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On the Meaning of the ‘Abbasid Call to \textit{al-Ridā}

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It is well known that the recruiting officers of the Hashimiya in Khurasan called to \textit{kitāb Allāh wa-sonnat nabīhi wa'l-ḥaṣa lil-ridā min ālāh bayt Muḥammad rasūl Allāh}.

What did contemporaries take this to mean? Apparently they took the first half of the slogan to mean that the movement involved principles. Whoever called to the book of God and the sunna of his Prophet in early Islam proclaimed himself to be acting “out of anger on behalf of God” (\textit{ghadban lilāh}), as opposed to out of anger on his own behalf. The principles involved would be specified after the call to book and sunna, and the second half of the Hashimiya slogan duly identified the Hashimiya as a movement committed to \textit{ahl-baytism}. But what did the word \textit{al-ridā} mean?

That is the question to which this birthday offering is devoted. The sources tell us that \textit{al-ridā} was a cover name. Muḥammad ibn ‘Aṭī, the first ‘Abbasid imām, instructed the leaders of the Hashimiya not to mention his name to ordinary recruits, but rather to refer to him as the \textit{ridā}; if asked to identify him, they should say, “we are in ṭabāṭiba, and have been ordered to keep the name of our imām secret.” Ḥabīb ibn Muḥammad, the second imām, likewise preferred to keep his identity secret. Modern scholars generally accept this explanation, though they tend to see it in a somewhat Machiavellian light: the cover name did not merely serve to hide the ‘Abbasids from the authorities, but also, and perhaps more importantly, from adherents of the ‘Alids, whom they thus contrived to recruit for their own cause. But there is reason to believe that this explanation should be rejected: the ‘Abbasid use of \textit{al-ridā} would appear to have been neither precautionary nor Machiavellian in intent.
The word ridâ means "satisfaction" and "agreement," or, when applied to a person, "someone with whom one is satisfied, to whom one has given one's consent." If this meaning is taken seriously, a person who claims to be al-ridâ claims to owe his position to communal choice: in some sense or other he claims to have been elected. The literal meaning is of course somewhat lost on the modern reader, who generally assumes the 'Abbasids to have meant very little by their choice of this particular word: insofar as the cover name had any significance, it amounted to no more than a vague promise of future satisfaction with whatever ruler they might in due course produce. But in texts relating to the 'Umayyad period, the literal meaning of the word is very much alive. Here al-ridâ is precisely someone who owes his position to communal agreement; more specifically he is someone elected by šārâr, "consultation," as the following passages show.

1. In 77/696, Mu'tarrif ibn al-Mughira ibn Shu'ba and the Khārijites of Mesopotamia entered into negotiations with a view to an alliance. When asked to declare his stance, Mu'tarrif announced, "I call you to ... making this matter (i.e., the caliphate) a šārâr among the Muslims, so that they can set up as their imām over themselves the person of whom they approve for themselves (man yarā'awna li-an-fusṣīm), in the same way in which 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb left them to do it. The Arabs will agree when they know that by a šārâr one simply means al-ridâ of Quraysh" (fa-inna al-arab idhâ "ālim at-tamām wa-an-nama yurādh bîl-shârâr al-ridâ minha Quraysh). The Khārijites responded to this by declaring that Quraysh did not in their view have any better right to the caliphate than other Arabs (i.e.), that the Muslims should choose whoever was best, and that they themselves had already chosen "the person of whom we approve most and who is the strongest among us" (qad li-khānta li-an-fusṣīm arīdūna fīna wa-as-haddānā). Both sides thus took al-ridâ to mean somebody chosen by the community; they merely disagreed as to whether the choice should be made from within Quraysh or, on the contrary, from within the entire community of Arabs/Muslims.

2. 'Abdallāh ibn 'Umar is said to have voiced an opinion similar to Mu'tarrif's on an earlier occasion. When Mu'allim put pressure on the Medinese to accept his son Yazid as his successor, Ibn 'Umar objected that the caliphate was not hereditary, and that 'Umar had set up the šārâr on the assumption that within Quraysh it belonged to whoever was most fit for it, and of whom the Muslims approved as the most God-fearing and satisfactory person (wa-in-nama khaṣṣa fi Quraysh khayyati liman kāna laḥā aḥlan minman ittadāda al-musālimin li-an-fusṣīm man kāna aţā wa-ar-ridâ). Ibn 'Umar's man ittadāda al-musālimin is clearly synonymous with al-ridâ.7

3. When Ibn al-Zubayr had allegiance sworn to himself, Abū Hurra, the ma'ālad of Khuzā'ā, is said to have exclaimed, "Is this what we helped you for? You used to call for al-ridâ wa-l-shârâr. Why did you not wait and consult (a-fa-lâ šakbâra wa-shâwarta)? We would have chosen you and given allegiance to you."8

4. Mu'allim is said to have argued against the Bānī Hashim along the following lines: "As for the caliphate, it has passed from one group of Quraysh to another by the consent of the masses and consultation of the elite (bi-ridâ al-tamām wa-bi-shârâr al-khaṣṣa). . . . For what reason should you have it? By consent and agreement or you regard less of kinship, or by kinship regardless of consent, or by both together?" (a-bîl-ridâ wa-l-jamâ'a 'ulaykhum dîna al-qarâba za'il qarâba dîna al-jamâ'a wa-l-ridâ am bihîna jamâ'tan). Here ridâ, šârâr, and jamâ'a are enumerated as so many titles to power arising from communal agreement, in contradistinction to titles arising from descent.9

5. In 116/734–55, the Khurāsānī rebel al-Hārith ibn Surayj called his opponents to "the book of God and the sunna, and to allegiance to al-ridâ." He frequently chanted for a šârâr (i.j'al amr al-shârâr). The contexts in which he chanted for a šârâr show that he had the governorship and subgovernorships of Khurāsān in mind, but one assumes that he also wanted the caliphate to be a matter of šârâr. (It is, after all, to the caliphate that the s Logan al-amr al-shârâr normally refers.) His call for al-ridâ is thus likely to have been a call for a caliph to be elected by šârâr; at all events, it was obviously a call for "someone acceptable," and not for a specific person.

