

**ZANDAQAḤ HERESY DURING THE
EARLY ‘ABBĀSID ERA (750-850 C.E.)
SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS**

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The present study, while discussing *Zandaqaḥ* as a social and political phenomenon, deals with those individuals who were declared *zindīqs* and were prosecuted and persecuted as heretics during the early ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate from 750 to 850 (C.E.). The movements and individuals whose religious beliefs and practices did not conform to the religious doctrine of the dominant religious and political elite, were branded as *zindīqs*. The rebellious movements in Persia and their leaders, including, among others, Ustādh Sīs, al-Muqanna‘, Bābak al-Khurrāmī, Afshīn and Mazyār were declared heretics and were persecuted on the charges of having anti-Islamic Zoroastrian and Manichaean agendas. In fact, there were social, economic and political grievances of the people of these areas that prompted them to rebel against the central government, and they were branded as heretics as they were against political and economic interests of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate in these areas.

Keywords: *Zandaqaḥ*, Heresy, Early ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, Social and political phenomenon, Traditionalists.

Introduction

The ‘Abbāsīd period in Muslim history is remembered as the period of development and progress in cultural, social, and religious spheres of life. The innovations in the fields of culture, society, religion and politics changed the dynamics of Muslim society. Some of the Muslim schools of thought and sects struggled to give meaning to and fulfill their social and political ambitions. Among these schools of thought and individuals, those who posed threat to the authority of the Caliphs and the dominant

religious groups were branded as heretics. In Muslim history, heresy has generally been treated as a religious or theological phenomenon by the historians. Theological arguments and religious reasons have been over-emphasized. Other reasons of political, economic and social nature, and of discontent of the people, have been under-emphasized. This approach to heresy seems to be reductive, as it over-simplifies a complex phenomenon. The present study contests this view of dealing with heresy merely on theological and religious grounds, and explores the likelihood that, in addition to religious and theological causes of heresy, political, social and economic factors were also involved. It focuses primarily on the social, political and economic causes of heresy during the early ‘Abbāsīd era stretching from 750 to 850 (C.E.). It tries to address the questions: Why political dissenters were branded as *zindīqs* or heretics and were persecuted? What were the causes of the mass discontent among the population that led to rebellions in Persia and Central Asia? Why were these rebellious movements declared heterodox movements? While giving answers to these questions, the present study deals with the etymology of *zindīq*. It identifies the individuals who were declared heretics while also giving an empirical overview of the different heterodox movements in Persia, and analyses the rebellious movements in Persia and their leaders who were declared heretics during the early ‘Abbāsīd era.

Zindīqs

Zindīqs were generally considered to be the followers of Mānī. Some of the *zindīqs* who accepted teachings of Islam were branded as heretics during the early ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate. The term *zindīq* was so much in use during this period that even Muslim opponents to the ‘Abbāsīd government were declared heretics and were persecuted.

Etymology and Meaning of *Zindīq*

Zindīq is an Arabic word (pl. *zanādīq* or *zanādiqah*, abstract/collective noun *Zandaqah*) most probably borrowed from the Persian language. It was used most narrowly against Manichaeans, and loosely for *mulhīds*, heretics, *murtīds*, renegades, *kāfīrs*, and unbelievers.¹ The word *zindīq* appeared for the first time during the time of the Sāssānid Empire

in Persia and was used against Manichaeism when that empire, having Zoroastrianism as its official religion, started a campaign against the followers of other religions, including Jews, Buddhists, Hindu-Brahmans, Christians and *zndyky*. During the fifth century an Armenian Christian writer Eznik used the word *zindīq* in his writings for Manichaeism. In the books of Zoroastrian religion also, the word *zindīq* has been used for Manichaeans.²

In the Arabic language, the term *zindīq* was primarily used for Manichaeans, while secondarily it was used for Muslim heretics as well. According to Mas'ūdī (d. 956), the word *zindīq* first appeared during the time of Mānī (216-274 C.E.) when Zoroaster's teachings were gathered together in the *Avesta* and its interpretation, *Zand*. For Persians, anyone who introduced something in the book contrary to the book or *zand*, was called a *zandī*. The Arabs changed the word to *zindīq* and used it for the dualist, *thanawiyyah*, having belief in two Gods. According to the modern linguistic research, the word *zandīq* was borrowed from Aramaic *zaddīq*, which meant 'righteous'. The Manichaeans also used the word *zaddīqe* for the 'elected one', i.e. for those who were full members of the Manichaean community.³ In this early context, when used by the Manichaeans the word was not pejorative, as it was used for the elected group of the community. Josef Van Ess argues that *Zandaqah* was a Persian word. It was derived from *zand*, the commentary on the *Avesta*.⁴ The Arabs did not know the etymology of the word and it was soon applied to any deviation, error or unbelief.⁵ W. Montgomery Watt has defined the term as 'vague' and 'irreligion'.⁶ It was used against those who were accused of having theological deviation, particularly towards Manichaeism or dualism.⁷ According to another definition of the word *zindīq*, which was used by Jahiz (d. 868), it meant the wandering monks. It was also used for Mānī and his followers. The word *zaddīq* was used for the elected class of Manichaean hierarchy.⁸ E.G. Browne argues that *zaddīq* is an Aramaic word which means 'righteous'. The Arabic word *ṣiddīq*, which means 'veracious', is etymologically equivalent to *zaddīq*. Thus *zaddīq* passed into Persian in the form of *zandīq*, which was used by the Persians before Islam, and *zindīq* is the Arabic form of *zandīq*.⁹

According to Ṭabarī, *zindīqs* were those who were involved in Zoroastrian, Manichaean and Mazdakite practices. It was a 'terrifyingly

vague' term during the early 'Abbāsīd era.¹⁰ The Manichaeans were severely persecuted during this early period¹¹ because of their profession of dualism and their aggressiveness against Islam.¹² Islamic thought did not particularly flourish at the early stage in the areas conquered by the Muslims, who were in the minority in these areas. So the Muslim religious elite were in favour of crushing Manichaeism in these conquered areas because it posed threat to Islam.¹³ In addition, during the early 'Abbāsīd period, the term *zindīq* was also used for Zoroastrians, *Ṣūfī* extremists, Mu'tazilah and the free thinkers.¹⁴ The term was used to encapsulate a wide variety of people of different religious outlook or ideology. Muslim jurists have defined *Zandaqah* in different ways. Some believe that *zindīq* was the one who showed himself outwardly as Muslims but inwardly practiced his former religion of Manichaeism. During the early Muslim history, some Muslims were declared *zindīqs*, being accused of believing in dualism, that is, claiming that there were two forces in the universe, Light and Darkness, a conception of God that was different from the Muslim conception of divinity. Some jurists believed that those who questioned the fundamentals of Islam, such as the Prophethood of Muḥammad (ﷺ), or the authenticity of the parts of Qur'ān were declared heretics, *zindīqs*.¹⁵ According to another group of jurists, *zindīqs* were those who were engaged in those acts that were prohibited in Islam, such as adultery, fornication and the consumption of wine.¹⁶ So those who did not give proper respect to Muslim teachings and practices were declared as *zindīqs*.

