

Chapter 5: Who Was the Imam after Hasan Al-'Askari?

On Friday evening the group met at Engineer Madani's house. The session formally began with the question raised by Dr. Jalali.

Dr. Jalali: I have heard that Imam Hasan 'Askari had no son at all!

Mr. Hoshyar: There are several methods to prove that Imam Hasan 'Askari did have a son:

(a) In numerous traditions reported on the authority of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and the Imams it is related that Hasan b. 'Ali b. Muhammad 'Askari will have a son who will return to launch a universal reform movement after a long absence and will fill the earth with justice and equity. This matter has been related in various forms in the traditions.

If you recall, we have mentioned a list of hadith-reports in the previous discussion in which it is affirmed that the Mahdi will be the ninth descendant of Imam Husayn; that the Mahdi will be the sixth descendant of Imam Sadiq; that he will be the fifth descendant of Imam Kazim; the fourth descendant of Imam Rida; the third descendant of Imam Muhammad Taqi; and so on.

(b) In several traditions it is related that the Mahdi will be the son of Imam Hasan 'Askari (peace be upon him). For example, Saqr b. Abi Dalf relates that he heard from Imam 'Ali Naqi who said:

The Imam following me is my son Hasan. After Hasan his son is the Qa'im who will fill the earth with justice and equity just as it is filled with injustice and tyranny¹.

(c) In a number of hadith-reports Imam Hasan 'Askari has informed that the Qa'im and the Mahdi will be his son and that the house of the Imam and the Prophet is protected from falsehood and error. The following is the tradition related by Muhammad b. 'Uthman, the second deputy of the twelfth Imam during the Short Occultation (ghaybat-i sughra), who received it from his father, the first deputy:

I was in presence of Imam Hasan 'Askari when someone asked him regarding the hadith that was

related from his forefathers, namely: "The earth will never be void of the hujjat (God's proof), and any one who dies without acknowledging the Imam of the Age dies the death of ignorance." The Imam responded: "Yes, indeed the matter is as clear and real as daylight." The person went on to ask: "Who is the hujjat and the Imam after you?" He said: "After me the hujjat and the Imam will be my son Muhammad. Any one who dies without acknowledging him will die a death of ignorance. Be aware that my son will go into occultation. The people, because of that, will experience confusion. Those who are unfaithful will perish, whereas those who fix the time of his appearance will be uttering falsehood. When the period of his occultation comes to an end he will launch a revolution. I see the white flags waving over his head in Najaf²."

(d) Imam Hasan 'Askari informed a number of his close companions about the birth of his son. The following are some of those traditions:

(1) Fadl b. Shadhan, who died after the birth of the twelfth Imam and before the death of Imam Hasan 'Askari, wrote in his book on Ghayba, relating from Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Hamza, who said: "I heard Imam Hasan 'Askari saying: 'The Proof of God and my successor was born circumcised on the 15th night of Sha'ban, year 255 (870 CE), in the early hour of dawn³.'"

(2) Another close associate of the Imams, Ahmad b. Ishaq heard Imam Hasan 'Askari say: "Thank God that He did not take me away from this world without showing me my successor. He (my son) is closest to the Prophet in his features and character. God will keep him for a while in occultation and then He will cause him to emerge so that he will fill the earth with justice and equity⁴."

(3) Ahmad b. Hasan b. Ishaq Qummi related: When the righteous successor [of Imam Hasan 'Askari] was born, a letter came from the Imam 'Askari through Ahmad b. Ishaq. The Imam had written: "A son has been born to me. Keep this matter secret, because I will not divulge it except to my close associates and relatives⁵."

(4) Again Ahmad b. Ishaq relates that one day he was with Imam Hasan 'Askari when the latter asked him: "Ahmad, what do you say about the matter in which people have fallen in doubt?" He said: "When your letter announcing the birth of your son arrived, for all of us, that is, men, women, children, old and young, truth became manifest and we believed in what you conveyed to us." The Imam said: "Don't you know that the earth cannot be without God's proof in it?⁶"

(5) Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Uthman 'Amri, the second deputy of the twelfth Imam, has related that when the Imam of the Age was born Imam Hasan 'Askari asked for Abu 'Amr, 'Uthman, his father and the first deputy of the twelfth Imam. When he came the Imam told him: "Buy a thousand pounds of bread and a thousand pounds of meat and distribute it among the Hashimites. Also, arrange for some sheep to be sacrificed for my newly born son's head-shaving ceremony ('aqiqa)⁷."

All these traditions provide the necessary evidence that there was a son born to Imam Hasan 'Askari (peace be upon him).

