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

(VOLUME I)

JAMĀL F. EL-ʿAṬṬĀR

THESIS PRESENTED FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

1996
DECLARATION

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

[Signature]

Janāl F. Atter
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise be to Allah, the most exalted, the provider of bounties and of beneficent truth, who made it possible that this research be accomplished. I would like to express my warmest thanks to all those whose assistance and encouragement proved to be vital in this respect.

Financcially, I am most grateful for the generous grant given by the "Barakāt Trust", (Oxford) in the period 1990-1993, without which it would have been impossible for me to join the University of Edinburgh. I am equally indebted to the University of Edinburgh's "Cowan House Scholarship Committee", and to "al-Maqāṣid's Institute of Islamic Studies", (Beirut) for their financial support in the final stages of my research.

Academically, I am eternally grateful for all the scholarly advice and editorial support that each of my supervisors, Dr. I.K.A. Howard and Dr. M.V. McDonald never hesitated to give through all the stages of my study. I am most obliged to Dr. M.V. McDonald who kindly edited the final draft. I would also like to thank all members of the Department of Islamic Studies for their continuous support, in particular Dr. C. Hillenbrand, Professor Y. Suleimān and the secretaries Miss I. Crawford and Miss L. Scobie.

My deepest gratitude goes, moreover, to my parents, relatives and friends whose good wishes and support I shall always treasure.

Special thanks are for the generous technical support that I have received from Professor Y. Suleimān, the staff of the Computing Service at the University of Edinburgh, namely Mr. P. Scott, Mrs. E. Egan, Mr. T. Morris, Mr. ʿAbdul-Majoth. I am equally grateful to Mr. Ḥ. al-Athīr, Mr. T. Mallūsh, Mr. Hishām Ṭhaṭṭār, Dr. M.W. Razā, Mr. A. al-Ḥusayyin, Mr. I. Padilla, Dr. K. al-Barrāq, Dr. A. al-Ṣāhibī, Dr. ʿAbdul ʿAzīz al-Zuqṵānī, Mr. M. Bin Ḥaddād, Mr. ʿAbdul Raḥmān A. Sālim, and Dr. H.B. al-Ṣāhib not to forget Ms.S. Stewart of the University Library and the staff of the Inter-Library Loan Service; I am moreover extremely grateful for all the exemplary technical assistance that each of Mr. Morris and Mr. Scott uniquely provided for the final appearance of the thesis: to all I owe my utmost respect and appreciation.
The aim of this thesis is to study some of the earliest literary works in classical Arabic Literature, namely those of the ʿAbbāsid man of letters, al-Jāḥīz (160-250/776-869), that have dealt with the question of caliphate (Imāma), and are concerned with knowing who has the right to rule and the criteria underlying that right. The importance of this research lies in its attempt to reconstruct chronologically al-Jāḥīz’s political works and thought by unfolding the full politico-religious heritage before al-Jāḥīz in order to understand the forces that had moulded his thought (Islamic, Umawī, ʿUthmāni, Muʿtazili, Khārīji, Shiʿi, Ḥanbali, etc.), and assist any future study of his impact on other political authors.

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

Scholars of al-Jāḥīz are therefore offered a unique opportunity in which the full spectrum of his political thought is re-assembled after detecting the developmental stages and major landmarks followed, by linking them to their respective politico-religious settings and also guided by the chronological markers and contextual pointers that prove that link. My critical examination of al-Jāḥīz’s political literature also aims at unveiling the ideological and political concerns of the ʿAbbāsid community and caliphate and evaluating al-Jāḥīz’s role in the propagation and shaping of ʿAbbāsid politics. I have also tried to interpret and account for the phenomenon of the marriage between ‘history’ and ‘contemporary politics’ in al-Jāḥīz’s time, and relate his hostile and tendentious anti-Umayyad position plus his views of the Shiʿa to the growing pro-ʿAbbāsid historiographic activities, and his special brand of Fīṭīzāl.
Much effort has been exerted to extract al-Jāḥīz’s political formula and doctrine by distinguishing his quoted views from his own views. The thesis is also concerned with answering the following questions: What factors underly his pro-Alid and anti-Rāfiḍī output and were they mutually irreconcilable? How do his pro-Alid writings fit in with his pro-ʿAbbāsidism and fondness for the charismatic Hāshimi stock of Quraysh, what influence had this on his initial Başran (ʿUthmānî) milieu and how much can be gained from the totality of his heresiographic scanning in understanding the formative period of Muslim sects? Were al-Jāḥīz’s views constantly bound by the necessity to observe the fluctuating interests of the regime or were they capable of sidestepping those pressures? Were his views on Imāma more concerned with the criteria according to which rulership was acquired or with the manner in which it should be practised? A full literature review is given, with an outline of the method and guidelines followed, difficulties incurred and suggestions for further studies on al-Jāḥīz.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS IV

ABSTRACT OF THESIS V

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION VIII

MAIN BODY OF TEXT:

- General Outline of the Contents. IX
- Detailed Breakdown of the Contents. XIII

LIST OF TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS XXVI

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS XXVII

VOLUME I 1-226

VOLUME II 227-460
NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

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

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

-PART ONE:

GENERAL INTRODUCTION. 2
CHAPTER ONE 3

A- Introductory survey of the development of the issue of the Imamate before the 6Abbâsid period:
   I. The Situation in the time of the guided (Râshidûn) caliphs. 4
   II. The Situation in the time of the Umayyads. 6

B- Introductory survey of the development of the issue of the Imamate [immediately prior to and during the time of al-Jâhi[z]:
   I. The Political theory of the 6Abbâsids. 12
   II. Significance of 6Abbâsid Caliphal Titles. 20
   III. The Question of the Imamate during the 6Abbâsid period among:
      A. Shi'ites (Proto-Shi'ite Phenomenon). B. Khârijites. C. Ḥanbalites
         (the cult of Mu'awiya; Neo-Umayyads). D. Mu'ṭazilites. 26

-PART TWO:

A CHRONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF AL-JâHI[Z'S POLITICAL THOUGHT:

CHAPTER TWO: 43
   -Literature review: Aims and guidelines.

CHAPTER THREE 53
al-Ma'mûn's Period I (198-200/813-815)
   - al-Jawâbât fi al-Imâma, (Wujûb al-Imâma):
     al-Jâhi[z's earliest extant political work.

CHAPTER FOUR 80
al-Ma'mûn's Period II (200-202/815-817)
   - Maqâlat al-Zaydiyya wa al-Râfiḳa
     (Imamate described in Shi'ite terms; 'Ali al-Riḍâ made heir-apparent.)
CHAPTER FIVE
al-Ma'mūn's Period III (203-211/818-826): al-Jāḥiz's political survey continued.

1- K. al-Macrifa. 110

2- K. al-'Uthmāniyya. 114

3- K. al-'Abbāsiyya. 189

CHAPTER SIX
al-Ma'mūn's Period IV (211-218/826-833)

- Risāla fi al-Nābita.

CHAPTER SEVEN
Post-Ma'mūnid Era (al-Mu'tasim, 218-227/833-841)
Theological and literary works:

1- Risāla fi Nafy al-Tashbih. 223

2- Risāla fi Khalq al-Qur'ān. 225

CHAPTER EIGHT
al-Wāthiq's period I (227-229/841-843): Political works:

1- Kitāb Faḍl Ḥāshim ʿalā ʿAbd Shams. 227

2- Risāla fi Taṣwīb ʿAlī. 257

CHAPTER NINE
al-Wāthiq's period II (229-231/843-845):
Literary, political and quasi-scientific works:

1- Madḥ al-Tujjār. 300

2- Kitāb al-Tarbīʿ wa al-Tadwīr. 300

3- Early parts of K. al-Ḥayawān (1-3). 1

4- Latter portions of K. al-Ḥayawān (4-7).
   Although belongs (chronologically) to chapter ten, below, has been treated here. 333

---

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

al-Mutawakkil's period I;
Last Phase of I'tizāl (232-236/846-850)

1- Latter portions of K. al-Ḥayawān (4-7). *(Above, pp. 333-341 & 343)*
2- K. al-Futyaʾ (?)
3- Kitāb al-Bukhalāʾ (?)
4- K. al-Bursān
5- K. al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn.
6- Annex to K. al-Ḥayawān:
   a- al-Qawl Fi al-Bighāl.
   b- K. al-Nisāʾ
   c- fi al-Muʾallimīn.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

al-Mutawakkil's period II;
Change in al-Mutawakkil's policy: (236/850)
Official anti-Rāfiḍī Campaign:

1- K. Faḍl al-Muʿtazila/al-Iʿtizāl
2- K. al-Radd ʿalā Aṣḥāb al-Ilhām.

CHAPTER TWELVE

al-Mutawakkil's period III;
Orthodox and Sunni Policy of al-Mutawakkil:
decline of Iʿtizāl (236-247/850-861):

1- K. al-Radd ʿalā al-Nasārā.
2- Risāla fi Manāqib al-Turk
3- K. al-Akhbār wa Kayf Taṣliḥh
4- K. Ḥujaj al-Nubuwwa.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Short-lived pro-ʿAlid sentiment,
reign of al-Muntasir (247-248/861-862):

1- Kitāb al-Bukhalāʾ (?)
2- Risāla fi al-Awṭān wa-al-Buldān.
3- Kitāb Fakhr al-Šūdān ʿalā al-Bīdān.
   *(233-255/847-868)*
Detailed Breakdown of the Contents of the Thesis

PART ONE

- GENERAL INTRODUCTION. 2

- CHAPTER ONE 3

A- Introductory survey of the development of the issue of the Imamate before the ʿAbbāsid period:

1-The Situation in the time of the guided (Rāshidūn) caliphs. 4

2-The Situation in the time of the Umayyads.
   I. Umayyad Political Theory. 6
   II. Merit vs. Descent. 7
   III. Early Shiʿism/Proto-Shiʿism & the Hāshimites 9

B- Introductory survey of the development of the issue of the Imamate [immediately prior to and during the time of al-Jāḥīz]:

I. The Political theory of the ʿAbbāsids. 12
II. Significance of ʿAbbāsid Caliphal Titles. 20
III. The Question of the Imamate during the ʿAbbāsid period among:
   A. Shiʿites (Proto-Shiʿite Phenomenon). 26
   B. Khārijites. 29
   C. Ḥanbalites (The cult of Muʿāwiyah; Neo-Umayyads). 30
   D. Muʿtazilites:
      (i) Origin. 33
      (ii) Relations with ʿAbbāsid court. 34
      (iii) Political attitudes and principles. 35, 40
      (v) Main Baghdādi scholars: Bishr b. al Muʿtamir, Thumāma Ibn al-Ashras, Ibn Abī Duʿād, al-Iskāfī. 38

PART TWO 42

Chronological Analysis of al-Jāḥīz's Political Thought: Era of Political Muʿtazīli Triumph:

CHAPTER TWO: 43
-Literature Review. 43
- BRIEF RECONSTRUCTION OF
  AL-JAHIZ'S POLITICAL WORKS:

(A)  Period of Political Mu'tazili Triumph (198-236/813-850)
- Ma'mün's era: (198-218).
- Post-Ma'münid era (218-231: al-Mu'tasim, al-Wāthiq).

(B)  Last Phase of I'tizāl 232-236 A.H.
- (The former rule of al-Mutawakkil).
- Change in al-Mutawakkil's policy: as of 236 A.H.

(C)  Period of Mu'tazili Political Decline
- Latter rule of al-Mutawakkil (237-247); Sunni policy of al-Mutawakkil.

(D)  Short-lived pro-²Alid policy; reign of al-Muntasir (247-248).

CHAPTER THREE:

al-Ma'mün's Period I (198-200)
al-Jawābāt fī (Ištīqāq) al-Imāma/Responsa on the Imamate:
Jāḥiz's earliest extant work(s) on the Imamate

1- The Immediate religio-political scene
   I. Within the Khārijite group.
   II. Within the Mu'tazilite circle.
   III. Within the 'Abbāsid circles.

2- Analysis of doctrinal stands of Responsa (al-Jawābāt)
   I. Religious proofs for the necessity of Imamate:
      A. Necessity of Imāma by (implicit) revelation.
         seeds for the argument of implicit text/indication
         (al-nass al-khafi).
      B. Doctrine of Ijmā' (Consensus of opinion among believers).
   II. Intellectual proof for the necessity of Imamate.
      A. Necessity Of Imāma by reason.
      B. Human nature.
   III. Quality of the Imam.
   IV. Unity of the Caliphal post as conducive to the
      solidarity and unity of Umma.
   V. Establishment of the Imam.
3- Critique of al-Jawābāt fi-al-Imāma: Historical relevance and Political significance. 75

CHAPTER FOUR 80

al-Ma'mūn's Period II (200-202)

Maqālat al-Zaydiyya wa al-Rāfiḍa fi Istihqāq al-Imāma.

1- Preface. 80

2- The immediate religio-political setting

   I. The Militant Zaydites. 81

   II. Reappearance of the 'Mahdi'
       A. Among Umayyads. 82
       B. Among Ṭālibites. 83

   III. An optimistic view of al-Ma'mūn's act of designating 'Ali al-Rifā: al-Ma'mūn in the eyes of:
       A. Some Arab historians. 84
       B. Gabrieli. 86
       C. Madelung. 86
       D. Sourdel. 87
       E. Watt's Intermediate View (an act of compromise). 87

   IV. An opportunistic view of al-Ma'mūn's act of designating 'Ali al-Rifā:
       A. Kennedy 90
       B. J. Hussain 91
       C. Crone and Hinds 92
       D. El-Hibri 93
       E. F. 'Omar 94

   V. Epilogue 94

3- Analysis of doctrinal stands of Maqālat al-Zaydiyya:

   I. Support for the most meritorious Imām (al-a! al-Imām): while acknowledging the Zaydi concept of mafdul 95

   II. A. Necessity of the post of Imām. 101
       B. Concept of aslah/Divine Justice in relation to the necessity of an Imām. 102

   III. The Imām, the Prophet, and the Messenger. 104

   IV. Main strata of society: The Elite and the Public. 105

4- Critique and Significance of "Maqālat al-Zaydiyya" 105
CHAPTER FIVE

al-Ma'mūn's Period III (203-211)
al-Jähîz's political survey continued.

(1) K. al-Ma′rifa. 110
(2) K. al-ʿUthmāniyya 114
(3) K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya. 189

(1) Kitāb al-Masā'il wa al-Jawābāt fī al-Ma′rifa
   -Analysis and significance. 110

(2) Kitāb al-ʿUthmāniyya 114

1. Preface:

   I. Meanings of the term ʿUthmāni. 115
   II. al-Jähîz's brand of ʿUthmānism. 121
   III. Setting and time of composition: (al-Ḥājiri (232 A. H.)
        vs. Zahniser (201 A. H.); My opinion (203-212 A. H.):
        [External (al-Ṭabarî, Yāqūt) + Contextual evidences]. 126

2. Analysis of K. al-ʿUthmāniyya:

   I. The Issue of tafḍīl/preference. 132
   II. The position of the ʿUthmāniyya group
       (and how al-Jähîz stands in respect to it.) 134
   III. al-Jähîz's method/approach. 137
   IV. al-ʿUthmāniyya's basis for Abū Bakr's Imamate:

       A. Era of Prophethood:

          (i) The Prophetic approval of Abū Bakr
              (Incidents that reflect Abū Bakr's faḍl
              in the era of Prophethood). 139

          (ii) Qur'anic reference to Abū Bakr's faḍl. 140

          (iii) Further Qur'anic/Divine reference to Abū
                 Bakr's faḍl and its political connotation
                 for the ʿAbbāsid caliphate. 140

       B. Incidents that reflect Abū Bakr's faḍl in the era
          of the Sahāba, i.e., following the Prophetic era:-

              Abū Bakr's role in saving the Muslim community 143
V. 'Uthmāni Defence of Abū Bakr’s Imamate by refuting the Rāfīḍa’s claims:

A. Refutation of the Rāfīḍa’s interpretations of Abū Bakr’s speech. 145

B. Refutation of the Rāfīḍa’s claims of the existence of a significant opposition block against Abū Bakr: 149

a- Salmān. 150
b- Khālid b. Sa‘īd b. al-‘Ās. 151
c- Bilāl. 153
d- al-Miqdād. 153
e- Ammār b. Yāsir. 153
f- Abū Dharr al-Ghitārī. 154
g- Usāma b. Zayd. 154
h- al-Zubayr. 155
j- al-Ansār. 156

VI. 'Uthmānī critique of the Rāfīḍa’s arguments on ‘Ali:

A. ‘Ali’s taqiyya 158
B. ‘Ali’s special ‘ilm. 159
C. ‘Ali’s designatory right to Imamate (nass): 162


Analysis of Man Kuntu Mawlāhu Fa ‘Alīyyun Mawlāh. 166

ii- ‘Uthmānī attack on the Rāfīḍa’s claim for a Qur’anic basis for nass on ‘Ali. 170

iii- Other weaknesses of doctrine of nass. 172
iv- Opposition front met by ‘Ali. 174
v- The wisdom underlying the absence of nass and the suitability of Ikhtiyār. 174

VII. ‘Uthmānī doctrines

A. View of the Imāmate. 176
B. Modalities of accession to Imāmate/Caliphate
(1) Popular acclamation. 179
(2) By way of revolution. 181
(iii) The third way of becoming a caliph is reflected in the way Abū Bakr gave the succession to ‘Umar. 183
(iv) The fourth way of becoming an Imām is that which has been undertaken by Muslims to choose ‘Uthmān, which was embodied in the Shūrā set out by ‘Umar, that acted as the khāssa (elite) of their times. 183

VIII. Evaluation of K. al-'Uthmāniyya: Was al-Jāhiz successful? 183
3- K. al-Abbāsiyya

I. Religio-political setting:
   - Contextually 190
   - Historically. 191

II. Content of al-Abbāsiyya:
   - Idea of wasiyya. & Idea of wirātha. 194

CHAPTER SIX

al-Ma'mūn's Period IV (211-218)

Risāla fi al-Nābita

1- Politico-religious setting:

   I. Ibn Hanbal's political theology:
      A. The Institution of Khilāfa. 203
      B. Mu'āwiya and the Companions of the Prophet. 206
      C. Submission and rebellion. 208
      D. The hierarchical order (tafṣīl) of the four Caliphs
         and the legitimacy of their caliphate. 209

   II. The Cult of Mu'āwiya
      A. The Cult of Mu'āwiya, Ḥanbalism and the
         Nābita. 210
      B. Caliphal decree against the Cult of Mu'āwiya. 213

2- Analysis of al-Nābita. 214

3- Significance and Comment. 218

CHAPTER SEVEN

Post-Ma'mūnid Era (218-227: al-Mu'taṣīm)

- Theological works: 222

- Religio-political setting.
- Analysis. 223

1- Fi Nafy al-Tashbih (Against Anthropomorphism). 223

2- Fi Khalq al-Qurʾān (on the createdness of the Qurʾān). 225
CHAPTER EIGHT

al-Wäthiq's period I (227-229), Political works:

(1) Kitäb Faḍl Hāshim ʻalâ ʻAbd Shams.
(2) Risāla fi Tašwīb ʻAlī.

(1) Kitāb Faḍl Hāshim ʻalâ ʻAbd Shams.

1- Note on nomenclature.

2- The Hāshimiyāt's relation to Kitāb Faḍl Hāshim:
   Diagramatic comparison between the two treatises.

3- Religio-political setting; the charismatic Banū Hāshim.

4- Analysis:
   I. Table on the clans of Quraysh.
   II. Ḥilf al-Muṭayyibin:
      A. Ibn Iṣḥāq's version.
      B. al-Jāḥiẓ's version.
   III. The ʻAbbāsid "historical" legitimate right to rule (Haqq al-ʻUmūma).
   IV. Unexpected mocking reference to Haqq al-ʻUmūma
   /Internal strife within the ʻAbbāsid ruling circle.
   V. The ʻAbbāsid 'revolutionary' right to rule.
   VI. The ʻAbbāsid/Hāshimite charisma.
   VII. The ʻAbbāsid-Tālibite charisma.
   VIII. al-Jāḥiẓ's attacks on the Umayyads:
      A. Jāḥili Umayyads.
      B. Umayyads during Islam.
   IX. Political significance underlying the praise of the two
       wings of Banū Hāshim: A wider notion of the House
       of Hāshim.
   X. Problematic text; historiographic comment.
   XI. al-Jāḥiẓ's ʻAbbāsidism & the ʻAbbāsid blessing.

(2) Tašwīb ʻAlī

1- Setting: historical vacuum and the Muťazili version of events.

2- Analysis of al-Jāḥiẓ's treatise 'Tašwīb ʻAlī'
   I. al-Jāḥiẓ's eclecticism/opportunism (Preface on goals).
   II. Fixing al-Jāḥiẓ as a historiographer within the contemporaneous
       and influential historiographic traditionists:
A. al-Jähiz and Umayyad historians:

(i) Sāliḥ b. Kaysän (d. 758) 264
(ii) al-Shaʿbi (d. 725) 266

B. al-Jähiz and ʿAbbasid historians:

(i) al-Jähiz and Ibn al-Kalbî (d. 819/204). 268
(ii) al-Jähiz and Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Minqari’s version of events (d.828): ʿAlī as the proposer of the halt and its relation to the Shiʿite concept of Ilhām. 271
(iii) al-Jähiz’s version of events: 273

- source of the halt
- ʿAlī’s right to Imamate.
- What was the issue at the Taḥkīm?

a- A critical appeal to the concept of taqiyya: a praise of ʿAlī’s Ilhām/tadbir. 273
b- The basis for ʿAlī’s right to the Imamate and purpose of Taḥkīm. 275
c- Muʿāwiya’s purpose in Taḥkīm. 277
d- ʿAlī’s purpose of Taḥkīm. 278
e- Comments from the Muʿtazili point of view. 280
f- Pro-ʿAlid sentiments (Charismatic portrait of ʿAlī). 281
g- The disputed issue of Taḥkīm. 283
h- Historiographic comment. 284

(iv) al-Jähiz and Sayf. b. ʿUmar (d.796). 286
(v) al-Jähiz and Abū Mikhnaf (d.774). 288
(vi) Mediational efforts of the Muʿtazilites and the ʿAbbasids: al-Jähiz and al-Wāqidi (d. 823). 289
(vii) Mediational efforts of the Muʿtazilites and the ʿAbbasids: al-Jähiz and al-Madāʾini (d. 840). 290

3. Significance of the treatise.

(i) Political doctrines on Imamate. 293
(ii) Towards a Shiʿi-ʿAbbasid Imam? 294
(iii) Classical image of the Imām 297
(iv) Shiʿite (Zaydi ) view on Imamate of ʿAlī. 297
(v) This treatise reflects mixed criteria on the Imamate (merit versus inheritance). 298
CHAPTER NINE

al-Wāthiq's period II (229-231),
Literary, political and quasi-scientific works:

(1) Madh al-Tujjār.
(2) Kitāb al-Tarbi‘ wa al-Tadwīr.
(3) Early parts of K. al-Ḥayawān.

(1) Madh al-Tujjār.

(2) Kitāb al-Tarbi‘ wa al-Tadwīr:

1- Setting for Kitāb al-Ḥayawān and Kitāb al-Tarbi‘.
2- The Addressee of the Treatise of al-Tarbi‘
3- Content of al-Tarbi‘ (parts I-VI below)

Table on the Messianic figures around the Ṭālibites.

I. -Portrayal of the addressee as the charismatically expected Imām;
   -Further Indications of giving the addressee the role of the awaited Imām.

II. Sarcastic references to the hidden Imām's unique longevity, unique knowledge or knowledge of eternal/historical events.

III. Sarcastic references to the highly allegorical (Ṣūfi/Gnostic) frame of mind of his addressee:

IV. The Prophet and the Imām.

V. Critique of 'mythical' beliefs:
   A. 'Anqā’ Mughrib: history; relevance to Shi‘ism.
   B. Sayf al-Ṣā‘iqā.
   [C. Thawr Allāh, D. The Lion and Tiger, Shi‘ab Raḍwā and Jībāl Ḥismā, E. al-Khuffāsh, F. al-Jafr and al-Ẓubur.]
   G. al-‘Badā‘.
   H. al-Raj‘ā.

VI. A. al-Jāḥiz and Aristotelian Hellenism.
   B. Significance of Insertion of Greek thought.
   C. Islam and Aristotelian Hellenism:
      Fitting al-Tarbi‘ into the historical context.

4- Significance of Kitāb al-Tarbi‘ wa al-Tadwīr.

5- Refutation of Kitāb al-Tarbi‘.

(3) Kitāb al-Ḥayawān:

1- Time of composition.
2- Setting.

xxi
3- Analysis:
   I. Critique of wild Shi`i doctrines related to the Imamate. 336
   II. al-Jähiz's pro-Abbāsidism. 340
   III. Criteria for the Caliphate. 341

CHAPTER TEN

al-Mutawakkil's period I
Early phase of al-Mutawakkil (232-237):
The Last stage of Iʿtizāl (232-236 A.H.) 342

1- Latter portions of K. al-Ḥayawān (vol. 4, 5, 6, 7). 343

2- Kitāb al-Futya. 343

3- Kitāb al-Bukhalāʾ(?) 344

4- Kitāb al-Bursān.
   Point of Chronology 345 346

5- Kitāb al-Bayān:
   I. Status of Khulafāʾ. 349
   II. Anti-Umayyad position. 350
   III. Ghulāt in K. al-Bayān.
   IV. al-Jähiz's pro-Abbāsidism. 352

6- Annex to K. al-Ḥayawān:
   I. Kitāb al-Qawl fi al-Bighāl.
      1- Setting. 353
      2- Analysis. 353
      3- The condition of Abbāsid Historiography. 355
   II. K. al-Nisāʾ 356
   III. Risāla fi al-Muʿallimīn. 357

CHAPTER ELEVEN

al-Mutawakkil's period II;
Change in al-Mutawakkil's policy: (236/850)
Official anti-Rāfiḍi Campaign:

(1) K. Faḍl al-Muʿtazila/al-Iʿtizāl
(2) K. Aṣḥāb al-Īlām.

(1) Kitāb Faḍilat al-Muʿtazila:
   1- Setting. 360
   2- Content. 362
3- Shi‘i concepts related to Imāma that are judged as genuinely moderate by Ibn al-Riwandi:

I. ʿIsmā.
II. Ijmāʿ on Qurʾān, Sunna and Hujaj al-Uqūl.
III. Badā’.
IV. Raf’a (return from death).
V. Ilhām of the Imāms.
VI. Attitude of respect to Companions, Salaf and the Umma.
VII. Defence of the Sound transmission of Shi‘ite transmitters (Ruwāt)

4- Shi‘i concepts regarded by Ibn al-Riwandi as wild and rejectionable:

I. Deification of ʿAli.
II. Shatm al-Salaf.

5- al-Jähiz’s criticism of the (wild) Shi‘i concepts (of al-Rawḍī) related to Imāma:

I. Biased narration and blasphemous theses of the Rāfīḍi Ruwāt (on behalf of their infallible Imāms).
II. Blasphemous content of fabricated narrations that had been circulated by Rāfīḍi and Ghālī Ruwāt:
   A. Ilhām and Divine status of the Ṭālibites as freeing them from obligation to learn and act virtuously.
   B. Deification of ʿAli.
   C. Belief in raḥa (return from death to the world).
   D. Belief in nasṣ over the Divinely appointed Imāmship of ʿAli, and the verdict of unbelief on the Umma (including the Sahāba) who opposed the appointed Imāmship of ʿAli.
   E. Departure of the Rāfīḍa and the Ghāliya from Ijmāʿ.


CHAPTER TWELVE:
al-Mutawakkil’s period III;
Orthodox & Sunni Policy of al-Mutawakkil, decline of I’tizāl (237-247/851-861):
Era II- Sunni Triumph and Mu’tazilite Political Decline.

1- al-Radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā (Official Muʿtazili Political Decline).
2- Manāqib al-Turk (Virtues of the Turks). Qualities of the Caliph 389
3- Kitāb al-Akhbār wa Kayf Tašiḥḥ. 391
4- Kitāb Ḥujaj al-Nubuwwa. 392

CHAPTER THIRTEEN 395
Short-lived pro-ṢAlid policy, reign of al-Muntasir (247-248): ERA III.
1-Risāla fi al-Awṭān wa al-Buldān.-Setting. 397
2- K. al-Bukhālāʾ(?)

PART THREE 404
CHAPTER FOURTEEN 405
GENERAL DISCUSSION (ON 3 ERAS)
Brief Exposé and Critique of al-Jāḥīz’s political views. 406

TABLE 1 407
TABLE 2 408
TABLE 3 409
TABLE 4 410

COLOURED TABLE 412
1- A critical summary of Jāḥīzian positions in Era I (Political Muʿtazili Triumph)
   I. al-Maʿmūn’s period.
      TABLE (doctrinal constants-in the period of al- Maʿmūn). 413
   II. Post-Maʿmūnid Period (al-Muʿtaṣīm, al-Wāthiq).
      TABLE ( doctrinal constants in the period of al-Muʿtaṣīm and al-Wāthiq) 417
2- A critical summary of Jāḥīzian positions in Era II (Sunni Triumph & Political decline of Muʿtazila)
   I. Early Transition Period of al-Mutawakkil.(232-236) 418
   II. al-Mutawakkil’s latter years 237-247.
      (Actual period of Muʿtazili Decline). 425
3- A critical summary of Jāḥīẓian positions in Era III of al-Muntaṣir (247-248) 428

TABLE (doctrinal constants - in the period of al-Mutawakkil and al-Muntaṣir). 429

4- Basic Aspects of al-Jāḥīẓ's Political Theory: 430

I. Necessity of the Institution of Caliphate. 432
II. Duties of the Imam. 434
III. Qualities of Imam (Criteria for Caliphate). 435
IV. Modes of Accession. 437
V. Dethroning of Imams. 439
VI. Number of Imams (Unity of Caliphal post). 440

5- Concluding Remarks. 441

- BIBLIOGRAPHY: 445

I. The works of al-Jāḥīẓ. 446
II. Arabic Primary Sources other than al-Jāḥīẓ. 448
III. Secondary Sources. 452
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LIST OF TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transfer of the Imāma from the grandson of ʿAli Ibn Abī Ṭālib to the grandson of Ibn ʿAbbās.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The wider and narrower senses of charismata of Ahl al-Bayt that existed by the end of the Umayyad era and shortly after as shown by the potential Qurayshi candidates for the caliphate (Ḥasanid, Ḥusaynid, Ḥanafid, Jaʿfarid or ʿAbbāsid).</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tension within the ʿAbbāsid circles, issue of ʿUmūma.</td>
<td>58, 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ʿAbbāsid succession restricted to the line of al-Manṣūr.</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Definition of the term ʿUthmānī and its chronological applications from the time of ʿUthmān to that of al-Jāḥiz.</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A heresiographic reconstruction of the political situation before al-Jāḥiz by summarizing the positions of the contemporary political parties.</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The issue of ṭafḍīl al-Khulafāʾ al-Rāshidin, among ʿAbbāsid political parties.</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A comparison of &quot;K. Faḍl Ḥāshim&quot; and &quot;Risāla fi ʿAlī wa Ālīhi min Bānī Ḥāshim&quot;.</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The clan leaders of Quraysh.</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The issue of ʿUmūma (Inter-ʿAbbāsid dispute).</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Traditionists and historians used by the ʿAbbāsid authorities for/against Shiʿism and Ḥanbalism.</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Messianic sects &amp; figures around the House of Abū Ṭālib.</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Chronological assembly/inventory of the works studied so far.</td>
<td>346,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Chronological reconstruction of al-Jāḥiz's political works (198-248/813-862):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I. al-Maʾmūn's Period.</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II. post-Maʾmūnid era: al-Muʿtasim and al-Wāthiq.</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>III. al-Mutawakkil's rule.</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IV. al-Muntaṣir's rule.</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Coloured chronological exposé of al-Jāḥiz's spectrum of political views.</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>al-Jāḥiz's doctrinal constants and variants in the era of al-Maʾmūn.</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>al-Jāḥiz's doctrinal constants and variants in the era of al-Muʿtasim and al-Wāthiq.</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>al-Jāḥiz's doctrinal constants and variants in the era of al-Mutawakkil and al-Muntaṣir.</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
(arranged alphabetically by authors)

K. = Kitāb.
IQ = Islamic Quarterly.
BRISMES = British Society for Middle Eastern Studies.
M F O = Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale.
MW = Muslim World.
REI = Revue des Études Islamique.

"The Views of al-Jāḥiq" = "The Views of al-Jāḥiq concerning the Nations as reflected in his works", (ʿAṭṭār, J. F.)
"Some aspects" = "Some aspects of the political theology of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal," (Ahmad, Z.)

"al-Maqrizi’s Exposition" = "al-Maqrizi’s Exposition of the Formative Period in Islamic History and its Cosmic Significance: The Kitāb al-Nizāʾ wa-t-takhāṣum", (Bosworth, C. E.).
"al-Maqrizi’s epistle" = "al-Maqrizi’s epistle concerning What has come down to us about the Banū Umayya and the Banū-l-ʿAbbās," (Bosworth, C. E.).
God’s Caliph = God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam, (Crone, P. and Hinds, M.)

The Umayyad Caliphate = The Umayyad Caliphate 65-86/684-705: A Political Study, (Dixon, A. A.).


al-Jāḥīz = al-Jāḥīz: Ḥayātuhu wa Āṭhāruhu, (al-Ḥājirī, Ṭāḥa.).

Majmūʿ = Majmūʿ Rasāʾīl al-Jāḥīz, (Ḥājirī, Muḥammad Ṭāḥa.).

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


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


Faḍāʾīl = Faḍāʾīl al-Ṣahāba, (Ibn Ḥanbal, A.).

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

Maqāṭīl = Maqāṭīl al-Ṭalibīyyīn, (al-ʿIṣfahānī, A.).


al-Bayān = Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Taḥyín, (al-Jāḥīz).

Kitāb al-Bīghāl = Kitāb al-Qawl fī al-Bīghāl, (al-Jāḥīz).

(K.) al-Būrṣān = K. al-Būrṣān wa al-Urjān wa al-Umyān wa al-Ḥūlān, (al-Jāḥīz).


Rasā'il (usually indicating volumes from 1-4, ed. A. Hārūn) = Rasā'il al-Jāhiẓ, (al-Jāhiẓ).

Rasā'il (Sandūbi) = Rasā'il al-Jāhiẓ, ed. Ḥ al-Sandūbi. (al-Jāhiẓ).

al-_catecUthmāniyya = Kitāb al-catecUthmāniyya, (al-Jāhiẓ).

Fadl (Hāshim) = Kitāb Fadl Hāshim ʿalā ʿAbd Shams, (al-Jāhiẓ).


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


"Etudes" = "Études Sur Le Règne du Calife Omaïyade Mo'awia 1er, Deuxième Série, Le Parti des ʿOṯmaniya et des Moʿtazila" (Lammens, H.).

Islamic Revolution = Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory: An Enquiry into the Art of ʿAbbāsid Apologetics, (Lassner, J.).

Development of Muslim Theology = Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory, (MacDonald, D. B.).


Religious Trends = Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran, (Madelung, W.).


Murūj = Murūj al-Dhahab wa Maʿādin al-Jawhar, (al-Masūdī).

'La Théorie de l'Imamat' = 'La Théorie de l'Imamat chez al-Ǧāhiẓ' a chapter in his doctoral thesis al-Ǧāhiẓ et le Chiʿisme,' (Mohamed, Ḥ.Y.).


Firaq = Firaq al-Shīʿa, (al-Nawbakhti).

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


Life and Works = The Life and Works of al-Jâhîz: Translations of selected texts, (Pellat, C.).

"al-Jâhîz" = "al-Jâhîz" in `Abbasid Belles Lettres, (Pellat, C.).

'L'Imamat' = 'L'Imamat dans la doctrine de ḇâḥîz,' (Pellat, C.).

'Le Culte de Muʿâwiya' = 'Le Culte de Muʿâwiya au IIIe siècle de l'hégire,' (Pellat, C.).

Le Milieu = Le Milieu Başrien et la Formation de ḇâḥîz, (Pellat, C.).


"La Nābita" = 'Un document important pour l'histoire politico-religieuse de l'Islam: La Nābita de Djâhîz,' (Pellat, C.).

al-Tarbi = K. al-Tarbi° wa al-Tadwîr, (Pellat, C.).

"Ali and Muʿâwiya = "Ali and Muʿâwiya in Early Islamic Historical Writing until the end of the 9th Century, (Petersen, E.L.).

'The Term 'Khalifa' = "The Term 'Khalifa' in Early Exegetical Literature," al-Qâdi, W.

"The Development of the Term Ghulât" = "The Development of the Term Ghulât in Muslim Literature with Special Reference to the Kaysâniyya," al-Qâdi, W.

Islamic History = Islamic History: A New Interpretation, (Shaban, M.A.).

al-Milal and Nihâl = Muslim Sects and Divisions, Translation of al-Shahrastâni's Milal and Nihal by Kazi, (al-Shahrastâni).

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

"La Politique Religieuse" = "La Politique Religieuse du Calife `Abbâside al-Ma'mûn", (Sourdel, D.).

Târikh al-Khulafâ' = Târikh al-Khulafâ'/History of the Caliphs, (Suyûţi, J.).


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

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


'Sidelights' = 'Sidelights on Early Imamite Doctrine,' (Watt, W.M.).

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

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


"Insights from the 'Uthmāniyya" = "Insights from the 'Uthmāniyya of al-Jāḥiẓ into the religious Policy of al-Ma'mūn," (Zahniser, M.).
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

جَنِّبَك اللّه الشَّبَهَة، وعَصِمَك مِن الحِيَرَة، وَجِعَل بَيْنك وَبَيْنك
المَعِرْفَة نَسِباً، وَبِين الصَّدَق سِبِباً، وَحَبِّب إِلَيْك التَّبَيِّنَت، وَزِيّن فِي
عِينَكِ الإِنْصَافَ، وَاذَاقَك حَلاوَة اللَّقْوِي، وَاشْهِر قَلْبَك عَزَّ الْحَقَّ،
وَأَودِع صَدّرَك برَّد الْيَقِينِ، وَطَرِد عَنْك ذُلّ الْيَأْسِ، وَعَرَفْك ما فِي
البَاطِل مِن الذَّلِّة، وَمَا فِي الْجِهَل مِن الْقَلَّة.

(مِن صَدِر كِتَاب الْحِيَوَان لِلْجَاحِظِ).
PART ONE
General Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

As Professor Ibish puts it:

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

---

3 Rashid Rida, al-Khilafah aw al-Imāma al-ʿUzmā (1923).
4 Ibn Khaldūn, al-Muqaddimah, (Cairo: 1322 A.H.) p. 151. al-Jāhiz uses the term Imām/Caliph and Raʾis or Sulṭān interchangeably; see Rasāʾil al-Jāhiz, 'K-al-Nisā' (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī (1399/1979) 3:147, 154, where all of these terms are used. The term al-Riʿāṣa al-Kubrā is also mentioned there.
5 Ibid. More references will be made in the introduction to other titles assumed by the caliph. For a brief view of the senses of the title Khalīfa or caliph, see Encyclopaedia of Islam, new ed. S.v."Khalīfa" by A.K.S. Lambton, pp. 947-948.
1. THE SITUATION IN THE TIME OF THE GUIDED CALIPHS  
(Rāshidūn):

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

---


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

12 E.I. new ed. S.v 'Khalifa' p. 938a by Sourdel based on one interpretation of Watt on Khârijite doctrine, see Watt, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1973) p. 14 who says that Khârijites claimed continuity with the revolutionary bodies responsible for 'Uthmân's murder (Formative, p. 9). Wellhausen suggests provisionally that 'the Saba'iyya were the real assassins of 'Uthmân and therefore the common root of both the Shi'a and of the Khârijî', see J. Wellhausen, The Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam, trans. by Ostle and Walzer (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing company, 1975) pp. 17-18.
13 See our discussion of this point in our analysis of al-Jähiz's treatise al-Näbita'.
14 A fitna already signalled by a Prophetic hadith (see Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Musnad, 8: 5953).
15 G. Hawting, The First Dynasty of Islam, p. 27.
16 al-Tabari, Târikh, 4: 428,429, 432-33, 462 and E.L. Petersen, 'Ali and Mu'awiyah in Early Islamic Historical Writing until the end of the Ninth Century (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1964) pp. 38, 40, 119. Petersen ascribes to al-Shâbî, a statement, "that 'Ali would not be content with an election by those present, and had desired a Shûrâ in order to prevent a fitna". Petersen, Ibid.
he stopped fighting "the enemies of God" by accepting arbitration -tahkim- with Mu'awiya and dissociated themselves from him. 'Ali had to face them at Nahrawân. The issue of arbitration remained unresolved until 'Ali was assassinated in 40/661. Finally, concerning the conflict between 'Ali and Mu'awiya, the latter is thought to have different motives and positions by different historians. Mu'awiya only recognized himself as caliph after al-Hasan had pledged allegiance to him in 661 (the year of reunion or Jamâ'a). The other interpretation is that Mu'awiya's demand for blood vengeance was "sheer pretence" and that he was thus a rival to 'Ali.

2. THE SITUATION DURING THE UMAYYADS:

I- Umayyad Political Theory:

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

17 Watt, Formative, pp. 10, 18 and al-Ashârî, cop.cit., p. 86. The only necessary qualification for the ideal Imam according to them was a demand for piety and religious excellence and a rejection of the view that he should belong to the family of the Prophet as the later Shi'ites demanded or to the wider tribe of Quraysh, as the later Sunnites required.
19 Petersen, op.cit., 49, 120. Petersen reflects both sides of the argument in the pages referred to.
20 Ibid., pp. 35, 37, 49.
21 al-Qur'ân, 17: 33-35 reads: 'And slay not the soul God has forbidden, except by right, whosoever is slain unjustly, we have appointed to his next-of-kin authority (sultân); but let him not exceed in slaying, he shall be helped. E.I.(2), s.v. 'Khalifa', A.K. S. Lambton p. 948a, and Petersen, 'Ali and Mu'awiya, p. 32.
shown 22 that the Manāfi Umayyads were the sole representatives of the whole Prophetic clan and "the family", one must understand that claim as directly targeted against the rebellious surviving descendants of ʿAbd Manāf’s brother, ʿAbd al-ʿUzza i.e., ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr who challenged the Umayyads from Makka between 680-692 by his constant appeal to the element of religious merit. To counter claims within the “Manāfi” line which also included current proto-Shiite (Hāshimi) claims, they claimed to be the sole representatives of ahl al-bayt and to have inherited the right to rule from the two sons of ʿAbd Manāf. In this way one notices the truth of the observation that access to leadership in the Umayyad era was progressively restricting the caliphate from the wider circle (the most meritorious Qurashi) to an increasingly shrinking and specific charismatic dynastic entity from the stock of Quraysh.23 Their legitimacy, they claimed, was unquestionable, as they could boast of their privileged qarāba24 to God’s House and also to His Prophet via ʿUthmān who was the Prophet’s son in law twice as much as ʿAli was. "God has garlanded you with Khilāfa and guidance, for what God decrees (qāḍāʾ), there is no change".25 This restricted theocratic notion of legitimacy was also adopted by other claimants to power, and it is important to remember this when we study the later dynastic and theocratic Shiīite and ʿAbbāsid concepts of ruling.

II- Merit vs. Descent:

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

22 "You have inherited the staff of mulk, not as distant relatives, from the two sons of (ʿAbd) Manāf, ʿAbd Shams and Hāshim." See also Watt, Formative, pp. 82-83 and al-Farazdaq’s Diwān, (Beirut: Dār Sādir, 1960), 2: 281, 309, 316.
merit (irrespective of noble descent) had been adopted by the Rāshidūn, the Zubayrids and the Khawārij, we shall find that apart from the ruling Umayyads and certain suppressed messianic movements of pro-Alid roots and aspirations, the element of belonging to "the family of the Prophet" was equally growing among the cousins of the Umayyads i.e., the Ḥāshimites at large and was particularly and "charismatically" accelerating among the Ṭālibi stock of Ḥāshim such that if the earlier worry of the Umayyads was to affix the charisma in the Manāfi line, against that of ʾAbd al-ʿUzza, the remaining worries were in being able to affix it to the descendants of ʾAbd Shams alone. The strong resemblance between the late26 Umayyad caliphal titles (God's Caliph/deputy, Imām al-hudā, deliverer from evil and provider of 'isma27) and the superior image propagated by the messianic movements around the Alids, allows one to conclude that both the Umayyads (as seen by Crone and Hinds) and their opponents (the Shiʿites and later the ʿAbbāsids) were drawing their divine basis from the same pool of non-orthodox dogmatic arguments whose goal was to use religion as a title or camouflage to hide certain opportunistic Machiavellian purposes.28 If the autocratic/theocratic nature of the Umayyads was a reaction to the earlier messianic claims around ʿAlī and his progeny, the real need to understand the long-term impact of the introduction of these foreign notions to the Arabs29 on the shaping of Proto-Sunni and future Muslim political thought is not less demanding than the need to appreciate it from within its own ideological roots.

26 Crone and Hinds in God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1986), pp.5-6 believe that the title God's Caliph is attested for all Umayyad caliphs. However, Wadād al-Qādi, in 'The term Khalifa in early exegetical literature', in Die Welt des Islams XXVIII (1988), pp. 409, 410, says that it had not been (officially) used until towards the end of the Umayyad rule.
27 Crone and Hinds, God's Caliph, p. 1, "The Umayyads are God's chosen lineage" p. 32. and ḥabd min ḥibāl Allāh (lifeline to God), pp.38-39. The similarity here is that ʿUthmān is the central charismatic figure and initiator of an era of caliphatehood following that of prophethood.
29 This was affected by the Persian community according to D.C. Dennett, "Marwān Ibn Muḥammad: The Passing of the Umayyad Caliphate", (Harvard, Ph.D thesis,1939) p. 163. T. Arnold, The Caliphate (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1924) pp.47-48, and M. al-Jābiri, al-cĀrābī al-Siyyāsī al-ʿArābī, (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wahda al-ʿArabiyya, 1990, pp. 143, 339. The last two authors explicitly say that the autocratic hereditary character of the Muslim caliphate was an inheritance from the Persian monarchy and its political heritage, into the possession of whose dominions the Muslim community had entered; for pre-Islamic Arabic society- as Arnold puts it- "had never known any such form of political institution nor was it in harmony with the Qur'ānic doctrine of the equality of believers."
III- Early Shi'iism/Proto-Shi'iism and the Hāshimites:

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

remember that the Mukhtäriyya cause seems to have retrieved its momentum under the Kaysāniyya movement (after Kaysän, a mawlā of al-Mukhtar) by the end of the Umayyad era\(^\text{33}\) such that the Kaysāniyya continued to be the "most important proto-Shi'ite group"\(^\text{34}\) from Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya's death in 718 up to 750. The Umawi denial of the Ḥāshimi right at large should not, however, hide the initial common ideological background that had eventually paved the way for the revolutionary success of one of those suppressed Ḥāshimi allied entities, which brought the alliance to an end when al-Manṣūr became caliph, thus indirectly allowing the Ṭālibites to make up-in their own ways- for the yet unrealised rights of the Prophetic family, by inheriting most of the Kaysānī dogma and building towards a realisation of the yet undefined Imāmism. Watt and many other scholars maintain that however pro-Imāmi propagandists try to retrospectively project onto certain Ṭālibī Ḥāshimites an image of fully-established Shi'i Imāmism, in their tendentious efforts "to read into the phenomena a greater unity than one is justified in assuming that they (early Shi'ites) possess during the Umayyad period"\(^\text{35}\), we should adopt an alternative term to Shi' a and tashayyu'\(^\text{c}\) in describing those initially sympathetic with the wider clan of Ḥāshim. To Watt, the nearest term to Shi' a in the stricter sense it later assumed as followers of ʿAli was Saba'iyya or Kaysāniyya\(^\text{36}\), in view of the undeniable attachment to the Alid Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya. Given the developmental nature of the early manifestations of pro-Ḥāshimi feelings, Watt finds it necessary to use the term Proto-Shi'ism instead, in view of the definite absence - that is observed during his examination of the Imāmi literature\(^\text{37}\) - of any one continuously unified position that gathered the early Shi'ites/Ṭālibites around one specific charismatic figure throughout the Umayyad era and up to the start of the ʿAbbāsid era. Watt notices that a report cited by al-Nawbakhti on a sect which held that there was no Imam after al-Ḥusayn (d. 680) contradicts another cited by the same source of a 'sect' which

34 Watt, Formative, pp. 55-56.
35 Watt, Formative, p. 54.
36 Ibid., p. 59
37 Namely, Firaq al-Shi' a by al-Nawbakhti see [Watt, "The Re-appraisal of ʿAbbāsid Shi'ism", op. cit.] and List of Shi'a Books by al-Ṭūśī [see Watt, "Sidelights on Early Imāmī Doctrine", Early Islam, pp. 154-161] and Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology p. 122. Actually, as Watt notes, this was first proposed by C. Cahen in his article 'Points de vue sur la Révolution ʿAbbāsid', Revue Historique, 1963, 295-338. See Watt, Formative, p. 38. Cahen is quoted here to a having noticed 'the distorting influence of Imāmī propaganda on the version of events during the first two Islamic centuries (Ibid.) Watt seems to have drawn from the conclusions of Massignon (Passion I/140-51) that the Imāmite aristocratic scholars and financiers welded the divergent Rāfīdīte opinions into the Imāmīte dogma for economic reasons. See Watt, 'The Rāfīdītes: A Preliminary Study' Oriens, vol. xvi (1963), p. 120 and "The Early Stages of Imāmīte Shi'ism", Early Islam, p.168.
recognized the imamate of ʿAli Zayn al-ʿAbidin, after his father al-Ḥusayn; thus Watt concludes:

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

What characterized early Shiʿism then?

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

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

Shiʿite belief in the charismata attaching to the kin of Muhammad did not restrict these charismata to the descendants of Ali and Fātimma, still less to the descendants of al-Ḥusayn. Throughout the Umayyad period the whole clan of Ḥāshim was regarded as sharing in the charismata ... not only Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, but ... the descendents of ʿAli's brother, Jaʿfar and his uncle al-ʿAbbās.41

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

40 Watt, 'The Significance of the Early Stages of Imāmite Shiʿism', Early Islam, p. 163.
41 Watt, "Shiʿism under the Umayyads" op. cit., p. 169. The revolt of ʿAbd Allāh b. Muʿāwiya b. ʿAbd Allah b. Jaʿfar's revolt implied a real threat to the ʿAbbāsids, as he could absorb all anti-Umayyad groups under his leadership, as in fact really happened. See Wellhausen, Factions, pp. 164-165. Zaydis, Khārijis and Shiʿis all fought on his side.
Imāmite form or in a pre-Imāmite or other Shi‘ite preliminary form; Watt has the following answer:

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

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

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

I- The Political Theory of the ʿAbbāsids:

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

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

---

42 Watt, 'The Reappraisal of ʿAbbāsid Shi‘ism' in Early Islam, p. 140. My underlining
43 i.e., whether they were fully Imāmite or still undergoing transformations from Saba‘īyya-Kaysāniyya-Rāfīda-Zaydiyya–Gaḥliyya-Proto-Imāmiyya, thus offering us a first-hand knowledge of an early proto-Sunni-proto-Shī‘ī polemic on the question of succession.
44 El2.2 S.v. "Khalīfa" by Sourdel.
46 Ibid., p. 82.
As Shaban puts it:

The ʿAbbāsid revolution was proclaimed in the name of al-ridā min Al Muḥammad. The time came when this member of the House of the Prophet acceptable to all, was to be selected. Although the name of the Imām of the Ḥāshimiyya, Ibrāhīm, was by now circulating among the revolutionaries, it was perhaps only as a possible candidate for the office of Amīr al-Muʿminīn. Unfortunately the currency of the name led the Umayyad authorities to the discovery of the connection between Ibrāhīm and the revolutionaries (so that) he was promptly arrested and taken to Harrān where he died, or more likely died in prison in 132/749.

