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# HOW DID THE EARLY SHI'Ā BECOME SECTARIAN?

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It is by now well known that Shi'ism was not at first, as orthodox Twelvers and even Sunnis would have it, a consistent cult of the twelve imāms one after another, from which various dissident Shi'ite groups diverged in favor of one or another alternative claimant. The early Shi'ā is no longer to be viewed from the standpoint of later Imāmism; and this fact obviates some once-popular questions, raising new ones in their place. For instance, it can no longer be supposed, as it used to be, that the Zaydīs parted company with the Twelvers because they preferred Zayd to Muḥammad Bāqir as the fifth imām, succeeding to 'Alī Zayn al-'Abidīn; nor that the subsequent Zaydī imāms were descendants of Zayd.<sup>1</sup> For Zaydīs, 'Alī Zayn al-'Abidīn was no imām at all; but even if he had been, there would have been no question of anyone in particular "succeeding" to him, for the imāmate was not hereditary.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, strictly speaking, the Zaydīs never "parted company" with the Twelvers at all; for in the days when Zaydism was being formulated there were as yet no Twelvers, for the Twelfth Imām had not yet come upon the scene. Similarly, it need no longer be regarded as strange, as it used to be, that so many Shi'ites could accept as imām non-Fātimids, like Muḥammad ibn al-Iḥānafiya; for it is now recognized that for the early Shi'ites, as for the other Arabs, it was descent in the male line which counted—that is, from 'Alī, not primarily from Muḥammad's daughter. Indeed, the whole family of 'Alī was given precedence; any descendants of Abū Ṭālib could become Shi'ite

leaders<sup>3</sup>—and, so far as relationship to the Prophet entered the case, even the other uncles were not ruled out. Hence the most effective of all Shi'ite efforts, in one sense, was the one which put the 'Abbāsids on the throne.

We must no longer ask how the early Shi'ā could neglect what we took for basic Shi'ite principles, but how those very principles could have arisen out of the early situation. The particular question touched on in this paper is how Shi'ism came to be sectarian. There were many cross-currents in early Islām; most were absorbed into the Sunni synthesis. How was Shi'ism able to escape this fate and maintain and deepen its characteristic differences? Two of the several elements in the process are the spiritual independence of the Ghulāt and the strategic advantages of the sectarian tendencies in the imāmate of Ja'far al-Sādiq.<sup>4</sup>

### *The initial defeat of the Shi'ā, and its reactions thereto*

The traditional Sunni viewpoint has been that 'Alī was one of the four great caliphs accepted by the community as rightful, and that the Shi'ites have merely exaggerated a reverence for him which the whole community shared. On this assumption the bitterness of the Shi'ā against the rest of Islām is scarcely intelligible. The first step in understanding has been taken when it is realized that for the early community 'Alī was by no means on the same footing with the first three caliphs. This early rejection of 'Alī, which Buhl's biography of 'Alī brings out so clearly,<sup>5</sup> imme-

<sup>1</sup> The old assumptions are to be found in I. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (Heidelberg, 1910), 247; they are also reflected in the common term "Fivers" (*Fünfer*)—cf. B. Spuler, *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1952), 170. Confusion on these points unfortunately continues by inadvertence. Cf. also C. Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples*, trans. J. Carmichael and M. Perlmann (London, 1949), 142-3. M. Gaudiefroy-Demombaynes, *Les Institutions musulmanes* (Paris, 1946, 3rd. ed.), 41, even makes of Zayd a hidden imām! Picturing the Zaydīs in the Twelvers' image can hardly go further.

<sup>2</sup> R. Strothmann, in his several works on the Zaydīs, has most fully clarified these points.

<sup>3</sup> The term "Talibid" is used in contrast to "'Abbāsīd" as often as is "Alid"; and as the case of 'Abd Allāh ibn Mu'āwiya shows, other Talibids could be looked on as within the family; however, even Ibn Mu'āwiya was expected by some to give over the imāmate to an actual 'Alid. Nawbakhti, *Firaq al-Shi'a*, ed. H. Ritter (Istanbul, 1931); 31. Cf. F. Buhl, "Alidernes Stilling," *Danske Videnskaberne Selskab, Forhandlinger*, nr. 5 (1910), 384.

<sup>4</sup> There are certainly other factors not dealt with here. B. Lewis, *Origins of Ismailism* (Cambridge, 1940), 32, stresses a shift to a more urban class situation unconfused by Arab national predominance as reason for the rise of conspiratorial sects under the 'Abbāsids.

<sup>5</sup> F. Buhl, *Alī som Præcedent og Kalif* (Kopen-

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diately poses a series of new questions—for instance, how did the once despised 'Alī gain his present prominence in Islām?—and at the same time suggests what tremendous vitality lay in the minority which formed his initial party.

The bitterness of the Shi'ites against the rest of Islām as the enemies of 'Alī has a sober historical foundation. It is hard to suppose that anyone thought of 'Alī as the logical candidate at the death of the Prophet;<sup>6</sup> but even when under extraordinary circumstances he was elected at Madīna, many of the most prominent of Muhammad's companions opposed 'Alī's rule, and others remained distinctly neutral.<sup>7</sup> Not only Talha and Zubayr, but Mu'āwīya from the first had supporters outside of Syria; the arbitration at Adhruh was—in the very choice of al-Ashtarī—a triumph for the neutrals; and by the end of 'Alī's life he seems to have been abandoned on one basis or another by the greater part of Islām.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, the opposition 'Alī or 'Uthmān, which the Sunnis denied (while the Shi'ites extended it to the Shaykhayn as well), was clearly no fiction. The cursing of 'Alī by the dominant party of Islām, that of the Umayyads, was an equivalent to the cursing of 'Uthmān by both Khārijites and Shi'ites from

hagen, 1921). Al-Manṣūr's remarks on 'Alī's position (Tabarī, III 213) seem justified.

<sup>6</sup> P. K. Hitti, however, still follows Shahrestāni in carrying a party of 'legitimists' (*ahl al-nass*) back to the death of the Prophet. *History of the Arabs*, 4th ed., (London, 1949), 179. No doubt 'Alī had personal followers from the first. But in any case the term 'legitimism,' which implies hereditary succession on the basis of traditional rules, cannot be applied to the Shi'a, least of all when appeal is made to the imām's *nass*, his personal designation. Neither 'Alī nor Ḥusayn would have been the heir by usual rules.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. F. Buhl, *Alī*, 36 f. Clearly 'Alī's election at Madīna did not have the same meaning as that of the first three Rāshidīn. The Madīna caliphate originated as a makeshift, dependent on Muhammad's personal prestige as it extended to his closest associates and his chosen city. Otherwise the Caliphate had no constitutional character of its own; so that when these conditions ceased, its first, Madīnese, phase was at an end. 'Alī both shifted the capital from Madīna (for he relied on a party, not on a sense of Muslim unity) and was succeeded by his son—in both respects like Mu'āwīya. But unlike Mu'āwīya, he never commanded the allegiance of the whole Muslim community. The time between the death of 'Uthmān and the proclamation of Mu'āwīya could as readily be reckoned an interregnum as a fourth Madīna caliphate. Cf. J. Wellhausen, *Das arabische Reich* (Berlin, 1902), 34.

<sup>8</sup> Wellhausen, *Reich*, 63 and passim.

among the original party of 'Alī.<sup>9</sup> The Shi'a began as a minority party, whose leader was rejected by the other companions of Muhammad; and although the rest of Islām has since come halfway to meet them, and the 'Uthmāniya has been quite submerged, the Shi'ites have refused to be reconciled.

The history of the Shi'a after its initial defeat moves toward two results. On the one hand is the development of sectarian groupings which have come to give 'Alī and certain of his descendants an exclusive role in special religious systems. On the other hand is the moulding of Islām as a whole in a Shi'itic direction, until reverence for 'Alī and his Fātimid descendants has come to color in manifold ways the life of Sunni Islām. There was at first, however, apparently no distinction between the two trends—both results followed from the events of the first century.