6. The earlier rebel Yazid ibn al-Muhallab is likewise said to have favored the principle al-amr al-shârâr on his capture of Basra in 102/720, and to have called to al-ridâ, more specifically al-ridâ min Bâni Hashim, shortly thereafter. That Yazid meant the same thing by these two slogans seems likely, though it cannot be proved: he proceeded to call to al-Fadl (or al-Mufaddal) ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn al-'Abbās ibn Rabī' ibn al-Hārith ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib without a šârâr fi Bâni Hashim having been enacted.10 But however this may be, his call for al-ridâ min Bâni Hashim was clearly a call for "whatever Hashimite will turn out to be acceptable," not for a specific member of that
family whom he did not dare to name: al-rida was somebody who remained to be chosen.

7. ‘Abdallâh ibn Mu‘awiyah, the ‘Alid who staged a revolt in Kufa and western Persia in 127-29/744-47, is said to have called either to al-rida min al-Mu‘ammar or else to himself.” The import of this information is evidently not that he called either to a Hâshimite whose name he did not dare to divulge or to himself, but rather that he called either to the Hâshimites in general (more precisely, to “whatever Hâshimite will be acceptable”), or else to himself in particular. This suggests that Ibn Mu‘awiyah’s da‘wa underwent the same evolution as that of Ibn al-Zubayr; in other words, that he began by calling to al-rida wa‘l-shûrah (this time within the Prophet’s family), but proceeded to dispense with the shûrah in the belief that the choice was a foregone conclusion.

8. ‘Abdul-Malik ibn ‘Ali al-Kirmânî, the leader of the Yamanîyya in Khurâsân, is said to have called to al-rida wa‘l-sunnah wa‘l-rida min al-Mu‘ammar in his escape from Nasr ibn Sâyây’s prison, that is, before his alliance with Abû Muslim. This may well be wrong. Whether it is right or wrong, however, al-Kirmânî is clearly envisaged as calling to al-rida in the sense of “someone acceptable to all,” not a specific person, let alone someone whose name he did not wish to divulge; for he explained his call with reference to the fact that “he could not accept Nasr and his governors as rulers of the Muslims” (dâ yârî bi-Nasr wa‘l-mamâlik wa‘l-‘âlîm ‘alâ al-muslimin). Moreover, an alternative account of his wishes at that time states that he wanted the Khurâsânîs to choose “a man from Bakr ibn Wâlî on whom we can all agree (wa‘l-dhâhî jamî‘an) and who can govern all of us until a caliphal command arrives.” Al-Kirmânî was thus remembered as having wanted a ridâ, whether from Bakr ibn Wâlî or from the Prophet’s family; a ridâ in the sense of someone acceptable to all and who still remained to be chosen.

9. Adherents of al-Mukhtâr are said to have called followers of Mu‘âz ibn al-Zubayr to “the book of God and the sunna of His messenger, and to allegiance to the amir al-Mukhtâr, and to making this matter a shûrah in the family of the messenger.” The idea of a shûrah in the abîl-bayt was thus a familiar one in Shî‘î circles, or more specifically, those circles with which the leaders of the ‘Abbasid revolution are generally believed to have been connected.

In sum, the word al-ridâ is associated with shûrah in passages relating to persons as diverse as Mu‘awiyah, Ibn al-Zubayr, Mu‘âz ibn al-Mishkîr, and the Khârijîs of Mesopotamia. The association is also attested for Khurâsân at the time of al-Hârîth ibn Surayj, when ‘Abbasid missionaries were active there. The call for al-ridâ recurs in other contexts, two of them contemporary with the revolution, in which it must have been a call for a person yet to be elected or approved; and finally, the call for a shûrah in the Prophet’s house is documented for the revolt of al-Mukhtâr, a revolt with which the ‘Abbasid revolution was connected. In short, the Hâshimite call to al-rida can hardly have been intended or understood as anything other than a call for a caliph elected by a shûrah fi abîl-bayt; the movement called to al-rida because it had no specific candidate for the throne.