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

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

---

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


49 Ibid.

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

51 Shaban, op.cit., pp. 164-165.
Abū Salama's removal (he was eventually put to death) on the accession of the first 6Abbāsid caliph was "for attempting to bring about the replacement of the 6Abbāsids by the 6Alids."52 In short, as Watt puts it, the 6Abbāsid revolution:

though not exactly a Shi'ite movement, it made use of Shi'ite ideas. From about 718 some members of the family of al-6Abbās were making plans to gain the caliphate for themselves. The leaders in this project were first Muḥammad b. 6Ali (d. 743), a grandson of 6Abd Allāh b. al-6Abbās and then his son Ibrāhīm (d.748) ... these men believed in the existence of a minimal degree of charismata in the house of Ḥāshim, but they were prepared to use agents with more extreme views ... The most famous agent of the 6Abbāsids Abū Muslim ... presumably taught some of the messianic ideas current among the Shi'ites at the time.53

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

It is difficult to know how prevalent in the earlier Umayyad period was this practise of designating a successor ... in one important case, the alleged appointment of an 6Abbāsid as heir by Abū Ḥāshim about 716, it is clear that the claim or allegation had been made public by 750. By this time, then, the idea that the Imām designated his successor must have been widely accepted. The success of the 6Abbāsids in gaining supreme power suggests that they may have been either the inventors or the first outstanding exponents of this idea.56

It is difficult, though, to judge whether the early propaganda of the 6Abbāsids (transfer of authority to them from Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya's son) was making use of current Shi'ite ideas that now held the idea of designation (nāṣṣ), or was in fact drawing from the 'autocratic bloc'57 i.e., by those Persian mawāli and like minded groups that believed in "the divine hereditary right of Kings,"58 presumably since Mukhtār had spread the idea of wasīṭ.59 Was the transfer of Imamate based on simple surrendering and yielding (tanāzul) of 6Alid rights, or one based on the more complicated and controversial idea of designation (wasīyya)?60

52 F.L., S.v. The 6Abbāsids', by B. Lewis, p. 16.
57 Watt, Early Islam, pp. 162, 165.
59 On bequeathal or transference of Imāmate in early Shi'ism, see reference in Footnote 15 above 60
The ʿAbbāsid agent Abū Salama’s failure to secure an ʿAlid candidate for the Imamate strengthens the idea that the pendulum of charismata was in fact oscillating between these two Hāshimite poles: the ʿAlids and the ʿAbbāsids, until the ʿAbbāsids affixed it permanently to their side, on the basis stated above that the Imamate had been transferred since 98/716 or 717 from the grandson of ʿAli to the grandson of Ibn ʿAbbās i.e., from Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya’s son, Abū Hāshim, to the ʿAbbāsid Muḥammad b. ʿAli:

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

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

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

---

61 Watt, Formative, p. 154.
62 Now based on nāṣ from Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya’s son but later this basis will be neglected after noticing its weakness. See on the weakness of this claim, Watt, Islamic Philosophy, p. 18.
Mukhtär's movement looks to the future. There seems to be a thread running from Mukhtär to the movement which eventually overthrew the Umayyads, that of the Hāshimiyya. The crushing of Mukhtär's revolt did not, it seems, end support for Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya as the rightful Imām, and when he died some of his followers transferred their hopes to his son Abū Ḥāshim. This Abū Hāshim then, according to early ʿAbbāsid tradition, transferred on his deathbed his rights to the Imāmate to the ʿAbbāsid family. Thus the ʿAbbāsids claimed to be the rightful leaders of the movement which had originally supported M. Ibn-al-Ḥanafiyya, and this seems to have been one of the ʿAbbāsids' main claims to legitimacy in the early part of their caliphate.\(^{65}\)

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

> It is difficult to see how this could have happened unless the ʿAbbāsids had managed to convince the leaders of the party that Abū Ḥāshim had transferred his claims to them ... The view that it was this sect which was taken over by the ʿAbbāsids is supported not only by the tradition of Abū Ḥāshim's will in favour of Muhammad b. ʿAlī, the ʿAbbāsid, but also by some continuity of ideas and terminology between the movement led by Mukhtär and that which brought the ʿAbbāsids to power.\(^{66}\)

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

---


\(^{66}\) Hawting, *First Dynasty*, pp. 110-111. But this view which attempts to establish a continuity between al-Mukhtär's uprising and the Hāshimiyya-ʿAbbāsid movement, has been described as 'futile', because the conditions, methods and chosen fields of activity were completely different. See Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, p. 151. Compare this to Hawting's observations (Ibid., p. 112) that the ʿAbbāsids used in their propaganda (daʿwa) the same terms used earlier by Mukhtär: "The propaganda appealed for support for a member of the family, ahl al-bayt, or the acceptable one of the family of Muhammad (al-rīḍā min Al-Muḥammad). The head of the movement in Kūfah came to bear the title wazir al-Muḥammad while Abū Muslim, the leader in Khurāsān, was amin al Muḥammad, both echoing titles used in the revolt of Mukhtär", Ibid., p. 112. On the ʿAbbāsid movement see also, E.I.\(^2\), ʿAbbāsids', where B. Lewis points that "the doctrine that the Imāmate can be bequeathed or transferred by the Imām to another person is by no means infrequent in early Shi'ism" i.e., by the non-Zaydis since the Zaydites differ from the rest of the Shiʿa in refusing the Imām the right to nominate his successor (Lambton, *State*, p. 22).
Fāṭimid or Ḥanafī or extremist, as was evident for example in Abū Muslim’s attempt to play the avenger of Yahyā b. Zayd.68 As Madelung says, “The ġAbbāsid da’wa used his and his father’s death to stir up anti-Umayyad sentiments without having much sympathy for their cause,”69 and this was evident in the ġAbbāsids’ ‘temporary’ appeal to their extremist du’āt (advocates) such as the “Khidāshi”70 movement and the “Rāwandiyya,”71 from which they soon had to dissociate themselves 72

Indeed, as Wellhausen says:

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

67 Though not Ja‘farid since the Ja‘farid descendant of Abū Ṭālib, ġAbd ġAllāh b. Mu‘āwiya, could not fit into the ġAbbāsid scheme and was thus executed.
69 Madelung, Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran (New York: University Press, Bibliotheca Persica, 1988) p. 87 and Watt, “Shi‘ism under the Umayyads” op. cit., p. 171. Though the ġAbbāsid propaganda approached the moderate and radical wings of Shi‘ism, it is suggested that their resort to the former was for the purpose of winning the more realistically minded Shi‘ites (Watt, Ibid., p. 171). Such an approach towards moderate Shi‘ites, as when claiming to seek vengeance for the blood of Zayd, might have coincided more with the future ġAbbāsid political agenda. Watt says “it was opportunistic, yet not devoid of concept”, Ibid., p. 171. This proximity to Zaydiyya is evident not only in the early ġAbbāsid da’wa but also later as we shall discuss below. The conceptual proximity is established if we remember that both the ġAbbāsid da’wa and Zayd’s revolution claimed to abide by the Kītāb and Sunna and defend the weak; things which the Kaysāniyya lacked. The only difference, perhaps, would be Zayd’s alleged attitude of disregarding Prophetic descent as a requisite for Imāmate. Later any continued approach to Kaysāniyya implied losing ahl al-Sunna wa al-, Wa‘ith, so they were discarded. See F. ġOmar, a1 cAbbāsiyyiin, 2: 90-96.
70 Khidāsh is one of the ġAbbāsid du’āt in Khurāsān who held non-Islamic views and is regarded by some as the basic establishe of the ġAbbāsid cause there. See F. ġOmar, Tabī‘at al-Da’wa, p. 126.
71 The name Rāwandiyya held different meanings at different times. The name refers to the party tracing the Imāmate through the ġAbbāsid caliphs to al-ġAbbās, the uncle of the Prophet, who should have been the first Imām after Muḥammad. See F. ġOmar, Tabī‘at al-Da’wa, pp. 120-121 citing al-Maṣū‘idī and al-Asḥ‘arī. al-ġAbbās is said here to have received designation (nasb) from the Prophet. Rāwandiyya also refers to a faction within the ġAbbāsid movement in Khurāsān, composed chiefly of mawāli and holding extremist views, and then extended to mean the whole ġAbbāsid Shi‘a. See EI.2, s.v. “Kaysāniyya”. Watt says that the Rāwandiyya developed from Kaysāniyya that held extreme views, notably that al-Manṣūr was God and Abū Muslim his prophet... Formative, p. 155. For a review of the different meanings of Rāwandiyya, see F. ġOmar, Tabī‘at al-Da’wa, pp. 115, 123-128, 233-235 and Sadighi: “Les Mouvements Religieux Iraniens” (Paris, 1938) [quoted by F. ġOmar,] and translated by him, in part, I.C., vol L111, 1979, pp. 31-43.
72 F. ġOmar, Tabī‘at al-Da’wa, p. 116 and al-ġAbbāsiyyiin, 2: 76.
73 Wellhausen, Factions, p. 165.
As to the new relation between the ʿAlids and ʿAbbāsids, Wellhausen adds:

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

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

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

Watt gives the following account on this shift in ʿAbbāsid propaganda:

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

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


76 Watt, Formative, p. 155.
Fārūq ʿOmar, moreover, suggests too, as Sourdel, that this ʿAbbāsid shift that was officially implemented in al-Mahdi’s announcement of the distinctive right of al-ʿAbbās in succeeding the Prophet, was in fact preceded by the laborious efforts of his father, al-Mansūr, who had victoriously fought religio-political wars against those ʿAlids who had opposed him, the victory in which gave him the opportunity to assume the title he was known by (al-Mansūr), the victorious over the ʿAlids,77 or “the divinely helped to achieve victory.”78

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

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

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

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

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

77 F. ʿOmar, Ṭabīʿat al-Daʿwa, pp. 119-120.
78 F. ʿOmar, al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awāʾil, 1: 211
79 F. ʿOmar, Ṭabīʿat al-Daʿwa, p. 117 (My translation).
80 Watt, Islamic Philosophy, p. 18 My underlining.
82 Watt, Formative, p. 155.
83 Ibid.
In a speech attributed to al-Saffāh (132-6/749-50) on the occasion of his receiving the oath of allegiance in Kūfa in 132/749, the claim is made that the ʿAbbāsids received their authority by divine mandate ... the speech was finished by his uncle who asserted that the ʿAbbāsids in contrast to the Umayyads, would rule according to the Qurʾān, and the example of Muḥammad. 'God', he said, 'has given us our party (Shīʿa) the people of Khurāsān ... and has caused a caliph to appear among you from the descendants of Hāshim and [shown favour to] you through him ... remain obedient to us ... know, - he concluded - that this authority is ours and will not leave us until we hand it over to Jesus son of Mary'.

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

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

II- Significance of ʿAbbāsid Caliphal Titles.

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

84 Lambton, State and Government, pp. 47-48. On the expected permanence of the ʿAbbāsid era, see also, A.A. al-Dūrī, al-ʿĀṣr al-ʿAbbāsi al-Awwal, (Beirut: Dar al-Ṭalīq, 1988) p. 39 and on the God given nature of their authority see F. ʿOmar, al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awāʾil, 2: 84-89. (al-Jāḥiẓ’s reference to the inheritance issue will appear below in the treatise entitled ‘al-ʿAbbāsiyya’, wherein a Prophetic tradition is quoted to imply that only economic wealth cannot be inherited from Prophets, i.e., thus political rights may be inherited!)

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

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

Endress goes further than this in stating that the ʿAbbāsids also took upon themselves the religious expectation of the Mahdi.\textsuperscript{89} How true is this statement?

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

\textsuperscript{86} F. ʿOmar, al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awālī, p. 82 citing Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī and al-Masūdī.
\textsuperscript{87} al-Suyūṭī, Tārijīkh al-Khulafāʾ/History of the Caliphs, tr. by M. Jarrett (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1881), p. 262.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid. "Outcast" is a bad translation for uṣūfū; "helpless" would be better.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., p. 42.
\textsuperscript{91} e.g. Abū Muslim only one year after al-Manṣūr took power (137) the group known as Muslimiyya who were proclaiming the Imāmāte of Abū Muslim (ʿOmar, Tabīʿat, p. 116).
\textsuperscript{92} al-Manṣūr is described as being the first to create fitna between the ʿAlīds and the ʿAbbāsīds. See al- Suyūṭī, Tārijīkh al-Khulafāʾ, pp. 261, 270.
\textsuperscript{94} F. ʿOmar, Tabīʿat, p. 119.
undeniable religious connotation underlining the title "Mansūr". Calling himself "al-
Mansūr" was in harmony with the accumulating religious traditions and movements
that included the term within the context of expecting the coming Mahdi or saviour
who should receive nasr, victory.95

With the hopes for the coming of al-Mahdi still echoing from the side of the
group which we may reasonably describe now as the new born Shi'a, namely from
al-Nafs al-Zakiyya whose ālAlid father was preparing him for being the Mahdi,96 al-
Mansūr now (tried to) put an end to all political hopes on the part of the Shi'a97 by
giving his son the title al-Mahdi as a political act98 to absorb all the effervescent
aspiration of the groups still attached to that concept and as a counter policy against
them.99

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

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

95 F. āOmar, 'Ibid., p. 146, Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom, pp. 234, 245. Besides the movements of
al-Mukhtar, Zayd and the āAbbāsid Muḥammad b. āli who were all addressed likewise, it is
reported by al-Suyūtī that the Prophet anticipated the coming of a Saffāh (the generous), a
mansūr, and a mahdi from his house. See Tārikh, p. 260.
96 M. al-āAbdā, Harakat al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, (Kuwait: Dār al-Īraqīm, 1986) pp. 55-70 i.e., by
matching all conditions: name, origin, and cultural aspirations.
98 al-Īsfahānī, Abū al-Faraj, Maqātīl al-Talibiyīn, ed. A. Ṣaqr (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-
āArabī, 1365/1946), p. 247, i.e., a political act void of any belief in its truth.
99 M. al-āAbdā, 'Ibid., p. 69.
100 See F. āOmar, Tabī'at, p. 317.
101 The Imām is also regarded as indispensable for the Shi'ītes, see: D. M. Donaldson, The Shi'īte
Religion, A History of Persia & Iraq (London: Luzac and Co., 1933), pp. 113-114. al-Ībārī is
reported to have said: "The Imāms were men of the House, and if they did not exist, men would
perish."
102 Crone and Hinds, God's Caliph, pp. 80-81, 104-105.
Sourdel has also pointed to the theocratic nature of the ʿAbbāsid charisma:

Whatever may have been the basis of ʿAbbāsid legitimism, it was the priority of the ruling caliphs to reinforce the theocratic nature of their power. The same expressions were employed in their case as in that of the Umayyad caliphs. al-ʿAlāʾ declared himself, it is said, "the power of God on earth "Sultan Allāh fi arḍīhi"\textsuperscript{103}... In addition, the royal titles adopted by the sovereigns stressed the charismatic quality of their power; the second caliph had named himself al-ʿAlāʾ, "he who receives the victory from God," the third al-Mahdī, "he whom God leads in the right way", a title which tended at the same time to assimilate the caliphs to the ʿAlid Imāms ... Subsequently ... al-ʿAmin, al-Maʿmūn and al-Wāthik bi-l-lāh ... the personal link between the caliph and the divinity guaranteeing his power remained strongly marked.\textsuperscript{104}

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

Lambton quotes Sourdel as saying that "al-Maʿmūn was the first ʿAbbāsid caliph to take officially the title Imām"\textsuperscript{107}, and describes Sourdel's interpretation of al-Maʿmūn's use of this title as simply 'hazarding a guess':

He, (Sourdel), further hazards the guess that al-Maʿmūn may have been attracted by the Shiʿi concept of the Imām and may have wished to exercise the powers which the Shiʿi's accorded to the Imāms.\textsuperscript{108}

We shall refer to this observation in more detail when we study the effects of the pro-ʿAlid policy of al-Maʿmūn on the political works of al-Jāḥīz. It is sufficient for the time being to end this section by noting that al-Maʿmūn's pro-ʿAlid policy (which took the form of designating ʿAli al-Ridā as heir in 201/816) was understood in terms of his general eagerness to attempt a compromise between Sunnism and Shiʿism (as Lambton says) or between the constitutional and autocratic bloc, as Watt puts it. There lies a subtle difference between Lambton, Sourdel and Watt. The former scholars find his act of designation primarily influenced by sympathy for Zaydi and not Imāmī Shiʿism\textsuperscript{109} whereas Watt interprets al-Maʿmūn's act as intended to secure the support of the autocratic bloc in its totality, which was then manifested

\textsuperscript{103} This is narrated by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih in his al-ʿIqd al-Farid, (3: 370) and quoted by F. ʿOmar, al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awāʾil, 2: 82.
\textsuperscript{104} E.I.\textsuperscript{2}, s.v. "Khalīfa" by Sourdel p. 939 b.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} Lambton, State and Government in Medieval Islam, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Lambton, State, p. 39.
in the Zaydites and Rāfiḍites,\textsuperscript{110} the latter being the theological predecessors of the Imāmites.\textsuperscript{111}

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

\textsuperscript{110} Watt, \textit{Formative}, p.177.
\textsuperscript{111} Watt, \textit{Islamic Philosophy}, p. 36.
III- Survey of the question of the Imāmate during the ʿAbbāsid period among:

A- Shiʿites (Proto-Shicism under the ʿAbbāsids)

The issue of the fluidity and indefinite nature of the Proto-Shiʿite phenomenon (versus the definitive one) before the appearance of the ʿAbbāsids has already been discussed above:

The revolt of the Hasanid al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and his brother in 145/763 reflected the disappointment of the Ṭālibites with the new ʿAbbāsid regime. The non-militant policy of the Ḥusaynīd Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Bāqir, was probably maintained after witnessing the defeat of the revolt of his uncle, Zayd b. ʿAlī, against the Umayyads and that of his two cousins, al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and his brother Ibrāhīm, against the ʿAbbāsids. Jaʿfar is said to have refrained from entering the political stage and to have been contented with religious discussions. It was al-Manṣūr who gave Jaʿfar the title of al-ṣadīq, i.e., the truthful. Due to his non-militant nature and his disinclination to make a bid for political leadership, al-Manṣūr was pleased to have him at Medina as a deterrent to the militant ʿAlīds and consequently to weaken the ʿAlīd revolutionary front.

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

114 F. ʿOmar, al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn, p.231.
115 Ibid., p. 215.
During the reign of al-Mahdi, the activities of the Ḥasanid figure ʻĪsā b. Zayd b. ʻAli b. al-Ḥasan b. ʻAli to claim the Imāmate were subdued in Kūfah. ʻĪsā's efforts were resumed in Baghdad by another Ḥasanid, ʻAli b. al-ʻAbbās b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. ʻAli, but this was also controlled. The Zaydite backing for this figure marks the beginning of the infiltration of anti-ʻAbbāsid forces into the caliphal capital itself, after having been absent during al-Maḥṣūr's reign. It was now that al-Mahdi claimed the ʻAbbāsid legitimacy to have been based on the uncle of the Prophet and not on a waṣiyya by Abū Ḥāshim. The reign of al-Hādī witnessed the revolt of the Ḥasanid, al-Ḥusayn b. ʻAli b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. Abī Ṭālīb, who was advised by al-Kāẓim not to do so. Mūsā al-Kāẓim, son of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, was suspected of political activities by the ʻAbbāsid Caliph al-Mahdi and later by al-Rashid who is allegedly believed to have ended his life in prison. Despite al-Rashid's orders to put the body (of Mūsā) before the public to see for themselves that he was actually dead, this step could not, however, prevent the emergence of a group known as al-Wāqīfa that held that "Mūsā would return some day and set everything right."  

The reign of al-Rashid saw the revolt of the brothers of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, Yahyā and Idris, sons of ʻAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. ʻAli b. Abī Ṭālīb. The former revolted in Daylam, which constituted the first eastern area of the caliphate that threatened the ʻAbbāsid interests. al-Rashid is reported to have put Yahyā under his supervision until he was allegedly killed.  

The revolt of Idris in Tilmisān that resulted in a momentary emirate in 172 A.H., was soon overcome as the ʻAbbāsids seemed determined to tolerate no more subdivisions in the western parts of the caliphate, after the emergence of the Umayyad Emirate in Spain. What is significant here is that by the time al-Ma'mūn came to power, the messianic and extremist trends had reached threatening
proportions which necessitated further caliphal measures to reduce that growing wave centred around the Ṭālibite Imāms. 123

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

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

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

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

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

As one modern scholar puts it:

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

B-Khārijites

The Khārijites, like the Shiʿites and other discontented religio-political factions, could not but express their dissatisfaction with the ʿAbbāsid regime that did not fulfill their aspirations nor improve their political status. The Khārijites are said to have seriously troubled the ʿAbbāsids in regions far from the capital, as in Syria, Oman, Khūrāsān, Yemen, North Africa, and sometimes in the ʿAbbāsid capital itself, Baghdad, during the reigns of al-Mahdi and al-Rashid:128

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

The significance of Khārijism, Watt adds, is to be seen in the formation of a relatively permanent state as in North Africa and Oman”.130 Many Khārijite leaders have claimed the title of the 'Commander of the Faithful'. Ḥamza was one such leader of Sijistān for more than three decades until his death in 213/828.131 ʿAmmār b. Yāsir al-Khārīji revolted in Sijistān in 238/853 and claimed the same title. In Africa, ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Rustam was recognized as Imām in Tāhart in 160/777 or 162/779 and the Rustamid dynasty founded by him lasted until 296/909.132 With the formation of the Ibāḍi states underlined above, it is thus evident that Khārijism was a threat to ʿAbbāsid interests. al-Jāḥiz's position towards this sect shall be studied later, including analysing the Khārīji impact on al-Jāḥiz's view of the Imāmate.

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

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

129  Watt, Ibid., p. 139.
130 Ibid.
132 Ibid., p. 73.
134 EI., old edition, S. v. "Umaiyyāds" and S. Lane-Poole, The Mohammedan Dynasties: Chronological and genealogical tables with historical introductions (Stanley Lane-Poole : N.Y., 1965) p. 21.
Yaqūt reproduces in the biography of Abū Ḥasan al-Madāʾini (d. ca 225/840) the following tradition: al-Maʾmūn ordered Ahmad b. Yūsuf to introduce me (it is al-Madāʾini who is reporting) to him; when I went in he uttered the name of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and I cited him some Ḥadīths about him by the Umayyads and I told him: "I know through Abū Salama al-Muthannā b. ʿAbd Allāh, brother of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣāri the following account that someone had made to him: 'When I was in Syria', says the narrator, 'I had noticed that no one named his children ʿAlī, Ḥasan, or Ḥusayn, because I heard only Muʿāwiya, Yazid and Walīd. One day I was passing in front of a man sitting on the threshold, and as I was thirsty I asked to drink. ' Ḥasan', he called, 'give him to drink'. 'Did you say: "Iliasan? "', I exclaimed "Sure!", he replied, 'I have children who are called Hasan, Ḥusayn and Jaʿfar. The Syrians give their children the names of their previous caliphs of God (the Umayyads), but as each one of us often has the occasion to address curses and insults to his children, I gave my children the names of the enemies of God (the ʿAlids); when I curse one, I only curse the enemies of God."135

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

Hence the affection for the Umayyads was a polemic one, since it arose from hatred towards the ʿAlids (and ʿAbbāsids) in places as close as Syria and as unusual as Irāq. The pro-Umayyad group in Iraq, as Pellat concludes, "must have been large and powerful,"138 so that al-Maʾmūn is reported in 211/826 as intending to order that Muʿāwiya be publicly cursed; but he soon changed his mind upon the advice of Qāḍī Yahyā b. Aktham, who had warned him against the possible reactions of the people, especially in Khurāsān.139 These incidents suggest that the ʿAbbāsid policy under al-Maʾmūn continued to be pro-ʿAlid, not only by nominating ʿAlī al-
Riḍā as heir to the caliph, (201) but also by denouncing the common enemy of the Hāshimites, Muʿāwiya (in 211/826 or 212/817). This anti-Umayyad feeling was later to be manifested by the same caliph in the theological Mihna he inflicted on Ibn Ḥanbal, but al-Maʿmūn's introduction of an inquisition may have served to enhance pro-Umayyad affection since it clearly demonstrated the difference in the religious policy of the two caliphates and encouraged new masses in Iraq to use Muʿāwiya as a weapon against the ʿAlids and ʿAbbāsids together. We shall find al-Jāhiz devoting a special treatise describing the doctrine of the pro-Umayyads (al-Nābita) and how much this group was still growing during his time.

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

During the reign of al-Mahdi a Marwānī revolution broke out in Egypt but was suppressed. The reigns of al-Rashid, al-Maʿmūn and al-Muʿtaṣīm witnessed the revolts of Sufyānī Umayyads in Syria and Yemen. It is interesting to note that the ʿAbbāsids maintained good links with the Umayyads. The pro-Umayyad group known as Nābita is also alleged to have encompassed, in addition to the

---

140 Madelung, Religious Trends, Ibid.
141 F. ʿOmar, al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn, pp. 131-132. See also Watt, Formative, P. 168.
143 F. ʿOmar, al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn, 1: 132,149.
144 F. ʿOmar, al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn, 1: 154 (al-Muʿtaṣīm, al-Mahdi and al-Rashid are said to have married into the Umayyads)
Hanbalites, the Karrāmiyyah\textsuperscript{145} who held the legitimacy of the existence of two Imāms (‘Ali and Mu‘āwiya) in the Muslim world. It was obvious that the ʿAbbāsids would not tolerate any other ruler who was able to compete with them politically, for this would endanger the unity of their caliphate.\textsuperscript{146}

D-The Mu‘tazilites.

(i) Origin:

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

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

F. ʿOmar adds on the originality of the Mu‘tazilite movement: "Though Wāsil and ʿAmr are given the appellation 'Mu‘tazilites' in historical accounts, they must not be regarded as members of a definite sect of Mu‘tazila as it existed in later times."\textsuperscript{148} In other words, if the question of the Imāmate was the direct cause for the formation of the religio-political sects (firaq) in Islam - as al-Ash‘arī maintains in his Maqālāt,\textsuperscript{149} - the question of when did the Mu‘tazilites crystallize as a definite religio-political movement should be somewhat clearer since they appeared on the scene later than the other sects.

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

\textsuperscript{146} F. ʿOmar, al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn, 1: 158.

\textsuperscript{147} Watt, "The political attitudes of the Muʿtazila", op.cit., pp. 52-54.


\textsuperscript{149} al-Ash‘arī, Maqālāt, p.1.
(ii) Relations with the ʿAbbāsid Court

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

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

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

There was no clearly defined group of followers of Wāṣīl and ʿAmr until towards the middle of the ninth century ... Wāṣīl may be taken to be the inventor of the conception of al-Manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn or "the intermediate status" ... there was no clearly-defined body of Muʿtazilites until 800, perhaps not until 850. 153

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

---

The story purporting to show that the name was derived from Wāṣîl’s withdrawal from the circle of al-Hasan al-Baṣrî is doubtless apocryphal, but suitably expresses the separation of the Mu’tazilah (sic) from the rest of the ‘Ulamā’, which occurred in the ninth century.155

(iii) Political Attitudes and Principles

Although the Mu’tazilites were noted for upholding the five principles, this does not mean there were no differences between them. The best example for this difference was al-Jāḥîz and al-İskāfî (d. 240/854). Although both were Mu’tazilites, the latter was representing the infiltration of the now Shi’ite group into the circles of Mu’tazilites such that we find the Shi’ite Mu’tazilite al-İskāfî refuting the arguments of a non-Shi’ite Mu’tazilite (al-Jāḥîz) in his anti-‘Alid work al-‘Uthmāniyya. Similarly, Ibîn al-Riwândî’s work Fâdihat al-Mu’tazila156 shows that there existed sharp religio-political differences among the Mu’tazilite figures.

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

(iv) Main Başrite Mu’tazilites

(a) al-Hasan al-Baṣrî

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

156 This work has been edited by Dr. A.A. al-İscam, in his Ph.D dissertation, ‘İbn al-Riwändî’s Fâdihat al-Mu’tazila’. (Cambridge University, 1972).
the Umayyads. As regards the Imāmate, al-Hasan is said to have acknowledged the caliphate of the Rāshidūn but when it came to ʿAli he regarded his resort to Taḥkīm (arbitration) as bringing a halt to the bounties of God bestowed on him up to that moment.\(^{158}\) He is also said to have condemned the killers of ʿUthmān.

(b) ʿAmr B. ʿUbayd

ʿAmr took a favourable position toward Abū Bakr\(^ {159}\), and rejected the testimony of those who fought in the Battle of the Camel, since both sides were wrong.\(^ {160}\)

(c) Wāṣil b. ʿAṭā'

The alleged founder and head of the school\(^ {161}\) dissociated himself from the circle of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. He is said to have refrained from taking a position against the opposing parties of the Camel and ʿSifīn. He held a similar view on ʿUthmān, on those responsible for his death and those who deserted him. One of these parties is sinful, but which one cannot be determined. Wāṣil, however, regarded the testimony of ʿAli, ʿṬalḥa and al-Zubayr as dismissable.\(^ {162}\)

(d) Abūʾl-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 235 A.H.)

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

\(^{158}\) al-Mubarrad, al-Kämil, 3: 950 cited by Ḥuşnī, op. cit., as the former was not available to me.


\(^{162}\) al-Shahrastānī, op. cit.

\(^{163}\) Watt, The political Attitudes of the Muʿtazila', pp.48-49. and Formative., p. 219.
rule while āli was afdal at least at the date of his coming to power. There was a tendency in Baṣra to sit on the fence and avoid decisions, such that he deliberately refused to say whether āuthmān was right or wrong during the last six years and whether āli or his opponents were in the right at the battle of the Camel.164

(e) al-Nazzām

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

(f) al-Aṣamm

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

164 Watt, Formative, p. 226.
165 Ibid.
166 A.A. Rida, al-Nazzām wa Ārā'ūhu al-Falsafiyya. (Cairo: Maṭba'at Lajnat al-Ta'īf, 1365 /1946) p. 175.
168 A. Rida, al-Nazzām, op cit., p. 176 This is also the position of the Zaydites and Murji'ites as narrated by al-Asfari, in Maqālāt, p. 453
169 Ibid., p.176
blamed but if it were for the benefit of the community so that it might choose an Imam then he was right. To him, Abū Mūsā was right in deposing him to make the people agree on one Imam. 171 In fact this contradicts his alleged cautiousness as "he is said to have been a more extreme opponent of the Rāfiḍites" (than al-ṢAllāf), since he held that ʿAli was never Imam, because there was no shūrā (according to al-Nāshi') or because there was no consensus (according to Ashʿari). 172 Watt says that from the time of al-Ashʿari onwards, al-Äṣamm becomes noted for the view that it is not necessary to have an Imam. "The non-obligatory character of the Imamate", adds Watt, "seems to be an inference from some statement of al-Äṣamm and not something on which he vehemently insisted." 173 al-Baghdādi judges as 'heretical' al-Äṣamm's view that the Imamship should only remain with him upon whom the consensus of the community rested, as this was an indirect attack against the Imamship of ʿAli that he got after a rebellion. He only accepted the Imamship of Muṣawiya because the people were unanimous about him. 174.

(v) Baghdādi Scholars

(a) Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir

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

Bishr and the Muʿtazīlītes of Baghdad held the Imamate of the mafdūl in the sense that while considering ʿAli afdal in 632 they nevertheless regarded Abū Bakr as a rightful Imam despite his being mafdūl. They thus differed from the Rāfiḍītes for whom Abū Bakr was never Imam at all. The appointment of the mafdūl was justified, and his preference for ʿAli was shown by his dissociation from ʿUthmān in the last six years. This implied that those who killed ʿUthmān were

171 al-Ashʿari, Maqālāt, p. 453.
175 Watt, Formative, p. 222.
justified and that ʿAli was right in not proceeding against them. Bishr is said to have played a conciliatory role that was reflected in the policies of al-Maʿmūn. He agreed with the Rāfiḍites in acknowledging ʿAli’s merit and excellence and (but) in his critique of the arbiters he seems to be siding with those who wanted the community to be based on inspired texts.177

(b) Thumāma Ibn al-Ashras (d. 828)

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

Both he and Aḥmad b. Abī Duʿād were pro-ʿAlīd in the sense that they dissociated themselves from Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, and venerated ʿAlī for political reasons. Thumāma hated Muʿāwiya greatly and could have affected al-Maʿmūn in the decree issued against him.181

(c) Ibn Abī Duʿād (d. 854)

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

(d) al-Iskāfī (d. 240/854)

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

176 Ibid., pp. 227-228.
177 Ibid., p. 228.
178 Ibid., p. 222.
179 al-Baghdādi, al-Fark Bayn al-Firak, p. 177.
180 A. Amin, Duhā al-Islām, 3: 75, 79.
181 Ibid., p. 153.
182 Ibid., p. 159.
183 Watt, Formative, p. 224.
not reflect more than approval of his theological works such as "Ithbát Khālaq al-Qur'ān, K. al-radd 'alā al-Mushabbiha, K. al-Radd 'alā man ankara khalaq-al-Qur'ān". As regards his political views, he has contradicted the K. al-Ćathmāniyya of al-Jāhiz, and refuted his views on 6Ali b. Abī Tālib. In view of this work, I tend to believe that al-Iskāfi whose Ḥizāl was initially associated with pro-6Alid sentiments being taught in Baghdād, and benefiting from the pro-6Alid policy of al-Ma'mūn, changed his mild position on ĄUthmān, thus leaving the Zaydite circles who had equally recognised the legitimacy of ĄUthmān as caliph and supported the Imāmāt of al-mafṣūl - by accelerating his esteem for Āli b. Abī Tālib, and obviously joining the Rāfidite circles (attacked by al-Jāhiz in K. al-Ćuthmāniyya). It is not clear why al-Jāhiz did not react to al-Iskāfi's refutation, especially since the former survived the latter by at least ten years.

(vi) Principles in brief

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

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

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

(a) The Intermediate Position

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

184 This is the only work preserved by him. See F.I.2 S.v. "al-Iskāfi, by Sourdé. It is reproduced by Hārūn at the end of Kitāb al-Ćathmāniyya of al-Jāhiz.
185 al-Iskāfi is not the vizier installed by the Turks during the reign of the ĄAbbāsid caliph al-Mu'tazz, who had the same surname and was not liked by the caliph because he suspected him of holding Shi'ite sympathies. See, F.I.2 S.v. "al-Iskāfi", by Sourdé. It could be that it was because al-Jāhiz was afraid of al-Iskāfi's relation to this Shi'ite vizier that he decided to remain silent.
the fighters of the Battles of the Camel and of Şīffīn.\textsuperscript{186} It was the position taken by each faction of the community that decisively defined its identity as Murji`ite, Khārijite or Mu`tazilite. The Mu`tazilites who joined the religio-political scene later than the Murji`ites and Khārijites or Shi`ites refused to condemn the fighters at the battles of the Camel and Şīffīn as kāfīr as the Khārijites have held. Neither did they totally abstain from passing a judgement as the Murji`ites did, who gave them the status of believers. Those fighters were neither Kāfīrs nor strictly believers, but were given the intermediate position of "fāsiqs".

Watt sees a line of continuity between the Murji`ites and the main figures of \textit{Ftizāl}: whereby Wāsīl b. ʿAtāʿ, ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd and al-ʿAllāf were undecided on the status of the fighters at the battle of Camel, or on the question of ʿUthmān: was he right or wrong during the last six years of his rule. Thus a form of neo-Murjīism was implicit in these figures or positions, except that the Mu`tazilites had the further choice of putting the sinner into the status of intermediate position and condemning him as fāsiq, or just refraining from that judgement and returning to the Murji`ite position.\textsuperscript{187}

(b) Commanding the good:

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

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

\textsuperscript{186} Pellat, "l'Imāmat ...", \textit{op.cit.} p.50. The same is the position of Nyberg, \textit{EI}. S.v. "Mu`tazila", p. 788.


\textsuperscript{188} al-Ashārī, \textit{Maqālāt}, p. 452 ; in p. 278 al-Ashārī likens \textit{Khurāj} to \textit{Amr bi-l-Ma`rūf} because of their both being dependent on \textit{Imkān}. 41
PART TWO
PART TWO:

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

CHAPTER TWO

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

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

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

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

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

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

Before starting to reconstruct al-Jähiz's doctrinal attitudes on the question of the Imāmate, we should first acknowledge the efforts in this respect of C. Pellat\textsuperscript{193} and Ḥ. Yehyā Moḥamed,\textsuperscript{194} who have tried to present al-Jähiz's theory of Imāmate without systematically attempting, however, to fit every doctrine into the historical religio-political setting and conditions that prevailed then, i.e., their attempt was a synthetic one that did not concern itself with the task of studying any development in al-Jähiz's political theory/views. It is our belief that by attempting to fit al-Jähiz's works into the likely historical context to which they belong, not only the relation between his political thought and the current ʿAbbāsid policy may be detected, but more significantly, one may be able to recognize the development occurring in our author's political works as he happened to have survived and witnessed the successively dominant and declining eras of the Muʿtazilite school of thought, especially as he is believed to be one of its influential figures and leader of al-

\begin{addendum}
\item See Pellat, "al-Jähiz" in ʿAbbāsid Belles Lettres, p.94.
\item See C. Pellat "L'Imāmat dans La Doctrine de Šähiz" in Studia Islamica, XV, 1961.
\item See Ḥassan Y. Moḥamed "La Théorie de l'Imāmat chez al-Šähiz", a chapter in his doctoral thesis al-Šähiz et le Chiṣāme (Paris: Sorbonne University, 1985) pp. 18-60. The same chapter is also found in Études Orientales, 1987, pp. 34-48. I will make reference to both of them.
\end{addendum}
JāhiZiyya, a sub-branch of Mu'tazilism whose disciples, unfortunately, remain obscure.

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

Literary historians have fortunately thrown some light on al-Jāhiz's relation with the ʿAbbāsid caliphal court, via the viziers or scholars with whom he had strong and lasting links. During the period of Mu'tazilite political triumph, we have historical evidence that al-Jāhiz had strong links with the following influential ʿAbbāsid figures: Thumäma b. al-Ashras, al-Yazidi, Abmad b. Abi Duʿād, his son Muḥammad, and ʿAbd al-Malik b. al-Zayyāt.

Both Thumäma and Aḥmad b. Abi Duʿād are said to have played a significant role in encouraging the ʿAbbāsid caliphs to hold and enforce their dogma of Ṭizāl as the state religion. al-Yazidi is said to have introduced al-Jāhiz's works to al-Maʾmūn, who seems to have ordered scholars to write on the topic of Imāma after

---

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

196 Contemporary and friend of al-Jāhiz, a Mu'tazilite theologian.


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

199 ʿAbbāsid vizier and friend of al-Jāhiz to whom 'Kitāb al-Hayawān' was presented. Sourdel views both Ibn Abi Duʿād and Ibn al-Zayyāt as having "contributed to the direction of the general policy of the empire". See E.I.², S.v. 'Ibn al-Zayyāt'.

45
the civil war that erupted with his brother, al-Amin, and had them summoned to his court in Marw to guide him in that respect.²⁰⁰

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

203 F.E. Petersen, 6Ali and Mu'awiya, p. 19.
204 Ibid., p. 18
fortunes" i.e., in the sense of its concentrated efforts to justify the presence of the ruler for religious or political reasons. Were al-Jähiz's views on the Imāmate religiously or politically motivated and shaped?

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

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

206 This point will be addressed later with special reference to B. Lewis's The political language of Islam, (Chicago: University Press, 1988) pp. 68, 94, 99, 103.
207 Pellat, C. 'L'Imāmat daus le doctrine de Ǧāḥīṣ', op.cit., p. 50.
208 Ibid., p. 51.
209 Ibid., p. 52.
each religio-political setting. We know that al-Jähiz had witnessed eleven caliphs, but what we lack is a systematic dated bibliography of his works. Our guide in this respect shall rest on the following guidelines and al-Jähiz's political thought will be traced according to:

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

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

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

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

---

211 Those were respectively: al-Mahdi, al-Hādi, al-Rashid, al-Amin, al-Ma'mūn, (al-Jähiz was 33 years old then), al-Mu'tasim, al-Wāthiq, al-Mutawakkil, al-Muntaṣir, al-Musta'īn, al-Mu'tazz.


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

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

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

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

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

(A) Period of Political Muṭazili Triumph (198-231/813-846)

Ma'mūn's era: (198-218)

1. al-Jawābät fl- īmāma, (Wujūb al-Īmāma).

al-Jāḥiz's Heresiographic Review:

2. Maqālat al-Zaydiyya wa-al-Rāfida (Imāmate described in Shi'ite terms.)

3. (? ) Independent Jähizian anti-Rāfiḍī campaign
   (a) K. al-Maṣrifa
   (b) K. al-ʿUthmānīyya
   (c) K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya.

4. Risāla fī-al-Nābita

Post-Maʿmūnīd Era (218-231: al-Muʿtaṣim, al-Wāthiq)

1. Theological works:
   - Risāla fī-Nafy al-Tashbīh.
   - Risāla fī-Khalq al-Qurʿān.

2. Political works:
   - Kitāb Faḍl Hāshim ʿala ʿAbd Shams
   - Risāla fī Taṣwīb ʿAlī.

3. [a ] Period of good relations with vizier Ibn al-Zayyāt:
   (1) Risāla fī Madīḥ al-Tujjār (addressed to Ibn al-Zayyāt as of 220 A.H.
       when he became vizier.)
   (2) Kitāb al-Tarbiya wa-al-Tadwīr.
   (3) Early parts of K. al-Ḥayawān, most probably started before 232 A.H.,
       as in 233 the addressee Ibn al-Zayyāt died. It could be argued that he was
       given the first volumes and then al-Jähiz continued afterwards expanding
       the book until 250 A.H.

[b ] Period of unstable relations with Ibn al-Zayyāt:
   - Risāla fī al-Jidd wa al-Hazl.

216 The editor of K. Fadihat al-Muṣṭazila says this work was written in 242 A.H., i.e., at a much
      later stage than I propose.
217 al-Ḥājiri suggests they were written during al-Mutawakkil’s life. See al-Ḥājiri, al-Jähiz, p.
      334.
218 See A. Abū Mulhim, Rasāʾīl al-Jähiz al-Kalāmiyya and Kashshāf Āthār al-Jähiz. (Beirut: Dār
      wa Maktabat al-Hilal, 1987) p. 67 of the inventory, and Hārūn, K. al-Ḥayawān, 1: 26 and N.
      al-Ḥumṣī and A. al-Mulūḥi, Min Kitāb al-Ḥayawān li al-Jähiz, (Damascus: Ministry of
      Education, 1979) p. 166. al-Ḥājiri has a contrary view, that al-Ḥayawān was written after the
      death of al-Mutawakkil. See al-Ḥājiri, al-Jähiz, p. 397
(B) Last Phase of I’tizāl 232-236 A.H.

I. (Earlier Rule of al-Mutawakkil)
   - Latter portions of K. al-Ḥayawān
   - K. al-Futyā.
   - K. al-Bukhalā’.
   - K. al-Bursān.
   - K. al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn.
   - Annex to K. al-Ḥayawān:
     - K. al-Nisā’.219
     - al-Qawl Fi al-Bighāl.
     - fi al-Mu‘allimin.

II. Change in al-Mutawakkil’s policy: (as of 236 A.H.)
   Official anti-Rāfīḍī Campaign:
   - K. Faḍl al-Mu’tazīlī/al-I’tizāl
   - K. Așḥāb al-Ilhām

(C) Period of Mu’tazīlī Political Decline: Sunni Policy of al-Mutawakkil, (236-247 A.H.)

   - K. al-Radd ʿalā al-Nasārā.
   - K. al-Akhtub wa Kayf taṣḥīḥ.
   - K. Ḥujaj al-Nubuwwa.
   - Risāla fi Manāqib al-Turk.

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

   - Risāla fi al-Awtān wa al-Buldān.
   - Fakhr al-Sūdān ʿalā al-Biḍān.

---

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

Chronological Analysis of al-Jāḥīz’s Political Thought: Era Of Political Muʿtazili Triumph:

al-Maʿmūn’s Period (I): 198-200
al-Jāḥīz’s Earliest Extant Work (s) On the Imāmate:

- al-Jawābāt fī Istiḥqāq al-Imāma (Responsa on the Imāmate) extant.

- al-Dalāla ‘alā anna al-Imāma Farḍ non-extant

- Kitāb Wujūb al-Imāma works.

al-Jawābāt fī al-Imāma:

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

---

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

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

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

1. The Immediate Religio-Political Scene

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

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

222 al-ʿUthmāniyya, p.154.
223 al-Bayān, 3: 374-375.
224 See al-Ḥājiri, al-Jāḥīz, p. 199.
225 Ibid., p. 204.
226 Ibid., p. 183-184. Although al-Ṭabarī represents al-Ma'mūn as being deeply anguished by the death of his defiant brother, we need not necessarily accept al-Ḥājiri's view that al-Ma'mūn was torn between the Arab bloc and a Shuʿūbī belief in the superiority of the Persian-Alid
rule, he eventually ordered that ĖAbbāsid scholars should put an end to such
dangerous discourses and speculations on the topic of Imāma, and provide him with
their views by paying a visit to his court in Marw. al-Amin's death was a blow to the
institution of the caliphate, as Kennedy puts it:

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

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

(I) Within the Khārijite group, this indifference went beyond
theological circles to reach the level of military revolt. Their revolution in 202/817 in
Baghdad against the ĖAbbāsid authorities was a continuation of their radical
opposition to any form of authority, that was initially directed against ĖAli and
Muṭawwila.228 An identical open rejection of the need for the caliphate was
proclaimed by a movement lead by Sahl b. Salama al-Anṣāri229 at the same time
(i.e., 201-202 A.H.), which claimed that people could do without political authority
as long as they acted properly and cooperated.230

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

---

228 See al-Hājiri, al-Jāḥīṣ, p. 203-204.
229 See al-Hājiri, al-Jāḥīṣ, p. 204 citing Ṭabarī in his Annals of 201-202 A.H., and H. Kennedy,
230 Ibid. This view has also been attributed by al-Nawbakhtī (Fīraq al-Shīʿa), pp. 10-11 to al-
Nazzām.
As far as Abū Bakr al-Asamm is concerned, whereas al-Ash'ari had ascribed to him a belief in the non-obligatory nature of the Imāmate (i.e., that it was not necessary to have an Imām), al-Nāshi' only refers to him as holding that in turbulent times it is practically impossible for anyone to function as Imām, besides saying that there may exist more than one Imām. al-Asamm is reported as being an extreme opponent of the Rāfiḍa since he held that ʿAli was never Imām. According to al-Nāshi', Watt adds (in the same mentioned reference) that al-Asamm's reason behind that position was that there had been no real Shūrā or council; but according to al-Ash'ari this can be understood in the light of the fact that there was no consensus on ʿAli, presumably by the Muslims as a whole.

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

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

---

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

233 Watt, Formative, Ibid.


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

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

(III) Within ʿAbbāsid Circles:

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

As far as the problem of succession is concerned, the ʿAbbāsids while publicly resorting to the charismatically established principle of *Bayʿa* and by religiously appealing to the masses by a procedure whose precedent was laid down in Abū Bakr's nomination of ʿUmar, the reality of things hid something different, and the procedure of *Bayʿa* and *wilāyat al-ʿAhd* was instituted as a tool to prolong the life of the new ʿAbbāsid state 237, which, paradoxically, was not much different from the dynastic-hereditary pattern 238 followed by their predecessors, the Umayyads. When

---


238 Conversely, it has been maintained by von Kremer that whereas the Umayyads were reflecting the "old Arab idea of seniority", the ʿAbbāsids' view of authority strove for direct transmission from father to son. i.e., the Umayyad rule was not as dynastic. For a proof of this view, out of the Sufyānīd line, only Yazīd and Muḥāwiya the 2nd succeeded in a direct line. Out of the Marwānīd line, only two followed that measure. (ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān and al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik). The ʿAbbāsids, however, displayed five successions - at least up to al-Jāhiz's time - thus numerically outweighed the Umayyads. This trend was resumed by al-Muqtadir (44th ʿAbbāsid caliph) almost uninterruptedly. See von Kremer,
power rested within the ⁶Abbāsid family, the precedent of Bay'a and the historical right of inheritance to rule were not enough, now that the surviving descendants of the Prophet's uncle were all equally ⁶Abbāsids, and the actual criteria for determining the candidacy to the Imāmate, were the obvious rivalry between certain lines within the ⁶Abbāsid family; namely between the descendants of Muḥammad b. ⁶Ali b. ⁶Abd-Allāh b. al-⁶Abbās, on the one hand and the brothers of this Muḥammad on the other, according to the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>'Ali b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muḥammad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd Allāh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al ⁶ṣamad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⁶Isā</td>
<td>(Dāwūd)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibrahim</td>
<td>al-Saffāh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>al-Maṃṣūr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>al-Mahdī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>al-Hādī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hārūn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tension and rivalry were so great that we are told that al-Maṃṣūr exerted tremendous pressure to drive his uncles Dāwūd b. ⁶Ali and ⁶Abd Allāh b. ⁶Ali away from competing with him on the Imāmate.²³⁹ But even when the non-Muḥammad branch was excluded, and power rested within the line of al-Maṃṣūr, the conflict assumed a new wave of rivalry, now among the sons of the present caliph and their uncles or cousins. al-Maṃṣūr doubled his efforts to secure the caliphate for his son, and succeeded in making ⁶Isā b. Mūsā - his cousin who had helped him fighting the rebellious Ḥasanids - surrender his rights for his son, al-Mahdī²⁴⁰ so that the old-new principle of succession, or right of succession to the Imāmate, turned out to be nothing more than a tactic of promoting and enhancing the prestige of the caliph and his direct sons, and the ability to keep it to his own line of descent, not that of his uncles, nor his brothers or his cousins. This al-Maṃṣūr succeeded in establishing as a precedent²⁴¹ to be followed by all those who succeeded him; therefore the established dynastic trend assumed the pattern "from father to son", thus from al-Maṃṣūr to al-Mahdī, from al-Mahdī to Hārūn - who accidentally

²³⁹ See F. ⁶Omar, 'The Problem of Succession', pp.31-32.
²⁴⁰ See Ibid., pp. 36-37.
²⁴¹ Ibid., p.41.
received it from his brother, al-Hādi - from Hārūn to his three sons: al-Amin, al-Ma'mūn, al-Mu'taṣīm. Then from al-Ma'mūn to (his brother) al-Mu'taṣīm, (and back to his sons) al-Wāthiq and al-Mutawakkil, and from the latter (most of) the rest of the 'Abbāsid dynasty: the following table demonstrate this rivalry within the 'Abbāsid circle:

The 'Abbāsid succession restricted within the Manṣūrid line:

THE 'Umūmah

al-'Abbās

↓

'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh

↓

Sulaymān Muḥammad 1 Others 2 Yahyā 'Abd al-Ṣamad Isā Dāwūd Šāliḥ 'Abdallāh

1. Gives rise to āAbbāsid Caliphs.
2. Bishr, Ahmad, Ishāq, Mubashshir and others. Obscure and leave no offspring.


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

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

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

243 See N. Ḥumṣī and A. Mulūḥī, Min Kitāb al-Hayāwān, p. 8 (reference to lack of Shūrā in āAbbāsid policy).
phenomenon of ‘hereditary dynasties’\textsuperscript{244} palatable and acceptable in the eyes of Muslim jurists and thinkers.

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

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

Some people allege that the Imamate is not required for one man, specifically from one group, nor for one man from the majority of the people, even though he was the most excellent and most capable of the Muslims, after being unique (in his qualification) for the Imamate without another person being equal to him. However, if the people do not establish one Imām, then it would be possible for them without them going astray, or being rebellious or being unbelievers simply by not establishing him. On the other hand, if they do establish an Imām, that would be a judgement which they had made and not doing it would not be remiss of them. It is possible for them to establish two Imāms and they could establish more than that (number), and it would not matter if these Imāms were non-Arabs and Mawālī. [But there must be a judge whether one or more in any circumstance and it is not possible that a man should be a judge over himself to carry out the ḥudād upon himself]. No one can say absolutely that there need not be law and a judge but they differ in their arguments and their understandings.

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

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

\textsuperscript{244} see F. Osmān, “Baiʿat al-Imām” in State, Politics and Islam, pp. 69.
can detect - from the surviving portions of the text - a clear cut saying on the nature of the necessity of the Imamate [i.e., whether it is based on khabar (tradition), or on reason], I have taken the liberty of assuming that all other portions which do not address reports of tradition (khabar) to have constituted al-Jähiz's view of the necessary nature of the Imamate on rational grounds i.e., on reason. Despite this distinction, one may nevertheless rightly argue as we shall see below, that such a distinct separation need not have reflected al-Jähiz's personal view when he was hypothetically assuming the position of the adversary. In other words, al-Jähiz's view of that necessity was probably more synthetic and less discrete, as one could always detect reason and revelation coming together in one argument. Thus for purposes of clarity we shall fit al-Jähiz's ideas into the suggested frame of revelation and reason, without forgetting that while both factors may be present in one argument, sometimes more emphasis is put to one than on the other.

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

I. Religious Proofs for the necessity of Imamate:

A. Necessity of Imam by (implicit) Revelation ... seeds for the argument of implicit text/indication (al-Nass al-khafi)

In what may be considered as an early reflection of the doctrine of al-nass al-khafi246 (implicit text, the implicit textual reference of revelation as deduced by men of reason/hikma), al-Jähiz believes that although we have not received an explicit legal text calling for the establishment of the office of Imam247, God, by leaving the question implicit was in fact choosing that which was more wise and beneficial for His creation and more reflective of His infinite mercy and generosity towards them than if He had explicitly stipulated an Imam for them. Furthermore, that implicitness should not lead us to discard the significance of the Imamate simply because of the confusion and dispute that may have risen because of that implicit

---

246 This is certainly neither the one allegedly ascribed to Ibn Hanbal on the Prophet’s implicit indication to the Imamate of Abü Bakr (see Abū Ya‘lā al-Farrā’, Nusūs al-Fikr al-Siyāsi al-Islāmi, edited by Y. Ibash, (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘a, 1966) p. 196 nor the one circulated by Zaydi Shiites on the Imamate of Ālī.

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

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

The obligation to set up an Imām is therefore fundamental and follows as a direct corollary from God's sending prophets. The Imām should therefore act in resemblance to God, and his duty should assume that role God had asked his messengers to exercise.249 Thus he elaborates the doctrine that Imāms are the khulafā‘ (immediate successors) of prophets250, in the permanent vital role - played by them all - of re-inforcing God's policy to His creation i.e., the policy of targhib and tarhib251 implemented through punishment - (qiṣāṣ) or adjusting and balancing (ta‘dil).

