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5.1.3 *Challenging the Power*

After 'Alī's death the Shī'ites never held the power during the period discussed here. Their talk of legitimation was purely theoretical; in practice all they could do was stage revolts, like the Khārijites. If they spoke of legitimation they always had contesting the official power and seizing power in mind. This, too, was of course given religious justification. From the very beginning, dissidents of any colour linked their resistance to a call 'to the book of God and the *sunna* of his prophet',¹ meaning that they wanted to realise the true Islam. Campaigning for this counted as *amr bil-ma'rūf wal-nahy 'an al-munkar* in their eyes; the slogan spread quickly. The Mu'tazilites adopted it while they were still in opposition to the authorities, and retained it once they entered the caliphs' service, for of course the authorities, too, set great store by being in harmony with 'the book of God and the *sunna* of his prophet' and 'commanding what is right'. Interpretation followed: how does one command what is right? Using the sword, the tongue, or just the heart? Hadiths had paved the way in this context.²

As soon as they took up arms, a Quranic verse became relevant that shifted the balance slightly: sura 49:9, which recommends fighting those who are violent (*al-fi'a al-bāghiya*) until they surrender.³ Subsequently it says that 'God loves those who are just'; consequently those who fought the 'violent ones' (and usually reported their own feats), the *ahl al-baghy*, were often called *ahl al-'adl* or *al-fi'a al-'ādila*.⁴ Of course everyone could refer this to himself in theory, but the Quranic verse drew certain limits. It also said that one should try to make peace between the parties at war; this was not to the taste of revolutionaries. The emphasis was indeed on solving the conflict; consequently someone fighting against unjust authorities lost his legitimation as soon as the authorities 'gave in'. Rebels thus did not usually employ the term *baghy*; one exception being the Khārijite poet 'Īsā al-Khaṭṭī who called the Umayyads *dhawī l-baghy wal-ilhād*, putting them politically as well as religiously in the wrong.⁵ The classic case for sura 49:9, however, was the battle of the camel. 'Alī, it was believed, had treated Mu'āwiya's party as *fi'a bāghiya*; afterwards he agreed that an arbitration court should ensure a reconciliation. Not only the Imāmites gave 'Alī right in this way:⁶ there was also a hadith that agreed,

1 Cf. the examples listed by Crone/Hinds, *God's Caliph* 59ff.; also Kister in: JSAI 18/1994/112ff.

2 Vol. II 440ff., and p. 748f. above.

3 Thus e.g. vol. I 305 above.

4 Ibid. 210. Cf. e.g. Ibn Qudāma, *Mughnī* x 64, -5ff./VIII 108, -6ff. For another meaning of the same see p. 568 above; also p. 760.

5 Quoted by Madelung in EI² VII 546a.

6 Kulīnī, *Kāfī* VIII 180, 9ff. after Ja'far al-Ṣādiq.