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Al-Karkh: the Development of an Imāmī-Shīʿī Stronghold in Early Abbasid and Būyid Baghdad (132-447/750-1055)

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Abstract

Following the foundation of Baghdad by Caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136-158/754-775) in 145/762, the neighbourhood of al-Karkh attracted many Imāmī scholars, becoming the centre of the Imāmī *wikāla* (network of deputies of the Imām) in the late 3rd/9th century, and then the heart of the Imāmī *ḥawza* (seminary) and the rationalist school of theology which developed under the Būyids (333-447/945-1055). Al-Karkh also became the centre of a popular movement of Imāmī-Shīʿa; from the Būyid period onward, the latter played a significant role in the social and political life of the city until its fall under the Mongol invasion of 656/1258. From the point of view of the micro-history, this article investigates the incubation of the Imāmī-Shīʿī movement in this suburban area of the city, bringing together topography and social history data from medieval geography manuals, historical chronicles, local histories, biographical dictionaries, poetry, and travellers' accounts. More than a quarter, al-Karkh acted as a city within Baghdad; repeatedly destroyed and burnt down, its history sheds light on urban life in the Abbasid capital, and on the development of Imāmī-Shīʿism during its formative period.

Keywords

Baghdad – Karkh – Imāmī Shīʿism – *wikāla* – *ḥawza*

Résumé

Après la fondation de Bagdad par le calife al-Manşūr (r. 136-158 / 754-775) en 145/762, le quartier d'al-Karkh a attiré de nombreux érudits imamites, devenant le centre de la *wikāla* imamite (réseau de lieutenants de l'Imām) à la fin du III^e / IX^e siècle, puis au cœur de la *hawza* imamite (séminaire) et de l'école rationaliste de théologie qui s'est développée sous les Būyides (333-447 / 945-1055). Al-Karkh est également devenu le centre d'un mouvement populaire shi'ite-imamite ; à partir de la période būyide, ce dernier a joué un rôle important dans la vie sociale et politique de la ville jusqu'à sa chute sous l'invasion mongole de 656/1258. Du point de vue de la micro-histoire, cet article explore l'incubation du mouvement shi'ite-imamite dans cette zone suburbaine de la ville en rassemblant des données de topographie et d'histoire sociale à partir de manuels de géographie, de chroniques historiques, d'histoires locales, de dictionnaires biographiques, de poésie, et de comptes-rendus de voyageurs médiévaux. Plus qu'un quartier, al-Karkh a agi comme une ville à l'intérieur de la ville de Bagdad ; détruit et incendié à plusieurs reprises, son histoire met en lumière la vie urbaine dans la capitale abbasside et le développement du shi'isme imamite au cours de sa période formative.

Mots-clés

Bagdad – Kharkh – Shi'isme imamite – *wikāla* – *hawza*

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Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-'Aṭṭār narrated from his father, from Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, from Muḥammad b. Mehrān, from his uncle Aḥmad b. Zakariyyā' that:

Al-Riḍā 'Alī b. Mūsā (d. 202/818) asked me:

"Where is your house in Baghdad?"

I said: "Al-Karkh."

He said: "That is the safest of places."¹

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1 Ibn Bābawayh, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'ma*, I-II, p. 403; Muḥammad Bāqir, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, XIII, p. 88.

Introduction

Throughout the Abbasid period, Imāmī² Shī'ism developed in various centres in Iran, Iraq and Khurāsān; Qum, Kūfa, Rayy, and Baghdad are the most noteworthy cities where Imāmī theology was elaborated. In Baghdad, it was in a specific quarter of the city named al-Karkh that the Shī'ī movement – both its intellectual stream and the popular activism of the masses – developed most strongly.³ Karkh Baghdad presented several advantages for Imāmīs: not only was it conveniently located on the road to Kūfa, a notorious Shī'ī stronghold, but it was also the most vibrant commercial centre of the capital city, attracting many visitors and merchants, and hosting a large and diverse population. Zayde Antrim highlighted the importance of place and territory in her work *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World*,⁴ which examined notions of attachment to land between the 3rd/9th and the 5th/11th centuries. While Antrim put the accent on cities as the main forms of territorial attachment, this article highlights the key role of neighbourhoods and quarters as spaces of belonging and identity construction.

2 Imāmī is used in the sense of Etan Kohlberg, "From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-'Ashariyya," pp. 521-534, and idem, "Early Attestations of the Term Ithnā-'Ashariyya," pp. 343-357. See also Najam Haider, "Prayer, Mosque, and Pilgrimage: Mapping Shī'ī Sectarian Identity in 2nd/8th Century Kūfa," pp. 151-174.

3 The name al-Karkh comes from the Aramaic "Karka", which means "fortified city." There were several towns called al-Karkh in Iraq, and they were conveniently distinguished by adding their location in their name: Karkh Baghdad and Karkh Samarra are among the most notorious. A list of several of these locations can be found in: Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, IV, pp. 447-49; *EL*² "al-Karkh." Both appellations "al-Karkh" and "Karkh Baghdad" are found in the primary sources, and this article will follow the same principle by adopting the definite article in front of "Karkh." The limits of Karkh Baghdad evolved over the period under consideration. While the early al-Karkh referred to the area between Bāb al-Baṣra and Bāb al-Kūfa, in the later period (post 4th/10th century) al-Karkh often refers to the whole area West of the Tigris and South of the Round City: Iṣṭakhri, *Masālik al-Mamālik*, p. 58; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-Ard*, I, p. 241. There are occasionally references to al-Karkh as encompassing the whole Western side of the Tigris, including the Northern part of the Round city. In that context the cemetery of Bāb al-Tibn (Quraysh cemetery) is described as being located in al-Karkh. Such references are rarer however, and throughout the Seljukid period, most of the historical chronicles refer to al-Karkh as the Southern part of the Round City, on the Western side of the Tigris. On the topography of al-Karkh, see Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, I, pp. 79-82. See also the detailed maps given by Aḥmad Sūsa, *Fayḍānāt Baghdād* and Jacob Lassner, trans. Ṣālah Aḥmad al-'Alī, *Khiṭaṭ Baghdād fī l-Uḥūd al-'Abbāsīyya al-'Ūlā*. Mathieu Tillier also notes that the district encompassing al-Karkh was called "al-Sharqiyya" up until the 4th/10th century, see Mathieu Tillier, *Les Cadis d'Irak*, pp. 25-57.

4 Antrim, *Routes and Realms*.

The timeline chosen emphasizes a long-term approach to developments in al-Karkh, contextualizing key moments in the evolution of the quarter. Social history studies on Abbasid Baghdad tend to focus on the Būyid period as the starting point of confessional and neighbourhood violence in the city. Both primary sources and secondary studies have emphasized the centrality of al-Karkh in this intercommunal violence from the Būyid period until the end of the Abbasid Caliphate in 656/1258.⁵ Throughout the late Abbasid period, al-Karkh is synonymous with Shīʿī rebellions in most chronicles of the time, particularly the works of the famous historians Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) and Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233). Little is known, however, of al-Karkh prior to the early Būyid era. The lack of studies on al-Karkh in the early Abbasid period has led several scholars to argue that the Shīʿī settlements noticeable in early Būyid Karkh dated from that very period.⁶ In the view of these scholars, the rise of confessional violence in the city from the Būyid period onward was equated with a new geographical distribution of religious communities in different neighbourhoods across Baghdad. This article seeks to fill a major scholarly gap in the microhistory of Baghdad by investigating the development of al-Karkh as a Shīʿī, and then Imāmī stronghold from the early Abbasid period until the end of Būyid rule. Through what processes did a community⁷ slowly

5 Sabari, *Mouvements populaires*. This paper will focus mainly on the development of Imāmī Shīʿism in al-Karkh, despite the fact that other Shīʿī groups were present in the quarter, in particular early Zaydīs, and a few Nuṣayrīs led by their leader in al-Karkh, ‘Abd-Allāh al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥamdān al-Khāṣībī (d. 346/957).

6 Muhsin al-Amin, the author of a vast encyclopedia containing the biographies of Shīʿī notable figures from the earliest period, considered al-Karkh to be inhabited solely by Shīʿīs from the early Abbasid period. This led him to categorize any resident of al-Karkh (Karkhī) as Shīʿī in his voluminous work. See Muhsin al-Amin, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*. Similarly Sabari considered the quarter to be mainly Shīʿī; he established a map of Sunnī and Shīʿī quarters based on the conflicts of the Būyid period. *Les Mouvements Populaires*, p. 12. To the contrary, Judith Ahola argued that al-Karkh was not a predominantly Shīʿī quarter until the late Būyid/early Seljukid period, while Vanessa Van Renterghem convincingly demonstrated the presence of non-Shīʿī inhabitants in the area in the Seljukid period, concluding that it is impossible to establish if and at what point the quarter might have become predominantly Shīʿī. See Van Renterghem, *Les Elites Bagdadennes*; Ahola, *The Community of Scholars: an Analysis of the Biographical Data from the Tārīkh Baghdād*. Ahola only relies on Sunnī sources for her argument, focusing on the *Tārīkh Baghdād*, which as will be explained does not offer a full treatment of Shīʿī scholars for the period. Mafizullah Kabir similarly argues that “we find no reference to the Shīʿīte character of the quarter till the time of the Buwayhids.” See Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad*, p. 203.

7 For the purpose of this article, the term “community” is defined as a group of people bound by common/shared religious beliefs, practices, and rituals as well as an interest in living together within a larger society. A shared residence, as will be shown, allowed for a greater number of contacts locally, which in turn strengthened the sense of a group identity. In

establish its headquarters in this area and why? This article demonstrates that al-Karkh was not only a distinctive neighbourhood in Baghdad, linked to its status as the main commercial center of the city, but it also largely functioned as an autonomous unit, and one of the largest and most populated districts of Baghdad. Several factors, it explains, led the area to become the heart of Baghdadi Shīʿism in the Abbasid period: its geographical location on the route to Kūfa,⁸ the diversity of its population, as well as trade incentives linked to its mercantile nature. Practical considerations, a sense of danger, but also a strong feeling of community led many early Shīʿa⁹ to settle in al-Karkh from the early Abbasid period onward. Though they might not have been the most numerous community in al-Karkh in the early Abbasid period, they had a considerable presence in the area, one that expanded over the years, with the multiplication of core communal markers such as mosques, libraries, and study circles. Following the analyses of Najam Haider who demonstrated the role of geographical space in shaping identity in 2nd/8th century Kūfa,¹⁰ this article argues that the choice of a place of settlement and residence in Baghdad in the early and later Abbasid period was a significant factor in community building. The later activism of al-Karkh, highly visible from the Būyid period onward, is the outcome of this long development during the previous two centuries. Through its role as the largest commercial center of Baghdad and the heart of

Kūfa just as in Baghdad, it is this perception of being different – often through differentiated rituals – that led these Shīʿī groups to establish their own local places of worship and residence separately from the larger population. In his examination of the birth of an insular Imāmī community in Kūfa, using *ḥadīth* transmitters as a point of analysis, Najam Haider concludes that the Imāmīs constituted a “distinctive community at the start of the 2d/8th century” (Haider, *The Origins of the Shīʿa*, p. 190). Haider notes that there are possibilities of the community having coalesced earlier (late 1st/7th century), but the available traditions do not allow us to reach any definitive conclusion on this matter. See Haider, *The Origins of the Shīʿa*, but also Marshall G. Hodgson, “How did the early Shīʿa become sectarian?” (*JAOS* 75, pp. 1-12). This article demonstrates the growing feeling of community through the place of residence, common rituals and collective activities (including the insults of the early Companions of the Prophet from the mid-3rd/9th century onwards, and the processions going from al-Karkh to the North West of Baghdad), and eventually the building of security walls around the neighbourhood of al-Karkh. The concentration of scholars and merchants of Shīʿī identity allowed for the latter to support the former, as will be explained in the article.

- 8 The large majority of early Imāmīs were settled in Kūfa (Haider, *The Origins*, 14).
- 9 The sources for the early Abbasid period indicate that many ‘Alids, Zaydis, and Imāmīs lived in the area; towards the later Abbasid period the Twelvers had become the predominant group. Other religious communities lived in al-Karkh, including Muslims, Christians, and Jews. This article will not trace their settlements in the area, but rather focuses solely on Shīʿism.
- 10 See Haider, “Prayer, Mosque, and Pilgrimage” and *The Origins of the Shīʿa*.

a Shī'ī-Imāmī movement, al-Karkh played a major role in Baghdad's social and political life.

Part 1: Al-Karkh in the Early Abbasid Period (132-333/750-945)

Before investigating the Shī'ī presence in al-Karkh, a preliminary examination of the early history of the area is necessary to understand both its specificities and its autonomous status in early Abbasid Baghdad, all of which were factors that attracted early Shī'a.

The Foundation of Baghdad near al-Karkh

The story of Abbasid Baghdad starts with al-Karkh. The district's history is intimately tied with the evolution of the capital city; not only were al-Karkh's geographical and topographical features significant for the development of Baghdad, but its tumultuous social life reflected broader conditions in the capital city.

In his book *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, the Persian geographer Ḥamd-Allāh Mustawfī (d. 750/1349) wrote that "in the days of the Chosroes [...] on the place Baghdad now occupies, there was a village on the western bank of the Tigris called Karkh, which was built by Shāpūr II."¹¹ According to this statement, the village of al-Karkh pre-existed the Abbasid capital of Baghdad by four centuries. Several sources indicate that it had both a thriving market – later called "Sūq Baghdad" and situated near Qarn al-Ṣarāṭ¹² – and a significant population before the foundation of Baghdad. Al-Karkh was inhabited by Christians and Jews¹³ prior to the Muslim conquests of the Sassanian Empire.¹⁴ Al-Karkh's importance for the city of Baghdad is attested in early Abbasid sources: it supplied the whole city with goods, despite the presence of smaller markets in other suburbs.

11 Ḥamd-Allāh Mustawfī, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb* trans. Le Strange, *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat-al-Qulūb*, p. 40.

12 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, pp. 414-415; Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad*, p. 247, f2.

13 The Jewish traveller Benjamin of Tudela (d. 1173) counted the synagogues of Baghdad, declaring: "In Baghdad there are 28 Jewish Synagogues, situated either in the city itself or in al-Karkh on the other side of the Tigris; for the river divides the metropolis into two parts," in *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, p. 42. The original Hebrew quote is p. 64.

14 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's *Tārīkh Baghdād* contains details on the gradual islamization process of the city, where previously Christian quarters and streets slowly espoused an Islamic character. See also: Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, II, pp. 616-695; Le Strange, *Baghdad*, pp. 207-13 for details on the public services and religious festivals of this community. More information on the number of monasteries and their location in the city can be found in Mustafā and Susa, *Dalīl Khāriṭat Baghdād*, pp. 57-134.

According to Jacob Lassner, the location of the Round City was chosen for its advantageous location near the market of al-Karkh.¹⁵ What made al-Karkh an area particularly fit for commerce was its network of canals: the area was watered by three waterways: *nahr* 'Īsā, the Ṣarāṭ, and the Karkhāyā.¹⁶ These canals conveniently connected al-Karkh to further areas, while the many bridges carried the traffic over them.¹⁷ One of the important features of these canals is that they enabled goods to be transported by water from the Euphrates, in particular grain from al-Jazīra to the markets of al-Karkh. This geographic location may explain why al-Karkh remained one of the most populated areas of Baghdad throughout the Abbasid period;¹⁸ even during the years of Abbasid decline in the early 4th/10th century, al-Karkh was among the most populous sections of the city.¹⁹ In his *Buldān*, the geographer al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/897) provides a long description of the quarter, explaining that "there was no quarter that was bigger and more splendid in Baghdad [than Karkh]."²⁰ According to al-Ya'qūbī, al-Karkh had a surface area of ten kilometres from North to South, and six from the West to the Tigris river.²¹ In a similar fashion, Ibn Ḥawqal

15 Lassner, *Topography*, p. 172; Lassner, Massignon and Baghdad, p. 21.

16 On the canals of al-Karkh, see Le Strange, *Baghdad during the 'Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 69-80.

