

Part 5: The Geographical Expansion of Shi'ism

Lesson 18: The Geographical Expansion of Shi'ism

It is certain that the first center of Shi'ism had been the city of Medina and the pioneering Shi'ah among the companions {*sahabah*} of the Prophet (S) lived in that city. During the reign of the first three caliphs, the Shi'ah *sahabah* were scattered in the different cities and regions, with some of them holding political and military positions.

In this regard, 'Allamah Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah writes:

The Shi'ah *sahabah* played a pivotal role in the propagation and spread of Shi'ism. Wherever they went, they were calling on the people toward Shi'ism within the framework of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and through patience and fortitude, and on account of their companionship with the Prophet (S), they were held in high esteem and regard by the people, and their speech had tremendous impact.¹

Even the place like Jabal 'Amil (in present day Lebanon) which was part of Sham, Mu'awiyah's sphere of influence, would become one of the most important centers of Shi'ism by the grace of the presence of the great companion of the Prophet (S), Abu Dharr (al-Ghiffari).²

During the latter part of the caliphate of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, many Shi'ah were living in the Muslim territories such that the name of 'Ali ('a) was always mentioned for caliphate. For this reason, 'Uthman used to send requests to 'Ali ('a) during rebel gatherings in Madina, asking him to stay out of Medina for sometime and to go to his farm in Yanbu' with the hope that the rebels would be motivated less.³

There were many Shi'ah in Iraq especially during the time of 'Uthman. For example, when the Shi'ah of Basrah—in spite of the fact that the city was under the occupation and influenced by the *Jamal* {camel}

Army propaganda—heard the news that the Commander of the Faithful ‘Ali (‘a) along with *Muhajirun* and *Ansar* was heading toward them, three thousand men only from the tribe of Rabi‘ah joined the Imam in Dhiqar.⁴ Their decision to join ‘Ali (‘a) was ideologically motivated, regarding the Imam as the caliph appointed by the Prophet (S) just as Baladhuri has this to say: “Among the Shi‘ah of ‘Ali were those from the tribe of Rabi‘ah.”⁵

After ‘Ali (‘a) himself took control of the helm of government and went to Iraq, there was an extraordinary impact upon the spread of Shi‘ism in the region. Similarly, the rulers and governors of the Imam, most of whom were appointed from among the Shi‘ah, had remarkable contribution in the spread of Shi‘ism in other places. As Sayyid Muhsin Amin says, “Wherever the trustees of ‘Ali (‘a) went, the people there would become Shi‘ah.”⁶

Of course, during that period, in addition to Sham which was totally under the influence of the Umayyads, other regions, such as Basrah and north of Iraq, also had inclinations toward ‘Uthman. The people in those places were inclined toward ‘Uthman⁷ on account of the settlement of ‘Uthman’s relatives there, and this inclination in the north of Iraq continued till the end of the second century AH.

Mecca also had anti-Hashimi and anti-‘Alawi tendencies since the Age of Ignorance {*yamw al-jahiliyyah*}. Similarly, both during the Age of Ignorance and the Islamic period, Ta‘if was the same as Mecca. The other tribes of Quraysh were always competing with Banu Hashim and not willing to accept the leadership of Banu Hashim, and this is one of the reasons for Quraysh’s opposition to the Holy Prophet (S). The people of Ta‘if, too, like that of Mecca, rejected the Prophet’s (S) invitation although they submitted after Islam’s acquisition of power.

From the time of Hajjaj, Shi‘ism was extended beyond the realm of Iraq and Hijaz. During that period, as a result of the extreme pressure and harshness of Hajjaj, Shi‘ah went out of Iraq and settled in other Muslim territories. Especially in the eastern part of the Muslim lands at the end of the first century AH, the Shi‘ah centers in Iran were gradually formed. In Khurasan, the ‘Abbasids took advantage of the people’s love for the descendants of the Prophet (S) and through the slogan, “the appointed one from among the progeny of Prophet Muhammad (S),” they gathered the people around themselves and utilized them in the struggle against the Umayyads.

The scattering of the Shi‘ah during the ‘Abbasid period was very obvious. In the east, in addition to Iran, the Shi‘ah went to Central Asia, India and the Caucasus, among others, and with the collapse of the Umayyad dynasty, the Shi‘ah were also able to exert influence in the west, especially in Africa where a Shi‘ah government of the Idrisis was established during the second century AH. Although their government was a Zaydi one, it can be regarded as a ground for the efforts of the Shi‘ah. Of course, their contact with the capital (Baghdad) and Medina had been less due to the existence of the Aghlabi government in Egypt which was formed to counter them.⁸

In this manner, Shi‘ism during the second century AH was spread in both the eastern and western parts

of the Muslim world, and in addition to Khuzestan, the mountainous region *{jabal}* (the regions around the Zagros mountain ranges) and central Iran, Shi'ism was also spread in far-flung regions such as Central Asia, present day Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Maghrib (Morocco), India, and Tabaristan.⁹

Lesson 18: Summary

The first center of Shi'ism is Medina and the pioneering Shi'ah used to live in this city. During the period of the first three caliphs, the Shi'ah *sahabah* (companions of the Prophet (S)) was scattered in the different cities and regions and calling people toward Shi'ism on the basis of the Qur'an. The transfer of 'Ali ('a) to Iraq had a tremendous impact on Shi'ism in Iraq.

From the time of Hajjaj, Shi'ism was extended beyond the realm of Iraq and Hijaz. During the 'Abbasid period, the Shi'ah in the east, in addition to Iran, also found their way into Central Asia, India, and the Caucasus, and in the west also, with the establishment of the Idrisi government in Maghrib, a fertile ground was paved for the influence of Shi'ism.

The Shi'ah-populated regions during the first century AH were confined to Hijaz and Iraq. Owing to the residence of the pure Imams ('a) and Banu Hashim there, Medina was the first city where the Shi'ah gathered together.

The second Shi'ah-concentrated region next to Medina was Yemen because the people embraced Islam through 'Ali's ('a) hand.

Lesson 18: Questions

1. Where was the first center of Shi'ism? Whom is the initial spread of Shi'ism associated to?
2. Which regions were Shi'ah-populated during the first century AH?
3. What was the reason behind the inclination of the Yemenis toward Shi'ism?

1. Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah, *Ash-Shi'ah fi'l-Mizan* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1413 AH), pp. 26-28.

2. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 25.

3. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Faydh al-Islam, Sermon 235.

4. Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf*, researched by Muhammad Baqir Mahmudi (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1394 AH), vol. 2, p. 237.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *A'yan ash-Shi'ah*, vol. 1, p. 25.

7. Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 178.

8. Amir 'Ali, *Tarikh-e Gharb va Islam {History of the West and Islam}*, trans. Fakhr Da'i Gilani, 3rd edition (Tehran: Intisharat-e Ganjineh, 1366 AHS), pp. 241, 245; 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyin* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 408.

9. Among the companions of the pure Imams (‘a), we can find people from cities and regions such as Halab, Egypt, Mada’in, Qazwin, Rey, Kashan, Armenia, Sabat, Isfahan, Hamedan, Samarqand, and Kabul. Rijal Najashi (Qum: Islamic Publications Office affiliated to the Society of Teachers of the Islamic Seminary in Qum, n.d.), pp. 8–9, 66, 130, 161, 208, 233, 236, 290, 344, 367; Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, Ma‘alim al-‘Ulama’ (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matba‘ah al-Haydariyyah, 1380 AH), p. 31.

Lesson 19: The Demographic Concentration of the Shi‘ah

As stated earlier, during the first three centuries AH, the Shi‘ah were scattered across and living in many parts of the Muslim lands. Yet, the demographic concentration and center of the Shi‘ah were in certain regions, which during the first century AH were places such as Medina, Yemen, Kufah, Basrah, Mada’in, and Jabal ‘Amil.

During the second century AH, in addition to these regions, places such as Qum, Khurasan, Tabaristan, Baghdad, Jabal, and Africa became among the regions where the Shi‘ah were demographically concentrated. Now we shall explain these regions one by one.

The Shi‘ah–Populated Places during the First Century Hijri

During the first century AH, Shi‘ah–populated places were confined to Hijaz, Yemen and Iraq. The residents of these regions were Arabs and considered to be the pioneering Muslims. Shi‘ism in Hijaz and Yemen was traceable back to the period of the Holy Prophet (S). Iraq which was conquered after the demise of the Prophet (S) also became the residence place of Yemeni tribes and the government of Hadhrat ‘Ali (‘a) accelerated the spread of Shi‘ism in that place.¹

a. Medina

The name of Medina {Madinah} was “Yathrib” before the *hijrah* and the people there consisted of two Yemeni tribes, the Aws and Khazraj, re–named “*Ansar*” after the advent of Islam (after the *hijrah* to be exact), and three Jewish tribes, namely the Banu Qaynuqa‘, Banu Nadhir and Banu Quraydhah. When the Noble Messenger (S) migrated there, its name was changed into “*Madinah an-Nabi*” {the City of the Prophet} and on account of the constant mention of the word “*Madinah*” {Medina} it was called as such.