Those Who Saw the Imam of the Age When He Was Small

Dr. Jalali: How can it be possible that a person could have a son and no one in the world would know about him? Moreover, how can it be so that five years would pass and he would remain unknown? Did not Imam 'Askari live in Samarra? Was not he visited by anyone? Could one believe the only report on the presence of the infant son of the Imam coming from Abu 'Amr 'Uthman b. Sa'id?

Mr. Hoshyar: Although it was clear from the very beginning that, under the circumstances which prevailed in Samarra under the 'Abbasids, the birth of Imam 'Askari's son would be kept secret, there were those trustworthy associates and relatives who had seen the child and had testified to his presence. Let us examine some reports to that effect:

(1) Among those who were present at the birth of the twelfth Imam and who reported the event in great detail was Hakima Khatun, the daughter of Imam Muhammad Taqi and the aunt of Imam Hasan 'Askari. The story in brief is recounted by her as follows:

One day I was visiting Imam 'Askari's house. At night, which happened to be the fifteenth night of Sha'ban (255 AH/29th July, 870), when I wanted to return to my home, the Imam said: "Aunt, stay with us tonight, because God's friend and my successor will be born this night." I asked: "Which one of your slave-girls is expecting?" He said: "Sawsan."

Hence, I started looking at her to see if there were any signs of pregnancy in her. I could not see any. After breaking the fast and finishing prayers, I slept in the same room as Sawsan. After a while I woke up from my sleep and began to think about what Imam 'Askari had predicted. Then I started performing the midnight prayers. Sawsan also woke up and prepared to perform her prayers. It was getting close to the dawn. But there was no sign of child-birth in her. I was beginning to doubt what the Imam had predicted when he said from his room: "Aunt dear, do not doubt. The time for my son's birth is approaching."

All of a sudden Sawsan's condition started changing. I asked her if everything was alright. She said that she was feeling some discomfort. I began to prepare things that were needed for delivery and took charge of the situation. Within a short while God's friend was born, all clean and pure. Just then Imam 'Askari said: "O Aunt, bring my son to me."

When I took him to the Imam he held him close to himself and stroked his tongue over the infant's eyes. The eyes of the infant opened immediately. Then he stroked his mouth and ears with his tongue, and his head with his hand. At that time the infant began to recite verses from the Qur'an. Then he gave the infant back to me and asked me to take him back to his mother. I brought him to his mother and went home.

On the third day, I came back to Imam 'Askari's house and straight away I went to Sawsan's room to see the child. But I did not see him. I went to the Imam's room. but hesitated to ask about the infant. The Imam at once informed me: "O aunt, my son is in concealment in God's protection. When I depart from

this world and when you see my followers in dispute about my successor, tell those trustworthy among them what you have witnessed in connection with his birth. However, make sure that the event is guarded in secrecy because my son will be in occultation⁸."

(2) The two maids at Imam 'Askari's residence have related that when the Imam of the Age was born he sat on his legs and raised his finger toward the sky [bearing witness to the Unity of God]. Then he sneezed and said: "Praise be to God, the Lord of the universe⁹."

(3) Abu Ghanim, the servant at Imam 'Askari's house, relates that a son was born to Imam Hasan 'Askari, whom he named Muhammad. "On the third day he showed him to his companions and said: 'This son of mine will be your master and Imam after me. He is the Qa'im who is being awaited by everyone. When the earth is filled with injustice and tyranny, he will rise, and fill it with justice and equity¹⁰.'"

(4) Abu 'Ali Khayzarani relates from the slave girl he had presented to Imam 'Askari that she was present at the time when the twelfth Imam was born. His mother's name was Sayqal¹¹.

(5) Hasan b. Husayn 'Alawi said: "I personally went to see Imam Hasan 'Askari in Samarra to congratulate him on the occasion of his son's birth." A similar tradition has been related by 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas 'Alawi¹².

(6) Hasan b. Mundhir reports that one day Hamza b. Abu al-Fath came to see him and informed him: "Last night God granted Imam 'Askari a son. However, he has asked us to keep the matter secret. I asked him his name. He said it is Muhammad¹³."

(7) Ahmad b. Ishaq relates that one day he came to see Imam Hasan 'Askari with the intention of asking about his successor. The Imam began the conversation. He said:

O Ahmad b. Ishaq, from the time God created Adam until the Day of Resurrection, God has not and will not leave the earth without His proof. It is because of the existence of this person that calamity is removed from earth and rain falls on it, through which the earth brings forth blessings.

