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SUNNIS' PERSPECTIVES REGARDING THE DEMISE OR MARTYRDOM OF HIS HIGHNESS IMAM ALI IBN MUSA AL-REZA (PBUH)

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ABSTRACT

The accounts on the demise or martyrdom of Imam Ali Ibn Musa (PBUH) by various historians are different and sometimes contradictory. The prevalent and popular idea amongst the scholars from Imamiyyeh Jurisprudence School is that his highness has been poisoned and martyred by Ma'amun, Abbasids' caliph. But, the Sunni historians and scientists have expressed different and conflicting notions in this regard. Some have proposed his highness's extreme use of grape and some have opined his highness's being poisoned by grape or pomegranate or pomegranate juice and some others have posited that his highness has been poisoned by Abbasids proponents and there are these others who speak of his highness's natural death and there are still many others who state that his highness has been poisoned by Ma'amun. The present study is seeking to figure out the selected idea indicating his highness's being poisoned based on a descriptive-analytical research method and through investigating and scrutinizing the various ideas mentioned in the resources and references of Sunni scholars and fellows.

Keywords: Imam Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza (PBUH), Demise, Martyrdom, Sunni Fellows.

INTRODUCTION

The major concern of every history researcher is the attainment of precise information and finding out the most accurate response to the study subject of interest and it is necessary to explore political, economic, ethical, intellectual and social statuses of the intended period in a wise manner and through resorting to fairness and study the factors influencing the event of choice as well as its effects and outcomes so that the judgements could be closest to the reality. The demise of his highness Imam Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza (PBUH) is amongst the controversial historical issues. Generally, the debates are pertinent to whether his highness has died a natural death or has he been poisoned and, in case of the latter being true, there are yet discrepancies as to with what poison has he been martyred: has Ma'amun perpetrated such a catastrophic act or has it been another person who committed such a crime? There are conflicts, as well, regarding the martyrdom cause in such a way that some have pointed to his highness's use of a drink and some others have posited his highness's use of grape and there is yet a large group who have proposed his highness's concomitant use of grape and pomegranate, though there are still these others who have sufficed to the sole mentioning of his highness's being murdered and martyred. Through exploring the preliminary sources and investigation of the late-coming references and making just narrations and criticisms from the historians and researchers' reports, the authors of the present study are seeking to achieve the most acceptable and the most logical result. One should not disregard the idea that the historical data have been approached by historians who

could have never offer the entire aspects and peripheries of the incidents in an accurate and perfect way, let alone those who might have even attempted the inverse reflection of them for a motivation or another; due to the same reason, judgement cannot be made exclusively based on what they have provided. In the meanwhile, it has to be emphasized that any analysis or expression of thought unlike the image portrayed in the history has to necessarily have traces in the ancient resources or the then literature otherwise it will be nothing more than a claim and guess that can be of use only to the supporters of a school of thought and the ones believing therein.

Study Background:

It was made clear in a research by the authors that there is no independent study carried out on the demise or martyrdom of His Highness Imam Reza (PBUH) and the majority of the historians and the researchers have succinctly dealt with the subject of interest to the present study under the general title of this dear and generous Imam. Thus, it was deemed necessary to perform a comprehensive research in this regard.

The following sections outline, investigate and criticize every idea expressed in this regard in separate.

1. Natural Death:

One of the common ideas opined by some of the Sunni scholars regarding the demise of His Highness Imam Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza (PBUH) is that his highness has died a natural death and no external factor and nobody has been involved therein.

Khalifa Ibn Khyyat (819) knows His Highness Imam Ali Ibn Musa Ibn Ja'afar's demise as being the result of natural death (Ibn Khayyat, 1993: 392).

Tabari (889) states that "His Highness Imam Ali Ibn Musa ate a lot of grape and died abruptly and Ma'amun wrote a letter to Hassan Ibn Sahl and informed him of his highness Imam Ali Ibn Musa and his grief over it and wrote another letter to Bani Abbas and his followers and people of Baghdad and meanwhile mentioning the reason for their enmity to himself, to wit Imam Ali Ibn Musa's succession, invited them to prove their obedience to him once again" (Tabari, no date, v.5, 1842).