Itated by the Khārijites, resisted by the Syrians and Mu'āwīya's party, unloved by the Ijijāzi supporters of Zubayr, abandoned by the neutrals of Adhruh, and not well supported even by the Kūfans to whom he could at least guarantee the presence of their treasury—nonetheless, 'Alī still had a zealous personal party. Malik al-Ashtar, Muhammad ibn Abū Bakr, and Salmān Fārisī were survived by others at least as loyal. Strothmann sees in the poetry of al-Du'ālī religious honors of sorts being already accorded to 'Alī.<sup>10</sup> 'Abd Allāh ibn Saba' is almost as much of a legend as Salmān, but it seems likely that he did refuse to believe that 'Alī could really be defeated or killed; that he asserted 'Alī had a divine mission to "drive the Arabs with his stick,"<sup>11</sup> to force the whole recalcitrant community of Islām to accept his sway; and so expected his return somewhat in the manner of

<sup>9</sup> Wellhausen, *Religiös-politische Oppositionsparteien*, Abh. d. Kön. Gesellsch. d. Wiss. zu Göttingen, phil.-hist. Kl., n. f. V nr. 2 (1901), 83, notes that at the time of Mukhtār the slogan opposed to that of Ḥusayn was that of 'Uthmān.

<sup>10</sup> R. Strothmann, *El s. e. "Sh'a"*. But even very adulatory terms in a poem need not imply a real dogma. Expressions like those in Ya'qūbī (ed. Houtsma *Historiae* (Leiden, 1883), II, 208) where al-Ashtar says at the time of 'Alī's accession that 'Alī is *wasī al-awṣiyā'* and *wa'rith 'im al-andiyā'* are not certainly genuine. But in any case the terms as they stand could indicate a purely personal enthusiasm: the term *wasī* implies a personal claim but not in itself a religious office—even when used by al-Nafs al-Zakiya (Tabarī, III 209). The inheritance even of prophecy seems to lack an implication of doctrine when applied to the 'Abbasids as in H. Lammens' citation, *Fatima* (Rome, 1912), 130.

Barbarossa. If it is true that he was banished to Madā'in, his strong partisanship was already embarrassing to 'Alī in his lifetime.<sup>11</sup>

The tendency for this partisanship to develop into real sectarianism moved rather slowly.<sup>12</sup> The Kūfāns looked to the family of 'Alī, as did the Egyptians to the family of 'Abd al-'Azīz,<sup>13</sup> as representing their independence; but there early came in several factors to give this sentiment an emotional and moral, and therefore a religious turn.<sup>14</sup> In such a martyr as Ḥujr ibn 'Adī the Kūfāns could mourn not only a patriot, but a victim of the growing tendency to discard the old Arab sense of the inviolable dignity of the tribesman.<sup>15</sup> When Ḥusayn became a martyr for the Kūfāns' sake (680), another element of moral and religious fervor was added. Ḥusayn himself no doubt was aware of his dignity as grandson of the Prophet, as well as son of 'Alī; and the Tawwābūn repentants of Kūfa who went off to be martyred in trying to avenge his death certainly were combining loyalty to 'Alī with loyalty to Muḥammad himself—an essential step in making the matter a strictly religious issue.<sup>16</sup> Mukhtār

(d. 687) gave a more ambiguous leadership to the movement, compromising it with the toleration of such varied elements as Arab divination and equality for the Mawālī; this marked a breach with sheer Kūfan patriotism, but attracted to the Shi'ite tendency elements with considerable potential religious and social appeal. In different ways the movements of the Tawwābūn and of Mukhtār mark the coming of a spirit which would make sectarianism possible. But the Shi'a was not yet a sect; there can as yet be no division of Islām between Shi'ite and Sunnī—Shi'a and 'Uthmāniya were merely positions with regard to the imāmate, not comprehensive divisions of the faithful.<sup>17</sup> This same spirit, which was to issue among some in a sectarian tendency, proceeded among others to become a motif for Islām as a whole.

The Pious Opposition to Umayyad Arabism became largely involved with partisanship for 'Alī.<sup>18</sup> In the time of Ḥusayn the Ḥijāz had still preferred a son of Zubayr to a son of 'Alī; but by the time of Zayd (740), the Ḥijāz was for him. The characteristic Shi'ite bitterness, however, was concentrated on the Umayyads. The Ḥijāz was evidently expecting an 'Alid house to succeed to the Umayyads, and was unanimous enough in supporting the Ḥasanids in their revolt against al-Manṣūr (762); not without reference to 'Alī as waṣī and

alī al-bayt—but it is not clear that this would not include the whole house of Ḥāshim at that time. Cf. *EI*, art. "Sharīf."

<sup>11</sup> The blackening of Mukhtār's reputation, making him look like a heresiarch rather than an eclectic advocate of a more general cause, began immediately upon his death—one of his wives was punished for refusing to contribute. (Tabarī, II 743.) That Mukhtār was himself something of a founder of a religion—the tendency that shifted the sect name from Kaysān to Mukhtār in time—has become so persistent an idea that even B. Lewis lets himself write that "After the death of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiya" (d. ca. 700), "Mukhtār" (d. 687) "preached that he was not really dead, but had gone into concealment. . . ." *The Arabs in History*, 2d. ed. (London, 1954), 72. A. Guillaume, *Islam* (Harmondsworth, 1954), 117, says the like.

<sup>12</sup> Such favor did not yet mean a complete triumph for 'Alī—some aspects of which no doubt waited on the harmonizing tendency of Sunnism rather than on direct Shi'ite activity. Thus J. Schacht, *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1950), 24, notes that (though Mālik already had given his blessing to the Ḥasanids) Shāfi'i (who himself supported a Zaydī candidate) still thought of the first three, not the first four caliphs as an authoritative group.

<sup>11</sup> The new *EI*, s. v. "'Abd Allāh ibn Saba'."

<sup>12</sup> For instance, there is no trace in the discussion with Ḥusayn at Madīna about his candidacy and where his support would lie, that support or non-support of him was a matter of religious allegiance unless in the general sense that juster government would be. (Tabarī, II 274 ff.) The Tawwābūn and even Mukhtār seem to have been willing to accept Ibn Zubayr at one point or another; and it is not messianic proofs but political commitment that Mukhtār's followers are satisfied with from Ibn al-Ḥanafiya in Madīna (Tabarī, II 607, Balādhuri, *Awsab al-Ashraf* V [Jerusalem, 1936], 221).

<sup>13</sup> Kindī, *Kitāb al-Umārā'* (Leiden, 1912), 50, 95 ff., 124. But, p. 112, sometimes the family offered a less independent leadership.

<sup>14</sup> A statement such as J. Wellhausen cites, *Relig.-Polit. Opp.-Parteien*, p. 69, that the Shi'ites still called other Muslims fellow-believers in the time of Ḥusayn, suggests no sectarian differences, though not that there were no religious differences at all. Cf. incidentally R. Strothmann's remarks on Shi'ite sectarianism in his *Kultus der Zaidites*, which approach the matter from a very different angle.

<sup>15</sup> In glorifying the political necessity of the Umayyad insistence on conformity, writers like Wellhausen have perhaps overlooked the legitimate nobility of the spirit which admitted no honorable Muslim to be subject to a man he himself had not sworn allegiance to. It is only in ages that submit tamely to government that the case of Ḥujr can seem petty.