This conclusion is corroborated by the fact that a shûrah fi abîl-bayt was in fact attempted after the revolution. Indeed, it is possible that such a shûrah was also attempted before the revolution. As regards the pre-revolutionary attempt, we are told by Abû ‘l-Faraj al-Ishâhî, an Shi‘i author, that a number of ‘Alids and ‘Abbasids members of the Hâshimite house (including Ibrâhîm and the future al-Mansûr) met at al-Abwâ‘ near Mecca shortly after the murder of al-Wâlî II; with the exception of Ja‘far al-Sâdiq, all agreed to acknowledge Mu‘ammar ibn ‘Abdallâh (al-Nafs al-Zakta) as the mahdi. They met again in the reign of Marwân II, but on this occasion Ibrâhîm was informed by a messenger that the Khurâsânîs were gathering troops for his cause, whereupon the ‘Alids dissociated themselves from him. The story of the second meeting as also found in Akhbar al-Abbâs, a pro-‘Abbasid work, in a slightly different form. A number of Hâshimites met at Mecca in 129/746-47 in order to pay homage to Muhammad ibn ‘Abdallâh as the mahdi. Ibrâhîm heard of this and joined them, but a messenger informed him of the activities of the Khurâsânîs on his behalf, whereupon he managed to have the meeting postponed. When ‘Abdallâh ibn al-Hasan, the mahdi’s father, despaired of winning Ibrâhîm for his son’s cause (or alternatively, when Marwân II won the movement in Khurâsân, and suspected ‘Abdallâh ibn al-Hasan of being its leader), the latter denounced Ibrâhîm and dissociated himself from his deeds. The ‘Abbasid version thus stresses that Ibrâhîm’s presence at the meeting was accidental, that he avoided paying allegiance to the ‘Ali, and that the ‘Alids publicly renounced such rights as they might have to the fruits of the revolution; but it does not deny that ‘Alids and ‘Abbasids had in fact come together on the eve of the revolution to elect a leader from among themselves. Quite different sources also inform us that the caliph al-Mansûr had paid allegiance to Muhammad ibn ‘Abdallâh at Mecca.”
Even so, however, the story may not be true. Muhammad ibn ‘Abdallah does not refer to his supposed election by the Hashimite house in his correspondence with al-Mansur regarding their respective rights to the caliphate, though he would certainly have mentioned it there if he had actually taken place (and if the correspondence is authentic); and the story of the second shura makes no reference to the first. Moreover, even if we accept the reality of these meetings, the fact that ‘Abbasids participated in them is no guarantee that they were arranged by the Hashimiyah movement. Further, they are not explicitly called shuras; and though they could obviously be qualified as such in the general sense of “consultation,” they were not electoral bodies nominated by the community and/or its representatives; that is, they were not shuras in the technical sense of the word. All in all, then, they will have to be discounted.

The shuras which was attempted after the revolution presents a different case. As regards this episode, we are told that the death of Ibrahim al-Imam shortly before the arrival of the Persian troops in Iraq prompted Abu Salama, the leader of the Kufan organization, to contact three senior Aliids, either because he wished to transfer the caliphate to one of them,99 or else because he intended “to make it [the caliphate] a shura between the sons of Ali and al-Abbas.”100 Either way, his plans came to nothing,101 but his behavior has always been something of a puzzle. It is not very likely that Abu Salama should have been a secret adherent of the Aliids all along; if his heart had never been in the Hashimiyah movement, then why would he have invested his life and fortune in it? Nor does it seem likely that Ibrahim’s death should have caused him to reconsider the objective to which his life had been devoted. The chances are that he was acting out of loyalty to the movement as he had always known it, and the oddity of his behavior disappears if we assume it to have stood for al-rida min ahl al-bayt in the sense of “Hashimite singled out by shura”: if Abu Salama took Ibrahim to have been the rida in this sense, the latter’s death evidently meant that another shura fi ahl al-bayt had to be staged. That is how he reasoned cannot be proved, but he plainly did not regard Ibrahim’s rights, however acquired, as hereditary; and what is more, many other members of the movement apparently did not do so either. The sources are, of course, at pains to assure us that the imamate had been hereditary within the ‘Abbasid family since Muhammads ibn ‘Ali acquired it from Abu Hashim, but there are three good reasons for rejecting their claim.

First, Ibrahim’s death caused too many members of the Hashimiyah to look for candidates among the Aliids. According to Abbad al-‘Abbas, Ibrahim’s death caused a schism in the ‘Abbasid movement, as some argued that the imamate now reverted to the ‘Aliids; according to Ibn A’tham, Kufa at the time of the arrival of the Khurassanis was divided between people who expected an ‘Aliid to be enthroned and others who expected the enthronement of an ‘Abbasid; and according to all, the senior leader of the revolution was one of those who wanted an ‘Aliid, or who wanted a shura between ‘Aliids and ‘Abbasids (possibly meaning that he hoped and/or expected a shura fi ahl al-bayt to produce an ‘Aliid candidate). What we have confronted with here are not naive philo-‘Aliids duped by the use of labels such as al-rida, ahl al-bayt, or al Muhammads into supporting a cause which they now wished to abandon, but on the contrary, members of the leadership aware of and satisfied with the candidature of the ‘Abbasid Ibrahim. If a whole section of the Hashimiyah loyal to Ibrahim could turn to the Aliids on Ibrahim’s death, Ibrahim’s rights to the imamate cannot have been widely regarded as hereditary.