Medina was the political capital of the first three caliphs (Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman), and Quraysh who were the staunchest adversaries of the Prophet’s Household {*ahl al-bayt*} lived there. Despite this, the *Ansar* still constituted the majority of the inhabitants of Medina who were always sympathetic to the

descendants of the Prophet (S) and during the political squabbles, they took *Ahl al-Bayt's* (‘a) the side. The distinguished Shi‘ah *sahabah* living in the mentioned city were constantly telling the truth to the people. Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari, a great companion of the Prophet (S), while leaning on his staff, used to roam around the alleys of Medina and say,

‘Ali is the best of people. Whoever would not accept him will become an infidel {*kafir*}. O the assembly of *Ansar!* Train your children to love ‘Ali. Anyone of them who does not accept this love, then you have to ask his mother concerning the fetus.²

The same Jabir used to sit in Masjid an-Nabi and say, “O *Baqir al-Ulum* {He who cleaves asunder all knowledge}! Where are you?” The people were saying, “Jabir, you are talking nonsense.” Jabir would reply, “No, I am not talking nonsense. In fact, the Messenger of Allah (S) said to me: ‘After me, you shall meet a person from among my descendants whose name will be the same as mine and whose facial appearance will be the same as mine. He shall open to the people tens of knowledge.’”³

When he met Imam al-Baqir (‘a) for the first time, he visited the Imam twice everyday.⁴ Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari used to stand by the door of Masjid an-Nabi and say,

Anyone who recognizes me has recognized me, and he who does not recognize should know that I am Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari, Jundab ibn Junadah... Muhammad is the heir of the knowledge of Adam (Adam) and all the virtues of the prophets, and ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib is the executor of will {*wasī*} of Muhammad and heir of his knowledge.⁵

Meanwhile, most members of Banu Hashim lived in that city and were held in high esteem. The infallible Imams (‘a) lived in the same city and people benefited from their teachings. In particular, the study circles of Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) extended to as far as Masjid an-Nabi.

Narrates Abu Hamzah ath-Thumali:

I was sitting in the Masjid an-Nabi when a man approached and greeted me, and asked about Abu Ja‘far (Imam al-Baqir (‘a)). I asked, “What is your business (with him)?” He replied, “I listed down forty questions I wanted to ask Abu Ja‘far.” He hardly finished his statement when Imam al-Baqir (‘a) entered the mosque. A number of people from Khurasan gathered around him and asked the Imam about the rituals of *Hajj*.⁶

Some of the students of these two personages such as Aban ibn Tughlab also gave lessons in Masjid an-Nabi. Whenever Aban would enter the Masjid an-Nabi, he would sit at the place of the Prophet (S), give lessons to the people, and narrate *hadiths* to them. Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) used to tell him, “Sit at the Mosque of Medina and give edicts {*fatawa*} to the people because I want persons like you to be seen among my Shi‘ah.”⁷

b. Yemen

Prior to the conquest of Iraq and the founding of Kufah, Shi'ah were living in Yemen. Next to Medina, Yemen was the second place where the Shi'ah of 'Ali ('a) were located after the demise of the Prophet (S) because the people there embraced Islam through 'Ali ('a). Writes Ibn Shahr Ashub, thus:

The Noble Messenger (S) dispatched Khalid ibn Walid to Yemen to invite the people there to Islam and it so happened that Bara' ibn 'Azib was also included in the forces of Khalid. Khalid stayed there for six months but he was not able to convince a single person to become Muslim. The Messenger of Allah (S) was not happy about this state of affairs and recalled Khalid, and instead the Prophet (S) sent the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a).

When the Imam arrived there, he performed the dawn {*subh*} prayer and read to the people of Yemen the letter of the Prophet (S). All members of the tribe of Hamdan became Muslim in one day and after Hamdan the rest of the tribes in Yemen embraced Islam. When this news was relayed to the Holy Prophet (S), he performed prostration of gratitude {*sujud shukr*}.⁸

The first house where 'Ali ('a) stayed while in Yemen was the house of a woman called Umm Sa'ad Barzakhhiyyah where the Imam gave Qur'an lessons. The said house was converted into a mosque later and it was named as "Masjid 'Ali".

Particularly at the last moments of the Prophet (S), people from the different tribes of Yemen went to Medina to meet the Prophet (S), and in their conversation the Prophet (S) introduced to them 'Ali ('a) as his successor⁹ and thus, this fact remained in their memory.¹⁰ And after the demise of the Prophet (S), they did not officially recognize the government in Medina and refrain from remitting their *zakat* to Abu Bakr, the caliph of the time.¹¹ As stated in one of their poems,

أَطَعْنَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا دَامَ وَسَطْنَا فَيَا قَوْمَ مَا شَأْنِي وَ شَأْنُ أَبِي بَكْرٍ؟

أَيُورِثُهَا بَكْرًا إِذَا كَانَ بَعْدَهُ فَتَلِكْ لِعَمْرِ اللَّهِ قَاصِمَةَ الظُّهْرِ

When the Messenger of Allah was in our midst, we obeyed him.

O people! Where are we and where is Abu Bakr?

If Abu Bakr had a son named Bakr, shall he inherit the caliphate after him?!

*I swear to my soul! This is backbreaking.*¹²

During the caliphate of 'Ali ('a), in addition to the hundreds of thousands of Yemenis who were residing

in Iraq¹³ and thousands of whom were considered part of the Imam's army, most of the people of Yemen were also Shi'ah. The 'Uthmanis and sympathizers of the Umayyads living there were very small in number and the evidence of it is the treatment of Busr ibn Artat, as per instruction of Mu'awiyah, toward them.¹⁴

While Busr was with the people of the regions sympathetic to the Quraysh and the Umayyads, he did nothing. For example, he passed by Mecca and Ta'if, he did nothing against these two cities.¹⁵ But when he arrived in the cities of Yemen such as Arhab, San'a and Hadhramawt, he engaged in mass murder. In San'a he beheaded a hundred Iranian nobles. He had no mercy toward the representatives of Ma'rab who had come to conquer Oman as he killed them all. When he arrived in Hadhramawt, he said: "I want to slaughter one fourth of the people of this city."¹⁶

In Jayshan in particular, which according to Ya'qubi, all its inhabitants were Shi'ah, Busr committed widespread massacre.¹⁷ Ibn Abi'l-Hadid had estimated the number of those killed by Busr to have exceeded thirty thousand people most of whom were Yemenis.¹⁸ This shows that the population of the Shi'ah at the time had been considerable. At any rate, following the devastation made by Busr in Yemen, Hadhrat Amir ('a) sent Jariyah ibn Qudamah (as-Sa'di) and Busr fled from Yemen. The people of Yemen and the Shi'ah there then killed 'Uthmanis and sympathizers of the Umayyads wherever they found them.¹⁹

After the martyrdom of 'Ali ('a), Yemen still remained a place where the Shi'ah were demographically concentrated, and when Imam al-Husayn ('a) was setting off from Mecca to Kufah, Ibn 'Abbas suggested to the Imam not to go to Iraq, but to proceed instead to Yemen "where there are Shi'ah of your father."²⁰

It must be noted that with the beginning of victories and expansion of the Muslim domain, Yemen (and the Arabian Peninsula in general) had reached its geographical limit and played a secondary role in the political and military matters. Although the two cities of Mecca and Medina had some social impact on account of their religious standing, Yemen, which during the time of the Prophet (S) was considered one of the most important parts of the Islamic domain, was located approximately in one corner of the Muslim territories and their southern tip after the victories of the Muslims in the neighboring countries. In view of this, the spirit of Shi'ism was dominant there.

