the meaning of *naṣīr* is stressed. See al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd fi al-Radd ʿalā al-Mulhida al-Muʿattila wa al-Rāfiḍa wa al-Khawārij wa-al-Muʿtazila*, Ed. M. al-Khudayrī & M. ʿAbd al-Hādī Abū Rīda, (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1366/1947) pp. 172-173. "*Man Kuntu Mawlāh*," says Bāqillānī, means: He (the Believer) who is backed by me, whom I protect in all religious matters, openly and implicitly, ʿAlī will equally support him. And this is a high credit for ʿAlī. Alternatively, he (the faithful) who sees me as his beloved and defender, should see ʿAlī, equally, as his beloved and supporter. Exalting me is binding and this applies to ʿAlī, in a Prophetic expectation that cuts the road for those who would excommunicate his political *wilāya* and criticize his actions.

635 This reading has also been narrated by Ibn Ḥanbal, through al-A^cmash, as sound in addition to the former one "*man kuntu mawlāh fa ʿAliyy^{un} mawlāh*", which is seen by Ibn Ḥanbal as equally sound. See *Fadā'il*, 2: 563 and 569.

636 al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, p. 145. Note here that Ibn Ḥazm equally refused to accept this tradition, from the point of transmission (*Isnād.*). See Ibn Ḥanbal's *Fadā'il*, p. 569. The editor comments on this as a far fetched conclusion.

However, al-Jāhiz claims that these words were hardly likely to have been said about Zayd because Zayd was one of the first, if not the first to accept Islam. According to the ʿUthmāniyya the merit of Zayd's acceptance of Islam was greater than ʿAli's. In addition his status and merit were further enhanced by the fact that whenever he went on an expedition (*sariyya*) he was put in command of it. Thus the Prophet put him in command over Jaʿfar al-Ṭayyār (who was also his *mawlā* as al-Jāhiz must have intended to indicate). He was also in command of the expedition to *Mu'ta* and the Prophet also put his son Usāma in command over the leading emigrants and Anṣār, like ʿUmar. When they complained about this to the Prophet, the latter, before he died, replied by accusing them of complaining about Usāma's authority in the same way as they had complained about his father's i.e., Zayd. He emphasises Zayd's suitability for leadership and asserted that Usāma was similarly suitable. He also claimed that Zayd was among the most beloved of the people to him and the same applied to his son. This led to Usāma being described by the people of Medina as Usāma "The beloved". It was for this reason that ʿUmar gave Usāma a greater portion of ʿAṭā' than his own son ʿAbd Allāh. ʿĀ'isha is also alleged to have said on the Prophet's death that if Zayd had been alive, the Prophet would have made him his successor. She said this even though her own father was the Caliph and the Imamate had been given to him.

So back to al-Jāhiz's criteria of the *khāṣṣ/ʿāmm*, and its significance in understanding Prophetic *Ḥadīths*; had the former portion of this *Ḥadīth* been authentic it should not have been applied to anyone but Zayd, who must have been the sole and immediate addressee of that Prophetic saying but as has been outlined, Zayd had never been the object of that Prophetic statement. al-Jāhiz brings the argument to a close in order to extinguish the Rāfiḍa's idea of *naṣṣ* by demonstrating that the *Ḥadīth* which *naṣṣ* rested on is a fabrication. Equally significant is the implicit way al-Jāhiz identifies himself with the ʿUthmāniyya as he strengthens his position by quoting their view of Zayd's merits. The ʿUthmānī political philosophy is therefore unfolded by such a discussion which asserts that as regards the Arab system of *walā'* in which non-Arabs, slaves or Arabs belonging to other tribes were granted membership into a clan, the superiority of Zayd was one that was solely acknowledged by virtue of his exemplary deeds for Islam and noble character, irrespective of the class status of *mawlā* through which he became a member of the "Pre-Islamic" Arabs.⁶³⁷

637 Ibid., pp.145-147.

It is therefore - according to the ʿUthmānis - quite improbable to even accept the Rāfiḍī insertion "*allāhumma ʿādi*" in view of the position Zayd had had with the Prophet. Even if the inserted words are hypothetically accepted, it need not reflect an evidence for ʿAlī's Imamate and a proof for his exclusive distinction. All that can be said - the ʿUthmānis maintain - is that the saying indicates, in its two portions, that ʿAlī enjoyed some *faḍl*, but not that exclusive and supreme one,⁶³⁸ which is, however, available in those *Ḥadīths* that praise Abū Bakr and ʿUmar.⁶³⁹

The ʿUthmānis here start a new argument to criticize the Rāfiḍī basis for ʿAlī's right for the Imāmate. The above *Ḥadīth* - as it is - can never be used as a proof against the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn* (who are condemned by the Rāfiḍa simply because they did not allow ʿAlī to actualize his designatory right). There is antagonistic debate whether the Prophet had kept the issue of succession subject to choice or whether he had solved the issue by choosing on behalf of his *Umma*.⁶⁴⁰ The ʿUthmānis argue that even if the issue of succession and designatory rights of ʿAlī were hidden in a subtle manner in that *Ḥadīth*, the Rāfiḍa should have been the first to refrain from labelling the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn* with *kufr*, just because they were incapable of exploring the hidden message of that *Ḥadīth*. But as the ʿUthmānis have shown above, the *Ḥadīth* has no room for such a hidden interpretation, and should therefore be discarded as a basis for the doctrine of ʿAlī's Imamate. The idea of *naṣṣ* and *Ikhtiyār* takes a polemic and dialectic approach. *Naṣṣ* is rejected, even if it saves the *Umma* from the eminent dangers of speculating who is the best, given

638 *Ibid.*, p. 148.

639 This is a weak point for first it contradicts the previous conclusion that there are *Ḥadīths* that were more praising of men other than Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. Second because it is using the method of the *Rāfiḍa* i.e., searching for *Ḥadīths* to back the Imamate of Abū Bakr in what may be viewed as an early proto-Sunni attempt to indicate Prophetic *naṣṣ* on Abū Bakr and hence this shows that the ʿUthmāni argument was not consistent in upholding the idea of *Ikhtiyār* uniformly, but displayed a tendency to use the idea of its adversary (*naṣṣ*). Third, because al-Jāḥiẓ openly identifies himself with the ʿUthmāniyya (*Ibid.*, p. 148) in their rejection of ʿAlī's Imamate - which he will accept later in another work. We have seen that al-Bāqillānī attempts to overcome al-Jāḥiẓ's ʿUthmāni determination to reject ʿAlī's Imamate by (a) accepting the former portion of the *Ḥadīth*, (b) suggesting that ʿAlī's Imamate could have been signalled by the Prophet before its occurrence when it carried a local implication (i.e., respect for ʿAlī is part of respect for the house of the Prophet) and had a future implicaton; that is if someone doubts ʿAlī's religious status, he should not question ʿAlī's integrity and actions when he receives office as the Prophet had already praised ʿAlī as *Nāsīr* (defender) of Islam. In this way one finds al-Jāḥiẓ either deliberately ignoring or failing to accept this interpretation, and his method of *khāṣṣ* & *ʿāmm* was therefore not impartially applied.

640 *Ibid.*, p. 149.

that there were many who were regarded as best. The *Rāfiḍa* now are pressurised to back the idea of *naṣṣ* by putting forward another *Ḥadīth*, in the hope of leaving no room for controversial speculation and closing the door of *Ikhtiyār*, and in this context the *Ḥadīth* of the bird (*al-Tayr*) is cited here whereby the Prophet wished that his most beloved Companion would join him in eating the bird but, as the *Rāfiḍa* claim, one Companion, Anas, found ʿAlī coming so he prevented him from coming to the Prophet's house in spite of the Prophet's insistence to let the visitor in. The ʿUthmānīs here reject this *Ḥadīth* from the transmission point of view, as it is concocted, 'sāqiḥ'⁶⁴¹ and also from its content as the Qur'ān would not have spared this instance in which a Companion violated the Prophetic orders.

The last *Ḥadīth* quoted by the ʿUthmānīs on behalf of the *Rāfiḍa* which reads: "You are the like of Aaron to me, except that no Prophet follows me" is rejected on the basis that Qur'anic and even Biblical and Judaic exegetes all confirm that Aaron died before Moses and as such no value can even be attributed to this saying in the sense that Aaron did not succeed Moses in Prophethood and the *Rāfiḍa*'s basis for ʿAlī being like Aaron in succession logically collapses.⁶⁴²

(ii) ʿUthmānī Attack On The *Rāfiḍa*'s Claim For A Qur'anic Basis For *Naṣṣ* On ʿAlī:

As for the Qur'anic references to the idea of *naṣṣ* on ʿAlī, the ʿUthmānīs are engaged in refuting the group of verses gathered by the *Rāfiḍa* to back their position. The ʿUthmānīs here appeal to the concept of *Ijmāʿ*⁶⁴³ among exegetes i.e., which gives no room for the *Rāfiḍī* claims or interpretations. In the Qur'anic verse⁶⁴⁴ that orders the believers to obey the Prophet and men of authority, in addition to those who perform *zakāt* while in prayer, ʿAlī's Imamate is allegedly claimed to be inherent in it as ʿAlī is reported by the *Rāfiḍa* to have made *zakāt* while bowing in

641 *Ibid.*, p. 150. The *Rāfiḍa* are referred by al-Jāhīz to the "*Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth*" who will settle the dispute for them, *Ibid.*, p. 151. The leprosy that afflicted Anas, is attributed by the *Rāfiḍa* to ʿAlī's spitting on his face in a highly imaginative and indeed miraculous fashion. The ʿUthmānīs comment on this: "why did not ʿAlī use such measures on Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī or the army of Ṣiffīn?" (*Ibid.*, pp. 152-153).

642 See *Ibid.*, pp. 153-115. This *Ḥadīth* has been mentioned by Ibn Ḥanbal (*Fadā'il al-Sahāba*, 2: 567-568. The Editor comments that this *Ḥadīth* has a sound transmission (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Sanad.*) The addition : "Had there been a Prophet after me, you should have been the one" is judged a concoction. *Ibid.*

643 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

644 Sūra 5: 55.

prayer. The ʿUthmānīs strongly reject this interpretation, as it is far fetched⁶⁴⁵ and is not backed by any Prophetic *khābar* or consensual Qur'anic *ta'wīl*. It is hence unlikely that God revealed that verse to indicate to the *Umma* ʿAlī's Imamate.⁶⁴⁶

When the Qur'anic verse which reads "Say: God is sufficient witness between us and also he who has knowledge of the Book" is cited,⁶⁴⁷ the ʿUthmānīs do not share with the Rāfiḍa the claim that ʿAlī had an exclusive knowledge of the Book. This claim - the ʿUthmānī spokesman says - has no basis among the authentic narrators and Qur'anic exegetes. Not even Abū Bakr, ʿUmar or ʿUthmān could be given that quality, although they had a share in it.⁶⁴⁸ Knowledge of the Book has rather been attributed to other men such as Ibn ʿAbbās,⁶⁴⁹ and later al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Mujāhid, al-Daḥḥāk, ʿIkrima, etc. Zayd b. Thābit's superior knowledge in the science of *al-Farā'id*, and Ubayy and Ibn Masʿūd's superiority in the science of *al-Qirā'āt*⁶⁵⁰, should not be competing with Ibn ʿAbbās's exclusive superiority and mastering of the science of *ta'wīl* in its totality, in the sense that each one of them have displayed an established mastery level in one but not in all facets of *ta'wīl*, and here ʿAlī was not reported as equal to those mentioned.

The ʿUthmānīs finally hold the opinion that after reading the Qur'ān from cover to cover, they found no one single contextual reference that points to the issue of succession from the *naṣṣ* point of view advocated by the Rāfiḍa.⁶⁵¹

It is obvious that al-Jāḥiẓ in both instances, here in K. al ʿUthmāniyya and later in K. Ḥujaj al-Nubuwwa⁶⁵², acknowledges Ubayy's and Ibn Masʿūd's authority in *Qirā'āt*, but whereas in the former source Zayd is eclipsed by them, in the latter he eclipses them both, and his version of the Qur'ān is described as unanimously accepted by all the Muslim sects: such as al-Mu'tazila, Khawārij, Murji'a and the

645 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

646 *Ibid.*

647 Sūra 13: 43.

648 and were more famous in excellence other than this technical aspect of *ta'wīl*. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

649 This is based on a Prophetic Ḥadīth in which the Prophet prayed that Ibn ʿAbbās will enjoy *fiqh* in *dīn* and *ta'wīl*, i.e. in all its meanings, stories, *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*, *khāṣṣ* and ʿāmm, *nāsikh* and *mansūkh*, Makkan and Medinese. See *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

650 Ubayy and Ibn Masʿūd will be mentioned later by al-Jāḥiẓ in this respect as having been eclipsed by Zayd b. Thābit, as his reading was the most binding to the *Umma* being the final version.

651 *Ibid.*, p. 273.

652 *Rasa'il*, 3 : 230 and ff.

Shīʿa but has, however, been rejected by the Rawāfiḍ who, strangely enough, are quoted as following the reading of Ibn Masʿūd. That is why al-Jāhiz pokes fun at them as Ibn Masʿūd was a typical ʿUmarī (in the sense that he loved ʿUmar greatly) and was outspokenly anti-Shīʿite. The reason the Rāfiḍa refused Zayd's Qur'anic reading and accepted that of Ibn Masʿūd, could be explained by reference to the Imāmī exegete, al-Ṭuṣī, who ascribes to him a fuller version of verse 24, Sūra 4, concerning temporary marriage (*muʿa*) in the form of an addition that does not exist in the *Muṣḥaf of ʿUthmān* (Sūra 4: 24).⁶⁵³

Other Weaknesses Of the Doctrine Of *Naṣṣ*

The ʿUthmānis have found evidence outside the realm of *Ḥadīth* and Qur'ān to attack the point of *naṣṣ*. First, it was not used by ʿAlī during his rule.⁶⁵⁴ The claim of *naṣṣ*, hence, after leaving the circle of Qur'anic *Ijmāʿ* of exegetes, and the circle of *Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth*, rests therefore in the circle of fabricators of the Rāfiḍa⁶⁵⁵ and is solely confined among the Rāfiḍa.⁶⁵⁶

If ʿAlī had really that right, why did we not find anybody - among the opposition fronts ʿAlī had met, such as Ṭalḥa ʿĀ'isha, Zubayr, (and Muʿāwiya) - reminding them of their mistakes in opposing one whom the Prophet had entrusted with authority?⁶⁵⁷ Second, even the Zaydiyya, despite their hatred for Ṭalḥa and Zubayr, do not share with the Rāfiḍa their point of *naṣṣ*.⁶⁵⁸

The ʿUthmāniyya maintained - according to al-Jāhiz - that to make a mistake about the Imamate could never amount to apostasy (*irtidād*). This term could only be applied to drastic differences in theology.⁶⁵⁹ Therefore, even if the traditions of the Rāfiḍa concerning ʿAlī's Imamate were true, and of course they did not accept them,

653 See al-Ṭuṣī, *Tafsir al-Tibyān* (al-Najaf al-Ashraf: Maktabat al-Amin), 3: 166 and I.K.A. Howard, "Mutʿa Marriage Reconsidered in the context of the Formal procedures for Islamic Marriage", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, vol. 20, No. 1, Spring 1975, pp. 82-92.

654 *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, pp. 10-13.

655 *Ibid.*, pp. 276,149.

656 *Ibid.*, p. 275.

657 *Ibid.*

658 *Ibid.*, pp. 275-276. On p. 180 an extreme faction of the Zaydiyya is described as claiming that the *Umma* fell in the *Ridda*, when they rejected ʿAlī's Imamate, but for Salmān, Miqdād, Abū Dharr and Bilāl. This group was most probably the Jārūdiyya.

659 *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271.

it would still not amount to apostasy!⁶⁶⁰ As such, the Rāfida's claims are traced until the ʿUthmānis are freed from any further need⁶⁶¹ to attack a group whose claims have left the established *Ijmāʿ* and authentic *Ḥadīth* and are founded on fabrications and motivated by obsession and whims.⁶⁶² In short, their concern was to oppose common sense and *Ijmāʿ* by all that is farfetched and hidden.⁶⁶³

After suggesting that the Qur'anic text has absolutely no contextual reference that points to the Imamate of any candidate,⁶⁶⁴ al-Jāḥiẓ cites *historical evidence* to confirm the unauthenticity of the doctrine of *naṣṣ*:

As such, (i.e., that the Qur'ān is silent on the exact identity of a person for the post of Imam), you have no more (genuine) evidences to forward from Qur'ān. The same applies when you try to gather a proof from historical *khābar*, despite the famous statement of *al-Anṣār* and that of *al-Muhājirūn*.⁶⁶⁵ ... [You are reminded] of Abū Bakr's disinterest in the post; although he was acting as the spokesman of Quraysh and *al-Muhājirūn* he asked the people to choose one from amongst two: ʿUmar or Abū ʿUbayda . . . Not one single person stepped out from the group of *Anṣār*, *Muhājirūn* or the community at large saying: "The Prophet has entrusted the post of *Imam* to a specified person." Not only so, but even if you assume that someone said that the Prophet said a statement on this and that date implying that the post belongs to someone, nobody uttered a word of this . . . We have also seen this confirmed in Abū Bakr's action in passing it to ʿUmar. . . Although Abū Bakr was advised to choose a less severe person, he was determined to choose ʿUmar and we did not hear the doctrine of *naṣṣ* raised against him then either. ʿUmar's *shūrā* of six reflects the same principle, and all Muslims consented: The Zuhri, Taymi, Hāshimī, Umawī, Asadī . . . more significant and foreign to the doctrine of *naṣṣ*, is ʿUmar's thinking of Sālim- the *mawlā* of Abū Ḥudhayfa - as a possible candidate . . . Add to this Saʿd's opposition to ʿAlī and his request for a proper *shūrā*. Nobody told Saʿd he was pointless as the Prophet had already chosen ʿAlī as Imam . . . The same reasoning applies to Ṭalḥa, Zubayr, and ʿĀ'isha's fight against ʿAlī. Nobody objected to them: Why are you fighting the person whom the Prophet has chosen as your Imam?⁶⁶⁶

The ʿUthmānis have also cited the rejection by seven Badrites of ʿAlī's call to them to accept his Imamate,⁶⁶⁷ in addition to the Khārijī rebellion against him.⁶⁶⁸

660 *Ibid.*, pp. 276-277.

661 *Ibid.*, p. 277.

662 *Ibid.*, p. 276.

663 See *Ibid.*, p. 238.

664 *Ibid.*, p. 273.

665 *Ibid.*, p. 176.

666 *Ibid.*, p. 273.

667 *Ibid.*, p. 175. (Zayd b. Thābit, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar, Ṣuhayb, etc.)

668 *Ibid.*, p. 184.

(b) Opposition Front met by ʿAlī:

We have seen above how the ʿUthmānis have briefly cited some opposition fronts against ʿAlī above. These include Saʿd, Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr, ʿĀʾisha, Muʿāwiyā, and ʿAlī's own supporters and soldiers. When the ʿUthmānis, however, state the following observations "how can ʿAlī be more superior than Abū Bakr?"⁶⁶⁹, "who else but (i.e., Abū Bakr) has been tested in a fashion that has not been repeated and never will?"⁶⁷⁰, "military expeditions were blocked in his (ʿAlī's) days, and mischief sprang up with him, and the Khārijites came out against his person"⁶⁷¹ they at once add: "but this brings us into that which we have intended to avoid."⁶⁷²

The wisdom underlying the absence of *Naṣṣ* and suitability of *Ikhtiyār*: *Naṣṣ* and *Ikhtiyār* contrasted to Divine ʿAdl and human *Taklīf*.

Against the Rāfiḍī justification for divine *Naṣṣ*, the ʿUthmānis forward the following argument:

If God had removed all that which heavily weighs upon men's shoulders, which men's souls find ugly, and all that which opposes their whims, the testing of them (*Imtīḥān*) would be therefore invalid and the freedom of choice (*Ikhtiyār*)⁶⁷³ would be void. For them, there would be no sweetness to avoid, no bitterness to experience, no delight to be delayed, or hateful thing to be advanced. How can they (the Rāfiḍa) expect of God a judgement or a situation (of *Naṣṣ*) whose burden He has not lifted!