As mentioned earlier, the word *zindīq* was borrowed in the first instance from the Persian language. It was initially used against the followers of other religions, particularly against the followers of Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism. Later on its use was extended to Muslim social, political, and religious dissenters, who were declared as *zindīqs* and were persecuted.

Individuals Branded as *Zindīqs*

Zandaqah was a strange phenomenon of early 'Abbāsīd era when some individuals were accused of *Zandaqah* and prosecuted and persecuted as heretics, including political opponents, religious dissenters, poets and also those who did not conform to Islamic moral restraints.

The persecution of *Zandaqah* was not confined to the Persians and Central Asians; Arabs also became victims.

During the Caliphate of al-Manṣūr (r. 754-775), ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Muqaffa’ (d. 756), was accused of *Zandaqah* and was persecuted.¹⁷ Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq al-Nadīm narrates that the harsh terms, written by al-Muqaffa’ on behalf of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Alī, which annoyed Caliph al-Manṣūr, became the reason for the persecution of al-Muqaffa’ persecution.¹⁸ The terms written by al-Muqaffa’ were in these words: ‘And if any time the Commander of the faithful acts perfidiously towards his uncle ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Alī, his wives shall be divorced from him, his horses shall be confiscated from the service of God (in war), his slaves shall become free, and the Muslims lose from their allegiance towards him’.¹⁹ Sufyān, the governor of Basra, also had personal enmity towards al-Muqaffa’,²⁰ who was accused of practising the Manichaean religion and having an anti-Islamic attitude and was killed by Sufyān. The persecution of *zindīqs* gained so much importance during the Caliphate of al-Mahdī (r. 775-785) that a separate department was established having *Ṣāhib al-zanādiqah* as chief examiner. Two contemporary poets, Bashshar ibn Burd (d. 783) and Ṣāliḥ ibn ‘Abd al-Quddūs (d. 784), were put to death by the orders of Caliph al-Mahdī on charges of *Zandaqah*. Bashshar ibn Burd was accused of practising Manichaeism and atheism.²¹ There were other reasons of political and social nature involved in the execution of Bashshar ibn Burd. In his poetry, he encouraged the Umayyads to rebel against the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate.²² Belonging to a noble Persian family, he propagated Persian ‘national’ sentiments and encouraged Persian clients, *mawālī*, to stand against the Arab domination. He also engaged in theological disputes with the Muslim theologians of Basra.²³ He was accused of *Zandaqah* because his activities were perceived as being against the social and political authority of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs and also of the religious elite.

Ṣāliḥ ibn ‘Abd al-Quddūs was a member of an Arab tribe or affiliated with an Arab tribe. There is very little information available about his life. Reynold A. Nicholson claims that he used to preach at streets in Basra and Damascus so there is a possibility that this ‘public doctrine’ was perceived as a threat to the authority of the ruling elite. Moreover, his was the philosophical mind of a poet, which could be a reason for his persecution as *zindīq*,²⁴ though there was nothing heretical in his poetry

and he was not critical of the religion of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ).²⁵ It was his libertine way of life and free thinking that became the reason for the persecution of Ṣāliḥ ibn ‘Abd al-Quddūs, Bashshar ibn Burd and Ḥammād Ajrad.²⁶ Another brilliant poet, Abū Nuwās (d. 814), was accused of *Zandaqah*, of having blasphemous, dangerous and morally unacceptable ideas, and was consequently imprisoned. But there are different versions of the death of Abū Nuwās.²⁷ This was the religious orthodoxy of the early ‘Abbāsīd period that tested the urban intellectuals like Bashshar ibn Burd and Abū Nuwās of having Manichaean and Zoroastrian inclinations. There were questions of freedom of thought and an immoral way of life behind the accusations of *Zandaqah* made against them.²⁸ The religious and political authority of the dominant religious group, the Traditionalists, and the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs played an important role in declaring those Muslims as *zindīqs* who did not follow Islamic teachings properly and those who lived an immoral life.

Members of respected Arab families were not spared from prosecution and persecution by the ruling authorities. The Hāshimis, Ya‘qūb ibn al-Faḍl, his daughter and Dā‘ūd ibn ‘Alī’s son, were brought as *zindīqs* before Caliph al-Mahdī. They were thrown into prison as the Caliph had taken an oath not to kill a Hāshimi.²⁹ Abū Ubaydallah Mu‘āwiyah ibn Yasār was an honest vizier and a capable officer of the revenue department during the Caliphate of al-Mahdī. He made many enemies due to his honesty. His son, Muḥammad or ‘Abdallah, was declared *zindīq* and was ruthlessly killed.³⁰ According to Ibn Khallikān, it was al-Rabī‘ ibn Yūnus who induced Caliph al-Mahdī against Abū ‘Ubaydallah and caused the death of his son as *zindīq*.³¹ In the case of Abū Ubaydallah’s son, who was declared as *zindīq* and was persecuted, it is clear that there were political and not just religious causes of *Zandaqah* during the early ‘Abbāsīd period.

Caliph al-Hādī (r. 785-786) closely followed the policy of his father in respect of the persecution of *zindīqs*. Two people, Yazdān ibn Badhān, the Secretary, and ‘Alī ibn Yaqtīn, Keeper of the Privy Seal, were executed during the reign of Caliph al-Hādī on charges of *Zandaqah*.³² Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786-809) continued the religious policy of orthodoxy and the persecution of *zindīqs*, though not in a severe manner. Anas ibn Abī Shaykh was killed after being accused of *Zandaqah*. He was an associate of the Barmakīs.³³ Caliph al-Mā’mūn (r. 813-833) did

not follow the policy of persecuting Manichaeans of his predecessors as he grew up in an intellectual environment, and hence respected the educated and intellectuals who belonged to other religions as well. Neo-Manichaeans were well treated by al-Mā'mūn, and it became fashionable to profess and show Manichaeism.³⁴ According to Ibn Nadīm, during the reign of al-Mā'mūn Ibn Yazdānbakht, who was accused of *Zandaqah*, was pardoned by the Caliph.³⁵

Famous *Zindīq* Movements and Leaders

The later Umayyad and early 'Abbāsīd era witnessed many religio-political and social movements in Persia. The inclusion of religious sentiments in these rebellions made them heterodox movements. These movements and their leaders were declared heretics by the ruling authorities when they perceived them as a political and social threat. These movements are also called Khurramī Movements.

