DARK IMAMS

THE CORRUPTION OF SHIA HADITH

The caliphs, the theologians, and the men who spoke for the absent Imam

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Prologue and Chapters 1–46

CONTENTS

PART I · THE TESTAMENT AND THE POISONED GRAPES
Prologue · The Testament in the Jar
1 · The Heirs Who Needed a Will
2 · The Promise Without a Name
3 · The Grapes
4 · How to Silence an Imam Who Is Already Absent
5 · The Disgraced Judge and the Books He Left Behind
6 · The Book That Could Speak for the Dead
Interlude · Who Signed the Statement?

PART II · THE INHERITANCE THAT LEARNED TO SPEAK
7 · Abū Hāshim's Other Heirs
8 · The Imam Who Went Into the Street
9 · Abū Ḥanīfa the Shīʿī
10 · Hishām and the Imam Who Knew
11 · The Judge Who Drew the Circle
12 · Making ʿAlī Say It
13 · The Library That Had More Than One Author
14 · The Girl Who Must Accept the Ruling

PART III · THE IMAM COMES OUT OF HIDING
15 · The Invitation That Arrived Before the Imam
16 · The Caliph Acquires a Legal Department
17 · The Soul and the Schoolmaster
18 · The Will, the Coin, and the Queen
19 · Alamut, Where the Message Arrived by Dagger
20 · The Daughter in the Fatimid Book
21 · The Covenant Written Beneath the Universal Soul

PART IV · THE CALIPH WHO KEPT HIS TITLE
22 · Baghdad With Two Masters
23 · The City That Learned to Remember on Command
24 · A Book Cannot Die With Its Author
25 · The Caliph in the Family Album
26 · Before the Imam May Testify
27 · The Father Who Knew Better
28 · The Banner That Must Never Be Raised
29 · The Men Who Answered the Letters
30 · Four Books and the Men Who Had to Choose

PART V · THE PHILOSOPHER, THE JURIST, AND THE EMPTY THRONE
31 · The School That Dared to Correct Its Masters
32 · The Shah Who Appointed the Imam's Deputy
33 · The Library of the Defeated
34 · A Book Crosses the Language Barrier
35 · The Philosopher Who Changed His Reader
36 · The Face That Appeared in the Book
37 · The Scholar Who Could Stop a Kingdom
38 · A Constitution for the Absent Imam

PART VI · THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ABSENT IMAM
39 · A Jurist Goes Looking for a Government
40 · The Constitution with an Invisible Sovereign
41 · The People in the Guardian's Care

42 · Who Guards the Guardians?
43 · The Letter That Put Government Above Law
44 · The Prisoners and the Imam's Signature
45 · The Office That Survived Its Founder
46 · Who Put Those Words in His Mouth?
NOTES ON SOURCES AND CLAIMS
PRIMARY-TEXT CHECKPOINTS AND LIVE SOURCE AUDIT · v10.3
DARK IMAMS: SOURCE CONCORDANCE

PART I · THE TESTAMENT AND THE POISONED GRAPES

Prologue · The Testament in the Jar

A saying in the Gospel of Thomas ought to interest anyone who has spent time arguing about the succession to the Prophet Muhammad, alayhi salaam, since the disciples ask Jesus who is supposed to lead them after he leaves, and Jesus directs them to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being. That is quite an appointment, the kind of thing that can turn a respected elder into a cosmic office-holder once enough generations of theologians get to work on what it might mean. We know the saying from a Coptic manuscript discovered among the Nag Hammadi codices, which leaves its relationship to the historical Jesus open to dispute, although the existence of the saying itself, and the theological weight somebody thought it deserved, are matters we can investigate. [W-S01]

I came to this material while following the Christianity of James and the other people who knew Jesus before the imperial Church developed the vocabulary through which most Christians now understand him, and I began to notice how readily a dispute over succession could generate metaphysical claims far larger than anyone present at the original meeting could have anticipated. There is the relatively human question of who should guide the community when the teacher is gone; then there is the rather grander proposition that this chosen successor somehow carries an indispensable piece of God's arrangement with the universe. Between those propositions lies the work of interpreters, whose names we can sometimes recover and whose motives are often much harder to establish. [W-S02]

If you have sat through Sunni and Shiʿi arguments about Ghadir Khumm, Saqifa, or the rights of the Prophet's household, you have already seen what can happen when the memories of an appointment become the foundation of a civilization's understanding of legitimate rule. I love Ali and his descendants, and my sympathy for the family is one of the reasons I have spent so much time studying the disputes rather than being content with the version of the story handed out by whichever group is telling it. The Qur'an keeps drawing us back to justice and to the danger of making idols of human authorities; Surah Tawbah 9:31 is particularly uncomfortable for people who have become accustomed to noticing the idolatry of somebody else's clergy while treating their own interpreters as a rather special exemption.

In *Who Are the Quranists?* I spent a good deal of time on the fact that you can love a religion, regard its revelation as sacred, and still suspect that a later institution has put words into the mouth of someone you revere. This usually provokes the traditionalist response that an entire community could hardly have been mistaken for a thousand years, which sounds persuasive until you recall how fiercely the community disagreed with itself throughout that millennium, writing furious books about those disagreements, and occasionally arranging for a competitor to lose his job, his property, or his head. I don't think the historians should have to solve every

theological question before they are allowed to ask who profited from a particular account of the past.

Our first such account concerns Abū Hāshim, a grandson of Ali through Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, whose following became part of the complicated family of early movements later grouped under the name Kaysāniyya. According to traditions that proved remarkably useful to the Abbasids, Abū Hāshim passed his claim to Muhammad ibn Ali, a member of the Abbasid house, and thus an inheritance associated with the wronged family of Ali could be carried into a different branch of the Prophet's clan. Some versions make the transfer a testament, others place more emphasis upon a designation or the transmission of secret knowledge, and historians have disputed the authenticity of the underlying event. [W-D1; N01–N03]

Consider the position of a man in Kufa who had supported the cause of Ali's household under the Umayyads. He may have risked his security, perhaps the security of his family, because he believed the Prophet's descendants had been cheated out of a rightful place in the government of the ummah. Then somebody tells him that loyalty to that cause now requires allegiance to another family, who happen to possess the organization and the resources to turn rebellion into a successful revolution. The reported will is doing some serious work here; with a sufficient blessing from an Alid ancestor, the problem of an apparently inconvenient change of dynasty can be made to look like fidelity to the original mission.

The Abbasids came to power in 750, and whatever happened in Abū Hāshim's final days, the new rulers had abundant reason to take an interest in a story that explained their victory as the fulfillment of an older religious designation. A modern historian might never recover the original conversation, assuming there was one, but can still trace how its alleged contents were used, who repeated them, and what claims they made possible. That is the line of inquiry that interests me, because at some point the person entitled to authenticate the inheritance acquires an extraordinary amount of influence over the people who believe in it.

Beside my notes lies an Iranian devotional image, made many centuries later, that depicts the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn offering grapes to Ali al-Riḍā, whom Twelver Shiʿis revere as their eighth Imam. In 817 al-Ma'mūn named him as his successor; al-Riḍā died the following year, and Shiʿi traditions accused the caliph of poisoning him, an accusation whose historical truth remains disputed. The print belongs to the history of how that accusation was remembered, and it is powerful precisely because it makes the political relationship visible: the caliph reaches out to honor the Imam, while the viewer who knows the story understands the proposed gift as an instrument of death. [N04; PG-01–PG-02]

I keep returning to that plate of grapes because it offers a disturbing analogy for the history of hadith. A ruler might seek an Imam's authority through a royal appointment, while another man, working a century later with texts attributed to the

Imam, could obtain something similar by making a religious judgment appear to come from the Imam's own lips. There are several ways for this to happen, ranging from deliberate fabrication to a perfectly sincere jurist drawing an extravagant conclusion from a genuine report, and they leave different traces in the surviving record. The accusation against al-Ma'mūn belongs to one historical case; my suspicion about textual authority belongs to another, and I intend to find out how far the documents allow us to connect them.

That is how I arrived at the book's rather impolite title. What if the caliphs, or some of the scholars whose careers depended on courts and political patrons, acquired the ability to speak through the Imams while remaining outwardly respectful of them? Could these men, in that limited and unsettling sense, have functioned as *Dark Imams*, guiding communities through an authority that was supposed to belong to somebody else? The grander allegation, that Abbasid-sponsored intellectuals deliberately manufactured a quietist Shiʿi tradition for the political convenience of the dynasty, would need a trail of instructions, patrons, altered texts, and identifiable beneficiaries; I want to investigate it with precisely that burden of proof in view.

A variant in a manuscript can tell us that a sentence changed, and a record of patronage can tell us who paid for a scholar's journey; even a ruling that serves a dynasty establishes its political usefulness long before it tells us the motive of the man who transmitted it. The greater accusation requires a bridge between these observations, some surviving trace of direction or coordinated editing that another historian could recognize without being asked to share my suspicions. I expect to find plenty of politics in the history of a religious library, since books cost money and teachers live in the same world as kings, but I also want the hypothesis to remain vulnerable to evidence, including the uncomfortable evidence of anti-caliphal sayings preserved by the very schools we are investigating.

We begin with the testament because the question is already present there, before the theology of occultation and before the great collections of hadith took their later shapes: when a dead man is supposed to have transferred the right to command the living, who is standing beside his words to assure us that the transfer was made?

1 · The Heirs Who Needed a Will

Abū Hāshim has become a remarkably convenient man for later historians to quote, which is unfortunate for historians who would like to cross-examine him. We possess accounts of his transfer of authority rather than an authenticated testament bearing his signature, and those accounts reached us through authors writing amid disputes that had developed long after the event. He belonged to the line of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, the son of Ali whose followers inspired several movements of succession and restoration, while the terminology by which these factions were eventually classified was worked out over time by people with their own commitments. A neat organizational chart of early Kaysāni Shiism can therefore give the reader considerably more confidence than the evidence deserves. [W-D1; N01]

The account that mattered to the Abbasid revolution says that Abū Hāshim appointed Muhammad ibn Ali of the Abbasid family as his successor, in some tellings transferring a testament, and in others conveying knowledge or authority understood to justify the new leadership. What appears at first to be a rather specialized dispute about inheritance within the Prophet's clan becomes a general explanation of why people who had attached themselves to an Alid cause ought to accept rule by the descendants of al-Abbas, the Prophet's uncle. Once the dynasty has won, the logic acquires a beautiful circularity: the right man was designated because he led the victorious family, and the victorious family can point back to the designation as proof that it was the right one. [N01–N03]

Some early partisans may sincerely have understood the reported transfer as settling the question, and the various Kaysāni currents were too diverse to be packed into one imaginary party headquarters taking orders from an Abbasid mastermind. The followers of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya inherited the expectations surrounding al-Mukhtār's uprising and the wider grievances of a community that had watched the family of the Prophet suffer under successive rulers; a movement grounded in those injuries would have contained people whose understandings of Imamate, revenge, justice, and spiritual knowledge were far from identical. Anyone proposing a grand strategy of absorption has to contend with what those people themselves might have believed.

Patricia Crone's reconstruction challenged the authenticity of the testament, while Farhad Daftary's account of early Shiʿi movements and Ilkka Lindstedt's work on narratives of the Abbasid *dawla* help us see how the story was situated within later struggles over legitimacy. I find the disagreement more valuable than an untroubled consensus would be, because it directs attention toward the surviving witnesses, their dates, their likely sources, and the circumstances under which their accounts reached

the form we can read. The designation story exists as an item in the historical record; its origin as an actual dying instruction is the matter being contested. [N01–N03]

Why would the Abbasids trouble themselves with an ancestral will after they had won the war? A conqueror might simply claim the right to govern by conquest, the old imperial solution that has served quite a few dynasties without requiring a mystical piece of estate planning. Yet conquest settles possession of a throne more efficiently than it settles the consciences of people who entered the struggle believing they were vindicating the descendants of Ali, and the prestige of those descendants remained politically meaningful after the Umayyads had been removed. If an ancestral designation could reconcile the revolution's religious promise with the identity of its winners, that was a valuable story to have in circulation.

My earlier work on Christian succession proves useful here, since an apostolic chain can be defended through a later institution that has acquired the power to certify which witnesses are orthodox and which belong to the proliferating catalog of heresies. I'm offering an analogy of how authority is remembered, rather than proposing that Abbasid propagandists borrowed their technique from a Christian bishop. The resemblance is in the historian's difficulty: when the only surviving testimony to a contested appointment comes through traditions that profited from recognizing it, the apparent solidity of a lineage can conceal an extraordinary amount of editorial work.

A securely dated witness to Abū Hāshim's final designation, produced before the revolution and independent of accounts favored by the victorious dynasty, would change the investigation. So would a variant demonstrating that an older, more modest transfer had been expanded into a universal claim to leadership, although an early witness might itself be partisan and would have to be examined with the same skepticism. Historians do not need a confession from the alleged forger to recognize textual development, but they do need to show that development rather than assuming it from the usefulness of the outcome.

It is easy to picture a secret meeting where the beneficiaries decide what Abū Hāshim must have said and then send a scribe away to make the problem disappear. Perhaps something like that occurred; perhaps a widely repeated partisan explanation acquired fresh detail through decades of ordinary retelling, with each compiler sincerely believing he had preserved the old truth. Those alternatives matter if the thesis is about a designed operation, because the operations have different authors, different incentives, and different chances of leaving identifiable fingerprints. A ruler need not create every useful story he later encourages others to believe.

Even an authentic testament would leave us with the question of what the original speaker intended. A succession to the leadership of a particular religious group might be understood by later admirers as a transfer of sovereignty over the entire Muslim community, and an esoteric inheritance can become a warrant for commanding

armies once the men who interpret it happen to have armies available. The enlargement of a claim deserves its own historical accounting, regardless of how that claim began.

Reading these traditions, I keep returning to the man in the audience who had given his loyalty to the family of Ali, perhaps thinking that his cause would correct the injustices of the old caliphate, and who now hears a scholar explain that the correct outcome has been certified by a dead member of that very family. Whether he was persuaded by the evidence, by the prestige of the narrator, or by the success of the armed movement is beyond our reach; the apparent neatness of the later succession story makes his uncertainty easy to miss. The revolution that followed would make the problem much larger, because its public invitation had left considerable room for people to imagine that victory would mean different things.

2 · The Promise Without a Name

The Abbasid revolutionary appeal included the expression *al-riḍā min āl Muḥammad*, usually rendered as the acceptable or chosen figure from the family of Muhammad, although scholars disagree over the precise use and development of the slogan. As political language it is fascinating, because it brings the family of the Prophet into the foreground while allowing people attached to quite different candidates to hear something pleasing to themselves. A man looking for an Alid restoration and an organizer committed to the Abbasid house could participate in the same enterprise for a time, with the final meaning to be determined when somebody was in a position to name a caliph. [W-D1; N02–N03]

We are dealing with an underground opposition movement across territories where Umayyad authority had generated intense grievances, which made secrecy useful even without an elaborate program of ideological deception. Messengers could spread a promise that gathered loyalty around the prestige of the Prophet's household, while the various people receiving it supplied details from their own expectations. Historians have quite properly argued over what the phrase meant in its earliest uses; the later victory is a dangerous guide to the intentions of every participant who joined before it happened.

In 750 Abū al-Abbās al-Saffāḥ emerged as caliph after the Abbasid victory, and one imagines that the moment must have clarified matters for anyone in the coalition who had assumed the restoration would put an Alid Imam on the throne. The new dynasty now had a government through which it could appoint officials and support accounts of its own genealogy, with the great advantage of being able to treat its successful accession as the obvious culmination of a historical destiny. Alid supporters continued to possess a rather awkward counterargument: they belonged to the same cause whose prestige had helped bring the revolution into being, and many of them had descendants of Ali to whom their allegiance could still be given.

Here the reported testament of Abū Hāshim performs its little miracle. The designation allows an Abbasid advocate to say that the revolution fulfilled the original obligation to Ali's house, because the authority of that house had already been transferred to the people who won. Yet it also concedes the premise that makes an Alid claim dangerous: the right to rule was important enough to require transmission from Ali's lineage in the first place. A testament that appears to close the matter can therefore preserve the theological materials with which its opponents reopen it.

These texts had different authors, audiences, and political purposes. The early sources contain competing memories and the later authors inherited controversies their predecessors had already tried to settle, while the scholars who have

reconstructed the Abbasid appeal disagree about its chronology and original meaning. Crone's challenge to the conventional account, Lindstedt's attention to the literature of the revolution, and Daftary's treatment of the early Shiʿi groups give us reasons to study the shape of each tradition before deciding what it proves. [N01–N03]

The broader Shiʿi world was meanwhile developing alternatives that an Abbasid genealogy could hardly make vanish. In Zaydi conceptions of leadership, the expectation that an Imam might rise against injustice gave political action a religious dignity; other Alid communities disagreed over designation, inherited knowledge, and the right to lead, while the currents later classified as Ismaili and Twelver would have their own difficult succession histories. We should be suspicious of any account that pictures a single Shiʿi opposition waiting passively for the caliphs to decide what it believed, since the surviving debates are testimony to an argument that had many participants and continued long after the first Abbasid victory.

Still, the dynasty faced a problem whose persistence can be measured in its own behavior. It had used the aura of the Prophet's household to justify a change of government and now had to live with the fact that genuine descendants of Ali could offer a competing claim to the very legitimacy the dynasty celebrated. The problem became quite visible under al-Maʾmūn when, more than sixty years after the revolution, a caliph reached for a solution that appeared to bring one of those revered descendants directly into the court's succession.

3 · The Grapes

Al-Ma’mūn's decision to designate Ali al-Riḍā as his successor in 817 almost invites a conspiracy theory, which is a good reason to examine the episode with particular care. The ruler of an empire built upon a contested relationship to the Prophet's household brings a descendant of Ali into the royal succession, placing a man whom his followers regarded as an Imam within the ceremonies and calculations of an institution that many of those followers regarded with deep suspicion. Whatever al-Ma’mūn hoped to accomplish, the appointment happened, and its consequences have been debated by historians interested in the caliph's political situation as well as by communities for whom the Imam's dignity is a matter of religious obligation. [N04]

One can imagine a partisan welcoming the news as proof that the dynasty had finally recognized the rights of Ali's family, while another might wonder what happens to the independence of an Imam whose status now depends, at least in the eyes of the court, on the pleasure of a caliph. A royal designation can offer protection and public recognition, but it also draws a religious leader into an apparatus capable of controlling his movements, defining his public role, and using his presence as an advertisement for the government's legitimacy. For a family with a long history of bad experiences at the hands of rulers, this was an uneasy kind of honor.

Then al-Riḍā died in 818, and in Shiʿi devotional memory the episode became the story of a murder, with al-Ma’mūn accused of offering poison to the Imam. The later Iranian lithograph of the caliph presenting grapes captures the suspicion beautifully, although a twentieth-century image cannot tell us who, if anyone, administered poison eleven centuries earlier. Historical investigation of the death has to work from the surviving written traditions and their relationships to one another, with the appointment, the timing of the death, and the competing political interests all kept in view. The allegation of murder is a real feature of Shiʿi memory; establishing it as the cause of death is a further question. [N04; PG-01–PG-02]

The caliph's gesture fascinates me because it appears generous. He has the fruit, the refinement of a royal table, and the apparent intention of honoring his guest, yet the viewer who knows the tradition reads the plate as a warning about what happens when sacred authority enters the reach of worldly power. It is a very efficient image of an institutional problem, since the danger comes dressed in the ceremonial language of respect. One could hang it above the door of almost any office where a government has invited a religious authority to bless something the government already wanted to do.

The image kept leading me back to the books. Suppose the ruler, or a jurist living under rulers, wants an Imam to support an arrangement that the Imam might have

disliked; centuries after his death there are easier means of obtaining that support than persuading him in person. A report can be transmitted with a useful ambiguity, selected from among variants, placed beneath an editorial heading, or interpreted through a legal framework developed under different political circumstances. The compiler may be conscientious and the jurist may be sincere, which is why an accusation of fabrication needs a textual case of its own rather than borrowing the emotional force of a painting about a poisoned man.

When I was studying hadith maximalism for *Who Are the Quranists?*, one of the recurring frustrations was the way a conversation about the Qur'an could suddenly be decided by a quotation from a later collection, as though the existence of the quotation settled the question of what Allah commanded. The Shiʿi archive presents its own version of that problem, with its own sciences of transmission, significant internal disagreements, and a much more complicated history than any polemic about a single false book would allow. My quarrel concerns the point at which the claimed voice of an Imam becomes an enforceable instruction to a person who is entitled to ask where that instruction came from.

A suspicion of this kind has to survive examination. If a report was invented, we ought to find evidence in its transmission or in its relationship to older versions; if it was selected because it suited a later institution, the selection becomes the object of study; and if the text was transmitted faithfully but its meaning was expanded until a jurist could justify an oppressive ruling, we should be able to examine the chain of reasoning that made the expansion possible. All of those investigations can be undertaken with respect for the religious figures whose names appear in the sources, and perhaps that respect is a reason to be especially demanding about what we allow other people to attribute to them.

The caliph's grapes will remain on the table as the investigation proceeds, because the motif gives form to an anxiety that is otherwise easy to lose amid lists of transmitters. The most consequential text in a collection may be one that allows an official to make a living person's choices on the authority of a dead saint. Before we reach those collections, however, we have to enter the succession crisis in which the Imam's physical absence changed the entire problem of consultation, and in which theologians working close to the intellectual world of Baghdad helped explain how authority might continue when its rightful holder could no longer be approached.

4 · How to Silence an Imam Who Is Already Absent

When al-Hasan al-ʿAskari died in 874, the community later recognized as Twelver Shiism entered a succession crisis that is difficult to appreciate once you have grown accustomed to its eventual solution. The familiar account says that the twelfth Imam existed and went into concealment, but the early literature records disputes over whether al-ʿAskari had left a son, who might legitimately succeed him, and how believers should understand an office whose living holder was increasingly inaccessible. Saʿd al-Qummi's account of the factions is a historical source with its own problems of transmission and classification, yet it permits us to look at a community before its disagreements had been tidied into the retrospective narrative of an inevitable orthodoxy. [Z01]

I sympathize with the people caught in that predicament. They believed that God had provided a special form of guidance through the Prophet's household, and now they were being asked to organize religious life around an Imam they could not question in the ordinary way, while rival claimants to authority continued to argue over what had happened. You could not simply suspend the duties of marriage, commerce, prayer, and communal justice until an unresolved succession dispute was settled to everybody's satisfaction, so the people who preserved sayings, evaluated claims, and supplied explanations were naturally going to matter more as the crisis continued.

The theology of occultation developed in this environment of argument, and among the intellectuals whose work historians have examined were Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī and Ibn Qiba al-Rāzī, with Ibn Qiba's Muʿtazilī background especially relevant to the movement of ideas across the theological boundaries of the period. The Nawbakhtī family belonged to the learned world of Abbasid Baghdad and had connections to the administrative establishment, which ought to get the attention of someone investigating the political uses of doctrine, although the existence of those connections is only the beginning of such an investigation. We have historical scholarship documenting the rational defense of Imami succession; the alleged instructions from a caliph to design a politically convenient occultation remain to be found. [N05; Z04–Z06]

The intellectual life of Baghdad shaped the arguments that followed. Muslim theologians were arguing about divine justice, the Qur'an, human freedom, prophecy, and the proper foundations of authority, while the court and its surrounding networks could offer careers and patronage to men whose arguments were useful, impressive, or simply fashionable. The Muʿtazila, whom I have often found attractive for their insistence that justice is intelligible to human reason, inhabited this world alongside other schools and sometimes enjoyed the favor of

rulers, with consequences that could become ugly when a theological position was backed by the coercive apparatus of government. A rationalist's theology might be intellectually admirable while his political circumstances remained a perfectly legitimate subject for scrutiny.

A ruler considering how to contain Alid resistance might have noticed an opportunity. A living Imam who can instruct his followers to resist an unjust ruler presents one sort of problem to the ruler; an Imam who cannot be consulted directly leaves much more room for intermediaries, and the political effect of those intermediaries depends upon the doctrines they teach and the institutions that certify their authority. If a court-connected theologian supplied a reason for the community to defer action or to treat direct claims to leadership as illegitimate, the result might have been useful to a government interested in domesticating opposition. That question becomes historically serious when we can attach it to a dated argument, a patron's known purpose, or an alteration that can be followed through the sources.

Yet the absent Imam was also a potentially subversive idea. A ruler could dominate Baghdad and control much of the visible world of scholarship, while a believer continued to regard a hidden descendant of the Prophet as possessing an authority the ruler could never extinguish. The doctrine's meaning was worked out by people living under political pressure and experiencing a real theological crisis; reducing their efforts to a single motive supplied by the court would discard evidence about their actual beliefs. The interesting part is to follow what later institutions did with a doctrine that could sustain expectations of justice while placing the practical administration of religious life in the hands of living scholars.

The same dilemma has troubled other religions after a founding authority became inaccessible. Catholic claims about apostolic succession, rabbinical disputes over the interpretation of revelation, and Sunni arguments about consensus are different bodies of evidence, each with its own institutional and theological history, but all make it worthwhile to ask how a community decides whose reading of inherited words has weight. A sacred figure may remain the source of legitimacy while jurists and custodians of the archive develop methods for applying his authority to circumstances he never addressed in person, which is a considerable responsibility to place upon a scholarly class.

Consider what happens when two transmitters produce competing reports under the same Imam's name, or when a legal scholar finds a statement whose apparent sense is at odds with a broader teaching about justice. The believer who wants to live faithfully needs a way to proceed, and the scholarly methods developed to answer such questions can be careful, sophisticated, and subject to meaningful criticism from within the tradition. It would be a mistake to assume that every rule unfavorable to my preferred understanding of the Qur'an was the work of a secret court, just as it would be a mistake to treat the eventual adoption of a rule by eminent jurists as proof that every step in its transmission was beyond reproach.

Everything depends upon who is empowered to decide between the competing accounts. Once a scholar can announce what the absent Imam's words require, he may be able to affect the life of somebody whose objections will be given very little weight, and the power to determine which witnesses count can become as consequential as the contents of the witnesses themselves. If the original Imamate was a protest against people who had taken religious authority by force, we should be interested in the procedures through which a later interpreter exercises the Imam's authority, especially when that interpreter has access to the ruler's courts or the community's finances.

The Muʿtazilī connection deserves closer study, since the intellectual history of the period gives us actual people to study rather than a hypothetical committee of villains. Some scholars working within the orbit of Muʿtazilī argument helped articulate Imami ideas, while Muʿtazilī theology also influenced Zaydi scholars who defended the legitimacy of an Imam willing to rise against injustice. It is an awkward complication for the claim that rationalist infiltration was necessarily a project to teach Shiʿis political obedience, and I would rather retain the complication than win the argument by omitting the evidence.

Our next scholar was a judge whose career depended upon a great political patron, whose books traveled beyond the environment in which he wrote them, and whose sudden loss of favor gives the story the sort of tempting human drama that researchers ought to enjoy while keeping an eye on the calendar.

5 · The Disgraced Judge and the Books He Left Behind

In Rayy toward the end of the tenth century, Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār built a career that depended as much on political patronage as on theological distinction. He was among the major Muʿtazilī theologians of his age, had served as a judge under Buyid patronage, and owed much of his position to the powerful vizier al-Ṣāḥib ibn ʿAbbād, whose death in 995 was followed by the judge's dismissal and confiscation of his property. We have a scholar with political connections, a dramatic loss of favor, and writings that would go on to shape theological debates far beyond the circle of people who had followed his original career; for the purposes of a book called *Dark Imams*, it is an almost dangerously appealing combination. [N06; ZF-Z02]

You can probably see the conspiracy theory coming. A rationalist with an impressive command of theological argument falls out with the authorities, and his intellectual descendants end up playing a role in the transmission of books that later Shiʿi communities will treat as part of their learned inheritance. It would make for a wonderfully tidy drama if we could assign him an angry private motive and then watch him set about redesigning Shiism from a room full of manuscripts. The biographies tell us about his career and dismissal, while the later transmission history concerns people who lived in different generations, with different patrons and different problems to solve. A good investigative story can survive an uncooperative date; a historical accusation has to accommodate it.

I have long sympathized with the Muʿtazila, whom we might call the People of Monotheism and Justice, and I suspect many Quran-centric Muslims who regard divine justice as something we should be able to reason about will recognize elements of their own project in this tradition. The idea that Allah's commands are intelligible in relation to justice has important consequences for anyone faced with a hadith whose literal reading seems to make the Almighty cruel or arbitrary, and the debates over human agency and moral responsibility still have a contemporary feel. There were also periods when people associated with rationalist theology enjoyed the sponsorship of rulers, and the famous history of theological coercion around the *miḥna* is a reminder that intellectual sophistication does not somehow prevent the temptations of power.

The travels of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's arguments after his dismissal interest me more than any imagined revenge scheme. His writings helped furnish a body of theological learning that later Zaydi scholars could appropriate and develop, and the Zaydi context creates a real problem for anyone treating Muʿtazilī influence as synonymous with political quietism. The Zaydi understanding of an Imam who may actively confront injustice is difficult to reconcile with a universal project of teaching the descendants of Ali to accept their rulers, although a scholar's influence can change as

his concepts move between institutions. The actual question is which arguments traveled, who selected them, and how their implications were understood in each new setting.

More than a century after ʿAbd al-Jabbār was dismissed, Qāḍī Jaʿfar ibn Aḥmad undertook a journey through Iraq and Iran, collecting Zaydi and Muʿtazilī books for the scholarly world of Yemen under the patronage of Imam Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān. Scott Lucas dates the expedition to 1151–1159, giving us a real collecting project with a patron, an agent, and identifiable intellectual material. By then the judge who lost his office in 995 belonged to history, so a story in which he personally instructed Jaʿfar to execute some grand scheme would require a rather unusual theory of longevity. The chronology nevertheless permits an interesting inquiry into the survival and migration of ideas through scholars who regarded older authorities as worth preserving. [N07; ZF-Z03; ZF-Z06–ZF-Z07]

Jaʿfar's collecting mission gives us something firmer than a story about a cabal: the decisions from which a scholarly canon was made. Someone decides which manuscripts are worth obtaining, a patron supplies the resources, a teacher chooses what to copy or explain, and the students who inherit those materials may eventually speak about their tradition as if its shelves were arranged by providence. Manuscript culture was expensive and full of accidents of survival, so an absent book cannot automatically be treated as evidence of censorship, though the existence of a documented selection process gives historians something concrete to examine when a later body of teaching becomes unexpectedly narrow.

Jaʿfar's treatment of consensus and of the views that should count among the Prophet's family deserves attention in this connection, since the seemingly technical decision about whose agreement counts may determine whether a living dissenter is entitled to challenge a ruling. If the boundaries are drawn so that certain voices can be disregarded, a later jurist can announce agreement with considerable confidence while the rejected views remain somewhere outside the circle. That procedure may have an elaborate principled defense within the relevant school, and I want to read it before judging the outcome; its political and legal consequences are nevertheless part of the story of how inherited authority is used. [ZF-Z07]

A modern allegation concerns the *Musnad Zayd*, a collection transmitted under the name of Zayd ibn Ali, which the working manuscript discusses in connection with a 2023 argument by Saeed Mohd H. al-Marri about later composition or fabrication. This is exactly the sort of claim on which an investigation should spend its time, because we can ask which manuscripts preserve the text, whether the same reports appear through genuinely independent lines of transmission, and where the wording develops in a way that changes what the attributed Imam is made to teach. The narrowness of a transmission route may give us good reasons to be cautious, while the verdict that a named person consciously manufactured the text requires evidence about agency and intent. [ZF-MZ; N08]

With so much court intrigue and theological resentment on the page, it becomes tempting to recruit every displaced intellectual and manuscript collector into the personnel roster of a single secret operation. When the evidence supports a long chain of influence, I want to follow that chain and see where it leads, because people can build institutions with materials inherited from a predecessor whom they never met and whose original purposes they might have misunderstood. The questions worth answering are more demanding: which texts were known in a given place, what changes can be dated, whose patronage paid for their circulation, and what doctrinal or legal consequence followed from the version that prevailed?

The collection we turn to next helped form the Twelver canon. It became a central reference for Twelver hadith, contains reports whose legal consequences still generate debate, and was completed in a period whose chronology complicates one of the more convenient theories about political sponsorship. With it we finally leave the succession slogans and the careers of court theologians for the setting where an attributed sentence can acquire authority over the life of an ordinary believer.

6 · The Book That Could Speak for the Dead

Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī died in 329/941, and his *al-Kāfī* became one of the foundational collections of Imami hadith, preserving a body of material that later scholars would spend centuries discussing, grading, and interpreting. The Buyid military takeover of Baghdad came in 334/945, after his death, when the Abbasid caliph remained on his throne under the dominance of new rulers. Anyone claiming that the Buyid authorities in Baghdad commissioned al-Kulaynī's original compilation therefore has a chronological difficulty to solve before we even get to the contents of the book, although the collection's later history of copying and legal interpretation continued through institutions that developed under changing political conditions. [N09–N10]

I understand why a community would cherish such a work. If you love the Prophet's household and believe that the Imams preserved wisdom about the Qurʾan, morality, and the proper conduct of life, you would naturally want to preserve what they were reported to have taught, especially once the living Imam was inaccessible and the witnesses who might have heard his predecessors were passing away. There is something moving about the effort to rescue a teaching from oblivion by making a book of it, and the sheer scope of the early Imami archive tells us that its collectors were responding to a religious need. A historian can respect that need while asking how confident we should be about an individual attribution.

The trouble begins when a collection is made to stand in for the Imam himself. A remembered sentence may have passed through several teachers, been copied from an earlier notebook, entered a compiler's chapter under a heading that invites a particular reading, and then reached a jurist who has to decide whether the report governs a dispute that arose centuries later. Every participant might be working in good faith, yet there is an accumulating distance between the original occasion and the legal rule eventually extracted from it, and a responsible account of hadith has to show readers where that distance comes from. A chain of transmission tells us something important about the claim to memory; the meaning a later institution gives that memory is another part of the history.

At this point my Quran-centric sympathies tend to get me into trouble with enthusiasts of maximalist hadith law. In Sunni discussions I have often encountered a report from Bukhari or Muslim being offered as the final word on a subject where the Qurʾan seems to leave us room for reasoning, as though the proper job of the believer were to adjust the divine text until it fit the most expansive reading of the later report. Twelver Shiʿi scholars developed their own methods and disputes, so the details of the critique differ considerably, but the general problem of an authoritative

collection acquiring an authority beyond what its underlying evidence can support will be familiar to anyone who has spent time comparing the two traditions.

The matter becomes more uncomfortable when the report is used to decide what another person is permitted to refuse. Among the dossiers collected for this book are narrations in *al-Kāfī* concerning paternal authority and marriage, where a particular line of legal reasoning can be invoked to deny a girl or woman a later opportunity to reject a marriage arranged on her behalf. This is a subject on which the exact wording matters, because the meaning of a phrase about guardianship, the age or capacity of the person involved, and the differences between transmitted versions can alter the argument significantly. The working manuscript keeps the relevant reports and the scholars' judgments together so that the legal consequence can be traced through the evidence, rather than laid at the feet of an Imam by rhetorical assertion. [K-R07–K-R11]

I keep picturing the scene that occurs generations after the original transmitter has disappeared. A jurist tells a young person that the arrangement made for her is binding, and when she asks why, he invokes a report attributed to an Imam whose authority her community has been taught to honor. Perhaps the text has been transmitted securely; perhaps the jurist has misunderstood the circumstances of the original statement; perhaps a later interpreter has added assumptions that were never in the attributed words. Whatever the history turns out to be, the man applying the ruling is making a present decision, and the person who bears its consequence has every reason to demand an explanation that goes beyond the prestige of the name printed above the hadith.

I worry about the ease with which a historical description can harden into a legal permission. A narrative may tell us that a marriage occurred under particular circumstances, which is itself a claim to be tested, and later scholars may use it to establish rules about the marriages of people living in wholly different circumstances. There are legitimate methods of legal reasoning for moving from precedent to general guidance, but those methods are arguments, and the person whose rights are at stake should be able to see them. One of the reasons I return to the Qur'an is that a religious law deserving the name ought to be answerable to the moral world the Qur'an places before us, including its language of justice and our responsibility for what we do to other people.

The reported marriage of ʿUmar to Umm Kulthūm, identified in a number of accounts as a daughter of Ali, is a particularly instructive problem for the same reason. The historical reports vary in their details, and later jurists have sometimes invoked the episode in arguments about family authority, so the investigator has to decide first how well the event itself is attested and then whether the version accepted by a jurist gives him the right to impose a particular rule. Even a relatively secure historical occurrence can be made to carry an extraordinary burden once later legal authors enlist it for purposes far removed from the original household. The

differences between the accounts deserve to be kept in sight, rather than flattened into whichever version is easiest to quote. [Y09–Y13]

A polemicist who has learned the vocabulary of grading can miss a further subtlety about *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḍaʿīf*. A report with a weak transmission may contain a valuable ethical insight, while a report whose chain receives a favorable grade can be applied in a manner that is cruel or plainly unsupported by its wording. My working case register preserves examples of those different outcomes, including an ethical teaching retained despite a weak grade and a disputed coercive application of a more favorably graded report. I am interested in both the history of the words and the moral responsibility of the person who uses them, because a verdict about a chain cannot do all the work of a legal and theological argument.

Those grapes matter again here. The devotional image accuses al-Maʾmūn of making a deadly offering to the Imam he had publicly honored, and its force comes from the contradiction between the gesture of respect and the suspected purpose of the gift. In the world of books, a similar danger arises when the Imam is praised as an infallible authority while the particular words attributed to him pass through editors, transmitters, and jurists whose decisions effectively determine what his authority will mean. Some of those decisions can be documented and tested; others disappear into the gaps between surviving witnesses, leaving us with the more limited task of explaining what the extant evidence can bear.

The term *Dark Imams* describes the possibility that the practical control of sacred authority migrates toward people who claim merely to preserve it. An Abbasid caliph might have a great political interest in a testament that made his dynasty the legitimate heir of an Alid cause, while a later scholar could influence the conduct of believers by deciding which sayings of the Imams deserve to command obedience. The cases belong to different centuries and their relationships must be proved, yet they invite a common investigation of the movement from an absent authority to the living people who certify what that authority supposedly requires.

This conclusion will irritate readers on several sides of the sectarian divide. Someone attached to a particular school may hear an attack upon its revered transmitters, while a Quranist who has already decided that almost all hadith is fabricated might be frustrated by the care with which I preserve reports that withstand criticism. The temptation to make our favored conclusion simple is powerful, especially on the internet, where a single sensational quotation can travel farther than the painstaking explanation of its manuscript history. I would rather keep the argument open to correction, because a book about men claiming the right to speak for the Imams would be rather embarrassing if its author began treating his own preferred reconstruction as a revelation.

The documents that brought us here were a supposed testament, a revolution with an ambiguous promise, a caliph's remarkable appointment of a living Imam, the

theological defense of a hidden successor, and the scholarly transmission of books across several generations. We have seen circumstances in which the authority of Ali's household was invoked by people who had political and institutional interests of their own, and we have reached a legal arena in which an attribution can affect another person's freedom. The next part of the investigation must go further into the particular reports and the jurists who used them, because the allegation of corruption becomes worth making only when we can show the reader what was transmitted, what changed, and who had the power to enforce the resulting rule.

Interlude · Who Signed the Statement?

Religious history invites the fantasy that a winning institution was designed in advance by people who understood exactly what the future would require. The Abbasid dynasty inherits a contested story about Abū Hāshim's testament; al-Ma'mūn makes al-Riḍā his heir, and a year later the Imam is dead; theologians associated with the learned world of Baghdad help explain how the community of an absent Imam can continue; a judge in Rayy falls from office, while books from his intellectual world are preserved by scholars who live long after him. Seen from the far end of the story, these events acquire a pattern, especially once later jurists are able to invoke the words of holy ancestors as binding legal authority.

But the sources have their own calendar, which is less accommodating to the theory of one continuous operation than an enthusiastic conspiracist might prefer. Al-Kulaynī died before the Buyids entered Baghdad, and Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār was dismissed more than a century before Qāḍī Jaʿfar undertook his collecting mission. These are facts about sequence that any serious theory must survive, while the positive evidence of patronage, theological argument, literary selection, and later legal application gives us substantial material to study on its own terms. We may eventually discover a deliberate intervention in a particular report or doctrine, and if we do, I want to be able to identify the people and the surviving witness that make the accusation credible.

An institution can help author history through its archive without inventing every word preserved there. It can select among genuine traditions, promote one interpretation until the others are treated as eccentric, and give that interpretation practical force in the life of a believer, all while regarding itself as the faithful servant of the people whose authority it preserves. Religious leadership inevitably involves such choices, which makes the standards governing them a matter of enormous moral importance. The question is whether the people who exercise that power are answerable to the revelation they claim to interpret and to the human beings who live under the consequences.

So, could the caliphs have been the Dark Imams? I want that question to follow us into the footnotes, the biographies, and the conflicting versions of the reports, where it has a chance of becoming something stronger than a good title. I also want to keep asking it of later jurists, including those whose religious commitments are close to my own, because the most disturbing possibility is that the caliph's method of ruling through a revered name outlived the dynasty and became so ordinary that people ceased to notice who was speaking.

PART II · THE INHERITANCE THAT LEARNED TO SPEAK

7 · Abū Hāshim's Other Heirs

The longer I study Abū Hāshim, the harder it becomes to believe that his political importance can be exhausted by asking whether he left a testament to the Abbasids, because this descendant of Ali turns up in another family history whose consequences were theological rather than dynastic. The story places a young Wāṣil ibn ʿAṭāʾ in his circle, learning principles that would later be associated with the Muʿtazila, and there is a certain satisfaction in the thought that the family whose claims were used to crown a dynasty also helped furnish the arguments by which rationalists would insist that God's justice must make sense. I like that story rather a lot. Which is precisely why it needs the same treatment as the testament. [P1-C01; P1-C03]

The later biographies report that Wāṣil learned from Abū Hāshim in Medina and disagreed with him about the Imamate, among other questions, although the earliest witnesses to this account have yet to be collated in the working dossier. The dates make contact possible: Abū Hāshim is commonly placed at the end of his life around 716–718, while Wāṣil was born around 699, with enough overlap for a young man to have encountered the elder before the disputes of Basra became his intellectual home. Some enthusiasts carry the association a generation further back and make Wāṣil a direct pupil of Muhammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya himself, which is considerably harder to accomplish when the alleged teacher died around the time his pupil was born. I would enjoy a lineage that ran from Ali to the Muʿtazila as much as any lover of the Prophet's household; enjoying it does nothing to fix the calendar. [P1-C01; P1-C04; P1-C06]

The disagreement over the Imamate is the part I find most appealing, since a pupil who can receive instruction from an Alid scholar and then reject his theory of leadership is exhibiting a rather healthy understanding of what learning is for. We should remember how much later scholars packed into the word *uṣūl*, which can describe the principles of a subject without implying that the whole elaborate science familiar from medieval textbooks was already laid out in the teacher's notebook. If Wāṣil learned arguments concerning God's unity, justice, and the status of the sinner, he would have received something valuable even if the mature Muʿtazilī school later organized those arguments in ways his teacher never imagined. The historical question concerns what passed between the men and how later writers used the pedigree, rather than whether we can baptize an entire school into the household by means of one attractive biographical sentence. [P1-C01; P1-C05]

There was another son in Muhammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya's household whose reported intellectual work complicates the family portrait. Al-Ḥasan ibn Muhammad is associated with an early text on *irjāʾ*, the postponement of definitive judgment on disputed figures from the first civil wars, and scholars have treated the transmitted letter as a possible witness to arguments circulating in the 690s. That is a date worth

caring about, because an authentic early letter would put us close to the people still living amid the consequences of those conflicts, while a later reconstruction would tell us more directly about how subsequent generations wished to remember them. The attribution is debated, and the manuscript has yet to collate every witness, so the reported date belongs beside the uncertainty rather than above it. [P1-C02]

Picture the intellectual discomfort this creates for anyone who wants the heirs of Ali to have spoken with one political voice. One son of Muhammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya becomes associated with militant movements seeking redress for the family; another is remembered as postponing judgments that partisans on several sides were desperate to settle; and Abū Hāshim is placed at the beginning of both a dynastic story and a genealogy of theological disagreement. The point of looking at these accounts together is the opportunity to recover an early community in which intellectual positions crossed household boundaries and people who revered the same ancestor could still dispute what justice demanded of them. Later books arranged those lives into schools, which has made the historian's job easier in one respect and surprisingly treacherous in another. [P1-C02; P1-C03; P1-C04]

I am conscious that *irjāʾ* is one of those words that provokes a reflexive accusation of quietism, as though postponing judgment about a disputed person's ultimate standing must also mean excusing the actions of every living tyrant. That implication needs to be proved in the particular context. A scholar may refuse to declare a Muslim an unbeliever while still believing that a ruler can be opposed for injustice, and the lives of some early jurists give us reason to keep the possibilities separate. One can see why a court would prefer subjects who practiced a convenient version of political silence, but the theology that says our final judgments belong to Allah does not automatically issue a lifetime license to anyone currently occupying the palace.

Later institutions encourage us to project their categories backward, especially when we look back from the grand classifications of Sunni and Shiʿi Islam. A Muslim who now describes himself as Hanafi, Zaydi, or Twelver has centuries of commentary helping him understand what those labels require, while the people living in Kufa before the Abbasid revolution were deciding whether to risk their money, their reputations, and sometimes their lives for causes whose final names they would never learn. It is possible for a reported inheritance of teachings to carry genuine intellectual influence and for a supposed inheritance of political office to be contested; the accounts concerning Abū Hāshim deserve that patient comparison because the same celebrated name can perform remarkably different work in each.

This gives us a more interesting set of suspects than the one suggested by the first sight of the Abbasid testament. A later scholar seeking to make a ruler legitimate might borrow a family pedigree; a rationalist disputing that ruler might invoke a teacher from the same household; and a jurist attempting to settle a practical case might inherit arguments developed by people whose political loyalties were never identical. If a coordinated effort to domesticate Shiism existed, its author would have

needed to work through this exceedingly uncooperative intellectual terrain. The next generation supplies a test that no genealogy can settle in advance, because one of the Prophet's descendants would rise against the government, while other members of the family and their friends had to decide what his act required of them.