According to the Rāfiḍa, *Naṣṣ* supposedly rests on their unfounded fears that God has relieved the community of believers from the burden of choosing, and the possible dangers of mischoosing and division (*ghalaṭ wa fitna*).⁶⁷⁴

The ʿUthmānis confirm that the absence of *Naṣṣ* has been divinely intended, such that by leaving the Muslims to discover the best candidate - although it invites a great deal of objectivity and subjects their faith to a big trial when desires and

669 Ibid., p.185.

670 Presumably by the wise way he accepted the Prophet's death and led Muslims according to his model. See context, p.184.

671 Ibid., p.185.

672 Ibid., pp. 185-186.

673 I chose *Ikhtiyār* for *Ikhtibār* as the likely reading in relation to the Muʿtazilī doctrine of free will, their view of *taklīf*, and in line with the Muʿtazilī justification for their doctrine of choosing (*Ikhtiyār*) the caliph. Ibid. p. 272.

674 Ibid. , p. 270

attitudes are confronted with objectivity - would be a more beneficial divine measure to the *Umma*, than breaking the silence by specifying a single Imām.

Objective striving to recognise the most excellent is the key principle for the ʿUthmānīs, and for this the exact candidate has not been specified, but is wisely discarded.⁶⁷⁵ al-Jāhīz adds on their behalf the advantages and wisdom behind this discarding:

If they say: "It is either that the Prophet has decided for us or we are left to decide." we reply: "Had the Prophet chosen a candidate and decided for us, this would of course have solved the matter, but since he did not, it is quite wise that he left the issue as it is, (i.e., open for choice.) His choice not to choose is indeed an invitation for us to choose, as choosing not to choose is sometimes a better choice for us. The Prophet would not have chosen to dismiss *Naṣṣ*, had he not realised that this is the best solution."⁶⁷⁶

The ʿUthmānīs reject the doctrine of Divine *Naṣṣ* by saying:

Why is that they have expected and forced on God that which is easier and more apparent, when they have noticed that He has not done likewise, and kept things which are more delicate in meaning and need a subtler path to reach, and are more deep to extract, more sinful to commit neither specified nor explained, such as the issue of predestination, settling the dispute between free choice and predestined instincts, *al-taʿdīl wa al-tajwīr*, the issue of anthropomorphism (or its antithesis), and the way information is received and the logical reasoning of the mind.⁶⁷⁷

This final point should not imply the unnecessary nature of the Imamate; rather it fixes the obligatory nature of the Imamate within a non-Rāfiḍī framework, i.e., within the ʿUthmānī (and equally Muʿtazilī and Sunnī) framework that views the caliphate as a function of *Istinbāṭ*⁶⁷⁸ which is conclusive to *Ikhtiyār* and not based on *Naṣṣ*. The significance is unveiled when the ʿUthmānīs confirm what has later distinguished the Sunnī from the Shīʿī attitude to the Imamate. For the ʿUthmānīs, it is not one of the basics (*uṣūl*) but among the *furūʿ* whereas the Shīʿa held the opposite:

For this reason the ʿUthmānīs say:

675 *Ibid.*, p. 271

676 *Ibid.*, p. 278

677 *Ibid.*, p. 270

678 *Istinbāṭ* means exerting efforts to discover the truth, and applies to discovering the necessity of Imamate as well as on discovering the suitability of the correct Imam, achieved by the process of *Ikhtiyār*. (Case of Abū Bakr as well as the ʿAbbāsids).

We have never seen one deserving to be labelled as an atheist or unbeliever just because he has erred in his view on the issue of caliphate/Imamate. On the contrary, we found such labels applied to those who have erred in (other) issues that were equally left unanswered in the Qur'ān . . .⁶⁷⁹

The ʿUthmānī expectation of God that He did not designate the Imamate to a specific person opposes that of the Rāfiḍīs, which rests on *Naṣṣ*. Of course, the difference can easily be traced back to the ʿUthmānī/Muʿtazilī outlook on God and their view of human nature. Divine justice and human nature are joined together to bring out the ʿUthmānī version of the Imamate, in the sense we shall elaborate below, and can be used to reflect a doctrinal constant by al-Jāḥiẓ during this period, which links ʿUthmāniyya to the earlier work of "al-Jawābāt" which also had a view of the Imamate equally tied to human nature and Divine justice.

VII- ʿUthmānī doctrines:

A-view of the *Imāma*

The ʿUthmānīs therefore believe that the Imamate rests on the principle of *Ikhtiyār*. The ʿUthmānīs assert that although religion kept silent on the exact identity of the candidate, it gave a suggestion of such qualities as justice and perfection. The Prophetic *Ḥadīth*: "Let the most fit (perfect) lead you" is one such example of the flexible nature of the Imamate embodied behind such a silence.⁶⁸⁰

Another feature of the ʿUthmānīs is that the *Imām* should be the most meritorious, without having to descend from a specific noble family or genetic pool,

679 *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, p. 271. That the Imamate is not among the *uṣūl al-ʿItiqād* ; see ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahristānī, *Nihāyat al-Iqdām fi ʿilm al-Kalām*, Ed. A. Guillaume, (Oxford: University Press, 1934), p.478 and also M. ʿAmāra, *al-Islam wa al-Sulta al-Dīniyya*, (Beirut: al-Mu'assasat al-ʿArabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1980), pp. 77-82, where he cites an identical view by al-Ghazālī who also agrees that no mistake in the issue of Imamate should make one a non-believer.

680 *Ibid.* p. 277. This *Ḥadīth* is not mentioned by any narrator and does not exist in Wensinck's Concordance. The closest reading to it has been narrated by Abū Dāwūd, where the 'best among you' is asked by the Prophet to make the call for prayers (*Adhān*), and the best reader of the Qur'ān is asked to lead the prayers. Perhaps al-Jāḥiẓ's ʿUthmāniyya have heard the *Ḥadīth* (Let the best among you, lead you) differently wherein the "Qur'ān readers" are substituted by "the best". al-Jāḥiẓ's ʿUthmānī interpretation of the *Ḥadīth* and application of the leadership of prayers to the leadership of the Umma, however, matches a common Islamic practise. See al-Nasāʾī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, (Bombay: Dār al-Qayyima, 1985), 1: 223, where the *Saqīfa* incident is first introduced to describe the qualities of the leader of prayer, aiming to link Imāmship in *ṣalāt* to leadership of the *Umma*.

so that in this way the ʿUthmānīs have clearly separated themselves from the forceful political heritage of dynasties or ideologies that based their legitimacy on their blood relation to the Prophet, be they Umayyad, ʿAbbāsīd or Shīʿite. The ʿUthmānīs, after stressing that Abū Bakr (and equally ʿUmar and ʿUthmān) have got office by merit, seem to shift the debate from the area of guided caliphate to one of political philosophy, by expounding one of the basic and key themes of K. al-ʿUthmāniyya, namely, that leadership in religion could not be given to anyone without having an established superiority in religion "*al-riyāsa fī al-dīn lā tunāl bi- ghayr al-dīn.*" Here, the fallacy of *qarāba* as conducive to *Imāma* is attacked. The Prophet Muḥammad had deserved that office by virtue of his manifesting an outstanding moral record, and not because of his Hāshimite origin, otherwise any Hāshimite could have claimed leadership. Extending the Hāshimite argument further, ʿAlī could have been an excellent candidate, as he happened to fulfil the Hāshimite requirement from his parents. But this supposition is rejected because the Prophet - the ʿUthmānīs add - was not given the highest of statuses and noblest of leaderships except by ʿamal and saʿy. Quoting the Qurʾanic reference (53: 37-39) that man will be judged solely by his actions, the ʿUthmānīs say:

If one's being the son of a Prophet or the Prophet's successor, or his cousin is not obviously part of his saʿy, this explains why the Prophet summoned his uncle, al-ʿAbbās and his aunt Ṣafīyya to draw their attention to the fact that their relation to him would not free them from God's punishment, should they deserve it. ⁶⁸¹

The ʿUthmānīs now complete their argument by quoting the Qurʾanic verse (44: 41), which warns that every *mawlā* is independent from his other *mawlā* on the day of judgement. As *mawlā* is said to have meant one's cousin, (besides one's slave), freedom from God's wrath is hence said to apply equally to the Prophet's cousin (and all his blood relations). He who objects to this conclusion, by assuming that *qarāba* should replace good deeds, *al-ʿamal al-Ṣāliḥ*, is one who is rejecting God's ruling and advice in this matter. The ʿUthmānīs back their view by reference to the Qurʾanic story of the sons of Adam (5: 29), whereby one's relation to his father, the Prophet, did not prevent him from God's curse and punishment. In this manner, no oppressor should ever depend on his noble lineage, not even a Prophet's son. The same applies to Noah's son whose disbelief made him one amongst the drowned (11: 46).

681 al-ʿUthmāniyya, pp. 206-207.

The Qur'anic reference to God's promise of Ibrāhim's Imāmship does not extend to cover the wicked (*fāsiq*) (2: 124) from his offspring, even if they come from the best of God's creation. This - the ʿUthmānīs conclude - is the proof that leadership in religion "should never" be based on any factor but religion. The argument is finally closed by reference to the Qur'anic verse that shows how God has sent Noah and Abraham and made their offspring receive prophecies, (57: 26) yet as some of their descendants were guided and many were *fāsiqs*, the fact remains that relation to the same genetic pool does not - as it never had - make the descendant noble.⁶⁸² Hence the main feature of the ʿUthmānīs is their outspoken non-racial doctrine of political equality, (*taswiya*), in the issue of the caliphate. In other words, these ʿUthmānīs ascribe no weight to lineage factors and continuously stress that the caliph should always be the most meritorious and as such they are distinguished from the ʿAbbāsids, Umayyads and Rāfiḍa who have hitherto attached undue significance to the factor of genealogical descent and blood relation to the Prophet. These ʿUthmānīs who are also known as ʿUmarīs, quote ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's *madhhab* of *khilāfa*, which reflects their non-racial attitudes to the question of succession.⁶⁸³

It would be useful to keep an eye on how such a position was viewed by al-Jāhīz throughout his political career: did he join the ʿUthmānīs in their non-racial attitude to the identity of the Imām or was he more keen to take the side of the ʿAbbāsīd stock of Hāshim/Quraysh? and if so, how could restricting the Imām to Quraysh have been compatible with the Islamic (non-racial) criteria for rulership? As regards al-Jāhīz's work, *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, it is sufficient here to say that al-Jāhīz - after completing his account of the ʿUthmānīs as regards the freedom to choose the candidate for *Imāma*, no matter where he may originally and genealogically come from - al-Jāhīz, surprisingly has implicitly maintained that his patrons, the ʿAbbāsīds, could very much fit in *khilāfa*, in spite of the strictness of the ʿUthmāniyya, as it is left implicit for the reader to infer that the ʿAbbāsīds need not be excluded from the ʿUthmānī ruling on merit, as they could be seen as having combined merit and noble descent exactly as ʿUthmān had, in what may be seen as a subtle Jāhīzian twisting of the ʿUthmānī argument for merit that does not rest on descent.

682 See how the argument is developed in *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, pp. 206-211.

683 *Ibid.*, pp 217-218. Here ʿUmar on his death bed is quoted saying: "Had (the non-Arab) Sālim, client of Abū Ḥudhayfa been alive, I would have certainly recommended him for the caliphate".

Equally significant is the way the post of Imām is simultaneously linked to the argument of human nature and Divine justice, expressed in "al-Jawābāt fī al-Imāma" and recycled here in a way that suggests how the Mu'tazila's and 'Uthmāniyya's views coincided in this respect.

Man is not ideally projected, as the predominance of his desires and lusts are acknowledged. As a *mukallaf* who is entrusted with religious duties and is committed to look at the long term effects of his actions and as one who can and subsequently should oppose his whims and preferences, he must listen to the call of reason in choosing the most meritorious, setting his immediate preferences aside.⁶⁸⁴ If it is claimed there are ten equally meritorious candidates, the answer to that is that it contradicts with Divine justice: "God would not have ordained a matter and then make it impossible to realising . . . If this happens, it would be more miraculous than raising the dead alive, but God only asks for things that are within man's reach and are conducive to his *maṣlaḥa*."⁶⁸⁵ From this point the various ways of choosing an Imām are laid down.

B- Modalities of accession to *Imāma*/Caliphate

i- Popular acclamation (after communal *Istinbāṭ* of the most meritorious):

Now that the *Shari'a*'s silence on the identity of the Imām is justified, how do the 'Uthmānis see their alternative of *Ikhtiyār* regulated, in view of the undeniable conflicting local preferences⁶⁸⁶ of each part of the Islamic caliphate? How do the people get to know of their leader? The 'Uthmāni argument makes an appeal here to the principle of "natural necessity"⁶⁸⁷, i.e., once the community is familiar and knowledgeable with the virtues of the most meritorious figure, it follows instantly that they choose him by virtue of his outstanding excellences and qualities that compel them to unanimously select him as their leader.

684 *Ibid.*, p. 272

685 *Ibid.*, p.269

686 These include the Syrian, 'Irāqī, Ḥijāzī, Tahāmī, Jazarī, Qurayshī, Ḥusaynī, Ḥasanī, Ibādī, Ṣufri, Azraqī, Najdī and Zaydī. See *Ibid.* pp. 269-270.

687 Instantaneous recognition of the Imam in this manner follows with al-Jāḥiẓ's view that recognition of God and His messengers is equally compelling provided independent *taklīf* is ongoing. See *Ibid.*, p. 255 and 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1965), pp. 54-55. Destiny and free will are harmoniously fitted, because man is destined to accept that which is really the most excellent in his opinion.

The candidate's distinguished excellences are so manifest and famous that this makes the elite of the community choose him willingly and spontaneously, after a long process of being familiar with him, by virtue of an undoubted *khavar* or compelling witness in the way ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd became famous among the Muʿtazila, and al-Ḥasan b. Ḥayy among the Zaydiyya and Mirdās b. Udayya among the Khawārij, and Galen became the most distinguished in medicine and Aristotle in logic.⁶⁸⁸ It is quite unlikely that the most excellent in *Dīn* and *Dunyā* is unheard of, because his very excellence could only be attained by frequenting ʿulamāʾ and fuqahāʾ, by extensive study of the Books of God and His creation, and competing with adversaries.⁶⁸⁹ How can we suppose the most suitable and perfect of men to be obscure by deed and creed, when he could only enjoy such an excellence by virtue of accumulating experiences, abundant correct choices and actions.⁶⁹⁰ Abundant works or "*kathrat al-Aʿmāl*", in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's words, is the road conducive to *Imāma*.⁶⁹¹

Popular acclamation of the leader is hence the first mode of accession and it goes without saying that Abū Bakr's Imamate is the most illustrative example of this way of accession in view of the category of virtues highlighted in al-ʿUthmāniyya and the explicit suggestion that Abū Bakr's appointment was a consequence of the community's familiarity with his merits that lasted for twenty three years.⁶⁹²

Their gathering around Abū Bakr was not due to his wealth nor to his clan-status, but due to his religious merit, and was made possible not after implementing a metaphysical doctrine or apparatus, but was achieved by a free exercise of the intellect. al-Jāhiz's allusion to how the first Muslims had reacted to the problem of succession is significant in understanding the issue of Imamate as a direct responsibility of the intellect, God's agent installed in mankind.⁶⁹³ For this reason revelation was silent on this political issue in order to give way for the society

688 *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, pp. 265-266.

689 *Ibid.*, pp. 266-267.

690 Such as pilgrimages, wars, prayers, fasting, alms giving, recitation of Qurʾān, forbidding evil and commanding the good, love for the pious and aggression to enemies, *Ibid.*, pp. 252, 266-268.

691 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Sharh*, p. 754.

692 See *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 167, 168, 171 and 172.

693 See al-Jāhiz, "Risāla fi al-Maʿāsh wa al-Maʿād", *Rasāʾil*, 1: 92, (*al-ʿAql=wakil Allāh fi al-ard*).

represented by its most learned groups, *ahl al-ḥaqq*⁶⁹⁴, to exercise that God-given power towards *ahl al-faḍl*⁶⁹⁵, the most meritorious amongst them.

ii- By way of revolution

The second of these ways is by means of revolution whose obligatory nature of attainment is conditional upon possibility (*Imkān*) and whose possibility or likelihood is dependent on the special relation al-Jāḥiẓ viewed as indispensable between the elite (*al-khāṣṣa*) and the public masses (*al-ʿāmma*):

When we say it is incumbent on people to set an Imām, we mean none but the (privileged), the *khāṣṣa*, whose obligation rests on the possibility of fulfillment (*Imkān*). If they say: "what makes the *khāṣṣa* powerful or powerless?" we say: "it may be that the public is antagonistic towards it and strongly attached to the army of the illegitimate ruler (*al-Bāghī al-mutaghallib*) which makes it powerless."⁶⁹⁶

In the condition mentioned above (when the *ʿāmma* is in agreement with the tyrant) does the obligation to set an Imām remain binding on the *khāṣṣa* and when does it vanish? al-Jāḥiẓ says: it may or may not remain binding:

If they say: "in which case does the obligation to set one apply?" we say: "If the deserving candidate for the Imamate and the most worthy of the caliphate is distinguishable and apparent, provided the element of *taqiyya* is absent." If they ask: "how come secrecy hinders those that are more numerous than the soldiers of the tyrant?" we reply: "It is not enough that the holders of the just cause⁶⁹⁷ be more numerous for they may be faced by a more trained army, that makes their plot fail. A small trained group is usually more efficient than a scattered and divided group."⁶⁹⁸

In another instance al-Jāḥiẓ gives another condition for the possibility of dethroning the tyrant, in what Pellat describes as an analysis of the 'psychology of the plotters', i.e., success of the revolution is not only due to the agitation of the masses but is also due to the more influential and plotting role of the *khāṣṣa*. Hence the two forces should work together for the success of the revolution, but this depends on the period when a favourable relation exists between these forces.

694 See *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, p. 270.

695 *Ibid.*, p. 265.

696 Besides the above translation of the term *mutaghallib*, Pellat uses the "tyrant", the "usurper". See 'L'imamat dans la doctrine de Ḡāḥiẓ', p. 48, f.n. 1.

697 It is not contextually clear how the elite could be more numerous, but as Pellat suggests, some of the pages are disappointing. (*Ibid.*, p. 49). As he suggests, the more numerous should mean the upholders of the just cause (p. 48).

698 al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, p. 262.

The *khāṣṣa*, even if it knows where the man worthy of the caliphate can be found, and is more decided, each member of it is convinced that his associate could betray and forsake him. As long as there is need for *taqiyya*, forsaking and indifference continue, although all agree to help in appointing the absent Imām. Such unanimity of feeling is of no use as long as they are not united. If they say: "They should forever abstain from selecting an Imām as no co-operation exists among them for they cannot get out of *taqiyya*," we shall say: "It is not that. The prudence and clandestineness of certain members of the *khāṣṣa* towards other members cannot continue and eventually will stop for numerous reasons. For instance, the conduct of the tyrant may worsen, his injustice may become abominable, his usurpation and oppression may increase to such an extent that this attitude will evidently reach a very awkward state that drives them to think of resistance, by honest discourse, and fruitful consultations; here the state of embarrassment (*Ihrāj*) has driven them to be more united than ever, such that everyone is guided by the opinion of his associate after they found themselves suffering from the common misfortune that provoked that unpleasant anger in their souls. This will continue until their inherent agreement matches their external one, with the misfortune sparing no one. Upon meeting, people get more excited, agitated and observant, which leads to an open communication to one another, and an abandonment of their *taqiyya* which will ultimately be known to their oppressive adversaries. They know then that their only refuge is war and their only outlet is an open fight. They also find themselves obliged to give money and spare no effort. These are the working causes of a growing cumulative phenomenon and conditions or matters that trigger other matters and motives that cause reciprocal actions. At that point, violence is possible and the religious obligation to strike becomes real."⁶⁹⁹

Such a manner of reaching power obviously bears a strong relation to the coming of the ʿAbbāsids⁷⁰⁰ and justifies their absence from the political stage during the Umayyad era. In this sense the ʿAbbāsīd stock is freed from any blame, as such an elite was overshadowed by the Umayyad oppressors⁷⁰¹ and their efforts remained futile until the situation worsened in their favour, i.e., until the interaction between *al-khāṣṣa* and ʿāmma interacted favourably to the ʿAbbāsīd cause after the political vision of both groups had perfectly coincided in their attempt to get rid of the unlawful Umayyad usurpers. The ʿAbbāsīds as such are seen as enjoying a potential right to rule, which was however suppressed by the brutal Umayyads and the weakness of the ʿāmma.⁷⁰² This (potential) right of the ʿAbbāsīds will be more openly discussed below under the work known as "al-ʿAbbāsīyya".