At that juncture Ahmad asked the Imam about his successor. The Imam went in the private quarters of his house and returned carrying a three year old boy whose face was shining like the fourteenth night moon and said:

O Ahmad, if you had not been close to the Imams and highly respected by them I would not have shown my son to you. Know that this boy's name and patronymic are the same as the Prophet's name and patronymic. He is the one who will fill the earth with justice and equity¹⁴.

(8) Mu'awiya b. Hakim, Muhammad b. Ayyub and Muhammad b. 'Uthman 'Amri related the following account:

We were forty people who had come together in Imam Hasan 'Askari's house. The Imam presented his

son to us and said: "This is your Imam and my successor. After me you must obey him. Do not get into a dispute on this matter, otherwise you will be destroyed. However, you must remember that after this you will not be able to see him¹⁵."

(9) Ja'far b. Muhammad b. Malik was among the group of the prominent members of the Shi'a that included 'Ali b. Bilal, Ahmad b. Hilal, Muhammad b. Mu'awiya b. Hakim and Hasan b. Ayyub. He relates the following occasion:

We were all gathered at the Imam 'Askari's house to find out about his successor. We were some forty people there. At that time 'Uthman b. 'Amr stood up and asked: "O son of the Prophet, we have come to ask you about something of which you have better knowledge." The Imam said: "Please be seated." He then left the room asking everyone to remain there. He returned after an hour, having brought with him a small boy whose face was shining like the moon. He then announced: "This is your Imam. Obey him. And also know that you will no more see him after today¹⁶."

(10) Abu Harun reports that he saw the twelfth Imam when his face was shining like the full moon¹⁷.

(11) Ya'qub relates that one day he went to visit Imam 'Askari. On the right side of the Imam he saw a room with a curtain hanging on its entrance. He asked the Imam as to who was the Master of the Age. The Imam said: "Raise the curtain!." When he raised the curtain, a boy appeared and came and sat on the Imam's lap. At that time, the Imam told Ya'qub: "This is your Imam¹⁸."

(12) 'Amr Ahwazi reported that Imam 'Askari showed him his son and told him that he was the Imam after him¹⁹.

(13) A Persian servant related the following:

I was standing at Imam Hasan 'Askari's door when I saw a maid leaving the house with something covered in her hands. The Imam said to her: "Reveal that which you have in your hands." The maid uncovered a beautiful boy. The Imam told me: "This is your Imam." After that one time I never saw that boy again²⁰.

(14) Abu Nasr, the servant, and Abu 'Ali Mutahhar relate that they saw the son of Imam Hasan 'Askari²¹.

(15) Kamil b. Ibrahim relates that he saw the twelfth Imam in the house of Imam Hasan 'Askari. He was four years old and his face was as beautiful as the full moon. The Imam answered his questions before he asked him²².

(16) Sa'd b. 'Abd Allah recounts: "I saw the Master of the Age as his face was bright like the full moon. He was sitting on his father's lap and responded to the questions I asked²³."

(17) Hamza b. Nusayr, Imam 'Ali Naqi's slave relates from his father: When the twelfth Imam was born the family members in the household of Imam Hasan 'Askari were congratulating each other. When the

Imam had grown a little older I was asked to buy daily meat with some bone and it was said that the meat was for "our younger master²⁴."

(18) Ibrahim b. Muhammad relates:

Once because of fear of the governor I decided to escape from Samarra. I came to Imam Hasan 'Askari's house in order to bid him farewell. I saw a beautiful child next to him. I asked him: "O son of the Prophet, who is this child?" The Imam replied: "He is my son and successor²⁵."

This was the list of the trustworthy associates, relatives, and servants of Imam Hasan 'Askari who had seen his son in his childhood and who had testified to his existence. When one puts this testimony along side the information given by the Prophet and the Imams, then certainty about the existence of the son of Imam Hasan 'Askari is attained.

Why Was the Twelfth Imam Not Mentioned in the Will of Imam Hasan 'Askari?

Engineer Madani: It is said that in his last days when Imam Hasan 'Askari was ill he appointed his mother as the executer of his will so that she could manage his affairs after his death. This matter was officially approved by the court. In this will there was no mention of his son. Moreover, his estate was divided between his mother and his brother²⁶. Had he had a son then he would have certainly mentioned him in his last will so that he would not be deprived of his share of inheritance.

Mr. Hoshyar: Imam Hasan 'Askari intentionally kept his son's name off his last will so that he would remain immune from all the danger that could come to him from the ruler of the time. In fact, he was so careful in this matter and was so fearful about his son's birth being uncovered that at times, out of necessity, he would employ precautionary dissimulation in the matter of his son with his close associates to obscure the situation for them.