<sup>16</sup> They are represented as fighting in the name of the

to the Fā'imīd descent,<sup>19</sup> and use of Mukhtār's term 'Mahdī.'<sup>20</sup> The idea of 'Alid—and in particular Fā'imīd—rule took such firm root that in the course of centuries, after martyrdoms such as that of the Fakhkh (786), it became common for the Holy Cities to be ruled by 'Alids, Zaydī or not.<sup>21</sup> By modern times, reverence for all sayyids made it only natural for the Sharif of Mecca to suppose he was the logical candidate, as an 'Alid, for a revived caliphate. So many-sided is this sentiment—in *ḥadīth*,<sup>22</sup> in the Ṣūfī orders, in guilds, in popular tales—that not only in its support of the original 'Alid claims but in its whole pious Sunnī Islām can be called at least half Shi'ite. Yet there were Shi'ites who still refused the half loaf, and formed themselves into sects.

#### Issues raised by the early Ghulāt

If the Shi'ite tendency could not be considered less orthodox in the first century than, say, an 'Uthmānī tendency, nevertheless some of the notions which sprang up in Islām then and commonly associated themselves with the Shi'ite movement<sup>23</sup> could be considered unorthodox even by the ill-defined standards of the time. In this earlier Ghulūw, accordingly, we find elements which helped develop the sectarian aspect of the later Shi'a. But the conventional approach to the Ghulāt—that they were the left wing of the Shi'a, a posited Twelver "moderation" being its center, and the

mild Zaydīs its right wing—is hardly acceptable, certainly for the earlier period which is most fully described by the heresiographers.<sup>24</sup> Before the gradual formation of sects after the time of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. ca. 765)—such as the Ismā'īlī, the Zaydī, and what was to issue in the Twelvers—the greater part of the strictly religious speculation, including that later adopted in substance by the Twelvers, has been labeled *ghulūw*; which for the early period is practically a name for any primitive Shi'ite speculation.<sup>25</sup>

The term *Ghulāt*, 'exaggerators,' was used by the later Twelver Shi'ites,<sup>26</sup> who liked to think of themselves as moderates, to designate as an extremist any other Shi'ite whose ideas particularly shocked them. At first the term was surely not thought of as technical.<sup>27</sup> But it soon became so.

<sup>19</sup> Gaudfroye-Demombynes, *Institutions*, 40, who defines the Ghulāt in terms of *ghulāt*, is for instance very unjustly schematized. A few of the Ghulāt seem to have gone in for political extremism (e. g., the *khuṣṣāq*, "strangers"), which is a different matter.

<sup>20</sup> The attachment of specific Ghulāt to particular Shi'ite candidates is often indefinite—no line is free of them: Bayyān is credited in Nawbakhtī with looking for the *rujū'* of Ibn al-Ḥanafīya (p. 25); with claiming to succeed Abū Ḥāshim in prophecy (p. 30); and with claiming the *wisāya* from Bāqir (p. 25). De Goeje, *Fragmenta*, 230, associates him with the Ḥasanids after a split with Bāqir. Likewise, later Shi'ite sects all have adopted "Ghulāt" ideas—the Twelvers some, the Ismā'īlīs others.

<sup>21</sup> It is inherently likely that the term would originate with Shi'ites for internal quarrels, as the Sunnis would lump all Shi'ites together. This is borne out provisionally by a comparison of its use by Nawbakhtī and Ash'arī (*Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn*, ed. H. Ritter, I [Istanbul, 1929]), earliest heresiographers of any fullness: Nawbakhtī uses it to characterize certain sects, for the most part as he comes to them, while Ash'arī makes the Ghulāt into one of the grand divisions of the Shi'a, gathering all the material on Ghulāt doctrines together in one chapter—yet also includes many of these groups over again in his second group, the Imāmiya, which he orders not by doctrines but by succession to the imāmate.

<sup>22</sup> Nawbakhtī, p. 46, e. g., uses the term *ghulūw* of a group, the Ḥāshimīya, which ascribed to the 'Abbāsids just those traits—the imām is all-knowing, and whoever does not know the imām does not know God, etc.—which Twelvers commonly ascribed to their own line. Usually the term implies, for Nawbakhtī, allegation of one or more traits of a complex: divine incarnation, *tanāsukh* (reincarnation) and cyclicism, and antinomianism. But these are freely interpreted. Whereas p. 78 we have the idea that 'Alī was *raḥb* outright, on p. 29 God is a light in Ibn Mu'āwīya (cf. the *nūr* doctrine), and p. 28 it seems to be merely that Abū Ḥāshim was expected to revive the dead.

<sup>19</sup> Tabart, III 189: a head is sent to Khurāsān labeled not 'Alid but Fā'imīd.

<sup>20</sup> The connection with Ibn al-Ḥanafīya is made yet more likely in de Goeje's *Fragmenta historicorum araborum* (Leiden, 1868), citing Wāqidi, p. 230-1, where Ghulāt leaders have a hand in it.

<sup>21</sup> The numerous 'Alid rebels with their miscellaneous following, before the Zaydī doctrine was consolidated by al-Rasfī (d. 860), represent surely as much the Shi'izing of Islām as a whole as they do the formation of a Zaydī sect. Cf. the case as late as Bāyid times, when an 'Abbāsīd rebel enlisted wide support especially among the Shi'itically inclined by giving himself out as a reformer from the house of the Prophet, but was abandoned when found not to be an 'Alid. (Miskawayhi, *Experiences of the Nations* (Oxford, 1921), 263/247. A like attitude has been found at various times from Morocco to Delhi.

<sup>22</sup> Even the 'Abbāsids could not displace 'Alī in favor of their ancestor.

<sup>23</sup> But not with the Shi'a alone. The ideas surrounding the awaited Sufyānī, for instance, are surely part of this general tendency. The Ghulūw is not simply carrying a Shi'ite position to a logical extreme, but is a type of idea ready to appear in any party.

Just as the Sunnis have an embarrassing time finding good Sunnis in the early generations, from the time of the *Ṣaḥāba* who failed to recognize each other's blessed standing to that of Abū Ḥanīfa, rumored to be a Murji'ite, so that Twelver Shi'ites are not highly successful in tracing their pure doctrine to the beginning, even though they do not mind being in a minority. Contradictory testimonies in Kashshī suggest a certain unwillingness to relinquish so many early names!<sup>28</sup> But in fact almost any early Shi'ite whose speculations were at all free had to come under the ban; and *Ghulāt* was a convenient label. In the early heresiographers Nawbakhtī (fl. ca. 910) and Ash'arī (d. 935), accordingly, the name *Ghulūw* is used for a whole range of groups prior to the consolidation of the imamate after Ja'far, but sparingly for the century immediately preceding themselves.<sup>29</sup> The subsequent heresiographical tradition merely added a few later instances. That earlier *Ghulūw* with its shifting lines is in fact distinctly different in role from the relatively small number of well-defined sects (where one is not dealing with Sūfi extremism) which are also called *Ghulūw* in later times—such as the Nusayrīs, the 'Alī-lāhīs, and sometimes the various Ismā'īlīs. If the tendentious term is to be retained at all, it might well be restricted to those earlier groups; leaving the later non-Twelver sects their individual identities rather than confounding them, as now, with the miscellaneous ferment of the early Shi'a—which after all is as much the heritage of the Twelvers as of any other one Shi'ite sect.

Islamists, both Muslim and Western, have had a way of absorbing the point of view of orthodox Islam; this has gone so far that Christian Islamists have looked with horror on Muslim heretics for teaching doctrines which are taken for granted

coming from St. John or St. Paul.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, the early *Ghulāt* have received scant respect among Islamists, since they have been despised by both Sunnis and Twelvers. But it has been shown that survivals of earlier religious teachings are to be found among them—by Friedländer especially; and it can be suggested that they alone in Islam at that time were dealing with problems that Ṣūfīs later took up, no doubt with greater success; certain questions about personal religious experience—about revelation, morality, and spirit.