8 · The Imam Who Went Into the Street

Kufa in 740 was an unpleasant place to test a theory of rightful government, especially if your claim involved belonging to the Prophet's household and the local governor had reason to consider you a threat. Zayd ibn Ali, son of Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn and descendant of Husayn, raised an uprising against the Umayyad regime and was killed after the rebellion failed. His death became the point around which a movement would eventually articulate a remarkably demanding image of the Imam: a learned and just descendant of the family who asserts his claim publicly and accepts the danger of confronting oppression. The later formulations belong to the history of Zaydism, while the revolt and its destruction belong to the political history of the eighth century. [X01; ZU-01]

That distinction starts to matter when we read the lives of the other Alids living at the same time. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, whom Twelver Shiʿis remember as the sixth Imam, did not join Zayd's uprising or the later Hasanid revolt, and the traditions interpreting his abstention offer several ways to understand the decision. One explanation treats him as the designated authority whose knowledge of the circumstances justified restraint; another can read his caution as a serious practical judgment about a rebellion likely to bring disaster upon its followers. The historian can recover the difference in conduct and study the explanations without pretending that access to a man's private divine knowledge has been provided by the dossier. [X01; X03]

I know the usual argument. If Jaʿfar was the true Imam, it is presumptuous for a lesser man to demand that he rise whenever the political situation grows intolerable, since the Imam knows the time and manner of his obligation. I also know the rejoinder from people drawn to Zayd: the claim that a leader's wisdom is invisible can become very convenient for somebody who never has to pay the public cost of leadership. Neither argument needs a caricature of the person on the other side. A man who goes to war may be courageous and mistaken about his chances, while one who stays home may save lives through restraint or preserve a position others are willing to die for. What interests me is what later institutions made of their choices, and how they turned two human decisions under pressure into theories of what an Imam must be. [X03]

The most revealing disagreement was therefore conducted by followers as much as by potential leaders. Some Kufans withdrew support from Zayd amid disputes over his stance toward the first caliphs, while those who continued with him could see their loyalty as fidelity to the family in action. The later heresiographers give us factions and doctrinal labels, though these classifications often sit between us and the unrecoverable conversations in the streets. A modern reader should be careful with the tidy tale that everyone decided the question of succession once and for all before

the battle began. People were sorting their loyalties while the authorities were already sorting their enemies. [ZU-01]

This difference between a public claimant and a designated claimant would haunt Shiʿi thought. The Zaydi traditions developed criteria by which a qualified descendant of Hasan or Husayn could call people to an active defense of justice, and their later legal literature could then ask whether his conduct met the standards attached to the office. Imami theology put increasing weight upon designation, inherited knowledge, and the special standing of a line of Imams; in that world a claimant could have an office whose full authority depended on something more than the visible success of a rebellion. Historians can trace the argument without deciding which claimant God had chosen, and the different ways of distributing risk were political consequences whether the participants experienced them as theology or ordinary survival.

Later chroniclers have a peculiar taste for assigning all the brave men to one community and all the prudent men to another. The actual map was considerably less obedient, because the jurist who would eventually be celebrated as the greatest authority of a major Sunni school appears in the sources as a supporter of Zayd, and later offered support to the descendants of Hasan when they rose against the Abbasids. That gives our story an inconvenient protagonist, a prosperous Kufan teacher who would be canonized by an institution often imagined as the opposite side of the sectarian divide. [B7-01]

A further question follows from the two Imams' divergent political choices. Which tradition can preserve the story of a man who opposed the ruler and then place in his mouth a legal rule that relieves a later ruler of responsibility? In principle, it could happen through a genuine change of circumstances, a misunderstanding by the transmitter, or an editor who has made a useful selection. The title of Imam provides neither a guarantee that every surviving report is his nor a reason to assume that each politically uncomfortable statement was forged. What makes the Zaydi library worth opening is the opportunity to test those different possibilities against named books and actual chains of transmission.

The further irony is that Zaydism, once a movement memorializing the Imam who rose, developed institutions of government of its own, with learned Imams who ruled territories, appointed judges, collected revenues, and disputed with independent religious communities. We should expect an Imam who governs to confront questions unlike those asked of a rebel whose cause is cut short, and the possibility that his government might influence the law copied into its libraries is an invitation to research rather than an accusation ready to serve. The historical actor and the legal office share a title; whether they share an identical program is something the documents must show.

The first person I want to examine in this connection is a man whose own tradition came to call him an Imam of extraordinary stature, although he was not an Alid and never claimed the particular authority that later Shiʿi schools assigned to the family. His life takes us through the two revolutions that changed the government of Iraq and illustrates why a movement's later name is a poor substitute for its earlier political commitments.

9 · Abū Ḥanīfa the Shīʿī

The jurist Abū Ḥanīfa died in Baghdad in 767, and the accounts of his final years place him in conflict with the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr, whose offers of public office he reportedly refused. By then he was an established teacher from Kufa with commercial means, students, and a reputation that made him useful to people who sought the legitimacy of scholarly opinion. Later generations would know him as *al-Imām al-Aʿẓam*, the Greatest Imam, and the schools that inherited his name would eventually teach law across an enormous part of the Muslim world. I wonder what his captors would have made of the title, assuming the reports about his treatment preserve the outlines of what occurred. [B7-01]

His politics are the part of this career that modern sectarian habits have a way of forgetting. The biographical literature records support for Zayd ibn Ali's rebellion against the Umayyads, including reports of material assistance, and it also places him on the side of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and his brother Ibrahim when the Hasanid challengers rose against the Abbasids in the 760s. Umar Faruq Abd-Allah's study in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* treats the Alid sympathies as substantial and describes the jurist's understanding of political legitimacy as close to early Zaydi positions. We have several traditions written down after the events, with the ordinary problems of biographical reconstruction, although their cumulative pattern deserves considerably more attention than it receives in polite modern conversations about the four Sunni schools. [B7-01]

A scene from Abū Ḥanīfa's career complicates the picture of a harmless founding jurist. An older man who has spent decades teaching in a city full of memories of Ali is accused of supporting people who might overthrow the government, and the government in question belongs to the Abbasid family, whose revolutionary success had itself depended in part upon appealing to loyalties connected with the Prophet's household. A dynasty that has come to power beneath the symbols of restitution is suddenly forced to face an Alid claimant who believes that restitution has still been deferred. At that point a jurist's opinion on the matter may become a question of public security, and his refusal to serve the palace is understood rather differently by the people responsible for guarding it.

I do not mean by calling him Shīʿī that someone should search the archives for a lost membership certificate bearing the seal of the later Twelver school. The Arabic word for party or partisanship belonged to the political language in which allegiance to Ali could be expressed, and the doctrinal boundaries that separate our contemporary communities took time to form. We can recover his sympathy for Alid challengers through reports, study his inheritance of Kufan legal reasoning, and ask where his students carried both, while recognizing that the eventual Hanafi school

developed an identity he would scarcely have recognized in its mature Ottoman or South Asian forms. [B7-01]

The scholarly world that formed him had its own lineage of teachers, running through Ḥammād ibn Abī Sulaymān, Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī, and the Kufan memory of Ibn Masʿūd, so it was a world in which law had to be reasoned about as well as remembered. A judgment attributed to a Companion might provide a starting point, while the practical problems arriving in a city full of traders, families, litigants, and officials required a jurist to decide how a scriptural instruction applied in circumstances its text had never explicitly enumerated. The mature arguments about analogy, preference, and authoritative consensus emerged through such disputes, sometimes with striking overlap between men later assigned to different religious camps. [B7-01; ZU-17]

The revolt of Ibrahim, brother of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, is especially important because it removes any convenient notion that the change from Umayyad to Abbasid government satisfied Abū Ḥanīfa's political conscience. Reports describe him as offering support that worried his students, who understood perfectly well that scholarly prestige would do little to protect them if the ruler decided to prosecute the people around him. An intellectual can have a well-formed theory of justice and still make dangerous mistakes in choosing the people to embody it; the fact that these commitments survived into the new dynasty tells us at least that his political concerns were bigger than hostility to a particular family of rulers. [B7-01]

The biography also illustrates a source problem. Later admirers were eager to remember a jurist who refused corrupt appointments, because such a refusal demonstrates independence in almost any theology of the learned class, whereas the particular rebellions he supported invite uncomfortable questions about his relation to the eventual structures of Sunni legitimacy. Hostile writers could use the same facts to portray him as reckless or heterodox. We therefore have to read the stories as arguments written by people with reasons to remember him in particular ways. The reports from multiple traditions are meaningful evidence of an early reputation, while the words of a letter supposedly written by him demand a separate test of dates and manuscript witnesses.

The temptation to enroll Abū Ḥanīfa as a direct long-term student of Zayd illustrates the problem. He is reported to have supported Zayd's cause, and some anecdotes claim personal encounters or instruction, but a political alliance does not automatically prove a classroom relationship of whatever length a later apologist finds useful. Indeed, a reader who knows that a jurist loved the Prophet's family may be delighted to discover one more pedigree of personal authorization, just as the Abbasids were delighted to discover a testament. I have had enough experience with these genealogies to insist that the meeting, the teaching, and the political sympathy be evaluated separately. [B7-01]

What did a teacher like this think the responsibility of reason was, once the ruler demanded obedience? Some texts attributed to his circle connected *commanding right and forbidding wrong* with resistance to injustice, and the early discussions of *irjāʾ* did not produce a single political answer. An argument over whether a grave sinner remained within Islam could coexist with an insistence that the ruler had committed an act for which his subjects should hold him accountable. The conclusions of the mature Hanafi school contain later negotiations with government, judicial appointment, and ordinary public order; the earlier jurist lived through the years when those negotiations could still cost a man his freedom. [B7-01]

Now consider the irony from the other side of the historical boundary. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, whose authority would become fundamental to Imami law, is remembered as abstaining from revolts that the future Sunni Imam reportedly supported. Their choices can both be defended, and the records require us to resist the fantasy that the settled doctrinal categories were already walking around Kufa in recognizable costumes. If a later polemic asks us to judge which school most faithfully preserved the political soul of Ali, I would like it first to explain how the future Sunni jurist ended up closer to the battlefield than the future fountainhead of Jaʿfari law. [X03; B7-01]

I see a larger danger in the habit of handing the interpretation of each man's life over to his institutional heirs. By the time a tradition has written its canon, its leading ancestors can seem to have agreed with everything that later students prefer, and a courageous inconsistency becomes a puzzle to explain away. We ought to leave room for the possibility that Abū Ḥanīfa lived with contradictions, argued with friends, misjudged opponents, and borrowed useful reasoning from people whose conclusions he rejected. The same allowance should be extended to Jaʿfar, Zayd, and their followers. It is one thing to honor the dead; it is a much more consequential activity to make them into perfect witnesses for the institutions that arrived afterward.

The explanation becomes harder to test when the Imam's conduct is justified by knowledge hidden from everyone expected to obey him. At that point the disagreement is no longer simply over whether he made a prudent political choice; it concerns whether the nature of the office permits a follower to ask what evidence supports a claim made in its name. For that question we need to meet a formidable debater from the circles around Jaʿfar, a man whose intellectual descendants helped define what the Imam could be expected to know.

10 · Hishām and the Imam Who Knew

Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam was the sort of theologian who could make an opponent regret raising a question in public, and the accounts of his career place him among the disputants who brought the doctrine of the Imamate into the argumentative world of early Islamic *kalām*. Later Shiʿi memory treats him as a devoted associate of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and Mūsā al-Kāẓim, while hostile accounts made him an author of doctrines they regarded as dangerous, including accusations of anthropomorphism that modern researchers have learned to handle with more suspicion. A thinker remembered so differently by different communities is exactly the person we should want near the center of an intellectual history, since his career may show how a doctrine was constructed while its defenders were still arguing over what it meant. [H1; X03]

For a reader accustomed to the completed Twelver theology, the Imam may appear as a familiar institution whose infallibility, special knowledge, and place in the divine arrangement are all part of a settled system, but Etan Kohlberg's work on the development from early Imāmiyya to Ithnā-ʿashariyya reminds us that even the number twelve became a central defining commitment through a historical process. Arguments associated with Hishām had already given the Imamate a developed theological shape in the eighth century, while the system of an enduring line ending in an occulted twelfth Imam emerged into its later formulation as the community worked through crises of succession and absence. These developments belong to different moments of construction, so a tradition reported in a tenth-century book cannot be used to show without further argument that every element of its mature theory had been publicly known two centuries earlier. [H1; X03; Z04]

The great attraction of a special Imam is intelligible if you have spent much time watching ordinary people claim to have settled God's law. A Muslim asks for justice and finds several scholars who disagree about the meaning of a verse, the reliability of a report, and the demands of the local governor, each of whom can explain with tremendous confidence why the other man is wrong. What a relief it would be to have a leader whose authority guaranteed the correctness of his answer, a point of reference secure against the endless capacity of interpreters to misunderstand each other. The trouble appears when the Imam himself is inaccessible, or when the evidence of what he said consists precisely of the transmitted reports that require scholarly interpretation. The solution has brought us back to the problem it promised to settle.

Hishām's arguments are therefore of more than antiquarian interest. If infallibility concerns the guidance of an Imam who knows the correct rule, it still leaves the historian with the question of how one recognizes his words and distinguishes them

from the claims of people speaking in his name. The disciple who argues for a necessary guide can be making a coherent theological proposal; the later transmitter who offers an attributed sentence as that guide's judgment has incurred an additional responsibility. A community may grant the Imam an extraordinary office and remain obligated to ask whether a particular report is genuine. [H1]

Ja'far's death in 765 gives the question an urgency that is easy to lose when we read the settled lists of successors in later devotional literature. The early dispute over who would inherit his authority included competing claims attached to sons and family members, and the existence of those disagreements is significant even to a believer who ultimately accepts one line as legitimate. A true designation, if it occurred, had to be known through witnesses in a world where the putative Imam could die and the people who had heard him might interpret his intentions differently. A later narrative may explain every disagreement as a test of obedience or the result of prudent concealment; the historian must also ask how the competing statements circulated and who first recorded them. [H1; Z04]

I admire the attempt to construct a theology in which knowledge and moral responsibility are joined, though I worry about the very large territory a later jurist may be permitted to occupy once he claims to be the authorized interpreter of a uniquely knowing Imam. It is already difficult enough to test an ordinary ruler whose decisions can be observed, protested, and perhaps overturned, while the man who claims access to a hidden or departed authority can answer many challenges by referring to evidence his critic is unable to examine directly. We should be most attentive when a theory of special knowledge is used to make a practical disagreement disappear, since the refusal to discuss evidence is a human action, undertaken by the scholar in front of us, however elevated the absent teacher may be.

The surviving collections complicate the argument further, because they preserve instructions to reason. The Imami *al-Kāfī* begins with a book on intellect and ignorance, making the human capacity to understand and to answer for one's understanding part of the inherited religious world, while Zaydi legal theory contains techniques for comparing evidence that later polemicists sometimes imagine belong exclusively to their adversaries. We can appreciate those traditions and still ask whether every report contained in them deserves the authority assigned to its speaker. A mind instructed to reason is being asked to do work, and a jurist who tells us to silence it because his citation has settled the matter had better possess a very good explanation of what the citation means. [K; ZU-17]

Consider the terms *taqiyya* and *naṣṣ* in this setting. A claim of designation gives an Imam a particular basis of authority, while prudential concealment may explain why he behaves or speaks differently in circumstances of danger, and neither concept is inherently absurd in a world where rulers really did persecute their opponents. The difficulty arises if every contrary statement can be declared concealed speech and every missing witness can be supplied by the authority the interpreter already assumes.

Such an argument risks becoming impossible to test using any evidence available to outsiders. The tradition's own theologians debated its boundaries, and a fair inquiry should recover those limits rather than present the entire intellectual inheritance as an elaborate excuse for inaction. [H1; Z04]

The Qur'ān raises an older anxiety in Surah Tawbah, which speaks of people taking their learned authorities as lords besides Allah, and the warning seems especially relevant to readers who insist that their community has already solved the problem by giving its scholars a sufficiently religious vocabulary. A man can be wrong with a very impressive isnād, while another can arrive at a useful ethical insight without being able to identify every teacher through whom the words passed. How we distinguish these cases matters because both men may eventually cite the same Imam, and the act of choosing between their claims is a decision being made in the present by people answerable for its consequences.

The old contrast between the Imam who rose and the Imam who stayed behind has therefore moved into a different register. In Hishām's world the Imam is increasingly the indispensable source of right knowledge; in the Zaydi political world the Imam must also demonstrate public competence and willingness to oppose tyranny, though the traditions borrow arguments from one another in ways a neat modern chart cannot capture. Each ideal can be abused by its own representatives. A government may pronounce itself the armed embodiment of justice, while a network of scholars may say that its unseen principal has already judged every question entrusted to them. The first case demands an examination of actions and institutions; the second requires us to inspect the actual words, the chain by which they arrived, and the person who now wants us to obey them.

Which brings us back to Qāḍī Ja'far and his books, since we now have the intellectual ingredients for a school of law whose claims to family authority can be defended in the technical language of rationalist jurisprudence. The interesting part is that the documents permit us to see at least one such change on the page, where an inherited argument acquires a new provision for the agreement of the Prophet's family and thereby changes whose judgment a later scholar may regard as binding.

11 · The Judge Who Drew the Circle

Qāḍī Jaʿfar's journey from Yemen to the scholarly centers of Iraq and Iran in the 1150s has the sort of ordinary institutional motive that makes it more valuable to our investigation than any speculative scene of secret meetings, since Imam Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān wanted books and the judge knew where to find people who could transmit them. Scott Lucas records the mission and the extraordinary importance of the material brought back, much of the older Zaydi literary inheritance that later generations possessed having passed through Jaʿfar and his teachers. If you are looking for the moment when the intellectual life of a community begins to depend upon the decisions of a small number of scholarly intermediaries, the collecting expedition is a very good place to start. [ZF-Z03; ZF-Z06; ZF-Z07]

Before fitting the judge for the robes of a secret court operative, I would like to know what he wrote. A good scholar could travel at considerable personal cost because he believed that the religious learning of his community deserved better books. His patron could support the journey because an intellectually serious Imamate needed scholars capable of defending its law against rival interpretations. The same journey might also strengthen an administration fighting internal opponents, since an authoritative library gives a school common arguments and produces teachers who recognize its criteria for legitimate disagreement. These motives can coexist in the life of one institution, and the evidence of patronage tells us which books were sought without supplying a transcript of every intention inside the patron's head.

The judge's own path through the divided scholarly world of Yemen makes the story particularly revealing. Lucas's manuscript work describes Jaʿfar as having belonged first to the Muṭarrifī orientation before accepting the authority of Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān, whose conflict with the Muṭarrifiyya was more than a polite disagreement among theologians. The movement possessed networks of teaching and local religious life, with institutions capable of collecting and distributing communal resources, so a court-backed dispute over which scholars counted could carry consequences for the survival of independent communities. The argument about divine justice was being conducted in a world where somebody had to pay for students' food and keep the teachers' rooms open. [ZF-Z03; ZF-Z08]

The most instructive passage appears in Jaʿfar's *al-Taqrīb fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, a work of legal theory that drew upon an earlier discussion by the Hanafi Muʿtazilī al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī. Lucas compares thirty-one topics about consensus and finds one decisive difference between the treatments: Jaʿfar accepts a special authority for the agreement of the Prophet's family where al-Jishumī rejects it. The edited witnesses include Ambrosiana Arabic D 544, copied in 1160, and Vatican Arabic 1165, copied in 1169.

The Zaydi author gives that agreement a privileged status, converting inherited rationalist apparatus into a defense of an authority his school believed belonged to the *ʿitrah*. We have something far more informative than an allegation that a Muʿtazilī had corrupted the Imamate: a traceable act of adaptation, with a particular proposition that changes as the argument enters a new community. [ZF-Z07]

That alteration may be defended sincerely. A believer in the special standing of the family could argue that their agreement provides a kind of evidence unavailable from the ordinary concurrence of jurists, while a critic may ask how the whole family is to be identified and what degree of independent agreement has been demonstrated. I am interested in the test by which a scholar announces that the relevant people agreed, because the information available in medieval books is uneven, and a man's silence can be evidence of several incompatible things. He may never have been asked, his books may have been lost, or his disagreement may have been rejected as unqualified; the compiler who counts only voices admitted through his own criteria may then reproduce a rather peaceful portrait of communal unanimity.

Two propositions in the *Taqrīb* deserve special scrutiny. In Lucas's edition, a person judged culpably misguided through interpretation can cease to count toward consensus, and the disappearance of an entire party from the set of qualifying participants can cause what was previously a recognized disagreement to be treated as resolved. I am summarizing the legal effect of topics 29–30 here; the Arabic, the printed translation, and the qualifications in the surrounding topics belong in the source dossier, since these sentences are important enough to warrant inspection in their original setting. A method that excludes the people who have been convicted of error may be internally coherent when the conviction is well-founded, while the decision about who has the power to convict becomes a matter of great institutional significance. [ZF-Z07]

Now imagine the method in a dispute between a court-backed teacher and an independent local network. The teacher argues that a position is contrary to the community's established law; the local network insists that its reading is part of a long-standing disagreement; and the school representative replies that certain participants have passed beyond the bounds of qualified interpretation. At that point a legal rule about consensus begins doing the work of administration, although the text itself may have been written as an honest attempt to specify which arguments should count as religious evidence. We need individual judgments before claiming that this imagined sequence describes a particular historical case, but the mechanism is visible on the page and it deserves to be tested against the social history of the Muṭarrifiyya. [ZF-Z08]

The *Taqrīb* is more demanding than its exclusionary rules might suggest, for it refuses to make a simple majority into sufficient proof and tells the scholar capable of judging evidence to examine it rather than follow a superior interpreter blindly, which makes the work intellectually more interesting than a modern polemic about

sinister theologians would suggest. The judge who insists on principled scrutiny can also develop a rule through which a disfavored participant loses standing. There is no need to invent a moral contradiction in his private life to observe a potential tension in the institution created by these rules, and an honest reader should give his more demanding provisions as much attention as the ones useful to our suspicion. I would like a jurisprudence in which the former constrain the latter, with objections answered on their merits even when the objection comes from someone inconvenient. [ZF-Z07]

We even possess a manuscript example of the way rationalist books moved into the libraries of powerful Zaydi patrons. Sabine Schmidtke describes Leiden Or. 8409 as a copy produced for the library of ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ḥamza in 1209 and collated with a witness from Iran, furnishing a date, a patron, and the fact of comparison between textual exemplars. A man commissioning books for his library may be preserving learning with considerable care, and it would be irresponsible to use the mere presence of the manuscript in an imamic collection as proof of manipulation. The historical significance lies in the inspectable act: somebody authorized its reproduction, somebody compared its wording, and the resulting object entered a library through which other scholars would receive the work. [ZF-Z09]

I suspect the modern imagination of conspiracy has been damaged by the habit of making every investigator search for an instruction written in unusually incriminating language, as though the only political interventions worth noticing are those in which a ruler writes to his operative and tells him to falsify a verse before lunch. Sometimes the significant intervention is to pay for a particular curriculum and authorize a particular set of experts. That activity is normal in the life of an institution, and deciding whether it amounted to corruption requires a comparison of the resulting teaching with what other witnesses preserve. A court's useful book can be both carefully copied and politically convenient, which is why the evidence has to descend from the grand theory to the words on the page.

Saeed Mohd H. al-Marri has gone further in a 2023 article, arguing that Qāḍī Jaʿfar himself fabricated the received *Musnad Zayd*. The argument deserves attention because a narrowly transmitted book, absent from earlier notices where we might expect to find it, can acquire a distinguished name through relatively late intermediaries. The argument concerns a supposedly narrow transmission route, missing early witnesses, and the possibility that a later compiler placed material beneath the name of Zayd. Those are appropriate matters for manuscript and isnād comparison. Their cumulative force depends on independent early witnesses, the relation between variants, and the dating of the suspect passages; the article's attribution of deliberate fabrication to one named judge therefore remains an argued conclusion to be tested against those records. [ZF-Z04; ZF-MZ; PV-02]

For now the strongest case in the judge's file is the alteration we can observe in the treatment of consensus, because it offers the rare pleasure of knowing what changed

and approximately where the change took place. The archive-building mission is independently documented, as are the institutional disputes that gave a patron reason to support scholars, and the later collection deserves to be treated as a witness whose individual passages can be tested. Our investigation has arrived at the point where an ancestor's name stands above an explicit theory of judicial authority. There is no better way to learn what the Dark Imams allegation could mean than to read that passage slowly and ask how its words compare with the words carried by other traditions.

12 · Making ʿAlī Say It

At the point where a modern reader expects the story of the Imam who died fighting an unjust government to continue with another account of his courage, the received *Musnad Zayd* offers a rather technical discussion of how a judge should proceed when the answer to a case is unavailable in the texts immediately before him. It comes in the section on adjudication, printed on page 292 in the Beirut edition consulted for the working manuscript and identified as report 393 in another numbered edition, and its attribution travels up the familiar family route from Zayd through his forebears to Ali. The content of the report makes it a valuable place to investigate the transformation of inherited religious authority, because the words attributed to the ancestor concern the authority that later jurists themselves should possess. [MZ-M01; MZ-M02]

The procedure moves from the Book of Allah to the teachings of the Messenger and then to the agreement of the righteous, after which the decision-maker is instructed to reason through comparable cases. One clause explicitly speaks of considering and comparing matters, and another grants the Muslim judge a competence in this sphere associated with the Imam. We have a compact architecture of legal judgment, capable of supporting a serious jurisprudence, and the most interesting question is why its author places this architecture beneath Ali's name. A well-reasoned statement may deserve to persuade its readers on intellectual grounds, while the claim that Ali himself spoke it asks them to accept a historical event that requires witnesses. [MZ-M01]

That difference matters because the modern debate about hadith so often becomes a rather tedious competition in which one participant shouts *ṣaḥīḥ* and the other shouts *fabricated*, after which both go home satisfied that the subject has been exhausted. The clauses of this report do independent work. An instruction to consult the judgment of righteous predecessors invites a reader to look at earlier decisions; the more technical claim that the righteous *agreed* introduces a problem about who counted among them, how their agreement was recorded, and whether someone who lived outside the circle should be able to object. The express permission to compare cases grants the judge a method, while the sentence equating his competence with that of the Imam in the relevant matter gives his use of the method a particular authority. [MZ-M01]

A similar judicial progression appears in *Sunan al-Nasāʾī* 5397 under the name of Ibn Masʿūd, another figure with a considerable Kufan afterlife. The reported instruction there begins with scripture, turns to the Prophet's judgments, asks what the righteous decided, and then tells the jurist to exercise his judgment rather than retreat into fear. The surviving versions deserve a clause-by-clause comparison,

because the legal effect of a reference to what earlier righteous people *judged* can differ from a doctrine that their *agreement* itself binds a later community, and the explicit statement about the Imam and the Muslim judge is a separate matter to be explained. Al-Nasāʾī died in 915, which gives us a dated collection witness, while the age of Ibn Masʿūd as an attributed speaker tells us nothing automatically about when the surviving wording entered circulation. [MZ-M03]

The possibility that an older judicial maxim was expanded as it passed through a series of juristic environments is perfectly serious, and so is the possibility that related schools preserved different branches of an earlier teaching. I would like to know whether the extra words can be found in an independently dated witness earlier than the surviving *Musnad* arrangement, and whether writers who knew the four-stage method without citing Ali used the same technical vocabulary. A late copy containing the name of an eighth-century transmitter is evidence that somebody later preserved an attribution, while the original speaker's identity remains a question that textual history must answer. The caliph putting words in the Imam's mouth is an excellent description of a mechanism that could exist; the date and authorship of any particular insertion are precisely what the investigator is obliged to demonstrate.

The same page in the *Musnad* supplies a useful complication. The preceding report rejects judgment by one witness accompanied by an oath, invoking a scriptural understanding of the witness requirement, while al-Shāfiʿī defends that procedure for appropriate property claims in passages of *al-Umm*. If a later Zaydi editor had copied an entire Shāfiʿī legal program into Ali's mouth, he seems to have left an awkward objection staring at the reader from the adjoining paragraph. A selective borrowing of methodology would explain such an uneven profile, as would common legal materials circulating among different schools, so the contradiction improves the investigation by narrowing the question from wholesale doctrinal theft to the history of specific clauses. [MZ-M01; MZ-M04]

A second example reveals how the arrangement of a hadith collection shapes what readers encounter. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* preserves a report in which the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd questions al-Zuhrī about a damaging allegation concerning Ali and ʿĀʾisha, while the scholar rejects the implication and gives testimony that goes against it. The episode documents a courtly setting in which a hostile question was asked and resisted, which is significant evidence in a history of political pressure on the memory of Ali. It does not authorize us to invent a subsequent order to manufacture traditions, especially when the surviving report presents resistance inside a major Sunni collection that somebody might otherwise be tempted to dismiss as an instrument of anti-Alid propaganda. In *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* a related scene has Muʿāwiya questioning Saʿd about his refusal to disparage Abū Turāb, and the latter answers through remembered praises of Ali. The received sources keep the protests as well as the attempts to provoke them. [MZ-M07; MZ-M08]

I find those episodes illuminating because people who understand religion mainly through later sectarian polemics can be surprised by the actual contents of the opposing archive. An Umayyad ruler may wish to hear something discreditable about Ali, while a transmitter whose report survives in a Sunni collection refuses to provide it, and the historian who wants an honest account has to preserve both the power of the questioner and the inconvenient answer. The pressure itself matters. Yet the survival of a refusal matters too, because the campaign to shape religious memory, if there was one, encountered people who had their own reasons to protect it. The archival traces are a good deal more human than the idea of a dynasty successfully rewriting every book by fiat.

Other reports show how the same remembered event can change its force when its surroundings change. In the famous account of Ali burning people described as heretics, a fuller presentation in *Bukhārī* includes Ibn ʿAbbās's criticism of punishment by fire, whereas the compressed *Musnad* presentation permits the reader to encounter the punishment under Ali's name with less of the corrective conversation around it. There are multiple historical and textual questions here, including the identification of the condemned group and the route by which the report passed into different collections, while the contrast in the narrative's effect is visible to anyone reading the two versions. The presence or absence of a remembered objection can make a famous ancestor look like a model of severity or a figure whose decision another Companion was prepared to question. [MZ-M01; MZ-M11]

A more intimate example appears in the report about Barīra during the investigation of the accusation against ʿĀ'isha. A narrative associated with the sīra tradition includes an allegation that Ali beat the servant while questioning her, and a modern legal answer consulted for the manuscript repeats the episode in a way that supplies an excuse for violence during interrogation. The corresponding version in *Bukhārī* 4141 preserves the questioning and favorable testimony without that beating clause. Whether one form represents an addition, an omission, or the survival of independent narrative branches is a problem for the manuscripts and transmitters, while the later use of the severe version is observable: an act attributed to a respected person has become a resource for justifying something a modern interpreter would otherwise be required to defend. [MZ-M09; MZ-M10]

Here the expression *poison in the Imam's mouth* acquires the concrete meaning that the grapes alone could never establish. A story moves from a narrator to a reader, who cites it in a new dispute; the revered name helps the proposed conduct pass as acceptable, and somebody with less power may have to endure the consequence. We should be able to reject coercion in an interrogation on grounds of justice and reliability without first solving every question about the report's ancestry, and we should be equally capable of pursuing the textual ancestry without pretending that discovering a weak chain automatically gives us a complete moral theory. My own commitments require both inquiries, particularly when the person carrying the

burden of the interpretation is a woman or a child whose consent is not being taken seriously.

The received *Musnad* also contains difficult rulings attributed to Ali about an *umm walad*, an enslaved woman who bore her owner's child, and about marriage arrangements made on behalf of minors. Those are passages where a reader may be tempted to move directly from moral revulsion to a confident accusation of forgery, and I think that would be another form of treating our preferred conclusion as if its historical credentials were self-evident. A coercive law requires criticism even when its antiquity is secure; an ancient text can be authentic evidence of an injustice or a dispute, while a later legal application may be unjust even if the relevant ancestor uttered the words exactly as transmitted. The evidence can support several different verdicts, and each clause deserves to be identified before those verdicts are assigned. [MZ-M01; ZH-01]

The evidence now shows two paths by which an inherited report could authorize a later decision. A formal judicial maxim can authorize the decision-maker who cites it, while a narrative of violent or coercive conduct can become the precedent used to excuse a contemporary abuse. Neither case has established that a particular Abbasid caliph dispatched an agent to fabricate Zaydi doctrine. We have discovered something narrower and more useful: the received reports can be compared with other witnesses, and some differences change who is allowed to judge or what conduct a revered name appears to license. The next stage is to inspect the books that carried these reports across generations, because the names printed on their title pages can conceal several different acts of collection, transmission, and rearrangement.

13 · The Library That Had More Than One Author

A religious book can possess a distinguished name and still have a history far more complicated than the title suggests, a problem that becomes obvious as soon as we put the received *Musnad Zayd* beside the dictations associated with Aḥmad ibn ʿĪsā and the compilations later arranged for Zaydi students. We tend to imagine a book as the literary act of one man, followed by a sequence of patient copyists reproducing it, whereas medieval scholarship often involved hearing, authorization, excerpting, rearranging, and selecting material preserved through different chains. All of those activities are capable of transmitting learning, and all of them require us to ask who made which decision before we identify a particular sentence as the authentic position of Zayd, Ali, or a later Imam. [ZC-C02; ZC-C03; ZC-C04]

The *Amālī* associated with Aḥmad ibn ʿĪsā offers the first useful test. The working dossier identifies material transmitted through a route that meets the *Musnad* at Abū Khālid al-Wāsiṭī, together with other reports traveling through different teachers, so the existence of the same saying in two titled works does not automatically establish that two independent people heard it from Zayd. If both routes converge at the point whose reliability is in question, the second title tells us something about the subsequent circulation of the report while providing limited independent reassurance about the earlier link. It is a fairly elementary lesson in source criticism, though one that tends to be abandoned when a controversial hadith appears in enough books to look impressive in a social-media screenshot. [ZC-C02; ZC-C03]

The dossier also identifies later authorization notices and arrangements in collections whose core material may reach earlier transmitters, and these are important precisely because they show that books could continue to acquire a structure after the lives of the people named above them. A notice recording that a work was heard or authorized gives us a real event in its later transmission, while the relation of that event to the contents of the earliest version needs separate investigation. Some modern editions make this more difficult by giving one smooth title and a modern list of reports to a body of material that passed through several recognizably different literary states. A convenient printed page can be the final surface of a long history. [ZC-C03; ZC-C04]

Qāḍī Jaʿfar supplies a particularly useful case because the preface to *Taysīr al-maṭālib*, his rearrangement of the *Amālī* associated with Abū Ṭālib, tells the reader that he organized the material by subject. That is a documented editorial act. A man who changes a book's arrangement can affect which reports his readers encounter together and may make a particular line of reasoning appear clearer or more compelling, although the act of organizing subjects is also something ordinary scholars do when they want students to find useful material. We can test the

consequences by comparing the organization of the earlier collection with the later topical order, looking for changes of wording, movement of objections, and the loss or preservation of the original occasions of dictation. [ZC-C09]

I like this sort of evidence because it gives us a way to discuss the creation of authority without turning every editor into a cartoon villain. A later anthology of the Bible can place a passage beside another text and suggest a doctrinal relation the ancient authors never discussed, while a compiler of Islamic reports can do something similar through chapter titles and the sequence of his selections. The resulting interpretation may be intelligent, honest, or rather convenient to an institution, and the way to tell is to compare what the editor received with what he supplied. There is no need to search for poisoned ink when the ordinary tools of a scholarly workshop are capable of changing how a reader understands an inherited voice.

The source record contains a story about an alleged agent of al-Manṣūr working under the disguise of a perfumer, which deserves attention as a tradition that remembers Abbasid attempts to observe or penetrate Alid circles. Its survival in a Zaydi body of material complicates the image of an archive designed simply to flatter the caliphate, since the book can preserve stories hostile to Abbasid authority even while later jurists use other parts of it to justify their own powers. We have to test the story's attribution before treating it as a verified record of an intelligence operation, and its inclusion is itself evidence of what the later collector wanted his audience to read. The detail offers a glimpse of how the fear of political infiltration belonged to the inherited world of these scholars. [ZC-C11]

Another report preserved in the circle of material associated with *Taysīr* describes a camel lowering itself before the Prophet, which the people take for prostration, only for the reported response to warn against exaggerating his status. I find that a rather striking piece of theology to encounter in a tradition sometimes accused of surrounding the Imams with too many supernatural privileges, although the report's congeniality to my own concerns is no substitute for checking its chain. Its presence illustrates a point worth keeping throughout the book: a library can preserve arguments capable of restraining the very institutions that later inherit it. An investigator who selects only the extravagant claims may end up producing a more uniform and more obedient tradition than the historical texts themselves. [ZC-C12]

The later collection *Uṣūl al-aḥkām*, associated with Imam Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān, puts the disputed judicial maxim to practical use, preserving the saying attributed through Zayd's family to Ali in the context of reports about judgment. The consultation recorded in the dossier locates it at report 2304, and the adjoining material concerns the reward of a judge who strives in reaching a decision, so the surrounding legal architecture is part of its reception. A reader who encounters the maxim in a compilation designed to furnish judicial proofs may give it a different practical significance from someone who encounters it as an isolated saying under a revered ancestor's name. Its presence gives us a witness that the passage had become

useful to a twelfth-century Zaydi legal project; establishing whether the compiler knew the same version as a much earlier author requires additional textual comparison. [ZC-C14]

Other titles extend the sequence. *Al-Jāmiʿal-kāfī* preserves juristic disagreement in forms that can abbreviate written authorities, while later works associated with al-Murshid bi-llāh, al-Amīr al-Ḥusayn, and al-Qāsim ibn Muhammad give us additional layers of dictation, selection, and application. When a modern edition places a report from one book beside a parallel in another and indicates that the chains meet at the same narrator, the reader has been given a useful clue that the two printed titles may belong to a shared route. A later scholar who acknowledges a wording difference has done something worth appreciating, since the historian needs the disagreement in order to understand how the report traveled. [ZC-C07; ZC-C13; ZC-C15; ZC-C16; ZC-C18]

The wider archive also crossed the denominational borders that modern readers sometimes treat as impregnable. Materials associated with figures revered in Imami and Zaydi settings circulated through collections with their own arguments about succession, and a transmitter's place in one family's genealogy does not mean his hearers adopted every theory subsequently developed about that family. I have long suspected that the habit of dividing the first centuries of Islam into perfectly separated Sunni, Zaydi, Ismaili, and Twelver books has hidden more of the interesting conversations than it has clarified. Texts can travel through people who dislike one another's conclusions, and the resulting corpus may retain the traces of arguments that later communities preferred to treat as the private property of their own ancestors. [ZC-C10]

The archive itself shows that the archive has several observable authors in the ordinary sense of people who arranged, selected, and transmitted material. A later rearrangement is an act to document; a shared chain is a feature to test; a disagreement within the same book is a check against reducing an entire library to one party line. Those findings make a particular fabrication hypothesis more demanding, because its defender must locate the suspicious words among these transmission operations and explain why the alleged forger's other work contains evidence that sometimes resists his supposed political purpose. The received *Musnad* can remain under suspicion in particular places while the larger Zaydi archive is acknowledged as a more varied record than any single theory of court-sponsored silence would predict.

A school can begin with jurists arguing conscientiously about difficult questions and end with students treating one selected answer as the ancestral Imam's position, even where the Imam left no sentence on the case. The history of that selection matters most to someone whose life the resulting rule will govern, particularly when the school has forgotten how to let the person challenge it.

14 · The Girl Who Must Accept the Ruling

Some arguments about Islamic legal history possess the wonderful ability to remain abstract until the moment somebody is required to obey them, and it has been my experience that the question of marriage guardianship is especially prone to this transformation. A scholar announces an opinion about the power of a father to contract a marriage on behalf of a young daughter, his colleagues debate the conditions under which the arrangement may be made, and a legal manual explains which later opportunities exist for the child to object. The whole exchange can be conducted in the dignified vocabulary of guardianship and public order. Then the child reaches an age at which the consequences matter to her, and the people around her tell her that the contract is already binding because a respected ancestor said so.

The received *Musnad Zayd* contains material attributed to Ali concerning a father's power to arrange a daughter's marriage and the continuing effect of the contract when she reaches maturity. Another passage addresses liability for intercourse with an enslaved girl below a stated age, and the two texts have been examined separately in the longer working dossier. I mention the clauses because a reader of this book should be able to see what kind of authority is being claimed, rather than hearing only that the collection contains something objectionable. Whether the relevant sentences go back to Ali, Zayd, an intermediate narrator, or a later compiler is a historical problem; whether a living person may be deprived of meaningful consent under the resulting rule is an ethical and legal problem on which the investigator must explain his principles. [ZH-01; ZU-13]

My own starting point is the Qur'an's demand for justice and our accountability for the people placed in our care, which makes the consent of a vulnerable person a matter that deserves particular attention rather than one that can be dissolved through the prestige of an old citation. Premodern jurists took the institutions of slavery, guardianship, and arranged marriage as familiar features of their social world, often debating protections and procedural limits inside those institutions, and some of those debates can help us see where disagreements existed. A restriction upon a guardian's choice may have mattered to a person living under that legal system, while the larger issue of whether the child could refuse the arrangement deserves to be asked directly. The historical comparison gains nothing by pretending that a few conditions amounted to a general freedom the text did not grant.

My sympathies require the same scrutiny of traditions whose theology appeals to me. I have spent enough time criticizing coercive interpretations associated with Sunni and later Imami law that a favorable portrait of the Zaydi inheritance would be very convenient to the author of *Dark Imams*. It would also make the book an exercise in choosing attractive ancestors rather than trying to understand how

religious authority works. A legal permission that rests upon the decision of a guardian can be examined in a Zaydi text with exactly the seriousness we bring to a later jurist defending the prerogatives of the state, and if the earliest attribution remains insecure the statement can still be described as evidence of a position preserved in the received legal tradition. [ZH-01; ZU-13]

Consensus becomes a far less academic affair when a daughter's marriage hangs on the decision. If a teacher is able to exclude the opinion of a dissenting scholar because he has been classed as doctrinally unsound, and the remaining opinions are then said to constitute the position of the Prophet's family, a young person affected by the ruling may have no practical access to the disagreement that once existed. The selection may have happened generations before she was born, through students who preferred one commentary and judges who used it in their courts. The resulting authority can feel ancient and immediate at the same time, which is one reason the history of the selection deserves to be exposed in a form ordinary believers can follow. [ZF-Z07; ZU-03; ZU-04]

Zaydi legal theory also preserved resources capable of unsettling such closure. Some of its jurists defended the continuing duty of the qualified scholar to inspect evidence, while others discussed how different competent interpreters might reach defensible practical judgments before a school determined which position would be taught as its operative law. In later writings the names of jurists from outside the Zaydi lineage, including al-Shāfiʿī and Abū Ḥanīfa, could be admitted as possible authorities for a follower, notwithstanding debates about the preference for adhering consistently to one school. These details are important because the tradition itself recorded more than one way to decide who should be heard. [ZU-06; ZU-10]

The debate over *taṣwīb* and the later selection of a madhhab position is a good example. A school can maintain that a qualified jurist who strives to determine a practical rule deserves a certain kind of recognition even when other jurists disagree, but a court or teacher still needs to announce a rule for the case at hand. The movement from acknowledged plurality to the selected position is an intellectual decision and sometimes an administrative one, and its documentary traces may survive in commentaries explaining the competing opinions. I am interested in those traces because an institution that preserves its disagreements gives the next generation room to reconsider a conclusion, while a tidy quotation attributed to the Imam may conceal the fact that the actual rule is the work of later jurists. [ZU-06]

A later Zaydi critic such as al-Shawkānī brings another complication, since the call to return directly to the Qur'an and Sunnah could become a challenge to inherited madhhab law while operating within political circumstances that gave a ruler his own reasons to welcome reform. I enjoy a reformer who insists upon examining the evidence, being inclined to the practice myself, but the historical usefulness of a slogan about independent reasoning must always be investigated in the circumstances of the people who employed it. An institution may oppose one form of excessive

juristic authority while helping its patron acquire another. The same book about the danger of speaking through the Imams ought to be suspicious of anyone who claims to have solved the whole problem through a new monopoly on what the early community truly meant. [ZU-15]

The hard case is the ordinary believer who approaches a scholar because she expects religion to protect her, only to encounter an attributed statement being used to make her situation harder. The reader of the legal sources must establish what the report says, the jurist's actual reasoning, and whether other members of the same school recorded a less coercive position, because those are the things we can inspect and criticize without assigning invented motives to men long dead. The woman or child subject to the ruling has a moral claim upon our attention even when we lack the documentary evidence to identify exactly who first introduced the disputed words. It is the contemporary application, with its present agents and present consequences, that makes our historical questions urgent.

If there is a theme that has followed us from the supposed testament of Abū Hāshim, it is the ability of a name to continue acting after the person who bore it has disappeared. The name can authorize a dynasty, provide a lineage for a philosophical method, validate a judicial maxim, and eventually become the speaker above a rule that the original man may never have contemplated. Some of these inheritances were probably sincere, others remain contested, and individual acts of deliberate fabrication are part of what the source criticism is intended to detect. At each stage there is somebody alive who decides which words will count, and for that decision he bears a responsibility that cannot be transferred to the dead by printing a venerable name at the top of the page.

The next part of the book follows a different Alid inheritance, one carried through the missionary networks of the Ismailis into a state that finally possessed the means to govern in the name of its own living Imam. We have looked closely at what happens when the Imam is absent or remembered through books; a caliph who can claim to *be* the Imam presents a fresh set of problems, and the Fatimid experiment will let us ask what sacred authority becomes when it is able to build institutions openly in its own name.

PART III · THE IMAM COMES OUT OF HIDING

15 · The Invitation That Arrived Before the Imam

The Zaydī books have left us with a rather uncomfortable picture of religious inheritance, in which the person whose name guarantees a ruling may have been dead for centuries by the time someone uses it, while the scholar who brings the ruling to court has plenty of reasons to believe that he is doing a public service. Let us now travel west, back to the end of the ninth century, and consider a different arrangement, one in which the Imam is supposed to be living somewhere, the people who want to obey him have rarely seen his face, and the men carrying his invitation are building an organization capable of overthrowing governments. The Fatimid story is exciting enough without our adding a secret master plan, although it will eventually supply a few very useful lessons about the difference between serving an Imam and becoming the man who decides what the Imam intended.

The Ismaili *dáwa* was an invitation into a particular account of succession, religious understanding, and political obligation, carried through teachers whose communities sometimes possessed only a partial explanation of the authority they represented. Yemen was important to the missionary networks that reached toward the Maghrib, and Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī's work among the Kutāma from the 890s made the western movement a political force long before its claimant took up residence in a royal city. The Kutāma contributed fighters, local knowledge, protection, and decisions of their own. When a victorious dynasty writes its history, it is tempting to give the entire adventure to the wise man who arrived with the message, yet that gives the people who took the risks about as much agency as the scenery through which the missionary travelled. We need them in the narrative because the question of what they understood themselves to be supporting becomes urgent when the invitation is converted into an institution of command. [101; 104]

Abū ʿAbd Allāh's mission did eventually bring about the defeat of the Aghlabids, with Raqqāda falling in March 909, although the conventional date of the new Fatimid state hides several stages of accession. The missionary took power before the concealed leader became its public sovereign; ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī was acclaimed in Sijilmāsa later that year and made his entrance into the old Aghlabid center in January 910. An interesting moment occurs between those events, as men who had accepted the orders of a missionary because he spoke for someone else were asked to recognize the arrival of that someone else, whose claim now came with soldiers and a treasury. The intermediary who has been indispensable to the revolution must discover how much of his authority was his own. It is easy enough to describe the handover once the dynasty has survived, and considerably harder to reconstruct what each participant thought had been promised before the victory. [101; 104]

The most revealing fracture had already happened in 899, far away from the triumphal procession. The central leadership at Salamiyya issued teachings associated with ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī's claim to the Imamate, while Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ and

ʿAbdān, important figures in the Iraqi mission, resisted an understanding that departed from the expectation of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl. The circumstances were sufficiently dangerous for concealment to have been a serious practical concern, and a sympathetic account can say that successive leaders had protected the true line until its public recognition became possible. The difficulty for the dissenter is that his earlier loyalty was organized around an explanation he now finds revised. He needs some means of telling the difference between a secret kept for the safety of a persecuted family and a new entitlement announced by the people who have gained control of the correspondence. This was a disagreement inside the early Ismaili movement, with the dissident Qarmaṭī traditions and the eventual Fatimid community taking different directions. [I01; I02]

The identifiable change interests me more than a story about mysterious strangers deceiving everyone for generations, because it gives us an identifiable change, people who objected to it, and surviving traditions that explain why the change was necessary. The same distinction troubled the Abbasid testament at the beginning of this book: where a document allegedly transfers the right to govern in the name of the Prophet's family, the person presenting it must give the hearer a reason to recognize the transfer. Sometimes that reason is the authenticity of a prior appointment, while sometimes the very success of the organization makes a later explanation feel irresistible. Imagine being asked to give up your expectation about the awaited Imam by somebody who has just demonstrated a remarkable ability to recruit allies, organize a campaign, and defeat an established state. He may be an admirable organizer. I would still like to inspect the earlier instructions before agreeing that his military success proved the new genealogy.