Ibn Taqary (1453) says: "Imam Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza died when Ma'amun took position in Tus and Ma'amun became sad of his demise and wrote a letter to the people of Baghdad stating that Imam Ali Ibn Musa for whose sake a lot of wars have happened passed away and that succession has been returned to Bani Abbas (Ibn Taqary, 2012: v.2, p.173).

Saiwati (1490) only objects to the demise of the elders during Ma'amun's time without providing any details of the event (Saiwati, 2007, 315) and reminds that Imam Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza has died in 782 (Ibid, 294).

Meanwhile accepting his highness's natural death and exonerating Ma'amun, Ahmad Amin (1954), the Egyptian scientist, realizes others responsible for it in case of coming to accept his highness's being poisoned and states that "my prevalent reckon is that Ma'amun has been honest in his works in such a way that he had one of his daughters married to Imam Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza and the other to his son Muhammad Ibn Ali but it was the divine will for Imam Ali Ibn Musa to pass away after succession and following tolerating three days of disease. But, the Shiites as it is their habit about their Imams claimed that Ma'amun has poisoned him for the riot in Baghdad and this is far from truth as I see it; because the historians have reminded of Ma'amun's extreme grief and also



mentioned that he went to Baghdad while wearing Alavis' slogan, a green garment, for 29 days after the demise of Ali Ibn Musa and even required the commanders to do the same but he was forced to change it to Abbasids' slogan, black garment, upon observing Abbasids' reluctance and their conspiracies. So, it must have been somebody other than Ma'amun and from Abbasid Dynasty's inviters if accepting that Imam Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza had been truly poisoned" (Amin, 2006, c.3, p.210).

Accepting Ma'amun's plot for murdering Fazl, Muhammad Sohail Taqqush, as well, posits natural but sudden demise of his highness Imam Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza (PBUH) and states that "at the same time that Ma'amun started off towards Baghdad, he plotted the murdering of Fazl Ibn Sahl in Sarakhs (Taqqush, 2009, p.125) and he found his highness has passed away all of a sudden when he arrived at Tus. There is a discrepancy amongst the historians regarding the quality of his death and Shiites, accusing Ma'amun, assert that he has poisoned him by grape" (Ibid, p.126). In a footnote, Taqqush adds that Ma'amun's poisoning of his highness is far from truth because Tabari has taken a silent position in accusing Ma'amun and he has not also been convicted by Khalifa Ibn Khayyat".

Khalid Ezam, a contemporary Arab writer, believes that Imam Ali Ibn Musa passed away suddenly on his way to Iraq and this paved the way for the caliph to get rid of objections by Baghdad's people and the forces supporting him could take perfect control of the situation (Ezam, 2009, p.136).

Mahmoud Shaker (2014), a Syrian historian and writer, is of the belief that Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza suddenly passed away in Tus when Ma'amun was going to Baghdad and Ma'amun wrote a letter to Hassan Ibn Sahl and the people of Baghdad that their cause of anger has diminished with the demise of Ali Ibn Musa (Shaker, 2000, v.5, p.183).

It is made evident using scrutiny in the abovementioned materials that nearly all the historians know the demise of His highness Imam Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza as happening all of a sudden but the point worthy of contemplation here is that all of these sources right after mentioning the rather quick letter-writing by Ma'amun to Bani Abbas and his own supporters and the people of Baghdad remind of Ma'amun's claim for returning of the succession to Abbasids and, resultantly, his inviting them to again prove obedience to him. This makes one doubt it could have been Ma'amun who plotted the physical elimination of his highness to free himself of Imam Reza's succession entanglements through a cleverly-thought conspiracy and in order to settle down Abbasids' rebellion in Baghdad and as it is confirmed by Ibn Khaldun (it will be dealt with in more details in the next section), he expressed his apology to the people after his highness's demise for the delegation of succession. On the other hand, Ahmad Amin, as well, who always takes anti-Shiite positions, does not decisively reject the poisoning of Imam Ali Ibn Musa (PBUH) but says if it had been so it could have been perpetrated by a person close to Ma'amun.