W. Madelung argues that Khurramiyyah was a religious movement founded by Mazdak in the late fifth century. Some Islamic sources claim the movement to have been anti-Islamic, as Ibn Nadīm writes in his book *al-Fihrist* that these people were Magians and followers of Mazdak. They were very fond of pleasure in respect of food and drinking and also sharing their women, which they believed was according to the teachings of their master, Mazdak.³⁶ Madelung maintains that the Khurramiyyah were those who took Abū Muslim Khurāsānī (d. 755) as their Imām and thus were also called Muslimiyya, as Abū Muslim received support from the Mazdakite community during the *da'wa* movement against the Umayyad Caliphate. After the murder of Abū Muslim, Khurramī Mazdakite rose against the 'Abbāsīd Caliph in revenge for their leader's murder.³⁷ Jonathan P. Burkey explores Khurramiyyah and its roots in the socio-religious movement of Mazdak during the Sāssānian rule (224-651) in pre-Islamic Persia. They followed Abū Muslim during the 'Abbāsīd Revolution of 749 C.E. After his murder by Caliph al-Manṣūr, they participated in rebellions against the 'Abbāsīd government.³⁸ Farhād Daftary also called these rebellions and revolts 'Khurramī movements', when a large number of Zoroastrian and neo-Mazdakite communities supported these movements. They belonged to the lower social strata, particularly peasantry.³⁹ According to J.J. Saunders, though, it was an effort to revive

the Persian culture and sentiments in the eighth century that gave birth to the different fanatical and heretical sects and factions in Muslim Persia.⁴⁰ E.G. Browne recalls these movements as the movements of heresiarchs that arose in the Persian land of the ‘Abbāsīd Empire.⁴¹ These movements emerged owing to the social and economic grievances of the local population. Among the famous movements and leaders were Bihāfarīd, Sunbādh, Ishāk, the Turk and Baraz, Ustādh Sīs, al-Muqanna‘, Muhammira, Bābak al-Khurrāmī, Afshīn and Mazyār.

Bihāfarīd

Bihāfarīd was the leader of the Bihāfarīdiyyah heretic movement of Muslim Persia. According to Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad al-Bīrūnī Bihāfarīd pronounced himself a prophet and found many followers among the Magians.⁴² Ibn Nadīm says that, he propagated the doctrines of Magians. Apparently, he accepted Islam but inwardly practised the teachings of Magians.⁴³ Farhād Daftary states that Bihāfarīd had a Zoroastrian background. He started a reform movement based on a blend of the ideas of Zoroastrianism and Islam.⁴⁴

Sunbādh

Sunbādh, was a Zoroastrian who revolted in 755, during the Caliphate of al-Manṣūr, and started the popular Khurrāmī movement.⁴⁵ Ṭabarī states that Sunbādh was a Magian and was a supporter of Abū Muslim al-Khurrāsānī. He was the leader of a rebellion that was started to avenge the death of Abū Muslim.⁴⁶ According to Maqḍīsī, Sunbādh proclaimed himself as the successor and *walī*, of Abū Muslim Khurasanī and vowed to take revenge for his death. Sunbādh used the religious syncretism to acquire support from the different religious communities, particularly the Muslims and Zoroastrians. He preached that Abū Muslim was not dead and would soon return with Mahdī and Mazdak.⁴⁷ According to some sources, he gathered 100,000 supporters and aimed at destroying *Ka‘bah* (God forbid), which gave an anti-Arab and anti-Muslim aspect to Sunbādh’s rebellion.⁴⁸ Caliph al-Manṣūr sent Jahwar ibn al-Marrar al-Ijlī to deal with Sunbādh, who was defeated. He fled to Ṭabaristān, where he was killed.

Ishāq, the Turk and Baraz

Ishāq, the Turk, was one of those who participated and encouraged the Khurramiyyah movement as he played an important role in the formation of the *mubayyidah* (*safīd-jāmahgān* in Persian), ‘wearers of white’ movement against the ‘Abbāsids. They carried white banners against the black banners of ‘Abbāsids.⁴⁹ Later on, Baraz, under the false name of Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Hāshimī, became leader of the *safīd-jāmahgān*. He fled from the persecution of Caliph al-Manṣūr and resided in Transoxiana, where he propagated the view that neither Abū Muslim and nor Zoroaster were dead but would return and preach the true religion.⁵⁰

Ustādh Sīs

Another Persian ‘pseudo-prophet’, named Ustādh Sīs, revolted in 766-768 in the districts of Herat (capital of Herat province of today’s Afghanistan), Bādghīs (a province of northwestern Afghanistan) and Sīstān (a historical region comprising parts of eastern Iran and southern Afghanistan).⁵¹ Some sources maintain that he proclaimed himself as a prophet, but this assertion is controversial.⁵² Among the followers and supporters of Ustādh Sīs were peasants, Khārijī tribesmen of Sīstān and also Turkish tribesmen. He gathered huge support from the villagers. Later he was captured and killed at the orders of al-Manṣūr in Baghdad.

Al-Muqanna‘

The most famous Khurramiyyah movement in Khurasan and Transoxiana was that of al-Muqanna‘ (d. 799).⁵³ Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ja‘far al-Narshakhī notes that he was a very clever man and learned magic and engineering at an early age, with which he attracted people. He gathered a large number of people around him and started plundering and looting the caravans.⁵⁴ Al-Bīrūnī says that he claimed divinity and preached the teachings of Mazdak, resorting to killing and violence.⁵⁵ He was killed in 779, during the Caliphate of al-Mahdī.

Muḥammira

Muḥammira were the Mazdakites, those who followed the teachings of Mazdak or were the supporters of Khurramiyyah. They were called

Muḥammira, which meant ‘wearers of red’. They revolted in Jurjān (now in Iran). ‘Amr ibn Muḥammad al-Amrakī, who encouraged these revolts, was declared as *zindīq* and was executed in Merv on the orders of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd.⁵⁶ When the Khurramiyyah, i.e. the Muslimiyyah, began a rebellion under the leadership of Muḥammira in revenge for the death of Abū Muslim, the neo-Mazdakite communities of western Persia made common cause with the Khurramiyyah, Muslimiyyah.⁵⁷

Bābak al-Khurramī

The Khurramiyyah movement reached its peak in its enmity against the Arabs and the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate when Bābak Khurramī (d. 838) started a rebellious movement against the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate.⁵⁸ According to Ibn Nadīm, the chief of the ‘Khurramiyyah al-Bābakiyah’ was Bābak al-Khurramī who claimed divinity and introduced violence in the Khurramiyyah sect.⁵⁹ Bābak revolted in northwestern Persia and posed a serious threat to the ‘Abbāsīd Empire. Two other important people who were declared as *zindīqs* were Afshīn, who was a famous general of caliph al-Mu‘taṣim,⁶⁰ and Mazyār (d. 840), who was a member of the Karinid dynasty of Ṭabaristān who revolted against caliph al-Mu‘taṣim.⁶¹ He was accused of heresy and was imprisoned during the Caliphate of al-Mu‘taṣim, where he died.