These earlier *Ghulāt* can no doubt be regarded as relatively unsophisticated; in that small ruling community of Arabs newly catapulted to power, and their motley clients, every individual's new ideas had a potential importance for the whole; and unsophisticated notions might receive a prominence not possible in later times, when the popular notions of the Qalandars were scarcely chronicled any longer as serious positions. One leader of the *Ghulāt* is explicitly noted as an illiterate bedouin.<sup>31</sup> But we can no longer think of all their views as particularly extreme, as religious views go. Except to a pious Twelver Shi'ite, there is no reason to be shocked when the *Ghulāt* looked to others than Muhammad's descendants as messianic figures—one might equally say the extremist is the one who exalts persons purely on account of their birth. Nor is there anything more extreme in expecting a man to return whom others regard as dead—as some of the early *Ghulāt* did—than in the expectation of the so-called moderate Shi'a that a man will return whom others doubt was ever born. There is reason to suppose that the views ascribed to those *Ghulāt* became exaggerated with time, moreover. We find leading *Ghulāt* such as Abū 1-Khaṭṭāb and Mughira weightily accused by Kashshī of what strike one as fairly minor divergencies in ritual law—that the *maghrīb* should not be said till a certain star is seen, or that the women of Muhammad's family could say the *ṣalāt* even when menstruating (in deference to their purity)<sup>32</sup> In the case of one of the first *Ghulāt*, al-Barbarī, at one point Nawbakhtī has him call Ibn al-Īṣnāfiya the god of whom he is prophet; but shortly after says that Barbarī believed in the *rujā'*, return from the dead, of both himself and of Ibn al-

<sup>28</sup> Kashshī, *Akhhār al-rijāl* (Bombay [1317]), 83, has divergent but largely favorable reports on Mukhtār (and the worst report on Mukhtār comes s. v. *Mughira*). Likewise he is ambiguous, p. 126, on Jabir Ju'fi. On p. 149 he implies that even Mughira and Abū 1-Khaṭṭāb will come to Paradise after a season in hell.

<sup>29</sup> Nawbakhtī, pp. 32 and 41, sums up the *Ghulūw* as including certain groups up through the Khaṭṭābiya (Khaṭṭābiya, 'Abbasīya, Hārithīya, especially), apparently excluding later deviants; though on individual occasions he uses the term later. Ash'arī, his contemporary, includes approximately the same groups. No doubt, as H. Ritter suggests, such lists go back to police-lists ("Philologica III," *Der Islam*, Vol. 18 [1929], 34.)

<sup>30</sup> De Saey on the Druzes and Von Haumer on the Nizārīs are classical examples.

<sup>31</sup> Abū Mansūr—in Nawbakhtī, 34.

<sup>32</sup> Kashshī, 149.

Iḥanafiya. In the light of this one suspects that the idea of Ibn al-Iḥanafiya's divinity was an outsider's deduction from Barbari's own prophetic claims.\*\*

Probably one of the first charges to label persons as 'exaggerators' was the *condemnation of the Shaykhayn* in addition to 'Uthmān. According to Nawbakhti, Ibn Saba' was the first to preach the doctrine of *wagf* (refusal to recognize the death of the latest imām—limited by Twelvers to the twelfth) and of *ghulūw*. Nawbakhti does not define the *ghulūw*, but apart from the refusal to recognize 'Alī's death (*wagf*), what he does list is: the doctrine that 'Alī had the same relation to Muḥammad as Joshua to Moses—i. e., as Kashshī makes clear, he was the *waṣī* in the general Shi'ite sense; and that 'Alī's right to rule was prescriptive (*farḍ*), and the first three caliphs and their followers should be cursed. It is for Ibn Saba's rejection of the first caliphs that 'Alī is represented as banishing him; and that was no doubt his *ghulūw*. The obvious implication of Nawbakhti that the fault lay in saying such things publicly (*shahhara*), a breach of *taqiya*, seems like an afterthought.\*\*

But though the early Ghulāt were not necessarily extremists compared with the later Twelvers (to say nothing of the Christians), they did raise distinctive problems through which they helped to give the whole Shi'a a special religious tone; problems arising from a distinctive experience. Among them, as Friedländer pointed out, appeared a number of features of earlier Arabian thinking which were being suppressed in most of Islām.\*\* There was the notion of *ra'ja*—that a hero might return to this life from the dead; as in the Jāhiliya,

\*\* Nawbakhti, 23 and 25. In general, the apparently inconsistent character of the teachings ascribed to the various leaders, in the form we have them, suggests that the material has often been treated uncautiously. Thus in Ash'ari, p. 11, the same people who make "*janna*" refer to earthly rewards speak of ascending to "*Malūt*." Clearly we cannot simply call them deniers of Paradise, as would result from Shahrastāni's shortened form, *Mfal*, I (Cairo, 1948), 301.

\*\* Nawbakhti, pp. 19-20. Cf. Kashshī, s. v. *Ibn Saba'*. The charge comes up again against Kayṣān in Nawbakhti and Mughira in Ash'ari. Can the notion of a sect of Sabābiya (sometimes put for Saba'iya) be traced to a time when *sabb al-ṣaḥāba*, reviling the Companions, was still *ghulūw* to many Shi'ites? Cf. I. Friedländer, *Heterodoxies of the Shiites* (New Haven, 1909), 137 ff.

\*\* Friedländer, *Heterodoxies*.

this was not necessarily restricted to one messianic figure, though it was readily adapted to the whole messianic idea—probably in the case of 'Alī and certainly in the case of Ibn al-Iḥanafiya—which the early Muslims tended to avoid.

Perhaps more important was the expectation of divination and indeed of divinely inspired prophesying, which we find notably at the time of Mukhtār. It is hardly surprising that the notion of prophecy as a recurrent (and not necessarily world-shaking) event should have survived the death of Muḥammad. In later times prophethood was taken very seriously, as implying one or more of three things: (1) unique authority in one's own time; (2) equality with Muḥammad; or (3) the founding of a new community. But none of these need have been implied by *nubūwa* in the early Arab mind (whatever may be the case with *risāla*). After all, there is nothing very explicit in the Qur'an, apart from the ambiguous phrase about Muḥammad's being the 'seal' of the prophets, to debar even major prophets from appearing after him; to say nothing of God's speaking through minor figures to confirm the faith given as had admittedly happened among the Jews. In Christianity indeed the death of Jesus was followed by the mass prophesying of Pentecost and of the primitive churches; the absence of such a movement in Islām is probably to be explained by the need of the Madina aristocracy to freeze the status quo, and the sword of Khālid which enforced their decision in Arabia.

Accordingly, there arose a tradition—frowned on by official Islām—in which the idea was carried on that God might any day speak to His community through prophets; and this notion could readily be combined with the other, that in the fullness of time (and here the partisan enthusiasms that tore early Islām found their place) the heroes of the righteous but defeated party (for most this was the party of 'Alī) would return and finally establish justice. In the generations after the failure of Ibn Zubayr (692) and of Mukhtār, Islām was beginning to produce teachers of pure religion for those pious who were not satisfied with Islām in its official condition. Among the others, our Ghulāt also developed this enthusiastic tradition of theirs into regular teachings, dealing with the problems it raised.\*\*

\*\* This notion of propheticism, and possibly that of *rujā'*, seem the only ones to be found, beyond an exaltation of



One of the most intriguing problems these Ghulāt theorists did not fear to face was the form of God: what does He look like? Muḥammad had given no tangible answer, and official Islām frowned on any attempt to enlarge on his teaching; but these men who saw nothing strange in mere mortals' receiving divine leadings tried to have clear conceptions of their Guide. The description of God ascribed to Mughira (d. 736) is the most famous of these.

