

### **Agents of the Hidden Imam**

In 874 CE, the eleventh Imam died and the Imami community splintered. The institutions of the Imamate were maintained by the dead Imam's agents, who asserted they were in contact with a hidden twelfth Imam. This was the beginning of "Twelver" Shi'ism. Edmund Hayes provides an innovative approach to exploring early Shi'ism, moving beyond doctrinal history to provide an analysis of the socio-political processes leading to the canonization of the Occultation of the twelfth Imam. Hayes shows how the agents cemented their authority by reproducing the physical signs of the Imamate, including protocols of succession, letters, and alms taxes. Four of these agents were ultimately canonized as "envoys" but traces of earlier conceptions of authority remain embedded in the earliest reports. Hayes dissects the complex and contradictory Occultation narratives to show how, amid the claims of numerous actors, the institutional positioning of the envoys allowed them to assert a quasi-Imamic authority in the absence of an Imam.

**Edmund Hayes** is a researcher at Radboud University, Nijmegen. He has authored numerous articles at the intersection between the intellectual, religious, and social history of early Islam, including on the institutions of the Shi'i Imamate, Islamic revenues, charity and taxation, excommunication, ethnicity, and gender and sexuality.

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# Agents of the Hidden Imam

*Forging Twelver Shi'ism, 850–950 CE*

EDMUND HAYES  
*Radboud University, Nijmegen*



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For Mum and Dad

Yet som men say in many partys of Inglonde that Kynge Arthure ys nat dede, but had by the wyll of Oure Lorde Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall com agayne, and he shall wyne the Holy Crosse. Yet I woll nate say that hit shall be so; but rather I wolde sey, here in thys worlde he changed his lyff. And many men say that there ys written upon the tumbre thys [vers]: HIC IACET ARTHURUS, REX QUONDAM REXQUE FUTURUS [Here lies Arthur, king once, king to be].

Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*

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## Abbreviations

In the notes:

<i>EIr</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i>
<i>EI2</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , second edition
<i>EI3</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , third edition
Lane	Edward William Lane, <i>An Arabic–English Lexicon</i> , 8 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863–93)

In translations from the Arabic:

AJ	<i>‘Azza wa-jalla</i> , “He is glorified and great.” Used of God.
AS	<i>‘Alayhi al-salām</i> , “upon him be peace.” Used of an Imam, or Imams if in the plural.
QAR	<i>Qaddasa Allāh rūḥahu</i> , “may God sanctify his soul” (or dual or plural forms). Used for the envoys.
RA	<i>Raḥimahu Allāh</i> , “may God have mercy upon him” (or dual or plural forms). Used for a venerated figure who has passed away.
RAA	<i>Raḍiya Allāh ‘anhū</i> , “may God be pleased with him” (or dual or plural forms). Used for agents, envoys, scholars, and other pious, venerated followers and companions of the Imams.
RATAA	<i>Raḍiya Allāh ta‘ālā ‘anhū wa-arḍāhu</i> , “may God most high be pleased with him and grant him contentment.” Used for agents, envoys, scholars, and other pious, venerated followers and companions of the Imams.

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SAA	<i>Ṣallā Allāh ‘alayhi</i> or <i>Ṣalawāt Allāh ‘alayhi</i> , “may God bless him” or “God’s blessings be upon him.” Usually used for a prophet.
SAAA	<i>Ṣallā Allāh ‘alayhi wa-ālihi</i> , “may God pray for him and his family.” Used for the Prophet Muḥammad.
SAAS	<i>Ṣallā Allāh ‘alayhi wa-sallam</i> , “may God pray for him and grant him peace.” Used for the Prophet Muḥammad.
T	<i>Ta’ālā</i> , “He is most high.” Used for God.