Introduction

On the eighth night of Rabīʿ al-Awwal, in the year 260 of the Hijra (874 CE)[1] the Imam al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-ʿAskarī died in Samarra, then the capital city of the ʿAbbasid Empire. Ḥasan was too young to die – just twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old – and he had been leader of the small, but widely dispersed religious community of the Imami Shiʿa for only six years. With no obvious successor to replace him, his death refreshed a political crisis that had been brewing since his father's lifetime. Ḥasan's bitter rival – his brother Jaʿfar – seized the opportunity to reassert his own claim to succeed to the Imamate. Though Jaʿfar had some initial success in calling the Shiʿa to support him, he was ultimately rejected, to be remembered in Twelver Shiʿi sources as Jaʿfar "the Liar."[2] His failure was not from want of trying. Upon Ḥasan's death, Jaʿfar had leapt into action, mounting a dramatic attempt to seize the property of his dead brother. In one report, Jaʿfar is described as bringing a band of horsemen to raid and loot the house.[3] In another, Jaʿfar instigates someone to use an axe to break down the door of the dead Imam's

[1] Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*, ed. ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī (Tehran: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 1388–91/1968–71), 1:503; Pseudo-Masʿūdī, *Ithbāt al-waṣiyya li-l-Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib* (Qumm: Manshūrāt al-Riḍā, 1404/1983–84), 257–58, 261.

[2] The exception to this hostile attitude is that of the Naqavī Sayyids who descend from him. See Hossein Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1993), 85.

[3] A report transmitted from the great-grandfather of al-Ḥasan b. Wajnāʾ corroborates the spirit of Jaʿfar's desperate action. It reports that Jaʿfar and a group of horsemen attacked the house with the intention of looting (*nahb*) and raiding (*ghāra*). The polemic role of this story is to show how the child twelfth Imam was saved from danger when he miraculously disappeared. Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-niʿma fī ithbāt al-ghayba*, ed. ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī (Tehran: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 1395/1975), 470–72.

house.[4] Yet another report, also hostile to Jaʿfar, gives us details about the tactics to which Jaʿfar resorted in order to get his hands on the family wealth – even as his brother's corpse was yet warm:

> On the night of [the death of] Abū Muḥammad [al-ʿAskarī], Jaʿfar sealed the storehouses and whatever was in the house, and then he returned to his own lodgings. In the morning, he came to the house and entered it so as to carry off the things upon which he had placed his seal. But when he opened the seals (*khawātim*) and went inside, we saw there was nothing but a trifling amount left in the house and in the storehouses, so he beat all of the servants and the slave girls, but they said to him, "Do not beat us, by God! Indeed, we saw the possessions, and the men loaded up the camels in the street, but we were unable to speak or move until the camels set off, after which the doors were locked just as they had been." Jaʿfar gave out a great howl of dismay, and struck his head in regret at what had left the house.[5]

Jaʿfar's attempt to seize the house and property of his dead brother was a strategic assertion of control over both the material and the symbolic power of the Imamate. Scholars seldom consider the broader implications of the material wealth of the Imams and the resources they controlled through their networks, although we commonly hear of Imams passing down a legacy of objects of sacred value and symbolic power to their successors: books of prophetic knowledge, the weapons of holy heroes, and so on.[6] To neglect the materially embedded dimension of the Imamate is a mistake. The symbolism of the Imamate was rooted both in doctrinal frameworks and in material relations. Conversely, the wealth they controlled was not just money, but a conduit for purification, blessing, prestige, and the indication of favor. Money and objects of value were sent to the Imam by his followers in exchange for blessing and purification: the currency in a kind of "sacred economy"[7] that served as social glue which

[4] Kulaynī, *Kāfī*, 1:331–32.

[5] al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī, *al-Hidāya al-kubrā* (Diyār ʿAql [Lebanon]: Dār li-ajl al-maʿrifa, 1428/2007), 288–89.