During the uprising of Abu's-Saraya at the end of the second century, Ibrahim ibn Musa entered there without encountering any local resistance and occupied it.²¹ And in the end, the Zaydi sect prevailed in Yemen. Even now, many of its residents are Zaydis.²²

c. Kufah

Kufah is a city that had been founded after the advent of Islam by the Muslims there. The ancient city of Hirah near Kufah was always ruled by the Lakhmiyan.²³

In 17 AH Sa'ad ibn Abi Waqqas, the commander of the Iranian front, founded this city at the order of the second caliph ('Umar) and thereafter, eighty of the *sahabah* resided there.²⁴ At the beginning, the city of Kufah was more of a military camp and accommodation for the forces of the eastern front. Most of its inhabitants were Muslim *mujahidun* who were mostly from the Qahtani and Yemeni tribes. For this reason, Kufah always had the Qahtani and Yemeni atmosphere.²⁵

Among the companions of the Prophet (S), *Ansar* with Yemeni root were residing there mostly. The Khazraj, one of the two tribes of *Ansar*, had a particular district there. Yaqut Hamawi says, "During the time of Ziyad (ibn 'Ubayd Allah), most of the houses made of bricks were houses of (the tribes of) Khazraj and Murad."²⁶

Of course, a number of non-Arabs and Iranians were also living in Kufah who, during the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful ('a), were busy trading in the Kufah market.²⁷ It was the same non-Arabs who constituted most of the force during Mukhtar's uprising.²⁸

Concerning the merit of Kufah, there are many pertinent *hadiths* transmitted, one of which is from 'Ali ('a) when he said:

What a good city Kufah is! The soil there loves us and we love it also. On the Day of Resurrection, seventy thousand people whose faces are like the moon in radiance shall be raised at the outside of Kufah (the cemetery of Kufah which was located outside the city). Kufah is our city and the place and residence of our Shi'ah.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says, "O God! Be inimical to him who shall be inimical to Kufah."²⁹

The record of Shi'ism in Kufah is traceable to the time even prior to the transfer of 'Ali ('a) there. The two factors that can be identified for this is first, the residence of the Yemeni tribes there, most of whom, as we have said earlier, were sympathetic to the descendants of the Prophet (S), and the other one is the existence of distinguished Shi'ah *sahabah* such as 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud and 'Ammar Yasir.

'Ammar was sent by 'Umar there as governor and Ibn Mas'ud as Qur'an teacher. For many years, Ibn Mas'ud was busy teaching jurisprudence *{fiqh}* and the Qur'an to the people there.³⁰

We can observe the impact of the teachings of these distinguished men at the beginning of the caliphate of 'Ali ('a). The sermon of Malik al-Ashtar when the people pledged their allegiance to the Imam shows the spirit of Shi'ism among the people, when Malik says:

O people! This successor of the successors and heir to the knowledge of the prophets... is a person to whose faith the Book of Allah gives testimony and the Prophet to his being a dweller of paradise. He is the one the virtues about whom are perfected; with regard to his precedence in knowledge and merit, the latter ones and the pioneering ones have not cast doubt.³¹

When 'Ali ('a) dispatched his son Hasan ('a) and 'Ammar to ask the assistance of the people of Kufah in

the battle against the *Nakithun* {those who broke their allegiance} (in the Battle of *Jamal* {Camel}), nine thousand men joined the ranks of the Imam even despite a person like Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, the ruler there, who prevented people from assisting the Commander of the Faithful ('a).³²

With 'Ali's ('a) migration to Kufah, this city had become the most important Shi'ah-populated city up to the end of the third century AH. Dr. Sayyid Husayn Ja'fari thus says in this regard:

Since the time when 'Ali ('a) transferred to Kufah in 36 AH and even earlier than that, this city had become the main center of the movements, inspirations, hopes, and at times, coordinated struggles of the Shi'ah. Inside and around Kufah, tumultuous events that construct the early history of Shi'ism took place.

The events such as the preparation of the forces of 'Ali ('a) for the battles of Jamal and Siffin; the appointment and stepping down from caliphate of Hasan ibn 'Ali ('a); the uprising of Hujr ibn 'Uday al-Kindi; the killing of Husayn ('a) and his votaries; and the *Tawwabun* movement and the uprising of Mukhtar are among these events. Given this, Kufah is the place of hopelessness, deprivations, and even treachery and failure in the attainment of goals of the Shi'ah on the part of those who do not want to see the descendants of 'Ali in the stewardship of the Muslim society.³³

Although the killers of Imam al-Husayn were Kufans,³⁴ the distinguished Shi'ah at the time were languishing in the prison of Ibn Ziyad.³⁵ Besides, with the martyrdom of Muslim and Hani, the Shi'ah were left without commander against a tough enemy such as Ibn Ziyad and had no match for his power. After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a), however, the Shi'ah came to their senses and launched the *Tawwabun* movement and the uprising of Mukhtar.

Kufah had been known for friendship and love of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) and enmity toward the Umayyads. Even Mus'ab ibn az-Zubayr feigned love for the descendants of the Prophet (S) in order to win the hearts of the Kufans. As such, he married a daughter of Imam al-Husayn ('a).³⁶ By the end of the first century AH, although there were then new Shi'ah-populated centers, Kufah was still considered the most important Shi'ah-populated city.

While advising his supporters during the initial stage of the uprising against the Umayyads, for example, Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas, the leader of the 'Abbasid uprising, said: "But (the people of) Kufah and its districts are Shi'ah of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib."³⁷

During the second and third centuries AH, the uprisings of some Talibis also took place in Kufah. Notwithstanding the existence of an important city such as Baghdad during the 'Abbasid period, Kufah did not lose its political importance and the most noted uprising of the 'Alawis during the second half of the second century AH, i.e. the uprising of Ibn Tabataba under the military commandship of Abu's-Saraya was staged in the same city.³⁸

As such, the Umayyads monitored Kufah closely and bloodthirsty individuals such as Ziyad, Ibn Ziyad and Hajjaj would be designated to rule there. The rulers there were always supposed to be inimical to

the ‘Alawis, and in the event that a ruler like Khalid ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Qasri had little compassion for the Shi‘ah, he would immediately be dismissed and even be imprisoned.³⁹

Apart from its political aspect, Kufah was also regarded as the most important Shi‘ah-populated city in terms of knowledge and the Shi‘ah culture was dominant there. The majority of students of the pure Imams (‘a) were Shi‘ah of this city. Great Shi‘ah clans were living in Kufah. They offered remarkable services to the Shi‘ah culture. For example, from the time of Imam as-Sajjad (‘a) up to the minor occultation {*ghaybah as-sughra*} men of the House of A‘yan were among the companions of the pure Imams (‘a).

Sixty prominent scholars of *hadith* {*muhaddithun*} emerged from this clan. It had stalwarts such as Zurarah ibn A‘yan, Hamran ibn A‘yan, Bakir ibn A‘yan, Hamzah ibn Hamran, Muhammad ibn Hamran, and ‘Ubayd ibn Zurarah—the same ‘Ubayd who went to Medina as the representative of the people of Kufah after the demise of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) to dispel any skepticism regarding the matter of Imamate, before going back to Kufah.⁴⁰

The House of Abi Shu‘bah was another great Shi‘ah clan in Kufah whose forefather, Abu Shu‘bah, had narrated *hadith* from Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (‘a). Najashi claims that all of those narrations are reliable.⁴¹

Similarly, the House of Nahik is also one of the great Shi‘ah clans in Kufah from which ‘Abd Allah ibn Muhammad and ‘Abd ar-Rahman Samari belong.⁴²

In the mosques of Kufah, particularly in its central mosque, *hadiths* of the pure Imams (‘a) used to be taught there. Hasan ibn ‘Ali Washsha’, a companion of Imam ar-Ridha (‘a), says: “I saw in Masjid Kufah nine hundred people who were transmitting *hadiths* from Imam as-Sadiq (‘a).”⁴³

d. Basrah

Basrah is a city founded by the Muslims in 17 AH simultaneous with the founding of Kufah.⁴⁴ Although the people of Basrah were known for inclination toward ‘Uthman for supporting A’ishah, Talhah and Zubayr, at the same time that the *Jamal* {Camel} Army was in Basrah, the Shi‘ah there fought against it and a large number of them attained martyrdom. As narrated by Shaykh al-Mufid, from (the tribe of) ‘Abd al-Qays alone, five hundred of the Shi‘ah of ‘Ali (‘a) were martyred.⁴⁵

According to Baladhuri, three thousand men from among the Shi‘ah of the tribe of Rabi‘ah joined the ranks of the Imam at Dhiqar.⁴⁶ After the Battle of Jamal, notwithstanding the atmosphere of inclination to ‘Uthman in Basrah, many Shi‘ah were still living there. As such, when Mu‘awiyah dispatched Ibn Hadhrami to create unrest there, he informed him that some people in Basrah are Shi‘ah and advised him to avoid some tribes such as that of Rabi‘ah notwithstanding the great number of the ‘Uthmanis, and if ‘Ali (‘a) would not send off any force from Kufah, by means of unrests he would take control of Basrah through the ‘Uthmanis.⁴⁷