Fortunately, we can move beyond the modern summaries of an intrigue, since the early Fatimid archive contains several kinds of witness. Writings attributed to Abū ʿAbd Allāh and his brother Abū'l-ʿAbbās set out arguments for the Imamate in the language of scripture and ancestral designation, and the *Kitāb al-Munāẓarāt* associated with Ibn al-Haytham offers the perspective of a scholar who encountered the missionaries around the revolution. Later, al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān wrote the *Iftitāḥ al-daʿwa*, a history composed with access to Fatimid materials of which many no longer survive. Their different positions matter to the reading: a text advocating recognition asks the audience to join a cause, a participant's recollection organizes his experience of that cause, and a retrospective court history can place both in a story whose ending is already known. One of the pleasures of having several genres is that a triumph recounted by the dynasty can sometimes be made less inevitable by reading what people argued about before anybody knew whether it would succeed. [I02; I03; I04]

The propaganda war over Fatimid ancestry should be subjected to the same standard. Hostile stories alleging a hidden, non-Alid origin for the dynasty were politically useful to its enemies, and Farhad Daftary has shown how the Qaddāḥid

genealogy was mobilized against the Fatimids. A writer investigating religious manipulation has an obvious temptation to adopt whichever account exposes the opponent as an impostor; the trouble is that a forged counter-genealogy would be another instance of the very method we have undertaken to investigate. A ruler descended from Fāṭima may still be answerable for his conduct, and an outsider can make a sound criticism of his law without first persuading us that his grandfather had a different name. [101]

When the Imam finally appears in public, then, we have reached the beginning of the interesting problem. The mission had been capable of teaching, gathering money, and moving men while the ultimate authority remained inaccessible; now the man at the top could answer in his own name, while most of the practical decisions were still made by intermediaries who interpreted what he had said. The Fatimid solution to one crisis of succession created a rather extraordinary setting for testing claims of guidance, because a living Imam would be asked to govern people who might never have accepted his explanation of how the invitation began. From here the documentary trail leads into a legal collection written by a man whose most enduring contribution was to tell the government what the Prophet's household had authorized it to do.

16 · The Caliph Acquires a Legal Department

A caliph with an army can seize a province, but governing it through a claim to the Imamate requires a more durable form of obedience, since an officer must be told which judgments he may deliver and the people under his authority need some account of why those judgments are the law. Al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, who died in 974 after serving the early Fatimid rulers, helped provide that account in *Daʿāʾim al-Islām*, the collection of law that acquired official standing under al-Muʿizz. I should be delighted if every political movement that took power were required to produce a substantial book of principles before its officials began issuing punishments, provided somebody also made it possible to challenge the book. In al-Nuʿmān's case the opportunity is especially valuable because he was gathering teachings attributed to the Prophet and the household for a state that considered itself governed by their living heir. [I06; I09; N23]

The collection contains an instruction on choosing officials that ought to embarrass a great many people who have considered themselves rulers by right of divine appointment. The appointing authority is told to examine a candidate's earlier conduct and to continue investigating the officer's behavior after he has been given a position, with attention to the way he treats people who come before him and the damage his arrogance may cause. An appointment is plainly incapable of supplying omniscience about the man appointed, and the authority who selected him has to keep learning from the people who deal with him. I admire this instruction, especially because it leaves a practical standard by which a believer could judge the Fatimid administration itself. An officer who invokes the Imam's confidence as sufficient answer to a complaint would seem to be forgetting a rather useful passage in the Imam's own legal tradition. [I06]

That same corpus attacks the inconsistencies of jurists who change opinions and judges whose incompatible rulings receive approval from a higher authority, a complaint that acquires considerable force when the disagreement concerns an inheritance or a criminal penalty. Al-Nuʿmān's answer turns toward the certainty of authorized instruction through the Imams, and here we encounter a serious disagreement about how human beings come to know the law. I can understand the attraction of a living guide who can resolve an argument when learned men have reached opposite conclusions on the same evidence, yet the existence of that guide leaves open the question of whether the sentence presented in court has come from him, whether the court understood it correctly, and what has happened to the person who contests the officer's account. The promise of a better source of knowledge is an invitation to take transmission very seriously. [I08; I09]

In another familiar story Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq confronts Abū Ḥanīfa over legal analogy by invoking Iblīs, who compared fire and clay as though the raw materials of creation could decide which command deserved obedience. This is a fine rhetorical blow against an inference whose premise is false, although I struggle to believe that a person could understand any legal sentence without at some point reasoning about the relation between one case and another. The question concerns the conditions under which an analogy is appropriate and which evidence makes a comparison relevant. The story's appearance in the Fatimid collection establishes a received argument against a rival juristic method, while the history of the actual conversation requires witnesses older than the compilation. Its polemical utility is easy to see when a community wishes to identify its approved source of instruction. [107]

The same book gives us a counterexample that matters far more to the person being judged than the professional disagreement of the jurists. A narrative attributes to ʿAlī a calculation from Qur'anic passages concerning pregnancy and nursing, through which a woman who gave birth after six months is spared a punitive inference. The ancestor's name gives the story its familiar attraction, but its moral force comes from watching an interpreter use the words of the Qur'an to interrupt a punishment based on an inadequate understanding of the facts. Whether the ancient encounter happened in precisely the form preserved is a separate historical question. I would have wanted the calculation heard even if the person offering it had been an obscure midwife rather than the most celebrated son-in-law of the Prophet. [110]

Other rules safeguard protection granted to an outsider by an ordinary Muslim and recognize that words extracted through compulsion cannot necessarily bear the same consequences as a free undertaking, though the familiar legal restrictions of slavery and status remain present around those protections. There is enough good material in *Dāʾim* that a simple denunciation of a court library would be both unfair and counterproductive. I want to know how a body of teaching that could restrain an officer and honor a pledge also decided when an owner's demands prevailed over an enslaved person's liberty, and we will return to its marriage and manumission passages after the philosophical and political history has given us a sense of the institution that preserved them. [111; 112]

The Fatimid court also supplies a much harder example of what happens when the person claiming the highest spiritual office exercises unmistakably temporal power. Under al-Ḥākim, who ruled from 996 to 1021, decrees and enforcement reached into public religious life with consequences that historians can trace, including the destruction ordered against the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 1009 and discriminatory measures directed against Christians and Jews. Jennifer Pruitt's work on Fatimid Jerusalem shows how the later dynasty confronted the damage and politics of rebuilding, while the near-contemporary Christian historian Yaḥyā of Antioch preserves a perspective in which the effects of orders become visible through petitioners and restrictions on ordinary life. The motives

attributed to the caliph differ across witnesses, and a chronicle is capable of exaggeration; the destruction of the church is a historical act for which an appeal to spiritual insight can scarcely substitute for an account of justice. [IS19-08; IS19-09]

It would be rather convenient for this book if every Fatimid ruler had been a tyrant and every official a cynic, since the moral argument could then proceed without anybody having to learn from an opponent. The historical record is more demanding. The same dynasty produced scholarly work and forms of governance whose practical instructions deserve attention, while policies under particular rulers injured people whom the ruler's claim to divine guidance ought to have made especially careful to protect. A theory of continuing revelation can explain why the Imam has authority to respond to a changing world; it leaves the question of which response is just, whose testimony reaches him, and whether his servants carry out the instruction that was given. When an official's cruelty becomes an offense against the appointment entrusted to him, even an institution that reveres the appointing Imam has reasons to hear the victim.

The strange thing is how easily an inquiry about perfect guidance can become an inquiry about the paperwork of an imperfect bureaucracy, with case records and complaints suddenly more important than a magnificent theological defense written for court consumption. This is where the image of poisoned grapes begins to acquire another use. A sovereign may honor the Prophet's family with ceremonies, learned books, and an impressive doctrine of succession, while a subordinate converts that reverence into a decision against someone whose name never appears in the official history. We should learn how the institution understood the soul before deciding that the entire philosophical enterprise was nothing but a cover for that subordinate, because some of the finest Ismaili thinking is concerned precisely with how knowledge changes the conduct of the person who acquires it.

17 · The Soul and the Schoolmaster

An analogy in Nāṣir-i Khusraw's writing has stayed with me: an apple must draw nourishment through the tree before it develops the sweetness we enjoy. His concern is with the human soul, which may be told the truth without yet having acquired the habits that allow it to understand and live according to it. This is a splendid answer to a problem in religion that has bothered me for years: someone can memorize a book of divine commands, recite the most beautiful passages of the Qurʾan, and remain a menace to the people who depend on him, because he has learned what to say without developing the disposition to notice what he is doing. Nāṣir's account of spiritual assistance through knowledge and practice gives that distinction a philosophical life. [I18]

Nāṣir was a Persian writer who traveled to the Fatimid world and became one of the great voices of Ismaili thought, and it is worth allowing him some independence from the court's legal machinery before we make his metaphysics responsible for the failings of every governor in Egypt. In his account, the Universal Intellect is the first originated principle through which the intelligible order becomes possible, and Universal Soul participates in the development of the world and in the powers of human beings who learn to understand it. The relation is expressed through arguments about dependence, causation, knowledge, and the soul's changing capacities, rather than through the spatial picture of a giant ghost from which little human fragments have been broken off. He is doing philosophy, which means that his propositions ought to be examined for the arguments that support them, including the points where his cosmology depends on an inherited account of the heavens that modern astronomy has given us reason to revise. [I15; I16; I17]

One advantage of reading the Persian is that the imagery refuses to let us turn the whole system into an organizational chart. A soul becomes capable of doing things that were previously beyond it; knowledge alters the knower, while practice supplies the conditions in which knowledge can become stable. I have always found this more persuasive than the notion that enlightenment happens when somebody gives you the password to a secret room, after which your newly acquired membership exempts you from the ordinary responsibilities of being a decent human being. The apple cannot be made ripe by a decree declaring that the harvest has arrived. A student may be told about compassion and then discover, through sustained action, how difficult it is to resist an opportunity to humiliate somebody who has made a mistake. [I18; I22]

Of course Nāṣir's world has teachers, ranks, and a living line of authorized guidance, and this is where the argument that began with the apple acquires political significance. If the capacity to recognize truth develops through education, who

decides that a person has been educated sufficiently to understand an objection to the teacher? A beginner's confusion may be genuine, while a teacher who explains every criticism as the symptom of an immature soul can acquire something close to an unlimited exemption from correction. It would be a remarkable school in which the pupil is encouraged to develop his reason, only to be told that using it to examine the headmaster's claims is proof that his lessons have failed. We need to ask what competence the instruction is supposed to produce, and whether its success can be recognized without first agreeing with every conclusion the institution desires. [I19; I21]

In *Wajh-i dīn*, an interpretation of the waiting period associated with the transfer of an enslaved woman becomes a lesson about what happens when a learner moves between instructors. The educational point has some merit: people carry earlier ideas into new lessons, and a teacher who fails to discover those ideas may simply produce a confused student who knows how to repeat incompatible answers. But the legal material used to form the allegory concerns ownership of human beings, and its imagery can turn the student into the passive object of a transfer between authorities. The moral problem is subtler than a claim that every male teacher thinks all female students are property, which the metaphor does not establish. Its trouble is that a relation of command and dependence inherited from an unequal legal institution can begin to look like the natural condition of receiving knowledge. [I20]

Another passage in Nāṣir's work sets an even sharper test. While arguing with religious opponents, he gives particular weight to what a person has conceded and states that the words of somebody who affirms no Imam should receive no acceptance. We can understand the dialectical maneuver, since a critic who agrees to a premise can reasonably be asked to follow its implications, yet the broader exclusion would allow an institution to disregard a sound observation because the person making it rejects the institution's theory of succession. An astronomer who has identified an error in the calendar does not become unable to count the days because he recognizes a different Imam, and the critic who discovers a variant reading in a manuscript deserves an answer on the merits of the manuscript. If religious education makes people more capable of discovering truth, it should make them better at hearing an inconvenient witness. [I21]

It would be equally careless to imagine that every Ismaili philosopher assigned the same cosmic roles to every spiritual principle. Al-Sijistānī's writings give Soul an important position between intelligible and natural orders, while al-Kirmānī constructed a different, more elaborate architecture of intellects and opposed the tendency to treat al-Ḥākim as a divine being. His intervention belongs to the history of a community capable of arguing within itself over how far exalted language could be applied to its ruler. In later Tayyibi circles parts of this intellectual inheritance acquired their own life, so a theory that blames one timeless Ismaili doctrine for every

subsequent dispute would erase the very variations that make the surviving texts useful. [I23]

I sometimes wonder whether the philosophical tradition offers the strongest possible critique of the corruptions we are investigating. If an Imam and his representatives are supposed to guide souls toward the recognition of justice, a jurist who uses an inherited attribution to make another person helpless has given us a very poor example of an enlightened soul, however elegant his explanation of emanation may be. The defender may reply that the jurist has misunderstood a teaching whose higher sense is humane, and that response deserves inspection in the text instead of a dismissive laugh. We must then ask how the living institution corrects the misunderstanding and what the injured person can do while the scholars are debating the matter. Spiritual education becomes morally consequential when the knowledge it promises can be seen in the treatment of people whom its authorities possess the power to injure.

The prospect of universal knowledge carries a temptation that will return in the Druze account of Intellect and Soul. A person whose insight is supposed to encompass the whole world may begin to look like a person entitled to govern the whole world. The inference is far from automatic, and Nāṣir's own emphasis on the dependence of originated principles gives us a reason to resist it: knowing more about someone increases the responsibility for the use of that knowledge, while the scope of another person's consent remains a separate question. The cleverest court philosopher cannot give the caliph permission to make a bad judgment true simply by assigning the caliph an impressive place in the architecture of the heavens.

18 · The Will, the Coin, and the Queen

By the eleventh century the Fatimid caliphate had given Ismailism a capital, a body of law, a flourishing scholarly literature, and a public dynasty in which the Imam's succession ought, in theory, to have been easier to determine than it had been when the movement operated through concealed teachers. Then al-Mustanṣir died in 1094, and the question of whom the living Imam had designated became a dispute over the government itself. The rivalry between Nizār and al-Mustaʿlī divided the movement, with the Egyptian court supporting the latter while Persian Ismailis under Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ recognized Nizār's claim. An institution that had spent two centuries explaining how a continuous Imam could settle religious disagreement found itself explaining why men who accepted its general doctrine had reached incompatible conclusions about the person occupying its highest office. [J01; J02]

A community may trust God to guide it through the Imam and still have to establish that a particular prince received the designation, or *naṣṣ*, by which the office passes to the next generation. The designation is a claim about something a person said or did at a certain time, sometimes before witnesses whose memories or loyalties may later be contested. A theology can make the appointment morally and religiously decisive; it cannot remove the need to discover whether the reported act took place. We have met this problem before in the testament of Abū Hāshim, whose reported transfer to the Abbasids was asked to settle a political inheritance that his followers could no longer ask him to explain. In the Fatimid succession the archive is richer, although the richer archive also contains more skilled people with an interest in arranging the evidence. [J01]

Al-Āmir's *al-Hidāya al-Āmiriyya*, a defense of the Mustaʿli line produced after the earlier dispute, offers an unusually fine example of the work a title can be made to perform. In the discussion analyzed by S. M. Stern, a distinction is drawn between the heir of the believers and heirs described in the language of the Muslims, assigning one expression a religious precision that favors the officially recognized successor. The argument may preserve a genuine earlier convention, but Stern points out a lack of independent evidence for the decisive wording, which is an invitation to investigate how the title functioned before everybody knew whom it was meant to support. A chancery term can carry a remarkable quantity of theology when the person holding it has already gained possession of the chancery. [J01]

The same study contains a smaller embarrassment that ought to be preserved in the narrative because it teaches an especially valuable lesson about historical confidence. A coin with the name Nizār was taken as evidence relevant to the succession, until the accompanying title made it clear that the person in question was the earlier caliph al-ʿAzīz, whose personal name was also Nizār. The metal is real and

the inscription is real, while the identification of the man was wrong. We should be grateful whenever the record allows an error to be corrected this cleanly, because it demonstrates how an impressive object can become evidence for the wrong proposition if the historian has stopped reading at the name that interests him. [J01]

Then comes the division after al-Āmir's death in 1130, a much stranger test of succession because one important claimant was a child whose fate became obscure and another was an adult who eventually occupied the Egyptian caliphal office. The claims of al-Ṭayyib and al-Ḥāfiẓ supported different institutional futures, with the Cairo establishment recognizing the latter while the Tayyibi mission came to maintain an inheritance through a concealed line. The explanation of each side must be allowed to state its own case. A claim of prior designation for al-Ḥāfiẓ deserves investigation even though the line of succession passed through a collateral branch, and a preserved notice of al-Ṭayyib's birth establishes something important about the child without automatically proving every later assertion about his concealed descendants. [J02; J03]

Sayyida Arwā of Yemen makes this history far more interesting than a quarrel among male claimants in Cairo. She had political standing within the Ṣulayḥid world and sustained the position of al-Ṭayyib after al-Āmir's death, helping to establish the arrangements under which a *dāʿī muṭlaq* would lead the community while its Imam remained concealed. The historical sources place Dhuʾayb ibn Mūsā al-Wādiʿī at the beginning of this office, with Arwā's decision lending it the authority of an established leader whose court was outside Cairo's immediate control. The word *muṭlaq* deserves to be read within the actual history of the office rather than translated into a general right to command every aspect of somebody's life. It is nevertheless an extraordinary development: a woman acting in an established political and religious role helped preserve a succession rejected by the most conspicuous public court in the movement's world. [J03]

I would like readers who have been patiently told that Islamic history is mainly a sequence of men instructing women in the limits of their judgment to spend some time with Arwā. Her decisions affected which living community would preserve a line of the Imamate, and she exercised those responsibilities amid the real risks of dynastic politics. Whether one agrees with the line she defended, her agency belongs in the record, which makes a rather uncomfortable companion to legal passages that permit a father to bind his young daughter's future without giving that daughter an equivalent later choice. The queen and the daughter are separated by circumstances and by centuries of arguments, but they are both human beings whose capacity to judge ought to matter when an institution announces what is good for them.

The history also defeats the comforting assumption that whichever family holds the capital must possess the complete religious inheritance. Distance creates an opportunity for contradictory instructions and competing stories; in this case it also allowed a Yemeni institution to survive when the Fatimid state disappeared in 1171.

To speak of the survival of Ismailism after the caliphate is therefore to speak of communities that preserved different offices, different methods of teaching, and distinct answers to the question of who was entitled to represent a living Imam. The Abbasid caliph whose name was again proclaimed in Cairo after the Fatimid overthrow did not thereby inherit all the arguments and relationships that the Fatimid da'wa had spent centuries forming. [J02; J03]

The succession problem becomes almost embarrassingly practical at this point. If the Imam is hidden, the believer who wants to follow him must eventually consult somebody who claims to be able to communicate his purposes; if there are rival claimants, the believer must also learn which channel to trust. Letters, testimony, seals, commemorations, coins, and public buildings can preserve evidence of what an institution announced, while their survival does not prove that every private designation happened as the institution later described it. An honest account can recognize the sincerity and learning of several communities and still ask which documentary evidence establishes each disputed inheritance. The next time a man assures us that the Imam has spoken, we should have some experience asking who handed him the message.

19 · Alamut, Where the Message Arrived by Dagger

The name Alamut has enjoyed a splendid afterlife among people who prefer their medieval history with concealed masters, impregnable mountain fortresses, and a convenient supply of hashish. The surviving history needs less theatrical assistance than the legend gives it, since Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ established himself at the fortress in 1090 and built a movement able to resist powerful Saljuq adversaries from scattered strongholds. His supporters would later recognize the claim of Nizār after the Fatimid succession dispute, but for much of the early Alamut period the Imam was beyond the ordinary reach of his people, leaving leaders who represented his authority to decide what ought to be done. This is the arrangement that should interest anyone trying to understand how an institution can acquire tremendous practical power in the name of a principal whom the people affected by its decisions cannot consult. [IS19-11; IS19-12]

Ḥasan's teaching placed great weight upon the need for an authorized instructor, usually discussed under *taʿlīm*, and the argument is more serious than an invitation to surrender one's intellect at the fortress gate. Scholars can interpret the same Qur'anic passage differently, while the person who needs a legal answer may have little reason to believe that another century of argument will produce agreement. The claim that guidance requires an authoritative teacher deserves engagement with the actual doctrine, including the Ismaili account of the Imam as a living interpreter whose relation to revelation is more intimate than the expertise of an ordinary jurist. I understand the attraction, though the difficulty arises exactly where the argument is at its strongest: if the teacher's authority is what makes his instruction final, how do the people receiving an order know that this teacher has the appointment he claims, or that the words he speaks are those of the hidden Imam? [IS19-02; IS19-11]

The political repertoire of the Nizari state included targeted killing, carried out by agents later remembered as *fidāʾīs*, and the reputation of these operations quickly became powerful enough to attract stories about killings for which the movement's responsibility remains uncertain. The murder of the Saljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk in 1092 entered this atmosphere of accusation, with the circumstances of the killing and the question of who authorized it receiving different explanations. An investigator needs to distinguish the person who committed a killing from the officer who may have ordered it and the Imam whose authority the officer might have invoked. The distinctions make a difference to the moral judgment even if the target had been an opponent of the Nizari movement, since a theory of legitimate defense still needs to address the actual danger, the evidence for it, and the right of the authority to impose the particular sentence. [IS19-12; IS19-13]

I find the Alamut material especially revealing when a person is punished by his own community, rather than when a heroic defender strikes an external enemy. The later Persian chronicle tradition reports that Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ ordered the deaths of two sons, one over an alleged murder and another over an accusation concerning wine. The first story becomes particularly disturbing in versions that later attach responsibility for the killing to somebody else, which raises the possibility of an irreversible punishment imposed on a mistaken attribution. The reports survive through historians with overlapping access to earlier, partly lost Nizari materials, so three medieval books may preserve one historical source rather than provide three independent confirmations. Their shared story is worth reading closely as a record of how severity was remembered, while the original judicial facts remain less securely recoverable. [IS21-A08; IS21-A09]

A different text examined by Shiraz Hajiani, a Persian *Ḥikāyat* that may have been composed before the declaration of the Resurrection in 1164, gives the deaths an altogether different place in the story. In its account Ḥasan's sons become four, and the crucial instructions come from the concealed Imam. The author is interested in the legitimacy of the leadership at Alamut and in the possibility that the hidden line had been mishandled by its supposed representatives. This is a much better historical surprise than another round of the popular hashish legend, because the traditions disagree on the number of sons and on the location of responsibility for the deaths, while each makes obedience to the rightful authority the reason the story matters. Hajiani's reconstruction of the work's date and manuscript setting is itself part of the evidence to examine. The disagreement is historical data, which means we ought to keep it visible instead of selecting whichever version makes the strongest villain. [IS21-A11]

A concealed Imam may possess legitimate authority within the community's theology, yet an instruction delivered in his name can be mistaken, altered, or invented by the very person who benefits from it. That is the possibility this book has been pursuing since the Abbasid testament, and Alamut gives it an unusually severe application because the institution sometimes claimed a right to kill. A representative who tells a family that the Imam has ordered the execution of their son is making a claim whose consequences cannot be withdrawn when a later historian discovers a contradictory witness. What should count as evidence of the appointment, how may the family challenge the facts, and does the religious standing of the representative change the ordinary moral burden of proof? If the correct answer depends entirely on the representative's own assurance that he has heard the command, the highest office may be serving as protection for an authority exercised much lower down.

Then, in August 1164, the fourth lord of Alamut, Ḥasan II, proclaimed the *qiyāma*, an event remembered as the spiritual Resurrection and eventually bound to his recognition as Imam. Readers sometimes confuse him with Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, who had died in 1124, and that forty-year gap is rather important when attempting to

assign responsibility for the doctrines and decisions involved. The proclamation changed the community's account of sacred time, with the unveiled truth associated with the Imam becoming present to those who recognized him. A hostile chronicler could describe the change as the abolition of religious law, while an Ismaili account would explain the transition from the outward discipline of the law to the reality toward which it had pointed. The event is well established; the precise scope of each command delivered to adherents has to be read from the witnesses through which it has come down. [IS19-16; IS19-17]

There is something intellectually alluring in a community inviting its members to understand the inward meaning of ritual rather than suppose that compliance with an outward form settles the state of the soul, and Nāṣir-i Khusraw's apple makes the idea easier to appreciate. It is also the sort of claim that could be ruinous if somebody takes his supposed spiritual advancement as permission to injure others. The strongest Nizari account places the change under the guidance of the living Imam, allowing religious practice to respond to the spiritual condition of the age. The historian's inquiry concerns who issued the instruction, what its audience understood by it, and whether the people enforcing it preserved its limits. Those who celebrated the Resurrection may have had good reasons to distrust hostile reports of universal libertinism, and the sources should be made to tell us what was done rather than what an enemy assumed a mystical doctrine must permit.

The next reversal is almost too good for a tidy theory of medieval sects. In 1210 Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥasan came to power at Alamut and directed a return to Sunnī legal observance, in the context of renewed relations with the wider political world. The doctrine of a living guide has a coherent explanation for change of this kind, since the Imam can determine which form of instruction is appropriate, though a community that has recently been told it has entered the Resurrection may understandably wish to know how its previous instructions relate to the new ones. I see little reason to imagine that followers were incapable of sincere commitment in both periods. I do want evidence for the new command and its limits, because an institution can always invent an immaculate theological account of a decision after the officer who made it has already enforced the change. [IS19-17; IS19-20]

The Mongol conquest of 1256 destroyed the Nizari state and damaged the textual inheritance through which much of Alamut's history might have been checked, leaving hostile historians to preserve records alongside their own interpretations. Their testimony matters, especially where it contains material from libraries their armies destroyed, although a later reconstruction of a killing cannot supply an unexamined order from an Imam whose followers had little opportunity to answer the accusation. [IS19-12; IS21-A08; IS21-A11]

20 · The Daughter in the Fatimid Book

After the dynastic histories and the philosophers, I owe the reader a return visit to al-Nuʿmān, whose legal collection brings us much closer to the people who had to live under these rules. The *Dāʾim* can preserve a humane principle about investigating officials and another about respecting commitments made to people who depend on the state, while its neighboring provisions sometimes grant a father or a slaveholder powers that the person subject to them may have little opportunity to contest. If our inquiry about the corruption of Shia hadith is to accomplish more than rearrange a few succession charts, we have to ask what the received legal words say, how they reached the jurist, and whether the affected person was given a meaningful place in the judgment.

Volume II, page 218 of Asaf A. A. Fyzee's edition gives us an uncomfortable sequence. Reports 809 and 810 demand consultation and attribute to ʿAlī the instruction that a father must hear his daughter's refusal. Immediately afterward, report 811, also attributed to ʿAlī, makes marriages arranged by fathers for minor children binding even when those children grow up. A jurist can distinguish consultation with an adult from guardianship over a minor, and classical Muslim schools developed a considerable literature about the duties and limits of guardians, so the apparent tension deserves to be read inside its legal setting. The child in question, however, may eventually become an adult who understands the arrangement perfectly well and wishes to reject it. A right recognized in one passage seems a poor comfort if another passage has already allowed somebody to extinguish that right before she had the capacity to exercise it. [IS20-A01; IS21-A02]

It matters that this is a rule about the continuing force of a marriage contract. The passage does not establish that a particular Fatimid family arranged a marriage in this way, and it does not by itself describe a sexual act or settle the conditions of consummation, which require their own textual and historical evidence. My objection concerns the claim that another person's earlier authorization can bind a capable adult to an intimate relationship without giving the adult a corresponding choice. This is an argument about legal authority that I have also made against received Sunni, Imami, and Zaydi materials, because the reverence due to ʿAlī supplies no reason to exempt a later speaker using his name from scrutiny. We can retain the humane instruction to consult while asking what transmission and interpretation made the exception legally decisive. [IS20-A01]

The slavery passages expose a comparable movement from a Qur'anic sentence into a legal power exercised by somebody else. Qur'an 24:33 addresses owners who are asked by enslaved people to enter a *mukātaba*, a contract providing a path toward freedom where the relevant goodness or fitness is found. In *Dāʾim* II:309, report

1166 attributes to ʿAlī an interpretation that places the command among instructions whose form does not make performance legally obligatory, allowing the owner to enter the agreement or decline. The juristic question concerns the force of an imperative, a familiar dispute across classical schools. The human question is why the man asking to escape bondage should have his path to liberty decided exclusively by the person who profits from keeping him there. [IS20-A07; IS21-A04; PV-04]

Nearby passages show that the compilation can encourage generosity toward applicants for manumission and discuss the means by which a contract might be made possible, and we should preserve those cases because the existence of an owner's power to refuse does not describe every choice an owner actually made. Other rules allow an owner to separate enslaved spouses under conditions the jurists attempt to distinguish, sometimes using Qur'an 16:75, a passage describing the powerlessness of an owned servant, as part of their legal reasoning. The later Imami jurist al-Ṭūsī interpreted related reports with qualifications that affected which owner could sever which marriage, an important difference to anybody who depended on the continued existence of that household. One can admire the care with which a jurist identifies the boundary between two categories of case and still question the inherited premise that another person's ownership should confer the right to break a marriage. [IS20-A05; IS21-A06; IS21-A07]

Fyzee's manuscript evidence reveals how much work lies between an ancient Imam and the sentence on our page. Fyzee's introduction to volume II identifies six manuscript copies, the oldest listed witness dated 865 AH, or 1461, about five centuries after al-Nuʿmān's death, and the editor's collation has given modern readers a substantially better object of inquiry than an unattributed quotation online. Yet even a carefully edited manuscript of al-Nuʿmān's work does not function as a recording made while ʿAlī was speaking. The main text, later marginal glosses, editorial notes, and still later Twelver reuse of Fatimid material are different kinds of witness, and a nineteenth-century compiler who quotes the *Dáāʾim* supplies valuable evidence of reception while failing to become an independent seventh-century transmitter by the magic of a second book title. [IS21-A01; IS21-A03]

A beneficial report deserves the same care. A provision protecting a woman from an unjust accusation can retain its ethical value while its precise early attribution is investigated, and a provision authorizing a guardian to override a grown child's wishes should be examined even where somebody is confident of the chain. The presence of a contested report does not entitle me to announce that al-Nuʿmān personally forged the words of ʿAlī, and the absence of a complete manuscript collation should not be inflated into proof that the words were unchanged from the seventh century. The received legal text is an identifiable historical object. Its proposed authority over another person's life is an additional proposition, with additional consequences and a burden of explanation that should grow heavier as the person subject to it becomes less able to speak.

The Fatimid tradition becomes intellectually appealing when it can reinterpret outward law through the education of the soul, with a legal distinction acquiring an inward meaning that an ordinary jurist might never have imagined. When the waiting rule associated with transferring an enslaved woman becomes an allegory for the movement of a student from one teacher to another, however, the philosopher has borrowed the structure of an unequal human relationship for the purpose of describing spiritual learning. That is an opportunity to ask whether a useful metaphor has silently made an institution's power over its students feel as natural as the ownership relation the law had already permitted. A student should be able to move between teachers without becoming somebody's possession, and a girl should be able to grow up without discovering that an ancestor's name has been used to make a stranger the proprietor of her future. [I25; IS20-A09]

Perhaps this is the heart of the poisoned-grapes image, which has been following our argument from an Abbasid court into the Fatimid archive. The caliph may never have touched the words in the later collection; the jurist may have arranged his sources with complete sincerity; the copyist may have done his job with remarkable care. Yet when a respected name passes through these hands and emerges as a ruling that the subject cannot challenge, we have an outcome that the language of inherited authority makes easier to justify. To identify a deliberate plot, we would need an actual altered passage, a responsible agent, and evidence of the intended political use. The ordinary route by which an attribution gains legal force can be examined now, with the person injured by its application allowed to speak before the historical detective has solved every mystery about who first wrote it down.

21 · The Covenant Written Beneath the Universal Soul

We come now to the Druze, whose religious history emerged in the world of the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim but developed into a distinct community with its own writings and account of divine unity. It would make a neat story for a book about secret institutions if they were treated merely as an exotic branch of a single Ismaili organization, although the actual controversy began within the Fatimid environment and produced serious disagreements about what could be said of the ruler, the Intellect, and the manner in which divine guidance becomes manifest. Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī and the movement associated with him appeared in the late years of al-Ḥākim's rule, with the *Rasāʾil al-ḥikma* preserving an extraordinary religious literature whose formation must be reconstructed through the people who wrote and transmitted its epistles. The texts have a history of their own, and the living Druze community has a history extending far beyond the dramatic events at the Fatimid court. [J06; J07]

The association of Ḥamza with Universal Intellect and of Ismāʿīl al-Tamīmī with Universal Soul provides a bridge to the philosophical world we encountered through Nāṣir-i Khusraw, though the relations between those terms change when spiritual principles are linked to named figures in the politics of Cairo. Daniel De Smet's work on the earliest epistles establishes a critical framework for reading that doctrinal vocabulary, while the older English translations by Philip Hitti give us accessible passages whose Arabic originals still require collation for a full textual argument. It matters to know which person is speaking in each case, since a cosmic description supplied by a member of the movement does different work from a hostile chronicle's attempt to explain why the movement appeared. We can find the claims startling without making the believer into a prop in somebody else's tale of occult Egypt. [J06; J09]

A covenant translated by Hitti opens with the language of willing undertaking and describes the signer as acting without compulsion, a condition that deserves recognition in a history where so many rulers and guardians appear to believe that consent can be supplied by somebody of higher rank. Its demands subsequently extend to the signer's body, property, and children, with acceptance of what the revered authority determines for or against him. A believer who reads the covenant through its theology of divine unity may understand the commitment as devotion to God rather than surrender to an ordinary political official, and that interpretation is central to the document rather than an excuse invented after the fact. Our question concerns the authority of the people who authenticate and apply such a commitment, especially when the covenant is made to cover decisions the signer could not have foreseen or to encompass the future wishes of children who did not sign it. [J10]

What fascinates me is how quickly an insistence upon voluntary allegiance can be made to support an expansive theory of future obligation. A person may thoughtfully enter a demanding religious way and accept the guidance of teachers he trusts, while still possessing the moral duty to resist an injury that none of the parties anticipated when the agreement was made. The issue is recognizable from marriage law, where an early decision by a guardian may be offered as sufficient reason to silence the adult who later bears its consequences. It also resembles the problem of the concealed Imam: a covenant made toward a transcendent authority must eventually be interpreted by people whose own claims to speak in that authority's name can be inspected. The supposed perfection of the source gives us excellent reasons to be careful about the fidelity of the intermediary.

The Druze writings also offer an unexpectedly direct encounter with the Gospel of John, which makes them relevant to the theological inquiry I have been pursuing in *Finding Injil*. An epistle attributed to Bahā' al-Dīn and represented as addressed to the Byzantine emperor interprets the temple's restoration in John 2 as a succession of religious ages, with the Paraclete identified in relation to Muḥammad and the eventual disclosure of unity completing the pattern. It is an ambitious attempt to give Jewish, Christian, and Islamic scripture a place in one history of revelation, and I can appreciate the desire to read them together while remaining quite unconvinced by several of the steps taken. The proposed recipient and the letter's actual delivery are distinct historical claims; a transmitted title that names an emperor is evidence about how a document was presented, rather than a receipt issued by the imperial court. [J12]

One detail makes the textual problem unavoidable. The English translation presents the epistle using a formulation about the Father and a son that differs from John 14:28, where the received Gospel has Jesus say that the Father is greater than he. This might reflect the epistle's interpretation, an altered quotation already circulating in its milieu, or a difficulty in the textual or translation history, and the responsible investigation would place the Arabic passage beside the Greek and relevant Syriac witnesses before declaring which route produced the change. There is enough here to study a medieval community's use of Christian scripture without imagining that its interpretation confirms what the evangelist originally wrote. A beautiful scheme of sacred time can become very unpersuasive when one of its crucial scriptural steps has had to rewrite the sentence it claims to explain. [J12; J13]

The religious dispute surrounding al-Ḥākim's disappearance in 1021 is another place where the received epistles are more interesting than a prefabricated conspiracy story. A charter preserved in Hitti's selection explains the ruler's absence within a theological narrative and directs followers to refrain from tracing his steps. There may be protective circumstances that explain why a vulnerable community would restrict publication of someone's location, though an enduring prohibition on investigating an event that stands near the center of a religious claim has

consequences for how followers can decide what they know. The text gives us a stated restriction on inquiry. To establish who issued it, where it was displayed, and how it shaped actual conduct requires the transmission evidence that stands behind the title and the translated wording. [J11]

The most valuable Druze passage for this book may turn out to be less spectacular than the covenant. A later teaching associated with al-Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh al-Tanūkhī compares the return of vices to stars whose light is overwhelmed by the sun while it shines, only to appear again when the sun has gone. The point concerns moral education, in which a person can act well under the influence of insight and discipline yet recover older habits when those conditions are neglected. I like the image because it allows a community to speak about spiritual growth without declaring that a moment of initiation has rendered every later decision trustworthy. The teacher may need the same reminders as the student, and the person who claims to have passed into a higher state should be capable of hearing when arrogance or cruelty has returned. [J15]

The history of the Druze cannot be compressed into the question of whether an early follower of al-Ḥākim understood one contentious formula correctly, any more than the whole Fatimid inheritance can be reduced to the worst order a caliph issued. Their writings exhibit an attempt to explain the relation between revelation, intellect, and the soul's formation, while also preserving demanding claims about allegiance whose effects deserve scrutiny. The point for *Dark Imams* is precisely that a tradition can contain sincere insight and a dangerous way of using authority in the same inherited book. Our inquiry concerns the words, their historical transmission, and the effect of the authorized interpretation on the person expected to obey, with the living community given the ordinary dignity of being understood through its own evidence instead of through somebody else's lurid story.

We should also resist the temptation to jump from an Ismaili doctrine of the Universal Soul, through a Druze reading of John, directly into the castles of the Crusaders and declare that we have uncovered a single secret history of Europe. There are interesting leads for studying the travel of ideas, including translations, encounters, and the later Western taste for claiming Eastern initiations, but a resemblance between two metaphors does not supply a medieval letter of introduction. The connective tissue has to be found in named people and documents. For now the Druze material has given us something more immediate: a religious archive in which the grandeur of a cosmic office and the humble fact of a human promise can be read together, leaving the interpreter to account for every occasion when the office seems to swallow the person who made the promise.

PART IV · THE CALIPH WHO KEPT HIS TITLE

22 · Baghdad With Two Masters

The trail now returns to Baghdad, an apparent detour after the rise of the Fatimids and the mountain fortresses of the Nizaris, until we remember that the Abbasid caliph was living through a parallel history in which his ceremonial position could survive substantial transfers of practical power. The Buyids entered Baghdad in 945 and maintained a political order in which Shiʿi military rulers exercised authority beside an Abbasid caliph whose title still mattered, producing a wonderfully awkward arrangement for scholars who regarded the rightful Imamate as belonging to somebody else. Some offices could keep a city functioning under the government that actually existed, while a believer asked to serve in one of them needed an account of how the work could remain legitimate. [J16]

The Buyid story begins earlier than the march into Baghdad, since the family had established positions in Iranian territories during the 930s, and its branches were capable of pursuing distinct political interests. This matters because the book of hadith at the center of our argument, al-Kulaynī's *al-Kāfī*, was compiled before the Buyid government of Baghdad and its author's death is conventionally placed around 940 or 941. A political account that has the Baghdad Buyids order its initial composition would be an abuse of chronology, which leaves us with a better and more demanding question about how the book was transmitted, copied, interpreted, and given new uses after its author's death. The Buyids are relevant to that subsequent history only where we can identify the people, manuscripts, and decisions through which their influence might have operated. [J16; W-S13]

A short treatise by al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā provides a more concrete view of the machinery of political accommodation. His discussion of accepting employment under an unjust government is dated to 415 AH, or 1024, and placed within the setting of a vizier's gathering, where a scholar could be asked questions that were hardly academic to the people who wished to appoint him. Al-Murtaḍā considered conditions under which holding office could be legitimate and even obligatory, especially when it allowed somebody to establish a right or prevent an injury that he could not otherwise prevent. The text demands indications sufficient to make the expected benefit credible, which is an excellent condition to preserve when a person is tempted to accept a comfortable position on the ground that he might someday manage to help somebody. [J17; J18]

The remarkable turn comes when the treatise explains how an office received outwardly from an unjust ruler may be understood as held, in its effective moral meaning, from the rightful Imam and the Master of the Affair. The condition is that the work genuinely serves the obligations whose authority is traced to that Imam. The theory gives a man in public service a way to regard his employment as religiously defensible without endorsing the ultimate title of the government that pays him. This is a serious political argument whose attraction becomes obvious if

the alternative is to leave every judicial and administrative office to people who have no concern for the rights of the Prophet's family. It can also give an official an impressive answer to a complainant: my appointment may bear the caliph's name, but the authority in whose service I act is the Imam's. [J19]

I have been looking for the place where a caliph might put words in an Imam's mouth, and here we have something even more interesting than a forged saying. A jurist can relocate the effective source of an office without altering a single report in the hadith collection, using an argument about legitimate purpose to make the office intelligible within his own theology. Al-Murtaḍā's reasoning is conditional, and the difference matters because it gives us grounds on which to question the official who invokes it. Was the benefit really inaccessible by other means? Has his conduct remained within the purposes that justified the appointment, and what happens when the ruler demands something that the official cannot carry out without injury? A legal permission can become a far broader entitlement when the next person to quote it keeps the conclusion and forgets the condition.

Al-Murtaḍā knew that people would ask these questions, and his treatise directly considers how an outsider can judge the man who holds office under the arrangement. His answer uses indications about the official's conduct and character, while treating balanced uncertainty as a reason to refrain from contesting the office. The moral impulse toward avoiding an unjust accusation is apparent, but the practical balance becomes difficult when the official already possesses the power to punish and the petitioner is still trying to obtain a hearing. A person who has suffered an injury should be able to supply evidence about what happened even where the ruler has a high opinion of the official's personal piety. The conditions that justified the appointment ought to remain answerable to the experience of the people who live under it. [J19; J20]

An additional passage in al-Murtaḍā's collected writings makes the question of representation even sharper by observing that the evidence for an envoy's or governor's appointment must come from something beyond the claimant's own report about himself. The principle reaches back to Abū Hāshim's will, forward to the disputes over the Fatimid heirs, and across to the Nizari officer who invokes a command from a concealed Imam. Each person may have a good reason for requiring the community's trust, while the community still needs some independent way of discovering whether the claim being made is true. Perhaps the best thing a theologian can give a believer is permission to ask where the appointment came from. [J21]

The useful evidence here consists of the moments when a scholar's conditional argument became an official power exercised against someone who could challenge it. A copied hadith could gain an expansive new interpretation; a teaching originally intended to protect rights could be quoted as a warrant for suppressing an inconvenient complaint; an argument for useful government service could be applied by a man who neglected the very obligations that made his service defensible. Each

development has a documentary trail we can look for, and the absence of a trail means the accusation remains a proposal for investigation rather than a historical fact. The political setting makes such developments possible. It does not tell us in advance which of them occurred.

The caliph is still sitting in Baghdad, his title preserved even when the men around him command more soldiers, while scholars who deny his highest religious legitimacy are busy explaining how a person can nevertheless serve within the institutions that operate under his name. I find that arrangement much more suggestive than the picture of a single wicked ruler secretly dictating the contents of every Shiʿi book. The power to define the conditions of legitimate service, to recognize the man who qualifies, and to decide whether his opponent may complain can be distributed among people who sincerely disagree about theology. The next documents concern the public calendar and the continuing life of *al-Kāfī*, through which the names of the Imams could acquire an authority that long outlived the men whose teachings the scholars believed themselves to be preserving. [J17; J19; W-S13]

23 · The City That Learned to Remember on Command

Let us remain in Baghdad for a while, because in the tenth century the city seems to have developed a particularly ingenious method of making an argument without ever requiring its inhabitants to attend a theological seminar. On the appointed day the markets closed, people came into the streets, and a dispute about the Prophet's household acquired the force of a public holiday. You could spend the morning arguing over whether a report about Ghadīr Khumm established the political authority of ʿAlī, or you could take the rather more practical route of declaring a festival, lighting the city, and allowing the children to grow up knowing that this was a day on which the entire neighborhood behaved differently. As methods of transmitting religious memory go, the second has considerable advantages for a government with access to the police and the calendar.

In 352 AH, corresponding to 963, the Buyid ruler Muʿizz al-Dawla ordered the public celebration of Ghadīr Khumm in Baghdad, turning an already cherished Shiʿi memory into a visible civic event. Ahmad Kazemi-Moussavi points out that the written memory of Ghadīr was much older, while an earlier public festival on this scale is not recorded; the later chronicles describe decorations, fires, drums, and commercial activity late into the night. Public mourning for Ḥusayn on ʿĀshūrāʾ also received Buyid sponsorship in this period, with the shutting of markets and the emergence of processions that made Karbalāʾ part of the capital's public life. We may question the accuracy of a later chronicler's theatrical details, especially when he dislikes the people marching through his city, while still recognizing the administrative change he is describing. [DI7-01]

Why would a Shiʿi military ruler want the people of Baghdad to remember the suffering of a grandson of the Prophet who had died resisting a government, given that the ruler himself had recently acquired the rather comfortable position of commanding a government. Yet the memory of Ḥusayn carries several uses, and they are not all contained in the intentions of the man who sponsors the procession. To a believer it may be grief, religious fidelity, and a demand for justice; to an emerging community it also makes neighbors recognize one another, gives poets an audience, and offers the political authorities a fairly accurate picture of who can gather thousands of people at short notice. A procession turns private allegiance into a public fact. The same procession may one day provide language for judging its patron, which is one of the reasons a prudent ruler should be careful before asking everybody to identify him with a martyr.

The Sunni response was instructive. Public counter-observances elevated other memories, including a date associated with the Prophet and Abū Bakr in the cave,

and confrontations around rival processions eventually produced restrictions intended to prevent bloodshed. In a city full of competing preachers, each group could recruit the calendar to give its chosen episode of sacred history a kind of annual constitutional significance. The disagreement about what had happened at Ghadīr had not been invented in 963, although the city had acquired a new way of rehearsing it, and that distinction matters for our investigation because otherwise every impressive public expression of a belief will be mistaken for the moment somebody created the belief. [DI7-01; DI7-02]

I was tempted at first to use this episode as a clue to an Abbasid or Buyid plot to manufacture Shiism, although the immediate political arrangement is already complicated enough to make that formulation unsatisfactory. A Shiʿi ruler was administering a capital in which the Abbasid caliph remained a visible source of ceremonial legitimacy, Sunni families and scholars were hardly a marginal presence, and the descendants of the Prophet had their own claims and institutions. In this environment we can see a government magnifying the public presence of Shiʿi memory, with practical effects that were quite substantial, yet the effect did not amount to the creation of the reports that supplied the memory. A street festival can make a text important to more people; it cannot, by itself, tell us who composed the text.