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

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

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

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

248 Ibid., p. 288.
250 al-Jāḥīz, ‘Risāla fi al-Jawābāt’, Rasā’il, 4: 302
251 Ibid., see also ‘Maqālat al-Zaydiyya’ and ‘Risāla fi Ḥujaj al-Nubuwwa’.
predicament which we have described. This would be the cause for suspension of law, and bringing about corruption.253

This text reflects an explicit commandment by revelation. However, Revelation was only definitely explicit in making clear the obligation to avoid corruption, and maintain justice by implementing laws and calling men to use their reason to bring about their welfare. The call for establishing the Imāmat has been kept implicit as the call for enjoining good and avoiding evil has been fully and explicitly elaborated. The call for Imāmat has therefore taken the way of stressing the benefits of implementing God’s laws that obviously could not be implemented or observed without the existence of an Imām. We shall see al-Jāhiz elaborating this point in K. al-2Uthmāniyya. We are to infer that God chose His commands to be explicit but left the one who should put them into practise implicit. al-Jāhiz’s explanation for this divine action goes as follows:

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

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

B. Doctrine of Ijmā’ (Consensus of opinion among believers)

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

253 'al-Jawābāt', Rasā‘il , 4: 287. This commandment by revelation can be easily substantiated from the Qur‘ān (Sūra 16, verse 90).
254 i.e., the bounty of Imāmate.
255 i.e., by avoiding leaving them unattended.
256 'al-Jawābāt', Rasā‘il , 4: 303-304.
politics had never been so systematically invoked and put forward before al-Jähiz's time: al-Jähiz therefore represents a sample of how one school of thought - one among several others - had felt the necessity of bringing history to the forefront and tried to re-interpret history with the aim of influencing the present and hopefully 'manufacturing or maintaining' the future.

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

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

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

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

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

---

258 We should remember that al-Jähiz's time is known as the formative period of Muslim thinking. See Khafají, *al-Jähiz*, pp. 188-189, 243 and Pellat's *The Life & Works of al-Jähiz*, p. 22.
the obvious consent exhibited by the community of believers at the *Saqīfa* incident and those events following it.

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

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

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

---

261 Ibid., p. 30.
Therefore, *IJMA* is not only seen as guaranteeing the Qur'an and Sunna of the Prophet (i.e., in acknowledging them as permanent guides) but it is also concerned in determining the body to best interpret them influentially and correctly.\(^{262}\) Al-Jahiz agrees with the premise of this statement as long - however - as the interpretation is exercised by the Mu'tazilite school of thought i.e., by the Mutakallimun without whom the Umma, in al-Jahiz's view, would crumble (lawla al-Mutakallimun lahalaka al-`Awamm).\(^{263}\) Al-Jahiz is equally concerned with the infallibility of the Umma and eager about its well being, (maslaha) but he seems to have understood the infallibility as being possible only if such a privileged school of thought as his is exercising the *IJMA* and exclusively deciding on behalf of the Umma. (It may appear that al-Jahiz's concept of *IJMA* is that of the elite, not of the Umma, as Shafi'i recommended). While al-Jahiz aimed to restrict the *IJMA* to an elite (the Mu'tazila), al-Shafi'i's concept of *IJMA* was much broader and more democratic.\(^{264}\) In fact, al-Jahiz's notion of *IJMA* that he restricted to the Mu'tazila group may be compared to some Malikites who against the spirit of their master (i.e., Malik) tried to bestow on their *IJMA* a binding and authoritative dimension,\(^{265}\) an infallibility (*ISMA*), that is promised by God to be bestowed on the whole of the community, so "it would therefore be improper to turn the property of the entire community into a privilege of the mujtahidun" (i.e., of one locality or school).\(^{266}\) What matters to al-Shafi'i is the general consensus of all Muslims on essentials.\(^{267}\) This thesis according to Schacht meant breaking with the school of Medina or with any similar school that may claim to monopolize legal judgements by virtue of a prestigious or privileged local or ideological consensus.\(^{268}\) However, there are reports transmitted on behalf of the head of the Malikî school that deny any intention of monopolizing *IJMA* from Medina, as Malik himself rejected al-Manṣur's request.

\(^{262}\) Ibid., p. 114.

\(^{263}\) See al-Jahiz, K. al-Hayawän. 4:206.


\(^{265}\) See A. Ismä'il, al-Adilla, p. 363.

\(^{266}\) See Kamali, Ibid., p. 217.

\(^{267}\) Schacht, Ibid., p. 47.

\(^{268}\) Ibid., p. 58.

\(^{269}\) Ibid., pp. 30,61.
to impose his *Muwatta*\textsuperscript{270} which represented the practises and *fiqh* of the people of the Medina.

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

A. Necessity Of *Imāma* By Reason:

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

The welfare of the people could be achieved without the existence of an Imām, provided that they abstain from mischief amongst themselves and cooperate together in meeting their external enemy i.e., they should act justly and cooperate to implement the revealed legal punishments (*hadd*) freely i.e., without the presence of an Imām ... Absence of the Imām and rulers is good as it encourages capable members of the community to be self-sufficient in matters of protection and defence\textsuperscript{271}, as is the case when the public and anarchists rose in protest when the prestige of the Sultan waned, but were nevertheless suppressed by those virtuous men who acted morally when the forces of the authority were absent.\textsuperscript{272}

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

B. Human Nature:

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


\textsuperscript{271} 'al-Jawābat’, *Rasā́l*, 4: 290, 286-287, 289.

\textsuperscript{272} Ibid., 4: 289.

\textsuperscript{273} 'al-Jawābat’, *Rasā́l*, 4: 287.
pleasure and flee from an imminent danger, or something unpleasant, while attempting to evade the enforcement of deserved penalties."274

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

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

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

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

---

274 Ibid. This point is common in al-Jähiz's works, often mentioned in the context of discarding the possibility that God has left man to this fatal nature; see Ibid., 4: 302.
275 'al-Jawâbât', Rasâ'il, 4: 299 (The text is somehow corrupt).
276 al-Jähiz's critique of the Epicurean moral philosophy reads: "And what is more fatal than a nature which is eventually destructive and a desire which causes oppression, and a man who
possible task of adjusting man's conduct and keeping his passionate nature under check. So despite this nature, man could exercise *Taklif* but only in the presence of a powerful ruler, entrusted with the duty of guiding them from being driven by the short-term effect of actions and making them aware of the long term effects and benefits. 277

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

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

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

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

277 See 'al-Jawābbat,' Rasā'il, 4: 302-303.
278 'al-Jawābbat', Ibid., 4: 300.
The significance of Qisäs at the individual level is described by al-Jähiz in the following psychological analysis:

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

In another passage al-Jähiz beautifully describes the mechanism of fear-of qisäs within the soul of the mukallaf as follows:

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

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

III. Quality of the Imām:

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

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

279 'al-Jawābāt', Rasā'il, 4: 299-301.
280 Ibid., 4: 302.
281 Ibid., 4: 305-306. Note that al-Jähiz here categorically refuses to accept for the Imāmate, one who is less excellent (mafdūl).
al-Jähiz’s insistence on the intellectual precedence of the Imäm is remarkable, for if the leader does not enjoy that intellectual power that can check his own instincts, he will be less able to check his subjects’ instincts as well. Furthermore, al-Jähiz seems to be holding the view that the chosen Imäm should be elected from a specific tribe i.e., Quraysh in light of a Prophetic tradition that he incorporated in his work for that purpose, reading: ‘al-A’immat min Quraysh’.

Unfortunately, al-Jähiz’s analysis of this point is not extant, as one may have expected from his introductory note on those who did not mind choosing the Imäm from any social group within the Arabs or even from within the non-Arabs (‘Ajam) and clients (mawāli) as the Khārijites had maintained.  

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

see ‘al-Jawābät’, Rasā’il, 4: 285 & 293. We should recall here al-Dhahabi’s refutation of the authenticity of Umar’s statement in which he favoured Sālim, a client of Abū Ḥudhayfa, to succeed him. Even Ibn Khuldūn (al-Muqaddima, p. 153) maintains that ‘Umar’s statement could not be taken as a guide, and compares it with the Prophetic tradition that says: “Obey
IV. Unity of the Caliphal post as conducive to the solidarity and unity of the *Umma*

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

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

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

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

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

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

even if you were ruled by an Abyssinian", which he understands metaphorically as indicating the necessity to obey phrased in an exaggerated manner, rather than allowing the giving of leadership to a non-Qurayshite.
period without continuous competitions, jealousy, rivalries and wars?"  

Although al-Jāḥīz does not name the sect which had adopted a multiplicity of Imāms, the same scholar benefits from al-Shahrastānī's mention of the fact that it was the Zaydites who accepted the simultaneous existence of two Imāms or governors in two different places on condition that each one had the qualities cherished by the Zaydites, whereby the Muslims must submit to each one of them.  

al-Jāḥīz thus concludes:

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

V. Establishment of the Imām

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

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

---

285 Hassan Yehyā Mohamed, 'La Théorie de l'Imāmat chez Ġāḥīz', p. 47.
provided, and shall always provide as long as the community exerts the objective effort to nominate and choose the most excellent "as long as they will want him" (Irādatihim lahu) and rush to his side (qaṣdihim ilayhi).

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

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

3. Critique of Work Cited

Historical relevance and Political Significance

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

288 Referred to as "tagṣir" by Qāṭi `Abd al-Jabbār, al-Mughni, 1: 50.
289 'al-Jawābät', Rasā'il, 4: 303-304.
290 This description was first suggested by T. al-Ḥājiri, in al-Jāhiz, Hayātuhu wa Āṯārūhu, p. 360.
oneness, and his reference to the ideal Imam may be seen as a clever reminder by al-Jähiz to avoid the chaotic situation that prevailed in the 'Abbāsid community when more than one Imam was recognized i.e., be it al-Ma'mūn's brother, al-Amin, or his uncle, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdi who is said to have successfully competed with his nephew al-Ma'mūn for the post of caliph for two years. 291 al-Jähiz's concern for the unity of the post could also be accounted for - historically - as being directed against the separatistic movements already appearing in North Africa and Spain. 292

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

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

al-Jähiz's own testimony 294 to the good effect his political works had had on al-Ma'mūn himself runs as follows:

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

291 See al-Tabari, in his Annals of the year.
295 Ibid.
Although the opinions of al-Ma'mün on al-Jähiz's works on Imâma have been questioned296 by later historians, this need not disprove the hypothesis suggested above by Häjiri and Pellat that al-Jähiz was an ʿAbbâsid necessity, their adviser and apologist.

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

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

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

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

297 al-Ḥājirī, op.cit., p. 360.
As far as this treatise is concerned, we can definitely conclude that there is no room, yet, for such caliphal decisions here, and so this work may reflect the classical role of Imām played by al-Ma'mün, as propagated recently by al-Shāfi`i who was doing his best to propagate the view that "the caliph was a mere executor of the law, chosen by the community, and that the ultimate arbiter (of the law of God) was the consensus of the entire community." 298

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

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

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

299 Ibid., p. 82.
the Imām as proposed by Shāfi‘ī. Only when he assumes the role of caring for their spiritual balance, something almost absent in this work, can we say that he is leaving al-Shāfi‘ī's model for that of the Mu'tazili-Shī'ite model where the Imām assumes exclusive responsibility (with the elite, without the 'Āmma) to cater for the spiritual affairs of his subjects. This confirms the chronological estimation of the period in which al-Jāhiz wrote this work, where the "basic" role of the Imām300 was prior to the spiritual role. Historians do confirm that the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn did happen before al-Ma'mūn had the chance to exercise his role as the spiritual guide of the Umma, in what was known as the inquisition (Mihna). Hence the absence of the spiritual role of the Imām in Responsa is justified and understandable.

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

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

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

1. Preface

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

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

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

I. The Militant Zaydites:

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

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

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

302 Kenendy, op.cit., p. 152.
This Zaydi revolt was soon crushed, and Muḥammad was taken to al-
Maʾmūn’s court in Marw. The Kūfan revolt had its offshoot in Makka303 but was
easily suppressed, and “many of the leading ʿAlids were taken into captivity
to Marw. It was one of these leaders, ʿAli b. Mūsā, who was chosen by Maʾmūn to be
his heir.”304

II. Reappearance of the ‘Mahdi’

A. Among Umayyads:

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

---

303 led by ʿAli al-ʾRiḍā’s uncle, Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Ṭalibī brother of Mūsā al-Kāzīm who
claimed to be the Mahdi. See Madelung, ‘New Documents’, p. 337.
304 Kenendy, op. cit., p. 211. According to the Twelver Shiʿites (Ithnaʾashariyya), this view is
rejected as they do not agree that ʿAli al-ʾRiḍā took part in the revolt.
305 A notion current during the time of al-Amin, when it was circulated as a true Ḥadīth
expecting the appearance of the Sufyānid Mahdi, after the outbreak of a quarrel within
ʿAbbāsid circles, reading “the rule of the Banū al-ʾAbbās will disintegrate in 197 or 199
and the Mahdi will rise in 200”. F. ʿOmar suggests in al-ʿAbbāsiyyūn al-Awāʾil that such a notion
was first current in 64 A.H. (687 A.D.) among the masses who did not like transfer of power
to the Marwānid branch of the Umayyads. It reappeared towards the end of the Umayyad
rule and in the early ʿAbbāsid period (p. 133), under al-Manṣūr (p. 148), al-Rashid, al-Amin,
and even al-Maʾmūn’s and al-Muʿtaṣīm’s reign; (Ibid.), all hoping for the return of the
Sufyānī that would relieve the Syrians from the oppression of the ʿAbbāsīds. See F. ʿOmar,
Central Islamic Lands, ed. P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis (Cambridge:
307 Madelung, op. cit., p. 336. No wonder that al-ʾJāḥīz attracted caliphal recognition by al-
Maʾmūn himself. Recent scholars have seen al-ʾJāḥīz as “an apologist for al-Maʾmūn” see
We shall soon see how al-Maʾmūn’s understanding of the politico-religious significance of
Ḥāshim is perfectly echoed in the works of al-ʾJāḥīz.
B. Among Ṭālibites

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

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

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

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

---

308 In 199 and 200, by Abū al-Sarāyā and Muḥammad al-Dibāj, (the Mahdi) see Ibid., p. 337.
309 Madelung, op.cit., p. 345.
310 Ibid., p. 336, f.n. 22.
311 Ibid., p. 346.
Below we shall expound the logical consequences of both of these views, and try to describe the various interpretations underlying Ma'mün's act of nominating a non-Abbāsid figure to rule after him.

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

A. Some Arab historians

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

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

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

---

312 Ibn Aʿtham, al-Futūḥ, vol. 8: 296 (as cited by Madelung)
313 Ibid., pp. 308, 316
314 Ibid., p.324.
315 Ibid.
316 Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 8: 554.
al-Ma'mūn was not only upset by his brother's death but equally saddened at the sudden death of his favourite candidate. The remarkable thing is that al-Ma'mūn is reported to have maintained this 'Alid sentiment and just ten years later, in 211/826 he officially dissociated himself, and instructed people to do likewise - in what may be regarded as a political Miḥna - from acknowledging Muʿāwiya as having any merit, or even giving him any higher status than that of the Companions of the Prophet. In 212/827, al-Ma'mūn is also said to have openly proclaimed ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib as being the best (al-afdāl) after the Prophet.

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

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

---

317 Ibid., p. 618.
318 Ṭabari, Tāriskh., 8: 649.
This view of al-Ma'mūn’s motivation is taken by Gabrieli and Madelung, with the latter assuming certain differences as to the nature and character of al-Ma'mūn.

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


Ibn Bābūya's ʿUyūn al-Akhbār and al-Majlisi's Biḥār al-Anwār may be seen as elevating the non-opportunistic view of al-Ma'mūn's pro-ʿAlid policy to its maximum logical consequences. First, in Ibn Bābūya's ʿUyūn, we are informed of a letter signed by al-Ma'mūn himself and his heir-apparent, striving to initiate and perpetuate a revolutionary attitude within the ʿAbbāsid block vis-a-vis their Hashimite cousins, the Shiʿites, by nominating one from among the non-ʿAbbāsids as heir-apparent.

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

---

³²⁰ See El.², S.v. "Faḍl b. Sahl".
³²¹ Madelung, 'New Documents' pp. 341-343.
³²² Ibid.
I think Madelung's interpretation of al-Ma'mün's motivation, while acknowledging its sincere basis, is almost ridiculing the caliph's grand concern for the institution of the caliphate, and his genuine courageous endeavour to maintain it under the headship of the fittest, *al-afdal*, (the most meritorious). A caliph like Ma'mün, noted for his support for free thought would not - in my opinion - be solely motivated by a *Hadith* that was obviously concocted and not authentic. In other words, it is difficult to accept al-Ma'mün's plans and concern for the future of the caliphate as being determined by the prediction of an alleged *Hadith* that the world was to come to an end during his reign.323

**D. Sourdel** presents the following non-opportunistic view of al-Ma'mün's policy:

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

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

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

---

324 This has been documented in al-Jawābāt (*Responsa*) and will also be seen in 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', and in K. al-ʿUthmāniyya.
325 Sourdel, "The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate" in *Cambridge History of Islam*, p. 121.
charismatic community. Watt describes these 'ulama' as the bearers of the wisdom of the community, as the constitutional block in contrast to the former autocratic block.

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

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

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

328 Ibid.
329 Ibid., p. 176
330 Ibid., p. 177.
331 Ibid., quoting Sourdel's article 'La Politique Religieuse'
332 Ibid., p. 179.
But such an analysis makes one wonder whether al-Ma'mūn was a puppet-ruler in the hands of the autocratic secretaries and Mu'tazilites or was he dictating his terms to both. Furthermore, if the Zaydites—during al-Ma'mūn's time—had not yet adopted the doctrine of hereditary succession among 'Alids as conducive to the post of Imāmate (as confirmed by al-Jāhiz himself in 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya'), al-Ma'mūn's policy remains perplexing: was his longing for the "afdal" out of pure religious motives, one that transcended the rigidity of the hereditary succession (stressed by the Rāfidites and Persian or like-minded groups) or one that was wittingly forwarded by al-Ma'mūn (in describing ʿAli al-Riḍā as the afdal) without intending that ʿAli al-Riḍā should be followed by his ʿAlid descendants? Thus, the subtleness lies in aiming at achieving, once more, a dramatical realignment of the historical relations between Abū Bakr and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalib, this time applied to his person and ʿAlī al-Riḍā, thus suggesting that his rule was authentic as it had a historical precedence. ʿAlī al-Riḍā was more meritorious than himself, but nevertheless the former need not really aspire to meet the political consequences of that faḍl simply because his grand grand predecessor (ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalib) had not questioned the political rights of Abū Bakr during the rule of Abū Bakr (i.e., ʿAlī did not knock him out of the political scene). As such, the nomination of ʿAlī al-Riḍā was a clever manoeuvre that started and finished in itself, made its effect and pleased one portion of the Zaydites who happened to give al-Ma'mūn all the conditions and elements for his manoeuvre to succeed, such as respect for Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, respect for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalib, the doctrine of the afdal, and the absence of the element of hereditary succession of the ʿAlids. Despite the above, the evidence for the good intentions of al-Ma'mūn towards his cousins cannot be completely overruled and remains a plausible explanation of al-Ma'mūn's pro-ʿAlid policy. He may have had real sympathetic sentiments for the ʿAlids, and by acknowledging one of them as being afdal from the house of the Prophet, he appears as an objective ruler.

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

---

333 As Watt maintains, Ibid., pp. 165-166.
IV. An opportunistic view of al-Ma'mūn's act of designating ʿAlī al-Riḍā:

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

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

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

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

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

335 See Madelung, "New Documents", p. 337, f.n. 25.
337 Kennedy, Early ʿAbbāsid Caliphate, p. 158. This is Sourdel's opinion.
338 Ibid. The opinion among Shiʿītes was not unified, as there were the quietists, represented by followers of al-Ṣādiq, who developed the view that the Imam should be a religious leader,
shown to be so worried about securing peace in the site of the previous Abbāsīd capital that he eventually took this reconciliatory step for that purpose: "In order to achieve peace in Iraq, he (al-Ma'mūn), had been forced to sacrifice his chief adviser, Faḍl b. Sahl and two of his main policies: the rule of the empire from Marw, and the adoption of an Alīd heir (both of which did not please the Irāqīs)." Kennedy, however, regards al-Ma'mūn's designation as looking to the future, the interests of the Abbāsīds. This act of recognition of Alī al-Riḍā did not necessarily imply recognition of the hereditary right of the family of the Prophet; Alīds and Abbāsīds were both Ḥāshimites and should work together to lead the community. Here al-Ma'mūn is seen acting under the influence of the Persian scheme of his vizier, al-Faḍl b. Sahl, as he reflected that influence by showing "interest in the religious aspects of his office when he had proclaimed himself as Imām."

Furthermore, his choice of Alī-al-Riḍā was significant as he happened to be the most quietist among the Alīds who participated in the revolts of 199 and 200 respectively.

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

The installation of al-Riḍā was in reality a political step arranged by the Persian vizier al-Faḍl b. Sahl and associated with other policies aimed at consolidating his Persian support and harming the interests of his Arab opposition in Baghdad. This can be concluded from the points mentioned below: Firstly, the fact that al-Ma'mūn continued to reside in Merv caused complaints among the military and administrative groups in Iraq, who had been the courtiers of al-Amin (193-198/808-814) and who then had to struggle for their economic and regional interests against the Persian vizier of al-Ma'mūn, al-Faḍl b. Sahl, and his brother . . . with the encouragement of his vizier, al-Ma'mūn installed al-Riḍā as his successor to the caliphate in order to divide the rebels by gaining the support of al-Riḍā's adherents who need not necessarily encourage his supporters to overthrow the existing regime (Ibid., pp. 200-201). One of Ja'far's main contributions was in differentiating between caliphate and Imāmāte, thus allowing an Alīd Imām and his Shi'ī followers to live in peace in a Sunni society (Ibid., p. 199). The other group was a militant one, represented by followers of "the Zaydī principle of khurūj, that anyone who was prepared to take military action to assert the rights of the family (of the Prophet) was entitled to leadership."
and those who were hoping for the appearance of an inspired 6Alid leader. Thirdly, by installing al-Riḍā as his successor, al-Ma'mūn succeeded in splitting the rebels by gaining the support of al-Riḍā's brothers, who accepted the conciliation of al-Ma'mūn and mentioned his name in the Khutba along with the name of al-Riḍā.344

C. Crone and Hinds see al-Ma'mūn's act of designating 6Ali al-Riḍā as his successor along very firmly opportunistic lines. At a time when al-Ma'mūn felt the possibility of losing his religious authority to the 6ulama, it was necessary for al-Ma'mūn to react against such a threat. In other words, there were a struggle over who should be entrusted with religious authority:

On the face of it al-Ma'mūn sought his resources for a restoration of caliphal authority in Shi'ism, first by designating the eighth Imam of the Imāmi Shi'ites as his successor and next by assuming for himself the prerogatives of this Imam, displaying the religious authority which he had won thereby in the institution of the Miḥna. Loss of legitimacy and loss of religious authority went hand in hand under the Umayyads and the 6Abbāsids alike; the designation of 6Ali al Riḍā might be a reaction primarily to the former, the institution of the miḥna primarily to the latter.346

Commenting on Madelung's opinion which sees al-Ma'mūn's measure as motivated by his worries on the Day of Judgement, Crone and Hinds add: "The letter (of al-Ma'mūn347) thus amounts to a restoration of the Umayyad concept of caliphate rather than to preparation for the end of the world." Furthermore, Crone and Hinds say that al-Ma'mūn's use of the title Imām is significant after a long official insistence on the titles Mahdi and Ḥādi. Imām is more suitable for the present time because al-Mahdi according to Sunni Islam stands for the redeemer at the end of time349, whereas the title Imām could now accommodate or attract the sympathies of the 6Alids who believed in the "Imām" without which the earth could not stay even for a second.350 It was natural then that he was addressed likewise to attract his moderate and radical opponents, or as Crone and Hinds say "to assume for himself the prerogatives of this Imām"351 (the Shi'i Imām who was designated as his successor).

---

344 Ibid., pp. 42-43.
345 See Crone, God's Caliph, p. 19.
346 Ibid., pp. 22, 94.
347 i.e., al-Ma'mūn's letter of designation of 6Ali al-Riḍā as his successor, see a translation of this letter in Crone and Hinds, God's Caliph, pp. 133-139.
348 Ibid., pp. 95-96.
349 Crone, God's caliph, p. 103.
350 Ibid.
351 Ibid., p. 94
D. T. el-Hibri

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

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

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

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

---

353 Against the classical view taken by Gabrieli, see E.I.2, S.v. "al-Amin".
354 Tayeb el-Hibri op.cit., p. 474.
355 Ibid., p. 463.
Another view on the opportunistic motives of al-Ma'mün's politico-religious policy is taken by F. 'Omar who says that it is very unlikely that al-Ma'mün really thought of transferring the caliphate after the difficulties incurred by him to have it. As 'Omar puts it:

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

V. Epilogue

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

357 F. 'Omar, al-Khîlafâ-al-'Abbâsîyya fi Ahd al-Fawdâ al-'Askariyya, (Baghdad: Dâr al-Muthanna, 1977.) pp. 31-34. The view is based on al-Qiftî's Târikh al-Hukamâ', Berlin edition pp. 221-222. The same position is taken by M. al-Jâbiri's Takwin al-'Aql al-`Arabi", pp. 227-230. However, al-Jâbiri's view of Ma'mûn's politics is taken from an ideological stand that presents al-Ma'mûn as a worried Sunni caliph who was very eager to silence or counteract the growing trends of Gnosticism and Shi'ite esotericism. (al-`Irân al-Shî'î).

358 al-Masûdi reports al-Ma'mûn's lamentation and distress at his brother's death by likening his sadness to that of 'Ali b. Abî Talib upon the murder of Uthmân. See Murûj al-Dhahab 4:298.

360 Ibid.
had neglected while he was in Merw, and so he decided to rehabilitate his sovereignty in Baghdad.\textsuperscript{361}

3. Analysis of doctrinal strands of Maqālat al-Zaydiyya

I. Support for the most meritorious Imām (al-afḍāl): while acknowledging the Zaydi concept of Mafḍūl

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

al-Jāḥiẓ first cleverly quotes the current sayings of one group of the Zaydi wing of Shi'ism,\textsuperscript{362} as regards the criteria for ascendancy for the caliphate, as the

\textsuperscript{361} Ibid., see pp. 166 and 162.

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

As regards the position held by the Fāṭimid descendants of ʿAlī concerning the hereditary right of the house of the Prophet as claimed earlier by Mukhtār and echoed in Imāmite and Shi'ite sources, Watt suggests that ʿAlī's grandson, ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn and the latter's son, Zayd b. ʿAlī, may not have held that the Imām must be a descendant of ʿAlī and Fāṭima, a condition that they would perfectly satisfy. Watt draws a distinction between Zayd's views and the distinctive body of doctrine forming the sect of Zaydiyya during the early ʿAbbāsid period which then adopted the hereditary view of Imāmate, Watt adds:"The assertion that Zayd restricted the Imamate to descendants of Fāṭima, may rather be the teaching of later Zaydites . . . it is not clear how far these later doctrines coincide with the views of Zayd himself." Watt, Formative, pp. 52, 165-166. "The assertion is probably an inference by later
title of the treatise suggests. Not even one of the conditions quoted refers to
prophetic descent, but nevertheless, ēAli b. Abi Ṭālib is presented as having deserved
the caliphate by virtue of superiorly fulfilling these meritorious conditions.

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

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

If the concept of Imāmāte of the mafdūl364 is one Zaydi facet, then the
other face of this Zaydi coin, the spirit underlying the concept of mafdūl, is that of

writers from the persons of the leaders of revolts labelled Zaydite. See Watt, 'Shi'ism
under the Umayyads', p. 169. Compare to Lambton's notice of this change in the Zaydiyya
outlook in State and Government in Medieval Islam, p. 28. and see also Hawting, First Dynasty
p.111, where he maintains that prior to the ēAbbāsid rule, Imāms were not restricted to
Fāṭimid descendants of ēAli but also extended to the Ḥanafīd descendants and even to the
descendants of ēAli's brother, Ja'far, all within the flexible concept of the Prophetic family,
which however, later became more rigid and was confined to the Fāṭimids or ēAbbāsids. See
also Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, p. 16, on the absence of hereditary descent
from Muhammad in early Shi'ite claims, and Watt, Formative, p. 55, and 'Shi'ism under the
Umayyads', p. 169 on the wide extension of charismata that prevailed before ēAbbāsids, to
cover the whole clan of Ḥāshim. It is interesting to note that al-Jāhiṣ's conception of the
Zaydiyya of his time (at least one prominent Zaydi group) matches the views presented (by
Watt and others) as to the unnecessariness of hereditary Prophetic descent as regards the
Imāmāte. See Rasā'il, ed. Ḥarūn Maqālat al-Zaydiyya wa al-Rāfīḍa, 4: 317, and for the
absence of nass. See al-`Uthmāniyya, p. 276.

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

364 Watt draws our attention to the fact that the phrase 'Imāmāte of the inferior (al-mafdūl) is
absent in al-Nawbakhtī's Firaq because it was a mocking way of referring to the Zaydi
recognition of Abū Bakr, used only by those opponents known as the 'neglectors' (ahl al-
ihmāl) who maintained that Prophet Muhammad made no designatory arrangements versus
religious maslaha. In other words, the Zaydis who first proposed the doctrine of the less meritorious, and accepted less excellent candidates than 6Ali b. Abi  Taliban, could only have done so in light of their great veneration for 6Ali’s religious zeal and genuine altruistic motives that made him withdraw in favour of Abû Bakr:

Well aware that with regard to public interest, his (6Ali’s) superiority over Abû Bakr would not compensate it if he were named caliph . . . (he avoided) the risk of seeing religion collapse, and endangering human lives ... therefore he preferred obscurity due to religious zeal and gave preference to future reward over immediate advantages.365

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

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

As to the nature of the specific Zaydi group, al-Jähiz is referring here to the Zaydi group which did not specify the hereditary 6Alid line to be among factors conducive to the Imāma. It is obscure, but luckily two sources do refer to this point. First, Kitāb al-Hūr al-6In of Nashwān. b. Sa6id al-Ilimiyya specifies the Butriyya and

the designators’ (āshū al-nas). Watt, Early Islam, p. 141. See al-Jähiz’s reference to the neglectors in al-Hayawān, 2: 269 and our analysis of Kitāb al-Hayawān


Dr. Howard suggests that by using the term hasab (family relations and genealogy) al-Jähiz is extending the criteria for the Imāmate to a totality of groups and not to one: i.e., the Zaydi view is put in an exaggerated manner to allow in the 6Abbāsids. In short, it extends to all Banū Ḥashim (6Abbāsids, Ṭalibids (Ja6farids and 6Alids). So this passage need not be taken literally as it opens the candidacy for everyone, but in history this flexible credibility was emphasized by the Ja6farid Ṭalibites, and perhaps al-Ma’mūn was acknowledging it among their Ṭalibite comrades (the Zaydites) in order to stretch the flexibility of Imāma to include the 6Abbāsids as well, in his constant effort to broaden the view that salvation of the Umma lies in the wider circle of Banū Ḥashim, (see Madelung, op.cit. p. 336). Certainly this was a courageous yet dangerous step by al-Ma’mūn, to be echoed by al-Jähiz in K.Fadl Ḥashim and to be elaborated one step further in K. al-6Uthmāniyya, from the broad circle of Ḥashim to the circle of Fadl proper (merit) , wherein al-Jähiz’s 6Uthmānites trespass on the circle of 6Alid and 6Abbāsid descent . Here, and on the basis of this Zaydi doctrine he is not diverting the caliphate for ever to the 6Alid family as he is keeping it open: The 2nd candidate may be 6Alid, but need not be necessarily so, he may be available from among the ‘afādī’best’ without having to relate genealogically to the Prophet. This has to wait until the formation of al-6Uthmāniyya, which resembles the Khārijite thesis of rejecting hasab.

Jaririyya from among the Zaydi block as basing the Imamate on Shūrā and not on Naṣṣ and commonly holding the Imamate of the afḍal while not rejecting the mafḍul. Second, from reviewing various sects of Zaydiyya, one notices that the Sulaymāniyya or Butriyya may have been related to al-Jāḥiz’s remark. First because Sulaymān acknowledged the Imamate of the less excellent (al-mafḍul), and because al-Butriyya (after al-Hasan b. Śāliḥ b. Ḥayy) did acknowledge the Imamate of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar and did not condemn ʿUthmān as infidel as Sulaymān had. So one may conclude that from these two sources (al-Ḥimyari, and ʿAbd al-Jabbār) that among the Zaydiyya sects, the Butriyya and Jaririyya (but not the Sulaymāniyya) may have held such non-hereditary views of Imāma, that attracted al-Jāḥiz’s attention. The Sulaymāniyya could have been a modified offshoot from Jaririyya, as we are told that Sulaymān was the son of Jarir.

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

However, bearing in mind the opportunistic view of al-Maʾmūn’s policy, al-Jāḥiz’s artistic elaboration of the Zaydi doctrine of the mafḍul is significant here as it implicitly suggests that during the era of designation - without contradicting the above premises of faḍl and afḍal - that ʿAlī al-Ridā and al-Maʾmūn should be seen in almost the same perspective as ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib had occupied with regard to Abū Bakr.

---

368 See al-Ḥūr al-ʾIn, pp. 150-152 and 155.
370 See al-Ḥūr, p. 155. For such reasons al-Jāḥiz is accused of cherishing Zaydi views, see al-Ḥayawān, 1: 7.
371 al-Ḥimyari, al-Ḥūr, p. 152.
The subtleness of such an analogy lies in the intended Jāḥiṣīan implication that although ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and his present descendant may be both seen as superior - in merit - to Abū Bakr and al-Maʿmūn respectively, as angels were superior to Adam, this Zaydi perspective need not violate the status quo simply as it had not been violated in the past, for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib did not - in spite of his superiority - question the validity of his predecessors, and this tolerance among the Shiʿites, is especially encouraged and wished to be held by their Zaydi wing, if not for the sake of preserving the caliphate under the ʿAbbāsid Maʿmūn, at least to make the Zaydis learn a lesson from history and exercise political tolerance until their candidate may come to rule in due course.

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

Had al-Maʿmūn thought ʿAlī al-RIDĀ was really better than himself he would not have nominated him as heir-apparent but would have given the throne to him. al-Maʿmūn's action of nomination does not alter Muʿtazili- Maʿmūnid belief in the best having the right to rule, and that same belief in the afdal also dictated on him to look around for the afdal after him. His search ended in finding ʿAlī al-RIDĀ as the best (after him) from the circle of Banū Ḥāshim. The act of nomination and al-Jāḥiṣī's reference to the Zaydi doctrine of al-Mafdūl may not have totally pleased all the Shiʿites, as they regarded their candidate as al-afdāl and demanded that he be caliph at once, but patience had to be exercised by them to achieve that.

Similarly, it can be argued that the obvious outcome of applying the doctrine of al-mafdūl to the caliph al-Maʿmūn and his heir-apparent, would not please al-Maʿmūn himself as he is viewed - from the Zaydi perspective - as the less
meritorious, which challenged his belief in himself as being the first best, thus threatening his legitimacy.

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

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

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

Among them are savage men and anarchist groups who were devoid of all knowledge: evil and cruel nomads or semi nomads. Once united they break up and then unite again. Thus in their agitation rioting proves inevitable. Their calm is not a sign of confidence; when they have money, they become tyrants. When they are poor they are stubborn. They have the custom of hating the leaders and the benefactors. They aspire for disgrace, rejoice in misfortune of others. They are glad to make ambushes against the Muslims... 

Ali, Abû Bakr, Umar, Abû Ubayda and the first of the Muhājirūn and Ansār saw that men were divided in categories. In Medina there were hypocrites who bit out of anger the ends of their fingers. There were like minded men who knew well the critical situation but were cautious and awaiting the right opportunity. This was realized at the same time when the apostasy (ridda) of some of the Arabs occurred in the neighbourhood of Medina, after they threatened to make it during the sickness of the Prophet. The situation was aggravated by the meeting of the Ansār and the Muhājirūn, and the suggestion by the former: "Let there be an Amir from amongst us and one from amongst you".

Ali then feared to make his intention to rule the people explicit, lest a spectator from those people we have described should stir more disorder because the hearts of the hypocrites, ahl al-Ridda and the disposition of al-Ansār were as we have narrated.

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

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

II A. Necessity of the post of Imam

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


101
reference to man's 'permanent' need for the messengers, Prophets and Imāms in view of his permanent lack of understanding, triumphant (passionate) nature, and limited intelligence or capacity to achieve what befits him now and in the hereafter. The other new element in this treatise explains the reason for having an Imām. It is mainly to have his subjects adjusted and raised to the acquired level of obedience, hence to actualize God's intended goal underlying the creation of this world, says al-Jāḥīz: 376

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

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

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

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

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

376 Pellat, Life and Works, Tr. by Hawke, p. 63 (This passage corresponds to 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', op. cit., pp. 318-321.)
moment of creation, man was constantly corrected, upgraded and Divinely raised to
the level of worship. The new element in this argument is God’s eternal concern for
His creation to properly worship Him. Given the above factors, which might impede
this Divine aim, it was optimal “to keep them (tabqiyatihim).”

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

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

It is here that al-Jähiz expresses his hierarchical view of the differences
between Prophets, messengers and Imâms. While all reflect God’s justice and

378 The text is not explicit here but the point is implied from the context: they have to be
preserved under Divine supervision, now entrusted to the Imâm. An alternative reading could
be that their benefit is “maintained” by “taswiyatihim” i.e., perfecting and normalising their
behaviour (by sending Prophets and Imâms) - Ibid., p. 319.
380 The difference between prophets and messengers is that (I) the former are those sent by God
as preachers and nadhir to their people, but are not the head of an Umma like the rasûl. (ii)
The rasûl are less numerous than prophets (iii) Rusul are law-givers and provided with a
book such as Adam, Nûh, Ibrâhîm, Mûsâ, ʿIsâ and Muḥammad. List of Prophets is longer
including, besides the majority of rasûl, Biblical or quasi-Biblical characters like Ibrâhîm,
Iṣâq, Yâqûb, Hârûn, Dâwûd, Sulaymân, Ayyûb, Dhu’l-Nûn. See The Shorter
provision, al-Jähiz remarkably distinguishes that the messenger is the best of men, then comes Prophets, then Imâms:

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

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

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

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

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

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

\(^{382}\) Ibid.
IV. Main strata of society: The Elite and the Public

al-Jähiz in this treatise narrates, on behalf of the Zaydis, a classical Greek division of society that he employs here to strengthen the notion of Imâma. The corruption and vices displayed by the public towards ʿAli seem to stress not only the Zaydi view which prevented ʿAli from stepping into the political scene, but also al-Jähiz’s view of the ʿāmma, as is evident in al-Jähiz’s other works.384

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

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

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

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

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

---

384 Such as Kitāb al ʿUhmāniyya.
385 Ibid., 4: 315, and "Istīḥqāq al-Imāma", Rasāʾil, 4: 210-211.
386 See for example al-Hayawān, 2: 101-102.
But was al-Jähiz Zaydi himself or was he trying to attract the Zaydis to the Mu‘tazili school?\(^{388}\) Pellat answers this question by reference to that fact that al-Jähiz differed from the Zaydis by categorically holding the Imamate for the most perfect man, \textit{al-afdal}, i.e., "he shows himself on this point to be very demanding and does not accept theoretically the \textit{maf'dul} . . . ."\(^{389}\) However, having read al-Jähiz's own opinion above, it should be noted that Pellat's remark reflects al-Jähiz's position in the first treatise (\textit{Responsa/al-Jawäbät}) but not necessarily in the second (\textit{Maqälat al-Zaydiyya}) wherein his exposition of the Zaydi doctrine of \textit{Mafdül} is eloquently expressed. Does this reflect the influence of Zaydism on \textit{Ftizäl} or the influence of \textit{Ftizäl} (through al-Jähiz) on Zaydism, which essentially share with him a longing for the \textit{afdal}, (it is the best solution for both Mu‘tazilites and Zaydis) though for valid reasons, the less excellent is legitimised and accepted?

It should be noted that at no point in al-Jähiz’s presentation of the Zaydi doctrine of the Imamate of \textit{maf'dul} does al-Jähiz criticize it. Whether this means that he has modified his earlier doctrine of the necessity of the Imam being continuously \textit{al-afdal} is difficult to say. But one would have expected some criticism of the doctrine of \textit{the maf'dul} if he has not modified his position. Most fully stated, the doctrine of \textit{mafdul} is left without criticism. But why? If al-Jähiz is for \textit{afdal} why does he not criticize it? Either al-Jähiz changed his mind, or he was reflecting how al-Ma‘mūn was under the influence of Zaydi circles or ideas. By not criticizing, he is being a propagandist for their doctrine, yet he has not bluntly stated an acceptance. Pellat says al-Jähiz never ‘theoretically accepts’ \textit{mafdul} but we have seen the contrary. What are the implications of that?

If Zaydism was exerting its influence on \textit{Ftizäl} al-Jähiz could be seen to have ostensibly accepted the doctrine of the less excellent - at least theoretically - as if he had implicitly put himself in the position of the Zaydites and tactfully viewed his \textit{c}Abbāsid Imam as less excellent than the Zaydi/Shi‘ī Imam (i.e. \textit{c}Ali al-Riḍā) who is the \textit{afdal}. Thus the political reasons to satisfy the Zaydis may have been behind quoting their view of the \textit{mafdul}. As regards the particular doctrine of \textit{hasab} of the group of Zaydis favoured by al-Jähiz, however, we find in it an invitation to the Zaydis (and to Shi‘ites at large) to exercise tolerance towards the \textit{c}Abbāsid Imam; thus insinuating that if the \textit{c}Abbāsid Imam could rank next to the \textit{c}Alid Imam, exactly

\(^{388}\) See Pellat, 'L'Imamät dans le doctrine de Ġähiz', p. 51.
\(^{389}\) Ibid.

106
as Abū Bakr - in the opinion of Zaydis - ranked next to ʿAli b. Abī Tālib, the message sent to the Shiʿites is that the ʿAbbāsids have an equal access to the Imāma. No wonder al-Jāḥiz was categorized as a Zaydi scholar, but al-Jāḥiz’s quotation of the Zaydi concept of al-mafḍūl need not be literally accepted as reflecting a change or diversion from his original thesis of al-afḍal. As we have implied above, al-Jāḥiz could have put forward the Zaydi concept without holding its implication, i.e., it could have been one tricky way of infiltrating the Zaydi/Shiʿite circles by ‘theoretically’ but not ‘really’ accepting the logical and practical consequences of the mafḍūl, which would have obviously meant putting (al-afḍal) ʿAli al-Riḍā in the very place of the ʿAbbāsid caliph himself (al-mafḍūl) and not his heir-apparent . . . but since nothing of the sort was happening, one may see this treatise as having been written during the peak of ʿAbbāsid-Zaydi relationship when certain Zaydi axioms were used and played with, not for what they negatively implied, but for the positive political values they offered to the ʿAbbāsids. Here the expectation from the axiom of merit and negation of hasab is either to create a schism within the Shiʿites via the Zaydi channel, or probably to turn the political rules of the game upside down and show how the ʿAbbāsid caliph himself was probably now setting an example before all the Umma that descent does not matter at all in the Imāmate, and consequently all Hāshimites are equal candidates to that post thus diminishing the growing super charisma of one Hāshimite block over the other but not reaching the ideal example of the Khārijites who removed the Imām from that Qurashite genetic pool altogether and freed him from any genealogical requirements.

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

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

---

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

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

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

(i) in echoing the ʿAlīd-ʿAbbāsid proximity as he praised the Zaydi stand concerning ʿImāmat al-mafdūl in view of ʿAlī's notion of ʿaṣlāḥa of the ʿUmma.

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

(iii) in stressing the need for an Imām (from the point of securing physical and spiritual salvation\(^{392}\) of the ʿUmma). Thus a shift from the classical image of the Imām to that of one who is securing the spiritual-no less than the physical-salvation of the ʿUmma is achieved. The Imām here is essentially enjoying the extra dimension of "providing guidance", in his capacity of "instructing them"; thus the phraseology of al-Jāḥīz "instruction of Imāms" is justified\(^{393}\) as the ʿUmma is before the Imām in the very humble status of the student before the instructor.

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

\(^{392}\) Ibid., 4: 320-322.  
\(^{393}\) Ibid., pp. 320,322.
caliphate and value of the Imām: The resemblance between al-Jāḥīz's words (which are used to describe the Zaydī version of events) and those of al-Ma'mūn is striking:

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

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

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

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

---

394 Crone, God's Caliph, p. 96.
395 Ibid.
396 Ibid.
397 See 'Maqālat al-Zaydiyya', Rasā'il, 4: 207, 311.
This book is said by Pellat to have been written before 232 A.H.399, i.e., before the coming of al-Mutawakkil and the change of State policy from Mu'tazilism to Sunnism.

This work may reflect an independent Mu'tazili endeavour to criticize the theses of those Shi'ite groups that believed in gnosticism (Ilhâm). al-Jähiz's attempt to attack such a road to knowledge (a feature that was exclusively associated with the infallible Imam and with the Sufi movement) should be understood in the same way and context that would later drive al-Jähiz to write Kitāb al-Tarbī' where we will find al-Jähiz ridiculing Ilhâm and stressing the role of reason because the former ideology was threatening the basis of the 'Abbāsid regime. Judging from Dr. al-A'sam's thesis on the ex-Mu'tazilite figure of Ibn al-Riwandi, who is said to have exchanged Fitnâl for Shi'ism, the content of K. al-Ma'rifah seems identical to the non-extant "K. al-Ilham" which was judged by Ibn al-Riwandi to be a Jähizian work that attacked Shi'ism. The two Jähizian works specified by Ibn-al-Riwandi as directed by al-Jähiz against Shi'ism are K. al-Ilham and K. al-`Abbâsiyya.400

As to the date of K. al-Masâ'il wa-al-Jawâbât fī al-Maūrifah, Pellat suggests that it was written before 232 A.H. External evidence to back this assumption can be easily detected from al-Jähiz's 401'Uthmâniyya (if al-'Uthmâniyya as I propose was completed and given to al-Ma'mün as we shall see below) wherein al-Jähiz alludes to this work under 'Kitāb al-Maūrifah', as being completed before K. al-'Uthmâniyya,401 and as such this work is symbolic of the flexible era of al-Ma'mûn that allowed for

---

399 See Pellat, 'Nouvel Essai d'inventaire de L'oeuvre Jähizienne', Arabica, XXXI, 1984 pp. 141, and pp. 147-148. The work on Maūrifah however has been classified by Pellat under four titles 'Kitāb al-Maūrifah', K. al-Jawâbât fī al-Maūrifah', K. Masâ'il Kitāb al-Maūrifah', and K. al-Masâ'il; nevertheless we only have access to the first one, which has been given the name 'Kitāb al-Masâ'il wa al-Jawâbât fī al-Maūrifah', see Hārūn, Rasâ'il al-Jähiz, IV: 47-65. al-Jähiz has alluded to this work in his Kitāb al-'Uthmâniyya, p. 261.


401 See al-'Uthmâniyya, p. 261.
such theological debates that obviously were not devoid of a contemporary political connotation i.e., the claims raised by the Shi'ite theologians on the superior faculties of ʿAli b. Abi Ṭālib in comparison to the other Companions of the Prophet. The main theme of this work that concerns us here has been signalled by Pellat, as he says:

Kitāb al-Masāʾil wa ʿl-Jawābāt fī al-Maʿrifa (Questions and Answers on the Subject of Knowledge) must have been an account of the teachings of the different Muʿtazili schools on the knowledge of God, the only surviving fragment of which suggests that al-Jāhiz believed that God can only be known by a process of [acquired] ratiocination by Iktisāb and not by [necessary] intuition, (Idtīrār) which implies that ʿAli b. Abi Ṭālib could not have had an innate knowledge of God, and could not therefore be seen as having had an intrinsically better claim than other Muslim converts to the Imamate after the Prophet's death.

al-Jāhiz’s passage that seems relevant here reads:

In reply to those who ask whether knowledge is acquired or innate, I say that man knows God only through His messengers, not through concepts such as motion and stillness, union and separation . . . If they ask me: Was their recognition of the truthfulness of the messengers by acquisition (Iktisāb) or by a priori knowledge (Idtīrār) they might say: But how did he see, understand and experience the world, if he came upon the Prophet's signs (or the Prophet and his signs forced themselves on him) when he was an innocent child or a young man - for a man is still an infant until he reaches the age of reason? Was it by means of a direct and sudden comprehension [i.e., Ilḥām]? In which of the two cases had he seen, understood and experienced the world? Was it when he was an innocent child . . . or after growing up and coming into possession of all his faculties?

The above question is quite significant: in raising the issue as to how do innate knowledge and acquired knowledge relate, and which precedes the other or whether they co-exist? In fact, al-Jāhiz has answered his addressee's quest by acknowledging acquisition and innateness (Iktisāb and obvious compelling or proofless apriori knowledge, Idtīrār). In another passage al-Jāhiz suggests that real appreciation of the significance of the Prophet and his signs - which takes the form of spontaneous submission and acceptance - could only follow the necessary

402 I.e. Knowing about Him, by use of reason.
404 Innateness is not the right translation here, the word necessity Idtīrār is better. See "K. al-Masāʾil wa ʿl-Jawābāt fī al-Maʿrifa ", Rasāʾil, 4: 60, where al-Jāhiz is referring to an overwhelming and incumbent acceptance of mature people witnessing the signs of Prophets.
developmental stage of adulthood. Only after the person has been properly trained to distinguish the realities of life and acquire the capacity to differentiate the possible from the impossible, is he capable of appreciating the truth and impact of what has been forwarded by Messengers and Prophets, whether he witnessed them personally, by ‘Iyān or only heard of them, by true burhān and strong evidence (khabar). For those who witness the demonstrated miracles, once the common sense of the mukallaf is sufficiently developed, (by Iktisāb), he is most probably expected to exhibit an a priori acceptance, a commonsensical submission to the Prophet's demonstrated miracles, by a process of Iḍīrār.406 The idea of Iḍīrār has often been described as a typical Jāhizian doctrine of epistemology.407 When the mental faculties of man have been fully developed, he is then ready to recognize the presence of God, "This is the time when God [through a true messenger], puts comforting words in his ears (khabar) and/or compelling signs before his eyes"408 and his knowledge is described as "acquired", but his acceptance of it - however - is "innately" undertaken; i.e., "when he sees one of God's messengers bringing the dead back to life, healing lepers or men blind from birth, or cleaving the waves of the sea, he needs not to take thought or be urged on or be shown proofs or [further] experiences, he has already passed that stage, and his understanding is perfect."409

This (necessary acceptance) i.e., innateness cannot, however, be assumed to have had an exclusive precedence over rational cognition: it can only follow it; it cannot replace it or assume its role; as al-Jāhīz puts it:

The onlooker is convinced by religious evidence (and can emit such an intuitive reflex of acceptance) only if he already has experience of the world and is acquainted with its ways and laws: if he had not enough experience to recognize the limitations of human devices and contrivances to distinguish the possible from the impossible and tell what can happen by accident what cannot, it [the signs and miracles] would mean nothing to him.410

In this sense, ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib could not be accepted by the Başrite Muʿtazilite figure of al-Jāhīz, to have been enjoying a 'superhuman' innate path to religious truth, as al-Jāhīz himself admits this case to be' extraordinary and against

407 i.e., that al-Maʿārif dararāt Tibā`, See Qādî ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Sharh al-Usūl al-Khamṣa (Cairo: Maktabat Wahha, 1965) pp. 54-55 where al-Jāhīz's claim that knowledge [of] God is by Iḍīrār is criticized, and ʿAbd al-Jabbār says it is possible by Iṣīdīlāl.
408 Pellat, op. cit., p. 37.
409 Ibid. This reminds one of the stage of "ʿAyn al-Yaqīn", following the stage of "ʿilm al-Yaqīn".
410 Pellat, op. cit., p. 36.
This passage therefore marks a moment in al-Jähiz's thinking (to be immediately developed in al-‘Uthmāniyya) that aims to undermine the Shī‘īte image of ʿAlī, by paving the way for such a purpose as al-Jähiz demonstrated in his concept of acquired and *a priori* knowledge. As the latter can only be recognized/achieved by someone who has gained the acquired ability to reason, it follows that no child - even if *Idṭīrār* is potentially there - can *a priori* accept religious truth and distinguish between a true prophet and a false one simply because he has not acquired enough knowledge of the world, i.e., he has not gained enough 'acquired' knowledge conducive to the state of compulsory intuitive acceptance (*Idṭīrār*).

---

411 Pellat., p. 36. It is inconceivable for al-Jähiz to expect a maturely intuitive reflex and necessary acceptance of religious truth to come before the subject has matured and gained experience, so as to make him distinguish the *hujja of the nabi* from the *hīla* (trick) of the *mutanabbi* (see Rasā’il; 4:60, 62) i.e., it is against human nature to expect or believe that a child of nine had been endowed with such a dimension, as early as that age.
Below is an outline of the main points to be discussed in our analysis of K. al-
Uthmāniyya:

1. Preface:
   I- Meanings of the Term ʿUthmāni.
   II- al-Jāḥiz’s brand of ʿUthmānism.
   III- Setting and Time of composition.
   V- My opinion (203-212 A.H.) [External (al-Ṭabarî, Yāqūt) + contextual
evidences].

2. Analysis:
   I- Issue of Tafdil.
   II- Position of al-ʿUthmāniyya contrasted to that of al-Jāḥiz.
   III- al-Jāḥiz’s approach to the caliph and method in treating the issue
   IV- al-ʿUthmāniyya’s basis for Abū Bakr’s Imamate:
      A. Era of Prophet:
         (1) Prophetic approval.
         (2) Qur'anic reference.
         (3) Further Qur’anic reference.
      B. Era of Ṣaḥāba.
   V- ʿUthmāni defence of Abū Bakr’s Imamate by refuting:
      A. ʿRāfīḍa’s interpretations of Abū Bakr’s speeches
      B. ʿRāfīḍa’s claims of opposition fronts against Abū Bakr:
         Salmān, Khalīl b. Saʿīd, Bilāl, Miqādād, ʿAmmār, Abū Dharr,
   VI- ʿUthmānī Critique of the ʿRāfīḍa’s arguments on ʿAlī’s:
      A- taqiyya.
      B- special ʿilm and Ilhām.
      C- caliphate:
         (i) designatory rights (nass; Qur’anic/Prophetic basis).
         (ii) opposition blocks met by ʿAlī.
   VII A- ʿUthmānī doctrine of Imamate:(based on merit not on descent).
      B- modes of choosing the Imam:
         i- popular acclamation.
         ii- ʿAhd (to ʿUmar).
iii- Shūrā (to ʿUthmān).
iv- Revolution (how are the ʿAbbāsids justified).

