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The Savior is a descendant of the Prophet whose expected return to rule the world will restore justice, peace, and true religion. The Twelver Shiʿites believe him to be the Twelfth Imam who is in occultation (see ḠAYBA) until his reappearance at the end of time.

Although derived from the root, *h-d-y*, which appears many times and in a variety of forms in the Qurʾān, the actual term *mahdi*, meaning "the rightly-guided one," does not occur in the Qurʾān. Most probably, it entered Islam as an apocalyptic term from the southern Arabian tribes who settled in Syria under Moʿāwiya (governor during the caliphate of ʿOṯmān b. ʿAffān, r. 644-56). They expected "the Mahdi who will lead the rising people of the Yemen back to their country" (Marwazi, p. 244) in order to restore the glory of their lost Himyarite kingdom. It was believed that he would eventually conquer Constantinople. This Mahdi would be followed by the "Qaḥṭāni" (also called the "Yamāni"), who would lead the Yemenite tribes in fierce warfare against the Qorayš, destroying the latter (ibid., pp. 236-39, 242, 246). The Qaḥṭāni is

said to be the brother of the Mahdi in some traditions, while other traditions separate him from a second Mahdi who would be the conqueror of Constantinople (ibid., pp. 243-45, 247, 249).

The more generally recognized appearance of the term dates from the Second Civil War (*fetna*; 680-92). It was first used in a messianic sense during the rebellion of Moḵtār in Kufa in 683 on behalf of a son of ʿAli b. Abi Ṭāleb (q.v.), Moḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiya (d. 700). Its messianic connotation probably emerged from two distinct groups of his supporters who became known as the Kay-sāniya: southern Arabian tribes settled in Iraq, and Persian and Mesopotamian clients (*mawāli*) who were new converts to Islam.

The Kaysāniya spread two other ideas that became closely associated with the belief in the Mahdi. The first was the idea of *rajʿa* (q.v.), or return of the dead, especially of the Imams. The second was the idea of *ḡayba* (occultation). When Moḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiya died in 700, the Kaysāniya maintained that he was in occultation in the Raḍwā mountains west of Medina, and would one day return as the Mahdi and the Qāʾem (q.v.). The Kaysāni poet Koṯayyer (d. 723) hailed him as "the Mahdi, whom Kaʿb, the brother/fellow of the Aḥbār, had told us about," and affirmed that "he has vanished in the Raḍwā, not to be seen for a while, and with him is honey and water" (Masʿudi, III, p. 277).

It is probably in connection with the expectation of the return of this Mahdi from occultation that the term *Qāʾem* (the Standing One, the Riser) gained currency in the Shiʿite apocalyptic tradition. What is certain is that the apocalyptic figure in the early Shiʿite traditions is the Qāʾem (Modarresi, p. 6). He is represented as the expected redresser of the cause of God (*al-qāʾem be amr Allāh*), and the riser by the sword (*al-qāʾem be'l-sayf*). He is the Lord of the Sword (*ṣāḥeb al-sayf*, see Ṣaffār, p. 151) and the avenger of the wrong done to the House of Moḥammad by the usurpers of their rights. This picture can be supplemented by the early Imami Shiʿite traditions which present the Qāʾem as the redresser of the house of Mo-ḥammad (*qāʾem āl Moḥammad*; see Majlesi, LI, pp. 49-54, and Arjomand 1998, p. 252, for further references). The Qāʾem would establish the Empire of Truth (*dawlat al-ḥaqq*; see Majlesi, LI, pp. 62-63).

It should be noted that the apocalyptic politics of the Second Civil War prompted its pious opponents to promote an anti-apocalyptic conception of the Mahdi. The most important proponent of the anti-apocalyptic idea of the Mahdi was ʿAbd-Allāh, son of the famous disciple Zobayr, who declared himself caliph in Mecca. The dispersal in the desert in 683 of an army sent by