The institutions organized around that memory make the point sharper. The Buyid period saw increased public prominence for Alid notables and offices concerned with the Prophet's descendants, together with opportunities for jurists whose theology placed the Imam somewhere other than the Abbasid palace. The *naqīb* who maintained genealogical standing and represented the Alids had functions that could intersect with government, while scholars who wished to protect their community had reasons to accept patronage without endorsing every claim of the ruling house. It is easy to admire the practical benefits of this arrangement, particularly if the alternative is to leave one's people without legal assistance, although I would like the right to inspect the appointment before allowing the officeholder to turn his newly acquired respectability into a command from God. [DI7-02]

Now imagine a boy growing up in Baghdad after these celebrations had become familiar. He may hear Ghadīr from his parents, observe ʿĀshūrāʾ in the street, learn the biographies of the Imams from teachers, and eventually encounter a book in which one of those Imams has apparently given a ruling on marriage or political obedience. By the time he opens that book, the Imams are already present to him as characters in a moral calendar, which does not make the book's report false, but surely changes the ease with which the reported speaker enters his imagination. A saying copied by one scholar, praised by another, and taught on a day recognized by the whole neighborhood acquires several forms of authority at once. Only one of them is the proposition that the historical Imam uttered those particular words.

Keep that mechanism in mind as we approach *al-Kāfī*. A book can pass into a new political world while its text remains old, and a community may give greater legal weight to one inherited saying because the institutions surrounding it have learned to repeat it more effectively. The Buyids have supplied us with evidence that a government could change the volume at which a memory was heard; whether anyone also altered the words calls for a different investigation, with earlier quotations, identifiable manuscripts, and the unromantic business of deciding what a named transmitter could have known on a particular date. [DI7-03]

24 · A Book Cannot Die With Its Author

The most amusing difficulty for a theory that the Buyids wrote *al-Kāfī* to pacify the Shiʿa is that the author inconveniently died before their army entered Baghdad. Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī died in 329 AH, generally given as 940 or 941, while the Buyid takeover of the capital occurred in 334/945; one can imagine many ingenious explanations for a political operation, but requiring its beneficiary to supervise the production of a book several years after the author's death is rather a lot to ask without a supporting document. That fact obliged me to take the transmission history more seriously, and the result is much more interesting than an elaborate posthumous forgery in which somebody changes every manuscript and then persuades the population to forget what had been in its libraries. [DI7-03]

Al-Kulaynī's writings reached other scholars through identifiable routes. The bibliographical notices preserved by al-Ṭūsī describe transmission in Baghdad in 327 AH, before the author's death, while al-Najāshī records the reading of *al-Kāfī* through a transmitter associated with al-Kulaynī. Abū Ghālib al-Zurārī knew the work in the early period, and Ibn Qūlawayh was an important route through which al-Kulaynī's writings passed to al-Mufīd. The account does not give us a complete set of photographed tenth-century pages, and several routes may share an earlier exemplar, but it does supply people and dates with which any claim of later invention has to reckon. Etan Kohlberg's study in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* also records al-Nuʿmānī drawing extensively on the first volume for his *Kitāb al-ghayba*, completed by 342/953–54. [DI7-03; DI7-04]

That last detail makes the occultation material particularly difficult for a convenient late theory of fabrication. In the preceding chapters we met the lawyers, fiscal agents, and theologians trying to explain how a community could remain obedient to an Imam who was no longer available to answer questions in public, and there is a tempting story in which this whole apparatus was invented by the next government to protect itself from an Alid uprising. The difficulty is that al-Kulaynī's collection had already taken shape before the Buyid occupation of Baghdad, and a substantial early part of it was circulating through another author within roughly a dozen years of that occupation. Those reports may contain older inventions, misunderstandings, or later interpretive growth. Their appearance in a named early source makes the proposed place and date of invention more constrained, which is what evidence is supposed to do to an attractive theory.

Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*, completed late in the tenth century, does not mention al-Kulaynī or his famous book, and the collection seems to have grown into its enormous prestige gradually. Al-Mufīd praised it, other authors used it selectively, and al-Ṭūsī would turn to it extensively, whereas its later privileged status among

four canonical collections belongs to a much longer history. The silence of a bibliographer cannot erase contemporary transmission, and the fact that somebody knew the book does not establish that he considered every line in it divine law. The difference between a book being available and a book being almost impossible to disregard is the difference between a source and a canon. [DI7-03; DI7-05]

The word *canon* is liable to make all this sound more orderly than the actual process. A jurist wants to know what the Imam taught about a disputed inheritance, a copyist supplies a work with many chapters, a teacher judges one chain more reliable than another, and the next generation acquires its legal habits from the books that happen to be copied and taught. Nobody need convene a secret council of corruptors for the practical weight of one report to increase. It might be copied more frequently because it offers a convenient solution, cited more frequently because an eminent scholar has made that solution respectable, or positioned under a heading that invites the reader to see a restriction where the earlier speaker may have intended to discourage an abuse. In the surviving textual evidence, those are separate propositions, and I would like a real manuscript comparison before claiming that any particular word was slipped into the text.

The history of *al-Kāfī* also contains explicit criticism from within the Imami scholarly tradition. Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā was prepared to speak of forged reports in it, and Fayḍ al-Kāshānī could praise its extraordinary usefulness while observing limitations in coverage or arrangement. Later Usuli scholars resisted the claim that every report in the Four Books carried certain attribution to an Imam. That is worth remembering whenever someone presents the volumes as though the community had kept a perfectly sealed case of sacred utterances since al-Kulaynī closed his desk. Scholars who revered the book were capable of disagreeing with portions of it, and the disagreement belongs to the history of Shiism just as surely as the praises do. [DI7-03]

Amin Ehteshami's study of the Four Books traces the emergence of the collective designation to the fifteenth century and its fuller consolidation in the seventeenth, an extraordinary distance from the men who originally compiled them. When we speak as though a scholar in 950 could open a universally recognized collection called *the Four Books*, we grant the distant past the benefit of an institution it had not yet constructed. That sort of historical compression is common in religions with venerable archives. The Christian who says a fourth-century bishop simply had *the Bible* in the familiar modern sense, or the Muslim who projects a later legal school's finished handbook into the lifetime of its founder, is doing something much like the person who assumes *al-Kāfī* was born already wearing the crown it acquired over centuries. [DI7-05]

I would like to suggest three places a corruption can occur, all of which deserve investigation and none of which will be established merely by disliking the resulting rule. First, a copyist can change a name, number, negation, or clause; here we need

witnesses and variant readings. Next, an editor or jurist can preserve a report while making it do new work through the order of chapters, the choice of neighboring passages, or the explanation of an ambiguous phrase. Finally, a later institution can turn a report of limited provenance into an ordinary legal presumption because generations have treated the containing book as exceptionally trustworthy. The second and third mechanisms require history of interpretation and social use even when the manuscript copies agree letter for letter.

The result changes the title of our investigation in a useful way. *The Corruption of Shia Hadith* cannot mean that every report we dislike must have been written by a disreputable theologian under orders from a caliph, however satisfying that scene might be in a television reconstruction. It can mean that a historical claim about what an Imam said has acquired a practical authority exceeding what the evidence for its attribution and meaning can bear, and that people in recognizable institutions made the successive decisions that brought it there. There may be individual falsifiers to discover, though the deeper case concerns a system in which sincere experts sometimes allow their conclusions to inherit more authority than their sources can justify.

At the center of *al-Kāfī* lies a useful instruction, attributed to the Imams themselves, to examine a received report against the Book of God. We will return to it after a detour through a particularly unsettling marriage precedent, because there are few better ways to discover whether our method is serious than to apply it to a hadith that seems to make the authority of the Prophet's household support a rule the Qur'an gives us strong reasons to question.

25 · The Caliph in the Family Album

The story of ʿUmar marrying Umm Kulthūm, a daughter of ʿAlī, occupies a curious place in Muslim polemic because each side wants it to do more work than a difficult historical report should have to perform. Some Sunni writers use the marriage to demonstrate cordial relations between men whom later sectarian memory often places on opposite sides of a great injustice, while Shiʿi reports portray the transaction as a coercive taking of somebody who belonged to the Prophet's family. If the marriage can be made to prove fraternity, it may soften an entire account of the first succession dispute; if it proves coercion, it confirms the persistence of an injury the Shiʿa have never forgotten. Somewhere in the middle of this argument is a young woman whose wishes are remarkably easy to lose among the things that eminent men have decided her marriage should signify.

I originally approached the incident with a theory that an objectionable norm of paternal control had entered Imami law through a precedent associated with ʿUmar, a sort of caliphal legislation smuggled into the household of ʿAlī. The first thing the surviving legal texts did was complicate that idea. In the *Muṣannaf* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq, a report attributed to the Kūfan jurist Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī allows the father to dispense with a daughter's permission under conditions connected to her status and household dependence, while a neighboring report attributed to al-Shaʿbī requires consultation. Neither appears to need the story of Umm Kulthūm in order to disagree. The legal culture of Kufa was already debating how far paternal authority extended, and we would do better to begin there than to appoint a famous caliph the inventor of every rule that later seems to benefit his reputation. [DI7-06]

An argument attributed to another Iraqi jurist, Ibn Shubruma, goes much further in the direction I find Qurʾanically persuasive, although its preservation comes through a later opponent. Al-Sarakhsī's *al-Mabsūṭ* remembers Ibn Shubruma and Abū Bakr al-Aṣamm rejecting marriage contracts imposed on minors before they reach maturity, with Qurʾan 4:6 and the limited purpose of guardianship doing important work in their reasoning. Al-Sarakhsī rejects them, citing other Qurʾanic evidence and the familiar reports of early marriages. Here we have a jurist arguing that the person who acts for a child because the child lacks capacity should not thereby acquire the right to bind the adult who will eventually emerge from that dependency. The argument survived because a later scholar thought it necessary to answer it. [DI7-07]

The marriage of Umm Kulthūm enters the legal archive explicitly through al-Shāfiʿī, whose use of the precedent is preserved by al-Bayhaqī. In the passage, al-Shāfiʿī says that ʿAlī married his daughter to ʿUmar without her authorization, and he uses this event in an argument about the father's authority over a virgin daughter's

marriage. The fuller story is peculiarly awkward for the legal conclusion it is used to support, since Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are represented as objecting that Umm Kulthūm is a woman capable of choosing for herself. Their objection is not allowed to control the legal inference, because the marriage as recounted becomes evidence that the father could act, which is a good illustration of how an inherited story may preserve an ethical protest while the jurist finds his rule in the act that overrode it. [DI7-08]

The detailed narrative also passes through Sufyān ibn Wakīʿ, whose reliability was severely criticized by later authorities in connection with material inserted through a copyist. We ought to keep the historical confidence appropriate to that transmission, and distinguish it from the securely visible fact that a later legal discussion employed the marriage as an Alid precedent. The marriage was a contested story; its usefulness as a legal argument is visible in the very text that preserves it. I find this distinction more revealing than an attempt to settle every disputed personal detail, because one can reconstruct the work a story performed even when its original events remain uncertain. [DI7-08]

In the Imami archive we meet the incident again, wearing the opposite political costume. *Al-Kāfī* attributes to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq a statement characterizing the taking of Umm Kulthūm as coercion, and another narrative has ʿAlī protest that she is young; al-Majlisī later gives the two reports a favorable *ḥasan* assessment. This is a memory of violation, one that could have supplied a warning about using political power to obtain a marriage, yet the surrounding Imami law contains further reports assigning remarkable authority to a father even when a daughter objects. A tradition can preserve a scene in which coercion is condemned and, elsewhere, a general rule that appears to authorize the same kind of domination when the father is the one doing the authorizing. The contradiction calls for inquiry into provenance, intended scope, and legal interpretation. [DI7-09]

An incident involving a marriage can hardly settle an entire legal doctrine. A report in which ʿUmar is said to have married against a family's wishes might be used to condemn political coercion, while a jurist could separately defend paternal contracting power on the ground that the father knows the child's interests. Neither report proves the other's authenticity, and the fact that a famous ancestor acted in one way is a poor substitute for a justification of the law imposed on people now. We have to ask whether consent was possible, whether refusal carried consequences, and whether a decision made during childhood remained subject to challenge after maturity. These are ordinary legal questions whose answers determine the shape of another person's life, although the theological dispute has made them feel like a contest over which revered man receives the better historical portrait.

I will bring in one later reader because the problem survives well beyond the medieval dispute. In his *Taḥrīr al-Wasīla*, Ruhollah Khomeini drew a distinction between penetrative intercourse before the age of nine, which the rule prohibited, and other sexual access within an infant marriage, which it permitted. The original

manuscript treats the Arabic wording and the printed edition as an evidentiary matter and makes no claim about his private conduct. The reason for mentioning this troubling legal text here is that it shows a modern jurist still able to discuss the sexual entitlement of an adult in terms of a marriage created while the person affected could have supplied no meaningful consent. We have moved far beyond the historical question of what happened to Umm Kulthūm, but we remain inside the same juridical question of who is empowered to speak for a dependent person. [DI7-10]

The older Kūfan evidence permits a fairly precise conclusion about ʿUmar's supposed entrance through the back door. The earliest recovered Kūfan paternal rule precedes the explicit legal use we have identified of his marriage to Umm Kulthūm, so the allegation that he personally originated that rule through this precedent is unproved. By the time al-Shāfiʿī's reasoning was preserved, however, the marriage had become useful evidence in defense of paternal power, and later Imami materials could simultaneously condemn the incident and preserve their own formulations of that power. I am interested in how a precedent strengthens a rule it may never have created, particularly when the man supposedly giving the precedent is the ancestor whose moral authority the tradition professes to protect.

A jurist can inherit an unjust rule without inheriting the story that made it seem respectable to somebody else. He can also inherit the story and reject the rule, as the objections attributed to Ḥasan and Ḥusayn encourage us to do. In the next chapter we will turn to the rules by which the Imami tradition itself proposed to assess reports, and I would like to see whether those rules can still operate when the received chain is favorable and the proposed legal consequence is profoundly unwelcome.

26 · Before the Imam May Testify

Al-Kulaynī's collection contains a rather helpful warning, allegedly from the very authorities whose sayings it preserves, that a report should be assessed in light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, with one formulation treating a purported saying that conflicts with the Book of God as an ornament falsely attached to the religion. Al-Majlisī grades the relevant report *ṣaḥīḥ*, while a neighboring tradition, presented as a Prophetic sermon reported through Jaʿfar, says that a teaching contradicting the Book should not be attributed to the Prophet. The second receives a more qualified chain description, which is a reminder that two useful principles need not arrive with identical historical confidence. It is difficult to imagine a more appropriate instruction to place near the beginning of a collection whose subsequent history involves endless argument over whether particular sayings were authentic. [DI7-11]

A reader might wonder whether I am about to turn this into a convenient method for rejecting every report whose meaning I dislike, allowing my own interpretation of the Qur'an to carry the entire judicial proceeding. It is a fair objection, and the answer has to involve showing the work. If a Qur'anic verse admits several serious readings, or if a report appears to address circumstances that the verse does not specify, the relationship must be argued on its merits; the outcome cannot be manufactured by assigning the report the grade *weak* whenever its implications make us uncomfortable. Conversely, an eminent transmitter's reliability cannot make a legal inference from his words morally and textually inevitable. The question of attribution and the question of what follows from an attributed sentence arise at different stages, with legitimate disagreement possible at each.

Consider a report on free choice and divine determination which is attributed to Jaʿfar and which rejects both irresistible compulsion and the complete abandonment of human action to independent creatures. It expresses an attractive position to somebody who wants human responsibility without denying divine sovereignty, but its recorded transmission is *mursal*, containing an unidentified intermediary. In another entry a saying warns devotees that attachment to the household of the Prophet will not save them from the consequences of their actions, a teaching I think the entire book could profitably take to heart. Al-Majlisī grades that one weak. Neither ethical attraction makes the historical chain stronger, and the weakness of the chain prevents a historian from presenting the precise wording as a securely recovered speech of the Imam. The moral argument remains available for independent examination, which is a relief because otherwise we would have to defend many objectionable ideas simply to preserve our favorite ones. [DI7-11]

The case of *taqiyya* illustrates how useful the distinction can become when lives are at stake. A report attributed to Muḥammad al-Bāqir explains the protective

purpose of concealment and says that it ends when blood is to be shed, with al-Majlisī grading it *ḥasan* and al-Behbūdī selecting it in his later *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Kāfī*. A community persecuted for its beliefs may have good reasons to speak discreetly, and an ethic that allows protective concealment can save people who otherwise become helpless before officials who demand a public confession of loyalty. It changes character when somebody invokes the same permission to justify arranging another person's death. The report's reported boundary is therefore worth keeping in view when later theological arguments try to make the obligations of loyalty infinitely elastic. [DI7-11]

One exchange preserved by the compilers shows how a favorable chain can coexist with a serious objection to its argument that later readers have sometimes overlooked. In an exchange involving Ismāʿīl ibn Jaʿfar, the older brother whose role matters in Ismaili succession disputes, the young marriage of ʿĀʾisha is cited in a legal argument concerning children's testimony. Al-Majlisī regards the chain as *ṣaḥīḥ* and nevertheless criticizes the reasoning attributed to Ismāʿīl, construing the episode in a way that bears upon his suitability for the Imamate. The chain's grade has established, for the commentator, a favorable path to the reported exchange; it has not forced him to endorse the legal logic used by the person in the exchange. That willingness to judge argument after assessing transmission is exactly the discipline I would like to see applied to reports whose conclusions are more congenial to the commentator's theology. [DI7-12]

Studies of hadith corruption can become a competition to produce a new index in which every beloved report receives a green mark and every inconvenient one receives a red mark, at which point the author has recreated a miniature religious court and appointed himself the final scholar. Our dossier contains twenty-two selected reports, chosen because they bear on concrete claims about authority, marriage, compulsion, succession, or the Qur'an, and it does not pretend to represent a random sample of *al-Kāfī* from which rates of forgery could be calculated. A careful reader can therefore check the exact location of each report, the stated grade, the path of transmission, the Arabic wording, and the legal inference under dispute, while the overall picture remains properly limited to the cases we have inspected. [DI7-11]

The poisoned-grapes image has become less theatrical after these reports. A believer can take a chain to mean that a saying was probably spoken, then hear a jurist declare that the saying authorizes a practice, and finally encounter an institution that regards resistance to that practice as resistance to the Imam. At each step somebody has translated evidence into a stronger kind of authority. Whether the process amounts to corruption will depend upon the actual case, and the honest scholar must make room for cases in which a weak chain carries good advice or a favorable chain has been used to defend an unjust inference. The methods we inherit should help us discover those distinctions, particularly when the prestige of the institution makes them inconvenient.

One of the most troubling examples is waiting immediately ahead. In the same book that preserves a woman's ability to contract for herself, and a young girl's refusal, we find reports favorable enough in the inherited grading system to support a father's power over the marriage of a daughter who has reached the age at which she is otherwise expected to make decisions. As a matter of historical study, the reports deserve the same careful treatment as any other passage. As a matter of religion, they also require us to ask whether an adult's claimed superior knowledge of a child's interests can turn the child's future into something he owns.

27 · The Father Who Knew Better

Men who possess power over somebody else have long explained that they exercise it for the other person's benefit, an explanation which may be entirely sincere and is frequently useful, since few people like to think of themselves as a tyrant at the dinner table. A father who has paid for his daughter's upbringing may know a great deal about her health, preferences, prospects, and the people seeking to marry her; the difficulty arises when the law converts that knowledge into a right to decide the matter for her and, in some versions, to deny her the power to revisit the decision when she becomes an adult. This is the specific problem in the marriage reports of *al-Kāfī*, and it is worth reading them in their actual order because the archive offers several competing pictures of what a woman's agency amounts to. [DI7-13]

One report tells us that a woman who possesses authority over herself, who is capable of sound judgment and is not under guardianship, may contract marriage without a guardian. Al-Majlisī calls its chain *ḥasan*, and al-Behbūdī includes it among reports he considers authentic. Another concerns an orphan girl or a sister in a man's care and insists upon asking her consent, with an answer that the girl must not be married off if she refuses. The latter report is graded weak according to the prevailing assessment because of its route, and that is a useful first lesson in the limits of using favorable outcomes as an authentication method. The statement about consent may be compelling as an ethical rule, while the specific report still has to pass the ordinary tests of transmission. [DI7-13]

On the next part of the same dossier the picture becomes much less comfortable. A report attributed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq says that a father's marriage arrangement is effective even when the girl objects, and al-Majlisī gives it a *ḥasan* grade while interpreting it as evidence for the father's independent authority. Another claims that a daughter living with her parents need not be consulted because the father is more attentive to her interests; this one receives *muwaththaq*, a favorable category of reliable transmission. A third, attributed to al-Riḍā, asks whether a girl whom her father married while young may choose again upon maturity and answers that she may not, with al-Majlisī grading the chain *ṣaḥīḥ*. We have moved from a debate about how to protect someone during childhood to a legal proposition that continues to deprive her of choice after she is old enough to understand the consequences. [DI7-13; PV-05]

Perhaps someone will respond that jurists can reconcile the passages by distinguishing a woman who is independent from one under paternal guardianship, a previously married woman from a virgin, or the moment a contract is created from the time it may be consummated. Those distinctions are part of the classical legal discussion and deserve examination, because a historian ought to reconstruct the rule

as its defenders understood it before judging its effects. Yet the more carefully the categories are drawn, the more obvious the precise moral difficulty becomes. If the legal disability is that the girl has not reached a capacity to choose, what happens when she acquires that capacity and discovers she has inherited a marriage she never wanted? If the answer is that the father's earlier decision remains binding, his supposed concern for her welfare has been elevated into a power over the future adult, and that power demands a justification beyond the observation that parents often know more than children.

Qur'ān 4:6 complicates this inherited theory of guardianship by asking that orphans be tested as they approach marriageable age and that their property be returned when sound judgment appears. The verse concerns the management of property and the recognition of capability, and its use as a categorical argument about marriage contracts is a matter of juristic inference, such as the one attributed to Ibn Shubruma in the previous chapter. The attraction of the argument is that guardianship exists to care for someone during an inability that is supposed to end. It is rather strange to cite a father's confidence in his daughter's future welfare as the reason she can never undo a decision made on her behalf, particularly when the same body of reports recognizes other circumstances in which a woman can act for herself. [DI7-07]

The age-nine reports present a second and related problem. In one, attributed to al-Bāqir, consummation is barred until a girl reaches nine or ten, while the wording of another, attributed to al-Ṣādiq, sets nine as the threshold. Al-Majlisī grades the first weak according to the familiar view and the second *ṣaḥīḥ*, recording in the first case a discussion of possible harm. A modern reader may be shocked by the number, and I share the concern, although we should read the grammar before claiming that the report positively commands what it describes as the earliest permissible time. The sentence states a prohibition before a boundary; an inference that intercourse becomes lawful in every circumstance once the boundary is passed requires further assumptions about bodily safety, consent, and the actual status of the marriage. [DI7-14]

Those additional assumptions come from an adult legal system in which the person most affected is the least able to dispute the supposed permission. A girl can be assigned to a husband before she has the capacity to understand the contract, after which the law discusses the minimum conditions of access to her body while her own agreement is presumed to have been supplied by the guardian. I want a much more demanding account of authorization than that, and the Qur'an's repeated concern for justice, protection, and the fair treatment of those under another person's power gives the argument its religious starting point. The actual text should be open to readers who disagree, because their strongest defense must explain how the proposed legal consequences follow from the sources they invoke.

Here the historical and ethical judgments need different language. A chain graded *ṣaḥīḥ* by al-Majlisī is evidence of his favorable assessment of its transmitters and structure. It remains possible to question whether the attributed Imam uttered the sentence, what he intended by it, and how later jurists applied it. In the case of the report depriving the newly mature daughter of an option to refuse, I regard the legal application as incompatible with the obligation to respect her agency; that is my normative judgment, which should stand openly in the argument. Declaring the report secretly Abbasid would spare me having to answer a difficult source, and it would also deprive the reader of the very example needed to test whether our method can resist institutional pressure.

The desire to preserve a harmonious portrait of the household adds a second pressure. A defender of the reports may decide that every apparently coercive sentence must have a hidden compassionate meaning, while an opponent may regard the harshest reading as proof that the household was never the moral authority its followers believed. I prefer to examine the human circumstances implied by the actual words. If the Imam spoke against coercion in the case of Umm Kulthūm, as another report attributes to Jaʿfar, there is reason to ask how a theory of guardianship could be understood so that the daughter's objection retains force; and if a later jurist finds that impossible, he ought to identify the report and the principle he is choosing to privilege rather than smuggling the decision into the honorific attached to the speaker. [DI7-09; DI7-13]

The question has followed us from a contested marriage between two revered families into the daily structure of law, and it will follow us further into political authority. The reasoning that turns a guardian's knowledge into another person's continuing loss of choice is closely related to the reasoning by which a scholar claims that his superior understanding of a hidden Imam entitles him to command a community. They are distinct legal questions, with different texts and histories, although the burden of justification is recognizably similar. The person who claims to act on another's behalf should be answerable to the welfare and agency of the person in whose name he acts, because otherwise representation becomes a very polite word for appropriation.

28 · The Banner That Must Never Be Raised

Suppose a tyrant appears in an Islamic city, imprisons people who disagree with him, and makes his rule so intolerable that the inhabitants begin to discuss resistance. They have the memory of Ḥusayn to remind them that a ruler can be wicked enough to resist at terrible personal cost, the Qur'an urging justice even when it is inconvenient, and the examples of Zayd and the many Alid rebels who believed that refusing to oppose oppression was itself a moral failure. Now somebody opens a respected collection and reads a saying attributed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq: every banner raised before the coming of the Qā'im belongs to a *ṭāghūt* who is worshipped apart from God. It is a remarkable sentence to place before a population contemplating political action, especially if the person interpreting the sentence happens to be employed by the government. [DI7-15]

The report appears in *Rawḍat al-Kāfī* and is graded *muwaththaq* by al-Majlisī, so I have little interest in disposing of it with an easy claim that no respected scholar ever accepted its transmission. The question is what kind of banner the speaker meant. A defensible reading can take the warning to concern pretenders who present their own movement as the sacred authority of the promised Imam, which would make sense in a world crowded with claimants and movements offering salvation in exchange for immediate allegiance. A much more expansive reading condemns every independent effort to establish justice before the Qā'im appears, which gives ordinary rulers a religious advantage far exceeding the sentence's useful warning against false messiahs. The limits have to be argued from context and parallel teachings, since the surviving words themselves are disturbingly broad. [DI7-15]

This brings us close to the original suspicion that disgraced rationalists and court-connected theologians helped turn militant Shiism into a quietist doctrine, a suspicion which has been complicated by every date and family history we have examined. The saying could be politically useful to an Abbasid ruler. So could an apocalyptic rumor that persuaded rebels to postpone action until a hidden leader appeared. Yet usefulness is evidence about incentives and consequences; it is weaker evidence about the original author than a manuscript, a named intermediary, or a correspondence in which the ruler instructed somebody to circulate the report. The desire to discover a Dark Imam among the caliphs is understandable, but the real question is whether any historical actor can be shown to have made this particular wording serve his political interest.

We also encounter a different report, this one associated with a dispute brought before an adjudicator, in which Jaʿfar is said to direct members of the community away from unjust authorities and toward a person knowledgeable about their teaching, adding that he has appointed such a person to judge between them. The

famous report of ʿUmar ibn Ḥanẓala receives from al-Majlisī a favorable *muwaththaq* assessment accompanied by the observation that the community accepted it. The original scene concerns disputed debts or inheritance, which is useful because it places the appointment in a recognizably legal setting rather than making the Imam deliver a ready-made constitution for every future state. [DI7-16]

If two people agree to have a competent judge decide a matter, their agreement creates reasons to respect his judgment, although those reasons also presume the judge's competence, a fair procedure, and some way of correcting a mistake that could ruin an innocent party. The more ambitious political reading takes the gravity of rejecting an authentic Imam-appointed adjudicator and extends it to a later jurist who claims authority over public life. That extension is a legal argument which may be defended, challenged, or narrowed on its own terms, with the chain to the original report insufficient by itself to prove that every contemporary holder of a similar title possesses the same jurisdiction. A statement that a community needs judges is an excellent starting point for public law; it requires a remarkable amount of further explanation before it becomes the doctrine that a particular jurist may govern a nation in the absence of the Imam.

The two reports have an interesting relation. One can be read as warning against unauthorized attempts to assume the Imam's sacred office, while the other can be read as authorizing specified forms of adjudication among his followers. It is possible to construct a coherent practical doctrine from them, with communities avoiding reckless messianic movements while resolving disputes through scholars they recognize. Yet that doctrine remains accountable for the judgments it produces, and it becomes suspect when the prohibition against raising a banner is deployed against the powerless while the appointment of a judge is expanded to dignify a government that exercises considerably more authority than the original disputants ever delegated. An interpretation that makes every revolt sinful and every official with the proper credentials sacred has revealed a great deal about its own preferences.

The original corpus makes the theory of imamic authority more expansive still. One report allows two Imams only when one is silent, another asserts that the earth cannot remain without an Imam, and a passage concerning the unseen tells us that the Imams' knowledge is at times given and at times withheld. Al-Majlisī gives the two-Imams item a favorable *ḥasan* grade, while he grades the earth-sinking report weak in the edition used by the source dossier, and the statement about knowledge *ṣaḥīḥ*. These are quite different claims: one concerns succession and simultaneous offices, another the metaphysical necessity of a divine proof, and the third the limits of human access to knowledge even in those whom the community reveres. None should be silently converted into evidence for an unlimited human intermediary. [DI7-17]

The last of those passages is particularly useful because it makes epistemic humility possible inside an elevated theology of the Imams. If knowledge can be supplied and

withheld, the interpreter must distinguish a divine gift asserted in an inherited text from his own possession of information about what a hidden Imam desires today. A theologian who holds that the Imam possesses extraordinary knowledge may still have to admit that the jurist interpreting a tenth-century report has no comparable guarantee, and that the ordinary mechanisms of proof and correction remain necessary. A community can believe that its guide is perfect while recognizing that the people who speak on his behalf are capable of error; the alternative is to distribute the guide's perfection among every officeholder in the administrative chain.

Another passage tests the assumption that a chain grade can settle every question of theological truth. In the Book of the Excellence of the Qur'an, *al-Kāfī* preserves a report giving the revelation brought by Gabriel to Muḥammad as seventeen thousand verses, vastly exceeding the conventional verse counts of the received Qur'an. Al-Majlisī discusses a variation in a transmitter's name that affects his chain assessment and, in the inspected commentary, takes the report and related traditions seriously as evidence of textual loss or alteration. His opinion is historically important because it reveals a scholar willing to accept implications about the Qur'anic text which many Muslims, including many Imami scholars, find unacceptable. The edition and the exact transmitter reading must be kept distinct, so our study records the variant rather than treating a conditional grade as an unambiguous verdict attached to every printed text. [DI7-18]

For my own inquiry the publicly transmitted Qur'an supplies the starting point, and a report announcing a vastly larger revelation requires a degree of evidence that this selected dossier has not furnished. It would be irresponsible to turn al-Majlisī's discussion into an accusation that every Shi'i secretly believes in a missing Qur'an, although it would be equally irresponsible to remove the passage from the record because its implications are embarrassing. One of the virtues of showing the exact chain and the exact commentator's position is that readers can see the intellectual history as it occurred, including a proposition the writer of this book rejects while acknowledging that a serious historical scholar held it. [DI7-18]

The thread connecting all these cases is the transfer of authority. A warning about rival banners can become a general prohibition on opposition, a judgment about an inheritance can become a theory of sovereignty, a report about divine knowledge can be cited as though the contemporary scholar knew more than the sources actually tell him, and a textual attribution can be presented as sufficient to revise the very scripture against which other reports were supposed to be measured. Some of those expansions may be defensible within a particular theology; each needs its own evidence. The caliph's most efficient method of putting words in the Imam's mouth, in such a setting, would be to persuade the living interpreter that his conclusion had already been spoken by somebody beyond appeal. Whether any caliph deliberately did so remains a historical question rather than an answer supplied by the metaphor.

29 · The Men Who Answered the Letters

Long before the Buyids arrived in Baghdad, Shiʿi communities had developed networks of representatives who collected dues, carried questions, transmitted instructions, and helped people maintain ties with an Imam they might never visit. There is nothing mysterious about needing such a system, particularly when the person at the center of a persecuted community is under surveillance or living at a considerable distance from his followers. The interesting problem arises when the Imam dies, a publicly acknowledged successor is unavailable, and the people who already know how to collect the money and answer the correspondence become the practical means through which the continued existence of an authority is recognized. At that point the history of theology meets the history of administrative procedure, which can be a much stranger encounter than a reader expects. [DI7-19]

The death of al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī in 874 produced a succession crisis whose traces survive in early accounts of the factions formed afterward. Saʿd al-Qummī describes a divided community, with some groups accepting a concealed son, others locating the Imamate elsewhere, and some unable to decide between the claims presented to them. Later Twelver memory organizes the transition through a familiar sequence of four envoys during the Minor Occultation, but Edmund Hayes's study of the agents and Verena Klemm's account of the early sources show why the finished scheme should not simply be projected backward into the first days after the death. Agents existed before the crisis, the authority of particular intermediaries was contested, and the orderly succession known from later histories emerged through a process that requires its own account. [DI7-19; DI7-20]

I find the case especially compelling because the signs that establish ordinary institutional trust also become the signs by which extraordinary religious authority is presented. A man produces a letter bearing familiar handwriting, receives the alms people previously sent to the Imam, or supplies an answer to a question which nobody outside the network knew had been asked; those actions may make him a credible representative in the eyes of people already accustomed to dealing with him. Yet a signature or a payment can establish several things with different levels of confidence. The recipient may recognize the courier, the handwriting, or the continuity of the network without being able to establish independently who dictated the message, and the difficulty grows when the person alleged to be sending it is hidden from every ordinary means of inspection.

The Banū Nawbakht make the story more tempting for a writer interested in the possibility of a caliphal operation. They were a Baghdad family involved in Abbasid administrative and intellectual life, and Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī was an important early Imami theologian who used forms of rational argument familiar from Muʿtazilī

discourse while defending the doctrine of the hidden Imam. Ibn Qiba al-Rāzī also crossed the boundary from a Muʿtazilī background into Imami theology and became associated with defenses of the occultation. If you set these facts beside the caliph's interest in a stable capital and the possible political advantage of a community awaiting an absent deliverer, it is easy to imagine a room full of brilliant men offering the court a new theology of patience. The sources establish the connections and the doctrines; a commission from the palace would still require evidence of the actual commission. [DI7-20; DI7-21]

The more interesting question concerns what the theologians thought they were doing. A man who left another school because he found the problem of the Imamate intellectually compelling may have adopted its methods of disputation with great sincerity, while a court-connected family could also use its bureaucratic experience to make a vulnerable religious network more coherent. Rationalism has no single political destination: a theorem about divine justice can justify criticism of tyranny, and a theory of rightful authority can be used to explain why the visible ruler possesses no final religious claim. The historian must therefore resist the temptation to read employment in the Abbasid world as proof of agreement with the caliph's purposes, especially when the family is known for defending an authority whose theory challenges the caliph's own claim.

There was a genuine institutional gain in the theory of occultation. A community whose Imam might be imprisoned, killed, or unreachable could continue to collect its religious contributions, adjudicate local disputes, and preserve a tradition through people who supplied continuity. The cost is that those people acquire leverage over evidence about their own authority, especially if the qualifications for recognized representation have become the very secrets they are entrusted to preserve. An allegation that an agent was lying may then be treated as sacrilege against the Imam, although the allegation concerns a human being whose conduct should be judged by the ordinary standards of honesty and proof. This is why an early disagreement about letters and payments deserves a place beside theological writings about the divine wisdom of occultation. [DI7-19]

One of the principles associated with al-Murtaḍā's political writing is that a claimant to delegated office needs evidence of appointment beyond his own assertion, a principle which belongs naturally to a legal system that expects truthful testimony. Its application to a concealed Imam is uncomfortable, because a representative may regard the strongest evidence as information supplied privately by the Imam himself. We can appreciate the concern for secrecy in a persecuted community while still asking whether a different representative, or an injured follower, possesses any way of testing the assertion. The objection is not to the possibility of a true envoy; it concerns what follows when someone must decide whether a particular man is one. [DI7-22]

Now return to the picture with which the book began, an alleged testament moving authority from the household of ʿAlī to the Abbasid family. Its political power depended upon the credibility of the transfer to the people who were asked to recognize it. The problem of the letters from the hidden Imam is different in its immediate circumstances, since the supposed principal remains alive and deliberately inaccessible, yet it shares the demand that an intermediary give the audience reasons to believe in a commission the audience cannot inspect directly. A written instrument, a family connection, and an established network of envoys each provide kinds of evidence; none becomes self-authenticating because of the grandeur of the office it claims to represent. The historical story can therefore proceed without resolving the theological truth of occultation, which is a question a manuscript of later recollections cannot settle by itself.

The institution did not remain frozen at the stage of four envoys. The Greater Occultation placed scholars and jurists in a more significant position, with functions previously mediated through recognized agents increasingly discussed in terms of learned interpretation, legal competence, and community recognition. Exactly how those functions developed is a matter for the following chapters and the larger book's account of juristic government, but the crucial development is already visible: the people who answered questions in the Imam's name eventually had to explain why the community should trust their answers when the channel of direct representation had been closed. A theory of knowledge became a theory of office, carrying into the law courts the old problem of who could authenticate the words.

30 · Four Books and the Men Who Had to Choose

By the time we reach the Baghdad school of al-Mufīd, al-Murtaḍā, and al-Ṭūsī, the idea that Shiism possessed one settled method for interpreting the Imams' reported speech begins to look much more like a later courtesy paid to the past than an accurate description of what these scholars were doing. The three men belonged to a recognizable intellectual lineage, worked with substantially overlapping texts, and played enormous roles in the history of Twelver legal thought, while disagreeing about how far the evidence of transmitted reports could carry the jurist. Their arguments deserve more attention than the claim that somebody simply found a perfect archive and handed its instructions to the faithful, since the disagreements show us the exact point at which inherited words became legal propositions requiring human judgment. [DI7-23]

Al-Mufīd, who died in 1022, approached the traditions within a wider discipline of theological and legal reasoning, arguing about the relation between reports and the foundations by which the religion could be known. His position was shaped by the world of Baghdad, where competing Sunni and Shiʿi schools, Muʿtazilī rationalists, and jurists attached to powerful families could dispute a point of law in terms that their opponents understood well enough to challenge. We have already seen the danger of making the word *Muʿtazilī* into a secret badge of somebody who has agreed to sabotage the Imamate, since a scholar can adopt another school's intellectual tools and direct them toward an entirely different conclusion. The more useful observation is that theology supplied arguments with which the authority of a transmitted report could be defended or questioned, and those arguments made it harder to treat a document as self-interpreting. [DI7-23]

Al-Murtaḍā pressed the question of certainty unusually hard. He was willing to discuss and interpret isolated reports, but resisted allowing the sort of solitary report which failed to produce knowledge to establish binding divine law. His position is a serious challenge to the convenient habit of saying that something must be obligatory because it appears in a respected book with a plausible chain, and I find it especially useful for the cases where the proposed rule deprives another person of consent or political freedom. A report whose attribution remains probable can still be historically interesting, perhaps offering a glimpse of a controversy circulating near the Imam's lifetime, without automatically possessing the evidentiary force required to command a girl into marriage or a citizen into obedience. [DI7-24]

His student al-Ṭūsī went on to defend the use of certain isolated reports under specified conditions, and the disagreement is remarkable because each man could appeal to what he understood as the established practice of the Imami community. In one generation, the earlier scholastic inheritance could be remembered through an

insistence upon certainty or through a more accommodating method that allowed jurists to work with a much larger body of traditions. That is the sort of historical disagreement a later institution is tempted to smooth away when it invokes the supposedly unanimous position of the ancestors. Once we look into the books, the ancestors are still arguing, and the reader should be allowed to hear them. [DI7-24]

Al-Ṭūsī's two great collections reveal something else about the transformation of hadith into law. *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* was organized as a commentary upon al-Mufīd's juristic work, while *al-Istibṣār* arranged reports around their apparent contradictions and offered ways to reconcile them, so that the compiler's intelligence was already at work before the later reader reached any particular narration. Robert Gleave has shown how the form of these early collections was shaped by the developing needs of jurisprudence, with hadith reports serving as material from which law could be reasoned rather than appearing as fully processed law themselves. The title on the cover may tell us that we are reading what the Imams said; the order of the chapters tells us which questions a jurist wanted those sayings to answer. [DI7-25]

Consider a dispute in which one report grants an adult woman agency and another grants her father the superior right to act. The collector decides where the reports appear, an interpreter asks whether their subject matter differs, a commentator grades the chains, and a judge announces which conclusion will control the marriage before him. The woman may be told that the Imam has settled the issue, although a substantial part of what determines her legal position is a sequence of identifiable scholarly decisions made long after the Imam's death. Those decisions can be skillful, humane, and deservedly influential. Their legitimacy is strongest when the parties who live under them may examine the reasoning and ask whether its assumptions have survived contact with their own circumstances.

I am tempted to call the resulting legal figure the *canonical Imam*, a character who appears in hundreds of chapters of jurisprudence with far more detailed answers than any one historical speaker could have delivered in a public lifetime. The phrase needs care, since the canon may preserve many authentic teachings and the scholar who reconciles them may be doing exactly what a responsible interpreter must. Yet a practical persona emerges from the combined operations of attribution, preservation, chapter arrangement, chain grading, comparison, and enforcement, so that the believer often encounters the Imam through a voice already assembled by generations of jurists. That is the voice whose manufacture this book is investigating, and its historical examination requires us to notice every human hand without pretending in advance that every hand was dishonest.

The expression *the Four Books* itself arrives remarkably late. *Al-Kāfī* by al-Kulaynī, *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh* by Ibn Bābawayh, and al-Ṭūsī's *Tahdhīb* and *Istibṣār* were compiled in the tenth and eleventh centuries, while Amin Ehteshami's work traces their collective classification into a privileged group through the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. A believer looking at a shelf of modern editions may think

the four works have always occupied one clearly marked place in the religious library, but the history of how that shelf came to be arranged is almost as interesting as the books themselves. When later institutions call a work foundational, they are giving us evidence of what they have chosen to teach, as well as making a claim about what the earlier authors intended. [DI7-05; DI7-25]

This history complicates the rather satisfying image of an Abbasid caliph sitting with a collection of disgraced Muʿtazilī scholars and asking them to invent a quietist Imam who would keep the population under control. We have found court-connected theologians with rationalist methods, real arguments about the authority of representatives, and political institutions that could benefit from a population trained to defer to scholars rather than raise a new banner. We have also found rationalist Imamis who rejected weakly supported reports, jurists who openly disagreed over the authority of isolated traditions, and a canon that acquired much of its collective prestige centuries after the Buyid moment. The surviving evidence currently favors an institutional history with multiple agents and repeated disputes over a direct story of central command. If the direct story is to be told as fact, somebody will have to produce the letters, appointments, payments, or specific textual manipulations that connect the named men to the alleged operation. [DI7-19; DI7-24; DI7-25]

The result has a human irony. The great scholars whose works later readers sometimes wield as if they were unanswerable authorities are among our best witnesses to the fact that the texts required argument, and some were quite unwilling to let a probable report substitute for certainty. A community can honor al-Ṭūsī's accomplishments without pretending that al-Murtaḍā never disagreed with him, and it can admire al-Mufīd's intellectual courage while preserving the right to challenge a legal inference he would have defended. The dignity of their scholarship is enhanced by examining the disagreements because it allows us to see accomplished minds working through problems whose answers were still genuinely at stake.

From the disputed Abbasid testament the documentary trail has carried us through the Buyid streets of Baghdad, the copying and reception of *al-Kāfī*, the disputed authority of fathers and judges, and the scholarly method that eventually produced a privileged collection of four books. The caliph who once claimed to rule by a transferred inheritance still sits at the edge of the story, although his more durable influence, where we can demonstrate it, appears through the institutions that changed how communities organized and interpreted their religious memory. The next portion of the book follows those institutions beyond Baghdad, where the methods of law and the philosophy of divine knowledge grew together until a jurist could present himself as the public guardian of a people whose Imam remained hidden.

PART V · THE PHILOSOPHER, THE JURIST, AND THE EMPTY THRONE

31 · The School That Dared to Correct Its Masters

Historians of Shiʿi law tell a curious story about the generations after al-Ṭūsī, the enormously influential scholar whose collections brought us to the end of the previous chapter. His authority grew so great, according to later accounts, that other jurists almost forgot how to disagree with him, until Ibn Idrīs al-Ḥillī appeared and began disputing positions that had acquired the dignity of settled truth. The story has probably become tidier with repetition, as stories about the brave dissenter and the school that had lost its nerve tend to do, yet it catches something important about the way a religious tradition can treat the words of a brilliant man once enough students have organized their education around them. It also gives us a useful starting point for the next question, because a community that is trying to preserve the speech of an absent, infallible Imam must decide what it is going to do when its very fallible scholars disagree. [DI8-01]

We watched that disagreement unfold at the center of the medieval Imāmī legal world. Al-Murtaḍā demanded a severe account of what could be known from isolated reports, while his student al-Ṭūsī developed a more accommodating method for using particular transmitted reports in law; the scholar who assembled a collection and the scholar who interpreted it could each believe himself faithful to the Imams while reaching different conclusions about the permission a text gave him. Their differences survived inside a tradition that eventually presented both as towering authorities. That leaves the believer in a curious position. He has inherited a theology of unique guidance, surrounded by an archive of human judgments about precisely where that guidance is to be found, and the student who refuses to distinguish the two is liable to mistake the accumulated dignity of scholarship for the infallibility of its object.

The city of al-Ḥilla, in southern Iraq, offers a particularly good place to watch the problem develop. Aun Hasan Ali's study of the School of Hillah reconstructs the families, teaching relationships, books, and patronage arrangements that sustained the jurists from the later Abbasid era into the period following Mongol rule, and his portrait is one of a tradition held together through sustained debate, much of it conducted by people who possessed a strong sense of belonging to the same religious community. It is an important correction to the fantasy of a single authority issuing commands down an unbroken chain of obedient disciples, since the social reality was a network of scholars arguing over how an inherited claim could be made convincing to a competent reader. Sometimes a school survives because a student has the impudence to tell his teacher that the proof is defective. [DI8-01]

Ibn Idrīs, who died in 1202, is remembered for challenging the authority of al-Ṭūsī and for insisting upon an account of legal reasoning that would permit a fresh examination of the sources. Whatever the exaggerations in the familiar story of an age of imitation, his reputation reminds us that an inherited verdict could be reopened from within the tradition. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī, who died in 1277, then helped give Imāmī law a durable organization, presenting rulings in forms that later jurists could consult, contest, and enlarge, while his nephew and student al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī, who died in 1325, moved through an intellectual world in which philosophical reasoning, transmitted material, and the politics of an Ilkhanid court were in active conversation. We can recognize in these men a formidable culture of learning, and we should be able to recognize it without pretending that the construction of a learned school brought the Hidden Imam himself back into the classroom. [DI8-01; DI8-02]

Al-ʿAllāma's connection with the court of Öljeitü is especially attractive to a writer suspicious of religious authority, since courts and theologians have a long and often profitable acquaintance with one another, although it would be a mistake to treat a jurist's appearance near a ruler as evidence that his every argument was written on royal instructions. Patronage might place books in the hands of students who would otherwise never have seen them. It could also reward a scholar whose conclusions made political life easier for the man paying the bills. The historian must work out which of those things happened in the case at hand, using documents and the chronology of actual relationships, because the same institutional arrangement can contain scholarship of high quality and a pressure to reach comfortable conclusions.

A great deal turns on how we understand *ijtihād*. The word is often introduced to English readers as independent reasoning, which is useful as far as it goes, although in this setting it names a disciplined form of legal effort whose practitioners argue about the sources, rules of inference, and professional competence that make a judgment responsible. The jurist becomes a necessary interpreter when a community faces problems on which its transmitted authorities offer incomplete or conflicting guidance. I can see the attraction of calling that a noble occupation; when a report attributed to an Imam appears to require the marriage of a person who cannot give meaningful consent, somebody ought to examine both the evidence for the report and the reasoning by which it has been made to carry that demand. The trouble begins when the expert's very responsibility to interpret is turned into a claim that his answer has the Imam's own immunity from criticism.