[6] For a description of the early Shiʿi conception of *waṣiyya*, including the transmission of physical items like swords, turbans, and, of course, books, see Uri Rubin, "Prophets and Progenitors in the Early Shīʿa Tradition," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 1 (1979): 45–51. While much of this may belong to the realm of the purely mythical, it is certain that the sanctity of the Imam was considered to be suffused into the gifts they gave their followers, and presumably other physical objects in their possession also. There is no reason to believe, thus, that there were not significant objects of real symbolic power present among the possessions to be inherited from the Imam.

[7] Edmund Hayes, "The Imams as Economic Actors: Early Imami Shiʿism as a 'Sacred Economy,'" in *Land and Trade in Early Islam: The Economy of the Islamic Middle East 750–1050 CE*, ed. Fanny Bessard and Hugh Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, in 2021).

held the Imami Shiʿi community together. The house of the Imams was not just a dwelling, but a focus for pilgrimage[8] and the central location for the collection of canonical taxes. This book is an attempt to root the history of the Imami Shiʿa in both the material and the ideological relations binding the community, and to view this foundational moment in the forging of Twelver Shiʿism through the lens of political, institutional, and social forces. Doctrine is produced through social factors, not purely through the autonomous work of intellectuals and pious systematizers.

This book centers on a moment of historical transition: the transition from the leadership of the living, manifest Imams, to a community without a visible, physically present Imam. Although this transitional period was in some ways a continuation of the history of an Imami Shiʿi community, it was also the moment in which a newly defined community emerged, who came to call themselves "Twelvers," after the closed sequence of canonical twelve Imams they recognized (Table 1).

The Twelvers are currently the most populous Shiʿi denomination and a hugely influential force within the diverse and complicated history of Islam, and yet relatively few careful critical studies have been made into the complex and contradictory evidence for this foundational moment of Twelver Shiʿism. Central to this story are the agents of the hidden Imam who created the conditions of possibility for the establishment and canonization of this

TABLE 1 The canonical sequence of the twelve Imams of the Twelver Shiʿa

1. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, d. 40/661
2. al-Ḥasan, d. 49/670
3. al-Ḥusayn, d. 61/680
4. ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, d. 95/713–14
5. Muḥammad al-Bāqir, d. 114/732–33
6. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, d. 148/765
7. Mūsā al-Kāẓim, d. 183/799
8. ʿAlī al-Riḍā, d. 203/817
9. Muḥammad al-Jawād, d. 220/835
10. ʿAlī al-Hādī, d. 254/868
11. al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, d. 260/874
12. The hidden Imam: Muḥammad al-Mahdī (believed born before 260/874)

[8] Edmund Hayes, "Entwined Itineraries: Shiʿi Interpretations of Hajj and the Ziyara to the Shiʿi Imams," in *Hajj and the Arts of the Pilgrimage*, ed. Nasser D. Khalili, Qaisra Khan, and Nahla Nassar (in press).

defining doctrine of Twelver Shiʿism: the Occultation (*ghayba*) of the twelfth Imam. I aim to show how the direct leadership of the Imams collapsed, how it was replaced by the authority of agents of non-Imamic lineage,[9] and why the leadership of the agents collapsed in turn, only to be canonized as a key part of Twelver doctrine.

THE TWELVER DOCTRINE OF THE HIDDEN IMAM, HIS AGENTS, AND THE ENVOYS

The classical Twelver narrative of the Occultation goes as follows:[10] A few years before the eleventh Imam died,[11] he had a son, who was shown to some but soon went into hiding. When his father died, the child became the Imam, but continued to live in hiding, due to the danger posed by the persecution of the ʿAbbasid caliph and his men. A sequence of four men was appointed to act as the hidden Imam's emissary or envoy (*safīr*, pl. *sufarāʾ*) during his Occultation:

1. ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd (or Ḥafṣ b. ʿAmr according to Kashshī) al-ʿAmrī (d. before 280/893)[12]
2. His son, Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān al-ʿAmrī (d. 305/917)
3. Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Rawḥ al-Nawbakhtī (d. 326/938)
4. Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Samurī[13] (d. 328–29/940–41)

[9] Said Amir Arjomand explored this transition from the point of view of normative theologies of authority, "The Consolation of Theology: The Shiʿite Doctrine of Occultation and the Transition from Chiliasm to Law," *Journal of Religion* 76, no. 4 (1996): 548–71; and he has looked at political dynamics in "Crisis of the Imamate and the Institution of Occultation in Twelver Shiʿism: A Sociohistorical Perspective,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 4 (1996): 491–515. However, in the latter article, while purportedly sociological, he concentrates more on theologico-political theories of authority, and does not engage directly with sources in order to identify the dynamics of the institutions of Imamate through which these processes were fulfilled.