17 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, I, pp. 79-82; the translation of Ibn Serapion's (4th/10th century) work on the canals of Baghdad by Guy Le Strange, reedited by Hugh Kennedy, *Collected Works of Guy Le Strange*, IV, Description of Mesopotamia and Baghdad by Ibn Serapion translated by Guy Le Strange.

18 There is disagreement on the population of Baghdad in the early Abbasid period, figures ranging from 250,000 to 1.5 million. The Būyid historian Hilāl al-Ṣābī argued that the higher estimates were closer to reality in *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa*, p. 21. See *EP² Baghdad*; Sabari, *Mouvements populaires*, pp. 16-17; Bosworth (ed.), *Historic Cities*, pp. 33-37; a discussion of Baghdad's population from the foundation of the city until the Būyid period can be found in the thesis of Judith Ahola, *The Community of Scholars*, in particular chapter 3. See also Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, p. 47; Micheau, "Baghdad In The Abbasid Era: A Cosmopolitan And Multi-Confessional Capital," pp. 234-235.

19 Al-Muqaddasī, *The Best Divisions For Knowledge of the Regions*, 109. Al-Karkh was destroyed and burnt down a number of times, particularly under the Būyids and Seljūkīds, but maintained a fairly high population despite relatively short periods of decline.

20 Al-Ya'qūbī, *Al-Buldān: Les Pays*, trans. Gaston Wiet, p. 27.

21 Al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, ed. M. J. De Goeje, p. 246. A description of the various markets can be found: pp. 245-246. Ibn 'Aqīl also uses al-Karkh in its broadest extension; it includes the entire West side (see Makdisi, "The Topography of Eleventh Century Baghdad: Materials and Notes (I)," *Arabica*, T. 6, Fasc. 2 (May, 1959), pp. 178-197, see p. 196). See also Al-Iṣṭakhrī (d. 957), *Kitāb al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik* (BGA, ed. de Goeje, I, Leiden, 1927), pp. 83-84.

(d. 378/988) described it a century later as “heavily populated and with considerable commerce.”²²

In terms of security, the canals of Al-Karkh offered protection against unwanted newcomers to the Round City. Caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136-158/754-775), the founder of Baghdad, had both commerce and security in mind when choosing a location for his new capital.²³ He effectively used natural frontiers to protect his new home: the Tigris as a barrier between him and Persia and Khurāsān (seen as a breeding ground for rebels), the Euphrates as a barrier from Syria, and pro-ʿAlid Kūfa²⁴ kept at a distance beyond the canals of al-Karkh.²⁵

ʿAlid Threats and the Relocation of the City Markets to al-Karkh in 157/774

A series of events in the first decades following the foundation of the Round City led to a considerable expansion of al-Karkh. These events ultimately ended with the removal of all the markets from the Round City and their establishment in al-Karkh in year 157/774, on the orders of al-Manṣūr. This decision, and the background leading to it, are all the more significant since they laid down the nature of the future relationship between central Baghdad and al-Karkh.

The foundation of Baghdad had brought to the city heavy waves of migration from the Iraqi cities of Kūfa and Baṣra,²⁶ but also Khurāsān and Persia; among these migrants were large numbers of merchants²⁷ coming to find opportunities in the new capital. In his account of al-Manṣūr’s decision in 157/774,

22 Al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb Masālik wa-Mamālik*, p. 67.

23 See Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, pp. 58-60; Al-Yaʿqūbī, ed. M. J. de Goeje, p. 234. The purity of the air was another reason for the choice of this location. See Ibn al-Ṭīqtaqā, *Al-Fakhrī*, pp. 218-219.

24 Kūfa had been considered as a potential capital by the early Abbasid caliphs, who even established themselves there for some time; the strength of ʿAlid sympathies deterred them from remaining there. The *Bayt al-Māl* and the *dawāwīn* were located in Kūfa before the foundation of Baghdad, which attests of its role as an administrative center of the empire. They were moved from Kūfa to Baghdad in 762/3. Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 293; *EP*², “Kūfa.” On Kūfa as the center of the pro-ʿAlid movement, see Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival*, pp. 39-41.

25 Salmon, *L’Introduction Topographique*, p. 43.

26 A detailed study on new settlers and their origins can be found in Ahola’s thesis, *The Community of Scholars: An Analysis of the Biographical Data from the Tārīkh Baghdad*, Unpublished thesis, St Andrews University, 2005, pp. 101-110. At the level of traditionists, Kūfa was the largest source of migrations to Baghdad in al-Khaṭīb’s *Tārīkh*, followed by Baṣra.

27 The early Imāmī movement of Kūfa relied on merchants to send correspondence to the Imāms in Medina. Haider, 14.

al-Ṭabarī mentions a report by al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān al-Hāshimī, who narrated from his father. According to al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān, Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā (also called Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. 'Abdallāh), who was named *muḥtasib* of the city by al-Manṣūr in 157/774, had “gathered a group against al-Manṣūr and led the lower classes of them astray, and they caused a commotion and gathered together.”²⁸ Al-Ṭabarī explains that Ibn Zakariyyā had connections with Muḥammad and Ibrāhīm, sons of 'Abdallāh b. Ḥasan (known as al-Nafs al-Zakiyya), who had led an 'Alid rebellion against al-Manṣūr in Medina in 145/762;²⁹ this information is omitted by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, although both historians agree that according to al-Faḍl's report, this event was “the reason for the removal of the markets from the City of Peace.”³⁰ Al-Manṣūr was wary of two particular groups: the 'Alids on the one hand, and the merchants on the other. Through the Caliph's decision, both of these groups were pushed away to the suburban area of al-Karkh. The butchers, who were “*sufahā'* and had in their hands cutting knives,” were placed at the end of the markets, further away from the Round City,³¹ while al-Manṣūr also attempted to surround al-Karkh with armed men.³²

Al-Manṣūr followed this order by another security measure, which indicates the perceived threat that al-Karkh represented for caliphal authority from early on: he ordered the construction of a second principal mosque for the

28 *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, tr. Kennedy, xxix, p. 9.

29 The seventh Imām Mūsā al-Kāzim took part in this rebellion according to the Zaydī al-Nāṣir al-Uṭrūsh, see Madelung, *Der Imām al-Qāsim*, p. 160.

30 The details provided by al-Ṭabarī are not included in al-Khaṭīb, who indicates that Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā incited the “*amma*” to revolt against the Caliph, and was executed on the order of Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr at Bāb al-Dhahab. This is consistent with the fact that al-Khaṭīb generally includes less details pertaining to 'Alids and Shī'ism in his work. His biographical data omits a number of important Shī'ī traditionists of Baghdad; those who received a biography are often granted more minor descriptions than their Sunnī counterparts (al-Mufid is an example). On this point, see Van Renterghem, *Les Elites Bagdadiennes*. Another story is mentioned by several historians to account for the removal of the markets and their transfer to al-Karkh: the Byzantine ambassador's visit, which is found in al-Ṭabarī, al-Khaṭīb, and Yāqūt among others. Upon visiting the city of Baghdad, a Byzantine envoy was given a tour of the city and then asked what he thought about it. He answered that he found it perfect except for one shortcoming. The Caliph, surprised, asked what this shortcoming was. The Byzantine envoy told him that since the markets were in the city, any enemy could enter it under the disguise of a merchant. In his *Mu'jam*, Yāqūt adds another story, though less convincing: the smoke emerging from the shops and markets blackened the city walls, which led the Caliph to order their transfer to al-Karkh. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, iv, p. 255. The sense of threat from the masses and the markets in the city center (and their later relocation to al-Karkh) is also highlighted by Ibn al-Jawzī in his *Muntaẓam*, viii, pp. 78-79.

31 Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, iv, p. 448. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, viii, pp. 193-194.

32 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, viii, p. 195.

population of al-Karkh, who had thus far been praying at the mosque in the Round City. The mosque was erected in al-Sharqiyya, and a *qāḍī* was in charge of the administration of al-Karkh. Following this decision, the only people allowed in the Round City were the Caliph and his close relatives, the workers of the palaces, the servants, eunuchs, etc. The army was located in the Ḥarbiyya quarters, in the North-West side. The transferal of markets to al-Karkh was continued under al-Mahdī (r. 158-168/775-785): Sūq Dār al-Baṭīkh, formerly located in Darb al-Asāqifa, and the Darb al-Zayt, among others, were transferred to al-Karkh.³³ As al-Karkh grew, its limits evolved over time: originally an area South-West of the Round City, it eventually became the name of the whole portion of the city lying on the West bank, South of the Round City.³⁴

If the relocation of the markets made al-Karkh the principal commercial centre of the city, it also drew a number of migrants to the area, making it the most cosmopolitan and diverse district in Baghdad. Al-Karkh became home to most of Baghdad's workforce including doctors, small and better-off merchants, but also building, textile, paper, and leather workers coming from Khurāsān, Persia, Iraq, as well as Syria and Egypt. Many of these workers formed a large "urban proletariat," often noted for its early activism against the richer class of merchants.³⁵ We also hear of many pilgrims coming to the city in this period, some for a short period and others settling in al-Karkh more permanently. Writing in 276/889, al-Ya'qūbī gives enlightening information about the constituency of the people of al-Karkh. Behind the Rabī' concession,³⁶

33 A detailed map of al-Karkh with the location of several of its markets, mosques, and streets can be found in Le Strange, *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 57; the map was reproduced in Lassner, *Topography*, p. 202, and eventually Hugh Kennedy, "Baghdād," in *Historical Atlas of Islam*, ed. H. Kennedy.

34 On the topographical changes of Karkh between 132/750 and 333/945, see Le Strange, "Description of Mesopotamia," pp. 1-76; the appendix on the topography of Baghdad under al-Muqtadir by Judith Ahola and Letizia Osti in *Crisis and Continuity at the Abbasid Court*, pp. 221-238.

35 Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 88; Levy, *A Baghdad Chronicle*, p. 29; Salmon, p. 45. Levy speaks of a large Persian migration from Khurāsān to Baghdad, under al-Manṣūr's reign, composed of pilgrims and merchants mostly. One instance of the early opposition between the higher class of merchants and the urban proletariat took place during the civil war and the siege of al-Karkh by al-Ma'mūn's forces. While the urban proletariat took up arms to defend the city against the army of al-Ma'mūn and in defense of al-Amīn, the upper class of merchants reacted by drafting a letter to al-Ma'mūn, when faced with the possibility of retaliations by al-Ma'mūn's advancing forces. See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, xxxi, p. 139; Hugh Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 145-147; Kennedy, *When Baghdad ruled*, pp. 107-108.

36 Located in the Western part of Karkh, near the Gate of Karkh, it was one of the most populated areas of al-Karkh, see Guy Le Strange, *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 57-58.

houses lodged the merchants and a “mixed population of all origins,”³⁷ in particular many Khurāsānis selling various kinds of merchandise imported from Khurāsān, as well as Persians. Non-Arab groups constituted the majority of the population, since al-Ya‘qūbī specifically mentions a few houses “inhabited by Arabs” in the middle of the “areas and concessions [which we have] described.”³⁸ Besides Persians, a large number of Kūfans settled in al-Karkh, due to the proximity³⁹ of this area to the road to Kūfa, and to the markets. A significant number of people with the *nisba* al-Kūfī owned property in al-Karkh, and the quarter had a street named after them called Darb al-Kūfiyyin.⁴⁰ Al-Karkh’s mixed and diverse population has been noted by geographers and poets. Abū Nuwās (d. 198/814), who lived in al-Karkh in the first century of Abbasid rule, praised the delights of al-Karkh in one of his poems devoted to pilgrimage: “al-Karkh [is] where Baghdad’s strangers gather – for me they are not strangers.”⁴¹

Several sources indicate that the large Shī‘ī population of the markets goes back to this early period. In his *Tārīkh*, al-Khaṭīb quotes a statement of al-Wāqidī (d. 208/823)⁴² declaring that “*Al-Karkh mufīd al-safa*” (al-Karkh is infested with the lowest rabble).⁴³ Al-Khaṭīb follows this statement by an explanation given by Shaykh Abū Bakr: “Al-Wāqidī meant by this statement the specific areas of al-Karkh inhabited by the *Rāfiḍa* with no one except them; he did not mean the rest of the areas of al-Karkh, and God knows best.”⁴⁴ The geographer Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 626/1229) echoed this statement four centuries later in his *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, declaring: “all the inhabitants of al-Karkh are Imāmī-Shī‘a; there is not a single Sunnī to be seen there.”⁴⁵ What these sources indicate is that already in the late 2nd/8th century, al-Karkh contained pockets

37 Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Buldān* (tr. Wiet), p. 26.

38 Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Buldān* (tr. Wiet), p. 25.

39 Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, p. 31.

40 Large numbers of tradesmen and artisans from Kūfa are noted in al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī’s *Tārīkh*. On Darb al-Kūfiyyin, see Al-Khaṭīb, IV, p. 2321. Ahola’s database established that 46% of the Kūfans whose profession is mentioned by al-Khaṭīb and who came to Baghdad between 767-815/16 were tradesmen and artisans. Ahola, *The Community of Scholars*, p. 83.

41 The word used is *shudhdhād* *Baghdād*, meaning the foreigners or strangers of Baghdad, i.e. those who settled there but do not belong to the city. Another poem mentioned by Yāqūt refers to Baghdad as a city where strangers find solace, contrary to Damascus: “the eye of the stranger sleeps in it, while you don’t see a stranger in the Shām enjoying sleep,” Yāqūt, *Buldān*, IV, p. 461.

42 Al-Wāqidī (d. 208/823) lived in Baghdad and served as a judge for the Caliph al-Ma‘mūn.

43 Al-Khaṭīb, p. 81.

44 Al-Khaṭīb, p. 81.

45 Yāqūt, *Muḥjam*, p. 448.

of residents who were associated with Shī'ism. While it is difficult to establish with precision which particular groups were present in the quarter (were there Kaysānīs, the active wing of early Shī'ism?), we have records of Zaydīs, and later Ismā'īlīs and Nuṣayrīs, but the largest group would eventually become the Twelvers.

Considering the importance granted by the Shī'ī tradition to professions in the field of production and handicraft, it is no surprise that many were involved in these fields,⁴⁶ and al-Karkh provided a suitable place of residence. It is safe to assume that many money-changers and shop keepers associated with the early underground Shī'ī movements came from Kūfa and other regions and settled in al-Karkh in the early Abbasid period. Shī'ī *rijāl* works of the period contain mention of a significant number of *ṣarrāfiyūn* established in al-Karkh.⁴⁷ A street called 'Awn was full of bankers and money changers.⁴⁸ Ḥanbalī merchants are also mentioned as living in al-Karkh, and they tended to belong to the largest class of merchants in the city.⁴⁹ Before examining the Shī'ī presence at the level of the masses and the scholars in al-Karkh, the following section will use topographical data and poetry to examine the status of al-Karkh as an autonomous area within Baghdad.

A Town within the City: Medieval Geographers on Early Abbasid Karkh

If al-Karkh was distinguished by its population, it also was by its administrative status, which retained a degree of ambiguity: neither a mere neighbourhood, nor a full city, al-Karkh lay somewhere in between these categories. Like the other villages around Baghdad, it was absorbed by the expanding city as one of its suburbs. However, it was located at a considerable distance from the round city (there was "a horse ride from the Bāb al-Karkh to the Bāb al-Baṣra," according to Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī⁵⁰). On an administrative level, al-Karkh was an autonomous area and functioned in the way of a municipality, or even a "town." In the early years of the foundation of Baghdad, al-Karkh disposed of elements

46 Brunchvig, « Métiers vils en Islam, » p. 59.

47 Money-changers associated with the Shī'ī movement became predominant in the time of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq in Kūfa, see Asatryan, "Bankers and Politics," Newman, *The Formative Period*, p. 6.