The al-Ḥilla jurists bring a genuine complication to the accusation around which this book is organized. If the entire history of Shiʿi law were a caliphal project to make obedient followers of the Imams, we might expect the resulting tradition to have given relatively little room to learned people who freely criticized its greatest doctors. Instead the archive preserves a remarkable density of argument, including disputes about the very methods by which the archive may be used, and the disagreements cannot be made to disappear because one wished the case against later authority were

simpler. A successful investigation ought to grow more difficult as the evidence improves. Otherwise one is writing a sermon against somebody else's sermons.

By the fifteenth century, however, another circumstance had appeared. The jurist might be asked what to do when the Imam was absent, and a family might choose to accept his answer, but what happened when a ruling dynasty wanted a public religion in which thousands of communities could be governed, prayers organized, revenue collected, and appointments made through something resembling a national clerical administration? An old debate about the qualifications of an interpreter would suddenly have a practical value that al-Murtaḍā and Ibn Idrīs could scarcely have ignored, because the office whose holder was allowed to speak on the Imam's behalf might also become the office through which a shah proposed to govern. In Persia the distinction between interpreting an absent leader and representing him was about to be examined by men with considerably more at stake than a student's reputation in a seminary.

32 · The Shah Who Appointed the Imam's Deputy

The Safavids present us with a splendid imperial paradox. A dynasty that had emerged from a religious movement with a striking charismatic inheritance set about making Twelver Shiism the public religion of a kingdom, and in order to govern this kingdom it required the assistance of scholars who could explain the rights and limits of a ruler during the absence of the Twelfth Imam. The shah had armies and officials, while the jurists possessed a language in which his commands might be given a more venerable ancestry. Each could help the other with a problem that conquest alone had failed to solve, although that arrangement was liable to make the question of who was appointing whom wonderfully awkward. [DI8-03]

The story of ʿAlī al-Karakī, a scholar originally from the Jabal ʿĀmil region of the Levant, allows us to examine the awkwardness through documents rather than through the great abstractions of Safavid ideology. Al-Karakī travelled in Iran, taught the Jaʿfarī legal tradition, and acquired influence in the reign of Shah Ṭahmāsp; on 9 July 1533, a royal decree identified him as the deputy of the Hidden Imam and gave him exceptional authority in the religious life of the state. That phrase deserves a moment's attention, since it was an appointment from a reigning monarch to an office whose spiritual legitimacy was supposed to come from an Imam whom the monarch could neither present to the court nor consult in the ordinary way. [DI8-04]

The court had plausible practical reasons for these arrangements. A ruler interested in ordering public life according to Shiʿi law needed qualified people to decide what the law required, and the jurist who already believed the community required guidance during the occultation could reasonably prefer an orderly

administration to a succession of arbitrary military governors. Al-Karakī was a formidable scholar who supplied such a program, writing about land revenue, the administration of religious offices, and the obligation of Friday prayer; his work offers a clear instance of legal reasoning being placed in the service of a new political order. The particular question for us is how that service came to acquire a title which appeared to make him the representative of a sacred leader. If the shah could issue the decree, why was the authority described as belonging to the Imam? If the Imam supplied the appointment, what constituted evidence of it? [DI8-04; DI8-05]

One of the strongest passages in the historical record involves the Friday prayer, a ritual whose public organization seems a harmless subject until one notices that the prayer leader occupied a position which could make the political order visible every week. Earlier jurists had disagreed about the validity of conducting the full Friday service during the occultation, because the Imam's presence or authorization was understood by some to be required. Al-Karakī argued for the competence of a qualified jurist to act in the missing Imam's place, although the exact obligation to attend was itself subject to distinctions which the scholarship records. In towns and villages, appointments could now express the new religious order through a visible pattern of regular worship. The result was an institutional claim about delegated authority embodied in the act of gathering people for prayer. [DI8-05; DI8-06]

His contemporaries did what learned men so often do when presented with a bold enlargement of somebody else's jurisdiction: they objected. Ibrāhīm al-Qaṭīfī disputed aspects of al-Karakī's position on the Friday prayer, on the legitimacy of receiving payments tied to royal land revenue, and on the scholar's relationship with the ruler. Others regarded the prayer as impermissible during the absence of the Imam, while some accepted its practice under carefully specified conditions. The disagreement had consequences for appointments and for money, which is why an account of it as a vague collision of mystical temperaments would miss most of its interest. If the state collected the tax and a jurist accepted the proceeds, his signature could do something to the public understanding of the state itself. [DI8-05; DI8-06]

And then, as if the subject had been designed for a book called *Dark Imams*, a forged letter appeared. According to the historical account summarized in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, opponents circulated a document attributing insults against Shah Ṭahmāsp to al-Karakī, thereby inviting the ruler to reconsider the favor he had shown his religious deputy. The shah investigated; a former associate who had turned against al-Karakī was implicated and banished. The precise contours of guilt follow the chronicles that report the affair, and the episode should be read at that level, but here at least we have a case in which the fabrication of words is part of the recorded political struggle. The document was designed to make a living scholar say something to his patron that he had not said. [DI8-05]

The episode deserves attention because the mechanics are recognizable from our earlier hadith cases, despite the obvious difference between forged political

correspondence and the attribution of sacred speech. A message is given an author whose authority or reputation makes it consequential; it is delivered to an audience with a reason to care; its effect depends upon who is entitled to certify the authorship. The forged letter is the sort of small, traceable operation that historians are entitled to describe as such. The enormously larger proposal that scholars manufactured an entire quietist Imamate for the Abbasids would require comparable evidence on a vastly greater scale, including the relevant texts and the people responsible for altering them.

The Safavid controversy also supplies a useful antidote to the idea that all the old jurists quietly agreed about political deference. An advocate of a more substantial clerical office could read the demands of the occultation in one way, while his contemporary argued that the same absence made certain privileges unavailable. Both claimed fidelity to the Imams. In the meantime, the shah's government preferred a system able to appoint preachers and judges, collect revenue, and make the kingdom's religious character comprehensible to subjects who had been accustomed to a variety of local practices. Real administrative problems created a strong incentive to settle difficult theological questions in an administratively useful fashion. [DI8-03]

I have been calling the caliph a possible Dark Imam because he could acquire power over religious interpretation while outwardly honoring those he represented. Here the subject is a shah, and the documents permit us to identify the political mechanism more precisely: an extraordinary jurist is named deputy of an invisible Imam by a visible ruler, and his authority travels through offices the ruler recognizes. The scholar may believe sincerely that his doctrine protects the community, while his critic may sincerely fear that sacred jurisdiction is being borrowed for a worldly crown. We have every reason to read what both men wrote before deciding which concern was better founded. The scandal is not that religion once entered politics. In this case the question is which office supplied permission for the other, and whether anyone outside their circle could test the answer.

As the Safavid court acquired a more elaborate intellectual culture, another line of inheritance entered the same city. Philosophers and theologians gathered around problems that were not about taxes or the right to lead prayer, and their arguments eventually reached a thinker who would take the idea of learning as an act that changes the knower to extraordinary lengths. Before entering his classroom, however, we should follow a collection of defeated theologians whose manuscripts had survived farther from the great Persian court, in libraries kept by a community that belonged to another branch of the Shiʿi family.

33 · The Library of the Defeated

After following the Muʿtazilī scholars through Abbasid and Buyid courts, one may think their story has reached its end. A theologian quarrels with his patron, a school loses its privileged position, and the victors proceed to explain in their own books why the defeated men had always been unsound. The account would fit much of what we know about imperial religion, and the Muʿtazila had supplied enough arguments about the nature of the Qurʾan, the justice of God, and the capacity of human reason to keep their enemies busy for centuries. Yet the story takes a rather unexpected turn, because a large part of what modern historians can read of their work survived in the care of Zaydī Muslims, especially in Yemen, and of Jewish communities whose scholars also engaged in rational theology. The defendants had lost much of their original public standing, while their books continued to lead complicated lives. [DI8-07]

Sabine Schmidtke's reconstruction makes the survival quite concrete. The sack of Rayy in 1029 under Maḥmūd of Ghazna damaged the libraries and communities which had supported rationalist learning there, while networks extending through the Zaydīs of northern Iran and eventually Yemen helped preserve later Muʿtazilī writings. In the thirteenth century, books moved between Zaydī communities in Iran and Yemen as part of a broader transfer of scholarship, and the materials recovered in modern times include works of pupils and intellectual descendants of Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār. The great *al-Mughnī*, whose title promises an ample account of divine unity and justice, survived in a form that made serious modern scholarship possible. Other parts of the tradition reached us through paraphrases, later criticisms, and manuscript witnesses whose chains of dependence historians still have to reconstruct. [DI8-07]

I find the arrangement almost too pleasing, given the theory that has brought us this far. A rationalist movement associated at various times with caliphal intellectual patronage finds an archive in the custody of a Shiʿi community whose political theology insisted that an Imam ought to rise publicly against injustice when the conditions of rightful leadership were met. If somebody wished to construct a story in which the Muʿtazila were merely the technicians of political quietism, this would be a remarkably inconvenient place for their writings to wash up. The inconvenience is welcome. We cannot establish a genealogy of sabotage by noticing a court connection and then discard a second connection when it leads to men who had very different opinions about obedience.

The earlier chapter on Qāḍī Jaʿfar provided a still more practical reason for attending to the survival of these books. Scott Lucas has traced the jurist's use and adaptation of Muʿtazilī legal reasoning in the Zaydī milieu, including the adjustment of an argument about consensus so that the agreement of the Prophet's family could acquire a distinctive place in the construction of legal authority. That is a textual alteration which scholars can point to, rather than an imagined conversation behind

palace curtains. Yet it belongs to a Zaydī doctrinal project with its own requirements, and its author worked in the twelfth century, long after the dismissal of the celebrated Buyid judge whose school provided part of the intellectual inheritance. The fact that one scholar borrowed from another does not put them in a single administrative office. [DI8-08]

The detail matters because names themselves can become a trap in this field. Abū Hāshim, the son of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, belonged to the early succession disputes we encountered when the Abbasids were gathering supporters. Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī, the Muʿtazilī theologian who died in the tenth century, was a different man living centuries later, whose ideas entered the sophisticated debates about divine attributes, human action, and the nature of existence. Treating the two as one would supply a fantastically convenient connection from the early Alid movement to the most developed machinery of rationalist theology, and an author careless enough to make it could probably produce three chapters of gorgeous nonsense before a reader who knew the dates stopped him. The names can legitimately belong in the same inquiry, since their communities and later admirers may have shared intellectual interests, but the historical link has to be made through witnesses which bridge the intervening generations. [DI8-09]

What survives of the rationalists is more intriguing than the caricature of a group that tried to replace revelation with philosophy. These scholars asked what divine justice implies for human responsibility, whether a person can be held answerable for an act he could not avoid, and how to understand the language that describes God without multiplying eternal beings alongside Him. Their answers varied, sometimes sharply, and many regarded disciplined argument as an obligation of religion rather than a secular import. One can disagree with a conclusion and still see that the argument was written by people who believed truth mattered enough to risk the displeasure of their friends. The surviving documents also remind us that a book described in an opponent's polemic as a triumph of sophistry may contain an unexpectedly lucid account of the opponent's own theological difficulty.

This raises a more delicate question about the hadith archive. If a jurist has learned to distinguish between the wording of a report, the claim of its transmitter, and the operation by which a legal conclusion is extracted from it, can reason improve the fidelity with which the Imam's teaching is carried forward? I think it can, and the Qurʾan's insistence that human beings consider, compare, and understand what is before them gives that hope a religious basis. The danger arises when the interpreter's reason is promoted into a privilege that the community is expected to accept simply because a recognized expert has exercised it. The rationalist who argues that a decision needs reasons may inadvertently provide the professional vocabulary through which later authorities claim that the reasons are too technical for anyone else to examine.

A reader who has followed the Zaydī books through the dispute over the rights of a young woman to refuse a marriage will appreciate why this is more than a scholarly

quarrel. The laws of guardianship produce consequences for the body and future of a person who has rarely been asked which school of legal epistemology she would prefer, and the mere appearance of a report in an esteemed collection cannot tell us whether a later conclusion fairly expresses its content. A school that argues over analogical reasoning, communal consensus, and chains of transmission is at least giving us the equipment with which to test the claim. Whether the equipment is used impartially is a question of conduct, and conduct must be examined through cases in which the preferred authority receives the same scrutiny as his rival.

The preservation of defeated theology thus turns out to be a rather remarkable act of fidelity to the possibilities of reason. There were moments when one government favored a scholar, other moments when a different army destroyed his school, and long stretches during which a distant library quietly preserved a text because its custodians believed there was something worth learning from it. The political fortunes of the author and the intellectual value of the argument moved on different schedules. This is the sort of history which makes me suspicious of accounts that reduce a religious tradition to the intentions of the ruler whose name appears at the top of its chronicle.

Having followed the books east to Yemen, we can now turn west, where Arabic philosophical works entered the Latin world and became part of the intellectual property of people who disagreed about nearly everything the original authors had believed. If a caliph could take a theological inheritance and use it to justify a throne, a university could take a philosopher's argument and use it to remake an account of God, the soul, and the obligations of the mind. At least here we possess translated texts through which the transfer can be observed. It would be useful to demand the same kind of evidence from every claimed secret chain of initiation that later turns up in this book.

34 · A Book Crosses the Language Barrier

At the beginning of this investigation we had a will said to have been conveyed in the last days of an Alid claimant, passed through generations of historical writing until it could serve as the explanation for a dynasty's right to rule. We could ask who was present and who repeated the story, though we were obliged to concede that the original event might never be recovered. The transmission of Arabic philosophy into Latin Christianity gives us a more agreeable class of evidence, because the books can sometimes be placed on both sides of the language barrier, and we can watch a later reader alter a proposition that had been written by a predecessor whose name he actually knew. [DI8-10]

In twelfth-century Toledo, the translator Dominicus Gundissalinus worked in the company of the scholar whom Latin sources call Avendauth on the Latin rendering

of Avicenna's *De anima*, part of the enormous philosophical project now known as the *Book of Healing*. These were working intellectuals, interested in the problem of how the soul knows, what the intellect does, and why Aristotle's account required the expansion that Avicenna was prepared to give it. Other translators, among them Gerard of Cremona, brought substantial portions of Greek and Arabic science and philosophy into the Latin world, while Michael Scot later assisted the circulation of Averroes's commentaries. We can dispute particular attributions or reconstruct particular translators' careers; the actual passage of texts into a new scholarly language remains a well-attested historical process. [DI8-10]

I can imagine the attraction of watching a metaphysical system cross a religious boundary in a room where two scholars are arguing over the best Latin word for an Arabic concept. The translator cannot simply replace every term with a convenient dictionary equivalent, because the philosophical question is already embedded in the relation of one term to another. Existence, essence, necessity, intellect, and cause arrive bearing centuries of argument, and a Latin theologian who uses the words in his own proof is doing more than importing a piece of eastern decoration. The translated text has become part of a new conversation, in which the author may become famous while his original assumptions are contested sentence by sentence.

Thomas Aquinas supplies a beautiful example of this kind of serious inheritance. The distinction between what a thing is and the fact that it exists, developed by Avicenna in a particular metaphysical setting, became part of the Latin debates over essence and existence, in which Aquinas worked out his own account of created being and the cause of existence. These arguments involved Aristotle, Christian theology, and several Arabic and Jewish philosophers, so a claim that Thomas copied one Muslim teacher and thereby received an uninterrupted chain of sacred knowledge would miss both the originality of his reasoning and the visible disputes in which he was engaged. The influence is more interesting because it is traceable. We can name the books and then examine what the new writer did with them. [DI8-11]

Aquinas's engagement with Averroes is especially instructive for anyone attracted to grand stories about a secret philosophical concord of civilization. Averroes's commentaries offered Latin readers powerful arguments about Aristotle and the intellect, and Aquinas addressed them with the seriousness one gives to an opponent whose conclusions could affect the whole structure of one's thought. He could learn from the same body of Arabic scholarship while rejecting a theory of intellect he regarded as incompatible with the intellectual life of individual human persons. The encounter is visible in writing, which makes the dispute much richer than a declaration that Islam and Christianity share a hidden doctrine descended from a single master. We learn more from watching where the transmission breaks into disagreement.

Then there is the *Liber de causis*, a work long received in Latin as part of the Aristotelian inheritance, whose relation to Proclus's *Elements of Theology* became

clear to Aquinas after a Latin translation of Proclus became available. Here is another of those deliciously instructive moments in which a distinguished name on a manuscript proves less secure than the underlying ideas, and the reader who recognizes the attribution problem can continue to examine the propositions without feeling obliged to defend the old label. The history of the book is a small argument for the intellectual morality I have tried to apply to hadith: a text's worth and the reliability of the name written above it are distinct questions, and a famous attribution may do significant work in establishing authority long before somebody notices that it needs checking. [DI8-12]

The Latin schools were hardly havens of perfect freedom, and the movement of texts across religious boundaries involved censorship, controversy, and accusations against philosophers who seemed to threaten established doctrines. The very existence of those disputes, however, complicates the idea that the translators were carrying a single approved message from an earlier master into a new civilization. A philosopher entered a school and became an argument. An argument was answered, adapted, and occasionally condemned. The route remained open because people continued to find questions in these books that they could not simply dismiss.

I should say what this detour can establish for the claim that Alid teaching exercised a long influence on later religious philosophy. There are intellectual affinities worth examining among the languages of divine unity, the perfect guide, the hierarchy of intellect, and the formation of human knowledge. Some forms of transmission between Islamic and Christian thought are demonstrable through named texts and translators, while the early genealogical connections reaching back to an Alid classroom are often much less secure. The fact that we can follow Avicenna into a Latin discussion does not prove that an Imam secretly founded the entire tradition from which his system arose. It gives us a method for examining the possibility of influence when evidence is available, and that is considerably more useful than a universal genealogy which cannot specify a single missing intermediary.

The same question returns when we follow the philosophical tradition back into Safavid Iran. There a scholar would attempt to unite the concerns of metaphysics, scripture, and spiritual practice in an account of the intellect that treats knowing as a transformation of the person who knows. His teachers can be named, his books survive, and his interpretation of transmitted Imāmī teachings offers a particularly intimate view of philosophy moving through the hadith collection itself. The philosopher is Mullā Ṣadrā, and his project raises a question I find more exciting than the discovery of an ancient secret order. What if a man could become a better judge of truth by changing the habits of his own mind, and what would that improvement entitle him to do to somebody who remained unconvinced?

35 · The Philosopher Who Changed His Reader

When I first encountered Mullā Ṣadrā, I had the feeling that I had arrived at the point where the philosophy of knowledge was beginning to consume the scholar himself. Most writers on reason ask what a person can know, how an argument ought to proceed, or what kinds of error a disciplined intellect might learn to avoid. Ṣadrā asks us to consider a much stranger possibility, that knowing is itself a kind of becoming, so that the soul which genuinely understands an object has undergone a transformation which cannot be described as the simple addition of another entry to a mental catalogue. This is an ambitious proposition, and it offers something unusually relevant to a book concerned with the authority of inherited speech: if a reader changes through the act of understanding, then the transmission of knowledge involves the formation of character, not merely the delivery of another sentence from a revered source. [DI8-13]

His life also brings us back to Isfahan, where the Safavid court and its wider religious society sustained a remarkable concentration of scholarly activity. The evidence for Ṣadrā's education is more personal than the usual procession of names in a medieval biographical dictionary. A literary collection known as the *Jung-i Qazvin* contains notes associated with Mīr Dāmād, Shaykh Bahā'ī, and their student Ṣadrā, including autograph material and affectionate references to the younger thinker. Mīr Dāmād called him his spiritual son, while Shaykh Bahā'ī addressed him in a fashion suggesting an intellectually intimate relationship, and the collection allows us to glimpse the warmth of a scholarly household through the formal vocabulary of its learning. There are limits to what these notes can establish about a complete curriculum, but the people knew one another, and the surviving writing gives the connection a substance that genealogies of secret teaching usually lack. [DI8-13]

Mīr Dāmād belonged to a family linked to the jurist al-Karakī, which makes the intellectual setting especially interesting after our account of the shah who recognized an absent Imam's deputy. The descendents of a scholarly world concerned with public offices and religious law were also producing metaphysics, poetry, and theories of the soul, while one of their most famous students set out to bring the concerns of philosophy into a direct engagement with scripture. Those traditions did not remain sealed in separate rooms. A man might study legal texts with one teacher and Aristotle through Arabic commentaries with another, and then discover that the problem of what it means to know God appeared in both conversations under different names.

Ṣadrā's *Four Journeys* became the great literary monument of what is called transcendent philosophy, and its title suggests that an account of metaphysics can also be understood as an itinerary of transformation. The language of the journeys has tempted more than one reader to treat the work as a manual for climbing through mystical ranks, although its arguments are sufficiently technical to satisfy

anyone who believes philosophers should occasionally earn their salaries by making a person concentrate. At the heart of his system lies the priority of existence, the thought that the actuality of being cannot be reduced to a collection of conceptual categories through which we classify the things around us. What changes, and the kinds of being to which change belongs, become central questions. [DI8-14]

His doctrine of substantial motion offers a particularly rich way of thinking about a human life. Change occurs at a deeper level than the alteration of a surface property, and the soul's intellectual development belongs within that wider metaphysical account of a reality in motion. The union of the knower and the known, which Ṣadrā defends through philosophical argument, is readily abused when detached from the qualifications of its own system, since one might begin with the observation that understanding changes a person and end by assuring everybody that the enlightened man has become identical with whatever he understands. We need to read the specific propositions before deciding which form of union is being claimed. There is a genuine philosophical question here, and the temptation to turn it into a credential of sacred office is a temptation with a much weaker argument behind it.

The connection to the hadith tradition is direct. Ṣadrā wrote a commentary on the *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, which puts his philosophical voice into conversation with the text whose transmission and later legal uses have occupied so much of this book. He was a reader of the Imams rather than merely a philosopher working on a parallel set of Greek problems. His interpretation can bring the language of inner knowledge, spirit, and the ranks of intellect to a report which another scholar might have approached through the chain of narrators or its legal implications, and the comparison reveals how much depends upon what a later reader is prepared to do with the text. The name of the Imam remains on the page; the method by which the sentence is made meaningful has acquired a new history. [DI8-13; DI8-14]

A critic of hadith corruption needs particular care at this point. A philosopher's commentary can introduce meanings the original speaker never intended, and every confident metaphysical interpretation deserves scrutiny for that possibility. It can also expose an assumption that earlier readers imported without noticing, or show how a report's vocabulary connects with a serious account of divine knowledge. We are entitled to ask what evidence bears the interpretation, whose words supply the key premise, and where a reader is being asked to accept a conclusion because of the interpreter's reputation. The important event is the argument, which should remain available for a future mind to examine, improve, or reject.

Consider the case of a jurist who believes that his learning makes him better qualified to determine a difficult marriage dispute, and suppose that a philosopher has shown how serious learning can transform the habits of judgment. The jurist might become more patient and attentive through that study, which would be a considerable benefit to everybody who comes before him. Yet the further claim that his superior intellectual formation authorizes him to overrule the will of a person

affected by the judgment requires a legal and moral justification of its own. The ideal of a perfected knower may help us describe why expertise matters. It cannot substitute for an account of who entrusted that expert with the power to impose a decision on somebody else.

In this respect Ṣadrā belongs to the brighter inheritance that the book has been following, the tradition in which an Alid or Qur'anic account of guidance is joined to the cultivated ability to reason and to become better through understanding. I am attracted to that inheritance, and have little interest in hiding the attraction behind an academic pose of perfect indifference. The work of historical criticism begins when we refuse to turn attraction into an exemption from evidence. If I like a passage in Ṣadrā, I must still ask what he was commenting on, whether the earlier report deserves its attribution, and where his metaphysics enters the interpretation. Loving a teacher may give a person the patience to read him carefully; it does not absolve the reader of the obligation to discover when the teacher was wrong.

The next case concerns a different kind of transformation, in which the Imam himself becomes an extraordinary figure in texts that place the Face, the Eye, and the Tongue of God in the language of human guidance. Some of those accounts can be read through the idea of a dependent servant who manifests divine teaching, while others demand powers and forms of assent which place the reader under an immense theological pressure. Their collector, al-Majlisī, was a towering figure in the later Safavid hadith world, and his enormous anthology supplies exactly the sort of archive in which the reader needs to know when a compiler is quoting, when he is commenting, and when somebody else has put a voice into the Imam's mouth.

36 · The Face That Appeared in the Book

A saying attributed to ʿAlī presents him as the Face of God, the Eye of God, and the Tongue through which divine guidance is disclosed, accompanied by claims so extraordinary that a reader may find himself wondering whether he has left a book of sayings and entered a cosmology. The language is preserved within the material known as the *Nūrāniyya* report, part of the larger tradition of luminous accounts of the Imam, and I think the first duty of anyone approaching it is to understand why such language could have been meaningful to believers who also insisted upon the absolute unity of Allah. The report contains an explicit claim of servanthood, which prevents the critic from disposing of the whole text by declaring that it simply calls a man an independent deity. Its other propositions remain subject to examination, including the claims about the reach of the Imam's knowledge and the extraordinary acts attributed to him. [DI8-15]

The same difficulty appears in the religious writing that first led me here. In the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks of the Father being made known through him; the

Qur'an presents Jesus performing signs by Allah's permission; and Shi'i writings use language of divine guidance disclosed through particular human beings. These texts offer materials for a serious account of dependent agency, in which a servant can make the will of God manifest without becoming another God beside Him. The analogy becomes dangerously convenient, however, when a reader begins to treat every marvelous claim in a later report as established by the mere possibility that God could have granted such a power. Allah's power to grant an extraordinary gift cannot establish that a particular attributed document accurately describes the recipient and the extent of the gift. An attribution needs witnesses. [DI8-15]

Al-Majlisī's great *Biḥār al-anwār* is a suitable place to begin the textual investigation because he provides some information about the books from which the luminous report was recovered. In the introduction to the relevant passage he describes his father's encounter with the account in an old collection of traditions about ʿAlī, and then reports finding the material in another old book. That is a provenance claim worth recording, although the word *old* is of no great help in dating the underlying composition when the owners and manuscript histories are insufficiently identified. Two old books might represent two lines of transmission. They might also be copies descended from the same source, in which case their apparent agreement would provide less independence than the reader imagines. The question has to be settled by examining the witnesses, their wording, and their relation to one another. [DI8-15]

One reason these luminous accounts interest me is that the argument can become circular at the very moment a believer is being asked to accept the most astonishing propositions. The text makes recognition of ʿAlī's elevated reality a mark of complete faith, and some clauses apply severe theological consequences to those who refuse the claims being advanced. A reader who asks how the report can be attributed to ʿAlī then appears, within the report's own logic, to have demonstrated his deficiency by asking. This is the precise point at which a disputed voice begins to protect itself from examination through the very authority it is attempting to establish. We saw a more prosaic version of the mechanism when a legal attribution was used to settle an argument over the rights of a guardian; here the prize is the reader's understanding of divine knowledge and the conditions of faith. [DI8-16]

It would be unfair to suggest that al-Majlisī himself never recognized the need for distinctions. His discussions engage the contested category of *ghulūw*, the accusation of excessive elevation of the Imams, and he is aware that theologians disagreed over which extraordinary properties should count as dangerous exaggeration. He also gives caveats concerning material attributed to al-Bursī and other sources, with a policy of retaining reports under stated conditions rather than treating every discovered page as equally secure. His anthology is valuable partly because these decisions remain visible. The compiler, the earlier book, and the speaker described inside a report are three voices which an incautious reader can easily compress into one. The result is an

Imam whose assertions may owe as much to the habits of later collectors and interpreters as to anything the historical man said. [DI8-15; DI8-16]

The dispute over the Face of God also deserves treatment as a theological question in its own right. One report understands the divine Face through a succession of mortal bearers of guidance, a reading which makes the language of continuity intelligible without requiring that a human being cease to be created. Another account describes a created Spirit whose assistance accompanies the Prophet and the Imams, while a nearby passage draws a distinction that complicates easy identification of every Qur'anic reference to the Spirit with the same being in the same role. The original research manuscript preserves the Arabic points and the reported grades, including a translation issue in which a negative was lost in an English rendering. I would rather preserve that awkward negative than obtain a beautiful theological harmony by permitting a mistranslation to make it for me. [DI8-17]

Another report about the Greatest Name assigns letters and degrees of knowledge in a symbolic scheme, granting extraordinary access to the Imams while reserving one part for God. Such passages can carry a meaningful account of creaturely dependence, and a reader may find in them an attempt to express the distance between divine knowledge and the knowledge granted to even the most excellent servant. They do not thereby authorize the astonishing practice of calculating the proportion of omniscience supposedly possessed by a mortal person, as if the divine mystery were a family business in which shareholders held a fixed number of units. The manuscript's report register records a *majhūl* grade for the selected version, which is another reason to keep the text's possible theological meaning distinct from confidence in its historical attribution. [DI8-17]

The more consequential problem arrives when exaltation enters the law. If a narrator says that obedience to a particular Imam is the condition of faith, a later interpreter must explain how the person affected by the rule can determine whether the statement is authentic and whether the claimed obligation reaches the matter being decided. If the interpreter can answer every difficulty by invoking the perfection of the speaker, while resting the knowledge of that speaker's exact words on the interpreter's own judgment, the route back to the historical source has become alarmingly narrow. I do not need to conclude that every reader who makes such a claim is acting in bad faith. The mechanism has a life of its own. Sincere piety can make an institution dependent upon a particular form of textual authority, and dependency often survives long after the people who first benefited from it have left the scene.

We should also take care with the category of the *ghulāt*, whose surviving texts and descriptions come to us through a history of disputed classifications. A sectarian opponent might describe as divinization what another community understood as created and dependent assistance, while a text that explicitly removes an obligation of prayer or grants a human being ultimate independence from God is making a

proposition which deserves to be assessed on its own terms. The original manuscript's source register identifies modern scholarship on early traditions classified as excessive, and it properly leaves portions of the manuscript history open pending closer collation. A title given to a group by its adversaries is evidence of a controversy. It is not a substitute for reading the sentences that provoked it.

The broader case against fabricated hadith will stand or fall on the same discipline. We can recover the words in a printed edition, identify its compiler, inspect what earlier books he says he consulted, and ask where the chains or manuscript relationships permit a more precise conclusion. We can then read the theology with sympathy, including the parts that connect with our own convictions, and reject the use of the report as its own certificate of authenticity. A claim about the Imam's luminous knowledge does not make the method of determining that claim infallible. The historical Imam remains the person we are trying to hear; the intermediary who attributes the luminous discourse to him must answer questions like everybody else.

Al-Majlisī died in 1700, by which time the Safavid world had furnished a dense set of institutions for collecting, teaching, and disputing Imāmī texts. The next century would give the argument over expert interpretation an increasingly public character, and the struggle between Akhbārīs and Uṣūlīs would help establish a form of learned authority capable of commanding enormous loyalty without occupying a throne. The author of a hadith collection could influence the boundaries of permissible belief; the jurist who decided which reports governed conduct could become a source to whom distant communities turned for their obligations. What interested the Safavid shah as an office of deputation would eventually appear in a different form, one sustained by students, donations, correspondents, and the remarkable confidence that a particular scholar was the most competent living guide to the law.

37 · The Scholar Who Could Stop a Kingdom

By the late nineteenth century, a Shiʿi scholar living in the Iraqi town of Sāmarrāʾ could issue a religious instruction that helped bring a Persian king's lucrative commercial arrangement to grief, even though the scholar commanded no army, held no cabinet office, and lived beyond the ruler's ordinary jurisdiction. The episode is usually told as the story of the tobacco boycott, and it is certainly that, but for our purposes it is also an extraordinary demonstration of what had become possible during a thousand years of argument about the absent Imam. A jurist's authority, once established through reputation, teachers, disciples, and the allegiance of believers in places he might never visit, could move through correspondence into the markets and homes of an entire kingdom. If one is looking for the moment when the old question of who speaks for the Imam becomes a political force without the appointment of a caliph, this is an excellent place to begin. [DI8-18]

The institution later known as *marjaʿiyya* developed through disputes that were neither simple nor tranquil. The Akhbārī scholar Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarābādī, writing in the early seventeenth century, argued for an approach to Imāmī authority that gave decisive weight to received reports and challenged forms of juristic reasoning which he believed had acquired a place they did not deserve. His critics insisted that the reports themselves required careful interpretation, because apparently incompatible texts and changing circumstances made some form of competent judgment unavoidable. The eighteenth-century struggle associated with Muḥammad Bāqir al-Bihbahānī helped the Uṣūlī position gain predominance in important scholarly centers, and the controversy sometimes turned vicious enough for its partisans to move from the denunciation of bad arguments to the denunciation of their authors. I have seen enough scholarly communities, religious and secular, to regard that transition as a depressingly familiar hazard of being certain one has discovered the correct method. [DI8-19]

The word *marjaʿ* identifies a source to whom believers turn for guidance, while *taqlīd* refers to their reliance upon qualified juristic judgment. The scholar's task is conventionally distinguished from the work of an ordinary believer who lacks the training to conduct independent legal inference, and the question of which jurist is the most knowledgeable can become consequential when the community accepts that his opinion should be followed. There is good sense in seeking a competent practitioner rather than improvising one's own jurisprudence from fragments of texts read on a telephone, just as a patient should generally prefer a capable physician to the assurance of a stranger who has seen several interesting videos about the human body. Yet expertise introduces a second responsibility, because the practitioner must be able to explain what falls within his competence and what kind of permission follows from it. The source of guidance is not necessarily the holder of every imaginable jurisdiction.

Shaykh Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī, who died in 1864, occupies an important place in the modern story of the most learned living jurist, with scholars describing his career as a formative moment in the transregional institution of marjaʿiyya. His writings gave legal reasoning a demanding technical form, and the networks of students and correspondents associated with the great Iraqi centers helped opinions travel far beyond the room in which they were formulated. This history should be told without inventing a single uncontested ceremony by which the entire community appointed one religious sovereign. Recognition could be dispersed and sometimes disputed, and several learned men might command allegiance in overlapping communities. Nevertheless, the expansion of expert guidance was plain enough to become visible in the politics of the Qajar state. [DI8-20]

The tobacco affair began in the ordinary world of concessions, money, and imperial influence. The shah's government gave a British concern exceptionally favorable rights over the trade, alarming growers, merchants, and many ordinary

consumers who feared the consequences for their livelihoods. The resistance did not begin as an obedient population awaiting a message from one remote scholar, since Iranian commercial and religious networks were already in motion, and their protests carried information to Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥasan Shīrāzī in Sāmarrā'. He protested to Nāṣer al-Dīn Shah in 1891, while a legal instruction prohibiting the use of tobacco circulated in his name toward the end of the year. The boycott spread with remarkable effect, and the concession was ultimately abandoned in 1892. [DI8-18; DI8-21]

The authorship of the famous prohibition contains a small historical problem which I would like the reader to retain. Contemporary doubts were raised about whether Shīrāzī had personally written the sentence circulated under his authority, although he had already expressed his opposition and did not repudiate the ruling. Hamid Algar's examination of the correspondence identifies the possibility that agents acting under delegated authority gave the message its final form, and a later instruction ending the boycott after the withdrawal of the concession was unambiguously his. The distinction between a document written by the principal and a document issued with his permission may seem small to someone cheering the successful protest, but it is central to our inquiry. The right to speak in another man's name was one of the powers that made the protest work. [DI8-18]

The movement's history in Tehran makes the scholar's new power especially vivid. Mīrzā Ḥasan Āshtiyānī helped transmit the authority of the scholar in Sāmarrā' to the capital, and the shah eventually threatened his expulsion, whereupon crowds mobilized to resist what they understood as an attack on a religious leader. Commerce, devotion, and popular anger combined to produce an event that the government could not manage through the ordinary channels of royal administration. The remote jurist's prestige had entered the city through people whose trust in his scholarship was stronger, for the purpose at hand, than their willingness to obey the monarch. A religious office had become a rival center of public influence without first becoming a government. [DI8-21]

The comparison with the Safavid decree is instructive. Shah Ṭahmāsp had recognized al-Karakī as deputy of the Imam in order to regularize a religious order the dynasty wished to govern, while the network around Shīrāzī could move against a shah from outside his political apparatus. Both cases involved claims about expert authority during the Imam's absence, and each depended upon intermediaries who carried instructions to people far from the source. By the time we reach the tobacco protest, the question of who appoints the messenger has become unusually practical. A reputable name could mobilize a city, and the people asking others to act in that name bore an enormous responsibility to state accurately what they had been authorized to say.

Religious funds enter the story at this point, though the accounts deserve more serious examination than the polemics have usually supplied. Students and

institutions needed support, and jurists claimed roles in receiving and distributing forms of religious revenue; the networks which sustained legal authority were therefore also systems of material trust. A donor may give money to support a school or a charitable duty, and the collector who invokes a jurist's name may be perfectly honest, yet the relationship only remains accountable when the donor can discover who appointed the collector and where the money went. A social system maintained by consent can become opaque as it expands, especially when the sanctity of the source is used to discourage questions about the conduct of an agent. If the historical Imam himself is beyond direct inquiry, the people who insist they speak for him should have an unusually serious obligation to make their worldly conduct inspectable.

Shīrāzī's political influence is sometimes treated as proof that the Shiʿi clerical establishment was already on an inevitable road to seizing the state. The history gives us a considerably richer picture. A scholar who had been reluctant to take on political burdens could nevertheless participate in a mass campaign when the grievances were sufficiently urgent, and the people who followed him had commercial and local interests of their own. His success did not settle the question of whether the leading jurist ought to rule a country. It did make plain that the religious community possessed an authority outside the throne to which it could appeal, and the next generation would ask how such a force might be used to restrain kings more permanently.

38 · A Constitution for the Absent Imam

An impressive feature of Shiʿi political thought is that the very absence of the infallible Imam can be used to reach sharply different conclusions about the powers of government. One jurist may regard the community's need for guidance as a reason to enlarge the office of the most knowledgeable scholar, since a world full of fallible rulers seems a dangerous place to leave religious affairs unattended. Another may begin with the same premise and conclude that every holder of public power ought to be surrounded by legal restraints, precisely because there is no infallible person available to excuse the risks of unchecked command. The Iranian Constitutional Revolution provided a public arena in which these questions were argued by men whose words mattered to merchants, students, soldiers, and people who had become tired of discovering what the shah intended only after his officials appeared at the door. [DI8-22]

The movement of 1905 to 1911 gathered people with remarkably different ideas about the future, including merchants protesting arbitrary exactions, reformers who wanted public institutions, and religious scholars whose opposition to tyranny could spring from deeply Islamic convictions. A written constitution and a representative

assembly promised a way to make some of the business of government visible to people whose lives it directed, though the place of religious law and the status of different communities remained subjects of fierce controversy. The early struggle also exposed the limits of treating the learned class as a single political actor. Religious scholars on opposite sides cited Islamic principles, appealed to sacred authority, and argued over the meaning of lawful government, while men who belonged to the same clerical world could end up calling each other's positions dangerous. [DI8-22; DI8-23]

Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾīnī, whose *Tanbīh al-umma wa-tanzīh al-milla* appeared in 1909, developed an argument I find particularly important to the intellectual lineage of this book. Since the ideal infallible ruler is absent, the actual government of human beings must be undertaken by imperfect people who possess the ordinary temptations of office, including the ability to turn public resources into private possessions and to invent elegant excuses for doing so. Nāʾīnī treated constitutional restraints and oversight as ways to reduce that danger, giving the public an institutional form in which it could restrain governmental arbitrariness. His argument did not make him an advocate of a state entirely detached from Islamic law; he discussed the supervisory roles of jurists and religious limits upon legislation. It showed, however, how devotion to the Imam could underwrite the demand for checks on rulers rather than serving as a blanket reason to trust the man who claimed to act in the Imam's absence. [DI8-24]

The constitutional argument now reaches for the language of trusteeship. A trustee possesses powers for the benefit of people whose affairs he administers, and the existence of a trust tells us something about the purpose of those powers. It should also provoke questions about the right of those people to inspect what has been done on their behalf, since a trustee who refuses to account for the use of his authority has begun to behave in a fashion that the institution of trust was designed to prevent. Nāʾīnī's account gives the ordinary fallibility of human rulers serious consequences for the design of government, and this is an aspect of Shiʿi political reasoning that seems to me to deserve rather more attention than another devotional account of how much the community loves its absent Imam. The love ought to matter when an official asks a person to accept a costly decision and refuses to explain why.

Shaykh Faḍl Allāh Nūrī, a prominent Tehran jurist whose opposition to the constitutional movement became a defining public controversy, saw dangers in a legislature that might enact rules contrary to divine law and establish a notion of equality that he regarded as incompatible with distinctions the sharīʿa required. His position changed across the revolutionary years and was developed through specific polemics rather than a single timeless hatred of public consultation. The conflict drew in jurists who supported constitutional constraints, including Ākhund Khurāsānī in Najaf, and it ended with Nūrī's execution in 1909. The event is a terrible reminder that religious argument can be conducted in the name of justice while the

contest over whose understanding will prevail becomes a struggle over the lives of actual opponents. [DI8-23; DI8-25]

For our investigation there is a question more interesting than deciding which twentieth-century faction looked most modern to an observer writing a century later. When a jurist announces that a legislature has exceeded the limits of divine law, who can examine the jurist's account of those limits, particularly when the evidence depends upon reports transmitted through the collections we have spent thirty chapters studying? And when another jurist says the ruler must be constrained by representative institutions, what powers does he retain for the experts who supervise those institutions? These questions can be answered in more than one way within the same religious vocabulary, and the historical writers deserve to have their full arguments read before they are enlisted as honorary supporters of somebody else's present-day political program.

I am drawn to Nāʾīnī's emphasis on human fallibility because it has an affinity with the method we have been practicing in the archives. A scholar may be competent, a chain of transmission may be highly regarded, and a community may have excellent reasons to honor a teacher, while every person in the chain remains subject to mistakes that a competent critic must be permitted to expose. The political consequence is a system in which a public decision can be challenged through identifiable procedures, and that aspiration matters especially when the decision reaches the vulnerable. One need only recall the marriage cases discussed earlier to appreciate how little comfort the reputation of a learned authority provides to a person whose own refusal has been dismissed as legally irrelevant.

Nūrī's position carries a warning of its own, because an assembly elected by human beings can make unjust laws, sometimes with remarkable confidence that the vote has performed the difficult moral work on its behalf. The question of how a constitution protects people from the legislature is a serious one, and the requirement that laws be judged by standards which are not invented at the whim of the majority cannot be ignored by a writer who believes that the Qur'an has authority over the interests of rulers. The challenge is to make the standards and the people who interpret them answerable to examination, and to prevent the guardians of an allegedly higher law from appointing themselves the sole judges of their own jurisdiction. Otherwise the old problem of the intermediary returns wearing the respectable clothing of constitutional review.

The revolution did not establish a final Shiʿi answer to sovereignty. It left a record of alternatives, including the attempt to distribute supervisory authority among institutions and the fear that any legislature might claim a power which belonged to God. The scholars who debated these questions had inherited the same centuries of transmitted hadith and legal argument, but they encountered a monarchy, a changing political economy, and the prospect of government by representatives in a setting their medieval predecessors had never been required to describe. The same sacred

language could support attempts to restrain power and attempts to reserve religious authority against popular decision. That plurality is part of the evidence, and it is important precisely because the twentieth century would produce an interpretation that claimed a more commanding place for the jurist in the state.

In 1970, while teaching in Najaf, Ruhollah Khomeini gave a series of lectures that would become *Islamic Government*, arguing for a far more expansive role for the qualified jurist than the constitutional arrangements defended by some of his predecessors. The political future of those lectures was not yet settled when they were delivered, and their later reception must be read against the constitutional debates and the institutions which preceded them. The question of who should speak for the Imam had travelled from a contested testament through libraries, courts, seminaries, and mass protest until a revolutionary movement was preparing to give it constitutional force. We have enough documentary history to understand the stakes without needing to suppose that every scholar who helped build the legal tradition had secretly intended the state which would eventually emerge from it.

The next chapter begins in Najaf, where a jurist taught that the supervision of an Islamic government belonged to his own class, and where the decisive question was finally placed before a modern country whose inhabitants could object, vote, organize, and suffer consequences that no metaphysical theory of perfected knowledge could remove. A thousand years after the Imam disappeared from ordinary public consultation, somebody was preparing to put his name over a government with soldiers, prisons, and the ability to decide whose interpretation would be enforced. It will be necessary to read the lecture notes carefully.

PART VI · THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ABSENT IMAM

39 · A Jurist Goes Looking for a Government

In Najaf, where the graves and seminaries have attracted the devout for centuries, a teacher can spend his working life arguing about a text whose author died before the Mongols arrived, and the enterprise need never attract the attention of a policeman. The city has supported careers of astonishing intellectual difficulty, along with the comparatively ordinary business of disputes over students, stipends, patronage, and who deserves to be regarded as the most knowledgeable person in a crowded room. It is an old city in which a man may possess enormous religious authority and remain, in the practical arrangements of Iraq, a subject of somebody else's government. In January 1970, Ruhollah Khomeini set about describing an arrangement that would change that last condition. [DI9-01; DI9-02]

The series of lectures later published as *Islamic Government* began as instruction to seminary students, with the dates given by the English edition running from 21 January to 8 February, although Hamid Algar's biographical account gives a slightly different starting date and count. The variation belongs in a footnote rather than the story we are following, which is that an Iranian scholar in exile presented the government of society as an obligation of those trained to interpret Islamic law, and addressed students who had inherited centuries of argument about the authority of the Hidden Imam. Khomeini had opposed the Shah and suffered imprisonment and exile; his audience was hearing a program of opposition from someone whose quarrel with the monarchy had been carried into the world of religious scholarship. [DI9-01; DI9-02]

The rights claimed by living interpreters of an absent Imam have followed us across the centuries. With Abū Hāshim, the problem took the form of a contested testament. With the early Twelvers, it required theories of representation after the Imam ceased to be publicly accessible. The compiler of *al-Kāfī* preserved sayings from which subsequent generations might draw their legal conclusions, and the later argument over solitary reports showed how much depended upon the jurist's willingness to trust a particular chain. By the nineteenth century the *marjaʿ*, a living source of emulation, had acquired a practical authority that could mobilize people against a royal tobacco concession. In Najaf the argument crossed another threshold, because the object of the jurist's proposed authority was the government itself.