[10] See, for example, Jassim Hussain, *The Occultation of the Twelfth Imam: A Historical Background* (London: Muhammadi Trust; San Antonio, TX: Zahra Trust, 1982), 1.

[11] Early sources do not agree about when the son of al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī was born, with the day often given as 15 Shaʿbān, but the year varying between 256/870, 258/871, 260/874, or 261/874, or after the Imam's death, through the posthumously pregnant concubine. Hussain, *Occultation*, 70–73.

[12] See discussion of ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd's death date and the chronology of the early Occultation era in Chapter 6.

[13] There is no consensus about the correct vocalization of the name of the fourth envoy. I follow Omid Ghaemmaghami, who reads it as Samurī, after one of his ancestors whose name was al-Samur, meaning gum acacia tree. *Encounters with the Hidden Imam in Early and Pre-modern Twelver Shīʿī Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 96 n66. Traditional Twelver usage favors Samarrī, which Halm notes is "presumably a folk etymology called forth by

These envoys are marked out as different from regular Imamic agents (*wakīl*, pl. *wukalāʾ*) because of their special designation as supreme intermediaries between the hidden Imam and his followers.[14] The existence of the hidden Imam is understood to be proven, in part, by these men's witness, and the letters and messages from him which they carried, alongside reports from others who saw him or experienced his presence. Taken together these reports are understood to form incontrovertible proof that the hidden Imam exists. After the last of the four envoys died in 328–29/940–41, no further intermediary was appointed, and indeed, anyone who claims to be the hidden Imam's directly appointed intermediary before the return of the Imam is to be branded a liar. The twelfth Imam is understood to be the person known to all Muslims (not just the Shiʿa) as the Mahdī, or "guided one," a messianic figure who will return at the end of time to conquer and rule in peace and justice, where before there had been only oppression. This doctrinal account of the Occultation splits Twelver Shiʿi history into three: the period of presence or manifestation (*ẓuhūr*) of eleven Imams up until 260/874; the transitional "lesser Occultation," or "shorter Occultation," in which the four envoys mediated for the hidden Imam; and the current phase of "greater Occultation," or "complete Occultation," in which the Imam is not accessible, even through intermediaries. A final era of millennial combat followed by a period of just rule is expected at some unknown point in the future.[15]

The doctrine of the Occultation represents a key article of faith defining what it means to be Twelver.[16] In order to defend this doctrine, the earliest

the reminiscence of Sāmarrā." Instead, relying upon Samʿānī's *Ansāb* and Ṣuyūṭī's *Lubb al-lubāb*, Halm maintains that "we must no doubt assume a vocalization of al-Simarrī after a place Simmar near Kashkar between Wāsiṭ and Baṣra." Heinz Halm, *Shiʿism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 37, 143n16. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi uses both Sumirrī (111) and Simarrī (113), *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʿism*, tran. David Streight (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994). Like Jassim Hussain, Abdulsater uses Sammarī, Hussein Ali Abdulsater, "Dynamics of Absence: Twelver Shiʿism during the Minor Occultation," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 161, no. 2 (2011): 305–34. Hussain says that the name is derived from a location called al-Sammar or al-Ṣaymar, situated in one of the districts of Basra, where the relatives of al-Sammarī used to live: *Occultation*, 133.

[14] Though the word agent (*wakīl*) is still frequently attached to them in the reports about their activities.

[15] Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Islam in Iran vii. The Concept of Mahdi in Twelver Shiʿism," *EIr.*

[16] Of course, there are many who might doubt one or another element of the narrative, but when done so publicly, there have been consequences for the doubter's membership of the Twelver community. For an example from the modern era, see Yann Richard, "Sharīʿat Sangalajī: A Reformist Theologian of the Riḍā Shāh Period," in *Authority and Political*

Twelver scholars assembled a mass of reports[17] to demonstrate that the existence of the hidden Imam was so well-attested as to be incontrovertible. This resulted in a somewhat catch-all approach and the preservation of an eclectic array of accounts about the early years of the Occultation, some of which, when analyzed, imply interpretations that are quite different from each other and from what was finally canonized.