699 *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, pp. 261-263.

700 This has been signalled by Lambton, *State and Government in Islam*, p. 61

701 *Ibid.*, p. 261, 264.

702 *al-Jāhīz* will extensively point to the oppressive nature of the Umayyads in an exaggerated manner in order to justify the impossibility of any ʿAbbāsīd rebellion during the rule of the Umayyads, who are described in the most oppressive manner, besides the type of people who fell victim to that oppression and accepted their *fiṣq*, except for a minority that God made immune from being as them. See 'al-Nābita', *Rasā'il al-Jāhīz*, 2: 15. Hārūn wrongly reads the verb here as "ʿaṣā", (see *Ibid.*, line 10). It should rather be read as "ʿaṣama Allāh", i.e., those (ʿAbbāsīds) protected by God (my suggestion).

iii- The third way of becoming a caliph is reflected in the way Abū Bakr gave the succession to ʿUmar.⁷⁰³

iv- The fourth way of becoming an Imām is that which has been undertaken by Muslims to choose ʿUthmān, which was embodied in the *Shūrā* set out by ʿUmar, that acted as the *khāṣṣa* (elite) of their times.⁷⁰⁴

VIII- Evaluation of K al-ʿUthmāniyya: Was al-Jāhiz successful?

It is significant to note how successful al-Jāhiz was in forwarding K. al-ʿUthmāniyya to al-Ma'mūn, in the role of an advisor concerning the the issue of *tafdīl* and the delicate matter of passing a judgement on one of the Companions of the Prophet. To achieve that target we have seen how keen al-Jāhiz was on stressing the extremism of the main parties that had a say in this topic, be it the ʿUthmāniyya who rejected the caliphate (but not the person) of ʿAlī or the Rāfiḍa who rejected the deeds, personalities and caliphates of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān. Once the extremism or non-orthodoxy has been highlighted, al-Jāhiz was equally keen to provide the caliph with a balanced and orthodox view on this matter. Observing that the caliph had a great esteem for ʿAlī to the exclusion of those who had preceded him, al-Jāhiz's task was not an easy one as he was determined to convey to the caliph, who seems to have had a pre-determined misconception of the hierarchical statuses of the *Ṣaḥāba*, an alternative view that aims at exactly placing them in the historically established politico-religious standing that each one of them had really enjoyed. The ʿUthmānī scholars, obviously, must have been very crucial and favourable to the non-Shīʿī al-Jāhiz in implementing this aim, given their acknowledged contributions in the existing non-Shīʿī, and growing Sunnī school of *fiqh* and *Ḥadīth*.

It is very likely that al-Jāhiz's determination to provide the pro-ʿAlid caliph with a detailed exposition of al-ʿUthmāniyya's outlook, couched in a ʿUthmānī-Rāfiḍī polemic, seemed to him the safest way to pull the caliph back to the most contemporary version of the circulated legitimised basis of the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate, i.e., to the Sunnī orthodoxy, at a time when the ʿUthmānī *ʿulamāʾ* as a group had become an important contributor in laying the foundation of that orthodoxy.

703 See *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, p. 274.

704 *Ibid.*, p. 270.

It can be asked here why al-Jāhiz in this aspiration for orthodoxy did not make any appeal to Ḥanbalism, being solely satisfied by using the ʿUthmānī scholars. In other words, why did al-Jāhiz choose the ʿUthmāniyya's outlook, which suffered from the weakness of rejecting ʿAlī's rulership when he could have appealed to another contributor to orthodoxy, Ibn Ḥanbal⁷⁰⁵ and his school who are believed to have incorporated ʿAlī (sooner or later in his life⁷⁰⁶) among the meritorious *Ṣaḥāba*.

Hence al-ʿUthmāniyya must have been more attractive to the caliph than the Ḥanbalīs whose growing influences al-Jāhiz, with the state-backed Muʿtazila, was keen to check by trying to inflict the *Miḥna* on them. Hence the choice by al-Jāhiz of al-ʿUthmāniyya as a group is justified, in his attempt to accommodate the *Ṣaḥāba* in a balanced way⁷⁰⁷, whereby the virtues of the caliph's favourite, ʿAlī, are acknowledged in an ʿUthmānic manner i.e., "although ʿAlī is shown to have been an excellent and virtuous Companion of the Prophet", the caliph is hopefully attracted to the corollary of this ʿUthmānī judgement: that each of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān was even more virtuous and thus they deserved to be the immediate successors of the Prophet.

This treatise could not have been produced without al-Jāhiz's awareness of and dependence on al-Ma'mūn's tolerance, which allowed al-Jāhiz to provide the caliph with the ʿUthmāniyya's outlook on the respective merits and statuses of the *Ṣaḥāba* after the Prophet. A sound criticism of ʿAlī (and his supporters) should not have been out of the question at al-Ma'mūn's court⁷⁰⁸, and so al-Jāhiz's attempt was not sufficiently risky to stir the anger of the biased caliph, as long as the criticism of

705 Ibn Taymiyya narrates on behalf of Ibn Ḥanbal: "He who does not count ʿAlī as the fourth caliph is more astray than the donkey serving his family, and should not be allowed to marry from us". See Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ Fatāwā*, Ed. by A. Ibn Qāsim (Morocco: al-Maktab al-Taʿlimī al-Saʿūdī, n.d.) 35: 19

706 See Madelung, *Religious Trends*, p. 24. Z. Aḥmad has pointed out Ibn Ḥanbal's broad definition of the respective merits of the *Ṣaḥāba*, wherein Abū Bakr has precedence over ʿUmar, then comes the six members of the *Shūrā*, all of whom were worthy of the caliphate, then fighters at Badr, then the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*. As such, ʿAlī's Imamate is acknowledged, being one of the *Shūrā* members. See Z. Aḥmad "Some aspects of the political theology of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal", *Islamic Studies*, XII (1973), pp. 53-66.

707 But not as balanced as Ibn Ḥanbal.

708 See Zahniser, 'Insights from the ʿUthmāniyya of al-Jāhiz', *MW*, pp. 13-14.

‘Alī's Imamate and exclusive *faḍl* (and the attempt to identify who had really enjoyed that exclusive *faḍl*) were put in the mouth of the ‘Uthmāniyya.⁷⁰⁹

It would be useful to comment on the impact of al-Jāḥiẓ's treatise on his intended reader al-Ma'mūn and the on the public as well. Of course, if this treatise was presented to the ‘Abbāsīd caliph before the year 201 (when ‘Alī al-Riḍā was made heir apparent), al-Jāḥiẓ's attempt must have been a big failure. The same applies if the treatise was forwarded to al-Ma'mūn before the year 212 when ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib was declared the best Companion after the Prophet.⁷¹⁰ But if, however, the treatise was presented to al-Ma'mūn after 212 and before 218, when al-Ma'mūn on his deathbed entrusted the caliphate to his brother al-Mu‘taṣim, al-Jāḥiẓ's ‘Uthmāniyya could be seen as scoring some genuine success, as al-Ma'mūn did not, eventually, appoint another ‘Alid figure to succeed him.⁷¹¹

It is also within al-Jāḥiẓ's pluralistic role of comprehensive and objective narration of the arguments of the various sects, that we should view the biographers' account of the existence of the non-extant work "*al-radd ‘alā al-‘Uthmāniyya*"⁷¹². The same period that witnessed this book must have also given room for al-Jāḥiẓ's narration of "*qawl aṣnāf al-Zaydiyya*"⁷¹³ which is also non-extant.

709 It is for this reason that al-Jāḥiẓ had been branded as a typical ‘Uthmānī, to which he will categorically object in his preface to *K. al-Ḥayawān*, as a constant reminder by al-Jāḥiẓ to his readers to distinguish al-Jāḥiẓ as a narrator and al-Jāḥiẓ as an independent thinker. See al-Jāḥiẓ's introduction to *K. al-Ḥayawān*, 1: 11. The same charge will continue after al-Jāḥiẓ. See al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 4:195-196 who describes al-Jāḥiẓ's ‘Uthmānism as an explicit and famous deviance. See Ibn al-Murtaḍā (d. 840 A.H.), in *al-Munya wa al-Amal*, Ed. Thomas Artlo (India, 1316 A.H.), pp. 38-39 and also see ‘Abbās al-Qummī (d. 1359), *al-Kunā wa al-Alqāb* who says he was close to the ‘Uthmāniyya (as cited in the special volume of *al-Mawrid*.)

710 The reason for such a failure would be attributed to the existence of the stronger influences of the Baghdādī Mu‘tazilites who were Zaydites in outlook, and seem to have won al-Ma'mūn to their side. al-Iskāfī's extant refutation of al-Jāḥiẓ's ‘Uthmāniyya, probably belongs to the period after 212 when al-Iskāfī's pro-Alid taste matched the declaration of al-Ma'mūn in the same year that ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib was the best Companion after the Prophet.

711 See al-Ṭabarī, *The History* (vol. XXXII) tr. by C. Bosworth, (1987, p. 230), Annals of the year 218 where al-Ma'mūn's testament in which he asks his brother to respect "the right of our paternal cousins that demand recognition on several grounds of consideration" is mentioned. At least, it seems to me that the financial rights of the Ṭālibites are stressed to the exclusion of any political right!

712 See Pellat's Inventory, *Arabica*, 1984, no 232, citing Yāqūt's *Irshād*, 6: 76, Kutubī, 153b, Ṣafadī, 134, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, 124a.

713 See Pellat, *Ibid.*, no 243, citing al-Jāḥiẓ's preface to *al-Ḥayawān*, 1: 9, and other sources. I have checked this source and I think it is a mistake to base the existence of this non-extant work on al-Jāḥiẓ's allusion, for in this reference al-Jāḥiẓ has coupled Zaydiyya with the branches of Khārijism which is very doubtful indeed. The other sources such as Yāqūt's

As far as K. al-ʿUthmāniyya is concerned, one must note that al-Jāhiz's professed role as an arbiter between the Rāfiḍa, Zaydiyya and ʿUthmāniyya (Bakriyya-ʿUthmāniyya), was not - given his ʿAbbāsīd and Sunnī convictions - practised with complete impartiality, as we have seen him directing the argument in a seemingly objective manner yet not free from his subtle way of directing these arguments to support the non-Shīʿī (Zaydī/Rāfiḍī) premises that al-Jāhiz cherished.

In this respect, out of the many caliphal addresses cited in K. al-ʿUthmāniyya, it is sufficient to quote al-Jāhiz's own words:

"... Look how clearly we provide the Rawāfiḍ with *hujaj* . . . and how far they go astray inspite of our efforts!"⁷¹⁴

Perhaps to al-Jāhiz, who has told the caliph not to misunderstand him for any of the parties quoted (i.e., here, as a partisan of the ʿUthmāniyya), such a remark could have been fitted within his outlined scheme of objective narration when he said (*wa jaʿaltu nafsi ʿAdl^{an} baynahum*); i.e., his rejection of the Rawāfiḍ theses does not necessarily contradict his role as an arbiter, for the judge cannot obviously keep silent and has to favour one or the other view.

It is exactly al-Jāhiz's critique of ʿAlī's superiority as cherished by both Rāfiḍa and Zaydiyya, which has driven a partisan of the latter, al-Iskāfī, to refute al-Jāhiz's work al-ʿUthmāniyya as it must have challenged the Zaydī doctrine of *al-mafḍūl* and *al-afḍal*. Although the Zaydiyya had accepted the authenticity of Imāmship of the three caliphs that preceded ʿAlī, they could not accept al-Jāhiz/al-ʿUthmāniyya's reasons for that authenticity⁷¹⁵, i.e., based on the fact they were better than ʿAlī. The Muʿtazilī Zaydī⁷¹⁶ al-Iskāfī could not accept the ʿUthmānī logic in which ʿAlī is sketched as one out of the many meritorious *Ṣahāba* of the Prophet, and thus his alleged unique superiority is torn into pieces or shattered as we have seen al-Jāhiz trying to pay justice to all the other *Ṣahāba* who were really enjoying a higher or equal image. For this reason, al-Iskāfī was motivated to refute al-Jāhiz

Irshād (6: 76) and Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*, (the new published annex) refer to this work among al-Jāhiz's list of works. Pellat in his article (*Ġāhiz Hérésiographe*) sees this work as one out of many heresiographical works by al-Jāhiz. See p. 155 ff.

714 *al-ʿUthmāniyya*, p. 129

715 H. Yehya Mohamed, *Op. cit.*, pp. 104, 107.

716 al-Iskāfī is supposed to have been a Muʿtazilite before becoming a Zaydite. See Watt, 'The Political Attitudes of the Muʿtazilites', p. 50.

immediately, even if the latter was "pretending that he as an objective author, was acting as an arbiter between the ʿUthmānī and Rāfiḍī sects,"⁷¹⁷ because those ʿUthmānī arguments do shake the Zaydī basis for accepting the Imamate of those who had preceded ʿAlī by suggesting that they were more superior than him.

But how comes it that the first attack on al-Jāḥiẓ's ʿUthmāniyya has come from a Zaydī source, whom al-Jāḥiẓ had praised (as a group) in the treatise studied above known as "Maqālat al-Zaydiyya" (in their alleged insistence that Imamate follows deeds and was not based on descent, on which he, however, kept silent while reiterating their view that ʿAlī had all the good qualities scattered among the *Ṣaḥāba*).⁷¹⁸ Of course al-Iskāfī who found al-Jāḥiẓ rejecting the latter thesis, i.e., by pointing out in K. al-ʿUthmāniyya that there were Companions who were more meritorious than ʿAlī, could not but refute him. This clash among members of the same Muʿtazila school needs some clarification. Ḥ. Yaḥyā Moḥamed has pointed that the Muʿtazila were divided into two schools: the Baṣrans and the Baghdādīs; although Abū Bakr's Imamate was acknowledged by both, there was no agreement between them whether Abū Bakr or ʿAlī was the most meritorious (*al-afdal*):

The Baṣrans like al-Nazzām, al-Jāḥiẓ, Thumāma, al-Fuwaṭī and other Muʿtazilites upheld like the ʿUthmānites that Abū Bakr was *afdal* than ʿAlī; and that the chronology of the first four caliphs reflected their respective order of merit. The Baghdādī Muʿtazilites, such as Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir, and al-Iskāfī, . . . thought like the Zaydites that ʿAlī was *al-afdal*.⁷¹⁹

In short the differences between al-Jāḥiẓ and the Zaydī Muʿtazila is the way Abū Bakr's Imamate was judged as authentic. To the former, who could only approve of the perfect candidate as suitable to succeed the Prophet⁷²⁰, that candidate was evidently Abū Bakr. The Zaydīs, however, did not deny Abū Bakr's Imamate but stressed that due to the factors beyond ʿAlī's control⁷²¹ - who, nevertheless, was the most meritorious - ʿAlī had to give way to the less meritorious, Abū Bakr, and as such Abū Bakr's Imamate - according to the Zaydī Muʿtazila - should not mean he

717 See Ḥ. Yehya's thesis: 'Ġāḥiẓ et le Chiʿisme', p. 111.

718 I owe this observation to Ḥ. Yehya Moḥamed, 'Ġāḥiẓ et le Chiʿisme', pp. 13-14.

719 Ḥ. Yehyā Moḥamed, *op. cit.*, p. 14. The generalisation quoted here needs amendments: Indeed there were Baṣran and Baghdādī Muʿtazilites, but a reading of the ʿUthmāniyya, indicates that it is not exact to attribute to them the hierarchy Yehyā ascribes (that hierarchical order follows their historical order of rule); what can be inferred is only the point of preference, where they preferred Abū Bakr over ʿAlī; as to the question of hierarchical order Yehyā's point is doubtful, as they rejected ʿAlī's Imamate!

720 See al-Jāḥiẓ's view expressed in *Maqālat al-Zaydiyya*.

721 See Yehya, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

was the *afdāl*, thus the birth of the term *al-mafdūl*, which was tied or based on a Zaydī socio-political analysis of events that justified the Imamate of those who preceded ʿAlī and offered the reasons that hindered ʿAlī from asking for his right.⁷²² So on the point of *tafdīl*, one can present the following table (up to this point in al-Jāhīz's thought):

	Abū Bakr	ʿUmar	ʿUthmān	ʿAlī
ʿUthmāniyya	accepted as <i>afdāl</i>	accepted	accepted	accepted his virtues, rejected his Imamate
Rāfiḍa	rejected	rejected	rejected	accepted as <i>afdāl</i>
al-Jāhīz	accepted as <i>fādīl</i>	accepted	accepted	a-neutral in "Maqālat al-Zaydiyya" b- close to ʿUthmānī opinion in al-ʿUthmāniyya c- accepted his virtues and Imamate in Taṣwīb
Zaydiyya	accepted as <i>mafdūl</i>	accepted as <i>mafdūl</i>	accepted as <i>mafdūl</i>	accepted as <i>afdāl</i> after Prophet

Watt, Pellat,⁷²³ and H. Y. Moḥamed have ascribed to al-Jāhīz the role of establishing the acceptance among the majority of Muslims that the chronological order of the guided caliphs was equally the order of their merit. In fact, this generalisation does not have any basis in the works of al-Jāhīz studied so far,⁷²⁴ as the present work (al-ʿUthmāniyya) is very clear in reflecting the ʿUthmānī rejection of ʿAlī's Imamate and we do not hear any comment from al-Jāhīz in this respect.

722 See "Maqālat al-Zaydiyya" and Yehya, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

723 Watt, *Formative*, p. 167, citing Pellat's 'l'imamat dans la doctrine de Ğāhīz', in *Studia Islamica*, XV (1961), p. 51.

724 Perhaps one has, it seems, to check the soundness of such a generalisation against al-Jāhīz's later pro-Alid work, "Taṣwīb".

3- Kitāb al-ʿAbbāsiyya

I Religio-Political setting:

Although the exact timing of this work has been controversial, one is inclined to assume its composition to have been during the period of political Muʿtazilite triumph where pro-ʿAlid and pro-ʿAbbāsid sentiments were unquestionably the main features of that period.

al-Ḥājirī⁷²⁵ rejects the possibility that this work - only three pages of which have remained - could have been one of the earliest Jāḥizian works on the issue of Imamate presented to al-Maʿmūn while he was in Merv, i.e., after his victory over his brother al-Amin.⁷²⁶ al-Ḥājirī's suggestion makes sense but the timing of this work should not be pushed to a period that goes beyond that of al-Maʿmūn, as suggested by al-Jāḥiz's doctrinal enemy, and most probably his contemporary, i.e., Ibn al-Rīwandī, who claimed that al-Jāḥiz had written al-ʿAbbāsiyya together with Kitāb al-Ilhām to refute the Shīʿites, during a much later period (in 241/855-856).⁷²⁷

Judging from the contextual markers in the work of al-ʿAbbāsiyya, as we shall see below, there is more evidence for our hypothesis that this work was written during the same period of political Muʿtazilite triumph and not during the period witnessing the anti-Alid trends of al-Mutawakkil.

What applies in our analysis above on the timing of al-ʿUthmāniyya should therefore be extended to the work al-ʿAbbāsiyya.⁷²⁸

al-ʿAbbāsiyya:

Before we analyse the content of the few pages that have reached us of K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya, we shall try below to relate the work contextually, to other Jāḥizian texts

725 al-Ḥājirī, al-Jāḥiz Hayātuhu wa Āthāruhu, p. 194.