Another point the mentioning of which seems to be useful is the Abbasid's policy in advancing their affairs. According to George Zaidan, Abbasids had learnt from the course of events that no religion can persist by exercising religion and piety the way the government of Rashedin Caliphs could not stand long and the offspring of Imam Ali (PBUH) could not overcome Mo'aviyeh through practicing good manners in such a



manner that Alavis used their weapons of religion and familial honor to fight with Mo'aviyeh who used politics and deception and the latter won the case. Due to the same reason, Abbasids discarded all the ethical principles and became politicians in its perfect sense in such a way that they even ordered Abu Moslem to kill from them, to wit from Mozerr Tribe, whoever who was found suspicious and even kill every youth whose height reached five spans and was found suspicious of animosity (Zaidan, 2013, v.4, p.755). He states elsewhere that "the oppression and disloyalty of Abbasids in respect to their servants and subordinates became so popular that they themselves even made deductions based thereon. For example, Amin wrote the following letter to Taher Ibn Hassin, commander of Khorasan Army, when he assisted Ma'amun in his rise against him: "Lo! Taher, you should know that whoever who assisted our family will be finally killed by a strike of a sword. You should either give up or be ready for death". Surprisingly, after Ma'mun's victory over Amin by the assistance of Taher, he was accused and Ma'amun sent one of Taher's own raised agents to poison him and he did so (Ibid, 759).

2. *Death by Grape Overconsumption:*

Some of the historians express that Imam Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza (PBUH) has passed away for his overuse of grapes as if they did not know or intentionally disregarded the prominent figure of his highness and the degree of his knowledge. These include the following individuals:

Abu Ali Moskaviyeh Razi (1000) states that "according to narrations, Ali Ibn Musa ate a lot of grape and died" (Moskaviyeh, 1986, v.3, p.141).

Ibn Jawzi (1176) believes that Ali Ibn Musa Ibn Ja'afar ate a lot of grape and died all of a sudden and Ma'amun sent the news of his highness's demise in a letter to Bani Abbas and the people of Baghdad and invited them to obey him now that the reason for their anger, to wit Ali Ibn Musa, has died (Ibn Jawzi, 1994, v.10, p.115).

Ibn Athir (1209), as well, poses the overconsumption of grapes as the reason for the demise of his highness Ali Ibn Musa and states: "it is said that Ma'amun has poisoned him with grapes because his highness was too interested in eating grapes and it seems far from reality to me" (Ibn Athir, no date, v.6, p.351).

Abulfada'a, as well, realizes the sudden death of his highness Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza as being caused by eating a lot of grapes (Abulfada'a, no date, v.1, p.331).

Zohbi (١٩٨٩) narrates different ideas as follows: somewhere, he states "Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza ate a lot of grapes and suddenly passed away and Ma'amun wrote a letter to the people of Baghdad that Ali Ibn Musa for whose sake you have angered me has died" (Zohbi, 1989, v.14, p.13); elsewhere, he points out that his highness died in his middle age (Ibid, 1981, v.9, p.389) and he also states in another place that "it is said his highness has been poisoned and Abu Abdullah, the governor, has said his highness Ali Ibn Musa was martyred in Sanad Abad in Tus" (Ibid, p.393).

Ibn Kathir (1٩٩٨) expresses that "His Highness Ali Ibn Musa suddenly passed away by eating grapes and apparently Ma'amun became so much grieved and only God knows it. And, Ma'amun wrote a letter to Bani Abbas that you have become angry on me for the succession of his highness Ali Ibn Musa and now he has passed away so you should again prove obedience to me" (Ibn Kathir, 1998, v.14, p.126).



Ibn Khaldun (؁؁؁) has expressed the incident as “when Ma’amun entered Tus, Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza suddenly passed away for the grapes he had eaten. Ma’amun sent a messenger to Hassan Ibn Sahl and the people of Baghdad and Al-e-Abbas Shiites and informed them of the news and said that this turmoil has been for his sake and apologized for his succession and said they have to obey him now that his highness has passed away” (Ibn Khaldun, 2000, v.3, p.313).