But more important: who could be inspired by God, and how? Although official Islām was for reasons of its own bitterly opposed to the notion that God was still able to speak after Muḥammad's death, this incapacity of His was not at all clear to all the Muslims. Abū Manṣūr is noted for describing in detail the vision on which he based his claim to speak with divine authority. Linked to questions on the nature of inspiration were those on its meaning—we find some of these early figures credited already with symbolical explanations of the Qur'anic text, introducing a type of problem that has been with Islām ever since, whenever men's minds have not been content with the bare words of belief, and wanted to make sense of life. Thus Mughira is said to have referred the Qur'anic verse (33:72) about the refusal of the mountaints to undertake the faith to 'Umar's rejection of 'Alī; and Abū Manṣūr is said to have interpreted references to the heavens and the earth as bearing on the relation of the imāms to their party, their *shī'a*.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, inseparable from questions about the nature of the revealed law, were questions about the morality for which it legislated. We find some of them accused from very early<sup>18</sup> of teaching that all actions are lawful, despite any Qur'anic text—though presumably in any case they added, like Paul, that not all actions are expedient. Unfortunately, charges of this kind are very hard

<sup>17</sup>All and his family as chosen successors to Muḥammad, as distinctive in Shi'ite thought through the time of Mukhtār—for instance, in the people of the Chair, who professed enthusiastically at Kāfa. The tribe of Naḥd, involved with the Chair, also produced the Ghulāt teachers Sa'īd and Buḡyān (Nawbakhti, 25).

<sup>18</sup>Ash'ari, 8, 9.

<sup>19</sup>Already in the case of Barbarī, said to have married his own daughter (Nawbakhti, 25). Here the prerequisite to such freedom was to "know the imām." Is it possible that special privileges for the divinely favored were justified with the obvious example of Muḥammad?

to pin down. They may be founded on fear or hate, or on a misinterpretation of deviations—when a teacher has a different law from the usual, it may not be recognized as being law at all. But as the charges are laid selectively, in writers like Nawbakhti, they are likely to have some meaning; we have three possibilities. (1) There may be a full-fledged antinomianism, in the sense that once the inner spirit back of the law is entered into, the outer regulations become superfluous. This notion has arisen in Islām, but there is no clear indication of it so early. Rather, among the early Ghulāt it is probably only either (2) that there is a hidden truth symbolized in the law (in an external manner—forbidden foods refer arbitrarily to certain men whom one must reject),<sup>19</sup> so that points of ceremony, at least, are dispensed with when what they symbolically represent is followed instead; or (3), a position very common in the later Shi'a, and not to be disentangled entirely from the second position, that whoever is devoted to the imām will be forgiven his transgressions of the Law—though not actually exempted from it.

At any rate, the mooted of such positions on revelation and morality clearly gave rise to many differences of opinion among the Ghulāt teachers. Some followers of Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb (d. 755/6) took the significant position that every believer received private revelation for his guidance.<sup>20</sup> Such a way of viewing the human soul is also familiar in Christian experience. A more comprehensive theory of the soul, which would solve all such questions at once, was sought by some in a teaching of cyclicalism and transmigration. This tendency is already reported from the time of the revolt of 'Abd Allāh ibn Mu'āwiyā (d. 747); it seems to have become normal in the "Kaysāni" groups for whom the 'Abbāsids came to be the legitimate candidates. The idea of *raja*, return in *this* body from the dead, was replaced by that of reincarnation, *tanāsukh*, in a different human body; a notion presupposing a separable soul which alone matters. Thus according to one's deserts in past lives one could have very different religious status; and the 'Abbāsīd Kaysāni in Irān (identified with the Khurramdīni after the 'Abbāsīd victory) are said to have discussed their relative ranks, who was of angelic, who of prophetic, who of divine rank;

<sup>20</sup>This sort of *ta'wil* is ascribed already to Abū Manṣūr by Ash'ari.

<sup>21</sup>Ash'ari, 12.

so solving readily the problems of revelation and law, which depended naturally on one's spiritual status.<sup>41</sup>

No doubt more important for the future were the followers of Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb, also contemporary with the rise of the 'Abbāsids to power, but associated with Ja'far al-Šādiq. Here also it is not clear in detail what Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb taught; but from the heresiologists we can at least tell what it was they argued about; and here more than in any earlier group we get a sense of large issues debated. One matter in dispute, it seems, was the spiritual rank of various persons, their relative strength in receiving revelation. They too ranked persons as angels or prophets or divine messengers or, apparently, as gods—explicitly, however, not in real rivalry with the One God, Allāh, but only as His representative.<sup>42</sup> (It was naturally this obscure matter of divine ranking that was most seized upon by enemies, in those cases where it appeared.)

But perhaps more interesting than these disputes about revelation and prophecy were the disputes recorded among several of Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb's followers over the nature of death—and so of the spirit. Some groups did, others did not, admit that they died—which being interpreted seems to mean, that the afterlife depended on the body (hence the soul by itself would not live on). That is, some accepted the idea, which Muslims often stigmatize as Christian, of an immortal soul independent of the body.<sup>43</sup> There must have been some sort of search for spiritual experience back of the report that one group pretended to see their fellows, who had passed on, morning and evening.<sup>44</sup>

When Islām came to include the greater part of society, and the community at large was no

<sup>41</sup> *Tanūsukh* is remarkably easy to derive from the Qur'an (at least once that such a creed as Buddhism has suggested it first); especially at those passages which suggest that all species of animals—bees, etc.—have their own *ummas* and their own responsibilities; which Nawbakhti says the Kurramidīs cited. An easy confusion between the judgment against particular *ummas* and the Last Judgment would also help make a cyclical approach possible, no doubt.

<sup>42</sup> The distinction was made between the god on earth and the God in the heavens; by Ibn al-Labbān, Nawbakhti, 40.

<sup>43</sup> Apparently some expected their souls to ascend even while their bodies were still alive, at least in appearance. Ash'ari, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Ash'ari, 12.

longer to be upset by the views of the least member of what was at first a ruling class, such deviations no longer made such a stir—for one thing, their followers were no longer in a position to raise insurrections of a sudden, such as those feared by al-Qasri under Hishām.<sup>45</sup> Later, individuals might be executed for heresy, as in the case of al-Shalmaghāni of the time of Muqtadir, but the dangerous movements stemmed from more large-scale sects, notably the Ismā'īlis. The great debate among what are called Ghulāt associated with the proto-Twelvers after Ja'far's time—that about the status of the *'ayn*, the *mim*, and the *sin* and related questions, to which the Nuṣayrīs go back—comes to us in much more abstract and systematic terms than in the earlier Ghulūw.<sup>46</sup>

The later Shī'ite sects carried on especially the more partisan determined enthusiasms of the early Ghulāt—their interest in the continuation of divine authority on earth after Muḥammad, and how it was manifested, and their partisan eschatology, looking for the Qā'im to come,<sup>47</sup> or else the return of some hero. So far as the Ghulāt raised problems of a more general nature regarding the spirituality of the soul and the possibility of its communion with God, they no doubt contributed to the emotional tone of later Twelver and Ismā'īli Shī'ism. However, in this respect their evident successors were the Šūfis. Though Šūfism was no doubt not immediately connected with the Ghulūw,<sup>48</sup> the mystical states of the soul, as well as the relative ranks of various mystics, have been endlessly discussed in Šūfism ever since the closing of the classical period of the early Ghulāt; and it is among them that has been kept alive that oddly significant, so-called Christian idea, that what survives at death is the pure soul.

#### *Reasons for the strength of the imāmate of Ja'far al-Šādiq*

The Ghulāt by themselves, in any case, do not

<sup>45</sup> Tabari, II 1621.

<sup>46</sup> Massignon makes the most of this in various places, particularly in the article on Karṁatians in the *ET*.

<sup>47</sup> The idea of the Qā'im as the last of a line of imāms is ascribed i. a. to the followers of Abū Maṣ'ūr. Nawbakhti, 34. Among the Twelvers this idea is merged with that of *raja*.