Khomeini's starting point had considerable force for anyone who supposed Islam to be concerned with public justice. Taxes must be collected, people need courts, treaties and frontiers have to be administered, and a law that cannot be enforced soon begins to look like a sermon addressed to a locked door. He asked why a faith that gives rules concerning commercial obligations, punishment, and the public treasury should be imagined to have intended those rules to lie dormant until the Imam returns. If a knowledgeable and just jurist can distinguish the demands of Islamic law from a ruler's personal appetite, the argument continues, surely he is better qualified to administer that law than a monarch whose chief qualification was having inherited a throne. [DI9-01]

The distance between knowing what a rule requires and claiming the right to direct a whole country's use of force can disappear when the person crossing it is somebody people trust. A scholar who discovers that the minister has misunderstood the law has performed a service to the community. He may also conclude that the minister ought to defer to him. Khomeini took the matter further by claiming that the qualified jurist should hold the governing office whose occupant otherwise must continually ask for legal instruction. He presented this as the exercise of a responsibility entrusted by Islamic law, while distinguishing the extraordinary spiritual station of the Prophet and the Imams from the more ordinary governmental functions that a qualified scholar can perform. The distinction is central to his argument, since he had no need to persuade his students that he himself was another infallible Imam. He needed to establish that the Imam's authority over public affairs was available to an office staffed by fallible scholars. [DI9-01; DI9-03]

The argument required support from the transmitted tradition, since a proposal of such magnitude could hardly survive in a seminary if its defender offered only the general observation that kings tend to behave badly. Khomeini examined reports about judgment and appointment, including the narration associated with ʿUmar ibn Ḥanẓala in which disputants are told to refer their quarrel to someone familiar with the Imams' teachings. The report has a place in the history of Imāmī legal thought, and Khomeini's discussion treats language about appointment and ruling as evidence that the authority granted to a qualified jurist extends beyond the settlement of one commercial disagreement. The reader who has followed our journey through the collections can appreciate how much work is being asked of the words of that report. Their transmission has to be assessed, the context of the dispute recovered, and the scope of the office shown to include command over people who may already disagree with the jurist about the law. [DI9-03]

A judge can bind litigants because the law of a particular community recognizes a court, gives it jurisdiction, and provides an account of which decisions may be appealed. The power to organize an army, compel taxation, or appoint the people who will sit in judgment upon dissent is considerably larger. It may be that Khomeini possessed an argument for this larger office, and the lectures certainly attempt to

provide one, but the argument has to be examined at the point where adjudication becomes government. I suspect a reader trained by the polemics against Abū Ḥanīfa's supposed analogizing would want to know exactly which part of the received text performs that enlargement. The permission to reason about what a hadith entails is a formidable authority when the consequences include the right to govern a nation.

Earlier jurists had already debated broad forms of deputyship, and the history of wilāyat al-faqīh does not begin in 1970. We met al-Karakī in the Safavid court and saw a ruler recognize the jurist as deputy of the Hidden Imam for particular purposes, while nineteenth-century discussions could imagine a jurist's powers extending beyond the narrow office of issuing private legal advice. The historian Yasuyuki Matsunaga has also located important antecedents in Khomeini's *Kashf al-asrār* of 1944, which means the Najaf lectures should be understood as a forceful and systematic political intervention by a thinker with a longer intellectual history. Such continuities make the development more interesting, because the possibility of juristic rule had to be argued over time and eventually connected with men capable of changing a constitution. [DI9-02; DI9-04]

A rather revealing detail occurs when Khomeini compares the appointment of a governor to the appointment of a guardian for a minor. His immediate point concerns the legal office and the duties conferred upon its holder, while the spiritual rank of the person who appointed him remains another matter. The comparison occurs within a much larger argument, and it would be careless to wrench it into an assertion that all adult citizens are children. Still, after the earlier chapters on family guardianship, I find the analogy difficult to pass over, because in both cases the jurist must explain where the right to act for another person comes from and what that person may do if the guardian exceeds it. The analogy places this inquiry at the center of political theory precisely because Khomeini chose it himself. [DI9-01; DI9-05]

We ought to imagine the students leaving the lecture and carrying the notes through an ordinary religious world. For some the argument must have sounded like the restoration of the Prophet's political concern, a way to free the law from the humiliating position of requesting favors from a monarch. Others could remember a tradition in which the jurist's claim had to be measured against the limits of the Imam's delegated powers, or against the fear that a fallible man would begin deciding in the name of somebody whose authority could not be challenged directly. Khomeini's teaching would circulate through manuscript copies and printed editions, acquire followers, and eventually become part of the political language of a revolution. By then the classroom dispute would have a very large audience indeed, including people who had never heard of ʿUmar ibn Ḥanẓala and would nevertheless be compelled to live under the government's interpretation of him.

40 · The Constitution with an Invisible Sovereign

A revolution is an exceptionally good way of finding out which members of a coalition have been having quite different conversations with themselves. During the struggle against Mohammad Reza Shah, a republican might have been thinking about elections, a communist about class and ownership, a cleric about the recovery of Islamic law, and a merchant about the practical experience of officials who could interrupt his business whenever the royal government pleased. These people could stand in the same street and chant against the same ruler, which created a powerful impression of unity while leaving the question of his replacement suspended above the crowd. When the monarchy fell in February 1979, that suspended question became the country's next appointment with history. [DI9-06]

The referendum of March asked voters to endorse an Islamic Republic, and the official result reported overwhelming support, a figure subsequently written into the opening article of the new constitution. It matters that a large number of Iranians supported the destruction of the monarchy and gave the new political form their approval, since this was a revolution with mass participation rather than the mere installation of one ambitious seminary professor. It matters equally that the words *Islamic Republic* left unanswered questions about who would have final authority over the laws, and whether the people who voted for the new system understood that a supreme religious office would be placed over institutions they hoped to elect. An electoral endorsement of a form of government requires a further account of what choices the citizens were given and what means of revision they would retain. [DI9-06; DI9-07]

The early constitutional drafts show that the institution was made through historical struggle. A proposal associated with the provisional government and the Revolutionary Council borrowed from earlier constitutional arrangements and envisioned a form of clerical review, while the Assembly of Experts for the Constitution subsequently elevated guardianship of the jurist into the architecture of the state. Saïd Amir Arjomand traces the change through the 1979 deliberations, which is a better source for the process than the notion that a fully developed supreme leadership somehow appeared, unchanged, in the hearts of everyone who had taken to the streets. Participants disagreed over the proposal and its meaning; even those who supported an Islamic order possessed varying understandings of what a qualified jurist ought to control. [DI9-06]

When the new constitution was approved in December, the absence of the Twelfth Imam had acquired a curious presence in public law. Article 5 provided for the guardianship of the community during the occultation by a just and qualified jurist, and Article 110 specified powers of a much more earthly character, including

supreme command of the armed forces and appointments to the judiciary and the Guardian Council. The constitution made room for popular elections, a parliament, a president, and public rights; it also gave institutions claiming Islamic competence the power to review what those elected institutions could do. Each of those provisions has its own drafting and amendment history, and the amended text of 1989 must be distinguished from the document adopted a decade earlier. [DI9-07; DI9-08]

I have spent enough time with the Imams' transmitted sayings to feel a particular interest in Article 4, which subjects the laws and regulations of the country to Islamic criteria and assigns jurists a decisive role in interpreting that requirement. The article sounds like a reassurance when it is read in a society that expects Islamic law to protect the weak from arbitrary rule. Read alongside the history of the hadith collections, it also raises an obvious question about the intervening layers of human judgment. A law may be said to follow a divine criterion, but the citizen reaches that criterion through a scholar's selection of reports, an assessment of their reliability, and a theory of what the reports authorize. The constitution gives some of those judgments a place in the machinery of government. [DI9-08]

Calling this a theocracy is tempting, though the word conceals some of the most consequential distinctions. Iran retained elections, factions, political parties and competing centers of authority, while the system also established bodies equipped to invalidate legislation and eventually restrict access to the ballot. The combination helps explain why the constitutional struggle has persisted within the Islamic Republic rather than simply appearing as an argument between believers and an entirely secular opposition. An elected assembly can disagree with the Guardian Council about a social or economic law, and both sides can invoke the revolution and the protection of religion. Their dispute then returns to the question we have followed since the first contested testament: which interpreter possesses the authority to settle it?

The new government's critics appeared quickly, including women who had helped make the revolution possible and who objected when the political authorities began specifying their dress and the future of family law. On 8 March 1979, thousands demonstrated in Tehran and other cities, angered by measures directed at the status of women and statements about veiling in government workplaces. The participants were diverse, and the sources preserve their demands as well as the hostility they encountered. The timing is revealing because the quarrel began within weeks of the old regime's fall, when arguments about the country's constitutional future were still being formed. Women who had contributed to the revolution now had to press the elementary question of whether they would be permitted to determine the shape of their own lives under the government that was supposed to represent them. [DI9-09]

The Qur'anic language of justice and consultation has always struck me as capable of making uncomfortable demands upon authorities who are confident that they

know the correct answer. The standard can be applied to an elected president, a learned jurist, a shopkeeper's husband, or an opposition group which announces that it seeks liberation while granting its own members very little say in how they will be liberated. The constitutional system's claims about righteousness need to be read against those governed by it, because the experience of a woman facing workplace restrictions supplies evidence about how a supposed protection operates. Her willingness to speak is an important part of the record, even if the official standing on the other side has read more books of fiqh than she has.

In the earlier chapters we saw two competing ways of responding to the absence of an infallible leader. Nā'īnī's constitutionalism took human fallibility seriously as a reason to limit rulers through institutions, whereas Khomeini's vision placed a qualified jurist in a governing office meant to secure the authority of Islamic law. The Islamic Republic combined representative procedures with religious supervision, and the arrangement made political arguments about these two tendencies a normal part of public life. The invisible sovereign now had a constitutional address, an authorized interpreter, and a set of offices from which the decisions could be put into effect. The next question was what happened when those offices disagreed.

41 · The People in the Guardian's Care

Whenever I read a treatise on guardianship, I find myself wondering whom the guardian imagines sitting on the other side of his desk. The legal vocabulary is full of concern for persons whose circumstances make them vulnerable: children, people whose affairs require a trustee, or those caught in a dispute which an ordinary court must resolve. The justification for allowing an adult to act in another's name is ordinarily an account of the benefit conferred upon the dependent person, and that is where the ethical burden should remain. Yet the person who receives the power also gets to participate in interpreting its limits, while the dependent person may be left arguing that the arrangement intended for her protection has become the source of an injury. Our inquiry into marriage law began with exactly that problem.

Khomeini's use of guardianship language in Najaf deserves careful treatment because it is both more precise and more consequential than the polemical shorthand sometimes attached to it. In his discussion of government, the guardian of a minor provides an analogy for the appointment of an official whose duties are fixed by law; he emphasizes the similarity of the public function, and says nothing there about competent adult citizens literally possessing the capacity of children. He is concerned to distinguish the jurist's governmental task from the unsurpassable spiritual standing of the Prophet and the Imams. The consequence, for our purposes, is that an argument about representation must still tell us how the governed can recognize abuse of the office and secure redress when the purported guardian believes himself to be acting under a superior mandate. [DI9-05]

The marriage book of Khomeini's *Taḥrīr al-Wasīla* contains a ruling whose Arabic can be located in volume two, issue 12, page 698 of the 1426 AH edition published by the institute responsible for his works. The ruling prohibits intercourse with a wife before she completes nine years, while explicitly allowing other forms of sexual contact, including with a nursing infant. It proceeds to discuss injury, permanent restrictions in some circumstances, continuing marital status, and financial obligations. The text is a jurist's published account of what a marriage contract permits, composed without any requirement that the infant consent to the acts he has allowed. I consider that permission abusive; the historical claim made here concerns the rule Khomeini wrote, with no inference about his private conduct. [DI9-10; PV-06]

This ugly distinction has a place in the history of knowledge as well as the history of law. A modern reader can be tempted to condemn the entire tradition in which a ruling was produced, and a defender may be tempted to explain the ruling away as an imaginary legal question whose factual occurrence would be exceedingly unlikely. Neither response tells us how the rule acquired its normative form. We need to

investigate the received legal texts, the limits attributed to guardians and husbands, the objections made by other jurists, and the interpretive move by which an adult's recognized status becomes permission over a child who cannot agree. The earlier chapter on Ibn Shubruma's resistance to minor marriage is useful precisely because it shows that contemporaries and later jurists had arguments about the matter. The legal tradition's disagreements belong to the evidence alongside its accepted permissions. [DI9-10; DI9-11]

Khomeini's political teaching and his sexual jurisprudence employ guardianship in different domains, and each demands analysis on its own terms. Their conjunction becomes striking because the same general moral issue appears whenever authority over another person is justified by an assertion about what is good for that person. The legal guardian may be charged with protecting the child, while the political guardian may claim to defend a community's religion and welfare. The power granted in one setting cannot simply be transferred into the other, any more than an obscure report on judges can become a general grant of sovereignty by an act of scholarly confidence. Yet both settings oblige us to ask whether the intended beneficiary possesses a means of refusing an abusive decision, and whether the law is willing to hear that refusal as evidence about the guardian's failure.

There were religious reasons available to question authority over children before the modern vocabulary of rights became common, including the Qur'an's insistence in 4:6 that orphans' capacity be tested before property is handed over, and its repeated commands that judgments be rendered justly. The application of 4:6 from property to marriage involves an interpretive argument which must be stated openly, while the basic fact that an infant cannot consent to sexual contact requires no specialized chain of transmission. A jurist who attributes certain permissions to the Islamic legal order must answer the moral question raised by his rule. I am interested in the point at which the methods employed to protect a child became available to rationalize the power of a person whose interest in exercising that power is obvious.

The political version of the issue becomes less abstract when one remembers the Iranian women demonstrating in March 1979. They had marched in a successful revolution against monarchical coercion and then found their status subject to decisions pronounced by religious authorities claiming responsibility for the moral character of society. Some of the women were devout and covered, while others sought an entirely different public life; their disagreement over dress did not extinguish their shared concern that the new rulers were narrowing the options available to them. Their protests deserve to be placed beside the theories of guardianship, because they show the persons said to benefit from a guardian's guidance publicly stating how the guidance would affect them. [DI9-09]

This returns us to the rather embarrassing matter of a government claiming divine authorization through the interpretation of a fallible human being. A scholar can sincerely believe that he is safeguarding the rights of the vulnerable and still produce a

rule which the people affected understand as an injury. If his interpretation acquires state force, the danger grows in proportion to the institutions prepared to enforce it. It is possible to admire Khomeini's resistance to the Shah, acknowledge the support his revolutionary project received, and examine the human consequences of rules for which he argued. The history becomes clearer when each claim receives the degree of proof it can bear. I would like the cleric who invokes the Imam as his superior to explain how the Imam's supposed concern for justice permits the living person at the foot of the hierarchy to complain about what the cleric has done.

42 · Who Guards the Guardians?

Once the constitution had distributed the principal offices, the revolutionary state acquired the administrative problem which has afflicted nearly every government since the first official discovered that somebody had to pay for his department. The parliament legislated, judges ruled on cases, ministers made decisions about the economy, and religious jurists were asked to certify the compatibility of proposed measures with Islamic criteria. It was possible for every one of these people to believe he was defending the revolution while insisting that a colleague had misunderstood his responsibilities. An ideal of government by divine law had to become an argument among human institutions whose members could read the same text and arrive at contradictory verdicts.

The Guardian Council sits at the center of that story. Article 91 of the amended constitution describes a body of twelve, with six jurists selected by the Leader and six lawyers elected through parliament from candidates nominated by the head of the judiciary. Article 94 requires legislation passed by the Majles to be reviewed, while Article 96 gives the clerical jurists decisive responsibility for judging its compatibility with Islamic law. These are legal mechanisms whose details can be read in the constitutional text rather than inferred from somebody's theory of clerical ambition. When the review concludes that a measure conflicts with religious criteria, the legislature confronts a problem that cannot be solved by voting a second time for the same position. [DI9-08]

I can imagine an ordinary supporter of the revolution welcoming a body which prevents a government from violating what he regards as the most basic requirements of Islam. A parliament elected in the excitement of a political crisis may pass an abusive law, and a constitutional council could restrain it; the argument for review has a familiar logic. The difficulty grows from the fact that the Council's Islamic judgments depend on contested interpretations of an inherited legal tradition and that the people who bear the consequences have limited ways to demand reconsideration. The same problem could afflict a secular constitutional court, though the Iranian arrangement gives a particular set of jurists a privileged standing through the religious character of the state.

The public controversy became sharper when the revolutionary government needed economic and administrative measures which some jurists considered inconsistent with ordinary rules of property or commerce. How could parliament regulate an economy during war, provide for taxation, or alter contracts if every new measure risked being rejected by the guardians of the law? The dispute involved rival accounts of public welfare and the scope of religious command. Khomeini intervened at various moments, sometimes preferring that institutions resolve their

differences, before the conflict led toward the more expansive theory he articulated in January 1988. This was a dispute over the precise architecture of the Islamic Republic rather than an abstract seminar disagreement, since officials required decisions and the country was fighting a destructive war with Iraq. [DI9-12]

There was another kind of guardianship being constructed during these years, one which seldom appears in the doctrinal discussions of the Hidden Imam because it operated in classrooms and offices. The Cultural Revolution beginning in 1980 led to the closure of Iran's universities and the reorganization of higher education under revolutionary supervision; faculty members and students could find their futures judged through political and ideological screening. Khomeini himself regarded the independence of the universities from foreign influence as a serious national problem, while scholarly studies of the closures and purges document the costs to academic life. People trying to study physics or literature discovered that the revolutionary state's account of moral education could determine whether they were permitted to enter a campus. [DI9-13]

A university would seem a natural ally of a theological tradition that prizes learning. The philosophers we visited in the preceding chapters treated learning as a means of changing the person who learns, and the great libraries of Zaydī Yemen preserved works which their authors' political rivals might otherwise have allowed to disappear. The Islamic Republic's intervention in the universities reminds us that knowledge can also become a category through which an authority decides who should be admitted to speak. The council charged with improving learning could exclude a teacher for the opinions he held, and the teacher's objection could then be classified as further evidence that he was unsuitable. It takes some effort to create an educational system in which the act of disagreeing with the supervisor counts against one's capacity to be educated.

The constitution did contain provisions about public participation and the responsibilities of rulers, and the powers of the Leader were accompanied by procedures concerning his selection and removal. Article 111 allows the Assembly of Experts to remove a Leader who loses the prescribed qualifications. These institutions make the Iranian system a richer object of study than a caricature in which every official simply obeys a single man. Their practical effectiveness depends, however, upon how the members of the supervising institutions are chosen, what information they can obtain, and whether they are permitted to act against the person whose authority underlies their position. A constitutional safeguard is worth examining as an actual route of remedy, with its personnel and procedures, rather than as an attractive sentence printed on the page. [DI9-08; DI9-14]

That last point should sound familiar from the early collections. A narrator may have an impressive pedigree, his name may appear in a venerable book, and a later commentator may place a favorable grade beside his report. The critic still wants to know what was transmitted and whether the institutional confidence rests upon

evidence. A constitutional office can acquire an equally impressive pedigree while depending upon practical choices made by fallible people. In both cases the inherited claim becomes dangerous when the act of checking it is treated as disloyalty to the very authority under examination. The dispute over the Guardian Council's vetoes would eventually force Khomeini to say something extraordinary about the relationship between government and the rules it claimed to serve.

43 · The Letter That Put Government Above Law

On 1 January 1988, Ali Khamenei, then president of Iran and a prominent figure within the revolutionary leadership, delivered a Friday sermon in which he described the authority of government in relation to the framework of Islamic law. On 6 January, in a letter whose Persian date is 16 Dey 1366, Khomeini answered with a forceful assertion that government could take priority over other religious obligations when the interests of the Islamic state required it. We have the letter, dated 6 January, in a Persian original and an English translation maintained by the Iran Data Portal, along with scholarly accounts of the institutional quarrel in which it arose. It is one of those moments when a theoretical question ceases to belong to a seminar because the people discussing it already command a state. [DI9-15]

The dispute sounds almost modest when it is described as an argument about whether government can operate within the limits of religious law, until one sees what each position requires the state to do. Khamenei had described governmental action as constrained by divine ordinances; Khomeini considered that formula a serious misunderstanding of what it meant for the Prophet to exercise divine political guardianship. If government must remain entirely within the ordinary rules governing private transactions, he argued, it cannot build roads across privately held property, regulate certain forms of commerce, mobilize soldiers, or organize the public treasury in the way a modern state must. He proceeded to claim for Islamic government a kind of priority reaching across those ordinary rules, and he illustrated the claim with cases which his audience could readily imagine. [DI9-15; DI9-16]

A road may require the acquisition of a house, and a government may compensate the owner and proceed with the project. A mosque may become the subject of an administrative order. Contracts previously recognized under the religious law may be set aside if the state's interest demands it. Even pilgrimage, one of Islam's most important obligations, may be temporarily suspended when the interests of the country and Islam are judged to require it. These are paraphrases of Khomeini's own examples, and their significance lies in the relationship he established between the religious duties of individuals and the governmental office responsible for the interests of the political order. The ruler was invoking the scope of a divine delegation, giving the state powers which ordinary legal obligations could otherwise obstruct. [DI9-15; PV-07]

The letter is particularly important because Khomeini's larger argument had been that Islam requires government, and here he was prepared to make government a commanding principle within the law itself. The institution was charged with administering a sacred order, yet it could suspend obligations of that order when the recognized public interest demanded it. The natural question for a reader of our

earlier chapters concerns the identity of the people authorized to determine that interest, since a power to override an obligation depends enormously upon the authority that identifies the circumstances in which the overriding is permitted. The guardians of religious law must now explain how their own government can set aside a rule whose divine character they were appointed to protect.

I expect this is precisely the sort of controversy which would have interested an earlier jurist examining the problem of *maṣlaḥa*, public welfare, in Islamic law. Public necessity has always complicated attempts to turn a collection of religious rules into the daily administration of society, and even the best-intentioned government cannot govern by treating every existing property arrangement as immovable. The harder problem concerns the delegation that gives a particular office power to define the public necessity, and the safeguards against a ruler who describes his own survival as the essential interest of the community. Khomeini was speaking within a developed juristic vocabulary. A historical investigation should follow that vocabulary instead of imagining that the letter sprang from a desire for personal power which can be read off its face. The text grants remarkable governmental powers; the question of their abuse requires a further inquiry into how officials exercised them. [DI9-16]

The practical route out of the conflict was an institution that could resolve disputes between parliament and the Guardian Council, the body later formalized as the Expediency Discernment Council. Khomeini created its predecessor in February 1988, and the 1989 constitutional revision gave the institution a lasting place in the Islamic Republic. The development answers a real problem of government: a legislature could pass a measure which the Guardian Council refused to approve, leaving the competing claims of ordinary legislation and religious review in a deadlock. A council charged with the interest of the system could intervene, allowing the state to function under a doctrinal account of the leader's power. The irony is that the effort to ensure that legislation conformed to the sacred law created a political need to recognize circumstances in which the administration of the state could take precedence over ordinary rules. [DI9-12; DI9-17]

Earlier, powerful political actors had discovered that the inheritance of the Prophet's family could be interpreted in a way that solved a problem of rule. An Abbasid claim about Abū Hāshim's testament gave a dynasty an answer to the question of why followers of the family should accept its authority. The Buyid rulers sponsored a public culture of Shiʿi remembrance while managing a Sunni caliphate that continued to perform its constitutional role. In Iran, centuries later, the issue was the reach of an office whose legitimacy depended upon religious expertise and whose duties included administration of a modern country. These episodes differ in their sources, persons and constitutional forms. What makes them belong in one investigation is the act of turning an inherited religious claim into a specific answer about public power.

The title *Dark Imams* may sound melodramatic beside a council discussing roads, contracts and the budget, although it is the ordinary life of institutions that interests me most. A political system survives by performing work that can be boring in description and devastating in effect. When its officials can decide what counts as religious necessity, the distinction between divine instruction and political judgment requires more careful protection than ever, because the latter may begin to arrive already dressed in the dignity of the former. One can admire the jurist's account of public responsibility and still insist that the official who invokes it should show his evidence, his authority and his remedy for the person harmed by the decision.

The next documents are much more difficult to read. While the Iranian state was arguing over which rules its government could suspend, it also possessed prisoners whose fates lay in the hands of judicial and security officials. During the summer of 1988, the question of what a religious order could authorize reached a prison system in which people would die without receiving a fair hearing. We have contemporary and later evidence for the events, including the testimony of a senior cleric who could hardly be dismissed as a foreigner ignorant of the revolution's purposes. His name was Ḥusayn ʿAlī Montaẓerī.

44 · The Prisoners and the Imam's Signature

The names of the dead interrupt the historical analogies here, as they ought to. The political prisoners executed in Iran during the summer of 1988 were human beings with families, convictions, fears and lives outside the categories assigned to them by the state. They were already in custody, and the people deciding their futures were acting within institutions that claimed religious and legal authority. Human Rights Watch's reconstruction, drawing upon testimony, officials' memoirs and surviving documentary material, concludes that Khomeini ordered a widespread campaign of summary executions. The organization reports estimates between 2,800 and 5,000 deaths, while acknowledging that the total cannot be firmly established. [DI9-18]

The context includes an eight-year war with Iraq, the armed activity of the Mojahedin-e Khalq and the movement's late-July incursion from Iraq, factional struggles inside the revolutionary state, and an official vocabulary which treated certain opponents as enemies of religion. None of that context makes the killing of prisoners without fair proceedings lawful. It explains some of the arguments and events surrounding the decisions, which is important if we are going to understand who authorized what and why. The victims included people whom prison officials regarded as belonging to a hostile political organization, and the subsequent executions also extended to prisoners from leftist and other political backgrounds. The evidence for each category and location needs to be examined against the available testimony and records. [DI9-18; DI9-19]

Among the central documents is an undated order published in Montaẓerī's memoirs and attributed to Khomeini, directing officials to assess which imprisoned supporters of the Mojahedin-e Khalq remained committed to the organization; later investigations place the order in late July 1988. Its language employed a religious and political classification which could turn a prisoner's attitude into grounds for execution. The officials charged with carrying out the process asked prisoners about their beliefs and allegiances, often through brief and profoundly inadequate proceedings. The number of victims and the questions asked varied across institutions, and the historian should resist treating every prison as a carbon copy of one surviving account. What emerges from the accumulated documentation is a system in which the legal security of people already under state control was abandoned through decisions issued by representatives of the state. [DI9-18]

Here a peculiar feature of the Islamic Republic's religious history becomes decisive. Montaẓerī was a senior theologian deeply involved in the revolution and regarded as Khomeini's designated successor. He had supported the development of juristic government and occupied a position from which his disagreement could not

easily be treated as the irritation of a student who had failed to understand the first lecture. When he protested the executions, he objected from inside the community of religious authority, calling attention to prisoners who had already been sentenced and to the absence of proper legal grounds for killing them. His letters and the later-released recording of a meeting with officials in August 1988 preserve the dispute in unusually direct form. [DI9-18; DI9-20]

A recording of the meeting became public in 2016 through Montaẓerī's son, and the sound matters because it gives the investigator something different from a polished retrospective argument. It documents officials being challenged by a man with standing in the system they served, and reveals their own engagement with the decisions under criticism. The recording has its own provenance and the published accounts have their interpretive limits, as all documentary witnesses do, but its existence makes the dispute impossible to dismiss as a story invented by the country's external enemies. The revolutionary state contained an authoritative critic of its conduct, and the officials he confronted were members of that same state's judicial and security apparatus. [DI9-18]

The Najaf lectures explain a theory of authority, although the events in the prisons demand a reconstruction of decisions made by identifiable officials. The chronology requires the uncomfortable middle: a revolution, a constitution, a war, a security apparatus, executive and judicial offices, political movements willing to use violence, and specific men who signed or implemented decisions. The constitutional theory tells us how certain actors could claim to possess ultimate authority. To establish responsibility for a particular death, the investigator needs orders, acts and records connecting the people involved. Human Rights Watch has done important work collecting and weighing such evidence, which belongs beside the documents of the jurists rather than underneath a rhetorical flourish. [DI9-18]

Still, the moral question which brought us here cannot be avoided. An official is said to act under a superior religious authority, and the prisoner has little means of contesting the classification applied to her. The judge's knowledge of a received religious rule, or confidence that his office has been properly appointed, does nothing to repair a proceeding in which the accused cannot summon evidence or defend a life. We have seen versions of the problem in the study of a child's capacity to refuse a marriage, and in a scholar's ability to impose a report upon a believer who disputes its transmission. The prison is a more immediate and terrible setting because the person subject to the judgment can be removed from the world before anybody outside the institution discovers what happened.

Montaẓerī's objections matter to my understanding of Shiʿi history because they preserve the possibility of dissent from within a tradition whose authority is often represented by its strongest political claimant. A religion which generated Zayd's revolt, Jaʿfar's choice to refrain from revolt, and Nāʾīnī's defense of restraints upon fallible rulers could also produce a senior jurist protesting killings carried out by an

Islamic government. The same historical community furnished the arguments by which officials defended their authority and the arguments with which another scholar condemned their actions. An inquiry into the corruption of religious authority that ignored its internal critics would itself be a rather effective form of corruption, since it would erase the evidence that the tradition was capable of judging its rulers.

Montaẓerī paid for his disagreement in political standing, and the disagreement became entangled with the question of succession as Khomeini's health declined. The 1988 executions were a major part of their rupture, although the history of their relationship also includes earlier disputes and concerns surrounding Montaẓerī's political associates. His position makes it possible to examine the Islamic Republic's highest office through something resembling an experimental test. Here was a man regarded as sufficiently qualified to inherit supreme religious-political leadership, who exercised his judgment against an action ordered at the top. What would a constitutional system do with such a critic? The answer leads to 1989, when the qualifications of the leadership were reconsidered and a different successor was chosen. [DI9-20]

45 · The Office That Survived Its Founder

The leadership dispute of 1989 has something of the structure of the earliest succession stories in this book, though the paperwork is considerably better. Here there are letters, constitutional articles, named participants in assemblies, and a modern state whose citizens watched an extraordinary office prepare to pass from one man to another. Khomeini was ill, the war with Iraq had ended, and Montaẓerī's future as successor had become untenable after years of dispute sharpened by his objections to the executions. In March 1989 the break was formalized. The person long expected to inherit the office was out of the succession, and the governing institutions had to decide what would qualify another person to receive it. [DI9-20; DI9-21]

The constitution adopted in 1979 had tied the leadership to a high degree of religious standing, including the prestige of the *marjaʿ*, a source of emulation whose recognized authority rested on learning and a following among believers. In the historical development of Twelver Shiism that we have been tracing, the distinction matters. People had gradually come to consult living jurists for authoritative legal guidance during the Imam's occultation, and the question of who deserved to be followed could be contested among scholars with serious claims to competence. A state, however, needs an identifiable executive authority capable of issuing orders on a particular day, which can make the dispersed and disputable character of scholarly precedence rather inconvenient. The constitution had tried to connect a religiously recognized rank with a political office; the succession crisis exposed the strain. [DI9-07; DI9-21]

During the constitutional revision Khomeini recommended that the requirement of *marjaʿiyya* be removed, considering qualification as a just *mujtahid* sufficient for appointment through the Assembly of Experts. His letter to ʿAlī Meshkīnī, dated 9 Ordībehešt 1368, or 29 April 1989, states that he had long considered the *marjaʿ* qualification unnecessary and regarded a just *mujtahid* accepted by the Assembly of Experts as sufficient. It appears in volume 21, page 371 of the collected *Ṣaḥīfa-ye Imām*, with an accessible Persian text and English translation. The substance is plain enough: the future Leader could be a jurist qualified to exercise legal reasoning without already occupying the highest recognized station as a source of emulation. It was a notable adjustment to the relationship between the religious hierarchy and the political state. [DI9-21; DI9-22]

One can understand the problem facing the architects of the system without sharing their solution. If the Supreme Leader's authority depends on a qualification possessed by a small group of senior scholars, and those scholars cannot be expected to agree about who should govern the state, then the constitutional settlement may

become difficult to maintain at precisely the moment when continuity is most urgent. Changing the legal definition of eligibility makes more candidates available and allows the political institutions to identify a successor. The decision protects the office from a crisis which its own original requirements helped produce. It also invites a question about what has become of the older claim that political authority follows an especially recognized religious competence, since the state can now specify the qualifications that make a candidate religiously eligible for the office.

The change was accompanied by a broader constitutional revision. The revised text strengthened the presidential executive by eliminating the office of prime minister, formalized the Expediency Council, and made the language of absolute guardianship more explicit in the structure of the state. Khomeini died in June 1989, before the amended constitution was ratified by referendum on 28 July. The Assembly of Experts selected Ali Khamenei to succeed him, and the constitutional settlement provided a formal framework for the leadership that followed. None of those facts requires the historian to suppose that the original jurists of the occultation had anticipated the complicated institutions of the late twentieth-century Iranian state. The modern document was produced through modern conflicts, with the earlier tradition available as a language of authorization. [DI9-08; DI9-17; DI9-21]

The comparison with the Abbasid testament ought now to be handled carefully, because it contains the accusation toward which this entire book has been moving. The Abbasid succession story claimed the transfer of an Alid inheritance by a will whose authenticity historians dispute. In 1989 the institutions of an established government altered the eligibility criteria for an office whose authority was defended through the jurisprudence of the Hidden Imam, and the documentary record of that change is far stronger. The two cases illustrate the ability of political actors to define succession through authoritative texts, although they differ in the type of text, its provenance, and the institutions that gave it effect. A constitutional amendment is a public act of state, while a disputed early testament is an historical claim about a private designation. Their resemblance is worth investigating because both ask whose words can turn a successor into the rightful holder of authority.

The changing office also tells us something about the power of legal institutions to preserve themselves. Khomeini's personal standing had helped create a system in which political command could be defended by reference to learned juristic authority. After his death, the state needed that system to survive the departure of its founder, and so the relation between learned status and political eligibility was arranged in a form that could accommodate a new ruler. There was a constitutional procedure, an assembly, and a public referendum on the amended text; the process is historically visible and should be judged on its own evidence. It is revealing that the authority of the office was now durable enough to survive a change in its relationship with the hierarchy of religious learning. The government's legitimacy depended upon

the Imam's absent authority, yet the practical question of who would rule had been settled by institutions formed in the very recent past.

The story of the office does not end in 1989, since a constitutional system continues to evolve through elections, judicial interpretations, and struggles over who may enter political life. The Guardian Council's later role in assessing electoral candidacies, for example, shows how the power to interpret the constitution can shape the composition of the institutions which might someday contest it. Those later controversies require their own documentary treatment, with attention to the decisions and changing legal practices rather than a timeless account of how the country must have operated. Our immediate task is to understand how a question about speaking for the Imam became part of the constitution and how the constitution adapted when the man who had carried that argument to power died. [DI9-14; DI9-23]

The disputed qualifications for the highest office show why the provenance of religious authorization matters. The *marjaʿ* was a scholar whom believers might recognize through learning and trust; the Supreme Leader became the occupant of a state office whose selection and powers were written into a constitution and its amendments. The person who holds the office may also be a learned jurist, and the supporters of the system can offer serious theological reasons for the connection, but the practical act which appoints him has its own legal and political history. The divine pedigree makes a powerful claim. The assembly still has to meet and vote.

46 · Who Put Those Words in His Mouth?

We began with a dead man's will, or rather with the report of a dead man's will, which is a distinction that can become rather important when the will is used to decide who gets a kingdom. Abū Hāshim's alleged transfer of the Alid inheritance to the Abbasid family survives within an early political and sectarian record whose disagreements are part of the reason historians continue to argue about it. The Abbasid revolution relied upon hopes that members of the Prophet's family would receive justice, while the dynasty which emerged from it constructed claims that gave its rule a place within the family's prestige. The surviving testimony is good enough to establish the political use of this inheritance story and complicated enough to make certainty about the original designation irresponsible. [DI9-24]

From there we followed a chain of people who claimed, in very different settings, to speak for a figure whose authority could not be reached directly. Some were scholars preserving books, and their work may have saved teachings which a less diligent generation would have lost. Others were rulers attempting to solve a problem of legitimacy or practical government, while still others were jurists who believed they were protecting believers from the arbitrary opinions of a king. The Imams themselves stood at the center of a history in which the love of their family furnished moral courage and extraordinary learning, together with the possibility that a later institution might use that love to silence a question the believer had every reason to ask.

The story would become a flattering kind of nonsense if I announced at this point that every quietist report came from a caliphal bureau, that every Shiʿi scholar was a willing accomplice, or that the eventual shape of the Islamic Republic had been planned in some Abbasid palace a millennium earlier. We have found sources establishing that early movements disagreed about who qualified as an Imam and whether he should take up arms. We have traced collections whose transmission could sometimes be documented before the later dynasties supposed to have rewritten them. We have seen legal doctrines revised under court patronage, and encountered transmitted sayings which later scholars regarded as weak even while other voices treated them as authoritative. The original thesis of a coordinated campaign to produce quietism by corrupting Shiʿi hadith remains a historical hypothesis with substantial work left to do, especially in identifying alterations and the people who directed them. [DI9-24; DI9-25]

Every institution that has imposed a rule under a revered name remains answerable for the authority it claimed and the evidence behind it. The legal history contains smaller and often better documented forms of appropriation. The same phrase can acquire a different meaning when it moves from an Imam's reply to a

litigant into a later treatise on public office. A collector's selection creates an archive in which some possibilities are remembered more readily than others. A judge may take the authority of a transmitted report and use it to close a dispute which the report's own historical setting would scarcely have anticipated. The scholar's task is to demonstrate these moves one at a time and to allow the evidence to determine the force of each conclusion.

Several cases bring us close to the thing promised by the title, even though it has not located a hidden minister issuing instructions from the caliph's private study. The case of Qāḍī Jaʿfar and the adaptation of Muʿtazilī legal argument documents how a scholarly text could be reshaped to give the Prophet's family a particular kind of legal authority. The history of juristic recognition under the Safavids shows a ruler publicly elevating the position of the scholar, with opponents using forged correspondence in their own struggle for influence. The disputes over *al-Kāfī* show that the authority of a compilation does not abolish the need to examine its reports. In the twentieth century, a constitution gave jurists powers which the first scholars of the occultation had never exercised in such a state, and the 1989 amendment revised the qualifications needed to hold the supreme office. These acts have identifiable participants, textual witnesses and political circumstances. [DI9-25]

The Dark Imam, as I have come to understand him, is a problem of authorization. A real Imam can be revered for justice, learning and the willingness to stand against an oppressor, while an institution claiming to speak in his name may arrive at a verdict that protects the institution's own position. The believer then faces the peculiar obligation to decide whether fidelity to the Imam requires obedience to the transmitted command or a renewed investigation of who supplied it. The question has theological consequences, and I make no secret of where my sympathy lies. Yet the historian's contribution is to keep the names and documents visible long enough for a reader who disagrees with me to inspect the case for himself.

Here the Qurʾan imposes a discipline upon the investigator as much as upon the jurist. The command in 49:6 to examine a report before acting upon it ought to make a partisan historian uneasy when a source supports his preferred accusation too conveniently, while the demand in 4:135 for justice even against one's own interests ought to trouble the defender of a tradition whose legal record includes permissions he would never tolerate in his own household. The devotion which I have for Ali and his descendants has given me a reason to care about the provenance of their words; it grants me no privilege to invent a better account of the past when the evidence is inconvenient. A ruler invoking the Imam's name is subject to the same examination, and so is a critic who claims to have unmasked him.

I return in my mind to the devotional painting of al-Maʾmūn offering the grapes to Imam al-Riḍā, a later artist's presentation of a poisoning tradition whose historical details remain disputed. Its popularity tells us something about what the community fears most: the ruler's proximity to a holy man and the danger that the court may

destroy a person it has publicly honored. The image also furnishes the metaphor which has followed us through the book. A caliph could gain something by giving the Imam a seat beside him, and later institutions could gain something by having the Imam appear to endorse their decisions from the pages of a book. The resemblance is an invitation to investigate the documents. A painting of poisoned grapes does not identify the scribe who changed a report, though it gives the reader a rather memorable reason to ask who carried the plate into the room.

Anyone continuing this investigation will find more useful work in the archives than in a diagram linking Abbasid ministers to twentieth-century scholars with red string. We need early witnesses of particular hadiths, dated versions of books, close studies of what compilers added or rearranged, and records of the patrons who paid for the circulation of certain teachings. The cases most worth testing are those in which the received statement gives a ruler, husband or jurist a permission which the Qur'anic commitments of justice and protection appear to put in doubt. They should be compared with reports that oppose the supposed quietist pattern and with traditions which were transmitted long before the court that might be accused of creating them. An accusation becomes persuasive through the successful reconstruction of a sequence of acts.

Abū Hāshim's disputed inheritance still haunts these final pages, although the title on the door has changed several times. The person speaking claims an inheritance from a man whose authority the audience reveres. His words are written down, copied, authenticated, given a place in a legal argument, and finally enforced by somebody who may never have seen the document from which the authority was supposed to descend. I would like to know who wrote the sentence, who permitted it to circulate in that form, and who stood to benefit from its being obeyed. Somewhere between the original voice and the order delivered to a living person lies the history of the Dark Imams.

NOTES ON SOURCES AND CLAIMS

The prologue and Chapters 1–46 form a continuous reading edition. Chapters 15–22 recast the original manuscript's Fatimid, philosophical-Ismaili, succession, Alamut, Druze and initial Buyid research dossiers, while Chapters 23–30 follow the public calendar of Baghdad, al-Kāfī's early transmission, the selected marriage and authority reports, and the growth of the juristic canon. The historical report distinguishes contested allegations, quotations in later manuscripts, authors' arguments, and actions established through contemporary or near-contemporary witnesses. The larger working manuscript 02.11.5h remains the reference for unabridged Arabic, Persian and legal report dossiers. Chapters 39–46 follow the Najaf lectures, Iran's revolutionary constitution, the 1988 claims about absolute guardianship, the prison-execution evidence, and the 1989 succession. The new source ledger DI9-01–DI9-25 appears at the end.

Source and claim ledger · opening and Zaydī arc

No1. Abbasid testament and Hāshimiyya. Farhad Daftary, *A History of Shiʾi Islam*, early Shiʿi succession and the Abū Hāshim testament. https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/101408/9780755613151.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1. Also manuscript labels [W-D1], [P1-B04–B14]. These sources support the existence and political importance of the testament *story*, with authenticity disputed.

No2. Abbasid narratives of legitimation. Ilkka Lindstedt, "Al-Madāʾinī and the Narratives of the ʿAbbāsid Dawla," *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 5 (2017): 65–150, https://journal.fi/store/article/download/63285/27925. Supports the reported testament as a genealogical legitimation narrative.

No3. The revolution's ambiguous promise. Patricia Crone, "On the Meaning of the Abbasid Call to al-Rida," text available at https://albert.ias.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/a56c26c1-7c53-45dd-b40b-0dd79e50bd59/content. Her treatment challenges the authenticity of the testament; other scholars read the evidence differently. The chapter treats her argument as a reconstruction.

No4. Al-Maʾmūn and al-Riḍā. Nebil Husayn, *The Caliph and the Imam: The Making of Sunnism and Shiism*, Oxford University Press, preview at https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9780190689476_A63381584/preview-9780190689476_A63381584.pdf. Appointment in 817 and death in 818 are historical events; the poisoning accusation remains contested. See the 02.10.7 manuscript's image register [PG-01–PG-02] for provenance of the later devotional illustration.

No5. Theology of occultation. Saïd Amir Arjomand, "The Crisis of the Imamate and the Institution of Occultation in Twelver Shiʿism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28 (1996): 491–515, https://www.bahai-library.com/pdf/a/arjomand_crisis_imamate.pdf; *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, "Ḡayba," https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gayba/. Both discuss Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī and Ibn Qiba in the rationalization of occultation. A specific Abbasid commission to pacify Shiʿis remains undocumented in this review. Manuscript [Z01; Z04–Z06].

No6. The displaced Muʿtazilī judge. Wilferd Madelung, "ʿAbd-al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. The judge held office in Buyid Rayy and was dismissed after the death of his patron in 995. The biography supports patronage and displacement, rather than covert authorship of later Zaydī hadith collections. Manuscript [ZF-Z02].

N07. Qāḍī Jaʿfar's transmission mission. Scott C. Lucas, "Zaydī Shīʿism," *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, https://www.saet.ac.uk/Islam/ZaydiShiism, section 2.5.3. Covers Jaʿfar's 1151–1159 collecting expedition, the Zaydī and Muʿtazilī books he transmitted, and later influence. Manuscript [ZF-Z03; ZF-Z06–ZF-Z07].

No8.* Musnad Zayd *forgery allegation. The working manuscript attributes a construction/fabrication thesis to Saeed Mohd H. al-Marri, "Musnad Zaid bin Ali between Narration and Composition" (2023). This packet treats that as a modern hypothesis requiring isnād-cum-matn and manuscript comparison, especially where independent witnesses are absent. Manuscript [MZ; ZF-MZ].

**No9. Al-Kulaynī and* al-Kāfī. Encyclopaedia Iranica*, "Kolayni," https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kolayni/. Notes al-Kulaynī's death in 329/941 and identifies early transmitters, including al-Nuʿmānī. The collection predates the Buyid entrance into Baghdad. Manuscript [K; Z13].

N10. The Buyid Baghdad chronology. Abbasid caliphs remained in office under the new Buyid military rulers after the takeover in 334/945–946. Compare the working manuscript's chapter on Baghdad and https://www.islam.museum/en/polity/abbasid-caliphate/. The transition must not be backdated to make a direct commission of *al-Kāfī* seem possible.

Case controls. The existing manuscript's *al-Kāfī* marriage/consent dossier [K-R07–K-R11] and ʿUmar–Umm Kulthūm legal-history dossier [Y09–Y13] retain their original grades, variants, and limitations. This narrative opening states their stakes without attempting a replacement critical edition.

Working hypothesis. A continuous Abbasid-controlled operation to fabricate quietist Shiʿi hadith has yet to be demonstrated by the cited evidence. This book can test that thesis through particular patronage relations, dated transmissions, textual variants, and legal uses. The politically consequential transformation of attributed speech can also arise from decentralized acts across successive regimes.

Notes on the Zaydī archive

This edition continues the narrative revision through Chapters 7–14, drawing upon the historical argument, manuscript comparisons, and legal dossiers in *Dark Imams* working manuscript 02.11.5h. It is a newly written narrative treatment rather than a sentence-by-sentence replacement of every page in that much larger draft. Technical discussions of individual isnāds, the comparative registers, Arabic extracts, and the longer discussions of Abū Ḥanīfa, Hishām, and Qāḍī Jaʿfar remain in the underlying research edition and its appendices, pending a fuller critical rewriting. The earlier chapters and their historical notes are preserved in the consolidated reading edition.

The chain of inquiry in these chapters is intentionally more specific than the attractive notion of a single Abbasid-controlled conspiracy. The reported intellectual connection between Abū Hāshim and Wāṣil needs early independent witnesses; the public choices of Zayd, Jaʿfar, and Abū Ḥanīfa have to be reconstructed from later histories; and the manuscript history of the received *Musnad Zayd* has not established the agency of a particular forger. Evidence of institutional selection, textual adaptation, and consequential legal application can be studied directly, while an accusation of conscious falsification requires its own proof.

Guide to the documentary controls

P1-C01–P1-C07, Abū Hāshim and the rationalist inheritance. Consult the original working manuscript's dossier on al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad's early *irjāʾ*, later reports that Wāṣil learned from Abū Hāshim, and the chronological difficulty in connecting Wāṣil directly with Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya. A modern study of the teaching connection is Galip Türcan, "The Emergence of Muʿtazila: Religious and Sociocultural Environment," *Süleyman Demirel University Faculty of Theology Journal* 51 (2023), https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/3628748. The dates permit some proposed contacts and challenge others; they do not establish the actual content of any lesson.

X01–X05, ZU-01, Zayd and competing accounts of the Imamate. The original chapters on the rebel Imam and his abstaining relative discuss the difference between political action and later theories of designation. See Wilferd Madelung, "Zaydiyya," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* overview, available through the Institute of Ismaili Studies, https://www.iis.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/zaydiyya_pdf-1294164387.pdf. Theories about an Imam's divine knowledge or correct political strategy remain theological and historical interpretations, respectively.

B7-01, Abū Ḥanīfa. Umar Faruq Abd-Allah, "Abū Ḥanīfa," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abu-hanifa-noman-b/. The biographical evidence supports serious investigation of his Alid political sympathies, including reports of material assistance to rebel movements. Claims of specific periods of direct study with Zayd have to be assessed independently of those sympathies.