These people gave leadership to the rebellions against the early ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate. As has already been mentioned, these rebellions arose because of the murder of Abū Muslim Khurāsānī and the dissatisfaction of the masses with the new Caliphate, since the promises that were made during the ‘Abbāsīd *Da‘wah* movement were not fulfilled. The leaders of these revolts and rebellions profited from the discontent of the people because of their personal interests, and provided leadership to these movements, which were declared as heretical movements by the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs.

Rebellions in Persia as Heretic Movements

These movements were portrayed by some Muslim chronicles as heretic movements. To understand the aspects and nature of these

heterodox revolts, it would be very useful to understand the issues of 'class conflict, social reforms, and simple religious syncretism which invariably accompanied them'.⁶² The involvement of different religious groups like Zoroastrians, Khurramiyyah (neo-Mazdakite), Muslims and *ghulāts*⁶³ in these movements made it easy for the 'Abbāsīd government to declare these heterodox movements.⁶⁴ According to Waardenburg, these religio-political movements were expression of popular religion,⁶⁵ which was not tolerated by the religious elite nor by the political elite, which favoured normative religion.

The 'Abbāsīds came to power claiming themselves legitimate heirs of the house of Prophet (ﷺ). They presented themselves as the champions of the cause of Islam. Their state was called the 'Blessed State', *al-dawlah al-mubārakah*, by their supporters and followers.⁶⁶ After the establishment of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, some of those who helped them to come to power became dissatisfied with the 'Abbāsīd government, as the promises of justice and well-being of the people – later used as basis and catchphrase of the 'Abbāsīd revolution – were set aside.⁶⁷ The 'Abbāsīds were very much aware of their political authority, even during the revolutionary activities; the extremist attitude of Khidash (executed in 736) was rejected not because of religious reasons but because of losing the political authority over the revolutionary process, as extremism was derailing the political process.⁶⁸ The oppressive rule started by the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs dissatisfied Shī'ah and other groups. Those who were dissatisfied with state policy, like the *ghulāt*, participated in the Khurramiyyah Movement against the 'Abbāsīd government in Persia.⁶⁹ The religious and political groups whose religious, social and economic interests had not been met by what the 'Abbāsīd government had promised during the revolution, turned against them. They were declared heretic and were persecuted.

Right from the beginning, 'Abbāsīd Caliphs understood the importance of Persia. They tried to establish the political writ in these areas because the areas were important for the empire in respect of economy. Azerbāijān and adjacent areas were rich in mineral resources like gold, iron, lead, silver and mercury.⁷⁰ The crude oil of the areas like Khurāsān (the region comprising the land of modern-day northern Afghanistan, eastern Iran and parts of Tajikistān and Uzbekistān), Azerbāijān was important for the state. It was used for lighting and

warfare.⁷¹ The mineral wealth of these areas attracted the Arabs and they migrated there in great numbers during the early period of ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate. The fertile agricultural land of Transoxiana, also called *Māwarāun-nahr* during the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate (the region between the Āmu Daryā and Syr Daryā rivers in Central Asia), and Khurasan attracted the Arabs to settle in these regions. As they were arriving in such numbers, the local population perceived them as a threat to their livelihood.⁷² During the early period, the ‘Abbāsīd government began creating colonies in the areas at the foothill of Elburz (a mountain range in northern Persia). Local people started a rebellion against the ‘Abbāsīd government as the new immigrants started controlling the resources of local population.⁷³ These rebellions against the ‘Abbāsīd government were crushed and their leaders declared heretics. Bādghīs, where Ustādh Sīs revolted, was important for the ‘Abbāsīd government as it had a large number of silver mines. The urbanite Muslims of Khurasan were interested in taking Bādghīs. They used religion to legitimize their effort to take a hold on it. The local population stood against the government that posed a threat to their established traditional way of life, and against the urbanite Muslims.⁷⁴ The movement of Ustādh Sīs was very much linked with the threat to the material well-being of local population, as the Arabs and urbanite Muslims of Khurasan wanted to take control over the silver mines in the areas.⁷⁵ When the local population of the areas abounding in mineral resources saw that their economic interests were in jeopardy, they rebelled against the usurpers. Their revolts were branded as heterodox movements by the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs and were crushed.

The people and princes of mountainous areas like Ṭabaristān loved their culture, old traditions and beliefs and they were very keen to preserve their social customs and cultural values.⁷⁶ The small princely states and their rulers, being conscious of their social and political status, wanted it to continue in the presence of semi-divine figures. So they resisted the process of Islamization in their areas.⁷⁷ During the Umayyad Caliphate, the city-states of the Eastern Empire like Tukhāristān (part of the eastern Persia during the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, which is presently part of Afghanistan) and Sogdiana (territory corresponds to the modern provinces of Samarkand, Bukhārā in Uzbekistān and the Sughd province of modern Tajikistān) lost their independence when they were occupied by the

Umayyads. After the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution, these city-states tried to regain their freedom and to implement their own social and economic structure, which they had enjoyed before the Arab invasion.⁷⁸ The religious syncretism, local cultural traditions and common enemy of these rebels created a sense of group feeling among them, the same group feeling as that of the urbanite ‘*ulamā*’ in Khurasan and Bukhārā.⁷⁹ The resistance of the original inhabitants of areas like Tukhāristān and Sogdiana was seen as a threat to the political and economic interests of the ‘Abbāsīds and the religious elite, aligned with the government, and was suppressed as a heretic movement.

Most of the leaders of these rebellious movements had personal material interests. These revolts were backed by the local people, with different religious beliefs and social values, in great numbers. The presence of these heterogeneous elements in these movements gave the ‘Abbāsīd government the opportunity to brand them as heterodox movements.⁸⁰ Some of the Arabs who settled in these areas during the Umayyad Caliphate also participated in these movements. They lost their jobs and prestige as a result of the occupation of their land by the new Arabs settlers.⁸¹ The differences and disagreements between the local Arabs who inhabited these areas during the Umayyad Caliphate and those who arrived after the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution encouraged local people to rebel for their independence.⁸² The reasons for the rebellions were based on political, social and religious grievances of the local people.