One of the companions of Imam Hasan 'Askari by the name of Ibrahim b. Idris relates that the Imam sent him a sheep with a message that he should sacrifice it for the latter's having performed the ceremony of shaving off his son's birth hair ('aqiqa), and share the meat with his family. Ibrahim carried out the Imam's order. But when he came to see him the Imam said: "Our child has died." However, once again he sent Ibrahim two sheep with a letter in which the Imam instructed Ibrahim:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Sacrifice these sheep for your master's ceremony of 'aqiqa and eat the meat with your family.

Ibrahim carried out the order. But when he came to see the Imam the latter did not mention anything about it²⁷.

Imam Sadiq had also taken similar precautions in his last will. He had appointed five persons as

executors of his will, including the 'Abbasid caliph Mansur, Muhammad b. Sulayman, the governor of Madina, his two sons, 'Abd Allah and Musa, and his wife Hamida, Musa's mother²⁸. By doing so he saved the life of his son Musa from imminent danger, because he knew that if his Imamate and legateship became known to the caliph, Mansur would have tried to get rid of his son. As a matter of fact events did happen exactly as Imam Sadiq had thought, because the caliph ordered that if the legatee of the Imam Sadiq was a specific person, then he should be killed.

Why Did Others Not Know about the Twelfth Imam's Birth?

Dr. Fahimi: The custom is that when a child is born to anyone, then relatives, neighbors, and friends come to know about it. This is true in the case of a person who is well respected. As such no one disputes the existence of a child for that person. How can one believe that the people would have no information about a son born to Imam Hasan 'Askari in spite of the respect that he held among them and that they would have doubts about that and dispute with each other about it?

Mr. Hoshyar: You are correct that normally the situation is exactly the way you have described. However, Imam Hasan 'Askari from the very beginning had decided that he would not divulge any information about the birth of a son to him. Rather, such a decision was made when the Prophet was alive and when other Imams were faced with a situation where secrecy about the birth was among the signs of the last Imam. Thus we have a report which says that Imam Zayn al-'Abidin predicted that: "The birth of our Qa'im will be concealed from the people and that will cause the people to say that he is not born at all, so that when he takes the command no one's allegiance will be on his neck²⁹."

In another tradition 'Abd Allah b. 'Ata relates:

I said to Imam Baqir: "Your followers in Iraq are numerous. By God, no one in your family has the status that you have. Why don't you rise?" The Imam said: "O 'Abd Allah, you have allowed nonsensical talk to enter your mind. By God, I am not the promised commander of the affairs." I asked: "Then who is the commander of the affairs?" He said: "Look out for someone whose birth will be concealed from the people. He will be your commander³⁰."

Dr. Fahimi: Why did Imam Hasan 'Askari conceal the birth of his son from the people so that they would fall into doubt and perplexity and would be led astray in the matter of Imamate?

Mr. Hoshyar: As I have said earlier, the story of the promised Mahdi was widespread among Muslims from the very early days of Islam. The traditions and the hadith-reports about the subject that were related by the Prophet and the further confirmation of these reports by the Imams had circulated among the people. The rulers of the time were also well aware of these hadith-reports which announced that the promised Mahdi will be among the descendants of Fatima and Husayn.

Moreover, these traditions announced the destruction of unjust governments by the Mahdi, who will establish the rule of justice and equity all over the world.

Consequently, they were in fear of the birth and emergence of the promised Mahdi and were determined to rid themselves of the danger of the revolution of the Mahdi. It was for this reason that the homes of the family members of the Prophet, that is, the Hashimites, and more particularly Imam Hasan 'Askari's home, were under constant surveillance and under the watchful eyes of secret agents of the 'Abbasid state.

Mu'tamid, the 'Abbasid caliph, had assigned a number of midwives to conduct espionage missions in the Hashimite families to collect information about pregnancies and child births. When the caliph got the news about Imam Hasan 'Askari's illness, he instructed his agents to keep a constant watch over the house of the Imam. When he heard that the Imam had died, he ordered a search of the Imam's house to find the whereabouts of his son. In addition, he sent some of these midwives to examine the slave girls of the Imam to determine if they were pregnant. If a woman was found pregnant she was detained and imprisoned.

The midwives suspected one of the women to be pregnant and reported her to the caliph. The caliph ordered her to be confined to one of the rooms and commissioned Tahrir, his servant, to watch over her. He did not set her free until he was sure that she did not carry the Imam's child. He did not stop with the household of Imam Hasan 'Askari. Rather, as soon as the funeral was over he ordered all the houses to be searched and kept under watch³¹.