726 This is the view of Pellat, in 'al-Ġāḥiz Hérésiographe', pp.153-155.

727 Ibn al-Rīwandī, Fadīhat al-Muʿtazila, in microfilm, Ph. D. Thesis by A.A. Aʿsam, pp. 32-33, 42. This timing which is suggested by al-Aʿsam is based on the supposition that K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya followed al-ʿUthmāniyya, which is believed by him to have been composed in 240/854-855.

728 al-Jāḥiz, al-ʿUthmāniyya, p. 187.

and historically, to other sectarian doctrines in which the group of al-ʿAbbāsiyya defined themselves in relation to others.

Contextually, al-Jāhiz has promised the reader/addressee of K. al-ʿUthmāniyya to follow it by K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya, by citing the different aspects of their argumentation in a very profound fashion and with the greatest impartiality (*inṣāf*).⁷²⁹ The promise and mention of the ʿAbbāsiyya was triggered by al-Jāhiz's reference to the way the Rāfiḍa have quoted Salmān's view on the question of political inheritance, which he is allegedly said to have uttered in Persian:

Says al-Jāhiz:

Had Salmān meant that political succession were to be confined within the house of the Prophet, in an inherited manner (*ʿalā al-tawāruth*) that gives priority to those that are closest to him in kinship, the closer one is to him the more right he has to succeed him (*al-aqrab fa al-aqrab*) - which obviously alienates the rest of the Arabs (that lack such kinship) and equally the non-Arabs: then, accordingly, this interpretation would have been a credit and proof to the group of ʿAbbāsiyya and not to the group ʿAlawiyya, as the ʿAbbāsids were closer and enjoyed a more senior blood relation to the Prophet than the ʿAlids (Uncle vs. Cousin).⁷³⁰

Of course, this position is the complete antithesis of the group of the ʿUthmānis, who have categorically refuted the doctrine of succession by descent and judged such a position as necessarily conflicting with that favourable to God.⁷³¹

Contrary to the ʿUthmāni and even the ʿAlawī position, al-Jāhiz's professed neutrality was obviously punctured by such an acknowledgement of the right of the ʿAbbāsids, which he could not resist pointing out; this time in the context of quoting the Rāfiḍa's interpretation of Khālid b. Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣ's alleged statement in reaction to Abū Bakr's Imamate: "did you, the group of ʿAbd Manāf accept the rulership of someone not from you?"⁷³²

al-Jāhiz's analysis of this statement hypothetically acknowledges the superior right of al-ʿAbbās over ʿAlī and the rest of ʿAbd Manāf, if - al-Jāhiz stresses - Khālid

729 See *Ibid.*, p.187.

730 *Ibid.*

731 *Ibid.*, p. 208.

732 *Ibid.*, p. 190.

meant to remind them of the issue of political inheritance, which al-Jāhiz concludes - was not Khālid's intention!⁷³³

On the contextual relation between al-ʿAbbāsiyya and al-ʿUthmāniyya, Pellat says:

There is an absolute continuity between K. al-ʿUthmāniyya and K. Masʿil al-ʿAbbāsiyya, since, having discussed the doctrine of the Muslims who believe that the caliphate had been legitimately held by Abū Bakr and his first two successors, the author (al-Jāhiz), had logically - without passing any judgement⁷³⁴ - to go further and without believing too much in it himself,⁷³⁵ to show that at any rate the ʿAbbāsid caliphate was more legitimate than that which was claimed by the Alids,⁷³⁶ since even the Shīʿites had come to the conclusion that the Prophet himself had designated al-ʿAbbās.⁷³⁷

Historically and concerning the original transfer of power from the ʿAlids to the ʿAbbāsids, the question remains whether al-Mahdī was the one who had first introduced such a new legitimacy for the dynasty or was it after *al-Hāshimiyya-al-Rāwandiyya* had introduced such a view that he followed them?⁷³⁸ Furthermore, how

733 Ibid.

734 I think that al-Jāhiz in K. al-ʿUthmāniyya was not an innocent arbiter as Pellat assumes here. This contradicts his own observation in which he alerts the reader to the probability that al-Jāhiz was not in al-ʿUthmāniyya a simple narrator. See Pellat 'al-Ġāhiz Hérésiographe', p. 149.

735 I think this can be debated as al-Jāhiz's pro-ʿAbbāsidism is quite detectible in many of his writings.

736 Pellat's conclusion should rather read: The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate's legitimacy was initially rooted in their cousins' right to Imamship, namely from his Ḥanafī's descendants, it passed over to them. This interpretation of the basis of the ʿAbbāsid rule is confirmed by al-Masʿūdī's analysis of the group of Rāwandiyya, who refuted the Imamate of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar but accepted that of ʿAlī because al-ʿAbbās had accepted/wished it, but they nevertheless confirm al-ʿAbbās's superior right to the caliphate by virtue of his distinguished kinship. In this sense, ʿAlī could be seen to have had the second priority, as al-ʿAbbās was removed from exercising his right. ʿAlī could have acted on behalf of al-ʿAbbās, but this does not extend in time. See Murūj, 3: 236.

737 Pellat, "Ġāhiz Hérésiographe", pp. 153-155. I wonder who these Shīʿites were. Perhaps he means the Hāshimiyya-al-Kaysāniyya.

738 According to Pellat the Rāwandiyya were members of a sect that made its appearance shortly after the death of Abū Hāshim (son of Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya, end of 1st century) among the Kaysāniyya who were divided over the problem of the succession of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya. They had played a strong role in the ʿAbbāsid *Daʿwa*, and benefiting from F. ʿOmar and Madelung, Pellat defines the Rāwandiyya as being named after ʿAbd Allāh al-Rāwandī, an ʿAbbāsid *dāʿī* of the ʿAbbāsid pretender Muḥammad b. ʿAlī in Khurāsān, who presided over the Hāshimiyya (the supporters of Abū Hāshim) who maintained that the son of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya had given up his rights in favour of this Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, or rather to his father, ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās, such that these Rāwandiyya were the only supporters of the Alid transmission of Imamate among the ʿAbbāsids. See Pellat, 'Ġāhiz Hérésiographe', footnote 50-53. To him, it was this group - at the time of al-Mahdī - which ended up claiming that the Prophet had designated his uncle al-ʿAbbās to succeed him, and that group was known as al-ʿAbbāsiyya. Pellat's analysis therefore seems to trace back the

can we accept that al-Mahdī, according to al-Ash^ʿarī al-Qummī,⁷³⁹ was critical of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and all other non-ʿAbbāsīd rulers who are seen by al-Mahdī as usurpers and are secretly seen by the *Hāshimiyya-al-Rāwandiyya* - whose allegiance he is allegedly believed to have succeeded in shifting from Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya's son Abū Hāshim to Ibn ʿAbbās's grandson, Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī - as *Kāfirs*, when we know for certain that he and his father, al-Manṣūr (and also later caliphs) were keen on “choosing orthodoxy and renouncing the heterodox origins of the ʿAbbāsīd movement, their extremist supporters and the various other heretical movements, such as Manichaeism.”⁷⁴⁰

two versions of ʿAbbāsīd legitimacy to one source i.e., to the variant slogans of the Rāwandiyya group that seems to have given up their belief in the transfer of *Imāma* by a *waṣiyya* from the Ḥanafi-Alid Abū Hāshim (via ʿAbd Allāh al-Rāwandī) and holding instead the new belief that the Imamate had rather belonged to the house of al ʿAbbās, a view that was probably propagated during the reign of al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī.

F. ʿOmar, on the other hand, relates that ʿAbd Allāh al-Rāwandī - who has been described by Pellat above as the ʿAbbāsīd pretender - considered al-Manṣūr as Imām and God and that Abū Muslim was his messenger! (see *al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awā'il* 1: 285.). He furthermore tries to sum up the complex evolution of the Rāwandiyya as follows: (i) during the ʿAbbāsīd *daʿwa* the Rāwandiyya was reflected in (a) the *Khidāshī* movement, after Khudāsh, one of the important ʿAbbāsīd supporters in Khurāsān who believed in the Imamship of Ibn ʿAbbās's grandson after a *waṣiyya* from ʿAlī's grandson. (b) the ʿAbbāsiyya movement that believed that al-ʿAbbās was the sole inheritor of the Prophet, as propagated by Abū Hurayra al-Rāwandī, Abū al-Qāsim al-Rāwandī and Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Rāwandī; (the first is described by al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, p. 42 as leader of the pure ʿAbbāsiyya/the pure Rāwandiyya: al-ʿAbbāsiyya/al-Rāwandiyya *al-Khullaṣ* who deified the ʿAbbāsīd Imams. (ii) With the success of the ʿAbbāsīd *daʿwa*, F. ʿOmar adds that out of the many movements that evolved from the initial Rāwandiyya, there were the Abū Muslimiyya and Ruzāmiyya who deified Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī and al-Manṣūriyya who deified Abū Jaʿar al-Manṣūr. Only the ʿAbbāsiyya is said to have escaped their line of *ghuluww* and course of rebellions launched against the orthodox ʿAbbāsīd regime. See F. ʿOmar, *Tabīʿat*, pp. 233-235 and *al-Khilāfa al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, p. 197. Anyway, the significance of the shift in ʿAbbāsīd legitimacy is two-fold: (1) It is reflective of the evolution undertaken by the ʿAbbāsiyya from the the extremist movements of al-Kaysāniyya and al-Rāwandiyya, i.e., from a period in which the so far undefined soluble state of Proto-Shīʿism was about to definitely split into proper ʿAbbāsīdism and Shīʿism. (2) It strongly suggests the dependence of ʿAbbāsīd polity on Kaysānī esotericism and its ending up in an ideology of the Imāmī type that based *Imāma* on testamentary designation (see H. Laoust, as cited by Pellat, *op.cit.*, footnote 60.) It also indicates (as suggested by Guidi and cited by F. ʿOmar in *al-Khilāfa al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, p. 197) that the ʿAbbāsīds at one stage had to follow the same line of *ghuluww* that had already been exhibited by the Yazīdī pro-Umayyads and the Proto-Shīʿī extremist movements (Saba'iyya, Kaysāniyya, Mughiriyya and Khaṭṭābiyya).

739 See al-Qummī, *al-Maqālāt wa al-Firaq*, pp. 64-65, and al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, p.43.

740 *E.I.*, new ed. S.v. “ʿAbbāsīds”.

It is quite possible that a good deal of historical rewriting and interpretation was taking place.⁷⁴¹ The conflicting attitudes of al-Rāwandiyya towards ʿAlī is an excellent example. al-Masʿūdī's reference to the Rāwandiyya's acknowledgement of ʿAlī's *Imāma*, who was addressed by al-ʿAbbās in a venerable advisory way that clearly reflects ʿAlī's right to the *Imāma*⁷⁴² is not only different from al-Qummī's and al-Nawbakhtī's definition of the *Rāwandiyya* but is further challenged by an anonymous anecdote that takes the trouble of reiterating al-ʿAbbās's advice to ʿAlī - which is surprisingly attributed to al-Jāhīz (the *ex-muḥaddith*)⁷⁴³ - wherein ʿAlī is seriously warned against stepping into the political scene given ʿUthmān's higher chances of success - and is only encouraged to back the ʿAbbāsīd cause and the right of ʿUmūma to succeed the Prophet. Of course such a concocted piece of advice aims to justify the ʿAbbāsīd absence then, as well as portraying al-ʿAbbās as the more deserving and farsighted person⁷⁴⁴ vis-à-vis ʿAlī who is described as already committing the great mistakes that made him lose his status. The writing of this treatise as following that of al-ʿUthmāniyya makes sense in the way it fulfils al-Jāhīz's promise made to al-Ma'mūn to provide him with the arguments of those who believe in descent (other than the Rāfiḍa) after he had furnished him with the political logic of those who believe in the criterion of religious merit (i.e., the ʿUthmānids).

741 The exclusive *fadl* of al-ʿAbbās had been imposed by the Rāwandiyya as they circulated Prophetic traditions pointing to al-ʿAbbās's merits. See al-Mughnī, 20: 130.

742 See Murūj, 3: 236-237. al-Masʿūdī's definition of the Rāwandiyya in his Murūj is similar to the ones portrayed by al-Nawbakhtī (Firaq al-Shīʿa, pp.30, 41-42.) and al-Qummī (al-Ashʿarī al-Qummī, Maqālāt, p. 64. in (a) the way it backs the right of the ʿAbbāsīds and (b) also in excommunicating Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. The only difference, however, is that the Rāwandiyya as conceived by Masʿūdī seem to have accepted the Imamship of ʿAlī. Here, al-ʿAbbās is quoted as saying to ʿAlī: "Let me pledge you allegiance such that no people would differ on you". The other instance in which ʿAlī's Imamship is acknowledged is when the ʿAbbāsīd Dāwūd b. ʿAlī told the people attending the *bayʿa* to al-Saffāh in Kūfa: "O people of Kūfa, no Imām truly succeeded the Prophet except ʿAlī and al-Saffāh.." We must remember here that al-Jāhīz's treatise maintains the same outlook as it includes an attack on Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān but not ʿAlī, which implies that the Rāwandite or ʿAbbāsīyya faction as quoted by al-Jāhīz seems to reflect that group that included the remnants of the Kaysānite Hāshimiyya, i.e., included people who have not yet completely withdrawn their affection towards ʿAlī, while accepting that Imamship now rests with the descendants of al-ʿAbbās.

743 This advice (*waṣīyya* of al-ʿAbbās) has been quoted by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha, 3: 282-283, after Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, by the handwriting of al-Ṣūlī on behalf of al-Jāhīz. Muḥammad al-Shaykh, the Editor of Abū Ḥayyān: Ra'yuhu fi al-Ījāz (Libya: al-Dār al-ʿArabiyya li al-Kitāb, 1983) 2: 588 says that al-Jāhīz and not Abū Ḥayyān should have fabricated this report! (presumably on behalf of the Rāwandites who could have been behind al-ʿAbbās's alleged critical attitude towards Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, who are seen as usurpers and unjust men, in the same way seen above by the other Rāwandites.

744 This advisory role and image of al-ʿAbbās will be sketched again by al-Jāhīz in his treatise "Taṣwīb ʿAlī". As for *ḥaqq al-ʿUmūma*, it will also be acknowledged by al-Jāhīz in K. Fadl Hāshim, and K. al-Awtān wa al-Buldān.

But whether the Rāwandiyya (*shīʿat Banī al-ʿAbbās*) have completely alienated themselves from the Shiʿi grounds that were indispensable for the ʿAbbāsīd revolution, or whether they had some residual respect for the figure of ʿAlī, the point which remains is that before such a divorce had occurred, the figure of ʿAlī had to be gradually removed from the political scene.

Concerning our research, it is difficult to disregard such a tendency of residual respect as portrayed in al-Jāhīz’s alleged “*waṣīyya* of al-ʿAbbās”. What can be said here is that as far as al-Jāhīz’s treatise “al-ʿAbbāsiyya” is concerned, there remains the same pro-Alid stamp or residual respect for the wife of ʿAlī, Fāṭima, but of course not to be taken at its face value but for backing the ʿAbbāsīd cause!

II. Content of al-ʿAbbāsiyya

What has come to us from the remaining portions of the work of al-ʿAbbāsiyya seems to be a loaded polemic between the partisans of the party that probably supported the caliphate of al-ʿAbbās and the party which probably supported the caliphates of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. The argument revolves around the question of inheritance; in this case, whether it was right for Fāṭima and al-ʿAbbās to inherit from the Prophet. The implication of this is that if such an inheritance was allowed, it explains al-ʿAbbās’s right to inherit political succession to the Prophet. The claim is made by the supporters of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar when those two asserted that it was a Prophetic *Ḥadīth* that Prophets do not have heirs, none of the Companions objected to this, thereby proving the truth of their report. This “*ḥujja of tark al-nakīr*” is counteracted by the argument that when Fāṭima claimed *Fadak*, none of the Companions also objected. This would seem to indicate that they were unaware of the Prophet ever having made the statement attributed to him by Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. They accepted it on the basis that they regarded them as honest men without being aware - the Rāwandiyya claim - of the probability that they were really deceitful.

They go on to point out that the Companions’ silence in fact is not very significant because the Companions remained silent when ʿUmar contradicted his statement that the Prophet said: “The Imams are from Quraysh”, by saying on his death bed that if Sālim - a non-Qurayshī *Mawlā* - had lived, he would have nominated him to succeed him to the caliphate. The fact is that ʿUmar and Abū Bakr were in power over the rest of the Companions who were not in a position to dispute anything

they said. Against the argument that action was taken against ʿUthmān when he had a higher clan status than Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, the ʿAbbāsiyya reply that the situations were different: ʿUmar and Abū Bakr were not as bad as ʿUthmān, in that ʿUthmān showed nepotism, and took their money (*fayʿ*). In addition, conditions were much more prosperous in the days of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. The ʿAbbāsiyya go on to accuse Abū Bakr of preventing the ʿitra (i.e., family of Prophet) and the ʿUmūma (al-ʿAbbās) from inheritance according to a ruling in the Qurʾanic revelation, on the basis of a *Ḥadīth*, a case which remained an obscurity (*shubha*) to most people at the time, except for those guided scholars who knew the truth of the matter.⁷⁴⁵

A further argument put forward by the ʿAbbāsiyya against the idea that Prophets do not have heirs, is reported by Masʿūdī from al-Jāḥiẓ's book, but does not survive in the fragment. In this argument, Fāṭima maintains that Solomon inherited from David, and that this is in the Qurʾān: "*wa waritha Sulaimān Dāwūd*". al-Masʿūdī also suggests that the ʿAbbāsiyya al-Jāḥiẓ is writing about is the ʿAbbāsiyya al-Rāwandiyya. He explains that this group rejected (*tabarraʿū*) the Imamates of Abū Bakr, and ʿUmar (and presumably that of ʿUthmān as well), but accepted ʿAlī's Imamate. However, he himself acknowledges that al-Jāḥiẓ's arguments on their behalf are only briefly put forward as al-Jāḥiẓ did not accept their doctrines, and we have no indication from anywhere else as to whether the group whose argument al-Jāḥiẓ was putting forward actually accepted the Imamate of ʿAlī or not. Equally significant is Masʿūdī's allusion to the Rāwandiyya's Qurʾanic basis for the caliphate of al-ʿAbbās after the Prophet, being his uncle, inheritor and *ʿaṣab*.⁷⁴⁶

A significant implication of the ʿAbbāsiyya argument is their categorical rejection of the possibility that a Prophetic *Ḥadīth* can overrule a Qurʾanic saying on inheritance.

Now that the weakness of the proof of *tark al-nakīr* is fully exposed, the thesis of al-ʿAbbāsiyya is to return to God's judgement in the disputed matter of

745 K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya, or Imāmat Wuld al-ʿAbbās. See al-Sandūbī, Rasāʿil al-Jāḥiẓ, pp. 300-303 and Adab al-Jāḥiẓ, p. 121 and al-Mulūḥī, Min Kitāb al-Hayawān, pp. 141-142. al-Mulūḥī simplifies the matter by saying that al-Jāḥiẓ in this work had scored two victories for the ʿAbbāsids and also for the Muʿtazila in his attempt to refute those who believed that the Prophet's wealth belongs to the community of believers (cannot be inherited) and equally - if not more significantly - that *Khilāfa* (who succeeds the Prophet) has been left to the *Umma* and not to his relatives!

746 See al-Qurʾān, Sūra: 8 (al-Anfāl) verse: 75, as cited by al-Masʿūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab, 3: 236-237.

inheritance (*ḥukm Allāh fī al-mīrāth*) and it is quite obvious how indispensable Fāṭima's request to Abū Bakr was for them in their striving to base the "political" right to succession within the same Qur'anic context of right to inheritance, be it material (Sūra: 27, verse 16) or political (Sūra: 8, verse: 75).

From the kind of polemical argumentation that has been preserved for us in "al-ʿAbbāsiyya", it appears to me that the dialogue is between the ʿAbbāsiyya partisans and their opponents at large.