The growing luxuries of the court of the Caliphs forced the tax collectors to raise the taxes in the empire. The process of taxation created disputes between Muslims and non-Muslims, and also among the Arabs themselves. Moreover, there was a new social order that eliminated the old one, based on the stereotypical social thinking. This new type of social system became the cause of unrest and rebellion by the local people. Before the ‘Abbāsīd government, the local *dehqāns* (peasants and small landlords) had enjoyed political power. They were not only deprived of their political role, but also of social privileges that were taken over by the Muslim military and administrative elite.⁸³ The revenue based on tax collection played an important role in the urban development in the early ‘Abbāsīd era. This created discontent among the rural population in Khurāsān.⁸⁴ The rebellious movements were against both

the political structure of the central government and the taxation system in these areas.

The Zoroastrians supported these movements to stop the dissemination of Muslim culture, which was a threat to their old social and religious system. The Zoroastrians showed more resistance against the Arab encroachment than against Islam.⁸⁵ The Zoroastrians and neo-Mazdakites living in these areas belonged to the poor sections of society, and belonged partly to the peasantry. They were not satisfied with the unequal system of taxation and their increasingly deteriorating social position. When these movements started after the assassination of Abū Muslim, they supported them, as they had also considered Abū Muslim their leader.⁸⁶ In fact, it was the grievances of local peasants and the growing differences between 'haves' and 'haves nots' that forced people to rebel against the central government. The religious beliefs and cultural practices of the people were under threat from the new social and religious order that became the cause of the movements like al-Muqanna'.⁸⁷ According to Daniel, the revolt of al-Muqanna' was a genuine protest based on the social grievances of the peasants of Central Asia that was declared heretic as it threatened Islamic social order in Transoxiana.⁸⁸ The rural population of most of those areas where these rebellions arose had their own local rulers and distinct cultural identity. The threat to the autonomous and traditional culture of these areas became the prime reason for the rise of these movements.

Political interests of different groups allied with the central government also played a critical role in these revolts that were branded as heretic movements. According to Hugh Kennedy, Ustādh Sīs rebelled with his *dehqānī* followers in support of 'Isā ibn Mūsā (d. 784), who was the nephew of first 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Saffāh, when the latter was removed as heir apparent by Caliph al-Manṣūr in favour al-Mahdī.⁸⁹ Ustādh Sīs revolted in Soghdiana region where 'Isā ibn Mūsā was popular.⁹⁰ The revolt of Bābak al-Khurramī posed a threat to the political, economic, social and territorial integrity of the 'Abbāsīd Empire. Being head of a socio-religious sect of Khurramiyyah, Bābak gathered a large number of poor peasants. They were ready to revolt under any leader who would preach the doctrine of salvation after death and prosperity in this world, both of which were Bābak's slogans. In addition, personal motives of gaining power and autonomy encouraged Bābak to revolt

against the central government.⁹¹ The multiple causes of the revolts, from the social and economic interests to the political interests of the people of Persia and Central Asia, forced them to rebel against the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate. The ‘Abbāsīds, perceiving a threat to their dynastic rule, labeled these movements as heretic movements.

Those who converted from one religion to another kept in mind their social status. They wanted to enjoy the same social status after converting to the new religion.⁹² The princes of the Central Asian regions were very proud of their culture and belief system. After conversion to Islam, they expected equal status in Muslim society as that enjoyed by the Arabs. For example, Mazyār, one of the princes of the region of Ṭabaristān, accepted Islam. He was given the status of *mawlā*, the client of Caliph al-Mā’mūn, but the prince insisted on being treated as an ally not as the client of the Commander of the Faithful.⁹³ These social deprivations encouraged people like Mazyār to rebel against the ‘Abbāsīd government. There was conflict over political and territorial gains between ‘Abd Allah ibn Ṭāhīr, the governor of Khurāsān, and Mazyār, the governor of Ṭabaristān. The latter was accused by the Ṭāhiridis, the ruling family of Khurāsān, who perceived a political threat from Mazyār in the form of anti-Islamic and anti-state activities.⁹⁴ Mazyār revolted against the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mu‘taṣīm as his political and social status was not accepted by the ‘Abbāsīds because it was harmful to their political authority. So they declared Mazyār as having an inclination towards other religions, with the support of the religious elite.

The trial of Afshīn also showed an antagonism, to some extent, between the men of the sword, the military commanders, and the men of the pen, the secretaries. Afshīn represented the former group, while Aḥmad ibn Abī Dā’ūd (d. 854) represented the latter. These were the secretaries who accused Afshīn of heresy. ‘Abd Allah ibn Ṭāhir had some connections with this latter group. ‘It was this group which stood behind the severe measures in the *miḥnah* and having failed to carry through its policies there found an outlet for its intentions in championing the cause of Islam and the Caliphate in the trials of Bābak, Mazyār and al-Afshīn.’⁹⁵ The trial of Afshīn was a political trial⁹⁶ and not a theological one.

The abundance of mineral resources, the harsh attitude of tax collectors, and the growing control of migrated Arabs on the mines

forced local people to rebel against the central government.⁹⁷ The most common feature of all the revolts in the eastern areas was economic factors. Most of the people joined revolt to win financial benefits. Oppression and injustice by the central government united different groups of peasants, Arabs and Persians against the ‘Abbāsīd government.⁹⁸ Moreover, ‘the uprising of Bābak, the revolt of Mazyār and the trial of Afshīn describe the weak grip of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs on the government and also the political and economic situation of the empire’.⁹⁹ These movements challenged the political, economic and social hegemony of the Arabs over the locals and ‘manifested anti-Arab or even anti-Islamic sentiments, rooted in Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Mazdakism and other Iranian traditions’.¹⁰⁰ These movements and their leaders were declared heretic because of anti-Islamic propaganda against them. In fact, these movements were not against Islam but against the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate. The people of the areas where these movements arose fought against the oppressive rule of the central government in order to save their social and cultural identity.

***Zandaqah* as a Socio-political Phenomenon**

These movements posed a serious threat to the political and religious establishment. Its leaders were branded as *zindīqs*, sometimes for religious reasons and most of the time for other social and political reasons. Those who were charged with *Zandaqah* were accused of having an inclination towards Manichaeism or dualism. Sometimes those Muslims were also declared *zindīqs* who did not give proper respect to Islamic tenets and openly violated Muslim beliefs and practices, and those who adopted a ‘libertine’ way of life.¹⁰¹ Those who were accused of *Zandaqah* did not belong to any particular group or faction; they included members of the ruling elite, Arabs, Persians, Central Asians, poets, philosophers and learned men. They were declared *zindīqs* and were persecuted.