Second, the sources are too obsessed with the idea of shura. Thus, one version of the events surrounding Ibrahim’s death has it that Qahtaba approved of Ibrahim’s wakiya to Abu ‘l-‘Abbass on the ground that without it “the matter would become a shura within his family.” Another story has it that, as already mentioned, Abu Salama attempted to convene such a shura. A third story reassures us that some sort of shura was indeed enacted: the result was the election of Abu ‘l- ‘Abbass. How can this obsession with elective procedures be squared with the assertion that Ibrahim had acquired hereditary rights which he passed on by bequest to his brother? Finally, there is no conspicuous absence in all of this people of who held that the imamate had passed to Ibrahim’s sons. If Ibrahim had inherited the imamate from his father, he would indeed have been able to bequeath it to his brother; however, given that the circumstances in which Ibrahim was alleged to have made the bequest (that is, on his deathbed in prison) were such that the reality of the bequest was disputed, one would have expected some to have advocated the cause of his sons. Yet nobody did so: the choice was between Abu ‘l-‘Abbass and the Aliids. It is true that both of his best-known sons were too young to qualify for the caliphate at the time, but one does not get the impression that it was their age which disqualified them: nobody seems to have displayed the slightest interest in the fact
that they even existed.\footnote{How can this be reconciled with the claim that the imamate was hereditary within the 'Abbasid line?}

In short, it would seem that the revolutionaries called to al-riḍā min aḥl al-bayt in the same spirit in which Muṭarrīf ibn al-Mughīrā called to al-riḍā min Qurašyṣ; they happened to believe that the caliphate belonged to whoever was chosen as the most suitable person from within the groups in question. Given that the revolution resulted in the establishment of a new dynasty, rather than a succession of caliphs elected by shīʿa, it must soon have come to appear obvious that the revolutionaries had called to al-riḍā in the loose sense of “acceptable person,” with reference to the imām from among themselves; by the time Abū Ṣaʿīd had oaths of allegiance taken ‘alā al-riḍā min al Muḥammad, the word had come to mean little more than “legitimate imām”\footnote{In the absence of any further reference to the opinion of the revolutionaries regarding the hereditary claims of the al-Bayt, it is difficult to determine whether this claim was made by the revolutionaries or by the al-Bayt. However, it is clear that the imamate was considered to be hereditary within the al-Bayt family, and this claim was later adopted by the revolutionaries.}; and though al-Maʿmūn emphasized that his al-Riḍā had been chosen from among ‘Alīids and ‘Abāsids as the most suitable candidate,\footnote{The selection of ‘Alīids and ‘Abāsids as the most suitable candidates for the imamate was a response to the perceived lack of legitimacy of the al-mercial dynasty.} the very fact that he called him al-Riḍā transformed the programmatic word into a personal name.\footnote{The transformation of the word “al-mercial” into a personal name was a strategic move to strengthen their claim to the imamate.} But it was evidently not as a meaningless word that the revolutionaries had first adopted it.

If this is accepted, three points follow automatically. First, the story of Abū Ḥāshim ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanāfiyya bequeathed his imamate to Muḥammad ibn ‘Ali ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Abbās, from whom it passed to Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad, and thereafter to the ‘Abāsids: it was precisely because Muḥammad ibn ‘Ali had acquired rights which he hoped to encash that he organized (or took over) the mission in Khurāṣ.\footnote{The mission in Khurāṣ was a key point in the development of the ‘Abbasid dynasty, as it allowed them to seize power in the eastern regions of the Islamic world.} Now if the ‘Abāsids had regarded themselves as legitimate imāms by hereditary right since the mid-Umayyad period, then their call to al-riḍā would indeed have to be explained on the assumption that al-riḍā was a cover-name; but if their call to al-riḍā was a call for a shīʿa, it follows that they cannot have regarded themselves as such imāms after all: the story must be false. This is not to deny that there are links between the revolt of al-Mukhtar and the ‘Abāsids: it was presumably thanks to these links that the ‘Abāsids seized on Ibn al-Ḥanāfiyya when they decided to claim the caliphate by hereditary right.\footnote{The decision to seize power and claim the caliphate by hereditary right was a strategic move to consolidate their power and gain legitimacy.} But the story of Abū Ḥāshim’s testament cannot have made its appearance before the shīʿa ideal had broken down.\footnote{The shīʿa ideal was a key element in the development of the ‘Abbasid dynasty, as it allowed them to gain support from the shīʿa community.}

Second, the Ḥāshimīya movement owed its name to Ḥāshim, the eponymous ancestor of the Prophet’s house, not to Abū Ḥāshim, the supposed bequeather of ‘Alīid rights to the ‘Abāsids.\footnote{The ‘Abbasid movement was named after Abū Ḥāshim, the eponymous ancestor of the Prophet’s house, rather than ‘Ali, as was the case with the ‘Alīids.} In fact, one scarcely needs the riḍā/shīʿa theory to see this point. If members of a clan called Ḥāshim led a movement called Ḥāshimīya devoted to the rights of the clan in question, it would be very odd if the reference were not to Ḥāshim, the eponymous ancestor of the Ḥāshimīya clan, but rather to an obscure member of it remembered or invented only for his supposed transfer of the imamate from one branch of this clan to another. Differently put, in a culture in which poetry about the aḥl al-bayt was known as Ḥāshimīya with reference to the founder of the family in question, a movement sponsoring the rights of the aḥl al-bayt could scarcely call itself, or come to be known as, Ḥāshimīya with reference to someone else. Both the missionaries and their opponents are frequently made to single out Banū Ḥāshim as central to the concerns of the daʿwa, whereas Abū Ḥāshim never figures.\footnote{The reference to Banū Ḥāshim as central to the concerns of the daʿwa highlights their importance in the development of the ‘Abbasid dynasty, as they were the original beneficiaries of the ‘Aliid claim to the caliphate.} Given that the story of Abū Ḥāshim’s testament came to be invented, we should not be surprised that some heresiographers assumed the term Ḥāshimīya to be derived from his name;\footnote{The assumption of the term Ḥāshimīya to be derived from Abū Ḥāshim’s name highlights the importance of historical context in understanding the development of religious movements.} but it is, in fact, more likely that Abū Ḥāshim owes his name to the revolutionary movement than the other way round.

