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Issue 1



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Transliteration

Arabic has been transliterated according to the following key:

ء	’	ض	ḍ
ا	a	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	‘
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ي	y
ص	ṣ	ة	a; at in <i>idāfah</i>

Vowels and Diphthongs

آ	ā	أَوْ	aw
أُو	ū	أَيَّ	ay
إِ	ī		
أَ	a		
أُ	u		
إِ	i		

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Editorial Foreword

Background

The Al-Qalam Journal is inspired by the Islamic teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt, as established in the Shīʿī advanced seminary (*al-ḥawza al-ʿilmiyya*). The Ḥawza of Najaf was founded in 449/1057 to promote progressive and advanced Shīʿī Islamic studies. It embodied the erudite and oceanic knowledge and principles of Shaykh al-Ṭāʾifa, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Tūsī, who settled in Najaf in 449/1057 after sectarian sedition initiated by the Seljuks became rampant in Baghdad. Upon sensing a danger to his activities as an elevated figure of Shīʿī Islam, he established this academic institution in Najaf, which became the first global centre for study and research, outdating the earliest globally known universities, i.e. in Bologna, Italy, in 1088, and the University of Oxford, England, in 1096 / 1167 AD.

The International Centre for Advanced Islamic Research (ICAIR) embodies the living teachings of the ancient classical centres of Shīʿī Muslims, despite its hub being in London, UK. ICAIR aspires that this [al-qalam] journal, which seeks to abide by strict academic standards, will be a critical channel for exchange and dialogue between Islamic scholars from both traditional and academic backgrounds.

What is Al-Qalam?

From Qurʾanic exegesis, we know the term *al-qalam* – which literally means ‘the pen’ – is mentioned in the Qurʾan in the chapter of the same name. *Sūrat al-Qalam* was the second sura to be revealed, in Mecca, after *Sūrat al-ʿAlaq*. However, some interpreters disagree as to whether some of its verses were revealed in Mecca or Medina. Other titles for this sura are Nūn, Qalam, and Nūn wa-l-Qalam. The purpose of this sura was to bolster the Prophet against the accusations of those who were offensive towards him. An interesting fact is that the first sura begins

with “Read!”, and this second sura starts by swearing by the “Pen” and what it writes, which reflects the importance of knowledge that is manifested in reading and writing.

If we reflect over the detailed meaning of the first two verses in this sura, we can understand the following. The first verse: “*Nūn*. By the Pen and what they write ...” *Nūn* is one of the abbreviated letters, a unique feature of the Holy Qur’an. There are vast discussions detailing the meanings, philosophy, and importance of those abbreviated letters, as seen in the exegeses of *Sūrat al-Baqara*, *Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān*, and *Sūrat al-A‘rāf*, amongst others. This phenomenon is repeated throughout the Qur’an in various suras. In the beginning of *Sūrat al-Qalam*, the Qur’an swears by the two great phenomena that established human civilisation, and which are the tools of human sciences and knowledge. Swearing by them indicates their greatness and benefit for all civilisations throughout history.

Human life can be divided into two parts: one before written history and the other after. The history of mankind started as soon as the human being created letters and symbols. It is very probable that “and what they write” in this verse refers to this historical fact. These holy verses were revealed at a time and in a place where writing and reading were very rare, and the people who knew how to read and write were very few. The worldwide literacy rate has increased dramatically by advent of the 20th century; however, writing systems have existed since as early as 3000 BCE in Egyptian hieroglyphs, or perhaps even before that in the Mesopotamian civilisation.

It is worth mentioning here that even at such a time, when the very first verses of the Qur’an were sent down to the Prophet in the Cave of Hira, the civilizational implications of reading and writing were beyond imagination. The verses referred to reading, teaching, the pen, etc.: “Read, and your Lord is the most generous, He who taught you with the pen.” Such words are clear indications that these are divine commands. It is also worth mentioning that the letters *alif* and *lām* in “*al-qalam*” signify unconditionality, i.e., all means of writing. Hence, it includes

pencils, pens, printing materials, compositions, even computers and films in the modern era, and suchlike.

A Historical Observation

A key observation from the verse “By the Pen and what they write” is that it does not seek to praise the pen as a tool merely; instead, swearing by it serves to encourage achieving literacy and seeking knowledge. In line with this, one finds that fighting illiteracy and encouraging reading and writing are among the fundamental priorities of Islam, greatly promoted by the Prophet.

The Prophet’s conduct was full of civilised, inspirational lessons. Many historical records affirm that after the Battle of Badr, the Prophet accepted for prisoners of war to teach ten Muslims how to read and write as ransom, after which they would be freed. This reflects the extreme need for literacy at that time. If looked at from the perspective of building a human civilisation, it is noted that the fundamental obstacles impeding the progress of humanity can be classified as 1) ignorance and 2) arrogance. While the Muslims had fought the arrogance manifested by the enemies, the prisoners of war presented their own role toward civilisation, which was to liberate ten Muslims from ignorance. As such, each party contributed to the other on their path to salvation, namely by fighting their respective ignorance and arrogance.

Contributing to Al-Qalam Journal of Advanced Islamic Research

The Al-Qalam Journal aims to address issues pertaining to the needs of the current time. Contributed articles need to be profoundly discussed, with assiduous attempts to reach the most methodological and appropriate answers. They should all be based on Islamic themes and the principle of critical dialogue between intellectuals from all fields of thought. Their arguments should be based on logical consistency, avoiding unmitigated claims or emotional conclusions.

Policies and Conditions of Acceptance

Following in the legacy of the classical Shīʿī seminary (*hawza*) and its production of innovative, pioneering, influential, and objective knowledge, Al-Qalam aims to publish high-quality papers on topics of general interest, guest-edited by leading authorities. These papers comprise of new research, reviews, and opinions from adroit thinkers who seek to provide a foundation for future research, applications, and innovative ideas.

Papers can be based on themes of international academic conferences or stand-alone topics; they can either be commissioned by the journal's editorial board or proposed by writers themselves. All contributions are invited, and those that meet the required academic standards and fulfil the aims of the journal shall be accepted, pending feedback through a blind peer review process. Accepted papers will then be edited according to the journal's style guidelines.

Articles submitted to the journal must not have been published previously nor be under consideration for publication elsewhere. The main findings of the article should not have been reported in the mass media. Like many journals, Al-Qalam employs a strict embargo policy, where reporting an article and its findings by the media is embargoed until a specified time. The editor-in-chief has final authority in all matters relating to publication.

Editor-in-Chief,

Ali H. Al-Hakim

(Ijtihād) (Cand.Mag.) (PhD) (DProf)

Statement from Ayatollah Ja‘far Sobhani¹

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and prayers and peace be upon Muhammad and his chosen family, from whom Allah removed impurity and purified them with a thorough purification.

There has long been a heated debate between the two sides [of truth and falsehood]. Not in the sense that falsehood can stand before the truth, nor [can] that artifice [of falsehood] match reality, but rather that the clamour and commotion of those who support falsehoods continues to clash with the call of truth; and the insolence and arrogance of the hawkers of falsehood continues to vie with the chant of righteousness.

Indeed, there has long been a debate between the bearers of truth and the followers of falsehood. Ever since our forefather Adam was sent down to Earth, this debate has been raging on between the two groups.

Thereat, in every era or every century throughout time, Allah brought forth divine men to expound the truth and fight against falsehood. At the same time, a band from Satan’s hosts would fight them with all their might and obstinacy. And yet, the divine realities remained a shining light throughout the ages, from the time of Prophet Noah until that of Prophet Abraham, and from the time of Prophet Abraham until the time of the Prophet of Islam, who brought a perfect and eternal law that encompasses all aspects of life.

And [in turn], he enjoined people to follow the Two Weighty Things after his demise. He said: “I am leaving among you the Two Weighty Things: the Book of Allah and my progeny from my household.” So, if the children of the blessed Islamic nation were to refer to these two treasures, they would not differ in any matter of belief or law. In addition to all of that, the Prophet foretold that this religion would be upheld in every era by exemplars of justice, who would prove false the interpretations of the falsifiers, the distortions of the exaggerators, and the arrogations of the

¹ Grand Religious Authority, Islamic Seminary of Qom, Iran.

ignorant, just as the bellows remove the impurities from iron.²

And what the Noble Prophet foretold has come to pass, because in every age, whenever someone wanting to corrupt the teachings of Islam or cause division amongst the Muslims appeared, righteous men stood against them and barred their path. And they did so with the Book of Allah and the Sunna of His Prophet, and debated them with clear proofs, in seeking to sweep away the thorns that had been planted in the path of the Islamic nation. One such example of someone who tried to divide the Islamic nation and sow discord amongst the Muslims was Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328).

This man sowed a division in the Islamic nation by denying those issues upon which all their scholars agreed. He denied the legitimacy of seeking the Prophet's intercession and the [permissibility] of visiting his grave. Worse than that, in more than one of his books, he propagated the belief that Allah has a physical form, to the extent that he explicitly claimed that Allah literally sits on His Throne, as well as other such myths and superstitions that neither accord with reason nor revelation.

At that, a group of scholars in his time and beyond – both Sunnī and Shī'ā – wrote books and treatises refuting his misguidance, until he was sentenced to imprisonment, in which he died. Ibn Taymiyya's falsehoods and delusions remained dormant after his death, and no one paid them any heed, until Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb came along in the 12th century AH and revived what had perished of Ibn Taymiyya's ideas, and called people to follow them in an environment where illiteracy prevailed. The Saudi authorities supported him in Hijaz by spending money and raiding clans, and spread these myths and superstitions. Both Sunnī and Shī'ī scholars confronted them by clarifying the truths, removing doubts and suspicions, and writing innumerable books and letters.

As we congratulate you for holding this valuable conference, we hope that you publish booklets that discuss these doubts, identify the

² Al-Ṭūsī, Muḥammad, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, v. 1, pg. 10.

date of their emergence and spread, and write clear responses to them.

Imam al-Ṣādiq said: "The scholars amongst our Shi'a stand guard at the borders where Satan and his afreet transgress, preventing them from attacking our weak followers."³

In the end, we ask Allah to grant you success in this endeavour.

We hope to see this blessed work continue with sincere intentions.

And Allah lies beyond the goal.

Ja'far Sobhani

Qom, Imam Ṣādiq Institute

11 Rabī' II 1443 AH / 17 November 2021

³ Al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, v.2, pg. 155.

Al-Qalam Journal



ACADEMIC ARTICLES

Ghuluww in History and Islamic Thought: An Overview of the Case of Imāmī Shī'ism

Vinay Khetia (PhD)¹

ABSTRACT

This paper explores some of the intricacies involved in defining ghuluww (religious extremism) in Imāmī thought. It explores exegetical and historiographical perspectives, and a selection of ḥadīth all to demonstrate the variegated nature of the discourse surrounding this subject. Imāmī scholars such as Sayyid al-Khoei and Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najafī felt it necessary to limit the boundaries of who constitutes a ghālī to those who ascribed divinity to the Prophet or the Imams. Part of the reason for such caution is that ghuluww entails kufr (disbelief) or the anathematisation of an individual, which in turn carries profound social-juristic implications. The ḥadīth traditions selected for this study present a snapshot of this broader discussion which entails a constant intellectual mediation between recognising God's ultimate power possessed solely by Him, while on the other hand His bestowal of fantastical attributes and abilities upon select individuals among His creation. Therefore, the sheer inculcation of such attributes (as per post-formative Imāmī thought) such as knowledge of the future or certain miraculous feats unknown and deemed impossible for the average fallible human being, does not entail the divination of such gifted individuals. Rather, it is indicative that God can and does bestow gifts upon His creation as He wills, and this does not compromise God's ultimate transcendence.

KEYWORDS: Ghuluww, Imam, Divine Lordship, Divine

¹ Shia Research Institute, Toronto.

delegation, God-given knowledge

Introduction

Religious extremism or radical theological beliefs has been a matter of contention since the first century of Islam. *Ghuluww* is a term that will be defined during the course of this paper as being largely elastic and subjective outside of those clear traditions from the Fourteen Infallibles which stipulate what it is and who it may be applied to. The very elasticity of this term and the incredible social-political implications in its usage is what makes it so litigious.

This paper will set out to explore the etymological, political, and theological history of this term as it pertains to Imāmī Shī‘ism in an attempt to explore how it has been negotiated so to appreciate the multivocal nature of this concept when viewed from a variety of vantage points. This objective of the aforementioned method of analysis is to demonstrate that *ghuluww* and *ghulāt* are not terms that can be so easily applied to any group or individual who has distinctive beliefs due to its highly coloured history. Rather, it requires a nuanced approach in differentiating between the potential greatness in human beings and the Creator who bestowed that greatness upon them.

Put differently, whatever potential human beings have to perform any number of great acts, that potential derives from an unlimited, powerful creator who placed that within them. Throughout history, various Muslim groups have made the misjudgement of either denying the greatness (*aẓama*) of human beings or the ultimate power belonging to the Creator to bestow such potential upon creation. Or conversely, upon observing historical personalities with certain uncanny abilities (attributed to them) the assumption is made that such feats are impossible for a human and hence that person “must” necessarily be classified as a god of sorts or have divinity ascribed to such an individual.

Ghuluww and its Qur'anic Etymology and Exegesis

The verbal noun *ghuluww* is derived from the trilateral root *gh-l-w*, and in terms of its literal lexical meaning there does not seem to be any divergence among the famous lexicographers. The noun as well as the verb *ghalā* or noun *ghuluww* literarily means to “exceed or go beyond its limit” (*jāwaza ḥaddahu*).² It is also likened to firing an arrow high up into the air which again denotes an attempt to do something outlandish or to attempt at piercing the air.³ The root word is also used to describe an item that is overpriced or even a plant that has grown unusually tall, in both cases again conveying an exceeding of normal limits.⁴ For instance, it is even used to convey when someone is exceedingly overweight or plump (*ghalā bi-hā ‘aẓmun*) or when used in form VI, “they were exorbitant in respect to the dowry or gift to the bride” (*taghālaw fī l-ṣadāq*).⁵

As for the Qur'an, the term *ghuluww* has been used twice as a verb, firstly in Q 4:171:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةٌ انْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا

O People of the Book! Do not exceed the bounds in your religion, and do not attribute anything to God except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only an apostle of God, and His Word that He cast toward Mary and a spirit from Him. So have faith in God and

² Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qurʾān* (Dār al-Shāmiyya: 1991), 613. Cf. Khālid b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī, *Kitāb al-ʿayn* (Hijrat Publishers: 1989), 4:446; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab* (Dār Ṣādiq: 1991), 15:133.

³ Al-Farāhīdī, 4:464.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ E.W. Lane, *English-Arabic Lexicon* (Islamic Texts Society: 1984), 2:2287.

His apostles, and do not say, "[God is] a trinity." Relinquish [such a creed]! That is better for you. God is but the One God. He is far too immaculate to have any son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, and God suffices as trustee.

The early Qur'anic exegete, Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) points out that *taghlū* here is indicative of *tafraṭū* which is synonymous with the meaning of exceeding the limits and going beyond the boundaries in words or beliefs.⁶ It is also worth noting that the vast majority of Qur'anic exegetes when defining *ghuluww* associated it with *ifrāt* or *furuṭ* (which is used in eight various forms in the Qur'an), except in the case of the latter where it indicates going to excess accompanied with neglect and failure.⁷

For example, in Q 18:28 it states regarding those attached to this world such that they forget God: "... His doings have become rife with shortcomings" (*kāna amruhu furuṭa*), al-Ṭabarsī cites various exegetes before him such al-Muqāṭil and al-Jubbā'ī who describe it as being *ifrāt wa tajāwuz al-ḥadd* (going to excess and passing the boundary); in other words, to characterize a lifestyle that has gone to extremes.⁸

Q 5:77 states:

﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا أَهْوَاءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَضَلُّوا كَثِيرًا وَضَلُّوا عَنْ سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ﴾

Say, "O People of the Book! Do not unduly exceed the bounds in your religion and do not follow the fancies of a people who went astray in the past, and led many astray, and [themselves] strayed from the right path."

⁶ Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'an* (Dār al-Ma'rifa: 1992), 4:24.

⁷ Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* (Brill: 2008), 702-703.

⁸ Abū Faḍl al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'an* (Naser Khosrow Publications: 1993), 4:719.

In both these verses there is a clear warning to the People of the Book to be careful not to elevate their religious personalities to sons of God or to assume there is some ontological equivalency between a great religious personality and God, which seems to be the inherent problem in trinitarian doctrine. Both the Jews and the Christians have been condemned by the Qur'an for elevating their religious personalities or prophets either to become sons of God or lords; thus this seems to be the root of *ghuluww* as viewed through the lens of these two verses.⁹

For example in Q 9:30 it states: "The Jews said that Uzayr is the son of God" or in Q 9:31: "They took their rabbis and their priests as lords instead of God (*arbābaban min dūn allāh*).” Interestingly, Shaykh al-Ṭūsī adds a further element to the definition of *ghuluww* by stating that the Jews committed *ghuluww* in the case of ʿĪsā, and both Christians and Jews committed *ghuluww* in their rejection of Prophet Muḥammad's prophethood and their accusing him of falsehood.¹⁰ As will be seen shortly, this form of *ghuluww* also involves exceeding in admiration of such priests to the extent of blindly following them over what is seen to be clear dictates of God.

The central concern of the Qur'an is with either attributing sonship to God or in taking lords other than God as is evident in Q 3:64:

﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

Say, "O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you: that we will worship no one but God, and that we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that we will not take each other as lords besides God." But if they turn away, say, "Be witnesses that we

⁹ Muḥammad Bāqir al-Malakiyān, *al-Ghuluww fī muṣṭalaḥ al-mīl wa-l-niḥal wa-l-rijāl* (Ma'had Adīb al-Fiqh al-Jawāhirī: 2018), 17.

¹⁰ Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Dār Iḥyā' Turāth al-ʿArabī), 3:607.

are Muslims.”

In this regard, Shaykh al-Ṭūsī combines his commentary on Q 9:31 with Q 3:64, citing a tradition from Imam al-Šādiq which is presumably in relation to either verse, and says: “What they worshipped instead of God, and surely they prohibited for them what was made permissible, and made permissible for them what was made impermissible, and that was the act of taking lords instead of God.”¹¹

According to al-Ṭabarsī, there exists disagreement as to the precise meaning of “lords” in both Q 9:31 and Q 3:64 in so far as it could mean simply they set up human beings as objects of worship (*ʿibāda*) or as well as following their priests or rabbis in opposition to what God has clearly prohibited or permitted, thus in doing so they took them as lords, albeit not in the sense of literally worshipping them but rather symbolically.¹² To this effect, al-Ṭabarsī cites an instructive narration of Prophet Muḥammad in which he was specifically asked about this verse, to which he replied to the assertion that the priests and rabbis were not being worshipped but their declarations were being followed (in opposition to clear scriptural guidance) to which the Prophet replied: “It is that (*huwa dhālika*).”¹³ In the case of them literally being deemed as lords or the act of taking lords other than God, ‘Allāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī in reference to this verse describes this type of lordship (*rubūbiyya*) as an empowerment of human beings to the extent of not needing to rely on God anymore.¹⁴

Another example of *ghuluww* can be seen in *Sūrat Nūḥ* in which his community is told by those who reject Noah: “Do not abandon your

¹¹ “*Mā ʿabadūhum min dūn allāh wa innamā ḥarramū la-hum ḥalālan wa aḥallū la-hum ḥarāman fa-kāna dhālika ittikhādh al-arbāb min dūn allāh.*” Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān*, 2:488.

¹² Al-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 2:767.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mizān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Muʿassasat al-ʿAlamī lil-Maṭbūʿāt: 1997), 3:288.

gods. Do not abandon Wadd, nor Suwā', nor Yaghūth, Ya'ūq, and Nasr."¹⁵ According to al-Ṭabarsī these idols were initially a group of pious people (*qawmun ṣāliḥūn*), whose admirers were tempted by Satan to draw images of them so that they may feel closer to them, however this resulted in them becoming idols of worship.¹⁶ Therefore, in this case we see a connection between iconography and *ghuluww* which also speaks to certain iconoclastic trends in Islamic history at least as reflected in the 6th/12th century commentary by al-Ṭabarsī. Upon examination of the verses pertaining to *ghuluww* in the Qur'an and Arabic lexicography, the essential problems lie in taking otherwise gifted human beings as gods or in attributing some form of ontological equivalency between God and them. This slippage or intentional ontological conflation as we shall see was at least partially responsible for the development of early *ghulāt* sects.

The Early *Ghulāt* and Beliefs regarding the Ahl al-Bayt

Early Shī'ī theological and heresiographical literature is replete with tales describing the early groups whom Sean Anthony describes as "transgressive Shiites" instead of extremists, since the term "extremist" in contemporary English conveys terrorism or some sort of political violence in the name of religion.¹⁷

I would tend to concur with this definition as it will be seen within the context of early Shī'ī movements that there were numerous groups and personalities that attached themselves to various figures from both the Twelver line of Imams and otherwise, only to ascribe attributes that would be deemed heretical by the Imams and later Shī'ī heresiographical writers. The reason I am limiting myself largely to Shī'ī heresiography is for the simple fact that for Sunnī theologians and heresiographers, the definition of *ghuluww* was much broader to essentially include large

¹⁵ Q 71:23.

¹⁶ Al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-bayān*, 10:547. Cf. al-Malakiyān, 15.

¹⁷ Sean Anthony, "*Ghulāt*," EI3.

parts of what was the predominant belief among the Imāmiyya, such as the rejection of the moral uprightness of the first three caliphs prior to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.¹⁸ Therefore, for the purpose of this section I will limit myself to references largely from Shī‘ī sources or those academic studies that draw upon them such as the influential work of Wadad Qadi, while providing some necessary historical background.

Throughout the Umayyad period, the accusation of *ghuluww* was used for political purposes to silence dissent especially with respect to the Khawārij. In fact, each group claimed to have the final say regarding the definition of *ghuluww* in the Qur’an and hence used it as a harpoon to discredit competing religious movements.

For example, the Umayyad caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 99-101/717-720) accused the Qādariyya (those who believe in free will of human beings) as having gone to extremes in their beliefs (*ghāla fi l-qawl*).¹⁹ For other Umayyad caliphs, any act of disobedience to them was deemed an act of *ghuluww*. It is for this reason that we must be cautious in deriving any authoritative meaning of this term when we come across the usage of this epithet in the works of historiography and theology.

The earliest sect of *ghulāt* is the Saba’iyya, who were named after their alleged Jewish convert and founder, ‘Abdullāh b. Saba’. Early sources, such as the history of Sayf b. ‘Umar, which have been highly coloured by anti-Shī‘ī polemics, describe Ibn Saba’ as a *ghālī* because he cursed the enemies of ‘Alī. The sources are replete with claims and counterclaims to which the late Murtaḍā ‘Askarī asserted that most of the tales surrounding Ibn Saba’ are just that, tales or myths. But nevertheless, the term *ghuluww* or *ghālī* was used to describe something unpalatable for some Muslims groups.

According to other reports, Ibn Saba’ believed that ‘Alī did not die but will return to rule the Earth; again, this was deemed by some Sunnī

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

heresiographers to be *ghuluww*. According to later Shīʿī sources such as al-Ashʿarī, Ibn Sabaʿ believed ʿAlī to be a deity. The question that Wadad Qadi raises in this regard, which I deem to be a valid one, is the following: how do we settle on a definition of *ghuluww* especially if it entails someone being expelled out of the fold of Islam, and is *ghuluww* simply a wild idea or notion?²⁰ She raises some important questions here in order to force us to be more precise and cautious in how we use this term. During the first two centuries of Islam this continued to be debated as we can see in the case of Mukhtār and his followers.

In fact, the *ghulāt* as a group first appear in a report by Abū Mikhnaḥ who narrates stories of the Kufan women, Hind bt. al-Mutakallifa al-Nāʿiyya and Laylā bt. Qumāma al-Muzaniyya, in whose homes “would gather every *ghālī* from the Shīʿa to converse (*kāna yajtamiʿu ilayhā kullu ghālīn min al-shīʿa*).”²¹ While we cannot be precise as to what was discussed in these homes, what we do know is that those who gathered in these homes were later known for claiming to prophesise the future, like the soothsayers of pre-Islamic Arabia. It should also be mentioned that Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya clearly denounced this *ghuluww*.

In order to encapsulate the various groups that emerged after Mukhtār, the heresiographers use the term Kaysāniyya to indicate an umbrella group that held an array of beliefs. Among these alleged controversial beliefs of the Kaysāniyya was the charge that the first three caliphs before ʿAlī were guilty of infidelity (*kufr*) due to their rejection of ʿAlī’s Imāmate after the death of the Prophet. Or for example, it was claimed that Ibn Ḥanafiyya never died but was rather trapped in the mountains of Ruḍwā only to eventually return as the Mahdī (messiah).

Furthermore, there were antinomian tendencies arising from such groups which believed part of the *sharīʿa* was abrogated or even conferring prophethood on some of their leaders such as Bayān b. Samʿān who believed in anthropomorphism, such as claiming to

²⁰ Wadad Qadi, “The Development of the Term Ghulāt in Muslim Literature” in *Shīʿism ed. Etan Kohlberg* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing: 2003), 208.

²¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* (Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya: 2005), 3:489.

see God.²² Another group was led by Abū l-Khaṭṭāb, known as the Khaṭṭābiyya, who ascribed divinity to Imam al-Ṣādiq, as well as having antinomian beliefs. Madelung characterises this movement as ‘Abbāsīd Shī‘ī *ghuluww*.

Upon perusal of the Shī‘ī heresiographical literature, such as the work of the famous Imāmī scholars al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (d. circa 4th/10th century) and Sa‘d b. ‘Abdullāh al-Ash‘arī al-Qummī (d. 300/912), we find that at least by the early 4th century prior to the major occultation, *ghuluww* was limited largely to anthropomorphism, reincarnation, or outright attribution of divinity to the Imams. For example, in an instructive description by the notable companion of Imam al-Kāẓim and Imam al-Riḍā, Yūnus b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 204/820), the *ghulāt* drew their ideas primarily from two basic tenets:

1. God presents Himself to whom He wills in whatever form He wills and how He wills in His justice ... therefore He views Himself as He views His creation (the two become one and the same in their presentation) (إِذْ يَرَى مِنْ نَفْسِهِ مَا يَرَى مِنْ خَلْقِهِ). Based on that, it is not befitting (*lam yajuz*) for Him to present Himself to them except in a form (*mathal*) that they recognise.²³
2. The *ghulāt* say that He is in His essence (*dhātihi wa kunhihi*) a holy spirit (*rūḥ al-quḍus*), a dweller in a dwelling place and the dwelling place is His screen/veil (*al-maskūn ḥijābuhu*).²⁴

So, to summarise, the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd era *ghulāt* groups held an array of beliefs, some of which are shared by the mainstream Imāmiyya and some of which are not. For example, they believed in *raj‘a*, *bad‘* (the belief that God can change His mind or decree), *tanāsukh* (transmigration of souls and/or reincarnation), *ḥulūl* (indwelling of souls – incarnation), *tashbīh* (anthropomorphism, i.e. that God can

²² Wilfred Madelung, “Kaysaniyya,” EI2.

²³ This belief alleges that God identifies with his own creation.

²⁴ Al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī and Sa‘d b. ‘Abdullāh al-Ash‘arī al-Qummī, *Firaq al-shī‘a* (Dār al-Irshād: 1992), 62.

descend in the material world), and antinomianism (denial of *sharī'a* or elements of it).

Let us now list the various beliefs or statements attributed (in sources post-dating their existence) to the *ghulāt*:

1. Claim that the Prophet or Imams or anyone else possesses divinity (*ulūhiyya*):
 - For example, the companion of 'Abdullāh b. al-Rāwandī believed that al-Manṣūr was god (*allāh*) and he knew their secrets and their whispers (*ya'lamu sirrahum wa najwāhum*).²⁵
2. Attribution of prophethood to anyone after Prophet Muḥammad:
 - Mughīra b. Sa'īd and Bayān b. Sam'ān and Buza'y and Ṣā'id considered themselves prophets (*naṣabū anfusahum anbiyā'*).²⁶
3. Transmigration of souls from one person to another (*al-tanāsukh*).

Let us now turn to the various narrations from the Imams to see how they dealt with these groups, and the balance that they struck in approaching the issue pertaining to their merits and the fundamental ontological separation between them and God.

The Traditions of the Infallibles: Recurring Themes and Lessons

What we will discern from a selection of traditions is that the Imams openly condemned the *ghulāt* as well as those who would seek to

²⁵ Sa'd b. 'Abdullāh al-Ash'arī al-Qummī, *al-Maqālat wa-l-firaq* (Markaz-i Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī wa Farhangī: 1981), 69. This trend of *ghuluww* was particularly poignant during the 'Abbāsīd period within the general milieu of millenarianism, messianism, and revolution, all of which was encompassed by the 'Abbāsīd revolution and the general religious and doctrinal environment of the 2nd-3rd/8th-9th centuries. It is also no coincidence that this was contemporary to the Imamates of al-Ṣādiq, al-Kāẓim, and al-Riḍā.

²⁶ Ibid, 55. In addition to this they believed the decedents of the Prophet were creating lords (*arbābun khālīqūn*).

belittle their position (*muqassira*). When we look at the ḥadīth literature as a whole, we notice an attempt to strike a balance between both. Furthermore, there is a clear emphasis upon the Imams as the servants of God and there always remaining an ontological incomparability between them and God, unlike the theological transgressions of the Jews and Christians.

حَمْدُويَه، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عِيسَى، عَنْ يُونُسَ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، عَنْ بَشِيرِ
الدَّهَّانِ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: كَتَبَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ إِلَى
أَبِي الْخَطَّابِ، بَلَغَنِي أَنَّكَ تَزْعُمُ أَنَّ الزَّنا رَجُلٌ، وَأَنَّ الْخَمْرَ رَجُلٌ، وَأَنَّ الصَّلَاةَ
رَجُلٌ، وَأَنَّ الصَّيَّامَ رَجُلٌ، وَأَنَّ الْفَوَاحِشَ رَجُلٌ، وَلَيْسَ هُوَ كَمَا تَقُولُ، أَنَا أَصْلُ
الْحَقِّ، وَفُرُوعُ الْحَقِّ طَاعَةُ اللَّهِ، وَعَدُوْنَا أَصْلُ الشَّرِّ، وَفُرُوعُهُمُ الْفَوَاحِشُ، وَكَيْفَ
يُطَاعُ مَنْ لَا يَعْرِفُ؟! وَكَيْفَ يُعْرِفُ مَنْ لَا يُطَاعُ!؟

Bashīr al-Dahhān relates from Imam al-Ṣādiq: “Abū ‘Abdullāh wrote to Abī l-Khaṭṭāb that: ‘It has come to me that you claim: fornication is a man, wine is a man, prayer is a man, and fasting is a man, indecencies is a man. It is not as you say; I am the origin of truth and the branches of the truth is obedience to Allah, and our enemies are the origin of evil and their branches are the moral indecencies. How then can the one who is not known be obeyed, and how can the one who is not obeyed be known?’”²⁷

The beliefs of Abū l-Khaṭṭāb would seem to imply that these acts taken on some human form, which is perhaps linked to the *ghulāt* doctrine of *tanāsukh*, which clearly in this case the Imam has absolutely repudiated. Furthermore, as per al-Ash‘arī al-Qummī, Abū l-Khaṭṭāb and his group, the Khaṭṭābiyya, were among those who ascribed to antinomianism in so far as allowing alcohol, fornication, and other such sins, believing these to now be allowed since the love of the Imam (who for them

²⁷ Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Kashshī, *Ikhtiyār ma‘rifat al-rijāl with glosses of Mīr Dāmād* (Āl al-Bayt Institute: 1984), 2:577.

is a god or a form of god) is all that matters to them.²⁸ Clearly, the Imam forbade such beliefs and castigated those who ascribed to such doctrines. We see the fear of antinomianism throughout the traditions as they pertain to the *ghulāt*, which seems to be for just cause. When we look at the various splinter Shī'ī sects, including the Nuṣayrīs – they have largely annulled many of the practices that were believed to be compulsory.

وَعَنْهُ، قَالَ: أَخْبَرَنَا الْحُسَيْنُ بْنُ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: أَخْبَرَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ بْنِ يَحْيَى
الْعَطَّارُ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ بْنِ خَالِدٍ، عَنْ الْعَبَّاسِ بْنِ مَعْرُوفٍ،
عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ مُسْلِمٍ، عَنْ فَضِيلِ بْنِ يَسَارٍ، قَالَ: قَالَ الصَّادِقُ (عَلَيْهِ
السَّلَامُ): إِحْذَرُوا عَلَى شَبَابِكُمْ الْغُلَاةَ لَا يُفْسِدُوهُمْ، فَإِنَّ الْغُلَاةَ شَرُّ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ،
يُصَغَّرُونَ عَظَمَةَ اللَّهِ، وَيَدْعُونَ الرُّبُوبِيَّةَ لِعِبَادِ اللَّهِ، وَاللَّهُ إِنَّ الْغُلَاةَ شَرُّ مِنَ الْيَهُودِ
وَالنَّصَارَى وَالْمَجُوسِ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا. ثُمَّ قَالَ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): إِنِّي نَايِرُ الْجَعِ الْغَالِي
فَلَا نَقْبَلُهُ، وَبِنَا يَلْحَقُ الْمُقْصَرُّ فَنَقْبَلُهُ. فَقِيلَ لَهُ: كَيْفَ ذَلِكَ يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ؟
قَالَ: لِأَنَّ الْغَالِيَّ قَدْ اعْتَادَ تَرَكَ الصَّلَاةَ وَالزَّكَاةَ وَالصَّيَامَ وَالْحَجَّ، فَلَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى
تَرَكَ عَادَتِهِ، وَعَلَى الرُّجُوعِ إِلَى طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) أَبَدًا، وَإِنَّ الْمُقْصَرَ إِذَا عَرَفَ
عَمِلَ وَأَطَاعَ.