H15; Z04, the early Imami theological development. Etan Kohlberg, "From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-ʿashariyya," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/bulletin-of-the-school-of-oriental-and-african-studies/article/abs/from-imamiyya-to-ithnaashariyya/32F60507F79BEE8C3732011F4D092CAF; Alexander Hainy Khaleeli, "Hisham ibn al-Hakam: Arch-Heretic?" *Journal of Shiʿa Islamic Studies* 3 (2010). The sources distinguish Hishām's importance in developing the doctrine of the Imamate from the later consolidation of specifically Twelver teaching.

ZF-Z02–ZF-Z09, the judge, the books, and the law of consensus. Scott C. Lucas, "Zaydī Shīʿism," *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, https://www.saet.ac.uk/Islam/ZaydiShiism; Lucas, "Consensus in Yemeni-Zaydī Jurisprudence: Selections from Unpublished Writings by Imam Aḥmad b. Sulaymān and Qāḍī Jaʿfar," *Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen* 9 (2019), https://www.cdmy.org/cmy/cmy28.pdf; and Lucas, "Qāḍī Jaʿfar in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana," https://www.cdmy.org/cmy/cmy26.pdf. The comparison between Jaʿfar's *Taqrīb* and al-Jishumī's *ʿUyūn al-masāʾil* is a documented textual relationship. The interpretation of consensus topics 29–30 should retain the neighboring rules against treating a majority as proof and against blind imitation by a qualified scholar. The rival Muṭarrifī institutions and the evidence of dated manuscript copying require their own historical treatment.

**ZF-Z04; MZ; MZ-M01–MZ-M11, the received* Musnad Zayd. *The base text and clause locators follow the original manuscript's comparison of the Beirut* Musnad, *a numbered edition's report 393,* al-Shāfiʿī's al-Umm, *and the judicial parallel in* Sunan al-Nasāʾī* 5397, https://sunnah.com/nasai:5397. The comparison is at the level of individual clauses and surviving witnesses. The argument of Saeed Mohd H. al-Marri, "Musnad Zaid bin Ali between Narration and Composition" (2023), remains a published allegation of fabrication, with manuscript and chain tests unresolved in the present edition. The passages on al-Zuhrī, Saʿd, Barīra, and punishment by burning are recorded in the original dossier with the cited Bukhārī and Muslim report numbers, whose individual contexts must be maintained.

ZC-C02–ZC-C18, the wider Zaydī compilations. The underlying comparative register records routes in the *Amālī* associated with Aḥmad ibn ʿĪsā, the later transmission of *al-Jāmiʿal-kāfī*, Jaʿfar's stated thematic rearrangement in *Taysīr al-maṭālib*, and subsequent receptions in *Uṣūl al-aḥkām* and later compilations. Matching lower chains do not become independent earlier witnesses simply because the report appears under two printed titles. The dossier also retains the items hostile to Abbasid authority and against exaggerated reverence, which complicate any universal pacification thesis.

ZH-01; ZU-03–ZU-17, Zaydī authority and consent. The original dossier preserves Arabic clauses, report locators, historical comparisons, and the author's normative evaluations of marriage guardianship and the treatment of minors. This narrative installment makes the stakes visible while preserving the separation between an attribution's historical status and the justice of an applied rule. Consult the larger manuscript's Appendices H–I for the detailed case map and competing Zaydī legal interpretations.

SOURCE NOTES FOR PARTS III–IV

These notes identify the principal documentary leads inherited from the 02.11.5h research manuscript and the publications consulted for this narrative installment. Page-level and manuscript-level claims that still require fresh collation are flagged in the prose. The bracketed source codes retain their relation to the original working dossier; the new narrative does not silently promote an editorial summary into an independent medieval witness.

I01–I04, early Ismaili missions and 899: Farhad Daftary, "Ismāʿīlī Shīʿism," *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, https://www.saet.ac.uk/Islam/IsmailiShiism; Daftary, "Ismaʿilism iii. Ismaʿili History," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ismailism/iii-ismaili-history/; Daftary, "Salamiyya," Institute of Ismaili Studies, https://www.iis.ac.uk/scholarly-contributions/salamiyya/; Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī and Abūʾl-ʿAbbās, *Affirming the Imamate*, edited by Wilferd Madelung and Paul E. Walker; Ibn al-Haytham, *The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shiʾi Witness*, edited by Madelung and Walker; al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, *The Founding of the Fatimid State: The Rise of an Early Islamic Empire*, translated by Hamid Haji, and Institute of Ismaili Studies publication notice, https://www.iis.ac.uk/news/2007/march/new-iis-publication-on-the-rise-of-the-fatimid-state/. The claims about missionary chronology, the 899 rupture, and the genre of the witnesses come from these works; this narrative does not claim a new Arabic collation of the early mission texts.

I06–I14, Fatimid law and authority: Al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim al-Islām*, edited by Asaf A. A. Fyzee, particularly vol. I, p. 365 and vol. II, legal sections identified in the original manuscript; Fyzee, "Qadi an-Nuʿman, the Fatimid Jurist and Author," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1934), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0035869X00082630; Husain Qutbuddin, "Fāṭimid Legal Exegesis of the Qurʾan," *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 12 (2010), https://www.jstor.org/stable/25831167. The report about an officer's conduct is a proposition contained in the received collection; it establishes a rule the author presented, not proof that every Fatimid administrator followed it.

I15–I23, the philosophical Ismaili tradition: Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Khwān al-ikhwān* and *Wajh-i dīn*, passages and Persian section locators recorded in the original working manuscript; "Reconciling Religion and Philosophy: Nāṣir-i Khusraw's Jāmiʿ al-ḥikmatayn," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, https://philarchive.org/archive/ANDRRA-8; Farhad Daftary's discussion of al-Sijistānī and al-Kirmānī in *Ismāʿīlī Shīʿism*, https://www.saet.ac.uk/Islam/IsmailiShiism. The treatment of Universal Intellect and Soul follows these historical philosophical descriptions, and the claims about moral agency are the author's argument rather than quotations from the medieval writers.

J01–J05, succession and Arwā: S. M. Stern, "The Succession to al-Āmir, the Claims of the Later Fāṭimids to the Imamate, and the Rise of Ṭayyibī Ismailism," *Oriens* 4 (1951), pp. 193–255; Daftary, "Sayyida Hurra: The Ismaʿili Sulayhid Queen of Yemen," Institute of Ismaili Studies, https://www.iis.ac.uk/scholarly-contributions/sayyida-hurra-the-ismaili-sulayhid-queen-of-yemen/; "Ismāʿīlī Shīʿism," *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*. The retrospective title distinction in the *Hidāya* and the mistaken Nizār coin identification are taken from Stern's notes as described in the original dossier. Al-Ṭayyib's disappearance and the reasons for it are disputed; the independent birth notice, the rival designation claims, and later Tayyibi institutions are treated separately.

IS19-08–IS19-09, policies under al-Ḥākim: Jennifer Pruitt, "The Fatimid Holy City: Rebuilding Jerusalem in the Eleventh Century," *The Medieval Globe* 3 (2017),

https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/tmg/vol3/iss2/4/; Colin Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West*, chapter 5, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198269281.003.0005; and the Yaḥyā of Antioch dossier in the 02.11.5h manuscript. The destruction of the Holy Sepulchre is well attested. Individual motives, the exact dates of associated restrictions, and details reported by one chronicle require comparison with other sources.

IS19-02, IS19-11–IS19-20, Alamut: Farhad Daftary, "The Mediaeval Ismailis of the Iranian Lands," Institute of Ismaili Studies, https://www.iis.ac.uk/scholarly-contributions/the-mediaeval-ismailis-of-the-iranian-lands/; Daftary, "Hasan II," https://www.iis.ac.uk/scholarly-contributions/hasan-ii/; and Daftary, "Ismāʿīlī Shīʿism," *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*. The foundation at Alamut, 1094 split, 1164 proclamation, and 1210 change in policy are distinct episodes, with Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (d. 1124) distinguished throughout from Ḥasan II (d. 1166).

IS21-A08–IS21-A12, Alamut transmission: Shiraz Hajiani, "Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw: Analyses of a Subaltern Nizari Ismaili Text Written before the Declaration of the Qiyāmat-i buzurg," *Iranian Studies* (published January 24, 2025), https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/iranian-studies/article/abs/hikayati-sayyid-nasiri-khusraw-analyses-of-a-subaltern-nizari-ismaili-text-written-before-the-declaration-of-the-qiyamati-buzurg-the-great-resurrection-in-5591164/81F8A6D2BDA30ECFE38E9BDCEDE265F8; and the original manuscript's register of the chronicle tradition descended from the lost *Sargudhasht-i Sayyidnā*. The two-son and four-son accounts remain competing reports, not established records of four or two independent judicial killings.

IS20-A01–A09, IS21-A01–A07, Fatimid legal witnesses: Al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, *Dáāʾim al-Islām*, edited by Asaf A. A. Fyzee, vol. II, pp. 218 (reports 809–811), 245 (reports 924–927), 299 (reports 1125–1127), and 309–311 (reports 1166–1169), together with the volume II editor's manuscript introduction; al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, vol. VII, p. 339 (reports 1386–1388), and al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasāʾil*, reception citations, as located in the 02.11.5h dossier. The oldest of Fyzee's six listed volume II witnesses is dated 865 AH / 1461 CE, and the current narrative relies on the published edition and apparatus rather than the original manuscript folios.

J06–J15, Druze writings: Daniel De Smet, *Les Épîtres sacrées des Druzes: Rasāʾil al-ḥikma*, volumes 1–2 (Leuven, 2007); the critical review and description at https://www.persee.fr/doc/bcai_0259-7373_2010_num_25_1_1038_t6_0119_0000_1; Philip K. Hitti, *The Origins of the Druze People and Religion* (1928), selected translated epistles and charter passages identified in the original working dossier; and Tatsuya Kikuchi and Kais Firro's discussions cited in the dossier. The differences between the epistle's presentation of John and the received Johannine text are reported as a later history of reception. The underlying Arabic readings have not been newly collated.

J16–J21, Buyid authority and al-Murtaḍā: Tilman Nagel's Buyid chronology and al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-ʿAmal máa al-sulṭān* and related *Rasāʾil* passages, as cited and translated in the original dossier at printed pp. 94–95. Al-Murtaḍā's conditional permission for service in a government he judges unjust is a textual claim in a dated setting, with a separate historical question about which appointments later invoked it. The death of al-Kulaynī before the Buyid entry into Baghdad is a chronological control against anachronistic stories about the initial composition of *al-Kāfī*.

Source scope for the Ismaili and Buyid chapters

The subsequent chapters followed the Buyid public calendar, the posthumous transmission of al-Kāfī, and the route through which a report collected in an Imam's name could become a judge's binding rule. Original working-manuscript Chapters 20–27, including the detailed 22-report al-Kāfī decision register, remain available for the continuing narrative and textual collation.

SOURCE NOTES FOR CHAPTERS 23–30

The bracketed DI7 citations are keyed to the records below. Ancient material is cited at the level of an edition or named passage whenever the original working manuscript supplies one. The narrative uses the working manuscript's selected twenty-two-report *al-Kāfī* dossier and does not imply a new inspection of all manuscript witnesses or a new complete grading of the collection. The versions of *Mir'āt al-ʿuqūl* and the electronic hadith indexes cited in that dossier should be collated against a fixed print edition for publication.

DI7-01. Ahmad Kazemi-Moussavi, "Ḡadīr Ḵomm ii. Ḡadīr festival," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2000, updated 2013), https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gadir-komm/gadir-komm-ii-gadir-festival-id-e-gadir/. For 352/963 Ghadīr observances, the chroniclers' descriptions, earlier written memory, and Sunni counter-observances. Compare the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* entry "Dasta" on mourning processions. Details in Ibn al-Athīr are mediated by later chronicle transmission.

DI7-02. *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, "Iraq x. Shiʿites of Iraq," https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/iraq-x-shiites-of-iraq/. Context for the Buyids, urban confessional politics, Alid *niqāba*, and administrative offices. State sponsorship of an event documents amplification, with separate evidence required for any allegation of invented reports.

DI7-03. Etan Kohlberg, "Kolayni," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kolayni/. For al-Kulaynī's date, student-transmitter network, al-Nuʿmānī's quotations, Abu Ghālib's library, later reception, al-Mufīd's praise, Ibn al-Nadīm's silence, al-Ṭusi's use, and critical Imami assessments. Kohlberg reports Ibn Qūlawayh as a particularly important route to al-Mufīd. The presence of identifiable quotations in early works constrains but does not authenticate every report in the present collection.

DI7-04. Al-Ṭūsī, transmission notice in the *Mashyakha* of *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām / al-Istibṣār*, describing a 327 AH Baghdad transmission of al-Kulaynī's works; al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, entry on al-Kulaynī and his readers. These are medieval bibliographical notices, not surviving autographs. The original working manuscript records the relevant Arabic passages under Y06–Y07.

DI7-05. Amin Ehteshami, "The Four Books of Shiʿi Hadith: From Inception to Consolidation," *Islamic Law and Society* 29 (2022): 225–279, https://doi.org/10.1163/15685195-28040002. For the fifteenth-century appearance and seventeenth-century consolidation of the collective category, a reception history rather than a claim that the constituent books did not circulate earlier.

DI7-06. ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, reports concerning paternal consultation in marriage, involving Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī and al-Shaʿbī; original manuscript Y09 reports variant digital numberings near 10292–10294. Consult a specified edition before assigning a final printed page.

DI7-07. Al-Sarakhsī, *al-Mabsūṭ*, vol. 4, "Bāb nikāḥ al-ṣaghīr wa-l-ṣaghīra," preserving the position attributed to Ibn Shubruma and Abū Bakr al-Aṣamm, together with the author's rebuttal. The passage invokes Qur'an 4:6 and 65:4 in the exchange. Ibn Shubruma's view is transmitted through a much later jurist and should be attributed accordingly.

DI7-08. Al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, reports 13437–13438 as numbered in the original working manuscript, on al-Shāfiʿī's legal use of the marriage of ʿUmar and Umm Kulthūm, including the phrase *bi-ghayr amrihā*. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl*, entry on Sufyān ibn Wakīʿ and later criticism of his transmission. The historical marriage's details remain disputed, while the legal use is directly visible in al-Bayhaqī's text.

DI7-09. *Al-Kāfī*, 5/3/23/1–2; al-Majlisī, *Mir'āt al-ʿuqūl* 20:42. Reports concerning Umm Kulthūm and an accusation of coercion. The original working dossier numbers them 15–16; their favorable *ḥasan* grades are not direct proof of the historical event.

DI7-10. Ruhollah Khomeini, *Taḥrīr al-Wasīla*, vol. 2, *Kitāb al-nikāḥ*, question 12, as cited and transcribed in the original 02.11.5h manuscript, source records P6-B01–B02. The legal text distinguishes penetrative intercourse before nine from other sexual acts under a contract and mentions *ḥattā fī al-raḍīʿa*. The report here concerns a published juristic ruling, with no claim about the author's private conduct.

DI7-11. Original manuscript *al-Kāfī* selected dossier 01–05: 1/2/22/3, 1/2/22/5, 1/3/30/13, 2/1/36/3, 2/1/97/16; al-Majlisī, *Mir'āt* 1:229, 2:195, 8:50, 9:183. Includes the Qur'an-conformity reports, the *mursal* free-will report, a weak yet ethically favorable report about conduct, and the *ḥasan* limitation of *taqiyya* at bloodshed.

DI7-12. *Al-Kāfī* 7/5/11/1, report concerning Ismāʿīl ibn Jaʿfar, ʿĀ'isha's age, and legal testimony; al-Majlisī, *Mir'āt* 24:235, *ṣaḥīḥ* for the transmission with subsequent criticism of the reasoning attributed to the reported speaker. The chain ends with Ismāʿīl rather than extending automatically to the Imam.

DI7-13. *Al-Kāfī* 5/3/56/1, 5/3/57/3–6; al-Majlisī, *Mir'āt* 20:125, 20:129–130. Dossier cases 09–13. The reports differ over adult female self-direction, consent within the household, paternal contracting power, and the absence of rescission at maturity. Individual grades include *ḥasan*, weak, *muwaththaq*, and *ṣaḥīḥ*. Their normative conflict is a matter for legal argument beyond the grade.

DI7-14. *Al-Kāfī* 5/3/61/1 and 5/3/62/1–2; al-Majlisī, *Mir'āt* 20:137. The reports include a warning about child marriages' failure to produce affinity and different chains for the nine or ten and nine-year thresholds. The source distinguishes the grammar of a prohibition before an age from affirmative authorization of every act after that age.

DI7-15. *Rawḍat al-Kāfī*, report 452, digital index 8/1/452/1; al-Majlisī, *Mir'āt* 26:325, *muwaththaq*. The Arabic refers to the leader of each banner being *worshipped apart from God*; the scope of the warning is contested and a universal prohibition on opposing injustice is the subject of the book's criticism.

DI7-16. *Al-Kāfī* 1/2/21/10, report of ʿUmar ibn Ḥanẓala; al-Majlisī, *Mir'āt* 1:221, *muwaththaq* with a note of reception. The context is an adjudicative dispute over debt or inheritance; later applications to broader clerical jurisdiction require their own argument.

DI7-17. *Al-Kāfī* 1/4/5/1, 1/4/5/10, 1/4/45/1; al-Majlisī, *Mir'āt* 2:294, 3:110 and the digital grade for 1/4/5/10. Dossier cases 19–21 concern the silent Imam, metaphysical continuity, and knowledge being provided or withheld. The *earth would sink* report's grading requires direct page collation against *Mir'āt* before final printing.

DI7-18. *Al-Kāfī* 2/3/14/28; al-Majlisī, *Mir'āt* 12:525–526. The seventeen-thousand-verses report has a reported transmitter-name variant; the commentator's classification is conditional on the reading. The editorial dossier records both the variant and his interpretation, and suspends a reconstruction of its original recension pending collation.

DI7-19. Edmund Hayes, *Agents of the Hidden Imam: Forging Twelver Shiʿism, 850–950 CE* (Cambridge University Press, 2022). For pre-occultation agency networks, financial transfers, contested mediation, and the piecemeal formation of envoy authority. The first five chapters of the original working manuscript discuss the fourth envoy and the early form of the institution separately from its retrospective presentation.

DI7-20. Saʿd ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Qummī, *Kitāb al-maqālāt wa-l-firaq*; Verena Klemm, "Islam in Iran ix. The Deputies of Mahdi," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. For factions after al-ʿAskarī's death, differences between early lists, and the later tidy account of the four envoys. Distinguish the related *Firaq al-Shīʿa* witness from an unquestioned original by Ḥasan al-Nawbakhtī.

DI7-21. *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, "Nawbakhti Family," "Abū Sahl Nawbakhtī," and Saïd Amir Arjomand, "Ḡayba." For the intellectual and administrative setting of the family, Abū Sahl's theological affinities, and the role of Ibn Qiba. These sources support connections between rationalism, bureaucratic experience, and Imami theology; they do not document a caliphal commissioning operation.

DI7-22. Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, discussion of authorization and service under unjust government, as recorded in the source manuscript's Chapter 19 (source records J17–J21), including the 415 AH/1024 context. The present chapter applies the general requirement for independently recognizable delegation to the problem of occultation-era agents, as an argument rather than a newly discovered historical quotation.

DI7-23. Wilferd Madelung, biographical studies of al-Mufīd and al-Murtaḍā; Andrew J. Newman, *Twelver Shiism* (2026), chapter on later Buyid rationalism; contemporary academic discussion of early Usuli legal method. For the Baghdad scholars' dates, intellectual setting, and differing uses of rational analysis. Distinguish the period's debates from later stabilized Akhbari/Usuli party identities.

DI7-24. Ali Aghaei, "The Hermeneutics of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā: The Interpretation of *akhbār al-āḥād* in *Kitāb al-Amālī*"; *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, "Ejtehād" and "Aḵbārīya." For al-Murtaḍā's concern about solitary reports and al-Ṭūsī's more conditional acceptance, with these scholars' differing claims about the inherited practice of the school.

DI7-25. Robert Gleave, "Between Ḥadīth and Fiqh: The 'Canonical' Imāmī Collections of Akhbār," *Islamic Law and Society* 8, no. 3 (2001): 350–382, https://doi.org/10.1163/156851901317230620; Amin Ehteshami, "The Four Books of Shiʿi Hadith" (DI7-05). For the organization of *Tahdhīb* and *Istibṣār*, the juristic work performed by collectors, and the later collective canon.

Editorial boundary. These chapters adapt existing research rather than offering a fresh critical edition of each Arabic source. Reports are identified by the locators and grades already documented in the 02.11.5h research manuscript. A publication edition should fix the Arabic print base, record textual variants, independently audit the isnād where required, and make the separation between historical attribution and normative evaluation visible in every case.

SOURCES AND DOCUMENTARY NOTES FOR CHAPTERS 31–38

The references below identify the documentary basis for the new reading-edition chapters. The full 02.11.5h working manuscript retains longer quotations, Arabic extracts, disagreements over translated wording, and its original source-register IDs. Bracketed references in the narrative point to this register. An attribution in a late anthology is treated as evidence that the anthology transmits a text, with separate evidence required to date the text or establish a speech of the historical Imam.

DI8-01 · Al-Ḥilla as an argumentative school. Aun Hasan Ali, *The School of Hillah and the Formation of Twelver Shi'i Islamic Tradition* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023). Publisher metadata: https://books.google.com/books/about/The_School_of_Hillah_and_the_Formation_0.html?id=KzTLEAAAQBAJ. The study reconstructs a community sustained through teachers, families, texts, and disagreement. It does not support the traditional tale that intellectual work simply ceased in the generation after al-Ṭūsī. Source manuscript: Chapter 28, register Z16.

DI8-02 · The al-Ḥillī jurists and legal organization. Robert Gleave, "Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī (d. 676/1277) and His al-Muḫtaṣar al-Nāfi'," *Arabica* (2025), https://doi.org/10.1163/15700585-01236946. For the roles of Ibn Idrīs, al-Muḥaqqiq, al-'Allāma, and the historiographical claim that juristic reasoning had stagnated. The account of Öljeitü and court scholarship is inherited from the original Chapter 28 and requires the named biographical witness for detailed claims of royal patronage.

DI8-03 · Safavid religious institutions. Hamid Algar, "Shi'ism in Iran since the Safavids," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/iran-ix1-religions-in-iran/iran-ix2-islam-in-iran/iran-ix23-shiism-in-iran-since-the-safavids/. This covers conversion policy, juristic debates over the shah's religious status, Friday prayer, land revenue, and the institutional role of religious officeholders.

DI8-04 · The decree of 1533. Colin P. Mitchell, "Ṭahmāsp I," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/tahmasp-i/. The article dates the decree recognizing al-Karakī as deputy of the Imam to **9 July 1533** and describes the controversy over its implications. The royal recognition is a historical event; whether the shah could confer the spiritual office remains the disputed legal proposition.

DI8-05 · Al-Karakī and the forged letter. Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "Karakī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/karaki/. The entry discusses al-Karakī's provincial appointments, land-tax administration, opponents, and an allegedly forged letter attributing insults to Shah Ṭahmāsp to the jurist. The episode comes through named chronicles, and its evidentiary reach is the documented political accusation and inquiry. A forged court letter is a different class of event from a proven forgery of hadith.

DI8-06 · Friday prayer under occultation. *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, "Emām-e Jom'a," https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/emam-e-joma/; "Ḵoṭba," https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kotba-sermon/. The historical disagreement includes outright prohibition, conditional or elective obligation, and more expansive state-oriented positions. The prose does not ascribe a single unanimous ruling to the Safavid jurists.

DI8-07 · The Mu'tazilī library in Yemen. Sabine Schmidtke, "The People of Monotheism and Justice: Mu'tazilism in Islam and Judaism," Institute for Advanced Study (2017), https://www.ias.edu/ideas/2017/schmidtke-rational-theology. For the survival of 'Abd al-Jabbār's *al-Mughnī* and later Mu'tazilī works in Zaydī manuscript networks, and for the additional Karaite transmission context.

DI8-08 · A specific Zaydī adaptation of Mu'tazilī argument. Scott C. Lucas, "Zaydī Shī'ism," *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, https://www.saet.ac.uk/Islam/ZaydiShiism, section on Qāḍī Ja'far and his jurisprudence. Cf. original working manuscript Chapter 11, sources ZF-Z02–ZF-Z09, and the earlier narrative Chapters 11–13. The known adaptation is a textual relation; continuous caliphal supervision is an unproved additional claim.

DI8-09 · Distinguishing two Abū Hāshims. Original manuscript Chapter 29, source notes B6-01–B6-03, distinguishes Abū Hāshim son of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya from the later Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī (d. 933). The early relation with Wāṣil remains an issue of witness dating and genealogical attribution rather than a demonstrated chain reaching the tenth-century rationalists.

DI8-10 · Toledo and the Arabic–Latin translators. Original working manuscript Chapter 30, sources B6-09–B6-10. A general descriptive source is "The Arabic-to-Latin Translation Movement," *Ad Fontes*, https://adfonteslibrary.org/toledo-translation-movement, identifying Gundissalinus, Avendauth, and the translations. The precise identity behind the Latin name Avendauth is treated cautiously; the translation's existence is better established than every proposed biographical identification.

DI8-11 · Aquinas and the Arabic philosophers. Original manuscript Chapter 30, source set B6-09–B6-13. For the visible Latin reception of Avicenna's essence/existence arguments and Aquinas's responses to Averroes on intellect, consult Aquinas's *De ente et essentia*, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, and the histories cited in that chapter. Similarity of an argument is not taken as proof of a secret initiatory lineage.

DI8-12 · The Liber de causis. Thomas Aquinas, Super Librum de causis expositio, read against the Latin reception of Proclus's Elements of Theology, as detailed in the original Chapter 30 source register. Modern collection: Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes, Brill, 2019, https://brill.com/edcollbook-oa/book/9789004395114. The changed attribution supplies a methodologically useful counterexample to trusting a famous author name.

DI8-13 · Mullā Ṣadrā's teachers and works. Sajjad H. Rizvi, "Mulla Sadra," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://seop.illc.uva.nl/entries/mulla-sadra/. For the *Jung-i Qazvin*, notes involving Mīr Dāmād and Shaykh Bahā'ī, the four journeys, and the commentary on *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*. The notes establish documented intellectual relationships while leaving details of a complete formal curriculum unresolved. Source manuscript Chapter 31, B6-14 onward.

DI8-14 · The philosophical argument. Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fī l-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa* and *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, with modern scholarly explanation by Rizvi (DI8-13). Terms including the primacy of existence, substantial motion, and union of knower and known are presented as attributed doctrines requiring their own philosophical assessment, not as historical proof that a teacher acquired governmental authority.

DI8-15 · The Nūrāniyya and the old-book notice. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 26:1–7, received printed edition, source section BH-B02 in the original manuscript Chapter 32 and Appendix C. The introduction refers to old books encountered by the compiler and his father. An independently dated first-century text is not established through that description alone.

DI8-16 · The theological clauses and their circulation. Original manuscript Chapter 32, Appendix C, sources BH-B06, BH-B08–BH-B12, for the luminous speech, the language of servanthood, the disputed use of *ghulūw*, and al-Majlisī's own interventions. The discussion distinguishes the meaning a passage might sustain from the separate question of its historical speaker.

DI8-17 · Created Spirit and Greatest Name controls. *Al-Kāfī* 1/4/56/1 and 1/4/56/4, and 1/4/36/1, discussed in the original Chapter 32 with source IDs BH-K01–BH-K03 and the cited *Mir'āt al-ʿuqūl* grades. The analysis retains an Arabic negation obscured in an English rendering and the *majhūl* judgment for the selected Greatest Name report. These are separate case controls, not grades for the whole *Nūrāniyya* corpus.

DI8-18 · The tobacco ruling and its attribution. Hamid Algar, "Ḥasan Širāzi," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hasan-sirazi-mirza-mohammad/, and "Fatwā," https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/fatwa/. Shīrāzī died in **1895**. The sources reconstruct the letters, the late-1891 prohibition, attribution questions, and the definitive instructions ending the boycott in 1892.

DI8-19 · Akhbārīs and Uṣūlīs. "Aḵbārīya," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/akbariya/; original manuscript Chapter 33, source N20.

For Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarābādī, al-Bihbahānī, and the disputed role of jurists as interpreters during the occultation. The story does not turn Akhbārī thinking into an unreasoned absence of scholarship.

DI8-20 · The formation of marjaʿiyya. Original manuscript Chapter 33, P6-A08 and discussion of Zackery Mirza Heern. Cf. Farhad Daftary, *A History of Shiʿi Islam* (2024 edition), on Shaykh Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī's nineteenth-century authority and on the difference between the premodern legal tradition and the modern transregional source of emulation. Claims of single leadership describe a historically variable degree of recognition.

DI8-21 · Āshtiyānī and the protest network. Hamid Algar, "Āštīānī, Ḥasan," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/astiani-hajj-mirza-hasan-or-mohammad-hasan-b/. For transmission of Shīrāzī's protest to Tehran, the threat of expulsion, and the mobilization around the scholar.

DI8-22 · Iranian constitutionalism. "Constitutional Revolution i. Intellectual Background," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/constitutional-revolution-I/, with original manuscript Chapter 34, source N22. For the 1905–1911 controversy, the assembly, the monarchy, and conflicts over the religious scope of legislation.

DI8-23 · The jurists' divergent political positions. "Shiʿism in Iran since the Safavids," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (DI8-03), constitutional section, and Vanessa Martin, "Nūrī, Fażl-Allāh," https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nuri-fazl-allah/. For Nūrī's changing stance, Khurāsānī's constitutional support, and Nūrī's execution in 1909.

DI8-24 · Nāʾīnī's constitutional trust. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾīnī, *Tanbīh al-umma wa-tanzīh al-milla* (1909), translated selections introduced by Mahmoud Sadri and discussed in original manuscript Chapter 34, P6-A06. The paraphrase describes the argument of the selected passages; the full Persian treatise is required for an exhaustive account of its religious and constitutional provisions.

DI8-25 · Limits on legislative authority. Vanessa Martin's Nūrī entry (DI8-23), the 1907 supplemental constitutional controversy, and source P2-A03 in the original manuscript. The narrative records the jurist's expressed objections to equal standing and press freedom and acknowledges his earlier reformist participation. The political verdict is kept separate from the historical reconstruction.

The historical allegation of a coordinated Abbasid project to falsify quietist Shiʿi hadith remains a hypothesis under examination. Chapters 31–38 document identifiable and sometimes disputed changes in legal method, state patronage, manuscript transmission, interpretation, and learned jurisdiction, with particular attention to cases in which contemporaries objected. A reader may find the cumulative pattern suspicious; a claim of direction by a particular court or agent requires evidence of the direction itself.

SOURCE NOTES FOR CHAPTERS 39–46

Source labels identify the authority for an event or formulation rather than certify the entire authorial interpretation. Received editions, translations and later memoirs are named as such; no previously unexamined manuscript is claimed to have been collated. Primary texts are cited alongside historical studies so that the strength and limits of each historical inference remain visible.

DI9-01 · The Najaf lectures (primary English edition). Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist*, translated and annotated by Hamid Algar, English online text at https://al-islam.org/sw/islamic-government-governance-jurist-sayyid-ruhullah-musawi-khomeini. The edition's introduction gives 21 January to 8 February 1970. The lectures are interpreted as their author's public argument; this is no independent authentication of the hadiths to which he appeals.

DI9-02 · Career and lecture chronology (secondary). Hamid Algar, "Khomeini i. Life," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/khomeini-i-life/. This scholarly biography dates the course from 27 January to 8 February and calls it twelve lectures, differing in detail from the English edition's introductory chronology. The chapter therefore describes a series in early 1970 without resolving the divergence by invention.

DI9-03 · Judicial reports and general jurisdiction (primary commentary). Khomeini, *Islamic Government*, portions analyzing the report of ʿUmar ibn Ḥanẓala and the functions of judges and rulers, source DI9-01. See also the original *Dark Imams* working manuscript 02.11.5h, Chapter 35, source P6-A03, for the author's interpretation. The quoted report's historicity and scope remain separate issues.

DI9-04 · Antecedents and 1944. Yasuyuki Matsunaga's study of Khomeini's *Kashf al-asrār* as summarized and cited in the working manuscript 02.11.5h, Chapter 35, and Algar's "Khomeini ii. Works," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/khomeini-ii-works/. The presence of earlier juristic and political argument prevents an anachronistic claim that the doctrine originated wholesale in the Najaf course.

DI9-05 · Guardianship analogy. Khomeini, *Islamic Government*, chapter on the authority of the jurist, source DI9-01; original *Dark Imams* manuscript Chapter 35, P6-A03. Its comparison concerns appointed duties; the chapter's treatment of political consent is the author's normative criticism, with the domains of law expressly distinguished.

DI9-06 · The 1979 drafting process. Saïd Amir Arjomand, "Constitution of the Islamic Republic," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/constitution-of-the-islamic-republic/. Full historical article used for the competing drafts, the Assembly of Experts, and the arrival of *welāyat-e faqīh* in constitutional debate.

DI9-07 · Referenda and the first constitution. "Constitution of Iran, 1979," Middle East Institute constitutional text and metadata, https://www.mei.org.in/constitutions/constitution-iran-1979. Approved on 2–3 December 1979; Article 1 records the officially reported 98.2 percent figure from the March referendum. An official result is an attributed figure, not independent proof of the conduct of the vote.

DI9-08 · Revised constitutional clauses. "Iran (Islamic Republic of) 1979 (rev. 1989)," Constitute Project, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iran_1989, especially articles 4–5, 57, 91–96, 107–111 and 150. The narrative distinguishes the original adoption of the constitution from

subsequent changes; quotations from the revised document cannot by themselves establish the exact wording of the 1979 version.

DI9-09 · Women's demonstrations. "Feminist Movements iv. In the Islamic Republic," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/feminist-movements-iv/; see also the study "We did not make a revolution to go backwards," *Asia Maior* (2025), https://www.asiamaior.org/the-journal/asia-maior-vol-xxxvi-2025/we-did-not-make-a-revolution-to-go-backwards-the-iranian-womens-uprising-of-march-1979-and-its-systematic-erasure-from-historical-memory.html. These establish the March 8 events and the diverse protest concerns. Recollections and later essays must be identified separately from contemporary newspaper records.

DI9-10 · Khomeini's marriage-law ruling. Khomeini, *Taḥrīr al-Wasīla*, vol. 2, *Kitāb al-nikāḥ*, issue 12, primary Arabic text and pagination preserved in manuscript 02.11.5h, Chapter 35, P6-B01–P6-B03. The normative contents of the ruling are discussed with an explicit ethical judgment. No assertion about Khomeini's private conduct is inferred from the legal text.

DI9-11 · Precedents and legal disagreement. Original manuscript Chapters 22–24, including the received *Muṣannaf* comparisons and the medieval dispute involving Ibn Shubruma as cited by al-Sarakhsī. The earlier chapter's evidence limitations remain controlling: distinct schools, texts and centuries cannot be combined into an invented continuous chain.

DI9-12 · State–council deadlock. Algar, "Khomeini i. Life," DI9-02, sections on the 1980s Majles/Guardian Council disputes and the establishment of the expediency body; Arjomand, DI9-06. The chapter reconstructs the institutional problem separately from the theological evaluation of Khomeini's answer.

DI9-13 · University closures and ideological screening. "Education vii. General Survey of Modern Education," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/education-vii-general-survey-of-modern-education/; "The 1980 Cultural Revolution and Restrictions on Academic Freedom in Iran," Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (2020), https://iranhrdc.org/the-1980-cultural-revolution-and-restrictions-on-academic-freedom-in-iran/. Date ranges and reported counts of dismissals vary among sources; no single estimate is asserted in the narrative.

DI9-14 · Accountability and the election system. Constitute Project articles 107–111, DI9-08; "Elections ii. Under the Islamic Republic, 1979–92," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/elections/elections-ii-under-the-islamic-republic-1979-92/. Later interpretations of candidate screening are dated rather than attributed to every period of the Islamic Republic.

DI9-15 · 6 January 1988 letter (primary). "Letter to President Khamenei: Determining the limitations of the authority of the Islamic government," Iran Data Portal, Syracuse University, https://irandataportal.syr.edu/letter-to-president-khamenei-determining-the-limitations-of-the-authority-of-the-islamic-government. Dated 16 Dey 1366 / 6 January 1988; English translation with an original Persian text link. The narrative paraphrases the letter's examples.

DI9-16 · Absolute guardianship (academic interpretation). "Law's Comprehensiveness and Sovereign Leadership: On the Juridico-political Thinking of Ayatollah Khomeini and Carl Schmitt," *Political Theology* (2022), https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1462317X.2021.2017536. Used for the 1 January sermon and 6 January exchange, as well as the distinction between divine law and the scope of governmental priority. A modern analytic comparison does not establish direct influence from Schmitt.

DI9-17 · Expediency and 1989 revision. Arjomand, DI9-06; Algar, DI9-02; Constitute Project, DI9-08. The institution emerged in 1988 and became constitutionally formalized with the 1989 amendments. These sources give the chronology of the change rather than inferring it from doctrine alone.

DI9-18 · 1988 prison executions and memoir witness. Human Rights Watch, "Iran's 1988 Mass Executions," 8 June 2022, https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/08/irans-1988-mass-executions. Extensive review of the mass executions, the fatwa reproduced in Montaẓerī's memoir, witnesses, casualty estimates, and the 2016 audio recording. This is an assessed investigative source, whose cited documents should be separated from its legal judgments.

DI9-19 · Contemporary and later human-rights inquiry. Abdorrahman Boroumand Center, "Report on Human Rights Violations in Iran, 1987 to 1990: The Massacre of 1988," https://www.iranrights.org/library/document/349. The record shows documented challenges over the prisoners' prior sentences and the later handling of survivors.

DI9-20 · Montaẓerī's protest and removal. Human Rights Watch, DI9-18; Algar, "Khomeini i. Life," DI9-02, section on succession; original working manuscript Chapter 35, P6-B08. The source record supports Montaẓerī's protests and the political split; it is improper to make a single causal explanation swallow all disputes between the men.

DI9-21 · Leadership qualifications and constitutional crisis. Arjomand, DI9-06; Algar, DI9-02; "Out of the Mouth of the Leader: The Political Ideology of Ayatollah Ali Hosseini Khamenei," University of California eScholarship, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4tc4k8c6. Sources address the late-April 1989 letters, the relation of *marjaʿiyya* to leadership, and the June succession. Dates and texts of related instructions require primary Persian collation for exhaustive treatment.

DI9-22 · Letter on the marjaʿ condition. The 29 April 1989 letter to ʿAlī Meshkīnī as reproduced in the eScholarship dissertation at DI9-21; compare the references to May statements in the Algar and Arjomand articles. The substantive conclusion, a move to qualification as a *mujtahid*, is established; edition dating and relationships among letters are retained as source-specific details.

DI9-23 · Election oversight after 1989. "Elections ii. Under the Islamic Republic, 1979–92," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, DI9-14. For the historical distinction between constitutional supervision and the Guardian Council's 1991 interpretation including candidate qualifications.

DI9-24 · Opening succession and poisoning controls. The v8 narrative edition, opening source ledger No1–No5, and manuscript 02.11.5h, Part I, for the disputed Abū Hāshim testament, the Abbasid legitimating narrative, the appointment and death of al-Riḍā, and the later poisoned-grapes image. The latter is devotional art and retrospective tradition rather than independent evidence of a poisoning act.

DI9-25 · Textual moves and limits of the coordination thesis. The prior narrative's source ledgers for Qāḍī Jaʿfar, the Buyid reception of *al-Kāfī*, the Safavid al-Karakī dispute, and the Twelver hadith grading examples; original manuscript 02.11.5h, Chapters 11–13, 21–27 and Appendices B–I. A documented revision, adaptation or forged letter is evidence about that case; the presence of such cases does not by itself demonstrate a century-spanning directed conspiracy.

Continuing editorial verification

The next scholarly revision should collate the received Persian text of the January 1988 letter and the April–May 1989 leadership correspondence against the earliest dated print witnesses; compare the 1979 constitutional articles directly with their 1989 amendments; revisit the specific *ʿUmar ibn Ḥanẓala* report, its chains and Khomeini's deployment of it; and submit the descriptions of 1988 prison proceedings to a specialist in modern Iranian history and transitional justice. These are

documented verification tasks. The present installment makes no claim to a new primary manuscript discovery or a completed fresh *rijāl* audit.

PRIMARY-TEXT CHECKPOINTS AND LIVE SOURCE AUDIT · v10.3

These verification notes record what each inspected source contains and where manuscript or isnād collation is still required. The short codes [PV-01]–[PV-11] supplement the original labels without silently revising earlier report grades. Public pages were checked on 21 November 2026. An online transcription can verify wording as printed there, while the attribution of that wording to an early Imam remains a separate historical question.

[PV-01] Qāḍī Jaʿfar and the adapted consensus argument. Scott Lucas, "Consensus in Yemeni-Zaydī Jurisprudence," *Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen* 9 (2019), pp. 56–97, https://www.cdmy.org/cmy/cmy28.pdf, and "Zaydī Shīʿism," *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, https://www.saet.ac.uk/Islam/ZaydiShiism. The study edits material witnessed in Milan Ambrosiana ar. D 544 (1160) and Vatican ar. 1165 (1169), finding a change to the standing of the Prophet's family's consensus in an otherwise closely related set of thirty-one topics. This establishes a scholarly textual adaptation in a Zaydī setting. It supplies no direct order from an Abbasid patron.

[PV-02] A published allegation of forgery. Saeed Mohd H. al-Marri, "Musnad Zaid bin Ali between Narration and Composition," *Online Journal of Research in Islamic Studies* 10, no. 2 (2023), DOI 10.22452/ris.vol10no2.10, https://jice.um.edu.my/index.php/RIS/article/view/43182. The journal abstract argues that the book's narrow transmission route and missing early attestations point to Qāḍī Jaʿfar as its fabricator. The finding is the article's scholarly position, recorded here as disputed; this edition has not reconstructed an independent complete isnād or manuscript collation to adjudicate it.

[PV-03] Marriage consultation and father's contractual power. Al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, *Dáā'im al-Islām*, ed. Asaf A. A. Fyzee, vol. II, p. 218, reports 809–811, Arabic digital transcription, https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/218?lang=ar. Reports 809–810 require consultation and preserve refusal, whereas report 811 attributes to ʿAlī a marriage rule binding minor sons and daughters after maturity. The contradiction of ethical stakes is visible in the received printed sequence. The page by itself neither authenticates the seventh-century attribution nor resolves how later lawyers reconciled the passages.

[PV-04] The owner's discretion over manumission contracts. Al-Nuʿmān, *Dáā'im*, II, p. 309, report 1166, https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/309?lang=ar. The received text lists the command concerning *mukātaba* among instructions treated as guidance rather than legal obligation and attributes a choice to the owner. The printed text is located; manuscript history and early attribution remain open.

[PV-05] Named al-Kāfī *variants with later chain grades. Al-Kulaynī,* al-Kāfī*, vol. V, book 3, chapter 57, reports 4–6, Arabic and English text and the grades of al-Majlisī as presented by Thaqalayn: https://thaqalayn.com/hadith/5/3/57/4 (ḥasan), https://thaqalayn.com/hadith/5/3/57/5 (muwaththaq), https://thaqalayn.com/hadith/5/3/57/6 (ṣaḥīḥ). The reports address different forms of paternal control over marriage and provide a visible basis for the narrative's distinction between chain assessment, legal interpretation, and consent. These are web presentations of editions and grades, not an independent reconstruction of al-Majlisī's entire critical apparatus.

[PV-06] Taḥrīr al-Wasīla*, marriage issue 12. Rūḥollāh Khomeini,* Taḥrīr al-Wasīla*, vol. II,* Kitāb al-nikāḥ*, question 12, edition of Mu'assasat Tanẓīm wa Nashr Āthār al-Imām, 2nd ed., 1426 AH, electronic p. 698, https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/16418/698?lang=ar. The Arabic explicitly prohibits intercourse before the completion of nine years and permits other forms of sexual contact even with an infant. It continues with rules concerning injury, marital status, compensation and maintenance. The source proves the contents of Khomeini's published juristic ruling; it is not biographical evidence about his conduct.

[PV-07] Governmental priority, 6 January 1988. Khomeini to President ʿAlī Khamenei, 16 Dey 1366 / 6 January 1988, Persian original and English translation at Syracuse University's Iran Data Portal, https://irandataportal.syr.edu/letter-to-president-khamenei-determining-the-limitations-of-the-authority-of-the-islamic-government/. The text explicitly discusses overriding contractual obligations and temporarily suspending the ḥajj in asserted public interests. It establishes an articulated view of governmental power and cannot alone establish a causal account of later prison orders.

[PV-08] The 1988 prison executions and the documentary record. Human Rights Watch, "Iran's 1988 Mass Executions," 8 June 2022, https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/08/irans-1988-mass-executions; Amnesty International, "Blood-Soaked Secrets" (2018), https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/MDE1394212018ENGLISH.pdf; UN Special Rapporteur, "Atrocity Crimes and Grave Violations of Human Rights," 2024, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/iran/20240717-SR-Iran-Findings.pdf. The record includes the order reproduced in Montaẓerī's memoirs, his protests, testimonies, and the recording made in August 1988 and released in 2016. The reproduced order lacks its own dated original; reports place it in late July 1988. This evidence must be presented by document and provenance rather than as a deduction from the theory of guardianship.

[PV-09] The April 1989 leadership letter. Khomeini to ʿAlī Meshkīnī, dated 9 Ordībehešt 1368 / 29 April 1989, *Ṣaḥīfa-ye Imām*, vol. XXI, p. 371, Persian and English at https://emam.com/posts/view/17867/Letter-%5Bto-%60Ali-Mishkini%5D. The letter explicitly removes the necessity of *marjaʿiyya* from the writer's preferred criteria and states that a just *mujtahid* approved by the Assembly of Experts would suffice. Distinct letters and later constitutional ratification require their own dating.

[PV-10] Safavid decree: conflicting dates in reference literature. Colin Paul Mitchell, "Ṭahmāsp I," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/tahmasp-i/, dates the decree recognizing al-Karakī as deputy of the Imam to **9 July 1533**. Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "Karakī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/karaki/, refers to a decree of **1532** conferring *nāʾeb al-emām* and related titles. The latter also narrates a forged letter used to discredit the jurist at court. The different dates may refer to distinct documents or divergent reconstructions. Resolving them requires direct comparison of the royal decrees and their cited chronicles; the main narrative cites Mitchell's specific date and this note preserves the disagreement.

[PV-11] Al-Riḍā's death and a much later image. Hamed Noori, "Portraits Woven by Faith," Ajam Media Collective, 17 December 2025, https://ajammc.com/2025/12/17/sacred-persian-rugs-khorasan/, identifies a twentieth-century Iranian poster of the caliph offering poisoned grapes. Wilferd Madelung, "ʿAlī al-Reżā," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ali-al-reza/, reviews the eighth Imam's heirship and death. The image witnesses devotional memory, while the poisoning allegation remains a distinct historical claim.

Research obligations that remain

The received *al-Kāfī* grades need verification against fixed Arabic print bases of al-Majlisī's *Mir'āt al-ʿuqūl*; the marriage reports in Chapters 12–14 and 25–28 require a comparative chain-and-variant table in the book's publication apparatus. The original 02.11.5h manuscript preserves the working dossier and its current grades. No new verdict on a narrator is asserted here. The evidence for Qāḍī Jaʿfar's individual deliberate fabrication and for a coordinated Abbasid strategy remains insufficient to promote either claim from hypothesis to finding.

DARK IMAMS: SOURCE CONCORDANCE

Reading edition v10.3 and research manuscript 02.11.5h

This appendix is an editorial retrieval index for citations carried into the expanded reading edition. It is assembled from the original research manuscript's own source ledger. An entry here preserves the original claim about the source and the author's stated access limitations. It is not a new reading of the underlying witness.