VIII. Significance of K. al-ʿUthmāniyya:
A- al-Jāḥiẓ's role.
B- Watt's view.
C- was al-Jāḥiẓ successful?

Kitāb al-ʿUthmāniyya

I. Meanings of the Term ʿUthmānī

Watt has rightly observed the different applications of the adjective ʿUthmānī in different periods. Although information on this little used term is scanty, he suggests that a study of this term is promising as it gives "further insight into the complex character of the general religious movement and the variety of political attitudes to be found in it." Out of the conflicting definitions of the term cited by different sources, I propose the following sketch to cater for the varieties that the term had assumed and been applied in different eras. The term ʿUthmāniyya has been applied in the following ways:

1 - Loyalists supportive of ʿUthmān's caliphate and the view that he legally got office.

412 There is no definition of the term in Shahristāni's Milal, and many other Muslim historiographers. Masʿūdi's and Ṭabarī's use of the term is contextual, i.e., needs to be inferred from the context. Watt seems to have touched this point in a fair yet not extensive manner, but Lammens has brilliantly traced the term in the historical and literary sources and furnished us with a good index to these sources. See H. Lammens, "Études Sur Le Règne du Calife Omaïyade Moʿawia Ier, Deuxième Série, Le Parti des ʿOtanîya et des Moʿtazîla", Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale, (Beirut: Université Saint Joseph, 1907) pp. 1-17. Of course, Lammens's suggestion that the ʿAbbāsid Muʿtazila are similar to those who politically withdrew from battles against ʿAlī or Muʿāwiya has some truth, yet we do not need to connect Muʿtazil to the days of ʿUthmān.

413 Watt, Formative, pp. 76-77. This conclusion will be verified below. See the following table illustrating the changing meanings of the term, especially of the time of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī and that of Muʿāwiya.

2 - repudiators of those who revolted against him and those who held he was unjustly killed, seeking to revenge his blood but not holding 'Ali responsible.

3 - Those who preferred 'Uthmân over 'Ali in merit, and ahead of him in faḍl, in opposition to the 'Alawi Shi'is who apply the same outlook to 'Ali in relation to 'Uthmân.

4- Rejectors of 'Ali's caliphate, including those:
   a  accusing him of a possible role in 'Uthmân's death.
   b  rallying around Mu'awiya who assumed the role of blood avenger of 'Uthmân. Hence those 'Uthmânis became Umawis, but not all 'Uthmânis were pro-Umayyad; Some 'Uthmânis were:
   c  not necessarily rallying around Mu'awiya, but supportive of 'Uthmân in Egypt.
   d  raising a demand for a Shūrā: (Talha, 'Ā'isha, al-Zubayr) i.e., by the upholders of the principle of the early caliphate i.e., the right of the families of the non-Hāshimi early Companions, now living in Medina.

The term 'Uthmân was applied to one that did not favour either Mu'awiya, (since he did not belong to the early Companions but was

415 See Madelung, E. L. 2 S.v., 'Imāma', Lammens describes these as protesters who could have formed the nucleus of the 'Uthmâniyya party. These protesters or loyalists to the martyred caliph (Shi'at 'Uthmân) included Ḥassān b. Thābit, Ka'b b. Mālik, al-Nu'mân b. Bashir, Sa'd b. Abi Waqqās, Ṭalḥa, Zubayr, and 'Ā'isha. Lammens refers for this to Ibn Sa'd's Ṭabaqāt, and al-İsfahāni’s Aghānī


417 See al-Jāḥīz, Taṣwīb 'Ālī. The 'Uthmân ā accusation rests on the Shi'i-Khārjī claims that they were proud of 'Ali's alleged killing of 'Uthmân. Lammens, op. cit., p. 11 says that the pro-Mu'awiya 'Uthmânis have become convinced of 'Ali's share in the revolt of Medina, without giving any reference.

418 See Lammens, quoted by Pellat, Ibid.
420 See Watt, Formative, pp. 76-77.
421 Madelung, Ibid.
accepted for the sake of unity) or ʿAli's succession. 422 In al-Ṭabari's chronicles of the year 61 A.H. (Karbalä'), we are informed of one of this type, Zuhayr b. al-Qayn, who had never backed ʿAli in his rule yet rushed to rescue al-Ḥusayn for religious motives. 423

With the rule of Yazid I (60-63/680-683), ʿUthmānis break up into being pro-Zubayrid or pro-Umayyad. The ʿUthmāni al-Nuʿmān b. Bashīr, the governor of Kūfa installed by Muʿāwiya, joins the revolt of Ibn al-Zubayr 424 (60-72/680-692). Under the Marwānids (63-132/683-750), other ʿUthmānis become openly pro-Umayyad (the cult of ʿUthmān) and others remain ʿUthmāni without becoming Umawīs. 425

5 - accepters of ʿAli's sound character who abstained from cursing him, 426 yet contrast him with ʿUthmān to the advantage of the latter against the Rāfiḍi portrait of the former, 427 presumably practised by the ʿUthmānī scholars of Baṣra and of a Kūfān mosque, 428 and still operative - according to Ibn al-Murtadā - in al-Ḥāfiż's own time as reflected by al-ʿAllāf, who is described as a Shiʿi. 429

The above applications obviously cut through a long period of time, from ʿUthmān's death, to ʿAli's time, passing through Umayyad rule and ending at al-Ḥāfiż's group of ʿUthmāniyya. Watt's remark on the different applications of the term has echoes here, as the above uses do reflect evolutionary and developmental stages in the formative period of Islamic thought and society. The same term takes us from (a) Umayyad ʿUthmānis, to (b) non-Umayyad ʿUthmānis. It would be interesting here to relate the pro-Umayyad ʿUthmānis (i.e., ʿUthmānī remnants of the Umayyad era) to the appearing cult of Muʿāwiya (Nābita) of al-Ḥāfiż's time, and the evolving

422 Madelung, Ibid.
424 Lammens, "Le Parti..." p. 15.
425 Ibid., p. 17, such as the Muftī of Egypt Yazid b. Ḥabīb (d.128/745)
427 al-Ḥāfiẓ, Ibid., and K. al-Hayawān, VII: 7 where ʿUthmānī is equated with the objection to the superior virtues of ʿAli and to his claims to have been the immediate successor of the Prophet. The Muftī of Egypt Yazid b. Ḥabīb (d. 128 A.H.) is described as ʿUthmānī without being pro-Umayyad. See Watt, Formative, pp. 76-77.
group of *ahl-al-Sunna*, including the *Uthmânîs* of al-Jâhiç's pro-*Abbâsid type. This line of connection from the original historical *Uthmânîs* to the pro-Umayyad and *Abbâsid brands is confirmed by al-Jâhiç when he couples the *Uthmânîyya* of his time to the contemporaneous *ahl-al-ḥadîth* and *hashwiyya*. By recalling first al-Jâhiç's unique references in his treatise "Taṣwîb ḤAli" to that Başra mosque which was used by the Muʿtazîlîtes and the Nābita at the same time, and the other reference in the same source where Nawâbit and aṣḥâb al-ḥadîth are coupled together in their position to abstain from dwelling on *Uthmân's* murder in the way used by *ahl al-Kalâm* against the criteria of *Sunna* and Jamâʿa, it becomes less difficult to accept finding the Muʿtazîlî al-Jâhiç among the Traditionists. From these references (in *Uthmânîyya* and Taṣwîb), an initial relation between *ahl al-Ḥadîth* and the Muʿtazîla, can safely be assumed i.e., that the Muʿtazîla of al-Jâhiç's Başra were originally *Uthmânî muḥaddithûn* before they assumed the distinguishing features of *Uthmânîsm* and/or *Fīzâl*, so that those *Uthmânî muḥaddithûn* and fuqahā who survived the Umayyads, could equally have become:


2. Nâbitîtes (pro-Muʿâwiya), anti-*Alîd*, rehabilitating Muʿâwiya as a means to oppose the *Abbâsid* regime.

3. Ḥanbalîte Traditionists (pro-*Abbâsid*, pro-Umayyad, pro-*Alîd*) who were part and forerunners of what became known as *Ahl al-Sunna* or Sunnîtes.

Ibn al-Riwandi’s future puzzling remark that al-Jâhiç was a Nâbitîte is thus resolved: If some of the *Uthmânîs* became Nâbita and cherished the cult of Muʿâwiya, (i.e., opposing *Alî*) this should not make us mistake al-Jâhiç for being a Nâbitî. al-Jâhiç was a *Uthmânî* in the sense that "*Uthmânîtes* were primarily...

---

430 *Uthmânîyya*, p. 176.
431 Ibid., p. 123.
432 Taṣwîb', parag. 12.
433 Ibid., parag. 44.
434 See Watt, *Formative*, p. 167 and this relation is also confirmed by Pellat, *Le Milieu*, pp. 135-137.
435 See *Ibid.*., F. *Omar* has the same opinion, with the addition that the transformation of the *Uthmânîyya into ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamâʿa*, was due to the *Abbâsid* religious efforts and policy to create a Sunni orthodox basis that could sustain their new state and religious policy. See *Omar, al*-*Abbâsîyyûn al-Awârîl*, 2: 93.
concerned to oppose the undue exaltation of 'Ali by the Rāfiḍites." The only common point between Nāhiba and 'Uthmāniyya is criticism of 'Ali and after that they diverge in cherishing or not cherishing the figure of Muṭāwīya. Watt's suggestion that a group of the 'Uthmāniyya became at least a section of the forerunners of ahl al-Sunna justifies the above transformation that the 'Uthmāniyya may have undergone, in the sense that Traditionists from the 'Uthmāni circles or from other places (such as Ḥanbalites of Khurāsān) merged together in what is known as ahl al-Sunna. In this framework, Watt regards the Sunnī view that arranges merit of the first four caliphs in the chronological order of ruling, "as a result of arguments such as those of al-Jāḥīz," which proves his point on the relation between ahl al-Sunna and the 'Uthmānis.

Now that we are discussing the issue of transformation within sects, it should be stated here, contrary to what has been held of al-Jāḥīz, that al-Jāḥīz started as a scholar of Ḥadith, but being disappointed with those traditionists who accepted traditions non-critically and literally, he decided to remain critical of those rigid 'Uthmāni Baṣrān Traditionists. That does not mean, as Sandūbi rightly points out, that the Muṭāzilī al-Jāḥīz abandoned Ḥadith altogether: It was the literal unexamining approach to understanding certain Ḥadiths and the unexamined chains of Isnād that he opposed, as his literature is full of authentic Ḥadiths against those forwarded by the Ḥashwīyya (literalists), of the very same school of Ḥadith in Baṣra that they came from.

al-Jāḥīz's celebration of the famous Sunnī traditionist Abū Dāwūd is significant; when Abū Dāwūd introduced himself as a man from 'Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth, al-Jāḥīz was angry at being mistaken as a man of the Ḥashwīyya. When Abū Dāwūd pronounced his name, al-Jāḥīz at once welcomed him. This relation between the Muṭāzilī al-Jāḥīz and the Traditionist suggests that the feud between Ṣīzāl and ahl al-Ḥadīth needs further investigation. al-Jāḥīz did not reject those authentic narrators whose standards of authenticity were as high as his, as is evident in his 'Uthmāniyya. The following table summarizes the change in the application of the term 'Uthmānī from 'Uthmān's death up to al-Jāḥīz's time:

---

436 Watt, Formative, p. 166.
437 Ibid., p. 167.
438 See al-Sandūbi, Adab al-Jāḥīz, (Cairo: 1931) pp. 24-25. al-Khaṭīb al-Baḥdādī in his Tārikh is cited here as attributing to al-Jāḥīz his role in transmitting Ḥadīth. Abū Dāwūd, the famous transmitter, paid a visit to al-Jāḥīz's residence for the sake of gathering a Ḥadīth.

119
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caliph</th>
<th>Time/Period</th>
<th>Definition of ( ^6 \text{Uthmânî} ) and its Representatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( ^6 \text{Uthmân} )</td>
<td>d. 35/656 upon ( ^6 \text{Uthmân's} ) death</td>
<td>( ^6 \text{Neutralists}, ) siding neither to ( ^6 \text{Ali} ) nor with Mu( ^6 \text{âwiya} ) (Lammens, pp. 5-6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ^6 \text{Ali} )</td>
<td>35-40/656-661</td>
<td>( ^6 \text{Uthmânî Loyalists} ) Hassan, Ka( ^6 )b, Sa( ^6 )d, al-Nu( ^6 )mân, Ta( ^6 )la, Zubayr) convinced of ( ^6 \text{Uthmân's} ) innocence, seek to revenge him, protest against ( ^6 \text{Ali's} ) rule without holding him responsible for martyred caliph (Lammens, pp. 5, 11).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>: Protest at battle of the Camel : Protest at Şiffin (by rallying with Mu( ^6 \text{âwiya}'s ) demand to avenge ( ^6 \text{Uthmân}, ) were not yet Umawi partisans: ( [^6 \text{Ubayd} \text{Allâh b.} ^6 \text{Umar b.} \text{Khaṭṭāb,} \text{Abû Hurayra,} \text{4000 Qur'an readers} ) plus 10,000 ( ^6 \text{Uthmânîs} ) in Egypt, Yemen, ( ^6 \text{Iraq} ) who found in Mu( ^6 \text{âwiya} ) instrument of revenge (Lammens, pp. 7-8, 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yazid I (al-Ḥusayn)</td>
<td>60-63/680-683</td>
<td>( ^6 \text{Some} ^6 \text{Uthmânî Ioyalists} ) have become convinced of ( ^6 \text{Ali's} ) role in revolt of Medina, refuse ( ^6 \text{Ali's} ) Imamate (without being Umawis) (Lammens, p. 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TRANSFORMATIONS:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ex-( ^6 \text{Uthmânî} ) (Z. b. al-Qayn) sides with Ḥusayn at Karbalā( ' ) in 680 though he had never backed ( ^6 \text{Ali} ).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ex-( ^6 \text{Uthmânî} ) (Suhār b. al-( ^6 \text{Abbās} ) al-( ^6 \text{Abdi} ) sides with the Khawārî) (Lammens, p. 13).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ex-( ^6 \text{Uthmânî} ) (A. Ibn Hammām) sides with Mukhtār's revolt in Kūfā.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn al-Zubayr</td>
<td>60-72/680-692</td>
<td>-( ^6 \text{Uthmânîs} ) break into pro-Zubayrid or pro-Umayyad. (al-Nu( ^6 )mân b. Bashir joins Ibn al-Zubayr's revolt), (Lammens, p. 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwānī Umayyads</td>
<td>63-132/683-750</td>
<td>-other ( ^6 \text{Uthmânîs} ) become pro-Umayyad (cult of ( ^6 \text{Uthmân} ) (Lammens, p. 17), but Mufti of Egypt (d. 128) remained a non-Umawi ( ^6 \text{Uthmânî} ) (Watt, Formative).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ^6 \text{Abbâsids:} ) al-Rashid</td>
<td>170-193/786-809</td>
<td>-Provincial governor, a blood descendant of ( ^6 \text{Uthmân} ).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Baṣāns: Non-Umawi, ( ^6 \text{Uthmânî} ) scholars indicate failure of Umayyad and ( ^6 \text{Abbâsîd} ) measures to convert them (Lammens, citing Ibn Sa( ^6 )d's Ṭabaqāt).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-Ma'mūn (al-Jâḥîz)</td>
<td>198-218/813-833</td>
<td>-al-Jâḥîz's ( ^6 \text{Uthmâniyya} ) recycles the non-Umawi Zubayrid ( ^6 \text{Uthmânî} ) call for Shūrâ (i.e., that Khilâfah should not be based on Qarâba). They were critical of Umawi, Shi( ^\dagger ) and ( ^6 \text{Abbâsî} ) criterion of caliphate based on descent and were possibly remnants of the Zubayrid group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

120
II. al-Jähiz's Brand of 'Uthmânism:

al-Jähiz should be seen as a product of the remnants of the supporters of 'Uthmân who were still surviving in Başra, the place that witnessed the first revolt against the murder of 'Uthmân (party of ١‘A’ishâ-Ţalha-Zubayr). Those doubts on the murder, including 'Ali's possible share in it could have continued to exist in the hearts of the (Khârijî-Shî‘îte) Başrans. al-Jähiz's 'Uthmânism obviously meant an approval of 'Uthmân's legitimate caliphate, but what distinguishes him from his Başran comrades (such as the Khârijites who are said to believe that the murderers of 'Uthmân were their spiritual ancestors),\(^{439}\) or from those Muslims who are quoted by him as regarding 'Ali's killing of 'Uthmân as one of his noblest deeds,\(^{440}\) is that he never accuses 'Ali of 'Uthmân's blood.\(^{441}\)

In al-Jähiz's time, the term 'Uthmânî should be seen within the new politico-religious concerns of the community, in the sense that it was re-habilitated by those Başran Mu'tazilites who formed a group (٣'Uthmâniyyûn), praising 'Uthmân (up to the first six years of his rule and without having to defend him indefinitely), as a political tool of ninth century politics that retrieves history in order to assert contemporary political concerns, namely in reaction to the claims of the Râfîdites and their hostility towards the first three caliphs.\(^{442}\) So what distinguished al-Jähiz from some of the 'Uthmâniyya, is that he was not pro-Umayyad, and from the other ones, is that he did not accuse 'Ali of 'Uthmân's death and accepted 'Ali's Imamate. His rehabilitation of the figure of 'Uthmân matches the general Başran line of Fīzâl that used his figure for political purposes, without having nonetheless to defend him. Thus the historical 'Uthmân is invoked to serve the following political aims:

1- To emphasize the legitimacy of the patriarchal Caliphs, against the Râfîdi-Zaydî claims that opposed the above premise.

2- To try to win al-Ma'mûn to the side of al-Jähiz and Başran Mu'tazilites from the growing influences of the Baghdâdi scholars over al-Ma'mûn's position towards 'Ali b. Abî Tâlib; i.e., to win al-Ma'mûn to the orthodox position that the merits of the Râshidûn follow their respective chronological order of rulership, in the following

\(^{439}\) See Watt, Formative, p. 76.
\(^{440}\) See 'Taşwîb', parag. 44.
\(^{441}\) See Pellat, 'L'imamat', p. 31, and the 'Uthmâniyya.
\(^{442}\) See Ibid., p. 51 and Watt, Formative, p. 166.
sequence: Abü Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, ʿAli against the Baghdādi Zaydi proposition of al-mafdūl i.e., that ʿAli was the most excellent, without denying Abü Bakr’s caliphate, such that excellence does not have to follow the historical order of ruling.

3 - Probably to justify the absence of the ʿAbbāsids from the political scene during that time, without forgetting to hint at the legitimate basis for their forthcoming rule (This, as we shall find below, depends on al-Jāḥiz’s subtle argument on the quality of merit that paved the way for the Rāshidūn, justified the ʿAbbāsid absence, yet keeps room for them in the way they combined merit and descent, not to forget an allusion to revolution, through which al-Jāḥiz could have accounted for the coming of the ʿAbbāsids too.

It seems quite likely to me that the ʿUthmāniyya as a group could have encompassed all or some of the above quoted variations in outlook; I say variations, because the onlookers themselves were varied and belonged to different groups: the remnants of the Shūrā at Medina (those non-Ḥāshimites who put merit above descent and called for Shūrā) were ʿUthmānids, in the sense they approved of ʿUthmān’s legal caliphate throughout his rule, (ʿĀisha-Ṭalha-Zubayr group). Later, this group could have been represented by muḥaddithūn, who narrated the Prophetic tradition that ʿUthmān will be killed unjustly (yuqtal maẓlūm“). Rehabilitation of Muḥāwiya and even ʿAli had already been found in Ibn Ḥanbal, who is a case of an ʿUthmān who was equally pro-ʿAbbāsid. al-Jāḥiz, however, represents a divergence from this type of ʿUthmānism, in the sense that while sharing the Khārijite Başrān climate that believed in the exclusive superiority of merit over noble descent, and accepting ʿUthmān (owing to his Başrite-ʿUthmānid origin) he was, however, influenced by the Khārijites who had rejected ʿUthmān’s rule by saying that his rule was only valid in the first six years. Against the Başrān Muḥaddithūn, al-Jāḥiz, however, did not extend his ʿUthmānism and respect of ʿUthmān to the level reached by the Nābita when they used his figure and that of Muḥāwiya as a tool to tease the ʿAbbāsids. As we shall see below the assassinated caliph, ʿUthmān, was used as a tool to suit other purposes, such as a means to justify the caliphate of Abü Bakr and ʿUmar and hence tease the Rāfidi block which had rejected the Imamship of both. Therefore one should be careful in using this term, as it had been used respectively by:
a - early Companions (Hāshimi or non-Hāshimi).

b - the Muḥaddithūn443 (Umayyads or ʿAbbāsids).

c - the pro-Umayyad Nābita (critical of ʿAli).

d - the pro-ʿAbbāsid al-Jāḥiz, who seems to forward his own brand of ʿUthmāniyya, although he hates to be classified as anything other than a Muʿtazili judge444 among the various sects, namely the extreme Bakriyya and the extreme ʿAlawiyya.

Hence the term “ʿUthmāni” was a quite flexible one that encompassed several incompatible positions. Ṭalha-Zubayr’s party was one (ʿUthmānis) as they believed ʿUthmān was killed unjustly and were suspicious of the conditions surrounding ʿAli’s Imamate to the level of rejecting it (battle of the Camel) and were also rejecting Muʿāwiya and Umayyads (Ibn al-Zubayr’s rebellion), in their constant unachieved request for a Shūrā. But an ʿUthmāni could have been pro-Umayyad in the way the Syrian troops rallied around Muʿāwiya, the relative and Wali, blood avenger of ʿUthmān, but whether they should be described as ʿUthmāni is problematic, for we do not hear in K. al-ʿUthmāniyya any significant reference to Muʿāwiya and the Umayyad dynasty or even to the nawābit. As such, the Zubayrīds and not pro-Umayyads, could have best represented the ʿUthmāni outlook, or conversely, these ʿUthmānis of al-Jāḥiz could have been remnants of the Zubayrid party.

This can be confirmed if we remember the common politico-religious opinion between them (a) that the caliphate should be based on Shūrā and solely based on merit (b) the caliphate should belong to the Muhājirūn and their descendants in the fashion laid by ʿUmar, and it should not belong to descendants of Ṭulaqāʾ (Umayyads) (c) they had high esteem for the Companions (d) claimed vengeance for ʿUthmān’s death and (e) criticized ʿAli’s Imamate and approved that of ʿUthmān.

As such, although the term ʿUthmāni could have accommodated anti-Umayyad (Zubayrid) as well as pro-Muʿāwiya trends, (Ḥanbalites) the ʿUthmānis of al-Jāḥiz were actually reflective of the former and not the latter.

443 These were critical and suspicious of ʿAli. See K. al-ʿUthmāniyya.
In the ʿAbbāsid period, suspicion or rejection of ʿAlī is preserved among the remnants of the Zubayrid party in Baṣra and Egypt, besides the Khawārij. The Muʿtazilite al-Jāḥiṣ stands in an intermediate position between the ʿUthmānīs - described in al-ʿUthmāniyya as one group of Muḥaddithūn and fuqahā' who were suspicious of and rejected ʿAlī's Imamate, yet without declaring him a Kāfir - and the Khārijites who viewed him as a Kāfir besides the Rāfiḍa who rejected the first three patriarchal caliphs. The following table summarises the situation before al-Jāḥiṣ:
| {\(\text{Talha Zubayr, A'isha}\)} & Abu Bakr & accepted & accepted (seen as the martyred caliph) & rejected (received office in dubious conditions) & rejected (by son of al-Zubayr) & --- |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Z. b. al-Qayn & accepted & accepted & rejected but later backed Husayn at Karbala' & rejected & --- |
| Ibn al-Zubayr & accepted & accepted & fought at battle of Camel & rejected & --- |
| Shi'at {\(\text{Uthman}\)} in Egypt (656 A.D.) & accepted & accepted & rejected & not necessarily supporting & --- |
| {\(\text{Uthman}\)} Mufti of Egypt Yazid b. Habib d. 128 & accepted & highly merited & dismerited & not Umawi & --- |
| Troops backing Mu'awiya & accepted & accepted & rejected & supported & --- |
| Başran'Uthmani scholars & accepted & accepted (seen as the martyred caliph) & rejected Imamate, without dismeriting or cursing & Objectible to any dynastic rule & rejected! |
| Başran Kharijites & accepted & rejected policy (accused him of nepotism) although accepted first six years. & rejected & rejected & rejected |
| The Başran al-Jahiz & accepted & accepted in {\(\text{Uthmaniy}\)}, but (only first six years of ruling) in al-Nabita. & accepted best after {\(\text{Uthman}\)} & rejected and seen as blasphemers & supported |
| {\(\text{Abbasi}\)} Muhaddithun: 1- al-Nabita & accepted & accepted & rejected & supported & rejected |
| 2 - Ibn Hanbal & accepted & accepted & accepted best after {\(\text{Uthman}\)} & accepted & accepted |
| Zaydi Shi'ites: & accepted as al-mafdul & accepted as al-mafdul (for the 1st six years) & accepted as al-mafdul after Prophet & rejected & possibly accepted {\(\text{Abbasi}\)} as mafdul |
| Râfi'î (Imami) Shi'ites & rejected & rejected & accepted as the only afdal & rejected & rejected |
| al-Nazzâm & - accepted & - & defended 445 & rejected & - supported |
| al-Allaf & - accepted & - & preferred over {\(\text{Uthman}\)} 446 & rejected & - defended |

---

446 See Ibn al-Murtadä, op.cit.
Kitāb al-Ṭūmāniyya

III. Setting and Time of Composition:

The thorny issue of timing al-Jāḥīz's works reaches its peak when one tries to date this Kitāb that is "the most complete of all the extant works on the Imamate from the pen of al-Jāḥīz." It has been suggested that this work was composed during the period of al-Ma'mūn (198-218 A.H.) or during the reign of al-Mutawakkil (232-248 A.H.); al-Ḥājīrī argues on the basis of the anti-ṢAlīd tone in the ʿUthmāniyya that the work belongs to the period when anti-ṢAlīd policies were pursued by al-Mutawakkil. These seem to have been initiated four years after he came to power (in 236 A.H.). According to this view, the date of the ʿUthmāniyya would be somewhere between the years 232 to 247 A.H.

On the other hand, Zahniser argues that the book is one of the early works by al-Jāḥīz on the Imamate which were submitted to al-Ma'mūn before 202 A.H. because they were submitted by al-Yazidi who died in that year. In support of this, he cites the following external and internal evidences:

The first external evidence is based on Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's reference to a refutation of this book by one al-Iskāfī, who died in 240/854. Of course this information can be used against Zahniser's proposal (that al-Mutawakkil could not have been the intended reader of the treatise). Zahniser himself has noticed that if the ʿUthmāniyya could not have been written after 240, al-Iskāfī's refutation could be used to indicate the presence of eight years of al-Mutawakkil's reign (232-240) during which al-Jāḥīz may have written the work. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's deduction that al-Iskāfī refuted the work in his youth is not helpful and is slightly weakened by the fact that we do not know Iskāfī's exact age when he died.

The second external evidence that Zahniser uses to confirm his conclusion rests on al-Jāḥīz's own reference in his introduction to K. al-Ḥayawān to qawl al-ʿUthmāniyya. As K. al-Ḥayawān was addressed to Ibn al-Zayyāt who died in 233/Nov. 847, Zahniser suggests it would be unlikely to assume that Jahiz had

448 See Ṭabarī's annals of the year 236.
completed it in the four months period between the accession of al-Mutawakkil in August of 847 and the death of al-Zayyāt, given the poor health conditions of al-Jāḥīz at that time.

This evidence is, in my view, equally slightly weakened by the fact that al-Jāḥīz composed many works after 232 A.H. I owe this information to the editor of K. al-Ḥayawān who has suggested that al-Jāḥīz's illness in the latter portion of his life did not, in fact, prevent him from writing.\textsuperscript{450}

Furthermore, I have noticed that the present introduction of K. al-Ḥayawān appears to have been re-written (hence \textit{qawl al-}\textsuperscript{2}Uthmāniyya need not have necessarily preceded the year 232 A.H.) as there are obvious attacks on the addressee in it. This is hardly appropriate as a recommendation of the work to Ibn al-Zayyāt, and was probably included in the original introduction after Ibn al-Zayyāt's disgrace.

Zahniser, however, depends on internal contextual evidences to back his proposal. Zahniser has noticed that the "decidedly Muʿtazilite stamp upon the treatise" such as strong dislike for \textit{taqlīd}, repeated appeals to the mean between extremes in deciding questions of historical accuracy, his critical theory concerning the use and value of Prophetic tradition (\textit{ḥadīth}) and other historical data of proof, and his views of what it is possible that God 'should do' viewed from the Muʿtazilite conviction that God's actions be consistent with His unity and justice strongly indicate the categories of reason and dogma championed by the Muʿtazili movement, thus he confirms: "under these circumstances, al-Mutawakkil could not conceivably have been the intended reader of the treatise since his opposition to Muʿtazilism was nearly as strong as his opposition to the supporters of ṢAlī."\textsuperscript{451}

But knowing from chroniclers like Ibn Khallikān\textsuperscript{452} and Tabari, that al-Mutawakkil did not immediately expel the Muʿtazili Qāḍī Ahmad Ibn Abī Duʿād from office, for he and his son Muḥammad continued to administer "\textit{maẓālim al-Askar and qadā}," before he sacked them in 237, we may conclude that al-Mutawakkil's anti-Muʿtazilite policy was not fully implemented until 237, and this leaves a period of five years when pro-Muʿtazilite expressions by al-Jāḥīz in his

\textsuperscript{450} See Hārūn's introductory remarks on al-Ḥayawān, vol. 1.
\textsuperscript{451} Zahniser, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{452} See Ibn Khallikān, \textit{Wafayāt al-Å'yan}, 1: 89.
works may not have displeased the caliph (i.e., this gives room for al-Ṣūṭūtīyya then.)

In trying to fix the date of Kitāb al-Ṣūṭūtīyya to before 202 A.H., Zahniser argues that it is part of a series of books on the Imamate introduced to al-Ma‘mūn (and not to al-Mutawakkil) by al-Yazīdī, who died in 202. He suggests that al-Jāḥiẓ himself states this453 when he says:

If it were not for the fact that those whom the Prophet left as leaders in Medina during the various raids were included in ... all Sīra literature, I would have included them in my book which I wrote for you (sg.) ... in which I refuted those who belittle the value of the Imamate and allege that it is not necessary, and that it is possible to have a number of Imams at the same time: Except for this book/kind of writings my (other) books do not reflect my own point of view; rather I let the book explain itself as I assume the position of each adversary and keep myself neutral (‘adl) amongst them. This of course follows my unshaken confidence in the predominance of truth over falsehood. It is evidently illegal now (not halāl) to hide such falsehood (and contrast it against truth), now that taqiyya is unnecessary, the dahr is fortunately good, and the judge (al-qayyim) is just.454

That al-Ma‘mūn was the intended reader of this passage in Ṣūṭūtīyya, is dependent on accepting first that al-Jāḥiẓ’s (earliest) works on Imamate were really addressed to al-Ma‘mūn. This we know from al-Jāḥiẓ’s rejoicing at Ma‘mūn’s pleasure with ‘my works on Imamate’ passed to him via al-Yazīdī.455

Zahniser also cites other quotations from the Ṣūṭūtīyya in support of his view:

We will present to you the treatise (maqālat) of the Ābbāsiyya and the facets of their argumentations after we have finished with the treatise on the Ṣūṭūtīyya in the most comprehensive way possible, by paying justice to each one of them, to enable you to choose for yourself by your own intellect (‘aql), after that these statements have been presented in the most explicit and lucid way in order to make you clearly knowledgeable on them.456

Although Zahniser has reasonably demonstrated the link between al-Jāḥiẓ’s Ṣūṭūtīyya and its addressee, al-Ma‘mūn, his attempt to fix it before 202 remains questionable if not unsubstantiated. The passages cited above need not be taken as a conclusive evidence to include K. al-Ṣūṭūtīyya, among al-Jāḥiẓ’s early series of

453 Zahniser, Ibid., p. 12.
455 al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Bayān, 3: 374-375.
works on the Imamate i.e., as being amongst the works which had pleased al-Ma'mūn, according to al-Jāḥīz's allusion in K. al-Bayān. Even Zahniser’s use of the passage in ʿUthmāniyya, where the caliph is reminded of his bias, cannot be taken as an evidence to fix the work before 202. A.H.

This is, in my opinion, due to the fact that al-Jāḥīz’s warning to his addressee against allowing his natural biases to stand in the way of objective evaluation, cannot be necessarily taken to indicate which stage of al-Ma’mūn’s (biased) religious policy it is exactly meant to address. My point is that al-Jāḥīz’s reference to the caliphal bias should be contextually tied to all the other direct addressees made to the caliph, in order to understand the specific themes that are stressed there and fix it in the right time. In fact, I have been able to gather at least thirty five direct addresses to the caliph, and to study their content, which is concerned with passing a balanced orthodox judgement on the respective merits of the patriarchal caliphs, against the exaggerated and excessive claims of the groups cited (Zaydiyya, Rāfiḍa vs. ʿUthmāniyya), and in the light of the historical fact that al-Ma’mūn issued a decree in 212 declaring his own personal judgement on the exclusively superior merits of ʿAli, and it is therefore much more reasonable to link al-Jāḥīz’s allusion to the caliphal bias to the year 212, or at least the decisive moments preceding the caliphal decree. Furthermore, Ṭabari’s chronicles of the year 205 in which al-Ma’mūn was chairing discourses on the issue of Imamate, and even Yāqūt’s reference to Zaydi and pro-Imāmīe scholars who were discussing Shiʿism (tashayyu’) before al-Ma’mūn, could be seen as external evidences that allow us eventually to date al-ʿUthmāniyya between the death of ʿAlī al-Riḍā in 203 A.H. and Ma’mūn’s declaration in 212 (hence after 202); thus it was not among those books on the Imamate which al-Yazidi had brought to the attention of al-Ma’mūn, especially as we know there had been ongoing debates during this period (203-212) among the scholars that al-Ma’mūn had gathered around him, on the issue of tafḍil i.e., preference of that single Companion of the Prophet that was the most meritorious after him.

As for al-Jāḥīz’s key contextual references that support this alternative dating, and fix his allusion to the caliphal “bias” in the exact politico - religious setting and

---

457 Ibid., pp. 279-280.
458 al-Ṭabari, annals of year 205. This does not deny that al-Ma’mūn had chaired discourses before 205, and as early as 198 A.H. There is one report cited by Ibn Qutayba (ʿUyūn al-Akhbār, Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1346/1926), 2: 140-141, that alludes to a discussion between al-Ma’mūn and ʿAlī al-Riḍā.
clarify the real issue it meant to address, i.e., that of tafdid al-fādil or al-maf4ül 460 which must have been the issue of debate then, between 203-212 al-Jāḥiz clearly states to al-Ma'mūn:

What indicates the broadness of his (Abū Bakr's) knowledge, and the basic fact that he was the person to be sought in difficulties (al-mafza`), is that when al-Muhdjirūn in general and the Bana Hāshim in particular differed where to bury the Prophet, may God blessings fall upon him, ... Abū Bakr came to them with the solution as heard from the Prophet. They said to him: what did you hear? he said: I heard the Prophet, may the blessings of God be upon him, saying: "When a Prophet dies he is (to be) buried in the place he dies" ... We did not hear that people asked for evidence from Abū Bakr, and not even two persons differed on him. Doubt was not even displayed by one person, close or remote. Mind you, the site was the house of the Abū Bakr's daughter, yet Abū Bakr's opinion was respected. Hence, he who was never accused of narrating on behalf of the Prophet in such circumstances such that his opinion preceded over all others, is evidently deserving not to have anyone be put before him in excellence (qadr), knowledge (ilm), trustworthiness (amāna) and honesty (sidq). 461

In another passage, the caliph's attention is drawn to passing an impartial judgement on Abū Bakr's successor, ʿUmar, who is cited here by way of advising the caliph to be cautious in matters of tafdid:

... Can you not see that ʿUmar followed the true path of religion and wherever religion went he lead the first step towards it ... His will that recommended Šuhayb - the non Arab - to lead the death prayer and to lead prayers until the Shūrā decided on the coming caliph, is an indication that these men (Companions) put nothing before religious merit and dedicated precedence in Islam ... His calling to ʿAmmār, Bilāl, Šuhayb and Salmān to enter his office while the most notable Arabs and Qurashites were waiting at his door, is another indication of putting religious merit before ethnic and social hierarchy ... His utterance on his death bed ... "that had Šālim - the client of Abū Hudhayfa b. ʿUtba - been alive, I would have recommended him for the caliphate", is the biggest evidence ... For this, I strongly advise (you) not to pass a judgement on the Companions of The Prophet, may the blessing of God be upon him, (Aşḥāb Muḥammad), before establishing firm knowledge of them in all their situations: It is obviously not guaranteed for any theologian who is least knowledgeable and informed about them, to be driven by such ignorance to belittle some of the Companions or believe that they have gone astray and hence excommunicate them, thus making the theologian suffer severe fatalities now and in the hereafter. 462

Pointing to the Rāfīda's unfounded assertions that Abū Bakr was hiding his "Kufr" from the Prophet and the Şahāba, al-Jāḥiz adds in the same passage:

You, the group of seeming theologians and thinkers should be the first to realize that Muḥammad's disciples were not his enemies; in fact, those who have accused ʿUmar of

460 al-Jāḥiz, al-ʿUthmāniyya, p. 127 and see p. 76
461 Ibid., pp. 83-83. al-Jāḥiz adds that Abū Bakr's opinion was to be later rejected by the ghāli faction of the Rawāfiḍ. Ibid.
462 al-ʿUthmāniyya, pp. 216-221.
Asābiyya were two types of people: A Rāfi¢i, who wanted to blemish his image before the ʿAjam and mawālī, and a Mutaʿarrib, (extreme pro-Arabist) who knew that ʿUmar was a model, and he accused ʿUmar of that to back his position: so beware of those and know that well."463

This text, and similarly other addresses in ʿUthmāniyya, would mean that al-Jāḥiz’s ʿUthmāniyya represents an attempt by al-Jāḥiz to put forward the views of the Başran Muʿtazila - against those of the Baghdādi ones, who were now under the influence of the Rāfīḍa, on the order of merit of the first four caliphs, and that Abū Bakr’s Imamate followed his exclusive superiority in religious merit and fiqh over the rest of the ʿṢaḥāba.464

This can be substantiated by an examination of those of al-Jāḥiz’s ʿUthmāni arguments that are strongly tied to the issue of preference (tafdīl). In one text, al-Jāḥiz says:

I have discussed this for you to make you aware of the privileged statuses (of Companions other than ʿAlī), after all the trouble, mischief, terror and oppression they have encountered; we - however - have not heard that ʿAlī equalled them in those respects.465

In another passage al-Jāḥiz says: "can't you realize his generosity and noble deeds and the qualities of leadership in him? (in Abū Bakr) In such and similar matters can you not check his status in Makka, among his people and in the opinion of the Prophet - peace be upon him - and even among the Companions?"466

The attention of al-Maʿmūn is therefore drawn to the conclusion that Abū Bakr has been evidently the most meritorious Companion of the Prophet during the era of Prophethood and after the Prophet's death:

Abū Bakr was the most learned of Arabs about Arabs, and the most notable transmitter of their virtues and vices, and knowledgeable of their strength and weaknesses, goodness and badness: That is why the Prophet recommended Ḥassān - despite his eminence in poetry - In his attempt to

463 Ibid., p. 221. This important conclusion follows a detailed analysis of ʿUmar’s just policy that was solely based on religious merit: His belittling of Persians after conquering them is judged to be exactly as wise as his warning against their strength before the conquest, and should not mean he was racist (p. 214) for he acknowledged merits of certain non-Arab Muslims over Arab Muslims, (pp. 212, 213, 217).
464 Ibid., p. 74.
465 Ibid., p. 38.
466 Ibid., p. 65.
refute Abū Sufyān b. al-Ḥārith, to seek the advice of Abū Bakr who was the most knowledgeable about the clan of ʿAbd Manāf.467

In another passage, the same conclusion is stated, this time in comparison to ʿAli:

ʿAli, therefore has not displayed a position that can be claimed to have eclipsed Abū Bakr’s positions: Abū Bakr, in fact, has superiorly eclipsed those of ʿAli and has exclusively exhibited actions that are not found in ʿAli or all the other Companions.468

2. Analysis of K. al-ʿUthmāniyya

I- The Issue of Tafḍīl/Preference

In each of the thirty five Jāḥizian addresses that were most probably directed to al-Maʾmūn, one notices that the main issue stressed in each one of those addresses, does in fact revolve around the thorny issue of passing a judgement of preference between Abū Bakr and ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib. By examining these addresses it is quite obvious that the author holds a view that is opposite to the addressee and as such every effort is taken to make the addressee re-examine his position concerning the superiority of ʿAli over the rest of the Companions of the Prophet, and possibly come to the conclusion of al-Jāḥiz whose acknowledgement of ʿAli’s virtues and merits does not prevent him from acknowledging the more meritorious and virtuous Abū Bakr, i.e., while ʿAli was an excellent and virtuous Companion of the Prophet, Abū Bakr was more virtuous and thus deserved to be the first Imām. This is one of the basic themes of the treatise.

However, al-Jāḥiz is very careful to indicate that in putting forward the views of the ʿUthmāniyya in answer to the problems raised by the Zaydiyya and the Rāfiḍa, he does not necessarily hold them himself. He is only trying to be as objective as possible in presenting their views by describing them in the way that they would do so. This, of course, gives al-Jāḥiz a way out if the ʿUthmāni arguments fail to convince Maʾmūn:

Because Sects, like individuals, have different 'personalities'images: (suwar) and just as some personalities are more compatible with your (sg.) basic nature than others, prettier to your eyes and lighter to your soul . . . so a given sect may have an analogous effect that makes it more palatable to desires, (shahawāt), in harmony with one's preferences

467 Ibid., p. 24
468 Ibid., p. 41.
Aware of the growing influences of members of the Baghdādi Muʿtazila on al-Ma'mūn, who must have been showing signs that fell short of that ideal head of the *Umma*, it was time to rescue the caliph from the non orthodox dangers of taking sides with one specific ʿAbbāsid group, as this certainly upsets the developing orthodox view which puts the order of merit of the *Rāshidūn* as following their order of rule.

In other words, al-Jāḥīz wants al-Ma'mūn to be continuously able to look at things in the balanced, flexible and open minded spirit of a neutral statesman by pointing to him the politico-religious hazards that are committed should he decide to hold fast to his unexpected 'impartial position' concerning Abū Bakr and ʿAlī. For this reason, al-Jāḥīz furnishes al-Ma'mūn with the arguments of the ʿUthmāniyya and the ʿAlawīyya (Shīʿites, Zaydis, Rāfīḍa, Ghāliya), and promises to provide him soon with that of al-ʿAbbāsiyya, so that al-Ma'mūn would hopefully be able to independently choose for himself, once a complete non-partial scanning of all politico-religious factions is placed before him. For this reason, al-Jāḥīz is very keen to conduct and present these views in the spirit of a neutral judge and it is quite likely that he was expecting his addressee, al-Ma'mūn, to act likewise, such that his fondness of ʿAlī would not - according to the criteria that al-Jāḥīz is forwarding - eclipse Abū Bakr's established merits:

Be confident that the author of any book cannot maintain impartiality and neutrality (ʿaddl) among the various adversaries, and attract the consent of those who are judicious (ahl al-nazar) until he can comprehensively forward the theses of his enemy in the most exhaustive way that he provides for himself, such that if the reader only reads the arguments of the author's foe, he would assume that it must have been that religious doctrine which the author had chosen for himself. But I would not have allowed myself to portray the (adversary's) arguments, in the most extensive and exhaustive way possible, and to assume the standpoint of the opponents, had I not been confident that falsehood can never overpower or surpass truth. 471

---

469 See al-ʿUthmāniyya, pp. 7, 10, 17.
470 Ibid., p. 280.
471 Ibid.
II. Exposition of the position of the ʿUthmāniyya group (and how al-Jāḥīz stands in respect to it.)

It is interesting to find that the group described by al-Jāḥīz as ʿUthmāniyya, (and equally ʿUmariyya,472 Hashwiyya,473) is defined as the group loyal to ʿUthmān who believe in his authentic Imamate and that it was bestowed upon him legally474 and hence that of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, as the former is presented as the basis (āṣl) for the group of ʿUmariyya, and the reason for discord with ʿAli's group (Shiʿat ʿAli).475 This ʿUthmāniyya is described as categorically rejecting ʿAli's Imamate "lam yakun fi-al-ard ʿUthmānī illā taʿlamūn annahu munkir ʿal-Imāmatihī", and this statement is ascribed to the numerous body of "ʿUthmānī fuqahā' and muhaddithūn"476 (presumably not all fuqahā' but those Basrites whom al-Jāḥīz has mixed with).477

Despite al-ʿUthmāniyya's rejection of ʿAli's Imamate, it is significant to point out that this group:

(a) lays great emphasis on the issue of merit (irrespective of descent),

(b) never accuses ʿAli of ʿUthmān's murder,

(c) never attacks ʿAli by rejecting his merits. They only criticize the Rāfiʿa's exaggerated portrait of ʿAli and their attack on Abū Bakr's merits and Imamate.

They openly maintain a policy of not imitating the Rāfiʿa by avoiding ridiculing ʿAli in the same way al-Rāfiʿa has ridiculed Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān. In this spirit they keep aloof from the Rāfiʿa's style, by acknowledging the merits of ʿAli yet without giving that acknowledgement the political connotations attached to him by the Rāfiʿa. From this, one can understand the deep reason underlying the Rāfiʿa’s position, in which no realization of any merit of the caliphs preceding ʿAli was made, because such an acceptance of merits (however trivial) would be incompatible

---

472 See Ibid., pp. 223, 92, 94.
473 Ibid., p. 123.
474 See Ibid., p. 243
475 Ibid., 233.
476 Ibid., 176.
477 Like Muḥammad b. ʿĀlīsha b. Ḥafs, and other Başrans whose views al-Jāḥīz narrates, although he has not met them for a long time. See Ibid., p. 225. The same figure appears in al-Hayawān, 2: 12.
with their exaggerated view of ʿAli, and hence had to be abandoned altogether to keep ʿAli the exclusively unrivalled Companion of the Prophet.

al-ʿUthmāniyyā’s key statement in this respect reads, concerning their position on ʿAli:

Yet, he was undeniably faqih, ʿAlim, has taken his share in excellence in all domains and we do not say of him - that we belong to al-ʿUthmāniyya wa al-ʿUmariyya - what you do say of ʿUmar and ʿUthmān . . .478

The instances in which ʿAli’s merits are listed and acknowledged by the ʿUthmāniyya are numerous479 and aim to pay justice to ʿAli’s Imamate. In this point al-Jāḥīz differs from them, hence he has a motive to act as a judge between those who reject ʿAli’s Imamate and those who reject Abū Bakr’s Imamate, by trying to bridge that gap, which is reflected in his generalization that ‘people are either ʿUmari or ʿAlawi, in that they consider either Abū Bakr or ʿAli to be exclusively the more meritorious’480 This is achieved by highlighting al-ʿUthmāniyya’s respect and objective approach to ʿAli (without having to be misunderstood as him adopting all their views) and hence developing many of their theses and arguments against the equally developed theses of their adversaries, with the intention that the addressee would hopefully avoid the line of extremism altogether - among all factions - basically by benefiting from al-ʿUthmāniyya’s more moderate approach (to ʿAli) compared to the extremist position of the Rāfīḍa, (to Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, etc.) and thus extending that ʿUthmānī moderation to the more complete Jāḥīzian concept of Muʿtazili moderation. It is quite possible that the ʿUthmāniyya have been cleverly chosen and used as a tool to cool al-Maʾmūn’s obsession with ʿAli, by suggesting to him that the supreme judge of the ʿUmma ought not pursue that outspoken bias towards one of the guided caliphs to the disfavour of those who have preceded him, because such a bias to ʿAli, in the politico-religious realities of the times and as al-Jāḥīz has cleverly conveyed, bears serious consequences on the established orthodoxy of the ʿUmma, (that has accepted ʿAli and the caliphs before him) and puts question marks on the future model of the Islamic orthodox government that the ʿAbbāsid dawla and daʿwa have claimed to continue. In short, al-Jāḥīz is hinting to al-Maʾmūn that his admiration of ʿAli (which is quite orthodox) should not be extended and used to demerit those guided caliphs

478 Ibid., p. 93-94.
479 See Ibid., pp. 30, 48, 75, 76, 93, 153, 9-10.
480 See Ibid., p. 140.
before him, which puts him on the non-orthodox road of the Râfiḍa and endangers the dimension of orthodoxy stressed by his predecessors. 481

One would usually expect a discussion between the merits of two historical figures to be logically remote from ʿAbbāsid political debates, but as we have pointed out above, the contemporary political discussions of al-Jāḥiz’s time were assuming this fashion of recollecting (and possibly reshaping) the immediate and distant historical past. Every effort is taken by al-ʿUthmāniyya not to undermine ʿAli’s merits, and their view of him should therefore not be taken literally but as a reaction to (and possibly corrective measure) to the Râfiḍi non-orthodox dimensions attached to ʿAli as we shall see below.

Hence al-Jāḥiz’s aim was to rid al-Maʾmūn of the excessive standpoints of the ʿAlawīyya, (al-Zaydiyya wa-al-Râfiḍa) and less of the ʿUthmāniyya, in the hope that he could win him back to the Muʿtazili stand that he sees as the most objective and just position to be followed, a position that has room for respect for all the guided caliphs, which seems to draw from the Başrite fountain of ʿUthmāni fiqh and mahuḍdithūn as much as it depends on the more solid basis of al-Qur’ān and Ijmāʾ al-Salaf. It is this school of al-Jāḥizīyya, a distinct brand of Muʿtazilism and one offshoot of ʿUthmānīsm that is quite versed in orthodoxy that we shall analyse. One should therefore be prepared to reject the unsound claims that assume Fitāzāl and orthodoxy (here meaning ahl al-Ḥadith) to be incompatible.

A quick reading of al-Jāḥiz’s ʿUthmāniyya (and of his other works) seems to me quite reflective of a man who was well established in the domain of Ḥadīth, and the quarrels that are found in the biographical literature between the Muʿtazila and ahl al-Ḥadīth should be re-examined. At least they should reflect the developing tension which al-Jāḥiz’s non-literal approach to Ḥadīth, (i.e., his talent in the science of fiqh al-Ḥadīth) caused him with those literal narrators, 482 be they among the

482 See Pellat’s remarks on al-Jāḥiz being a master in the science of Ḥadīth in Pellat, Le Milieu Basrien, (in Arabic) pp. 135-137. Not only did al-Jāḥiz frequent Ḥadīth circles, but he is described as a narrator too, from Qāḍī Abū Yūsuf directly (d. 182). This experience will also be used later when he writes on futūḍ to Ibn Abī Duʿār, which uncovers as al-Ḥājrī suggests, al-Jāḥiz’s talent in the principles of Islamic Jurisprudence. See al-Ḥājrī, al-Jāḥiz, p. 313 where Ḥājrī says that the extant K al-Futuḍ represents one of the earliest attempts in the science of usūl al-fiqh. See al-Jāḥiz’s other extant work “Risāla fi Kitmān al-Sīr, Rasāʾīl, 1: 162 (where his own non-literalistic understanding of religion is outlined in brief in the way he understands Dhikr as Subhān Allāh, al-Ḥamdu lillāh and Allāh Akbar to also transcend the
Sunnis or Rāfidis. This could partly justify the way he forwards himself as a neutral judge between the ʿUthmānis (who, like him draw from the source of Hadith, but unlike him, in a literalistic way) and the Shiʿites.

III. al-Jāḥiz's approach

As for the approach followed by al-Jāḥiz to express the above themes, one can detect the following lines of reasoning despite al-Jāḥiz's inclination to digress at certain points:

- A keen attempt to pull out and defend Abū Bakr's virtues in reaction to the Rāfidi attempt to blemish his noble record is made on behalf of the ʿUthmāni spokesmen in the belief that merit and Imamate had been inseparable and hence al-ʿUthmāniyya's inventory of Abū Bakr's virtues is acknowledged to stress their causal link to his authentic Imamate. In other words, Abū Bakr's Imamate was a direct consequence and function of his established merits, in the Prophetic and post-Prophetic eras.

- ʿAlī's virtuous figure and Imamate should never be applied to eclipse that of Abū Bakr, by undermining his merits and rejecting his Imamate as the Rāfida did.