48 The street was attacked by the Ḥanbalīs in 329/940. Al-Ṣūlī, *Akhbār al-Rādī bi-llāh*, p. 198.

49 The largest merchants of Baghdad supported the Ḥanbalī doctrine, owing to the fact that it allowed them not to pay taxes, while variant forms of Shī'ism tended to be more popular among the smaller shop keepers of the city since Shī'ī doctrine offered them a more equitable system of finance. See Newman, *The Formative Period*, p. 3.

50 Yāqūt, IV, p. 448.

that made it a municipal entity on its own, at the behest of the Caliph: a principal mosque and a judicial authority (*qāḍī*).⁵¹

Arab and Persian geographers from the early Abbasid period seem to indicate that al-Karkh was a separate town on its own. Al-Ya'qūbī's (d. 278/891) *Buldān*, one of the earliest sources on the topic, suggests that al-Karkh was not a suburb: the Western side of Baghdad is composed of "the city proper, al-Karkh, and the suburbs."⁵² Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), who lived in Baghdad throughout his life, is also reported as having defined the boundaries of Baghdad in a way that excludes al-Karkh from its limits: "Baghdad comprises everything from the Ṣarāṭ Canal to Bāb al-Tibn."⁵³ These views are supported by the poetry of the period, which contains enlightening indications on the ways in which al-Karkh was perceived by the people of the time. In his poem for Baghdad, 'Umāra ibn 'Aqīl (d. 239/853) infers that Baghdad is situated "between Qaṭrabbul and Karkh:" "There is nothing like Baghdad, worldly-wise and religious (...) Between Qaṭrabbul and Karkh, a narcissus flower blooms."⁵⁴ Qaṭrabbul was, according to the 7th/13th century geographer Yāqūt al-Hamawī (d. 626/1229), a village near Baghdad, situated precisely between Baghdad and 'Ukbara.⁵⁵ This delineation of Baghdad's location as being between Qaṭrabbul and al-Karkh suggests an equivalence of some kind between these two areas. In a similar fashion, another 10th century poet named al-Ṭāhir ibn al-Muẓaffar ibn Ṭāhir al-Khāzin mentions the "beautiful city" of Baghdad "Between al-Khuld,⁵⁶ al-Karkh, and the bridge."⁵⁷ In the sources of the later Abbasid period, al-Karkh⁵⁸ stood increasingly as an isolated area, repeatedly burnt down and destroyed. The traveller Ibn Jubayr (d. 614/1217), who described al-Karkh in the Seljukid period, speaks of it as both a quarter of Baghdad and a "city." While al-Karkh is mentioned following a listing of the various quarters of the city, Ibn Jubayr notes "and then we have al-Karkh, this being a walled city."⁵⁹

51 Lassner highlighted the unique development of Baghdad, which began as an administrative and military center, growing into an "urban complex" rather than an integrated city. Lassner, "Municipal Entities," pp. 58-62.

52 Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, ed. Wiet, pp. 35; 44.

53 Al-Khaṭīb, p. 71. See also Lassner, *The Shaping of Abbasid Rule*, p. 225.

54 The translation used is by Reuven Snir, *Baghdad: The City in Verse*, p. 94.

55 Yāqūt, IV, pp. 371-372.

56 Al-Khuld refers to a palace built by al-Manṣūr in 158/775 on the West bank of the Tigris, between al-Ruṣāfa and al-Ḥarbiyya. See *ET*², "Al-Khuld."

57 Snir, *Baghdad: The City in Verse*, p. 131.

58 Streck, *Die Alte Landschaft Babylonien*, pp. 92-97.

59 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, p. 225. Ibn Jubayr mentions another quarter as a city, though not walled: "then the area of Bab al-Basra, which is also a city where the mosque of al-Mansur is located." In his translation of Ibn Jubayr, Ronald Broadhurst preferred the term "*mashhūra*"

Confirming the status of al-Karkh as being more than a neighbourhood of Baghdad is the amount of poetry – both laudatory and damning – dedicated to al-Karkh. “*Al-ash‘ār fi l-Karkh kathīra jiddan*” (poetry composed regarding al-Karkh is very abundant),⁶⁰ said Yāqūt. While there is a tradition of poetry being written for cities,⁶¹ Baghdad being a famous example of this, this is rarer for quarters, suburbs and neighbourhoods, which further suggests that al-Karkh was perceived as an entity of its own. The bulk of poetry is of the *faḍā’il* kind (laudatory odes), celebrating al-Karkh’s heavy rains and its flowering vegetation.⁶² Aside from its natural rain and vegetation, al-Karkh was known as a place of entertainment, and even the red-light district of Baghdad. Poetry offers countless evidence of the entertainers and slave girls working in the quarter throughout the Abbasid period, from the poems of Abū Nuwās to the writings of the late Abbasid litterateur Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023).⁶³ Being away from the caliphal palace, al-Karkh offered low-class houses of ill repute to the local population. Bordering the gate of al-Karkh, the Birkat Zalzal – named after the famous lute-player at the early Abbasid court Manṣūr b. Ja‘far al-Dārib known as Zalzal – gathered young women and slave girls, who in turn inspired poets.⁶⁴ In one of his poems, ‘Abd-Allāh ibn al-Mu‘tazz (d. 296/909) calls for the night in al-Karkh not to end: “Oh night

(famous) used by al-Sharīshī to the term “*musawwara*” (walled) found in the text of Ibn Jubayr. Broadhurst explained that he was “preferring the *mashūra* (noted) of al-Sharīshī to the *musawwarah* (walled) of the text [because] it is unlikely that this quarter of the city would be walled.” However, there is evidence in the sources that al-Karkh was walled a number of times in the Abbasid period. Ibn Jubayr travelled to Baghdad in the late 6th/12th century and his description of al-Karkh took place in the month of Ṣafar 580/1184, as noted in the text. It is very likely that al-Karkh would have been walled at this time as attested by the chronicles of the period. Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. R. J. C. Broadhurst.

60 Yāqūt, IV, p. 448.

61 For an overview of the poetry and elegies written for Baghdad, see Snir, *Baghdad: The City in Verse*; Cooperson, “Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative.”

62 Abū ‘Abd-Allāh Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad Niftawayhī (d. 935) mentions that “clouds water al-Karkh with perpetual rain,” emphasizing the beauty of the area “over any other abode.” Snir, *Baghdad*, p. 20. Another anonymous poem celebrates the area of “al-Karkh for all its pomegranate and blueberry.” Snir, *Baghdad*, p. 62.

63 Caswell, *Slave Girls of Baghdad*, pp. 29, 36, 44, 81. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī gave a breakdown of the slaves counted in the houses of ill repute in al-Karkh: “460 singing slave girls, 120 free women, and 95 boys.”

64 *El*² “Zalzal.” Zalzal used to play the *ūd* for the Caliphs al-Mahdī, al-Hādī, and Harūn al-Rashīd. Coming from Kūfa, he settled in al-Karkh in Baghdad, where he had a well dug; the area became known as Birkat Zalzal for centuries.

of mine at al-Karkh, please persist; oh night don't go, please don't go."⁶⁵ More powerful are the words of Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd al-Iṣfahānī, who described his attachment to the area: "My heart is in love with al-Karkh, ardent love -It is the love solely of one who has lived there."⁶⁶ A similar feeling was expressed in a preserved fragment of Ibn Ṭayfūr's (d. 280/893) *History of Baghdad*, in which one finds the story of a Baghdadi notable named Abū Dulaf, under al-Ma'mūn. After taking a slave girl from Baghdad, Abū Dulaf was eager to live in al-Karkh, while his slave girl hated it and wished to remain in Baghdad, her "*waṭan*." Ibn Ṭayfūr mentions the poetry she wrote to express her love for Baghdad and her disdain for al-Karkh. The opposition between Baghdad and al-Karkh is significant and confirms that al-Karkh was considered a distinct entity of its own in the vicinity of Baghdad.⁶⁷

Measuring Shī'ī-Imāmī Presence in al-Karkh 132-333/750-945

On a methodological level, assessing the Imāmī presence in al-Karkh is challenging for several reasons. On the one hand, at the level of the general population, there are very few indications on the masses residing in a city, let alone in a defined quarter. On the other hand, at the level of the elites, one is faced with other problems. Moojan Momen argues that "one approach to discovering which were the important Twelver-Shī'ī areas of a time is to study the place of origin of the 12er Shī'ī '*ulamā*' of that period – the premise being that the stronger and more important the Shī'ī community, the greater the number of '*ulamā*' it produced."⁶⁸ Considering the early Abbasid period, the first difficulty has to do with establishing the Imāmī identity of a scholar. In this formative period for Twelver-Shī'ism, terms such as '*Alid*, '*alawī*, '*rāfiḍī*, '*shī'ī* and '*tashayyu*'⁶⁹ are various categories used in the sources to describe a scholar's background and *madhhab*. To this one may add the fluidity of boundary lines between Sunnī and Shī'ī scholars, as well as the practice of *taqiyya*, particularly

65 Snir, *Baghdad*, p. 113.

66 Snir, *Baghdad*, p. 116.

67 See Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād*, p. 133.

68 Momen, *An Introduction to Shī'ī Islam*, p. 84.

69 Al-Khaṭīb uses three different categories to describe a link to Shī'ism: '*alawī*, '*rāfiḍī*, and '*tashayyu*'. While the first refers specifically to a descendant of 'Alī, the other two categories encompass various meanings. Another point is that in most instances when Al-Khaṭīb uses the phrase "*min ahl al-Karkh*" to identify the origins and place of residence of a scholar in Baghdad, the expression refers to an Imāmī scholar. Sunnī scholars residing in al-Karkh are more often mentioned as "living in al-Karkh," rather than belonging to "*ahl al-Karkh*," although there are a few exceptions.

in the early Abbasid period.⁷⁰ Relying on Shī'ī *rijāl* works and their own classification can remedy these problems to a certain extent, although these sources have their own limitations. The second challenge is the fact that the sources do not systematically indicate the place of residence of a scholar within Baghdad. When a scholar's name contains the *nisba* al-Karkhī, this can indicate that the person was either born in Karkh, or lived there, or both, and the *nisba* does not necessarily refer to Karkh Baghdad, as explained earlier.⁷¹ Third, Sunnī works on Baghdad, which are more numerous and more detailed, do not offer as much information on Shī'ī scholars as they do for Sunnīs. Al-Khaṭīb's work is a case in point, where prominent Shī'ī scholars are only afforded short entries. Despite these limitations, the combination of a variety of geographical sources, chronicles, and *rijāl* and *ḥadīth* works can allow us to establish a picture of al-Karkh and its evolution through the Abbasid period.

If we consider the masses first, a close reading of the chronicles of the period offers significant information on the population of various quarters. Indeed, popular expressions of Shī'ī sympathies were recorded on al-Karkh in the early decades of Abbasid rule, which suggests the early presence of a significant population identifying with Shī'ism, as mentioned earlier.⁷² Shī'ī migrants to Baghdad increased following the arrest of the seventh Imām,

70 On *taq̣ỵya* in the early Abbasid period, see Josef Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, pp. 362-65. Van Ess cites the example of the historian al-Wāqidi (d. 207/823) who hid his Shī'ī tendencies. Sometimes, Van Ess mentions, passing for a Zaydī could spare one's life.

71 The *nisba* al-Karkhī does not allow for an automatic association of the scholar's birthplace and residence with Karkh Baghdad; it could indicate a family background and could refer to any other Karkh area such as Karkh Samarra, North East of Baghdad. There are several cases of confusion linked to this *nisba*, including the origin of the famous Sufi saint al-Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d. 199-204/815-20), who is associated with Karkh Baghdad by most medieval and modern scholars. Several medieval and modern sources challenge his association with Karkh Baghdad, arguing that he was from Karkh Samarra. Al-Muqaddasī, *The Best Divisions*, trans. Basil Collins, p. 111. Al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283) confirms that al-Ma'rūf al-Karkhī was from Karkh Samarra. Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād*, p. 444. The fact that he was buried in Bāb al-Dayr, an area North of al-Karkh in Baghdad probably explains his identification with Karkh Baghdad, all the more since his tomb became one of the most important centres of pilgrimage in 9th century Baghdad. See Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archaologische Reise*, II, p. 105.

72 Several battles involving the *Khawārij* are mentioned in al-Ṭabarī's *History* as having been fought in al-Karkh in the pre-Abbasid period: year 37/657; 68/687; and 76/695, this last battle being the most spectacular rebellion of 'Abd al-Malik's reign, that of Shabīb b. Yazīd, who found al-Karkh to be a refuge for himself and his partisans when they were unable to enter al-Madā'in. It is unclear whether *Khārījī* elements remained in the area, but it is noteworthy that several battles took place there prior to the foundation of the Round City. See *The History of al-Ṭabarī: the First Civil War*, tr. G. R. Hawting, xvii, p. 116; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, IV, p. 76; *The History of al-Ṭabarī: the Victory of the Marwanids*, tr. G. R. Hawting,

Mūsā b. Ja'far al-Kāzim (d. 183/799) in Medina and his transfer to Baghdad, first by al-Mahdī (r. 158-168/775-85) for a brief imprisonment, and later by Harūn al-Rashīd (r. 169-193/786-809), who put him under house arrest until his death.⁷³ In Baghdad, al-Kāzim was able to communicate with followers and relied on a few individuals who were influential in the Imāmī movement's organization. A close look at the sources indicates that al-Karkh was a favoured place of residence for al-Kāzim's followers and that the area played a key role in the organization of the movement. Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 197/813), who was hiding from the forces of Hārūn al-Rashīd, wrote books that he sent specifically to the "people of al-Karkh" and the "a'māl of Isfahan," calling them to join his movement. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd tells us that these books fell in the hands of al-Ma'mūn after he came to power, and he relates a conversation during which al-Ma'mūn rebuked Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq for having written this *da'wa*.⁷⁴

Al-Ṭabarī and al-Ya'qūbī include in their works several events that demonstrate a Shī'ī presence in al-Karkh in the early Abbasid period. In the early 3rd/9th century, Aḥmad b. 'Isā b. Zayd b. 'Alī⁷⁵ – Zaydī leader and scholar considered by many Kūfan Zaydīs as the legitimate candidate for the imamate – managed to escape the prison he had been held at along with another 'Alid named al-Qāsīm b. 'Alī b. 'Umar in *al-Rāfiqa*. Harūn al-Rashīd, who considered this Zaydī leader a threat to his power, was determined to seize and arrest him. From Baṣra, Aḥmad b. Isā had "been writing to the Shī'a to call them to follow him."⁷⁶ Unable to capture Aḥmad b. Isā, Harūn had his assistant and servant, Ḥāḍir, arrested and brought to him. When entering Baghdad from al-Karkh, Ḥāḍir addressed the crowds saying: "oh people, I am Ḥāḍir, the companion of Aḥmad b. 'Isā b. Zayd al-Allawī and the Sulṭān has captured me (...)." Interrupted in his speech, Ḥāḍir was taken to the Caliph who, after unsuccessful attempts at getting him to give the location of Aḥmad b. Isā, had him beaten to death, and then crucified in Baghdad in 188/804. Here again, Ḥāḍir's address to the crowds of al-Karkh, and the immediate reaction of the caliphal troops, indicate the presence of a potentially sympathetic audience.

xxi, p. 127; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, in W. Ahlwardt, *Anonyme arabische Chronik*, p. 115; *The History of al-Ṭabarī: the Marwanid Restoration*, tr. G. R. Hawting, xxii, p. 65.