The noteworthy point here, disregarding the chastity of the Imam as a controversial issue between the Shiites and Sunnis, is that how is it imaginable that a wise and knowledgeable man could have eaten that much grapes to result in his sudden death?! Does a non-discerning child do such a thing, let alone Imam Ali Ibn Musa (PBUH) whose scientific rank, piety and virtue is confessed by everyone? As it is stated by Hassan Ibn Sahl regarding the justification of succession delegation to Imam Ali Ibn Musa (PBUH), “Ma’amun did not find amongst Bani Abbas and Alavis anyone more superior, more pious and more knowledgeable than him” (Tabary, no date, v.5, 1837; Ibn Jawzi, 1994, v.10, p.94; Moskaviyeh, 1955, v.4, p.131; Ibn Athir, no date, v.6, p.326; Ibn sabbaq, 2001, v.2, p.1005; Mirkhand, 1958, v.3, p.460). Evidently, there is no proportion between his highness’s superiority and knowledgeability, mentioned generally, and especially his highness’s virtuousness with voraciousness. The terms “apparently” and “only God knows” mentioned by Ibn Kathir after stating Ma’amun’s expression of a lot of sorrow point to the idea that Ma’amun’s grief for the demise of his highness Imam Ali Ibn Musa (PBUH) is suspicious and ponderable; however there are other evidences proving the foresaid idea and they will be pointed out in the middle of the discussions.

3. *Likelihood of Being Poisoned by Grapes or Pomegranate:*

Some historians have dodged the expression of discrete ideas about the demise of Imam Reza (PBUH) and consider that Imam might have been poisoned, of course, without mentioning the person(s) who has committed such a crime.

Ibn Jawzi (1233) says: “on the path of Ma’amun’s travel to Baghdad, Fazl Ibn Sahl was killed by a group in a bathroom in Sarakhs and Ali Ibn Musa got sick and died in Tus and it is stated that Imam had been given poisonous grapes after his leaving of the bathroom. The grapes had been stained with needles soaked in poison without them having left any trace of puncture and his highness passed away upon eating them. A group thinks that Ma’amun has poisoned him and this is incorrect because Ma’amun became sad and revealed his grief when His Highness Ali Ibn Musa passed away and he did not eat and drink for several days and retreated from taking any pleasure and he and his companions were wearing green garments when they entered Baghdad (Ibn Jawzi, no date, p.355). Ibn Khallakan (1260) knows the eating of a lot of grapes as the reason for the demise of His Highness Ali Ibn Musa and carries on stating that “the grapes were poisonous and his highness became sick upon eating them and passed away” (Ibn Khallakan, no date, v.3, p.270).

Safdi (1999) has the following statement: “it is stated that his highness Ali Ibn Musa used to eat a lot of grape and he died all of a sudden and it is stated that the grapes were poisonous” (Safdi, 1999, v.22, p.155) and they took it to the extent based on the utterances that Ma’amun poisoned him by pomegranate so as to make Bani Abbas satisfied with him” (Ibid, p.156).



Yafe'ei (1996) knows the reason for his highness Ali Ibn Musa as eating a lot of grapes based on narrations and adds "it is stated that the grapes had been stained with poison" (Yafe'ei, 1996, v.2, p.10).

Qalqashandi (2006) expresses the demise of his highness Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza for no clear reason and goes on adding that "his highness had been poisoned by pomegranate" (Qalqashandi, 2006, p.102).

Ibn Hajar (1431) adds that Abu Sa'ad Ibn Sam'ani quotes Abu Hatem Ibn Hayan in Al-Ansab that "his highness had been poisoned by pomegranate juice" (Ibn Hajar Asqalani, 1904, v.7, p.388).

Ibn Emad Hanbali (1668) narrates that "his highness died as a result of fever caused by poison" (Ibn Emad, 1987, v.3, p.14).