Now you can appreciate that Imam Hasan 'Askari, living under those dangerous circumstances, could not do anything other than conceal his son's birth from the people so that he would remain immune from their evil designs. The Prophet and his rightful successors, the Imams, used to predict these conditions and inform the people of the twelfth Imam's birth in secret.

However, such stories are not unknown in historical annals. As you know, when Pharaoh came to know that a child would be born among the Israelites who would put an end to his kingdom, he attempted to forestall the danger and so sent his spies around to keep a watch over all pregnant women and to kill all the boys and imprison all the girls that were born. With all these criminal acts he did not reach his aim, and God caused the birth of Moses to remain concealed so that the divine aim could be fulfilled.

As for Imam Hasan 'Askari, in spite of that dangerous situation, he revealed his son to a number of his trusted companions and followers so that they would continue to receive the guidance. Nevertheless, he asked them to keep the matter secret from the enemies and requested that they not even mention his name.

The Mother of the Twelfth Imam

Dr. Jalali: What is the name of the mother of the Master of the Age?

Mr. Hoshyar: His mother was introduced in the sources with various names. Among them are: Narjis,

Sayqal, Rayhana, Sawsan, Khumt, Hukayma, and Maryam. If you keep the two following points in mind you will understand the source of this confusion:

(a) Imam Hasan 'Askari had several slave girls with different names. On two occasions Hakima Khatun has mentioned these slave girls. At one time she came to visit Imam Hasan 'Askari and saw him seated in the courtyard of his house, surrounded by his slave girls. She asked him: "Which one of these girls is going to be the mother of your successor?" The Imam replied: "It is Sawsan³²."

In another report Hakima relates the event of the birth of the twelfth Imam, cited earlier, in which Imam Hasan 'Askari requests her to spend the night of 15th Sha'ban (255 AH/870 CE) in his house because a child was going to be born. At that point Hakima asked him: "Which of your maidens is the mother of the child?" The Imam said: "It is Narjis." Hakima said: "Yes, I too like her the most among your slave girls³³."

From these two and other similar reports it appears that Imam Hasan 'Askari had several slave girls.

(b) As stated earlier Imam Hasan 'Askari's child was born in an extremely dangerous situation because the 'Abbasid caliphs and even some members of the Hashimite clan had been aware of the approaching time for the birth of the Mahdi, who was to end unjust and tyrannical rule and establish justice and equity. Hence, the agents of the 'Abbasids were guarding the homes of the Hashimites in general, and the Imam in particular, day and night. The secret agents of the caliph were involved in searching for the newborn in these homes to deliver him to the caliph.

Having noted these two things, it must be pointed out that it was certainly decreed by God that in such a threatening environment and in such a home of importance a son had to be born to Imam Hasan 'Askari who should remain protected from all sorts of dangers. It was for this reason that all necessary precautions had to be taken. Hence, to begin with, according to the related accounts, there were no signs of pregnancy in his mother. Moreover, Imam Hasan 'Askari did not reveal her real name. In addition, at the time of the delivery only Hakima Khatun, and probably some slave girls were present. This is despite the fact that usually in such circumstances assistance is sought from a midwife and other experienced women. In fact, nobody knew whether Imam Hasan 'Askari was married or not and, if he was married, no one knew the identity of his wife.

On the fifteenth night of Sha'ban when it was completely dark, at night, the child was born under fear and veiled circumstances. This too happened in a home where there were several slave girls of whom none had any visible signs of pregnancy. At the time of delivery, with the exception of Hakima, there was no one present and no one dared to reveal the situation.

For a long while the matter was kept a secret and only later the close, trusted companions of Imam Hasan 'Askari began to inquire and were told about it. Some among the followers believed that God had favored Imam Hasan 'Askari with a son, whereas others denied it. Since all the slave girls lacked visible signs of pregnancy, the story about the dispute over the identity of the child's mother was naturally bound to occur. Some knew the mother to be Sawsan, some Narjis, some Sayqal, and so on. Nobody,

except a select few, knew the true state of affairs.

But they were not allowed to divulge that information. Even Hakima, who was the witness and was present during the birth of the twelfth Imam, for the sake of protecting the identity of his mother, sometimes used to mention her name variantly as Narjis, Sayqal or Sawsan, and at other time, as a precautionary measure she would ascribe the child to Imam Hasan 'Askari's mother.

In the year 262 AH/877 CE Ahmad b. Ibrahim came to see Hakima Khatun, the daughter of Imam Jawad. He spoke to her from behind the curtain and asked her about her beliefs. She introduced her Imams and mentioned Muhammad b. Hasan as her last Imam. Ahmad said: "Were you yourself witness to the matter (of his birth) or are you saying this on the basis of what you have heard?" She replied saying that the matter was according to what Imam Hasan 'Askari had written to his mother. So Ahmad went on to inquire as to whom the Shi'a should follow in that matter. Hakima said that they should follow Imam Hasan 'Askari's mother.