According to Melhem Chokr, *zindīqs* were charged with *Zandaqah* on different grounds, such as *tawhīd* (unity of Allah), Shī‘ism, *mu‘āradaḥ* (challenge of the uniqueness to the Qur’ān), the fabrication of *ḥadīth*, as well as due to the association of *Zandaqah* with Shu‘ūbiyyah Movement.¹⁰² Chokr calls it a movement that considerably influenced

the Islamic law, theology and literature. Those who sought religion through speculative theology were also accused of *Zandaqah*.¹⁰³ Although *Zandaqah* was a considerable challenge to the political elite, Caliphate and religious elite, the *zindīqs* failed to organize themselves and pose a serious threat to Islam.¹⁰⁴ It was easy to prosecute someone on religious grounds as the dominant religious group, the Traditionalists, had powers to regulate the religious doctrines, having a relationship of power with the ruling elite.

In the opinion of Muhammad Qasim Zaman, '*Zandaqah* was a highly charged but ill-defined' term in the early 'Abbāsīd society. The term, and its use and abuse, played an important role in defining boundaries of religious identities of different sects and schools of thought. According to Zaman, though *Zandaqah* was an 'extremely diffused' term, nevertheless it played an important role in defining 'religious identities' of different religious groups of the early 'Abbāsīd period.¹⁰⁵ Sometimes the ruling elite and religious elite, dealing with this problem, were apparently motivated by the possibility of eliminating their political and religious opponents in the name of fighting heresy. *Zandaqah* of Persian rebels and pro-'Alī groups was seen as having political ambitions. Although early 'Abbāsīd Caliphs considered it their religious duty to combat this growing heresy, they were more concerned for their political security.¹⁰⁶ In the opinion of Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm, the 'anti-materialist, anti-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian tendencies of Manichaeism or dualism also ran counter to the political culture of 'Abbāsīds and their allies in the Persian aristocracy'.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, the ruling elite feared the idea associated with Manichaeism or dualism. Marshall Hodgson argues that the Manichaeans were persecuted because they posed a threat to the intellectualism of the Muslim doctors of theology.¹⁰⁸ The Traditionalists perceived a threat from the Manichaean intellectual traditions as these traditions were influencing the intellectual Muslim groups, which undermined the Traditionalists' social status as the dominant religious group.

Sometimes the '*ulamā* used *Zandaqah* as a pretext against those who belonged to the opposite school of theology and law.¹⁰⁹ Most of the time, the enmity among the Muslims was used for declaring someone heretic or *zindīq*.¹¹⁰ Zaman writes in his book *Religion and Politics during the Early 'Abbāsīds* that 'the persecution of *Zandaqah* must

also be seen in terms of what the early ‘Abbāsīd state and its religious elite stood to gain from this challenge and their response to it. The persecution of “heresy” can be a crucial means of gaining consolidating and legitimating political power and social influence.¹¹¹ From a social point of view, heresy is primarily a matter of authority,¹¹² and for the ‘Abbāsīds, their political authority and security was very important for them.

The early ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs proclaimed themselves as Imām and, having this prerogative, tried to get rid of their religious and political opponents through *Zandaqah*. They believed that this would increase their religious prestige and status as Imām and Caliph.¹¹³ According to M.A. Shaban, Caliph al-Mahdī tried to reconcile with the pro-‘Alī group but he failed to get support on religious and political grounds. After his failure, he started a campaign against religious and political dissenters.¹¹⁴ During the early ‘Abbāsīd era, the ruling elite placed great importance on the sentiments of the ‘*ulamā*’ to gain their support, particularly during times of crisis and weak rule. Bishr al-Marīsī was threatened on the question of the nature of the Qur’ān in order to please the proto-*Sunnī* elements in Baghdad during the weak governance of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī (d. 839),¹¹⁵ who was an ‘Abbāsīd prince, and was proclaimed Caliph by the people of Baghdad in 817.

It is difficult to relate the movement of Shu‘ūbiyyah to the movements of heresy. It looks reasonable to argue that the propagation of cultural superiority of the Persians over the Arab culture became one of the reasons for the Traditionalists’ resentment. Secretaries like Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ continued Sassanian traditions that were disliked by the Traditionalists.¹¹⁶ Some of the poets and secretaries were very conscious of their own cultural and religious traditions. For example, Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ gave superiority to the traits of the Persian culture over the culture of Arabs in his writings,¹¹⁷ which was not acceptable neither to the religious nor Arab elite. The persecution of people like Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ on the grounds of having Shu‘ūbiyyah sentiments cannot be ignored.

Zandaqah was more a socio-political and economic phenomenon than a religious one. The questions of the security of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, political ambitions of the ruling elite and the nature of the relationship of the religious elite with the ruling elite were most important in respect of *Zandaqah* controversy during the early ‘Abbāsīd period.

Sunnī orthodoxy was made the state ideology by the early ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate except during the Caliphate of al-Mā’mūn, al-Mu‘taṣīm and al-Wāthiq. Those who had religious beliefs and practices opposed to the religious dogma of dominant religious elite and ruling elite fell victim to *Zandaqah* and were persecuted. The early ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs used the term *zindīq* freely against their political and religious opponents to save and consolidate the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate.

Conclusion

Though outwardly the political, social and religious dissenters were accused of having Manichaean or dualist religious tendencies, there were other factors involved in the accusations that related more to the threat posed by these dissenters to the authority of the dominant orthodoxy and the state. As the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate was in its infancy, so *Zandaqah* was used to crush political opponents and to consolidate the Empire. Sunnī Orthodoxy was the state ideology of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, so those whose religious beliefs and practices were opposed to the ruling elite and religious elite fell victim to *Zandaqah* and were prosecuted and persecuted. The rebellious movements in Persia and Central Asia were declared heretical movements and their leaders were persecuted as *zindīqs* on the charges of having anti-Islamic Zoroastrian and Manichaean agenda. These included, among others, Ustādh Sīs, al-Muqanna‘, Bābak al-Khurramī, Afshīn and Mazyār. In fact, the people of these areas had social, economic and political grievances that prompted them to rebel against the central government. The political and economic interests of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs, and the political ruling elite of these areas that had shared their political, social, and economic interests with the central government, were also involved in crushing these rebellions as heterodox movements. Economic factors played a critical role in the emergence of these rebellious movements. During the early ‘Abbāsīd period, a large number of Arabs started settling in the Persian and Central Asian lands and occupied the fertile lands of the local people. Moreover, the abundance of mineral resources, silver mines, gold, iron and crude oil in areas like Azerbaijān, Khurāsān and Bādghīs made these areas important and strategic for the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs. When people of these areas rebelled as a protest against the new settlers, who were taking their resources, the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate perceived it as a threat to their economic interests and declared

these movements as heterodox movements, while accusing their leaders of being non-Muslims.