Meanwhile accepting Ma'amun's conspiracy for murdering Fazl, Muhammad Khezry Bak (1927) mentions excuses to cleanse his hands from poisoning of his highness Ali Ibn Musa (PBUH) and confirms Ahmad Amin's idea and states that "four of Ma'amun's servants engaged Fazl Ibn Sahl with swords and killed him and, when they were brought to Ma'amun, they expressed that they had killed Fazl by Ma'amun's order and Ma'amun commanded their beheading. This action had definitely been carried out based on Ma'amun's plot because Ma'amun felt the heavy shade of Fazl above his head and he also used to mischievously treat him and the people of Baghdad did not obey his orders during the time that he was alive so he finished Fazl using these servants of him. Another incident took place in Tus that was the very demise of His highness Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza and Ma'amun is accused of poisoning him but I think there is no reason for such an allegation and its justification because although getting closer to the people of Baghdad and Abbasids and getting rid of His Highness Ali Ibn Musa makes one think of such an accusation, the affectionate feeling that is sown in the heart of Ma'amun for Al-e-Abu Taleb and the idea that he had her daughter married to his Highness Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza and this has made Ma'amun to be entangled with the conspiracies in Iraq all cause the accusation to appear far from reality. It might have been even carried out by Ma'amun's close assistants so as to mitigate the Abbasids' riots and prevent the caliphate from slipping out of Bani Abbas's hands" (Khezry Bak, 1985, p.206).

Although Ibn Jawzi and Khezry Bak try carving excuses to exonerate Ma'amun from Imam's murder, it is vividly clear that resorting to Ma'amun's apparent grief that is seriously suspected by Ibn Kathir and a few days of abandoning the pleasures and establishing kinship relationships with Imam Reza (PBUH) cannot at all be firm proof revoking the claim for his poisoning of Imam because the person who heinously slammed his brother down and took over the power and got rid of Fazl Ibn Sahl after all his services by having him murdered and blaming a group of his foremen so as to release himself from infamy and the inauspicious outcomes of such a transgression is easily capable of derailing his highness Ali Ibn Musa (PBUH) who was seen by him as an enemy and some historians' resort to his highness's being a relative of Ma'amun hence repudiating of his highness's being poisoned by him can be revoked by stating that there are numerous examples during the political history of the governments that such instantaneous or temporary marriages have taken place for political intentions and expediencies. Although Khezry Bak takes a step backward in the end and tries attributing the



perpetrated crime to Ma'amun's close assistants but this is not in compliance with the assertions by the other historians.

4. *Expressing the Murder or Martyrdom with no Mentioning of the Murderer:*

Some of the scholars, as well, have individually used such terms as "murder" or "martyrdom" to report the incident and they have no mentioning of the accomplices or partners of the murder.

Mas'oudy (924) states that "after expressing allegiance to His Highness Ali Ibn Musa as the successor, the situation became distressed in Baghdad and the people announced Ebrahim Ibn Mahdi as the caliph via deposing Hassan Ibn Sahl, Ma'amun's appointed governor in Iraq. For the same reason, Ma'amun, along with His Highness Ali Ibn Musa and his minister, Fazl Ibn Sahl, set out on a trip from Marv to Baghdad. Fazl was murdered in a bathroom in Sarakhs and his Highness Ali Ibn Musa was murdered in Tus" (Mas'oudy, no date, p.302). Mas'oudy who is a prominent and antecedent historian explicitly proposes the issue of Imam's murder without objecting to the statements by others.

Ibn Hajar (1448), as well, adds that His Highness Ali Ibn Musa was martyred in Sanad Abad in Tus during the holy month of Ramadhan or in Safar, as narrated by some (Ibn Hajar Asqalani, 1907, v.7, p.387).

As it was mentioned previously, Zohbi quotes Abu Abdullah, the governor, in stating the martyrdom of his highness (Zohbi, 1981, v.9, p.393).

Although these scientists and scholars do not explicitly or implicitly mention the name or possibly names of the murderers, the robust idea in an analysis of the situation of that time and juxtaposition of the data becomes that Imam Reza (PBUH) has been murdered by Ma'amun because he has been most intensely motivated to do so as it will be explicated in the following sections.

5. *Ma'amun as the Murdering Agent:*

A considerable count of the historians explicitly introduces Ma'amun as the murderer of his highness Ali Ibn Musa; of course, they have either sufficed to the mere mentioning of this or dealt with a detailed account of the murder's quality.

Abu Hatam Muhammad Ibn Haban Bosti (933), a famous scholar of HADITH and Narratives as well as a well-known biographical evaluation scientist, states that: "his highness Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza passed away by the juice that was given to his highness by Ma'amun" (Ibn Haban, 1972, v.8, p.457).