TOWARD A CRITICAL HISTORY OF THE ENVOYS

Existing scholarship on the agents of the hidden Imam is plagued by two persistent problems: first, an uncritical acceptance of the doctrinal narrative of smooth succession between the Imams and the envoys; and second, a neglect of explicit, critical analysis of the early reports on the events surrounding the Occultation. With regard to the historicity of the envoys, we can separate scholarship into two broad orientations: those who more or less accept the Twelver account of the succession to authority of the envoys, on the one hand, and those who are skeptical, on the other. Most scholarship tends toward the Twelver account,[18] the major exception being a brief 1984 article by Verena Klemm, in which she argued that the office of envoy only really came to exist with the tenure of the third canonical envoy, Ibn Rawḥ al-Nawbakhtī. Klemm suggests that the two first envoys were slotted into the office only retrospectively:

> All the information that can be found – or better: cannot be found – about the two Baghdādī *wukalāʾ*, ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd and Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān al-ʿAmrī, suggests that they were forced afterwards into the institution of the *sifāra* which, in order to be credible, had to begin as early as the death of the eleventh Imām.[19]

Culture in Shīʿism, ed. Said Amir Arjomand (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 159–77.

[17] By hadith, I refer to reports which convey a normative religious authority, including reports from the prophets and Imams, but also other accounts which provide evidence for religious norms and beliefs. I regard the distinction between hadith and *akhbār* that some make as being artificial, at least for the material I analyze here.

[18] Modarressi's seminal *Crisis and Consolidation*, while it by no means glosses over the complexities of this moment in history, tends to imply that the succession of the envoys represents Imamic authority as uncomplicated and inevitable. Hussain's *Occultation* goes rather further in shoring up the traditional Twelver narrative. See also Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of the Mahdi in Twelver Shiʿism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1981).

[19] Verena Klemm, "The Four *Sufarāʾ* of the Twelfth Imām: On the Formative Period of the Twelfer Shiʿa," in *Shiʿism*, ed. Etan Kohlberg (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 149.

This is an insightful hypothesis which deserves detailed exploration, but has not received it, either in Klemm's brief article, nor in the intervening years. Klemm speculated that, "it is not unthinkable that [Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī] and [the third envoy] Ibn Rawḥ together with other leading members of the Nawbakhtīs . . . conspired to concoct the concept."[20] But the idea that the office of envoy was created *ex nihilo* by a cabal from the well-placed Baghdadi Nawbakhtī family is unsatisfactory. This still leaves a period of more than forty years between the death of the eleventh Imam and the accession of the third envoy, Ibn Rawḥ, in which the structures of authority in the Imami community are left unexplained. It suggests that structures of authority can be concocted. I would argue, instead, that authority must be established upon the foundation of extant doctrines and institutions. The wholesale concoction of an office is not plausible.[21] The agents had to establish their claims in the face of other rival actors competing for authority in the community at the time, all of whom were embedded in extant frameworks and institutions: members of the family of the Imams, servants, bureaucrats, mystics, theologians, and hadith transmitters. In order to be accepted, they had to make their claims explicit to the community based on recognized credentials. If the agents had not had roots in the institutional fabric of the community, they would not have been able to press their claims.

Modarressi's contribution to our understanding of the Occultation has been seminal. His account of the agents and the development of their financial network in six densely researched pages is a remarkable piece of scholarship.[22] But he preserves the basic outlines of the traditional narrative of the succession of the agents more or less intact:

> Immediately after the abrupt death of Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī in 260/874, his close associates, headed by ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-ʿAmrī, made it public that the Imām had a son who was the legitimate successor to the Imāmate.[23]

This statement glosses over the contradictions in the early reports about who claimed there was a child Imam and when, underplaying the ideological nature of the succession account, and the clear contestations of authority

[20] Ibid., 150.