- Any attempt to pass a sound comparative judgement on the respective virtues of the Prophet's Companions should only be undertaken once the following skills are mastered:

(a) Full knowledge of the Companions' actions and merits in the Prophetic and post-Prophetic eras should be noted before passing a judgement among them. al-Jāḥiz - through the ʿUthmāniyya's spokesmen - is critical of their Rāfidi adversaries' rejection of Abū Bakr's Imamate. The dispute is tactfully settled by drawing the attention of the addressee to the fact that such an undermining of Abū Bakr is an equal if not stronger rejection of the approval that has been confirmed for him by (a) The Prophet (b) The Qurʾān (c) The Ṣaḥāba. (d) The Tābiʿūn (e) The narrators whom we shall expound below.

 literal recitation of them to the level of applying them in actions, such that the practical application of Takbir is - al-Jāḥiz says - in its power to drive one to all actions that please God, or in its deterring effect by making one avoid the actions that are sinful.
(b) The theologian should be well versed in the nature of proofs, *(hujaj)* and be able to distinguish refutable from irrefutable sound proofs,⁴⁸³ and fully aware of the differences in matters *(furūq al-Umūr).*⁴⁸⁴ The last requirement connects theology with Ḥadīth, and one is astonished at al-Jāḥiz’s frequent appeals to the body of *Muḥaddithūn* as an extra evidence to the argument discussed, based on their established narration, once he has exhaustively covered the delicately different meanings and interpretations that some Ḥadīths have been given, against their real meaning, in what reveals al-Jāḥiz as a forerunner in the science of *fiqh al-Ḥadīth.*

(c) Some effort should be taken to avoid being a victim to one sect (i.e., other than al-Jāḥiz’s), and an objective rendering of the disputing sects is furnished, in the Jāḥizian perspective outlined above, to help the caliph arrive at a free choice.⁴⁸⁵

IV. al-ʿUthmāniyya’s basis for Abū Bakr’s Imamate:

From reviewing the arguments of the ʿUthmāniyya, one can safely detect their criteria for establishing the sound Imamate of Abū Bakr. This rests on the collateral approval of the Prophet, *al-Qur’ān,* the Ṣaḥāba, the Ṭabīʿūn, the consensus of the *Salaf* and the *Umma* and the body of *Muḥaddithūn* and *fuqahāʾ* contemporary to al-Jāḥiz that constitute the majority of the group al-ʿUthmāniyya. The ʿUthmāniyya’s criteria for any candidate’s *faḍl* stems from critically examining who was the one single person that, when the Prophet died, was the best of all Muslims *(afḍal al-Muslimin)* and most knowledgeable *(afqah fi al-din),* more correct *(aṣwab raʿy)*⁴⁸⁶ and most patient and enduring to hardship, in the day that the candidate was chosen to succeed the Prophet.⁴⁸⁶ To demonstrate that Abū Bakr fulfilled this, they cite the following incidents that were very vital in making him be chosen as successor to the Prophet.

---

⁴⁸³ al-ʿUthmāniyya, pp. 142, 148.
⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 181
⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 187.
⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 75-76
(A) Era of Prophethood:

(i) The Prophetic approval of Abū Bakr (Incidents that reflect Abū Bakr's *fadl* in the era of Prophethood):

In addition to holding that Abū Bakr was the first Companion to embrace Islam,487 his *fadl* is shown in the Prophet's naming of him as *al-Ṣiddiq*,488 and describing him as his *Khalil*,489 his equation of his *Imān* as outweighing that of the whole Muslim *Umma*,490 the Prophet's profession that Abū Bakr (and `Umar) are the most privileged of the adults in paradise,491 the Prophetic advice that guidance ought to be sought from them,492 and the Prophetic wish that Abū Bakr may soon have an associate493 (to leave Makka), which was actualized in their Hijra, and the privileged companionships with the Prophet from Makka to Medina494 in addition to the exclusive tolerance exhibited by Abū Bakr concerning the Prophet's action in the *Hudaybiyya* incident495 (which was not known for either ṢAli or `Umar), and by virtue of the fact Abū Bakr's *fadl* was demonstratively reflected in the same incident by putting his signature immediately after the Prophet's.496

In addition to that, Abū Sufyān's rushing first to Abū Bakr on the day of the conquest of Makka, reflects that he was "*al-maqṣad wa-al-muṭtamad, al-mafzā* wa al-murshid/murshad ba'd rasūl-illāh."497 The Prophetic designation of Abū Bakr as head of the pilgrimage expedition in 9 A.H.,498 besides other incidents that show him as the most courageous,499 patient500 and learned501 (afqahuhum) among the

---

487 *Ibid.*, p. 3. Also first in the way his acceptance of Islam differs from ṢAli's alleged acceptance when he was much younger.
501 *Ibid.*, p. 103. Most patient in the way he stayed with the Prophet when many Companions have already left Makka to avoid Quraysh's oppression.
Saḥāba, should ultimately, the Ḥanāfīs conclude, have been behind the Prophet's orders to choose Abū Bakr to lead the prayers while the Prophet was on his death bed, thus to reflect the consistent Prophetic acknowledgement of Abū Bakr's merits up to the last moments of the Prophet's life.

(ii) Qur'anic reference to Abū Bakr's faḍl:

al-Jāḥiẓ here cites the unanimous views of Qur'anic commentators (ahl al-Ta'wil) apart from what is adhered to by the Rāfiḍī scholars, on Abū Bakr being the direct subject of several Qur'anic verses.

For instance, the Qur'anic reference to the one who walks blindly and the one who walks vigilantly is referring to Abū Jahl and Abū Bakr respectively, by citing two extremes, the head of kufr and the head of Ḥanāfī. The other Qur'anic reference on the generous and pious is understood to allude to Abū Bakr after his notable philanthropic deeds to those oppressed slaves by freeing them from their condition.

Furthermore, the Qur'anic reference to the aggressive people that al-A'rab will be summoned to fight with the Muhājirūn and Anṣār, is to the Banū Ḥanīfa whom Abū Bakr was called to fight. The Qur'anic order to the believers to take the side of the pious and honest points to Abū Bakr and 'Umar. These same figures are said by those commentators to have embodied God's reference to the people who love and were beloved by God according to the authority of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

(iii) Further Qur'anic/Divine reference to Abū Bakr's faḍl: and its political connotation to the ʿAbbāsid caliphate

In spite of the leading role of one Misṭāh b. Uthātha in circulating the forged scandal on ʿĀ'isha, Abū Bakr's daughter and the Prophet's wife, the Qur'ān has implicitly referred to Abū Bakr by encouraging him to forgive that man, who was his

502 Ibid., pp. 131, 166.
503 Ibid., pp. 113-114.
504 Ibid., p. 114.
505 Ibid.
506 Ibid.
507 Ibid., p. 115.
servant (mawlä) and the son of his cousin, despite his role in hadith al-Ifk; and to continue his favours to him and to his children. al-Jähiz after citing the Qur'anic address to Abū Bakr as one who is privileged with Fadl508 which promised him more rewards and forgiveness should he forgive his mawlä509 goes on to say:

Who is more superior in status (a°. am gadr°R) from a person whom God has privileged by addressing and acknowledging his status (sha'n), by allowing his merits to be narrated on his behalf by the Archangel Gabriel and His Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon them.510

al-Jähiz cites other Qur'anic references to Abū Bakr, such as the verse that reads: "wa anzala sakinatahu "alayhi" i.e., when God's calmness was bestowed upon Abū Bakr, as the Prophet lacked none. In this instance al-Jähiz steps out from the historical context to draw the attention of the addressee to the difference that distinguished the Prophet from Abū Bakr, despite their excellences, yet the Prophet has surpassed him. From this, al-Jähiz wittingly suggests to his addressee that a hierarchical system of fadl has existed, (first between the Prophet and Abū Bakr, then between Abū Bakr and 6Umar as 6Umar is described as the one who has emigrated earlier than Abū Bakr),511 hence he was less superior than him, whereas Abū Bakr was more meritorious as he was the last to join the category of emigrants. The political message behind this analysis is quite significant as al-Jähiz's 6Uthmäni spokesmen is used to make the 6Abbāsid caliph's confidence in himself unshakable: This interpretation could carry a lot of significance, and al-Jähiz's conclusion that the difference in merit between the Prophet and Abū Bakr, (also between Abū Bakr and 6Umar) has (or should have) a contemporary parallel, i.e., to put it in al-Jähiz's words:

... this difference between the Prophet and his successor, with all that it reflects on the outweighing merits of the former over the latter, is the same difference witnessed between the caliph and his heir-apparent ...512

This text could therefore be taken - in addition to other contextual markers - as a very likely indication of al-Jähiz's efforts to put an end to the caliph's recurring worries on the question of succession and rulership by insinuating to him that he should never lose confidence in himself as the afdal amongst his community, a Ma'mûnid disposition which was exposed when al-Amin died, and now stirred by

508 Ibid., p. 112 and al-Qur'ân, 22: 24 (Sūrat al-Nūr /Chapter of Light).
509 al-6Uthmâniyya, p. 112.
510 Ibid., p. 113.
511 See Ibid., p. 107.
512 Ibid.
the Shi'ite (Zaydi infiltration to Mu'tazilite circles) suggestion that 'Ali b. Abi Talib and his descendants enjoy an inherent charismatic right to succession. A Rafidi-Mu'tazili clash seems quite active in the struggle of both camps to bring the 'lost' caliph to their side. Watt's analysis of the symbolic significance of the statements about the first four caliphs and how relevant were they to ninth century politics is worth quoting:

Kitab al-Uthmâniyya is actually for the most part an argument for the superiority of Abû Bakr to 'Ali... The Uthmânites were primarily concerned to oppose the undue exaltation of 'Ali by the Rafidites... Most of the Uthmânites were men who believed that the Islamic state should be based on the principles revealed in the Qur'ân and the Traditions, and their insistence on the imamate of Abû Bakr developed naturally as a reaction to the Rafidite or Imamite insistence on the superiority of 'Ali. In the thought of such persons this superiority was linked with the superiority of imams descended from 'Ali and their immunity (isma) from sin and error. Some went too far as to say that the Imam could abrogate the Qur'an, and even the more moderate held that the decisions of the imam were superior to all methods of interpreting the Qur'an approved by the Sunnites. Thus the disputes whether Abû Bakr or 'Ali succeeded the Prophet and the Traditions, in their application to the life of the community, were to be interpreted by the generally accepted methods of the scholars or by the bare decision of the imam; and this was a central question of the politics of the ninth century.513

B Incidents that reflect Abû Bakr's faḍl in the Era of the Ṣaḥāba, i.e., following the Prophetic era:

One has to gather al-Jâhiz's scattered arguments in order to arrive at the common heading suggested above.

al-Jâhiz refers to the Ṣahâbâ's acknowledgement of Abû Bakr's faḍl, in addition to the notable Qurayshite and Arab clan leaders as instantly translated and embodied by their unanimous acceptance of his Imamship, which (a) follows an acquaintance with him that had extended for twenty three years514 and (b) was not upset by the insignificant dismay reported by the Râfiḍa on behalf of some of the Ṣaḥâba.

A fully detailed and critical defence of Abû Bakr's Imamate is given until Abû Bakr wisely passed rulership to the most meritorious then surviving figure, ʿUmar b. al-Khattâb, to emphasize the overwhelming consensus of the people's contentment with his Imamate.

514 Ibid., pp. 132, 172.
Abū Bakr's role in saving the Muslim community:

To start with, his exemplary statemanship was reflected in the exclusively wise reaction upon receiving the news of the Prophet's death which was received unorthodoxly by some members of the *Umma*.

Thus he rushed to the Muhājirūn, lest they should excessively regard Muḥammad, peace be upon him, as the Christians have done [with Jesus]... his agony was, however, not eased by noticing that men like ʿUmar, ʿAbd al-Rahmān and ʿUthmān were not any different, so he started with them pointing out their fallacies and excessiveness...

Abū Bakr's wisdom was also reflected when his attention was drawn to the Anšār's gathering under the Saqīfa of Banū Sāʿīda, around the figure of Saʿd b. ʿUbāda, intending to choose two caliphs, one from them and the other from the Muhājirūn. His quick arrival of their assembly and his exemplary speech to the Anšār in which their interest in ruling was rightly put aside in favour of the deserving Muhājirūn is highlighted. Abū Bakr's course of action is praised as he represented God's bounty by rescuing the *Umma* from their undue pursuit of *mulk*, after stressing that Muḥammad had really died. His action furthermore saved the community from division and hence spared them the possibility of being raided from outside Medina at their most vulnerable moment following the Prophet's death.

Such qualities, al-ʿUthmāniyya concludes, should have significantly re-enforced his established merits, among the Muslims, in the role he played as "protector, adviser, consooler, and healer"; without God's provision (of Abū Bakr), the *Umma* could have been fatally left to that short sighted outlook and erroneous choice which was about to bring about their destruction, and thus he is considered as the *Umma*’s true saviour after the Prophet, which was translated into a striking consensus over his Imamate.

Here al-Jāḥiz's ʿUthmānī spokesmen digresses a little by emphasizing that ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib lacked the atmosphere of consensus Abū Bakr had enjoyed as Imam, and a detailed study of the opposition fronts met by both caliphs is sketched to stress Abū Bakr's sound and popular Imamate. The ʿUthmānītes - who reject ʿAli's Imamate - have singled out all the opposition fronts raised against ʿAli, such as that of Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ when he was demanding that ʿAli appoint another *Shūrā* (as

515 Ibid., p. 199.
516 Ibid., p. 200.
517 Ibid.
Umar had done), on the criterion of merit and noble deeds.\textsuperscript{518} Talha's and al-Zubayr's equal demand for Shura,\textsuperscript{519} their "enforced" acceptance of his Imamate, at the hands of `Ali's emissaries (rusul),\textsuperscript{520} their open refusal to it that escalated to military confrontation in the battle of the Camel (together with `A'isha's dismay, in addition to that of Muawiya which resulted in another bloody confrontation), all these events should highlight the much forgotten fact, - the `Uthmâniids say - that point to the absence of any objection raised against these people in such words as: "Why are you fighting a man or asking him to choose one who is better (for Imamship) when the Prophet had already designated him (as successor) and clarified his status?"\textsuperscript{521}

Such a wide opposition, in addition to that which `Ali had met from his closest associates, and the most alert in his army - who considered him as Kafir and alienated him from his Imamate\textsuperscript{522} - all indicate the chaotic situation and rebellion witnessed by `Ali and not Abû Bakr.

What is noticeable here is that al-`Uthmäniyya who are categorically described as rejectors of `Ali's Imamate, hold that with `Ali's reign, conquests (futuh) came to an end, and the door of fitan\textsuperscript{523} was opened. It is said: "who else but him did the Khawarij rebel against?" However, at this point al-Jâhiiz's `Uthmânî scholars stop the argument because it falls under the category of attacking `Ali, and that is not their concern.\textsuperscript{524}

\textsuperscript{518} Ibid., pp. 159, 173 and 275. (Sa`d is described as advising `Ali to refrain from despotism, Ibid., p. 159).

\textsuperscript{519} Ibid., p. 173.

\textsuperscript{520} Ibid., p. 173, 159.

\textsuperscript{521} Ibid., p. 275.

\textsuperscript{522} Ibid., p. 174.

\textsuperscript{523} Notice the difference in describing the difficulties encountered by the contrasted caliphs. `Ali met/caused fitan, in contrast to the 'Mihna' that Abû Bakr has successfully contained, which no body has met nor would he ever encounter. Ibid., p. 184.

\textsuperscript{524} Ibid., pp. 185-186.
V. 'Uthmāni Defence of Abū Bakr's Imamate by Refuting the Rāfīḍa's Claims:

A. Refutation of Rāfīḍa's Interpretations of Abū Bakr's Speeches:

In this section the 'Uthmāniyya put Abū Bakr's speeches - related to his post as first caliph after the Prophet - in the proper context that should be understood against the far fetched interpretations assumed by the Rāfīḍa concerning those very utterances.

As for Abū Bakr's attestation that his bay'ā was more of a 'falṭa' (i.e., a lucky coincidence) than the prevailing situation would otherwise have allowed, the 'Uthmāniyya also quote 'Umar's identical attestation on Abū Bakr's Imamate who adds it was "falṭa - waqā Allāh sharrahā "525 i.e., a coincidence whose evil God has prevented. The danger is fully expounded, by acknowledging the existence of insurgents, oppositionists and enemies526 when the Prophet died, yet Abū Bakr's successful control of those difficulties in Medina against the potential ones outside is ascribed to Divine intervention and a Divine bounty that is usually bestowed on a Prophet or to a successor to the Prophet.527

Hence the coincidental factor is accepted, in the way sketched above that does not deny the imminent dangers surrounding the Companions, i.e., that falṭa refers to those critical moments in which the hearts of the Sahāba were scattered,

525 Ibid., pp. 196-197.
526 Ibid., such as (1) a person who was more noble in descent (hasab) than Abū Bakr, and wanted the caliphate to be affixed to his closest kin so that his tribe's hasab would increase (2) a person whose kinship to the Prophet made him think that lineage can relieve him from pursuit of knowledge and good deeds (3) a person whose belief was so faint that he never missed a chance of insurgence to become famous and popular (4) a person who embraced Islam out of fear, as the munāfīqūn of Medina (and the surrounding area) and the Beduin Aqrāb that were equally awaiting the first chance to rebellion (5) a quietist person who follows anyone who wins over (6) people as al-Anşār whose step-given their number and their socio-economic significance-had it been followed by the Muhājirūn, of selecting an Amir from both groups, could have opened a disastrous door of corruption, not only between the Anşār and Muhājirūn, but one that could have really alerted the enemies outside Medina to form a coalition front that could have united the munāfīqūn, the murtaddān (who left Islam once they heard about the Prophet's death) under the leadership of Musaylima, the false Prophet, and attack Medina at that critical moment of disagreement. See Ibid., pp. 196-198.
527 Ibid., pp. 198-199.
their voices loud and opinions disunited: Abū Bakr's presence was extremely significant in the way he made them united, tolerant and obedient.\textsuperscript{528}

If the Rāfiḍa object to Abū Bakr's first speech addressed to the Muhājirūn and Anṣār in which he first drew the attention of the latter to the undeniable charisma of Quraysh's nasab and hasab - that was privileged by the genetic pool from which the Prophet Muḥammad came and was initially backed by those who accepted his message - in the sense that Abū Bakr's acknowledgement of this faḍl of Quraysh which is not found among the Anṣār should have inversely made him give way to the post of succession to one from Banū Hāshim, as he came from the less notable clan of Taym:\textsuperscript{529} the ʿUthmāniyya clarify this misunderstanding in the following manner: Abū Bakr should never be taken as holding the superiority of descent over religious merit. His reference to Quraysh's nasab should not be taken literally, as Abū Bakr provisionally used it while developing his doctrine of the superiority of merit over descent.

It can be argued, however, that when al-Anṣār heard Abū Bakr's reference to Quraysh's faḍl from the angle of descent, and were reminded that they hold no blood relation to the Prophet, and that there were people who have held such blood relationship, this kind of reasoning was not sufficient to withdraw their representative from the Imāra to the wizāra. In an earlier section of al-ʿUthmāniyya al-Jāḥiz confesses that the Prophetic message was mostly rejected by the various clans (buṭūn) of Quraysh itself, and Abū Lahab despite his kinship to the Prophet (his uncle) displayed an opposition to Muḥammad equal to that of Abū Jahl, who was not a close relative.\textsuperscript{530} The descendants of ʿAbd Manāf were the most vehement enemies of the Prophet despite their kinship to him.\textsuperscript{531} So how is Abū Bakr's reference to Quraysh's hasab justified?

The ʿUthmāni spokesman here bluntly points out that his Rāfiḍi adversary has taken Abū Bakr's statement out of its full context. Abū Bakr's reference to Quraysh's nasab of course omitted the negative dimension of descent implied above by stressing its positiveness before the community of helpers that had a reverence for the concept of kinship (garāba) and a respect for lineage, (hasab) and it is for this

\textsuperscript{528} Ibid., p. 193 and 199-200.
\textsuperscript{529} Ibid., pp. 200, and see pp. 201, 202.
\textsuperscript{530} See Ibid., pp. 101-102.
\textsuperscript{531} See Ibid., p. 103.
very reason that he employed these concepts in order to make them give way to those who were closer to the Prophet and/or enjoyed an equally if not a superior social hasab.\footnote{532} Once this reasoning had convinced them, the next decisive step, now that al-Anṣār's attention had been shifted to a group that was more prestigious in descent and lineage (at least by virtue of the undeniable fact that the Prophet stemmed from amongst a group other than them), Abū Bakr could now state his political criterion and vision: Once Quraysh's faḍl is acknowledged in the positive sense (giving birth to the Prophet),\footnote{533} Abū Bakr singles out the body of Muhājirūn, who were obviously not collectively Hāshimites or Qurashites, by reminding them of al-Qur'ān's reference to their established and superior faḍl over al-Anṣār,\footnote{534} in being the first to embrace Islam in the conditions of oppression they met in Makka when the Anṣār were still non-Muslims and enjoying life in Medina. The migration of Muhājirūn from their homes in Makka to Medina should definitely not undermine the virtues of the Anṣār, yet the superiority of al-Muhājirūn - which does not rest on descent at all and is based on precedence (Sābiqa) in belief and deeds - over the Anṣār remains a quality of the former by the fact that the Muhājirūn had to experience the further difficulty of enduring home-sickness and alienation from their homes and families.\footnote{535}

In this way Abū Bakr's first speech to the Muhājirūn and Anṣār is properly interpreted and analysed to reflect his true position on lineage, (madhhabu fi al-ahsāb)\footnote{536} against the claims of the Rāfiḍa. Yes, Abū Bakr had alluded to nasab, but that was the opening phrases of his speech (ṣadr kalāmihi)\footnote{537} for completely different reasons than could be assumed by the Rāfiḍa, who did not follow him in the latter portions of his speech (ʿajz kalāmihi),\footnote{538} in which he had most beautifully expressed the doctrine of the supporters of equality: madhhab ʿashāb al-taswiya,\footnote{539} that makes piety and moral actions (taqwā)\footnote{540} the sole criteria for leadership.

\footnote{532} Ibid., p. 20. 
\footnote{533} Ibid., p. 200. 
\footnote{534} Ibid., p. 201. The exact Qur'anic reference is not spelled out. 
\footnote{535} Ibid., pp. 202-203. Here an allusion is made to how the Qur'ān has put the Muhājirūn before al-Anṣār in the hierarchy of Sābiqūn, which therefore points to the Qur'ānic Sūra 9 verse 100 where their eminent order cited in the Qur'ānic verse, follows their precedence in Islam. 
\footnote{536} Ibid., p. 202. 
\footnote{537} Ibid. 
\footnote{538} Ibid. 
\footnote{539} Ibid. 
\footnote{540} Ibid.
Although the negative aspects of lineage highlighted by Abū Bakr as a premise are not explicitly rejected, the present text of al-Jāhiz can be taken to assume such a rejection has been confirmed by the immediate flow of Abū Bakr's sentences that stress the exclusive virtues of the religious merits of al-Muhājirūn. Hence the reasoning given to the Anṣār is as follows: If succession is based on descent - (and obviously it cannot be) - then beware of Quraysh's superiority over you in this respect (in the positive sense, of having Muhammad coming from them). But if leadership is deserved by faḍl in din, then the Sābiqūn (the first Muslims) from amongst the Muhājirūn praised in al-Qur'ān, should be the ones to raise their right to succession. Abū Bakr's statement to al-Anṣār that this matter can not be snatched (i.e., from those who legally deserve to claim it) "inna hādha al-amr laysa bi-khilsa" - al-Jāhiz here says to his addressee - should reflect Abū Bakr's high confidence and clear vision as to where the Imāmate should be affixed ('Ārif " bi mawāḍī al-Imāma), 541 and as such his speech should not be interpreted against the view that religious leadership can be based on anything but ascendancy in religion, because the institution of caliphate is the greatest manifestation of religious authority and accordingly the higher the authority sought, a parallel ascendancy in religious knowledge and deeds should be provided and accompanied. 542

The ʿUthmānī scholars' view of Imamate is therefore accounted for in their categorical refutation of the alleged role of nasab in leading to Imamship, as they are quoted holding that no one can assume headship in religion other than by religion "aḥad lā yanāl al-riyāsa fi al-din bi-ghayr al-din". 543 Indeed, Abū Bakr's opening statement when detached from the whole speech can be misleading.

Another statement of Abū Bakr is also quoted to emphasize the above conclusions of the ʿUthmāniyya, on the issue of merit versus hasab/nasab, i.e., the superiority of Abū Bakr over ʿAlī. Abū Bakr's utterance: "I have been chosen by you yet I do not have the right of claiming to be the best among you" is used by the Rāfīda as an evidence that the first caliph after the Prophet had confessed his weakness i.e., "if he was sincere, then this contradicts the order of merit adhered to by you (ʿUthmānīs) when you have put him first among your recognized Imams." 544

541 Ibid., p. 203.
542 Ibid., p. 201 in which the whole reasoning is summarized.
543 Ibid., p. 204.
544 Ibid., p. 227.
Alternatively, "if he was not sincere, he loses credit for no one has forced him to be dishonest . . . but this is unlikely and hence his attestation that he is not the best should have prevented him from putting himself ahead of someone who is better than him (i.e., ʿAli), and thus he was ungrateful to that person (ʿAli) who had given him the chance to precede him.\textsuperscript{545}

al-Jāḥiẓ cites the views of many figures that justify Abū Bakr's statement. ʿAli's son, al-Hasan is quoted saying on this: "God knew he was the most meritorious, but the true believer usually humbles himself . . ."\textsuperscript{546} and such a disposition is only exhibited by genuine caliphs and guided Imams.\textsuperscript{547}

Qatāda is quoted as saying that Abū Bakr's denial that he was the best means that he was not coming from the best nobility of Quraysh or from al-Anṣār, and that his rulership is hence a function of his precedence in Islām, (Sābiqa).\textsuperscript{548}

Abū Bakr's saying, "choose anyone you prefer" (ʿUmar or Abū ʿUbayda), should not mean Abū Bakr's unfitness as the Rāfīḍa claim: this statement, al-ʿUthmāniyya says, was addressed to al-Anṣār and those who were present then, the moment Abū Bakr secured their acknowledgement of the faḍl of al-Muhājirūn, that consequently meant "Amīrs" should be chosen from among them. Abū Bakr's statement does not reflect any sort of incompetence because after making the Anṣār aware of al-Muhājirūn's faḍl, he was quite sure of his status among the superior Muhājirūn,\textsuperscript{549} and as a wise politician he suggested the persons of ʿUmar and Abū ʿUbayda, avoiding to impose himself despite his recognized status.\textsuperscript{550}

B. Refutation of the Rāfīḍa's Claims Of The Existence Of A Significant Opposition Block Against Abū Bakr:

When Abū Bakr asked: "does anyone wish to remove me?" ʿUmar is said to have preferred to be slaughtered than take Abū Bakr's post as caliph of the

\textsuperscript{545} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{546} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{547} Ibid., p. 229.
\textsuperscript{548} Ibid., pp. 227-228.
\textsuperscript{549} Ibid., pp. 230-231.
\textsuperscript{550} Ibid., p. 231.
Prophet.\textsuperscript{551} Ĕmar’s approval of Ėbu’ Bakr’s bay’a is highlighted by the ĖUthmānis saying: “Which bay’a was more authentic than one in which Ėmar had accepted? knowing that the Prophet had said that Ėmar’s utterances coincided with truth”.\textsuperscript{552} Furthermore, Ėabd al-Raḥmān b. ĖAwfs approval is also cited, taking note of the fact that the Prophet had described Ėabd al-Raḥmān as the trustworthy ‘al-Amin’.\textsuperscript{553} Ibn Mas’ūd’s approval is also acknowledged in light of the Prophetic saying “I have accepted for my Umma that which is favoured by Ibn Umm Ėabd (i.e. Ibn Mas’ūd)”. Other Companions have been named by the Rāfiḍa as resenting Ėbu’ Bakr’s Imamate, and after their reasons are mentioned al-Jāhiz forwards the ĖUthmāni refutations that found them to be unsound allegations.

-Salmān:

Salmān’s alleged objection in Persian (kardād wa nardād translated by al-Jāhiz as fa’alum wa lam ta’alū. i.e., you did but have not done) to the Ėnṣār and Muhājirūn that their choice of Ėbu’ Bakr fell beneath the expected ideal nominee (i.e., ĖAli) is criticized in detail. But how could their choice be fallible? If Ėbu’ Bakr’s actions were to be accused of falling short of the standard, al-ĚUthmāniyya’s answer is that Ėbu’ Bakr’s rule was perfect from all sides (he did not deviate from the right path, remained faithful, rejected nepotism) in the critical moments following the Prophet’s death that allow one to believe that no one has been subjected to the difficulties - nor would be subject - and reacted to them in the correct way that he has chosen.\textsuperscript{554} How could ĖAli be assumed to have taken Ėbu’ Bakr’s established role, “when we know that futūh were blocked in his reign, fitan raged with his rule and the Khawārij only then revolted against him.” The ĖUthmāni spokesman stops here in order not to follow the Rāfiḍa’s style of undermining the guided caliphs.\textsuperscript{555}

\textsuperscript{551} Ibid., p. 232. al-Jāhiz draws the attention of the caliph to the big difference that exists between Ėbu’ Bakr’s cited request (to pay allegiance to Ėmar or Ėbu’ Ubayda) and between their spontaneous whole hearted wish that allegiance be solely made to him. See Ibid., p. 233.
\textsuperscript{552} Ibid., p. 233.
\textsuperscript{553} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{554} This argument is sketched in Ibid., pp. 183-185, citing Ėbu’ Bakr’s virtuous deeds (suppression of ahl al-Ridda, in al-Hira, and of the munāfiqūn in and outside Medina, killing of the false Prophet (Musaylima), victory of Yamāma, imprisonment of Tulayha, sending troops to Syria and defending Islam in every respect.
\textsuperscript{555} Ibid., p. 186.
Salmān's words should be put in their Persian context i.e., in the way he was brought up to assume that if rulership was dynastic, and confined to the Prophet's house and specifically on inheritance, then this should have prevented the less notable Arabs and clever ā'jam from seeking that post. Here al-Jāḥīz is putting two different visions of rulership: The Persian, - which is dependent on inheritance, and has the qualities of ghalaba and ra'y that are associated with mālik, - and the Islamic, which is based on Kitāb and Sunna and is described as Imāma.\[556\] If Salmān ever said this, then this statement should be used as an evidence and basis by the group of al-ʿAbbāsiyya and al-Jāḥīz here promises the addressee that he will expound this group's arguments as soon as he finishes the present work. Furthermore Salmān's use of the Persian words is highly questionable before an assembly of Arabs. Furthermore, narrators of Ḥadīth have never reported those words which should have triggered the Sahāba to investigate their meaning.\[557\]

Khālid b. Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣ:

Khālid b. Saʿīd's alleged rejection of Abū Bakr's Imamate for a period of three whole months\[558\] is refuted by al-Jāḥīz's ʿUthmānītes in the following manner: First, Khālid was outside Medina during that period, collecting alms from Yemen and he did pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr once he returned.\[559\]

As for Khālid's (and equally Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb's) alleged shock upon knowing that Abū Bakr had become Imam, which took the flabbergasting form of addressing the group of Banū ʿAbd Manāf:\[560\] "How come you agreed to be led by a man from the (less notable) clan of Taym?"\[561\] al-Jāḥīz says that neither ʿAli nor ʿUthmān are reported to have reacted to Khālid's objection. From here al-Jāḥīz elaborates the view that Khālid's objection should alert us to the fact that the Muslims' consensus over Abū Bakr should not imply that Abū Bakr got office magically i.e., with 100% approval when we know that the community was not free from a minority of dissidents, enviers, ignorants, and rebellious members whose remarks should not - as they really had not - be given any degree of significance.

---

\[556\] Ibid.
\[557\] Ibid., pp. 188-189.
\[558\] or six months Ibid., p. 167.
\[559\] Ibid., p. 190.
\[560\] In p. 190 the question is raised to ʿUthmān and ʿAli.
\[561\] Ibid., p. 167. Abū Bakr's father is also reported as raising the same question.
But even if Khālid's utterance was really spoken, then al-Jāḥīz says it can be used to oppose the claims of the Rāfīda. Firstly, if Khālid meant that rulership should be confined and continued in the line of Banū ʿAbd Manāf in the fashion known in the Pre-Islamic time that gives priority to ḥasab, or by virtue of kinship to the Prophet, then - al-Jāḥīz suggests - this matter should have been addressed to al-ʿAbbās who was more deserving than ʿAli and the rest of Banū ʿAbd Manāf. If Khālid, however implied ʿAli's exclusive right, he should not have said: "did you agree O sons of ʿAbd Manāf ..." because both ʿUthmān and ʿAli were Manāfites. Instead he should have said: "did you agree, O family of the Prophet, or Banū Hashim or Banū ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib", and even then, ʿAbbās's right would still have been superior to that of ʿAli! If, however, the succession should not be ascribed to one specific clan,562 and can be conceived as having nothing to do with the close relatives and immediate clan of the Prophet (raḥt al-Nabi) or even with the most distant Manāfī, (all descendants of the great-great grandfather of the Prophet) then it is right to assume that it can be the right of the most distant member of Banū Kilāb, (the sixth ancestor of the Prophet) and hence, if that is the case, then Taym (the brother of Kilāb and equally sixth in relation to the Prophet) has the same right as Kilāb.

al-Jāḥīz concludes that Khālid's use of the term ʿAbd Manāf is therefore meaningless, for if it meant the best among Quraysh in knowledge and deeds, it was redundant (in view of the fact that the best has been given this right), and if it meant the best among Quraysh in general his statement is useless (as seen above). If it meant the closest relative to the Prophet, i.e. ʿAli) then it can be opposed by the right of al-ʿAbbās and if he meant the right of inheritance, his statement does not indicate that. If he meant a specific designated man assigned by the Prophet, he should have stated that more bluntly. .563

Eventually, al-Jāḥīz tends to believe that Khālid's position was not confined to the hypothetical possibilities above and that his common sense soon returned to him. His consent, however, should not overshadow that of the Anṣār-Muhājirūn towards Abū Bakr, and his alleged objection should not be used as an evidence of

562 The text in p. 190 is improperly edited and the two arguments are put without order, and misplaced.
563 See Ibid., p. 191.
Ali's superior right to the Imamate, as we know that neither Ali nor the Muslims claimed that right in times of happiness or stress.\textsuperscript{564}

Bilāl

Bilāl's alleged objection to Abū Bakr and Umar is refuted in the light of the fact Bilāl happily accepted Umar's will to become governor of Damascus, and was highly respected by Umar who equated his Aṭā to that granted to Uthmān, Ali, Ṭalḥa, Zubayr and Sa'īd. Bilāl's alleged opposition to Abū Bakr is equally rejected, as this allegation only comes from people ignorant of Umar, the authentic Sultān and, the dignity of Khilāfa he has embodied.\textsuperscript{565}

al-Miqdād

al-Miqdād's alleged objection to Abū Bakr's caliphate and acceptance of Ali's is also refuted. The Uthmānites insist that nothing certain or authentic has reached them in this matter, and wonder why al-Miqdād was cited. On the contrary to the Rāfīḍī allegation, the Uthmānites maintain that al-Miqdād was most resentful of Ali as the latter is reported to have given the Prophet a false impression of one woman's real consent to marry al-Miqdād.\textsuperscript{566}

Ammār b. Yāsīr

Ammār's alleged opposition to Umar is equally refuted, in the sense that Ammār is projected as one of the most sincere governors of Umar (in Kūfah)\textsuperscript{567} and hence his opposition to Abū Bakr is out of the question.

\textsuperscript{564} See Ibid., pp. 190-193.
\textsuperscript{565} Ibid., p. 180.
\textsuperscript{566} Ibid., p. 181 Of course, this anecdote presupposes an ethnic judgement circulated by the racial extremists (Muta'arribs i.e., by the pro-Arabs) and the Rāfīḍa, that narrate on behalf of Salmān an ethnic policy of marriage conveyed to him by the Prophet and Umar. Such a policy is of course condemned by the essentially non-racial Uthmānis (see Ibid., pp. 217-218 & 221.) who narrate how the Prophet scolded Ali as he shared Salmān's view that Arab women should not be married to non-Arab men. al-Jāḥiz comments on both anecdotes as a dubious fabrication that stirs hatred between the Prophet and his Sahāba. Ibid., p. 221 and projects a non-Islamic view.
\textsuperscript{567} Ibid., p. 183.
Abû Dharr al-Ghifârî

The ʿUthmâni reporters emphasize that they have received no report that attacks ʿUmar's caliphate from Abû Dharr. Instead, they narrate on the latter's behalf that he heard the Prophet saying: "You will enjoy prosperity as long as ʿUmar is amongst you."568

al-ʿUthmâniyya report that extremist and antagonistic rejectors of Abû Bakr's Imamate have excommunicated the whole Umma from Islam charging them with Ridda except for Salmân, Miqdâd, Abû Dharr and Bilâl, simply because they rejected ʿAli's rights and did not object against those who did not back him.569 The ʿUthmâniyya add that if their adversaries supply them with one hundred Companions who confirm ʿAli's right and deny Abû Bakr's caliphate, this would not add anything to the established authentic reports that they hold. The most that can be said is that those who refrained from attacking Abû Bakr (and they were many) should be seen as acceptors of his caliphate.570

Usâma b. Zayd

The Prophetic orders to send troops headed by Usâma have been used by the Râfîda to show that Abû Bakr refused to join the troops and took ʿAli's office. The ʿUthmânites, however, discredit their claim by reminding the Râfîda of the Prophet's orders to have Abû Bakr lead the prayers, (he is reported to have conducted seventeen prayers).571 The Muslims in their totality could not have ignored Abû Bakr's alleged takhalluf572 (running from joining Usâma's army), and if the Râfîda insist that Usâma - of all Muslims - could not express his resentment of Abû Bakr, out of fear, (taqiyya), the ʿUthmânites say: "why should he remain silent under ʿAli's rule, when we know that ʿAli had one hundred thousand swords behind him?"573 Instead, the Râfîda are reminded that they should be the first to avoid quoting Usâma who is reported as backing Ṭalḥa's saying: "I pledged allegiance to ʿAli unwillingly",

568 Ibid.
569 Ibid., p. 180.
570 Ibid., p. 183.
571 Ibid., p. 170.
572 Ibid., p. 167.
573 Ibid., p. 168.
and is thus seen as a ʿUmari. The Rāfiḍa's accusation of Abū Bakr's alleged Takhalluf and taking office illegally, is equivalent to the following ridiculous supposition: that a man descends on the Muslims at Medina out of the blue, lacking nasab and sabab and takes hold of the most noble and influential posts (ashraf al-maqāmāt) - in the presence of the Prophet's relatives and clan: such as his uncle, his cousin, his other close and distant relatives, and before the most notable men of Anṣār, Muhājirūn, Quraysh and Arabs at large - without being objected to by one single man of those listed above!\textsuperscript{575}

al-Zubayr

The Rāfiḍa's claim that al-Zubayr expressed his objection to Abū Bakr at the meeting of Saqīfa by raising his sword to Abū Bakr. The ʿUthmānis say:

What makes you so sure that he did not raise it for himself, or for his uncle ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, and not for ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib? How can we accept your claim when Abū Bakr approached the people at the Saqīfa in the most peaceful manner without holding any sword or whip, and without any worldly desire for rulership. He did not say "Obey and pay allegiance to me!" but was most disinterested in having the post conferred upon him. Convinced of the superiority of the Muhājirūn over the Anṣār, he rushed to the latter to keep things in order, so why should al-Zubayr have possibly raised a sword?\textsuperscript{576} If you say that al-Zubayr rejected Abū Bakr's advisory role (to pinpoint the fall of the Muhājirūn) out of all other Muhājirūn the adversaries are reminded of the high impossibility of such a claim given the tie of kinship Zubayr had to Abū Bakr (he married his daughter, and the fact Zubayr's Islam was proclaimed in front of Abū Bakr, besides Zubayr's high esteem for Abū Bakr's supporters: ʿUmar and ʿUthmān).\textsuperscript{577}

Finally, the Rāfiḍa are reminded that it is not clever of them to quote Zubayr as rebelling against Abū Bakr for the sake of ʿAli, when history informs us that he fought the latter's Imamate and insisted that he was more deserving of it, and that had ʿAli held a shūrā, al-Zubayr would have outweighed him and become Imām instead.\textsuperscript{578}

Here, the ʿUthmānis make appeal to the historical reality or truth 'wujūd' that has been handed to them by ʿUthmāni scholars of tradition (Aḥbāb al-Ḥadīth)\textsuperscript{579} that reject the report of Zubayr's raising of the sword, and consider it highly dubious. As

\textsuperscript{574} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{575} Ibid., p. 171.
\textsuperscript{576} Ibid., p. 221-222.
\textsuperscript{577} Ibid., p. 222.
\textsuperscript{578} Ibid., p. 224.
\textsuperscript{579} Appeal to Ḥummāl al-Ḥadīth has been a common but basic feature of ʿUthmāniyya's arguments. See Ibid., p. 151, and pp. 82, 115.
for al-Zubayr's alleged statement to ʿAli,\textsuperscript{580} this is attributed by al-Jāḥiẓ to ʿUthmānī scholars of ʿIrīzāl, whom he quotes after a long contact with them, presumably when he was in Baṣra.

The ʿUthmānis' reaction to the Rāfiḍa's unfounded claim that Zubayr had raised the sword against Abū Bakr opens the door for al-Jāḥiẓ's theological gymnastics.

The ʿUthmāniyya says: "al-Zubayr's armed objection to back ʿAli and dethrone Abū Bakr is flabbergasting (ʿajab): why did you not include al-Zubayr among those few whom you claim to have remained loyal to ʿAli's designated right (to Khilāfa), i.e., why did you regard him as amongst those who became infidels (Kāfir)\textsuperscript{581} despite his backing of ʿAli? Why do you treat him differently to Ḥudhayfa and ʿAmmār (whom you claim were infidels until they repented during the days of ʿUthmān), and that Zubayr remained a believer until he later (i.e., after Saqīfa) objected to ʿAli's rule?"\textsuperscript{582}

**al-Anṣār**

al-Anṣār's objection "One Amir from us and one from you" has been already explained, when Abū Bakr was able to change their opposition to consent.\textsuperscript{583} The ʿUthmānis add here that no one can claim that al-Anṣār who were reminded of the superior Fadl of the Muhājīrūn - said in a manner that convinced everybody: "If the Amir has to be one from amongst you, let it be that man (i.e., ʿAli) because he deserves it more being afdal and aḥaq̣q by virtue of qarāba and amal.\textsuperscript{584} This illustrates that the Muslims' unanimous acceptance (Itbāq)\textsuperscript{585} to choose Abū Bakr most willingly reflected how religious merit preceded kinship and hasab, and this is

\begin{footnotes}
\item[580] Ibid., pp. 224-225. Here al-Zubayr is allegedly reported saying to ʿAli "I embraced Islam when I was adult and you did in your boyhood. I was the first to raise the sword against infidels in Makka while you were hiding in Shīb Abī Ṭālib. I was the chevalier and you were the walker, and if you claim you are the Prophet's cousin I am the son of his aunt too! . . . In my shape angels descended and I am the Prophet's disciple." For this reason, the present ʿUthmāniyya of al-Jāḥiẓ could be very much considered as an offshoot of the ex-Zubayrid movement explained earlier.
\item[581] See on the use of this term, Ibid., p. 245, 249.
\item[582] Ibid., pp. 225-226.
\item[583] Ibid., p. 196.
\item[584] Ibid., p. 203.
\item[585] Ibid., p. 168 and p. 204.
\end{footnotes}
another key theme of the position of ʿUthmāniyya,586 who saw that Abū Bakr received office not by force and not because he enjoyed headship over clans but by virtue of his superior religious excellences.587

It is true that the line of tribal hasab (which was quite diverse and could lead to division) was present,588 and that the factor of Prophetic kinship589 was equally available, but Abū Bakr's excellences - which were evident to them for twenty three years,590 had in fact overshadowed these lines of considerations despite the hard mentalities of Quraysh and arrogance of some Arabs,591 and his subsequent choice of ʿUmar (and not ʿAli nor ʿAbbās) is a confirmation of the superiority of the criterion of merit592 in the issue of caliphate.

ʿAli

Finally ʿAli's resentment of Abū Bakr is equally denied by the ʿUthmāniyya who report ʿAli as confirming Abū Bakr's Imamate when the latter asked: "does anyone wish that I be removed from office for another candidate?" ʿAli is reported to have said: "By God, we shall never recommend any other but you and will let nobody dethrone you. The Messenger of God—may the blessings of God be upon him—has recommended that you lead the prayers and who, thus, can ever put you back (from position of leader)?!"593

The ʿUthmānis report ʿAli narrating on behalf of the Prophet that Abū Bakr and ʿUmar are the best members of the Umma,594 and that they shall be masters among men in paradise with the exception of Prophets and Messengers.595 They also quote ʿAli as determined to implement legal punishment (hadd) on whoever dares to

---

586 Ibid., p. 204 and ff.
587 Ibid., p. 168.
588 Ibid., p. 171.
589 Ibid.
590 Ibid., p. 132 and 172.
591 Ibid., p. 172.
592 See Ibid., pp. 86, 274.
593 Ibid., p. 235.
594 Ibid., p. 235.
595 Ibid., p. 136.
criticize Abū Bakr and otope Umar, in an attempt to put forward otope Ali's true position (madhhāb Ali fihimā) towards them.

VI. otope Uthmāni Critique Of The Rāfiḍa's Arguments On:
   A- otope Ali's taqīyya.
   B- otope Ali's special 'ilm.
   C- otope Ali's designatory right to Imamate (nass).

A- otope Ali's taqīyya:

In another strand of the thinking of the otope Uthmāniyya, the Rāfiḍa's arguments on otope Ali's taqīyya, and alleged special knowledge and designatory rights to the caliphate are criticized and refuted in detail in order to emphasize the otope Uthmāni doctrine of the real status enjoyed by Abū Bakr vis-à-vis all other Companions, and in particular otope Ali, in line with their purpose to stress Abū Bakr's unmatched superiority over the Rāfiḍi portrait of otope Ali. It is quite obvious (and equally orthodox) that while doing so, the otope Uthmānis (most of whom are fuqahā' and muhaddithūn) have committed themselves not to demerit otope Ali and avoid as much as possible, being driven to attack the person of otope Ali himself while they are engaged in attacking the unfounded Rāfiḍi allegations about him, who have used strong unorthodox language in passing comparative judgements on the Companions of the Prophet.

If the Rāfiḍa reject the above otope Uthmāni evidences cited against their allegation that Abū Bakr's Imamate - which had met many oppositional fronts - was illegal, and that the legal caliph (otope Ali) was prevented from expressing his designatory rights to the caliphate out of fear - taqīyya, the otope Uthmānis say:

How can one logically believe your justification, and why should otope Ali - in his ruling days - continue to hide his real view of Abū Bakr, otope Umar and otope Uthmān, now that he had power (one hundred thousand sworded men were behind him). If he ever thought of cursing them, what then made him speak of their merits? What made him have his sons named after them? What made him allow otope Umar to marry his daughter? If all was out of taqīyya, how would this fit with your image of him that he was the most courageous person: would a courageous person give his daughter to one you describe as kāfir?

596 Ibid., pp. 235-236.
597 Ibid., pp. 235-236.
598 See Ibid., pp. 93-94.
599 Ibid., p. 241.
600 If otope Ali was really resentful of otope Umar's fiscal policy, why did he not change otope Umar's diwāns and otope Umar's otope Aṭā' (grants), say the otope Uthmānis (See p. 218.).
Was Abü Bakr not more courageous to fight *ahl al-Ridda* despite the few men he had available, and was ʿUthmān not courageous when he sacrificed himself for the unity of the *Umma*? 601

According to al-Jāḥiz, the Rāfīḍa's resort to *taqiyya* is unconvincing and indicates how they could not control their biases against the caliphs preceding ʿAlī 602 thus perpetrating the view that the Prophet's designation of ʿAlī, which was met by rejection by most of the Companions, - except for three or four of them - who have become infidels, is a view that in fact ridicules ʿAlī and defeats their purpose as it is not understandable why the ruling wasī should refrain from attacking the infidels and continue praising them! 603

From here the highly apologetic mentality of the Rāfīḍa is unfolded: If Abü Bakr is mentioned as being the privileged emigrant Companion of the Prophet, they say ʿAlī's sleeping in the place of the Prophet surpasses it. If Abü Bakr is cited as *al-Šiddiq*, the Rāfīḍa respond that it is a fabricated *Hadith* by the ʿUthmānī *Hashwiyya* to obscure the title of *al-Šiddiq al-Akbar* 604 of ʿAlī. If Abü Bakr's leading of the prayer is referred to, the Rāfīḍa justify ʿAlī's absence by the fact he was nursing the Prophet. If Abū Bakr's merit in rescuing the *Umma* from going astray upon the death of the Prophet is mentioned, ʿAlī is described as helplessly silenced by grief. If Abū Bakr's role in pointing out to the Anṣār the virtues of the emigrants is mentioned, the Rāfīḍa claim that ʿAlī was afraid of doing so because of Quraysh's envy of him. If the ʿUthmāniyya say Abū Bakr's Imamate was confirmed by ʿAlī, they say the latter must have accepted that by force.

B- ʿAlī's Special ʿIlm

The opening passages of *Kitāb al-ʿUthmāniyya* in fact can be considered as a continuation of al-Jāḥiz's *Kitāb al-Maʿrifah* 605 studied above. When ʿAlī's acceptance of Islam is contrasted to Abū Bakr's, the ʿUthmānis are keen to emphasize that as ʿAlī had embraced Islam in his boyhood, (between 5-9 years old), his Islam cannot compete with that of Abū Bakr, who was much more mature when he accepted

602 Ibid., p. 243.
603 Ibid., p. 276.
604 al-Jāḥiz comments here that this title was narrated by people who were sectarianly motivated, and were ignorant in the art of distinguishing *fādil* from *Mafdi.*, *Ibid.*, p. 127.
605 In p. 261 there is acknowledgement by al-Jāḥiz of this work.
Islam. In this context, they criticize the special intellectual makeup of ʿAli's boyhood, as proposed by the Rāfiḍa to outwit Abū Bakr's:

The ʿUthmānī ʿulamāʾ, theologians and leading scholars amongst them say: had ʿAli - in his sixth, seventh eighth or ninth years of age - been capable of distinguishing the differences between Prophets and soothsayers, messengers and magicians and the news of the astrologer and the Prophet, such that he was capable of realizing the difference between a proof and a trick, and the overpowering reasonable arguments from the seemingly overpowering apologetic statements, ... and knew that which is possible from that which is impossible ... and that which is expected from God from that which cannot ... then his being in that state and quality, despite his obvious boyhood and inexperience, must be a violation of habits and norms that we usually know of the Umma. If he really enjoyed those features, he should have been a ḥujja over the ʿamma, and a sign of distinction. Of course, God would not have endowed him with those qualities and kept (them) secretly hidden, such that they go in vain: rather, He would have circulated their uniqueness, unveiled their peculiarity and forced men's souls to accept them, men's tongues to transmit them and men's ears to listen to them ... This of course should not be likened to Yahyā b. Zakariyyā whose reception of wisdom in his boyhood, and to Jesus's utterance in the cradle, which have been Qur'ānicly confirmed: ... Since the Qur'ān made no reference to ʿAli (as claimed by the Rāfiḍa), and no authentic news have reached us, then we can assume that ʿAli's nature was not different from his uncles Ḥamza and ʿAbbās, whom we think were more meritorious than him ... If anyone, however, claims the same qualities for his uncles, our position would still be the same (i.e., rejection).

As for ʿAli's alleged quality of Ilhām in his adulthood, and that God had revealed to him all the fitan the Umma would incur, the ʿUthmānīs object to that by saying: "how can this claim be compatible with ʿAli's choice of Abū Mūsā al-Askhāri, when his choice of ʿAmr b. al-Āṣ would certainly have proved more useful to his cause."

If the Rāfiḍa insist on rejecting Abū Bakr's Imamate, by virtue of the unaccomplished consensus on him to succeed the Prophet, the ʿUthmānīs engage now in a new round to emphasize that it was ʿAli and not Abū Bakr who never received Ijmāʾ on his Imamate:

The criticism of those few against Abū Bakr does not at all count against his perfect virtues: complete consensus is an impossibility, ... and to ask for complete consensus is only raised by one who is ignorant of the diverse natures of men. Had Abū Bakr's Imamate been affected by this (incomplete consensus), then ʿAli's Imamate is by far more incomplete and much weaker: for people collectively opposed him and his rejected

---

606 In pp. 224 and 238-239 another distinction between ʿIslām al-Ṭifl and ʿIslām al-Kahl is made on the basis of the witnessed reality (al-wujūd, al-ʿīyān) in the sense that possible witnessed realities (al-Shāhīd) cannot be logically contradicted and eclipsed by an alleged absent reality (Ghāṭīb).
607 Ibid., pp. 6-9.
608 See Ibid., pp. 13, 243.
authority (wilāya) to the extent they wanted to fight him. Did ʿAli not compete with one (Muʿāwiya) who was short of his sharaf and religious fadl yet caused enough disruption and chaos among the most sincere supporters (of ʿAli), by using his deceit against ʿAli’s camp and rejoicing in the success his betrayal had achieved; ʿAli sent his representative (to judge for or against him), and his adversary (khasmuhu) sent a representative to judge likewise, but ʿAli’s representative was the cheated one and Muʿāwiya’s was the cheater! and succession was 609 removed from him and his son (al-Hasan), once by trickery (hila) and thence by force (ghalaba) to the favour of Muʿāwiya . . . We do not wish to undermine - as you do too - the width of ʿAli’s knowledge nor his evident fadl and we do not claim his inferior judgement or being disgraced just because his followers have disobeyed him, when Muʿāwiya’s supporters never deserted him. But you can not deny ʿAli’s losing control to his enemies, and the mockery of his enviers, so why do you stick to Salmān’s rejection of Abū Bakr, and Abū Sufyān’s utterance and Khālid’s opposition? 610

In short, Abū Bakr’s alleged but very insignificant opposition front cannot be compared - the ʿUthmānis insist - to the very wide and much more serious opposition blocks ʿAli had met. We have cited some of the ʿUthmāniyya’s references to those fronts in their refutation of the Rāfiḍa’s attempt to magnify the opposition to Abū Bakr. The debate between the two parties is quite fierce and sometimes it is hopeless to imagine a fruitful agreement or promising signs of reaching constructive meeting points behind the apologetic scene. The ʿUthmānis’ policy of maintaining an objective attitude to ʿAli, all through their references to him, in such a heated atmosphere, where the figure and Imamate of the person referred to overlap, has somehow fallen short of their professed intention not to address or approach ʿAli - as members of the ʿUmariyya-ʿUthmāniyya party - in the negative derogative fashion applied by the Rāfiḍa to Abū Bakr and most of the ʿṢaḥāba. The ʿUthmāni scholars have been thus quite careful not to be quoted as attacking the person of ʿAli himself, while attempting to refute the Rāfiḍi portrait of the same figure, and their consequential belief in his prophetically designated virtues and right to the Imamate. These aims may seem difficult or incompatible, but that is the position chosen by the ʿUthmānis. Respect for the person of ʿAli can be easily detected in the midst of their apologetic arguments on Abū Bakr’s superiority:

... Not that ʿAli was potentially short of the essence of bravery (najda), gallantry (shahāma), or instinctively lacking in vigor and courage, or that he did not come from the noblest stock and best breed (akram ʿunsur wa aṭyab maghras) 611 . . . we did not

609 This unique reference to Muʿāwiya is significant. It of course makes the difference between the pro-ʿAbbāsid, anti-Umayyad ʿUthmāni traditionists (like al-Jāḥiẓ) and the pro-ʿAbbāsid-pro-Umayyad traditionists of the Ḥanbalites.