Recovered entries from original research ledger: 126.

B7-01

[B7-01] Umar Faruq Abd-Allah, "Abū Ḥanīfa," Encyclopaedia Iranica, vol. I, fasc. 3, pp. 295–301 (1983; online revision 2018). Full scholarly reference entry read. Surveys biographical testimony, varied genealogy, Murjiʾī political theology, links to Zayd and the Hasanid revolts, and imprisonment. It also reports his favorable view of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar and his position that ʿAlī was right in his civil wars. Source.

I01

[I01] Farhad Daftary, 'Ismaʿilism iii. Ismaʿili History,' Encyclopaedia Iranica. Full scholarly web entry consulted for the early mission, the 899 leadership dispute, the accession sequence, and hostile genealogical accounts. The entry is a historical synthesis; this batch does not claim examination of the manuscript sources underlying it.

I02

[I02] Wilferd Madelung and Paul E. Walker, eds. and trans., Affirming the Imamate: Early Fatimid Teachings in the Islamic West (2021), Institute of Ismaili Studies publication record. Description and contents consulted for writings attributed to Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī and his brother, the succession argument, and the reported sermon witness BL Or. 8419. The complete edition and the manuscript were not inspected.

I03

[I03] Wilferd Madelung and Paul E. Walker, eds. and trans., The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shiʿi Witness, presenting Ibn al-Haytham's Kitāb al-Munāẓarāt. Institute of Ismaili Studies publication record, including the 2001 paperback listing. Description and contents consulted to distinguish the participant memoir from the dynastic chronicle. No complete new reading of the primary edition is claimed.

I04

[I04] Hamid Haji, ed. and trans., Founding the Fatimid State: The Rise of an Early Islamic Empire (2006), presenting al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān's Iftitāḥ al-daʿwa. Institute of Ismaili Studies publication description and detailed contents consulted, including the mission's opening, public

administration, and chapter labels concerning opposition. Same underlying publication as N03. Chapter labels are treated as narrative framing; their accusations have not been adopted as findings.

I06

[I06] Al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, Daʿāʾim al-Islām, vol. 1, printed p. 365, administrative instructions on choosing and inspecting officials. Arabic passage examined in the indexed electronic transcription at Masaha. The webpage number is 367. This is a received printed-text transcription, not an early manuscript folio.

I07

[I07] Al-Nuʿmān, Daʿāʾim al-Islām, vol. 1, section on the authorities from whom knowledge is received, encounter attributed to Jaʿfar and Abū Ḥanīfa concerning analogy and Iblīs. Indexed primary Arabic passage consulted at the Najaf Desert Library webpage labelled p. 120. That website locator has not been collated with the pagination of a particular print edition. No independent chain authentication is asserted.

I08

[I08] Al-Nuʿmān, Daʿāʾim al-Islām, vol. 1, argument concerning judges' conflicting rulings and approval by their appointing ruler. Indexed Arabic passage consulted at the Najaf Desert Library webpage labelled p. 122. Website locator retained separately from unverified print pagination. The chapter assesses the argument without supplying a fresh historical attribution.

I09

[I09] Al-Nuʿmān, Daʿāʾim al-Islām, vol. 1, critique of revising jurists and followers who cling to a fixed position. Indexed Arabic authorial discussion consulted at the Najaf Desert Library webpage labelled p. 117. Print pagination and early witnesses remain to be collated.

I10

[I10] Al-Nuʿmān, Daʿāʾim al-Islām, vol. 1, narrative of ʿAlī's Qurʾanic calculation preventing punishment after a birth at six months. Indexed Arabic passage consulted at the Najaf Desert Library webpage labelled p. 115. The scriptural loci are Qurʾan 46:15 and 2:233. The narration's historical event remains distinct from the visible reasoning within the received text.

I11

[I11] Al-Nuʿmān, Daʿāʾim al-Islām, vol. 2, printed p. 95, reports 296–300. Electronic Arabic text consulted for the allegiance warning, coerced oath, coerced divorce and manumission, and protective dissimulation. Translation of the short oath clause is supplied in chapter 15. No fresh manuscript collation is claimed.

I12

[I12] Al-Nuʿmān, Daʿāʾim al-Islām, vol. 1, printed p. 378, discussion headed dhikr al-amān. Indexed Arabic text consulted for protection granted by an ordinary Muslim, recognition through gesture, and protection expressed in different languages. The URL's inherited heading differs from the section visible in the text. Read with the classical military and confessional setting retained.

I15

[I15] Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Khwān al-ikhwān, course 10, Ganjoor section 14. Original Persian transcription consulted for the originated Universal Intellect and the account of knowing. The page's machine-generated explanatory material is excluded. No claim to a fresh critical-edition or manuscript comparison.

I16

[I16] Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Khwān al-ikhwān, course 48, Ganjoor section 60. Original Persian paragraphs consulted for the human soul's relation to Universal Soul and the distinction between part and spatial piece. Modern generated summaries are excluded; translations and analysis in chapter 16 are the present project's work.

I17

[I17] Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Khwān al-ikhwān, course 40, Ganjoor section 52. Original Persian transcription consulted for the Soul's encompassing of the cosmos in intellectual and causal terms and the historical astronomical assumptions in the argument. Modern explanatory summaries are excluded.

I18

[I18] Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Khwān al-ikhwān, course 86, Ganjoor section 110. Original Persian transcription consulted for the relationship of practice, understanding, spiritual assistance, and the ripening-fruit analogy. Machine-generated explanation is excluded. The normative applications to teaching and AI are this book's analysis.

I19

[I19] Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Khwān al-ikhwān, course 41, Ganjoor section 53. Original Persian text consulted for moral proportion, Qur'an 17:29, and the place of authorized guides between anthropomorphism and negation. The generated paraphrase on the page is excluded.

I20

[I20] Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Wajh-i dīn, discourse 38, Ganjoor section 38. Original Persian text consulted for the ta'wīl of istibrā' through transfer between teachers and the learner's position in a sexual and ownership analogy. The chapter's criticism concerns the specified metaphor and its implications, with no general attribution to all Ismaili teaching practices. Generated summaries are excluded.

I21

[I21] Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Wajh-i dīn, discourse 48, Ganjoor section 48. Original Persian text consulted for its treatment of opponents' concessions and the exclusionary statement about a person who affirms no Imam. The short sentence is translated anew. Polemical categories remain attributed to this text and are not applied wholesale to contemporary communities. Machine-generated commentary is excluded.

I22

[I22] Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Khwān al-ikhwān, course 36, Ganjoor section 48. Original Persian transcription consulted for harmful acts shaping the soul and repentance through changed conduct, with its appeal to Qur'an 25:70. The constructive judgment in chapter 16 concerns that stated account; it does not authenticate every associated eschatological claim.

I23

[I23] Farhad Daftary, 'Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī,' Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2003), reproduced by the Institute of Ismaili Studies. The three-page scholarly PDF was read for the ten-intellect cosmology, opposition to claims of al-Ḥākim's divinity, and later Tayyibi reception. The account is distinguished from a new Arabic reading of Rāḥat al-'aql.

I25

[I25] Al-Nu'mān, Ta'wīl al-da'ā'im, vol. 3, webpage labelled p. 305. Indexed Arabic primary passage consulted for the interpretation of captives as defeated interlocutors, instructional food, and ransom. The discussion retains outward law alongside ta'wīl. The present chapter's evaluation of control over a learner is original analysis, not a finding about a specific historical abuse.

IS19-02

[IS19-02] R. Khalil Andani, "The Living Words of God: al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī's Shī'ī Ismaili Theory of Revelation," Global Intellectual History, published online 2023; blog abstract checked. DOI 10.1080/23801883.2022.2163913. Full article requires edition-level verification. https://doi.org/10.1080/23801883.2022.2163913 ; https://www.ismailistudies.blog/p/the-living-words-of-god-al-muayyad

IS19-08

[IS19-08] R. Jennifer Pruitt, "The Fatimid Holy City: Rebuilding Jerusalem in the Eleventh Century," The Medieval Globe 3, no. 2 (2017), and expanded treatment in Building the Caliphate, Yale University Press, 2020. Institutional abstract and publisher description checked; original architectural evidence and chronicles not collated.
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/tmg/vol3/iss2/4/

IS19-09

[IS19-09] P/R. Yaḥyā of Antioch, Tārīkh al-Anṭākī, report dated 403/1012, as presented by Paul E. Walker in The Bloomsbury Reader in Christian–Muslim Relations, 600–1500, based on 'Umar

ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī's 1990 edition, pp. 295–299. English translation and editorial introduction directly inspected on PDF pp. 105–107 (printed pp. 93–95); the English text contains an apparent internal October 1012 date-conversion inconsistency requiring checking. Full Arabic collation outstanding; reports of geographic extent are treated as the witness's allegations. https://almuslih.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Thomas-D-%E2%80%93-The-Bloomsbury-Reader-.pdf

IS19-11

[IS19-11] R. Farhad Daftary, "Ḥasan Ṣabbāḥ," Encyclopaedia Iranica XII/1 (2003), 34–37. Entry checked for chronology, ḥujja status, coercive severity and allegations about both sons. The medieval sources summarized therein remain uncollated for this batch. https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hasan-sabbah/

IS19-12

[IS19-12] R. Farhad Daftary, "Fedāʾī," Encyclopaedia Iranica. Entry checked for assassinations, distinct political context, exaggeration of attribution and later legends. https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/fedai-/

IS19-13

[IS19-13] R/I. Shiraz Ali Hajiani, Reconstructing Alamut: New Approaches to the Study of the Qiyāma and the Nizari Polity in Iran, University of Chicago PhD dissertation, 2019. University repository abstract and separately indexed excerpt on the filicide narratives checked. The full 744-page thesis was not collated. DOI 10.6082/uchicago.1894. https://knowledge.uchicago.edu/records/4594r-6c538

IS19-16

[IS19-16] R. Farhad Daftary, "Ḥasan II," Encyclopaedia Iranica XII/1 (2003), 24–25. Entry checked for 1164 ceremony, contemporary gaps, legal claims and later lineage. The IIS version includes editorial wording "[blind observance of]" that should be compared with the Iranica text rather than treated as the wording of a medieval source. https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hasan-ii/ ; https://www.iis.ac.uk/scholarly-contributions/hasan-ii/

IS19-17

[IS19-17] R/P-secondary. Wilferd Madelung, "Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's Ethics: Between Philosophy, Shiʿism and Sufism," first published 1985, reprinted by the Institute of Ismaili Studies 2011. PDF pp. 6–7 inspected; explains the Nizari account of alternating satr and qiyāma and imamic discretion, citing Ṭūsī's own Ismaili writings. Ṭūsī's Persian passages require separate collation. https://www.iis.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/nasir-al-din-tusi-s-ethics-final-886228271.pdf

IS19-20

[IS19-20] R. Farhad Daftary, "Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥasan III," Encyclopaedia Iranica XIV/4 (2008), 403–404, for the 1210 policy change and use of Shāfiʿī instructors. https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jalal-al-din-hasan-iii/

IS20-A01

[IS20-A01] Al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, Daʿāʾim al-Islām, vol. II, p. 218, reports 807–811 (edited by Asaf A. A. Fyzee; Dār al-Maʿārif). Marriage guardians and witnesses, consultation, and guardians contracting minors' marriages without a subsequent choice on maturity. Online Arabic edition: https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/218?lang=ar. Status: source text inspected through digital transcription; print/manuscript variants outstanding. Grade A for its appearance in the modern edition, U for earliest attribution.

IS20-A05

[IS20-A05] Daʿāʾim, II:299–300, reports circa 1125–1128. Master's legal power to separate enslaved spouses and status-dependent divorce, associated with the Qurʾān 16:75 analogy. https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/299?lang=ar; https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/300?lang=ar. Grade A for located text, U for early attribution.

IS20-A07

[IS20-A07] Daʿāʾim, II:309, report 1166; Qurʾān 24:33 treated among divine instructions that do not bind the master to make mukātaba. https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/309?lang=ar. Grade A for printed textual claim, U for ʿAlī attribution.

IS20-A09

[IS20-A09] Al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, Taʾwīl al-Daʿāʾim, vol. I, pp. 168–169. Outward explanation of istibrāʾ and inward analogy of women/men to students/teachers. Modern Arabic transcription: https://najafdesertlibrary.com/book/تأويل-الدعائم/v/1/p/168 and https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/10128/168?lang=ar. Grade A for extant exposition; assess manuscript witnesses separately.

IS21-A01

[IS21-A01] Al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, Daʿāʾim al-Islām, vol. II, ed. Asaf A. A. Fyzee (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, published within 1951–1960 edition sequence), editor's introduction pp. 7–10. Six witness sigla, oldest س dated 865 AH, textual ranking. Online transcription of introduction: https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/7?lang=ar ; https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/8?lang=ar ; https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/9?lang=ar ; https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/10?lang=ar. Status: editor's description of physical manuscripts checked in transcribed form; no folio images directly inspected. Some date digits in online transcription are malformed; anchor manuscript dates in AH and corroborate bibliographically.

IS21-A02

[IS21-A02] Daʿāʾim II:218–219, reports 809–811, 813–815, marginal notes identified as حش ى. https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/218?lang=ar ;

https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/219?lang=ar. Status: edited Arabic passage and footnotes inspected through online edition representation; no affirmative collation of all six witness folios. The al-Yanbūʿ and Mukhtaṣar al-Īḍāḥ notes are cited marginal material, not direct independent attestation of the main report's seventh-century origin.

IS21-A03

[IS21-A03] Al-Nūrī, Mustadrak al-Wasāʾil, chapter on marriage contracted by a father or grandfather for minors, citing Daʿāʾim II:218, report 811. https://lib.rafed.net/view.php?b_id=1210&page=322&type=c_fbook . Status: later reception; explicit dependence on the named Fatimid compilation.

IS21-A04

[IS21-A04] Daʿāʾim II:309, reports 1165–1166, Qurʾān 24:33 and interpretation of four divine instructions; witness note ع: تعليم أدب. https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/309?lang=ar . Status: edited Arabic and printed variant note checked through online rendering.

IS21-A06

[IS21-A06] Daʿāʾim II:299, reports 1125–1127, master's authority to separate enslaved spouses and use of Qurʾān 16:75. https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/2113/299?lang=ar . Status: edited Arabic located, passage has minimal visible apparatus on this page.

IS21-A07

[IS21-A07] Al-Ṭūsī, Tahdhīb al-aḥkām, vol. VII, p. 339, reports 1386–1388, ed. al-Khursān, with interpretation through change of ownership in particular cases. https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/6033/339?lang=ar . Status: separate Imami interpretive comparison. Later compilation and transmission lineage; do not claim it directly witnesses al-Nuʿmān's exact archetype.

IS21-A08

[IS21-A08] Farhad Daftary, "Sargoḏašte-e Sayyednā," Encyclopaedia Iranica, published November 26, 2014; lost Nizari biographical source and Ilkhanid chronicle transmission. https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sargozasht-sayyedna/ . Status: scholarly reconstruction of dependency and manuscript history, including two late twentieth-century copies carrying the title.

IS21-A09

[IS21-A09] Farhad Daftary, "Hasan Sabbah," Institute of Ismaili Studies encyclopaedia, https://www.iis.ac.uk/learning-centre/scholarly-contributions/encyclopedia-articles/hasan-sabbah/ . Status: first-party academic summary of the chronicle claims concerning two sons, including the different allegations.

IS21-A11

[IS21-A11] Shiraz Hajiani, "Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw: Analyses of a Subaltern Nizari Ismaili Text Written before the Declaration of the Qiyāmat-i buzurg (the Great Resurrection) in 559/1164," Iranian Studies 58, no. 1 (2025): 65–88, published online January 24, 2025, https://doi.org/10.1017/irn.2024.29 . Full article text reproduced by the author: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388357818_Hikayat-i_Sayyid_Nasir-i_Khusraw_Analyses_of_a_subaltern_Nizari_Ismaili_Text_Written_before_the_Declaration_of_the_Qiyamat-i_buzurg_the_Great_Resurrection_in_559l164 . Status: primary modern scholarly analysis of Ḥikāyat's uncertain date and multiple manuscript witnesses; the four-son account and polemical context are assessed as claims of that treatise.

J01

[J01] S. M. Stern, 'The Epistle of the Fatimid Caliph al-Āmir (al-Hidāya al-Āmiriyya)—its Date and its Purpose,' Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society 82(1–2) (1950), pp. 20–31, DOI 10.1017/S0035869X00103284. The publisher-exposed extract and printed-page footnotes were read, especially pp. 23–24 on titles and coins and p. 31 on dating. The complete article body and the Arabic Hidāya edition were not accessed. Named testimony and correspondence remain leads, rather than independently inspected documents.

J02

[J02] Farhad Daftary, 'Isma'ilism iii. Isma'ili History,' Encyclopaedia Iranica. The succession sections were reread for the 1094 and 1130 crises, al-Ḥāfiẓ's collateral position, and his asserted designation. Same underlying work as I01. These are the scholar's reconstructions; the cited Qalqashandī proclamation has not been independently collated in this batch.

J03

[J03] Farhad Daftary, 'Sayyida Hurra: The Isma'ili Sulayhid Queen of Yemen,' Institute of Ismaili Studies. Full scholarly webpage consulted, particularly Arwā's religious position, the al-Ṭayyib birth announcement, Dhu'ayb's office, and the references to 'Uyūn al-akhbār and Kay. Same underlying article as N08. The infant's eventual fate is not treated as established by this chapter.

J06

[J06] Daniel De Smet, Les Épîtres sacrées des Druzes: Rasā'il al-Ḥikma, volumes 1 et 2, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 168 (Peeters, 2007), ISBN 9789042919433. Publisher/distributor description and catalogue records consulted for the forty-epistle scope, Arabic critical edition, translation, and principal attributed authors. The complete edition and its manuscript apparatus were not accessed.

J07

[J07] Kais M. Firro, 'The Druze Faith: Origin, Development and Interpretation,' Arabica 58(1–2) (2011), pp. 76–99, DOI 10.1163/157005811X550309. Author abstract read through the University of Haifa research record. Used for the differentiation of outward, inward, and tawḥīd categories and the development of interpretation. No claim to a complete reading of the article.

J09

[J09] Philip K. Hitti, The Origins of the Druze People and Religion, with Extracts from Their Sacred Writings (Columbia University Press, 1928). The electronic host's index and selected appendices were read. Its 1924 header conflicts with the 1928 publication confirmed by the contemporary bibliographical notice, DOI 10.1017/S0035869X00111724. Hitti's English is a published translation, not a substitute for the Arabic manuscript text. The chapter separates his footnotes and bracketed identifications from translated wording.

J10

[J10] Hitti, Origins, Appendix A, 'Covenant of Induction into the Religion of the Ruler of the Age,' printed pp. 57–58. Complete displayed translation read, including the voluntariness clause, the scope of surrender, and the identification of the Lord and servant. Same volume as J09. No modern community-wide practice or assent is inferred from the historical formula.

J11

[J11] Hitti, Origins, Appendix C, translated charter concerning al-Ḥākim's disappearance, printed pp. 61–63. Complete displayed translation read. The title's assertion of public posting remains a transmitted claim; Hitti's conjectural murder explanation at note 62:7 is excluded from the chapter's historical findings. Old Qur'anic numbering on the page is not reproduced as a modern locator.

J12

[J12] Hitti, Origins, Appendix D, excerpt of al-Qusṭanṭīniyya attributed to Bahā' al-Dīn, printed pp. 64–67. Complete displayed English excerpt and notes read for John, the Paraclete, the three-day interpretation, and the translated colophon's 1028 date. The excerpt's attribution and intended addressee do not establish delivery. Arabic witnesses require comparison; Hitti's bracketed referents retain their editorial status.

J13

[J13] Gospel of John 14:9–11, 16–17, 26, and 28–31, USCCB primary-text presentation. Read for the received Paraclete context and the difference between 'the Father is greater than I' and the wording in J12. John 2:19–22 is the additional scriptural locus identified in J12. No new Greek manuscript collation is asserted.

J15

[J15] Hitti, Origins, Appendix F, exhortation attributed to al-Sayyid 'Abd Allāh al-Tanūkhī, especially printed pp. 71–73. Displayed translation read for the solar analogy of latent vices and the continuing discipline of the learner. The AI evaluation proposal is original comparative analysis. No new authentication of the exhortation's attribution or Arabic readings is asserted.

J16

[J16] Tilman Nagel, 'Buyids,' Encyclopaedia Iranica, IV/6, pp. 578–586 (1990; updated 2013). Entry reconsulted for Fars in 934, the great amirate in 936, Baghdad in 945, and the dynasty's regional divisions. Same work as W-S12 and N10. Political explanations beyond the reported events are identified in the chapter as this book's analysis.

J17

[J17] Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, Mas'ala fī l-ʿamal maʿa l-sulṭān, in Rasā'il al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, vol. 2, printed p. 89, Dār al-Qur'ān al-Karīm. Indexed Arabic transcription read for the vizier's gathering, the date Jumādā II 415 AH, and the opening classification. The electronic text has al-Maʿarrī, with a note supplying al-Maghribī. No autograph or contemporary manuscript was inspected.

J18

[J18] Al-Murtaḍā, Mas'ala, Rasā'il 2:90. The Arabic paragraph was read in the indexed Masaha transcription under its printed page marker 90. The URL's page number is unrelated to the multiple printed pages surfaced by the index. Used for the conditional obligation and the phrase about evident indications. Translation is supplied by this project.

J19

[J19] Al-Murtaḍā, Mas'ala, Rasā'il 2:94. Indexed Arabic text read at the Najaf Desert Library page labelled 94. Covers the bloodshed limit, the effective derivation of justified office from the Imam, coercive defense, and the question about identifying the official's rightful purpose. The text's conditional framing is retained. This is a received printed-text transcription, not an early manuscript folio.

J20

[J20] Al-Murtaḍā, Mas'ala, Rasā'il 2:95. Indexed Arabic text read for the tests based on conduct and the instruction under balanced indications. The chapter's account of asymmetric uncertainty is an original analysis of the rule, not an allegation that every later official applied it. Direct webpage retrieval failed; the accessible indexed text supplied the passage.

J21

[J21] Al-Murtaḍā, Rasā'il 1:95, discussion of evidence for the authority of envoys and governors in the argument over solitary reports. Indexed Arabic text read under the printed marker 95. The same passage appears at Usul web section 93 and at a Najaf Desert Library locator 135; these website positions are not treated as identical print pagination. The chapter quotes the requirement for evidence beyond the representatives' self-reports.

K-R07

[K-R07] Al-Kāfī 5/3/56/1. Arabic text and reproduced grades, citing Mir'āt 20:125. Full Arabic also at thaqalayn.net/chapter/5/3/56.

K-R08

[K-R08] Al-Majlisī, Mir'āt 20:129. Primary text and grades for al-Kāfī 5/3/57/3–5, including the paternal override and superior-judgment rationale.

K-R09

[K-R09] Al-Kāfī 5/3/57/6. Arabic text and reproduced ṣaḥīḥ grade, citing Mir'āt 20:130. Full chapter also at thaqalayn.net/chapter/5/3/57.

K-R10

[K-R10] Al-Ṭūsī, al-Istibṣār 3:236, report 851 in the displayed edition. Printed parallel with tathīb in the final clause.

K-R11

[K-R11] Al-Narāqī, Mustanad al-shīʿa 16:151. Juristic discussion records the takbur/tathīb variation; this is a report of copies, not a folio inspected for this edition.

MZ-M01

[MZ-M01] Primary received text. Musnad al-Imām Zayd, Beirut, Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1966, digitized in OpenITI as 0122ZaydIbnCali.Musnad.Zaydiyya0000052-ara1.mARkdown. Metadata and selected contiguous passages were directly read: opening transmission; pp. 275–276; 290–300; and 339–350. Principal locator: Bāb al-qaḍā', p. 292. These are modern electronic witnesses to a printed edition. No early manuscript folio was examined. OpenITI text. Numbered-edition parallel, report 393, printed p. 204, available as an indexed primary extract: al-Maktaba al-Zaydiyya.

MZ-M02

[MZ-M02] Primary received text. Al-Shāfiʿī, al-Risāla, Bāb al-bayān al-khāmis. The Arabic passage and surrounding discussion of inference were directly read. Text. The locatable chapter is used instead of assuming that pagination matches every edition.

MZ-M03

[MZ-M03] Primary received text. Al-Nasā'ī, Sunan, report 5397, chapter on judgment by agreement of scholars. Arabic and displayed translation directly read. The compiler's positive comment and the website's later grading are separate judgments. The report is attributed to Ibn Masʿūd. Text.

MZ-M04

[MZ-M04] Primary received text. Al-Shāfiʿī, al-Umm, Kitāb al-daʿwā wa-l-bayyināt, sections on judgment with an oath and a witness and the disagreement concerning it. The relevant indexed Arabic passages were inspected. Scope of the procedure · Disagreement.

MZ-M07

[MZ-M07] Primary received text. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 4142. Arabic and displayed translation directly read. The historical claim concerns the reported al-Walīd/al-Zuhrī exchange; the final textual note is not treated as proof of a caliphal command to change the wording. Text.

MZ-M08

[MZ-M08] Primary received text. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2404d. Arabic and displayed translation directly read. The chapter retains the question about abusing Abū Turāb and Sa'd's refusal without building an additional administrative narrative from the English rendering. Text.

MZ-M09

[MZ-M09] Modern reception source with an older quotation. Islamweb, fatwa 198439, 11 February 2013, "Hādhā al-siyāq min qiṣṣat al-ifk ṣaḥīḥ." The ruling, its citation of al-Albānī, and its rationale for the beating were directly read. Its Ibn Isḥāq/Ibn Hishām reference is a lead for collation, not a substitute for that work. Ruling.

MZ-M10

[MZ-M10] Primary received text. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 4141, slander narrative. The consultation with Barīra is the comparison target. The absence identified here is local to that presentation. Text.

MZ-M11

[MZ-M11] Primary received text. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 3017. Arabic and displayed translation directly read for the burning report and Ibn 'Abbās's response. Text.

N23

[N23] Institute of Ismaili Studies, 'New IIS Publication on the Rise of the Fatimid State,' March 2007. Publisher's account consulted for al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's work with the early Fatimid rulers and the place of his histories and legal compilation. Related to N03; this publication notice is not independent medieval corroboration.

P1-C01

[P1-C01] R. Muḥammad Aruçi, "Vâsıl b. Atâ," TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi (2012). Full Turkish entry read, especially the stated youthful teaching relationship with Abū Hāshim, Wāṣil's disagreement about imamate, and the chronology of Medina and Basra. English paraphrases in Chapter 7 are our translations of the accessible Turkish discussion; no earliest ṭabaqāt witness is independently authenticated. https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/vasil-b-ata

P1-C02

[P1-C02] R. Ethem Ruhi Fığlalı, "Hasan b. Muhammed b. Hanefiyye," TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi (1997). Full Turkish article inspected on al-Ḥasan's life, the attributed Kitāb al-Irjā', the proposed late-seventh-century date, and polemic against groups associated with al-Mukhtār. The article

makes its proposed dating conditional on the letter's attribution. The historical letter has not been separately collated in Arabic for this batch. https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/hasan-b-muhammed-b-hanefiyye

P1-C03

[P1-C03] S. Galip Türcan, "Mu'tezile'nin Ortaya Çıkışı: Dinî ve Sosyokültürel Çevre," Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi (2019), correction notice (2023). Abstract and correction page read; the paper links Wāṣil's theological formation to Abū Hāshim, reports the Mu'tazilī ṭabaqāt teaching genealogy and situates its reception in wider political and social circumstances. The full Turkish article and cited medieval ṭabaqāt passages require separate collation. https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/sduifd/article/1411880 ; original publication: https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/sduifd/article/560030

P1-C04

[P1-C04] S. Sean W. Anthony, "Kaysāniya," Encyclopaedia Iranica 16, fasc. 2 (2013): 183–188. Full article read, including the contemporary terms for al-Mukhtār's followers, early poetry and reported identities, Hāshimiyya factions, post-mortem expectations, the earliest identifiable ghayba traditions, and the contested scope of sectarian labels. This is a historical synthesis that cites the earlier sources; its conclusions are separately identified in the prose. https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kaysaniya/

P1-C05

[P1-C05] R. Neal Robinson, "Ash'ariyya and Mu'tazila," Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (1998), DOI 10.4324/9780415249126-H052-1. Publisher summary consulted for mature Mu'tazilī concerns and the conventional retrospective founder narrative, not as a direct eighth-century source. https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/ash-ariyya-and-mu-tazila/v-1

P1-C06

[P1-C06] S/R. Maha El-Kaisy, "Ibn 'Aṭā', Wāṣil," in Oliver Leaman, ed., The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy (London: Continuum/Bloomsbury, 2006; paperback 2015), entry on Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā'. Full electronic entry consulted for the chronological objection to making Wāṣil the direct pupil of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya and for the possibility of retrospective legitimating genealogy. The transmitted biographical anecdotes remain to be checked at their Arabic origins. https://azahari.blog/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/the-biographical-encyclopedia-of-islamic-philosophy.pdf

W-D1

[W-D1] From Alid Waṣiyya to Abbasid Caliphate: Abū Hāshim, the Hāshimiyya, and the Legitimation of the Abbasid Revolution. Supplied research report, eighteen pages. Chapters 2–4 of Working Manuscript 01, now represented in chapters 3–6, rely on its synthesis and page-specific source discussion. This is a project dossier, not an independently published primary source. Its references to Crone, Haider, Lindstedt, Sharon, and Özdemir remain distinguishable from direct consultation of those works.

W-S01

[W-S01] Gospel of Thomas, saying 12. English renderings collected by Early Christian Writings, with named translators. Checked for the designation of James and the creation-language clause. The page's reader comments are not used as evidence.
https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/thomas/gospelthomas12.html

W-S02

[W-S02] Paul, Galatians 1:18–19 and 2:1–12; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8. Primary textual loci for James's standing and the appearance tradition. These passages support the limited contextual claim made in the prologue. They do not independently narrate the appointment found in Thomas 12. No claim of a fresh manuscript examination is made.

W-S13

[W-S13] Etan Kohlberg, "Kolayni," Encyclopaedia Iranica (2004, later updated). Checked account of compilation, transmission, early quotations, organization, and scholarly reception of al-Kāfī. The discussion of Newman's interpretation is cited through Kohlberg.
https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kolayni/

X01

[X01] Robert Gleave, "Ja'far al-Ṣādeq i. Life," Encyclopaedia Iranica, published 2008, updated online. Full article consulted for Ja'far's scholarly Imamate, his refusal to support the uprisings of Zayd, the Abbasids, and Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, and the article's connection of this posture with naṣṣ and protected designation. The chapter treats this as Gleave's historical reconstruction rather than a verbatim constitutional statement by Ja'far.

X03

[X03] Etan Kohlberg, "From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-'ashariyya," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 39(3) (1976), pp. 521–534, DOI 10.1017/S0041977X00050989. Publisher extract consulted. Kohlberg describes the gradual development of Imami theory, assigns Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam a decisive role in its mid-second/eighth-century systematization, and distinguishes this from the later consolidation of the twelve-Imam and occultation doctrine after 874. The complete article remains a priority for edition-level reading.

Y09

[Y09] 'Abd al-Razzāq, al-Muṣannaf, reports 10292–10294 / alternate numbering 10360s, chapter on consulting women concerning marriage. Electronic Arabic text consulted for al-Sha'bī's reported requirement that the father seek permission and Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī's contrasting household-based rule. Numbering differs across editions and databases.
https://www.islamicbook.ws/hadeth/msnf-abd-alrzaq-009.html
https://hdith.com/encyclopedia/book/b-16/h/224964

Y10

[Y10] Al-Sarakhsī, al-Mabsūṭ, vol. 4, "Bāb nikāḥ al-ṣaghīr wa-l-ṣaghīra." Electronic Arabic text consulted for the later attribution to Ibn Shubruma and Abū Bakr al-Aṣamm of a prohibition on marrying minors before maturity, the argument from Qur'ān 4:6 and limits of guardianship, and al-Sarakhsī's rejection using Qur'ān 65:4, ʿĀ'isha, Companion precedents, and paternal solicitude. This is a later witness to Ibn Shubruma's doctrine.
https://ar.wikisource.org/wiki/مبسوط_السرخسي_-_الجزء_الرابع2

Y11

[Y11] Al-Bayhaqī, al-Sunan al-kubrā, reports 13437–13438. Electronic Arabic text consulted for al-Shāfiʿī's statement that ʿAlī married Umm Kulthūm to ʿUmar bi-ghayr amrihā, the detailed Hasan/Husayn objection narrative, the al-Zubayr comparison, and al-Shāfiʿī's explicit legal inference concerning paternal authority over a virgin daughter.
https://www.islamicbook.ws/hadeth/snn-albihqi-alkbra-026.html

Y12

[Y12] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl, entry on Sufyān b. Wakīʿ. Electronic Arabic text consulted for severe later transmitter criticism, including abandonment of his narrations and concern that his copyist inserted material. Used to qualify the detailed chain of Bayhaqī 13438, not to erase al-Shāfiʿī's independently visible legal use.
https://ablibrary.net/book_content/b/3107/231?lang=ar

Y13

[Y13] Abdul Karim Ali et al., "Faktor Perubahan Pendapat Imam al-Shafiʿi dari Qawl Qadim kepada Qawl Jadid," Jurnal Syariah 16.2 (2008): 1–23. Abstract/full PDF consulted for the standard chronology: qawl qadīm as al-Shāfiʿī's Iraqi doctrine and qawl jadīd as the Egyptian phase. The chapter uses this only to date the legal-use horizon broadly; it does not claim the Bayhaqī passage's exact place inside a reconstructed lost Iraqi book.
https://mjs.um.edu.my/index.php/JS/article/download/22767/11312

Z01

[Z01] Saʿd b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ashʿarī al-Qummī, Kitāb al-maqālāt wa-l-firaq. Indexed Arabic primary text consulted through Usul.ai, especially the section following the death of al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, which records no publicly known son and a division into fifteen factions. Modern edited text, not manuscript inspection. https://usul.ai/fa/t/al-maqalat-wal-firaq

Z04

[Z04] "Nawbakhti Family," Encyclopaedia Iranica. Full entry consulted for the family's administrative and intellectual setting and for Abū Sahl and Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī's roles in early Imami theology and the articulation of occultation/deputyship doctrines.
https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nawbakti-family/

Z05

[Z05] Wilferd Madelung, "Abū Sahl Nawbakhtī," Encyclopaedia Iranica. Full entry consulted for Abū Sahl's Muʿtazili theological affinities, Imami commitments, and early treatment of occultation. The chapter distinguishes these findings from any stronger claim of state-directed fabrication. https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abu-sahl-esmail-b/

Z06

[Z06] Saïd Amir Arjomand, "Ḡayba," Encyclopaedia Iranica. Full scholarly entry consulted for early post-874 factionalization, the agent network, the adaptation of occultation concepts, the two-occultation scheme, and the roles attributed to Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī and Ibn Qiba. Used as a modern reconstruction whose causal interpretation remains contestable. https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gayba/

ZC-C02

[ZC-C02] Primary received text, indexed extract. Amālī Aḥmad ibn ʿĪsā, received first volume, printed p. 255, opening report. The inspected passage gives the Aḥmad–Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlwān–Abū Khālid route. Text location. Modern bibliographic confirmation and the same opening chain appear in a separately identified discussion: Comparative notice.

ZC-C03

[ZC-C03] Primary received text, indexed extract. Amālī Aḥmad ibn ʿĪsā, opening purification material in Usul's electronic text. The inspected route includes ʿUthmān ibn Abī Shayba and al-Aʿmash and reaches a report concerning Salmān. Text location.

ZC-C04

[ZC-C04] Primary book-transmission notice, indexed extract. Opening of Amālī Aḥmad ibn ʿĪsā. The notice specifies a handover in 567 AH and a reading in Kufa in 555 AH. These are claims in the received paratext, not independently inspected original certificates. Opening text.

ZC-C07

[ZC-C07] Primary editorial policy through a quoted witness. A statement attributed to the compiler of al-Jāmiʿ al-kāfī, quoted in the received introduction to al-Taḥrīr. The inspected indexed passage identifies Muḥammad ibn Manṣūr's writings as the source behind some abbreviated legal attributions. The original Jāmiʿ preface remains to be collated. Quoted policy.

ZC-C09

[ZC-C09] Primary arranger's preface, indexed extract. Qāḍī Jaʿfar ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, preface to Taysīr al-maṭālib fī Amālī Abī Ṭālib. The extract names the arranger, describes the mixed dictation sessions, and specifies sixty-four chapters. Preface. Parallel displayed page: Arabic Library.

ZC-C10

[ZC-C10] Modern editorial identification. Taysīr al-maṭālib, introductory material, displayed p. 18, and selected received report routes. The identified cross-corpus references are leads requiring verification in individual reports. Introduction · Received report location.

ZC-C11

[ZC-C11] Primary received historical report, indexed extract. Taysīr al-maṭālib, printed p. 206. The passage gives Abū al-ʿAynāʾ's account of his grandfather's alleged commission from al-Manṣūr. Its named transmission route and the described instructions were read. The event is not independently authenticated in this chapter. Text location.

ZC-C12

[ZC-C12] Primary received text, indexed extract. Taysīr al-maṭālib, displayed printed pp. 59–60, the camel narrative and the Prophet's reported restriction of the audience's interpretation. The chapter uses a paraphrase and assesses its normative proposition separately from the event. Electronic text.

ZC-C13

[ZC-C13] Received edition and catalogue records. Al-Amālī al-khamīsiyya associated with al-Murshid bi-llāh Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Shajarī; later arrangement attributed to Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurashī. The consulted digital title material contains numerals differing from other catalogue descriptions. The present chapter leaves the discrepancy unresolved. Edition display · Additional catalogue text.

ZC-C14

[ZC-C14] Primary received text. Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān, Uṣūl al-aḥkām, reports 2303–2304, printed p. 1246. Directly retrieved page. The continuation of report 2304 was not independently retrieved. Page.

ZC-C15

[ZC-C15] Catalogue and modern biography. Shifāʾ al-awām fī aḥādīth al-aḥkām, associated with al-Amīr al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn. The consulted catalogue gives 663 AH. The imprisonment/composition account is a later biographical lead, not a verified contemporary prison record. Catalogue.

ZC-C16

[ZC-C16] Primary received later compilation. Al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad, al-Iʿtiṣām, received fourth volume, printed p. 108. The indexed passage explicitly quotes the Amālī in a discussion of exchange and fraudulent practices. Adjacent voices and quotations are not treated as one early hadith. Page.

ZC-C18

[ZC-C18] Modern selected collection with explicit parallels. Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā Muṭahhar, al-Mukhtār min ṣaḥīḥ al-aḥādīth wa-l-āthār, printed p. 92. The indexed page places an Amālī report beside a Sharḥ al-Tajrīd route and notes wording differences. The shared lower route is the methodological point. Page.

ZF-Z02

[ZF-Z02] R. Wilferd Madelung, "'Abd-al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad," Encyclopaedia Iranica, I/2, pp. 116–117; published 1982, updated 2018. Entry consulted for the appointment, dismissal, later teaching, and disciples. The web entry has an inconsistent AH numeral beside the 977 appointment; the present chapter uses the unambiguous CE date. https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abd-al-jabbar-b-ahmad/

ZF-Z03

[ZF-Z03] C. Al-Maktaba al-Zaydiyya, biographical entry for Qāḍī Jaʿfar b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Salām. Its indexed full biographical paragraph records travel, return in 554 AH, books, reception by Imam Aḥmad, and teaching against the Muṭarrifiyya. This is a modern community biography, not a contemporaneous mission order. https://ziydia.com/Author/146

ZF-Z04

[ZF-Z04] R. Saeed Mohd H. al-Marri, "Musnad Zaid bin Ali between Narration and Composition: Analytical Reference Study," Online Journal of Research in Islamic Studies 10(2) (2023), pp. 177–201. DOI: 10.22452/ris.vol10no2.10. English abstract verified. Arabic extraction was defective and page images could not be obtained during this pass, so the detailed chain reconstruction has not been independently checked.
https://ejournal.um.edu.my/index.php/RIS/article/view/43182

ZF-Z06

[ZF-Z06] R. Scott Lucas, "Islamic Theology in Thirty Topics: A Yemeni Zaydī Tradition Preserved in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana," Shii Studies Review 4 (2020), pp. 135–175. DOI: 10.1163/24682470-12340060. The author's abstract and account of the manuscript corpus were consulted; no complete manuscript collation was undertaken here.
https://www.academia.edu/50837750/

ZF-Z07

[ZF-Z07] P/R. Scott Lucas, "Consensus in Yemeni-Zaydī Jurisprudence: Selections from unpublished writings by Imam Aḥmad b. Sulaymān and Qāḍī Ǧaʿfar," Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen 9 (2019), pp. 56–99. Sections on al-Taqrīb, particularly Arabic pp. 69–72 and translation pp. 72–78, were read through the full online article transcription. Manuscript information is from the editor, not personal inspection. The Arabic fisq extracts were checked against that transcription and are translated anew here. https://www.academia.edu/44074822/

ZF-Z08

[ZF-Z08] R. Johann Heiss and Eirik Hovden, “Competing Visions of Community in Mediaeval Zaydī Yemen,” Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient 59(3) (2016), pp. 366–407. DOI: 10.1163/15685209-12341402. The author-provided abstract was consulted for the early community model and zakat practices. The full article’s detailed cases remain to be read. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299401963

ZF-Z09

[ZF-Z09] R. Sabine Schmidtke, “Yemen’s Manuscript Culture under Attack,” in Cultural Heritage and Mass Atrocities. Full web chapter consulted, including the historical account of imported literature, Muṭarrifi suppression, and the description of Leiden Or. 8409. The manuscript description is reported from Schmidtke. https://www.getty.edu/publications/cultural-heritage-mass-atrocities/part-2/13-schmidtke/

ZH-01

[ZH-01] Received primary text (modern electronic edition). Musnad al-Imām Zayd, Beirut, Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1966, OpenITI file 0122ZaydIbnCali.Musnad.Zaydiyya0000052-ara1.mARkdown. The Arabic text and the twenty-two specified passages were inspected directly, including their edition page markers. The witness is an electronic transcription of a twentieth-century print, not an eighth-century manuscript. File SHA on GitHub at inspection: 2c97cb75946922ea45e348ef10f1f94ee10bb1c7. https://github.com/OpenITI/0125AH/blob/master/data/0122ZaydIbnCali/0122ZaydIbnCali.Musnad/0122ZaydIbnCali.Musnad.Zaydiyya0000052-ara1.mARkdown

ZU-01

[ZU-01] R, full reference article. Scott Lucas and Egbal Almahatwary, “Zaydī Shīʿism,” St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology (2025), https://www.saet.ac.uk/Islam/ZaydiShiism. Full reference article checked for basic periodization, lineages, Ibn al-Murtaḍā and the place of Kitāb al-Azhār in Yemeni legal history. A synthetic modern witness, not an ancient source.

ZU-03

[ZU-03] R, full scholarly reference article. Devin J. Stewart, “Ejmāʿ,” Encyclopaedia Iranica, 1998, updated 2013, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ejma/. Read for the chronology of Zaydī family-consensus legal theory and its relationship with Twelver and Sunni theories. Intellectual chronology from secondary scholarship.

ZU-04

[ZU-04] R, publisher/IAS bibliographic record and abstract. Hassan Ansari, Ammar Jomah Falahieh Zadeh, and Sabine Schmidtke (eds.), The Notion of the Consensus of the Family of the Prophet According to Two Zaydi Jurists of the Fifth/Eleventh-Century (De Gruyter Brill, 2026), https://albert.ias.edu/entities/publication/f785776a-72bb-40b0-abc2-88188c6dc684; DOI 10.1163/9789004763579. Abstract identifies authors and manuscript witnesses (Milan, Ambrosiana, Ar. F 29; Ṣanʿā’, Maktabat al-Awqāf 1090). Full edited Arabic arguments were not

inspected. The earlier editio princeps of one treatise is documented at https://albert.ias.edu/entities/publication/772aa380-362a-4472-833a-ddd553d7ee03.

ZU-06

[ZU-06] R, scholarly article abstract/visible summary. Bernard Haykel and Aron Zysow, "What Makes a Madhhab a Madhhab: Zaydī Debates on the Structure of Legal Authority," Arabica 59 (2012), 332–371. Accessed abstract/summary reproduced at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270635073_What_Makes_a_Madhab_a_Madhab_Zaydi_debates_on_the_structure_of_legal_authority and citation at https://archaeopresspublishing.com/ojs/index.php/PSAS/article/view/3175. The doctrine of taṣwīb and debates over madhhab authority are attributed to their study at the level accessible here; full analysis remains to be checked.

ZU-10

[ZU-10] P, modern Arabic edition directly read. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Miftāḥ, Sharḥ al-Azhār, vol. 1, printed p. 148, "Faṣl fī taqlīd imām aw akthar." https://ziydia.com/book/81/page/148. Directly read the electronic Arabic passage naming al-Hādī, al-Qāsim, al-Shāfiʿī, and Abū Ḥanīfa, and the qualification on following different scholars in different rulings. No manuscript folio verified.

ZU-13

[ZU-13] P, repeated primary witness already in register. Musnad al-Imām Zayd, modern 1966 edition digitally transcribed in OpenITI, https://github.com/OpenITI/0125AH/blob/master/data/0122ZaydIbnCali/0122ZaydIbnCali.Musnad/0122ZaydIbnCali.Musnad.Zaydiyya0000052-ara1.mARkdown. The received legal reports discussed here were inspected in earlier Batch 12; cite [ZH-01] for passages and pagination. This repeats the same source and contributes zero independent early witnesses.

ZU-15

[ZU-15] R, scholarly article opening directly read. Bernard Haykel, "Al-Shawkānī and the Jurisprudential Unity of Yemen," Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée 67 (1993), https://www.persee.fr/doc/remmm_0997-1327_1993_num_67_1_1587. The exposed opening was read for tensions among Qāsimī power, Hādawī doctrine, and reformist ijtihād. Its later evidence and documentation were not fully read in this pass.

ZU-17

[ZU-17] P, modern Arabic edition directly inspected. Yaḥyā ibn Aḥmad ibn Muẓaffar, al-Bayān al-shāfī al-muntazaʿ min al-Burhān al-kāfī, vol. 1, printed pp. 40–41, introduction on eight forms of tarjīḥ among conflicting akhbār. https://ziydia.com/book/255/page/38 and https://ziydia.com/book/255/page/39. The text identifies the transmitter, analogy, reasoning, textual defects, and Companions' practice as grounds of preference; an editorial note explicitly discusses the sale of an umm walad. A modern indexed edition was read. The stated source is a medieval juristic apparatus, not independently recovered eighth-century practice; edition history and manuscript variants remain to be collated.

H1 / Z04

The v10 source notes contain an H1/Z04 grouped heading covering early Imami theological development. The shorthand H1 is retained here as an indirect citation until it is assigned a standalone bibliographic record.

PG-01

Hamed Noori, "Portraits Woven By Faith: Devotional Persian Rugs Collected in Khorasan," *Ajam Media Collective*, 17 December 2025, https://ajammc.com/2025/12/17/sacred-persian-rugs-khorasan/. The source documents a twentieth-century Iranian color lithograph captioned as an image of Imam Reza receiving poisoned grapes from Caliph al-Ma'mun. This supports modern iconographic provenance, not the cause of death in 818. Source: Working Manuscript 02.10.5, source register p. 360.

PG-02

Wilferd Madelung, "'Alī al-Reżā," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* I/8 (1985), pp. 877–880, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ali-al-reza/. This describes the heirship, death, and historical poisoning allegations; it does not establish the precise grapes episode as a forensic event. Source: Working Manuscript 02.10.5, source register p. 360.