Imam al-Ṣādiq said: "Caution/protect your youth from the *ghulāt*, do not allow them to get corrupted. For surely the *ghulāt* are the most evil of God's creation, for they belittle God's greatness, and they claim lordship for the slaves of God. Surely, by God, the *ghulāt* are more evil than the Jews and the Christians and the Zoroastrians

²⁸ Al-Ash'arī, *al-Maqālāt*, 51. Here al-Ash'arī says: "They [the Khaṭṭābiyya] making licit (*abāhū*) all of the illicit (*maḥārim*) including fornication, ... stealing, drinking wine, abandoning prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage, and allowing [making licit] swearing testimony upon each other [cursing and anathematising one another or accusing each other of *kufr*]."

and those who associate partners [with God].”²⁹ Then he said: “To us returns the *ghālī* but we shall not accept him, and the *muqaṣṣir* (shortcomer) catches up to us and we shall accept him.” It was then said to him: “And how is that the case ...?” [The Imam] replied: “Because the *ghālī* made it a custom/habit to abandon the prayer, alms (*zakāt*), fasting, and pilgrimage. And he [the *ghālī*] is not able to leave his custom/invented practice and return to obeying God, ever again. As for the shortcomer, when he knows, he acts and obeys.”³⁰

Much like the previous ḥadīth, it is clear that Imam al-Ṣādiq was very concerned with the extremist tendencies in the community, especially as it pertained to ascribing divinity or lordship to the Imams and abandoning the *sharīʿa*. Here the Imam makes a clear distinction between those who fall short in their practice, and the *ghulāt* who haughtily create new customs, which is essentially an act for forming a new religion by abandoning the necessary aspects of belief and practice (*ḍarūriyyāt al-dīn*).³¹ The youth can especially fall prey to any extreme tendencies it would seem, and there was a concern that such practices would destroy the community from within. It also for that reason perhaps that the Imam says that the *ghulāt* are more wretched than the Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and polytheists.³² Of course, such language must not be understood to promote violence or bigotry; here the Imam is referring to what the Qurʾan views as heretical beliefs (as

²⁹ Reference to Q 22:17.

³⁰ Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī* (Dār al-Thaqāfa: 1993), 650.

³¹ This is a point emphasised by Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najafī in his discussion on *ghuluww* and the issue of ritual impurity by rejecting the transcendence of God (*tanzīh rabb al-ʿālamīn*). Cf. Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najafī, *Jawāhir al-kalām fī sharḥ sharāʾiʿ al-islām* (Muʾassasat al-Murtaḍā al-ʿĀlamiyya: 1996), 2:459.

³² As an interesting point, I am not sure how these traditions would fit with a belief in soteriological pluralism. The tone and language seem very strong with regards to the “heretical” beliefs of others.

was previously discussed).

Once again, we see in this tradition and numerous others from the Imams that those ascribing physical qualities to God and bringing Him down to the human level are acts of taking human beings as lords and gods.

This the *ghulāt* were guilty of, and as we shall see in the next section, these are some of the beliefs that the *fuqahā'* have also classified as *ghuluww* in their discussion pertaining to their ritual impurity (*najāsa*).

However, for the Imāmiyya (Twelver Shī'a) this should not negate the belief that God can and has instilled greatness (*ʿaẓama*) in His chosen servants, whether they be prophets, Imams, or other pious individuals. The issue at hand is the attribution of divinity to such individuals. Needless to say there can exist a spectrum by which such concepts can be debated and discussed. This is precisely what Ayatollah al-Khoei discusses in his jurisprudential discourse. He emphasises that *ghuluww* as a technical concept has certain acts or beliefs associated with it that yield disbelief (*al-asbāb al-mūjiba lil-kufr*).

Therefore, any strange belief or extraordinary idea cannot classify someone as a "*ghālī*" and hence have that person be classified as a disbeliever. One of these beliefs would be for a person to "believe that 'Alī (or any other human being) is the sublime lord who came down to Earth in a physical body" which entails two things: anthropomorphism and rejection of God's divinity (*ulūhiyya*).³³

Sayyid al-Khoei then makes a critical point which is that this does not even necessitate someone to reject the divinity of God all together, but rather even believe that all the matters pertaining to legislation and creation (*al-tashrīʿ wa-l-takwīn*) return to the hand of Imam 'Alī or any of the other Infallibles. Again, the emphasis here is not on rejection of their greatness or God blessing them with incredible abilities as human beings that stand out from the rest of His creation.

³³ Shaykh Mīrzā 'Alī al-Gharawī, *al-Tanqīh fī sharḥ al-ʿurwat al-wuthqā taqrīrāt al-abḥāth al-sayyid Abū l-Qāsim al-Khūʾī* (Mu'assasat al-Khūʾī al-Islāmiyya), <http://www.al-khoei.us/books/?book=1&part=1>.

Rather, it is just that they are God's creation and a marvel at that, and hence it is for God to be glorified as the fashioner, creator, and the sustainer who gifted such incredible guides and remarkable intelligent beings to shepherd His creation to the shores of salvation. The problem with the *ghulāt* was that they simply failed to understand the radical ontological distinction, whereas the *muqaṣṣira* failed to understand the greatness in such human beings. They felt it was necessary that God and only God have knowledge of people's thoughts (for example), heal the dead, or even have some knowledge of the future (whatever it is that God granted them in terms of knowledge).

Therefore, Sayyid al-Khoei again points out that to believe for example that an angel brings down the rain by the permission of God or brings the dead back to life with the permission of God does not entail the rejection of divinity nor a necessary article of faith (*darūriyyāt al-dīn*).

The following narrations shed further light on this matter:

قَالَ لِي أَبُو خَالِدِ الْكَابُلِيِّ: أَمَا أَنِّي سَأُحَدِّثُكَ بِحَدِيثٍ إِنْ رَأَيْتُمُوهُ وَأَنَا حَيٌّ فَقُلْتُ صَدَّقْتَنِي، وَإِنْ مِتُّ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَرَاهُ تَرَحَّمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَدَعَوْتَ لِي. سَمِعْتُ عَلِيَّ بْنَ الْحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ يَقُولُ: إِنَّ الْيَهُودَ أَحَبُّوا عُزَيْرًا حَتَّى قَالُوا فِيهِ مَا قَالُوا فَلَا عُزَيْرَ مِنْهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ مِنْ عُزَيْرٍ، وَأَنَّ النَّصَارَى أَحَبُّوا عِيسَى حَتَّى قَالُوا فِيهِ مَا قَالُوا، فَلَا عِيسَى مِنْهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ مِنْ عِيسَى. وَأَنَا عَلَى سُنَّةٍ مِنْ ذَلِكَ أَنَّ قَوْمًا مِنْ شِيعَتِنَا سَيَحِبُّونَا حَتَّى يَقُولُوا فِينَا مَا قَالَتْ الْيَهُودُ فِي عُزَيْرٍ، وَمَا قَالَتْ النَّصَارَى فِي عِيسَى بْنِ مَرْيَمَ، فَلَا هُمْ مِنَّا وَلَا نَحْنُ مِنْهُمْ.

Abū Khālid al-Kābulī narrates from ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn (Imam al-Sajjād): “I heard ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn say: ‘Surely the Jews loved ‘Uzayr to the extent that they said about him what they said, and ‘Uzayr is not from them nor are they from ‘Uzayr. And the Christians loved ‘Īsā to the extent of saying what they said about him, and ‘Īsā is not from them nor are they from ‘Īsā. I am upon [practicing] the

Sunna [of the Prophet] in regard to that. A group from our Shi'a shall love us to the extent of saying [things] about us that the Jews say regarding 'Uzayr and what the Christians [say] about 'Īsā b. Maryam, so they are not from us and we are not from them."³⁴

Once again as we see from the Fourth Imam, the problem is not with the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt having exceptional knowledge bestowed upon them by God, nor is the problem in them being purified from sin, or even possessing a reserved status with God such that the rest of creation would rely upon their guidance and knowledge for their salvation. Rather, the danger in the view of the Imam lies in reproducing the theology of the Jews and the Christians as presented in the Qur'an as per his explanation.

Furthermore, in a lengthy report detailing the gathering of jurists and theologians with Imam al-Riḍā, he emphasised (similar to the earlier Imams) the importance of never losing sight of the fact that prophets and Imams are slaves of God; they rely upon God for their salvation just as all humans ultimately do.³⁵ To this effect he cited a statement of the Messenger of God who said: "Surely God chose me as a slave prior to taking me/choosing me as a prophet."

They worship God as his slaves; if anything, paradoxically it is this *maqām* (position) that becomes their greatest distinction itself and the cause for their incredible knowledge, and even abilities granted to them by God such as physiognomy (*ilm al-firāsa*), and this power of insight to read people and understand them has been given in its most supreme form to the Imams.³⁶ Ma'mūn is then clearly intrigued

³⁴ Al-Kashshī, *Ikhtiyār*, 120.

³⁵ Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī (al-Ṣadūq), *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* (Jahān Press: 1958), 2:201.

³⁶ Ibid, 200. Imam al-Riḍā says (as a part of the longer tradition):

قَالَ: وَمَا مِنْ مُؤْمِنٍ إِلَّا وَلَهُ فِرَاسَةٌ يَنْظُرُ بِنُورِ اللَّهِ عَلَى قَدَرِ إِيمَانِهِ وَمَنْبَغِ اسْتِبْصَارِهِ وَعِلْمِهِ، وَقَدْ جَمَعَ اللَّهُ لِلْإِئِمَّةِ مِنَّا مَا فَرَّقَهُ فِي جَمِيعِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ.

by this line of thought so he asks the Imam to shed further light upon the status of the Imams, to which Imam al-Riḍā answers by stating that they have been endowed with a purified sacred spirit (*bi-rūhin min-hu muqaddasa muṭaḥḥara*) which has only been given to the Messenger of God and the Imams accompanied by a column of light, all of which is a source of extraordinary guidance given to them by God.

Once again, this is a point that was lost upon the *ghulāt*, that God's chosen ones manifest the truest greatness through their most profound reverence of God Himself, and this in turn further imbues them with His divine guidance and blessings, all of which manifest in them being chosen guides who have been endowed with special knowledge, unlike the rest of creation. The Imam then goes on to cite the Qur'an:

﴿قَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُ اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ثُمَّ يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا عِبَادًا لِي مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ كُونُوا رَبَّانِيِّينَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تُعَلِّمُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ وَلَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَتَّخِذُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ أَرْبَابًا أَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْكُفْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

It does not behoove any human that God should give him the Book, judgement, and prophethood, and then he should say to the people, "Be my servants instead of God." Rather [he would say], "Be a godly people, because of your teaching the Book and because of your studying it." And He would not command you to take the angels and the prophets for lords. Would He call you to unfaith after you have been Muslims?³⁷

Therefore, once again we see the emphasis placed on servitude of God, and comprehending the purpose of prophecy as not creating mythical demigods but in further glorifying God for sending and creating such guides who in no way, shape, or form can ever be compared to God Himself, who is ontologically removed in terms of His essence from such a comparison ever being made. However, this again does not in any way

³⁷ Q 3:79-80.

negate God's blessing and endowment of special knowledge given to His chosen ones, whether it be al-Khidr, Jesus, Solomon, Muḥammad, or any of the Infallibles after him.

Imam al-Riḍā then goes on to narrate the tradition of Imam 'Alī:

قَالَ عَلِيٌّ (ع) يَهْلِكُ فِي اثْنَانِ وَلَا ذَنْبَ لِي، مُحِبُّ مُفَرِّطٍ، وَمُبْغِضُ مُفَرِّطٍ، وَأَنَا
أَبْرَأُ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى مِمَّنْ يَغْلُو فِيْنَا وَيَرْفَعُنَا فَوْقَ حَدِّنا كِبْرَاءَةِ عِيسَى ابْنِ
مَرْيَمَ (ع) مِنَ النَّصَارَى

Two groups shall perish/be destroyed and there is no sin upon me [in this regard]: the excessive lover and the excessive hater. I dissociate with God from whomever goes to extremes regarding us and elevates us above our limit, just as Jesus son of Mary disassociated from the Christians.

It must be reiterated that as per this narration, *rubūbiyya* is not the Imams having special knowledge of what we do not know or even in them being guided by the light of God to see things that we cannot see, or having knowledge of past and future of what God endows them with; rather, *rubūbiyya* is to take human beings as gods, and this was what the Imam was charging the *ghulāt* with. Is believing in *raj'a* (the return to this world of certain individuals such as the Imams) or circumstances in which fate can change (*badā'*) a type of *ghuluww*? Or, is it *ghuluww* to believe in circumstances when God gives the dead the ability to hear voices that convey *salām* (greetings of peace) to them after their death? No, it is not. That is why scholars such as Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/1022) accepted such beliefs. In fact, he said we collectively (*kāffatan*) accept this and that it is possible to accept such a notion as an intellectual-rational belief.³⁸

³⁸ Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Nu'mān (al-Mufid), *Awā'il al-maḡālāt* (Dār al-Mufid: 1993), 72-73. He says: "*Hādhā madhab fuḡahā' al-imāmiyya kāffatan* (this is the school of thought of the Imāmī jurists collectively)," although he has heard that Banū Nawbakht had a disagreement on this matter. Al-Mufid does not provide any further details in this regard. Al-Mufid also explains that

That being said, these suppositions could be debated, but what is reflected among the vast majority of Imāmī theologians such as al-Mufid is that such beliefs do not constitute *ghuluww*, which in turn results in anathematisation or rendering a Muslim to be a non-believer. Accepting the notion that the Infallibles can hear voices after their death (when people visit their graves, for example) does not imply that they are *al-samīʿ al-ʿalīm* (all-hearing and all-knowing, which are attributes that belong solely to God); it means they have been endowed with a special blessing, but this is not absolute; it is always limited and cannot necessarily be applied to everything and every circumstance; it is *mā shāʾ allāh* – as God wills.

Put differently, at issue is not God's power in essence (*dhāt*) but His power and ability to bestow by means of *mawhiba* (divine endowment) upon His creation. Ultimately, even if a belief is debated or even controversial, that does not immediately classify it as being *ghuluww*. It is for this reason Hassan Ansari in his discussion on *Ziyārat al-Jāmiʿa* states explicitly that the fantastical attributes of the Imams as described in this devotion are not synonymous with how *ghuluww* was defined in classical heresiographical literature and to make such an association is a mistake.³⁹ Again, this does not imply that such attributes are never open to differences of opinion either in their interpretation or in accepting the historical validity of such reports, for that is not the issue at hand in this paper. Rather, does accepting such beliefs necessitate the charge of *ghuluww*? The answer to which is most likely, no.

Conclusion

It has been demonstrated in this paper that differing beliefs or even those things classified as an outright superstition by some does not necessarily constitute *ghuluww*. This term has been subject to a long

this ability is due to God's graces (*laṭāʾif allāh*) upon these chosen servants such as the Prophet and the Imams. See: Ibid.

³⁹ Hassan Ansari, *Aṣālat al-ziyāra al-jāmiʿa*, <https://ias.academia.edu/HassanAnsari>.

and contentious political-sectarian history in which orthodoxy was largely defined by the majoritarian Muslim theology, and then those who veered too far from those set limits could be described as *ghulāt* (extremists or transgressive Shī'a).

That being said, among the Imāmiyya there tends to be a collective understanding (albeit not without exceptions) that the burden of proof to determine *ghuluww* and accurately charge someone with such is to ascribe divinity or lordship to human beings. The ultimate fear or overarching concern can be found throughout the Qur'an which constantly warns its reader of the past "extremism" of the Christians and Jews. The inherent concern is to conflate the one who has received a gift (whether it be exclusive knowledge or an uncanny ability) with the One who bestowed it upon him or her.

Put differently, the ontological reality of radical separation between the bestower and the bestowed must be kept in view so to avoid the pitfalls of *ghuluww*. It is perhaps for this reason that we come across numerous traditions from the Prophet and the Imams that absolutely emphasise their humility and constant remembrance of God. They are described as the servants of God par excellence and any fantastical attributes which they may possess is but tentative and subject to God's grace as they are but His chosen servants.

That being said, none of this negates the evident hierarchical structure that is perpetuated in Imāmī theology in which God is the creator and sustainer and the Prophet and the Imams receive this grace (*lutf*), and in doing so become the chosen guides for humanity, without whom humanity would be in utter disarray for the very reason that they are (in Imāmī theology) the means created by God in order to deliver human beings to the shores of salvation. Along the way it is believed by the Imāmiyya that the Prophet, Fāṭima, and the Twelve Imams have been given extraordinary abilities as a means of manifesting their sublime existence as being slaves of God (*'ibād allāh*).

That is not to say that *ghuluww* is not a concern among the Imāmiyya, for certainly it is, but this concern is limited to clear antinomian

tendencies (such as the abrogation of *ṣalāt* or allowance of alcohol consumption) along with the ontological conflation between God and His creation. An example of such conflation or blurring of lines would be when a human being becomes the source of sustenance, or he or she becomes *al-rāziq* (the sustainer) or as Ṣāhib al-Jawāhir (author of the famous work, *Jawāhir al-kalām*) mentions, *ghuluww* could be to say: “The Commander of the Faithful is the creator.”

Another example would be to attribute prophethood to someone other than Prophet Muḥammad after his death (*al-nabuwwa lil-ghayr*) which would render someone a non-Muslim in a jurisprudential sense.⁴⁰ Consequently, the concern of this paper has been to present a broad outline of the debated nature of what constitutes *ghuluww* and the general contours of the discussion as presented in a selection of exegetical works, ḥadīth, and heresiographical literature.

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⁴⁰ Al-Najafi, 2:459.

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The Criteria for Extremism (*Ghuluww*) in the thought of Shaykh al-Ṣadūq

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ABSTRACT

A major topic of theological debate in Iran today, owing to the influence of some Western thinkers, is the desacralisation of the world and of religion. One of the main areas on which proponents of desacralisation have focused is the status of the Imam. Some authors have claimed that Shīʿī scholars from the early centuries, including Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, did not recognise any superhuman attributes for the Imams and that they and other classical scholars reduced the Imamate of the Prophet's Household to that of "pious scholars" (*ʿulamāʾ abrār*). Some also assert that those figures who opposed this view were accused of being extremists (*ghulāt*) and expelled from the Shīʿī mainstream.

This article will endeavour to examine the description that Shaykh al-Ṣadūq presents of the *ghulāt* in his writings in order to identify the boundaries of Shīʿī extremism in his thought, and show, contrary to the claims of these authors, that Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, while believing in the possibility of the Prophet experiencing a lapse in his prayers (*sahw al-nabī*), nevertheless affirmed superhuman qualities for both him and his Household and held them as a matter of religious belief.

KEYWORDS: Imam, *ghuluww*, extremism, *taqṣīr*, shortcoming,

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‘*ulamā’ abrār*, theory of the Twelve Imams as pious scholars.

Introduction

Within Islamic theology, the issue of the Imamate represents the dividing line between Shī‘ism and Sunnism. Believing or not believing that ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib was the immediate successor to the Prophet of Islam and that this line of succession continued amongst his children, is the fundamental difference between Shī‘ī and Sunnī Islam. Within Shī‘ī Islam, the Imamate is also the axis around which sects and offshoots have historically formed, as it was usually due to disagreements about succession to the Imamate that led to splits within the faith. Looking through the catalogue of various Shī‘ī sects, such as the Zaydiyya, Ismā‘īliyya, Faṭḥiyya, and Kaysāniyya, one sees that all of these came into being as a result of debates about the rightful successor to the previous Imam.

Another issue of theological debates within Shī‘ism was the position of the Imams and the station of the Ahl al-Bayt, which also gave rise to different sects. The *ghulāt* (extremist) sect is one such sect. The *ghulāt* were cursed and repudiated by the Infallible Imams, and the Imams explicitly and roundly criticised their doctrinal and practical stances. This, in turn, led Shī‘ī scholars and jurists to become deeply concerned with the issue of *ghuluww* and to pay considerable attention to it, in both theory and practice, and to attempt to delineate the precise boundaries between Twelver Shī‘ism and *ghuluww*.

However, efforts by scholars to provide a precise demarcation of *ghuluww* and the explicit condemnation of the *ghulāt* as having gone astray by the Imams led to the formation of extreme positions in relation to this issue. On the one hand, some scholars were so averse to *ghuluww* that they went to the opposite extreme of *taqṣīr* (shortcoming) with regards to the rights of the Prophet’s Household. This meant that they saw no distinction between the Imams and the Prophet and ordinary human beings, and denied that the Imams possessed any superhuman

status or knowledge. On the other hand, there were those who sought to elevate the status of the Infallibles and, as a result, fell into heresy and disbelief by ascribing the qualities of divinity or creatorship to them. Meanwhile, moderate scholars followed the divine ordinance found in the verse, “We have made you a middle nation”³ and avoided both of these extremes, neither diminishing the status of the Imams by falling into *taqṣīr*, nor by assigning divinity to them. In this way, they respected the rights of both the Creator and His creatures.

One of the reasons why the discussion of *ghuluww* has again become relevant today in Islamic theological discourse is the penetration of Western ideas into Islamic nations and societies. Christian theology emerged in response to the internal contradictions and deviations⁴ that emerged within Christianity. However, some Muslim authors borrowed ideas from Christian theology and, in doing so, introduced the same theological contradictions into Islamic theology.⁵ Desacralisation is an integral part of human society and secular man in the contemporary era. Modern man sees everything as terrestrial and does not recognise anything as being sacred. This is to the extent that modern man even desacralises religion and God. The only thing treated as sacred is the human being and their absolute freedom, which neither religion nor God has the right to circumscribe. This idea is so deeply rooted in the

³ Q 2:143.

⁴ For example, the corruption of the text of the Bible, doctrines such as the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, Original Sin, and God being “three persons in one”.

⁵ For example, theories such as religious experience, religious language, hermeneutics, and fideism were developed in response to challenges faced by Christian theology, and some Muslim writers adopted these theories to solve problems they perceived in Islamic thought. The Bible – in both its Old and New Testaments – faces serious questions of authenticity, and no one can claim that these texts are divine revelation or the direct word of God. Discussions about religious language and hermeneutics arose in Christianity in response to the problems of these texts. Today, some Muslim authors use the same theories and ideas in relation to the Qur’an, while the Qur’an is the direct word of God and the eternal miracle of the Prophet.

minds of some Muslim authors that they have, following the Western model, also sought to desacralise Islam and religion. Some openly reject God and religion, while some outwardly accept religion while in reality undermining it.

One of the key issues onto which such authors have sought to turn the lens of desacralisation is that of the status of the Imams. They try to deny any divine or sacred status for the Imams by making the position of the Imams purely terrestrial. The most they are prepared to affirm about the status of the Imams is that they were “pious scholars,”⁶ meaning that they did not possess any special qualities such as divinely granted knowledge (*‘ilm ladunnī*), infallibility (*‘iṣma*), divine appointment, or acting as an intermediary for the outpouring of divine grace from the Creator to His creation.

On the contrary, they were merely scholars who were learned in the teachings of the religion and who practiced its ordinances. Aside from this, they had no special qualities to separate them from other people. Hossein Modarressi in his *Crisis and Consolidation* and Mohsen Kadivar in his articles and lectures have argued that the mainstream understanding of Shī‘ī scholars from the first half of the 3rd/9th century until the middle of the 5th/11th century was that the Imams possessed no superhuman qualities, meaning first-rate Shī‘ī scholars of these early centuries did not believe that the Imams were appointed by God, nor that they had any special knowledge or infallibility. Instead, these authors argue that these doctrines about the Imams were considered a form of extremism (*ghuluww*) by the leading scholars of these centuries, and that this only changed in subsequent centuries.

In this regard, Hossein Modarressi writes that: “The scholars of Qum began to declare anyone who attributed any sign of super-humanity to the Prophet or the Imams as an extremist and to expel such people from their town,”⁷ and: “The scholars of Qum, who were the highest

⁶ *‘Ulamā’ abrār*, see Kadivar, 1385; Modarressi, 1389, pp. 73, 87.

⁷ Modarressi, 83.

authority of religious knowledge in this period, remained firmly anti-Mufawwiḍa until the end of the fourth/tenth century, opposing and rejecting any idea that attributed any supernatural quality to the Prophet and the Imams" (ibid., 94). He also cites the opinion of Ibn Qiba al-Rāzī, saying: "Unlike what the extremists suggested, the Imams were merely prominent pious scholars of the *sharī'a*. They did not possess the knowledge of the unseen ..." ⁸

In this regard, Kadivar also writes: "The scholars of Qum rejected the attribution of superhuman characteristics to the Imams and asserted that the Imams were ordinary human beings. For the space of two centuries, these scholars were recognised as the official representatives of the Shī'ī community. According to al-Māmaqānī's investigations, beliefs about the Imams which they considered to be manifestations of extremism (*ghuluww*) are today essential components of the Shī'ī school of thought;" ⁹ "The fact that they labelled those who denied the possibility of the prophets and Imams experiencing lapses of concentration in their prayers (*sahw*) as extremists shows that they saw [the Prophet and Imams] as ordinary human beings.

The scholars of Qum without any doubt denied any superhuman attributes for the Imams. At the same time, there is not the slightest doubt that they were strict adherents of the teachings of the Imams in all matters of religion;" ¹⁰ "During these two centuries, the dominant theology (from the second half of the third/ninth century until the end of the fourth/tenth) and the theology they propounded (in the early fifth/eleventh century) in the Shī'ī community was that the Imams were human beings with human qualities. They did not consider divinely endowed knowledge, infallibility, or explicit divine appointment (as opposed to the appointment of the Prophet or previous Imam) to be necessary qualities for the Imams. In fact, such doctrines were

⁸ Ibid., 227.

⁹ Kadivar, 1385.

¹⁰ Ibid.

considered to be signs of extremism and were repudiated by Shīʿī scholars.”¹¹

These authors cite a number of Shīʿī scholars, in addition to a selection of traditions and verses from the Qurʾān, to show that the Imams did not enjoy any superhuman powers or status, for example: “I have no control over any benefit for myself nor [over] any harm except what God may wish. Had I known the Unseen, I would have acquired much good, and no ill would have befallen me. I am only a warner and a bearer of good news to a people who have faith.”¹² They say that this verse negates any knowledge of the unseen or any divinely granted knowledge.

They also cite some traditions and statements of scholars from the 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries to argue that the Imams did not enjoy any special status beyond that of ordinary people. One of the main figures cited by these authors in support of their views is Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and his teacher Ibn al-Walīd.¹³ In his *Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-faqīh*, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq transmits a tradition that appears to allow for the Prophet to experience lapses of concentration in prayer (*sahw*). After quoting the ḥadīth, he quotes his teacher Ibn al-Walīd saying that “the first step of *ghuluww* is to deny that the Prophet could experience lapses in prayer (*sahw al-nabī*).”

Therefore, according to Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and his teacher, if anyone claimed that the Prophet could not make mistakes in prayer, then that person was deemed an extremist. These authors cite this tradition and al-Ṣadūq’s explanation of it as evidence for the fact that is possible for the Prophet to forget something or experience a lapse of concentration, which also entails the negation of any special status or superhuman abilities belonging to the Imams or even the Prophet. In other words, according to these authors, the three Imamological doctrines of divine

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Q 7:188.

¹³ Kadivar, 1385; Modarressi, 1389.

appointment, divine knowledge, and infallibility were, in fact, traits of Shīʿī extremists in an earlier period and these extremists have somehow insinuated these beliefs into mainstream Shīʿī teaching.¹⁴ However, according to the “moderate” understanding of Shīʿism that these authors propose, the Imams themselves did not lay claim to these three qualities.

In this article, having cited Shaykh al-Ṣadūq’s views on the extremists and looking at his explanation of this, we will show that even though Shaykh al-Ṣadūq believed in the possibility of the Prophet experiencing lapses of concentration in prayer, he also believed in the Imams’ infallibility, that they were the reason for the creation of the cosmos, and that they had divinely endowed knowledge, which entails him believing that they enjoyed a station above that of ordinary human beings.

The attributes of Shīʿī extremists (*ghulāt*) in the discourse of Shaykh al-Ṣadūq

In his written works, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq identifies a number of features of Shīʿī extremists. A cursory examination of his discussion of these extremists reveals that the *ghulāt* were not a single group with a unified set of beliefs, but theirs were actually a spectrum of beliefs that included both extreme and moderate doctrines. Shaykh al-Ṣadūq quotes his teacher Ibn al-Walīd saying: “Our teacher Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Walīd believed that the first step of *ghuluww* is to deny that the Prophet could experience lapses in prayer.”¹⁵

However, when we consider that he considers the first, and hence least, step in extremism to be to deny that the Prophet could experience lapses of concentration in prayer, this actually shows that there is a spectrum of belief within *ghuluww*, and the least extreme level of belief within that spectrum is denying these lapses of concentration for the

¹⁴ Modarressi, 59, 70, 80, 100; Kadivar, 1385.

¹⁵ Ṣadūq, 1378, v. 1, p. 360.

Prophet. This is something al-Ṣadūq also calls attention to in his *Kamāl al-dīn*.¹⁶

Therefore, the doctrines that al-Ṣadūq attributes to Shīʿī extremists does not mean that someone needed to hold all of these at the same time in order to be considered an extremist. On the contrary, the presence of any one of these beliefs was enough for him to be accused of *ghuluww*.

It is necessary to mention that, in order to be aware of the doctrines of the *ghulāt*, in addition to the account given by al-Ṣadūq, we can also look at the appearance of the narrations he quotes from them in his works. After all, if he quotes narrations from them, especially in his *Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-faqīh*, this shows that their opinion is in accordance with the text of the tradition.

1. Believing in the divine lordship (*rubūbiyya*) of the Prophet's Household

Perhaps the most extreme group of *ghulāt* was those who ascribed divine lordship (*rubūbiyya*) to the Imams. Because they had seen the Infallibles perform miracles, they wrongly believed that if someone performed a miracle, this made them a deity in their own right. There were a group of *ghulāt* who believed this in the time of the Commander of the Faithful, who were put to death by him.¹⁷

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq says: "The *ghulāt*, may God curse them, say that if 'Alī was not God, he would not have punished them [who professed his divinity] with fire. The response to these individuals is that if 'Alī was God, he would not have needed to dig fire pits and load them with fuel in order to punish them. The Commander of the Faithful only meted out this punishment to them because they asserted his divine lordship (*rubūbiyya*)."¹⁸

It is clear that 'Alī punished this group because they claimed he was

¹⁶ Ṣadūq, 1395, v. 1, p. 82.

¹⁷ Ibn Ḥayyūn, 1385, v. 1, pp. 48-9.

¹⁸ Ṣadūq, 1378, v. 3, p. 150.

God and would not desist from making this claim. The fact that this group of *ghulāt* have gone beyond the pale of Islam is self-evident, and it is for this reason that the Commander of the Faithful put them to death.

In his *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, al-Ṣadūq transmits a lengthy narration in which the opponents of the Prophet's Household fabricate extremist narrations and attribute them to the Shī'a in order to convince the opponents of the Shī'a opponents to deem them disbelievers: "Then he said: 'O Ibn Abī Maḥmūd! Our enemies fabricate three types of tradition with regard to our merits: first, extremism (*ghuluww*); second, falling short with regards to our due; and third, proclaiming the misdeeds of our adversaries and condemning them. When people hear the extremist reports, they declare the Shī'a to be disbelievers and say: "The Shī'a believe that their Imams are lords beside God."'"¹⁹

This tradition shows that believing that the Prophet's Household are deities is an example of *ghuluww* and that the enemies of the Shī'a fabricated extremist traditions to this effect so that they could present the Shī'a as disbelievers and claim they believed in the lordship of the Prophet's Household.

Another tradition which shows that one of the groups of the *ghulāt* are those who believe in the lordship of the Prophet's Household is found in al-Ṣadūq's *Khiṣāl*.²⁰ According to this tradition, Imam al-Ṣādiq said: "Beware of going to extremes with regards to us. About us, say: 'They are God's devoted servants'; beyond that, say whatever you please about us."²¹

This tradition also shows that asserting the lordship of the Prophet's Household is a doctrine of the *ghulāt*. On the other hand, it also explains the true merits of the Prophet's Household: in short, those attributes which are exclusive to God must be negated from them, but

¹⁹ Ṣadūq, 1378, v. 1, p. 304.

²⁰ See: v. 2, p. 614.

²¹ Ṣadūq, 1414, p. 101.

everything else is acceptable beyond that. Therefore, every quality or feat that implies the Imams are lords besides God must be denied, but, at the same time, miracles and superhuman abilities, such as divinely endowed knowledge, infallibility, divine appointment, and their being the purpose for which God created the cosmos, can be affirmed for them.

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq rejects *ghuluww* with the following statement: “Our belief with regard to the *ghulāt* and the *mufawwiḍa* (delegationists) is that they disbelieve in God, and that they are worse than the Jews, the Christians, the Magians, the Qadariyya, the Ḥarūriyya,²² and all of the other innovators in religion.”²³

Insofar as, after rejecting *ghuluww*, he adduces a verse concerning the beliefs of the Christians with regards to the godhood and lordship of Jesus Christ, it seems clear that the meaning of *ghuluww* that he rejects here is believing in the lordship of the Prophet’s Household.

2. Believing in divine delegation (*tafwīd*)

In some passages of his writings, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq connects the *mufawwiḍa* (delegationists) with the *ghulāt* (extremists), in a way that seems to suggest he believes them to fall within the same category and that the *mufawwiḍa* are a group within the *ghulāt*.

They say: “The mark of the *mufawwiḍa* and the *ghulāt* and the like thereof is that they accuse the scholars of Qom of falling short (*taqṣīr*) [with regards to the Imams].”²⁴ In this passage, al-Ṣadūq identifies those who accuse the scholars of Qom of falling short as the *ghulāt* and *mufawwiḍa*. *Ghuluww* and *taqṣīr* represent two opposite extremes of the spectrum of belief about the Imams.