73 There is disagreement in the sources on the date of his arrest, as well as whether he was first imprisoned in Baṣra before being transferred to Baghdad. See E. Kohlberg, "Mūsā al-Kāzim", *EI*².

74 Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, xvi, p. 111.

75 *EI*² "Aḥmad b. 'Isā b. Zayd b. 'Alī."

76 Al-Ya'qūbī, ii, p. 512.

Another episode that attests to a significant Shī'ī presence in al-Karkh is the decision of al-Karkh's populace to admit al-Ḥasan's troops including both Zuhayr and 'Alī b. Hishām, into the neighbourhood during the civil war of 200-201/816-817. Siding with al-Ma'mūn's secretary and governor, al-Ḥasan b. Sahl, the people of Karkh were opposed by the Ḥarbiyya troops, who supported the rebellion and reacted by plundering and burning the whole quarter. When al-Zuhayr was killed in November 200/816, his body was hence born publicly around al-Karkh as an act of reprisal for the collective action of the neighbourhood.⁷⁷ The opposition of al-Karkh, singled out in this episode, might have been a reflection of the 'Alid-Abbasid antagonism.

In 255/869, a third episode is mentioned by al-Ṭabarī involving the population of al-Karkh: the insurrection led by 'Alī ibn Muḥammad who claimed lineage with the family of Zayd ibn 'Alī. Rising as an insurgent under al-Muhtadī bi-llāh (r. 255-256/869-870), he received help from the people of al-Karkh: when approaching Baghdad, "the inhabitants of al-Karkh came to him, greeted him, prayed for his good fortune, and extended to him all the hospitality he required."⁷⁸

If 'Alid and Zaydī sympathies were noted in al-Karkh, the sources record the start of a recurrent practice from the mid-3rd/9th century onward: "*sabb al-ṣaḥāba*", the cursing of the Companions, for the most part the first three Caliphs, and sometimes 'Ā'isha, the Prophet's wife, and Mu'āwiya.⁷⁹ These cursing events took place predominantly in al-Karkh and Bāb al-Tibn more occasionally. Aside from these areas, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) mentioned the existence of other smaller Shī'ī settlements in Baghdad towards the later Būyid period: Nahr Ṭābiq, Bāb al-Tibn in West Baghdad, and in East Baghdad Sūq al-Silāḥ, Bāb al-Ṭāq, Sūq Yaḥyā and al-Furḍa.⁸⁰ Since there is no sign of activity in these areas before the arrival of the Būyids, it is fair to assume that the settlement of Shī'a in these quarters might have taken place only after the Būyid transition. The practice of *sabb al-ṣaḥāba* became a main cause of violence from the mid-3rd/9th century onward, with al-Karkh being at center stage. The chronicles abound with examples of cursing activities taking place specifically in al-Karkh. In 241-242/855-856, al-Mutawakkil (r. 232-247/847-861) ordered

77 Al-Ṭabarī, xxxii, p. 51.

78 Al-Ṭabarī, xxxvi, p. 46.

79 Several references are made in the sources about these cursing activities. Ibn al-Sūsanjardī (d. 402/1011) is said to have decided to never walk again in al-Karkh after hearing the cursing of the Companions while passing through the area. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, 85; Al-Khaṭīb, iv, p. 237.

80 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, pp. 214-15. On this point see also Sabari, *Mouvements Populaires*, p. 12.

a wealthy perfume merchant in al-Karkh flogged after he had openly cursed Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Ā'isha.⁸¹ In the reign of al-Muqtadir (r. 295-320/908-932), which saw what has been coined a "Shī'ite resurgence," a rise in these cursing practices is recorded in the sources. By early 4th/10th century Baghdad, Imāmī Shī'ism was perceived as a threat based on its increasing popularity and organization, supported by powerful Shī'ī bureaucrats such as the Banū Nawbakht.⁸² The Ḥanbalīs, in particular, started a series of violent actions to denounce the growing power of the Shī'a, and they particularly reacted to cursing activities in al-Karkh.⁸³ State authorities did not always side with the Ḥanbalīs. In 321/933, it was the chamberlain of al-Qāhir, 'Alī b. Yalbaq, who instituted the cursing of Mu'āwiya from the pulpits, probably as a reaction to the rising influence of the Ḥanbalīs in the city.⁸⁴ 'Alī b. Yalbaq also ordered the arrest of the leader of the Ḥanbalīs, the jurist and preacher al-Barbahārī (d. 329/941), who went into hiding.⁸⁵ Two years later, in 323/935, Ibn Miskawayh notes that the Ḥanbalīs instituted visits to the tomb of Ibn Ḥanbal as a ritual in order to rival the Shī'a's visits to the tombs of the Imāms.⁸⁶ Following several excesses of al-Barbahārī and his partisans, who attempted to put an end to the public cursing of Mu'āwiya,⁸⁷ Caliph al-Rādī (r. 322-328/934-940) issued a decree threatening

81 Newman, 15. On the religious policies of al-Mutawakkil and al-Muqtadir, see Melchert, "Religious Policies of the Caliphs."

82 Abū Sahl Ismā'īl b. Nawbakht (d. 312/924) was one of the main leaders of the Imāmiyya in Baghdad and its main theologian. He contributed to the integration of rationalist Mu'tazilite elements in the doctrine of the imamate, to which he dedicated a large amount of his writings. He is among the founders of the Imāmī rationalist school of Baghdad. On the political role of Shī'ī ministers: Massignon, « Recherches sur les Chiites Extrémistes, » and « Les Origines de la Famille Vizirale des Banu al-Furat, » pp. 25-29; Donohue, p. 49; Newman, pp. 15-25.

83 Ibn Miskawayh recounts how they prevented the burial of Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī when he died in 310/923, accusing him of *rafḍ* (Shī'ite heresy). Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, I, pp. 93-94. The animosity of the Ḥanbalīs toward al-Ṭabarī was due to his refusal to recognize Ibn Ḥanbal as a jurist, according to Ibn al-Athīr. Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, VII, pp. 8-9. Ibn al-Jawzī explains that it was because of al-Ṭabarī's pro-Shī'ī stance. See on this point the analysis of Melchert, "The adversaries of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal," pp. 246-249.

84 Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, I, pp. 295-96.

85 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XIII, p. 316; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya*, XI, pp. 172-74. See also Laoust, al-Barbahārī, *ET*²; Kraemer, pp. 60-61.

86 Ibn Miskawayh, I, pp. 364-65.

87 Mu'āwiya was a particularly controversial figure in medieval Baghdad; while he was hated by the Shī'a, he was also held in high esteem by many among the population, in particular the Ḥanbalīs, to the extent that expressions such as "*rahīma Allāh Mu'āwiya*" were interpreted as meaning "*la'ana Allāh 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib*." See Charles Pellat, "Le Culte de Mu'āwiya au III^e Siècle de l'Hégire," *Studia Islamica*, No. 6 (1956), pp. 53-66 in particular the section on pro-Umayyad ḥadīth transmitters in Baghdad circulating apocryphal traditions about

the Ḥanbalīs with military suppression for causing unrest in Baghdad. The decree accused them of spreading anthropomorphic beliefs, molesting the best of Muslims, accusing the Shī'a of unbelief, and calling Muslims to venerate the tomb of Ibn Ḥanbal while forbidding the visit of the tombs of the Imāms. They were threatened with flagellation, death, and exile, among other things. Many Ḥanbalīs were arrested on the occasion, some of them executed, and public assembly was forbidden for the Ḥanbalīs.⁸⁸

As a quarter that saw the development of various Shī'ī groups, al-Karkh had a few *ghulāt*, noted in the works of Twelver scholars post-3rd/9th century. It seems that the quarter was also a receptive place for Shī'ī *ghulāt* groups to reside and plan their activities. While their presence seems to have been rather minor compared to the Imāmīs, they still had an impact on everyday life in the quarter. First, the founder of the Nuṣayrī sect (called "al-Namīriyya"⁸⁹ in the earliest sources), Abū 'Abd-Allāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī (d. 346/957),⁹⁰ lived in al-Karkh where he led his sect, before moving to Aleppo where he spread early Nuṣayrī doctrines. While having his residence in al-Karkh, he used to travel regularly to Aleppo and Mosul to transmit his teachings. The *kātib* Ibn al-Furāt supported the development of the sect in Baghdad.⁹¹ According to Louis Massignon, this was not an isolated case, for most of the famous families that supplied the caliphate with viziers and financial administrators were "Shī'a Mukhammisa,"⁹² a *ghulāt* group from Kūfa with presence in al-Karkh. A specific Mukhammisa family was even named after the quarter: "al-Karkhiyyūn."⁹³ These actors were the cause of the financial bankruptcy under al-Muqtadir, according to Massignon, who even goes so far as to argue that they caused the downfall of the Abbasid Caliphate and its political replacement by the Būyids.⁹⁴

Mu'āwiya, p. 56. Two scholars, Giudi and H. Zayyat, explain that this cult of Mu'āwiya was a reaction to the excesses of the 'Alids. See Michelangelo Guidi, "Origine dei Yazidi e storia religiosa dell'Islam e del dualismo," *RSO*, xiii (1932), pp. 266-300 (in particular p. 271) and H. Zayyat, "Al-Tasayyū' li-Muawīya fi 'ahd al-'Abbasiyyin," *Al-Mashriq*, 26, 1928, pp. 410-415. Pellat reaches the same conclusion through an analysis of a text attributed to al-Jāhiz, arguing that the cult of Mu'āwiya was the expression of an opposition to 'Alī rather than a particular love for Mu'āwiya, see Pellat p. 65.

88 Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, 1, pp. 364-365. See earlier footnote.

89 Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shī'a*.

90 See Yaron Friedman, "Al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī: A Historical Biography of the Founder of the Nuṣayrī-Alawite sect," pp. 91-112; Halm, H., "Nuṣayriyya," *EI*².

91 Al-Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār Ma'rifat al-Rijāl*, 457-58 ; Louis Massignon argued that Ibn al-Furāt and his family were Nuṣayrīs: Massignon, "Les Origines Chiites;" René Dussaud, *Histoire et Religion des Nosairis*.

92 Massignon, « Les Recherches sur les Chiites Extrémistes, » pp. 379-380.

93 Yāqūt, iv, p. 253. See also Daftary, *A History of Shī'ī Islam*, p. 45.

94 Massignon, « Les Recherches, » p. 378.

Ibn al-Athīr recalls an event during which members of the Nuṣayrī sect were arrested in Baghdad in 340/951. They were immediately released after speaking the following words to the Būyid ruler, “*naḥnu shī'at 'alī ibn abī ṭālib.*” This event indicates that extremist Shī'ī groups might have been able to survive in Baghdad by passing for Twelvers.

Another group with a noted presence in al-Karkh was the Qarāmiṭa, with mentions of the group in the quarter in the early 4th/10th century. In 313/926, al-Muqtadir was informed that the *rāfiḍa* were gathering in the Barāthā mosque where they cursed the Companions. On the advice of his vizier al-Khāqānī, al-Muqtadir ordered the levelling of the mosque. The mosque was razed, its surroundings burned down, and the area transformed into a cemetery.⁹⁵ The sources note that the “*rāfiḍa*” followed a leader named “al-Ka'kī,” accused of being Qarmaṭī. The forces of al-Muqtadir arrested thirty men in the mosque on a Friday and found on them rings made of white clay written on them: “Muḥammad b. Ismā'il is the Imām, the *Mahdī*, the Vice-regent of God.” Al-Khāqānī obtained a *fatwa* signed by several jurists denouncing the Barāthā mosque as a place of Qarmaṭī *da'wa* and one spreading “trouble, unbelief, and division among the community.”⁹⁶

It is possible that the presence of these radical groups in this quarter had an influence on the development of Twelver Shī'ism, and more particularly the activism of the masses, which we will examine in a following section.

At the level of the elites, al-Karkh was also developing as a Shī'ī stronghold in the early Abbasid period. Two features distinguish al-Karkh from other suburban areas of Baghdad. The first is the predominance of Kūfan families, as mentioned earlier. The second is the concentration of two social groups among the elites: Shī'ī scholars on the one hand, and prominent mercantile Shī'ī families on the other. These groups formed a network which allowed for the development of the Twelver Shī'ī community in the city. While the wealthy merchants gave patronage to the scholars, the latter supported the *mawālīs* from Kūfa who had settled in al-Karkh. In the early Abbasid period, several

95 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XIII, pp. 247-248. Ibn al-Jawzī deplors that following the mosque's erasure, “some ignorant people left writings on the date-palm trees next to the mosque stating: ‘This is the order of Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān [against] 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.’” Idem. Al-Barāthā was the largest Shī'ī mosque in Baghdad. In 328/940, Caliph al-Rāḍī ordered the mosque to be rebuilt and it became a place of Sunnī worship for a short while. Throughout the Būyid and Seljukid periods, the mosque was repeatedly destroyed, rebuilt, looted, and burnt down, acting as a symbol of the popular religious unrest which characterized the city in that period. According to Ibn Miskawayh, the authorities had to bow to a very high degree of Sunnī popular pressure to demolish the mosque.

96 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XIII, p. 248.

prominent scholarly figures of the Imāmī movement had established their residence in al-Karkh. The place of residence was all the more significant since these figures often taught in their homes, considered safe places to conduct teaching and debating sessions when mosques were susceptible to political or other kinds of interference. Let us turn to a few examples of key figures who had their homes in Karkh Baghdad.

Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. c. 179-180/795-796),⁹⁷ a companion of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq and Mūsā al-Kāzīm and one of the most prominent Imāmī scholars of his time, left Kūfa to settle in Baghdad.⁹⁸ One of the earliest Shī‘ī theologians in Baghdad and a prolific author, his theory of the imamate became a core component of Imāmī doctrine. Several biographical accounts give us details about his residence and commercial activities in al-Karkh. Al-Ṭūsī mentions that Hishām b. al-Ḥakam owned stores in al-Karkh, while Ibn Nadīm indicates that he was the protégé of the Banū Shaybān.⁹⁹ At his home in al-Karkh, located in the Darb al-Jubb near the vicinity of the Qaṣr al-Waḍḍāḥ, Hishām held disputations, some of which included prominent figures, such as Yaḥyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī (d. 190/806). He also had an office in the Bāb al-Karkh.¹⁰⁰ For the early Shī‘ī community in Baghdad, al-Karkh was considered a convenient location for these sessions, many of which included both Sunnī and Shī‘ī scholars. To a certain degree, Hishām can be considered a precursor of the Imāmī *hawza* which developed in al-Karkh a century and a half later, under the Būyids, and whose role was to defend the imamate.¹⁰¹ When Mūsā al-Kāzīm was placed under house arrest in Baghdad in 179/795, Hishām left Baghdad to Kūfa, where he hid away in the house of Bashīr al-Nabbāl, where he died.¹⁰² This concealment is another indication of the permanent feeling of threat that scholars

97 He was the author of more than 27 books focusing on religious teachings, the occultation, the imamate, and refutations. He received the teachings of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq and Mūsā al-Kāzīm.

98 It is important to mention the overall pattern of migration of scholars toward Baghdad at this period, which included figures from all sectarian denominations.

99 Al-Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār Ma‘rifat al-Rijāl*, pp. 219-37. See also Massignon, « Recherches sur les Chiïtes, » p. 134. In his *Fihrist*, Ibn Nadīm (d. 385/995) mentions that Hishām left Kūfa to find residence in al-Karkh in Baghdad. “He was one of the theologians of the Shī‘a who caused discord over the theology of the imamate (he formed his own sect, the Hishāmiyya). He was a protégé of the Banū Shaybān from al-Kūfa. Then he went to Baghdad. He lived in al-Karkh.” Ibn Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 175 f.; Ibn Qutayba, *‘Uyūn al-Akhbār*, II, p. 142 f.; Yāqūt, I, p. 14.