By the ʿAbbāsiyya partisans, it seems to me that al-Jāḥiẓ meant that extremist sect that was highly critical of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān (and not ʿAlī) which, as we have seen above, puts this sect amongst the Rāwandiyya al-ʿAbbāsiyya as defined by al-Masʿūdī.

In identifying the opponents of al-ʿAbbāsiyya, one Jāḥiẓologist⁷⁴⁷ has erroneously assumed that they must have been the ʿUthmāniyya, "who do not believe in inheritance in the issue of caliphate," but as one notices above, it is unexpected of those ʿUthmāniyya to have been critical of ʿUthmān, and as such the opponents could have shared with the ʿUthmāniyya the thesis of resting the caliphate on merit and not on inheritance, without being ʿUthmānites themselves.

As to the matter of rewriting history, this treatise reflects the eagerness of the ʿAbbāsiyya party to find a basis in the religious heritage, namely, al-Qur'ān, to back the ʿAbbāsīd right to inherit the Prophet. In this context, once inheritance is settled as an issue, i.e., once it is established that the surviving heirs (uncle, daughter) have a right to inherit as all other Muslims enjoin according to the Qur'anic text, it simultaneously follows that the surviving uncle has precedence in political succession although he is allowed to take an equal share of material inheritance as Fāṭima is allowed.

It is really surprising to find the ʿAbbāsīd partisans of al-ʿAbbāsiyya party adamant in stressing their Qur'anic right to inherit, and it is amazing how claims of inheritance (materially or politically) had to wait so long, after the Prophet's death, at least for the ʿAbbāsīds who produced their claim after the Shīʿa had, and obviously in the image and style of the latter, their equal claimants to material inheritance! The main

⁷⁴⁷ See A. Abū Muḥim, *Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ al-Siyāsiyya* (Beirut: Dār wa Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1987), pp. 38-40.

danger of such a political ideology is the way Islamic polity is conceived, i.e., as an inherited dynasty in the fashion of Chosroes and Caesar, thus recycling the same non-Islamic principle of the Umayyad dynasty, if not hinting that the Sunnī/orthodox Islamic polity has in reality discarded the Arab principle of seniority of merit and switched it for the Shīʿī-Persian-Roman principle of seniority of descent, a situation where the original is confused with the artificial, where, in short, Sunnī Islam, (represented by the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate) had superimposed a non-Sunnī ideology.⁷⁴⁸

Of course, such an exposition of ʿAbbāsīd legitimacy is confusing in the sense that the lines drawn between the economic right of inheritance and the political right of inheritance appear to be shaky and mixed, or as M. Sharon puts it:

In the traditions that grew out of the political strife within Islam, *the issue of the Prophet's inheritance was intentionally confused* so that no clear line could be drawn between the personal inheritance, that is to say the Prophet's private property, and the succession to the Prophet's spiritual and political authority. This intentional confusion, which served, no doubt, the ʿAbbāsīd requirements at the early stages of their debate with the Alids (or ʿUthmānīs) proved to be double edged and was turned against them by the elaborate Shīʿite counter propaganda. In their efforts to outmanouver the Alids, the ʿAbbāsīds combined *wirāthah* and *waṣiyyah*: while claiming the inheritance of the Prophet by virtue of al-ʿAbbās being his paternal uncle, they also produced a profusion of *Ḥadīths* according to which the Prophet had explicitly nominated al-ʿAbbās as his heir and declared that the caliphate would pass to ʿAbbās's descendants and remain in their hands until doomsday.⁷⁴⁹

Sharon's reference to the ʿAbbāsīd insertion of the idea of *waṣiyya*, which followed that of *wirāthah*, needs to be clarified.⁷⁵⁰ The idea of *wirāthah*, i.e., that al-ʿAbbās, not ʿAlī was the natural inheritor (*wārith*) of the Prophet, who died leaving no male offspring or brothers - which is ascribed to the Maṣūʾ-Mahdī period⁷⁵¹ - and the line of argumentation that the paternal uncle takes precedence when it comes to inheritance⁷⁵² over a cousin and even over a daughter, proved short lived, as the *Shīʿa* have counteracted al-ʿAbbās's superiority by showing that he was only the half uncle

748 The idea of *naṣṣ*, common then among the Shīʿa (Kaysāniyya-Mukhtāriyya and Proto-Imāmiyya) was to be soon employed by the pro-ʿAbbāsīd Rāwandiyya. Other pro-Sunnī groups, as the Bakriyya, claimed that the Prophet had explicitly designated Abū Bakr. al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is said to have held the doctrine of *naṣṣ Khafī* (not *Jalī*). Other groups, as the Jārūdī branch of Zaydiyya, held the doctrine of *naṣṣ khafī* whereas the Imamites were holding *naṣṣ Jalī* on ʿAlī. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ Fatāwa*, 35: 46.

749 M. Sharon, *Black Banners*, pp. 93-94.

750 See Sharon, *Ibid.*, pp. 93-96.

751 The fixing of this is based on (1) Maṣūʾ's letters with al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, (2) al-Mahdī's decree that established ʿAbbās as the only source of ʿAbbāsīd legitimacy.

752 Of course, political inheritance as the Sunnī legal law gives the daughter a share equal to the uncle. See M. ʿUthaymīn, *Tashīl al-Farāʾid*, (Riyād: Dār Ṭayba, 1404/ 1983) p. 37.

of Prophet Muḥammad,⁷⁵³ whereas Abū Ṭālib, ʿAlī’s father, shared the same father and mother as the Prophet’s father, hence he was the Prophet’s full uncle. So if Kinship is taken as establishing the right of (political) inheritance, then surely a full uncle has precedence over a half uncle, the Shīʿa argued, and even if al-ʿAbbās, (as shown above, were the *wārith* of the Prophet, in a political sense hidden to the early Muslims then), the fact still remains that ʿAlī is the latter’s *waṣiyy*, who had been granted patronhood (*wilāya*) over the *Umma* by the Prophet. For this reason, Sharon suggests that the ʿAbbāsids employed the Shīʿite idea of *waṣiyya*, by instructing their court traditionalists to combine *wirātha* and *waṣiyya* together (which the extant portions of K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya do not convey⁷⁵⁴), and the new revised ʿAbbāsīd traditions were clear and direct: “al-ʿAbbās is my *waṣiyy* and my *wārith* (heir), the Prophet is made to say (on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās). In another tradition the Prophet says: “This is ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib” (he is) my father, my uncle, my *waṣiyy* and my heir.”⁷⁵⁵

Benefiting from Sharon’s outlook, one can therefore relate al-Jāḥiẓ’s treatise (al-ʿAbbāsiyya) to the dominant version of ʿAbbāsīd legitimacy. Of course, we must recall a developmental trend and variations in ʿAbbāsīd polity, such that we can sum them in the following way observing the historical order:

(a) The idea of *waṣiyya* (bequeath and transfer of *Imāma*, current then among the Kaysānī movement (which asserted that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib’s son, Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya received Imāmship from his brother al-Ḥusayn ... by *waṣiyya*), which was passed to his son, Abū Hāshim and from the latter to Ibn ʿAbbās’s grandson, a fact that shows

753 i.e., that al-ʿAbbās was brother of Muḥammad’s father from the father’s side only.

754 And even al-Manṣūr’s exchanged letters with the Ḥasanid revolter, al-Nafs al-Zakiyya do not even touch the point of *waṣiyya*. In this period, the idea of *mīrāth* seems to be dominant, as al-Manṣūr’s concern was confined to proving that the Alids could not advance any claim of hereditary rights on either their father’s or their mother’s side, and that the ʿAbbāsīds were the only ones qualified to be the leaders of Islam by having a more senior right to inheritance. Sharon, *Ibid.*, p. 92. When al-Nafs al-Zakiyya boasted that he descended from two Fāṭimas, one in Jāhiliyya (Prophet’s grandmother) and the other in Islam (Prophet’s daughter) al-Manṣūr replies: “God has not given women such a status as He has given to uncles (on the father’s side) and to fathers. For he gave the uncle equal status with the father, but even though you be descended from the Prophet’s daughter, which is indeed a close kinship, this still does not give you the right of inheritance, as women are not allowed to lead (prayers and significant matters), so how come you claim inheritance of Imamate from the maternal/female line?” See Sharon, *Ibid.*, p. 91, and al-Mubarrad, *Kāmil* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1986), 3: 1491. This proves that at least up to the time of al-Manṣūr the idea of *wirātha* was still functional without need for *waṣiyya*.

755 Sharon, *Ibid.*, p. 95, citing from the *Mawdūʿāt* of Ibn al-Jawzi.

the ʿAbbāsid regime was an offshoot from the Kaysāniyya movement, one manifestation of early Shiʿism.⁷⁵⁶

(b) The second version of ʿAbbāsid legitimacy rested on the idea of *wirātha*, thus alienating themselves from the Shiʿi doctrine of *waṣiyya*, through which they attained the caliphate.

(c) Combining *wirātha* and *waṣiyya* to counteract the remnant Shiʿi partisans, as seen by Sharon above.

One should clarify here the relation of K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya to al-Jāḥiẓ's own political philosophy. It is quite unexpected of the Sunnī al-Jāḥiẓ to have addressed Abū Bakr and ʿUmar - who are uniformly praised throughout his works - in the way seen above by the ʿAbbāsiyya party. But in al-Jāḥiẓ's own preface to K. al-Ḥayawān he warns the reader against assuming that K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya reflects his own position. Should the reader like to criticize his tolerant narrative approach that made him accommodate such extremist views, the reader is asked to confine his critique to the works al-Jāḥiẓ has confessed as reflecting his own views, such as "K. Wujūb al-Imāma". For this reason, K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya should not be therefore taken to necessarily reflect al-Jāḥiẓ's own position, as confirmed by al-Jāḥiẓ and equally al-Masʿūdī,⁷⁵⁷ and hence this treatise should be put within his other politico-religious narrative endeavours to portray the various sects, not as a convicted partisan but as a narrator. In the same spirit comes his non-extant work, al-Khaṭṭābiyya, which quotes the arguments of the group that highly exalted ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb as best after the Prophet.⁷⁵⁸

It must be noted here that as concerns contemporary refutations of al-Jāḥiẓ's successive works al-ʿUthmāniyya and al-ʿAbbāsiyya, it is reported that the Zaydī ex-Muʿtazilī figure al-Iskāfī refuted al-Jāḥiẓ's former work, whereas the Rāfiḍī ex-Muʿtazilī figure Ibn al-Rīwandī is solely alleged to have refuted al-Jāḥiẓ's latter work (al-ʿAbbāsiyya). In spite the common Alid element among the Zaydites and Rāfiḍites,

756 See E.I., New Edition, S.v. ʿAbbāsids.

757 Murūj, (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus) 3: 237.

758 See ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Mughnī, 20: 113, wherein ʿAbd al-Jabbār says that al-Jāḥiẓ has uniquely referred to this sect. The other sect he is said to have described is that of *al-Duwaydiyya*, (probably Rāwandīyya) which regarded al-ʿAbbās as the best after the Prophet, a view al-Jāḥiẓ traces back to Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib.

it makes sense to expect Ibn al-Rīwandī not to mention the first anti-Alid work, as it seems to me he must have assumed the ʿUthmānī arguments, although styled in an anti-Rāfiḍī context, to have been the responsibility of the ʿAbbāsīd regime - that must have been equally addressed as were the Rāfiḍa who were now under attack by virtue of their common concept of Imamate by inheritance. But when the attack was purely targeted against the Rāfiḍa, he found himself pressurised to refute al-Jāḥiẓ's ʿAbbāsiyya,⁷⁵⁹ whose main thesis is that once the issue of inheritance is raised, the ʿAbbāsīds can claim that al-ʿAbbās was more entitled to inherit the office than ʿAlī and his descendants.

759 See A. Aʿsam, "Faḍiḥat al-Muʿtazila", (Ph. D. Thesis), pp. 32 and 42.

CHAPTER SIX

al-Ma'mūn's Period IV(211-219)

Risāla fī al-Nābita

1. Politico-Religious setting:

This treatise is also known by scholars as "Risāla fī Banī Umayya" or "Risāla fī Mu^ʿāwiya wa al-Umawiyyīn." If we were to judge the truth of the observation made by modern historians, that "each party indulged in a large-scale re-writing of history in the interests of their own theses",⁷⁶⁰ it is here that we may find a further illustration of such re-writing. A considerable bulk of historical writing was going on during the ʿAbbāsīd era. It was therefore natural for the virtues and qualities of the Umayyads to be overshadowed and discredited by ʿAbbāsīd historians.

The ʿAbbāsīds did their best to remove the Umayyads from the scene of virtues but their attempt was not perfect. At one end of the stage stood men like al-Jāhīz - though not strictly a historian - to denounce any possible virtue that may be ascribed to the state enemies, the Umayyads. At the other end of the stage rose men like Ibn Ḥanbal to acknowledge the virtues of the Umayyads in what may be described as resulting in a bitter clash of historical vision as regards the distant and immediate political past.

al-Ash^ʿarī⁷⁶¹ rightly observed that the question of Imamate had been the original cause of all differences among the Muslims that resulted in the appearance of the various religio-political parties. For the ʿAbbāsīds, however, it was a matter of time before they joined in disagreements. As this happened later than the other parties, they found themselves in the necessary predicament of defining their position concerning the past. The ʿAbbāsīds claimed to have inherited a promising past as it had stored for them the Prophetic wish that they should take over the sacred right to rule, after the Prophet had entrusted it to their great grandfather (and uncle of the Prophet), al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib.⁷⁶²

760 Watt, Formative, p. 169 and see Petersen, ʿAlī and Mu^ʿāwiya, p. 71.

761 al-Ash^ʿarī, Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn, ed., H. Ritter (Wiesbaden : 1963). p. 2.

762 Visions of the Prophet seen by the ʿAbbāsīd caliphs stressing this right to rule were propagated then. See J. Lassner, The Shaping of ʿAbbāsīd Rule (Princeton: University Press, 1980), pp. 26, 29.

But if the ʿAbbāsids' right to rule had been bestowed upon them since the death of the Prophet, how could that right have tolerated the Rāshidūn era? The only references to that right by al-Jāhiz come in K.al-ʿUthmāniyya⁷⁶³ and also in the work entitled "Imāmat wuld Banī al-ʿAbbās", also known as "K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya".⁷⁶⁴

So if the Rāshidūn were the less excellent before the ʿAbbāsids, what about the status of the Umayyad rulers in the eyes of the ʿAbbāsids?

By quickly recalling Kitāb al-ʿUthmāniyya, one can detect an explanation for the immediate past that preceded the ʿAbbāsid revolution. Despite their alleged political rights, they have not been able to exercise them against the combined factors of the brutal Umayyad usurpers and the corresponding weakness of the majority of those ruled by them i.e, the ʿāmma (masses). In the words of al-Jāhiz, the interaction between the *khāṣṣa* (elite) and the ʿāmma was acting unfavourably to the ʿAbbāsid cause, until the political vision of both circles had perfectly coincided to get rid of the unlawful Umayyad oppressors.⁷⁶⁵

We shall see below that the condemnation of Muʿāwiya was a very essential Muʿtazilite target, aiming to fill up the mentioned gap in historical traditions of the presence of the ʿAbbāsids. The ʿAbbāsids as the existing ruling party had to define their position and express their opinion towards the 'caliphate' that had just preceded their appearance and their condemnation of the figure of Muʿāwiya was significant in the way it reflected a symbolic interpretation of the *fitna*⁷⁶⁶ (be it the one caused by the

763 wherein al-Jāhiz justifies the ʿAbbāsid absence by the unfavorable relation between the elite and the masses.

764 It is sufficient here to say that in this work Abū Bakr is unexpectedly criticized. For the first time one finds in al-Jāhiz's works, Abū Bakr condemned - on behalf of the extreme group of al-ʿAbbāsiyya - for his double role of depriving the family of the Prophet (ʿItra) of its economic right (*ḥaqq*) and the ʿUmūma of its political right of inheritance (*mirāth*). If this position is solely confined to al-ʿAbbāsiyya, which is very likely - then such extremist views could be safely alienated from belonging to al-Jāhiz's own views. Perhaps the doctrine of the *mafdūl*, Imamate of the less superior - could, alternatively, have been used by the orthodox ʿAbbāsids instead, in the sense that this Zaydī concept could perfectly explain the ʿAbbāsid delay in taking over, as it justifies their absence at least until the Rāshidūn era had lapsed, thus alienating the ʿAbbāsids from the extremist view of al-ʿAbbāsiyya which criticized the reign of Abū Bakr.

765 See al-Jāhiz, *K. al-ʿUthmaniyya*, pp. 257-264. al-Jāhiz's exaggerated manner of pointing to the oppressive nature of the Umayyads could have been aiming to justify the impossibility of any ʿAbbāsid rebellion given the intensity of the former's oppression and the type of people who had been victims of that oppression, who accepted the Umayyads and shared their "*fisq*"; but, however, not without leaving a minority that God made immune from joining the circle of "*fisq*". See "al-Nābita", *Rasā'il*, 2: 15.

766 See Petersen, *op.cit.*, pp. 124-125.

death of ʿUthmān or by the confrontation of ʿAlī and Muʿāwiyā) and the accumulating bill of responsibilities towards the distant past and immediate circumstances that witnessed the emergence of a group known as al-Nābita that venerated Muʿāwiyā and the Umayyads and potentially threatened the ʿAbbāsīd interests greatly.

This trend of veneration of Muʿāwiyā was allegedly encouraged by Ḥanbalism, a traditionalist school of thought derived from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal who acknowledged the figure of Muʿāwiyā as meriting the credit for continuing the historical Qurayshite caliphate.⁷⁶⁷ This could not have been tolerated by the ʿAbbāsīds for the obvious reason that it gave the impression that it was unnecessary for them to come as saviours of the helpless *Umma* against their tyrants, the Umayyads. Since there was a deep clash in the religio-political visions of the ʿAbbāsīds (via the Muʿtazilites) and the Ḥanbalites we shall examine below in more detail the nature of the political theology of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal before examining and evaluating the genuineness of al-Jāḥiẓ's verdicts on him, the Umayyads and their contemporary supporters, in an attempt to describe the conflicting political visions of both, visions that go back in time to the period of the *Fitna*, thus offering us two very distinct interpretations of history that were most probably provoked by one common factor, the murder of ʿUthmān.⁷⁶⁸

I. Ibn Ḥanbal's Political Theology:

A. The Institution of *Khilāfa*

Ibn Ḥanbal's political views about the institution of the Caliphate are described by a modern study as having been "directed against the Khārijites and the Shīʿites." One may add however that these views did not totally clash with those of the Muʿtazilites as far as both have agreed to confirm the 'Sunnī' doctrine '*al-A'immat min Quraysh*' i.e., that the Imams are from the stock of Quraysh', after a Prophetic tradition transmitted by Ibn Ḥanbal himself. We have seen earlier that Quraysh were described as "the rulers of people in both good and bad times until the day of resurrection".⁷⁶⁹

767 Ibid.

768 Petersen, ʿAlī and Muʿāwiyā, p. 71.

769 See Introductory Survey, section on the Rāshidūn and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, S.v. "Imāra" : 1

To these traditions the Mu'tazilites offer no objection, and al-Jāhiz himself approves of their soundness in his works;⁷⁷⁰ so where did the difference come from? It seems that the Mu'tazilite al-Jāhiz reserved his objections against other Prophetic traditions, in the same way that his teacher al-Nazzām had rejected traditions regarded as very sound by the Sunnī transmitters of *Ḥadīth*.⁷⁷¹ It is very likely that the following *Ḥadīth* transmitted by Ibn Ḥanbal himself constituted the breaking point between him and the Mu'tazilites. In this tradition, the wheel of (ideal) Islam will keep revolving for thirty five years, thirty six, thirty seven or for an indefinitely long period (symbolized by the figure seventy).⁷⁷²

For those who count thirty five years from the date of *Hijra*, Ibn Ḥanbal sees them as approaching a daring step,⁷⁷³ as the years should be counted from the death of the Prophet to cover the entire period of the four caliphs.⁷⁷⁴

In my opinion, Ibn Ḥanbal's counting is more significant than suggested above as it gives room to accommodate 6, 8 or 10 years of the caliphate of Mu'āwiya's rule and the Umayyad rule as part of the number 70 that usually stands for an indefinite period in Arabic usage. This interpretation may be taken as the background for Ibn Ḥanbal's political vision of the wheel of the caliphate, whereby the Umayyads were active players and movers of that wheel. On the other hand, al-Jāhiz appears to have been solely attracted and convinced by another tradition that says "*khilāfa* is for thirty years, then monarchy (*mulk*) would appear."⁷⁷⁵

This impression will become evident in our analysis of the treatise of al-Nābita in which al-Jāhiz gives a history of Islam from the death of the Prophet until the year al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī abdicated in Mu'āwiya's favour. As 'Alī died in 661/40 A.H., and his son ruled for a couple of months, al-Jāhiz's application of the term *mulk* to the same year of al-Ḥasan's abdication or as of Mu'āwiya's accession could not but mean that he had rejected the first tradition (35, 36, 37, → 70), and applied the latter starting the

770 This is seen in al-Jāhiz's early works on Imamate.

771 See Aḥmad Amīn, *Duhā al-Islām*, 3: 85-89 (1355/1936), and Ibn Qutayba, *Ta'wīl Mukhtalaf al-Ḥadīth*, and A. Abū Rida, *al-Nazzām wa Ārā'uhu al-Kalāmiyya al-Falsafiyya*, (Cairo: Maṭba'at Ijnat al-Ta'lif, 1365/1946).pp. 31-32

772 See Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 1 : 290, 293 and Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, S.v. Abwāb al-Fitan : 1.