The contrast between the two is patent, and it is clear why al-Ṣadūq labels those who accuse the scholars of Qom of *taqṣīr* as *ghulāt*.

²² One of the branches of the Khawārij.

²³ Ibid., 97.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 101.

However, it is not correct to label them as *mufawwiḍa*, because there is less of a connection between *tafwīḍ* and *taqṣīr*. *Tafwīḍ* (delegationism) means that God has entrusted creation to the Imams. However, this belief is not the opposite of *taqṣīr*, unless we consider the *ghulāt* and the *mufawwiḍa* to be one and the same, in which case al-Ṣadūq mentions them side-by-side as two names for the same tendency. This might be the case, because on a number of occasions, al-Ṣadūq explains the doctrines of the *ghulāt* while also referring to them as *mufawwiḍa*.²⁵

If this is the case, then the idea that God delegated some of His functions to the Prophet and Imams is also *ghuluww*, and the *mufawwiḍa* are part of the *ghulāt*. It is also clear that what is meant by the *mufawwiḍa* here is not the Mu'tazilis, as they believed that in order for there to be free will, and therefore punishments and rewards for human behaviour, this necessitated the denial of the unity of divine acts (*tawḥīd al-aḥḍāl*) and the "delegation" of the power to create actions to human beings, which is why they were also called "delegationists" (*mufawwiḍa*). However, *tafwīḍ* within the context of Shī'ism means the delegation of certain divine acts to the Prophet's Household.

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq narrates the following tradition from Imam al-Ṣādiq in refutation of the *mufawwiḍa*:

It is narrated from Zurāra: "I said to Imam al-Ṣādiq: 'One of the children of 'Abdullāh b. Saba' professes a belief in delegation (*tafwīḍ*).' He said: 'What is *tafwīḍ*?' I said: 'They say that God created the Prophet and 'Alī, then He delegated the affairs of creation to them; they create, they distribute provision, they give life, and they cause death.' The Imam said: 'The enemy of God lies! If you see him, recite the verse of *Sūrat al-Ra'd* to him ...' So I went to him and I told him what Imam al-Ṣādiq had said. It was as if he'd been struck dumb or turned to stone!"²⁶

After quoting this tradition, al-Ṣadūq writes: "God delegated the matter

²⁵ See Ṣadūq, 1362, v. 2, p. 529; idem, 1385, v. 1, p. 227; idem, 1378, p. 203.

²⁶ Ṣadūq, 1414, p. 100.

of His religion to the Prophet when he said: 'Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatever he forbids to you, abstain from it.' This was also delegated to the Imams."

Looking at the tradition and al-Ṣadūq's remarks following it, it is clear that believing in the delegation of things such as creation, life and death, and provision to the Imams is also one of the doctrines of the *ghulāt*. He goes on to say that God has entrusted matters of His religion to the Prophet and Imams. However, by saying this, he has still asserted for them a superhuman status that goes beyond the position of mere "pious scholars".

3. The belief in the immortality of the Prophet's Household

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq narrates a report to the effect that believing that the Prophet's Household have not been killed but continue to live is also a teaching of the *ghulāt*. In his *Khiṣāl*, after narrating a tradition from Imam al-Ṣādiq, he writes:

The eleven Imams who followed the Prophet were all slain; some were slain by the sword, like the Commander of the Faithful and Imam al-Ḥusayn, while the rest were slain by poison. This is what truly happened to them and not as the *ghulāt* and *mufawwiḍa* claim - may God curse them - that they were not really killed, but that it was only made to seem that way to the people.²⁷

Therefore, according to Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, another doctrine of the *ghulāt* is the belief that the Prophet's Household were not slain. This group of the *ghulāt* believed that the martyrdom of the Imams occurred in a manner similar to the ascent of Jesus, about whom God says in *Sūrat al-Nisā'*: "and for their saying, 'We killed the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the apostle of God' though they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but so it was made to appear to them" (Q 4:157).

Therefore, just as Jesus Christ was not actually crucified and it only seemed that way to ordinary people, this group of the *ghulāt* likewise

²⁷ Ṣadūq, 1362, v. 2, p. 528.

believe that the Imams were never slain, but rather ordinary people and the Shi'a were merely made to believe that this was the case, when in reality the Imams lived on.

Concerning this belief, Ṣadūq says elsewhere: "Ḥasan ibn 'Alī al-'Askarī was killed by [the 'Abbāsīd caliph] al-Mu'tamid with poison; we believe that this is what actually happened and not merely how it was made to appear to people, which is what those who go beyond the bounds concerning the Prophet's Household have professed."²⁸

Based on the explanation he gave in his *Khiṣāl*, it is clear that by "those who go beyond the bounds concerning the Prophet's Household," he intended to refer to the *ghulāt*.

In *Kamāl al-dīn*, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq also refers to the belief in the fact that members of Prophet's Household did not die as being a key doctrine of the *ghulāt*: "Some claimed that the Imams were not killed but were like Jesus, where it was made to appear to people [that he had died]; but this is not correct and the fate of the Imams is not like that of Jesus. This belief - that they were not killed but that it was only made to appear so to the people - is only proclaimed by a group of the *ghulāt*."²⁹

This expression simultaneously denies that the Imams were not martyred but still living and ascribes this doctrine to the *ghulāt*. This, in turn, shows that the *ghulāt* did not possess a single, coherent belief system, but rather a spectrum of beliefs about the Imams, and that just one group of *ghulāt* actually held this particular belief.

In *Ilal al-sharā'i'*, there is also a tradition from Imam al-Ṣādiq that attributes the belief that Imam al-Ḥusayn was still alive to the *ghulāt*: "Whoever believes that Ḥusayn was not killed has denied the Prophet, Imam 'Alī, and all of the Imams who came after him ... may God curse the *ghulāt* and the *mufawwiḍa* ... Those sinners think little of God, and have disbelieved in and associated partners with Him and gone astray in order to avoid performing their religious duties or delivering their

²⁸ Ṣadūq, 1414, p. 99.

²⁹ Ṣadūq, 1395, v. 1, p. 82.

dues.”³⁰

This tradition also shows that some of the *ghulāt* believed that the Imams still lived, particularly Imam al-Ḥusayn. The rest of the tradition shows that another feature of the *ghulāt* was their failure to perform their religious duties or observe the outward rites of the religion - a topic that we will return to.

4. The Prophet experiencing lapses in prayer (*sahw al-nabī*)

One of the issues that is discussed in relation to prophethood and imamate is the infallibility (*ʿiṣma*) of the prophets and Imams.

Sunnī Muslims only discuss infallibility in relation to the prophets, while Shīʿa Muslims believe that the same rule applies to both prophets and Imams with regards to infallibility.

There are three levels of infallibility for prophets: infallibility with regard to committing sins, infallibility in receiving and conveying revelation from God, and infallibility from committing errors or experiencing lapses. There is disagreement amongst theologians about the extent of prophetic infallibility.

The Imāmī Shīʿa say that the Prophet and the Imams are completely infallible with regards to sins.³¹ On the other hand, Sunnī theologians disagree about this. All Sunnī and Shīʿī theologians agree that the prophets are infallible with regards to transmitting the revelation.³²

However, some Sunnī scholars believe that the Prophet was capable of making mistakes or experiencing lapses of concentration.³³

Some Shīʿī scholars also admit the possibility of the Prophet experiencing a lapse of concentration and, by extension, that of the

³⁰ Ṣadūq, 1385, v. 1, p. 227.

³¹ Sobhani, 1412, v. 3, p. 166.

³² Ibid., v. 3, p. 183.

³³ Ibid., 3, p. 200.

Imams doing so as well.³⁴ However, the majority of Shīʿī scholars³⁵ have said that it is impossible for the Prophet or Imams to experience lapses in concentration as the evidence for the infallibility of the prophets and Imams also covers cases of errors and slips in both matters of religion and everyday life.³⁶

Therefore, the majority of authoritative Shīʿī scholars, just as they say the Prophet is infallible in receiving and conveying divine revelation, also believe that he is protected from lapses, errors, and forgetfulness in everyday affairs.

The term “lapse of the Prophet” (*sahw al-nabī*), while linguistically including both lapses of concentration and errors in receiving and conveying the revelation, as a technical term amongst theologians only applies to lapses and errors in acts of worship and every day or personal matters. Therefore, the evidence presented by those who propound the doctrine of *sahw al-nabī* does not pertain to the Prophet receiving and conveying divine revelation. On the contrary, these pieces of evidence only pertain to acts of worship and every day or personal activities.

Therefore, believing in *sahw al-nabī* does not entail the negation of infallibility when it comes to revelation. *Sahw al-nabī* means that the Prophet and Imams, in everyday and personal matters, like other people, can experience lapses of concentration, make mistakes, or forget. Therefore, they can also experience doubt (*shakk*) when performing acts of worship and forget everyday things, and they are not protected from error when it comes to applying what they know in the real world.

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq follows his teacher Ibn al-Walīd in asserting the doctrine of *sahw al-nabī*, and one of the beliefs he identifies as the earliest steps into *ghuluww* is the denial of *sahw al-nabī*. In his *Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-faqīh*, al-Ṣadūq transmits a narration from Imam al-Ṣādiq

³⁴ Ṣadūq, 1378, v. 1, p. 360; Sobhani, 1412, v. 3, p. 204 citing al-Ṭabrisī, 1372, v. 7, p. 317.

³⁵ Sobhani, 1412, v. 3, pp. 200-1.

³⁶ Ibid., v. 3, pp. 192-7.

which assumes that the Prophet was vulnerable to lapses:

Saʿīd al-Aʿraj says: “I heard Imam al-Ṣādiq say: ‘God caused His Messenger to sleep from the beginning of the time for morning prayers until the sun had risen.’ Then the Prophet awoke and performed the two units of prayer that were for before *fajr* prayers - the supererogatory prayers for morning prayers - and then performed his morning prayers. God caused His Prophet to make a mistake ... God did this to His Prophet as a mercy to this nation, so that if a Muslim slept through morning prayers or experienced a lapse of concentration in their prayer, they would say that this had even happened to the Prophet.”³⁷

Al-Ṣadūq narrates the same tradition in *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* to demonstrate that the Prophet experienced lapses of concentration.

Abū l-Ṣalt says: “I told Imam al-Riḍā: ‘There are people in Kufa who believe that the Prophet did not experience lapses in his prayer.’ He responded: ‘They lie, may God curse them! Only God does not experience lapses.’”³⁸

Here, al-Ṣadūq quotes his teacher Ibn al-Walīd again.

These two narrations from Imam al-Ṣādiq and Imam al-Riḍā convey not only the possibility but the actual occurrence of lapses in concentration for the Prophet in his prayer. Some scholars have questioned the strength of the chain of narrators for these traditions.³⁹

Other scholars have also raised questions about the validity of the meaning of these traditions, arguing that admitting that prophets could experience slips in their prayers would necessarily entail their experiencing slips in conveying the revelation from God to mankind. Shaykh al-Ṣadūq⁴⁰ and Shaykh al-Ṭabrisī⁴¹ respond to this objection

³⁷ Ṣadūq, 1378, v. 1, pp. 358–60.

³⁸ Ṣadūq, 1378, v. 2, p. 203.

³⁹ Sobhani, 1412, v. 3, p. 205; Shaykh Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, n.d., 26–44.

⁴⁰ Ṣadūq, 1378, v. 1, p. 360.

⁴¹ Ṭabrisī, 1372.

by saying that if such a slip occurred through Satan's interference or the forgetfulness of the Prophet, then this could impair the Prophet's infallibility.

However, if this slip occurred because God caused it, then this does not present any problems for the Prophet's infallibility, as this slip was caused by God in order to make the lives of His servants easier, so that they would remember that the Prophet was a mere servant of God and not God Himself.

On the other hand, when it comes to receiving and conveying the revelation, God would not allow the Prophet to err. However, this response has not been universally accepted by Shi'i scholars, many of whom do not admit that such a distinction can be made between the two categories.⁴² In any case, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and his teacher Ibn al-Walīd, and the scholars of Qom in general, believed in *sahw al-nabī* and believed that anyone who denied it was one of the *ghulāt*.

Believing that the Prophet could experience slips in prayer was a key component of the doctrine of Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, his teacher Ibn al-Walīd, and the scholars of Qom in general. However, it should be noted that, contrary to the interpretation that some contemporary authors have developed of the stance of these scholars, belief in *sahw al-nabī* does not in any sense imply a denial of the special status of the Prophet and Imams or of their superhuman status. It is possible that someone could believe in *sahw al-nabī* while still maintaining that the Prophet and Imams enjoy a special status above that of ordinary human beings that endowed them with God-given knowledge, infallibility, divine appointment, and the ability to perform miracles and supernatural feats. It must be said that while believing in *sahw al-nabī* might involve negating one superhuman quality from the Prophet and Imams, it does not entail the negation of all superhuman qualities from them.

A general survey of the traditions that Shaykh al-Ṣadūq has narrated about the status of the Imams and an examination of his summary of

⁴² Sobhani, 1412, pp. 205-6.

Imāmī doctrine, the *I'tiqādāt*, shows that he believed in the Imams having a God-given status that is incompatible with the view advanced by some contemporary authors of them being mere “pious scholars” (*‘ulamā’ abrār*), as we shall see when we look at some of the stations and ranks that al-Ṣadūq assigns to the Prophet and Imams.

5. Foregoing prayers and acts of worship

This and the following section can be seen as detailing the practical doctrines of the *ghulāt*, as antinomianism and claiming knowledge of alchemy are not beliefs that are unique to the *ghulāt*. For example, the Murji’a did not consider action to be a requirement of faith (*īmān*), nor did they see sinning or the failure to perform religious duties as an impairment thereof. Therefore, they did not even consider one who committed major sins to be a sinner (*fāsiq*).⁴³ By contrast, the previous doctrines outlined were more-or-less unique to the *ghulāt*.

Another feature that marked out the *ghulāt* as a group according to Shaykh al-Ṣadūq was their lack of concern with and abandonment of acts of worship and other religious and monetary obligations. In his *I'tiqādāt*, he wrote: “One of the marks of the Ḥallājiyya sect of the *ghulāt* is their claim to be concerned entirely with worship, while also believing in forsaking prayer and all other religious duties.”⁴⁴

Therefore, foregoing religious duties was considered to be one of the most important features of the *ghulāt*. The passage from *Ilal al-sharā’i* quoted earlier (v. 1, p. 227) also explicitly calls attention to their lack of concern for religious laws and customs.

However, the mere fact that someone foregoes religious obligations does not necessarily mean that they are an extremist in their beliefs, as a believer could also shirk his duties without necessarily adopting any doctrines associated with the *ghulāt*. It seems that the meaning of showing a lack of concern for religious obligations here is not merely

⁴³ Sobhani, n.d., v. 9, p. 73.

⁴⁴ Ṣadūq, 1414, p. 101.

failing to perform religious duties, but rather a lack of belief in religious duties as duties. What seems to confirm this hypothesis is Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's remark, "while also believing in forsaking prayer and all other religious duties" which shows that they did not only forsake religious duties, they believed that it was right to do so.

6. Claiming knowledge of alchemy

In his *I'tiqādāt*, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq says that the *ghulāt* claimed to have knowledge of alchemy: "Another of their marks is their claim to have knowledge of alchemy, even though they know nothing about it, aside from spreading sin, corruption, doubts, and accusations amongst Muslims."⁴⁵ It seems that claims of knowing alchemy had little to do with their actual extremist beliefs. However, some of the *ghulāt* did claim that God had become incarnate within them⁴⁶ and that they could perform miracles and work magic as evidence that they were vessels of the Divine. Hence, perhaps alchemy was one such magical or miraculous act that they would perform to support their claims.

The superhuman status and attributes of the Prophet and the Imams according to Shaykh al-Ṣadūq

When we speak about "superhuman status and attributes" we mean those qualities with which God has singled out the Prophet's Household above the rest of mankind and which no other human being could acquire no matter how hard they strived.

No human being is superior to another, except by virtue of their piety and good deeds. Ordinary people can, through their own striving and good works, attain spiritual ranks, gain proximity to God, and be admitted to "those brought near" (*al-muqarrabūn*). However, being able to attain these spiritual ranks is, first of all, open to everyone who walks the path of divine servanthood and, second, something that a

⁴⁵ Ṣadūq, 1414, p. 101.

⁴⁶ See al-Shahrastānī, 1364, v. 1, p. 123.

person reaches through their own efforts.

By contrast, when we speak about superhuman status, we are referring to something which, first of all, is not open to everyone, but is only granted to the Prophet's Household and some of the prophets; second, something that cannot be obtained through a person's deeds or practice. On the contrary, it is God, through His infinite knowledge, who chooses upon whom to bestow these spiritual ranks;⁴⁷ third, these stations were given to the Prophet's Household from the moment of their creation.

Those theologians and authors who deny superhuman attributes to the Prophet's Household are mostly referring to three particular attributes: being appointed by God, having God-given knowledge, and being infallible. These three attributes clearly fall within the realm of superhuman characteristics because, firstly, they are not open to everyone; second, they cannot be obtained but must be granted; and thirdly, they were given to the Prophet's Household from the moment of their creation.⁴⁸

While Shaykh al-Ṣadūq believed that the Prophet could experience lapses in his prayer, he also believed that the Prophet's Household were infallible and did not err or experience lapses other than those willed by God and affirmed other attributes for them that fall into the category of superhuman qualities that could not be possessed by ordinary people.

1. The superiority of the Imams over the highest angels

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq quotes the Prophet saying: "I am superior to the angels

⁴⁷ As we read in *Ziyārat al-Jāmi'a*: "He chose you on account of His knowledge, approved of you for His knowledge of the unseen, selected you to keep His secret, decided on you by means of His omnipotence, equipped you with His guidance, distinguished you with His clear proofs, chose you for His light, supported you with His Holy Spirit, and accepted you as vicegerents upon His earth, and decisive authorities over His creatures ... God protected you against slips, and secured you against sedition, and removed from you all uncleanness, and purified you with a thorough purifying."

⁴⁸ Ibn Abī Jumhūr, 1405, v. 3, p. 121.

Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael, and to all of God's nearest angels and the bearers of the Throne; I am the best of all creatures; I am the best descendant of Adam."⁴⁹

According to this tradition, the Prophet of Islam - and by extension the Imams who are his successors - is superior to all of the angels, even the angels near-most to God like Gabriel and Michael. In *Sūrat al-Anbiyā'*, God describes the angels as follows: "Rather they are honoured servants. They do not venture to speak ahead of Him, and they act by His command."⁵⁰

According to God, the angels are beings of pure obedience to His commands. Therefore, based on this verse and the aforementioned tradition it is possible to deduce that they are infallible beings. Angels are protected from error and never do anything to contravene God's commandments. Now, if the Prophet is superior to all the angels, even the angels nearest to God, then it follows logically that he likewise never disobeys God's commands and is protected from sinning or falling into error. The tradition narrated in the *'Awālī* also confirms that this infallibility is not something an ordinary person can acquire through their efforts, as the Prophet says: "When Adam was between water and clay, I was already a prophet."

2. The Prophet is the best of all creatures

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq writes: "It is obligatory for us to believe that there is no creature superior to Muḥammad or his Household; they are the most beloved of creatures to God and the most noble of them. When God took a pledge from the prophets and made them witnesses over themselves, the first person to respond to God's call was Muḥammad, and God made him His Prophet to the other prophets in the realm of pre-existence (*'ālam al-dharr*)."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ṣadūq, 1414, 90.

⁵⁰ Q 21:26-7.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 93.

3. The angels bowed down to Adam because of the existence of the light of the Prophet's Household in his loins

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq says in his *I'tiqādāt*: "When God created Adam, He commanded the angels to bow down to him. This command to prostrate must be because of something superior to the angels. The prostration of the angels for God is an act of worship and obedience, while their prostration to Adam was out of respect and reverence. It was because of the Prophet and his Household that existed in Adam's loins. And He did not tell the angels to bow to anyone unless they were superior to them. Therefore, the prostration of the angels to God is out of worship and servitude, while to Adam it was out of respect, because the Prophet and the Imams - God's blessings be upon them - were in his loins."⁵²

4. The spiritual level of each of the prophets was determined by the extent of their knowledge of the Prophet's Household

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq writes: "Everything that God gave to each of His prophets was commiserate with the extent of their knowledge of our Prophet and the speed with which they had recognised his station [in the world of pre-existence]."⁵³

5. The creation of the cosmos was for the sake of the Prophet's Household

One of the merits that Shaykh al-Ṣadūq transmits about the Prophet's Household was that the entire world was made for their sake. According to him, the heavens and the earth, Adam and Eve, and all of the angels were made for them. This doctrine is irreconcilable with the idea that

⁵² Ibid., 90.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 93.

the Prophet's Household were ordinary human beings no different from anyone else: "God created all of His creations for the sake of the Prophet and his Household. Were it not for them, God would not have created the heavens or the earth, or heaven and hell, or Adam and Eve, or the angels, or anything else."⁵⁴

6. The commands of the Imams are equivalent to the commands of God

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq says: "Our belief about them is that they have truly come from God and their speech is God's speech; their commands are God's commands; obedience to them is obedience to God; to disobey them is to disobey God; and they do not say anything that is not from God or His revelation."⁵⁵

7. The Imams are protected from error and sinning

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq says in his *I'tiqādāt*: "They are protected from slips and errors."⁵⁶

In *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*⁵⁷ he quotes a lengthy tradition from Imam al-Riḍā concerning the status of the Imams, which affirms many of the attributes and ranks of the Imams, one of which is their infallibility. In addition to affirming their infallibility, this tradition also affirms their possession of exclusively God-given knowledge.

In his *I'tiqādāt* he gives the following explanation of the doctrine of infallibility:

Our belief concerning the prophets, messengers, Imams, and angels is that they are protected from all blemishes and do not commit any sins, whether great or small. They do not disobey God's command and whatever God bids them to do, they do. Someone who denies

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 92.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 94.

⁵⁷ Ṣadūq, 1378, v. 1, p. 221.

any aspect of their infallibility does not know them.⁵⁸

8. Delegation of the affairs of the religion to the Prophet's Household

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq says that one of the marks of the *ghulāt* and the *mufawwiḍa* is the belief that God has delegated affairs to the Imams. However, he explained that the kind of delegation that the *ghulāt* believe in is the delegation of the power to create and sustain the cosmos to them. At the same time, he asserts that God has, in fact, delegated the affairs of the religion to the Prophet and Imams. This can be found in the tradition of Zurāra, which we discussed earlier.⁵⁹

9. God-given knowledge (*ʿilm ladunnī*)

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq says the following about the knowledge of the Prophet's Household: "Our belief concerning them is that they are the recipients of God's secret knowledge, the translators of His revelation, and the pillars of His divine unity."⁶⁰

10. Other attributes

In his *I'tiqādāt*, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq affirms countless other attributes and ranks for the Prophet's Household, some of which are:

Those endowed with authority; witnesses over mankind; the way that leads to God; the guarantors of safety for the inhabitants of the earth; like Noah's ark; the Qur'an is with them and they are with the Qur'an; they are the intermediaries through which rain is sent down; they are the cause for which calamities are averted and prayers are answered.⁶¹ As is plain to see, these attributes are superhuman in quality and Shaykh

⁵⁸ Ṣadūq, 1414, p. 96.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 100.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 94.

⁶¹ Ibid., 94, 121.

al-Ṣadūq shows no hesitation in applying them to the Imams.

Conclusions

Some authors argue that the majority of Shīʿī scholars and religious authorities from the 3rd/9th to 5th/11th centuries denied that the Imams had any superhuman attributes and that those who ascribed such attributes to the Imams were condemned as extremists, or *ghulāt*. One of the main figures they ascribe this outlook to is Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, because Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and his teacher Ibn al-Walid ascribed to the notion that the Prophet could experience lapses in his prayers and that to deny this was *ghuluww*.

However, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, in both his own words and the traditions that he transmitted, clearly expresses a belief that the Imams enjoyed a special God-given status that was above anything an ordinary human being could attain. The attributes he mentions the Prophet's Household as having - which we have briefly outlined already - clearly show that he thought the status of the Imams was extremely high and hardly compatible with the view that they were mere "pious scholars" as these modern authors assert.

Therefore, to sum up: first of all, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and his teacher Ibn al-Walid subscribed to the view that the Prophet could experience lapses in prayer (*sahw al-nabī*); second, looking at the attributes that al-Ṣadūq assigned to the Prophet's Household, it is clear that he did not hold the view that they were merely "pious scholars" but, on the contrary, that they were superhuman in their qualities.

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The Methodology of Jurists in Authenticating Narrations

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that Shīʿī scholars possess a correct and objective method of authenticating narrations from Prophet Muḥammad and his family. By way of several examples, that prove the infallibility of the Imams, the importance of the Twelfth Imam in Sunnī and Shīʿī narrations, and mistakes found in Sunnī literature regarding Shīʿī narrations, this article proves that the Twelver Shīʿa can correctly claim legitimacy of their narrations. This work also demonstrates how contemporary Shīʿī scholars such as Ayatollah al-Sistani continue to prove and disprove ḥadīth based on their own scientific methods.

KEYWORDS: *Ilm al-Rijāl*, Ḥadīth, Reliability, Accuracy, Fabrication,

Introduction

*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.*²

This article discusses how Twelver Shīʿī scholars prove the authenticity of traditions (*aḥādīth*). The infallible Sunna, which refers to those traditions from Prophet Muḥammad and the infallible Imams, are binding sources of moral authority on all Muslims.

The Ahl al-Bayt clarify the meaning of the Qurʾan. In the Qurʾan,

¹ Ḥawza Islamic Seminary of Najaf al-Ashraf, Iraq.

² Q 33:33.

God has said: “We have sent down the reminder to you so that you may clarify for the people that which has been sent down to them, so that they may reflect.”³ and “It is He who sent to the unlettered [people] an apostle from among themselves, to recite to them His signs, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and wisdom, and earlier they had indeed been in manifest error.”⁴

The Prophet said: “I leave among you two weighty treasures which, if you cling to them, you shall not be led into error after me. One of them is greater than the other: the book of God [the Qur’an], which is a rope stretched from heaven to Earth, and [the second one is] my progeny, my Ahl al-Bayt. These two shall not be parted until they return to the pool of abundance (*kawthar*) in paradise.”

The Qur’an and ḥadīth prove that the relationship of the Prophet’s household to the Qur’an is that of an explainer, interpreter, and elaborator. The words of the Ahl al-Bayt are sources of moral authority in the same manner as the verses of the Qur’an. The ḥadīths narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt are of two kinds: those whose attribution is certain and those whose attribution is probable. The certainty of the first group is established by successive narration (*tawātur*), which means that the tradition is transmitted in every generation by so many narrators that it is certain that they could not have conspired to tell a lie.

An example of this is the narration of al-Ghadīr. Also of this kind are traditions whose context gives scholars confidence that the tradition is authentic in its attribution. For example, when Prophet Muḥammad said: “There is no harm or occasioning of harm for any believer.” Taking into account the context of this tradition, it is likely to have been said by the Prophet.

As for traditions of probable attribution, these are also of two types: those whose authenticity has been established on the basis of reliable evidence, such as the saying of the Prophet: “Al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn

³ Q 16:44.

⁴ Q 62:2.

are the chiefs of the youth of paradise,” and those traditions whose authenticity has not been reliably established, but which are attributed to the Prophet, such as the saying: “Do not limit your children to your manners, for they were created for a time different to yours.”

Regardless of whether these traditions are attributed to the Prophet or the Ahl al-Bayt, the first people to record traditions in writing were the Ahl al-Bayt. Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Shahrāshūb al-Sarawī al-Māzandarānī (d. 588/1192) mentions in his book, *Ma‘ālim al-‘ulamā’ fī fihrist kutub al-shī‘a wa asmā’ al-muṣannifīn qadīman wa ḥadīthan*, that the first person to write ḥadīth was Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 41/661), then Salmān al-Fārsī (d. 33/653), then Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī al-Kinānī (d. 32/652), then Imam al-Sajjād (d. 95/713) through *Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya* and (*Risālat al-ḥuqūq*) and other ḥadīths, then Imam al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) in the 400 sources (*uṣūl*).

In his *al-Mu‘tabar*, Abū l-Qāsim Ja‘far b. Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd al-Ḥillī (d. 676/1277) writes that the answers Imam al-Ṣādiq gave to questions he was asked were written down in books and these became the 400 sources. And in his *Muhaj al-da‘awāt*, Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 665/1266) writes that a group of the close companions of Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799), his family, and his followers would attend his gatherings with writing implements, so that if Imam al-Kāẓim uttered a word or gave a legal ruling on an issue, the people wrote down what they heard from him. Therefore, the practice of writing down traditions was well-established in the time of the infallible Imams.

This was an introduction. As for the main discussions, there are a number of topics for us to cover:

Fabrication

On the phenomenon of fabrication within the traditions attributed to Prophet Muḥammad (d. 11/632) and his household, this contains several points. First, one must ask when the idea of fabrication was first identified with regard to the ḥadīths of Prophet Muḥammad and the ḥadīths of the Ahl al-Bayt; regarding this, Yūnus b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān

transmits the following narrative:

Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā b. ʿUbayd narrates: “Some of our companions asked [the companion of Imam al-Riḍā] Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān in my presence: ‘O Abū Muḥammad, what made you so stringent about the traditions such that you deny much of what our colleagues narrate? What causes you to reject the traditions?’ He responded: ‘Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. circa 2nd/8th century) told me that he heard Abū ʿAbdullāh [Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq] say: “Do not accept a ḥadīth from us unless it agrees with the Qurʾān and the Sunna, or you find it corroborated in our earlier ḥadīth or from the ḥadīths of the forebears, because al-Mughīra b. Saʿīd – may God curse him – inserted fabrications into my father’s companions’ books [meaning the companions of Imam al-Bāqir] ḥadīths that my father did not narrate. So be wary of God, and do not narrate anything from us that is contrary to the Qurʾān or the Sunna of our Prophet, may God bless him and his family.””⁵

This narration establishes that fabrications were inserted into the books of the companions of Imam al-Bāqir (d. 126/743), and that Imam al-Ṣādiq was aware of this. Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān says:

I came to Iraq and found in it some of the companions of Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir, and I found many companions of Abū ʿAbdullāh al-Ṣādiq, so I heard traditions from them and received their books. Later, I presented these to Abū l-Ḥasan al-Riḍā and he rejected many traditions that purported to be from Abū ʿAbdullāh, and he said to me: “Abū l-Khaṭṭāb lied about Abū ʿAbdullāh; may God curse Abū l-Khaṭṭāb!”⁶

From this, we know that the fabrication of traditions took place, and that the Imams – including Imam al-Ṣādiq and Imam al-Riḍā – were aware of this phenomenon and fought against it. In fact, the books of

⁵ Al-Kashshī, Muḥammad b. ʿUmar, *Ikhtiyār maʿrifat al-rijāl (Rijāl al-Kashshī)* (Mashhad University Press: 1988, v. 1, p. 224.

⁶ Ibid.

the companions of Imam al-Bāqir and Imam al-Šādiq were shown to Imam al-Riḍā, and he ordered that they be edited and the fabricated traditions be removed. The Imam told Yūnus b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān: “And the companions of Abū l-Khaṭṭāb are still fabricating traditions down to the present day and inserting them into the books of the companions of Imam al-Šādiq, so do not accept anything purportedly from us that is contrary to the Qur’an.”⁷

Sometimes, the fabrication takes place in the book of traditions itself. An example is with the Cairo edition of Shaykh al-Ṭabarsī (*Makārim al-akhlāq*). The author is Shī‘ī and the book is Shī‘ī, and the author narrated from Imam al-Ḥasan. However, in the Egyptian edition, the book was altered in such a manner that the editor changed the name of the transmitter from Imam al-Ḥasan to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728)! This made it seem as though the traditions in the book were from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, when in fact they were from Imam al-Ḥasan.

What are the reasons for the fabrication of traditions? In the transcript of Grand Ayatollah Al-Sayyid ‘Alī al-Ḥusaynī al-Sistani’s (b. 1930) lectures, titled *Conflicts Between Evidences (Ta‘āruḍ al-adilla)*, which addresses and analyses the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt, he addresses the reasons for their emanation from an Infallible, the reasons for differences between them, the phenomenon of fabrication, and he discusses different factors that affect them. This book discusses the reasons for the fabrication of traditions in its first section.⁸

One of the most important reasons for fabrication is racial chauvinism. Racial chauvinism favours a particular people against another particular people. For example, the following tradition is narrated from Imam al-Šādiq: “Do not mix with the Kurds, for the Kurds are a group of the jinn whom God pulled back the veil of the unseen.”⁹ Even though this narration has an authentic chain according to some

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Al-Sistani, *Ta‘āruḍ al-adilla* (Ismā‘īliyyān Publications: 1441 AH), v. 1, p. 183.

⁹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī* (Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya: 1387 SH), v. 5, p. 158, h. 2.

standards, Ayatollah al-Sistani says this is a fabricated tradition because it discriminates against human beings on the basis of race, and such discrimination is incompatible with the spirit of the Qur'an and Sunna.¹⁰

The second reason for fabrication is to destroy the foundations of Islam. Consider the following tradition cited by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 380/991) in *Ma'ānī al-akhbār* with a reliable chain of narrators on the authority of Fuḍayl b. 'Uthmān, that says Abū 'Abdullāh al-Ṣādiq was asked about a tradition narrated from his father, Imam al-Bāqir: "If you know ..." – meaning "if you know the Ahl al-Bayt" – "... then do as you please." So whether you do good deeds or commit sins, it does not matter, as long as you know the Ahl al-Bayt! "And that they permit all forbidden things after that." So Imam al-Ṣādiq said: "What is wrong with them? May God curse them! What my father said, if you know him, then you do whatever 'good deeds' you please and it will be accepted from you." So, he did not say "do as you please", he said do whatever good you please and it will be accepted from you.¹¹

Here, Imam al-Ṣādiq addresses the phenomenon of fabrication by people looking to destroy the foundations of Islam by promoting the idea that knowing God and the Ahl al-Bayt means that a person does not need to behave righteously.