Abulfaraj-e-Esfahani (935) who is a descendant of Hosham Ibn Abdulmalek and exercises a sort of Iraqi and pseudo-Mu'azilah Shi'ism, has offered many news with no bias (cited in Ja'afariyan, 2014, p.256). He has different narrations regarding the demise of His Highness Imam Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza (PBUH). He states somewhere that "Ma'amun vested the succession in his highness Ali Ibn Musa and then made him drink poison according to what has been mentioned in this regard and his highness died for the same reason" (Abulfaraj, 2006, p.454). In another place, he states that "Ma'amun pretended that he has eaten an unhealthy and lethal food with His highness Ali Ibn Musa and they both got sick and His Highness Imam Reza remained sick until he passed away" (Ibid, p.427). He states elsewhere that "there is a discrepancy about the demise of his highness Ali Ibn Musa and also regarding the reason why his highness has been poisoned.



Ma'amun ordered Abdullah Ibn Bashir not to cut off his nails for a time following which he gave him something like tamarind to rub to his hands and then invited his highness Imam Reza and commanded Abdullah to prepare pomegranate juice with his poison-stained hands and Ma'amun made his highness drink it from his own hand and when Abasalt Herawi came to Imam, his highness ordered they did what they wished for, to wit they poisoned me". In another place, he does not mention Ma'amun's name and states that "Muhammad Ibn Ali quotes Muhammad Ibn Jahm to have said that his Highness Ali Ibn Musa liked grapes and his highness was fed on poisonous grapes when he was sick following which he passed away" (Ibid).

Abulfaraj mentions the poem recited by Da'abal Khaza'ei (825), a contemporary poet of his highness Ali Ibn Musa (PBUH), and cited by Ali Ibn Solaiman Akhfash and points to his highness's being martyred by poisonous juice:

فأبكيك أم ريب الردى فيهن؟ شككت فما أدري أ مسقى بشربة
و إن قلت موت إنه لقمين و أيهما ما قلت إن قلت شربة

(Ibid, p.459)

The poem means: "I have become doubtful and I do not know if you have passed away by the juice so that I can cry out for you or you have died of the old age so that I might take it easier on myself? It does not differ whether you have been poisoned or you have died a natural death, you travelled from amongst us very early".

This is while he states in another account of the incident that "Hassan Ibn Ali Khafaf quotes Abasalt Herawi to have said "Ma'amun came to visit his highness Ali Ibn Musa during his last hours of life and stated after expressing his sorrow that it is very hard for me that the people say I have poisoned you while I am innocent. And, His Highness Ali Ibn Musa, as well, ordered that the leader of the believers, you are right and you should not be blamed" (Ibid, p.460).

Qazi Minhaj-e-Seraj (1239) explicitly states that "Ma'amun sent Raja'a Ibn Abi Al-Zahhak to take his highness Ali Ibn Musa from Medina to Khorasan and promised the people that Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza will become the successor of caliphate after him and this was made by the efforts of Fazl, the minister, and Fazl had been given the epithet of the "double minister"; Abbasids became angry upon being brought the news of the allegiance and expressed their allegiance to Ebrahim Mahdi and Ma'amun regretted what he had done and poisoned Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza and ordered to kill Fazl in the bathroom" (Minhaj-e-Seraj, 1984, p.113).

Khandmir (1405) asserts that "based on the narrations by the majority of the scholars, His Highness Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza (PBUH) was murdered by Ma'amun in Ramadhan, in 782, in a village called Sanabad, in Tus" (Khandmir, 2001, v.2, p.82).

Mirkhand (1497), meanwhile providing proofs of the poisoning, states that "Ma'amun wanted to return to Baghdad and set out on a trip along with his highness Imam Reza and Sahl from Marv and they arrived at Sarakhs. Fazl Ibn Sahl was murdered in a bathroom in Sarakhs and Ma'amun killed the murderers who had been apparently perpetrated the crime by his own orders. Afterwards, his highness Imam Reza (PBUH) got sick in Tus and passed away in there. Poison has been said to be the reason for the



disease and demise of His Highness and it is also said that Ma'amun placed poison in grapes or pomegranate and had his highness eaten it and his highness passed away as a result of being poisoned. The reason why Ma'amun poisoned his highness according to what some say is that the people from Baghdad and also Bani Abbas were dissident regarding the succession of his highness and there were riots held everywhere against Ma'amun and Ma'amun was forced to poison his highness to stabilize his caliphate" (Mirkhand, 1994, v.3, p.461).