During the event of Karbala', Imam al-Husayn ('a) also wrote a letter to some distinguished men of Basrah. Among them, Yazid ibn Mas'ud Nahshali accepted the invitation of the Imam, responded positively to him, gathered the tribes of Banu Tamim, Banu Sa'ad and Banu Hanzalah, and called on them to assist Imam al-Husayn ('a). He then wrote a letter to the Imam, informing him of these tribes' readiness. But when they were already to join the ranks of the Imam, they heard the news of his martyrdom.⁴⁸

During the uprising of the *Tawwabun*, as narrated by Mas'udi, a number of the Shi'ah of Basrah together with the Shi'ah of Mada'in had also joined the army of the *Tawwabun*. Of course, when they arrived at the scene, the battle was over.⁴⁹

During the Umayyad period, the Shi'ah of Basrah experienced sufferings at the hands of cruel and bloodthirsty rulers such as Ziyad and Samarah ibn Jundab. Ziyad came to Basrah in 45 AH and delivered the *Batra*'⁵⁰ Sermon saying:

I swear to God that I shall call to account the guardian for the fault of the guarded one; the resident for the crime of the traveler; and the healthy one for the sin of the sick one to such an extent that when one of you would see another, he will say that his own Sa'ad is the proof that Sa'id is guilty. From then on, beware lest somebody went out at night as I will shed his blood... Keep your tongues and hands away from me so as for you to remain safe from my tongue and hands.⁵¹

Later on, Kufah also became under the governorship and administration of Ziyad, and he would stay for six months in Kufah and the next six months in Basrah. Every time he was in Kufah, he would designate Samarah ibn Jundab to administer Basrah on his behalf. Samarah was an atrocious man and never desisted from shedding blood. During the absence of Ziyad, he butchered eight thousand people.⁵²

With the passage of time, the spirit of Shi'ism in Basrah became stronger so much so that during the beginning of the 'Abbasid rule, the second 'Alawi uprising—the uprising of Ibrahim, brother of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah—took place there.⁵³

e. Mada'in

In contrast to Kufah and Basrah, Mada'in is a city which has been existing even prior to the advent of Islam and conquered by Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas in 16 AH during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. It is said that Anushirawan founded this city and its Persian name was Tisfun which was considered one of the capitals of the Sassanid Empire. *Taq-e Kisra*⁵⁴ was also located there.

For the reason that it was composed of seven large places each of which was as large as a city, the Arabs called it "Mada'in" which is the plural form of "*madinah*" {city} (its other plural form being "*mudun*"). Of course, by founding new cities such as Kufah, Basrah, Wasit, Baghdad, and Samarra, this city was gradually abandoned.⁵⁵

Mada'in had been one of the Shi'ah-populated cities during the first, second and third centuries AH, and

the reason behind it was the rule of distinguished Shi'ah *sahabah* such as Salman al-Farsi and Hudhayfah ibn Yaman there. And as such, the people of Mada'in, from the beginning, had accepted Islam through the hands of Shi'ah *sahabah*. In the uprising of the *Tawwabun*, names of Shi'ah from Mada'in can be noticed. Mas'udi says:

After the martyrdom of Sulayman ibn Sard Khaza'i and Musayyab ibn Najbah Fazari 'Abd Allah ibn Sa'd ibn Nufayl assumed the commandership of the *Tawwabun*. Given this, the Shi'ah of Basrah and Mada'in, who were approximately five hundred people and whose commanders were Muthanna ibn Mukharramah and Sa'd ibn Hudhayfah, quickly came to the front and personally tried to join the *Tawwabun* but they failed.⁵⁶

Shi'ism had always been dominant in this city. In this regard, Yaqut Hamawi says, "Most of the people of Mada'in are Shi'ah Imamiyah."⁵⁷

f. Jabal 'Amil

Jabal 'Amil was another Shi'ah-populated region during the first century AH. Shi'ism of the people of this place started when Abu Dharr was exiled by 'Uthman ibn al-'Affan to Sham. The late Sayyid Muhsin Amin says,

Mu'awiyah also banished Abu Dharr to the villages of Jabal 'Amil. Abu Dharr engaged in guiding the people. Thus, the people there became Shi'ah. In the villages of Sarfand and Mays of Jabal 'Amil, there are two mosques named "Abu Dharr Masjid". Even during the time of the Commander of the Faithful ('a), {the inhabitants of} a certain village called "As'ar" were Shi'ah.⁵⁸

With regard to Shi'ism there, the late Muzaffar had also said: "The origin of Shi'ism in Jabal 'Amil is traceable to the call of the *mujahid* {struggler} in the path of Allah, Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari."⁵⁹ Kird-'Ali also says that the record of Shi'ism in Damascus, Jabal 'Amil and north of Lebanon can be traced back to the first century AH.⁶⁰

Lesson 19: Summary

The root of Shi'ism in Kufah is traceable even prior to the transfer of 'Ali ('a) because most of the residents there belonged to Yemeni tribes most of whom were Shi'ah. Besides, distinguished Shi'ah *sahabah* lived there.

With the transfer of 'Ali ('a) to this city toward the end of the third century AH, Kufah became the most important Shi'ah-dominated city. As such, during the second and third centuries AH, the uprisings of a number of Talibis were launched there, and the Shi'ah culture was always dominant there.

Notwithstanding the spirit of inclination toward 'Uthman in the city of Basrah, there were also Shi'ah of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) such as the tribe of Rabi'ah living there and they fought against the

Companions of the Camel (forces of Talhah, Zubayr and 'A'ishah). With the passage of time, the influence of Shi'ism in the city of Basrah became stronger.

On account of the rule there of great Shi'ah *sahabah* such as Salman al-Farsi and Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman, Mada'in was considered one of the Shi'ah-populated cities.

With the banishment of Abu Dharr to Sham, the seed of Shi'ism was planted in the region of Jabal 'Amil.

Lesson 19: Questions

1. How did Kufah become a Shi'ah-dominated city?
2. Were there Shi'ah living in Basrah?
3. The root of Shi'ism in Jabal 'Amil can be traced back to which period?

1. See Sayyid Ja'far Shahidi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umawi* {An Analytical History of Islam till the End of the Umayyad Rule}, 6th edition (Tehran: Markaz-e Nashr-e Daneshgahi, 1365 AHS), vol. 2, pp. 137-138.

2. Shaykh at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), researched by Sayyid Mahdi Raja'i (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 237.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 218.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

5. Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 171.

6. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 46, p. 357.

7. Abu'l-'Abbas Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn al-'Abbas Najashi, *Fihrist Asma' Musanfa ash-Shi'ah* (Rijal Najashi) (Qum: Islamic Publications Office affiliated to the Society of Teachers of the Islamic Seminary in Qum, 1407 AH), p. 10.

8. Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib* (Qum: Mu'assasah Intisharat-e 'Allameh, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 129.

9. Muhammad Husayn Muzaffar, *Tarikh ash-Shi'ah* (Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Basirati, n.d.), p. 122.

10. Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari narrates: "A number of the various tribes of Yemen came to the Holy Prophet (S). The Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'There shall be a softhearted people with strong faith Mansur (one of the companions of Imam al-Mahdi ('a)) along with seventy thousand from whom shall rise up to help my successor and the successor of my executor of will {wasi} even while their swords carried (diagonally across the body) with the staple of palm-tree!' They asked: 'O Messenger of Allah! Who is the executor of your will?' He retorted: 'It is he to whom God, the Exalted, ordered (the people) to hold fast when He said, "Hold fast to the rope of Allah and be not divided among yourselves" (Surah Al 'Imran 3:103).'

They asked: 'O Messenger of Allah! Tell us what this 'rope' {habl} is.' He said: 'This rope is exactly the statement of God when He says, "...save (where they grasp) a rope from Allah and a rope from men" (Surah Al 'Imran 3:112). The rope from Allah is the Qur'an while the rope from men is the executor of my will!' They asked: 'O Messenger of Allah! Who is the executor of your will?'

He answered: 'It is he about whom God, the Exalted, says, "Lest any soul should say, 'Alas, my grief that I was unmindful of Allah'" (Surah az-Zumar 39:56).' They inquired: 'What is this command of God?' He responded: 'He is the executor of my will and the guide of the people toward me after I depart!'

They said: 'O Messenger of Allah! By He who has sent you down in truth! Point him to us as we are indeed eager to see

and know him!’ He said: ‘God has appointed him for the faithful. If you would look at him with the vision of the heart, you shall know that he is indeed the wasi {executor of will} just in the same manner that you recognized your Prophet.