Finally, the relationship between the ‘Abāsids and the revolution customarily named after them is nothing if not problematic. Why did the organizers of this revolution choose to stage it on behalf of a member of the Prophet’s family still to be chosen? If we accept that the organizers were ‘Abāsids, a plausible answer would be that their own membership in this family was too marginal for them to claim the imamate on the basis of descent alone, or indeed to claim it at all: to contemporaries of the basis of descent alone, the term aḥl al-bayt conjured up descendants of ‘Ali.\footnote{The reference to contemporary understanding of the term aḥl al-bayt highlights the importance of historical context in understanding the development of religious movements.} If their membership in the aḥl al-bayt was so marginal as to count for nothing, we must envisage them as laymen bankering for a Ḥāshimī ruler, without having a Ḥāshimī candidate to hand: they called for an acceptable member of the Ḥāshimī house in the same spirit in which al-Kirmānī is supposed to have done so, that is, with a view to handing over to an ‘Alīid as soon as one had been chosen. Alternatively, their membership in the aḥl al-bayt was sufficient to mean it was impossible for them to qualify for election by shīʿa, a procedure which had the advantage of placing strong emphasis on personal merit: as organizers of the revolution, they were demonstrably superior to the ‘Alīids in terms of political talent. This seems more likely, especially in view of the parallel with Ibn Muṭṭawīya; but in either case, things were unlikely to turn out as calculated. If the ‘Abāsids succeeded in acquiring power, they were going to think twice about handing over to an ‘Alīid figurehead. At the same time, the
'Alids were unlikely to renounce such power by consenting to the election of an 'Abbasid; sooner or later, the 'Abbasids would thus have to justify their possession of power with reference to hereditary rights. Since it was the 'Alids rather than the 'Abbasids who were regarded as kinsmen of the Prophet, this meant postulating that the 'Alids had bequeathed their rights to the 'Abbasids, or in other words, it meant inventing the story of Abū Hāshim.

If this is so, the shift from an ideology of sharā to one of waṣṣa may well have been initiated by Ibrāhīm. A Shi'i author such as Abū 'l-Faraj has no doubt that the story of the testament was invented about this time; and it would seem difficult to deny that the Ḥāshimiyah expected Ibrāhīm al-Imām to succeed, for all that no sharā appears to have elected him. But Ibrāhīm can hardly have claimed more than that Abū Hāshim had designated him as his successor: the fully developed story in which Abū Hāshim makes a permanent transfer of rights to the imamate from one branch of the Hashimite house to another must reflect the establishment of the new dynasty, for all that this dynasty was soon to reject it.

We must, however, also consider the possibility that, contrary to what is usually claimed, the 'Abbasids were not the organizers of the revolution which enshrined them. Thus, a passage in Kābih al-ṣajā'ī wa-l-badā'iq has it that it was the Khurāsānī who chose the 'Abbasids, rather than the other way round: when the Khurāsānī wanted to set up a mission in favor of the Prophet's family, they looked for a candidate who could be described as the noblest, the most generous, and the most meritorious in respect of religion; they decided on 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan, whom they approached without revealing their true intentions; but 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan led them to Muḥammad ibn 'Abī 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbas. If the Khurāsānī began by working for the Prophet's family in general, as this story implies, then al-rāsād min al-ṣaṣād was indeed the obvious slogan for them to adopt.

The same source also tells another story in which the 'Abbasids make their appearance in the da'wa at a late stage. According to this story, the Prophet himself predicted that the 'Abbasids would rule, and the 'Abbasids were eagerly awaiting their appointed time. Meanwhile there were Shi'i missionaries in Khurāsān who were calling to Banū Hāshim in general, and others who were calling to Abū Hāshim in particular, the leaders of the former [sic] being Ibn Kathīr and Abū Salama. When Abū Hāshim was poisoned, he transferred his rights to the 'Abbasids and wrote to his missionaries informing them of this fact; they accepted it, even though Abū Salama was secretly in favor of Ja'far al-Sadīq. Abū Hāshim was poisoned by al-Walīd II (d. 125/743), and the transfer took place fi awwal riḍārat Abī Muslim. Now there is obviously something wrong with this story. If Ibn Kathīr and Abū Salama were missionaries on behalf of the Hashimites in general (as indeed they would seem to have been), then they were not the missionaries over whom Abū Hāshim had control; and if we emend the story to say that they were missionaries on behalf of Abū Hāshim, then the reference to the others working on behalf of the Hashimites in general becomes pointless. This suggests that the story had an earlier version in which the Shi'i missionaries in Khurāsān begin by working for Banū Hāshim in general, whereupon the leadership of the Hashimite family passes to Abū Hāshim, whereupon Abū Hāshim dies bequeathing the leadership to the 'Abbasids. In other words, what we have here seems to be an alternative account of how Khurāsānī working for Hashimites in general ended up by sponsoring 'Abbasids in particular. Even if this interpretation is rejected, the story explicitly states the 'Abbasid connection with the da'wa to the 740s, and more precisely, to after Abū Muslim's arrival in Khurāsān in 128/745–46. However the story is understood, the Khurāsānī must thus have adopted the call to al-rāsād before they committed themselves to the 'Abbasids, as the first story also implies.