<sup>48</sup> It can be noted, however, that some Šūfis were ranged with the Ghulāt, notably the followers of Hallāj, who did make Shī'ite appeals. Ultimate connections between Shī'ite doctrine and Šūfi theosophy are of course noticeable.

account for Shi'ite sectarianism. One major factor in this is the rise of the *naṣṣ* imāmates. When we look at early Shi'ite history without seeing it through Twelver spectacles, the problem is no longer to discover why so many Shi'ites were persuaded to abandon the line of imāms now considered the true one, but rather how that line came to have so great a prominence as it finally did have. The reasons for this will at the same time help to explain how Shi'ism became sectarian.

Before and in the time of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. ca. 765) the prominent Shi'ite movements were in roughly two groups. First, the so-called Kaysiān—whose imām was Ibn al-Ḥanafiya—who appear in the great rebellion of Mukhtār and then in that of 'Abd Allāh Ibn Mu'āwiya, and who formed the nucleus of the 'Abbāsīd revolt itself. It is to this group that the most prominent early Shi'ite poets belong by and large.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand there was the great rising—which later Zaydis have claimed for their own<sup>61</sup>—of al-Nafs al-Zakiya and the Ḥasanids; this was also no isolated phenomenon, being preceded by the movements of Zayd and his son, which likewise received Ḥijāzī sympathy, and followed by the martyrs of Fakhkh. On the contrary, after Ḥusayn's early and not very large-scale rising, and the gestures of the Tawwābūn following it, we hear little in the chronicles of the line revered by modern Twelvers—until the time of Ja'far's grandson, whom we find as the scarcely disputed chief of the surviving Shi'a.<sup>62</sup> From this point on we find that most of the Shi'ites of subsequent times trace their imāmate back to Ja'far, to the exclusion of other lines: this the Twelvers, Ismā'īlīs, and Nuṣayrīs do, but not the Zaydis.

I think we must suppose that the family's for-

<sup>60</sup> Kuthayyir, Sayyid al-Ḥinayrī, even perhaps Kumayt. Buhl, *Alidernes Stilling*, 370. The lines were not of course closely drawn. Nawbakhti, p. 27, is able to claim, on the basis of a *qaṣida*, that Sayyid al-Ḥinayrī (d. 173/789) later turned to Ja'far; perhaps this is an indication of the way Ja'far's imāmate was able to rally the Shi'a after the great disappointment!

<sup>61</sup> R. Strothmann, *Staatsrecht der Zaiditen* (Strassburg, 1912), 106. Al-Nafs al-Zakiya even figures as a Zaydī legal authority.

<sup>62</sup> Ma'mūn's choice, at least, would suggest this. Even Zaydis are supposed to have followed him, according to Nawbakhti. Ja'far himself, indeed, does enter the chronicles as a potentially powerful figure, since he is cited for his peaceableness.

tune was essentially laid in the time of Ja'far (if not through Ja'far's own efforts). Not just because we find Ja'far himself quietly prominent—at the end of Ja'far's life Manṣūr is recorded as picking him out as the noblest of the many 'Alids then living, and setting his claims to honor against those of al-Nafs al-Zakiya.<sup>63</sup> Rather because testimony from every source, Sunnite as well as Shi'ite, points to his generation as towering above all others among the Shi'ites. Ja'far is the most prominent Shi'ite authority among the Twelver authors.<sup>64</sup> He is the center of more Ghulāt speculation, as recorded, than any other one figure; and on his death Nawbakhti lists claims to the succession in behalf of four of his sons, as well as a well-delineated group that waited for Ja'far himself. Compared even to the fairly controversial Bāqir, to say nothing of Zayn al-'Abidin, from whom no one claims anything, this indicates a great deal of ferment. Finally, Ja'far's reputation is wider than his own Shi'a: he and his father are accepted in Sunnī *isnāds*; the philosophical circle around Ja'far in particular is honored by Ash'ari with many pages;<sup>65</sup> and finally when from time to time the acceptance of the Shi'a as a Sunnī *madhhab* has been projected, it has been done in Ja'far's name.

Ja'far's time was propitious for a reorientation in Shi'ism. When Walid II (d. 744) fell, every sort of idealistic program had its chance and Islām was overflowing with them. Even the Syrian Umayyads themselves, who began the series of revolutions, had a 'reform candidate.' And of the five major movements that challenged the Syrian Umayyad rule altogether, four were likewise from the Pious Opposition in the broadest sense: two Khārijite movements and two more or less Shi'ite ones. Only Marwān's movement, based on the Qaysis in the north, had no special religious character. When it had destroyed the Syrian Umayyad power and broken three of the other movements, it was in turn set aside by the 'Abbāsids—

<sup>63</sup> Tabari, III 213. Ja'far also figures in the traditions concerning 'Alid intrigue at the time the 'Abbāsids took power. However, for instance in Abū Salama's offers of the Caliphate to 'Alids, Ja'far is not the only one approached.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. also the Ismā'īlī work of Qāḍī Nu'mān, which cites no imām later than Ja'far.

<sup>65</sup> The Shi'ite philosophers in the section on Shi'ite *ikhtilāf*, of which Ash'ari's Mu'tazilites sometimes make much, are mostly associated with Ja'far or his son.

and this seemed to mean a Shi'ite triumph. The whole upheaval had been the great Shi'ite opportunity, as it was that of Qadarites, Khârijites, and even Jahmites (in Khurâsân); the Shi'ites, with the support of Madîna, were expecting success. When the 'Abbasids repudiated them, therefore, the revolution became instead the great Shi'ite disappointment; and a fundamental reorientation was only natural, perhaps even more for them than for other groups.

No doubt there were diverse historical reasons for the rise to prominence of the imâmâte of Ja'far in these circumstances: the abortion of its "Kay-sânî" rivals in an 'Abbasid caliphate which emasculated and gradually repudiated them; the killing off of many Hânasids by al-Manşâr might conceivably have been to Husaynid advantage; and surely also the personalities of Ja'far himself and of his father played a rôle. But one can find three principles embodied in this imâmâte which undoubtedly contributed to its strength in the struggle to gather in the diffuse Shi'ite sentiment of the time.

The first principle is that of the *naşş*. Ibn Hâzm chooses to set off the Zaydis from other Shi'ites by the criterion that they denied that there was an explicit *naşş*, designation, of 'Alî by Muḥammad.<sup>57</sup> If one translates this principle into more general terms<sup>58</sup>—that the Zaydis denied there was any designation of the next imâm by a preceding one—this is true not only of the Zaydis at all times, but of a large proportion of the early Shi'a—up through the whole movement surrounding al-Nafs al-Zakîya in the time of Ja'far; for he claimed no *naşş*. What is out of the ordinary is the notion that the imâmâte is located in a given individual, whether he claims rule or not; and is to be transferred from one to

another by explicit designation, *naşş*.<sup>59</sup> This notion seems to appear in two lines at once—in that of Abû Hâshim, heir of Ibn al-Jânafiya; and in that of Muḥammad Bâqir, one of the grandsons of Husayn. To judge by Nawbakhtî, all of the lines of *naşş*, both 'Alid and not, stem back to these two.<sup>60</sup>

This notion of a *naşş* imâmâte probably dates back to the time of Muḥammad Bâqir (d. ca. 733), the contemporary of Abû Hâshim, at least in some form. Nawbakhtî's very lifelike stories of his dealings with the early Zaydis presuppose that he considered himself the uniquely legitimate 'Alid authority.<sup>61</sup> But certainly for the special followers of Ja'far at the latest, the claim was not just that the caliph ought to be some member of the 'Alid family; but that a particular individual, designated by his father and who would in turn designate his son, inherently possessed all the authority of the rightful imâm, whether he cared to be an overt candidate or not. Hence arose the famous problem of Ja'far's succession. This notion had a great advantage. Not only did this center the allegiance of the faithful on one individual; it gave them a continuous imâmâte, and so a permanent group existence—where otherwise Shi'ism was rather an indeterminate sentiment, which could be called upon by any candidate for the season of a revolt, but depended upon by none.

