



(Kermani, Mobin I, p. 228), while a well-known hadith (extant in several versions) ascribes to Muhammad the words "I am the city of knowledge (madinat al-'ilm) and 'Ali is the gate; will you enter the city other than by its gate?" (ibid., pp. 229-30). Shi'ite interpretation of Koran 2:58 and 7:161 identifies the imams with the bab through which the Children of Israel are to pass after saying "hetta" (for traditions, see Kermani, Mobin I, p. 229; for commentary, see Ahsa'i, Šarh II, pp. 227-31; Šabestari, Šarh, pp. 148-49).

Read the rest of this article online at  
[www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bab-door-gate-entrance](http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bab-door-gate-entrance).

The term also came to be used among the Imami Shi'ites to designate the representatives of the imam and is best known in its application to the four abwab believed to have acted as intermediaries for the twelfth imam during his lesser occultation: Abu 'Amr 'Otman b. Sa'id 'Omari, his son Abu Ja'far Mohammad (d. 305/917), Abu'l-Qasem Hosayn b. Ruh Nowbakti (d. 326/937), and Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali b. Mohammad Samarri (d. 329/940). (On these, see Maškur, Tarik-eŠi'a, pp. 137-42; Hussain, Occultation, chaps. 4-7.) Other claimants to this rank appeared during the same period (ibid., pp. 142-46), but in the end the system of babiyya was abandoned in favor of the theory of the greater occultation. During the nineteenth century, a section of the Shaikhi school (q.v.) came to regard Shaikh Ahmad Ahsa'i (q.v.) and Sayyid Kazem Rašti (q.v.) as gates of the imam, a belief which led to the emergence of Babism (q.v.) following the application of the term bab to Sayyid 'Ali Mohammad Širazi (see BAB, 'ALI MOHAMMAD ŠIRAZI, below).

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