Ahmad objected saying: "In this will of testament should we follow one woman?" Hakima responded that actually Imam Hasan 'Askari was following his forefather, Imam 'Ali b. Husayn in this matter. Imam Husayn had made his sister Zaynab his legatee and the knowledge that was possessed by 'Ali b. Husayn was ascribed to Zaynab. Imam Husayn had done that, added Hakima, so that the matter about the Imamate of 'Ali b. Husayn would remain secret. Then she said: "You are the people who know the traditions. Have not you been informed that the inheritance belonging to the ninth among the descendants of Husayn will be distributed while he is alive?³⁴"

As you can see, in this report Hakima has not responded to the inquiry about the last Imam's birth directly. In fact, she has attributed the story to Imam Hasan 'Askari's mother. It is also likely that out of fear for revealing the true state of affairs to the reporter she employed 'prudential concealment' (taqiyya). Or, she simply wanted to present the report in a manner that would generate bewilderment. However, the same Hakima in another place relates the event that led to the marriage of Imam Hasan 'Askari with Narjis Khatun and the birth of the Mahdi, to which she was herself a witness, in great detail. She ends this account with the following statement: "I now see my master (i.e., the twelfth Imam) regularly and talk to him³⁵."

In short, the differences of opinion regarding the name of the last Imam's mother is not something unusual. On the contrary they point to the most difficult and even frightful situation at that time. Moreover, the number of the slave girls that belonged to Imam Hasan 'Askari and the extreme precaution that he took in keeping the matter secret would have necessarily created confusion. It is not unlikely that the story about the serious dispute that erupted between the Imam's mother and brother, Ja'far, the Liar, could have been part of a state conspiracy masterminded by the caliph in order to extort information about Imam Hasan 'Askari's son.

According to Shaykh Saduq in his Kamal al-din, at the time when Imam Hasan 'Askari's mother got into the dispute with Ja'far, his brother, over the inheritance and when the matter was referred to the caliph,

one of the slave girls belonging to Imam Hasan 'Askari by the name of Sayqal claimed to be pregnant. Sayqal was brought to the palace of the caliph, Mu'tamid, and was kept under strict guard and under the watchful eyes of the midwives and other women in the palace to determine the fate of her pregnancy. At that very time, political turmoil as a consequence of the insurrection led by Saffar, the death of 'Abd Allah b. Yahya, and the revolution of the Zanj engulfed the caliphate. The 'Abbasids were forced to abandon Samarra. Hence, they became occupied with their own troubles and gave up the surveillance of Sayqal's pregnancy³⁶.

There is also another reason for differences in the name of the mother of the twelfth Imam. It is possible to say that all those names were given to one and the same person. That is to say that the twelfth Imam's mother had several names. This explanation is not far fetched because it was customary among Arabs to give several names to a person of importance.

The evidence for this is provided in Shaykh Saduq's Kamal al-din. He himself has related from Ghiyath that Imam Hasan 'Askari's successor was born on Friday, and his mother was Rayhana, who was also known as Narjis, Sayqal, and Sawsan. Since at the time of her pregnancy she had some kind of brilliance over her face, she was known as Sayqal³⁷.

To sum this discussion up, it is important to remind ourselves that in spite of some ambiguity in identifying the actual name of the twelfth Imam's mother, there is no doubt that she existed. In other words, such an ambiguity does not detract authenticity from her existence. As you have noticed all the Imams, including Imam Hasan 'Askari, have informed about the existence of a son for the latter. In addition, Hakima, the daughter of Imam Jawad, was a highly trustworthy woman who reported in detail the birth of the Imam. Moreover, a number of trustworthy companions and servants of Imam Hasan 'Askari saw the son and testified to his existence, regardless of his mother's name.

The Sunni 'Ulama' and the Birth of the Mahdi

Dr. Fahimi: If Imam Hasan 'Askari had a son then the Sunni 'ulama' and historians should have recorded that in their books.

Mr. Hoshyar: Yes, indeed there is a group of them who also have related the event of the birth of [Ibn] Imam Hasan 'Askari and have accepted and recorded his and his father's history in their books. Thus, for instance:

(1) Muhammad b. Talha Shafi'i writes: "Abu al-Qasim Muhammad b. Hasan was born in the year 258 AH/873 CE in Samarra. His father's name was Hasan Khalis. Among the titles [of this last Imam] are: Hujjat, Khalaf Salih (the righteous offspring) and Muntazar (the awaited one)." Following this statement he has related several traditions on the subject of the Mahdi, with the concluding statement: "These hadith-reports confirm the existence of Imam Hasan 'Askari's son, who is in concealment and will appear later³⁸."