100 Josef Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 1, pp. 410-417.

101 Gholamali Haddad Adel, Hassan Taromi Rad, Mohammad Jafar Elmi (eds), *Hawza-yi ‘Ilmīyya: Shī‘ī Teaching Institution*, pp. 97, 101.

102 Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol 1, p. 412. There are some disagreements about his legacy in the Shī‘ī sources; the controversy is fully treated by Van Ess in his section on the scholar.

and others of Shī'ī persuasion felt while in Baghdad; al-Karkh was an area that granted them a certain degree of safety but sometimes they still had to leave it when danger was palpable.

Another close companion of Mūsā b. Ja'far al-Kāẓim was his agent 'Alī ibn Yaqtīn (d. 182/798). A transmitter of *ḥadīth* from Mūsā and Ja'far, he was also a trusted official to the Abbasids and served in government while supporting the Shī'ī community and keeping a close relationship with the Imām in prison.¹⁰³ He acted as the financial agent of the Imām, collecting taxes for him and sending him precious presents. An analysis of biographical data shows that 'Alī ibn Yaqtīn was also a Kūfan whose family had settled in al-Karkh. After being chased by government agents under Marwān b. al-Ḥakam for being a follower of Imām al-Ṣādiq, his father Yaqtīn b. Mūsā decided to move the family from Kūfa to Medina, and then again to Baghdad, where he started working as a spice seller, in al-Karkh.¹⁰⁴ Like many other prominent Kūfan families involved in mercantile activities, they established their residence in al-Karkh and acted as patrons and protectors for the Shī'ī scholars.¹⁰⁵

Among the most prominent Imāmi scholars residing in al-Karkh in this period, one can mention the traditionist Abū al-Sa'adat Aḥmad b. Muḥammad ibn Ghalib al-ʿAṭṭārī,¹⁰⁶ and the famous poet al-Sayyid Ismā'īl b. Muḥammad b. Yazīd b. Rabi'a al-Ḥimiyārī (d. 179/795),¹⁰⁷ a companion of Imām Ṣādiq and Imām al-Kāẓim. A Kaysanī, Al-Ḥimiyārī is said to have later embraced Twelver Shī'ism. A key figure, he was a prolific poet, and his writings were composed in defense of Shī'ism and contained numerous attacks on the Companions and the wives of the Prophet. A very controversial figure in the Baghdadi milieu, it is noteworthy that he spent his life in al-Karkh and was also buried there, in particular since instances of *sabb al-ṣaḥāba* were more common in al-Karkh than any other area of the city.

There is reason to believe that newcomers to Baghdad among the community were encouraged to settle in al-Karkh, the reputation of which as a safe haven for the Shī'a was already established by the time of Mūsā al-Kāẓim.

103 Madelung, "A treatise of the Sharif al-Murtaḍā," pp. 17-19; Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, 34.

104 Al-Najāshī, p. 273.

105 Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, p. 32.

106 In his biographical dictionary of the traditionists entitled *Al-Ansāb*, al-Sam'ānī (d. 561/1166) writes that he was a knowledgeable shaykh from "the people of Karkh," and had a leaning towards Twelver Shī'ism, which he adds "was the main *madhhab* of the Kūfans." *Al-Ansāb*, IV, p. 209.

107 Having been a Khārijī, and then a follower of the Kaysaniyya, he is believed by medieval Twelver Shī'ī sources to have eventually converted to the Ja'farī *madhhab*. According to Wadad Kadi, this conversion to Ja'farism is dubious, see Kadi, Al-Sayyid al-Ḥimiyārī, *EP*².

When the latter died in prison near the Kūfa gate in Baghdad, his dead body was brought to al-Karkh and shown to a number of clerks there, before being buried in the cemetery of Bāb al-Tibn, which would become known as al-Kāzimiyya.¹⁰⁸ A tradition attributed to his son, the eighth Imām, al-Riḍā Alī b. Mūsā (d. 202/818), mentions al-Karkh as a preferred place of residence for the community in Baghdad:

Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yahyā al-‘Aṭṭār narrated from his father, from Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, from Muḥammad b. Mehrān, from his uncle Aḥmad b. Zakariyyā³ that:

Al-Riḍā Alī b. Mūsā (d. 818) asked me:

“Where is your house in Baghdad?”

I said: “Al-Karkh.”

He said: “That is the safest of places.”¹⁰⁹

This report is significant for two reasons: it shows that place of residence was a careful decision for active members of the Imāmī community and it highlights the popularity of al-Karkh as a safe location, particularly since al-Riḍā did not live in Baghdad but knew about al-Karkh. The modern Shī‘ī historian Muḥsin al-Amīn goes so far as to consider every scholar with the *nisba* al-Karkhī to have been Shī‘ī.¹¹⁰ This is certainly an exaggeration, as the area attracted many Sunnī traditionists both in the early and later decades of Abbasid rule, in particular Shāfi‘ī scholars, followed by Ḥanafis,¹¹¹ with Qaṭī‘at al-Rabī‘ and the street of Darb al-Za‘farānī as the most populated areas in al-Karkh.¹¹² Considering the surface area of al-Karkh, it is highly possible that there were pockets of Shī‘ī settlements, which would support al-Khaṭīb’s statement attributed to al-Wāqidi. While Shī‘ī *rijāl* works indicate a growing number of scholars residing in al-Karkh in the late 2nd/8th century, Shī‘ī scholars resided in other quarters throughout Baghdad, in particular Bāb al-Tibn and the Kāzīmāy after it became a burial site for the seventh and ninth Imāms. While we cannot establish with certainty when al-Karkh’s population became predominantly

108 Ibn al-Ṭiḡṭāqā‘, *Al-Fakhrī*, p. 334. On the cemetery, see: Le Strange, *Baghdad*, pp. 160-5; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, XIII, p. 31.

109 Ibn Bābawayh, *Kamāl al-Dīn*, I-II, p. 403; Muḥammad Bāqir, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, XIII, p. 88.

110 Muḥsin al-Amīn postulates in the introduction of *A‘yān al-Shī‘a* that all the inhabitants of al-Karkh were Shī‘a, and uses the *nisba* al-Karkhī as a proof of Shī‘ism. On this see Van Renterghem, *Les Elites Bagdadiennes*, p. 43.

111 See Ahola for the Būyid period, and Van Renterghem for the Seljukid period.

112 There is a debate about the sectarian demographics of al-Karkh in the early Abbasid period, see footnote 6.

Shī'ī, we can establish that the area was conceived of as a safe and welcoming place of residence since early Abbasid times.

Al-Mutawakkil's reign (232-247/847-861) ushered in a period of strict surveillance for the Imāmīs; after having established links between the underground activities of the Imāmī agents in al-Karkh, Kūfa, and al-Madā'in,¹¹³ and the tenth Imām al-Hādī (d. 254/868), al-Mutawakkil ordered al-Hādī to be brought to Samarra in 233/848; he was put under house arrest until his death twenty years later. Several followers of al-Hādī were arrested in Baghdad and sent to Samarra, including Abū Hāshim al-Ja'farī and Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-'Aṭṭār.¹¹⁴ Many of al-Hādī's Companions and followers are reported in the sources as having resided in al-Karkh, including the prominent grammarian and traditionist Ibn al-Sikkīt (d. 244/858), who lived and taught in al-Karkh's Darb al-Qanṭara (Bridge Street).¹¹⁵

The concentration of Shī'ī scholars and activist figures in al-Karkh gradually increased over the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries, with two significant developments taking place in these periods: the transfer of the Imāmī *wikāla* from Samarra to al-Karkh, and the slow emergence of the *ḥawza* (Shī'ī seminary) in al-Karkh.

Late 9th Century: The Transfer of the Imāmī Headquarters from Samarra to al-Karkh

The first development was the transfer of the Imāmī *wikāla*¹¹⁶ from the town of Samarra to al-Karkh during the period of the minor occultation (*ghayba*) from 260/874 to 329/941. During this major historical period, the Imām was represented by deputies among his followers, the *safīrs* (representatives of the Hidden Imām), in a system of deputyship called the *wikāla*.¹¹⁷ The deputies held a crucial role among the community since they took care of the organization's fiscal and legal functions (collection of taxes including *khums* and the *zakat*¹¹⁸) and allowed for a continued communication between the Imām and his community.

113 Al-Madā'in had a large Imāmī community, which would become mainly composed of farmers in the late medieval period. See M. Morony, Al-Madā'in, *EI*².

114 On this point see also Nasr and Dabashi, *Expectations of the Millenium*, pp. 22-23.

115 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, pp. 224-225; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, VI, pp. 395-401.

116 Husain, "The Role of the Imamite *Wikala*," pp. 25-52; Edmund Hayes, *The Envoys of the Hidden Imam*, Ph.D. diss., U of Chicago, 2015.

117 The *wikāla* was an elaborate network of agents developed by the proto-Twelvers during the lifetime of the last Imāms.

118 Momen, p. 179; Husain, "The Role of the Imamite *Wikala*;" Klemm, "The Four *sufarā'* of the Twelfth Imām."

Following the death of the eleventh Imām Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (d. 260/874), poisoned on the orders of the Caliph al-Mu‘tamid according to Shī‘ī sources,¹¹⁹ the first deputy was Uthmān ibn Sa‘īd al-Asadī (d. c. 265-266/879-880), a trusted companion of the eleventh Imām.¹²⁰ Shortly after 260/874, ‘Uthmān left Samarra, deemed unsafe as the headquarters of the Abbasid troops, and established his residence in al-Karkh.¹²¹ This move is significant: not only did it symbolize the will to carry out activities in a more secure environment, but it also consecrated al-Karkh as a center of the Imāmī-Shī‘ī movement. Links between Samarra and al-Karkh are mentioned in the sources before ‘Uthmān’s move.¹²²

From al-Karkh, Uthmān was able to act beyond the control of the Abbasids and he soon sent representatives to a series of cities and neighbouring areas, including Kūfa, Ahwaz, Samarra, Rayy, but also Qum, Baṣra, and Medina. Al-Karkh was at the very center of this elaborate network, benefiting from its proximity to neighbouring towns such as Kūfa, but also from a vibrant commercial milieu. In Samarra and al-Karkh, ‘Uthmān is said to have disguised himself as a butter seller and was known under the pseudonym “*al-Zayyār al-Sammān*”¹²³ (butter dealer). This identity enabled him to conveniently collect and carry money to the Imām al-‘Askarī in his butter bags, while evading the investigation of the Abbasid regime.¹²⁴ After his death and his burial in

119 According to these sources, he died in his home in Samarra in 260/874. See Mufīd, Ibn-al-Mu‘allim, Naṣr, *Kitāb Al-Irshād*.

120 Edmund Hayes calls the role of ‘Uthmān in the *wikāla* into question. He argues that the early sources do not contain narrative reports of him acting as an envoy, in particular through the collection of taxes and the issuing of statements by the Imām. He argues that his significance “lay initially in the fact that he was deployed by Qummī scholars as a singularly trustworthy witness to the existence of the Hidden Child Imam, who was, some claimed, the inaccessible successor to the Eleventh Imām.” See Edmund Hayes, “The Envoys of the Hidden Imām: Religious Institutions and the Politics of the Twelver Occultation Doctrine,” Unpublished thesis, Chicago University, 2015, in particular chapter 6: ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-‘Amrī: Envoy or *wakīl*?, pp. 362-69. Despite this controversy however, the fact that ‘Uthmān was portrayed in the Shī‘ī sources as having fulfilled his functions in Karkh is important in our enquiry; it translates the centrality of this location for the community, even if his role might have been elaborated on in a later period.

121 Samarra had been the home of the tenth and eleventh Imāms – ‘Alī al-Hādī and Ḥasan al-‘Askarī were both buried there. ‘Alī, „Die beiden ersten Safire,“ p. 203.

122 Al-Khaṣībī, *Al-Hidāya al-Kubrā*, p. 329; on post transfer period, see p. 341.

123 Al-Nu‘mānī, *al-Ghayba*, pp. 104, 106-107, 159; *al-Kāfi*, VIII, p. 264. The deputyship of Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān was denied by another contender, Aḥmad b. Hilāl al-Karkhī (d. 266/880), who had been a companion of al-Mahdī and al-‘Askarī. As his name indicates, Aḥmad b. Hilāl al-Karkhī settled in al-Karkh, after having spent the earlier part of his life in a village in Nahrawān between Wāsiṭ and Baghdad.

124 Al-Nu‘mānī, *Al-Ghayba*, pp. 106-7; *al-Kāfi*, VII, pp. 264, 310; Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-Ghayba*, pp. 367, 370, 400.

al-Karkh, 'Uthmān was succeeded by three other deputies, whose activities were centered in al-Karkh: his son, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. 'Uthmān 'Amrī (d. 304/917), who enjoyed the support of Abū Sahl Ismā'īl in Baghdad, followed by Abū al-Qāsim Ḥusayn b. Rawḥ Nawbakhtī (d. 326/938) and Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Samurī (d. 329/941).¹²⁵ Al-Samurī is said to have received command from the twelfth Imām not to designate a successor, for the complete *ghayba* had begun.

'Uthmān's move to al-Karkh led many Imāmīs to follow him, in particular a number of scholars who migrated from Qum. This was the case of the aforementioned Ibn Rawḥ al-Nawbakhtī (d. 326/938),¹²⁶ the third *saḥīr*. A native of Qum, he moved to al-Karkh shortly after 'Uthmān's departure from Samarra. He held a prominent role in the organization of the Imāmīs of Baghdad, and it was with him that they became a coherent party in the city.¹²⁷ It is in this period that strong links were established between Qum and Baghdad, and more particularly between Qum and al-Karkh. The first great Imāmī traditionist of the tenth century, al-Kulaynī (d. 328/940-41),¹²⁸ also migrated from Qum to Karkh Baghdad. Coming from a renowned family from Rayy, he received his education there before becoming the leader of the Shī'a in Rayy.¹²⁹ According to Madelung, al-Kulaynī moved to Baghdad between 300/913 and 310/923, and settled in Darb al-Silsila, an area in Karkh near the Bāb al-Kūfa.¹³⁰ The Imāmī biographers mention that he spent the last twenty years of his life in Baghdad.¹³¹ It is in Karkh Baghdad that he completed his magnum opus *al-Kāfi*, which took him twenty years to complete. This work, along with other writings of al-Kulaynī, formed a basic part of Imāmī studies in Baghdad.¹³² Al-Kulaynī's impact is measurable by the number of famous Imāmī scholars he counted

125 Newman, p. 22. Amir-Moezzi, p. 110.

126 On the Nawbakhtī family, see Arjomand, *Sociology of Shi'ite Islam*, pp. 874-941 and 203-206.

127 Klemm, „Die Vier Sufarā' des Zwölften Imam,“ p. 132.

128 For an overview of his role and life, see Amir-Moezzi and Ansari, „Remarks on al-Kulaynī and his Summa of Traditions, in *The Silent Qur'an and the Speaking Qur'an* (2016), pp. 125-160. On his residence in Darb al-Silsila near the Kūfa gate, see p. 140.

129 See al-'Amīlī, *Buḥūth ḥawla Rīwayāt al-Kāfi*, which includes a complete list of his teachers. In Rayy, the Imāmīs were a majority of the inhabitants and dominated the entire city except the Northeast, where the Shāfi'īs were settled, and the area South of Jabal al-Rayy al-Kabīr, which was shared between Shāfi'īs and Ḥanafīs.

130 See Ghaffār, *Al-Kulaynī wa al-Kāfi*, p. 265, and Madelung, *Kulaynī, EP²*. Amir-Moezzi and Ansari mention that his stays in Baghdad were brief, p. 127.

131 Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, p. 377. See also Muḥsin al-Amīn, *A'yān*, XLVII, p. 153; Newman, *The Formative Period*, p. 46, footnote 2.