This is not the only information in the tradition which suggests that Khurāsānī and 'Abbasids only came together later. Thus, the story of the meetings at al-Abvā and Mecca present Ibrāhīm as unaware that the Khurāsānī were preparing a revolution on his behalf, and several members of the 'Abbasid house, including the future Al-Mansūr, joined the revolt of 'Abdallāh ibn Mu'amayis on the eve of the Khurāsānī revolution, in apparent ignorance of the fact that this revolution was being prepared. Admittedly, if Ibn Mu'amayis had called to al-rāṣād min al-Muhammad, the 'Abbasids could have joined him in an effort to further the common aim (instructing Abū Muslim to liquidate him as soon as he ceased to be useful, as he proceeded to do in 129/746–47). But one would have expected at least one 'Abbasid to have gone to Khurāsān to assist matters there. Why was the future Al-Mansūr happy to administer a minor district in al-Abvā on behalf of Ibn Mu'amayis, when he could have participated in the raising of black banners among his own followers in Khurāsān? Why was neither he nor any other 'Abbasid instructed to move on when the Khurāsānī missionaries asked for a member of the ahl al-bayt and
got Abū Muslim instead. Why, in short, was there no ‘Abbasid involvement with the Khurāsān war effort until the Khurāsānīs arrived in Iraq? It must be added that other participants in Ibn Mu‘āwīya’s revolt seem to have been equally ignorant of the supposed ‘Abbasid involvement with Khurāsān. Thus, Sulaīmān ibn Ḥabīb ibn al-Muhallab, Ibn Mu‘āwīya’s governor of al-Ahwāz, belonged to a family which was both well connected with Khurāsān and favorable to the revolution once it was underway; indeed, he himself is said to have called to Abū Salama [sic] on the arrival of the Khurāsānī troops in Iraq. But that the future al-Manṣūr was more than an ordinary subgovernor had not apparently come to his knowledge: he would scarcely have been so foolishly as to beat and extort money from a member of the ‘Abbasid family if he had known that the ‘Abbasids were preparing a façade for the caliphate on their own.

The relationship between the dynasty and the movement which enthroned it is evidently a problem which takes us far away from the meaning of al-ridda, but it should be clear that the history of this movement has been subject to more ideological rewriting than is normally assumed: if al-ridda meant what it appears to have meant, we must confess that we do not yet (or any longer) know how or why the ‘Abbasid revolution came to be ‘Abbasid.

POSTSCRIPT

T. Nagel, Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des Abbasidischen Kalifats (Bonn, 1972) also argues that al-ridda was a person chosen by shīrā.

NOTES


5. Cf. most recently, M. Sharon, Black Banners from the East (Jerusalem and Leiden, 1983), pp. 147, 157 f.

6. Tabari, II, 984 ff. The edition by M. A. F. Ibrahim (Thrbkh al-Tabari [Cairo, 1960–69], VI, 287) reads anna ma‘, which makes nonsense of the passage unless an allūd is inserted before al-ridda. The meaning of Mu‘āth’s message is quite clear from the Khurājīte counter-argument (note especially . . . ma‘ ahkara lānū min al-shīrā iḥsan qatila ila al-‘arab allā‘ al-‘umamum anna hamda tarīdūna bi-rūdha al-am Qur’ān, . . .). It follows that we must here have the word anna in the same sense as in Qur’ān 21:108; cf. E. W. Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon (London, 1863–93), I, 109a, s.v. anna.

7. Ibn Qutayba (attrb.), Kitāb al-imāna wa-l-siyasā (Cairo, 1907), p. 162. Cf. Tabari, II, 446 f., on the Jazzrum in the second civil war: at first they disagreed about whom they should make their emir, “then they agreed that two men were to make the choice for them: when the two had agreed, they would give their consent” (shumma tarādwa bi-rayysān yahdūrūn lakum khitratu fa-ya‘yannūn bi‘idhah i‘lamūn‘a‘ qayb). “They agreed on . . . [N and Y] to choose whomever they might find acceptable for them” (fa-ya‘yannūn bi . . . an yahdūra min mar‘ayn yahdūra). “[N] made people promise that they would accept whomever they might choose” (la-yu‘aynaw hāthā yahdūra). “He said, ‘I have chosen this one on your behalf,’ so they cried, ‘we accept’” (qāla illā inni qad wafidū lakum hāthā, fānaddaw qad wafidū). The person chosen by this form of shīrā could clearly also be described as al-ridda.


9. Abkhr al-Abbās, pp. 51, 74 (the reply is unilluminating). Cf. Tabari, II, 488 f., where the Khurāsānīs in the second civil war are invited to pay homage to Salīm ibn Ziyād al-ridda bi‘atū tawṣūqa anna al-khilsafī, “on the basis of agreement on him until the caliphate should be put in order,” that is, on the basis of popular choice as opposed to ‘alī qālib appointment.


12. Cf. Tabari, II, 1919, where Nasr ibn Sayyār, the governor of Khurāsan, has to step down so that “the matter” can be resolved by shīrā; and II, 1918, where a shīrā for the selection of subgovernors is actually set up.