Notes and References

1. F.C. de Blois, 'Zindik', *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, XI, pp. 510-513.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. The *Avesta* is the primary collection of sacred texts of Zoroastrianism.
5. Josef Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, Tr. Jane Marie Todd, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 15.
6. W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, London, Oneworld, 1998, p. 171.
7. W. Montgomery Watt, *Islam and the Integration of Society*, Oxford, Routledge, 2001, p. 120.
8. Reynold A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, Richmond, Curzon Press, 1993, p. 375.
9. *Ibid.*, see n. 2.
10. Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *The Early 'Abbāsīd Empire: The Sons and Grandsons of al-Manṣūr, The Reigns of al-Mahdī, al-Hādī and Hārūn al-Rashīd*, Tr. John Alden Williams, vol. 2, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 27, see n. 78.
11. Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia from the Earliest Times until Firdawsi*, (Elibron Classics Series, Replica Edition), London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1902), p. 307.
12. Bayard Dodge, 'Mani and the Manichaeans' in *Medieval and Middle Eastern Studies in Honour of Aziz Suryal Atiya*, Ed. Sami A. Hanna, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1972, p. 102.
13. Muḥammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early 'Abbāsīds: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunni Elite*, Leiden, Brill, 1997, p. 64.
14. Dodge, 'Mani and the Manichaeans', p. 102.
15. Abdullah Saeed and Hassan Saeed, *Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam*, Burlington, Ashgate, 2004, p. 40.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Ibn al-Muqaffa' was one of the great literary personalities of the early 'Abbāsīd period. He was of Persian origin, wrote Arabic prose and translated Indian and Iranian literary works into Arabic, F. Gabrieli, Ibn al-Muqaffa', *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, III, pp. 883-885.
18. Abu'l-Faraj Muḥammad bin Ishāq al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, Tr. and Ed. Bayard Dodge, New York, Columbia University Press, 1970, p. 259.
19. Shams al-Din Abk Al-Abbās Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān wa Anbā Abnā al-Zamān (A Biographical Dictionary)*, Tr. M. de Slane, Ed. S. Moinul Haq, vol. 2, New Delhi, Kitab Bhavan, 1996, p. 225.
20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.
22. Uthman Sayyid Aḥmad Ismail al-Bili, *Prelude to the Generals: A Study of Some Aspects of the Reign of the Eighth 'Abbasid Caliph, Al-Mu'taṣim, 218-227 A.H./ 833-842 A.D.*, Reading, Ithaca Press, 2001, pp. 12-13.
23. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, pp. 373-374.
24. *Ibid.*, 374.
25. *Ibid.*, Maḥmūd Ibrahim, 'Religious Inquisition as Social Policy: The Persecution of the 'Zandaqah' in the Early 'Abbasid Caliphate', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, XVI (Spring, 1994), p. 60.
26. Farouk Omar, 'Some Observations on the Reign of the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdī 185/775-169/785', *Arabica* 2, June., 1974, p. 141; Ibrahim, 'Religious Inquisition as Social Policy', p. 56.
27. Ewald Wagner argues that according to one version he died in prison on charges of heresy. According to another tradition, he died in the house of a woman that was used as a bar, while according to another source, he died in the house of Al-Nawbakht, a learned Shī'ah family, Ewald Wagner, 'Abu Nuwas', *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, I, pp. 143-144.
28. Hamid Dabashi, *Truth and Narrative: The Untimely Thoughts of Ayn Al-Qudāt Al-Hamadāni*, Richmond, Curzon Press, 1999, p. 195.
29. Omar, 'Some Observations on the Reign of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mahdī 185/775-169/785', p. 142.
30. Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine 634-1099*, Tr. Ethel Broido, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, 289-290.
31. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān wa Anbā Abnā al-Zamān*, vol. VII, p. 244.
32. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Early 'Abbāsīd Empire*, vol. II, p. 140.
33. *Ibid.*, 250; the Barmakis were a Persian family who served as secretaries and wazīrs during the early 'Abbāsīd Caliphate. They belonged to the Iranian priest group of the temple of Nowbahār near Balkh before accepting Islam. They enjoyed great powers during the Caliphate of al-Manṣūr, al-Mahdī, al-Hādī, and Hārūn al-Rashīd. The most famous wazīrs of this family were Khālīd ibn Barmak and Yaḥyā ibn Khālīd. They fell from grace during the period of Hārūn al-Rashīd. Their property was confiscated, some were killed and some were imprisoned. The reason for the fall of the Barmakīs is controversial. See W. Barthold and D. Soudel, 'Barmakī', *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, I, pp. 1033-1036.
34. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, p. 507.
35. Al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, p. 805.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 817.
37. W. Madelung, 'Khurramiyah', *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, V, pp. 63-65.
38. Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 172-173.
39. Farhād Daftary, 'Sectarian and National Movements in Iran, Khurāsān and Transoxiana during Umayyad and Early 'Abbāsīd Times', in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Ed. M.S. Asimov and C.E. Bosworth, vol. 4. Delhi, Narandera Prakash Jain, 2003, pp. 47-48.
40. John Joseph Saunders, *A History of Medieval Islam*, London, Routledge, 2002, p. 113.

41. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, p. 308.
42. Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations: An English Version of the Arab Text of Athar-ul-Bakiya of Al Biruni*, Tr. Edward C. Sachau, (Elibron, Classics Series, Reprint Edition), London, Elibron.com, 1999), 193.
43. Al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, p. 822.
44. Daftary maintains that his teachings were against both the official Zoroastrian establishment and orthodox Muslims. He was killed by Abū Muslim Khurrāsānī in 749.⁴⁵ His followers, mainly the Zoroastrians, participated in the later heterodox movements in Persia against the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate. Daftary, ‘Sectarian and National Movements in Iran, Khurasan and Transoxiana during Umayyad and Early Abbasid Times’, p. 47.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.
47. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Early ‘Abbāsīd Empire*, vol. II, p. 26.
48. As cited in Elton L. Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under ‘Abbasid Rule, 747-820*, Minneapolis, Bibliotheca Islamica, 1979, p. 129; According to Madelung, most of the people who joined his revolt were from Jibal (a province in western Iran during Arab rule) and Ṭabaristān (a region on the southern coasts of Caspian Sea, part of the modern Iranian provinces Māzandarān, Golestān and Semnān). The people of Jibal were peasants who were discontented due to the state’s uneven taxation policy. Sunbādh killed many Muslims, inflicted severe atrocities on others and tried to destroy the social fabric of the state, W. Madelung, ‘Sunbadh’, *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, IX, pp. 874-875.
49. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, p. 172.
50. Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under ‘Abbasid Rule, 747-820*, pp. 132-133. According to Daniel their white banner was symbol of ‘white’ religion of Zoroastrianism against Islam.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133.
52. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 317; Daniel, while relying on Ya‘qūbī al-Dhahabī and Suyūṭī, argues that Ustādh Sīs was *amīr* of Herat. With his supporters, he participated in the *Da‘wah* movement of ‘Abbāsīds against the Umayyad’s but later revolted against the ‘Abbāsīds. Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under ‘Abbasid Rule*, p. 133.
53. W. Madelung, ‘Ustādh Sīs’, *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, X, pp. 926-927.
54. Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under ‘Abbasid Rule, 747-820*, pp. 138-139. According to Daniel, Muqanna‘ belonged to the village of Kaza near the city of Merv. His name was Aṭā, Ḥākīm or Hāshim ibn Ḥākīm. Al-Muqanna‘ was his nickname, because he used to cover his face with a green or gold mask. In fact, he used to cover his face to veil his ugliness as he only had one eye. He served in the ‘Abbāsīd *Da‘wah* as an officer in the army of Abū Muslim. His movement gained popularity in Soghdia, Bukhara and Transoxiana. This part of Central Asia was inhabited by Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, orthodox and heterodox Muslims and pagan ‘shamanists’, which made this area very fruitful for the growth of religious syncretism and of new religious doctrines such as that of al-Muqanna‘.
55. Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ja‘far al-Narshakhi, *The History of Bukhara*, Tr. Richard N. Frye, Princeton, N.J., Markus Wiener, 2007, pp. 87, 89.