Another reason for fabrication is in order to revive pre-Islamic practices. For example, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq mentions in the first section of his book that there are narrations that show signs of this kind of fabrication. For example, there is a tradition that Shaykh al-Ṣadūq narrates in *Sharā'i'* that indicates that camel meat is forbidden to consume. Shaykh al-Ṣadūq comments on this, saying: "I do not allow this tradition to be narrated because it is impossible, meaning prohibiting camel meat is not in line with the ḥadīths of the Ahl al-Bayt. It seems that this was borrowed from Judaism, because Jews forbid the eating of camel meat because a camel is used for transportation." There is a

¹⁰ Al-Sistani, *Ta'āruḍ al-adilla* (Ismā'īliyyān Publications: 1441 AH), v. 1, p. 442.

¹¹ Ibn Bābawayh, Muḥammad b. 'Alī, *Ma'ānī al-akhbār* (Dār al Ma'rifa), v. 1, p. 181.

narration about the impurity of the sweat of a person in the state of *janāba* (ritual impurity) from illicit intercourse. Ayatollah al-Sistani says it is likely that this is fabricated because the sweat of the *junub* (a person in the state of *janāba*) from illicit intercourse is not impure, even if the act itself is forbidden; yes, the *junub* must bathe, but the sweat is not impure if it comes into contact with the body or with clothing. Ayatollah al-Sistani says: “It is not unlikely that this narration is fabricated, given that in Judaism the sweat of the *junub* person is impure.”¹²

Ayatollah al-Sistani identifies several methods of fabrication, such as attributing a book to the Imams that is not theirs. For example, the *Kitāb al-ʿilal* of Abū Muḥammad Faḍl b. Shādhān b. Khalīl al-Azdī al-Nīshābūrī (d. 260/873-4) was attributed to Imam al-Riḍā and accepted by some scholars. However, Ayatollah al-Sistani says this is not a book by Imam al-Riḍā but actually the work of Faḍl b. Shādhān. Faḍl b. Shādhān was not alive at the time of Imam al-Riḍā. In fact, he was not even born during the lifetime of Imam al-Riḍā; he is counted amongst the companions of the Imams ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Hādī (d. 254/868) and Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad (d. 260/874), or even amongst the companions of Imam Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Jawād (d. 220/835).

Another example can be found in the book attributed to Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī al-ʿĀmirī (d. circa 714), but who is said to have entrusted it to Ābān b. Abī ‘Ayyāsh (d. circa 8th century). This was mentioned by Ibn al-Ghaḍāʾirī in his biographical work of scholars (*Rijāl*). Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān al-ʿUkbarī al-Baghdādī, known as Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), states in his *Taṣḥīḥ al-iʿtiqādāt al-imāmiyya* that “the book itself is not trustworthy, as there are insertions that have been added to it. However, the overall content from what has been narrated from “Abū Jaʿfar [Shaykh al-Ṣadūq] from the book of Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī via Ābān b. Abī ‘Ayyāsh, the

¹² Al-Sistani, *Taʿāruḍ al-adilla* (Ismāʿīliyyān Publications: 1441 AH), v. 1, p. 449.

meaning is correct.”¹³

Reliability

Given these discussions on fabrications, one might question the reliability of *al-Kāfi*, *Man lā Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh*, and *al-Istibṣār*. How do we rely on books of ḥadīth when the existence of these fabrications is established? The Imams and their companions undertook the process of critically examining ḥadīths since the time of the Imams, as did the generation of scholars who lived during the Minor Occultation (260/874 to 329/941), and those who followed them during the era of the Major Occultation (349/941 to the present era), and this took place in several stages. The first stage was presenting books of ḥadīth to the Imams and writing them in the time of the Infallibles, under the supervision of the Imams themselves. Ayatollah al-Sistani:¹⁴ “According to al-Najāshī, the book of ‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Alī al-Ḥalabī was presented to Imam al-Ṣādiq who approved it and said: “These people have no book like this in jurisprudence!”¹⁵ Meaning that the non-Shī‘īs did not have such a book in jurisprudence.”

Also note the narration that we cited earlier, when Yūnus b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān presented the books of the companions of Imam al-Bāqir and Imam al-Ṣādiq to Imam al-Riḍā, and he rejected their ḥadīths, meaning that he told Yūnus to revise them and removed the unreliable material from them. This is why Yūnus was very strict in his criteria for accepting traditions, which is why someone asked him: “O Abū Muḥammad, what made you so stringent about the traditions, such that you deny much of what our colleagues narrate? What causes you to reject the traditions?”¹⁶

Another example in this regard: just as the book of Yūnus and the book of al-Ḥalabī were presented to the Imams, there are other

¹³ Mufid, *Taṣḥīḥ al-i‘tiqādāt al-imāmiyya*, p. 149.

¹⁴ Al-Sistani, *Ta‘āruf al-adilla* (Ismā‘īliyyān Publications: 1441 AH), v. 1, p. 119.

¹⁵ *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, p. 231.

¹⁶ *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, v. 1, p. 224.

examples of books being presented to the Imams. The book of Faḍl b. Shādhān was presented to Imam al-‘Askarī, brought to him by a man from Nishāpūr, as mentioned by Kashshī in his *Rijāl*. The books of Ibn Abī ‘Uzāqīr, which were full of traditions, were presented to Ḥusayn b. Rūḥ al-Nawbakhtī. This means the books of traditions were compiled under the supervisions of the Imams or their representatives. In fact, the traditions were first written down under the supervision of the Imams. I will mention some examples from the work of Ayatollah al-Sistani¹⁷:

Ibn Bukayr narrates: “Zurāra visited Abū ‘Abdullāh al-Ṣādiq and said: ‘You told us the time of *ẓuhr* and *‘aṣr* prayers was a cubit or two cubits [meaning that if the shadow was one cubit in length, it was the beginning of *ẓuhr*, and if it became two cubits, it was the beginning of *‘aṣr*]. Then you said to stay cool in summer, so how do we do that?’ Then he [Zurāra] opened his notebook to write down what he [Imam al-Ṣādiq] said.”¹⁸

In his *Mu‘tabar* narration, Sa‘īd b. Yasar says: “I asked Abū ‘Abdullāh al-Ṣādiq about whether it was permissible to exchange one camel for two, whether immediately or as a *nasī’a* (postponed payment). He said: ‘There is no problem, so long as you refer to it in terms of its age, such as two camels which have completed four years or two camels which have completed five years [in return for one camel as valuable as the two]. Then he told me to delete the word *nasī’a* from my book.”¹⁹ This also shows that the book was written under the supervision of the Imam.²⁰

It is also transmitted from ‘Umar b. ‘Uyayna: “I said to Zurāra: ‘People narrate to me from al-Ṣādiq and his father about things of religious

¹⁷ Al-Sistani, *Ta‘āruḍ al-adilla* (Ismā‘īliyyān Publications: 1441 AH), v. 1, p. 199.

¹⁸ Al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmili, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan, *Wasā’il al-shī’a* (Āl al-Bayt Institute: 1995), v. 4, p. 149.

¹⁹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi* (Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya: 1387 SH), v. 5, p. 191.

²⁰ Al-Sistani, *Ta‘āruḍ al-adilla* (Ismā‘īliyyān Publications: 1441 AH), v. 1, p. 199.

obligations [distribution of inheritance] that I will show to you ...”²¹ In other words, ‘Umar b. ‘Uyayna showed the ḥadīths to Zurāra, who was one of the closest companions of Imam al-Ṣādiq. He continued: “... so that you can tell me which of these narrations are true and which are false, so that I do not narrate them.”^{22, 23} Hence, this work was produced under the supervision of Zurāra b. A‘yan.

Then, companions of the Imams wrote books. Ibn Abi ‘Umayr wrote a book titled, “*Ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth*” (Differences in Ḥadīths) as al-Najāshī reports. Then Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Khālīd al-Barqī wrote a book also titled “*Ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth*”, as is recorded in Shaykh al-Ṭūsī’s *Fihrist*. ‘Abdullāh b. Ja‘far al-Ḥimyarī wrote a work titled, “*Al-Ḥadīthān al-mukhtaliḥ*” (Divergent Traditions). Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Dāwūd, a contemporary of Ja‘far b. Muḥammad b. Qūluwayh, wrote a book with the same name. And Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Wahīd b. ‘Ubdūn, the teacher of both al-Ṭūsī and al-Najāshī, another work on “divergent traditions”. This means that all of these books were written on the subject of ḥadīth and they gathered contradictory ḥadīths in order to distinguish one from the other. This was the practice of the narrators of the teachings of the Prophet’s household.²⁴

This is the first stage; now for the second stage.

The Strict Approach Towards Tolerant Narrators

For any narrator who was tolerant, the scholars would take a strict approach towards him. Consider what narrators mention from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā al-Ash‘arī. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā al-Ash‘arī was a leader in the holy city of Qom. However, he did not tolerate any tolerant narrator of traditions from the Ahl al-Bayt, meaning a narrator who narrates traditions from weak narrators, and would banish them

²¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, v. 7, p. 98.

²² Ibid. v. 7 p. 98 (noorlib.ir).

²³ Al-Sistani, *Ta‘āruḍ al-adilla* (Ismā‘īliyyān Publications: 1441 AH), v. 1, p. 200.

²⁴ Al-Sistani, *Ta‘āruḍ al-adilla* (Ismā‘īliyyān Publications: 1441 AH), v. 1, pp. 203-4.

from the city. He expelled Sahl b. Ziyād and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Khālīd al-Barqī because they narrated traditions from weak narrators. Likewise, Shaykh Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Walīd, the teacher of al-Ṣadūq, rejected many traditions from Nawādir al-ḥikma, a well-known book by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Ash‘arī al-Qummī. He rejected many traditions from this book because he did not consider them to be proven to be valid or correct. All of this is evidence of the strictness in accepting ḥadīth in the time of the Imams themselves, as Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā was a contemporary of Imams al-Hādī and al-‘Askarī.

Now let us come to the third stage.

Accuracy in Investigating Ḥadīth by Notable Scholars of Ḥadīth

We shall now look at the investigations of Shaykh al-Kulaynī in *al-Kāfi*, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq in *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh*, and Shaykh al-Ṭūsī in *al-Tahdhīb* and *al-Istibṣār*.

This is what Shaykh al-Kulaynī says in the introduction to *al-Kāfi*: You would like to have a sufficing book, in which is gathered all the arts of the knowledge of religion, with which the student will suffice, to which one seeking guidance can refer, and from which the one who wants the knowledge of religion can obtain said knowledge and act upon it, based on authentic traditions according to the truthful.²⁵

In other words, he has compiled what he considers to be authentic traditions. But this is his own view, and other jurists might disagree. However, it shows he was careful in his investigation of authentic traditions.

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq says in the introduction to *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh*:

In this work, my goal was not to compile everything that narrators

²⁵ Ibid. v. 1, p. 24.

narrate, but to compile that upon whose basis I issue legal rulings and deem to be authentic, and I believe that it is an established *hujja* between myself and my Lord.²⁶

This shows al-Ṣadūq's strictness in his criteria for accepting traditions and distinguishing authentic traditions from others. And in relation to Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, he writes in his *Kitāb 'uddat al-uṣūl*:

The verified sect was unanimous, for we found they unanimously agreed to act upon the reports that they narrated in their books of ḥadīth and recorded in their notebooks. There is no disagreement or quarrel about this amongst them, so that if one of them brings a tradition that is unknown, they ask where it came from.²⁷

This was the practice of all the jurists of the Ahl al-Bayt. "If he referred them to a well-known book or a well-known source, and its narrator was reliable ..." So first, a well-known book, and second a trustworthy narrator, "... they would not reject the tradition. They would accept his narration." All of this demonstrates their rigour with regards to validating traditions.

Now we come to the fourth stage.

The Foundation of *ʿilm al-rijāl* (the Science of Narrators) to Distinguish Between Narrators of Ḥadīth

Al-Kashshī wrote a book of *rijāl*. Al-Najāshī wrote a book of *rijāl*. The *Fihrist* of Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, the *Rijāl* of al-Barqī, the treatise of Abū Ghālib al-Zurārī, the *Mashyikha* of al-Ṣadūq, the *Mashyikha* of al-Ṭūsī, the *Fihrist* of Muntajab al-Dīn, the *Maʿalim al-ʿulamāʾ* of Ibn Shahrāshūb, the *Rijāl* of Ibn Dāwūd, *Khulaṣāt al-aqwāl* ... are all works in this category. Amongst the modern scholars there is Sayyid al-Khoei's *Encyclopaedia of Ḥadīth Narrators* that is 23 volumes in length, and the *Kitāb qabasāt* of Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā al-Sistāni, in which he mentions the theories

²⁶ Ibn Bābawayh, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Bābawayh al-Qummī, *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh* (Jāmiʿa Mudarrisin: 1993), v. 1, p. 2.

²⁷ Al-Ṭūsī, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan, *Uddat al-Uṣūl* (n.d.), v. 1, p. 126.

of his father, Ayatollah al-Sistani.

All of these were written in the field of the science of narrators in order to distinguish the narrators in terms of their reliability, their accuracy, and whether it was possible to accept traditions from them. There is also the science of *ṭabaqāt* (biographical dictionaries), which identifies the generation to which a particular narrator belongs: first, second, or third, because distinguishing between different generations of narrators can help distinguish narrators with shared names.

For example, when we come across the name “Abū Baṣīr”, this name is shared between a number of narrators. Therefore, knowledge of *ṭabaqāt* allows scholars to distinguish Abū Baṣīr al-Murādī from Abū Baṣīr al-Bukhtūrī, and the reliable Abū Baṣīr from the unreliable Abū Baṣīr. We must study the *ṭabaqāt* to be able to make this distinction, and it is known as the science of *ṭabaqāt*.

Another effort of the scholars is the careful analysis of narrations with an incomplete chain (*mursal* ḥadīths). There are some *mursal* traditions that can be accepted, such as those of the Three Shaykhs: Ibn Abī ‘Umayr, Aḥmad b. Abī Naṣr al-Bazantī, and Ṣafwān b. Yaḥyā, because these three were strict in only narrating from reliable sources. Some of our scholars even accept the *mursal* traditions of al-Ṣadūq where he says “He said: ‘Imam al-Ṣādiq said: ...’” They accept it because al-Ṣadūq only uses this expression when he is certain of the tradition’s authenticity.

We now move onto the third and final topic: developing the method of authenticating and accepting ḥadīth.

Methodological Development

Has an approach in authenticating and accepting ḥadīth developed amongst our modern-day scholars? Yes! Among the most prominent who developed the current approach in accepting, classifying, and authenticating ḥadīth is Ayatollah al-Sistani, as is evident in his books and in the dictations taken from his lectures.

His approach is based on several pillars, in that in addition to what the scholars have mentioned about the science of narrators, and in addition to what the scholars have mentioned in the science of generations, and in addition to what the scholars have mentioned in general, he identifies other pillars.

The first pillar is looking at differences in manuscripts. It is necessary to study not just the printed books of traditions, but the manuscripts themselves, as the original texts were not printed, but rather copied by hand. Therefore, we must read all of their original manuscripts to classify the ḥadīth accurately and know their text.

In his book, *Ta'āruḍ al-adilla wa ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth*, he says: "Al-Majlisī transmits this narration on the authority of 'Ammār b. Marwān: 'I heard Abū 'Abdullāh al-Ṣādiq say about whatever is brought out of minerals, the sea, booty, and licit mixed with illicit property is forbidden if the owner is not known, and the five treasures.'" Ayatollah al-Sistani says: "Al-Majlisī transmitted it in *Biḥār* without mentioning the word '*ḥalāl*' mixed with the forbidden, and this is also the case in several editions of the book *al-Khiṣāl* by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq. They are printed without this additional word. Meanwhile, when we refer to other manuscripts we find that this word exists, and this means there are differences between manuscripts, so it is necessary to scrutinise this."²⁸

The second pillar is *idrāj*. At times, some scholars include their interpretation of the ḥadīth within the ḥadīth, and those who come after them think this is part of the ḥadīth when it is not. Therefore, the jurist must have a great deal of experience to distinguish the cases of insertion from others. This is what Ayatollah al-Sistani focuses on in his analysis of traditions. For example, in this authentic tradition from Imam al-Ṣādiq, Zurāra asks: "On whom is the Friday prayer obligatory?" He said: "It is obligatory for seven Muslims, and no Friday prayer for a group of less than five Muslims, one of whom is the imam." Then he adds the sentence: "Then if seven meet and they are not afraid, one of

²⁸ Al-Sistani, *Ta'āruḍ al-adilla* (Ismā'īliyyān Publications: 1441 AH), v. 1, p. 467.

them leads the rest in prayer and delivers the Friday sermons.” This last phrase, “then if seven meet and they are not afraid” is al-Ṣadūq’s explanation of the tradition. However, Muḥammad Bāqir al-Bihbahānī (d. 1205/1791), the author of *Miftāḥ al-karāma*, and Sayyid Ḥusayn Burūjardī Ṭabāṭabā’ī (d. 1380/1961), have called attention to the fact that this is something al-Ṣadūq has said that is not part of the narration.²⁹

The third pillar is looking at ambiguities in handwriting. Narrations were originally written by hand. Sometimes the style of handwriting can mean that one word looks like another, and this leads to confusion about the narration. So, the jurist must pay close attention to the writing style of manuscripts. Ayatollah al-Sistani mentions in his book that there is a narration from ‘Ubayd b. Zurāra in which he says that the one offering prayers can recommence his recitation as long as he has not reached up to two-thirds of it, meaning that the worshipper, when he begins reciting a sura after *al-Fātiḥa*, can restart his recitation if he has not read two-thirds of the sura in question. However, on examining the manuscripts it becomes clear that “two-thirds” contains an addition, and it should read “one-third”.³⁰ This is something that can only be identified by paying close attention to the handwriting of manuscripts.

Paying Attention to Context; how do we Check the Context of a Tradition?

For example, when we look at the authentic narration of Ibn Abī Bukayr, he says Zurāra asked Abū ‘Abdullāh about praying while wearing the fur of foxes, squirrels, and other fur, so he produced a book claiming that it was the dictation of the Messenger of God. Imam al-Ṣādiq brought out this book, and it said: “Prayer wearing any fur of an animal forbidden to be eaten, and its hair, its hide, and any other part of it is invalid.”

Ayatollah al-Sistani says that many scholars read the narration in this way, but in fact the context gives a different meaning, namely that

²⁹ Ibid., v. 1, p. 432.

³⁰ Ibid., v. 1, p. 472.

it says: Prayer wearing anything with fur is invalid, not simply anything that is forbidden to be eaten. Some of those creatures that are forbidden to eat have no fur, meaning they have no feathers or hair, such as a snake or lizard. So, in its proper context, the narration says that praying in the hair, fur, or hide or anything else from an animal with fur that is forbidden to eat renders the prayer invalid.³¹

Ayatollah al-Sistani classifies³² the ḥadīths into two categories: ḥadīths of teaching and ḥadīths of legal rulings. He says the ḥadīths of the Ahl al-Bayt are not in a single format. Some are issued in the context of teaching and others in the context of legal opinions. So, we must distinguish between different traditions according to their genre, and this plays a role both in the acceptance of traditions as valid and in issuing legal rulings on their basis. What does it mean to say something was issued in the context of teaching? It means in the context of teaching general principles that Ayatollah al-Sistani mentions, where he says it was reported from Imam al-Šādiq: “We give you the fundamentals and it is up to you to derive specific rulings from them.” It was also narrated from him: “If you doubt after certainty, then continue on the basis of certainty.” The narrator asked: “Is this a principle?” He said: “Yes.” Sometimes the Imams provide general principles for their companions from which to derive specific rulings. This is the meaning of “in the context teaching”. And it is distinct from those traditions which were issued in order to provide legal rulings.

What is the meaning of legal rulings? It means that the Imam provides a specific directive to the questioner. This is in the same manner as jurists answer legal questions today. He does not provide a general rule from which people can derive specific rules. For example, see the following noble narration:

A man asked Abū ‘Abdullāh, that he had gone to his wife before completing the *ṭawāf al-nisa’*. The Imam said he must give a camel

³¹ Al-Sistani, *Ta’āruḍ al-adilla* (Ismā’iliyān Publications: 1441 AH), v. 1, p. 478.

³² Ibid., v. 1, pp. 224-8.

as expiation. Another man came and asked, and he said a cow. A third came and asked, he said a sheep. The narrator stood up and said: "God set you aright, to the first you said a camel, to the second a cow, and to the third a sheep!" The Imam replied: "Yes. The first was wealthy, so he must give a camel. The second was middling, so he must give a cow. The third was poor, so he must give a sheep!"

So, the Imam does not give a general ruling, but answers each according to his circumstances. This is what we call a legal ruling narration, so it is necessary to distinguish between the two kinds.³³

The sixth pillar: studying the environment of the narration. Ayatollah al-Sistani says that we must study the environment of the narration, namely in what kind of environment was it issued; hence, we study the time and place in which the narration originated. This is what is called the social atmosphere of the tradition. This is necessary because we cannot fully understand the narration's meaning and significance without understanding the specific social setting in which it arose.

For example, when Ayatollah al-Sistani mentions the narrations of doing the *ziyāra* of Imam al-Ḥusayn, which recommend the *ziyāra* in Rajab or Sha'bān, he says that these narrations were uttered in a specific atmosphere. When Imam al-Ḥusayn was killed, the Shī'a began to visit his grave from Kufa, Basra, and Yemen, in groups and individually. However, they also faced the threat of persecution, so they would go secretly at night to visit the grave of Imam al-Ḥusayn. So, these narrations were issued to encourage them and mobilise them to visit the grave of Imam al-Ḥusayn to keep his revolution and message alive.

This is studying the social environment in which these narrations of *ziyāra* emerged. Therefore, it is not surprising to see the *ziyāra* of *arba'in*. Even if Jābir or Zaynab were not present on the fortieth day, immediately after the death of Imam al-Ḥusayn the Shī'a went individually and in groups to visit his grave. This is why these traditions encouraging the *ziyāra* of *arba'in* emerged, in order to support the

³³ Al-Sistani, *Ta'arūḍ al-adilla* (Ismā'īliyyān Publications: 1441 AH), v. 1, p. 432.

pilgrims already making this pilgrimage to the grave of Imam al-Ḥusayn on foot and under the cover of darkness.³⁴

The final pillar to be discussed is the application of probability calculations to the traditions. How can we accept some ḥadīths and not others through the use of probability calculations, which is a form of evidence in the science of mathematics, which Sayyid Shahīd al-Ṣadr and Ayatollah al-Sistani discuss with regard to the classification of narrations and with regard to their authentication and identification? For example, when we want to establish the birth of Imam al-Mahdī, how do we prove that? Do we take authentic ḥadīths only? In my book, *al-Ḥaqīqa al-mahdawīyya*, I write about using probability calculations to prove the existence of Imam al-Mahdī.

On page 70 of this book, I explain that we combine the indications of the existence of the Imam until we arrive at the level of certainty about his birth. The first indication are the narrations of the Prophet, as in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal al-Dhuhli (d. 241/855) and other works, which say each generation, including the generation in which we live, has an appointed Imam. There is a narration in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* that Islam will ensure until the Hour sets in or you are led by twelve caliphs, all of whom are from the Quraysh. In other words, in every era there is one of these twelve individuals, and he is the successor of the Prophet in that era until the end of time. It increases the likelihood of a real successor of the Messenger in our own time right now.

There is the evidence in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. For example, the books of Ibrāhīm al-Ṣabātī, Dr Saʿīd Ayyūb's *al-Masīḥ al-dajjāl*, and Shaykh Muḥammad Fakhr al-Islām's *Anīs al-islām* all state prophecies from the Bible, namely the verses that foretell the coming of a saviour in the Book of Joshua and in the Revelation of John. These books contain prophecies of a saviour who will purify humanity at that time. The fourth indication is the narrations that indicate the birth of Imam al-Mahdī. If we go back to the time of his birth in the year 255/869

³⁴ Al-Sistani, private gathering in Najaf, Iraq, during Arbaʿīn days, November 2016.

and the beginning of his occultation in 260/874, until the end of the Minor Occultation in the year 329/940, we find that the Imam had four deputies during this period:

- ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-Asadī al-‘Amrī (d. 267/880);
- Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān (d. 304-5/917-18);
- Abū l-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Rūḥ al-Nawbakhtī (d. 326/937);
- Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Samurī (d. 329/941).

If we go back to the books of major scholars, whether Shī‘ī or Sunnī, we do not find anyone who denied the birth of the Imam, or the fact that he was in occultation. Review all the history books that were written during this period and you will not find a single one who denied the birth of the Imam or his occultation. And if there is something unknown or considered false, people will hasten to deny it, especially Sunnī historians, and yet we find no Sunnī historian from this period who denies it.

And likewise Shī‘ī scholars, including Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb b. Ishāq al-Kulaynī al-Rāzī (d. 329/941), Ja‘far b. Muḥammad b. Ja‘far b. Mūsā b. Masrūr b. Qūlawayh al-Qummī (d. 368/978-9), and the father of al-Ṣadūq, reported in their books that there were frequent sightings and visions of the Imam during that period, and in fact that he issued written directives which continued to be issued for 69 years in the same handwriting. If there was no Imam behind these four ambassadors, the ambassadors would not have received these writings all in one and the same handwriting. This further confirms the birth of the Imam and his absence during that period.

The fifth indication is a clear and authentic account of his birth. ‘Abdullāh b. Jundub narrates with an authentic chain from Imam Mūsā b. Ja‘far that he used to say in his prostration of thanksgiving:

O God, I ask You and Your angels, Your prophets, Your messengers and all of Your creation, to witness that You are God my Lord, and Islam is my religion, and Muḥammad is the Prophet, and ‘Alī, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn, and ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, and Muḥammad b.

‘Alī, and Ja‘far b. Muḥammad, and Mūsā b. Ja‘far, and ‘Alī b. Mūsā, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī, ‘Alī b. Muḥammad, and al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī, and the Ḥujja, Ibn al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī are my Imams to whom I give my loyalty and from whose enemies I disassociate.

This is an authentic narration from Imam al-Kāẓim about what he would say in his prostrations, before the birth of Imam al-Mahdī.

To this, we add a sixth indication, which is the fact that the Muslim experts on genealogy, most of whom are Sunnī, all accept his birth:

- Abū Naṣr Sahl b. ‘Abdullāh al-Bukhārī (d. circa 4th/10th century) in *Sirr al-silsila al-‘alawiyya*;
- Sayyid al-‘Amrī, (d. 5th/11th century) in *al-Mujdī fī anṣāb al-ṭālibiyyīn*;
- Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī al-Shāfi‘ī, a scholar of the 7th/13th century in his book *al-Shayyā‘ al-mubāraka fī anṣāb al-ṭālibiyya*;
- Al-Arzaqānī from the 7th century in his book *al-Fakhrī fī anṣāb al-ṭālibiyyīn*;
- Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī, known as Ibn ‘Inaba, from the 9th/15th century in *‘Umdat al-ṭālib fī anṣāb āl Abī Ṭālib*;
- The Zaydī genealogist, Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Yamanī al-San‘anī of the scholars of the 11th/17th century, in his *Rawdāt al-bāb fī ma‘rifat al-anṣāb*;
- Muḥammad Amīn al-Suwaydī, a scholar of the 20th century in his *Sabā’ik al-dhahab fī ma‘rifat qabā’il al-‘arab*.

The seventh indication is that as well as these scholars of genealogy, there are several Sunnī historians who acknowledge both his birth and his occultation. These are:

- Ibn al-Athīr al-Jazarī (d. 631/1233) (*al-Kāmil fī l-tārīkh*);
- Ibn Khallikān (d. 682/1282) (*Wafayāt al-a‘yān*);
- Al-Dhahabī (d. 749/1348) in three of his books;
- Ibn al-Wardī (d. 749/1348-9) in his work of history;
- Aḥmad b. Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1566) (*al-Ṣawā’iq al-*

muḥriqa).

When we calculate the probabilities and combine these indications that support one other and strengthen each other's probability, we become convinced of the birth and existence of the Imam and of his occultation.³⁵

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds. May God's prayers and peace be upon Muḥammad and his family.

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³⁵ Khabbāz, Munīr, *al-Ḥaqīqa al-mahdawiyya* (Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Takhaṣṣuṣiyya fī l-Imām al-Mahdī (aj): 1431 AH), pp. 70-9.

Is Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’ Authentic? A Discussion in ‘Ilm al-Rijāl

Mohammed Ali Ismail (DProf)¹

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the authenticity of Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’ from a Biographical Studies (‘ilm al-rijāl) perspective. The first part is primarily devoted to an analysis of the reporters in the ziyāra’s chains of transmission as reported in Kāmil al-ziyārāt and Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid. The article then examines some other related rijālī matters, such as the different approaches and methods used for evaluating the authenticity of traditions; the much-debated passage in Ibn Qūlawayh’s Introduction to Kāmil al-ziyārāt; the opinions of contemporary marāji‘ on the ziyāra’s authenticity; the different standards used for deriving rulings on obligatory and unlawful matters compared to those used for determining the reliability of ziyāras and du‘ā’s; and the principle of leniency in evidence for recommended acts (qā‘idat al-tasāmuḥ fī adillat al-sunan).

KEYWORDS: Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’, authenticity, chain of transmission, Biographical Studies, ‘ilm al-rijāl, Kāmil al-ziyārāt, Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid

1. Introduction

Arguably the most well-known and oft-recited *ziyāra* (salutation) among Shī‘ī Muslims is *Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’*. For some, the *ziyāra* is an expression of love for the Ahl al-Bayt, a renewal of allegiance to them, and a reminder

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of the afflictions that befell Imam al-Ḥusayn in Karbala. For others, it is a prescription for spiritual growth, a guide to understanding what God wants from them, and a means to attaining immense rewards.² Still others will recite the *ziyāra* for all these reasons, seeing it as an extensive pronouncement of religious feeling, belief, and devotion.

Nevertheless, the authenticity of the *ziyāra* has been the subject of much discussion. Sometimes, the focus of debate has been on the content (*matn*) of the *ziyāra*; other times, questions have been raised about its chain of transmission (*sanad*). In response, scholars have presented various types of evidence and indicators to establish the *ziyāra*’s authenticity. These include:

- it being considered reliable by the highest authorities in Shī‘ī jurisprudence;
- its content complying with verses of the Qur’an;
- its content existing in other authentic *ziyāras*;
- its recitation being the practice of generations of believers;
- numerous reports of people experiencing extraordinary blessings from reciting it regularly; and
- its chain of transmission being sound.

This article investigates the last of these. It first analyses the reporters in the *ziyāra*’s chains of transmission and then examines some other matters pertaining to the *ziyāra*’s authenticity from a Biographical Studies perspective.

2. Biographical Studies (*‘ilm al-rijāl*)

Biographical Studies is one of the most important disciplines of Ḥadīth Studies. It is the study and application of principles used for determining the status of reporters of traditions (*aḥādīth*). In short, it is the science of evaluating ḥadīth reporters. It aims to answer questions

² For example, one of the reports that will be discussed in this paper – namely, the report pertaining to Chain 5 – states that God will record for the reciter the reward of a) one hundred million degrees; b) being martyred with Imam al-Ḥusayn; and c) every prophet, messenger, and person who has visited him.

such as “how can a reporter’s reliability be established?” and “is such-and-such reporter reliable?”

3. The four-fold classification of traditions

The four terms used in the classification of traditions, as described in the following table, are said to have been first coined by Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1265) and then popularised by his student ‘Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325).³

Classification	Description
<i>Ṣaḥīḥ</i> (Authentic)	Complete chain of transmission (<i>sanad</i>) ⁴ to the Prophet or Imam; each reporter in the chain possesses moral probity (<i>‘ādil</i>), ⁵ is accurate in his retention and transmission (<i>ḍābit</i>), and is Imāmī. ⁶
<i>Ḥasan</i> (Good)	Complete chain consisting of accurate and commended Imāmī reporters but the moral probity of one or more of them has not been explicitly affirmed.

³ See, for example, Sobhani (2019), p. 139; al-Īrawānī (2017), p. 143; and Islamic Text Institute (2012), v. 1, p. xxxii.

⁴ The *sanad* represents the transmission path between the first narrator of the tradition and the collection into which the tradition culminates.

⁵ An *‘ādil* person is someone who has deep-rooted God-wariness (*taqwā*) and consequently does not commit major sins nor persists in committing minor ones (Sobhani (2019), p. 141).

⁶ “Imāmī” here refers to a person who believes in the imamate of the Imam of his time (ibid).

<i>Muwaththaq</i> (Reliable)	Complete chain consisting of accurate and reliable reporters but one or more of them is non-Imāmī.
<i>Ḍaʿīf</i> (Weak)	Does not fulfil the requirements of the three categories above. ⁷

As it can be seen, this classification focuses purely on the characteristics of the reporters and the completeness of the chain of transmission. As such, “authentic” does not mean it was definitely said, just as “weak” does not mean it was definitely not said; rather, the terms simply refer to the soundness, or lack thereof, of the chain of transmission.

The four-fold classification would have been entirely unfamiliar to scholars of the formative period of Shīʿī scholarship, such as the compilers of the Four Books.⁸ For them, *ṣaḥīḥ* referred to a tradition that could be confidently attributed to an Infallible even if the chain of transmission was weak. For example, if a tradition with weak individuals or a disjointed chain was repeated in several unrelated sources, they might have seen this as indicative of the tradition originating from an Infallible.⁹

As we shall see later, some scholars go beyond a purely *sanadī* (chain-focused) approach when evaluating traditions and consider other

⁷ Al-Īrawānī (2017), p. 143; Faḍlī (2011), pp. 115-7; and Sobhani (2019), pp. 138-142. Sobhani adds that the first three categories are sometimes subdivided into “the highest” (*al-aʿlā*), “the middle” (*al-awsat*), and “the lowest” (*al-adnā*) (p. 143).