Based on Sunnis' sources, George Zaidan (1914) points to the common policy of Abbasids and states that "Ma'amun sent a man to Sarakhs to kill Fazl in a bathroom and then sentenced the murderers to death. After Fazl, Ma'amun was thinking of a way to get rid of his highness Ali Ibn Musa and because he feared the rebels by the people of Khorasan in case of deposing his highness from succession he was urged to resort to the ancient policy of Abbasids and sought the poisoning of his highness and murdered his highness Ali Ibn Musa by giving him poisonous grapes" (Zaidan, 2013, p.798; Ibid, 2003, p.231). Hassan Ebrahim Hassan (1968) expresses very conflicting ideas. Somewhere, he reminds of Ma'amun's accusation and states "the issue of Imam Reza's succession caused Bani Abbas to become angry in such a way that they deposed Ma'amun and expressed their allegiance to Ebrahim Ibn Mahdi. In order to settle down the turmoil, Ma'amun, firstly, murdered Fazl Ibn Sahl and made himself appear accused of his highness Ali Ibn Musa (PBUH) so as to keep Abbasids close to himself" (Hassan, 1992, v.2, p.61). In another place, he explicitly mentions his highness Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza (PBUH)'s being poisoned but mentions no name of the one(s) who did it and states that "Ma'amun became aware of the hostile policy of Abbasid caliphs towards Alavis for which reason he delegated succession to his highness Ali Ibn Musa (PBUH) and if his highness did not pass away as a result of being fed with poison on his way to Baghdad, the succession would have been taken away from Abbasids and vested in Alavis" (Ibid, p.128). Finally, he sits on the chair of judgement and states that "there are many debates amongst historians regarding the quality of Imam Reza (PBUH)'s murder; some have opined that Ma'amun gave him poisonous grapes or juice. It is clear that these reports are exposed to dubiousness because they are cited in Shiites' sources while the majority of the credible sources have adopted a silent position in regard of the issue" (Ibid, p.155).

Ahmad Shelby (2000), as well, meanwhile analyzing the issue, believes that his highness Ali Ibn Musa passed away suddenly as a result of eating grapes and states that some say the grapes had been poisoned and one becomes dubious as to whether accept it or not. But, the situation had been so that Ma'amun seems sufficiently motivated to have committed such a crime, especially because he writes a letter after the demise of his highness Ali Ibn Musa and expresses apology to Bani Abbas and the people of Baghdad for granting his succession and declaring the news of his highness's demise invites them to obey him (Shelby, 1996, v.3, p.327).

Abdulmon'em Hashemy, a contemporary historian, bases his explanations on his highness's demise but points out that "Ma'amun was determined to free himself of the persons like Fazl Ibn Sahl and his highness Ali Ibn Musa who had been envisioned as threats to his caliphate; Fazl was murdered in a bathroom in Sarakhs by four individuals and his highness Ali Ibn Musa passed away in Tus but his demise caused distress amongst