56. Al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, p. 194.
57. Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under 'Abbasid Rule, 747-820*, p. 147.
58. Madelung, 'Khurramiyyah', pp. 63-65.
59. According to D. Sourdel, Bābak was a native of al-Madain. His Persian name was Pāpak (in Arabic, Bābak). He became head of the Khurramīs after the death of the Jawidhān ibn Sahl and proclaimed that the spirit of Jawidhān had passed into him. He encouraged people to rebel in the region of al-Badhdh (not extant today, situated in the mountainous region of Arran, in Azerbāijān) and gave new strength to this social and religious movement. He introduced the teachings of Mazdak in Khurramīs. He started his movement in 816-817 during the Caliphate of al-Mā'mūn. Caliph Mā'mūn could not win against Bābak Khurramī. In the reign of al-Mu'taṣim (r. 833-842), he was defeated, captured and brought to Baghdad, where he was executed as a heretic and rebel in January 838. The followers of Bābak, Bābakiyya, continued to wait for their leader till the eleventh century. D. Sourdel, 'Babak', *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, I, p. 844.
60. Al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadim*, p. 818.
61. He belonged to Ushrusanā (the mountainous district between Samarkand and Khudjanda, including the upper course of Zarafshān River). The native princes of Ushrusanā were called *Afshīn*. His name was Khaydhar (in Arabic, Haydar). He became ruler of Ushrusanā after the death of his father, Afshīn Kawūs. He played a very important role during the reigns of Caliph al-Mā'mūn and Caliph al-Mu'taṣim in suppressing the revolts, particularly that of Bābak. Afshīn was accused of heresy and died in prison in 841 during the Caliphate of al-Mu'taṣim, W. Barthold and H.A.R. Gibb, 'Afshīn', *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, I, p. 241.
62. Mazyār (d. 840) was a member of the Karinid dynasty, which ruled over Ṭabaristān from the time of Khusrau (Chosroes) I (531-579) until 840. He accepted Islam and became *mawla* of the Commander of the Faithful, Caliph al-Mā'mūn. When he became ruler of Ṭabaristān, he began to use violent methods to gain more areas. The Zoroastrian landowners of the region resisted him because of his brutal methods. He refused to accept the suzerainty of the 'Abbāsids, refused to send them *kharāj* and proclaimed himself an independent ruler of Ṭabaristān. He revolted against Caliph al-Mu'taṣim. M. Rekaya, 'Karinids', *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, IV, pp. 644-647.
63. Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under 'Abbasid Rule, 747-820*, p. 125.
64. *Ghulāt* is a plural of *ghālī* meaning 'extremist'. According to Marshal Hodgson, in Muslim literature, the term is used for those Shī'ah who are accused of exaggeration (*ghulū*) and who had free speculation without any limitation in religion. See M.G.S. Hodgson, 'Ghulat', *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, I, 1093-1095.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
66. Jacques Waardenburg, *Islam: Historical, Social and Political Perspectives*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2002, pp. 88-89.
67. Al-Bili, *Prelude to the Generals*, p. 2.
68. C.E. Bosworth and O.G. Bolshakov, 'Central Asia Under the Umayyads and the Early 'Abbasids', in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia: The Age of*

- Achievement: A. D. 750 to the End of the Fifteenth Century, The Historical, Social and Economic Setting*, Ed. M.S. Asimov and C.E. Bosworth, Part One, vol. 4, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1999, p. 30; Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, pp. 172-173.
69. Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early 'Abbāsids*, p. 40.
 70. Bosworth and Bolshakov, 'Central Asia Under the Umayyads and the Early 'Abbasids', p. 30.
 71. Hugh Kennedy, *The Early 'Abbāsīd Caliphate: A Political History*, London, Groom Helm, 1981, pp. 170-171.
 72. M.A. Shaban, *Islamic History: A New Interpretation A.D. 750-1055 (A.H. 132-448)*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 57-58.
 73. Bosworth and Bolshakov, 'Central Asia Under the Umayyads and the Early 'Abbasids', p. 24.
 74. *Ibid.*, Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 26.
 75. Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under 'Abbāsīd Rule, 747-820*, p. 137.
 76. Kennedy, *The Early 'Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 183-184.
 77. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
 78. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179.
 79. Shaban, *Islamic History*, pp. 4-5.
 80. Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under 'Abbāsīd Rule, 747-820*, p. 146.
 81. Bosworth and Bolshakov, 'Central Asia under the Umayyads and the Early 'Abbasids', p. 32.
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 83. Bosworth and Bolshakov, 'Central Asia under the Umayyads and the Early 'Abbasids', p. 31.
 84. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-37.
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 92. Al-Bili, *Prelude to the Generals*, pp. 73-74.
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101. Daftary, 'Sectarian and National Movements in Iran, Khurasan and Transoxiana during Umayyad and Early 'Abbāsīd Times', p. 41.
102. Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early 'Abbāsīds*, p. 64.
103. Melhem Chokr, 'Zandaqah et Zindiqs au Second Siecle de l'Hegire', Book review by Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 4 (November 1995), pp. 504-505; According to Nicholson, Shu'ūbiyyah were non-Arabs, particularly Persians, who suffered because they championed the cause of Persian nationalism, and were against the domination of Arab culture and tradition. See Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 372.
104. Chokr, 'Zandaqah et Zindiqs au Second Siecle de l'Hegire', pp. 504-505.
105. Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early 'Abbāsīds*, p. 66.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
107. Omar, 'Some Observations on the Reign of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mahdī 185/775-169/785', p. 140.
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