132 Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, pp. 377-78; al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, IV, p. 234.

as his students, for instance the Qummī Ibn al-Qulawayh (d. 367/978),¹³³ who studied under him in al-Karkh and was buried in al-Kāzīmāyn.

Through the presence and teaching activities of al-Kulaynī in al-Karkh, the area became a center for Shī'ī *ḥadīth* studies, after Qum and Kūfa. Shī'ī traditionists from Kūfa, Qum, and Khurāsān, would meet in Karkh Baghdad during their stay in the city, and some of them settled there permanently in order to benefit from its great teachers. Around the year 328/940, while passing through Baghdad, the Shī'ī *faqīh* and traditionist Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Babawayh al-Qummī (d. 329/941)¹³⁴ gave an *ijāza*¹³⁵ for all his works to Abū al-Ḥasan 'Abbās ibn 'Umar al-Kalwadhānī. This *ijāza* system enabled Imāmīs in Baghdad and in al-Karkh to study the works of scholars from Qum.¹³⁶

By the time the Būyids arrived in Baghdad in 333/945, al-Karkh had already become the "center of the Shī'ī movement."¹³⁷ a network of Shī'ī agents and scholars, supported by a wealthy mercantile class, lived and worked in this district, and organized the life of their community from there. Būyid rule, through its political support to the Shī'a, further increased the development of al-Karkh as a center of Imāmī theology and popular activism. New institutions, but also new rituals were created by the Būyid elites, all of which granted a new visibility to Imāmī Shī'ism in the capital. Al-Karkh was at the center of these developments.

Part II: Al-Karkh in the Būyid Period (945-1055)

The arrival of the Būyid¹³⁸ rulers had an important and tangible impact on the Imāmī community in Baghdad: on the one hand, it strengthened the

133 Ibn al-Qulawayh was also one of the principal teachers of al-Shaykh al-Mufid.

134 Al-'Allāmah al-Hillī, *Rijāl*, p. 241; al-Ṭūsī, *Ghayba*, pp. 247-248.

135 The *ijāza* designates the license to relate the books of another scholar.

136 Donohue, *The Buwayhid*, 330.

137 Javad 'Ali, „Die beiden ersten Safire," p. 203.

138 Modern studies on the Būyids and the impact of their rule in Baghdad include: Bertold Spuler, "The Disintegration of the Caliphate in the East," pp. 143-74; John Donohue, *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq*; Ann Lambton, *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia*; Émile Tyan, *Institutions du Droit Public Musulman: le Califat*, pp. 531-541; Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, pp. 126-36; Dominique Sourdel, *The Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 104-139; Hugh Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 135-213; Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Ages of the Caliphates*, pp. 147-345; A. H. Siddiqi, *Caliphate and Kingship*, pp. 97-126; Eric Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*. On the adoption of Twelver Shī'ism by the Būyids, see: Cahen, *Buwayhids, EI²*; Donohue, p. 15; Canard, *Bagdad au 4e Siècle de l'Hégire*, pp. 267-287.

development of Imāmī theology and scholarship through patronage and the building of new institutions; and on the other, it promoted the rise of Imāmī popular activism through the celebration of rituals, the most visible being held in al-Karkh.

Karkh Baghdad in the Būyid Period: Center of Imāmī Intellectual Activity through the Ḥawza

The Būyid period was one in which informal schools and teaching developed massively in Baghdad. Joel Kraemer's study examined the proliferation of these informal schools in which the teacher acted as both "educator and spiritual guide;" these schools were interchangeable with the scholar's *majlis* ("study circle").¹³⁹ This was certainly the case for the Shī'ī study circles that developed in al-Karkh. The roots of the later Imāmī *ḥawza* of Najaf are to be found in al-Karkh in the Būyid period.

Shī'ī *rijāl* works indicate that by the early 4th/10th century, a significant number of Imāmī scholars were living in al-Karkh, often born and buried there. These scholars held study circles in their homes or at the local mosque, a practice linked either to security reasons, or because of limited resources.¹⁴⁰ The Shī'ī scholars' biographies allow us to reconstruct a picture of Imāmī educational centers and study circles in the capital. A discernible fact is the centrality of al-Karkh as a location for these study circles; the area figures predominantly as a center for the study and teaching of Imāmī theology through the *ḥawza ʿilmīyya*. As a system of education, the *ḥawza* first developed in Iran with the arrival of the Būyid amīr Rukn al-Dawla (322-335/934-947) and his vizier Ṣāhib ibn ʿAbbād (d. 385/995).

In 381/991, during the reign of Bahā' al-Dawla (d. 402/1012), his vizier Shāpūr b. Ardashīr (d. 416/1025)¹⁴¹ founded what would become the most important intellectual establishment for Imāmī Shī'ism in the city: the *Dār al-ʿIlm*¹⁴²

139 Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, especially pp. viii, pp. 55, 56. The *majlis* consisted of "students, colleagues, friends, and occasional visitors."

140 Home teaching remained in practice after the foundation of schools and libraries in which students gathered. Hence, the syntax teacher Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Fāsiḥī (d. 516/1122) taught in his home after being fired from his position at the Niẓāmiyya, on the charge of Shī'ism. Yāqūt, v, p. 196.

141 Al-Thaʿālibī (d. 430/1039) has a section on the poets of Baghdad who praised him because of his support towards them, gaining a reputation as the patron of scholars. See Al-Thaʿālibī, *Yatīma*, 111, pp. 129-36.

142 It was governed by two *sharīfs* and a *qāḍī*, and after Shāpūr's death, al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā is thought to have taken over its administration. Other librarians included: the grammarian Abū Aḥmād ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 404/1014) and the secretary Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (d. 418/1027). Shāpūr's library was used by numerous scholars, in particular by Abū al-ʿAlā'

(House of Knowledge) in al-Karkh. With more than 10,000 books on a variety of subjects, this centre gathered for the first time many of the volumes that had been kept in Baghdad in a single space. Shāpūr is said to have collected many books and to have decorated the library with particular care.¹⁴³ *Dār al-ʿIlm* quickly stood as a center of learning that attracted countless scholars of all confessions.¹⁴⁴ Like other libraries founded by the Būyids in Shīrāz, al-Rayy or Baṣra, the *Dār al-ʿIlm* of al-Karkh was meant as a place to spread Shīʿī doctrines, and in particular Twelver Shīʿism.¹⁴⁵ Most of the *ḥadīth* canonical literature of the Imāmiyya was produced in this period in al-Karkh. Besides this institution, there were a few personal libraries that gathered many books. Among them one might cite the personal library of Abū Aḥmad al-Mūsawī in al-Karkh. Abū Aḥmad al-Mūsawī combined a number of leading positions under Bahāʾ al-Dawla, including that of emir of the pilgrimage, *naqīb* of the Imāmīs, grand magistrate, and presider over the *mazālim* (grievance) courts.

These new institutions allowed for the flourishing of Imāmī theological activity in Baghdad, which saw a zenith under the Būyids. From the mid-4th/10th century onward, the most influential Imāmī theologians of Baghdad can be traced as residing in al-Karkh. This was the case of Ibn al-Muʿallim or al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022).¹⁴⁶ The most prolific writer of the school and its leading jurispudent and theologian in the 4th/10th century, al-Mufīd was particularly interested in disputation as well as *fiqh* and *kalām*. He lived in Darb al-Riyāḥ in al-Karkh and had a mosque built adjacent to his house.¹⁴⁷ It is in this mosque and at his house that he held regular *majlis* sessions attended by eminent scholars of his day and prominent figures.¹⁴⁸ His mosque is anecdotally mentioned in a dream in which he saw Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter, entering it in al-Karkh.¹⁴⁹

al-Maʿarrī during his short stay in Baghdad (399-400/1009-1010), and it also received the works of contemporary writers such as the Fāṭimid secretary Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Khayrān (d. 430/1039). It was burnt down when the Seljuks reached Baghdad in 447/1055. The vizier ʿAmīd al-Mulk al-Kundurī was able to save only a few books from destruction. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, pp. 348-50.

143 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xiv, p. 366.

144 Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty*, p. 181.

145 D. Sourdel, "Dār al-ʿIlm," *IEP*.

146 His full name is Abū ʿAbd-Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān al-Ḥārithī al-ʿUkbarī. al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, iv, p. 314 ff.; R. Strothmann, *Al-Mufid, IEP*; Donohue, p. 331. For a complete biography of al-Mufid, see Tamima Bayhom-Daou, *Shaykh Mufid* and Martin McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufid*.

147 Al-Najāshī, pp. 399-403; Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, 111, p. 231; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, p. 157.

148 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, p. 157.

149 Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, i, p. 41.

Among Al-Mufīd's most famous students were the two *naqībs* and brothers al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1045) and al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 407/1016). As syndics¹⁵⁰ of the 'Alids, the two brothers played a significant intellectual and political role in early Būyid Baghdad: they acted as intermediaries between the Būyid emirs, the Caliphs, and the population, while being Imāmī teachers and traditionists. A close look at their biographies and writings shows that their activities were centered in al-Karkh, where they were both born, and where they established study centers, while teaching in their homes.

Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī founded a residence for students in al-Karkh.¹⁵¹ The Shī'ī historian and genealogist Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī, known as Ibn 'Inaba (d. 827/1424), in *'Umdat al-Ṭālib fī Ansāb al-Ṭālib*, mentions that the students who joined his circle were granted supplies and lodging for free. His brother al-Murtaḍā is said to have imitated him by providing keys to each one of his students so they could use his library freely.¹⁵² These facilities testify to the large presence of students coming to join the circles of these Imāmī scholars in Karkh. When al-Sharīf al-Raḍī died in 407/1016, his funeral was attended by several Būyid figures among whom Fakhr al-Mulk Abū Ghālib.¹⁵³ He was buried in his home, near the mosque of al-Anbariyyin.¹⁵⁴ In the voluminous poetry he left behind, al-Raḍī mentions al-Karkh in some of his poems, for instance:

Means of living are no longer available in al-Karkh,
No necklace of glory adorns Baghdad's neck.¹⁵⁵

Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1045) became syndic (*naqīb*) of the 'Alids after the death of his brother al-Raḍī. He taught *fiqh* following his teacher. According to Shī'ī sources, al-Murtaḍā possessed a library comprising 80,000 volumes.¹⁵⁶ His home in al-Karkh became the center of a specific kind of studies, "*majālis al-naẓar*," which were sessions of debates and polemics which al-Murtaḍā particularly enjoyed. Among his students, Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b.

150 The term designates the office of representative of the 'Alids, or "*naqīb*." The syndic was responsible for keeping the genealogical records of the 'Alids and the administration of their charitable trusts. For a discussion of this office, see Bernheimer, *The 'Alids*, pp. 32-70.

151 Ibn 'Inaba, *'Umdat al-Ṭālib*, p. 209. Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, III, pp. 40-41; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, IV, pp. 414-420.

152 Ibn 'Inaba, *'Umdat al-Ṭālib*, p. 209. See also Donohue, p. 333.

153 Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, *EP*². On Fakhr al-Mulk Abū Ghālib, see Donohue, p. 103.

154 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, IV, p. 419.

155 Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, *Dīwān al-Raḍī*, I, p. 229.

156 Ibn 'Inaba, *'Umdat al-Ṭālib*, p. 206.

Muḥammad al-Baṣrī left a book on the library of Murtaḍā,¹⁵⁷ and Ṭāqī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī wrote on Imāmīte *uṣūl* and *furūʿ*. Both Sunnī and Shīʿī scholars attended and participated in these sessions. Al-Murtaḍā was buried in his house in Karkh, and later his body was carried to the shrine of Imām Ḥusayn.¹⁵⁸

The atmosphere of tolerance offered by the Būyids led to the production of a large number of foundational books for the Twelvers. Al-Nuʿmānī's (d. 360/971) *Kitāb al-Ghayba*, an influential book on the occultation of Imām al-Mahdī and the doctrine of the imamate, was studied by circles of students led by Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Shujāʿī at Mashhad al-ʿAṭīqa, in al-Karkh.¹⁵⁹

Close to al-Raḍī was the poet Abū al-Ḥasan Miḥyār al-Daylamī (d. 428/1037). Following a conversion from Zoroastrianism to Shīʿism, he is said to have become a virulent advocate of his new faith and produced elegies on ʿAlī and poetry vilifying the Companions of the Prophet. Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282) mentions that al-Daylamī was rebuked by an acquaintance because of his words against the Companions. Imprisoned for several years, he was set free through the intercession of al-Raḍī, who was his mentor and his model in poetry writing.¹⁶⁰

Other prominent students of al-Mufīd included, among others, al-Najāshī (d. c. 463/1071), al-Karājakī (d. 449/1057), Abū Yaʿlā al-Jaʿfarī (d. 463/1071), and the jurisconsult Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī (d. 459/1067). The latter was the last of the prominent Imāmī *ʿulamāʾ* in Baghdad, and the leader of the Imāmīs in Baghdad after the passing of al-Murtaḍā. Originally from Ṭūs, as his *nisba* indicates, he came to Baghdad where he eventually converted from Sunnī Shāfiʿism to Imāmī Shīʿism under the influence of Ibn al-Muʿallim. Al-Ṭūsī's biographers mention that he was taught in al-Karkh, where he attended the teaching sessions of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahīd ibn Muḥammad (known as Ibn Mahdī) in 411/1020. Ibn Mahdī was an Imāmī *muḥaddith*, who held *ḥadīth* lessons at his home in Darb al-Zaʿfarān in al-Karkh.¹⁶¹ A prolific writer, al-Ṭūsī managed to gain the support of numerous Būyid rulers as well as that of the Caliph al-Qāʾim (d. 467/1075), who appointed him to the principal chair of theology, the most prestigious of the capital. Attesting to the importance of place and the geographical location of the homes of the scholars is the vocabulary

157 Brockelmann, *GAL*, I, p. 512, 1 b.

158 Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, XI, p. 403; Ibn ʿInaba, *Umdat al-Ṭalīb*, 235; Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *Al-Daraja al-Rāfiʿa fi Ṭabaqāt al-Imāmiyya min al-Shīʿa*, p. 463; al-Khwansārī, *Rawḍat al-Janna*, IV, p. 297; Tabrizī, *Rayḥānat al-Adab*, IV, pp. 189-190.

159 See Gholamali, p. 109. On the importance of the book, see Newman, *The Formative Period*, pp. 58-60.

160 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, v, pp. 359-63; al-Rāwandī, *Minḥāj al-Barāʾa*, v, pp. 11-12.

161 Al-Ṭūsī, p. 257; *Hawza-yi ʿIlmiyya*, p. 109.

used by medieval scholars: al-Ṭūsī's home in al-Karkh is symbolically called "*ma'wa al-umma*" (the virtual center of Imāmism) by the Imāmī scholar Zayn al-Dīn al-Jubā'ī al-Āmilī Al-Shahīd al-Thānī (d. 965/1558), who mentions that many people from various places came to this house to seek relief from their problems and to consult the Shaykh.¹⁶² Al-Ṭūsī, who himself composed around fifty books, became the heir to a substantial proportion of the great Imāmī libraries of the time: that of *Dār al-Ilm*, which by his time contained more than 100,000 works, and that of al-Murtaḍā with about 80,000 works. In addition to the presence of eminent teachers, this concentration of books made al-Karkh all the more attractive as a place of study. Just as Kūfa and Qum before it, al-Karkh became the center of the Imāmī *hawza* system of seminary education in the Būyid period. The works produced in these *hawzas* had an impact beyond the city, notably through the flow of books.