⁸ The Four Books are the most reliable early collections of Shīʿī ḥadīth. They are: *Kitāb al-kāfī* by Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (d. 328/940 or 329/941); *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh* by Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Bābawayh al-Qummī, known as Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991); *Taḥḍīb al-aḥkām fī sharḥ al-muqniʿa* by Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, known as Shaykh al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067); and *al-Istibṣār fīmā ukhtulifa min al-akḥbār* also by Shaykh al-Ṭūsī.

⁹ Islamic Text Institute (2012), v. 1, p. xxxii.

indicators and supporting evidence as well. Therefore, when one hears terms such as “authentic” and “weak” being mentioned about a *ziyāra*, *du‘ā* (supplication), or other religious text, it is important to keep in mind that a text may be deemed weak by one scholar but authentic by another based on the different approaches and methods they use for evaluating narrations.

4. Where is *Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā* originally reported?

Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā is originally reported in two famous works by two illustrious scholars:

1. *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* by Ja‘far b. Muḥammad b. Qūlawayh al-Qummī (d. 367/977). *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* is a collection of ḥadīth on various aspects of *ziyāra*, such as its rewards, etiquette, and recitational texts. A large portion of the work is devoted to the *ziyāra* of Imam al-Ḥusayn and matters relating to his martyrdom. As for its author, al-Najāshī describes Ibn Qūlawayh as “among our reliable fellow Shī‘a and among the esteemed of them in jurisprudence and ḥadīth.”¹⁰
2. *Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid wa salāḥ al-muta‘abbid* by Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067). *Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid* is a primary work on *du‘ā*’s, *ziyāras*, certain ritual acts of worship, and recommended practices for specific days and months. Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, known as “Shaykh al-Ṭā’ifa” (Head of the Sect), is described by al-Najāshī as “esteemed among our fellow Shī‘a; reliable; eminent; [and] among the students of our teacher Abū ‘Abdullāh.”¹¹

5. The chains of transmission relating to *Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā*

It is not uncommon to find authors mentioning different figures for the number of chains of transmission for *Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā* – four, five,

¹⁰ Al-Najāshī (1418/1997), p. 123.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 403.

and six chains are mostly cited. The differences are mainly due to the way the chains appear in the two works and the decisions taken by the authors to count some of them together or to treat them separately. For instance, in *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, the first two chains are mentioned together in one passage, and the third chain is mentioned later in the text without a separate ḥadīth number allocated to it (all three come under ḥadīth number 8 in the Dār al-Murtaḍawiyya edition referenced in this paper). In *Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid*, the three chains are mentioned separately but all of them appear in the same body of text under one heading (“An explanation of the *ziyāra* of Abā ‘Abdullāh on the day of ‘Āshūrā’ from near and afar”).

In this paper, six chains are analysed. Two of the chains, namely Chain 3 and Chain 5, report the text of the *ziyāra* itself. One further chain, Chain 6, reports that Ṣafwān b. Mihrān recited the same *ziyāra* from Imam al-Ṣādiq that ‘Alqama b. Muḥammad reported from Imam al-Bāqir. The other three chains report matters concerning visiting Imam al-Ḥusayn and the day of ‘Āshūrā’.

The content of each report is summarised in this table.

Chain	What the report mentions
<i>First two chains in Kāmil al-ziyārāt</i> (‘Chain 1’ and ‘Chain 2’)	Imam al-Bāqir states the rewards for visiting Imam al-Ḥusayn on the day of ‘Āshūrā’; he explains what one should do on that day if they cannot go to the shrine and says he will be the guarantor and assurance for whoever does these things; he explains how one should offer condolences on the day of ‘Āshūrā’; he says if possible, one should abstain from fulfilling their worldly needs and procuring provisions for their home on that day and states the rewards for doing so.

<i>Third chain in Kāmil al-ziyārāt</i> (‘Chain 3’)	Imam al-Bāqir tells ‘Alqama the rewards for reciting the <i>ziyāra</i> and what should be done before reciting it; he then teaches him the text of the <i>ziyāra</i> and recommends that he recite it every day.
<i>First chain in Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid</i> (‘Chain 4’)	Imam al-Bāqir states the rewards for visiting Imam al-Ḥusayn on the day of ‘Āshūrā’; he explains what one should do on that day if one cannot go to the shrine and says he will be the guarantor and assurance for whoever does those things; he explains how one should offer condolences on the day of ‘Āshūrā’; he says if possible, one should abstain from fulfilling their worldly needs and procuring provisions for their home on that day and states the rewards for doing so.
<i>Second chain in Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid</i> (‘Chain 5’)	Imam al-Bāqir tells ‘Alqama the rewards for reciting the <i>ziyāra</i> and what should be done before it; he then teaches him the text of the <i>ziyāra</i> and recommends that he recite it every day.
<i>Third chain in Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid</i> (‘Chain 6’)	Sayf b. ‘Amīra reports the circumstances leading up to Ṣafwān performing the <i>ziyāra</i> as Imam al-Ṣādiq had shown him; he explains that Ṣafwān recited the same <i>ziyāra</i> that ‘Alqama reported from Imam al-Bāqir and that Ṣafwān then read what is widely known as the “Supplication of ‘Alqama” – this <i>du‘ā</i>’ is quoted in full; Sayf further reports the rewards for reciting the <i>ziyāra</i> and the <i>du‘ā</i>’; he also reports that the <i>ziyāra</i> is <i>ḥadīth qudsī</i>¹² and narrates the glad tidings that were conveyed to the Prophet by Jibrīl when he brought the <i>ziyāra</i> to him.

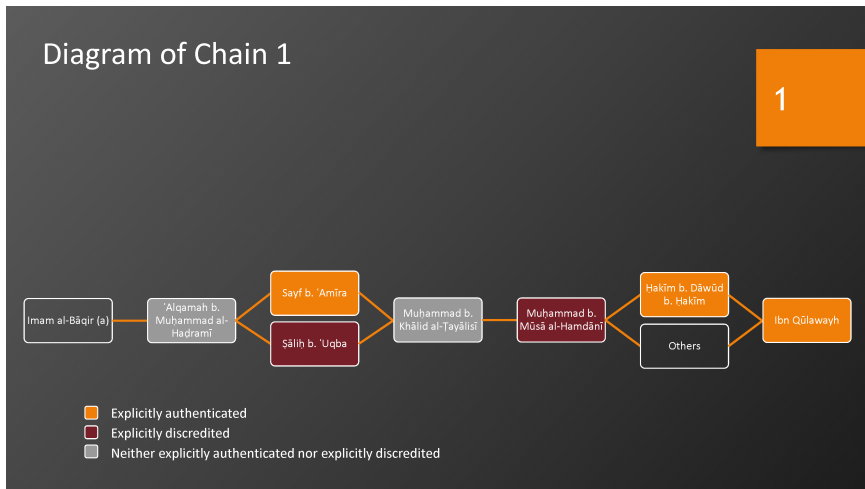
¹² That is, speech of God that is not part of the Qur’an.

5.1 Chain 1 and Chain 2

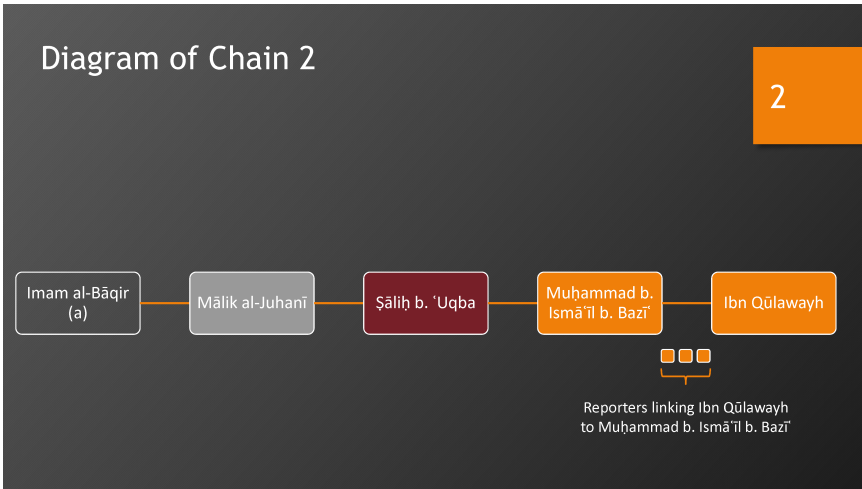
As both of these chains are mentioned in one passage, the second chain is marked in red to distinguish it from the first.

حَدَّثَنِي حَكِيمُ بْنُ دَاوُدَ بْنِ حَكِيمٍ وَغَيْرُهُ عَنْ مُحَمَّدٍ بْنِ مُوسَى الهمداني عَنْ
مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ الطَّيَالِسِيِّ عَنْ سَيْفِ بْنِ عَمِيرَةَ وَصَالِحِ بْنِ عُقْبَةَ جَمِيعًا عَنْ
عَلْقَمَةَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ الْحَضْرَمِيِّ وَمُحَمَّدِ بْنِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ عَنْ صَالِحِ بْنِ عُقْبَةَ عَنْ مَالِكِ
الْجُهَنِيِّ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ الْبَاقِرِ (ع) قَالَ...

Ḥakīm b. Dāwūd b. Ḥakīm and others reported to me [Ibn Qūlawayh] from Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Hamdānī from Muḥammad b. Khālīd al-Ṭayālīsī from both Sayf b. ‘Amīra and Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Uqba from ‘Alqama b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaḍramī. And Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl from Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Uqba from Mālīk al-Juḥanī that Abū Ja‘far al-Bāqir said ...¹³



¹³ Ibn Qūlawayh (1356 SH/1977), p. 174.



5.2 Biographical analysis of reporters: Points to note

With regard to the biographical analysis that will be presented in the following sections, it is important to note:

1. The phrase “Neither explicitly authenticated nor explicitly discredited” means the works of early (or “classical”) bibliographers do not explicitly state whether the reporter was reliable or unreliable.¹⁴
2. The focus of attention in the analysis is on reporters who have not been explicitly authenticated or have been explicitly discredited by the early bibliographers, as it is these reporters over whom opinions are divided. As for the explicitly authenticated reporters, references to early biographical works are given.
3. For the sake of brevity, what was considered to be the main supporting evidence for establishing the reliability of reporters

¹⁴ There are eight principal collections of Shī'ī *rijāl*. The foremost of these are: *Rijāl al-Kashshī* by Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, known as al-Kashshī (d. circa 340/951-2); *Rijāl al-Najāshī* by Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. 'Alī, known as al-Najāshī (d. after 463/1071); *al-Rijāl* by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067); and *al-Fihrist* also by Shaykh al-Ṭūsī.

who have not been explicitly authenticated has been mentioned. Further details can be found in Sobhani (n.d.), al-Zanjānī (2020), Ray-shahrī (1388 SH/2009), IslamQuest (2012), Qurbānī-Muqaddam (1395 SH/2016), Yadullāh-pūr (1387 SH/2008), Muḥammadi-Muẓaffar (1385 SH/2006), and al-Khoei (1410/1990).

4. As shall be explained later, not all scholars accept all the supporting evidence.

5.3 Biographical analysis of reporters in Chain 1 and Chain 2

Ḥakīm b. Dāwūd b. Ḥakīm: Explicitly authenticated.¹⁵

Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Hamdānī: Al-Najāshī states the Qummīs discredited him.¹⁶ Ibn al-Ghaḍā’irī discredits him.¹⁷ However, it has been argued that al-Najāshī was doubtful about the discreditation levelled at al-Hamdānī.¹⁸ As for the discreditation by Ibn al-Ghaḍā’irī, this has been

¹⁵ This is based on the opinion that Ibn Qūlawayh authenticated all his teachers in his Introduction to *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* (1356 SH/1977, p. 4). See also al-Tustarī (1411/1990), v. 3, p. 635.

¹⁶ Al-Najāshī writes: “The Qummīs have considered him weak due to [him having] an extremist (*ghuluww*) stance. Ibn al-Walīd says: ‘He would fabricate ḥadīth,’ and God knows best (*wa allāhu a‘lam*). He has a book on what has been reported about the days of the week, and a book on refuting the extremists (*al-ghulāt*), reported to us by Ibn Shādhān from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā from his father from him via his books” (1418/1997, p. 338). It should be noted, however, that the Qummīs, of whom Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad, known as Ibn al-Walīd was the chief, are said to have taken a very strict stance against anyone who narrated a tradition that did not concur with their beliefs on imamate. See also footnote 19.

¹⁷ Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Abdullāh al-Ghaḍā’irī (*fl.* 4th/10th and 5th/11th centuries), known as Ibn al-Ghaḍā’irī, was a scholar of *rijāl*. Referring to Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Hamdānī, Ibn al-Ghaḍā’irī writes: “He is weak and reports from weak people” (1422/2001, pp. 94-5).

¹⁸ Sayyid al-Khoei posits that al-Najāshī stops short of classing Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Hamdānī weak because after al-Najāshī mentions how some have

seriously questioned or dismissed entirely.¹⁹

Supporting evidence used to establish his reliability:

- Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. ‘Umrān al-Ash‘arī, the author of *Nawādir al-ḥikma* and a teacher of al-Kulaynī, reports from him.
- Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-‘Aṭṭār al-Qummī, another teacher of al-Kulaynī, also reports from him.

It is unlikely that such eminent authorities would report from him if he were unreliable.

Muḥammad b. Khālīd al-Ṭayālīsī: Neither explicitly authenticated nor explicitly discredited.²⁰

Supporting evidence used to establish his reliability:

a) The following eminent scholars report from him:

- ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Faḍḍāl
- Sa‘d b. ‘Abdullāh al-Qummī
- Ḥamīd b. Ziyād. Al-Ṭūsī says in his *Rijāl*, “Ḥamīd transmits

considered him weak, he says, “And God knows best.” This expression suggests that al-Najāshī was doubtful about the discreditation (1410/1990, v. 17, p. 283).

¹⁹ For example, Sobhani (n.d.) states that Ibn al-Ghaḍā’irī is known to have criticised many trustworthy people and that he “... had some unique beliefs and ideas about the Twelve Imams and whoever disregarded these views or narrated a tradition on the topic of the imamate which did not agree with his beliefs, tended to be described by him as an extremist and as a liar.” For instance, Ibn al-Ghaḍā’irī considered reporters who transmitted *karāmāt* by the Imams to be unreliable. Furthermore, according to Sayyid al-Khoei, it is not even established that the book attributed to Ibn al-Ghaḍā’irī was in fact his work (1410/1990, v. 9, p. 79).

²⁰ In the terminology of the later scholars, such a narrator is classed “*majhūl*”, i.e. one who has been mentioned in the books of *rijāl* but has not been praised nor criticised. *Majhūl* is sometimes confused with “*muhmal*”, which refers to a narrator who has been mentioned in a chain of transmission but not in the books of *rijāl*.

many *uṣūl*²¹ from him.”²²

- ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī
- Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Maḥbūb. In the words of al-Zanjānī, “Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Maḥbūb, one of the pillars of the community, narrates al-Ṭayālīsī’s books. This indicates his reliance upon [al-Ṭayālīsī].”²³
- Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Ma‘ādī
- Mu‘āwiya b. Ḥakīm

b) For some prominent reporters, he is the source to books of ḥadīth, such as the books of Sayf b. ‘Amīra and Muḥammad b. Ma‘rūf. For example, Muḥammad b. Ja‘far al-Razzāz, one of the most well-regarded scholars of his time, reports both books from al-Ṭayālīsī.

Other notable information:

- He was a companion of Imam al-Kāzim.

Sayf b. ‘Amīra: Explicitly authenticated.²⁴

Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Uqba: An entry in an early biographical work discredits him.²⁵ However, this discreditation has been rebutted.²⁶

Indicator used to establish his reliability:

- Eminent authorities like Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Bazī‘ and

²¹ “*Uṣūl*” is plural of “*aṣl*”. An *aṣl* (“foundational text” or “principle”) is a collection of traditions from an Imam by one of his students who either heard them directly from the Imam or from someone who heard them directly from the Imam.

²² Al-Ṭūsī (1430/2008), p. 441.

²³ Al-Zanjānī (2020).

²⁴ Al-Najāshī (1418/1997), p. 189; al-Ṭūsī (1417/1996), p. 140.

²⁵ Ibn al-Ghaḍā‘irī says about him: “Extremist (*ghāl*), liar (*kadhḥāb*), he is not to be paid any attention to (*lā yultafatu ilayh*)” (1422/2001, p. 69).

²⁶ Sayyid al-Khoei considers him reliable as he was authenticated by ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (1410/1990, v. 9, p. 79). As for Ibn al-Ghaḍā‘irī’s criticisms, see footnote 19.

Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Abī l-Khaṭṭāb report from him.

Other notable information:

- He was a companion of Imam al-Ṣādiq.

‘Alqama b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaḍramī: Neither explicitly authenticated nor explicitly discredited.

Indicator used to establish his reliability:

- In the third report in *Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid* (see Section 5.13), Sayf b. ‘Amīra says to Ṣafwān b. Mihrān that the *du‘ā*’ he recited was not reported by ‘Alqama from Imam al-Bāqir. Ṣafwān replies that he heard it from Imam al-Ṣādiq. If ‘Alqama was not reliable, Sayf would not have presented ‘Alqama’s report as an argument; in other words, when Sayf said to Ṣafwān that the supplication does not appear in the report of ‘Alqama from Imam al-Bāqir, he was using ‘Alqama’s report as the standard for evaluating Ṣafwān’s report; hence, Sayf clearly considered ‘Alqama reliable. Further, if ‘Alqama was unreliable, Ṣafwān would have commented on his unreliability in his response to Sayf. Ṣafwān’s report is therefore an endorsement of the *ziyāra* reported by ‘Alqama.

Other notable information:

- He was a companion of Imam al-Bāqir and Imam al-Ṣādiq.

Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Bazī: Explicitly authenticated.²⁷

Mālik al-Juhānī: Neither explicitly authenticated nor explicitly discredited.

Supporting evidence used to establish his reliability:

- a) ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī and Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā report from him, as do two Companions of Consensus (*aṣḥāb al-ijmā‘*):²⁸

²⁷ Al-Najāshī (1418/1997), p. 330; al-Ṭūsī (1430/2008), p. 364.

²⁸ The Companions of Consensus are an esteemed group of eighteen narrators who were companions of one or more of the Imams from Imam al-Bāqir through to Imam al-Riḍā. Scholars of *rijāl* consider them to be of the highest

‘Abdullāh b. Muskān and Yūnus b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān.

b) He appears in the chains of traditions in all the Four Books.

Other notable information:

- He was a companion of Imam al-Bāqir and Imam al-Ṣādiq.

5.4 Ibn Qūlawayh’s path to Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Bazī‘

There is some debate as to what exactly the words “And Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl” in the chain of transmission follow on from. Some scholars have suggested “And” here is a coordinating conjunction of “Ḥakīm b. Dāwūd b. Ḥakīm” at the start of Chain 1; i.e. Ibn Qūlawayh is reporting a new chain beginning with Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl.²⁹ Unlike Ḥakīm b. Dāwūd b. Ḥakīm, however, Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl was not a teacher of Ibn Qūlawayh; hence, we need to investigate the path of transmission from Ibn Qūlawayh to him.

Ibn Qūlawayh most likely reported the *ziyāra* from Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Bazī‘’s book in the same way that al-Ṭūsī did (see Section 5.8).³⁰ In any event, in *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, Ibn Qūlawayh mentions reliable paths which link him to Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl. One of these paths is quoted hereunder – it comprises solely of explicitly authenticated narrators:³¹

“His father [Muḥammad b. Qūlawayh]³² from Sa‘d b. ‘Abdullāh³³ from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā³⁴ from Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b.

rank of reliability.

²⁹ Sobhani (n.d.); IslamQuest (2012). The authors mention other possibilities as well. See also Muḥammadī-Muẓaffar (1385 SH/2006) for a more detailed discussion.

³⁰ Sobhani (n.d.); IslamQuest (2012).

³¹ Ibn Qūlawayh (1356 SH/1977), pp. 91, 172, 182, 183, 189, and 331.

³² Al-Najāshī (1418/1997), p. 123.

³³ Al-Najāshī (1418/1997), p. 177; al-Ṭūsī (1417/1996), p. 215; al-Ṭūsī (1430/2008), p. 427.

³⁴ Al-Najāshī (1418/1997), p. 82; al-Ṭūsī (1417/1996), p. 60; al-Ṭūsī (1430/2008), p. 351.

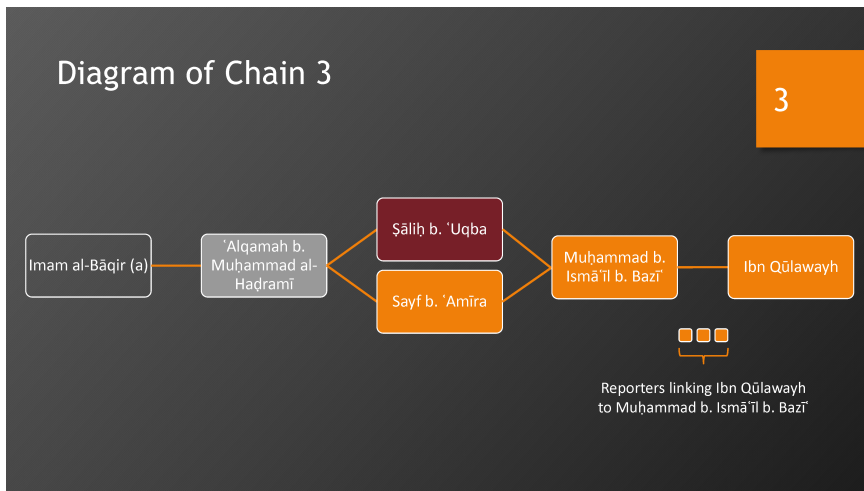
Bazī'.³⁵

5.5 Chain 3

قَالَ صَالِحُ بْنُ عُقْبَةَ الْجُهَنِيِّ وَسَيْفُ بْنُ عَمِيرَةَ قَالَ عَلْقَمَةُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ الْحَضْرَمِيُّ
قُلْتُ لِأَبِي جَعْفَرٍ (ع) عَلِّمْنِي ...

Šāliḥ b. 'Uqba al-Juhanī and Sayf b. 'Amīra reported that 'Alqama b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaḍramī said, "I requested Abū Ja'far [al-Bāqir], "Teach me ..."³⁶

We understand from what is mentioned in Chain 2 that Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b. Bazī' reports from Šāliḥ b. 'Uqba al-Juhanī and Sayf b. 'Amīra. The chain of transmission is illustrated as follows:



5.6 Biographical analysis of reporters in Chain 3

All the reporters in Chain 3 are mentioned in Chain 1 and Chain 2. Their biographical analysis was discussed earlier in Sections 5.3 and 5.4.

³⁵ As mentioned in Section 5.3.

³⁶ Ibn Qūlawayh (1356 SH/1977), p. 175.

5.7 Conclusion regarding the chains in *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*

An analysis of the narrators in Chain 3, which reports the *ziyāra* itself, shows the route of transmission through Sayf b. ‘Amīra to be sound. All the narrators on that route have been explicitly authenticated except ‘Alqama b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaḍramī, for whom there is strong supporting evidence.

As for Chain 1 and Chain 2, which report on matters pertaining to visiting Imam al-Ḥusayn and the day of ‘Āshūrā’, if one were to accept the arguments in defence of Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Hamdānī and Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Uqba, then the chains would be acceptable; otherwise, they would be deemed weak.

In Section 6.3, an important interpretation of a passage in Ibn Qūlawayh’s Introduction to *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* will be presented, which, if accepted, would increase one’s trust in the reports even if it were conceded that there are weaknesses in the chains.

5.8 Chain 4

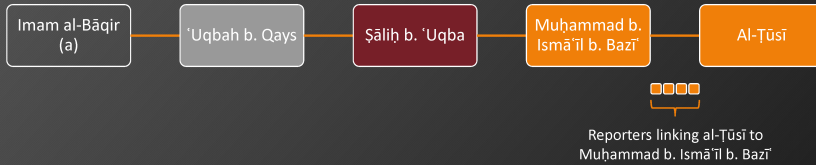
رَوَى مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ بْنِ بَزِيعٍ عَنْ صَالِحِ بْنِ عُقْبَةَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ
(ع) قَالَ...

Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Bazī‘ reports from Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Uqba from his father [‘Uqba b. Qays] that Abū Ja‘far [al-Bāqir] said ...³⁷

³⁷ Al-Ṭūsī (1411/1990), p. 772.

Diagram of Chain 4

4



5.9 Biographical analysis of reporters in Chain 4

Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b. Bazī^c: See Section 5.3

Šālih b. 'Uqba: See Section 5.3

'Uqba b. Qays: Neither explicitly authenticated nor explicitly discredited.

Notable information:

- He was a companion of Imam al-Bāqir and/or Imam al-Šādiq.

5.10 Shaykh al-Ṭūsī's path to Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b. Bazī^c

In his *Fihrist*, Shaykh al-Ṭūsī mentions three reliable paths from him to Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b. Bazī³⁸. One of them is quoted hereunder; all the reporters in it have been explicitly authenticated:

Ḥusayn b. 'Ubaydullāh al-Ghaḍā'irī³⁹ from al-Ḥasan b. Ḥamza al-'Alawī⁴⁰ from 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī⁴¹ from Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim

³⁸ Al-Ṭūsī (1417/1996), p. 215 and p. 236.

³⁹ Al-Najāshī (1418/1997), p. 69.

⁴⁰ Al-Najāshī (1418/1997), p. 64; al-Ṭūsī (1417/1996), p. 104.

⁴¹ Al-Najāshī (1418/1997), p. 260.

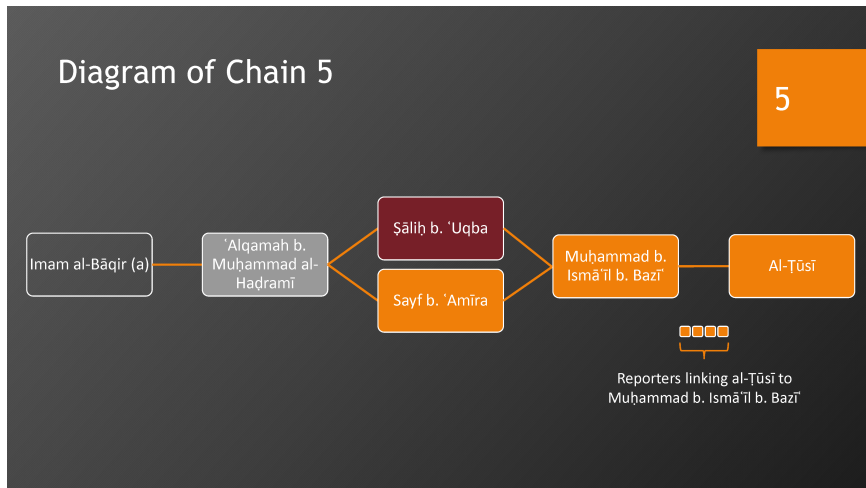
al-Qummī.⁴²

5.11 Chain 5

Chain 5 is the same as Chain 3 except the latter also mentions the demonym of Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Uqba (‘al-Juḥanī’).

قَالَ صَالِحُ بْنُ عُقْبَةَ وَسَيْفُ بْنُ عَمِيرَةَ قَالَ عَلَقَمَةُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ الْحَضْرَمِيُّ قُلْتُ لِأَبِي
جَعْفَرٍ (ع) عَلِّمْنِي ...

Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Uqba and Sayf b. ‘Amīra reported that ‘Alqama b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaḍramī said, “I requested Abū Ja‘far [al-Bāqir], “Teach me ...”⁴³



5.12 Biographical analysis of reporters in Chain 5

Shaykh al-Ṭūsī's path to Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b. Bazī' was discussed in Section 5.10. The biographical analysis of the other reporters was discussed in Section 5.3.

⁴² Al-Ḥillī (1388 SH/2010), p. 49. Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs claims there is consensus (*ijmā'*) on him being reliable (al-Khoei (1410/1990), v. 1, p. 317).

⁴³ Al-Ṭūsī (1411/1990), p. 773.

5.13 Chain 6

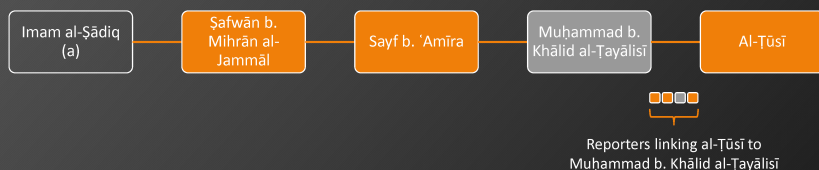
وَرَوَى مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ خَالِدٍ الطَّيَالِسِيُّ عَنْ سَيْفِ بْنِ عَمِيرَةَ قَالَ: خَرَجْتُ مَعَ صَفْوَانَ بْنِ مِهْرَانَ الْجَمَّالِ وَعِنْدَنَا جَمَاعَةٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا - إِلَى الْغُرِّيِّ بَعْدَ مَا خَرَجَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) فَسَرْنَا مِنَ الْحِيرَةِ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ، فَلَمَّا فَرَعْنَا مِنَ الزِّيَارَةِ صَرَفَ صَفْوَانُ وَجْهَهُ إِلَى نَاحِيَةِ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْحُسَيْنِ (ع)، فَقَالَ لَنَا تَزُورُونَ الْحُسَيْنَ (ع) مِنْ هَذَا الْمَكَانِ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَأْسِ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (ع) مِنْ هَاهُنَا، أَوْ مَا إِلَيْهِ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الصَّادِقِ (ع) وَأَنَا مَعَهُ، قَالَ: فَدَعَا صَفْوَانُ بِالزِّيَارَةِ الَّتِي رَوَاهَا عَلْقَمَةُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ الْحَضْرَمِيُّ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ (ع) فِي يَوْمٍ عَاشُورَاءَ.

And Muḥammad b. Khālid al-Ṭayālīsī reports from Sayf b. ‘Amīra that he said, “I rode out with Ṣafwān b. Mihrān al-Jammāl towards al-Gharī [Najaf], and a group of our companions were with us. This was after Abū ‘Abdullāh [al-Ṣādiq] had left. Later, we set out for Medina from al-Ḥīra. When we had completed performing the pilgrimage rites, Ṣafwān turned his face in the direction of the grave of Abū ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥusayn and said to us, ‘Salute al-Ḥusayn from this place, from the place of the head of the grave of the Leader of the Faithful [Imam ‘Alī], for Abū ‘Abdullāh al-Ṣādiq pointed towards it [i.e. the grave of Imam al-Ḥusayn] from right here while I was with him.’” He [Sayf b. ‘Amīra] said, “Then Ṣafwān recited the salutation that ‘Alqama b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaḍramī reported from Abū Ja‘far [al-Bāqir] for the day of ‘Āshūrā’.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Al-Ṭūsī (1411/1990), p. 777.

Diagram of Chain 6

6



5.15 Shaykh al-Ṭūsī's path to Muḥammad b. Khālīd al-Ṭayālīsī

In his *Fihrist*, Shaykh al-Ṭūsī states his path to Muḥammad b. Khālīd al-Ṭayālīsī as follows.⁴⁶ Only Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-‘Aṭṭār has not been explicitly authenticated.

Al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Ubaydullāh [al-Ghaḍā‘irī]⁴⁷ from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā [al-‘Aṭṭār] from his father [Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-‘Aṭṭār]⁴⁸ from Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Maḥbūb from him [Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Bazī’].⁴⁹

As for Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-‘Aṭṭār, supporting evidence used to establish his reliability include the fact that:

- He was a teacher of Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, who quotes many traditions from him and adds “*raḍī allāh ‘anhu*” (may God be pleased with him) after his name.

⁴⁵ Al-Najāshī (1418/1997), p. 198.

⁴⁶ Al-Ṭūsī (1417/1996), p. 228.

⁴⁷ Ibn Ṭawūs (1363 SH/1984), p. 97.

⁴⁸ Al-Najāshī (1418/1997), p. 353.

⁴⁹ Al-Najāshī (1418/1997), p. 349.

- He was a Master of Permit (*shaykh al-ijāza*).⁵⁰

Furthermore, as al-Zanjānī points out, it appears that Shaykh al-Ṭūsī had personally verified the attribution of the narration to al-Ṭayālīsī. This is because Shaykh al-Ṭūsī says in the active voice, “Muḥammad b. Khālīd narrated” (*rawā*) instead of using the passive form, “It has been reported by Muḥammad b. Khālīd” (*ruwiya ‘an*); this indicates Shaykh al-Ṭūsī’s confidence in the report coming from al-Ṭayālīsī.⁵¹

5.16 Conclusion regarding the chains in *Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid*

All the narrators in Chain 6 have either been explicitly authenticated or have strong supporting evidence pointing to their reliability. The same could be said for the narrators in Chain 5 if one were to take the route of transmission through Sayf b. ‘Amīra rather than Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Uqba.

As for Chain 4, even if one were to accept the counterarguments concerning the discreditation levelled at Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Uqba, the chain still suffers from the presence of ‘Uqba b. Qays about whom very little is known.