The idea of a *naşş* was not unique to the Ja'far imâmâte, however, since the several lines claiming their *naşş* from Abû Hâshim had it too (and these entered both of the main Shi'ite revolts at the fall of the Syrian Umayyads—those of Ibn Mu'âwiya

<sup>57</sup> It is to be noted that in principle 'legitimist' primogeniture is not involved here any more than in the rest of Islâm, even though the eldest might sometimes be chosen.

<sup>58</sup> Thus Bayyân, Abû Manşâr, Mughîra, and the Har-biya, if it is true all these claimed the *naşş*, as Ash'arî seems to maintain. Strothmann, *Staatsrecht*, p. 28, feels that the story of the Kûfan Shi'ites' abandoning Zayd for Ja'far shows that they already accepted the idea of a line of imûms by inheritance. But one gathers that their acceptance of Ja'far's position was at best not of long standing.

<sup>59</sup> Also Ghulât such as Bayyân are said to have claimed some such inheritance from him. Soon after his death, when Zayd's followers abandoned Zayd, they are said to have gone to Ja'far as representing Bâqir's claim. Tabarî, II 1698. That Ja'far recommended submission to the Shaykḥayn and others does not necessarily mean he rejected the idea of a non-rebelling imâmâte.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Nawbakhtî, p. 42, on how Mahdî even shifted the line of imûms retroactively back to 'Abbâs, and got some to accept this.

<sup>59</sup> Certainly al-Manşâr set the Husaynids off visibly from them. Tabarî, III 171.

<sup>60</sup> I. Friedländer, "Heterodoxies of the Shi'ites," *JAOS* XXVIII (1907), 74.

<sup>61</sup> As occurs in Ash'arî; he (p. 16-17) makes the idea of *naşş* to every imâm one of the key traits of the "Rawâfid" as against the Zaydis; noting, p. 67, that some Zaydis admit a *naşş* to 'Alî and his sons, though not to later imûms. Cf. R. Strothmann, *Staatsrecht der Zeiditen* (Strassburg, 1912), 44 ff.

and of the 'Abbāsids).<sup>48</sup> Ja'far had a special advantage, however, in that he was not only a Ṭalibid, and not only an 'Alid, but descended even if only through a woman from Muḥammad himself. Already in Ṭabari's (Abū Mikhnaf's) story of Karbala there figures the sense that Ḥusayn as the grandson of the Prophet was in some way sacred—just as Ibn Zubayr's Madīna was accounted sacred, as the Prophet's residence. This inviolability—for it was that, rather than any sense of a right to rule—was still only an ancillary distinction in Ḥusayn, as much later with al-Nafs al-Zakīya, who listed Fāṭima among the "good marriages" which his family had made, rather than fully as an ancestress in her own right.<sup>49</sup> But the point had an immense potential appeal; it eventually came to be a major plea among both Twelvers and Ismā'īlīs, so that Fāṭima among them became herself one of the holiest of figures; and it was even adopted by the Zaydis, who came to restrict the imāmate to those 'Alids who were also Fāṭimids.<sup>50</sup>

The idea of an imāmate by *naṣṣ*, restricted to a definite individual out of all the 'Alids, continuing through all political circumstances, was complemented by that of an imāmate based not primarily on a political claim, but on special knowledge, 'ilm. This was the time of the rise of *ḥadīth*, and the attempt to construct total systems of the pious life—which eventually issued in the full *shar'ā* law. It was the time of Abū Ḥanīfa and of Mālik, the imāms. Ja'far was evidently looked on as an imām like them concerned with working out the proper details of how the pious should solve the various cases in conscience that might arise. So he appears in Sunnī tradition to a degree. But in the case of Ja'far it was claimed that he had a unique authority in these matters, by virtue of his position as imām by *naṣṣ*—that in some sense his was the final decision upon earth in these matters; whereas the others, as was indeed ad-

mitted, had no more legal authority in principle than any of their followers.<sup>51</sup>

This claim was perhaps initially less a matter of the knowledge he had (from his father) than of the authoritative use he could make of it—his hereditary authority to decide cases. Any sovereign must be empowered to make the final decisions in any legal matter; hence the imām's very claim that sovereignty was justly his could readily entail a claim to final authority in legal (and in this case all religious) matters. Such a claim would be readily transmuted to one of supernatural knowledge in many minds, but it was not in all.<sup>52</sup> But in an imāmate where the authority was not in actual fact the sovereign, and his 'ilm remained on a theoretical level, that discernment, that 'ilm which should guide his decisions, took on a special sacredness and became a unique gift inherited from imām to imām. Accordingly, as the exclusively authorized source of the knowledge of how to lead a holy life, the imām had an all-important function whether he was ruler or not.

This fact must have had two results. First, it was not at all necessary for the imām to rise in rebellion and try to become *de facto* ruler; nay, it might be unwise for him to do so—his role as final authority in legal cases in conscience would surely be confused by joining it with the rather different responsibilities of actual political power.

<sup>48</sup> It seems likely that Bāqir and Ja'far themselves went along with this claim. The stories in *Nawbakhtī* of Bāqir's difficulties with overly observant disciples are too lifelike to be easily dismissed. It seems likely that the questioning of Ja'far's son 'Abd Allāh, who had assumed his father's place, was a real event (*Nawbakhtī*, p. 65); and perhaps Mūsā therefore had good reason to be Kāzīm even when he was free. Certainly 'Alī Ridā was willing enough to accept claims. All this does not mean, of course, that an independent Shī'ite legal system was fully formed so early. Cf. Schacht, *Origins*, 262, who notes that the distinctive "Shī'ite" points come up only now and later.

<sup>49</sup> The discussions in *Nawbakhtī*, e.g., over the child-imāms, show that it was not at first accepted that the imāms had other than external sources of knowledge. The spirit of the philosopher in Ash'arī (p. 36) who held to "whatever Ja'far decides"—like a lawyer accepting whatever the Supreme Court decides—is no doubt typical. The inheritance of an actual body of knowledge is of course important in virtue of the same common sense by which a thoroughly incompetent Supreme Court would lose the respect legally due it; but it was eventually made less necessary by the assurance that the (diplomatically cautious) imām would be divinely protected from error at all events.

<sup>48</sup> Also a line from Abū Ḥāshim's nephew, and perhaps others, like Bayyūn. The dispute between Ibn Mu'āwiya and the 'Abbāsids over who really had the *naṣṣ*, in *Nawbakhtī*, p. 30, illustrates its concrete nature.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Nafs al-Zakīya's letter to al-Manṣūr in Ṭabari, III 209.

<sup>50</sup> There are indications that the term Zaydīya, before the time of al-Rasht, covered Shī'ites who insisted on activism generally. *Nawbakhtī*, p. 51, has certain Zaydis accept any son of 'Alī, no matter of what womb; and R. Strothmann, *Staatsrecht*, 83 ff., mentions cases where it was applied even to followers of Ibn Mu'āwiya.

Accordingly, it seems to have been an explicit policy with both Bāqir and Ja'far to reject any idea of armed rebellion. We have numerous anecdotes about them illustrating this policy (not least the surely fictitious one in which Ja'far refuses to consider the offer by Abū Muslim to make Ja'far caliph).<sup>61</sup>

It had been taken for granted that the point of claiming imāmate was to bid for power; and this new approach alienated many Shī'ites it seems. We have some rather damaging anecdotes on this head from Nawbakhti, which will give something of the atmosphere of the whole idea of a *naṣṣ* imāmate.