773 Z. Aḥmad "Some Aspects of The Political Theology of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Islamic Studies*, XII (1973) p. 59.

774 *Ibid.*

775 *Ibid.*, p. 58.

counting from the death of the Prophet which amounts to 29 years and some months, i.e., (almost) coinciding with the Prophetic number 30.

In the light of the above traditions, the Mu'tazilite-Ḥanbalite clash should by now become clear in an attempt of each to draw the lines between the guided caliphate and the oppressive *mulk*. In short, the clash happened because of the insistence of the officially backed Mu'tazilites on condemning Mu'āwiya or removing him from the accepted political scene in order to throw him into the realm of the oppressive scene, and because of the equal if not stronger determination of Ibn Ḥanbal to accommodate the Umayyad rule⁷⁷⁶ and even the 'Abbāsīd one within the continuously moving wheel of Islam, although the revolution that brought about the coming of the 'Abbāsīds had been judged by Ibn Ḥanbal himself as "an illegitimate rebellion against the established caliphate and violation of the true principles of Islam",⁷⁷⁷ the wheels of which have been turned again by their advent.⁷⁷⁸

Ibn Ḥanbal denounced the legitimacy of revolt against the existing Imām and stuck to the traditions of the Prophet asking the Muslims to hear and obey the Imām in all situations. In Ibn Ḥanbal's view "obedience to the rulers ceases to be a duty, when they seek from the people disobedience to God. They must be met with refusal, as he himself did during the *Mihna*."⁷⁷⁹

But Ibn Ḥanbal's theological opposition to the 'Abbāsīds should not mean a political one. He was far more concerned to back each rule as long as the *Shari'ah* was defended under them. Perhaps that would explain his dismay at the interruption of the continuity of the institution (such as the 'Abbāsīd revolution) which supports the fact that his criteria for judgement of the two dynasties was strictly religious and void of worldly interests ; as one scholar puts it:

It appears that Ibn Ḥanbal had no particular inclination towards the 'Abbāsīds or the Umayyads. Only the question of *Sunna* and *Bid'ah* was before him to praise or to blame any individual caliph. He gave equal rank to 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz and al-Mutawakkil for their services to the cause of *Sunna*. Those preceding al-Mutawakkil were blamed by Ibn Ḥanbal for their initiation of the *Bid'ah* of *khalq-al-Qur'an*.⁷⁸⁰

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- 776 With the exception of some Umayyad leaders as Mālik al-Ashtar, Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya, and al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
777 Madelung, *Religious Trends*, p. 25.
778 See M. Sharon, *Black Banners*, p. 23.
779 Z. Aḥmad, *Some Aspects Of The Political Theology*, p. 55.
780 *Ibid.*

Noting that his religious criterion, on the other hand, did not push him to revolt against the ʿAbbāsids, the same scholar adds:

In Ibn Ḥanbal's view, to have patience with the tyrannical rulers was better than to be involved in the *Fitna*. In a *Fitna*, Blood is shed, wealth is destroyed. During the rule of al-Wāthiq, when the Imām (i.e., Ibn Ḥanbal) was still under the persecution of the *Miḥna*, he is quoted as having refused giving his consent to an armed action against the caliph, instigated by some Baghdādī *Fuqahā'*. At the time of *Fitna*, he preferred restraint or rather complete retirement in accordance with a tradition transmitted by Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī.⁷⁸¹

B. Muʿāwiya and the Companions Of The Prophet

Ibn Ḥanbal is said to have held a "balanced opinion about Muʿāwiya and his opponents." In his view, Muʿāwiya was hundred times superior to ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz because the former was a Companion of the Prophet; when asked by a man who held that Muʿāwiya did not die as a Muslim and that he was a *kāfir*,⁷⁸² Ibn Ḥanbal replied that no Companion of the Prophet was to be regarded as *kāfir*. Ibn Ḥanbal does not appear to have regarded Muʿāwiya and his followers who fought against ʿAlī in the battle of Ṣiffīn as rebels (*Bāghī*). In his view they were rather misguided in their judgement. Sometimes Ibn Ḥanbal avoided the question by saying: "to leave it is a safer course . . ." Among the Companions he (Muʿāwiya) was the first Imām driven to revolt.⁷⁸³ Ibn Ḥanbal might have considered the matter from two perspectives. Firstly, ʿAlī as the acknowledged caliph, was justified in taking action against Muʿāwiya. Secondly, Muʿāwiya being a Companion of the Prophet could not resort to rebellion. He rather mistakenly went against ʿAlī."⁷⁸⁴

In his comment on Muʿāwiya's motives as judged by Ibn Ḥanbal, Petersen says it was not a simple confrontation but a rebellion. Nevertheless, he had good motives:

Muʿāwiya had not raised the rebellion against ʿAlī from personal ambitions, but in order to assert that in his capacity of the victim's *walī* he was entitled to blood vengeance

781 *Ibid.*

782 As al-Jāhīz maintains in "Risālat al-Nābita." Ibn Ḥanbal's refusal to consider the persons disclaiming ʿAlī's legitimacy as violators of the creed of *Ahl al-Sunna* is noteworthy, as it opens an excuse for Muʿāwiya's confrontation with ʿAlī in view of the lack of consensus on the latter's caliphate See *Ibid.*, p. 60.

783 But this statement does not recognize the Camel incident.

784 *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

provided that the caliph-murder was committed unlawfully. Moreover, Mu^ʿāwīya did not receive *bayʿa* prior to the award.⁷⁸⁵

It should be clear now why Ibn Ḥanbal's above positions were mostly unwelcome to the ʿAbbāsīd authorities because of his acknowledgement of the Umayyad era as sound. If only he could have condemned Mu^ʿāwīya and the Umayyad reign, he would have attracted the ʿAbbāsīds as a no less supporter of their cause than the Mu^ʿtazilites. Having, however, approved of Mu^ʿāwīya, he appeared to them as "repudiating the religious motives of the ʿAbbāsīd revolution."⁷⁸⁶ Why should they be needed to come and correct something already seen as sound and legitimate?

According to Ibn Ḥanbal, one should add the following clarifying point on his justification of the Umayyads. For him it seems that there was no difference between the Umayyads and the ʿAbbāsīds as both of them came to power by *ghalaba*. His rejection of any further rebellion after the caliphate had turned to *mulk* is understandable in view of his belief that it is a religious duty to submit to the ruler, as long as he is from Quraysh, or as long as that *mulk* is legally sound:

While Ḥanbalism viewed the reign of the first three or four caliphs as the only true caliphate based on inherent legitimacy of merit, it equally made loyalty to the later historical caliphate, based on power, a fundamental religious duty. Ḥanbalite theory of the caliphate went further than Sunnite doctrine in general affirming the validity of the caliphate by usurpation (*ghalaba*). Yet the caliph must belong to the Quraysh until the end of time.⁷⁸⁷

As suggested earlier, both caliphates should be backed as heirs of the prestigious notion of the historical and permanent caliphate.⁷⁸⁸

Petersen has seen in Ibn Ḥanbal's position

an endeavour to raise "Islam"⁷⁸⁹ above the *fitna* which since ʿUthmān's death had split it into irreconcilably hostile camps. His polemic is directed primarily against the Mu^ʿtazila, Khārijīyya and extremist Shi^ʿa who all issued from the first civil war. He attaches particularly great weight to the continuity in Islam effected through the Qurayshite caliphate "which no person has the right to oppose." The sequel must be that

785 Petersen, *ʿAli and Mu^ʿāwīya*, pp. 114-115.

786 Madelung *Religious Trends*, pp. 23-34. Seen earlier as an illegitimate rebellion against the established caliphate". *Ibid.*, p. 25.

787 Madelung, *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

788 See *Ibid.*, p. 24.

789 Petersen, *op.cit.*, pp. 124-125. That is not to only raise ʿAli, as Shi^ʿite historians did. See *Ibid.*, p. 119.

the legitimacy of the Umayyad caliphate was not to be denied . . . as a legitimate and necessary link in the continuity of Islam.⁷⁹⁰

To sum Ibn Ḥanbal's position on the Umayyads and the Umayyad "Caliphate", Petersen says that historians among Ibn Ḥanbal's followers were responsible from the historiographic point of view for bringing pro-Umayyad transmissions to Baghdad, in "an attempt to rehabilitate the legitimacy of the Umayyad Caliphate, even if hardly of the Umayyads themselves. By this means the continuity in the orthodox community that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal had in view could be maintained; Mu'āwiya had not raised the rebellion against 'Alī from personal ambitions . . ."791

C. Submission And Rebellion

According to Madelung, Prophetic statements as "submission to the one whom God has put in charge of your command (is obligatory). Do not withdraw your hand from obedience to him and do not come forward against him with your sword . . . do not break an oath of allegiance; whoever does that is an innovator who opposes and abandons the community (*Jamā'a*). If the ruler commands you to do an act of disobedience towards God, do not obey him at all, but you do not have the right to sedition against him,"⁷⁹² should not be understood - as the 'Abbāsids did - as meant to challenge the 'Abbāsīd caliphate, but should be seen as directed towards the future and preserving the present caliphate rather than challenging it. Madelung goes to the extent of describing Ibn Ḥanbal as "the staunchest supporter of the 'Abbāsids."⁷⁹³ His vision of the past and respect for traditions (in which no rebellion is encouraged, and part of the Umayyad rule acknowledged) was only stressed to save the present 'Abbāsīd institution from a similar revolution, exactly like that they had inflicted on the Umayyads. We have given a full illustration of Ibn Ḥanbal's view on submission to the Caliph because it is severely attacked by al-Jāḥiẓ in al-Nābita. Ibn Ḥanbal's repudiation of the religious motives of the 'Abbāsids is only meant to strengthen the 'Abbāsīd cause itself and exactly conforms to the spirit of an earlier generation of 'Ḥanbalites'; Madelung comments:

It must seem most striking that a religious movement arising among the descendants of the revolutionaries who had brought the 'Abbāsids to power and who continued to back their caliphate most solidly, repudiated the religious motives of that revolution. It

790 Ibid.

791 Ibid., pp. 114-115.

792 Madelung, Ibid., p. 25 citing Ibn Ḥanbal's creeds from Ibn Abī Ya'la.

793 Ibid., pp. 23-24.

confirms the view that the Shi'ite core of the 'Abbāsīd movement while it attracted wide popular Iranian allegiance, remained small and that the great majority of the Khurāsānian army joined it late and without much sympathy for its Shi'ite principles. Political considerations soon led the 'Abbāsīd caliphs to distance themselves more and more from the small 'Abbāsīd Shi'a and under Hārūn al-Rashīd it was completely suppressed. The Ḥanbalites of Baghdad became the staunchest supporters of the 'Abbāsīds. They backed them not as Shi'ite Imams of the Family of the Prophet, but as heirs of the historical Caliphate. Rehabilitation of the Umayyads was a major concern of Ḥanbalite ideology.⁷⁹⁴

As for the link between present Ḥanbalism and the early Khurāsānians, Madelung adds:

This affirmation of unquestioning backing of the established caliphate reflects the situation and the spirit of the Khurāsānian loyalists in the Umayyad age in their permanent *jihād* against the infidels beyond the borders of Islam. It was the spirit of that heroic age which their descendants living in Baghdad longed to revive, although their struggle now was more against heresy inside the world of Islam than against the infidels outside its territories . . . the 'Abbāsīd caliphate, though first based on usurpation, was now established fact. It was entitled to unquestioning loyalty, except in disobedience to the orders of God.⁷⁹⁵

Ibn Ḥanbal's religio-political vision - in the light of the above - seems to look more to the future of the 'Abbāsīd cause than al-Jāhīz's vision, as long as the latter had licensed the validity of rebellion (in *Risālat-al-Nābita*) against the oppressors and made rebellion a key political doctrine for accession of the caliphate which Ibn Ḥanbal could not accept as it might pave the road for a multitude of unjustified rebellions and be misused as a recipe for disaster.

D. The hierarchical order (*Tafḍīl*) of the four Caliphs and the legitimacy of their caliphate

At first, Ibn Ḥanbal is said to have "upheld the early Medinese view of the caliphate (according to a *Ḥadīth* in which the Companions in the time of the Prophet had agreed that the most excellent Muslims after the Prophet were Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān.)⁷⁹⁶ Since most of the Companions of the Prophet, notably Ibn Mas'ūd, 'Ā'isha and others preferred 'Uthmān over 'Alī, Ibn Ḥanbal would consider those who placed 'Alī before 'Uthmān as *Mubtadi'*. To Ibn Ḥanbal . . . the supremacy of

794 *Ibid.*

795 *Ibid.*, p. 25 and E.I.² S.v. Ibn Ḥanbal, p. 276 (b.).

796 Madelung, *Ibid.*, p. 24.

‘Uthmān over ‘Alī was an established fact in favour of which many traditions were quoted.⁷⁹⁷

Madelung says that the above view that excluded ‘Alī from the legitimate caliphate (*Rāshidūn*) was a minority opinion in Sunnism in the time of Ibn Ḥanbal, especially in Iraq. However, Ibn Ḥanbal is said to have changed his position later in his life to include ‘Alī among the rightly guided caliphs. He continued to insist however "that the four caliphs must be ranked in excellence in accordance with their sequence."⁷⁹⁸

For Ibn Ḥanbal ‘Alī became the worthiest man for the caliphate after ‘Uthmān, and he seems to have counted the activities of ‘Alī as legitimizing his caliphate rather than taking into consideration the consensus of the Muslims on the matter.⁷⁹⁹

II. A. The Cult Of Mu‘āwiya, Ḥanbalism and the Nābita

Apart from Ibn Ḥanbal's veneration for Mu‘āwiya as a Companion and his son Yazīd as a *Tābi‘ī*,⁸⁰⁰ chroniclers have pointed to the development of a trend exhibited by the masses in Syria and even Iraq known as "the cult of Mu‘āwiya" that is said to have flourished during the third/9th century. In the following section we shall examine the relation of this movement to the school of Ibn Ḥanbal and to the Umayyad rebellions that were troubling the ‘Abbāsīd authorities.

F. ‘Omar distinguishes between the veneration of Mu‘āwiya by Ḥanbalism, and the movement of the Nābita and the veneration held by the political enemies of the ‘Abbāsīds. Behind the same cult and veneration of Mu‘āwiya there existed three different social forces or factions within the community.⁸⁰¹ The first two may be classified as:

797 Z. Aḥmad, *op.cit.*, p. 56.

798 Madelung, *Ibid.*, p. 24. [This view is attributed to al-Jāḥiẓ by Watt in *Formative*, p. 177].

799 Z. Aḥmad, *op.cit.*, p. 60. This position of Ibn Ḥanbal is identical to al-Jāḥiẓ's efforts to consider ‘Alī among the guided caliphs. The big difference, as may be inferred from Madelung, is that Ibn Ḥanbal did not initially regard ‘Alī in the fashion men like al-Jāḥiẓ may have contributed in forming i.e., order of merit following order of ruling. But if al-Jāḥiẓ's treatise of *Taṣwīb ‘Alī* proves al-Jāḥiẓ's efforts to regard ‘Alī as a guided caliph, we still do not find it bluntly stated - that the order of merit follows the order of ruling - as ‘Alī in *Taṣwīb* could still be regarded as superior to ‘Uthmān and hence the order in al-Jāḥiẓ's works remains debatable.

800 F. ‘Omar, *al-Khilāfa al-‘Abbāsiyya fi ‘Ahd al-Fawdā al-‘Askariyya*, pp. 188-189.

801 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi-al-Tārikh*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, n.d.) 5: 147.

(i) The religio-political and military movements that rested on the idea of the expected *Sufyānī* that would come and save the Syrian tribes by returning their previous glory and reviving the Umayyad rule. Shortly after the rule of al-Amīn, in 195/810, one *Sufyānī* pretender revolted against the authorities and claimed the caliphate for himself in Damascus.

In fact Umayyad rebellions could be traced earlier than the rule of al-Amīn, and go back to the time of the ʿAbbāsīd accession i.e., to the time of al-Saffāḥ, and al-Manṣūr.⁸⁰² In short the attachment for the Umayyads did not vanish with their overthrow, but appeared whenever circumstances permitted.⁸⁰³ In 209/824-825 Naṣr b. Shayth or Shabth revolted against al-Ma'mūn and challenged his troops for five whole years.

Only fifteen years after the crushing of Naṣr's revolt, Abū-Ḥarb al-Yamānī revolted in Palestine against al-Mu'taṣim and many gathered around him in the belief he was the expected *Sufyānī*. That was the last Umayyad large-scale revolt.⁸⁰⁴ But it is reported that heads of the Syrian tribes still loyal to the Umayyad rule continued their anti-ʿAbbāsīd activities after al-Mu'taṣim's reign, covering in effect the whole of al-Jāḥiẓ's life-time, namely in the years 231/845, 240/854, 248/862, 250/864, 252/866, and 256/869.⁸⁰⁵

(ii) The other movement holding respect for Mu'āwīya was that of al-Nābita and of the Ḥanbalites, quiet independent from each other,⁸⁰⁶ the myth of the expected *Sufyānī*, or of any real revolutionary threat. The Nābita movement could be viewed as a Sunnite faction with some connections to the Ḥanbalite scholars. This group was nicknamed as such by the Mu'tazilites against those Ḥanbalite traditionists (*Ahl-al-Ḥadīth*), also nicknamed *Ḥashwiyya*, who appeared and sprang up (thus the name *Nābita*) showing dexterity in the use of *Kalām* which was intolerable to their Mu'tazilite opponents as it was rivalling their own influence over the masses. One

802 A Marwānid supporter named Abū-al-Ward al-Kilābī called for the overthrow of al-Saffāḥ, and his group was known as *al-Mubayyida*, in 132/749-750. See Ḥabīb al-Zayyāt, "Ḥanīn al-ʿArab ilā-Banī-Umayya", *al-Muqtataf*, June 1931, pp. 676-677.

803 Ḥ. al.Zayyāt, *al-Mashriq*, vol. 36, 1928, p. 411.

804 Ḥ. al.Zayyāt, *al-Muqtataf*, p. 677.