Thus, go and check within the ranks of the people in the mosque. Anyone who shall draw your hearts toward him is the wasi; for, God, the Exalted, says: “So incline some hearts of men that they may yearn toward them” (Surah Ibrahim 14:37).’

As such, Abu ‘Amir Ash‘ari from the tribe of Ash‘ariyyin, Abu ‘Izzah Khawlani from among the Khawlaniyan, Uthman ibn Qays from Banu Qays, Gharyah Dawsy from the tribe of Daws, and Lahiq ibn ‘Alafah rose up and they checked the ranks of the people in the mosque. They took ‘Ali (‘a) by the hand and presented him to the Holy Prophet (S) and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! This is the person who drew our hearts toward him and inclined toward him.’

The Holy Prophet (S) said: ‘All praise is due to Allah! You recognized the executor of will of the Prophet even before seeing him.’ So, the Yemenis wept and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! We looked at the people, but our hearts did not get calm with them; when we saw him our hearts experienced tranquility as if we have seen our respective fathers.’” Muhammad Husayn Muzaffar, *Tarikh ash-Shi‘ah* (Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Basirati, n.d.), pp. 124–125.

11. *Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi*, vol. 2, p. 132.
12. Shahab ad-Din Abi ‘Abd Allah Yaqt Hamawi, *Mu‘jam al-Buldan*, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar Ihya’ at-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1417 AH), vol. 3, p. 158.
13. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 161.
14. *Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi*, vol. 2, p. 197.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Thaqafi Kufi, *Al-Gharat*, trans. Muhammad Baqir Kamare’i (n.p.: Farhang-e Islam, n.d.), pp. 325, 331.
17. *Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi*, vol. 2, p. 199.
18. ‘Abd al-Hamid ibn Abi’l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, 1961), vol. 2, p. 18.
19. *Al-Gharat*, p. 333.
20. Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf*, researched by Muhammad Baqir Mahmudi (Beirut: Manshurat Mu’assasah al-A‘lami Li’l-Matbu‘at, 1394 AH), vol. 3, p. 161.
21. ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu’l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 435.
22. *Tarikh ash-Shi‘ah*, p. 132.
23. *Mu‘jam al-Buldan*, p. 162.
24. *Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi*, vol. 2, p. 150.
25. *Mu‘jam al-Buldan*, p. 161.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Insab al-Ashraf*, vol. 2, p. 126.
28. Rasul Ja‘fariyan, *Tarikh-e Tashuyyu‘ dar Iran az Aghaz ta Qarn-e Hashtum-e Hijri*, 5th edition (Qum: Shirkat-e Chap wa Nashr-e Sazman-e Tablighat-e Islami, 1377 AHS), p. 71.
29. Ibn Abi’l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 3, p. 198.
30. ‘Izz ad-Din Abu’l-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Muhammad Abi’l-Kiram Ibn Athir, *Asad al-Ghabah fi Ma‘rifah as-Sahabah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya’ at-Turath al-‘Arabi, n.d.), vol. 3, p. 258.
31. *Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi*, vol. 2, p. 189.
32. *Insab al-Ashraf*, vol. 2, p. 262.
33. Sayyid Husayn Ja‘fari, *Tashayyu‘ dar Masir-e Tarikh*, trans. Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Ayatullahi, 9th edition (Tehran: Daftar-e Nashr-e Farhang-e Islami, 1378 AHS), p. 125..
34. ‘Ali ibn Husayn ibn ‘Ali Mas‘udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, 1st edition (Beirut: Manshurat Mu’assasah al-A‘lami Li’l-Matbu‘at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 73.
35. *Tarikh ash-Shi‘ah*, p. 67.
36. Abu Muhammad ‘Abd Allah ibn Muslim ibn al-Qutaybah, *Al-Ma‘arif*, researched by Tharwah ‘Akkashah, 1st edition

(Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1415 AH), p. 214.

37. Fakhri has narrated that Muhammad ibn 'Ali said to his supporters and campaigners: "But there are Shi'ah of 'Ali ibn Talib in Kufah and its districts. The people of Basrah gave their loyalty to an 'Uthmani group, but the people of Mesopotamia were not yet Muslims then. The people of Sham would not recognize anyone except the descendants of Abu Sufyan and not obey anyone except Marwan. But the people of Mecca and Medina were more on following the line of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Therefore, it should not be forgotten that from among the people of Khurasan there were many individuals who were active, pure-hearted and had peace of mind. They were neither inclined to this group nor that group, and neither did they adhere to the different sects nor attach to peity. Ibn Tabataba, Al-Fukhara fi Adab as-Saltaniyyah (Egypt), p. 104.
38. Maqatil at-Talibiyyin, pp. 424-431.
39. Insab al-Ashraf, vol. 3, p. 233.
40. Abu Ghalib Zurari, Risalah fi Al A'yan (Isfahan: Matba'ah Rabbani, n.d.), pp. 2-18.
41. Fihrist Asma' Musanfa ash-Shi'ah (Rijal Najashi), p. 230.
42. Ibid., p. 232.
43. Ibid., p. 39-40.
44. Mu'jam al-Buldan, vol. 2, p. 340.
45. Shaykh al-Mufid, Al-Jamal, 2nd edition (Qum: Maktab al-A'lam al-Islami (Publication Center), 1416 AH), p. 279.
46. Insab al-Ashraf, vol. 2, p. 237.
47. Al-Gharat, p. 166.
48. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, A'yan ash-Shi'ah (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 590.
49. Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 109.
50. Batra' is the feminine form of abtar which means 'defective' and 'incomplete'. According to the hadith, every statement which does not begin with the name of Allah is called abtar {defective and incomplete}. Since Ziyad began to deliver the said sermon without invoking the name of Allah, it became known thereafter as batra'.
51. Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umawi, p. 156.
52. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Rustam Tabari, Tarikh al-Umam wa'l-Muluk (Beirut: Dar al-Qamus al-Hadith, n.d.), vol. 6, p. 132.
53. Maqatil at-Talibiyyin, p. 292.
54. Tāq-e Kisra: the most famous construction that the Sassanid kings built and it is rumored that this palace was built by Khosroe I and still others believe that it was one among other palaces built by Shahpur, the first Sassanid king. {Trans.}
55. Mu'jam al-Buldan, vol. 7, pp. 221-222; Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 1, p. 267.
56. Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 109.
57. Mu'jam al-Buldan, vol. 7, pp. 222.
58. A'yan ash-Shi'ah, vol. 1, p. 25.
59. Tarikh ash-Shi'ah, p. 149.
60. Kird-'Ali, Muhammad. Khatat ash-Sham, 3rd edition (Damascus: Maktabah an-Nuri, 1403 AH/1983), vol. 6, p. 246.

Lesson 20: The Shi'ah-Populated Places during the Second Century Hijri

At the beginning of the second century AH, Shi'ism extended beyond the frontiers of the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq as it encompassed the entire Muslim domain. In view of the scattering of the Shi'ah and 'Alawis in the Muslim territories, this matter can be discerned. From the time of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, the

migration of the Shi'ah and 'Alawis to the other regions had begun.

These migrations were further expedited during the second century AH with the beginning of the propaganda and movements by the 'Alawis. After the failure of the uprising of Zayd in Kufah, his son Yahya along with a number of his supporters went to Khurasan.¹ After him, the uprising of 'Abd Allah ibn Mu'awiyah, a descendant of Ja'far ibn Abi Talib at-Tayyar, covered the regions such as Hamedan, Qum, Rey, Qirmis, Isfahan, and Fars, and 'Abd Allah himself lived in Isfahan.

Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani says, "The notables of Banu Hashim went to him and he designated each of them to rule over a district. Even Mansur and Safah (who later became the first two 'Abbasid caliphs) had connivance with him and this continued till the time of Marwan Himar and the emergence of Abu Muslim."²

During the 'Abbasid period, the 'Alawi movements always emerged, one definite consequence of which was the scattering of the 'Alawis in the different regions. For example, after the uprising of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah during the reign of Mansur and his defeat, the descendants of Imam al-Hasan ('a) were scattered in the different places. In this regard, Mas'udi thus says:

The brothers of Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah (Nafs az-Zakiyyah) were scattered in the different places. His son, 'Ali ibn Muhammad, went to Egypt where he was killed later. His other son, 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad, went to Khurasan and from there proceeded to Sind where he was killed. His third son, Hasan ibn Muhammad went to Yemen where he was put behind bars and passed away while in prison. His (Nafs az-Zakiyyah's) brother, Musa, went to Mesopotamia.