(2) Muhammad b. Yusuf, following his entry on the death of Imam Hasan 'Askari, writes: "He did not have any child beside Muhammad. It is said that he is the same as the Awaited Imam (imam muntazar)³⁹."

(3) Ibn Sabbagh Maliki writes: "Section Twelve on the Life of Abu al-Qasim Muhammad, Hujjat, Khalaf Salih, the son of Abu Muhammad Hasan Khalis: He is the twelfth Imam of the Shi'a." Then he has recorded the history of the Imam and has related the traditions about the Mahdi⁴⁰.

(4) Yusuf b. Qazughli, after writing his account of the life of Imam Hasan 'Askari, writes: [119] "His son's name is Muhammad, and his patronymic is Abu 'Abd Allah and Abu al-Qasim. He is the Proof of God's existence, the Master of the Age, the Qa'im, and the Muntazar. The Imamate has come to an end with him." Then he reports traditions about the Mahdi⁴¹.

(5) Shablanji in the book entitled Nur al-absar, writes: "Muhammad is the son of Hasan 'Askari. His mother was a slave girl by the name of Narjis or Sayqal or Sawsan. His patronymic is Abu al-Qasim. The Twelver Shi'ites know him as: Hujjat, Mahdi, Khalaf Salih, Qa'im, Muntazar, and Master of the Age⁴²."

(6) Ibn Hajar, in his al-Sawa'iq al-muharriqa, following the biography of Imam Hasan 'Askari writes: "He has not left a son besides Abu al-Qasim, who is known as Muhammad and Hujjat. That boy was five years old when his father died⁴³."

(7) Muhammad Amin Baghdadi in the book entitled: Saba'ik al-dhahab writes: "Muhammad, who is also known as Mahdi, was five years old at the time of his father's death⁴⁴."

(8) Ibn Khallikan relates in his biographical dictionary Wafayat al-a'yan: "Abu al-Qasim Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-'Askari is the twelfth Imam of the Imamiyya, that is the Twelver Shi'ites. The Shi'ites believe that he is the one who is the awaited Qa'im and the Mahdi⁴⁵."

(9) In Rawdat al-safa Mir Khwand writes: "Muhammad was the son of Hasan. His patronymic is Abu al-Qasim. The Imamiyya acknowledge that he is the Hujjat, the Qa'im, and the Mahdi⁴⁶."

(10) Sha'rani writes in his al-Yawaqit wa al-jawahir: "Mahdi is the son of Imam Hasan 'Askari. He was born on the fifteenth night of Sha'ban, 255 AH. He is alive and will remain so until he will emerge with Jesus. Now it is 957 AH. He is, thus, 703 years old⁴⁷."

(11) Sha'rani, quoting Ibn 'Arabi's Futuhat makiyya, section 366, writes: "When the earth will be filled with tyranny and injustice the Mahdi will rise and will fill the earth with justice and equity. He will be among the descendants of the Prophet and from the line of Fatima. His grandfather will be Husayn, and his father will be Imam Hasan 'Askari, the son of Imam 'Ali Naqi, the son of Imam Muhammad Taqi, the son of Imam 'Ali Rida, the son of Imam Musa Kazim, the son of Imam Ja'far Sadiq, the son of Imam Muhammad Baqir, the son of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, the son of Imam Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib⁴⁸."

(12) Khwaja Parsa in his book *Fasl al-khitab* writes: "Muhammad, the son of Hasan 'Askari, was born on fifteenth night of Sha'ban, 255 AH/870 CE. His mother's name was Narjis. His father died when he was five years of age. From that time until now he is in occultation. He is the awaited Imam of the Shi'a. His existence is well established among his companions, trusted associates and family. God will prolong his age as He has done in the case of Elijah and Eliash⁴⁹."

(13) Abu al-Falah Hanbali in his *Shadharat al-dhahab* and Dhahabi in *al-'Ibar fi khabar min ghabar* write: "Muhammad is the son of Hasan 'Askari, the son of 'Ali Hadi, the son of Jawad, the son of 'Ali Rida, the son of Musa Kazim, the son of Ja'far Sadiq, 'Alawi, Husayni. His patronymic is Abu al-Qasim and the Shi'a know him as Khalaf Salih, Hujjat, Mahdi, Muntazar, and the Master of the Age (*Sahib al-zaman*)⁵⁰."