610 Ibid., pp. 195-196.

611 Ibid., pp. 30-31.
intend, by this argument\textsuperscript{612} to belittle \textsuperscript{6}Ali, may the mercy of God fall upon him, nor remove him from the category of men noted for fitness and patience. We are positive that had \textsuperscript{6}Ali lived to the days of al-\textsuperscript{2}Hasan or Ibn Sirin, his religious knowledge, \textit{fiqh} and experience would have increased above the excellent level he achieved the day he was martyred.\textsuperscript{613}

When the issue of \textit{\textsuperscript{6}Iisma} (infallibility) is opened, the \textsuperscript{6}Uthm\textsuperscript{n}inis maintain that this matter cannot deny that even the father of Prophets, Adam, or Y\textsuperscript{n}un\textsuperscript{s}, David and Solomon and even the Prophet Muhammad, who are establishe\textsuperscript{d}ly infallible, were not free from small slips. The \textsuperscript{6}Uthm\textsuperscript{n}inis say: "why should (the R\textsuperscript{a}fi\textsuperscript{d}a) follow the mishaps of \textsuperscript{6}Umar and \textsuperscript{6}Uthm\textsuperscript{n}, when we, the \textsuperscript{6}Umar\textsuperscript{i}ya-\textsuperscript{6}Uthm\textsuperscript{a}niyya can furnish you with more mishaps of \textsuperscript{6}Ali . . . when they claim that he had never erred."\textsuperscript{614}

When religious excellence in \textit{fiqh}, \textit{qir\textsuperscript{a}'\textsuperscript{\textael}}\textsuperscript{t}, and \textit{tafsir} are raised, the \textsuperscript{6}Uthm\textsuperscript{n}inis do not see \textsuperscript{6}Ali as the most prominent, yet "acknowledge that he was \textit{faqi\textsuperscript{h}a}, \textit{\textael}im\textsuperscript{a}, and has taken a good share of excellence in everything, and we refrain from saying of him - we, \textsuperscript{6}Uthm\textsuperscript{a}niyya and \textsuperscript{6}Umar\textsuperscript{i}ya - that which you say of \textsuperscript{6}Umar and \textsuperscript{6}Uthm\textsuperscript{n}."\textsuperscript{615}

C. \textsuperscript{6}Uthm\textsuperscript{n}i Critique of \textsuperscript{6}Ali's Caliphate

Within the above framework of respect for \textsuperscript{6}Ali's person and merits, the \textsuperscript{6}Uthm\textsuperscript{a}niyya nevertheless throw back the R\textsuperscript{a}fi\textsuperscript{d}a's claim on the opposition that Ab\textsuperscript{u} Bakr had met, to their side by claiming that it was \textsuperscript{6}Ali who had really met such an opposition. Here starts their argument to reject \textsuperscript{6}Ali's Imamate not only as accepted by the R\textsuperscript{a}fi\textsuperscript{d}a but also in terms of his succession to \textsuperscript{6}Uthm\textsuperscript{n} in two ways:

(a) by resisting the R\textsuperscript{a}fi\textsuperscript{d}i interpretations of Prophetic \textit{Hadiths} or Qur\textsuperscript{a}nic text that have been erroneously used to back their view of the Prophet's specific designation of \textsuperscript{6}Ali as his immediate succes\textsuperscript{s}or.

(b) by citing the opposition blocks that rejected \textsuperscript{6}Ali.

\textsuperscript{612} On \textsuperscript{6}Ali's undisputed courage exhibited in fighting with the Prophet in the battles of Badr, Uhud, Khandaq and Khaybar. See \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 45, 48.

\textsuperscript{613} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 75.

\textsuperscript{614} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 93-94.

\textsuperscript{615} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 91-92.
The `Uthmāni Attack on the Idea of Prophetic Preference and Naṣṣ on ʿAlī: (The Peak of al-Jāḥiz’s Addresses to the Caliph).

The `Uthmāni scholars (fuqahā’ and muhaddithūn) are quoted by al-Jāḥiz - in what may be viewed as the peak of his addresses to al-Maʾmūn - as refuting the doctrine of naṣṣ propogated by the Rāfīḍa on the basis that they (the Rāfīḍa) have erroneously misinterpreted certain Prophetic Ḥadīths⁶¹⁶ where ʿAlī is specifically mentioned by the Prophet and designated as his immediate successor.⁶¹⁷

al-Jāḥiz here furnishes al-Maʾmūn with Prophetic Ḥadīths narrated by the `Uthmāni Fuqahā’ and Muḥaddithūn that highly praise Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān and have no reference at all to ʿAlī in them.

Of these Ḥadīths, the caliphal attention is particularly drawn to the content of one, in which the Prophet explicitly orders his Umma to take Abū Bakr and ʿUmar as models after him, and to another, in which the Prophet referred to the consecutive additions brought by Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān of building stones to the newly raised mosque of Medina as symbolic of the future chronological successive order of rulership taken by them.⁶¹⁸

Now that al-Jāḥiz has provided the caliph with the Rāfīḍa’s and `Uthmāniyya’s standpoints respectively, he puts himself as a neutral judge, and furnishes the caliph with an outlet from this paradox by drawing from his experience in the discipline of fiqh al-Ḥadīth by attempting to fix the Prophetic statements in their original intended contexts (usūl makhārijiha),⁶¹⁹ on the basis of the undeniable fact that “if what the Rāfīḍa have quoted on behalf of ʿAlī’s faḍīla is authentic, and what the `Uthmāni scholars have quoted on behalf of Abū Bakr’s faḍīla is equally authentic then we are presented with a logical paradox and contradiction in terms (in fixing the Prophetic faḍīla), and this makes one

---

⁶¹⁷ The basic Ḥadīths read: “Man kuntu mawlāh fa-ʿAlīyūn mawlāh (Sunni version), Allāhumma Wāli man wālāhu wa ʿĀdi man ʿĀdāhu”, (Rāfīḍi version) and “Anta minni bimanzilat Ilārūn min Mūsā, illā annahu lā-nābiyya baʿḍi”, and “Allāhumma Aṭīnī bi Aḥabbī al-Nās ilayka ya’kulu maʿī min hādḥā al-Ṭayr”, They are cited by the Rāfīḍa to indicate the Prophet’s unique preference and affection he had for ʿAlī and the political rights inherent in them).
⁶¹⁸ Ibid., p. 136.
⁶¹⁹ Ibid., p. 138.
simultaneously assume that Abū Bakr is more meritorious than ʿAli, and that ʿAli is more meritorious than Abū Bakr, (because the Hadiths are authentic) and this is the most obvious contradiction! In fact, al-Jāḥīz solves this difficulty by saying "Truth cannot be self contradictory, (al-hagqā lā yatanāqad) 620 (and as the Hadiths quoted by the Rāfiḍa are mostly authentic) the only reason that explains the ʿUthmāni Rāfiḍī conflict over the persons exclusively enjoying the Prophet’s admiration and hence the right to succeed him is that the Prophetic statements must have been eventually misinterpreted and manipulated by those who have received them (from the transmitters) as holding universal significance and implications by abstracting them from their original contexts without being able to distinguish that true Prophetic statements cannot be correctly understood when they are cut from their original intended purpose (usūl makhārijiha). Such a confusion is unavoidable when the two parties are not familiar with whether the Prophetic statement (khabar) carries a local and specific application (khāṣṣ)621 and nothing else beyond that, or whether the khabar is given a universal implication above its local and particular intended meaning (ʿāmm)622. This is al-Jāḥīz’s basic contribution where his own knowledge in fiqh al-Ḥadīth is deliberately forwarded to the caliph, who must have been affected by the conflicting interpretations of the Rāfiḍa and the ʿUthmāniyya, at the time al-Jāḥīz was addressing this treatise in his unique reconciliatory role to bridge the gap between the two camps. Of course, al-Jāḥīz’s position here seems to reunite the Rāfiḍa and the ʿUthmāniyya - now that the cited Prophetic Hadiths are quite agreeable to both. He may also be viewed as putting himself above the problem i.e., above the ʿUthmānis and the Rāfiḍa, but in fact the solution he is to offer in this critical issue need not - as he has pointed out in other contexts outside the treatise, - label him a strict ʿUthmāni. Indeed his constant appeal to the scholars of Ḥadīth, however similar it may appear to that of the ʿUthmāni fuqahā’ and hashwi623 muḥaddithūn, should not necessarily put him as one amongst them, by the very criterion of his being able to distinguish the particular (khāṣṣ) from the universal (ʿāmm), which both the ʿUthmānis and Rāfiḍis have equally failed to recognize (in these Prophetic Hadiths.) al-Jāḥīz says: People are of two kinds: they are either

620 Ibid., p. 138.
621 Ibid.
622 Ibid.
623 This term has been used by al-Jāḥīz in this treatise to describe the ʿUthmānis. Of course, this reminds us of the group of pro-Umayyads, al-Nābita who were given the same description. As such, one can conclude now that Hashwivwa is a nickname used by al-Jāḥīz to reflect the narrow minded mentality which he has observed among the pro-Umayyad Traditionists and also among the anti-Umayyad, ʿUthmāni Traditionists (who based the Imamate on the sole criterion of merit, and as such they are not pro-ʿAbbāsid but pro-merit.)
Umaris or Alawis, the former absolutely venerates Abū Bakr (Umar & Uthmān) while the latter exclusively venerates Aḥmad.

In trying to clarify his criteria of the khāṣṣ and āmm meaning of Prophetic Hadiths, al-Jāḥīz provides his addressee with examples that are illustrative of his theory. The Prophetic reference to the honesty of the Companion Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī has been equally misunderstood by the two parties.

If you ask the Shiya (Shīaite groups), "who was regarded by the Prophet as the most honest, Aḥmad or Abū Dharr?" They collectively answer: "Aḥmad". They justify Aḥmad's omission by saying that the Prophet has deliberately left him in the belief that Muslims knew that Aḥmad was the most honest. 624

If you ask the Uthmāniyya the same question, al-Jāḥīz adds, they would commit the same misinterpretation and say "Abū Bakr". 625 The consensus reached by each party that someone other than Abū Dharr is the most honest Companion, is an indication of al-Jāḥīz's point: The Prophetic reference to Abū Dharr, in spite of its being styled in an exclusive fashion (makhrajuhu makhraj al-āmm) 626 and expressed in a generalized tone, it nevertheless has a particular and specific application (khāṣṣ) 627 even if the specific application of its particularity (without which the Prophet is also excluded) is not bluntly expressed. 628 Similarly, the Prophetic Hadith "Among the pious people of God, Aḥmad is the best" has been interpreted by the majority of Muslims to have omitted Abū Bakr from the statement when in fact he was the best, i.e., al-Jāḥīz points out - there is a consensus among Muslims that somebody other than Aḥmad has been superior to him. 629 But people have not used this statement to establish the absolutely exclusive superiority of Aḥmad, as they have not exploited the existence of other Hadiths 630 on other Companions - which suggests that they are regarded as short-term in their application and highly figurative in style. Had Aḥmad or Abū Bakr been included in them, the Hadiths would

624 Ibid., pp. 138-139.
625 Ibid., p. 139.
626 Ibid., p. 138.
627 Ibid.
628 Ibid.
629 Ibid., p. 140.
630 Such as the Prophetic saying: "I am pleased to that which Ibn Umm Ṭabd has chosen", "to each nation there is a trustworthy figure, and Abū Ṭubayda (Ibn al-Jarrāḥ) is the trustworthy (Amin) of this Umma", "... how can I not be respectful of that whom the angels are shy?" (speaking of Uthmān), "God's throne was shaken by Ṣa'd Ibn Mu'āsh's murder", all these sayings - al-Jāḥīz says - carry more tafdlil than those referring to Abū Bakr and Aḥmad. See Ibid., pp. 140-141.
have certainly been used by the two parties as primary evidence to prove the exclusive suitability of either in the issue of Imāma and tafdil. Therefore these sayings were simply intended to give justice (qawīlān ʿadīlān) to the Companion named, and their general phraseology or appliance should not be extended any further, as the Prophetic expression has laid down the general wordings (lafīz) and omitted the purposed meaning, (maʿnā) in his full belief that it was obviously understood and known to his addressees such that these statements carry a general meaning, (of respect for a person, but not to the exclusion of other persons as may be literally understood).

**Man Kuntu Mawlāhu Fa ʿAliyya Mawlāhu**

So in light of the above examples (on the criteria of khāṣṣ and ʿāmm), al-Jāḥiz draws the attention of his addressee to the way the Rāfiḍa have erroneously misinterpreted the Prophetic utterances concerning ʿAli.

It must be concluded that from the above arguments Imamship and precedence have not had - and consequently should not have - any Prophetic basis or reference whatsoever, by virtue of the fact that Companions who were not as meritorious as Abū Bakr and ʿAli have enjoyed Prophetic statements in which the type of Prophetic address surpassed those in which Abū Bakr or ʿAli were mentioned.

However, if the Rāfiḍa continue to find in the Prophetic saying "Man kuntu Mawlāh" an explicit clear cut proof that substantiates ʿAli's designated right for the Imamate, al-Jāḥiz draws their attention to the following drawbacks: First, those non-Shiʿi traditionists who have narrated this saying did not have the extra portion which reads: "O, God, befriend whoever befriends him and oppose whoever is his enemy", (Allāhumma wāli man wālāḥ wa ʿādi man ʿādāh).

The ʿUthmānis believe that this latter addition has been concocted by the Shiʿa i.e., the numerous and diverse groups of Shiʿites and has no roots among

---

631 Ibid., 141.
632 Ibid., pp. 138-142.
633 Ibid., p. 144.
the majority of reliable transmitters. The transmitter, al-`A`mash, who al-Jähiz suggests was a Rāfidite has offered a different reading of that Ḥadīth reading: "man Kuntu waliyyuhu fa ʿAliyyya walīyyuhu", without having the inserted addition "Allāhumma wāli . . . ʿAdī, etc.", and thus in view of the difference in wording and variable readings the Ḥadīth is rejected because of these signs that are indicative of its wahan (weakness).

Another sign which undermines the trustworthiness of this Ḥadīth and the Rāfidite interpretation of it is that they also report that it was said about ʿAlī when he had had a dispute with Zayd b. Ḥāritha and he had been disputing him (lāhāhu). Zayd is said to have replied to ʿAlī with similar language. At this ʿAlī had told Zayd not to speak to his mawlā in such a way. Zayd denied that any one was his mawlā except the Prophet. This made ʿAlī go to the Prophet to complain about Zayd's behaviour and denial of his status. It was this that led the Prophet to say "Man kuntu Mawlāh fa ʿAlīyya Mawlāh. " Therefore this statement only concerns the technical relationship of wālā' nicma and therefore applies not only to ʿAlī but the rest of the Prophet's agnate relations like ʿAbbās etc. The report has nothing to do with the merit (fadl) of ʿAlī in religion. al-Jähiz then goes on to argue that even if the additional words which he alleges the Rāfīḍa have added were accepted, (i.e., oppose whoever opposes him and befriend whoever befriends him) they would not concern anyone except Zayd because Zayd was the person being complained about.

---

634 al-ʿA`mash was not Rāfīḍ as al-Jähiz classifies him. See Ibn Ḥanbal, Fadāʾil al-Sahāba, Ed. W. ʿAbbās (Makka: University of Umm al-Qurā, 1403/1983), vol. 2. Moreover, the editor of Fadāʾil also reports how al-Shāfiʿī, a contemporary of al-Jähiz, interpreted wālā' to ʿAlī as meaning wālā' of Islam. See Ibid., p. 563. Although this latter point is not clear, the Prophetic meaning of wālā' has been beautifully explained by al-Bāqillānī, in his Tamhid, whereby all the facets of wālā' are discussed, in particular the meaning of naṣīr is stressed.

635 This reading has also been narrated by Ibn Ḥanbal, through al-ʿA`mash, as sound in addition to the former one "man kuntu mawālāh fa ʿAlīyya mawālāh", which is seen by Ibn Ḥanbal as equally sound. See Fadāʾil, 2: 563 and 569.

636 al-Jähiz, al-ʿUthmānīyya, p. 145. Note here that Ibn Ḥazm equally refused to accept this tradition, from the point of transmission (Isnād). See Ibn Ḥanbal's Fadāʾil, p. 569. The editor comments on this as a far fetched conclusion.
However, al-Jāḥīz claims that these words were hardly likely to have been said about Zayd because Zayd was one of the first, if not the first to accept Islam. According to the ʿUthmāniyya the merit of Zayd's acceptance of Islam was greater than ʿAli's. In addition his status and merit were further enhanced by the fact that whenever he went on an expedition (sariyya) he was put in command of it. Thus the Prophet put him in command over Jaʿfar al-Ṭayyār (who was also his mawla as al-Jāḥīz must have intended to indicate). He was also in command of the expedition to Muʾta and the Prophet also put his son Usāma in command over the leading emigrants and Anṣār, like ʿUmar. When they complained about this to the Prophet, the latter, before he died, replied by accusing them of complaining about Usāma's authority in the same way as they had complained about his father's i.e., Zayd. He emphasises Zayd's suitability for leadership and asserted that Usāma was similarly suitable. He also claimed that Zayd was among the most beloved of the people to him and the same applied to his son. This led to Usāma being described by the people of Medina as Usāma "The beloved". It was for this reason that ʿUmar gave Usāma a greater portion of ʿAtā than his own son ʿAbd Allāh. ʿĀ'isha is also alleged to have said on the Prophet's death that if Zayd had been alive, the Prophet would have made him his successor. She said this even though her own father was the Caliph and the Imamate had been given to him.

So back to al-Jāḥīz's criteria of the khāṣṣ/ḍāmm, and its significance in understanding Prophetic Hadiths; had the former portion of this Hadith been authentic it should not have been applied to anyone but Zayd, who must have been the sole and immediate addressee of that Prophetic saying but as has been outlined, Zayd had never been the object of that Prophetic statement. al-Jāḥīz brings the argument to a close in order to extinguish the Rāfiḍa's idea of nass by demonstrating that the Hadith which nass rested on is a fabrication. Equally significant is the implicit way al-Jāḥīz identifies himself with the ʿUthmāniyya as he strengthens his position by quoting their view of Zayd's merits. The ʿUthmāni political philosophy is therefore unfolded by such a discussion which asserts that as regards the Arab system of walā' in which non-Arabs, slaves or Arabs belonging to other tribes were granted membership into a clan, the superiority of Zayd was one that was solely acknowledged by virtue of his exemplary deeds for Islam and noble character, irrespective of the class status of mawla through which he became a member of the "Pre-Islamic" Arabs.637

637 Ibid., pp.145-147.
It is therefore - according to the ʿUthmānis - quite improbable to even accept the Rāfidi insertion "allāhumma ʿādi" in view of the position Zayd had had with the Prophet. Even if the inserted words are hypothetically accepted, it need not reflect an evidence for ʿAlī's Imamate and a proof for his exclusive distinction. All that can be said - the ʿUthmānis maintain - is that the saying indicates, in its two portions, that ʿAlī enjoyed some faḍl, but not that exclusive and supreme one,638 which is, however, available in those Ḥadīths that praise Abū Bakr and ʿUmar.639

The ʿUthmānis here start a new argument to criticize the Rāfidi basis for ʿAlī's right for the Imāmate. The above Ḥadīth - as it is - can never be used as a proof against the Ansār and Muhājirūn (who are condemned by the Rāfīda simply because they did not allow ʿAlī to actualize his designatory right). There is antagonistic debate whether the Prophet had kept the issue of succession subject to choice or whether he had solved the issue by choosing on behalf of his Umma.640

The ʿUthmānis argue that even if the issue of succession and designatory rights of ʿAlī were hidden in a subtle manner in that Ḥadīth, the Rāfīda should have been the first to refrain from labelling the Ansār and Muhājirūn with kufr, just because they were incapable of exploring the hidden message of that Ḥadīth. But as the ʿUthmānis have shown above, the Ḥadīth has no room for such a hidden interpretation, and should therefore be discarded as a basis for the doctrine of ʿAlī's Imamate. The idea of nāss and Ikhtiyār takes a polemic and dialectic approach. Naṣṣ is rejected, even if it saves the Umma from the eminent dangers of speculating who is the best, given

638 Ibid., p. 148.
639 This is a weak point for first it contradicts the previous conclusion that there are Ḥadīths that were more praising of men other than Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. Second because it is using the method of the Rāfīda i.e., searching for Ḥadīths to back the Imamate of Abū Bakr in what may be viewed as an early proto-Sunnite attempt to indicate Prophetic nāss on Abū Bakr and hence this shows that the ʿUthmāni argument was not consistent in upholding the idea of Ikhtiyār uniformly, but displayed a tendency to use the idea of its adversary (nāss). Third, because al-Jāḥīz openly identifies himself with the ʿUthmāniyya (Ibid., p. 148) in their rejection of ʿAlī's Imamate - which he will accept later in another work. We have seen that al-Bāqillānī attempts to overcome al-Jāḥīz's ʿUthmāni determination to reject ʿAlī's Imamate by (a) accepting the former portion of the Ḥadīth, (b) suggesting that ʿAlī's Imamate could have been signalled by the Prophet before its occurrence when it carried a local implication (i.e., respect for ʿAlī is part of respect for the house of the Prophet) and had a future implicaton; that is if someone doubts ʿAlī's religious status, he should not question ʿAlī's integrity and actions when he receives office as the Prophet had already praised ʿAlī as Nāṣr (defender) of Islam. In this way one finds al-Jāḥīz either deliberately ignoring or failing to accept this interpretation, and his method of khāṣṣ & ʿāmm was therefore not impartially applied.

640 Ibid., p. 149.
that there were many who were regarded as best. The Rāfīda now are pressurised to back the idea of nass by putting forward another Ḥadīth, in the hope of leaving no room for controversial speculation and closing the door of Ikhtiyār, and in this context the Ḥadīth of the bird (al-Ṭayr) is cited here whereby the Prophet wished that his most beloved Companion would join him in eating the bird but, as the Rāfīda claim, one Companion, Anas, found ʿAlī coming so he prevented him from coming to the Prophet's house in spite of the Prophet's insistence to let the visitor in. The ʿUthmānis here reject this Ḥadīth from the transmission point of view, as it is concocted, 'sāqīṭ'641 and also from its content as the Qurʾān would not have spared this instance in which a Companion violated the Prophetic orders.

The last Ḥadīth quoted by the ʿUthmānis on behalf of the Rāfīda which reads: "You are the like of Aaron to me, except that no Prophet follows me" is rejected on the basis that Qurʾānic and even Biblical and Judaic exegetes all confirm that Aaron died before Moses and as such no value can even be attributed to this saying in the sense that Aaron did not succeed Moses in Prophethood and the Rāfīda's basis for ʿAlī being like Aaron in succession logically collapses.642

(ii) ʿUthmāni Attack On The Rāfīda's Claim For A Qurʾānic Basis For Nāṣs On ʿAlī:

As for the Qurʾānic references to the idea of nass on ʿAlī, the ʿUthmānis are engaged in refuting the group of verses gathered by the Rāfīda to back their position. The ʿUthmānis here appeal to the concept of Ijmāʿ643 among exegetes i.e., which gives no room for the Rāfīdī claims or interpretations. In the Qurʾānic verse644 that orders the believers to obey the Prophet and men of authority, in addition to those who perform zakāt while in prayer, ʿAlī's Imamate is allegedly claimed to be inherent in it as ʿAlī is reported by the Rāfīda to have made zakāt while bowing in

641 Ibid., p. 150. The Rāfīda are referred by al-Jāḥiẓ to the "Ashab al-Ḥadīth" who will settle the dispute for them. Ibid., p. 151. The leprosy that afflicted Anas, is attributed by the Rāfīda to ʿAlī's spitting on his face in a highly imaginative and indeed miraculous fashion. The ʿUthmānis comment on this: "why did not ʿAlī use such measures on Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī or the army of Šiīfīn?" (Ibid., pp. 152-153).

642 See Ibid., pp. 153-115. This Ḥadīth has been mentioned by Ibn Ḥanbal (Fadāʾil al-Sahāba, 2: 567-568. The Editor comments that this Ḥadīth has a sound transmission (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Sanad.) The addition: "Had there been a Prophet after me, you should have been the one"is judged a concoction. Ibid.

643 Ibid., p. 16.

644 Sūra 5: 55.
prayer. The āUthmānis strongly reject this interpretation, as it is far fetched and is not backed by any Prophetic khabar or consensual Qur'anic ta’wil. It is hence unlikely that God revealed that verse to indicate to the Umma āAli’s Imamate.

When the Qur’anic verse which reads "Say: God is sufficient witness between us and also he who has knowledge of the Book" is cited, the āUthmānis do not share with the Rāfida the claim that āAli had an exclusive knowledge of the Book. This claim - the āUthmani spokesman says - has no basis among the authentic narrators and Qur’anic exegetes. Not even Abū Bakr, āUmar or āUthmān could be given that quality, although they had a share in it. Knowledge of the Book has rather been attributed to other men such as Ibn āAbbās, and later al-Ḥasan al- Ḍaṣrī, Muḥāhid, al-Ḍāḥhāk, ʻIkrima, etc. Zayd b. Ṭābit’s superior knowledge in the science of al-Farahid, and Ubayy and Ibn Masūd’s superiority in the science of al-Qirā’āt, should not be competing with Ibn āAbbās’s exclusive superiority and mastering of the science of ta’wil in its totality, in the sense that each one of them have displayed an established mastery level in one but not in all facets of ta’wil, and here āAli was not reported as equal to those mentioned.

The āUthmānis finally hold the opinion that after reading the Qur’ān from cover to cover, they found no one single contextual reference that points to the issue of succession from the naṣṣ point of view advocated by the Rāfida.

It is obvious that al- Ḥāṣīz in both instances, here in K. al ʻUthmāniyya and later in K. Ḥujaj al-Nubuwwa, acknowledges Ubayy’s and Ibn Masūd’s authority in Qirā’āt, but whereas in the former source Zayd is eclipsed by them, in the latter he eclipses them both, and his version of the Qur’ān is described as unanimously accepted by all the Muslim sects: such as al-Muṣṭazila, Khawārij, Murji’ā and the

---

645 Ibid., p. 120.
646 Ibid.
647 Sūra 13: 43.
648 and were more famous in excellence other than this technical aspect of ta’wil. Ibid., p. 121.
649 This is based on a Prophetic Hadith in which the Prophet prayed that Ibn āAbbās will enjoy fiqh in din and ta’wil, i.e. in all its meanings, stories, muḥkam and mutashābih, khaṣṣ and ādam, nāṣikh and mansūkh, Makkah and Medinese. See Ibid., pp. 121-122.
650 Ubayy and Ibn Masūd will be mentioned later by al-Ḥāṣīz in this respect as having been eclipsed by Zayd b. Ṭābit, as his reading was the most binding to the Umma being the final version.
651 Ibid., p. 273.
652 Rasā’il, 3: 230 and ff.
Shia but has, however, been rejected by the Rawâfiḍ who, strangely enough, are quoted as following the reading of Ibn Mas'ūd. That is why al-Jâhîz pokes fun at them as Ibn Mas'ūd was a typical ‘Umari (in the sense that he loved ‘Umar greatly) and was outspokenly anti-Shiite. The reason the Râfiḍa refused Zayd’s Qur’anic reading and accepted that of Ibn Mas'ūd, could be explained by reference to the Imâmi exegete, al-Ṭûsî, who ascribes to him a fuller version of verse 24, Sûra 4, concerning temporary marriage (mu’a) in the form of an addition that does not exist in the Mushaf of ‘Uthmân (Sûra 4: 24).

Other Weaknesses Of the Doctrine Of Naṣṣ

The ‘Uthmânis have found evidence outside the realm of Ḥadîth and Qur’ân to attack the point of naṣṣ. First, it was not used by ‘Alî during his rule. The claim of naṣṣ, hence, after leaving the circle of Qur’anic Ijmâ’ of exegetes, and the circle of Ashâb al-Ḥadîth, rests therefore in the circle of fabricators of the Râfiḍa and is solely confined among the Râfiḍa.

If ‘Alî had really that right, why did we not find anybody - among the opposition fronts ‘Alî had met, such as Ṭalḥa ‘A’isha, Zubayr, (and Mu’âwiya) - reminding them of their mistakes in opposing one whom the Prophet had entrusted with authority? Second, even the Zaydiyya, despite their hatred for Ṭalḥa and Zubayr, do not share with the Râfiḍa their point of naṣṣ.

The ‘Uthmânîyya maintained - according to al-Jâhîz -that to make a mistake about the Imamate could never amount to apostasy (irtidâd). This term could only be applied to drastic differences in theology. Therefore, even if the traditions of the Râfiḍa concerning ‘Alî’s Imamate were true, and of course they did not accept them,


655 Ibid., pp. 276,149.

656 Ibid., p. 275.

657 Ibid.

658 Ibid., pp. 275-276. On p. 180 an extreme faction of the Zaydiyya is described as claiming that the ‘Umma fell in the Ridda, when they rejected ‘Alî’s Imamate, but for Salmân, Miqdâd, Abû Dharr and Bilâl. This group was most probably the Jârûdiyya.

659 Ibid., pp. 270-271.
it would still not amount to apostasy. As such, the Rāfida's claims are traced until the ʿUthmānis are freed from any further need to attack a group whose claims have left the established ʿilmāʾ and authentic Ḥadīth and are founded on fabrications and motivated by obsession and whims. In short, their concern was to oppose common sense and ʿilmāʾ by all that is farfetched and hidden.

After suggesting that the Qur'anic text has absolutely no contextual reference that points to the Imamate of any candidate, al-Jāḥīz cites historical evidence to confirm the unauthenticity of the doctrine of ʿnāṣṣ:

As such, (i.e., that the Qurʾān is silent on the exact identity of a person for the post of Imam), you have no more (genuine) evidences to forward from Qurʾān. The same applies when you try to gather a proof from historical khabar, despite the famous statement of al-ʿAnṣār and that of al-Muhājirūn. ʿUmar's disinterest in the post; although he was acting as the spokesman of Quraysh and al-Muhājirūn he asked the people to choose one from amongst two: ʿUmar or Abū Ubayda. Not one single person stepped out from the group of Anṣār, Muhājirūn or the community at large saying: "The Prophet has entrusted the post of Imam to a specified person." Not only so, but even if you assume that someone said that the Prophet said a statement on this and that date implying that the post belongs to someone, nobody uttered a word of this. We have also seen this confirmed in Abū Bakr's action in passing it to ʿUmar. Although Abū Bakr was advised to choose a less severe person, he was determined to choose ʿUmar and we did not hear the doctrine of ʿnāṣṣ raised against him then either. ʿUmar's ʿshurāʾ of six reflects the same principle, and all Muslims consented: The Zuhri, Taymi, Ḥāshimi, Umaiwi, Asadi . . . more significant and foreign to the doctrine of ʿnāṣṣ, is ʿUmar's thinking of Sālim- the mawṣūla of Abū Ḥudhayfa - as a possible candidate . . . Add to this Saʿd's opposition to ʿAli and his request for a proper ʿshurā. Nobody told Saʿd he was pointless as the Prophet had already chosen ʿAli as Imam . . . The same reasoning applies to Ṭalḥa, Zubayr, and ʿAʾishah's fight against ʿAli. Nobody objected to them: Why are you fighting the person whom the Prophet has chosen as your Imam?

The ʿUthmānis have also cited the rejection by seven Badrites of ʿAli's call to them to accept his Imamate, in addition to the Khāriji rebellion against him.

---

660 Ibid., pp. 276-277.
661 Ibid., p. 277.
662 Ibid., p. 276.
663 See Ibid., p. 238.
664 Ibid., p. 273.
665 Ibid., p. 273.
666 Ibid., p. 273.
667 Ibid., p. 175. (Zayd b. Thābit, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar, Ṣuhayb, etc.)
668 Ibid., p. 184.
(b) Opposition Front met by ʿAli:

We have seen above how the ʿUthmānis have briefly cited some opposition fronts against ʿAli above. These include Saʿd, Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr, ʿAʾisha, Muʿāwiya, and ʿAli’s own supporters and soldiers. When the ʿUthmānis, however, state the following observations "how can ʿAli be more superior than Abū Bakr?"669, "who else but (i.e., Abū Bakr) has been tested in a fashion that has not been repeated and never will?"670, "military expeditions were blocked in his (ʿAli’s) days, and mischief sprang up with him, and the Khārijites came out against his person"671 they at once add: "but this brings us into that which we have intended to avoid."672

The wisdom underlying the absence of Naṣṣ and suitability of Ikhtiyār: Naṣṣ and Ikhtiyār contrasted to Divine ʿAdl and human Taklif.

Against the Rāfidi justification for divine Naṣṣ, the ʿUthmānis forward the following argument:

If God had removed all that which heavily weighs upon men’s shoulders, which men’s souls find ugly, and all that which opposes their whims, the testing of them (İmtiḥān) would be therefore invalid and the freedom of choice (İkhtiyār)673 would be void. For them, there would be no sweetness to avoid, no bitterness to experience, no delight to be delayed, or hateful thing to be advanced. How can they (the Rāfida) expect of God a judgement or a situation (of Naṣṣ) whose burden He has not lifted!

According to the Rāfida, Naṣṣ supposedly rests on their unfounded fears that God has relieved the community of believers from the burden of choosing, and the possible dangers of mischoosing and division (ghalat wa fitna).674

The ʿUthmānis confirm that the absence of Naṣṣ has been divinely intended, such that by leaving the Muslims to discover the best candidate - although it invites a great deal of objectivity and subjects their faith to a big trial when desires and

669 Ibid., p.185.
670 Presumably by the wise way he accepted the Prophet’s death and led Muslims according to his model. See context, p.184.
671 Ibid., p.185.
672 Ibid., pp. 185-186.
673 I chose Ikhtiyār for Ikhtibār as the likely reading in relation to the Muʿtazili doctrine of free will, their view of taklif, and in line with the Muʿtazili justification for their doctrine of choosing (Ikhtiyār) the caliph. Ibid., p. 272.
674 Ibid., p. 270
attitudes are confronted with objectivity - would be a more beneficial divine measure to the *Umma*, than breaking the silence by specifying a single Imām.

Objective striving to recognise the most excellent is the key principle for the āUthmānis, and for this the exact candidate has not been specified, but is wisely discarded.\(^{675}\) al-Jāḥiz adds on their behalf the advantages and wisdom behind this discarding:

> If they say: "It is either that the Prophet has decided for us or we are left to decide." we reply: "Had the Prophet chosen a candidate and decided for us, this would of course have solved the matter, but since he did not, it is quite wise that he left the issue as it is, (i.e., open for choice.) His choice not to choose is indeed an invitation for us to choose, as choosing not to choose is sometimes a better choice for us. The Prophet would not have chosen to dismiss *Naṣṣ*, had he not realised that this is the best solution."\(^{676}\)

The āUthmānis reject the doctrine of Divine *Naṣṣ* by saying:

> Why is that they have expected and forced on God that which is easier and more apparent, when they have noticed that He has not done likewise, and kept things which are more delicate in meaning and need a subtler path to reach, and are more deep to extract, more sinful to commit neither specified nor explained, such as the issue of predestination, settling the dispute between free choice and predestined instincts, *al-tādīl wa al-tajwīr*, the issue of anthropomorphism (or its antithesis), and the way information is received and the logical reasoning of the mind.\(^{677}\)

This final point should not imply the unnecessary nature of the Imamate; rather it fixes the obligatory nature of the Imamate within a non-Rāfiḍī framework, i.e., within the āUthmāni (and equally Muʿtazili and Sunni) framework that views the caliphate as a function of *Istinbāt*\(^ {678}\) which is conclusive to *Ikhtiyār* and not based on *Naṣṣ*. The significance is unveiled when the āUthmānis confirm what has later distinguished the Sunni from the Shiʿi attitude to the Imamate. For the āUthmānis, it is not one of the basics (*usūl*) but among the *furūʿ* whereas the Shiʿa held the opposite:

For this reason the āUthmānis say:

---

\(^{675}\) Ibid., p. 271

\(^{676}\) Ibid., p. 278

\(^{677}\) Ibid., p. 270

\(^{678}\) *Istinbāt* means exerting efforts to discover the truth, and applies to discovering the necessity of Imamate as well as on discovering the suitability of the correct Imam, achieved by the process of *Ikhtiyār*. (Case of Abū Bakr as well as the āAbbāsids).
We have never seen one deserving to be labelled as an atheist or unbeliever just because he has erred in his view on the issue of caliphate/Imamate. On the contrary, we found such labels applied to those who have erred in (other) issues that were equally left unanswered in the Qur'ān...

The ʿUthmānī expectation of God that He did not designate the Imamate to a specific person opposes that of the Rāfīḍis, which rests on Naṣṣ. Of course, the difference can easily be traced back to the ʿUthmānī/Muʿtazīli outlook on God and their view of human nature. Divine justice and human nature are joined together to bring out the ʿUthmānī version of the Imamate, in the sense we shall elaborate below, and can be used to reflect a doctrinal constant by al-Jāḥiẓ during this period, which links ʿUthmāniyya to the earlier work of "al-Jawābāt" which also had a view of the Imamate equally tied to human nature and Divine justice.

VII- ʿUthmānī doctrines:

A-view of the Imāma

The ʿUthmānīs therefore believe that the Imamate rests on the principle of Ikhtiyār. The ʿUthmānīs assert that although religion kept silent on the exact identity of the candidate, it gave a suggestion of such qualities as justice and perfection. The Prophetic Ḥadīth: "Let the most fit (perfect) lead you" is one such example of the flexible nature of the Imamate embodied behind such a silence.

Another feature of the ʿUthmānīs is that the Imam should be the most meritorious, without having to descend from a specific noble family or genetic pool,


680 Ibid. p. 277. This Ḥadīth is not mentioned by any narrator and does not exist in Wensinck's Concordance. The closest reading to it has been narrated by Abū Dāwūd, where the 'best among you' is asked by the Prophet to make the call for prayers (Adhān), and the best reader of the Qur'ān is asked to lead the prayers. Perhaps al-Jāḥiẓ's ʿUthmānīyya have heard the Ḥadīth (Let the best among you, lead you) differently wherein the "Qurʾān readers" are substituted by "the best". al-Jāḥiẓ's ʿUthmānī interpretation of the Ḥadīth and application of the leadership of prayers to the leadership of the Ummah, however, matches a common Islamic practise. See al-Nāṣīʿī, al-Sunan al-Kubrā, (Bombay: Dār al-Qāyimā, 1983), 1: 223, where the Saqīfa incident is first introduced to describe the qualities of the leader of prayer, aiming to link Imamship in ṣalāt to leadership of the Ummah.
so that in this way the ʿUthmānis have clearly separated themselves from the forceful political heritage of dynasties or ideologies that based their legitimacy on their blood relation to the Prophet, be they Umayyad, ʿAbbāsid or Shiʿite. The ʿUthmānis, after stressing that Abū Bakr (and equally ʿUmar and ʿUthmān) have got office by merit, seem to shift the debate from the area of guided caliphate to one of political philosophy, by expounding one of the basic and key themes of K. al-ʿUthmāniyya, namely, that leadership in religion could not be given to anyone without having an established superiority in religion *"al-riyāsa fi al-dīn lâ tunāl bi- ghayr al-dīn."* Here, the fallacy of qarāba as conducive to Imāma is attacked. The Prophet Muḥammad had deserved that office by virtue of his manifesting an outstanding moral record, and not because of his Ḥāshimite origin, otherwise any Ḥāshimite could have claimed leadership. Extending the Ḥāshimite argument further, ʿAli could have been an excellent candidate, as he happened to fulfil the Ḥāshimite requirement from his parents. But this supposition is rejected because the Prophet - the ʿUthmānis add - was not given the highest of statuses and noblest of leaderships except by *ʿamal and saʿy*. Quoting the Qur'anic reference (53: 37-39) that man will be judged solely by his actions, the ʿUthmānis say:

If one's being the son of a Prophet or the Prophet's successor, or his cousin is not obviously part of his saʿy, this explains why the Prophet summoned his uncle, al-ʿAbbās and his aunt Safiyya to draw their attention to the fact that their relation to him would not free them from God's punishment, should they deserve it. 681

The ʿUthmānis now complete their argument by quoting the Qur'anic verse (44: 41), which warns that every mawlā is independent from his other mawlā on the day of judgement. As mawlā is said to have meant one's cousin, (besides one's slave), freedom from God's wrath is hence said to apply equally to the Prophet's cousin (and all his blood relations). He who objects to this conclusion, by assuming that qarāba should replace good deeds, *al-ʿamal al-Ṣāliḥ*, is one who is rejecting God's ruling and advice in this matter. The ʿUthmānis back their view by reference to the Qur'anic story of the sons of Adam (5: 29), whereby one's relation to his father, the Prophet, did not prevent him from God's curse and punishment. In this manner, no oppressor should ever depend on his noble lineage, not even a Prophet's son. The same applies to Noah's son whose disbelief made him one amongst the drowned (11: 46).

681 ʿUthmāniyya, pp. 206-207.
The Qur'anic reference to God's promise of Ibrāhīm's Imamship does not extend to cover the wicked (fāsiq) (2: 124) from his offspring, even if they come from the best of God's creation. This - the ʿUthmānīs conclude - is the proof that leadership in religion "should never" be based on any factor but religion. The argument is finally closed by reference to the Qur'anic verse that shows how God has sent Noah and Abraham and made their offspring receive prophecies, (57: 26) yet as some of their descendants were guided and many were fāsiqs, the fact remains that relation to the same genetic pool does not - as it never had - make the descendant noble. 682 Hence the main feature of the ʿUthmānīs is their outspoken non-racial doctrine of political equality, (taswiya), in the issue of the caliphate. In other words, these ʿUthmānīs ascribe no weight to lineage factors and continuously stress that the caliph should always be the most meritorious and as such they are distinguished from the ʿAbbāsids, Umayyads and Rāfiḍa who have hitherto attached undue significance to the factor of genealogical descent and blood relation to the Prophet. These ʿUthmānīs who are also known as ʿUmarīs, quote ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's madḥhab of khilāfa, which reflects their non-racial attitudes to the question of succession. 683

It would be useful to keep an eye on how such a position was viewed by al-Jāḥiz throughout his political career: did he join the ʿUthmānīs in their non-racial attitude to the identity of the Imam or was he more keen to take the side of the ʿAbbāsid stock of Hāshim/Quraysh? and if so, how could restricting the Imam to Quraysh have been compatible with the Islamic (non-racial) criteria for rulership? As regards al-Jāḥiz's work, al-ʿUthmāniyya, it is sufficient here to say that al-Jāḥiz - after completing his account of the ʿUthmānīs as regards the freedom to choose the candidate for Imam, no matter where he may originally and genealogically come from - al-Jāḥiz, surprisingly has implicitly maintained that his patrons, the ʿAbbāsids, could very much fit in khilāfa, in spite of the strictness of the ʿUthmāniyya, as it is left implicit for the reader to infer that the ʿAbbāsids need not be excluded from the ʿUthmānī ruling on merit, as they could be seen as having combined merit and noble descent exactly as ʿUthmān had, in what may be seen as a subtle Jāḥizian twisting of the ʿUthmānī argument for merit that does not rest on descent.

682 See how the argument is developed in al-ʿUthmāniyya, pp. 206-211.
683 Ibid., pp 217-218. Here ʿUmar on his death bed is quoted saying: "Had (the non-Arab) Sālim, client of Abū Ḥudhayfa been alive, I would have certainly recommended him for the caliphate".
Equally significant is the way the post of Imām is simultaneously linked to the argument of human nature and Divine justice, expressed in "al-Jawābät fi al-Imāma" and recycled here in a way that suggests how the Muṭtazila's and ʿUthmāniyya's views coincided in this respect.

Man is not ideally projected, as the predominance of his desires and lusts are acknowledged. As a mukallaf who is entrusted with religious duties and is committed to look at the long term effects of his actions and as one who can and subsequently should oppose his whims and preferences, he must listen to the call of reason in choosing the most meritorious, setting his immediate preferences aside.684 If it is claimed there are ten equally meritorious candidates, the answer to that is that it contradicts with Divine justice: "God would not have ordained a matter and then make it impossible to realising . . . If this happens, it would be more miraculous than raising the dead alive, but God only asks for things that are within man's reach and are conducive to his maṣlaḥa."685 From this point the various ways of choosing an Imām are laid down.

B- Modalities of accession to Imāma/Caliphate

i- Popular acclamation (after communal Istinbāf of the most meritorious):

Now that the Sharī'a's silence on the identity of the Imām is justified, how do the ʿUthmānis see their alternative of Ikhtiyār regulated, in view of the undeniable conflicting local preferences686 of each part of the Islamic caliphate? How do the people get to know of their leader? The ʿUthmāni argument makes an appeal here to the principle of "natural necessity"687, i.e., once the community is familiar and knowledgeable with the virtues of the most meritorious figure, it follows instantly that they choose him by virtue of his outstanding excellences and qualities that compel them to unanimously select him as their leader.

684 Ibid., p. 272
685 Ibid., p.269
686 These include the Syrian, ʿIrāqi, Ḥijāzi, Tahāmi, Jazari, Qurayshi, Ḥusayni, Ḥasanī, Ibaḍi, Ṣufrī, Azraqī, Najdi and Zaydi. See Ibid. pp. 269-270.
687 Instantaneous recognition of the Imam in this manner follows with al-Jāḥiẓ's view that recognition of God and His messengers is equally compelling provided independent taklif is ongoing. See Ibid., p. 255 and ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Sharh al-Usūl al-Khamṣa (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1965), pp. 54-55. Destiny and free will are harmoniously fitted, because man is destined to accept that which is really the most excellent in his opinion.
The candidate's distinguished excellences are so manifest and famous that this makes the elite of the community choose him willingly and spontaneously, after a long process of being familiar with him, by virtue of an undoubted khabar or compelling witness in the way 688 of `Uthmäniyya became famous among the Muʿtazila, and al-Ḥasan b. Ḥayy among the Zaydiyya and Mirdās b. Udayya among the Khawārij, and Galen became the most distinguished in medicine and Aristotle in logic.688 It is quite unlikely that the most excellent in Din and Dunyā is unheard of, because his very excellence could only be attained by frequenting `ulamāʾ and fuqahāʾ, by extensive study of the Books of God and His creation, and competing with adversaries.689 How can we suppose the most suitable and perfect of men to be obscure by deed and creed, when he could only enjoy such an excellence by virtue of accumulating experiences, abundant correct choices and actions.690 Abundant works or "kathrat al-Aʾmāl", in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's words, is the road conducive to Imāma.691

Popular acclamation of the leader is hence the first mode of accession and it goes without saying that Abū Bakr's Imamate is the most illustrative example of this way of accession in view of the category of virtues highlighted in al-ʿUthmāniyya and the explicit suggestion that Abū Bakr's appointment was a consequence of the community's familiarity with his merits that lasted for twenty three years.692

Their gathering around Abū Bakr was not due to his wealth nor to his clan-status, but due to his religious merit, and was made possible not after implementing a metaphysical doctrine or apparatus, but was achieved by a free exercise of the intellect. al-Jāḥiz's allusion to how the first Muslims had reacted to the problem of succession is significant in understanding the issue of Imamate as a direct responsibility of the intellect, God's agent installed in mankind.693 For this reason revelation was silent on this political issue in order to give way for the society

688 ʿUthmāniyya, pp. 265-266.
689 Ibid., pp. 266-267.
690 Such as pilgrimages, wars, prayers, fasting, alms giving, recitation of Qurʾān, forbidding evil and commanding the good, love for the pious and aggression to enemies, Ibid., pp. 252, 266-268.
691 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Sharḥ, p. 754.
represented by its most learned groups, *ahl al-haqq*, to exercise that God-given power towards *ahl al-fadl*, the most meritorious amongst them.

ii- By way of revolution

The second of these ways is by means of revolution whose obligatory nature of attainment is conditional upon possibility (*Imkân*) and whose possibility or likelihood is dependent on the special relation *al-Jähiz* viewed as indispensable between the elite (*al-khâssa*) and the public masses (*al-`ämma*):

When we say it is incumbent on people to set an Imâm, we mean none but the (privileged), the *khâssa*, whose obligation rests on the possibility of fulfillment (*Imkân*). If they say: "what makes the *khâssa* powerful or powerless?" we say: "it may be that the public is antagonistic towards it and strongly attached to the army of the illegitimate ruler (*al-Bağhibi al-mutaghallib*) which makes it powerless."696

In the condition mentioned above (when the *`ämma* is in agreement with the tyrant) does the obligation to set an Imâm remain binding on the *khâssa* and when does it vanish? *al-Jähiz* says: it may or may not remain binding:

If they say: "in which case does the obligation to set one apply?" we say: "If the deserving candidate for the Imamate and the most worthy of the caliphate is distinguishable and apparent, provided the element of *taqiyya* is absent." If they ask: "how come secrecy hinders those that are more numerous than the soldiers of the tyrant?" we reply: "It is not enough that the holders of the just cause be more numerous for they may be faced by a more trained army, that makes their plot fail. A small trained group is usually more efficient than a scattered and divided group."698

In another instance *al-Jähiz* gives another condition for the possibility of dethroning the tyrant, in what Pellat describes as an analysis of the 'psychology of the plotters', i.e., success of the revolution is not only due to the agitation of the masses but is also due to the more influential and plotting role of the *khâssa*. Hence the two forces should work together for the success of the revolution, but this depends on the period when a favourable relation exists between these forces.

---

694 See al-*Uthmâniyya*, p. 270.
695 Ibid., p. 265.
696 Besides the above translation of the term *mutaghallib*, Pellat uses the "tyrant", the "usurper". See 'L'imamat dans la doctrine de Ôâähiz', p. 48, f.n. 1.
697 It is not contextually clear how the elite could be more numerous, but as Pellat suggests, some of the pages are disappointing. (Ibid., p. 49). As he suggests, the more numerous should mean the upholders of the just cause (p. 48).
The khāṣṣa, even if it knows where the man worthy of the caliphate can be found, and is more decided, each member of it is convinced that his associate could betray and forsake him. As long as there is need for taqiyya, forsaking and indifference continue, although all agree to help in appointing the absent Imâm. Such unanimity of feeling is of no use as long as they are not united. If they say: "They should forever abstain from selecting an Imâm as no co-operation exists among them for they cannot get out of taqiyya," we shall say: "It is not that. The prudence and clandestineness of certain members of the khāṣṣa towards other members cannot continue and eventually will stop for numerous reasons. For instance, the conduct of the tyrant may worsen, his injustice may become abominable, his usurpation and oppression may increase to such an extent that this attitude will evidently reach a very awkward state that drives them to think of resistance, by honest discourse, and fruitful consultations; here the state of embarrassment (Ihrāj) has driven them to be more united than ever, such that everyone is guided by the opinion of his associate after they found themselves suffering from the common misfortune that provoked that unpleasant anger in their souls. This will continue until their inherent agreement matches their external one, with the misfortune sparing no one. Upon meeting, people get more excited, agitated and observant, which leads to an open communication to one another, and an abandonment of their taqiyya which will ultimately be known to their oppressive adversaries. They know then that their only refuge is war and their only outlet is an open fight. They also find themselves obliged to give money and spare no effort. These are the working causes of a growing cumulative phenomenon and conditions or matters that trigger other matters and motives that cause reciprocal actions. At that point, violence is possible and the religious obligation to strike becomes real."

Such a manner of reaching power obviously bears a strong relation to the coming of the Abūsids and justifies their absence from the political stage during the Umayyad era. In this sense the Abūsids stock is freed from any blame, as such an elite was overshadowed by the Umayyad oppressors and their efforts remained futile until the situation worsened in their favour, i.e., until the interaction between al-khāṣṣa and āmma interacted favourably to the Abūsids cause after the political vision of both groups had perfectly coincided in their attempt to get rid of the unlawful Umayyad usurpers. The Abūsids as such are seen as enjoying a potential right to rule, which was however suppressed by the brutal Umayyads and the weakness of the āmma. This (potential) right of the Abūsids will be more openly discussed below under the work known as "al-Abūsīyya".