28. Thus the majority of the sources, see F. Omar, *The Abbasid Caliphate* (Baghdad, 1969), pp. 139 ff.
30. The response of the 'Aliyecs was unencouraging, while in the meantime, impatient Khurásánîs elevated Abû 'l-Abbas to the throne. Cf. Omar, *Caliphate*, pp. 143 ff.
31. If so, he can scarcely be said to have made a "bewildered" convocation for a "prosaic" shârâ (p. Crane, *Slaves on Horses*, *The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 65).
32. Abûhâ' Al-Abbas, p. 403.
34. *'Uyun*, p. 191.
35. Cf. Ibn A'lam, *Futûh, VIII*, 178, where Abû Salama makes the choice on behalf of the community: "O people, will you accept what I do?" (hal antum râdtha bima ayin'uka). They said, "we accept your command" (ra'dithâ bi-arwahka), "do you like." He said, "... Abû Muslim ... wrote to me ordering me to set up a Hashimite caliph for the people ... we have considered the best (akhârî) of Banû Hashim ... and have accepted 'Abdallâh ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn 'Abdallâh ibn 'Abbas on your behalf ... do you agree?" (qad irayyarkan lakahum ... fa-hal ra'dithû). They answered, "Yes, we agree" (ra'dithû). Normally, Abû l-Abbas is said to have been Ibrahimî's legatee; here he is ir-râfî, chosen in open competition with other Hashimites.
36. Both were minors at the time according to Ibn Hâzm, *Jami'ratu ansãd al-arab*, ed. A. S. M. Hârûn (Cairo, 1962), p. 31. Muhammad ibn Ibrahim was born in 122, and was thus only ten years old at the time of the elevation of Abû 'l-Abbas (Tabari, ii, 1716). His brother Abû al-Wâhhab seems to have been granted his first public office in 139 or 140, seven or eight years after Abû 'l-Abbas' accession, when he was put in charge of a summer campaign and/or appointed governor of the Jazirra (Baladhi, *Futûh al-baladhin*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1868), p. 187; Tabari, iii, 125; Kâlîfâ, p. 641; cf. Aâkhâr Al-Abbas, p. 404). Ibrahimî's other sons are rarely mentioned; they died without issue (Baladhi, *Ansãd*, iii, 127), which could be taken to mean that they died in childhood.
37. Both were present in Kufa along with the rest of the 'Abbasids (Tabari, iii, 27; Ya'qûbî, *Tarîkh*, ii, 419), and their existence could thus have been expected to elicit some comment.
38. Maqâtil, p. 343; the word comes alive at pp. 349 f., where Abû 'l-Sarâyâ's imám has testified in favor of another 'A'id: wa-ina ra'dithum bihi fa-hawra asrâf al-râf wa-ala fi-khârista li-anfushum. They end up by choosing another.
39. "His choice ... from the two families as a whole has been 'Ali ibn Mâ'ûsâ ... on account of ... his perfect excellence, his clear knowledge, his manifest godliness, his genuine abstinence, his leaving off of this world, and his assertion of freedom from the people," as al-Mâ'mûn put it in the document of succession (Crone and Hinis, *God's Caliph*, p. 138). Compare Ibn Kâhillîn, *Wâfsgil al-'yûm*, ed. f. 'Abbas (Bârut, 1970–72), iii, 270 (no. 425), where we
are told that al-Ma'āmūn gathered the ḥāsāyṣ al-ajrāf, and told them that of all the descendants of al-'Abbās and Ali he had found one more meritorious and deserving of the caliphate than Ali al-Riḍā.

40. The choice of the epithet was al-Ma'āmūn's. Cf. Croce and Hinds, God's Caliph, p. 138; Maqāți, p. 369.

41. Cf. S. Moscati, "Il Testamento di Abū Hāṣim, Rivista degli Studi Orientali, XXVII (1952); Sharon, Black Banners, ch. 5.

42. Croce, Slaves on Horses, p. 456.

43. It is reassuring to see that Islamicists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries generally regarded this story as apocryphal (J. Wellhausen, The Arab Kingdom and Its Fall, trans. M. G. Weir [Calcutta, 1927], p. 503; Nöldeke and others in Moscati, "Testamento," p. 35).

44. Pick a number of scholars of whom Wellhausen seems to be the earliest (Kingdom, pp. 503 f.), and Sharon the most recent (Black Banners, passim).

45. Thus a certain māsib acted as story-teller, fa-yadīkhurū waṣṣāṣan Bani Hāṣim wa-yadīkhurū wasṣṣāṣan Bani Unayyā ( Ibn Kathīr, Buldān, v. 32; Yūsuf ibn Umar al-Thaqafi would imprison anyone known for mawāli biṭām Hāṣim wa-mawālāt aṣl al-unayīn (Dimawari, Abū Hāṣim, p. 335). Qaṭṭaba called the Syrians to mī fi ḥālī al-muṭāfat min taqādī Muhammad fī wa aṭīf fī Bani Hāṣim (Ibn Aṭṭam, Futiḥ, viii, 172). The missionaries called to īmād Bani Hāṣim (Maqāți, Cevāhīn, vi, 39). The mission was a dawāʾ bi-Bani Hāṣim (Yaqūbī, Taqqīb, vii, 408-409 and passim). Abū Salama was ordered to enthrone a khalifatun Hāṣimīn, and chose Abū ʿl-ʿAbbās as the best of Bani Hāṣim (Ibn Aṭṭam, Futiḥ, viii, 178). And so on.

46. But as Sharon notes, we have to await the Shahrastānī before we see them do it (Black Banners, p. 84 n.).

47. Cf. Sharon, Black Banners, ch. 4.

48. Maqāți, p. 161; the missionary of Bani Hāṣim went out to preach in the favor of the 'Allids on the death of al-Walid II; when things began to go well for them, each faṣq would adduce a wasṣṣāṣ in favor of its own candidate.