the Umayyad caliph Yazid (r. 680-83) against the anti-caliph ʿAbd-Allāh b. al-Zobayr, upon hearing the news of Yazid's death, generated what may be the first *ex eventu* prophecy about an unnamed restorer of faith who was later taken to be the Mahdi. Two notable historical features of the event—the pledge of allegiance by the people of Mecca between the Rokn Yamāni and the Maqām Ebrāhim, and the swallowing up (*ḵasf*) of an army in the desert (between Mecca and Medina)—were absorbed into the apocalyptic literature as parts of the image of the Mahdi (Madelung, 1981). Musā (son of the disciple Ṭalḥa), too, was proposed by his circle as the Mahdi after he fled from Kufa during Moḵtār's rebellion to Basra (Ebn Saʿd V, pp. 120-21). Two generations later, the Umayyad ʿOmar II b. ʿAbd-al-ʿAziz (r. 717-20) was said to be the Mahdi. In a conversation between him and ʿAbd-Allāh b. ʿOmar, even Moḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiya himself is made to say that any man who is with integrity (*ṣāleḥan*) can be called "the rightly-guided one" (Marwazi, pp. 229-30). Furthermore, the pious opposition to the revolutionary Mahdism of the followers of Mo-ḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiya found a resource in the belief in the Second Coming of Jesus. A tradition attributed to Ḥasan al-Baṣri (d. 728), who was a leading figure in this opposition, categorically states: "There will be no Mahdi other than Jesus son of Maryam" (Marwazi, pp. 230-31). This tradition has survived the avalanche of later traditions that affirm the return of both Jesus and the Mahdi. The appropriation of the notion of Mahdi in a non-apocalyptic form by Sunni Islam was largely the result of this pious opposition to the Shiʿite notion of the Qāʾem, which remained emphatically apocalyptic.

The image of the Prophet was also projected unto the Mahdi. An enormously influential tradition attributed to ʿAbd-Allāh b. Masʿud has Moḥammad foretell the coming of a Mahdi coined in his own image: "His name will be my name, and his father's name my father's name" (Marwazi, p. 227). Furthermore, widespread traditions assert that the number of the Mahdi's companions in battle is exactly the same (usually put at 313) as those of Moḥammad in the apocalyptic Battle of Badr (ibid., p. 213; Majlesi LI, pp. 44, 55, 58). One Sunni tradition goes even further and affirms that "on his shoulder is the mark of the Prophet" (Marwazi, p. 226), while some Shiʿite traditions have the Archangel Gabriel to the right of the Mahdi on the battlefield, and the Archangel Michael to his left, just as with Moḥammad at Badr (Majlesi LII, p. 311).

It is well known that the ʿAlid and the ʿAbbasid branches of the House of Moḥammad (see AHL-E BAYT) vied for the leadership of the revolutionary

movement that overthrew the Umayyad caliphate. However, the intense apocalyptic character of the ʿAbbasid revolution (744-63) remains largely unrecognized. There is firm evidence for the assumption of the title of Mahdi by the first ʿAbbasid caliph, Abu'l-ʿAbbās (r. 749-54), and for his claim to be the Qāʾem, even though this evidence has been generally overlooked (Duri, pp. 128, 136; see Arjomand 1998, p. 278, n. 34 for other references). The culmination of the revolutionary apocalypticism of the period for the ʿAlids was the uprising, in 762, of Moḥammad b. ʿAbd-Allāh al-Nafs al-Zakiya (the "Pure Soul"), the namesake of the Prophet foretold in the above-mentioned Mahdist tradition whom the ʿAbbasids themselves had accepted as the Qāʾem and the Mahdi of the House of Moḥammad before coming to power. ʿAbd-Allāh, the father of the Mahdi and the head of the Hasanid descendants of ʿAli, claimed to be in possession of the sword and the armor of the Prophet, which would evidently be put at the disposal of his son as the Lord of the Sword. The long delayed rebellion of the Mahdi of the House of Moḥammad in Arabia in 762 was followed by that of his brother Ebrāhim, who assumed the title of the *Hādi*, in Iraq. The wide following of the Hasanid Mahdi included an "extremist" (*ḡāli*, see ḠOLĀT) group, the Moḡiriya, who considered him the Qāʾem-Mahdi and with whom he had been in hiding in the mountain of Tamiya before his uprising. After his death and the suppression of his uprising, the Moḡiriya claimed that he was alive and immortal, and was residing in the same mountain (Ašʿari, p. 76). A large number of traditions about the return of the Qāʾem that had been generated by the followers of al-Nafs al-Zakiya were absorbed into the corpus of Imami Shiʿite traditions, the most notable being the above-mentioned ʿAbd-Allāh b. Masʿud tradition which made him the namesake of the Prophet: "The name of the [divinely-] guided Qāʾem (*al-qāʾem al-mahdi*) is my name, and his father's name, the name of my father. He will fill the world with justice as it is filled with oppression" (Ašʿari, p. 76; Ṭusi, p. 112).