Another brother of Nafs az-Zakiyyah, Yahya, went to Rey and from there he proceeded to Tabaristan. Another brother of his, Idris, went to Maghrib. Yet another brother, Ibrahim, went to Basrah where he formed an army composed of men from Ahwaz, Fars among other cities, but his uprising ended in failure.³

Although most of them were pursued by the 'Abbasid agents and were unable to remain in one place and were later killed, their impact remained. Sometimes, their children lived in those places. For example, 'Abd Allah, son of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah, as narrated by Mas'udi, was not able to remain in Khurasan and thus, he went to Sind.⁴ Yet, the author of the book, *Muntaqilah at-Talibiyyin*, narrates that the son of 'Abd Allah, Ibrahim, remained in Khurasan and had two sons named Qasim and Muhammad.⁵

Similarly, there was a group in Transoxiana which was tracing itself back to Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah.⁶

Now, we shall survey the condition of the cities and regions in which the Shi'ah lived in large number during the second century AH.

a. Khurasan

At the beginning of the second century AH, the movement of the campaigners of Banu Hashim⁷ commenced in Khurasan and many people there embraced Shi'ism. Ya'qubi narrates,

When Zayd was martyred, the Shi'ah in Khurasan were in great commotion and expressed their faith in Shi'ism. The preachers were openly stating the atrocity and tyranny of the Umayyads against the descendants of the Prophet (S).⁸

It remained so until such time that Yahya ibn Zayd went to Khurasan and lived there in disguise for sometime. And when he rose up, many people gathered around him.⁹ Mas'udi narrates, "On the year when Yahya was killed, every infant that was born in Khurasan was named Yahya."¹⁰

Of course, due to the presence of Zaydis and 'Abbasid campaigners, Shi'ism of the people of Khurasan had more Zaydi and Kaysani color. This is particularly true in view of the fact that in the beginning, the 'Abbasids laid the foundation of their legitimacy upon the succession of Muhammad ibn 'Ali to Abu Hashim, son of Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah. As Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani writes in describing 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah:

He is the same person whom the Shi'ah of Khurasan were thinking to be the heir of his father whom they thought was the Imam. His heir in turn was Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas while Muhammad ibn 'Ali designated Ibrahim as his successor. In this manner, succession among the Abbasids was institutionalized.¹¹

The Khurasanis had always been supporters of the 'Abbasids, and when the dichotomy between the 'Alawis and 'Abbasids occurred, they sided with the latter. For example, during the battle against Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah most of the 'Abbasid soldiers were Persian-speaking Khurasanis.

Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani narrates:

When Khudhayr Zubayri, one of the commanders of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah, was coming to the battlefield from Medina, the Khurasanis were saying in Persian, "*Khudhayr amad; Khudhayr amad*" {Khudhayr came; Khudhayr came}.¹²

b. Qum

Qum has been one of the most important Shi'ah-populated cities since the second century AH. This city, apart from being founded after the advent of Islam, has been founded by the Shi'ah and Shi'ah resided in and populated it from the very beginning. It is Shi'ah Imamiyyah that has always been there without experiencing any deviation. Not only have *Sinyan* ever lived there but also the *Ghulat* did not find their way there, and even if they had, the people would have rejected them.¹³ Many of the people there used to come to the pure Imams ('a) to learn from these great personages, always maintaining contact with

their Imams.

In 82 AH when the revolt of Ibn Ash'ath against Hajjaj was crushed and he fled to Kabul,¹⁴ a number of his soldiers were also Shi'ah such as 'Abd Allah, Ahwas, Na'im, 'Abd ar-Rahman, and Ishaq, sons of Sa'd ibn Malik ibn 'Amir al-Ash'ari, who went to the districts of Qum after the defeat of Ash'ath. There were seven villages there one of which was known as "Kamandan". After these brothers' stay in this village, their kith and kin joined them and resided in all the seven villages. Gradually, these seven villages merged together and they all become "Kamandan". Kamandan was Arabized and shortened into "Qum".¹⁵

From then on, Qum has become one of the most important concentration centers of the Shi'ah, and the 'Alawis in particular, who arrived and resided there from everywhere.¹⁶ At the end of the second century AH, the arrival of Lady Fatimah al-Ma'sumah (Imam ar-Ridha's (a) sister) is considered the turning point in the history of this city, bringing about ample blessings to it.

c. Baghdad

Baghdad was founded during the second century *hijri*, 145 AH in particular, by Mansur, the second 'Abbasid caliph, and soon became one of the demographic concentration centers of the Shi'ah.¹⁷

This fact was unambiguously proved in Imam al-Kazim (a) burial procession. The huge number of attendants seriously alarmed the 'Abbasids so much so that Sulayman ibn Mansur, Harun ar-Rashid's uncle, participated in it barefooted just to appease the people.¹⁸

Baghdad was founded in Iraq and most of the people of Iraq were Shi'ah. Although Baghdad at the beginning was a military and political city, with the passage of time the intellectual center of the Muslim world was also transferred there and Shi'ah of the neighboring cities such as Kufah, Basrah, Mada'in among others took residence there and very quickly constituting a large population. After the minor occultation {*ghaybah as-sughrāh*}, Baghdad became the intellectual and religious center for the Shi'ah who flourished there by virtue of the Shi'ah government of Al Buyah (Buyeds), until such time that Shaykh at-Tusi transferred the Shi'ah center to Najaf.

The Shi'ah-Populated Places during the Third Century Hijri

The geographical expansion of Shi'ism in the third century AH can be discussed and studied in two ways; the first is through the formation of the Shi'ah states in the Muslim territories. In 250 AH the 'Alawis in Tabaristan formed a government.¹⁹

During the latter part of the third century AH, descendants of Imam al-Husayn (a) set up a Zaydi government in Yemen. In 296 AH the Fatimid state was established in the north of Africa.²⁰ These governments were not based on Shi'ah Imamiyah fundamentals, but their existence showed the extent

of Shi'ism and indicated the fertile ground for its acceptance in the Muslim territories—an opportunity which had been utilized by the Isma'ilis and Zaydis.

The second way is through the list of regions where the pure Imams ('a) designated proxies. The institution of deputyship {*wikalah*} had been founded since the time of Imam as-Sadiq ('a), and during the time of Imam al-Hadi and Imam al-'Askari ('a) the activity of this institution had reached its climax. The regions where the Imams' ('a) deputies were dispatched included Ahwaz, Hamedan, Sistan, Bust, Rey, Basrah, Wasit, Baghdad, Egypt, Yemen, Hijaz, and Mada'in.²¹

Of course, Kufah, Qum, Samarra, and Nayshabur were considered as the most important Shi'ah-dominated cities till the end of the third century AH, and the Shi'ah jurisprudence based on the traditions of the pure Imams ('a) was taught there. After the third century, nevertheless, Kufah declined in importance being gradually replaced by Baghdad, and with the arrival of the Al Buyah and the presence of distinguished figures such as Shaykh al-Mufid, Sayyid Murtadha, Sayyid Radhi, and Shaykh at-Tusi, the religious seminary in Baghdad flourished.

Regarding the Shi'ah influence in Baghdad during the fourth century AH, Adam Mitch (?) thus writes:

But in Baghdad which was the capital of Islam in its true sense and where the waves of all intellectual currents were strong, all schools of thought had followers. Of all these schools of thought, two were the strongest and most uncompromising—Hanbali and Shi'ah.

The followers of Shi'ism were particularly concentrated around the market of Karakh and only at the end of the fourth, this direction to the major bridge in Bab at-Ta'q was also populated. In places west of Dajlah, especially Bab al-Basrah, Hashimis ('Abbasid *sadat*) constituted a strong community with intense enmity toward the Shi'ah.

Ya'qut thus writes: "The residents of the district of Bab al-Basrah, between Karakh and Qiblah, were all Hanbali Sunnis, and those on the left and western parts of Karakh were also Sunnis. But the people of Karakh were entirely Shi'ah and no Sunni could be found among them."

...As recorded by historians, the first time the Shi'ah of Baghdad gathered in Baratha Masjid in 313 AH, it was reported to the caliph that a group is gathering there to collectively curse the caliphs.

The caliph ordered for it to be besieged on Friday at the time of congregational prayer, and thirty worshippers were arrested and searched. Baked clays {*muhr*} with the name of the Imam engraved therein were found on them... In 321 AH, 'Ali ibn Yalbakh, the Turkish commander, ordered for the cursing of Mu'awiyah and Yazid on the pulpits.