A group left [the followers of Bāqir]. They had listened to one among them called 'Umar ibn Riyāh. This man claimed he had asked Bāqir about a certain case and Bāqir had given him an answer; then he returned to Bāqir after a year and asked him about the same case and received a different answer from the first time. He told Bāqir that this was different from the answer he had given him on the point the year before. Bāqir said that their [the imāms'] answers are sometimes determined by *taqiya*. But Ibn Riyāh was thrown into doubt about Bāqir's right, and his imāmate; he met one of Bāqir's followers called Muḥammad ibn Qais and told him [what had happened] and that Bāqir had said he did this from *taqiya*; "but God knows I [Ibn Riyāh] only asked about it because I am firmly resolved to believe what he decides in cases of conscience for me, accepting it and acting upon it; there is no reason for his *taqiya* from me; and that's my situation." Muḥammad ibn Qais said that perhaps there was someone with him who made Bāqir need *taqiya* but Ibn Riyāh said, "There was no-one in his room at either of the questions except me. No, his answers are all a matter of luck [*ṭabakkūt!*],"<sup>62</sup> and he doesn't remember what he answered the year before." Ibn Qais agreed with him and repudiated Bāqir's imāmate, saying that he is by no means an imām who gives incorrect legal decisions, for any reason and in whatever circumstances. He is no imām who gives other decisions, under *taqiya*, than what is proper before God; nor who hopes to remain hidden, closing his door; the imām is required to revolt and to command the good and forbid the wrong. For this reason he turned to the position of the Butriya [Zaydi], and several went along with him.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> These are given in Buhl, *Stilling*, 386 etc. Note that the policy is also related of Zayn al-'Abidin, though in less detail. Certainly this persistent *qu'ūd* made the family, despite the Twelver pious legends, relatively immune to 'Abbasid persecution; this fact in itself would help them gain Shī'ite leadership from more active rivals, if only by default.

<sup>62</sup> Or, "vainly"—*ṭakhayyub*, in ed. of Kashshī, 164.

<sup>63</sup> Nawbakhti, 62-3.

But however much the anti-activist position disappointed some older style Shī'ites, it reinforced all the more the second result of the idea of a *naṣṣ* imāmate: which was to create in effect a *sect*, with the purity and zeal of a sect. This probably did not come into full evidence even in Ja'far's lifetime, accepted as he was by later Sunnism. But the group consciousness and cohesion is illustrated even in Nawbakhti's story of the rivalries of Ja'far's sons. His narrative scarcely troubles to disguise the fact that Mūsā was not the heir-apparent.<sup>64</sup> At first it was Ismā'il; and if it is true that some left Ja'far when Ismā'il died, on the grounds that Ja'far should not have named a man who was not to survive him, a distinct idea of the supernatural character of the *naṣṣ* was already present.<sup>65</sup> Then it was 'Abd Allāh, whom the great majority accepted on Ja'far's death, and who is said to have formally set himself up as imām; but when he died without a son shortly thereafter, they had to move on to a third son, Mūsā. But from the first there had been some who were dissatisfied with 'Abd Allāh and had adopted other solutions, including the imāmate of Mūsā. There resulted from all this typical situations of schism and recrimination over whose faith was pure.<sup>66</sup>

But in addition to this combination of a designated succession (though not all could agree who was designated) and a uniquely authoritative knowledge to guide the steps of the faithful, which made for cohesiveness within the group or groups, there was apparently a third principle which helped the Ja'far imāmate to survive the great disappointment with such éclat. Bāqir may to some extent have prepared the way,<sup>67</sup> but at any rate Ja'far, actively or passively, seems to have attracted around himself people who speculated with remarkable vigor on the problems of the times. These included not only the philosophers

<sup>64</sup> Nawbakhti, 57 ff.

<sup>65</sup> Nawbakhti, 55-. Since this circumstance would preclude Ja'far's having deposed Ismā'il for immorality, as the later Twelvers would have it, it must be early.

<sup>66</sup> Since the position eventually won out that the hand-ful who had accepted Mūsā from the start were correct (and 'Abd Allāh was finally dropped from the list of imāms, though his status still was disputable at the death of Ḥasan al-'Askari), Nawbakhti brings in here the appropriate saying from Ja'far: "My true followers are few."

<sup>67</sup> Bāqir is represented as closely associated with the Ghulūw—in Nawbakhti, however, only in a hostile capacity. Cf., for more friendliness, Kashshī, 148-9.

in whom Ash'ari takes such an interest, but also some of the most suggestive of the Ghulāt. Only after a very close association, for instance, did he disown his follower, the most important thinker of the time among them, Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb.<sup>74</sup>

But it would seem that at the same time that this imāmate was thus invigorated, elements of a protective discipline were being developed which ultimately accommodated the various speculations within the flexible limits of the conventional Islām of the time. The disownment of Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb, which can stand on its own feet as an event, supports what is otherwise probable, that this disciplining began at least in the time of Ja'far. But the chronology of the process is obscure. The most impressive comment on it in Kashshī is perhaps a statement attributed to 'Alī Riḍā (d. 819), when he rejected certain *ḥadīth* which a follower had copied from the notebooks of those in 'Irāq who had taken down the sayings of Ja'far and Bāqir: that Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb and his followers had misrepresented Ja'far, and got their lies accepted in those notebooks, where they were still current. That sayings which had to be edited out were among the words not only of Ja'far but of Bāqir is shown by a parallel comment ascribed to Ja'far, who complains of Mughīra misrepresenting Bāqir; and adds that all the *ghulūw* ascribed to the latter is from Mughīra.<sup>75</sup>

At any rate, in the long run this process of discipline took effect, and gave the Ja'fari Shī'as the benefit of fairly free speculation within guiding limits. The effect can be seen in some significant contrasts between the doctrines reported of Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb and those of the Ismā'īlis, whose ranks are said to have been swelled by his followers. Along with other problems which the earlier Ghulāt had dealt with, Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb and his school were much concerned with problems of spiritual ranking. He is said, for instance, to have taught that in each generation there was a speaking and a silent prophet—as in their generation Muḥammad had been the speaker and 'Alī the silent possessor of knowledge.<sup>76</sup> Now among the Ismā'īlis

we find some of the same preoccupation with rank—their hierarchism is in fact their trade mark—but there is an important difference. There is no speaking and silent pair of prophets in every generation. The same words appear, *nāṭiq* and *ṣāmī*, but they are restricted to Muḥammad and 'Alī alone, that classical generation receiving its all-Islamic due respect; and even then, 'Alī is no prophet, but only the Prophet's "executor," a term used of him already in safely moderate circles. Similarly throughout their system, however extravagant its spirit may sometimes be, the formulation is kept carefully within a broad framework generally accepted in Islām.<sup>77</sup>

Likewise, the later Twelver terminology presents the same formal propriety, even when ideas are entertained which amount to something very dubious from a non-Shī'ite point of view. The term *ḥujja*, for using which indeed Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb seems to have been blamed,<sup>78</sup> was later used freely of the imāms, for instance; apparently because that term was not preempted for sacred purposes by Islām at large; though in the Twelver lore it and other such terms came near implying deification. But a term like *nabī*, originally perhaps possessing less far-reaching implications, was no longer hinted at—being banned explicitly by the all-Islamic consensus. The imāms were revered as manifestations of the divine Light, as perfect embodiments of holiness—but they were never allowed the *title* of even very minor prophets or gods.

By this process of at least a formal disciplining, it seems probable that the imāmate of Ja'far and his line captured for itself much of the zeal of the Ghulāt, at the same time drawing in time its worst fangs; thus avoiding too great a scandal in the eyes of the world—or indeed too unbridled an enthusiasm within the ranks of the faithful. It is perhaps this as much as anything else that gave the line of Ja'far its ultimate preeminence as the line of imāms par excellence.

<sup>74</sup> This process was no doubt hastened by the desires for respectability of the Fatimids in power; but it had begun before. Cf. "K. al-Ruḥd wa-l-ḥidāya," ed. M. Kamil Muncein in Ismaili Society, *Collectanea* I (1948), 189-213.

<sup>75</sup> Ash'ari, 10.

<sup>76</sup> The disownment of Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb caused great consternation among the faithful. Cf. B. Lewis, *Origins of Ismailism*, 32 ff.

<sup>77</sup> Kashshī, 140-7 and 147.

<sup>78</sup> Ash'ari, 10.

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