805 F. ʿOmar, *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

806 On the distinction between Nābita and Ḥanbalism see E.L. Petersen, *ʿAlī and Mu'āwīya*, pp. 128-129. Petersen holds that "the Umayyad cult had hardly any connection with Ḥanbalism but has arisen spontaneously. . ."

could deduce from the above that the Nābita may have constituted a distinct entity from Ḥanbalism, and could have been a socio-political dimension or social outlet of expression of Ḥanbalism. If when the Ḥanbalites acknowledged Mu^ʿāwīya they were planting the seeds for this offspring, the Nābita were able to utilize that acknowledgement in releasing their growing discontent with the ʿAbbāsīd rule, the Mu^ʿtazilites or the ʿAlids.⁸⁰⁷

The problem that existed was therefore more paradoxical and painful than planned by Ibn Ḥanbal in the sense that despite his pro-ʿAbbāsīdism,⁸⁰⁸ he had actually paved the way and provided the theological basis for the anti-ʿAbbāsīd outlook among the public.

Ibn Ḥanbal's concern - a traditionalist himself - was to defend the traditionalists and transmit a Sunnī or orthodox⁸⁰⁹ interpretation of events that accommodates the Umayyads and hence justifies their rule by crediting their role in the continuity⁸¹⁰ and promotion of the historical and lasting Caliphate, even if it has been dressed in clothes of *mulk* (a transformation predicted by the Prophet) but without attacking the ʿAbbāsīds. Such a compromise was most unwelcome and highly rejected by the state-writers such as al-Jāḥiẓ. Nevertheless, Ibn Ḥanbal's views as portrayed above should, in my opinion, raise the need to revise the inherited notion that the Mu^ʿtazilites were the only defenders of the dynasty⁸¹¹ as Ibn Ḥanbal himself have been not less concerned for the defence of the ʿAbbāsīd institution.

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- | 807 | <u>The Nābitites</u> <u>(Common Points)</u> | <u>The Hanbalites</u> |
|-----|---|--|
| a. | Venerated Mu ^ʿ āwīya | a. The same. |
| b. | Hated Rāfiḍa | b. The same. |
| c. | Belief in seeing God in the hereafter | c. The same (thus nicknamed <i>Mushabbīha</i>). |
| d. | Against the doctrine of "Khalq al-Qur'ān". | d. Kept silent on this, accused of being "Ḥashwiyya" (making the Qur'ān co-existent with God.) |
- 808 And his commitment to enlighten the authorities and their Mu^ʿtazīlite colleagues, rather than his wish to dethrone them.
- 809 See C. Pellat, *Le Culte de Mu^ʿāwīya en III Siècle de l'hégire*, Etudes sur L'histoire Socio Culturelle de L'Islam (VIIe-V-XVes), (London: Variorum Reprints, 1976) pp. 59-60, citing Guidi.
- 810 Petersen, "Studies On The Historiography of the ʿAli-Mu^ʿāwīya Conflict", Acta Orientalia, vol. xxviii, 1963, p. 109. From the historiographic point of view, Ibn Ḥanbal's efforts and those Ḥanbalite historians who followed him are seen here as representing the Syrio-Medinese transmission of events, resumed by Ḥanbalite historians as part of their controversy against the official Mu^ʿtazilism during the reign of Ma'mūn and his successors. Ibid.
- 811 See Pellat, "Un document important pour l'histoire politico religieuse de l'Islam, 'La Nābita de Djāḥiẓ' Annales de l'institut d'Etudes Orientales, (Algeria, 1952), vol./part X, p. 307.

B. Caliphal Decree Against The Cult Of Mu^cāwiya:

The fact that in 211 or 212/826-827 al-Ma'mūn had the intention of ordering that Mu^cāwiya be publicly cursed should give us an idea of the growing influence and power of the pro-Umayyad movement that had pushed the caliph to take that measure.

It was therefore natural that the ^cAbbāsīd authorities, in the light of a growing pro-Umayyad force in the community - which is given the name "the cult of Mu^cāwiya" - thought of taking measures to diminish the growing influence of that cult, especially in the Eastern provinces (Iraq, Khurāsān) which apparently stood as the mirror image of the Umayyad Emirate in Spain that had already endangered the unity of the caliphate .

It is useful to fully put al-Jāhīz's works in the historical context or within the political setting of his period:

al-Ma'mūn had had the intention in 211 or 212/826-827 of ordering that Mu^cāwiya be publicly cursed but he had altered his mind on the advice of the Qāḍī Yaḥyā b. Aktam who had warned him against possible reactions of the people, especially in Khurāsān. The danger must have been serious so that the caliph thought of taking such an attitude . . . The crowd of Mu^cāwiya's partisans must have been large and powerful. It is permitted to believe that the situation did not improve at all in the 3rd century since some 70 years later we see once again, that the caliph al-Mu^ctaḍīd issued in 284/897 a circular prescribing the cursing of Mu^cāwiya from the pulpit.⁸¹²

Whereas al-Ḥājirī dates the writing of al-Nābita to al-Ma'mūn's reign, Pellat hypothetically suggests that this work was written during the reign of al-Mu^ctaṣīm, (around 225) because a similar work of al-Jāhīz was written under al-Mu^ctaṣīm. al-Ḥājirī's position seems to be stronger, as it is rightly based on drawing the connection between the caliphal policy of al-Ma'mūn and al-Jāhīz's reference to that policy in which he congratulates the caliph on his superior alertness to the theological weaknesses of the Nābita. Furthermore, if the Nābita is literally signifying the appearance of a newly growing generation, it was al-Ma'mūn's reign which had first

812 Pellat, "Le culte de Mu^cāwiya," p. 55. al-Ḥājirī, however, suggests that al-Ma'mūn did not listen to Yaḥyā but followed Thumāma b. al-Ashras's advice in issuing a memorandum in which (according to al-Ṭabarī's annals of year 211) al-Ma'mūn openly dissociated himself from any one who mentions Mu^cāwiya in good terms, or who preferred him over the rest of the Companions. See al-Ḥājirī, *al-Jāhīz*, p. 188.

witnessed their growth and not that of al-Mu^ʿtaṣim.⁸¹³ This also seems more likely in view of the difference in character between them; al-Ma'mūn is said to have enjoyed an intellectual persuasive approach whereas al-Mu^ʿtaṣim lacked this and was inclined to resort to force.⁸¹⁴

2. Analysis of al-Nābita

If it was easy for men like al-Jāḥiẓ to indirectly put the blame on the block of ʿAlī to justify the coming of the Umayyads, it would obviously seem even less difficult to handle the case of the Umayyads as 'usurpers' whose head (Mu^ʿāwiya) fully utilized the differences among the camp of ʿAlī, allegedly created by Mu^ʿāwiya or by his agent ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, by the act of raising the Qur'ān to halt the victory of ʿAlī, thus camouflaging his worldly interests in the post of the Imāmate.

We shall see later how the absence of the ʿAbbāsids will be perfectly covered by al-Jāḥiẓ in the treatise on arbitration by putting the blame on Mu^ʿāwiya's treachery and then on ʿAlī's followers, but without leaving ʿAlī totally blameless.⁸¹⁵ We shall find in al-Nābita that al-Jāḥiẓ's intolerance of the figure of Mu^ʿāwiya, the Umayyads, and their contemporary supporters had escalated to a degree that was supra-Mu^ʿtazilitic i.e., goes beyond the agreed dogmas of the school as regards the status of the grave sinner; as Petersen puts it:

His (al-Jāḥiẓ's) broadsides are aimed primarily at the worldliness of the Umayyads, especially of Mu^ʿāwiya. al-Jāḥiẓ thus ranges himself alongside al-Madā'inī; he emphasizes that they called down *kufr*, (infidelity) upon themselves by their crimes against ʿAlī and his adherents and by their usurpation of the caliphal power.⁸¹⁶

How does al-Jāḥiẓ reflect this ʿAbbāsīd-Ḥanbalite tension?

A quick review of his work "al-Nābita" shows al-Jāḥiẓ's attack on Ḥanbalism to be two-fold i.e., containing a political and theological attack.⁸¹⁷ Politically, this work is a perfect illustration of "a notable framing of a Mu^ʿtazilite tradition before al-Ma'mūn,⁸¹⁸ in which the ʿAbbāsīd vision of the past was publicized - not only by men

813 Cf. al-Ḥājirī, *al-Jāḥiẓ*, pp. 192-193 and Pellat, "La Nābita de Djāḥiẓ", *op.cit.*, p. 304.

814 See Pellat, *al-Jāḥiẓ*, p. 11.

815 See parag. 64-68 of *Taṣwīb ʿAlī*. ʿAlī's softness and piety were not enough - al-Jāḥiẓ says - to defeat Mu^ʿāwiya's deceit and tricks.

816 Petersen, *ʿAlī and Mu^ʿāwiya*, p. 128.

817 Mirroring al-Ma'mūn's political and theological measures in 211 and 212 respectively.

818 See Petersen, *Ibid.*, p. 121.

of letters and makers of opinions like al-Jāḥiẓ, but equally by historians and propagators of state-policy such as al-Madā'inī. Both men seem to have been instructed to counteract, each in his own capacity, the Ḥanbalī historical version of events concerning the *fitna*. Whereas ʿAbū Khaythama Zuhayr b. Ḥarb (d. 848-850) and Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm ad-Dawrāqī (d.860-861) were keen to present Muʿāwiya's rebellion against ʿAlī as justified - in his role as the victim's *walī* -, and that Muʿāwiya got office justly after the arbitration and not before,⁸¹⁹ al-Madā'inī and al-Jāḥiẓ ignored that interpretation altogether: here, "every vestige of the vengeance motive is deliberately eliminated"⁸²⁰ in order to stress the worldly motives of Muʿāwiya and his associates to gain the caliphate:

Just like al-Ġāḥiẓ, the contemporary al-Madā'inī seems to have participated actively in the refutation of the pro-Umayyad tide. On the other hand, these vehement historiographical polemics during the caliphates of al-Ma'mūn and his successors must have had a social significance of their own. There is no reason to believe that the pro-Umayyad agitation in Iraq and Persia really expressed sympathy with the Syrian caliphate. These currents rather demonstrate the opposition of the orthodox patriciate of the cities of the eastern provinces against the prevailing Muʿtazilism and its fundamentally anti-traditionalist trend; conversely al-Ġāḥiẓ's and al-Madā'inī's struggles against the pro-Umayyad agitation reveal the rulers' fear of these currents.⁸²¹

Theologically, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his followers mentioned above were, on al-Ma'mūn's orders, brought before him to renounce their Ḥanbalī persuasion publicly before the assembled *Fuqahā'*,⁸²² in what was known as the *Miḥna*.⁸²³ In view of this religio-political context we come now to let al-Jāḥiẓ describe his vision of the Umayyads and the pro-Umayyad group known as *Nābita*; after that al-Jāḥiẓ outlines the history of Islam during the golden age that preceded the assassination of ʿUthmān,

819 *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 115.

820 *Ibid.*, p. 96. We shall see in our coming analysis of al-Jāḥiẓ's "Taṣwīb" how al-Jāḥiẓ adopted this ʿAbbāsīd vision of the *fitna*, and how he echoed such a trend in the circles of state-historians, when he completed the picture of a greedy Muʿāwiya, helped by the deception or trickery of his representative ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, (which Petersen judges to be fabrication p. 48), leaving ʿAlī helpless on the other hand with the intentionally-made "useless" Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī and an angry crowd of adherents, who all shared in the outstanding responsibility for ʿAlī's failure to meet these conditions. Adding to this: Ibn ʿAbbās's advises to ʿAlī, there, the ʿAbbāsīds' fight (See Petersen, p. 75): is therefore justified.

(1) on behalf of the family of the Prophet,
(2) against the illegal caliphate of Muʿāwiya .

821 Petersen, "Studies on the Historiography Of The ʿAlī-Muʿāwiya Conflict", *Acta Orientalia*, XXVII 1963, pp. 117-118.

822 Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya*, pp. 113-114.

823 Perhaps al-Ma'mūn's theological inquisition in 218/833 was the only solution he had, after he had failed to establish a political inquisition (cursing Muʿāwiya publicly) in 211 or 212 A.H.

which was followed by internal dissension⁸²⁴ that lasted until the accession of Mu^ʿāwīya b. Abī Sufyān; al-Jāhīz says:

Mu^ʿāwīya then took office and established his undisputed authority over the rest of the Council of Electors and over the assembly of Muslims (both *Anṣār* and Emigrants.) This year was called *ʿĀm al-Jamāʿa*, but it was not so much "a year of re-union" as a year of schism, coercion, oppression and violence, a year in which the Imāmate became a monarchy (*mulk*), after the fashion of Chosroes, and the caliphate a tyranny worthy of a Caesar. Yet all that amounts to no more than depravity and *fisq*. Mu^ʿāwīya's subsequent misdeeds were similar to those already mentioned, and of the same degree of seriousness so that he reached the point of openly rejecting the Prophet's doctrines and flagrantly repudiating his precepts regarding the 'child of the bed' and the penalty for debauchery. Yet the community were all agreed that Sumayya was not Abū Sufyān's *firāsh* but his companion in debauchery. By his (recognition of a collateral relationship), Mu^ʿāwīya took himself out of the category of *fājir* and became a real *kāfir*⁸²⁵ His execution of Ḥujr b. ʿAdī, his action in assigning the land tax revenue of Egypt for life to ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, his proclamation of the dissolute Yazīd as heir apparent . . . his favouritism in the appointment of provincial governors . . . This was the first lapse into unbelief within the community and it was perpetrated by men who laid claim to the supreme Imāmate and the caliphate.⁸²⁶

But how does the Nābita relate to the Umayyad mischiefs? al-Jāhīz adds:

Many Muslims of that period were guilty of the crime of *Kufr*, in that they failed to denounce Mu^ʿāwīya's impiousness; but they are outdone by the Nābita and the innovators of our own day who say: "Do not curse Mu^ʿāwīya! He was one of the Companions of the Prophet and to curse him is a blameworthy innovation; whosoever hates him contravenes the *Sunna*." In other words, the *Sunna* requires us to pardon those who specifically repudiate the *Sunna*.⁸²⁷

824 The division of ʿUthmān's reign took the dimension of either (i) setting the date for the first *fitna* in the *Umma*'s solidarity (as in al-Jāhīz's text above, a *fitna* already signalled by a Prophetic *ḥadīth* (see Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 8: 5953) that could have expected rapid misfortunes in *Khilāfa*, such as the decreasingly available optimal *shūrā* conditions, and the increasingly shifting criteria of succession from one based on merit to one favoring dynastic conditions (case of Umayyads, Shiʿites, ʿAbbāsids, etc.)) or (ii) passing a verdict on his conduct or administrative policy. For example, the Zaydites (the Batriyya branch) recognized his caliphate for the first six years when he was widely held to have ruled well. (Watt, *Formative*, p. 163, citing al-Ashʿarī, p. 454) and repudiated ʿUthmān during the last six years of his rule (E.I.² S.V. "Imāma", by Madelung, p. 1166a). But the Imāmites did not recognise his Imāmate at all since the Imām after the Prophet should have been ʿAlī. ʿUthmān is charged by the Imāmites with practising nepotism. See Ibish, *Al-Imāma ʿind al-Shiʿa*, p. 121. For a critical refutation of the invectives (*maṭāʿin*) raised against ʿUthmān see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-ʿAwāsim Min al-Qawāsim fi Tahqīq Mawāqif al-Sahāba*, ed. M. al-Khaṭīb (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿIlmiyya, 1406/1986) pp. 56, 60-62 and Ibish (ed.), *Nuṣūs*, (citing al-Bāqillānī) pp. 88-89, 97-105.

825 Note however that al-Jāhīz in his later work "Taṣwīb ʿAlī", refrains from charging Mu^ʿāwīya with *Kufr*. He is only *fāsiq*. See Taṣwīb: parag. 71, 73. Making Mu^ʿāwīya a *Kāfir* is an anti Mu^ʿtazilite position but is only taken to please the ʿAbbāsids.

826 Pellat, *Life and Works of al-Jāhīz*, pp. 82-84.

827 *Ibid.*

al-Jāhiz then reviews the various Umayyad caliphs and lists their crimes, waxing indignant at the Nābita's permissive attitude to them. al-Jāhiz here concentrates on blemishing the religious record of the Umayyads, and while he uses religion as a criterion to judge the Umayyads, he is doing so for obvious political reasons:

The situation was worsening until the period of ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān and his governor al-Ḥajjāj when they put a seal to the age of forbidding evil and commanding the good, as they tortured any one who approached them with an advice, killed religious scholars, frightened the family of the Prophet, re-adjusted the *Qibla* in Wāsiṭ, delayed Friday prayer until sunset, and re-destroyed the *Kaʿba*.⁸²⁸

Thanks to the Nābita, says al-Jāhiz, the age is now dominated by heresies, viz anthropomorphism, determinism and *Shuʿūbism*:⁸²⁹

If all that we have described about the Umayyads does not go beyond *ḥisq* and *ḍalāl* (going astray) then the *ḥasiq* should be cursed and whoever forbids that should be cursed as well. The Nābita and innovators of our age claimed that cursing of the leaders of evil is a *ḥisq*, and cursing the oppressors is an innovation (*Bidʿa*) ... But one who deserves the title of *Kufr* by murder differs from one who deserves it by rejection of the *Sunna* and destruction of the *Kaʿba*. One who deserves to be named *kāfir* for anthropomorphism is not like one who is *kāfir* by holding predestinarian views (*Tajwīr*).⁸³⁰ In this the Nābita are more (*kāfir*) than the *kufr* of Yazīd and his father, Ibn Ziyād and his father. The *Tajwīr* of the Nābita (their fatalistic view) of God, and their anthropomorphic view of Him, was by far a bigger sin!⁸³¹

al-Jāhiz elevates the *Kufr* of the Nābita of his age to one that had not been achieved even by the Umayyads :

Even though all that the Umayyads had done was *Kufr*, it was short of the *Kufr* manifested by the Nābita of our age and the Rāfiḍites of our generation because the type of *Kufr* differs . . . The errors of the *Umma* did not go beyond sin, (*ḍalāl*) - but for what I have told you about the Umayyads and the Marwānids and their governors and those who did not charge them with *Kufr* - until these Nābita sprang up, followed by the public. Consequently *Kufr* became the predominant feature of this century, i.e., anthropomorphism and determinism. The *Kufr* of the Nābita is more sinful than the one formerly followed by those who left the right path and committed *ḥisq*; they also shared

828 See "al-Nābita", *Rasā'il*, 2: 16-17.

829 As before, this is an exaggeration, for the group who favoured Muʿāwiya or refused *Miḥna* were probably anti-Shuʿūbites. The eternal language of the Qurʾān would be more prestigious to Arabs, versus the created language of the Qurʾān, which is more favourable to the non-Arabs.

830 al-Jāhiz uses here the term *Tajwīr* i.e., ascribing evil to God, in holding a deterministic view that all actions of one are God's responsibility, and not man's responsibility. This "*Tajwīr*" is categorically rejected by a Muʿtazilite like al-Jāhiz who belonged to the school of *ʿIzzāl* that was also known as the *Ahl al-ʿAdl wa-al-Tawḥīd*. *Ahl al-ʿAdl* is used to imply their rejection of any deterministic view of man's actions; by admitting man's free choice, God's responsibility is automatically removed and He is thus held to be ʿĀdil and not *Jāʿir*. See "al-Nābita", *Rasā'il*, 2: 14, and pp. 18-20.

831 *Ibid.*, 'al-Nābita', *Ibid.*, 2 : 14.

with those who committed *Kufr* (i.e., the Umayyads) by venerating them and desisting from charging them with *Kufr*. The Almighty said: "whoever joins them is surely amongst them."⁸³²

The doctrine of unconditional obedience held by the Nābita is again specifically rejected:

The Nābita agree that anyone who kills a believer is accursed; but if the killer is a tyrannical ruler or a fractious *emir*, they do not consider it lawful to curse him or depose him or banish him or denounce him, even if he has terrorized the good, murdered the learned, starved the poor, oppressed the weak, neglected the frontiers and marches, drunk fermented drinks and flaunted his depravity.⁸³³

as B. Lewis puts it:

al-Jāḥiẓ's position in this essay (al-Nābita) is clear. The sovereign is a human being, and may be guilty of some human error and sin while retaining his right to rule and his claim on the obedience of his subjects. But if his error reaches the point when he is neglecting his duties and abusing his powers as sovereign, then the duty of obedience lapses and his subjects have the right - or rather the duty, since it is *with duties not rights that Islamic jurisprudence and politics are concerned* - to denounce him and if possible to depose and replace him.⁸³⁴

Both Pellat and Lambton say that al-Jāḥiẓ's concept of the obligation to depose a ruler differs from the Khārijite uncompromising policy of unrestrained violence.⁸³⁵ We shall postpone this point until we come to evaluate al-Jāḥiẓ's views on the Imāmate and their relation to the Khārijites.