[21] Adapting Weber's definition of authority (*Herrschaft*) as that which ensures that commands will be complied with; we might supplement it by stating that the authority of Imams and their agents ensures that their doctrinal rulings will be accepted as legitimate. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: A New Translation*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 135.

[22] See Modarressi, *Crisis*, 12–18, for the development of the financial network, and also the whole of Chapter 3 for the events leading to the Occultation.

[23] Ibid., 77.

between rival agents and elites in the earliest phase of the Occultation. Modarressi approaches the Occultation as intrinsically a theological issue, and he ignores the social-structural issues which were key aspects for the understanding of the challenges and successes of the agents.

Arjomand, in his widely cited articles on the significance of the Occultation, relies greatly on Modarressi's analysis. Like Modarressi, he does not provide his readers with clear analysis of the early Occultation reports.[24] Arjomand selects certain facts and narratives without providing reasoning for his selection criteria, an arbitrariness which sometimes leads to his cherry-picking facts.[25] It also has the effect of broadly leaving the basic elements of the orthodox Twelver narrative unquestioned. On the rise of the envoys, he states:

> After the death of the eleventh imam, Hasan ibn ʿAli, in 874, his followers splintered into some fourteen groups. The ʿAmri father and son, who had directed the secretariat of the tenth and eleventh imams, maintained their control over a number of agents.[26]

The idea that the first envoys "maintained control over a number of agents" goes far beyond what our sources tell us. While couched in circumspect language, Arjomand reproduces Modarressi's basic assumption that from the very beginning, the envoys were envoys – that is, supreme agents atop a hierarchy – and that they took up from where the Imams left off without interruption. As I will argue, there is only sparse evidence that the elder ʿAmrī had "directed the secretariat of the tenth and eleventh imams"; and none that such a role continued into the Occultation period. Meanwhile there are many hints that the younger ʿAmrī had not been an agent of the eleventh Imam at all. Following Klemm, Arjomand does note that the ʿAmrīs were not envoys in the classical Twelver sense, but he attenuates her skepticism by suggesting not that Ibn Rawḥ had concocted the envoyship, but rather that the word "envoy" (*safīr*) was "A new designation … put in circulation [at the time of Ibn Rawḥ] … to upgrade the office of the chief

[24] The exception being the eclectic rescript which he translates and comments on at length in Said Amir Arjomand, "Imam *Absconditus* and the Beginnings of a Theology of Occultation: Imami Shiʿism around 900 CE/280–290 AH," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117, no. 1 (1997): 1–12. See my discussion below.

[25] Thus, for example, he mentions that "the father, ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd … carried out the funerary rites for the eleventh imam," without indicating that there were several conflicting accounts of the performance of funerary rites, and that the claim to have performed them was an intrinsically ideological claim to authority and successorship to the Imamate. Arjomand, "Crisis," 502. See my discussion of this issue below.

[26] Ibid.

representative [i.e. the envoy] as the sole official intermediary between the imam and the Shiʿis."[27] However, in his basic acceptance of the continuity in the pre- and post-Occultation ascendance of the ʿAmrīs, Arjomand essentially follows the orthodox Twelver narrative. Arjomand does acknowledge that the younger ʿAmrī, Abū Jaʿfar, "overcame significant opposition to his succeeding his father as the chief agent of the imam,"[28] but this does not go far enough. As I will show, the elder ʿAmrī was an agent of the eleventh Imam with almost no visible role in building Occultation-era institutions. The younger ʿAmrī, meanwhile, appears as a neophyte whose claims were rejected by some old-guard agents of the eleventh Imam. For all his sociological packaging, Arjomand, like Modarressi, makes no attempt to reconstruct the world of concrete institutions and social structures within which and through which the transition occurred. Instead, he provides an intellectual history of authority as theology, rather than a social history of authoritative institutions. Arjomand's basic insight that the direct guidance of Imams and envoys was replaced by the "consolation of theology" is still valid, but the question of practically how this happened must be reopened.