(14) Muhammad b. 'Ali Hamawi writes: "Abu al-Qasim Muhammad Muntazar was born in the year 259 AH/874 CE in Samarra⁵¹."

In short, besides all these above mentioned Sunni scholars there are numerous others who have recorded the birth of Imam Hasan 'Askari's son⁵².

At this time it was quite late in the night. The meeting was adjourned and it was decided that the following session would be held at Dr. Jalali's residence.

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1. *Ithbat al-hudat*, Vol. 6, p. 275
 2. *Bihar al-anwar*, Vol. 51, p. 160
 3. *Muntakhab al-athar*, p. 320
 4. *Ibid*
 5. *Ithbat al-hudat*, Vol. 6, p. 432
 6. *Muntakhab al-athar*, p. 345
 7. *Ithbat al-hudat*, Vol. 6, p. 430
 8. Tusi, *Ghayba*, pp. 141-42
 9. *Ithbat al-hudat*, Vol. 7, p. 292; *Ithbat al-wasiyya*, p. 197
 10. *Ithbat al-hudat*, Vol. 6, p. 431
 11. *Kamal al-din*, p. 105
 12. *Ithbat al-hudat*, Vol. 6, p. 433 and Vol. 7, p. 20
 13. *Ithbat al-hudat*, Vol. 6, p. 432
 14. *Bihar al-anwar*, Vol. 52, p. 23
 15. *Ibid.*, Vol. 52, p. 25
 16. *Ithbat al-hudat*, Vol. 6, p. 311
 17. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 20
 18. *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 425
 19. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 16
 20. *Yanabi' al-mawadda*, Bab 82, p. 461
 21. *Ithbat al-hudat*, Vol. 7, p. 344; *Ithbat al-wasiyya*, p. 198; *Yanabi' al-mawadda*, Bab 82, p. 461

22. Ithbat al-hudat, Vol. 7, p. 323; Yanabi' al-mawadda, p. 461
23. Bihar al-anwar, Vol. 52, p. 78 and 86
24. Ithbat al-hudat, Vol. 7, p. 18; Ithbat al-wasiyya, p. 197
25. Ithbat al-hudat, Vol. 7, p. 356. For detailed information on the birth of the twelfth Imam see: Sayyid Hashim Bahrani, Tabsirat al-wali fiman ra'a al-qalim al-mahdi and Bihar al-anwar, Vol. 51, Bab 1; and Vol. 52, Bab 17 and 19
26. Usul al-kafi, Bab mawlid Abi Muhammad al-Hasan b. 'Ali
27. Bihar al-anwar, Vol. 51, p. 22
28. Usul al-kafi, Bab al-ishara wa al-nass 'ala abi al-Hasan Musa
29. Bihar al-anwar, Vol. 51, p. 135
30. Bihar al-anwar, Vol. 51, p. 34
31. Usul al-kafi, Bab mawlid abi Muhammad al-Hasan b. 'Ali. See also all other sources that mention the adverse conditions under which these women suffered in the hands of the 'Abbasid caliph and his fear of the existence of a son for Imam Hasan 'Askari
32. Bihar al-anwar, Vol. 51, p. 17
33. Ibid., p. 25
34. Kamal al-din, Vol. 2, p. 178
35. Kamal al-din, Vol. 2, pp. 99-103
36. Kamal al-din, Vol. 2, p. 149
37. Kamal al-din, Vol. 2, p. 106
38. Matalib al-su' al (1287 AH edition), p. 89
39. Kifayat al-talib, p. 312
40. Fusul al-muhimma (Second edition), p. 273 and 286
41. Tadhkirat khawass al-umma, p. 363
42. Nur al-absar (Cairo edition), p. 342
43. al-Sawa'iq al-muharriqa, p. 206
44. Saba'ik al-dhahab, p. 78
45. Wafayat al-a'yan (1284 AH edition), Vol. 2, p. 24
46. Rawdat al-safa, Vol. 3, p. 143
47. al-Yawaqit wa al-jawahir (1351 AH edition), Vol. 2, p. 143
48. Ibid., p. 143
49. As cited in Yanabi' al-mawadda, Vo. 2, p. 126
50. Shadharat al-dhahab (Beirut edition), Vol. 2, p. 141; al-'Ibar fi khabar min ghabar (Kuwait edition), Vol. 2, p. 31
51. Ta'rikh mansuri, microfilm copy of the Moscow manuscript, folio number 114
52. See the references compiled in the volume Kashf al-astar, by Husayn b. Muhammad Taqi Nuri and Kifayat al-muwahhidin by TTabarsi, especially volume 2

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