The Masses: the Popular Imāmī Movement of al-Karkh in Būyid Baghdad

From the Būyid period onward, al-Karkh is the single most mentioned quarter in the chronicles for its restiveness and rebellions.¹⁶³ We will focus here on violence of a confessional nature, since there were various other types of activism, in particular considering the role of the *'ayyārūn*.¹⁶⁴ Al-Karkh was regularly engulfed in violence, often with its Sunnī neighbour to the North-East, the Bāb al-Baṣra, inhabited by Ḥanbalīs. Scholars including George Makdisi, Henri Laoust,¹⁶⁵ Christopher Melchert, and Nimrod Hurvitz,¹⁶⁶ have paid attention to the Ḥanbalī movement and its organization in Baghdad; their studies have put forth its role in the local politics of the day as well as its attempts at regulating social and religious norms in the city, often, but not always, with the support of the Caliphs. These studies have established that the Ḥanbalīs were the

162 Zayn al-Dīn al-Jubā'ī al-Āmilī Al-Shahīd al-Thānī, *Al-Rawḍa al-Bahīya fi Sharḥ al-Lu'ma al-Dimashqiya*, p. 61.

163 This led several scholars to assume that there had been no previous signs of Shī'ī activity in al-Karkh prior to the arrival of the Būyids. While a careful examination shows otherwise, we certainly notice a significant increase in the cases of popular unrest and violence in this area, along with other sections of Baghdad.

164 Quarter *'aṣabiyya* was also a cause for collective action: when an inhabitant of a quarter was attacked, the people of the quarter usually reacted in collective retaliation. For example, when a merchant's store was attacked by a group of *'ayyārūn* in al-Karkh, the population of the quarter pursued the *'ayyārūn* (vagabonds, often members of *fituwwa* brotherhoods) and forced them to return the merchandise stolen. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, pp. 201-2; 213; 222-3; 235-7.

165 Laoust, « Le Hanbalisme sous le Califat de Bagdad, » pp. 67-128.

166 Hurvitz, "From Scholarly Circles to Mass Movements," pp. 985-1008.

only school of law acting as a popular movement in the city. Little attention, however, has been paid to the Imāmī-Shī'a of al-Karkh, their level of organization, their activism, and their impact on local politics in Baghdad. Simha Sabari, who examined popular activism in Baghdad throughout the Būyid period, did not consider the Imāmīs to be part of a movement comparable to the Ḥanbalīs.¹⁶⁷

If we adopt Sidney G. Tarrow's definition of social movements as "collective challenges, based on common purposes, and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities,"¹⁶⁸ we can establish from the available data that the Imāmī-Shī'a of al-Karkh constituted a social movement, particularly in the Būyid period. A close examination of the sources indeed shows that this community acted as a group in the face of challenges, and worked to increase its visibility in the Abbasid capital, often in competition with the Ḥanbalīs, their main contestant in Baghdad. Both movements evolved in parallel and in reaction to one another; they both resorted to violence in order to apply pressure on political elites and gain support for their own group. While other quarters and groups also took part in this competition, the Ḥanbalīs of Bāb al-Baṣra and the Imāmī-Shī'a of al-Karkh can be singled out as leaders in the local politics of their time. More often than not, violence started in these quarters before spreading to other neighbourhoods. Compared with other local areas with a significant Imāmī population, al-Karkh's role and importance can be seen in the fact that the entire area was destroyed and burnt down on multiple occasions between the start of Būyid rule up to the Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 656/1258.¹⁶⁹

Several factors supported the consolidation of a popular Shī'i-Imāmī movement in al-Karkh in early Būyid Baghdad. The first factor was the large Imāmī-Shī'i presence in the district, both at the level of the masses and elites. In the Būyid period, the sources clearly indicate a large Imāmī presence in al-Karkh. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baḡhdādī (d. 463/1071), but also Hilāl Al-Ṣābi' (d. 448/1056) mentioned that it was customary for the Shī'a to live in al-Karkh and Bāb al-Ṭāq, before describing the colourful celebrations of 'Āshūrā' and *Ghadīr Khumm*

167 Sabari, *Mouvements Populaires*. See also the review of Simha Sabari's book by Richard Bulliet, who raises the question of why the Ḥanbalīs are referred to as a movement, but not the Shī'a: Richard W. Bulliet, Review of *Mouvements Populaires*, by Simha Sabari, pp. 815-16.

168 Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, p. 9.

169 The first fire is mentioned as taking place in 225/839, under the caliphate of al-Mu'taṣim. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XI, pp. 98-99, while other incidental fires took place in other years, including 323/935, 363/973, 371/981, Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XIII, p. 349; XIV, pp. 227, 281.

in these areas.¹⁷⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, writing in a later period, also indicated that al-Karkh and Barāthā in West Baghdad had the largest numbers of Imāmīs, followed by Nahr Ṭābiq; in East Baghdad there were Imāmīs in Bāb al-Ṭāq, Sūq Yaḥyā and al-Furḍah. Until the emirate of Jalāl al-Dawla (d. 435/1044), the only three Shī'ī settlements mentioned in the sources for their involvement in riots are al-Karkh, Barāthā, and Bāb al-Ṭāq. Episodes of violence are regularly noted, the first "*fitna*" between the Sunnīs and Shī'a with the destruction of al-Karkh occurring in 338/949.¹⁷¹ In this period, mosques in Baghdad operated as meeting points for the organization of popular movements. The Ḥanbalīs used the mosque of Al-Manṣūr as well as the mosque of Dār al-Sultān to organize their activities. For the Shī'a, the Barāthā mosque played this role.¹⁷²

The second factor that helped increase the activism of the movement is the support granted by the Būyid authorities. Although they were originally Zaydī, the Būyids supported Twelver Shī'ism and Mu'tazilism following the establishment of their dynasty. According to Roy Mottahedeh, this support was a strategic alliance with a community deemed powerful in Baghdad: realpolitik led the Būyids to exert "a conscious effort to assert Shī'ī doctrine and expand *da'wah*."¹⁷³ In addition to the libraries that were founded by the Būyids in al-Karkh, a number of other immediate actions were undertaken to raise the status of the Shī'a in the capital, including the reconstruction and repair of the shrines of the Twelver Imāms, the protection of the sites and their endowment with donations, the enhancement of the prestige linked to 'Alid lineage, and the generalization of the institution of the *naqīb*, which provided an official organization for the community. The most symbolic and impactful action was the institution of new rituals in Baghdad by Mu'izz al-Dawla in 352/963. The two public ceremonies were 'Āshūrā' on the 10th of Muḥarram, and *Ghadīr Khumm* on the 18th of Dhū al-Ḥijja.¹⁷⁴ Under Caliph al-Qādir (381-422/991-

170 Hilāl al-Ṣābi', *Kitāb al-Wuzarā'*, p. 371.

171 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XIV, p. 75.

172 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib Baghdad*, pp. 21-22; Ibn Rajab, *Kitāb al-Dhayl 'alā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, I, pp. 18-19.

173 "The Imamite presence in an important commercial sector of Baghdad meant that the Būyids needed to conciliate them (...) the Būyid emirs' overtures to the imamites suggests that the Imamites were an influential minority in Baghdad and the fact that they occupied Karkh, the main business district of Baghdad, lends credence to this suggestion," see Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, pp. 72-96. See also Halm, *Shī'ism*, p. 51.

174 'Āshūrā' was the commemoration of the battle of Karbala in 60/680, during which Imām Ḥusayn was killed. Mu'izz al-Dawla imposed an official day of mourning for the occasion: all shops and markets had to remain closed, including food stores, water providers, and butchers. Men were required to wear mourning clothes; women had to wear fibre bags

1031), who promoted traditionalism, the Sunnīs of Bāb al-Baṣra responded to the new rituals of the Shī'a with the creation of two new ceremonies in 389/999: *Ziyārat Zubayr* (eight days after 'Āshūrā') and *Yawm al-Ghār* (eight days after *Ghadīr Khumm*).¹⁷⁵ The celebrations are compelling by their similarities to the Shī'i ones, highlighting how both movements reacted to one another in a competitive spirit.¹⁷⁶

This leads us to our third factor: a set of collective actions – framed as “repertoire” in social movement theory – that all aimed at asserting an Imāmī-Shī'i identity. Here the sources contain a large number of examples, which can be categorized in groups: 'Āshūrā' and *Ghadīr Khumm* celebrations; cursing activities against the Companions and Mu'āwiya in particular; and actions of a political nature aimed at ordering relations with outside groups.

In the first set of public ceremonies, the Imāmīs gained a more profound sense of communal identity, becoming, in the words of Ira Lapidus, a “full-fledged sectarian community.”¹⁷⁷ Al-Karkh was at the centre of these celebrations: its inhabitants demonstrated a particular enthusiasm and fervour in the organization of these ceremonies. In 406/1015 for instance, during a procession for Muḥarram, we are told that the Shī'a of al-Karkh decided to pass through Bāb al-Sha'ir in an act of provocation, since this neighbourhood was not on their way to the tomb of Ḥusayn in Karbalā' nor the Kāzīmāyn. Serious altercations ensued and provoked several dead, involving also Bāb al-Qallā'in; Sharīf

and go out in the streets with their faces black with charcoal, their hair down, crying and beating their faces. Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, VII, p. 279-80; 286. To the contrary, *Ghadīr Khumm* was to be a day of full-fledged celebration. According to the Shī'i tradition, *Ghadīr Khumm* was the place where the Prophet stopped on his way back from Mecca in year 10 after the *hijra* and designated 'Alī as his successor. Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn al-Jawzī, and Ibn Kathīr give us a glimpse into these celebrations: the city was decorated for the occasion, the markets had to be open all night, and singing and dancing activities were organized throughout the city. Ibn Kathīr XI, p. 243. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XIV, pp. 151, 162, 189, 196, XV, p. 14. In contemporary Iran, the feast is celebrated by the erection of three statues made of dough and representing the first three Caliphs. The statues are filled with honey and a game would take place during which the participants had to stab the statues. When stabbed, the honey leaking from them symbolized the blood of the usurping Caliphs. It is then sipped by the participants. See Vecchia Vaglieri, “Ghadīr Khumm,” *EP*.

175 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XV, p. 14. Ibn al-Jawzī highlights the ways in which the Sunnīs of Bāb al-Baṣra tried to emulate the Shī'i celebrations in every detail. There is clear irony in the way the medieval historian describes these emulations.

176 *Ziyārat Zubayr* was the visit of the tomb of Muṣ'ab ibn Zubayr, who had fought the early partisans of 'Alī, in Maskin (Northwest of Baghdad, near al-Kāzīmāyn); the procession emulated that of the Shī'a to the tomb of Ḥusayn. *Yawm al-Ghār* commemorated the day the Prophet took refuge in a cave with Abū Bakr in 622 AD, during the *hijra* from Mecca to Medina; the correspondence with *Ghadīr Khumm* is clear.

177 Lapidus, *Islamic Societies to the 19th Century*, p. 274.

al-Raḍī was called by Fakhr al-Mulk in his capacity as *naqīb* of the Ṭālibiyyn to put an end to the violence. The commemorations were cancelled for the rest of the year.¹⁷⁸ Other similar examples in the sources attest to a high level of organization and initiative on the part of the Shī'ī masses in al-Karkh.

By erecting and reinforcing communal boundaries, these popular rituals in Baghdad played a key role in asserting communal identity. Because of the repetitive violence they provoked, the new Shī'ī and Sunnī rituals were forbidden by several Būyid rulers. In 393/1002, 'Amīd al-Juyūsh was sent to Baghdad to restore order and imposed that the Shī'a of al-Karkh and Bāb al-Ṭāq stop their commemorations of 'Āshūrā', while the Sunnīs of Bāb al-Baṣra and Bāb al-Sha'īr were ordered to stop commemorating the death of Zubayr.¹⁷⁹ In 443/1051, following clashes with the Sunnīs of Bāb al-Baṣra, the Shī'a of al-Karkh decided to violate the tomb of Ibn Ḥanbal; they were stopped by the *naqīb* of the 'Alids, whose wisdom foresaw the consequences such an act might bring.¹⁸⁰

A second set of activities was cursing the Companions of the Prophet, his wives, Mu'āwiya and his son Yāzīd. These cursing activities became a major cause of communal violence in the city. If similar cursing activities were recorded in the pre-Būyid period, as we have seen earlier, Būyid rule led to a rise of these practices since they were endorsed by the new political rulers. In 351/962, Mu'izz al-Dawla (d. 356/967) gave the order to cover the walls and doors of the city mosques with insults against the first Caliphs and Mu'āwiya. Ibn al-Athīr notes that "the slogans, after being erased by the Ḥanbalīs, reappeared on the order of Mu'izz,"¹⁸¹ while Ibn al-Jawzī adds that praising the Companions was forbidden by the Shī'a in the entire city of Baghdad.¹⁸² In 421/1030, a group of men were attacked in al-Karkh for chanting slogans in the memory of Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Riots ensued, with a number of killed on both sides. This demonstrates the leadership taken by the people of al-Karkh in establishing the primacy of their religious beliefs in the city. The frequency and violence of these cursing activities in al-Karkh led several scholars of the time to note the fanaticism of the Imāmīs of al-Karkh. The Imāmī scholar al-Khwārizmī (d. c. 383-384/993-994), in one of his *Rasā'il* addressed to the Shī'ī-Imāmī community of Nishapur to console them in the face of a brutal government, exhorted them to stay away from the extremism of the Shī'a of al-Karkh ("*ghuluww fi tashayyū' karkhī*").¹⁸³ His letter clearly addressed the Imāmī

178 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, 111. Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, viii, p. 93.

179 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, p. 37.

180 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, pp. 330-331.

181 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vii, p. 275.

182 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, xiv, p. 140.

183 Al-Khwārizmī, *Kitāb Rasā'il*, p. 135.

community and the term *ghuluww* seems to imply a connection between some Twelver elements and other radical groups.

Popular religious activism in al-Karkh was also embedded in actions of a more political nature. A new period started under 'Izz al-Dawla's (r. 356-367/967-978) rule, known under the *laqab* (cognomen) Bakhtiyār. In the war between Sebuktegin (the chamberlain of Mu'izz al-Dawla) and Bakhtiyār, the 'amma of Baghdad was divided into two camps: the Shī'a with the Būyid emir and the Daylamites, and the Sunnīs supporting Sebuktegin and the Turks.¹⁸⁴ In his *Tajārib*, Ibn Miskawayh highlights the significance of this episode in year 363/974, explaining that the "dispute between the two factions, which had formerly been on religious questions particularly, now became political as well as religious, as the Shi'ah adopted the watchword of Bakhtiyar and the Dailemites, while the Sunnah adopted that of Sabuktakin and the Turks."¹⁸⁵ Al-Karkh, which was at the forefront of the battle for Bakhtiyār, was burnt down twice: in 362/971-972 by the chamberlain of the vizier Abū al-Faḍl, who was a Sunnī,¹⁸⁶ and a second time a year later when the conflict engulfed most of the city, with al-Karkh as a center stage.¹⁸⁷

Year 391/1000 offers another example where the masses of al-Karkh demonstrated their political activism in the city. When the Turkish soldiers revolted against the vizier Abū Naṣr Shāpūr and asked for their salaries, a mob from al-Karkh took the initiative to go and stand in front of the house of the vizier to protect it, allowing him to flee. Al-Ṣābi' and Ibn Al-Athīr both give details of this encounter: the next day, Turkish soldiers retaliated by attacking al-Karkh and they were joined by Sunnīs particularly from Bāb al-Baṣra.¹⁸⁸

In 398/1008, a dispute arose between the people of al-Karkh and the jurists, following a mistreatment by the Ḥanbalīs of al-Mufid in his mosque in Darb Riyāh.¹⁸⁹ The people of al-Karkh reacted by going to the two judges Abū Muḥammad b. al-Akfanī and Abū Ḥamad al-Isfarāhī, and insulting them. A large *fitna* broke out, involving further areas, and the burning of a section of al-Karkh. Notables and merchants from al-Karkh gathered at the house of the

184 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XIV, p. 221 ff.