Although Jaʿfar al-Ṣādeq (d. 765), the sixth Imam of the Imami Shiʿites and head of the Ḥosaynid branch of the ʿAlids, denied his Hasanid cousin's claim, and reportedly asserted that he himself had inherited the sword and armor of the Prophet from his grandfather and was holding them in his house (Ṣaffār, pp. 150-53, 184), he was apparently not able to prevent his own sons from joining the uprising of the al-Nafs al-Zakiya. Jaʿfar's son and later the seventh Imam, Musā al-Kāẓem (d. 799), is reported among the participants, and in fact learned to harness its persisting political Messianism to longer term designs of his own, albeit more subtly. Musā al-Kāẓem competed in clandestine political

activism with the surviving Zaydi followers of his cousin, the al-Nafs al-Zakiya. There is ample evidence in the early Shiʿite books on sects to prove that he followed the example of the latter in claiming to be the Qāʾem-Mahdi, although the Imami compendia of traditions have systematically expunged the traces of this claim. His two periods of imprisonment gave rise to the idea, circulated by his followers, that the Qāʾem would undergo two occultations, a short one followed by a longer one extending to his rising. (Modarresi, pp. 10, 87) Several groups of Musā's followers who became known as the Wāqefiya (cessationists) refused to accept that he had died, and/or maintained instead that he was the Qāʾem and the Mahdi and had gone into occultation (Modarresi, pp. 60, 87; Arjomand 1996a; 1996b, p. 557).

The Wāqefiya's identification of the Qāʾem with the Mahdi was resisted for quite some time, prompting an inquisitive believer to ask the ninth Imam, Moḥammad al-Jawād (d. 835), if the Qāʾem was in fact the Mahdi or someone else (Ebn Bābawayh, p. 377; Modarressi, p. 91). Modarressi considers the introduction of the idea of the Mahdi to have taken place very slowly after the death of the eleventh Imam and the severe crisis of succession that resulted from it, and he gives (p. 89, n. 194) some illustrations of later insertions of the term Mahdi into the Qāʾem traditions. In any event, during the indefinite occultation of the twelfth Imam (see ḠAYBA; Arjomand, 1997) many of the Mahdi traditions were eventually absorbed into the collection of Imami traditions by being assimilated to, or compounded with, the Qāʾem traditions. According to the Imami doctrine that took shape in the 10th and 11th centuries, the Twelfth Imam is the Mahdi, who is in occultation and will reappear at the end of time (Arjomand, 1996b).

The development of the doctrine of the Imamate (q.v.) as a central component of Imami rational theology (*kalām*) in the same period allowed for the development of religious juristic authority that upheld a Shiʿite nomocracy against future claimants to Mahdi-hood. Nevertheless, Mahdism is more endemic in the Shiʿite tradition, especially in the Persianate world. Notable among the later claimants to Mahdi-hood in the period following the massive spread of Sufism were Sayyed Fażl-Allāh Astarābādi (q.v., d. 1394), the founder of the Ḥorufi (see ḤORUFISM) movement (Bashir, 2000, pp. 292-93), Sayyed Moḥammad b. Fallāḥ (d. 1462)á, the founder of the extremist Mošaʿšaʿ sect, and Sayyed Moḥammad Nurbaḵš (d. 1464), the initiator of the Nurbaḵšiya Sufi movement in Persia and Central Asia (Bashir, 2003, chap. 2; see also Arjomand, 1984, chap. 2). The Safavid Empire, founded in 1501, had its origins in a similar

Mahdist movement (Arjomand, 2005), and the Qajar era was marked by the claim of Mirzā ʿAli-Moḥammad of Shiraz (see BĀB, d. 1850) to be the Qāʾem-Mahdi, and the millennial uprisings it generated.

Numerous claimants to Mahdi-hood have risen in Sunnism, too, especially, as Ebn Ḵaldun (d. 1406) noted (Ebn Ḵaldun, pp. 342-48), in the milieu of Sufism. The Sunni Mahdis include Ebn Tumart (d. 1130), the founder of the Almohad movement, and the Sudanese Mahdi, Moḥammad Aḥmad (d. 1885); John Voll has constructed a distinct ideal type of "frontier Mahdism" for the modern period (Voll, pp. 145-66).

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