3. Significance and Comment:

From what we have seen of al-Jāḥiẓ's attempt to elevate the *Kufr* of the Nābita to a level unreached by the Umayyads, one may find in this work an attempt to push the authorities to face the hidden political implications underlying the Nābita's refusal to condemn the Umayyads by magnifying their attitude to a very grave sin (*Kufr*). This approach makes one wonder whether al-Jāḥiẓ - and the influential Mu'tazilism

832 al-Jāḥiẓ, 'al-Nābita', *Rasā'il*, 2:18-20. This is Sūra 5: 51.

833 The above translation of 'al-Nābita' is taken from B. Lewis, *Revolution in the Middle East*, 'Islamic Concepts of Revolution' London, 1972, p. 32. Note that this text may also reflect (by contrast) al-Jāḥiẓ's view of the role of the ideal Imām who should by definition be free from such misdeeds.

834 B. Lewis, *Revolution in the Middle East*, 'Islamic concepts of Revolution', p. 33.

835 See Pellat, *Ibid.*, 'L'imamat dans la Doctrine de Ḡaḥiẓ', *Etudes sur l'histoire*, . . . p. 49 (f.n. 1) and Lambton *State and Government*, pp. 61-62. i.e., Lambton says: "al-Jāḥiẓ's acceptance of violence is not absolutely categorical like the Khārijites' constant call for revolutions. For al-Jāḥiẓ it is a momentary measure and not an absolutely binding one." In my view, once it is acknowledged, (by al-Jāḥiẓ) it is a two-edged sword and thus he joins the unchecked Khārijī recipe for disaster.

then - were after a political *Mihna*/inquisition to control the growing veneration of Mu^ʿāwīya. If this work was written during the time of al-Ma'mūn, and not during the time of al-Mu'taṣim in which the religious facet of *Mihna* was applied, one may trace the development of the line of *Mihna* during the period of Mu'tazilī political triumph and during that of Mu'tazilī decline. In the former, the Mu'tazilites and the Caliphs (namely al-Ma'mūn) could not tolerate the growing influence of the cult of Mu^ʿāwīya and a work like al-Nābita should have been written during this period as an outlet to the frustration of the caliph in 211 in his wish of publicly cursing Mu^ʿāwīya. al-Jāḥiẓ's work would appear a calming substitute for that frustrated caliphal wish to curse Mu^ʿāwīya. That could have been the motive behind al-Jāḥiẓ's exaggerated attempt to curse Mu^ʿāwīya and regard him as a *Kāfir*, against the set Mu'tazilī concept of the status of the grave sinner, whereby he could only be a *fāsiq*.

As regards the works to be studied below entitled "fī-Nafy al-Tashbih, and "fī Khalq al-Qur'ān", one would first think they were written during al-Ma'mūn's time but the presence of "neatly positioned chronological markers"⁸³⁶ definitely shows that they were written under al-Ma'mūn's successor, al-Mu'taṣim. This means that the political *Mihna* was put into practise, and was planned/occured before the theological *Mihna* of *Khalq al-Qur'ān*. Perhaps the theological *Mihna* could have been the only possible substitute for the former, although one may easily detect in al-Nābita the presence of both facets of this *Mihna* whereby the Umayyads have been charged with their political and theological sins.

Below we will point out some critical comments regarding the treatise of al-Nābita:

(a) The beginning of the treatise contains a review of the political history of Islam to al-Jāḥiẓ's own time. The golden age of Islam according to al-Jāḥiẓ starts with the reign of the Prophet up to the first six years of the rule of ʿUthmān. This view is typically Mu'tazilite (also held by certain groups of Zaydites) as ʿUthmān's actions were not pleasant in their eyes in the latter portion of his rule. From the various statements and descriptions given by al-Jāḥiẓ on ʿUthmān, one may conclude that al-Jāḥiẓ's pro-Zaydite tendencies made him cautious about ʿUthmān,⁸³⁷ at least as

836 J. Lassner, *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory: An Enquiry into the Art of ʿAbbāsīd Apologetics*, (American Oriental Society, Connecticut, 1986, p. 31).

837 Cautious because al-Jāḥiẓ himself (a) denounced his last six years. (b) appeared uncertain whether ʿUthmān had "fully" practised nepotism (*In kāna qad rakiba kulla mā qadhafūhu bihi*) (c) judged his killers as *dullāl*, and *fujjār* but not *Kāfirs* (as this was to be given only

regards the last six years of his reign and the economic policy that was allegedly followed by him. Here ʿAlī appears superior to ʿUthmān⁸³⁸ (unlike in the ʿUthmāniyya when conditions dictate the contrary!)

(b) As regards the religio-political sins of the Umayyads one cannot but acknowledge an element of exaggeration in this work, especially when the history of the Umayyads is presented by the semi-official al-Jāḥiẓ who categorically backed the ʿAbbāsids. As B. Lewis says, al-Jāḥiẓ has written this essay in order "to justify, on religious grounds, the action of the ʿAbbāsids in overthrowing the reigning caliph."⁸³⁹

Nevertheless, many historians and scholars have found al-Jāḥiẓ unjustified because the Umayyads were not as evil as al-Jāḥiẓ's treatise has portrayed: The Umayyad dynasty was far from being as irreligious as the ʿAbbāsids alleged it was and had the support of scholars who could give a religious defence of its positions.⁸⁴⁰

Furthermore, al-Jāḥiẓ's cleverness in backing the ʿAbbāsids was reflected in the way he justified their absence in the presence of the brutal Umayyads by reference to the intolerable degree of oppression and to the helpless masses that did not help the more intelligible ʿAbbāsīd elite, whom al-Jāḥiẓ singles out as "among those whom God has ʿaṣama" from the general wave of *dalāl* that dominated the scene then.⁸⁴¹

F. Osman points out another inconsistency in al-Jāḥiẓ's political thought as reflected in this treatise:

Although kingship dominated Muslim lands, it was repeatedly emphasized by the jurists that the imamate was by no means a hereditary institution. This was clearly stated by al-Baghdādī, Abū Yaʿlā, Ibn Ḥazm and many others; the Muʿtazilites seemed clear and firm in denouncing the inheritance of the Imamate when they talked about Umayyads. However, they occasionally supported the rebellions of some of the descendants of the

to the Umayyads). See al-Nābita, *Rasāʿil*, 2: 90-10. This cautious position towards ʿUthmān should be contrasted to the classical Baṣrite one that was known to be pro-ʿUthmānite. al-Jāḥiẓ has therefore shifted his position exhibited earlier towards ʿUthmān, in which he shared with the Baṣrites in their unquestionable respect for ʿUthmān. Compare al-Jāḥiẓ's present Baghdādī view of ʿUthmān to that statement in *Risāla fī al-Jawābāt*, *Rasāʿil*, 4: 306 wherein a clear Baṣrite view is dominant. The reason for the change could be explained by the dominating pro-ʿAlid attitude in Baghdad where al-Jāḥiẓ has moved to.

838 Pellat, *L'imamat*, p. 51.

839 B. Lewis, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

840 Watt, *The Majesty That Was Islam*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1974) pp. 29-30.

841 See al-Nābita, *Rasāʿil*, 2: 15 where the word ʿaṣama is wrongly put by the editor as ʿAṣā.

Prophet's family (*ahl al Bayt*) who believed in the *inheritance of the Imamate* ... They also supported certain ʿAbbāsīd caliphs who believed in the same doctrine.⁸⁴²

Finally, as part of the ʿAbbāsīd propaganda in its effort to provide its own interpretation of history, it is remarkable how al-Jāḥiẓ has denoted Muʿāwīya's taking over, as one that halted the previous era of *Shūrā*, and initiated sinful *mulk* by transferring the Imāmate to kingship. This is a perfect illustration of the variable way in which the Prophetic tradition that pointed to that transformation was interpreted, as outlined above in our review of the clash in vision of the Ḥanbalites and Muʿtazilites. al-Jāḥiẓ now could easily justify the coming of the ʿAbbāsīds as returning the rule to its "Imāma" form after blemishing the religio-political records of their predecessors in every possible way.

al-Jāḥiẓ, as Goldziher⁸⁴³ correctly noticed, was not unique in his anti-Umayyad approach as he was in line with the general ʿAbbāsīd wave of historians and men of letters and even some traditionists who attacked the Umayyads. This activity however was not totally successful, as Charles Pellat says, because of the undeniable existence of those Sunnite groups within the ʿAbbāsīd community that continued to respect Muʿāwīya and the memory of the Umayyads.⁸⁴⁴

842 F. Osman, in M.Aḥmad (Editor) *State, Politics and Islam*. pp. 71-72.

843 I. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971), 2: 54, 345-346.

844 C. Pellat, "La Nābita de Djāḥiẓ" in *Annales de l'institut d'Etudes Orientales*, X (Algiers, 1952) p. 306.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Post-Ma'mūnid Era (218-227: al-Mu'taṣim)

Theological Treatises:

- 1- Fī-Nafy al-Tashbīh (Against Anthropomorphism)
- 2- Fī-Khalq al-Qur'ān (on the Createdness of the Qur'ān)

Although these works have no relation with the question of Imamate, they do, however, clearly reflect the relation between al-Jāhiz's *I'tizāl* and the religious policy of the 'Abbāsīd authorities, who are said to have adopted *I'tizāl* as the official state dogma since the time of al-Ma'mūn. Undeniably, strong links seem to have existed between our author and al-Ma'mūn; one evidence is cited by al-Jāhiz himself in K. al-Bayān, on the pleasure his books have given to al-Ma'mūn. al-Jāhiz knew the mentality of the caliph and seemed to cleverly transmit his works on the very frequency that suited the authorities. This intellectual unity between the two figures has been rightly observed by C. Pellat and D. Sourdel.⁸⁴⁵

The new evidence I would like to bring forward comes from comparison of the sermons (*Khuṭbas*) of al-Ma'mūn and the works of al-Jāhiz. In al-Ṭabarī,⁸⁴⁶ we find al-Ma'mūn's hyper-concern for *Tawḥīd*⁸⁴⁷ stressed in many of his *Khuṭbas*, especially the ones sent to all provinces to persuade the addressees concerned to hold the doctrine of the createdness of the *Qur'ān*. al-Jāhiz's works exactly echo al-Ma'mūn's wishes of denouncing all those *Ḥashwiyya* who diluted the absolute Divine unity of God by mixing with it the existence of another entity, al-*Qur'ān*, as they refused to accept its created nature.⁸⁴⁸

Although we have put these works together, our decision to treat them within the same period of Mu'tazilī political triumph does not mean, however, that they were both written during the reign of al-Ma'mūn. Most probably, they were written during

845 See Pellat, 'L'imamat...', p. 23.

846 See al-Ṭabarī, The History of al-Tabarī, Annals of year 218, Tr. by C. Bosworth, vol. XXXII. pp. 205-207, 222.

847 These are correctly seen as a religious reaction by al-Ma'mūn against rival doctrines, Manicheism and Christianity. The controversy of the created Qur'ān, while concentrating on excluding any entity other than God, was also targeted against those who associated with the Mu'tazilī definition of the Absolute Divine unity, any other entity, thus sharing the sin of Christian *Shirk* (association/polytheism). See Sourdel (Medieval Islam, tr. Watt, p. 78).

848 See my article, 'al-Jāhiz's view of Arabic in relation to the Qur'ān', Proceedings of the 1992 BRISMES Conference, St. Andrews, p.12.

the rule of al-Mu^cta^sim⁸⁴⁹ and al-Wāthiq, both of whom were sincerely applying al-Ma'mūn's advice and religious policy as stated in his last testament, or *waṣīyya*.⁸⁵⁰ This applies also to "K. Faḍl Hāshim", in which al-Jāhīz's fondness for Hāshim's political rights are stressed. Between the years 218 (death of al-Ma'mūn) and the coming of al-Mutawakkil (232) there came al-Mu^cta^sim and al-Wāthiq. But the change in caliphs before al-Mutawakkil did not change the general outlines laid down by al-Ma'mūn and adhered to by his successors. It was this period (198-232) that witnessed the blooming and flourishing of the Mu^ctazilī religio-political thought, followed by a last phase (232-236).

1. Religio-Political setting

The immediate religio-political setting for these theological works does not differ much from the period of al-Ma'mūn. The main difference was that of the character of al-Mu^cta^sim, who was allegedly more fond of fighting than of intellectual speculation. Nevertheless he was sincere in applying his brother's testimony to as regards the theological *Miḥna of khalq al-Qur'ān*. The other difference was the growing influence of the Nābita, whose power by the time of the writing of these polemical works, had grown beyond the expectations of the Mu^ctazilites as the former were using the very weapons of their adversaries, i.e., the tool of theological *Kalām*.

2. Analysis:

I. Fī Nafy al-Tashbīh

In this treatise al-Jāhīz is very angry now that the pro-Umayyad movement has mastered *Kalām*, the very polemical weapon of the Mu^ctazila, thus rivalling them in their established control over the masses. Says al-Jāhīz:

How could it happen that they have become, in their days of falsehood (*bāṭil*), superior to us in our days of strength and truth? The masses, when left dispersed, could sometimes be more manageable, but when they have a cunning Imam, who is obeyed by them, here comes the problem! Truth vanishes and the honest are bound to be killed. The problem is elevated as now amongst them are *mutakallimūn* and *fuqahā*.⁸⁵¹

849 This is the view also held by C. Pellat, who says that the work entitled 'fi-al-Radd ^calā al-Mushabbihā' was written between 218-227, i.e., during al-Mu^cta^sim's reign, in the semi-official role of al-Jāhīz to forward arguments that were needed by the authorities to face their enemies. See C. Pellat, *al-Mashriq*, (Beirut: 1953), 47: 282-283.

850 Ṭābarī, *Ibid.*

851 "Risāla fī Nafy al-Tashbīh", *Rasā'il*, 1: 285-287.

The situation now is so dangerous that the authorities should be warned of this change among the *Mushabbiha* and every effort taken to put their activity under check and each argument should be seriously attacked and refuted. In such atmosphere al-Jāhiz provided the following works:

- fī al-Radd ʿalā-al-Mushabbiha
- fī Nafy al-Tashbih⁸⁵²
- fī Khalq al-Qurʾān.

Among the further chronological markers in this essay is al-Jāhiz's statement in which the cycle of *Miḥna* previously inflicted on the *Muwaḥḥidūn*,⁸⁵³ i.e., the Muʿtazilites during the time (of what al-Jāhiz describes as "*al-Makhlūʿ*"⁸⁵⁴, the deposed or overthrown, have now turned to the favor of those previously in tribulation. The *Miḥna* has turned against the *Mushabbiha* thanks to the efforts of Aḥmad b. Abi-Duʾād⁸⁵⁵ and his youthful son Muḥammad, who had resurrected the *Sunna* and stressed *Tawḥīd* after it had been suppressed and left in obscurity⁸⁵⁶, in the footsteps of him who was before them⁸⁵⁷ (i.e., al-Maʾmūn).

Having realized that the praise has been concentrated on those mentioned, al-Jāhiz adds: "One may ask how come you have not mentioned *Amīr-al-Muʾminīn wa al Muʿtaṣim bi-rabb-al-ʿĀlamīn*, i.e., the caliph al-Muʿtaṣim."⁸⁵⁸

852 al-Jāhiz refers to the consecutive order above in the essay holding the latter title. See *Rasāʾil*, 1: 289. In "fī al-radd ʿalā-al-Mushabbiha", al-Jāhiz refutes their belief in the vision of God (*Ibid.*, *Rasāʾil*, 4: 8-16)

853 "fī Nafy al-Tashbih", *Rasāʾil*, 1: 285.

854 *Ibid.*, p. 284. Sourdél concludes from the verses in al-Jāhiz's treatise concerning *al-Makhlūʿ* (i.e., al-Amīn), which describes the ignorance of the Baghdādī mob backing him against al-Maʾmūn, to indicate the existence of two parties as of al-Amīn's time: one enjoying intellectual openness and exhibiting tolerance towards Shīʿites and *Dhimmīs*, and the other void of such an outlook. See Sourdél "La politique religieuse", f.n. 23, 24. But this term, *al-Makhlūʿ*, should not conceal the fact that al-Jāhiz participated in the apologetic historiographic campaign that was launched by al-Maʾmūn against al-Amīn, according to T. al-Hibri's study in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 24 (1992) pp. 474 and 463.

855 fī Nafī al-Tashbih', p. 285.

856 *Ibid.*, p. 293.

857 *Ibid.*, p. 301.

858 *Ibid.*, p. 306.

al-Jāhiz replies that by praising the viziers he was trying to praise the caliph as when the *Anṣār* are praised one is paying respect to the Prophet Muḥammad.⁸⁵⁹ In fact, it was al-Muṭaṣim, al-Jāhiz says, who has started this *amr* (i.e., al-*Mihna*) and supervised the observance of *Tawḥīd* and *nafy al-Tashbih*.⁸⁶⁰ By “starting” he means the application of the inquisition already initiated by al-Ma'mūn. But this awareness of the figure of al-Muṭaṣim, which only appears towards the close of the treatise, can not hide the fact that al-Muṭaṣim lacked the Muṭazilite qualities of his predecessor, and was more a military character than a speculative one. In this situation al-Jāhiz was therefore focussing his attention on the products of al-Ma'mūn (the vizier Ibn Abi Du'ād), who - as al-Jāhiz says - was very alert in dialectics and in strengthening *Tawḥīd* (in the Muṭazilite manner).⁸⁶¹

II. Fī Khalq al-Qur'ān

Having realised the capacity of the *Mutakallimūn* of the *Ḥashwiyya* and *Nābita* to conduct polemical and dialectical discussions after reading the works of the Muṭazilite *Mutakallimūn*,⁸⁶² al-Jāhiz once more decides to meet their growing influence. One remarkable statement of al-Jāhiz refers to the confrontation between al-Muṭaṣim and Ibn Ḥanbal, which ended in having Ibn Ḥanbal given thirty lashes as al-Jāhiz reports, followed by his acceptance(?) of the createdness of the *Qur'ān*, more than once.⁸⁶³

al-Jāhiz continues his policy of judging Ibn Ḥanbal and his followers as “*Kāfirs*”⁸⁶⁴ (infidels). This group consisted - as al-Jāhiz says - of the masses, the *fuqahā'*, and the *Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth* (traditionists) who all are described as lacking the faculty of thinking and to have dwelt in *taqlīd* (imitation).⁸⁶⁵

al-Jāhiz closes the treatise by pointing out to the anonymous addressee that scientists should fear the withering of science (here the Muṭazilite influential school of thought) exactly as Kings should fear the disappearance of their Kingship⁸⁶⁶.

859 *Ibid.*, p. 307.

860 *Ibid.*, p. 306.

861 *Ibid.*, pp. 292-293.

862 al-Jāhiz, “fī Khalq al-Qur'ān”, *Rasā'il*, 3: 288.

863 *Ibid.*, p. 295.

864 *Ibid.*, pp. 291-292.

865 *Ibid.*, pp. 297-298.

866 *Ibid.*, 3: 300.

Furthermore in this treatise al-Jāhīz gathered the Nābīta, *Ḥashwiyya*, (the literalist *ahl al-Ḥadīth*) masses, Ḥanbalites, together with the Rāfiḍites, condemning all of them for their common hatred for the Muʿtazilites, and in their alienation from the *Jamāʿa*, besides "their obvious *Kufr* and *Tashbīh*."⁸⁶⁷

These theological works reflect the possibility of the premise that the Muʿtazilites succeeded in implementing *the theological Miḥna*, having met the difficulties in executing the political *Miḥna* (cursing Muʿāwiya publicly).

867 See *Ibid.*, pp. 296, 298, 300.