185 Ibn Miskawayh, II, p. 355.

186 In 360/971, the vizier, Abū al-Faḍl, favoured the Sunnīs and ordered one of his chamberlains to deal with the Shī'a of al-Karkh. The chamberlain burnt down the whole area between the markets of the coppersmiths to that of the fishermen. This was the first time the entire quarter was destroyed; the vizier and the *naqīb* of the 'Alids entered in conflict following the event, and the *naqīb* was dismissed. Ibn Miskawayh, II, pp. 331-32; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XIV, p. 216. Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fi al-Tārīkh*, VII, pp. 336-338.

187 Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, VII, pp. 342-343.

188 Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, VIII, pp. 18-19. Al-Ṣābi', *Tārīkh*, VII, p. 387.

189 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XV, p. 58ff.

Caliph to seek forgiveness for what the masses had done. On the order of 'Amīd al-Juyūsh, al-Mufīd, considered fanatical by some, was sent out of Baghdad, and those involved in the *fitna* were arrested; preachers and story-tellers were banned from their activities.¹⁹⁰

In these episodes of violence, we find countless examples that demonstrate the independence of the popular movement of Imāmī-Shī'a from the Imāmī scholars, whose role was to protect the masses and restore peace in the neighbourhood. At times, these scholars were exiled by the rulers, who saw this as a strategy to restore calm in al-Karkh, as in the example above. This is despite the fact that often the scholars had nothing to do with the riots, and rather found themselves obliged to answer to the authorities who considered them to hold responsibility for the actions of their community. In 409/1018 again, the newly appointed governor of Iraq Ibn Sahlan, known for his tyrannical rule, was sent to Baghdad to decisively put an end to Sunnī-Shī'a disturbances. He took two actions: he exiled from Baghdad a group of bigoted Abbasids, and the Shī'ī 'ālim al-Mufīd.¹⁹¹ His second measure was to surround both al-Karkh and Bab al-Baṣra with Daylamite soldiers. This last measure led to abuses on the populations on the part of the soldiers.¹⁹² Seven years later, in 417/1026, we hear of an episode during which some bandits took refuge in al-Karkh. The quarter was attacked by Turkish soldiers, which led the Sharīf al-Murtaḍā and many inhabitants of al-Karkh to seek refuge in the palace of the Caliph, who protected them. Al-Karkh eventually had a fine of 1,000,000 dinars imposed on it, which was paid fully by its inhabitants.¹⁹³ Sharīf al-Murtaḍā acted as a mediator between the Shī'a of al-Karkh and the authorities on various occasions, using his function as *naqīb* of the 'Alids to secure the interests and safety of the Shī'ī community. In 420/1029, he led a delegation of notables to the caliphal palace to apologize for a Shī'ī attack on a Sunnī preacher that the Caliph had appointed to preach at the Barāthā mosque.¹⁹⁴ Again in 421/1030, he was sent to the caliphal palace following the violation of the interdiction to celebrate 'Āshūrā'.¹⁹⁵

In 422/1031, we hear of another episode showing the level of initiative taking in al-Karkh: a procession of men on their way to *jihād* was attacked in the

190 Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, VIII, pp. 49-50.

191 Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, VIII, pp. 122-123. He was expelled from Baghdad on two earlier occasions during Sunnī-Shī'ī riots in 392/1002 and 398/1008.

192 Madelung, Al-Mufīd, *El.* On Shaykh al-Mufīd, see McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd* and Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*; Kabir, p. 95.

193 Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, VIII, p. 156.

194 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, p. 201; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, VIII, p. 185.

195 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, p. 204.

quarter by people throwing stones at them. The procession was led by the Ṣūfī al-Khazlajī and chanting slogans in the memory of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar when they were attacked; a large revolt ensued, leading to a retaliation from Sunnī neighbourhoods along with the Turkish army the following day. The homes of the Jews were destroyed as they were said to have sided with the people of Karkh.¹⁹⁶

The Shī‘a of al-Karkh also demonstrated their activism through the construction of brick walls around their quarter to protect it from outsiders. This practice, which was later emulated by other quarters in the city, is first mentioned as having occurred in al-Karkh and Nahr al-Qalā‘īn in 408/1017.¹⁹⁷ The walls allowed the population to deny access to the police. Seven years later in 415/1024, the people of al-Karkh were able to deny entry to the quarter to a man called Abū Muqātil.¹⁹⁸ In 417/1026, following the attack of the Turkish soldiers, the Shī‘a of al-Karkh started erecting a brick wall of protection around the whole area of al-Karkh. They were soon imitated by other quarters, such as al-Qalā‘īn. Marking the city landscape, these brick walls were a testimony to the violence of these quarter disputes. Similar constructions of protective walls are mentioned in 441/1049, again at the initiative of the population of al-Karkh who decided to challenge the Būyid interdiction to celebrate *‘Ashūrā’* and feared the intervention of the Turkish soldiers and their Sunnī neighbours. Ibn al-Jawzī described the construction of these walls as moments of celebration, during which poetry recitation and singing took place, and gifts were offered to those who volunteered to build the walls. The walls were then sprung with rose water on their foundations.

Such activities demonstrate a high level of community organization. In 443/1052, we hear that the people of al-Karkh made banners on which they wrote with gold “Muḥammad and ‘Alī are the best of men.”¹⁹⁹ Short periods of peace are noted in the sources, between the people of the two neighbourhoods, and at their sole initiative, without any particular role for political authorities, such as in year 441/1050.²⁰⁰

A last characteristic of al-Karkh in the Būyid period is its role as a place of shelter for Imāmīs and pro-Shī‘ī political figures more generally. During the troubled reign of Jalāl al-Dawla (r. 418-435/1027-1044), violence increased to the extent that the Būyid emir had to leave his palace on five occasions. On two

196 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, pp. 213-214.

197 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, p. 125.

198 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, p. 167.

199 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, xv, p. 335. Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, viii, p. 301.

200 Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, viii, p. 292.

occasions, Jalāl al-Dawla took shelter in al-Karkh, with the *naqīb* of the 'Alids. When the army rose against him and forced him out of his court, Jalāl al-Dawla escaped at night to al-Karkh, where he was welcomed by the population, and he went to Sharīf al-Murtaḍā's house, along with his vizier Abū al-Qāsim.²⁰¹ On the other three occasions when he did not go to al-Karkh, Jalāl al-Dawla left Baghdad all together and sought help from outside rulers.²⁰² These various examples show the degree to which al-Karkh acted as a place of refuge for pro-Shī'ī elements. In the outskirts of Baghdad, al-Karkh provided shelter to those fleeing the Round City and other quarters on numerous occasions.

The repetitive character of these collective actions over the "longue durée" demonstrates the presence of a social movement. While the local leaders of these actions are often left anonymous in the sources²⁰³ – the only mention being of "*ahl*" or "*aṣḥāb*" *al-Karkh* (the people of al-Karkh) – the characteristics and repetitiveness of these collective endeavours demonstrates the presence of a community seeking to assert its visibility and influence in the capital. This Imāmī-Shī'ī movement of al-Karkh is striking by its independence from both the Shī'ī '*ulamā*' and the political figures: it was neither bound by the decisions of the political authorities – whether the Būyids or the Caliphs – nor by the scholarly figures who often took great pains to curb the violence. The occasional times of peace noted by the chroniclers are mentioned with astonishment: the historians are usually incapable of explaining the root causes for the lack of disturbances.

The independence of al-Karkh from other quarters in the city can be seen in their attitude towards the Seljukid Tughril Beg when he arrived in Baghdad in 447/1056: the inhabitants of al-Karkh were the only ones who did not fight the coming Oghuz Turks. They received temporary favors from Tughril Beg for this act, but these were to be short-lived.²⁰⁴

Conclusion

Al-Karkh played a significant role as a favored place of residence for the early Shī'ī movement. Imāmī-Shī'ism in particular developed strongly in this quarter

201 Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, VIII, p. 208 for the events of the year 424/1033, and VIII, p. 219 for the events for the year 427/1036.

202 Idem. See also Kabīr, p. 102.

203 The chroniclers often mention the presence of an "*amīr*" leading the masses in the quarters but tend to provide more names of Ḥanbalī local actors. Each battle had an *amīr*: Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XIV, p. 344.

204 Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, VIII, pp. 323-324.

of Baghdad, away from the Round City, and enjoyed a large degree of autonomy. More than any other area in Baghdad, it is in al-Karkh that the development of a public ritual life, the emergence of the *hawza*, the consolidation of doctrinal beliefs in a written form, and political recognition by the authorities took place.

The end of Būyid rule ushered the start of a new period for Imāmī Shī'ism in Baghdad, and the fate of the Karkh neighbourhood is symbolic of these transformations. Ibn al-Jawzī recounts that the prayer was read with the Sunnī formula in the mosque of Mūsā ibn Ja'far and all the mosques of Karkh, while a group from Bāb al-Baṣra entered al-Karkh and recited slogans to the glory of the Companions. All the posts hung over the stores and houses reading "Muḥammad and 'Alī are the best of mankind" were removed.²⁰⁵ In 448/1056-7, al-Ṭūsī had to flee his home in al-Karkh; his house was looted²⁰⁶ and all the books taken away, including a chair he used to sit on, as well as white banners pilgrims from al-Karkh used to take with them to visit al-Kāẓimayn. These books and objects were piled up in Sūq al-Karkh, where they were burnt to ashes,²⁰⁷ while many inhabitants of the quarter were insulted or even killed.

Al-Ṭūsī's departure symbolized the end of al-Karkh as a center of Imāmī Shī'ism, replaced by Najaf.²⁰⁸ Al-Ṭūsī indeed found refuge in Najaf, where he resumed his teaching activities and where many of his students followed him. His son and student Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan succeeded him after his death in 1067. If Imāmī intellectual activity in al-Karkh was reduced,²⁰⁹ the popular movement of Imāmī Shī'a in al-Karkh remained active throughout the Seljukid period. Al-Karkh became a walled city throughout the period, being regularly engulfed in violence. While most riots started in al-Karkh or Bāb al-Baṣra, many spread to other quarters of the city based on their confessional makeup.²¹⁰

The demise of the Seljuks did not put an end to this sectarian violence. The last century of Abbasid rule – with the exception of the rule of Caliph al-Nāṣir – saw high levels of violence involving Bāb al-Baṣra and al-Karkh. In

205 Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, VIII, p. 337ff. Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-Zamān*, XVIII, p. 510. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, XVI, p. 7. Ibn al-Jawzī explains that the Shī'ī Shaykh Abū 'Abd-Allāh b. Jalāb was ordered killed in Bāb al-Ṭāq for having been a central figure in cursing the Companions, and his body was hanged over his store. It is then that al-Ṭūsī decided to flee, and his house was destroyed.

206 Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt*, XIX, p. 7.

207 Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, VIII, p. 339.

208 Sachedina, p. 38.

209 For the presence of Shī'ī scholars in al-Karkh in the Seljukid period, see Van Renterghem, *Les Elites Bagdadiennes*.

210 The Seljuks established their headquarters in Northeast Baghdad, far away from the Karkh district. Van Renterghem, "Controlling and Developing Baghdad," p. 123.

1256, a climax in violence was reached under al-Musta‘*ṣ*im bi-llāh (d. 656/1258). Following disturbances between al-Karkh and Bāb al-Baṣra during Muḥarram, a Sunnī man was killed in al-Karkh by a Shī‘ī resident. The Caliph sent soldiers to al-Karkh to subdue the tensions; they joined the crowds in pillaging the quarter, burning its buildings, and taking some women as captives. Most Abbasid and Mamlūk historians describe this event as the major cause that triggered the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate in 1258.

While the story of Abbasid Baghdad started with al-Karkh, it also ended with it.

It would be a great error to consider these historical facts as having merely the same worth as curious stories, riots without any importance to the political and cultural life of the time. For we believe we have found one of the master keys to the understanding of the situation in Baghdad.²¹¹

Map References

1. Mosque of Musayyib with the Tall Minaret (Masjid Musayyib)
2. Market of ‘Abd al-Wāḥid (Sūq ‘Abd al-Wāḥid)
3. Fief of the Gate Keepers (Qaṭī‘at al-Bawwābīn), Office of the Poor Tax (Dīwān al-Ṣadaqa). Freedmen’s Stables (Iṣṭabl-al-Mawlā) and Dromedary House (Khān al-Najāib)
4. Market of Abū al-Ward (Sūq Abū al-Ward)
5. Mosque of Ibn Raghbān (Masjid Ibn Raghbān) and Mosque of the Anbārites (Masjid al-Anbāriyyin)
6. The Hospital Bridge (Qantar al-Bīmāristān) and the Old Hospital (Bīmāristān)
7. Quarter of men of Wāsiṭ (Ḥārat Rijāl-Wāsiṭ)²¹²
8. Gate of Karkh (Bāb al-Karkh)
9. Market of Ghālib (Sūq Ghālib)
10. Square of Suwayd (Raḥbat Suwayd)
11. The Clothes-Merchants’ Market (Sūq al-Bazzāzīn)
12. The Butchers’ Quarter (Sūq al-Jazzārīn)
13. Soap-boilers’ Quarter (Aṣḥāb al-Ṣābūn)
14. Canal-diggers’ Quarter (Aṣḥāb al-Qanā)
15. Reed-weavers’ Quarter (Aṣḥāb al-Qaṣab)
16. Quadrangle of the Oil-merchant (Murabba‘ al-Zayyāt)

²¹¹ Makdisi, *Ibn ‘Aqīl*, p. 87.

²¹² The Arabic is my own translation.

17. Shrine of Junayd (Qabr Junayd) and of Sarī-as-Sakatī (Qabr Sarī-as-Sakatī): the Sufi Convent (Dayr al-Ṣūfiyyin)
18. Quadrangle of Ṣāliḥ (Murabba'at Ṣāliḥ)
19. The Sawwāqīn (from Sawīq al-Ḥimmās, broth/ptisan of chickpeas)
20. Fief of the Christians (Qaṭī'at al-Naṣārā) and Monastery of the Virgins (Dayr al-ʿAdhārā)
21. The Alkali Bridge (Qantarāt al-Ushnān)
22. The Tuesday Market (Sūq al-Thulāthā')
23. Gate of the Mills (Bāb al-Arḥā)
24. The Myrtle Wharf (Mashra'at al-Ās) and the Melon House²¹³ or Fruit Market (Dār al-Baṭṭikh)
25. Palace of ʿĪsā (Qaṣr ʿĪsā), Mosque of Ibn al-Muṭṭalib (Masjid Ibn al-Muṭṭalib), and Tomb of the Caliph al-Mustaḍī (Qabr al-Mustaḍī)
26. Shrine of ʿAlī (Maqbarat ʿAlī) – known as (Mashhad al-Mintaqa, The Shrine of the Girdle)
27. Great Mosque of the Sharqiyya Quarter (Jāmi' al-Sharqiyya)
28. The Shrine of Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (Qabr Ma'rūf al-Karkhī) and the Cemetery of the Convent Gate (Maqbarat Bāb al-Dayr)
29. The Ḥarrānī Archway (Ṭāq al-Ḥarrānī), and Baṣra Gate Road (Darb Bāb al-Baṣra)
30. Ibid
31. 30-31 Lower Bridge Road, or Barley Street (Al-Jisr al-Awwal aw Darb al-Sha'ir)
32. Palace and Mosque of Waḍḍāḥ (Qaṣr wa masjid Waḍḍāḥ)
33. The New Bridge and the Booksellers' Market (al-Qantara al-Jadida/al-Ḥadītha wa Sūq al-Warrāqīn)
34. Palace and Market of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (Qaṣr wa Sūq ʿAbd al-Wahhāb)
35. Palace in Fief of ʿĪsā (Qaṭī'at ʿĪsā)
36. The Muḥawwal Gate and Mosque (Bāb wa Masjid Muḥawwal)
37. Qurayya Mosque (Masjid Qurayya)

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²¹³ This was a name commonly given to the town's fruit markets.

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