the people and it had become widespread that his highness had not died a natural death because his demise took place at the time that Abbasids had risen up in Iraq against Ma'amun for the transition of caliphate to Alavis and the people used to say that Ma'amun had fed him poisonous grapes following which Ma'amun wrote a letter to Hassan Ibn Sahl and Abbasids in Iraq and while declaring the demise of his highness Ali Ibn Musa called upon them to prove obedience to him" (Hashemy, 2006, v.3, p.116). Ma'amun's attempt of murdering Imam Reza (PBUH) is the most robust opinion expressed by the scholars. It can be explicated in the following words: Ma'amun was not adequately aware of the aggravation of the situation in Iraq and the other regions because Fazl Ibn Sahl used to present him with reports of the events the way he liked to hear and he hid from him the events that were happening in Iraq as well as the clashes that had caused the caliph's loyal forces to stand against the opposition forces. Upon becoming aware of the situation and finding his caliphate and government exposed to collapse, Ma'amun immediately started taking measures to make the public minds of the Iraqis and, atop of them, Al-e-Abbas satisfied; for the same reason and as his first step, started off from Marv towards Iraq so as to bear eye witness to the situation therein. In his second step and in a clever move urged by the policy of deception and conspiracy, he murdered Fazl Ibn Sahl and asked his nephew to marry Hassan Ibn Sahl's daughter so as to soothe their grief and killed his murderers. But, the most important barrier on Ma'amun's way of reconciliation with the people of Baghdad was the existence of Imam Reza (PBUH) in the position of succession. Due to the same reason, he poisoned his highness in his third step and under mysterious conditions (Holt et al, ۲۰۰۸, v.1, p.177; Khezry, 2014, p.73). Based on Shahid Motahhary's idea, as well, the main reason for the martyrdom of Imam Reza (PBUH) was the rise of Bani Abbas in Baghdad. Ma'amun poisoned Imam Reza (PBUH) in their way from Khorasan to Baghdad and the situation in Baghdad was repeatedly brought to him. He found out that he cannot depose Imam Reza (PBUH) and going on with the current situation was also deemed very difficult by him. So, he poisoned his highness so as to set the ground for going thereto and also to settle down Bani Abbas (Motahhary, 2009, p.212). This way, Ma'amun notified the Iraqis by breaking through these barriers that he is ready for his change of his policies.

6. *Prediction of Poisoning:*

Some reports are indicative of the idea that his highness Ali Ibn Musa (PBUH) had predicted before his demise that he would be poisoned. This is in proportion to Imam's supernatural power as a fact that is completely accepted in Imamiyyeh School, though Sunnis, resorting to some AYAT in holy Quran, know knowledge of unseen as being unique to the God (Razi, 1980, v.24, p.211).

A group of historians have narrated a report as follows: Harthamah Ibn A'ayon, a commander in Ma'amun's army, narrates that "his highness Ali Ibn Musa informed me that my life has come to an end and I will be given poisonous grapes and pomegranate following which I will be martyred. Harthamah says it did not take a long time before his highness Ali Ibn Musa was given poisonous grapes and pomegranate by Ma'amun and passed away" (Ibn Talheh, no date, p.301; Ibn Sabbaq, 1988, p.249; Sheblanji, no date, p.324).



Qonduzi Hanafi (1873) states that “his highness Ali Ibn Musa informed us before his demise that he will be martyred by poisonous grapes” (Qonduzi, 2009, p.422).

It is worth mentioning most robustly that the means of poisoning his highness Ali Ibn Musa (PBUH) has been a fruit that ripens during late summer and, surprisingly, Safar Month in 782 wherein his highness Ali Ibn Musa was martyred coincides based on astronomical calculations with September and this coincidence of his martyrdom with the ripening of the fruit is another testimony authenticating the idea that his highness was murdered and did not die a natural death (Zamany, 2005, v.2, p.330).

CONCLUSION:

According to the materials presented herein, it can be concluded that Imam Reza (PBUH)’s murder by Ma’amun is not only far from imagination but there are also evidences signifying that this heinous act has been committed by he himself. A short glance at the expressions by those who have denied His Highness Imam Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza (PBUH)’s murder shows that they base their claims on several reasons: 1) delegation of succession to his highness Ali Ibn Musa; 2) his highness’s veneration and reverence; 3) having his daughter married to his highness; 4) expression of grief and avoiding eating and drinking and taking pleasure; and, 5) putting on green garment for about a month. But, as it was observed, the statements made by historians do not comply with such a claim and these reasons and, more precisely, these excuses cannot be documented. Furthermore, it is also stated in history that Ma’amun did not even have mercy for his brother, Muhammad Amin, in his grasp of the power and murdered Fazl Ibn Sahl and Taher Ibn Hasin, the commander of Khorasan Army, and also, as it was pointed out in between the discussions and the evidences signify it, he did not any other way but to murder his highness Ali Ibn Musa so as to settle down and satisfy Abbasids’ rebel in Baghdad and also to fortify his position and he called for Bani Abbas’s obedience as soon as perpetrating such an atrocity. In addition, Ma’amun had regretted the granting of succession to his highness as opined by Ibn Khaldun, Minhaj-e-Seraj and Shelby and asked for forgiveness from his clan



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