Another route through solely explicitly authenticated narrators can also be presented by combining Chain 5 and Chain 6, both of which report on the *ziyāra* itself. This route is made possible due to there being more than one narrator at each *ṭabaqa* (stage or generation of transmission):

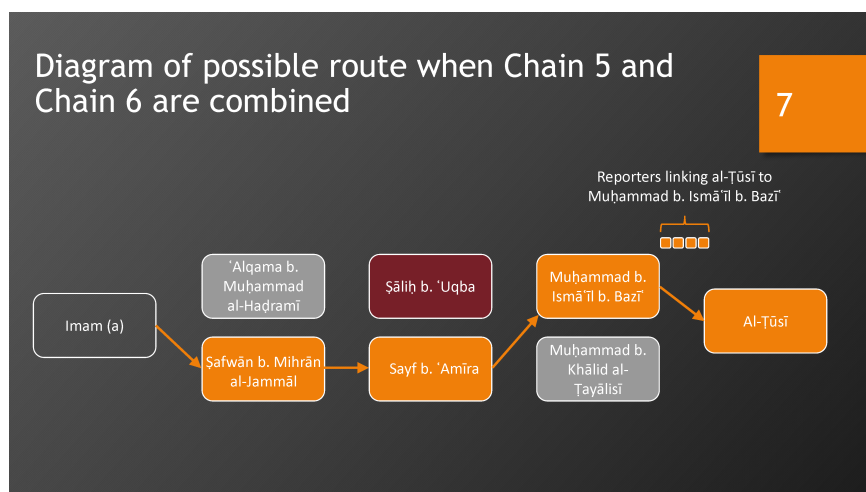
1. First stage: ‘Alqama b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaḍramī and Ṣafwān b. Mihrān al-Jammāl
2. Second stage: Sayf b. ‘Amīra and Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Uqba
3. Third stage: Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Bazī‘ and Muḥammad b. Khālīd al-Ṭayālīsī

⁵⁰ When a teacher permits a student to narrate from him the narrations he has recorded in his book, the term for the author of the book is “Master of Permit” (*shaykh al-ijāza*). See also Section 6.2.

⁵¹ Al-Zanjānī (2020).

Consequently:

- a) At the first stage, even if we assume the reliability of ‘Alqama b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaḍramī is not established, the chain of transmission is correct through Ṣafwān b. Mihrān al-Jammāl.
- b) As for the second stage, even if we assume the reliability of Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Uqba is not established, the chain of transmission is correct through Sayf b. ‘Amīra.
- c) And in the third stage, even if we assume the reliability of Muḥammad b. Khālīd al-Ṭayālīsī is not established, the chain of transmission is correct through Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Bazī⁵².



6. Other related *rijālī* matters

6.1 Approaches to evaluating narrations

There are two general approaches to evaluating the authenticity of narrations:

1. Reliability of the chain of transmission/the reporters
(*wuthūq sanadī/mukhbīrī*)

⁵² IslamQuest (2012).

With this approach, the reliability of a narration is solely or primarily determined by its chain of reporters. Among the advocates of this approach was Sayyid Abū l-Qāsim al-Khoei (d. 1992).

2. Reliability of issuance/the report (*wuthūq ṣudūrī/khabarī*)

Here, the reliability of a narration is determined by accumulated indicators and evidence, including its chain of reporters. Among the advocates of this approach is Sayyid ‘Alī al-Ḥusaynī al-Sistani.

Sayyid al-Sistani maintains that if through rational means we attain confidence (*iṭmi’nān*) that a particular narration was issued by an Infallible, it will be probative/authoritative (*ḥujja*) for us.⁵³ Hence, while it is necessary to study the chain of transmission, it is not sufficient. In other words, the *rijālī* status of the reporters in the chain helps to judge whether a narration was issued by an Infallible, but it is not the only factor to consider.

6.2 Methods for evaluating reporters

In addition to the two approaches mentioned earlier, there are differences of opinion on the methods and criteria that should be used for evaluating reporters. Consequently, different conclusions are reached depending on what a *rijālī* scholar’s stance is on questions such as:

1. Is the testimony of later scholars (*al-muta’akhhirīn*) about the reliability of a reporter to be accepted?
2. What is the significance of considering the Companions of Consensus reliable?
3. Does being an agent (*wakīl*) of an Imam indicate reliability?
4. When a reliable person reports from someone, does it mean that the other person is also reliable?

⁵³ Mu’assasih-yi bi-Sūyi Ijtihād (2021).

5. Does “Mastership of Permit” (*shaykhūkhat al-ijāza*) indicate reliability?
6. Can all the reporters in *Tafsīr al-Qummī* be deemed reliable?
7. Can all the reporters in *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* be deemed reliable?
8. If a member of the Banī Faḍḍāl⁵⁴ appears in a chain, does it render the report reliable?
9. Are all the Masters of al-Najāshī reliable?
10. If one of the Three Narrators⁵⁵ report from someone, is it evidence of that person’s reliability?⁵⁶

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss these issues here, but one example, relating to the chains of *Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’*, will be mentioned to give an idea of the different opinions that exist and the implications they have on a scholar’s assessment of a narration’s reliability. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā is in the *ziyāra*’s path of transmission from Shaykh al-Ṭūsī to Muḥammad b. Khālīd al-Ṭayālīsī (see Section 5.15). Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā has neither been explicitly authenticated nor explicitly discredited, but he is known to have held Mastership of Permit. However, according to Sayyid al-Khoei (d. 1992), Mastership of Permit is not sufficient for establishing reliability; hence, based on his methodology, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā is not reliable.⁵⁷ According to other experts, however, Mastership of Permit is sufficient for establishing reliability; hence, for them, the presence of Aḥmad b.

⁵⁴ The Banī Faḍḍāl are said to have been a group of individuals from the Faṭḥiyya sect. Another view is that they were companions of Imam al-Kāzīm, Imam al-Riḍā, Imam al-Hādī, and Imam al-‘Askarī, or they were Faṭḥiyya initially but later believed in the imamate of these four Imams and became their companions.

⁵⁵ They are Muḥammad b. Abī ‘Umayr, Ṣafwān b. Yaḥyā, and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Naṣr al-Bazanṭī.

⁵⁶ For more information on these topics and the different opinions about them, see al-Īrawānī (2017), pp. 77-133, and Sobhani (2019), pp. 19-109.

⁵⁷ Al-Khoei (1410/1990), v. 2, p. 328.

Muḥammad b. Yahyā in the chain is not problematic.⁵⁸

6.3 The much-debated passage in Ibn Qūlawayh's Introduction to *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*

In his Introduction to *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, Ibn Qūlawayh writes:

وَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا أَنَّا لَا نُحِيطُ بِجَمِيعِ مَا رُوِيَ عَنْهُمْ فِي هَذَا الْمَعْنَى وَلَا فِي غَيْرِهِ لَكِنْ مَا وَقَعَ
لَنَا مِنْ جِهَةِ الثَّقَاتِ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا رَحِمَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِرَحْمَتِهِ، وَلَا أَخْرَجْتُ فِيهِ حَدِيثًا رُوِيَ عَنِ
الشَّدَاذِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ يُؤَثِّرُ ذَلِكَ عَنْهُمْ عَنِ الْمَذْكُورِينَ غَيْرِ الْمَعْرُوفِينَ بِالرَّوَايَةِ، الْمَشْهُورِينَ
بِالْحَدِيثِ وَالْعِلْمِ.

We acknowledge that we have not encompassed everything which has been narrated from them [the Infallibles] about this topic [*ziyāra*] nor any other topic [for that matter]; rather, we have included what we have come across from reliable reporters from among our companions, may God be merciful to them with His mercy. I have not reported in it [this book] any tradition that has been narrated from irregular reporters (*shudhdhādh*) who have not been quoted for their reports from the aforementioned persons by those known for reporting and famed for their traditions and knowledge.⁵⁹

The meaning of this passage has been subject to lengthy discussion in Biographical Studies. Three main opinions on what Ibn Qūlawayh intended have emerged:

1. Ibn Qūlawayh meant to authenticate all the reporters mentioned in the chains of narrations in his book (388 reporters). Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1104/1693) held this opinion. It was also Sayyid al-Khoei's initial opinion.
2. Ibn Qūlawayh meant to authenticate only his *shaykhs* (teachers),

⁵⁸ Al-Īrawānī (2017), p. 114.

⁵⁹ Ibn Qūlawayh (1356 SH/1977), p. 4.

i.e. the first reporters in the chains (32 reporters). Mirzā Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 1320/1902) was of this opinion. It was also Sayyid al-Khoei’s later opinion.

3. Ibn Qūlawayh neither meant to authenticate all the reporters nor only his teachers; instead, he was explaining why the narrations in his book are reliable. This opinion is held by Sayyid al-Sistani. He writes:

The meaning of the passage is that he [Ibn Qūlawayh] did not include narrations from weak and criticised reporters in his book. This is because such narrations [i.e. from weak and criticised reporters] were not reported by reliable reporters famed for their traditions and knowledge, known as the “critical experts of ḥadīth” (*nuqqād al-aḥādīth*),⁶⁰ like Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Walīd and Sa‘d b. ‘Abdullāh. Even if some of these experts – be they his teachers or the teachers of his teachers – did report such narrations, he clearly trusted them and included them in his book. It seems he – may his soul be sanctified – sufficed in his trust of narrations from irregular reporters, as he says, when they were included [in the works of] some of these great critical experts of ḥadīth.⁶¹

In support of this interpretation, one can see that the same approach was used by other distinguished scholars as well, i.e. they too trusted in the assessment of reliable critical experts of ḥadīth and reported traditions that those experts had deemed reliable even if there were individuals in the chains who were irregular. These scholars include:

- al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941) in *al-Kāfī*

⁶⁰ The critical experts of ḥadīth were known for their ability to distinguish authentic reports from non-authentic ones, even if there were one or more weak reporters in the chain.

⁶¹ Al-Sistani (2014), pp. 21-2.

- al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991) in *al-Muqni'* and *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*
- Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1266) in *Falāḥ al-sā'il*
- 'Imād al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī (d. 6th/12th century) in *Bishārat al-Muṣṭafā li-shi'at al-Murtaḍā*⁶²

According to this interpretation, Ibn Qūlawayh was expressing his belief in the reliability of the narrations in his book, not the narrators. It is possible that the critical experts of ḥadīth relied on certain evidence that was passed down to them, such as a reliable book or a reliable verbal transmission, and on the basis of that evidence they deemed the narrations reliable; evidence that may not have reached us today. Such an interpretation is significant because, if accepted, it would increase one's confidence in the reliability of even those reports in *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* that are deemed to have weaknesses in their chains.

6.4 Opinions of *marāji'* on the *ziyāra*'s authenticity

Sayyid al-Sistani's opinion about the authenticity of *Ziyārat 'Āshūrā'* is unequivocal, as seen in the following response to a question about the chain and text of *Ziyārat 'Āshūrā'* and *al-Jāmi'a al-Kabīra*:

Ziyārat 'Āshūrā' and *al-Jāmi'a al-Kabīra* are among the most important, best, and authentic *ziyāras* from the perspective of their chain of transmission (*sanad*) and text (*matn*). Their content is mentioned in many authentic narrations. Therefore, the believers should persevere in reciting them, and they should not pay attention to the deceiving arguments of those who pursue their own agendas.⁶³

Many other *marāji'* have also spoken unreservedly about the authenticity of *Ziyārat 'Āshūrā'*. For example, Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Mūsā Shubayrī al-Zanjānī, one of the foremost authorities on *rijāl*

⁶² Al-Sistani, M.R. (1437/2016), pp. 122-4.

⁶³ Al-Baldāwī (2013), p. 26.

today, states:

Disregarding what has been narrated from reliable sources about its endorsement from the unseen realm (*al-ta’yidāt al-ghaybiyya*), which in itself suffices as a proof of the authenticity of this sacred *ziyāra*, the chain of narration mentioned in *Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid* after this *ziyāra* is veracious.⁶⁴

One of the most decisive responses to the question of the *ziyāra*’s reliability is from Grand Ayatollah Waḥīd Khurāsānī:

According to jurists (may God elevate their rank), *Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’* is indisputable and is therefore reliable and does not need a chain of transmission.⁶⁵

The views of some other contemporary *marāji’* are mentioned herewith:
Grand Ayatollah Nāṣir Makārim-Shīrāzī:

Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’, in addition to its lofty content and meaning, is renowned and possesses acceptable chains of transmission. *Ziyāat ‘Āshūrā’* is as it is written in its current form in reliable books.⁶⁶

Grand Ayatollah Ja’far Sobhani:

A consideration of the sum-total of these chains results in strengthening some of them with the others and grants knowledge or approximate certainty of the

⁶⁴ Quoted in Khalfan (2009), pp. xlv-xlvi.

⁶⁵ Khurāsānī (2007).

⁶⁶ Makārim-Shīrāzī (n.d.). Makārim-Shīrāzī also explains that some of the earliest extant manuscripts include the section beginning with “*allāhumma khuṣṣa anta awalla ḡālimin bi-l-la’ni minnī ...*” – a section which some have claimed is not an authentic part of the *ziyāra*. He goes on to suggest that it was probably because of *taqīyya* that some other early manuscripts do not mention this part. (Makārim-Shīrāzī (n.d.) and Makārim-Shīrāzī (n.d.a))

origins of these traditions from the Infallibles.⁶⁷

Grand Ayatollah Ishāq-Fayyāḍ:

These narrations [about *Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’*] are so numerous that they reach the level of *tawātur ijāmī*.⁶⁸ As a consequence, every *Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’*, short and long, is authentic and reliable.⁶⁹

Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-Ḥakīm:

Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’ is reliable from the perspective of its chain of transmission and text.⁷⁰

Grand Ayatollah Mirzā Jawād Tabrīzī presents twelve reasons why the *ziyāra* is authentic.⁷¹

6.5 Different standards for determining reliability

The standards employed in jurisprudence (*fiqh*) to determine the reliability of traditions for the purposes of deriving rulings on what is obligatory (*wājib*) and unlawful (*ḥarām*) are different to those used for determining the reliability of *ziyāras* and *du‘ā*’s. Stringent standards are used for the former, not the latter.

For a jurist to use a tradition pertaining to *wājib* and *ḥarām* acts, the tradition has to meet specific criteria of authentication and be subject to extensive scrutiny. This is because of the consequences of abiding by,

⁶⁷ Sobhani (n.d.), p. 30.

⁶⁸ “Non-specific wide-scale transmission”. *Tawātur* (wide-scale transmission) refers to a narration that has so many reporters at each stage of its transmission that it leads to certainty about its authenticity. *Ijmālī* (non-specific) here means the reports are different but they all speak of a common subject. The view being expressed by the Grand Ayatollah is that there are so many reports of the *ziyāra* that one attains certainty in the *ziyāra*’s authenticity even though there are differences in the reports.

⁶⁹ Shafaqna (2020).

⁷⁰ Al-Baldāwī (2013), p. 29.

⁷¹ Al-Tabrīzī (1432/2010), pp. 76-87.

or not abiding by, obligations and prohibitions in the Hereafter. Hence, the tradition must usually have an unbroken chain of transmission that traces back to an Infallible, and the reliability of each reporter in the chain must be independently verified.

Applying the same stringent standards to supplications and salutations can be likened to using the same standards to assess the cleanliness of the kitchen at a friend’s house where you have been invited for dinner, and the cleanliness of a strictly controlled laboratory where medical tests are done; and then objecting that the kitchen fails to match the level of sterilisation found in those laboratories!⁷²

6.6 The principle of leniency in evidence for recommended acts (*qā‘idat al-tasāmuḥ fi adillat al-sunan*)

According to this principle, traditions attributed to an Infallible whose chains of transmission are weak can be relied upon if they state a certain act merits reward and there is no evidence to indicate it is not permitted.

The principle is derived from narrations known as “*akhbār man balagh*” (“reaches a person reports”).⁷³ One such report is the Ṣaḥīḥ of Hishām b. Sālīm in which Imam al-Ṣādiq is reported to have said:

مَنْ بَلَغَهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ (ص) شَيْءٌ مِنَ الثَّوَابِ، فَعَمِلَهُ كَانَ أَجْرُ ذَلِكَ لَهُ، وَإِنْ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) لَمْ يَقُلْهُ.

If any [promise of] reward reaches a person from the Prophet, and he acts on it, he shall get the reward for that act even if the Messenger of God did not [in fact] say it.⁷⁴

⁷² Slightly modified version of the example given by Modarresi (2021).

⁷³ A case could also be made on purely rational grounds: reason dictates that trying to attain a benefit, albeit a potential benefit, is good. The greater the benefit at stake is, the more reason deems it good to make an attempt at achieving it.

⁷⁴ Al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī (1367 SH/1988), v. 1, section 18, tradition 184. This is one of

Based on these reports, if a narration states a certain act merits reward, and there is nothing to indicate it is forbidden, and one performs the act with the intention of attaining its reward, then he will get that reward. Therefore, according to this principle, even though such a narration may not be “authentic” in the strict *fiqhī* sense, one would be justified in acting on it.

Even scholars who do not take the view that the principle can be used for deeming an act “recommended” (*mustaḥabb*) say that one may still perform the act with the intention of *rajāʾ*, i.e. in the hope that it is desired by Allah.⁷⁵

7. Conclusion

The different approaches, methods, and criteria used by scholars of *rijāl* for evaluating the status of a narration’s reporters impact considerably on their final assessment of the narration’s reliability. While a few scholars have deemed the chains of *Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’* weak based on a strict application of the *wuthūq sanadī* approach,⁷⁶ most experts regard

nine such traditions in the section.

⁷⁵ “In Islamic jurisprudence, when a jurist declares something ‘*mustaḥabb*’ or ‘*makrūh*’, it means that in his or her opinion the action has an established legal status, i.e. it is something that the sharia has legislated as being ‘recommended’ or ‘disapproved’. A jurist will only make such a declaration if he or she is convinced that there is sufficiently strong evidence to support it. If, on the other hand, the jurist deems the evidence weak but finds no reason to suggest the act should not be performed/avoided, then he or she may say [...] that it can still be enacted but with the intention of ‘*rajāʾ*’ (shorter form of ‘*rajāʾ al-maṭlūbiyya*’), i.e. in the hope that it is desired by Allah. In this way, the jurist has not attributed something to the sharia that may not have actually been sanctioned by it, nor has he or she dissuaded their followers from performing/avoiding the action just in case in reality it is something that has been divinely legislated and carries with it abundant blessings and rewards” (al-Sistani, (2017) Ruling 12, Translator’s footnote number 15).

⁷⁶ See, for example, Hobbollah (2020), who applies Sayyid al-Khoei’s methodology to the reporters in the chains of the *ziyāra* and concludes that the chains are weak. Nevertheless, when it came to giving a legal opinion on

it as reliable based on their methods of assessment. An additional case is also made for the second and third chains of the reports quoted by Shaykh al-Ṭūsī in which there is more than one individual at each stage of the chain’s transmission; therefore, even if one of those individuals were deemed to be weak, the alternative route could be taken, thereby maintaining the integrity of the chain.

Sayyid al-Sistani’s interpretation of Ibn Qūlawayh’s statement in his Introduction to *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* is significant, as it would mean that critical experts of ḥadīth had scrutinised the reports and judged them to be reliable. Perhaps one other message that could be derived from his interpretation is the need to trust in the judgement of the foremost specialists in issues about which one does not have sufficient knowledge or evidence at hand.

Furthermore, as *Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’* does not concern a *wājib* or *ḥarām* action, the most stringent standards of verification need not be applied. Even if one were to deem the chains weak, the narrations reporting the *ziyāra* could still be relied upon according to the principle of leniency in evidence for recommended acts, or, at the very least, the *ziyāra* could be recited with the intention of *raja’*. By doing so, one would not be closing off a route that has the potential for showering reciters with tremendous rewards and blessings.

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Application of Hermeneutical Analysis in Islamic Studies

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ABSTRACT

Hermeneutics as an independent method has established its special position in the field of human thinking. Especially in the 20th century, this method provided its achievements and findings for other disciplines such as philosophy, theology, social sciences, and philosophy of religion, and created new discussions in those disciplines.

Hermeneutics has two parts, a philosophical one and a methodological one. The first is based on philosophy, while the second one is based on authorship. Questions addressed in this paper are: What are the crucial differences between the two main schools of philosophical hermeneutics, i.e. Gadamer and Betti, who were pioneers in this field during the last century? Which hermeneutic attitude can be used in Islamic studies? Can there be a relationship between the current method of

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understanding texts in Islamic studies and hermeneutics?

By mentioning that it is possible to establish a relationship between religious texts and hermeneutics, the writers of this extensive article intend to demonstrate the differences amongst them (hermeneutics experts themselves)! They will also attempt to show that, because applying philosophical hermeneutics can lead not only to various readings of religion and belief in the effect of assumptions, but also to relativism, it is not proper for Islamic studies. Methodological hermeneutics, author-based methods, and text-based ways, however, by observing accepted basics and rules of methodological hermeneutics, are correct ways to interpret religious texts in Islamic studies.

KEYWORDS: Islamic studies, Gadamer, Betti, *Shīrī* uşūl, hermeneutic, modern interpretation, text, paraphrase

1. Introduction

Hermeneutics, meaning the interpretation of text, has had two methodological and philosophical stages. The first kind of hermeneutics was used primarily for holy texts and then, subsequently, for all kinds of texts. Philosophical hermeneutics, which includes more fields than the methodological stage, covers generally all phenomena, i.e. human teachings, texts, and speeches, and provides a challenging issue in readings. Considering various hermeneutic attitudes which deal with assumptions, interests, and beliefs in the interpretation of texts, the following questions are developed: what is the relationship between hermeneutics and Islamic studies? Which kind of hermeneutics can be used in Islamic studies? Can there be a relation between the current method of understanding texts in Islamic studies and hermeneutics?

Considering applying hermeneutics in Islamic texts, many, while writing their critiques, do not differentiate between various kinds of hermeneutics. While regarding the most fundamental principles for all kinds of hermeneutics, one should compare the relationship between

hermeneutics and the fundamental principles of *ijtihad* within Islamic studies. In this article, however, an attempt is made to analyse the hermeneutical dispute between Emilio Betti (1890-1968) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) to understand what lessons *uṣūlīs* may learn from it.

The authors of this paper will explore the background, field, and aims of hermeneutics by analysing data regarding mythological hermeneutics (which the article will explain). The various hermeneutic attitudes will be differentiated and compared with the current method of understanding text in Islamic studies. Finally, a theory based on methodological hermeneutics is proposed for Islamic studies.

2. Definition of Hermeneutics

The word “hermeneutic” was commonly used in ancient Greece. Aristotle used it as the title of his thesis on logic propositions in the book *Organon* and named it *Peri Hermeneias* which means “On Interpretation”.⁵ The word hermeneutic is derived from the Greek verb “*hermeneuin*” which means “to interpret”, and its nominal meaning “*hermeneia*” means interpretation. The various forms of this word include the meaning of understanding something or some situation which is vague.⁶ Some writers believe that every interpretation and explanation include three aspects: text that needs understanding and interpretation; the means or medium for enabling understanding (interpreter or Hermes); and delivering a text message to an addressee. This structure comprises the main issues of hermeneutics (Eliade, 1995).

Various definitions have been provided for hermeneutics, each of which has a specific viewpoint on the aims and duties of this way of achieving knowledge. For example, according to Wilhelm Dilthey, hermeneutics is not knowledge for understanding texts, but a kind of methodology and epistemology which is commonly at the service of

⁵ Ahmadi, 1996.

⁶ Palmer, 1969.

the human sciences. On the other hand, philosophical hermeneutics, which began with Heidegger, takes a completely different view and states that the position of hermeneutics is not to provide method. Its mission is to think philosophically on the ontological foundations of understanding and explaining how they are created, promoting it from a methodological level to philosophy and an ontological one.⁷

Considering that both mentioned schools of hermeneutics are related to the interpretation of text, Paul Ricoeur's brief explanation of hermeneutics mentions its function thusly: "Hermeneutics is the action of understanding, which is related to the interpretation of text."⁸

3. Hermeneutics Typology and Different Types Distinguished

In a long process, hermeneutics has passed four main stages. First, classic hermeneutics wanted to provide a way for the interpretation of holy texts and considered texts to be absolute. This kind was found in the thoughts of persons such as Saint Augustinus. Second, romantic hermeneutics tried to cease misunderstanding and incomprehension and was a method found in the thoughts of persons such as Donn Hauer, Johann Martin Chladenius, August Wolf, and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Third, a methodological method was used generally in human sciences and was consolidated by Wilhelm Dilthey. Fourth, philosophical hermeneutics was begun by Martin Heidegger and continued by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Jacques Derrida;⁹ it tries to explain truth of understanding. Considering the classification of kinds, various typologies are provided for hermeneutics.¹⁰ In a typology which is

⁷ Waezi, 2001.

⁸ Couzenshoy, 1978.

⁹ For more information, see Ahmadi, 1386 SH; Palmer, 1969; Rikhtegaran, 1999; Copleston, 2006; Verneaux, 1993; Augustine, 1972; Gadamer, 2000; G.H.R, 1996; Gordin, 1994; Volmer, 1990.

¹⁰ Palmer, 1969; Freund, 1973.

based on the process of hermeneutics formation as well as according to the function of hermeneutics, three kinds can be distinguished: “methodological hermeneutics”, “philosophical hermeneutics”, and “critical hermeneutics”.¹¹

“Methodological hermeneutics” purposes using hermeneutics as a method for understanding human sciences. In this kind of hermeneutics, discussion is about meaning and being meaningful, and hermeneutics is used as the means to understand meaning. Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Emilio Betti, and Eric Donald Hirsch are some of the famous theoreticians who, despite their intellectual differences, developed ideas and principles about hermeneutics.¹²

Conversely, “philosophical hermeneutics” is after the quiddity of the understanding itself and the interpretation of “Dasein”. In this kind of hermeneutics, instead of the question of how understanding is done, the main question is, “how is cognition done?” or “what is the existential aspect of the thing that exists only through understanding?” “Philosophical hermeneutics” questions the fundamental assumption of “methodological hermeneutics”, which is based on the fact that hermeneutics is a method for achieving understanding; it seeks the phenomenological explanation of the existence of man himself and the exhibition of the ontological aspect of understanding.¹³

The third kind of hermeneutics is “critical hermeneutics”, of which Jürgen Habermas is the main representative. “Critical hermeneutics” does not deal merely with methodology and epistemology, nor with ontology and phenomenology; rather, it deals more with the freedom of dominated men and emphasises the relationship and understanding between individuals and society. Critical hermeneutics assumes that man’s ability to communicate makes social life continue with understanding, but this ability is usually marred and suppressed by

¹¹ Bleicher, 1980.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Nietzsche et al., 2007; Couzenshoy, 1978.

factors such as power and wealth, which prevent the establishment of communication and understanding in society. An action that mars communication and causes a lack of understanding in society itself leads to the denial of freedom of men. Here, critical hermeneutics is used as a way to free individuals and establish understanding among them.¹⁴

Comparing the three kinds of hermeneutics elucidates the fact that more similarity and closeness exist between “critical hermeneutics” and “methodological hermeneutics”. Hermeneutics is considered as a method used for cognition and understanding on one hand, and for the sake of freedom and emancipation in the other. Because critical hermeneutics focuses on method, is newly founded, and lacks full consolidation of its special theoretical bases, it is not used in this paper. “Methodological hermeneutics” from the angle of content and principles is probably more suitable and/or better with regard to our aim, and yet, only “philosophical hermeneutics” are used in Islamic studies, and they have been selected for use herein. In the next paragraphs, the meanings of those terms are going to be elaborated.

3.1. Methodological Hermeneutics

Methodological hermeneutics purposes to be used in the interpretation or methodology of human sciences. The main aim of hermeneutics is to discover the meaning that is intended by an author by knowing the language rules that govern the work.¹⁵

Hermeneutics began as a method and was used for understanding classic Greek and Latin texts as well as understanding and interpreting Christian holy texts. Some ancient texts had unreadable or missing words and complex and ambiguous phrases because they were ancient, and this condition brought about suspicion and doubt; every reader read and interpreted such texts in a special way that differed from others.

¹⁴ Manocheri, 2002.

¹⁵ Floistand, 1982.

Therefore, interpreters tried to find a way to solve the problem. Using philology and by referring to other texts, they tried to fill in empty places and clarify vague words and phrases; in fact, they tried to reconstruct and make the texts understandable. After the advent of Protestantism and the religious reform movement, lexical hermeneutics as a method for discovering the message in a text and achieving “genuine text” became urgently necessary. Contention over reforming the movement from the verdict of the Catholic Church that only it had the authority to interpret the holy book, and the Protestants’ insistence on independency of the holy text and their definitive decision to show the fundamental clarity of the Holy Book, led hermeneutics as a way of understanding the Holy Book to a new stage.¹⁶

Hermeneutics is of non-experimental and non-positivistic ways (such as linguistics and phenomenology), and its main essence is formed by “meaning”, “communication”, and “understanding”, while the essence of experimental and positivistic ways is “cause”, “observance”, and “explanation”. This method assumption maintains that objective, stable, and metahistorical understanding of text, and achieving the author’s purpose, is possible. Text meaning is independent from an interpreter, and the meaning of text is differentiated from an interpreter’s condition, status, and horizon of meaning. This perception of hermeneutics was cleaned up and organised by Schleiermacher and Dilthey, but prior to their work it could be found in various researchers’ views.¹⁷

One of the fundamental discussions of science philosophy concerns the differentiation between “meaning” and “cause” and between “understanding” and explanation”, the origination of which can be found in the thoughts of Ibn Khaldun (in mention of the issue of *‘aşabiyya* (concept of social solidarity and science of society), Jyambatysta Vico (in differentiation between historical categories and culture and natural sciences), and Max Weber (in mention of the plan of understanding in

¹⁶ Nietzsche et al., 2007.

¹⁷ Ahmadi, 1996.

human sciences and paying attention to the background of actions and social actions). The oldest methodological approach to hermeneutics, however, can be traced in Dann Hauer's thoughts, as he considered hermeneutics a method of interpretation of the Holy Book and used it to refer to discussions on methods of text interpretation.

From the 18th century onwards, hermeneutics as a matter solely about the Holy Book gradually faded away.¹⁸ In this period, as in the previous one, the achievement of text meaning and author's purpose was considered possible, and hermeneutics was used as a method to realise this aim. However, Schleiermacher and Dilthey coherently explained and critically revised methodological hermeneutics.¹⁹

3.2. Philosophical Hermeneutics

The distance between 20th century hermeneutics and hermeneutics from prior times was increased by a revolution that created philosophical hermeneutics early in the 20th century and finding common aims between philosophical hermeneutics and methodological hermeneutics became impossible. Philosophical hermeneutics was begun by Heidegger and his famous book *Being and Time*, and a radical and full-scale rotation was formed in the methodological perception of hermeneutics as a kind of methodology and epistemology, by which principle the basics and common way of understanding in human sciences and history was cleaned and revised.

In the introduction to *Being and Time*, Heidegger points to the matter that philosophers have tried to perceive "existences" instead of being. After Plato, philosophers had special prejudgements of being, considering it as "the commonest", "undefinable", and "obvious" concept. As recognised in these attributes, "being" was not looked at as a philosophical issue. Heidegger believed that this concept is undefinable and general, which does not prevent perception of truth. He held that

¹⁸ Palmer, 1969.

¹⁹ Palmer, 1969; Floistand, 1982.

philosophy's aim is to answer the question about the meaning of being. In his belief, one cannot directly face and understand being, but being is another attribute of possible existence and must be known by question and analysis (Heidegger, 1927). According to Heidegger, the only way to know being is through the analysis of existence structure of Dasein or human existence, for he had the most plentiful questions about being with himself. Heidegger believed that the main mission of philosophy is phenomenology of Dasein for the sake of understanding the meaning of being, and he called this phenomenology hermeneutics.²⁰ Contrary to hermeneutics thinkers from before him, Heidegger was not after methodology or a new method for understanding text or human sciences. He promoted hermeneutics from a methodology and epistemology level to a philosophy level.²¹ This radical rotation in promoting hermeneutics from methodology to epistemology was continued by some of Heidegger's followers and disciples, such as Gadamer and Ricoeur.

Gadamer provides an ontological base for his philosophical hermeneutics, and so he is in one line with Heidegger. Their aims, however, differ. Heidegger wants to describe a new ontology and understand the meaning of being, but Gadamer's ontology is one of understanding. Because he knows understanding as continually interpretative, instead of providing a way of interpretation, he thinks on interpretation itself and its achievement. For Heidegger, however, thinking about the essence of understanding and its interpretativeness is a middle aim, which is acknowledged in order to achieve another aim that is the answer to the question about the meaning of being while the structure of Dasein is analysed. Gadamer's main aim is to know the truth of reality and its existential bases, and he follows no other aim.²² Heidegger pays no attention to the main problem of human

²⁰ Heidegger, 1927.

²¹ Palmer, 1969.

²² Gadamer, 2000.

sciences, that is the issue of objectivity, but in Gadamer's hermeneutics, it is a main issue. Gadamer moves from the ontology of understating to epistemology, and with his analysis of understanding essence and its existential conditions and interpretation, he show that, contrary to Dilthey, one cannot achieve truth by using methodology and revising and cleaning text; truth must be basically considered through other different perspectives, and this varies from assumed scientific and philosophical tradition.²³

Ricoeur was also influenced by Heidegger, but unlike Heidegger, he relates hermeneutics to Husserl's phenomenology. Ricoeur does not directly follow his ontology through the existential analysis of Dasein, for he does not believe in independent ontology, as Heidegger thinks in the ontology of Dasein, but believes that all ontologies are interpretative and full of symbols. He holds that as ontological understanding is expressed through language, all kinds of phenomenology for understanding being cannot avoid semantics. Therefore, hermeneutics is referred to semantics through which the issue of existence can be understood.²⁴ Moreover, Ricoeur, like Gadamer, is not after ontology. Ricoeur's hermeneutics begins with the mechanisms of language and interpretation, and understands through a brief look at ontology.²⁵

3.2.1. Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Comparative Approach

Hans-Georg Gadamer put forward a theory of philosophical hermeneutics that took into consideration human experiences in relation to how an interpreter reaches understanding, considering not only the subject, but also the object of interpretation. Gadamer was heavily influenced by his teacher and friend, Martin Heidegger, especially in how the being-in-the-world of humans has a huge influence on the way something may be interpreted. He demonstrated

²³ Gadamer, 2000; Rahbari, 2006.

²⁴ Ahmadi.