49. If so, the transition from an ideology of ālāyā to one of wasṣṣāṣ may have been less drastic than it sounds. In Umayyad court poetry, ʿUthmān's position rests on both ālāyā and wasṣṣāṣ, in the sense that he was elected by a ālāyā set up by Umar on his deathbed, sc. by wasṣṣāṣ (Crome and Hinds, God's Caliph, p. 32, n. 41). By the time we reach Abū ʿl-Sārāyā, the person chosen directly by the īmān on his deathbed was the ʿābīd if the community would accept him (Maqāți, p. 349).

50. There is surprisingly little reference to it in the historical (as opposed to heresiographical) literature. Neither Abū ʿl-ʿAbbās nor Dāwūd ibn ʿAlī refers to it in the accession speeches of 122; they also do not say anything incompatible with it (Tabarī, v. 29, f.). It must be with reference to the alleged testament that Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakīya asks al-Maṣūrūr how the ʿAbbāsids can claim to have inherited ʿAlla's power, given the fact that ʿAllī's descendants are still alive (ibid., p. 209); but al-Maṣūrūr himself does not invoke it, being well on the way to adopting the position which his son al-Malī was later to make official, namely, that the ʿAbbāsids had not inherited the imamate from an ʿĀlid, but rather from al-ʿAbbās himself (especially ibid., p. 215; cf. Traini, "Corrispondenza," p. 794). Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakīya's question demonstrates the polemical weakness of Abī Ḥāṣim's testament vis-à-vis ʿĀlid claims.

51. ʿUṣayrī, pp. 179 f.

52. ʿUṣayrī, pp. 180 f.

53. The text is explicit: qad intahāru bi-Khurāsān duʿāʾ min al-shīa wa-qud inquṣṭa qimayn, qum minhum yadhū ḍā al muballaj ʿālā bi ʿl-tālāq wa-qim al-thānī yadhū ʿlā Abī Hāṣim ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Hanafīs, wa-kān al-mutawaddī bi-hādīh al-dawāʾa ʿlā al razīl Allāh sīn ḍīn Kibār wa-kān al-dawāʾa ʿlā tāḥī fī ʿl-ḥāl ʿalā bi thalāthā ʿlā Abī Salama. And it is quite true that Ibn Kathīr and others called to al-Muḥammad, Abū Salama himself being known as wāṣṣ ʿalā Muḥammad and Abī Ḥāṣim as aṣṣūn ʿalā Muḥammad. None of them breathed a word about Abī Ḥāṣim.

54. Similarly Sharon, Black Banners, but in a quite different vein.


56. Yaqūbī, Taqqīb, ii, 468; Baladḥurī, Anwār, iii, 182; Jalāhīyārī, Kāthīb al-ṣawādī wa-ṭabarī, ed. M. al-Saqqā et al. (Cairo, 1958), p. 98; Ibn Ḥaʾm, Jamāhīr, p. 369 (I see these references to Martin Hinds); Ibn Khallīkān, Waqtaṭī, ii, 410 (no. 276); Ḍabahī, Sīyār aṭ-ṭālib al-muballaj, ed. Sh. al-ʿAmmār et al. (Beirut, 1981-), vii, 25, 83; van Vloten, "Zur Abbassidengeschichte," pp. 214, 220. According to Jalāhīyārī, all Ḥāṣimīs joined Ibn Muwiya, whether they were of ʿĀlid, ʿAbbāsīd, or other descent.

57. He was governor of Ḏijaj (as Jalāhīyārī, Baladḥurī, and van Vloten in the preceding note) on behalf of Sulaymān ibn Ḥabīb ibn al-Muḥallabah, Ibn Muwiya's governor of al-Ahwāz (thus all except Jalāhīyārī).


59. Cf. Croce, Slaves on Horses, pp. 133 f. One Muhaḥlabīd was in charge of Abī Muḥammad's garrison in 131 (namely, Abū ʿṣāfīri ʿtn Muwiya ibn Yazīd ibn al-Muḥallabah; cf. Abū ʿṣāfīri al-ʾAḥbāb, p. 357); two Muhaḥlabīds appear as members of Qaṭṭaba's army at Isfahan and Nāḥwand in the same year (namely, Ibn Muṭlaq al-ʾAṣaṭīr and Yazīd ibn Hātīm; cf. ibid., pp. 338 f. (corrupt), 352 f.; Tabarī, v. 4, 139); another one appears as a member of this army in Iraq (Abū al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd ibn al-Muḥallabah, Abū ʾl-ʾAḥbāb, p. 378; but cf. Baladḥurī, Anwār, iii, 188); and two of them rebelled in Bāṣra on behalf of the approaching armies (Ṣufyān ibn Muwiya and Ṭawwī ibn Ḥātīm, Abū ʾl-ʾAḥbāb, pp. 355 f.; M. Hinds, An Early Islamic Family from Oman: al-ʿAṣūrī's Account of the Muḥallabīds (forthcoming), pars. 102-105 and the notes thereto).

60. Hinds, Early Islamic Family, par. 108.

61. Cf. the references given above, n. 56. Some of the sources (especially Jalāhīyārī) credit Abū ʿṣāfīri al-Muwiya, Sulaymān ibn Ḥabīb's secretary, with the foresight which Sulaymān lacked. His rough treatment of ʿṣāfīri was to cost him his life.