699 al-Uthmāniyya, pp. 261-263.
700 This has been signalled by Lambton, State and Government in Islam, p. 61
701 Ibid., p. 261, 264.
702 al-Jāḥiz will extensively point to the oppressive nature of the Umayyads in an exaggerated manner in order to justify the impossibility of any Abūsids rebellion during the rule of the Umayyads, who are described in the most oppressive manner, besides the type of people who fell victim to that oppression and accepted their fisq, except for a minority that God made immune from being as them. See 'al-Nabīta', Rasā'il al-Jāḥiz, 2: 15. Hārūn wrongly reads the verb here as "aṣā", (see Ibid., line 10). It should rather be read as "aṣama Allāh", i.e., those (Abūsids) protected by God (my suggestion).
iii- The third way of becoming a caliph is reflected in the way Abū Bakr gave the succession to ʿUmar.\textsuperscript{703}

iv- The fourth way of becoming an Imām is that which has been undertaken by Muslims to choose ʿUthmān, which was embodied in the Shūrā set out by ʿUmar, that acted as the khāṣṣa (elite) of their times.\textsuperscript{704}

VIII- Evaluation of K al-ʿUthmāniyya: Was al-Jāḥīz successful?

It is significant to note how successful al-Jāḥīz was in forwarding K. al-ʿUthmāniyya to al-Maʿmūn, in the role of an advisor concerning the the issue of tafsīl and the delicate matter of passing a judgement on one of the Companions of the Prophet. To achieve that target we have seen how keen al-Jāḥīz was on stressing the extremism of the main parties that had a say in this topic, be it the ʿUthmāniyya who rejected the caliphate (but not the person) of ʿAlī or the Rāfīḍa who rejected the deeds, personalities and caliphs of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān. Once the extremism or non-orthodoxy has been highlighted, al-Jāḥīz was equally keen to provide the caliph with a balanced and orthodox view on this matter. Observing that the caliph had a great esteem for ʿAlī to the exclusion of those who had preceded him, al-Jāḥīz's task was not an easy one as he was determined to convey to the caliph, who seems to have had a pre-determined misconception of the hierarchical statuses of the Ṣaḥāba, an alternative view that aims at exactly placing them in the historically established politico-religious standing that each one of them had really enjoyed. The ʿUthmānī scholars, obviously, must have been very crucial and favourable to the non-Shīʿī al-Jāḥīz in implementing this aim, given their acknowledged contributions in the existing non-Shīʿī, and growing Sunni school of fiqh and ʿHadith.

It is very likely that al-Jāḥīz's determination to provide the pro-ʿAlid caliph with a detailed exposition of al-ʿUthmāniyya's outlook, couched in a ʿUthmānī-Rāfīḍī polemic, seemed to him the safest way to pull the caliph back to the most contemporary version of the circulated legitimised basis of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate, i.e., to the Sunni orthodoxy, at a time when the ʿUthmānī ʿulamāʾ as a group had become an important contributor in laying the foundation of that orthodoxy.

\textsuperscript{703} See al-ʿUthmāniyya, p. 274.
\textsuperscript{704} Ibid., p. 270.
It can be asked here why al-Jähiz in this aspiration for orthodoxy did not make any appeal to Ḥanbalism, being solely satisfied by using the ʿUthmānī scholars. In other words, why did al-Jähiz choose the ʿUthmāniyya's outlook, which suffered from the weakness of rejecting ʿAli's rulership when he could have appealed to another contributor to orthodoxy, Ibn Ḥanbal705 and his school who are believed to have incorporated ʿAli (sooner or later in his life706) among the meritorious Ṣaḥāba.

Hence al-ʿUthmāniyya must have been more attractive to the caliph than the Ḥanbalis whose growing influences al-Jähiz, with the state-backed Muʿtazila, was keen to check by trying to inflict the Miḥna on them. Hence the choice by al-Jähiz of al-ʿUthmāniyya as a group is justified, in his attempt to accommodate the Ṣaḥāba in a balanced way707, whereby the virtues of the caliph's favourite, ʿAli, are acknowledged in an ʿUthmānic manner i.e., "although ʿAli is shown to have been an excellent and virtuous Companion of the Prophet", the caliph is hopefully attracted to the corollary of this ʿUthmāni judgement: that each of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān was even more virtuous and thus they deserved to be the immediate successors of the Prophet.

This treatise could not have been produced without al-Jähiz's awareness of and dependence on al-Maʿmūn's tolerance, which allowed al-Jähiz to provide the caliph with the ʿUthmāniyya's outlook on the respective merits and statuses of the Ṣaḥāba after the Prophet. A sound criticism of ʿAli (and his supporters) should not have been out of the question at al-Maʿmūn's court708, and so al-Jähiz's attempt was not sufficiently risky to stir the anger of the biased caliph, as long as the criticism of

---

705 Ibn Taymiyya narrates on behalf of Ibn Ḥanbal: "He who does not count ʿAli as the fourth caliph is more astray than the donkey serving his family, and should not be allowed to marry from us". See Ibn Taymiyya, Maimūt Fātāwā, Ed. by A. Ibn Qāsim (Morocco: al-Maktab al-Taʾlimi al-Sāʿudi, n.d.) 35: 19
706 See Madelung, Religious Trends, p. 24. Z. ʿAhmad has pointed out Ibn Ḥanbal's broad definition of the respective merits of the Ṣaḥāba, wherein Abū Bakr has precedence over ʿUmar, then comes the six members of the Shūrā, all of whom were worthy of the caliphate, then fighters at Badr, then the Muḥājirūn and Anṣār. As such, ʿAli's Imamate is acknowledged, being one of the Shūrā members. See Z. ʿAhmad "Some aspects of the political theology of ʿAbd ʿAbd-Allah b. Ḥanbal", Islamic Studies, XII (1973), pp. 53-66.
707 But not as balanced as Ibn Ḥanbal.
It would be useful to comment on the impact of al-Jähiz's treatise on his intended reader al-Ma'mūn and the on the public as well. Of course, if this treatise was presented to the 6Abbāsīd caliph before the year 201 (when 6Ali al-Riḍā was made heir apparent), al-Jähiz's attempt must have been a big failure. The same applies if the treatise was forwarded to al-Ma'mūn before the year 212 when 6Ali b. Abi Ṭālib was declared the best Companion after the Prophet. But if, however, the treatise was presented to al-Ma'mūn after 212 and before 218, when al-Ma'mūn on his deathbed entrusted the caliphate to his brother al-Mu'taṣīm, al-Jähiz's 6Uthmāniyya could be seen as scoring some genuine success, as al-Ma'mūn did not, eventually, appoint another 6Alid figure to succeed him.

It is also within al-Jähiz's pluralistic role of comprehensive and objective narration of the arguments of the various sects, that we should view the biographers' account of the existence of the non-extant work "al-radd 6alā al-6Uthmāniyya". The same period that witnessed this book must have also given room for al-Jähiz's narration of "qawl asnāf al-Zaydiyya" which is also non-extant.
As far as K. al-"Uthmâniyya is concerned, one must note that al-Jähiz's professed role as an arbiter between the Râfîda, Zaydiyya and "Uthmâniyya (Bakriyya-"Uthmâniyya), was not - given his "Abbâsid and Sunni convictions - practised with complete impartiality, as we have seen him directing the argument in a seemingly objective manner yet not free from his subtle way of directing these arguments to support the non-Shî`î (Zaydi/Rafidi) premises that al-Jähiz cherished.

In this respect, out of the many caliphal addresses cited in K. al-"Uthmâniyya, it is sufficient to quote al-Jähiz's own words:

"... Look how clearly we provide the Rawâfid with ḥujaj . . . and how far they go astray inspite of our efforts!"714

Perhaps to al-Jähiz, who has told the caliph not to misunderstand him for any of the parties quoted (i.e., here, as a partisan of the "Uthmâniyya), such a remark could have been fitted within his outlined scheme of objective narration when he said (wa ja'altu nafsi 'Adl 'baynahum); i.e., his rejection of the Rawâfid theses does not necessarily contradict his role as an arbiter, for the judge cannot obviously keep silent and has to favour one or the other view.

It is exactly al-Jähiz's critique of "Ali's superiority as cherished by both Râfîda and Zaydiyya, which has driven a partisan of the latter, al-Iskâfi, to refute al-Jähiz's work al-"Uthmâniyya as it must have challenged the Zaydi doctrine of al-mafdûl and al-afdal. Although the Zaydiyya had accepted the authenticity of Imâmship of the three caliphs that preceded "Ali, they could not accept al-Jähiz's al-"Uthmâniyya's reasons for that authenticity715, i.e., based on the fact they were better than "Ali. The Muʿtazili Zaydi716 al-Iskâfi could not accept the "Uthmâni logic in which "Ali is sketched as one out of the many meritorious Sahâba of the Prophet, and thus his alleged unique superiority is torn into pieces or shattered as we have seen al-Jähiz trying to pay justice to all the other Sahâba who were really enjoying a higher or equal image. For this reason, al-Iskâfi was motivated to refute al-Jähiz.

Irshâd (6: 76) and Ibn al-Nadîm's Fihrist, (the new published annex) refer to this work among al-Jähiz's list of works. Pellat in his article (Gâhîz Hérésiographe) sees this work as one out of many heresiographical works by al-Jähiz. See p. 155 ff.

714 al-"Uthmâniyya, p. 129
716 al-Iskâfi is supposed to have been a Muʿtazilite before becoming a Zaydite. See Watt, The Political Attitudes of the Muʿtazilites', p. 50.
immediately, even if the latter was "pretending that he as an objective author, was acting as an arbiter between the Uthmâni and Râfiḍi sects,"717 because those Uthmâni arguments do shake the Zaydi basis for accepting the Imamate of those who had preceded 6Ali by suggesting that they were more superior than him.

But how comes it that the first attack on al-Jâḥiz's Uthmâniyya has come from a Zaydi source, whom al-Jâḥiz had praised (as a group) in the treatise studied above known as "Maqālat al-Zaydiyya" (in their alleged insistence that Imamate follows deeds and was not based on descent, on which he, however, kept silent while reiterating their view that 6Ali had all the good qualities scattered among the Šahāba).718 Of course al-Iskäfi who found al-Jâḥiz rejecting the latter thesis, i.e., by pointing out in K. al-Uthmâniyya that there were Companions who were more meritorious than 6Ali, could not but refute him. This clash among members of the same Mu'tazila school needs some clarification. H. Yahyâ Mohamed has pointed that the Mu'tazila were divided into two schools: the Başrans and the Baghdâdis; although Abû Bakr's Imamate was acknowledged by both, there was no agreement between them whether Abû Bakr or 6Ali was the most meritorious (al-afdal):

The Başrans like al-Nazzäm, al-Jâḥiz, Thumâma, al-Fuwati and other Mu'tazilates upheld like the Uthmânites that Abû Bakr was afdal than 6Ali; and that the chronology of the first four caliphs reflected their respective order of merit. The Baghdâdi Mu'tazilites, such as Bishr b. al-Mu'tamir, and al-Iskäfi, ... thought like the Zaydites that 6Ali was al-afdal.719

In short the differences between al-Jâḥiz and the Zaydi Mu'tazila is the way Abû Bakr's Imamate was judged as authentic. To the former, who could only approve of the perfect candidate as suitable to succeed the Prophet720, that candidate was evidently Abû Bakr. The Zaydis, however, did not deny Abû Bakr's Imamate but stressed that due to the factors beyond 6Ali's control721 - who, nevertheless, was the most meritorious - 6Ali had to give way to the less meritorious, Abû Bakr, and as such Abû Bakr's Imamate - according to the Zaydi Mu'tazila - should not mean he

718 I owe this observation to H. Yehya Mohamed, 'Jâḥiz et le Chi'isme', pp. 13-14.
719 H. Yehyâ Mohamed, op. cit., p. 14. The generalisation quoted here needs amendments: Indeed there were Başran and Baghdâdi Mu'tazilites, but a reading of the Uthmâniyya, indicates that it is not exact to attribute to them the hierarchy Yehyâ ascribes (that hierarchical order follows their historical order of rule); what can be inferred is only the point of preference, where they preferred Abû Bakr over 6Ali; as to the question of hierarchical order Yehyâ's point is doubtful, as they rejected 6Ali's Imamate!
720 See al-Jâḥiz's view expressed in Maqālat al-Zaydiyya.
721 See Yehya, op. cit., pp. 15-16.
was the *afdal*, thus the birth of the term *al-mafdūl*, which was tied or based on a Zaydi socio-political analysis of events that justified the Imamate of those who preceded ʿAlī and offered the reasons that hindered ʿAlī from asking for his right.⁷²² So on the point of *tafḍīl*, one can present the following table (up to this point in al-Jāḥīz’s thought):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ʿAbū Bakr</th>
<th>ʿUmar</th>
<th>ʿUthmān</th>
<th>ʿAlī</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>ʿUthmāniyya</em></td>
<td>accepted as <em>afdal</em></td>
<td>accepted</td>
<td>accepted</td>
<td>accepted as <em>afdal</em>, rejected his Imamate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rāfīḍa</em></td>
<td>rejected</td>
<td>rejected</td>
<td>rejected</td>
<td>accepted as <em>afdal</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| *al-Jāḥīz* | accepted as *fāḍil* | accepted | accepted | a-neutral in “Maṭqālat al-Zaydiyya”  
| | b-close to ʿUthmāni opinion in al-ʿUthmāniyya  
| | c-accepted his virtues and Imamate in Taṣwīb |
| *Zaydiyya* | accepted as *mafdūl* | accepted | accepted | accepted as *afdal* after Prophet |

Watt, Pellat,⁷²³ and Ḥ. Y. Mohamed have ascribed to al-Jāḥīz the role of establishing the acceptance among the majority of Muslims that the chronological order of the guided caliphs was equally the order of their merit. In fact, this generalisation does not have any basis in the works of al-Jāḥīz studied so far,⁷²⁴ as the present work (al-ʿUthmāniyya) is very clear in reflecting the ʿUthmāni rejection of ʿAlī’s Imamate and we do not hear any comment from al-Jāḥīz in this respect.

---

⁷²² See “Maṭqālat al-Zaydiyya” and Yeḥya, op. cit., p. 17.
⁷²⁴ Perhaps one has, it seems, to check the soundness of such a generalisation against al-Jāḥīz’s later pro-Alid work, “Taṣwīb”.

188
3- Kitāb al-ʿAbbāsiyya

I Religio-Political setting:

Although the exact timing of this work has been controversial, one is inclined to assume its composition to have been during the period of political Muʿtazilite triumph where pro-ʿAlid and pro-ʿAbbāsid sentiments were unquestionably the main features of that period.

al-Ḥājiri rejects the possibility that this work - only three pages of which have remained - could have been one of the earliest Jahizian works on the issue of Imamate presented to al-Maʿmūn while he was in Merv, i.e., after his victory over his brother al-Amin. al-Ḥājiri's suggestion makes sense but the timing of this work should not be pushed to a period that goes beyond that of al-Maʿmūn, as suggested by al-Jāḥiz's doctrinal enemy, and most probably his contemporary, i.e., Ibn al-Riwandi, who claimed that al-Jāḥiz had written al-ʿAbbāsiyya together with Kitāb al-Iłhām to refute the Shiʿites, during a much later period (in 241/855-856).

Judging from the contextual markers in the work of al-ʿAbbāsiyya, as we shall see below, there is more evidence for our hypothesis that this work was written during the same period of political Muʿtazilite triumph and not during the period witnessing the anti-Alid trends of al-Mutawakkil.

What applies in our analysis above on the timing of al-ʿUthmāniyya should therefore be extended to the work al-ʿAbbāsiyya.

al-ʿAbbāsiyya:

Before we analyse the content of the few pages that have reached us of K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya, we shall try below to relate the work contextually, to other Jahizian texts.

---

725 al-Ḥājiri, al-Jāḥiz Ḥayāṭuhu wa Āthāruhu, p. 194.
726 This is the view of Pellat, in 'al-Ǧāḥiz Hērēṣiogrāphe', pp.153-155.
727 Ibn al-Riwandi, F dihat al-Mūṭažila, in microfilm, Ph. D. Thesis by A.A. A ʿsam, pp. 32-33, 42. This timing which is suggested by al-ʿsam is based on the supposition that K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya followed al-ʿUthmāniyya, which is believed by him to have been composed in 240/854-855.
and historically, to other sectarian doctrines in which the group of al-Abbâsiyya defined themselves in relation to others.

Contextually, al-Jâhiẓ has promised the reader/addressee of K. al-Uthmâniyya to follow it by K. al-Abbâsiyya, by citing the different aspects of their argumentation in a very profound fashion and with the greatest impartiality (insâf).\textsuperscript{729} The promise and mention of the Abbâsiyya was triggered by al-Jâhiẓ’s reference to the way the Râfiḍa have quoted Salmân’s view on the question of political inheritance, which he is allegedly said to have uttered in Persian:

Says al-Jâhiẓ:

Had Salmân meant that political succession were to be confined within the house of the Prophet, in an inherited manner (‘alâ al-tawdruth) that gives priority to those that are closest to him in kinship, the closer one is to him the more right he has to succeed him (al-aqrab fa al-aqrab) - which obviously alienates the rest of the Arabs (that lack such kinship) and equally the non-Arabs: then, accordingly, this interpretation would have been a credit and proof to the group of Abbâsiyya and not to the group Alawiyya, as the Abbâsids were closer and enjoyed a more senior blood relation to the Prophet than the Alids (Uncle vs. Cousin).\textsuperscript{730}

Of course, this position is the complete antithesis of the group of the Uthmânis, who have categorically refuted the doctrine of succession by descent and judged such a position as necessarily conflicting with that favourable to God.\textsuperscript{731}

Contrary to the Uthmâni and even the Alawi position, al-Jâhiẓ’s professed neutrality was obviously punctured by such an acknowledgement of the right of the Abbâsids, which he could not resist pointing out; this time in the context of quoting the Râfiḍa’s interpretation of Khâlid b. Sa’îd b. al-Ãś’s alleged statement in reaction to Abû Bakr’s Imamate: “did you, the group of ‘Abd Manâf accept the rulership of someone not from you?”\textsuperscript{732}

al-Jâhiẓ’s analysis of this statement hypothetically acknowledges the superior right of al-Abbâs over ‘Ali and the rest of ‘Abd Manâf, if - al-Jâhiẓ stresses - Khâlid

\textsuperscript{729} See Ibid., p.187.
\textsuperscript{730} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{731} Ibid., p. 208.
\textsuperscript{732} Ibid., p. 190.
meant to remind them of the issue of political inheritance, which al-Jähiz concludes - was not Khālid’s intention!733

On the contextual relation between al-ʿAbbāsiyya and al-ʿUthmāniyya, Pellat says:

There is an absolute continuity between K. al-ʿUthmāniyya and K. Masāʾil al-ʿAbbāsiyya, since, having discussed the doctrine of the Muslims who believe that the caliphate had been legitimately held by Abū Bakr and his first two successors, the author (al-Jähiz), had logically - without passing any judgement734 - to go further and without believing too much in it himself,735 to show that at any rate the ʿAbbāsid caliphate was more legitimate than that which was claimed by the Alids,736 since even the Shiʿites had come to the conclusion that the Prophet himself had designated al-ʿAbbās.737

Historically and concerning the original transfer of power from the ʿAlids to the ʿAbbāsids, the question remains whether al-Mahdi was the one who had first introduced such a new legitimacy for the dynasty or was it after al-Ḥāshimiyya-al-Rāwandiyya had introduced such a view that he followed them?738 Furthermore, how

---

733 Ibid.
734 I think that al-Jähiz in K. al-ʿUthmāniyya was not an innocent arbiter as Pellat assumes here. This contradicts his own observation in which he alerts the reader to the probability that al-Jähiz was not in al-ʿUthmāniyya a simple narrator. See Pellat ‘Al-Jähiz Hérosiographe”, p. 149.
735 I think this can be debated as al-Jähiz’s pro-ʿAbbāsidism is quite detectible in many of his writings.
736 Pellat’s conclusion should rather read: The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate’s legitimacy was initially rooted in their cousins’ right to Imamship, namely from his Ḥanafi’s descendants, it passed over to them. This interpretation of the basis of the ʿAbbāsid rule is confirmed by al-Masʿūdi’s analysis of the group of Rāwandiyya, who refuted the Imamate of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar but accepted that of ʿAli because al-ʿAbbās had accepted/wished it, but they nevertheless confirm al-ʿAbbās’s superior right to the caliphate by virtue of his distinguished kinship. In this sense, ʿAli could be seen to have had the second priority, as al-ʿAbbās was removed from exercising his right. ʿAli could have acted on behalf of al-ʿAbbās, but this does not extend in time. See Murūj, 3: 236.
737 Pellat, “Al-Jähiz Hérosiographe”, pp. 153-155. I wonder who these Shiʿites were. Perhaps he means the Ḥāshimiyya-al-Kaysāniyya.
738 According to Pellat the Rāwandiyya were members of a sect that made its appearance shortly after the death of Abū Ḥāshim (son of Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, end of 1st century) among the Kaysāniyya who were divided over the problem of the succession of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya. They had played a strong role in the ʿAbbāsid Daʿwa, and benefiting from F. ʿOmar and Madelung, Pellat defines the Rāwandiyya as being named after ʿAbd Allāh al-Rāwandi, an ʿAbbāsid dāʿī of the ʿAbbāsid pretender Muḥammad b. ʿAli in Khurāsān, who presided over the Ḥāshimiyya (the supporters of Abū Ḥāshim) who maintained that the son of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya had given up his rights in favour of this Muḥammad b. ʿAli, or rather to his father, ʿAli b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās, such that these Rāwandiyya were the only supporters of the Alid transmission of Imamate among the ʿAbbāsids. See Pellat, ‘Al-Jähiz Hérosiographe”, footnote 50-53. To him, it was this group - at the time of al-Mahdi - which ended up claiming that the Prophet had designated his uncle al-ʿAbbās to succeed him, and that group was known as al-ʿAbbāsiyya. Pellat’s analysis therefore seems to trace back the
can we accept that al-Mahdi, according to al-Ash`ari al-Qummi,739 was critical of Abù Bakr, 6Umar, and all other non-6Abbasid rulers who are seen by al-Mahdi as usurpers and are secretly seen by the Hāshimiyya-al-Rāwandiyya - whose allegiance he is allegedly believed to have succeeded in shifting from Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya's son Abû Hāshim to Ibn 6Abbās's grandson, Muḥammad Ibn 6Ali - as Kāfirs, when we know for certain that he and his father, al-Manṣūr (and also later caliphs) were keen on “choosing orthodoxy and renouncing the heterodox origins of the 6Abbasid movement, their extremist supporters and the various other heretical movements, such as Manic...”740

---

739 See al-Qummi, al-Magālāt wa al-Firaq, pp. 64-65, and al-Nawbakhti, Firāq, p. 43.
740 EI., new ed. S. v. “6Abbasids”.

---

two versions of 6Abbasid legitimacy to one source i.e., to the variant slogans of the Rāwandiyya group that seems to have given up their belief in the transfer of Ḥimāma by a wasīyya from the Ḥanafi-Allīd Abū Hāshim (via 6Abd Allāh al-Rāwandi) and holding instead the new belief that the Imamate had rather belonged to the house of 6Abbās, a view that was probably propagated during the reign of al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdi.

F. 6Omar, on the other hand, relates that 6Abd Allāh al-Rāwandi - who has been described by Pellat above as the 6Abbasid pretender - considered al-Manṣūr as Imām and God and that Abū Muslim was his messenger! (see al-6Abbāsiyyūn al-Awā’il 1: 285.). He furthermore tries to sum up the complex evolution of the Rāwandiyya as follows: (I) during the 6Abbasid ḍa’wa the Rāwandiyya was reflected in (a) the Khūdāšl movement, after Khudāš, one of the important 6Abbasid supporters in Khurāsān who believed in the Imamship of Ibn 6Abbās’s grandson after a ṣāḥiyya from 6Ali’s grandson. (b) the 6Abbāsiyya movement that believed that al-6Abbās was the sole inheritor of the Prophet, as propagated by Abū Hurayra al-Rāwandi, Abū al-Qāsim al-Rāwandi and Abū al-6Abbās al-Rāwandi; (the first is described by al-Nawbakhti, Firāq, p. 42 as leader of the pure 6Abbāsiyya/the pure Rāwandiyya: al-6Abbāsiyya/al-Rāwandiyya al-Khullāṣ who deified the 6Abbasid Imams. (II) With the success of the 6Abbasid ḍa’wa, F. 6Omar adds that out of the many movements that evolved from the initial Rāwandiyya, there were the Abū Muslimiyya and Ruzāmiyya who deified Abū Muslim al-Khurāsāni and al-Mansūriyya who deified Abū Ja`ār al-Manṣūr. Only the 6Abbāsiyya is said to have escaped their line of ghulaww and course of rebellions launched against the orthodox 6Abbasid regime. See F. 6Omar, Taḥfīṣ, pp. 233-235 and al-Khilāfa al-6Abbāsiyya, p. 197. Anyway, the significance of the shift in 6Abbasid legitimacy is twofold: (1) It is reflective of the evolution undertaken by the 6Abbāsiyya from the the extremist movements of al-Kaysāniyya and al-Rāwandiyya, i.e., from a period in which the so far undefined soluble state of Proto-Shī‘ism was about to definitely split into proper 6Abbasidism and Shi‘ism. (2) It strongly suggests the dependence of 6Abbasid polity on Kaysānī esotericism and its ending up in an ideology of the Imāmi type that based Imāma on testamentory designation (see H. Laoust, as cited by Pellat, op.cit., footnote 60.) It also indicates (as suggested by Guidi and cited by F. 6Omar in al-Khilāfa al-6Abbāsiyya, p. 197) that the 6Abbāsis at one stage had to follow the same line of ghulaww that had already been exhibited by the Yazidi pro-Umayyads and the Proto-Shī‘i extremist movements (Saba‘iyya, Kaysāniyya, Mughirīyya and Khaṭṭābīyya).

See al-Qummi, al-Maqālāt wa al-Firaq, pp. 64-65, and al-Nawbakhti, Firāq, p. 43.
It is quite possible that a good deal of historical rewriting and interpretation was taking place. The conflicting attitudes of al-Râwandiyya towards 6Ali is an excellent example. al-Masʿûdi's reference to the Râwandiyya's acknowledgement of 6Ali's Imâma, who was addressed by al-5Abbâs in a venerable advisory way that clearly reflects 6Ali's right to the Imâma is not only different from al-Qummi’s and al-Nawbakhti’s definition of the Râwandiyya but is further challenged by an anonymous anecdote that takes the trouble of reiterating al-5Abbâs’s advice to 6Ali - which is surprisingly attributed to al-Jâhîz (the ex-muhaddith) wherein 6Ali is seriously warned against stepping into the political scene given 6Uthmân’s higher chances of success - and is only encouraged to back the 6Abbâsid cause and the right of 6Umûma to succeed the Prophet. Of course such a concocted piece of advice aims to justify the 6Abbâsid absence then, as well as portraying al-5Abbâs as the more deserving and farsighted person vis-à-vis 6Ali who is described as already committing the great mistakes that made him lose his status. The writing of this treatise as following that of al 6Uthmânîyya makes sense in the way it fulfils al-Jâhîz’s promise made to al-Ma’mûn to provide him with the arguments of those who believe in descent (other than the Râfi’îa) after he had furnished him with the political logic of those who believe in the criterion of religious merit (i.e., the 6Uthmânîds).

741 The exclusive fadl of al-5Abbâs had been imposed by the Râwandiyya as they circulated Prophetic traditions pointing to al-5Abbâs’s merits. See al-Mughni, 20: 130.

742 See Murüj, 3: 236-237. al-Masʿûdi’s definition of the Râwandiyya in his Murüj is similar to the ones portrayed by al-Nawbakhti (Firaq al-Shi’a, pp.30, 41-42.) and al-Qummi (al-Asâri al-Qummi, Maqâlât, p. 64. in (a) the way it backs the right of the 5Abbâsids and (b) also in excommunicating Abû Bakr and 6Umar. The only difference, however, is that the Râwandiyya as conceived by Masʿûdi seem to have accepted the Imamship of 6Ali. Here, al-5Abbâs is quoted as saying to 6Ali: “Let me pledge you allegiance such that no people would differ on you”. The other instance in which 6Ali’s Imamship is acknowledged is when the 5Abbâsid Dâwûd b. 6Ali told the people attending the bay’a to al-Saffah in Kûfâ: “O people of Kûfâ, no Imâm truly succeeded the Prophet except 6Ali and al-Saffâh." We must remember here that al-Jâhîz’s treatise maintains the same outlook as it includes an attack on Abû Bakr, 6Umar, 6Uthmân but not 6Ali, which implies that the Râwandiite or 5Abbâsiyya faction as quoted by al-Jâhîz seems to reflect that group that included the remnants of the Kaysânite Hâshimiyya, i.e., included people who have not yet completely withdrawn their affection towards 6Ali, while accepting that Imamship now rests with the descendants of al-5Abbâs.

743 This advice (waṣîyya of al-5Abbâs) has been quoted by Ibn Abî al-Ḥadîd, Sharh Nahj al-Balâgha, 3: 282-283, after Abû Ḥayyân al-Tawhîdi, by the handwriting of al-Ṣâli on behalf of al-Jâhîz. Muḥammad al-Shaykh, the Editor of Abû Ḥayyân: Ra’yuḥu fi al-Fâjd (Libya: al-Dâr al-6Arabiyya li al-Kitâb, 1983) 2: 588 says that al-Jâhîz and not Abû Ḥayyân should have fabricated this report! (presumably on behalf of the Râwandiites who could have been behind al-5Abbâs’s alleged critical attitude towards Abû Bakr and 6Umar, who are seen as usurpers and unjust men, in the same way seen above by the other Râwandiites.

744 This advisory role and image of al-5Abbâs will be sketched again by al-Jâhîz in his treatise “Tawbî 6Ali”. As for haqq al-6Umûma, it will also be acknowledged by al-Jâhîz in K. Fadl Hâshim, and K. al-Awtân wa al-Buldân.
But whether the Rāwandiyya (shīʿat Banī al-ʿAbbās) have completely alienated themselves from the Shiʿī grounds that were indispensible for the ʿAbbāsid revolution, or whether they had some residual respect for the figure of ʿAlī, the point which remains is that before such a divorce had occurred, the figure of ʿAlī had to be gradually removed from the political scene.

Concerning our research, it is difficult to disregard such a tendency of residual respect as portrayed in al-Jāḥīz’s alleged “waṣiyya of al-ʿAbbās”. What can be said here is that as far as al-Jāḥīz’s treatise “al-ʿAbbāsiyya” is concerned, there remains the same pro-Alid stamp or residual respect for the wife of ʿAlī, Fāṭima, but of course not to be taken at its face value but for backing the ʿAbbāsid cause!

II. Content of al-ʿAbbāsiyya

What has come to us from the remaining portions of the work of al-ʿAbbāsiyya seems to be a loaded polemic between the partisans of the party that probably supported the caliphate of al-ʿAbbās and the party which probably supported the caliphates of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. The argument revolves around the question of inheritance; in this case, whether it was right for Fāṭima and al-ʿAbbās to inherit from the Prophet. The implication of this is that if such an inheritance was allowed, it explains al-ʿAbbās’s right to inherit political succession to the Prophet. The claim is made by the supporters of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar when those two asserted that it was a Prophetic Hadith that Prophets do not have heirs, none of the Companions objected to this, thereby proving the truth of their report. This "ḥujja of tark al-nakīr" is counteracted by the argument that when Fāṭima claimed Fadak, none of the Companions also objected. This would seem to indicate that they were unaware of the Prophet ever having made the statement attributed to him by Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. They accepted it on the basis that they regarded them as honest men without being aware - the Rāwandiyya claim - of the probability that they were really deceitful.

They go on to point out that the Companions’ silence in fact is not very significant because the Companions remained silent when ʿUmar contradicted his statement that the Prophet said: “The Imams are from Quraysh”, by saying on his death bed that if Sālim - a non-Qurayshī Mawlā - had lived, he would have nominated him to succeed him to the caliphate. The fact is that ʿUmar and Abū Bakr were in power over the rest of the Companions who were not in a position to dispute anything.
they said. Against the argument that action was taken against ʿUthmān when he had a higher clan status than Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, the ʿAbbāsiyya reply that the situations were different: ʿUmar and Abū Bakr were not as bad as ʿUthmān, in that ʿUthmān showed nepotism, and took their money (fayʿ). In addition, conditions were much more prosperous in the days of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. The ʿAbbāsiyya go on to accuse Abū Bakr of preventing the ʿitra (i.e., family of Prophet) and the ʿUmūma (al-ʿAbbās) from inheritance according to a ruling in the Qur’anic revelation, on the basis of a Ḥadīth, a case which remained an obscurity (shubha) to most people at the time, except for those guided scholars who knew the truth of the matter.\footnote{K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya, or Imāmat Wuld al-ʿAbbas. See al-Sandūbi, Rasāʾīl al-Jāhiz, pp. 300-303 and Adab al-Jāhiz, p. 121 and al-Mulūḥi, Min Kitāb al-Hayawān, pp. 141-142. al-Mulūḥi simplifies the matter by saying that al-Jāḥiz in this work had scored two victories for the ʿAbbāsids and also for the Muʿtazila in his attempt to refute those who believed that the Prophet’s wealth belongs to the community of believers (cannot be inherited) and equally - if not more significantly - that Khilāfa (who succeeds the Prophet) has been left to the Umma and not to his relatives!}

A further argument put forward by the ʿAbbāsiyya against the idea that Prophets do not have heirs, is reported by Masʿūdī from al-Jāhiz’s book, but does not survive in the fragment. In this argument, Fāṭima maintains that Solomon inherited from David, and that this is in the Qurʾān: “wa waritha Sulaimān Dāwūd”. al-Masʿūdī also suggests that the ʿAbbāsiyya al-Jāhiz is writing about is the ʿAbbāsiyya al-Rāwandiyya. He explains that this group rejected (tabarraʿū) the Imamates of Abū Bakr, and ʿUmar (and presumably that of ʿUthmān as well), but accepted ʿAli’s Imamate. However, he himself acknowledges that al-Jāḥiz’s arguments on their behalf are only briefly put forward as al-Jāḥiz did not accept their doctrines, and we have no indication from anywhere else as to whether the group whose argument al-Jāḥiz was putting forward actually accepted the Imamate of ʿAli or not. Equally significant is Masʿūdī’s allusion to the Rāwandiyya’s Qur’anic basis for the caliphate of al-ʿAbbās after the Prophet, being his uncle, inheritor and ʿasab.\footnote{See al-Qurʾān, Sūra: 8 (al-Anfāl) verse: 75 , as cited by al-Masʿūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab, 3: 236-237.}

A significant implication of the ʿAbbāsiyya argument is their categorical rejection of the possibility that a Prophetic Ḥadīth can overrule a Qur’anic saying on inheritance.

Now that the weakness of the proof of tark al-nakir is fully exposed, the thesis of al-ʿAbbāsiyya is to return to God’s judgement in the disputed matter of
inheritance (*ḥukm Allāh fi al-mirāth*) and it is quite obvious how indispensable Fāṭima’s request to Abū Bakr was for them in their striving to base the “political” right to succession within the same Qur’anic context of right to inheritance, be it material (Sūra: 27, verse 16) or political (Sūra: 8, verse: 75).

From the kind of polemical argumentation that has been preserved for us in “al-`Abbāsiyya”, it appears to me that the dialogue is between the `Abbāsiyya partisans and their opponents at large.

By the `Abbāsiyya partisans, it seems to me that al-Jāḥiz meant that extremist sect that was highly critical of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān (and not ʿAli) which, as we have seen above, puts this sect amongst the Rāwandiyya al-ʿAbbāsiyya as defined by al-Masʿūdī.

In identifying the opponents of al-ʿAbbāsiyya, one Jāḥizologist747 has erroneously assumed that they must have been the ʿUthmāniyya, “who do not believe in inheritance in the issue of caliphate,” but as one notices above, it is unexpected of those ʿUthmāniyya to have been critical of ʿUthmān, and as such the opponents could have shared with the ʿUthmanīyya the thesis of resting the caliphate on merit and not on inheritance, without being ʿUthmānites themselves.

As to the matter of rewriting history, this treatise reflects the eagerness of the `Abbāsiyya party to find a basis in the religious heritage, namely, al-Qur’ān, to back the `Abbasid right to inherit the Prophet. In this context, once inheritance is settled as an issue, i.e., once it is established that the surviving heirs (uncle, daughter) have a right to inherit as all other Muslims enjoin according to the Qur’anic text, it simultaneously follows that the surviving uncle has precedence in political succession although he is allowed to take an equal share of material inheritance as Fāṭima is allowed.

It is really surprising to find the `Abbāsid partisans of al-ʿAbbāsiyya party adamant in stressing their Qur’anic right to inherit, and it is amazing how claims of inheritance (materially or politically) had to wait so long, after the Prophet’s death, at least for the `Abbāsids who produced their claim after the Shiʿa had, and obviously in the image and style of the latter, their equal claimants to material inheritance! The main

danger of such a political ideology is the way Islamic polity is conceived, i.e., as an inherited dynasty in the fashion of Chosroes and Caesar, thus recycling the same non-Islamic principle of the Umayyad dynasty, if not hinting that the Sunni/orthodox Islamic polity has in reality discarded the Arab principle of seniority of merit and switched it for the Shi'i-Persian-Roman principle of seniority of descent, a situation where the original is confused with the artificial, where, in short, Sunni Islam, (represented by the ʿAbbāsid caliphate) had superimposed a non-Sunni ideology.\footnote{748}

Of course, such an exposition of ʿAbbāsid legitimacy is confusing in the sense that the lines drawn between the economic right of inheritance and the political right of inheritance appear to be shaky and mixed, or as M. Sharon puts it:

In the traditions that grew out of the political strife within Islam, the issue of the Prophet's inheritance was intentionally confused so that no clear line could be drawn between the personal inheritance, that is to say the Prophet's private property, and the succession to the Prophet's spiritual and political authority. This intentional confusion, which served, no doubt, the ʿAbbāsid requirements at the early stages of their debate with the Alids (or ʿUthmānis) proved to be double edged and was turned against them by the elaborate Shiʿite counter propaganda. In their efforts to outmanoeuvre the Alids, the ʿAbbāsids combined wirāṭah and waṣiyyah: while claiming the inheritance of the Prophet by virtue of al-ʿAbbās being his paternal uncle, they also produced a profusion of Ḥadīths according to which the Prophet had explicitly nominated al-ʿAbbās as his heir and declared that the caliphate would pass to ʿAbbās's descendants and remain in their hands until doomsday.\footnote{749}

Sharon's reference to the ʿAbbāsid insertion of the idea of waṣiyya, which followed that of wirāṭa, needs to be clarified.\footnote{750} The idea of wirāṭa, i.e., that al-ʿAbbās, not ʿAli was the natural inheritor (wārith) of the Prophet, who died leaving no male offspring or brothers - which is ascribed to the Maṅṣūr-Mahdi period\footnote{751} - and the line of argumentation that the paternal uncle takes precedence when it comes to inheritance\footnote{752} over a cousin and even over a daughter, proved short lived, as the Shiʿa have counteracted al-ʿAbbās's superiority by showing that he was only the half uncle

\footnote{748} The idea of nass, common then among the Shiʿa (Kaysāniyya-Mukhtāriyya and Proto-Imāmiyya) was to be soon employed by the pro-ʿAbbāsid Rāwandiyya. Other pro-Sunni groups, as the Bakriyya, claimed that the Prophet had explicitly designated Abū Bakr. al-Ḥasan al- Başri is said to have held the doctrine of nass Khafi (not Jali). Other groups, as the Jarūdi branch of Zaydiyya, held the doctrine of nass Khafi whereas the Imamites were holding nass Jali on ʿAli. See Ibn Taymiyya, Majmūʿ Fatāwa, 35: 46.

\footnote{749} M. Sharon, Black Banners, pp. 93-94.

\footnote{750} See Sharon, Ibid., pp. 93-96.

\footnote{751} The fixing of this is based on (1) Maṅṣūr's letters with al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, (2) al-Mahdi's decree that established ʿAbbās as the only source of ʿAbbāsid legitimacy.

\footnote{752} Of course, political inheritance as the Sunni legal law gives the daughter a share equal to the uncle. See M. ʿUthaymin, Tashil al-Farāʾid, (Riyāḍ: Dār Ṭayba,1404/ 1983) p. 37.
of Prophet Muḥammad, whereas Abū Ṭalib, āli’s father, shared the same father and mother as the Prophet’s father, hence he was the Prophet’s full uncle. So if kinship is taken as establishing the right of (political) inheritance, then surely a full uncle has precedence over a half uncle, the Shi’a argued, and even if al-Ṣabbās, (as shown above, were the wārīth of the Prophet, in a political sense hidden to the early Muslims then), the fact still remains that āli is the latter’s wasiyy, who had been granted patronhood (wilāya) over the Umma by the Prophet. For this reason, Sharon suggests that the Ṣabbāsid employed the Shi’ite idea of wasiyya, by instructing their court traditionalists to combine wirātha and wasiyya together (which the extant portions of K. al-Ṣabbāsiyya do not convey), and the new revised Ṣabbāsid traditions were clear and direct: “al-Ṣabbās is my wasiyy and my wārīth (heir), the Prophet is made to say (on the authority of Ibn al-Ṣabbās). In another tradition the Prophet says: “This is Ṣabbās b. Ṣabd al-Muttalib” (he is) my father, my uncle, my wasiyy and my heir.”

Benefiting from Sharon’s outlook, one can therefore relate al-Jāḥiz’s treatise (al-Ṣabbāsiyya) to the dominant verison of Ṣabbāsid legitimacy. Of course, we must recall a developmental trend and variations in Ṣabbāsid polity, such that we can sum them in the following way observing the historical order:

(a) The idea of wasiyya (bequeath and transfer of Imāma, current then among the Kaysāni movement (which asserted that āli b. Ābi Ṭalib’s son, Ibn al-Ḥanafiyā received Imāmship from his brother al-Ḥusayn ... by wasiyya), which was passed to his son, Abū Ḥāshim and from the latter to Ibn Ṣabbās’s grandson, a fact that shows

---

753 i.e., that al-Ṣabbās was brother of Muḥammad’s father from the father’s side only.

754 And even al-Manṣūr’s exchanged letters with the Ḥasanid revoler, al-Nafs al-Zakāliyya do not even touch the point of wasiyya. In this period, the idea of mirāth seems to be dominant, as al-Manṣūr’s concern was confined to proving that the Alids could not advance any claim of hereditary rights on either their father’s or their mother’s side, and that the Ṣabbāsids were the only ones qualified to be the leaders of Islam by having a more senior right to inheritance. Sharon, Ibid., p. 92. When al-Nafs al-Zakīliyya boasted that he descendend from two Fāṭimas, one in Jāhilīyya (Prophet’s grandmother) and the other in Islam (Prophet’s daughter) al-Manṣūr replies: “God has not given women such a status as He has given to uncles (on the father’s side) and to fathers. For he gave the uncle equal status with the father, but even though you be descended from the Prophet’s daughter, which is indeed a close kinship, this still does not give you the right of inheritance, as women are not allowed to lead (prayers and significant matters), so how come you claim inheritance of Imamate from the maternal/female line?” See Sharon, Ibid., p. 91, and al-Mubarrad, Kāmil (Beirut: Mu’assassat al-Risāla, 1986), 3: 1491. This proves that at least up to the time of al-Manṣūr the idea of wirātha was still functional without need for wasiyya.

755 Sharon, Ibid., p. 95, citing from the Mawdū’at of Ibn al-Jawzi.
the ʿAbbāsid regime was an offshoot from the Kaysāniyya movement, one manifestation of early Shiʿism.756

(b) The second version of ʿAbbāsid legitimacy rested on the idea of wirātha, thus alienating themselves from the Shiʿi doctrine of wasiyya, through which they attained the caliphate.

(c) Combining wirātha and wasiyya to counteract the remnant Shiʿi partisans, as seen by Sharon above.

One should clarify here the relation of K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya to al-Jähiz’s own political philosophy. It is quite unexpected of the Sunni al-Jähiz to have addressed Abū Bakr and ʿUmar - who are uniformly praised throughout his works - in the way seen above by the ʿAbbāsiyya party. But in al-Jähiz’s own preface to K. al-Ḥayawān he warns the reader against assuming that K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya reflects his own position. Should the reader like to criticize his tolerant narrative approach that made him accommodate such extremist views, the reader is asked to confine his critique to the works al-Jähiz has confessed as reflecting his own views, such as “K. Wujūb al-Imāma”. For this reason, K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya should not be therefore taken to necessarily reflect al-Jähiz’s own position, as confirmed by al-Jähiz and equally al-Masʿūdi,757 and hence this treatise should be put within his other politico-religious narrative endeavours to portray the various sects, not as a convicted partisan but as a narrator. In the same spirit comes his non-extant work, al-Khāṭṭābiyya, which quotes the arguments of the group that highly exalted ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb as best after the Prophet.758

It must be noted here that as concerns contemporary refutations of al-Jähiz’s successive works al-ʿUthmāniyya and al-ʿAbbāsiyya, it is reported that the Zaydi ex-Muʿtazili figure al-Iskāfi refuted al-Jähiz’s former work, whereas the Rāfidi ex-Muʿtazili figure Ibn al-Riwanī is solely alleged to have refuted al-Jähiz’s latter work (al-ʿAbbāsiyya). In spite the common Alid element among the Zaydites and Rāfidiṭes,

757 Murūj, (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus) 3: 237.
758 See ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Mughni, 20: 113, wherein ʿAbd al-Jabbār says that al-Jähiz has uniquely referred to this sect. The other sect he is said to have described is that of al-Duwaydiyya, (probably Rāwandiyya) which regarded al-ʿAbbās as the best after the Prophet, a view al-Jähiz traces back to Saʿid b. al-Musayyib.
it makes sense to expect Ibn al-Riwandi not to mention the first anti-Alid work, as it seems to me he must have assumed the ‘Uthmānī arguments, although styled in an anti-Rāfiḍī context, to have been the responsibility of the ‘Abbāsid regime - that must have been equally addressed as were the Rāfiḍa who were now under attack by virtue of their common concept of Imamate by inheritance. But when the attack was purely targeted against the Rāfiḍa, he found himself pressurised to refute al-Jāḥiz’s ‘Abbāsiyya,759 whose main thesis is that once the issue of inheritance is raised, the ‘Abbāsids can claim that al-‘Abbās was more entitled to inherit the office than ‘Ali and his descendants.

1. Politico-Religious setting:

This treatise is also known by scholars as "Risāla fi Bani Umayya" or "Risāla fi Muʿāwiya wa al-Umawiyīn." If we were to judge the truth of the observation made by modern historians, that "each party indulged in a large-scale re-writing of history in the interests of their own theses", it is here that we may find a further illustration of such re-writing. A considerable bulk of historical writing was going on during the ʿAbbāsid era. It was therefore natural for the virtues and qualities of the Umayyads to be overshadowed and discredited by ʿAbbāsid historians.

The ʿAbbāsids did their best to remove the Umayyads from the scene of virtues but their attempt was not perfect. At one end of the stage stood men like al-Jāhiz - though not strictly a historian - to denounce any possible virtue that may be ascribed to the state enemies, the Umayyads. At the other end of the stage rose men like Ibn Ḥanbal to acknowledge the virtues of the Umayyads in what may be described as resulting in a bitter clash of historical vision as regards the distant and immediate political past.

al-Ashʿarī rightly observed that the question of Imamate had been the original cause of all differences among the Muslims that resulted in the appearance of the various religio-political parties. For the ʿAbbāsids, however, it was a matter of time before they joined in disagreements. As this happened later than the other parties, they found themselves in the necessary predicament of defining their position concerning the past. The ʿAbbāsids claimed to have inherited a promising past as it had stored for them the Prophetic wish that they should take over the sacred right to rule, after the Prophet had entrusted it to their great grandfather (and uncle of the Prophet), al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib.

---

760 Watt, Formative, p. 169 and see Petersen, ʿAli and Muʿāwiya, p. 71.
762 Visions of the Prophet seen by the ʿAbbāsid caliphs stressing this right to rule were propagated then. See J. Lassner, The Shaping of ʿAbbāsid Rule (Princeton: University Press, 1980), pp. 26, 29.
But if the ʿAbbāsids' right to rule had been bestowed upon them since the death of the Prophet, how could that right have tolerated the Rāshidūn era? The only references to that right by al-Jāhiẓ come in K. al-ʿUthmāniyya763 and also in the work entitled "Imāmat wuld Bani al-ʿAbbās", also known as "K. al-ʿAbbāsiyya".764

So if the Rāshidūn were the less excellent before the ʿAbbāsids, what about the status of the Umayyad rulers in the eyes of the ʿAbbāsids?

By quickly recalling Kitāb al-ʿUthmāniyya, one can detect an explanation for the immediate past that preceded the ʿAbbāsid revolution. Despite their alleged political rights, they have not been able to exercise them against the combined factors of the brutal Umayyad usurpers and the corresponding weakness of the majority of those ruled by them i.e, the ʿāmma (masses). In the words of al-Jāhiẓ, the interaction between the khāssa (elite) and the ʿāmma was acting unfavourably to the ʿAbbāsid cause, until the political vision of both circles had perfectly coincided to get rid of the unlawful Umayyad oppressors.765

We shall see below that the condemnation of Muʿāwiya was a very essential Muctazilite target, aiming to fill up the mentioned gap in historical traditions of the presence of the ʿAbbāsids. The ʿAbbāsids as the existing ruling party had to define their position and express their opinion towards the 'caliphate' that had just preceded their appearance and their condemnation of the figure of Muʿāwiya was significant in the way it reflected a symbolic interpretation of the fitna766 (be it the one caused by the

763 wherein al-Jāhiẓ justifies the ʿAbbāsid absence by the unfavorable relation between the elite and the masses.
764 It is sufficient here to say that in this work Abū Bakr is unexpectedly criticized. For the first time one finds in al-Jāhiẓ's works, Abū Bakr condemned - on behalf of the extreme group of al-ʿAbbāsiyya - for his double role of depriving the family of the Prophet (Itra) of its economic right (haqq) and the ʿUmlima of its political right of inheritence (mirdth). If this position is solely confined to al-ʿAbbāsiyya, which is very likely - then such extremist views could be safely alienated from belonging to al-Jāhiẓ's own views. Perhaps the doctrine of the mafḍūl, Imamate of the less superior - could, alternatively, have been used by the orthodox ʿAbbāsids instead, in the sense that this Zaydi concept could perfectly explain the ʿAbbāsid delay in taking over, as it justifies their absence at least until the Rāshidūn era had lapsed, thus alienating the ʿAbbāsids from the extremist view of al-ʿAbbāsiyya which criticized the reign of Abū Bakr.
765 See al-Jāhiẓ, K. al-ʿUthmaniyya, pp. 257-264. al-Jāhiẓ's exaggerated manner of pointing to the oppressive nature of the Umayyads could have been aiming to justify the impossibility of any ʿAbbāsid rebellion given the intensity of the former's oppression and the type of people who had been victims of that oppression, who accepted the Umayyads and shared their "fisq"; but, however, not without leaving a minority that God made immune from joining the circle of "fisq". See "al-Nāhiba", Rasāʾil, 2: 15.
766 See Petersen, op. cit., pp. 124-125.
death of ʿUthmān or by the confrontation of ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya) and the accumulating bill of responsibilities towards the distant past and immediate circumstances that witnessed the emergence of a group known as al-Nābita that venerated Muʿāwiya and the Umayyads and potentially threatened the ʿAbbāsid interests greatly.

This trend of veneration of Muʿāwiya was allegedly encouraged by Ḥanbalism, a traditionalist school of thought derived from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal who acknowledged the figure of Muʿāwiya as meriting the credit for continuing the historical Qurayshite caliphate.767 This could not have been tolerated by the ʿAbbāsids for the obvious reason that it gave the impression that it was unnecessary for them to come as saviours of the helpless Umma against their tyrants, the Umayyads. Since there was a deep clash in the religio-political visions of the ʿAbbāsids (via the Muʿtazilites) and the Ḥanbalites we shall examine below in more detail the nature of the political theology of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal before examining and evaluating the genuiness of al-Jāḥiz’s verdicts on him, the Umayyads and their contemporary supporters, in an attempt to describe the conflicting political visions of both, visions that go back in time to the period of the Fitna, thus offering us two very distinct interpretations of history that were most probably provoked by one common factor, the murder of ʿUthmān.768

I. Ibn Ḥanbal’s Political Theology:

A. The Institution of Khilāfa

Ibn Ḥanbal’s political views about the institution of the Caliphate are described by a modern study as having been “directed against the Khārijites and the Shiʿites.” One may add however that these views did not totally clash with those of the Muʿtazilites as far as both have agreed to confirm the 'Sunni' doctrine 'al-Aʿimmat min Quraysh' i.e., that the Imams are from the stock of Quraysh', after a Prophetic tradition transmitted by Ibn Ḥanbal himself. We have seen earlier that Quraysh were described as "the rulers of people in both good and bad times until the day of resurrection".769

767 Ibid.
768 Petersen, ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, p. 71.
769 See Introductory Survey, section on the Rāshidūn and Sahih Muslim, S.v. "Imāra" : 1
To these traditions the Mu'tazilites offer no objection, and al-Jähiz himself approves of their soundness in his works;\textsuperscript{770} so where did the difference come from? It seems that the Mu'tazilite al-Jähiz reserved his objections against other Prophetic traditions, in the same way that his teacher al-Naẓẓām had rejected traditions regarded as very sound by the Sunni transmitters of Hadith.\textsuperscript{771} It is very likely that the following Hadith transmitted by Ibn Ḥanbal himself constituted the breaking point between him and the Mu'tazilites. In this tradition, the wheel of (ideal) Islam will keep revolving for thirty five years, thirty six, thirty seven or for an indefinitely long period (symbolized by the figure seventy).\textsuperscript{772}

For those who count thirty five years from the date of Hijra, Ibn Ḥanbal sees them as approaching a daring step,\textsuperscript{773} as the years should be counted from the death of the Prophet to cover the entire period of the four caliphs.\textsuperscript{774}

In my opinion, Ibn Ḥanbal’s counting is more significant than suggested above as it gives room to accommodate 6, 8 or 10 years of the caliphate of Mu'āwiya's rule and the Umayyad rule as part of the number 70 that usually stands for an indefinite period in Arabic usage. This interpretation may be taken as the background for Ibn Ḥanbal's political vision of the wheel of the caliphate, whereby the Umayyads were active players and movers of that wheel. On the other hand, al-Jähiz appears to have been solely attracted and convinced by another tradition that says "khilāfa is for thirty years, then monarchy (mulk) would appear."\textsuperscript{775}

This impression will become evident in our analysis of the treatise of al-Nābita in which al-Jähiz gives a history of Islam from the death of the Prophet until the year al-Ḥasan b. ʿAli abdicated in Mu'āwiya's favour. As ʿAli died in 661/40 A.H., and his son ruled for a couple of months, al-Jähiz’s application of the term mulk to the same year of al-Ḥasan’s abdication or as of Mu’āwiya’s accession could not but mean that he had rejected the first tradition (35, 36,37, \(\rightarrow\) 70), and applied the latter starting the

\textsuperscript{770} This is seen in al-Jähiz's early works on Imamate.
\textsuperscript{771} See Ahmad Amin, Duhā al-Islam, 3: 85-89 (1355/1936), and Ibn Qutayba, Ta‘wil Mukhtalaf al-Hadith, and A. Abū Rida, al-Nazzām wa Ārā‘uhu al-Kalāmiyya al-Falsafīyya, (Cairo: Maṭba‘at lajnat al-Ta‘līf, 1365/1946). pp. 31-32
\textsuperscript{773} Z. Ahmad "Some Aspects of The Political Theology of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, Islamic Studies, XII (1973) p. 59.
\textsuperscript{774} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{775} Ibid., p. 58.
counting from the death of the Prophet which amounts to 29 years and some months, i.e., (almost) coinciding with the Prophetic number 30.