While I have drawn many insights from my scholarly predecessors, then, I will show that no clear succession of leadership was initially accepted, even within the core elite. This means that, initially, there was no real office of envoy in the sense of a broadly recognized community institution. The office had to be forged out of precedents set under the living Imams and adapted to the new conditions. Throughout, in their attempts to establish their authority, the envoys faced varied pressures that continued until the envoyship collapsed under the strain. I make no assumptions about the inevitability of the envoys' accession to Imamic authority. Instead, I propose that we should see the early years as a contest for leadership between different actors.

DOCTRINAIRE HISTORY: THE OCCULTATION AND THE "FOUR-ENVOY PARADIGM"

It is not my primary aim in this book to survey the theological elaboration of the Occultation doctrine.[29] However, an understanding of the elaboration and the crystallization of doctrine is crucial to the way in which we must

[27] Ibid., 506. [28] Ibid., 502.

[29] The key guides to the Occultation doctrine are the works of Modarressi (*Crisis*) in the realm of theology, and Hassan Ansari, *L'imamat et l'Occultation selon l'imamisme: Etude bibliographique et histoire des textes* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), in the realm of hadith, but much remains to be done to fully understand the stages in the emergence of the doctrine. Ansari noted that his work was a bibliographical study focused on the sources of Occultation lore

treat our sources, which have been formed in response to these changing orthodoxies. The canonical Twelver story of the Imamic succession crisis and the authority of the agents first becomes visible in *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-niʿma*, written by great Twelver Shiʿi scholar Ibn Bābūya between 368/978–79 and his death in 381/991–92.[30] It is true that both Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī's[31] *Kitāb al-tanbīh*, written around 290/903,[32] and Muḥammad b. Abī Zaynab al-Nuʿmānī's (d. 360/970–71) *Kitāb al-ghayba*, which was completed in 342/953, had previously highlighted the importance of the agents in proving the existence of the hidden Imam and linking the community to him. However, Ibn Bābūya's *Kamāl* is the first extant text to cite a report providing their names and laying down their canonical sequence,[33] along with a wealth of other reports. The conception of the agents continued to be refined in the following generations. It was given greater theological rigor by Mufīd[34] and reached its classical form in Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī's (d. 460/1067) *Ghayba*, written around 448/1056–57.[35]

Ṭūsī dedicated a series of chapters in his *Ghayba* to separating out more clearly who the envoys were and how they differ from less highly distinguished agents. Thus, before his section on "The praised envoys (*sufarāʾ*) during the time of the Occultation,"[36] he has a section on pre-Occultation agents, both "the praiseworthy, orthodox[37] among them," and the "blameworthy, doctrinally corrupt ones."[38] He also has a separate section on legitimate, but subordinate Occultation-era agents: "The Reliable people who sent rescripts[39] on behalf of those appointed to the envoyship during

rather than a comprehensive work on the development of the Occultation doctrines. *L'imamat*, xiii.

30 Ghaemmaghami cites Serdani as setting 368/978–79 as the *terminus post quem* of the composition of *Kamāl al-dīn*. *Encounters* 95n60. Ansari gives 368 as the date for the book's composition in Nishapur. *L'imamat*, 74. While Ibn Bābūya narrates a story regarding the reasons for composition of the book, there is no clear evidence for how long it might have taken to write. See Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 2–4.

31 See Wilferd Madelung, "Abū Sahl Nawbaḵtī," *EIr.* 32 Modarressi, *Crisis*, 88.

33 Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl*, 432–33.

34 al-Shaykh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmānī al-ʿUkbarī al-Mufīd, *al-Fuṣūl al-ʿashara fī al-ghayba*, ed. Fāris al-Ḥassūn, in *Mawsūʿat al-Shaykh al-Mufīd*, vol. 3 (Qumm: Dār al-Mufīd, 1431/2009).

35 Sachedina, *Messianism*, 38.

36 Shaykh al-Ṭāʾifa Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghayba*, ed. ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī (Najaf: Maktabat al-ādāb al-sharqiyya, 1423/2002), 219–45.

37 Arabic: *ḥasan al-ṭarīqa*. 38 Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, 214–19.

39 The precise meaning of rescript (*tawqīʿ*) is a short response to a formal question or petition written directly on the page that was originally sent by the petitioner and returned to him or her. However, in Imami and Twelver accounts, the word is often used more broadly to refer to all letters issuing from the Imams or their representatives.