²⁵ Waezi, 2011.

his theory of philosophical hermeneutics in his magnum opus *Truth and Method*.²⁶ Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics is highly subjective in that it considers the agency of the interpreter as greatly influencing what is being interpreted. The agency's being, what they consider authentic, their presuppositions, prejudice, and temporality, are all thought to play a part in the object of interpretation.²⁷ All these dimensions bring a high degree of relativity to how a given object is understood, as each interpretation is unique in the interpreter's own experiences, upbringing, education, and personhood, and therefore qualifies what Gadamer has stated: "There cannot be any single interpretation that is 'in itself' correct."²⁸

Gadamer considers "understanding" to be concomitant with the interpretation and that text is understood to be a priori understanding existing with the interpreter, and therefore, "understanding is already interpreting."²⁹ He reckons that even when an interpreter plays the role of historian in attempting to reach an objective understanding of a text, all attempts at being impartial fail, because the interpreter is influenced by their own interests that they then superimpose upon the text being interpreted. The scientific method fails and behaves like everyone else, "as a child of his time who is unquestioningly dominated by the concepts and prejudices of his own age."³⁰

Gadamer states that if an interpreter employed the scientific method of a historian, they would fail to grasp what influences them; they would fail to reach what the subject matter of the text requires because of it

²⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Methods* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2004).

²⁷ Paul Regan, "Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics: Concepts of reading, understanding, and interpretation," *Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy* 4 (December 2012), 286-303.

²⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Methods*, 415.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 414.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

being obscured by their own concepts. They need to keep their ideas to the side and try to obtain the concepts that governed at the time the text was written in order to reach a correct understanding of history. This means that an interpreter needs to implement the conceptual framework of a given object of interpretation successfully within their own mind, or the “logical interpretation of historical consciousness,”³¹ the achievement of which is considered by Gadamer to be an unachievable naïve illusion.³² The interpreter is deemed incapable of ever being able to leave them aside in their endeavours so as to be able to correctly interpret the text that belongs to a particular historic epoch.

This has huge implications for the way the understanding of a given text is reached, as there can be a multiplicity of understandings according to Gadamer. Therefore, one cannot really and wholeheartedly trust the interpretation of any individual, as there is always a degree of relativity in any interpretation because no interpreter really puts themselves aside when attempting to interpret a historic text. Gadamer does not consider this phenomenon a hindrance to interpreting, but it does taint all interpretations of historical texts, because any interpretation that gives regard to attempting to put aside one’s concepts as much as possible and adopting the concepts that are seen to be governed by the concepts of an epoch of a given text is always going to be influenced by the ideas of one’s own thinking.³³ Gadamer recognises that any interpretation will always be tainted by one’s own thinking and presuppositions, but attempting to escape one’s own concepts is not only impossible, but totally absurd, for how could one take away something that would be the only means to enable interpretation? For “to interpret means precisely to bring one’s own preconceptions into play so that the text’s meaning can really be made to speak for us.”³⁴

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 415.

³⁴ Ibid.

Gadamer also figures that there will always be a “hermeneutical situation” to which an interpreter will try to adhere, such as attempting to interpret a text while considering the target audience of the interpretation rather than merely what the interpreter is looking to achieve from their work. This “hermeneutical situation” encompasses any aim or objective one is looking to satisfy in their undertaking of any hermeneutical endeavour, which would all be subject to the interpreter’s perspective of the situation at hand and may narrow the scope relative to the objectives at hand. This narrowing of scope of interpretation would mean that these interpretations as such may not be as effective when utilised for other objectives.

3.2.2. Emilio Betti’s Critique of Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics

Emilio Betti (1890-1968) is a legal scholar whose concerns were focused mainly on legal interpretation, but also encompassed the concerns of interpretation in general.³⁵ Betti differed from Gadamer in much of what his philosophical hermeneutics specified. Betti did not consider “understanding” to be something pre-existing with the interpreter before they undertake an interpretive activity, but rather that which follows an interpretation, where interpretation is characterised as an action whose useful outcome is understanding.³⁶ Betti states that implicit in any goal-orientated activity there exists an implicit representative value which, when in the context of interpretation the interpreter reflects on it, is able to turn implicit to explicit the representative value marks of personality found throughout a whole range of overt behaviour.³⁷ Betti emphasised that law along with philosophy, history, economics, art,

³⁵ George Wright, “On a general theory of interpretation: the Betti-Gadamer dispute in legal hermeneutics,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32, (1987), 191.

³⁶ Emilio Betti, “On a General Theory of Interpretation: The Raison d’Etre of Hermeneutics,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32, (1987), 247.

³⁷ Ibid.

and literature is a specifically human achievement, differing in essence from the phenomena of nature and requiring appropriate interpretive techniques for adequate understanding. He used the term *scienze morali* to describe their function as the moral, or human, sciences, the sciences of the spirit rather than of nature.³⁸

Although the human sciences pursue varying cognitive goals and have different terrains, they are united, according to Betti, in having a common interest and a common method: the interpretation of one subjectivity by another on the basis of the objectivity present in an external object.³⁹

Betti's critique of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics asserts that the process of interpretation defined by Gadamer gives the interpreter a "monopoly of truth" by modelling the interpretation upon its application based on the era of the interpreter.

At this point, Gadamer responds to Betti saying that he is not presenting a methodology of how one is to interpret and arrive at an understanding, but is only describing what actually is happening during the activity of interpretation and those variables that need to be considered as part and parcel of the process of interpretation, and to highlight those variables the scientific empirical method misses out, such as considering the roles of historicity and prejudice, and not what Betti considered as what ought to happen.⁴⁰

In his critique of Gadamer's stipulation that an interpreter is considered to be always a child of his time and never able to interpret text as it was intended to be understood by its creator and prescriber, Betti attempts to merge the gap between the interpreter and the epoch of the text through a reception: "Another interpretive attitude is

³⁸ Wright, "On a general theory of interpretation: the Betti-Gadamer dispute in legal hermeneutics," 193.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Regan, "Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics: Concepts of reading, understanding and interpretation," *Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy* 4, (December 2012), 301.

necessitated when legal and institutional forms pass from one historical locus to another through the process known as reception. Assimilation, reform, transformation, integration, tradition, and renaissance are all phenomena at work in different epochs among different societies, bringing about encounters, exchanges, and even mutual sharing in one continuity of life and development. In the face of historical vicissitudes, such continuity among civilisational forms presents two aspects: one concerns the transmission of a spiritual patrimony from one generation to the next in the same historical locus or, should that locus change, its transfer from one national community to another; the second concerns the unbroken chain whereby such transmission takes place, through those subject to it and those that enforce it.”⁴¹

What can be understood here is that Betti believed that future generations will always be inheritors of the concepts of the past to be able to understand the forms of what they create with objectivity. Betti considered reception to be a collaborative exchange from one generation to another and, through a dialectical process, between different civilisations, but still to have some affinity between each other.

Betti also believes that correctness of understanding may be able to reach objectivity away from subjectivity by interpreting precisely text *per se*, through which the interpreter would be able to also gain insight into the spirit that created the form being interpreted, although Betti highlights that achieving this objectivity would be contingent on the form being representative.⁴² According to Betti, it is through the connecting chain of spirits throughout history that a spirit of the future can reach a mutual understanding with the spirit of the past. Through this, Betti attempts to resolve any distortion in a common understanding of a given textual representation when interpreters attempt to understand what those of the past have prescribed as representative forms of what

⁴¹ Betti, “On a General Theory of Interpretation: The Raison d’Etre of Hermeneutics,” 263.

⁴² Wright, “On a general theory of interpretation: the Betti-Gadamer dispute in legal hermeneutics,” 194.

they wished to impart. There is some truth in this, given that it is obvious that texts that have been preserved in the languages spoken in the past are today still understood as they were, disregarding some differences in the idioms and cultural sayings used by those of the past, differences which would need to be taken into account by the interpreter.

4. Highlighting Different Standpoints

There are Muslims thinkers who are very critical of the implementation of hermeneutics. However, when referring to methodical hermeneutics, we do not mean the implementation of the linguistic theories and ideas presented in phonology and linguistics.

We do not mean the application of the main misleading elements of hermeneutics! If they were to be fully applied, it may lead to the denial of the whole Qur'an and divine revelation, which would be a disaster for the future of the fields of Muslim intellectualism and civilisation. These Muslim thinkers claim further that although the Qur'an's authority remains unquestionable, there is a risk that serious consequences would arise if modern hermeneutic principles infiltrated the *ijtihādī* approved approach. We are about to highlight what from the hermeneutical discussions can be implemented in *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

4.1. An Elaboration

Considering the mentioned typology, the main questions of this article are: what approach of hermeneutics can be used in Islamic studies? Can there be a relationship between hermeneutics and the common method of understanding in Islamic texts? It seems that the answer to these questions can be found in the history of applying hermeneutics as well as the current method of understanding texts in Islamic studies. Using these discussions, a base can be found for the relationship between philosophical and mythological hermeneutics.

4.2 The History of Applying Hermeneutics in Islamic Sciences

The word hermeneutics cannot be traced in various branches of Islamic teachings, and Islamic scholars, including interpreters, philosophers, theologians, and *uṣūlīs*, have not formally mentioned such a discussion. However, mechanisms similar to hermeneutics have been used by Islamic scholars throughout history for understanding and perceiving Islamic texts for interpretation and the science of canonical scholarship.

Islamic sciences have a vast relationship with understanding and interpreting religious texts in branches such as Islamic jurisprudence, the science of canonical scholarship, theology, and interpretation. Islamic scholars studying religious texts follow a special interpretation theory which is accepted and common among them. Therefore, discussions that are like hermeneutics are traditionally mentioned more prevalently in two cases.

First: The science of canonical scholarship is an introductory discipline in Islamic jurisprudence which has principles that are used in inferring religious verdicts from the Qur'an and traditions. A large section of this science is related to issues about understanding text and governing rules for understanding religious texts, part of which is called "word discussions" and is typically studied from three aspects: the general rules of the way of implication of text and its manifestation; the means of confirmation of text formation and religious reason; and the validity of text referent, documentation, and justification of manifestation. All of these comprise a kind of methodological hermeneutic discussion which has been used from the formation of the science of canonical scholarship to the present.⁴³

From the viewpoint of the science of canonical scholarship, achieving fixed meaning is possible by reconstructing the author's life and mentality for the interpreter. This is plausible, considering humans' established tradition that the appearance of speech is sufficient for aim, and if there

⁴³ Kadhmi Khorasani, *Modhafar*, 1986.

is no current context or inferential context, its contrary possibilities will not be considered. The *uṣūlīs* believe that the relationship between word and meaning and the criteria for meaningfulness of a word is determined in the process of “establishment”, and the meaning of words depends on the position of one who makes the establishment and the custom of the wise ones. Thus, if author or theologian wants to leave this restriction and apply meaning other than the accepted meaning of the word, they must restrict it with the phrases “current context”, “inferential context”, or “rationality” (Larijani, 1993). Thus, although text potentially has the possibility of pluralistic meanings, if the reader concludes that the meaning of the text is what the author really means, the text has the affirmative meaning. It is clear that *uṣūlīs* accept that there is the possibility of error when one wants to discover the author’s purpose, and they accept that there is the possibility of a mismatch between the valid interpretation and the author’s purpose of text through text. Considering practical tradition, however, which is common among humans, the validity of guessed meaning, that is the appearance of text, is mentioned where the achievement of fixed meaning is possible. Custom considers the appearance of text to be enough to express the author’s purpose and does not take into consideration its contrary possibility.⁴⁴

Second: In the discipline of interpretation, interpreters also deal with topics regarding the quality of interpretation and understanding of the Holy Qur’an, and these topics are also hermeneutic. The way ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī has interpreted the Qur’an in *al-Mīzān* can be mentioned as an example. By interpreting the Qur’an by the Qur’an, he has brought up a different method of interpretation, the theory of which contradicts what the Akhbārīs say. The Akhbārīs believe that Qur’anic verses are not independent in indicating purpose, and that the Qur’an is different from custom conversations. They further hold that Allah has not intended to express His purpose through Qur’anic

⁴⁴ Hadavi Tehrani, 1998.

verses themselves, but the real interpretation is done by the help of narrations from the Infallibles. This kind of interpretation theorisation, which is the base of a variety of Qur'an interpretation methods, is a kind of hermeneutic discussion. Some mystics tend to subjectively interpret the Qur'an and do not restrict themselves to the verbal appearance of the Qur'anic verse. This, too, is a hermeneutic approach which is also common among some Christian scholars.

5. The Common Method of Understanding Texts in Islamic Studies

Considering the history of the use of hermeneutics in Islamic studies and focusing on Islamic scholars' methodology when they face any text, we can base the common method of understanding text in Islamic studies on these doctrines:

First, the interpreter wants to discover the meaning of the text.

Second, every text has some fixed and ultimate meaning that is the author's intended purpose.

Third, the meaning of every text is the author's purpose, and to express it, they use words; this is an objective matter which the interpreter tries to achieve.⁴⁵

Fourth, the meaning that the interpreter wants to perceive is an objective, fixed, and unchanging matter, totally unaffected by the interpreter's mentality. In other words, an interpreter sometimes mistakenly does not perceive its truth, and sometimes they do perceive it. In both cases, meaning is a fixed and unchanging matter, and the interpreter's mentality has no effect on it. According to this perception, religious texts have divine messages for man, and an interpreter's aim is to perceive the real purpose of the lawmaker.⁴⁶

Fifth, religious texts have divine messages for man, and the interpreter's aim is to perceive the messages that the author intends.

⁴⁵ Larijani, 1993.

⁴⁶ Waezi, 2011.

Sixth, the common way of understanding, which is the literal appearance of text for achieving meaning, is used to attain that aim, because the author has mentioned their purpose through words. Whether words indicate meaning depends on the establishment of words, rational and conventional rules, and the principles of conversation, which are observed by the author and the addressee in every language. Violation of these rational rules of mutual understanding, which can be recognised and written, causes disorder in understanding speech.⁴⁷

Seventh, the ideal situation for an interpreter is that they achieve a certain and reliable understanding which is in accordance with the author's serious purpose. Such understanding is not always available, however; in cases when text clearly indicates concept, this situation is attained, and such text is called "*naṣṣ*". In cases other than *naṣṣ*, which are called "*ẓawāhir*", the interpreter's uncertainty about whether the perceived meaning is the very ultimate meaning of the text does not connote that the interpretation is not valid or that there is no criteria for differentiating valid interpretation from invalid interpretation. In the interpretation of texts, especially religious ones, the interpreter tries to achieve a "valid" understanding as well as a reliable and authoritative interpretation which is methodical and achieved while the rational principles governing conversation are maintained. If such is the case, then the interpretation is valid and confirmed in common traditions among Islamic scholars.⁴⁸

Eighth, when one wants to understand apparent (*ẓawāhir*) meaning and texts other than explicitly indicated words (*naṣṣ*), there will be some disagreement. In instances of disagreement in interpretation of text, the interpretation is "author-centred" and "text-centred" and there is no place for "interpreter-centred" interpretation.⁴⁹

Ninth, the distance between the text interpreter time and the time of

⁴⁷ Javadi Amoli, 1993.

⁴⁸ Waezi, 2011.

⁴⁹ Larijani, 1993.

text writing does not prevent the interpreter from achieving the meaning of religious texts, and text can be objectively understood despite this distance; language changes in the passing of time are not so extreme as to complicate understanding or in bringing the literal appearance of the text into contradiction with the author's intended meaning.

Tenth, the interpreter must try his best to perceive the message of the text. Understating text is "author-centred" and "text-centred". The interpreter intends to perceive the author's purpose through the implication of the text. Thus, that interpreter's mentality intervening in the determination of the message content is not justified and leads to "arbitrary interpretation". Any theorisation for interpretation which leads to "interpreter-centredness" and justifies the interpreter's mentality intervening in understanding the text is contrary to the accepted way of text interpretation. According to the traditional way of understanding text, the interpreter plays the role of message receiver and has no role in the formation of the message.⁵⁰

Eleventh, the traditional reading of text opposes "interpretation relativism", which is the belief that there is no criteria for differentiating correct understanding from incorrect understanding, and understanding which is according to reality cannot be distinguished from wrong understanding.⁵¹

The common way of understanding text does not permit every interpretation. Religious *naşş* texts have only one interpretation and understanding and religious appearance (apparent meaning); although it has possibilities of interpretation, these possibilities are limited. In understanding apparent meanings and texts that are not *naşş*, there is some disagreement regarding understanding; however, this disagreement is a limited area, and the text, not the interpreter's mentality, determines its area. In other words, in some disagreements regarding interpretations of a text, the interpretation is still "author-

⁵⁰ Khosropanah, 2002.

⁵¹ Waezi, 2011.

centred” and “text-centred”, not “interpreter-centred”.

6. Philosophical Hermeneutics and Islamic Studies

Philosophical hermeneutics creates the grounds upon which challenges can be brought to the common way of understanding text; thus, common religious cognition will be doubted. The effect of philosophical hermeneutics on the field of religious and Islamic thinking is neither direct, nor does it provide a new way of understanding text. Philosophical hermeneutics is not a religious approach with special teachings and affects religious thinking only through the challenges it brings to the common way of understanding text. Philosophical hermeneutics provides the analysis of the essence of understanding text, its condition of doing so, and the interpretation aims, which is seriously contrary to the common way of understanding text in Islamic studies, and opens the way for new criticisms.

Discussions on philosophical hermeneutics, which were widespread especially in the 20th century, were concentrated on whether a definite interpretation of a text can be declared as the only possible, correct, and valid interpretation, and is there a meaning for *naşş*, which is contrary to appearances (apparent meaning), as former generations thought? No text has a unique interpretation. All texts could have different interpretations and readings. No text can be “*naşş*”.⁵²

7. Conflicts of Philosophical Hermeneutics with the Common Way of Understanding Text in Islamic Studies

7.1. Epistemic Relativism

Philosophical hermeneutics does not accept fixed and definite meanings; it contains epistemic relativism.⁵³

This view is not accepted in Islamic epistemology. Indeterminateness

⁵² Mojtabeh Shabestari, 2002.

⁵³ Nietzsche et al., 2007.

of meaning in interpretation of religious texts leads interpretation to a deviated path, and no correct meaning is achieved. In philosophical hermeneutics, relativism asserts that the interpreter's horizon of meaning, prejudgements, and presuppositions affect the process of understanding, and while philosophical hermeneutics propagates relativism, it inflicts its primary damage on the theory itself, for it leaves no criteria for proving its claim. When every understanding is relative and fluid, the principles and teachings of philosophical hermeneutics cannot also be considered as absolute and non-relative. In fact, when hermeneutic relativism is applied to itself and includes itself, a lack of its inclusion is required, and when it is confirmed, its contradiction is proved.⁵⁴

Relativism is in conflict with Islam's comprehensiveness and finality, and it makes commitment to divine orders and abandonment of forbidden things ineffective. Moreover, hermeneutic relativism cannot be used equally in all religious conclusions, because not all religious texts are of the same style and register. Decisive ones, allegorical ones, reality, and appearance cannot use hermeneutics in the same way. Religion has some decisive points and fixed matters the concepts of which both the nomad Arab and the contemporary intellectual Arab may share almost identically. The evidence for this claim is a ḥadīth from Prophet Muḥammad which declared that the legislated forbidden and lawful, will remain forbidden and lawful until Resurrection Day.⁵⁵

In social and political aspects, relativism and philosophical hermeneutics will have many evil consequences. For example, if there are no criteria for differentiating a correct interpretation from an incorrect one, Imam 'Alī's interpretation cannot be discriminated from the interpretation of Mu'āwiya and the Khawārij. Worse yet, if hermeneutic relativism is accepted, it is possible that the rightful aspect of religion could turn into its opposite aspect!

⁵⁴ Alikhani, 2007.

⁵⁵ Ṣaffār, 1984.

Another problem that the acceptance of hermeneutic relativism causes is that it makes the sending of messengers, divine books, and divine guidance futile if religious requirements are rejected and necessary beliefs and verdicts of religion are doubted.⁵⁶

7.2. Centrality of the Interpreter

Philosophical hermeneutics considers understanding text to be the product of the combination of the interpreter's and the text's meaning horizons. Therefore, the intervention of the interpreter's mentality in understanding a text is not problematic, but it is an inevitable reality regarding understanding a text, and must be accepted as such. Philosophical hermeneutics puts emphasis on the endlessness of understanding, impossibility of objective understanding of a text, namely the achievement of understanding according to reality, and thus, the acceptance of all understandings,⁵⁷ because the interpreter's mentality and prejudgement are conditions of achieving understanding and their pre-knowledge inevitably intervenes in every understanding. The philosophical hermeneutic way to interpret a text is to consider all pre-knowledge useful and to advise the interpreter to use it, for with no prior knowledge, an interpreter cannot be in agreement with the author. In such case, the horizons are never placed in an equal combination.⁵⁸

Therefore, philosophical hermeneutics is "interpreter-centred" and not seeking the author's purpose; thus, ultimate understanding is not possible. Consequently, multiplicity in various readings of religious text leads to ignorance of the author's purpose and blocks any kind of criticism of understanding in Islamic studies.⁵⁹ Understanding is the result of the fusion of horizons, and this fusion provides endless possibilities. This unbounded relativism, which justifies all

⁵⁶ Sobhani, 2006.

⁵⁷ Ahmadi, 1996.

⁵⁸ Bleicher, 1980.

⁵⁹ Bleicher, 1980.

understandings and introduces the action of understanding as endless, provides no criteria or rules for assessing the action of understanding, and so it devalues understanding and justifies all understandings that everyone has.

In philosophical hermeneutics, the purpose is not to understand the “author’s purpose”. An author is one of the readers of text, and there is no difference between them and other interpreters and readers of text. The interpreter places themselves in the author’s shoes and considers the author as one of the readers of the text, and the author’s concept has no preference over other concepts. Therefore, the author’s purpose and intention are valueless.⁶⁰ In this case, there is no correct, valid understanding, and when the author’s intention is omitted from the process of reading and understanding text, there is no criteria for judging a valid, correct, and better understanding, for indeed the words would be nonsense.

With religious texts, for example about worship, and regarding all religious verdicts, there is always the possibility of a new reading. A new reading of the meaning of naṣṣ texts, which are about the number of prayer units, can be provided and, according to it, morning prayer can be performed in four units, for there is no base for judging understanding! Even a lawmaker has no right to judge it, for he is, at most, an interpreter like other interpreters.

More importantly, there is no difference between Prophet Muḥammad’s understanding of divine guidance and human existence and its origination and aims, and the understanding of people such as Abū Jahl and Abū Sufyān. Therefore, the door of guidance and salvation will be closed to mankind forever, for in such case, speaking about matters such as guidance, aim, destiny, and the unseen, is meaningless.

In Sermon 133 of *Nahj al-Balagha*, Imam ‘Alī says:

The Qur’an can speak with you. With the Qur’an the path of truth can be found and heard. Some verses of the Qur’an interpret other

⁶⁰ Palmer, 1969.

verses [and it is not so that all presumptions that are out of the text are imposed on the text]. All the book's verses can equally introduce Allah and protect one who acts according to them against dangers.

In the common way of understanding a text in Islamic studies, although some pre-known things are necessary for understanding the text, the process of understanding is not interrupted by them.⁶¹ Information that is presumptive and uncertain can lead to interpretations based on personal biases and a misunderstanding of the author's intended message. It is important to consider this and avoid relying solely on this type of information in the process of understanding. When it is accepted that presumptions and mentalities intervene in the interpreter's understanding, there will be no criteria or rules for judging the validity of the understanding of the text.⁶²

In Islamic studies, no evidence for the acceptance of endless action of understanding and consequently the validity of all understandings can be found, but verses and narrations emphasise emergence of superior understanding and the way to its achievement.

7.3. Dismissing the Validity of the Apparent Meaning of Words

In philosophical hermeneutics, any kind of fixed, ultimate, or unchangeable understanding of text is not possible (Waezi, 2011). While in the common way of understanding text in Islamic studies and especially in the science of canonical scholarship, the main principle is relying on and accepting the apparent meaning of words – the interpreter cannot ascribe to a verse or narration a meaning in opposition to its apparent meaning, without having a certain indication and context.

In the next stage, the appearance of words in the time of the lawmaker

⁶¹ O ye who believe! if ye fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong).

⁶² Khosropanah, 2002.

and for addressees of that time is also important. Accordingly, in the interpretation of Qur'anic verses, the circumstances of revelation of the verses are crucial in understanding them. For example, if the lawmaker orders, "Then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and your hands [with it]," the appearance of the word *ṣaʿd* (earth) at the advent of Islam and for its addressees must be specified by evidence and proofs, not by its 20th century meaning.⁶³

7.4. Continuity of Understanding

In philosophical hermeneutics, understanding has a cyclic structure which is formed in interpretation according to the interpreter's particular viewpoint and his special way of understanding. According to this theory, prejudgements are inevitable and indelible. Consequently, continuity is formed in understanding, for an interpreter's view and vision is always stable and cannot leave discovered current meaning behind and go forward.⁶⁴

This attribute is also not acceptable in the common way of understanding Islamic studies, for in Islam, the understanding of many divine concepts depends on one's being pious, having belief, and being sincere, and as much as these matters increase in the interpreter, understanding also becomes more complete and nearer to the truth. Take for example verse Q 8:29: "If you fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion [to judge between right and wrong]," and the Prophet's ḥadīth: "One who is sincere for the sake of Allah, Allah grants him wisdom which can be expressed by his tongue."⁶⁵

Considering these examples, it can be concluded that the continuity of understanding emphasised by philosophical hermeneutics is not accepted in Islam, and discovering the meaning of Islam's teachings depends greatly on piety and sincerity.

⁶³ Haghighat, 1998.

⁶⁴ Bleicher, 1980 Bleicher, 1980.

⁶⁵ Payandeh, 2003.

8. Methodological Hermeneutics in Islamic Studies

Now, by considering the rejection of the acceptance of philosophical hermeneutics in the current way of understanding text in Islamic studies, we deal with the question of whether methodological hermeneutics is in agreement with the current way of understanding text in Islamic studies.

It seems that methodological hermeneutics, which proposes new horizons of text interpretation, does not have the challenges philosophical hermeneutics does and does not cause serious problems in Islamic studies, for it is loyal to the accustomed ways of interpretation. Thus, by considering the current way of understanding in Islamic studies and by having recourse to methodological hermeneutics as a way of understanding a text, in Islamic studies methodological hermeneutics is an accepted way that has the following components:

8.1. The Necessity of Differentiation between Various Ways of Interaction with Text

The main aim of referring to text is to perceive textual meaning. Readers find various matters in text and provide them, all of which are not “expression of text purpose” but are “about the meaning of text”. This demarcation must be maintained. Interpretation particularly means explaining the purpose of the author in the arrangement of words and inspiration of speech.⁶⁶

8.2. Necessity of Centrality of Author’s Purpose in All Meanings Being Ascribed to Text

Some ways of interaction with text, such as criticism, judgement, and comparison, do not lead to the ascription of meaning to text, but they are about the content of textual meaning after perceptual meaning. In such interactions, centrality of an author’s purpose as the base of

⁶⁶ Sobhani, 2006.

these interactions has no meaning. However, because the current way of understanding text in Islamic studies dictates that “text has a certain meaning” and “this meaning is established free from the process of reading text” and “the factor that determines meaning is hidden in an author’s purpose”, various kinds of interaction with text must aim to discover the meaning that an author intends.

8.3. Avoiding Free Reading of Text and Binding to Methodological Interpretation

Believing in language communication for the sake of making an author’s purpose understood does not provide an opportunity for “interpreter-centrality”, and believing in the existence of a fixed meaning in text, which is independent from the reader and their reading, puts emphasis on observing the rules of the common way of understanding text in Islamic studies. This presumption, that language is the means of communicating, understanding, and explaining used by wise and ordinary people, as well as speaker and author’s conformance to the customary way of understanding and explaining and to rational rules of language communication, leads to the matter that in the process of understanding and reading text, the interpreter must not violate the rational rules of understanding and explaining, and must not apply personal taste or uncustomary conceptions to text.⁶⁷

8.4. Differences in Understanding must Conform to Regulations

The criteria of understanding text is an author’s aim and intention; disagreement about understanding a matter is not unregulated and optional (according to the philosophical hermeneutic approach), but it happens when interpreters try to achieve a common, single, and certain meaning. Because of some problems in understanding the objective meaning, disagreement occurs. In philosophical hermeneutics,

⁶⁷ Waezi, 2011.

disagreement is caused by the reader and his mentality, while in the common way of understanding in Islamic studies, disagreement about understanding text is mainly related to the matters which are outside the mentality and will of the interpreter.

Some disagreements about understanding that arise when Islamic texts are to be interpreted develop from the following:

First, letters in language are used with various meanings and sometimes their usages are not clear.⁶⁸

Second, some words and terms may have the same letters (homonyms) or can be correctly used with several meanings.⁶⁹

Third, the methodologies of interpreting holy text are sometimes different.⁷⁰

Fourth, unjustified presumptions of discourse of the interpreter may intervene in the understanding of the text.⁷¹

Therefore, the common way of understanding text in Islamic studies is carried out according to the discovered pre-known (such as Arabic literature and linguistic rules), and the interrogative pre-known (theoretically and practically new questions which the interpreter encounters and tries to answer through religious texts). The interpreter must have personal abilities, faith, honesty, and the required information, and they must seek truth so that they do not provide an

⁶⁸ For example, the letter ‘ب’ has various meanings. In the verse “Rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles,” it can mean “discrimination” or “emphasis.”

⁶⁹ For example, the word “قُرء” in the Arabic language means both “طهر” (purity of woman) and “حيض” (menstruation).

⁷⁰ For example, some interpreters of the Qur’an insist that narrations from the Infallibles should be considered in the interpretation of the Qur’an. Some other interpreters hold that the principle of Qur’anic interpretation is that the Qur’an must be interpreted by the Qur’an itself.

⁷¹ Some theologians believe in the embodiment of Allah; they attribute this meaning to some verses of the Qur’an, which is a kind of interpretation according to personal opinion.

interpretation which is based on personal view and opinion.⁷²

8.5. Using Personal Opinion to Derive Legal Verdicts while Ignoring the *Naṣṣ* is Forbidden

Both the interpreter and the reader must have recourse to the meaning of *naṣṣ* and they must not deviate from the clear meaning of *naṣṣ* according to *ijtihād*, which is against *naṣṣ*.

8.6. Necessity of Preferring Clearer (*aḥḥar*) to Apparent (*ẓāhir*) Meaning

The interpreter is obliged to seek the most possible meaning in apparent meanings, for such meaning more likely finds and narrates the author's purpose than other meanings. The reason for this is also the custom of the wise of understanding and explaining, in that they never abandon a stronger meaning for the sake of a weaker one, because paying attention to the apparent meaning is grounded in the power of discovering and narrating an author's purpose.⁷³

8.7. Necessity of Conformity with Valid Reading

It is justified to distinguish valid from invalid interpretation. It is not that all understandings of a text are valid or that principally, by abandoning the matter of "validness" (like a hermeneutic approach of interpretation), the base of this distinguishing and difference of understanding is considered inevitable. Of course, it must be noted that invalid interpretation is not limited to personal-based interpretation, but, perhaps, an understanding of a text is invalid not because one imposes meaning on the text, but because they fail to understand the author's purpose or inaccurately recognise evidence that connotes indicated meaning.

The criteria for validity of understanding based on the common

⁷² Alikhani, 2007.

⁷³ Sajedi, 2004.

way of understanding text in Islamic studies includes the following preliminaries:

First, because the appearance of a text shows the author's meaning and purpose, the wise will pay attention to it and consider it valid. Then, appearance of discourse is a way to perceive an author's real purpose.

Second, the typical and not the personal appearance of understanding of an author's discourse is argument. That is, the audience of a speech must understand meaning, not the personal reasons and concerns that confirm meaning.

Third, the possibility of nonconformity of the typical appearance and custom appearance to the author's purpose ceases to exist, because the means of this possible nonconformity, due to the rational principles governing language, cease to exist. For example, it is rational to allow for the possibility of negligence on the part of the author, but it is also inconceivable that an author did not have a serious purpose in writing the text.

Fourth, typical appearance is mostly conjectural; only in some limited cases, which are called *naṣṣ*, does it mean purpose. Thus, if typical appearance is the linchpin for valid understanding, this criterion is conjectural and uncertain.⁷⁴

It is understood from these preliminaries that verifying the understanding and interpretation of text is consistent with typical appearance and is, by itself, the unique criterion of distinguishing a valid interpretation from an invalid one. Typical appearance refers to the attempt an interpreter makes to determine the apparent meaning of text on the condition that the evidence is exact, recorded, and methodological, which is appreciated by custom and by the wise, who consider it as the discoverer of meaning. If this determination of the apparent is in conflict with other interpreters' interpretation and understanding of text, an interpreter is not condemned; however, it is believed that although an author's serious purpose has been fixed

⁷⁴ Waezi.

and unpolarised, there is no certain or definite criterion for checking which understanding is in exact accordance with reality. In such case, various interpreters' methodological understanding and interpretation are considered valid for themselves and for those who accept their evidence and reasons as enough.⁷⁵

8.8. Avoiding Esotericism and Algorism of Text

The apparent meaning of discourse (typical appearance) is argumentative and valid, and interpreting discourse as allegory and mystified requires evidence and correspondence, according to which apparent meaning cannot be maintained.⁷⁶

8.9. Necessity of Having Access to the Decisive and Interpreting the Allegorical Meaning According to the Decisive

This factor is peculiar to perceiving the Holy Qur'an. In the science of canonical scholarship, the explicit and the apparent implication of the Qur'an is considered to be of the decisive, and the allegorical is attributed to the verses that are semantically abstract and ambiguous, that tolerate various meanings, and have no clear meaning. In these cases, allegorical verses must be understood on the strength of decisive verses, according to *uṣūlī* rules, and the common way of understanding text in Islamic studies.⁷⁷

9. What Can *Uṣūlīs* Learn from the Dispute between Gadamer and Betti?

In *uṣūl al-fiqh* specific to the Imāmī tradition, *uṣūlīs* take a much more literal approach to arrive at an understanding of the speaker's

⁷⁵ Hashemi Shahroodi, 1985.