In the light of the above traditions, the Mu'tazilite-Hanbalite clash should now become clear in an attempt of each to draw the lines between the guided caliphate and the oppressive mulk. In short, the clash happened because of the insistence of the officially backed Mu'tazilites on condemning Mu'āwiya or removing him from the accepted political scene in order to throw him into the realm of the oppressive scene, and because of the equal if not stronger determination of Ibn Ḥanbal to accommodate the Umayyad rule and even the ābāsid one within the continuously moving wheel of Islam, although the revolution that brought about the coming of the ābāsid had been judged by Ibn Ḥanbal himself as "an illegitimate rebellion against the established caliphate and violation of the true principles of Islam," the wheels of which have been turned again by their advent.

Ibn Ḥanbal denounced the legitimacy of revolt against the existing Imām and stuck to the traditions of the Prophet asking the Muslims to hear and obey the Imām in all situations. In Ibn Ḥanbal's view "obedience to the rulers ceases to be a duty, when they seek from the people disobedience to God. They must be met with refusal, as he himself did during the Miḥna."

But Ibn Ḥanbal's theological opposition to the ābāsid should not mean a political one. He was far more concerned to back each rule as long as the Sharī'a was defended under them. Perhaps that would explain his dismay at the interruption of the continuity of the institution (such as the ābāsid revolution) which supports the fact that his criteria for judgement of the two dynasties was strictly religious and void of worldly interests; as one scholar puts it:

It appears that Ibn Ḥanbal had no particular inclination towards the ābāsid or the Umayyads. Only the question of Sunna and Bida'a was before him to praise or to blame any individual caliph. He gave equal rank to Īmar b. Abd al-ʿAziz and al-Mutawakkil for their services to the cause of Sunna. Those preceding al-Mutawakkil were blamed by Ibn Ḥanbal for their initiation of the Bida'a of khalq-al-Qurʾān.

776 With the exception of some Umayyad leaders as Mālik al-Ashtar, Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, Yazid b. Muʿāwiya, and al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf. Ibid., p. 63.
777 Madelung, Religious Trends, p. 25.
778 See M. Sharon, Black Banners, p. 23.
779 Z. Ahmad, Some Aspects Of The Political Theology, p. 55.
780 Ibid.
Noting that his religious criterion, on the other hand, did not push him to revolt against the `Abbāsids, the same scholar adds:

In Ibn Ḥanbal's view, to have patience with the tyrannical rulers was better than to be involved in the Fitna. In a Fitna, Blood is shed, wealth is destroyed. During the rule of al-Wāthiq, when the Imām (i.e., Ibn Ḥanbal) was still under the persecution of the Mihna, he is quoted as having refused giving his consent to an armed action against the caliph, instigated by some Baghdādi Fugahā'. At the time of Fitna, he preferred restraint or rather complete retirement in accordance with a tradition transmitted by Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī. 781

B. Muʿāwiya and the Companions Of The Prophet

Ibn Ḥanbal is said to have held a "balanced opinion about Muʿāwiya and his opponents." In his view, Muʿāwiya was hundred times superior to ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz because the former was a Companion of the Prophet; when asked by a man who held that Muʿāwiya did not die as a Muslim and that he was a kāfir, 782 Ibn Ḥanbal replied that no Companion of the Prophet was to be regarded as kāfir. Ibn Ḥanbal does not appear to have regarded Muʿāwiya and his followers who fought against ʿAlī in the battle of Šīffin as rebels (Bāghi). In his view they were rather misguided in their judgement. Sometimes Ibn Ḥanbal avoided the question by saying: "to leave it is a safer course . . ." Among the Companions he (Muʿāwiya) was the first Imām driven to revolt. 783 Ibn Ḥanbal might have considered the matter from two perspectives. Firstly, ʿAlī as the acknowledged caliph, was justified in taking action against Muʿāwiya. Secondly, Muʿāwiya being a Companion of the Prophet could not resort to rebellion. He rather mistakenly went against ʿAlī. 784

In his comment on Muʿāwiya's motives as judged by Ibn Ḥanbal, Petersen says it was not a simple confrontation but a rebellion. Nevertheless, he had good motives:

Muʿāwiya had not raised the rebellion against ʿAlī from personal ambitions, but in order to assert that in his capacity of the victim's wali he was entitled to blood vengeance

781 Ibid.
782 As al-Jāḥīṣ maintains in "Risālat al-Nābīta." Ibn Ḥanbal's refusal to consider the persons disclaiming ʿAlī's legitimacy as violators of the creed of Ahl al-Sunna is noteworthy, as it opens an excuse for Muʿāwiya's confrontation with ʿAlī in view of the lack of consensus on the latter's caliphate See Ibid., p. 60.
783 But this statement does not recognize the Camel Incident.
784 Ibid., pp. 61-62.
provided that the caliph-murder was committed unlawfully. Moreover, Muṣāwīya did not receive bay'a prior to the award. 785

It should be clear now why Ibn Hanbal's above positions were mostly unwelcome to the ʿAbbāsid authorities because of his acknowledgement of the Umayyad era as sound. If only he could have condemned Muṣāwīya and the Umayyad reign, he would have attracted the ʿAbbāsids as a no less supporter of their cause than the Muʿtazilites. Having, however, approved of Muṣāwīya, he appeared to them as "repudiating the religious motives of the ʿAbbāsid revolution." 786 Why should they be needed to come and correct something already seen as sound and legitimate?

According to Ibn Ḥanbal, one should add the following clarifying point on his justification of the Umayyads. For him it seems that there was no difference between the Umayyads and the ʿAbbāsids as both of them came to power by ghalaba. His rejection of any further rebellion after the caliphate had turned to mulk is understandable in view of his belief that it is a religious duty to submit to the ruler, as long as he is from Quraysh, or as long as that mulk is legally sound:

While Ḥanbalism viewed the reign of the first three or four caliphs as the only true caliphate based on inherent legitimacy of merit, it equally made loyalty to the later historical caliphate, based on power, a fundamental religious duty. Ḥanbalite theory of the caliphate went further than Sunnite doctrine in general affirming the validity of the caliphate by usurpation (ghalaba). Yet the caliph must belong to the Quraysh until the end of time. 787

As suggested earlier, both caliphates should be backed as heirs of the prestigious notion of the historical and permanent caliphate. 788

Petersen has seen in Ibn Ḥanbal's position

an endeavour to raise "Islam" 789 above the fitna which since ʿUthmān's death had split it into irreconcilably hostile camps. His polemic is directed primarily against the Muʿtazila, Khārijiyya and extremist Shi'a who all issued from the first civil war. He attaches particularly great weight to the continuity in Islam effected through the Qurayshite caliphate "which no person has the right to oppose." The sequel must be that

785 Petersen, ʿAli and Muṣāwīya, pp. 114-115.
786 Madelung Religious Trends, pp. 23-34. Seen earlier as an illegitimate rebellion against the established caliphate. Ibid., p. 25.
787 Madelung, Ibid., pp. 24-25.
789 Petersen, op.cit., pp. 124-125. That is not to only raise ʿAli, as Shī'ite historians did. See Ibid., p. 119.

207
the legitimacy of the Umayyad caliphate was not to be denied... as a legitimate and necessary link in the continuity of Islam. 790

To sum Ibn Ḥanbal's position on the Umayyads and the Umayyad "Caliphate", Petersen says that historians among Ibn Ḥanbal's followers were responsible from the historiographic point of view for bringing pro-Umayyad transmissions to Baghdad, in "an attempt to rehabilitate the legitimacy of the Umayyad Caliphate, even if hardly of the Umayyads themselves. By this means the continuity in the orthodox community that Ahmad b. Ḥanbal had in view could be maintained; Muʿāwiya had not raised the rebellion against ʿAli from personal ambitions..." 791

C. Submission And Rebellion

According to Madelung, Prophetic statements as "submission to the one whom God has put in charge of your command (is obligatory). Do not withdraw your hand from obedience to him and do not come forward against him with your sword... do not break an oath of allegiance; whoever does that is an innovator who opposes and abandons the community (Jamaʿa). If the ruler commands you to do an act of disobedience towards God, do not obey him at all, but you do not have the right to sedition against him," 792 should not be understood - as the ʿAbbāsids did - as meant to challenge the ʿAbbāsid caliphate, but should be seen as directed towards the future and preserving the present caliphate rather than challenging it. Madelung goes to the extent of describing Ibn Ḥanbal as "the staunchest supporter of the ʿAbbāsids." 793 His vision of the past and respect for traditions (in which no rebellion is encouraged, and part of the Umayyad rule acknowledged) was only stressed to save the present ʿAbbāsid institution from a similar revolution, exactly like that they had inflicted on the Umayyads. We have given a full illustration of Ibn Ḥanbal's view on submission to the Caliph because it is severely attacked by al-Jāḥiz in al-Nābita. Ibn Ḥanbal's repudiation of the religious motives of the ʿAbbāsids is only meant to strengthen the ʿAbbāsid cause itself and exactly conforms to the spirit of an earlier generation of Ḥanbalites'; Madelung comments:

It must seem most striking that a religious movement arising among the descendants of the revolutionaries who had brought the ʿAbbāsids to power and who continued to back their caliphate most solidly, repudiated the religious motives of that revolution. It

790 Ibid.
792 Madelung, Ibid., p. 25 citing Ibn Ḥanbal's creeds from Ibn Abī Yaʿlā.
793 Ibid., pp. 23-24.
confirms the view that the Shi‘ite core of the 6Abbāsid movement while it attracted wide popular Iranian allegiance, remained small and that the great majority of the Khurāsānīan army joined it late and without much sympathy for its Shi‘ite principles. Political considerations soon led the 6Abbāsid caliphs to distance themselves more and more from the small 6Abbāsid Shi‘a and under Hārūn al-Rashid it was completely suppressed. The Ḥanbalites of Baghdad became the staunchest supporters of the 6Abbāsids. They backed them not as Shi‘ite Imams of the Family of the Prophet, but as heirs of the historical Caliphate. Rehabilitation of the Umayyads was a major concern of Ḥanbalite ideology.794

As for the link between present Ḥanbalism and the early Khurāsānīans, Madelung adds:

This affirmation of unquestioning backing of the established caliphate reflects the situation and the spirit of the Khurāsānī loyalists in the Umayyad age in their permanent jihād against the infidels beyond the borders of Islam. It was the spirit of that heroic age which their descendants living in Baghdad longed to revive, although their struggle now was more against heresy inside the world of Islam than against the infidels outside its territories . . . the 6Abbāsid caliphate, though first based on usurpation, was now established fact. It was entitled to unquestioning loyalty, except in disobedience to the orders of God.795

Ibn Ḥanbal's religio-political vision - in the light of the above - seems to look more to the future of the 6Abbāsid cause than al-Jāḥiz's vision, as long as the latter had licensed the validity of rebellion (in Risālat-al-Nābita) against the oppressors and made rebellion a key political doctrine for accession of the caliphate which Ibn Ḥanbal could not accept as it might pave the road for a multitude of unjustified rebellions and be misused as a recipe for disaster.

D. The hierarchical order (Tafṣīl) of the four Caliphs and the legitimacy of their caliphate

At first, Ibn Ḥanbal is said to have "upheld the early Medinese view of the caliphate (according to a Hadith in which the Companions in the time of the Prophet had agreed that the most excellent Muslims after the Prophet were Abū Bakr, ūmar and ūthmān.)796 Since most of the Companions of the Prophet, notably Ibn Masūd, ūṣa and others preferred ūthmān over ūAli, Ibn Ḥanbal would consider those who placed ūAli before ūthmān as Mubtadi‘. To Ibn Ḥanbal . . . the supremacy of
Uthmân over 6Ali was an established fact in favour of which many traditions were quoted.797

Madelung says that the above view that excluded 6Ali from the legitimate caliphate (Râshidûn) was a minority opinion in Sunnism in the time of Ibn ӽHanbal, especially in Iraq. However, Ibn ӽHanbal is said to have changed his position later in his life to include 6Ali among the rightly guided caliphs. He continued to insist however "that the four caliphs must be ranked in excellence in accordance with their sequence."798

For Ibn ӽHanbal 6Ali became the worthiest man for the caliphate after 6Uthmân, and he seems to have counted the activities of 6Ali as legitimizing his caliphate rather than taking into consideration the consensus of the Muslims on the matter.799

II. A. The Cult Of Mu̇awiya, ӽHanbalism and the Nâbîta

Apart from Ibn ӽHanbal's veneration for Mu̇awiya as a Companion and his son Yazid as a Tâbi'î,800 chroniclers have pointed to the development of a trend exhibited by the masses in Syria and even Iraq known as "the cult of Mu̇awiya" that is said to have flourished during the third/9th century. In the following section we shall examine the relation of this movement to the school of Ibn ӽHanbal and to the Umayyad rebellions that were troubling the 6Abbâsid authorities.

F. 6Omar distinguishes between the veneration of Mu̇awiya by ӽHanbalism, and the movement of the Nâbîta and the veneration held by the political enemies of the 6Abbâsis. Behind the same cult and veneration of Mu̇awiya there existed three different social forces or factions within the community.801 The first two may be classified as:

797 Z. Ahmad, op.cit., p. 56.
798 Madelung, Ibid., p. 24. [This view is attributed to al-Jâhîz by Watt in Formative, p. 177].
799 Z. Ahmad, op.cit., p. 60. This position of Ibn ӽHanbal is identical to al-Jâhîz's efforts to consider 6Ali among the guided caliphs. The big difference, as may be inferred from Madelung, is that Ibn ӽHanbal did not initially regard 6Ali in the fashion men like al-Jâhîz may have contributed in forming i.e., order of merit following order of ruling. But if al-Jâhîz's treatise of Taşwîb 6Ali proves al-Jâhîz's efforts to regard 6Ali as a guided caliph, we still do not find it bluntly stated - that the order of merit follows the order of ruling - as 6Ali in Taşwîb could still be regarded as superior to 6Uthmân and hence the order in al-Jâhîz's works remains debatable.
(i) The religio-political and military movements that rested on the idea of the expected Sufyānī that would come and save the Syrian tribes by returning their previous glory and reviving the Umayyad rule. Shortly after the rule of al-Amin, in 195/810, one Sufyānī pretender revolted against the authorities and claimed the caliphate for himself in Damascus.

In fact Umayyad rebellions could be traced earlier than the rule of al-Amin, and go back to the time of the ʿAbbāsid accession i.e., to the time of al-Saffāh, and al-Manṣūr. In short the attachment for the Umayyads did not vanish with their overthrow, but appeared whenever circumstances permitted. In 209/824-825 Naṣr b. Shayth or Shabth revolted against al-Maʿmūn and challenged his troops for five whole years.

Only fifteen years after the crushing of Naṣr's revolt, Abū-Ḥarb al-Yamānī revolted in Palestine against al-Muʿtaṣim and many gathered around him in the belief he was the expected Sufyānī. That was the last Umayyad large-scale revolt. But it is reported that heads of the Syrian tribes still loyal to the Umayyad rule continued their anti-ʿAbbāsid activities after al-Muʿtaṣim's reign, covering in effect the whole of al-Jāḥîz's life-time, namely in the years 231/845, 240/854, 248/862, 250/864, 252/866, and 256/869.

(ii) The other movement holding respect for Muʿāwiya was that of al-Nābita and of the Ḥanbalites, quiet independent from each other, the myth of the expected Sufyānī, or of any real revolutionary threat. The Nābita movement could be viewed as a Sunnite faction with some connections to the Ḥanbalite scholars. This group was nicknamed as such by the Muʿtazilites against those Ḥanbalite traditionists (Ahl-al-Ḥadīth), also nicknamed Hashwiyya, who appeared and sprang up (thus the name Nābita) showing dexterity in the use of Kalām which was intolerable to their Muʿtazilite opponents as it was rivalling their own influence over the masses. One

805 F. ʿOmar, ibid., pp. 188-189.
806 On the distinction between Nābita and Ḥanbalites see E.L. Petersen, ʿAli and Muʿāwiya, pp. 128-129. Petersen holds that "the Umayyad cult had hardly any connection with Ḥanbalism but has arisen spontaneously..."
could deduce from the above that the Näbita may have constituted a distinct entity from Ḥanbalism, and could have been a socio-political dimension or social outlet of expression of Ḥanbalism. If when the Ḥanbalites acknowledged Muʿāwiya they were planting the seeds for this offspring, the Näbita were able to utilize that acknowledgement in releasing their growing discontent with the ʿAbbāsid rule, the Muʿtazilites or the ʿAlids.807

The problem that existed was therefore more paradoxical and painful than planned by Ibn Ḥanbal in the sense that despite his pro-ʿAbbāsidism,808 he had actually paved the way and provided the theological basis for the anti-ʿAbbāsid outlook among the public.

Ibn Ḥanbal’s concern - a traditionist himself - was to defend the traditionists and transmit a Sunni or orthodox809 interpretation of events that accommodates the Umayyads and hence justifies their role by crediting their role in the continuity810 and promotion of the historical and lasting Caliphate, even if it has been dressed in clothes of mulk (a transformation predicted by the Prophet) but without attacking the ʿAbbāsids. Such a compromise was most unwelcome and highly rejected by the state-writers such as al-Jāḥiz. Nevertheless, Ibn Ḥanbal’s views as portrayed above should, in my opinion, raise the need to revise the inherited notion that the Muʿtazilites were the only defenders of the dynasty811 as Ibn Ḥanbal himself have been not less concerned for the defence of the ʿAbbāsid institution.

---

807 The Näbitites (Common Points) The Hanbalites
a. Venerated Muʿāwiya a. The same.
b. Hated Rāḍīqa b. The same.
c. Belief in seeing God in the hereafter c. The same (thus nicknamed Mushabbiha).
d. Against the doctrine of "Khalq al-Qur’ān". d. Kept silent on this, accused of being "Hashwiyah" (making the Qur’ān co-existent with God.)

808 And his commitment to enlighten the authorities and their Muʿtazilite colleagues, rather than his wish to dethrone them.


810 Petersen, “Studies On The Historiography of the ʿAli-Muʿāwiya Conflict", Acta Orientalia, vol. xxviii, 1963, p. 109. From the historiographic point of view, Ibn Ḥanbal’s efforts and those Ḥanbalite historians who followed him are seen here as representing the Syri-Medinese transmission of events, resumed by Ḥanbalite historians as part of their controversy against the official Muʿtazilism during the reign of Ma’mūn and his successors. Ibid.

B. Caliphal Decree Against The Cult Of Mu'āwiya:

The fact that in 211 or 212/826-827 al-Ma'mūn had the intention of ordering that Mu'āwiya be publicly cursed should give us an idea of the growing influence and power of the pro-Umayyad movement that had pushed the caliph to take that measure.

It was therefore natural that the 'Abbāsid authorities, in the light of a growing pro-Umayyad force in the community - which is given the name "the cult of Mu'āwiya" - thought of taking measures to diminish the growing influence of that cult, especially in the Eastern provinces (Iraq, Khurāsān) which apparently stood as the mirror image of the Umayyad Emirate in Spain that had already endangered the unity of the caliphate.

It is useful to fully put al-Jāḥiz's works in the historical context or within the political setting of his period:

al-Ma'mūn had had the intention in 211 or 212/826-827 of ordering that Mu'āwiya be publicly cursed but he had altered his mind on the advice of the Qādi Yahyā b. Aktam who had warned him against possible reactions of the people, especially in Khurāsān. The danger must have been serious so that the caliph thought of taking such an attitude.

The crowd of Mu'āwiya's partisans must have been large and powerful. It is permitted to believe that the situation did not improve at all in the 3rd century since some 70 years later we see once again, that the caliph al-Mu'taadid issued in 284/897 a circular prescribing the cursing of Mu'āwiya from the pulpit. 812

Whereas al-Ḥājirī dates the writing of al-Nābita to al-Ma'mūn's reign, Pellat hypothetically suggests that this work was written during the reign of al-Mu'tasīm, (around 225) because a similar work of al-Jāḥiz was written under al-Mu'tasīm. al-Ḥājirī's position seems to be stronger, as it is rightly based on drawing the connection between the caliphal policy of al-Ma'mūn and al-Jāḥiz's reference to that policy in which he congratulates the caliph on his superior alertness to the theological weaknesses of the Nābita. Furthermore, if the Nābita is literally signifying the appearance of a newly growing generation, it was al-Ma'mūn's reign which had first

812 Pellat, "Le culte de Mu'āwiya," p. 55. al-Ḥājirī, however, suggests that al-Ma'mūn did not listen to Yahyā but followed Thumäma b. al-Ashras's advice in issuing a memorandum in which (according to al-Ṭabarī's annals of year 211) al-Ma'mūn openly dissociated himself from any one who mentions Mu'āwiya in good terms, or who preferred him over the rest of the Companions. See al-Ḥājirī, al-Jāḥīz, p. 188.
witnessed their growth and not that of al-Mu'tasim.\textsuperscript{813} This also seems more likely in view of the difference in character between them; al-Ma'mūn is said to have enjoyed an intellectual persuasive approach whereas al-Mu'tasim lacked this and was inclined to resort to force.\textsuperscript{814}

2. Analysis of al-Nābita

If it was easy for men like al-Jāhiṣ to indirectly put the blame on the block of āli to justify the coming of the Umayyads, it would obviously seem even less difficult to handle the case of the Umayyads as 'usurpers' whose head (Mu'awiyah) fully utilized the differences among the camp of āli, allegedly created by Mu'awiyah or by his agent Āmūr b. al-`Āṣ, by the act of raising the Qur'ān to halt the victory of āli, thus camouflaging his worldly interests in the post of the Imāmate.

We shall see later how the absence of the ŢAbbāsids will be perfectly covered by al-Jāhiṣ in the treatise on arbitration by putting the blame on Mu'awiyah's treachery and then on āli's followers, but without leaving Mu'awiyah totally blameless.\textsuperscript{815} We shall find in al-Nabita that al-Jāhiṣ's intolerance of the figure of Mu'awiyah, the Umayyads, and their contemporary supporters had escalated to a degree that was supra-Mu'tazilic i.e., goes beyond the agreed dogmas of the school as regards the status of the grave sinner; as Petersen puts it:

\begin{quote}
His (al-Jāhiṣ's) broadsides are aimed primarily at the worldliness of the Umayyads, especially of Mu'awiyah. al-Jāhiṣ thus ranges himself alongside al-Madā'in; he emphasizes that they called down kufr, (infidelity) upon themselves by their crimes against āli and his adherents and by their usurpation of the caliphal power.\textsuperscript{816}
\end{quote}

How does al-Jāhiṣ reflect this ŢAbbāsid-Ţanbalite tension?

A quick review of his work "al-Nabita" shows al-Jāhiṣ's attack on Ŵanbalism to be two-fold i.e., containing a political and theological attack.\textsuperscript{817} Politically, this work is a perfect illustration of "a notable framing of a Mu'tazilite tradition before al-Ma'mūn,\textsuperscript{818} in which the ŤAbbāsid vision of the past was publicized - not only by men

\textsuperscript{814} See Pellat, al-Jāhiṣ, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{815} See parag. 64-68 of Tašwīb āli'. āli's softness and piety were not enough - al-Jāhiṣ says - to defeat Mu'awiyah's deceit and tricks.
\textsuperscript{816} Petersen, āli and Mu'awiyah, p. 128.
\textsuperscript{817} Mirroring al-Ma'mūn's political and theological measures in 211 and 212 respectively.
\textsuperscript{818} See Petersen, Ibid., p. 121.
of letters and makers of opinions like al-Jähiz, but equally by historians and propagators of state-policy such as al-Madä’ini. Both men seem to have been instructed to counteract, each in his own capacity, the Ḥanbalī historical version of events concerning the fitna. Whereas ʿAbū Khaythama Zuhayr b. Ḥarb (d. 848-850) and Aḥmad b. Ibrāhim ad-Dawrāqī (d.860-861) were keen to present Muʿāwiyah’s rebellion against ʿAlī as justified - in his role as the victim’s wali -, and that Muʿāwiyah got office justly after the arbitration and not before,819 al-Madä’ini and al-Jähiz ignored that interpretation altogether: here, "every vestige of the vengeance motive is deliberately eliminated"820 in order to stress the worldly motives of Muʿāwiyah and his associates to gain the caliphate:

Just like al-Jähiz, the contemporary al-Madä’ini seems to have participated actively in the refutation of the pro-Umayyad tide. On the other hand, these vehement historiographical polemics during the caliphates of al-Maʾmūn and his successors must have had a social significance of their own. There is no reason to believe that the pro-Umayyad agitation in Iraq and Persia really expressed sympathy with the Syrian caliphate. These currents rather demonstrate the opposition of the orthodox patriciate of the cities of the eastern provinces against the prevailing Muʿātazilism and its fundamentally anti-traditionalist trend; conversely al-Jähiz’s and al-Madä’ini’s struggles against the pro-Umayyad agitation reveal the rulers’ fear of these currents.821

Theologically, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his followers mentioned above were, on al-Maʾmūn’s orders, brought before him to renounce their Ḥanbalī persuasion publicly before the assembled Fuqahāʾ,822 in what was known as the Miḥna.823 In view of this religio-political context we come now to let al-Jähiz describe his vision of the Umayyads and the pro-Umayyad group known as Nābita; after that al-Jähiz outlines the history of Islam during the golden age that preceded the assassination of ʿUthmān.

---

819 Ibid., pp. 113, 115.
820 Ibid., p. 96. We shall see in our coming analysis of al-Jähiz’s "Taṣwīb" how al-Jähiz adopted this ʿAbbāsid vision of the fitna, and how he echoed such a trend in the circles of state-historians, when he completed the picture of a greedy Muʿāwiya, helped by the deception or trickery of his representative ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, (which Petersen judges to be fabrication p. 48), leaving ʿAlī helpless on the other hand with the intentionally-made "useless" Abū Mūsā al-ʿAshʿarī and an angry crowd of adherents, who all shared in the outstanding responsibility for ʿAlī’s failure to meet these conditions. Adding to this: Ibn ʿAbbās’s advises to ʿAlī, there, the ʿAbbāsid’s fight (See Petersen, p. 75): is therefore justified.
(1) on behalf of the family of the Prophet,
(2) against the illegal caliphate of Muʿāwiya.
822 Petersen, ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, pp. 113-114.
823 Perhaps al-Maʾmūn’s theological inquisition in 218/833 was the only solution he had, after he had failed to establish a political inquisition (cursing Muʿāwiya publicly) in 211 or 212 A.H.
which was followed by internal dissension that lasted until the accession of Muawiya b. Abi Sufyan; al-Jahiz says:

Muawiya then took office and established his undisputed authority over the rest of the Council of Electors and over the assembly of Muslims (both Ansar and Emigrants.) This year was called "Am al-Jamda, but it was not so much "a year of re-union" as a year of schism, coercion, oppression and violence, a year in which the Imamate became a monarchy (mulk), after the fashion of Chosroes, and the caliphate a tyranny worthy of a Caesar. Yet all that amounts to no more than depravity and fisq. Muawiya's subsequent misdeeds were similar to those already mentioned, and of the same degree of seriousness so that he reached the point of openly rejecting the Prophet's doctrines and flagrantly repudiating his precepts regarding the 'child of the bed' and the penalty for debauchery. Yet the community were all agreed that Sumayya was not Abu Sufyan's firâsh but his companion in debauchery. By his (recognition of a collateral relationship), Muawiya took himself out of the category of fâjir and became a real kâfir. His execution of Hujr b. cAdi, his action in assigning the land tax revenue of Egypt for life to 'Amr b. al-As, his proclamation of the dissolute Yazid as heir apparent ... his favouritism in the appointment of provincial governors ... This was the first lapse into unbelief within the community and it was perpetrated by men who laid claim to the supreme Imamate and the caliphate.

But how does the Nabita relate to the Umayyad mischiefs? al-Jahiz adds:

Many Muslims of that period were guilty of the crime of Kufr, in that they failed to denounce Muawiya's impiousness; but they are outdone by the Nabita and the innovators of our own day who say: "Do not curse Muawiya! He was one of the Companions of the Prophet and to curse him is a blameworthy innovation; whosoever hates him contravenes the Sunna." In otherwords, the Sunna requires us to pardon those who specifically repudiate the Sunna.

824 The division of 'Uthman's reign took the dimension of either (i) setting the date for the first fitna in the Umma's solidarity (as in al-Jahiz's text above, a fitna already signalled by a Prophetic hadith (see Ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad, 8: 5953) that could have expected rapid misfortunes in Khilafa, such as the decreasingly available optimal shûrû conditions, and the increasingly shifting criteria of succession from one based on merit to one favoring dynastic conditions (case of Umayyads, Shi'ites, Abbâsids, etc.) or (ii) passing a verdict on his conduct or administrative policy. For example, the Zaydites (the Bâtriyya branch) recognized his caliphate for the first six years when he was widely held to have ruled well. (Watt, Formative, p. 163, citing al-Ash'ari, p. 454) and repudiated 'Uthman during the last six years of his rule (E.J. 2 S.V."Imâma", by Madelung, p. 1166a). But the Imâmites did not recognize his Imamate at all since the Imam after the Prophet should have been 'Ali. 'Uthman is charged by the Imâmites with practising nepotism. See Ibish, Al-Imama 'Ind al-Shi'a, p. 121. For A critical refutation of the invectives (ma'âsin) raised against 'Uthmân see Ibn al-`Arabi, al-`Awâsim Min al-Qawâsim fi Tâhâq Mawqûf al-Sahâba, ed. M. al-Khajîb (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-`Ilmiyya, 1406/1986) pp. 56, 60-62 and Ibish (ed.), Nusûs, (citing al-Baqqâli) pp. 88-89, 97-105.

825 Note however that al-Jahiz in his later work "Tašwib 'Ali", refrains from charging Mu'awiyah with Kufr. He is only fasq. See Tašwib: parag. 71, 73. Making Mu'awiyah a Kâfir is an anti Mu'tazilite position but is only taken to please the Abbâsids.

826 Pellat, Life and Works of al-Jahiz, pp. 82-84.

827 Ibid.
al-Jähiz then reviews the various Umayyad caliphs and lists their crimes, waxing indignant at the Nābita's permissive attitude to them. al-Jähiz here concentrates on blemishing the religious record of the Umayyads, and while he uses religion as a criterion to judge the Umayyads, he is doing so for obvious political reasons:

The situation was worsening until the period of 6Abd al-Malik b. Marwän and his governor al-Hajjaj when they put a seal to the age of forbidding evil and commanding the good, as they tortured any one who approached them with an advice, killed religious scholars, frightened the family of the Prophet, re-adjusted the Qibla in Wäsit, delayed Friday prayer until sunset, and re-destroyed the Ka'ba.828

Thanks to the Nābita, says al-Jähiz, the age is now dominated by heresies, viz anthropomorphism, determinism and Shu'ûbîsm:829

If all that we have described about the Ummayds does not go beyond fisq and dalâl (going astray) then the fâsiq should be cursed and whoever forbids that should be cursed as well. The Nābita and innovators of our age claimed that cursing of the leaders of evil is a fitna, and cursing the oppressors is an innovation (Bid'â) ... But one who deserves the title of Kufr by murder differs from one who deserves it by rejection of the Sunna and destruction of the Ka'ba. One who deserves to be named kâfir for anthropomorphism is not like one who is kâfir by holding predestinarian views (Tajwîr).830 In this the Nābita are more (kâfir) than the kufr of Yazid and his father, Ibn Ziyâd and his father. The Tajwîr of the Nābita (their fatalistic view) of God, and their anthropomorphistic view of Him, was by far a bigger sin!831

al-Jähiz elevates the Kufr of the Nābita of his age to one that had not been achieved even by the Umayyads:

Even though all that the Umayyads had done was Kufr, it was short of the Kufr manifested by the Nābita of our age and the Râfidîtes of our generation because the type of Kufr differs ... The errors of the Umma did not go beyond sin, (dalâl) - but for what I have told you about the Umayyads and the Marwânids and their governors and those who did not charge them with Kufr - until these Nābita sprang up, followed by the public. Consequently Kufr became the predominant feature of this century, i.e., anthropomorphism and determinism. The Kufr of the Nābita is more sinful than the one formerly followed by those who left the right path and committed fisq; they also shared

829 As before, this is an exaggeration, for the group who favoured Mu'awiyâ or refused Miḥna were probably anti-Shu'ûbîtes. The eternal language of the Qur'ân would be more prestigious to Arabs, versus the created language of the Qur'ân, which is more favourable to the non-Arabs.
830 al-Jähiz uses here the term Tajwîr i.e., ascribing evil to God, in holding a deterministic view that all actions of one are God's responsibility, and not man's responsibility. This "Tajwîr" is categorically rejected by a Mu'tazilite like al-Jähiz who belonged to the school of Fītâzîl that was also known as the Ahl al-Adl wa-al-Tawhîd. Ahl al-Adl is used to imply their rejection of any deterministic view of man's actions; by admitting man's free choice, God's responsibility is automatically removed and He is thus held to be Ḍâ'il and not Jâ'îr. See "al-Nābita", Rasâ’il, 2: 14, and pp. 18-20.
831 Ibid., 'al-Nābita'. Ibid., 2 : 14.
with those who committed *Kufr* (i.e., the Umayyads) by venerating them and desisting from charging them with *Kufr*. The Almighty said: "whoever joins them is surely amongst them." 832

The doctrine of unconditional obedience held by the Nābita is again specifically rejected:

The Nābita agree that anyone who kills a believer is accursed; but if the killer is a tyrannical ruler or a fractious *emir*, they do not consider it lawful to curse him or depose him or banish him or denounce him, even if he has terrorized the good, murdered the learned, starved the poor, oppressed the weak, neglected the frontiers and marches, drunk fermented drinks and flaunted his depravity. 833

as B. Lewis puts it:

al-Jähiz's position in this essay (al-Nābita) is clear. The sovereign is a human being, and may be guilty of some human error and sin while retaining his right to rule and his claim on the obedience of his subjects. But if his error reaches the point when he is neglecting his duties and abusing his powers as sovereign, then the duty of obedience lapses and his subjects have the right - or rather the duty, since it is *with duties not rights that Islamic jurisprudence and politics are concerned* - to denounce him and if possible to depose and replace him. 834

Both Pellat and Lambton say that al-Jähiz's concept of the obligation to depose a ruler differs from the Khārijite uncompromising policy of unrestrained violence. 835

We shall postpone this point until we come to evaluate al-Jähiz's views on the Imāmate and their relation to the Khārijites.

3. Significance and Comment:

From what we have seen of al-Jähiz's attempt to elevate the *Kufr* of the Nābita to a level unreached by the Umayyads, one may find in this work an attempt to push the authorities to face the hidden political implications underlying the Nābita's refusal to condemn the Umayyads by magnifying their attitude to a very grave sin (*Kufr*). This approach makes one wonder whether al-Jähiz - and the influential Muʿtazilism

832 al-Jähiz, 'al-Nābita', Rasāʾil, 2:18-20. This is Sūra 5: 51.
833 The above translation of 'al-Nābita' is taken from B. Lewis, Revolution in the Middle East, 'Islamic Concepts of Revolution' London, 1972, p. 32. Note that this text may also reflect (by contrast) al-Jähiz's view of the role of the ideal Imām who should by definition be free from such misdeeds.
834 B. Lewis, Revolution in the Middle East, 'Islamic concepts of Revolution', p. 33.
835 See Pellat, Ibid., 'L'imamat dans la Doctrine de Ġahiz, Etudes sur l'histoire...', p. 49 (f.n. 1) and Lambton State and Government, pp. 61-62, i.e., Lambton says: "al-Jähiz's acceptance of violence is not absolutely categorical like the Khārijites' constant call for revolutions. For al-Jähiz it is a momentary measure and not an absolutely binding one." In my view, once it is acknowledged, (by al-Jähiz) it is a two-edged sword and thus he joins the unchecked Khārijī recipe for disaster.
then - were after a political Mihna/inquisition to control the growing veneration of Muʿawiya. If this work was written during the time of al-Maʾmūn, and not during the time of al-Muʿtaṣim in which the religious facet of Mihna was applied, one may trace the development of the line of Mihna during the period of Muʿtazili political triumph and during that of Muʿtazili decline. In the former, the Muʿtazilites and the Caliphs (namely al-Maʾmūn) could not tolerate the growing influence of the cult of Muʿawiya and a work like al-Nābita should have been written during this period as an outlet to the frustration of the caliph in 211 in his wish of publicly cursing Muʿawiya. al-Jāḥiz's work would appear a calming substitute for that frustrated caliphal wish to curse Muʿawiya. That could have been the motive behind al-Jāḥiz's exaggerated attempt to curse Muʿawiya and regard him as a Kāfir, against the set Muʿtazili concept of the status of the grave sinner, whereby he could only be a fāsiq.

As regards the works to be studied below entitled "fi-Nafy al-Tashbih, and "fi Khalq al-Qurʾān", one would first think they were written during al-Maʾmūn's time but the presence of "neatly positioned chronological markers"836 definitely shows that they were written under al-Maʾmūn's successor, al-Muʿtaṣim. This means that the political Mihna was put into practise, and was planned/occurred before the theological Mihna of Khalq al-Qurʾān. Perhaps the theological Mihna could have been the only possible substitute for the former, although one may easily detect in al-Nābita the presence of both facets of this Mihna whereby the Umayyads have been charged with their political and theological sins.

Below we will point out some critical comments regarding the treatise of al-Nābita:

(a) The beginning of the treatise contains a review of the political history of Islam to al-Jāḥiz's own time. The golden age of Islam according to al-Jāḥiz starts with the reign of the Prophet up to the first six years of the rule of ʿUthmān. This view is typically Muʿtazilite (also held by certain groups of Zaydites) as ʿUthmān's actions were not pleasant in their eyes in the latter portion of his rule. From the various statements and descriptions given by al-Jāḥiz on ʿUthmān, one may conclude that al-Jāḥiz's pro-Zaydite tendencies made him cautious about ʿUthmān,837 at least as

---


837 Cautious because al-Jāḥiz himself (a) denounced his last six years, (b) appeared uncertain whether ʿUthmān had "fully" practised nepotism (In kāna qad rakiba kullâ mā qadḥafshu bihi) (c) judged his killers as dūllāl, and fūjjār but not Kāfirs (as this was to be given only
regards the last six years of his reign and the economic policy that was allegedly followed by him. Here ʿAli appears superior to ʿUthmān

(Unlike in the ʿUthmāniyya when conditions dictate the contrary!)

(b) As regards the religio-political sins of the Umayyads one cannot but acknowledge an element of exaggeration in this work, especially when the history of the Umayyads is presented by the semi-official al-Jāḥīz who categorically backed the ʿAbbāsids. As B. Lewis says, al-Jāḥīz has written this essay in order "to justify, on religious grounds, the action of the ʿAbbāsids in overthrowing the reigning caliph."839

Nevertheless, many historians and scholars have found al-Jāḥīz unjustified because the Umayyads were not as evil as al-Jāḥīz’s treatise has portrayed: The Umayyad dynasty was far from being as irreligious as the ʿAbbāsids alleged it was and had the support of scholars who could give a religious defence of its positions.840

Furthermore, al-Jāḥīz’s cleverness in backing the ʿAbbāsids was reflected in the way he justified their absence in the presence of the brutal Umayyads by reference to the intolerable degree of oppression and to the helpless masses that did not help the more intelligible ʿAbbāsid elite, whom al-Jāḥīz singles out as "among those whom God has ʿaṣama" from the general wave of ḥalāl that dominated the scene then.841

F. Osman points out another inconsistency in al-Jāḥīz’s political thought as reflected in this treatise:

Although kingship dominated Muslim lands, it was repeatedly emphasized by the jurists that the imamate was by no means a hereditary institution. This was clearly stated by al-Baghdādi, Abū Yaʿlā, Ibn Ḥazm and many others; the Muʿtazilites seemed clear and firm in denouncing the inheritance of the Imamate when they talked about Umayyads. However, they occasionally supported the rebellions of some of the descendants of the

to the Umayyads). See al-Nābīta, Rasāʾil, 2: 90-10. This cautious position towards ʿUthmān should be contrasted to the classical Baṣrīte one that was known to be pro-ʿUthmānīte. al-Jāḥīz has therefore shifted his position exhibited earlier towards ʿUthmān, in which he shared with the Baṣrītes in their unquestionable respect for ʿUthmān. Compare al-Jāḥīz’s present Baghdadī view of ʿUthmān to that statement in Risāla fi al-Jawābāt, Rasāʾil, 4: 306 wherein a clear Baṣrīte view is dominant. The reason for the change could be explained by the dominating pro-ʿAlīd attitude in Baghdad where al-Jāḥīz has moved to.

839 B. Lewis, op.cit., p. 32.
841 See al-Nābīta, Rasāʾil, 2: 15 where the word ʿaṣama is wrongly put by the editor as ʿAsā.
Prophet's family (ahl al Bayt) who believed in the inheritance of the Imamate. They also supported certain 'Abbāsid caliphs who believed in the same doctrine.\textsuperscript{842}

Finally, as part of the 'Abbāsid propaganda in its effort to provide its own interpretation of history, it is remarkable how al-Jâhiz has denoted Mu'āwiya's taking over, as one that halted the previous era of Shūrā, and initiated sinful mulk by transferring the Imāmate to kingship. This is a perfect illustration of the variable way in which the Prophetic tradition that pointed to that transformation was interpreted, as outlined above in our review of the clash in vision of the Ḥanbalites and Mu'tazilites. al-Jâhiz now could easily justify the coming of the 'Abbāsids as returning the rule to its "Imāma" form after blemishing the religio-political records of their predecessors in every possible way.

al-Jâhiz, as Goldziher\textsuperscript{843} correctly noticed, was not unique in his anti-Umayyad approach as he was in line with the general 'Abbāsid wave of historians and men of letters and even some traditionists who attacked the Umayyads. This activity however was not totally successful, as Charles Pellat says, because of the undeniable existence of those Sunnite groups within the 'Abbāsid community that continued to respect Mu'āwiya and the memory of the Umayyads.\textsuperscript{844}

\textsuperscript{842} F. Osman, in M. Ahmad (Editor) State, Politics and Islam. pp. 71-72.


\textsuperscript{844} C. Pellat, "La Nābita de Džāhiz" in Annales de l'institut d'Etudes Orientales, X (Algiers, 1952) p. 306.
CHAPTER SEVEN
Post-Ma'múnid Era (218-227: al-Mu`tásim)

Theological Treatises:

1- Fi-Nafy al-Tashbih (Against Anthropomorphism)
2- Fi-Khalq al-Qur'an (on the Createdness of the Qur'an)

Although these works have no relation with the question of Imamate, they do, however, clearly reflect the relation between al-Jāhiz's Fitâl and the religious policy of the 'Abbâsid authorities, who are said to have adopted Fitâl as the official state dogma since the time of al-Ma'mûn. Undeniably, strong links seem to have existed between our author and al-Ma'mûn; one evidence is cited by al-Jāhiz himself in K. al-Bayân, on the pleasure his books have given to al-Ma'mûn. al-Jāhiz knew the mentality of the caliph and seemed to cleverly transmit his works on the very frequency that suited the authorities. This intellectual unity between the two figures has been rightly observed by C. Pellat and D. Sourdel.845

The new evidence I would like to bring forward comes from comparison of the sermons (Khutbas) of al-Ma'mûn and the works of al-Jāhiz. In al-Tabari,846 we find al-Ma'mûn's hyper-concern for Tawhid847 stressed in many of his Khutbas, especially the ones sent to all provinces to persuade the addressees concerned to hold the doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'an. al-Jāhiz's works exactly echo al-Ma'mûn's wishes of denouncing all those Hashwiyya who diluted the absolute Divine unity of God by mixing with it the existence of another entity, al-Qur'an, as they refused to accept its created nature.848

Although we have put these works together, our decision to treat them within the same period of Mu'tazili political triumph does not mean, however, that they were both written during the reign of al-Ma'mûn. Most probably, they were written during

845 See Pellat, 'L'imamat... ', p. 23.
847 These are correctly seen as a religious reaction by al-Ma'mûn against rival doctrines, Manicheism and Christianity. The controversy of the created Qur'an, while concentrating on excluding any entity other than God, was also targeted against those who associated with the Mu'tazili definition of the Absolute Divine unity, any other entity, thus sharing the sin of Christian Shirk (association/polytheism). See Sourdel (Medieval Islam, tr. Watt, p. 78).
the rule of al-Mu'tasim and al-Wãthiq, both of whom were sincerely applying al-
Ma'mün's advice and religious policy as stated in his last testament, or waṣṭiya. This applies also to “K. Fâdîl Hâshîm”, in which al-Jãhîz's fondness for Hâshîm's political rights are stressed. Between the years 218 (death of al-Ma'mün) and the coming of al-Mutawakkil (232) there came al-Mu'tasim and al-Wãthiq. But the change in caliphs before al-Mutawakkil did not change the general outlines laid down by al-
Ma'mün and adhered to by his successors. It was this period (198-232) that witnessed the blooming and flourishing of the Mu'tazili religio-political thought, followed by a last phase (232-236).

1. Religio-Political setting

The immediate religio-political setting for these theological works does not differ much from the period of al-Ma'mün. The main difference was that of the character of al-Mu'tasim, who was allegedly more fond of fighting than of intellectual speculation. Nevertheless he was sincere in applying his brother's testimony to as regards the theological Miḥna of khalq al-Qur'án. The other difference was the growing influence of the Nâbita, whose power by the time of the writing of these polemical works, had grown beyond the expectations of the Mu'tazilites as the former were using the very weapons of their adversaries, i.e., the tool of theological Kalâm.

2. Analysis:

I. Fi Nafy al-Tashbih

In this treatise al-Jãhîz is very angry now that the pro-Umayyad movement has mastered Kalâm, the very polemical weapon of the Mu'tazila, thus rivalling them in their established control over the masses. Says al-Jãhîz:

How could it happen that they have become, in their days of falsehood (bâtil), superior to us in our days of strength and truth? The masses, when left dispersed, could sometimes be more manageable, but when they have a cunning Imam, who is obeyed by them, here comes the problem! Truth vanishes and the honest are bound to be killed. The problem is elevated as now amongst them are mutakallimün and fuqahâ.851

849 This is the view also held by C. Pellat, who says that the work entitled 'fi-al-Radd 'alâ al-
Mushabbiha' was written between 218-227, i.e., during al-Mu'tasim's reign, in the semi-
official role of al-Jãhîz to forward arguments that were needed by the authorities to face their enemies. See C. Pellat, al-Mashrik. (Beirut: 1953), 47: 282-283.

850 Tabari, Ibid.

The situation now is so dangerous that the authorities should be warned of this change among the Mushabbiha and every effort taken to put their activity under check and each argument should be seriously attacked and refuted. In such atmosphere al-Jähiz provided the following works:

- **fi al-Radd ʿalā-al-Mushabbiha**
- **fi Nafy al-Tashbih**
- **fi Khalq al-Qurʾān.**

Among the further chronological markers in this essay is al-Jähiz’s statement in which the cycle of Miḥna previously inflicted on the Muwahḥidūn, i.e., the Muʿtazilites during the time (of what al-Jähiz describes as “al-Makhluʿ”854, the deposed or overthrown, have now turned to the favor of those previously in tribulation. The Miḥna has turned against the Mushabbiha thanks to the efforts of Aḥmad b. Abi-Duʿād855 and his youthful son Muḥammad, who had resurrected the Sunna and stressed Tawḥīd after it had been suppressed and left in obscurity856, in the footsteps of him who was before them (i.e., al-Maʾmūn).

Having realized that the praise has been concentrated on those mentioned, al-Jähiz adds: “One may ask how come you have not mentioned Amir-al-Muʾmin wa al Muʾtasim bi-rabb-al-ʿĀlamin, i.e., the caliph al-Muʾtasim.”

---

852 al-Jähiz refers to the consecutive order above in the essay holding the latter title. See Rasāʾil, 1: 289. In “fi al-radd ʿalā-al-Mushabbiha”, al-Jähiz refutes their belief in the vision of God (Ibid., Rasāʾil, 4: 8-16)


854 Ibid., p. 284. Sourdel concludes from the verses in al-Jähiz’s treatise concerning al-Makhluʿ (i.e., al-Amin), which describes the ignorance of the Baghdādi mob backing him against al-Maʾmūn, to indicate the existence of two parties as of al-Amin’s time: one enjoying intellectual openness and exhibiting tolerance towards Shiʿites and Dhimmis, and the other void of such an outlook. See Sourdel “La politique religieuse”, f.n. 23, 24. But this term, al-Makhluʿ, should not conceal the fact that al-Jähiz participated in the apologetic historiographic campaign that was launched by al-Maʾmūn against al-Amin, according to T. al-Hibri’s study in International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 24 (1992) pp. 474 and 463.


856 Ibid., p. 293.

857 Ibid., p. 301.

858 Ibid., p. 306.
al-Ｊāḥīṣ replies that by praising the viziers he was trying to praise the caliph as when the "Aṣnār are praised one is paying respect to the Prophet Muḥammad. In fact, it was al-Muṭṭasim, al-Ｊāḥīṣ says, who has started this "amr (i.e., al-Miḥna) and supervised the observance of Tawḥīd and naḥf al-Tashbih. By “starting” he means the application of the inquisition already initiated by al-Maʾmūn. But this awareness of the figure of al-Muṭṭasim, which only appears towards the close of the treatise, can not hide the fact that al-Muṭṭasim lacked the Muʿtazilite qualities of his predecessor, and was more a military character than a speculative one. In this situation al-Ｊāḥīṣ was therefore focussing his attention on the products of al-Maʾmūn (the vizier Ibn Abī Duʿād), who - as al-Ｊāḥīṣ says - was very alert in dialectics and in strengthening Tawḥīd (in the Muʿtazilite manner).

II. Fi Khalq al-Qurʿān

Having realised the capacity of the Mutakallimūn of the Ḥashwiyya and Nābita to conduct polemical and dialectical discussions after reading the works of the Muʿtazilite Mutakallimūn, al-Ｊāḥīṣ once more decides to meet their growing influence. One remarkable statement of al-Ｊāḥīṣ refers to the confrontation between al-Muṭṭasim and Ibn Ḥanbal, which ended in having Ibn Ḥanbal given thirty lashes as al-Ｊāḥīṣ reports, followed by his acceptance(? ) of the createdness of the Qurʿān, more than once.

al-Ｊāḥīṣ continues his policy of judging Ibn Ḥanbal and his followers as “Kāfirs“ (infidels). This group consisted - as al-Ｊāḥīṣ says - of the masses, the fuqahāʿ, and the Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth (traditionists) who all are described as lacking the faculty of thinking and to have dwelt in taqlīd (imitation).

al-Ｊāḥīṣ closes the treatise by pointing out to the anonymous addressee that scientists should fear the withering of science (here the Muʿtazilite influential school of thought) exactly as Kings should fear the disappearance of their Kingship.

859 Ibid., p. 307.
860 Ibid., p. 306.
861 Ibid., pp. 292-293.
863 Ibid., p. 295.
864 Ibid., pp. 291-292.
865 Ibid., pp. 297-298.
866 Ibid., 3: 300.
Furthermore in this treatise al-Jāḥīz gathered the Nābita, Ḥashwiyya, (the literalist ahl al-Hadīth) masses, Ḥanbalites, together with the Rāfiḍites, condemning all of them for their common hatred for the Muʿtazilites, and in their alienation from the Jamāʿa, besides "their obvious Kufr and Tashbih."\textsuperscript{867}

These theological works reflect the possibility of the premise that the Muʿtazilites succeeded in implementing the theological Miḥna, having met the difficulties in executing the political Miḥna (cursing Muʿāwiya publicly).

\textsuperscript{867} See Ibid., pp. 296, 298, 300.