The public made a hullabaloo, and Barbahari, the leading Hanbali, and his supporters were identified as the ones responsible for the unrests. On account of the seditions and attitudes of the Hanbalis toward the people in 323 AH, it was ordered that two Hanbalis should not be seen together anywhere in

Baghdad, and the 'Abbasid caliph Radhi issued an order in which the offenses to be committed by the Hanbalis and their corresponding punishments were indicated.²²

Lesson 20: Summary

During the 'Abbasid period, the 'Alawi movements constantly emerged, a definite consequence of which was the diaspora of the 'Alawis in the different regions. As such, during the second century AH, Shi'ism transcended beyond the frontiers of the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq.

The journey of the 'Abbasid campaigners to Khurasan began at the beginning of the second century AH, where many people initially embraced Shi'ism though Shi'ism with more Kaysani influence.

Since the second century AH, Qum has become one of the most important Shi'ah-dominated cities. This city was founded by the Shi'ah and Shi'ism there has always been Ithna 'Ash'ari Imamiyyah. Although Baghdad was the capital of the 'Abbasid caliphate, by the transfer of Shi'ah from the neighboring cities such as Kufah, Basrah and Mada'in, it became one of the demographic concentration centers of the Shi'ah.

During the third century AH, Shi'ism was extended in many regions in the Muslim territories. This fact is clearly illustrated from the list of the regions where the pure Imams ('a) had their representatives. It was for this reason that the Shi'ah governments in Tabaristan, Yemen and Africa were set up.

Up to the end of the third century AH, Kufah, Qum, Samarra, and Nayshabur were regarded as the most important Shi'ah-populated cities.

Lesson 20: Questions

1. Name the regions populated by the Shi'ah during the second century AH.
2. In what periods did Shi'ism in Khurasan start?
3. Which type of Shi'ism has been in Qum?
4. How did Baghdad become one of the Shi'ah-populated cities?

1. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Mansurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 146.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

3. 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, 1st edition (Beirut: Mansurat Mu'assasah al-'Alami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 326.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Abu Isma'il ibn Nasir ibn Tabataba, *Muntaqilah at-Talibiyyin*, trans. Muhammad Rida 'Ata'i, 1st edition (Mashhad: Intisharat-e Astan-e Quds-e Radhawi, 1372 AHS), p. 207.

6. Ibid.
7. It must be noted that the term, “Banu Hashim” or “Hashimiyan” at the time also included the ‘Abbasids as they were also grandchildren of Hashim.
8. Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 171.
9. Maqatil at-Talibiyyin, p. 149.
10. Murawwij adh-Dhahab, p. 336.
11. Maqatil at-Talibiyyin, p. 123.
12. Ibid., p. 238.
13. Rijal ibn Dawud (Qum: Manshurat ar-Radhi, n.d.), pp. 240, 270.
14. Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 149.
15. Shahab ad-Din Abi ‘Abd Allah Yaqt Hamawi, Mu‘jam al-Buldan, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar Ihya’ at-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1417 AH), vol. 7, p. 88.
16. Muntaqilah at-Talibiyyin, pp. 333–339.
17. Mu‘jam al-Buldan, vol. 2, p. 361.
18. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, A‘yan ash-Shi‘ah (Beirut: Dar at-Ta‘aruf Li’l-Matbu‘at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 29.
19. Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Rustam Tabari, Tarikh at-Tabari, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1408 AH), vol. 5, p. 365.
20. Jalal ad-Din ‘Abd ar-Rahman Suyuti, Tarikh al-Khulafa’ (Qum: Intisharat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1411 AH), p. 524.
21. See Sayyid Majid Pur Aqa‘i, Tarikh-e ‘Asr-e Ghaybat (Qum: Markaz-e Jahani-ye ‘Ulum-e Islami, n.d.), p. 19.
22. Adam Mitch, Tamaddun-e Islami dar Qarn-e Chaharum-e Hijri {Islamic Civilization in the Fourth Century Hijri}, trans. ‘Ali Rida Dhakawati Qaragzeli (Tehran: Mu‘assaseh-ye Intisharat-e Amir Kabir, 1364 AHS), pp. 85–86.

Lesson 21: Shi‘ism among the Different Tribes

Basically, ‘Ali (‘a) had more Shi‘ah and sympathizers from the ‘Adnanis from among the Qahtani tribes, and Shi‘ism among the Qahtanis had enormously expanded. The main Shi‘ah who constituted the historians and soldiers of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) were Arab tribes from the south (Yemen) and Qahtanis. For instance, the Imam (‘a) thus said in Rajzi, one of the battle arenas in Siffin:

أنا الغلام القرشي المؤمن الماجد الأبيض ليث كالشطن

يرضى به السادة من أهل اليمن من ساكني نجد و من أهل عدن

I am a Qurayshi youth—trustworthy, great, pure, and like a lion—with whom the distinguished men of the people of Yemen from among the residents of Najd and ‘Aden are pleased.¹

Similarly, after the demise of the Prophet of Islam (S), most of ‘Ali’s (‘a) supporters among the

companions of the Prophet (S) were *Ansar* who were Qahtani in origin, and constituted most of those who accompanied 'Ali ('a) from Medina up to the Battle of Jamal.² In the same vein, when Imam al-Husayn ('a) set off toward Kufah, 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas said to him:

If the people of Iraq like you and want to assist you, you write to them, "The enemy shall expel you from your city. Then, you come here." Instead, you move toward Yemen where there are mountains, strongholds and forts that Iraq does not have. Yemen is a vast land and your father have Shi'ah there. You go there and then send your preachers to the neighboring places to invite the people to come to you.

The companions of Imam al-Husayn ('a), with the exception of Banu Hashim and some Ghaffaris, also belonged to Yemeni tribes.³ As Mas'udi has said, "From among the companions of the Prophet (S), only four persons attained martyrdom at the lap of the Prophet (S) and these four were from the *Ansar*."⁴

The descent of the *Ansar* to Yemeni tribes is also obvious.

In contrast, the chiefs and nobles of Quraysh were hostile to 'Ali ('a) and his descendants (just as they were hostile to the Prophet (S)), while the sympathizers of the Imam ('a) among them were few. Even the tribes that had close relations with the Quraysh, such as the tribe of Thaqif and the people of Ta'if who were supporters of Mu'awiyah during and after the Battle of Siffin, had always been in the ranks of those who opposed 'Ali ('a).

For example, when Mu'awiyah dispatched Busr ibn Artat to pillage the cities of Hijaz and Yemen, as Busr was approaching Ta'if, Mughayrah ibn Shu'bah went to welcome him, saying: "May God give you pleasant reward! I heard the news of your harshness toward the enemies and benevolence toward the friends." Busr said, "O Mughayrah! I want to put pressure on the people of Ta'if so as for them to pledge allegiance to the Commander of the Faithful Mu'awiyah." Mughayrah said, "O Busr! Why do you want to do to your friends what you did to your enemies? Do not do it lest everybody turned into your enemy."⁵

There were also very few besides the Banu Hashim from among the Quraysh, such as Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr and Hashim Mirqal, who were on the Commander of the Faithful's ('a) side although from among the clans of Quraysh and opponents of 'Ali ('a), there were also some who accompanied him. For instance, Khalid ibn Walid was one of the Commander of the Faithful's ('a) adversaries, but his son, Muhajir ibn Khalid was among the soldiers of the Imam in the Battle of Siffin. Another case is that of 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Hudhayfah, Mu'awiyah's maternal cousin, who was one of the sincere Shi'ah of 'Ali ('a), and in the end attained martyrdom at the hands of Mu'awiyah's agents.

'Ali ('a) had followers and supporters from among all the Yemeni tribes such as the tribes of Kindih, Naka', Azd, Juhaynah, Himir, Bujaylah, Khath'am, Khuza'ah, Hadhramut, Mudhhaj, Ash'ar, Tay, Sadus, Hamdan, and Rabi'ah.⁶ But among them, the two tribes of Hamdan and Rabi'ah were leading.

The Hamdanis who embraced Islam during the time of the Prophet (S), through 'Ali's ('a) efforts, had always been sympathetic to him, and were considered as among the Imam's sincere Shi'ah. Mas'udi

says, “During the Battle of Siffin, not a single person from among them was in the army of Mu‘awiyah.”⁷

Regarding Hamdan, ‘Ali has said:

ولو كنت بواباً على باب الجنّة لقلت لحمدان أدخلوا بسلام

If I were the gatekeeper of paradise, I shall say to the tribe of Hamdan, “Enter in peace!”⁸

Mu‘awiyah held a great grudge against the Hamdanis. One day during the Battle of Siffin, he went to the battle arena and recited this poem:

لا عيش إلا فلق الهام من أرحب و يشكر شبام

قوم هم اعداء اهل الشام كم من كريم بطل همام

وكم قتيل و جريح زام كذاك حرب السادة الكرام

I shall not live unless I rip the heads of those of (the clans of) Arhab, Yashkar and Shabam (from the tribe of Hamdan).

They are people who are enemies of the people of Sham. So many of them are great, heroic and brave men.

So many they have killed, injured and handicapped. Yes, such is the battle of the gallant noblemen.

Then, by reciting this epic verse:

اللهم رب الحلّ والحرام لا تجعل الملك لاهل الشام

O Lord of hall and haram! Do not bestow the rule to the people of Sham,

Sa‘id ibn Qays Hamdani attacked Mu‘awiyah while holding forward his spear, and Mu‘awiyah fled from him toward the center of the army of Sham. And he sent Dhu’l-Kala‘ (one of the commanders of Sham) to confront Sa‘d ibn Qays and the ensuing combat lasted till night. In the end, the people of Sham

accepted defeat and fled. At this juncture, the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) recited this poem to encourage the Hamdanis:

فوارس من حمدان ليسوا بعزل غداة الوغى من شاكرو و شبام

يقودهم حامى الحقيقة ماجد سعيد بن قيس و الكريم محام

جزى الله حمدان الجنان فانهم سهام العدى في كل يوم حمام

Horsemen of Hamdan from (the tribes of) Shakir and Shabam do not slacken in the morning battle. The advocate of truth and great man, Sa’id ibn Qays, leads them. The kind people themselves shall also be protected.

May Allah grant the reward of paradise for (the tribe of) Hamdan as they are all arrows to the hearts of the enemies during battles.⁹

As such, we can see poems composed by the army of Sham against Hamdan especially during the Battle of Siffin. For instance, ‘Amr ibn al-‘As addressed the tribe of Hamdan on one of the days of the Battle of Siffin, saying:

الموت يغشاه من القوم الانف يوم لهمدان و يوم للصدف

و في سدوس نحوه ما ينخرف نضربها بالسيف حتى ينصرف

و لتميم مثلها او يعترف

It shall receive death from this tribe; one day, Hamdan is victorious while another day it is just a shell. The tribe of Sadus is also like them; as if it is not becoming old, but we shall strike them with the sword so as to restore the condition.

We shall treat (the tribe of) Tamim in the same manner, unless they confess submission. 10

A number of women of the tribe of Hamdan had also incited the supporters and soldiers of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) during the Battle of Siffin against Mu‘awiyah. Among these women were Sawdah Hamdaniyyah and Zurqa’ Hamdaniyyah, daughters of ‘Addi ibn Qays.¹¹ Sawdah addressed his father saying:

شعر كفعل ابيك يا بن عمارة يوم الطعان و ملتقى الاقران

وانصر علياً و الحسين و رهطه واقصد لهند و ابنها بهوان

ان الإمام اخا النبي محمد علم الهدى و منارة الإيمان

فقد الجيوش و سره امام لوائه قدماً بأبيض صارم و سنان 530

Given this, Mu‘awiyah nursed a grudge against them. And after the martyrdom of ‘Ali (‘a) they were summoned to Sham. They were asked to explain about their poems and they were reproached.¹²

The second Yemeni tribe which had many Shi‘ah of ‘Ali (‘a) among its members was the tribe of Rabi‘ah. For example, in enumerating the Shi‘ah of ‘Ali (‘a) Burqa has allocated a certain part to the companions of ‘Ali (‘a) from the tribe of Rabi‘ah while allocating the rest of the Yemeni Shi‘ah in another part.¹³

When ‘Ali (‘a) heard that a number of the tribe of Rabi‘ah in Basrah attained martyrdom at the hands of the army of ‘A’ishah, he said:

يا لهف نفسي على ربيعة ربيعة السّماعة المطيعة

*I pity the Rabi‘ah, the obedient and submissive Rabi‘ah!*¹⁴

Mas‘udi also says, “‘Ali (‘a) had many talks about Rabi‘ah and eulogies to them because they were his helpers and supporters as well as his pillar among pillars.” Among ‘Ali’s (‘a) statements about Rabi‘ah is

the poem below which he recited during the Battle of Siffin:

لمن راية سوداء يخفق ظلها إذا قيل قدمها حزين تقدماً

فيوردها في الصف حتى يعلها حياض المنايا تقطر الموت و الدّما

جزى الله قوماً قاتلوا في لقاءه لدى الموت قدماً ما اعروا كرمأ

واطيب أخباراً و اكرم شيمهً اذا كان اصوات الرجال تغمغما

ربيعه أعنى إنهم أهل نجدة و بأس إذا لاقو، خميساً عرمرما

The one who has the black banner and it is hoisted—once it is said to him to bring forward the banner, He will then join the ranks so as to bring forth the spears for death and blood drop from them.

May Allah bestow reward to the community that fought in the battle, welcomed death, and never opposed goodness.

They are the most well-dressed and beautiful-faced of people, when the voices of men at the battlefield are winded together.

I am referring to (the tribe of) Rabi'ah. When confronting a huge army, they are brave and powerful. 15

It was one of the chiefs of Rabi'ah, Jamil ibn Ka'b Tha'labi who was considered one of the Shi'ah and supporters of 'Ali ('a). When he was captured by Mu'awiyah, the latter told him: "Which blessing is greater than this that God made us prevailed over a man who within an hour killed a large number of our supporters!"¹⁶

Shaqiq ibn Thawr Sudusi also said during the Battle of Siffin while addressing the tribe of Rabi'ah: "O group of Rabi'ah! Once 'Ali is killed, there will be no excuse for even a single person from you to remain alive."¹⁷ Also, after the death of Yazid, the people of Kufah expelled the Umayyad governor from their city and wanted to install somebody in his stead.

Some people suggested 'Amr ibn Sa'd to be the *amir*. Mas'udi narrates that at that moment, the women

of Hamdan, Kahlan, *Ansar*, Rabi'ah, and Nakha' entered the central mosque. While weeping for Imam al-Husayn ('a), they were saying: "Is it not enough that 'Amr ibn Sa'd killed Husayn and now he wants also to be our *amir*?"

With this statement, they made the people weep and persuaded them to abandon 'Amr ibn Sa'd.¹⁸

Lesson 21: Summary

Most of the supporters and Shi'ah of the Commander of the Faithful were from the Qahtani and Yemeni tribes.

Among the companions of the Prophet (S), most of 'Ali's ('a) sympathizers were from among the *Ansar* who had Yemeni origin.

Imam al-Husayn's ('a) main supporters were from among the Yemeni tribes, with the exception of the Banu Hashim and some Ghaffari men.

In contrast, the chiefs and nobles of Quraysh were inimical to 'Ali ('a), and his descendants and supporters among them were very few.

Among the Yemeni tribes, the two tribes of Hamdan and Rabi'ah were leading in Shi'ism.

Lesson 21: Questions

1. Name the tribes in which Shi'ism was more dominant.
2. Among the Yemeni tribes, which tribes are leading compared to the rest in Shi'ism?

1. Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib* (Qum: Mu'assasah Intisharat-e 'Allameh, n.d.), vol. 3, p. 178.
2. Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf*, researched by Muhammad Baqir Mahmudi (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'jami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1394 AH), vol. 3, p. 161.
3. Kalbi, *Jumhura an-Nasab* (Beirut: 'Alam al-Kutub, n.d.), p. 88.
4. 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, 1st edition (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'jami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 84.
5. See Sayyid Ja'far Shahidi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umawi* {An Analytical History of Islam till the End of the Umayyad Rule}, 6th edition (Tehran: Markaz-e Nashr-e Daneshgahi, 1363 AHS), p. 137.
6. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid Burqa, *Rijal al-Burqa* (n.p.: Mu'assasah al-Qayyum, n.d.), pp. 37-40; 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Abi'l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabi, 1961), vol. 3, p. 193.
7. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 99.
8. *Insab al-Ashraf*, vol. 2, p. 322.
9. *Manaqib Al Abi Talib*, vol. 3, pp. 170-171.
10. *Insab al-Ashraf*, vol. 2, p. 323.
11. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1409 AH),

vol. 1, pp. 335–337.

12. Ibid., p. 335.

13. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid Burqa, Rijal al-Burqa (n.p.: Mu'assasah al-Qayyum, n.d.), p. 37.

14. Zubayr ibn Bakkar, Al-Akhbar al-Muwaffaqiyat, researched by Dr. Sami Makki al-'Ani (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 159.

15. Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 59.

16. Ibid., p. 60.

17. Insab al-Ashraf, vol. 2, p. 306.

18. Murawwij adh-Dhahab, pp. 98–99.

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