⁷⁶ Saeedi Roshan, 2004.

⁷⁷ Hashemi Shahroodi, 1985.

intention in linguistic discussions (*mabāḥith al-alfāz*) of the divine textual sources, being the Holy Qur'an and the prophetic traditions (ḥadīth). These sources have been transmitted from generation to generation; nevertheless, they are considered authoritative because of the overarching context based on the theological belief that they have come from Allah and His Prophet. The Qur'an is considered to be certain in its source from Allah (*maqṭū' al-ṣudūr*), while investigation (*taḥqīq*) of both the chains of transmission (sanad) and the text (*matn*) of ḥadīth is undertaken. Nonetheless, there is no general guidance to establishing the context of the text or any consideration of the human agency of the interpreter of the text.

Therefore, some lessons can be learned from the Betti-Gadamer dispute regarding understanding and the effect of the human agency and the relativity that comes about when an *uṣūlī* undertakes textual interpretation.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ﴾

And We did not send any messenger except [speaking] in the language of his people to state clearly for them.⁷⁸

In this verse, we would like to emphasise that every messenger was sent speaking in the language of the people to whom he was sent so as to seek the clearest means of imparting the message of the revelation. The word "language" here would encompass culture, common concepts of the time, and environmental variables that would all need to be embodied in this "language" for the recipients of the message to be able to understand what is being delivered to them. This "language", for the means of clear statement, has many dimensions similar to that which Gadamer alluded, in that when it comes to interpreting a text, the concepts of the epoch in which the text was written must be accessed and implemented in the mind of the interpreter for a more precise

⁷⁸ Q 14:4.

understanding of what is intended, and to arrive at the subject matter (*al-mawḍūʿ al-aṣlī*) to which the original text is postulated to indicate and refer.

Although contrary to this, another lesson to be learned from Gadamer is that the interpreter needs to be able to keep in mind the biases and personal prejudices one may be harbouring that could affect how something is interpreted. Thus, per Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, the impact of an interpreter's own agency in the process of interpretation needs to be acknowledged. If one is able only to enact what they have been taught of Arabic language, logic, Qur'anic sciences, and history with no regard to the way the *uṣūlī*'s human agency is selecting and employing these sciences in the interpretation of text, then this would be deception.

There is also a need to acknowledge from this debate that general rules should be developed to more precisely arrive at the context of a given text that is under interpretation. Although, as jurists recognise, the further away we move from the era of revelation, the more difficult it is to be able to correctly arrive at the context, especially when the historicity of the recollections of the epochs of the time may not be precise, and hence collating the concepts of the epoch surrounding the text is difficult; however, it would still justify the due diligence *uṣūlīs* take to be able to correctly define the context of a text with what Gadamer has highlighted.

Coming to the points highlighted by Betti in his critique of Gadamer, objectivity can be reached if the form of a text is representative of the intention of the speaker. However, this is contingent upon the forms being representative to begin with, which is not the case with many ḥadīth that are at the mercy of the precision of the narrator in correctly representing what they have heard or observed, which would be very difficult to guarantee. Therefore, in a situation where forms may not be representative, it is necessary to draw upon many sources. Nevertheless, in this regard, the human agency of the interpreter is the means of how the text is "brought alive" as per Gadamer's words, and is, therefore,

still subject to opinion. Maybe the traditional method of individual interpretation can be resolved by means of collective interpretation, so that a common interpretation is reached in a matter where the biases of an individual interpreter may be dissolved. This does not take away, however, from the sociological phenomenon of “collective consciousness”, where there may be a risk of the agency of a collection of interpreters to hold collective biases, which may further be mitigated through having interpreters from diverse backgrounds.

This may, albeit, take away the ability of those who are closer in culture and norms (or the “recipients” in Betti’s words) of the culture of the text being interpreted to be involved in the conclusions reached by the interpreter collective, or those who are closer in culture to the text being interpreted may be given priority in voice over a larger group.

10. Conclusion

As mentioned, throughout history, Muslim scholars have used mechanisms and methods similar to hermeneutics to understand, perceive, and interpret Islamic texts and texts in disciplines such as principles of religious jurisprudence and interpretation. Many of these attempts have been carried out in the framework of the rules of understanding, interpretation, deducing verdicts, questioning text, and to uncover the lawmaker’s view and understanding in these cases.

From this whole discussion, it can be understood that agreements between methodological hermeneutics and the common way of textual understanding an Islamic text do exist. These agreements do not dictate that it is not practically possible to understand text contrary to an author’s purpose or without an author’s purpose; reader-centred interpretation, personal-based interpretation, and semantically-free play with text are imagined and possible. The purpose of agreement is that by considering the common way of understanding text in Islamic studies, a kind of hermeneutic method for understanding text can be achieved, the elements of which are “an attempt to perceive text

meaning (not about text meaning)", "the centrality of discovering the author's purpose", "objectivity in understanding text (non-centrality of interpreter and paying attention to the author in the process of understanding)", "the regularity of understanding text according to inquisitiveness and derived pre-known things", "taking recourse to naṣṣ against ijtihād that is not based on naṣṣ", "preferring the semantical possibility of a clearer one over a clear one", "committing to a valid interpretation which is based on its typical appearance (avoidance of esotericism)", and "taking recourse to the decisive while interpreting the allegorical with the help of the decisive".

Using a hermeneutic method in Islamic studies also results in the centrality of the author's purpose being found in interpretation and emphasis on the matter that each text has a real meaning, i.e. one fixed by the author's intention and purpose. This fixed semantic limitation is the realm of real meaning of text, which must be recognised as the main aim of interpretational encounters with text, because denying the relationship between the main and real meaning of a text and an author's purpose, in fact, means that no real or main meaning for that text exists. Instead, possible and probable meanings and personal-based interpretation are allowed to be in place of "fixed" meaning. Then, using hermeneutic knowledge which is not relative and believes in the genuineness of text, is not rejected in Islamic studies. Hermeneutics can be accepted as a method for understanding religious texts and doing research in Islamic studies and be reconstructed according to the ways of Islamic interpretation.

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Al-Qalam Journal



BOOK REVIEWS

Islam, Modernity and a New Millennium: Themes from a Critical Rationalist Reading of Islam

Written by Professor Ali Paya

Review by Maleeha Abdullah (MA)

Modernity is a complex and fluid ideology comprised of a set of philosophical, cultural, political, and sociological circumstances, and is a movement that touches the majority of Muslims in the present day. Often, it is thought that it is only Muslims that live in western states who are presented with these ideas, but with the rise of globalisation, technology, and the digital space – innovations fuelled themselves by modern forces – there are very few Muslims in any state or country that are unaffected by modernity and its products.

This leads to a well-known conundrum: how do members of the religion of Islam – a religion that was formalised many centuries ago – interact with “the new” and “the modern”? How does Islam shape the response of an individual who wishes to remain firmly attached to their beliefs as they know them, in the wake of contemporary issues not encountered by the exegetes of their Holy Book, the Qur’an (i.e. the Prophet and Imams), and thus not discussed by them? Should modern ideas be accepted, or are they fundamentally incompatible with God’s word? Is there a third (or fourth ...) option?

It is in this complex arena that emerges the work of Dr Ali Paya, a seasoned philosophical thinker, in a compilation of articles in the book, *Islam, Modernity and a New Millennium: Themes from a Critical Rationalist Reading of Islam*, published by Routledge in 2018, and is available in both hardback and paperback.

Dr Paya has many years of philosophical study, writing, and teaching to bring to the arena that is Islam vis-à-vis modernity. These experiences are, however, combined with a unique ideological worldview. Dr Ali

Paya – as is evidenced from the title of the book in question – takes a critical rationalist reading of Islam, and thus of modernity itself. This is a unique position for a Muslim philosophical thinker to take: the present author has not found other Shīʿī thinkers to view the religion of Islam from a critical rationalist lens. Thus, Dr Paya appears to be unique in this regard, as he himself suggests in the book. In logical succession, this places Dr Paya's position towards Islam and modernity as equally unique, and worthy of encountering and reflecting over.

What is it to view the world from a critical rationalist lens? It is to be a realist – one who believes in an accessible reality outside of oneself – and not a sceptic. However, it is to see all knowledge, beliefs, and ideas as no more than conjectural, capable of being infinitely critiqued and refined, in an attempt to get closer to reality. It is an attitude that promotes curiosity, dialogue, and constant refinement of one's beliefs, but rejects certainty, dogma, and superiority of belief.

Equipped with the critical rationalist approach, Dr Paya turns towards some of the complex ideas that modernity has to offer, in search of possible solutions. How does one approach the Qur'an, if the best they can obtain is conjectural knowledge – as discussed in Chapter 2? What benefit can religion – which often asserts its own advantage with regards to knowledge of the cosmos – have to a critical rationalist thinker who is constantly refining his worldview, a question posed in Chapter 3? How can a Muslim wrestle with the ideas of modern thinkers who suggest that religion is fundamentally incompatible with science (Chapter 3)? Can knowledge be Islamised (Chapter 4)? Is the Tāfīkī position tenable (Chapter 7)? What fuels religion-based violence, and how can a critical rationalist lens provide a bulletproof shield (Chapter 9)?

As previously mentioned, critical rationalism is an attitude that promotes curiosity, dialogue, and constant refinement of one's beliefs, but rejects certainty, dogma, and superiority of belief. This may surprise some readers: many may see this rejection of certainty to be at stark odds with the conviction and submission seen in dedicated Muslim

believers, and the exhortations of the Qur'an towards reaching certainty in their beliefs. Instead, Dr Paya reduces certainty to a psychological state of the individual, rather than an epistemic position that indicates that a belief corresponds to that external reality and truth.

However, it must be noted that from the critical rationalist lens, it is the belief or proposition that "can withstand serious criticism" (p. 200) that must be retained and nothing else. Thus, it is these "tests" of criticism that, if withstood successfully, increase the likelihood that a certain belief or proposition corresponds to external reality by refining it or increasing its validity, and bring that proposition closer to epistemic certainty (in other words, its truth-value).

It thus appears that Dr Paya rejects notions of epistemic certainty in favour of a worldview that ultimately strives to get closer to epistemic certainty, albeit recognising that the task may be arduous, and that there may be multiple levels in the process. The Qur'an recognises this same idea through its exhortation to different levels of certainty – *ilm al-yaqīn*, *ʿayn al-yaqīn*, and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, and recognises that few may be able to reach the higher levels.

This same idea can be used to discuss Dr Paya's rejection of justificationism. He describes that many philosophies are concerned with justifying, verifying, strengthening, validating, and defending propositions and standpoints. The critical rationalist rejects this entirely because each justification of a standpoint requires further justification (p. 18). However, one questions how the critical rationalist concludes that critical rationalism itself is a tenable position, if the possibility of justifying said position is rejected. Dr Paya makes suggestions that critical rationalism is acceptable because it may be rationally preferred (p. 18) to other ideologies, or that it can withstand substantial criticism (p. 200) – which appear to be justifications. Similarly, when discussing the role of religion and whether one can and should be religious, he also suggests that the critical rationalist may accept the conjecture of the existence of God because it gives them "a pragmatic edge against nihilism" (p. 57). These examples appear to be justifications of various

standpoints – a way of validating, strengthening, or defending these standpoints, even if they are only at the pragmatic level. Thus, it appears that in order to put forth a philosophical worldview, even critical rationalism, justification at some level is unavoidable.

This rejection of justificationism also contributes to Dr Paya's ideas on the sources of religious-based violence (Chapter 9); Dr Paya holds that the root of religious-based violence is the "bewitchment of justificationism" (p. 201), where individuals who feel justified in their doctrine will be ready to see others as inferior, leading to violence that they deem justified against the "other". As well as justification being unavoidable (as discussed in the previous paragraph), the other concern with the conclusion of this chapter is that it is a conclusion based on a few case studies of violent individuals, generalised to be the single cause for *all* religious violence. While it is probable that superiority of doctrine may contribute to many cases of violence, it must be questioned as to whether this is the largely single cause for *all* religious violence.

Having said this, Dr Paya's exhortations towards epistemic humility in light of the case studies discussed, and the importance of being willing to explore the existence of a spectrum of ideas in order to refine one's own standpoint and belief system (rather than holding arrogant superiority of one's standpoint), is an important conclusion that should equally be reflected on.

Perhaps one of the most formidable conjectures posed by Dr Paya in this book is the reassessing of the status of *fiqh* – jurisprudential law – in Shīʿī Islam (Chapter 5), where Dr Paya recapitulates the *faqīh* (jurist) as an engineer: skilful and adept in engineering solutions for puzzles posed by the practical lives of Muslims, but playing an entirely different role than the pure scientist or thinker who exists to further the knowledge of the human race. While this conception is stylistically portrayed and is not a unique idea in literature, it is also interspersed with unfavourable implications. For example, the reflection that engineers' implementations of technological laws to find solutions are informed by their own personal social, economic, and cultural considerations (p. 91)

is then also directed at the *fuqahā'* (jurists), who – while living in specific socioeconomic conditions – aim to find solutions for the betterment of Muslims globally, and that duty involves looking outward at the condition of Muslims globally, rather than looking inward at their own circumstances and what might fit those circumstances best. Further, Dr Paya constructs a distinction between “normal” jurists and “founding” jurists, admiring the latter for their innovation in finding solutions for issues that have no precedence (p. 94). In doing so, “normal” jurists – of which he mentions form the majority of jurists today – are seen to “simply” use, or at best gradually improve, existing solutions (i.e. laws of previous jurists) for known problems.

While innovation has its place in some areas of *fiqh*, particularly contemporary issues, considering it as the gold standard for approaching all legal issues in Islam overlooks a thousand years of jurisprudential tradition, in which the conclusions of great scholars and jurists (many of whom were also theologians, philosophers, and “thinkers”) bear significant weight in assessing the evidence for a particular legal edict. Disagreeing with them for the sake of innovation, particularly when the evidence suggests otherwise, would be disadvantageous to the Muslim community.

While this book touches upon contemporary ideas well known to many Muslims in the modern context, it is not for the faint-hearted; it is an extensively detailed philosophical paradigm that needs careful consideration. Complex epistemological and philosophical issues are discussed, and for those unfamiliar with deep-rooted and passionate debates on the nature of justification in epistemology, or ideas of epistemic certainty, correspondence and nominalism/realism may feel themselves to be wading through philosophical jargon with little practical relevance.

However, this is not the case: the reader must accept the need for a rudimentary understanding and interest in these theoretical issues in order to appreciate their relevance in the recapitulation of modern ideas in the practical realm. Further, while Dr Paya thoughtfully

characterises Muslim responses to modernity beyond the often-seen (and oversimplified) triad of “Accept”, “Reject”, and “Fuse” in the introduction of this book, detailing nine categories of responses with reference to archetypes for each, he spends considerably less time explicating what modernity *is* than what it *isn't*.

While his explanation that modernity is too complex a movement to define monolithically does not go unappreciated, for the philosophically unexperienced reader, there is not enough of a discussion on the tenets of modernity to feel that they have come to grips with the acute dilemma of a Muslim in the modern world. Thus, the reader is left not quite having grasped the enormity of the presence of modernity in their lives, and, depending on their level of understanding, may need preliminary reading into modernity and its products to fully appreciate the arguments made in this book.

The most interesting aspect of this work is that Dr Paya, having meticulously explicated his critical rationalist approach to religion and modernity, ultimately leaves his own work up for critique and refinement – living true to the critical rationalist creed. His reluctance to suggest the intellectual superiority of his own reading of Islam leaves it to the reader to assess the tenability of his position, and in this way holds his own work up to the rigorous standards of critical rationalism, allowing it to be critiqued.

This equally allows the reader to see his work as an effort towards the growth of knowledge, and a stepping stone for the reader to reach their own intellectual heights by critical assessment of these very ideas. It is a book that, through its writing, exhibits the merits of critical rationalism that Dr Paya advocates for: intellectually honest dialogue in the search of truth, a desire to contribute to the flourishing of knowledge, and an aspect of epistemic humility.

The Words of the Imams, Al-Shaykh Al-Ṣadūq and the Development of Twelver Shī'ī Ḥadīth Literature

Written by George Warner

Review by Mehdi Abdullah (MSc)

Ḥadīth compilations are a fundamental part of the sources available to Muslims: not only as part of their legal framework, but also in matters of theology and ethics. The compilations offer an abundance of guidelines, instructions, and advice to inform the lives of Muslims, assisting them in living a life they believe to be consistent with God's expectations of them. Readers of ḥadīth from both the laity and scholars, academic or seminarian, primarily engage with ḥadīth as tools to enable them to derive rulings and pass normative judgements, looking past the author of the ḥadīth collections. Considering Shaykh al-Ṣadūq plays a pivotal role in Shī'ī ḥadīth, both in terms of the ḥadīth collections he left behind and that he was an important Shī'ī scholar in the 4th century AH, Warner seeks to lay out an intellectual portrait of Shaykh al-Ṣadūq by engaging with his ḥadīth works not from the perspective of them as compilations, but as authored works written with intent and purpose. Through readings of selected ḥadīth works of al-Ṣadūq, he attempts to demonstrate the issues that occupied al-Ṣadūq's context and how he responded to those issues.

It is important to note that Warner does not attempt to engage with all of al-Ṣadūq's works, meaning his study is not exhaustive or representative of the entirety of al-Ṣadūq's ideas, beliefs, and methodologies; rather, he intends to engage in a relatively new approach to engaging with ḥadīth collections: compilation criticism. In this manner of investigation, an individual deals with multiple works of a selected author – analysing the structure of the compilations, the content and style of narrations, and other elements – to present an intellectual biography of said author. This can be an effective tool to bring the author to life. In what follows,

there is a brief overview of Warner's book, with emphasis on certain sections to further understand what Warner is attempting to do from an outsider's perspective to ḥadīth studies.

This book is composed of two parts, the first consisting of three chapters, and the second consisting of two chapters. In part one, Warner is "Placing al-Ṣadūq" in the context of "Living without an Imam" (Chapter 1), exploring his approach to legal theory (Chapter 2), and how al-Ṣadūq contributed to wider ḥadīth literature, beyond the theological and legal (Chapter 3). In part two, a more detailed reading of two theological ḥadīth collections, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* (Chapter 4) and *Kamāl al-dīn wa tamām al-ni'mah* (Chapter 5), is undertaken to explore al-Ṣadūq as an author, and not simply a compiler of ḥadīth.

In "Placing al-Ṣadūq", Warner clearly highlights the context in which al-Ṣadūq lived and wrote to be one where an Imam is no longer accessible for the Shī'a to ask any questions pertaining to religion, which puts the Shī'a in a similar position to the non-Shī'a in lacking a direct source of guidance. This is an important factor in understanding the shift from a reliance on the words of an Imam to developing tools to verify the authenticity of narrations and formulating rational arguments for some tenets and foundations of faith. Given that al-Ṣadūq lives in this period of transition, highlighting his role and impact on legal theory, ḥadīth literature, theology, as well as his function as a scholar, is of great importance, something which Warner examines both within a socio-political and scholarly context.

When dealing with al-Ṣadūq as a *faqīh* (jurist), Warner wisely explores *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh* in the context of the development of legal theory in the absence of the Imam. This is prudent firstly as this book is one of the four canonical books for Ja'fārī jurisprudence, but also because it is situated in a time when, as previously discussed, a transition is taking place from access to the Imams for legal matters, to losing that access. Warner highlights the style of the book being predominantly tradition based, much like the other books of al-Ṣadūq, with some rulings expressed in his own words. This allows a limited

reading into the narrators al-Ṣadūq considers reliable enough to narrate from, but does not expound on his “deeper standards” for evaluating the *asnād* (chains of transmission).

While Warner correctly places this section within the context of the development of legal theory in the absence of the Imam, it comes across as unstructured and perhaps out of place, namely because later in part two he deals with two theological texts independently in a more structured manner, laying out the macro structure of the respective books and elucidating on al-Ṣadūq as an author through relatable examples from the selected texts. He does not give the same regard for *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh*, which is arguably a more well-known text of al-Ṣadūq. Furthermore, given al-Ṣadūq is most well known as a *faqīh*, it can be argued that there would be added value in dealing with his jurisprudential texts, *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh*, *al-Muqniʿ*, and *ʿIlal al-sharāʾiʿ* in part two of this book with considerably more structure, exploring al-Ṣadūq’s jurisprudential attitudes and methodology. Perhaps this was considered out of the scope of the book by the author, but it would have added a further dimension nonetheless.

In part two, Warner surveys two theological texts – *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* and *Kamāl al-dīn* – in greater detail, both being apologetic works to respond to the challenges of his environment, rather than aimed at being representative of al-Ṣadūq’s own theological positions. In *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, al-Ṣadūq highlights two beliefs that the Shīʿa are falsely accused of holding, *tashbīh* and *jabr*, and so one of the tasks of the author is to nullify the perception that the Shīʿa subscribe to these ideologies. Warner chooses these two chapters in *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* to illustrate al-Ṣadūq’s skill as an author and his scholarly capabilities. In Warner’s reading of the chapter on *tashbīh*, he is able to demonstrate al-Ṣadūq’s ability to understand that dealing with this accusation has various dimensions: a broader one in which the style is more apologetic, and a more nuanced one where specific details need to be established regarding the nature of God, His attributes, and the relationship between the two. What can be further deduced is that, given the context al-Ṣadūq lived in and the

challenges that arose following the greater occultation, his approach in using ḥadīth to respond to accusations can be interpreted as an attempt to convey the theology of the Imams from whom the Shī'a take their understanding of God and subsequently establishing the Imams as the authoritative source for the Shī'a in creedal matters.

The nature and purpose of *Kamāl al-dīn* on the other hand, is a book entirely different in its function and audience, one where the existence of an Imam is presumed and built upon to establish the legitimacy of the Twelfth Imam, his occultation, and to finally assert his reappearance as fact. An interesting element noted by Warner is that al-Ṣadūq does not attempt to use rational argumentation to make his case. Rather, he utilises the words of previous prophets and Imams who mentioned the existence of the Twelfth Imam, his occultation, and reappearance. This, according to Warner, is a clear display of al-Ṣadūq's understanding of the propensities of his audience at the time, who considered the words of the Imams and prophets as more authoritative than rational argumentation.

Both theological books chosen by Warner offer a great deal of engagement for Warner to explore his primary aim, i.e. shifting the view of a compiler of ḥadīth towards an author who has collected ḥadīth, and consciously structured the texts with the intent to address challenges of the time, using ḥadīth in a particular order to construct a coherent argument for his chosen position on a matter. Further, this method of compilation criticism is able to give further insight into the methodologies of al-Ṣadūq as a scholar, understanding the challenges and preoccupations of the people of his time, and not just an expert in compiling ḥadīth.

In conclusion, this book offers a great deal to a new genre of ḥadīth studies – compilation criticism – in which the compiler of ḥadīth is engaged with as an author with intent, not just as someone gathering traditions. In reading this book, al-Ṣadūq is brought to life as an individual who played a pivotal role in impacting the scholarly world of his time, as well as gaining an appreciation of al-Ṣadūq's methods

and how he dealt with the challenges of his environment. Furthermore, there is a framework laid out for engaging with other pillars in the Shīʿī ḥadīth world as intellectuals and scholars, not just compilers of narrations. While this book offers insight in these aspects, it is not likely to appeal to individuals who do not take interest in intellectual portraits of scholars, nor to those who have a limited background in ḥadīth studies.

Current Issues: A Shi'ah Reflection

Written by Shaykh Professor Ali H. Al-Hakim

Review by Sayyid Dr. Shabbar Haider Shah (PhD)

This book review assesses some articles that are presented in this compendium under the third category, which is related to human rights and social issues. It contains three articles which will be reviewed in the same order they appear in the book.

In the article on gender and human rights issues, titled *Hijab: the Qur'anic theory and the answers to the most common questions*, Professor Al-Hakim criticises the Western approach to defining and devaluing hijab, and Muslim women who choose to follow the Islamic dress code.

Professor Al-Hakim's approach is meritorious as he unties knots that are tied on seemingly sweet slogans, but that are in reality based on questionable philosophies, such as feminism. The article has effectively been able to peel off misguided judgements on hijab, and concentrates on encouraging it, even for non-Muslims, because it proliferates public decency. Indeed, any rational mind will be in harmony with hijab after reading this article, which approaches the matter pragmatically. Appreciation must also be extended to the answers given to contemporary issues surrounding this sensitive topic, such as the banning of hijab in France.

Whilst the effort that has gone into this article is duly acknowledged, it would have been more complete if, under the subtitle, "The historical context and Qur'anic theory", it had explored the fact that Islam did not initiate the laws pertaining to hijab, but rather just modified and upgraded them. The author could have brought forth examples and referents from history, and this would have made the article more suited to a broader range of individuals and backgrounds.

The author was effectively able to paint a picture of modesty in

Islam, yet for a mindset that may be hesitant to appreciate the Islamic approach – however rational it may be – a discussion under relativism could have solved this issue because feminism itself is a referent of relativism. Furthermore, the three types of relativism – liberal, radical, and cultural – and their numerous branches – are in conflict with one another. This would then lead a rational mind to question: what rights does an individual have, and who is to determine this?

The article should then have proceeded to prove how God is the sole being, who has the right to legislate laws for His creation, and that He alone sustains the right. I would highly encourage this article to young Muslims and inquisitive minds – regardless of religious dedication – that have questions and are yearning to learn. It is, by far, one of the most excellent articles written on the topic.

I have no hesitation in rating the next article highly: *Human Rights, Feminism and the Muslim woman's identity*. The title of the article is somewhat catchy due to the controversies and ambiguities it involves. Professor Al-Hakim has done a marvellous and assiduous job in discussing a much-needed understanding of three key areas: human rights, feminism, and the Muslim woman. The article is multifaceted as it thoroughly discusses many other related topics under the main title. His aim in the article is to explain the feminist position regarding human rights in two groups: the sceptical and the realistic, finally drawing a conclusion.

The flow, in which the author selects titles one by one, is commendable because answering follow-up questions saturates thinking. And he skillfully grounds the whole discussion on the sacred message of Islam and the Holy Prophet, who was a reformer and a true example for all peoples. Finally, he calls for the promotion of Qur'anic human rights in international institutions while upholding the purely Islamic principles of balanced equality between men and women.

While the article's title may interest most, it will be highly appreciated by academics more than general readers. The pen and content are appropriate for a specific group of people who enjoy thorough

investigation on topics such as prosody and intonations in general understanding and in the Arabic language specifically. Professor Al-Hakim's effort in giving a unique look at intonations when discussing texts pertaining to women's rights in Islam is much appreciated. The writer argues that Arabic is an intonation-based language and should be treated with that in mind.

Professor Al-Hakim further elaborates that it is due to human error that Arabic has been unable to grasp a textual writing of a verbal statement. Therefore, he has innovated a theory: *al-anmāṭ al-ṣawṭiyya al-kalāmiyya* (the different phonological approaches of intonational forms). In the article, Professor Al-Hakim further encourages using the theory for the better understanding of sacred texts, especially those that are focused on women's rights, because on some occasions, women have been deprived (by androcentric systems) of what could justly be their right.

Whilst I am amazed at the ideas and attention to the subject matter, I must also argue that this theory is not always applicable to the most sacred texts, such as many verses of the Qur'an and narrations, because there is no longer a source to reach the correct intonation. Seeking further guidance from the experts in the field, they were all of the opinion that it is extremely difficult to determine the intonation of these sacred texts. For example, the word *ṣalli* (pray) has at times appeared in verses and narrations as is, and a reader may not be able to understand the exact intonation.

Professor Al-Hakim has succeeded in bringing a new perspective into this field. The theory can contribute in rephrasing many Islamic laws and drawing different conclusions. I certainly hope that the theory is further looked into by the experts of this subject, and can be of use in contemporary *ijtihād*. The article is an engaging read for those engaged in this area and I highly recommend it to all seminary students, especially those that may produce further research on it.

In the article *Flexible marriage (Al-Mut'ah)*, Professor Al-Hakim disproves many misconceptions and prejudices surrounding flexible

marriage by demystifying the allegations against it, and supporting it with historical and Qur'anic proofs. The writer has methodically and artistically stripped away most misunderstandings and ambiguities regarding flexible marriage to show its real purpose and function for a healthy society.

From the beginning of the abstract to the end of the article, the writing is impressive, fluent, and reader-friendly. The Arabic terms in italics are helpful for a better understanding of equivocal words in English. The very first paragraph caught my attention and answered my question with the definition of "fixed-period marriage". I had these very same questions in my younger days and I was often asked about *mut'a* – in fact, it was as if the identity of a Shi'a was one who believed in *mut'a* – and this article is the answer to many young minds that either want to learn more or simply want to understand what to say when asked.

The comparatives drawn in the article with Christian philosophers, their challenges and observations, and proposals for solutions in their societies are also much appreciated. This article is a must-read for all Muslims and non-Muslims, especially those that are well-versed in Western history and have ambiguities regarding flexible marriage in Shi'i Islam.

An in-depth consideration of this subject, such as this article, is just what society needs. However, an extra section in the article, under the subheading of, for example, "*mut'a* in other Islamic schools of thought" would have opened a new horizon for a large number of Muslim readers. After all, *mut'a* seems to always be a topic of interdiction in other Islamic schools of thought. Furthermore, a concise account on *misyār* and *'urfi* marriages, accepted by some Sunnī scholars, would have completed the discussion on this controversial topic. It would be refreshing to see a discussion on the brief history of *misyār* and *'urfi* marriages, and also a comparison between *misyār* and *mut'a*. These elements would have made the article more comprehensive, and much more relatable by any person in the east or west.

I would highly encourage this article to be included in all *madrassa*

and Muslim school curricula. I would also encourage that it be made accessible to all public libraries, regardless of religious inclinations.

In The Minds of Extremists

Written by Dr. Mahmood Abdulla

Review by Afzal Merali (MA)

In The Minds of Extremists by Dr Mahmood Abdulla, is an in-depth academic and journalistic study into the roots, beliefs, and strategies applied by extremists who falsely ascribe themselves to Islam. It is distinguished in terms of its scientific methodology, rich information, and the universal language used by the author.

As for its methodology, this book is an intense research which is both academic and journalistic.

The reader will firstly find that the book's academic calibre is evident in that it begins by giving an interesting preface about the topic at hand, followed by a definition of extremism, a historical analysis of its roots, and its contemporary manifestations in different societies, with a special focus on Wahhabism/Salafism in the Muslim world.

Secondly, all of its arguments are supported with clear logic, strong evidence, and extensive sources that are all authenticated.

Thirdly, the book has a manifest touch of experienced analytical and investigative journalism, whereby the author has exhausted all resources available to him, whether they be primary sources such as the Holy Qur'an and prophetic narrations mentioned in works such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, or otherwise, such as newspapers, websites, and television programmes from mainstream media in different languages, including the controversial *al-Ittijāh al-Mu'ākis* (The Opposite Direction) show on Al Jazeera, whereby in his analysis of it, it becomes obvious that Dr Abdulla is a keen observer of its rhetoric and content. With this taken into account, the reader will quickly come to the conclusion that this book is a culmination of many years of research.

With regard to the book's wealth of information, one can turn their

attention to the theories postulated by Dr Abdulla, such as specifying the root causes of extremism in the Muslim world as being injustice by despots, misleading clerics affiliated to rulers, and existence of religious fanatics. In addition, it presents detailed case studies on certain extremist Salafi scholars, such as Dr Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Dr Zakir Naik – whose celebrity mob-culture tactics, which are exploited for moulding the crowd's beliefs and thoughts according to their own extremist ideologies – are exposed.

An example observed by the author is when Dr Naik declares the likes of the toppled despotic tyrant of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, a “martyr”, whereas Imam al-Ḥusayn, who is venerated by Shīʿī Muslims as a successor of Prophet Muḥammad and was martyred in his uprising against the Umayyad tyrant of his time, Yazīd, was wrong and an oppressor, because he rose up against what Naik calls the imam and legitimate ruler of his time.

Furthermore, one who reads this book can find a thorough analysis of how the Arab Spring of the general masses was hijacked by extremist elements such as the Ikhwān movement in Egypt, international Wahhabi insurgents in Syria, and Al-Qaeda and ISIS ideologues in Libya.

On another note, all of this is presented with a universal language, suitable to people of all backgrounds. This affords it clarity, whereby no unnecessarily complicated terms are used by the author. However, on the other hand, in order to maintain its scientific and academic level, the author does use various Islamic and Arabic terminologies, whose translations he also provides. So, if the layman reader is not familiar with such scientific Arabic terms, they will not be indecipherable for them.

To summarise, this excellent book is a must-read for academics, journalists, scholars, orientalists, and all those who are perplexed by the recent rise of Salafi/Wahhabi extremism in the geopolitical field of today, though have a vague understanding of its beliefs, brainwashing tactics, political hypocrisy of those countries which both sponsor or cover up for them, and of the agents who fuel this lethal fire.

Also, its content must be studied by all influential Muslim personalities, especially imams and scholars from the Sunnī denomination in order for them to gain awareness as to how Salafī and Wahhabi extremism is being introduced in their mosques and religious circles by suspicious elements.

Al-Qalam Journal



ACADEMIC NEWS

Declaration of ICAIR

The International Centre for Advanced Islamic Research (ICAIR) is a pioneering institute for Islamic Studies affiliated to The World Federation of KSIMC.

ICAIR's primary focus is Islamic and Shi'i studies on both theoretical and applied levels. It works to promote Quranic research, explore Ijtihādī methodologies and encourage research-based approaches to address contemporary issues. It also seeks to foster communication and build bridges of dialogue and collaboration between the traditional Islamic Hawzah seminaries, and the diverse academic milieu.

Its strategy involves creating multiple international hubs to deal with a wide array of pressing issues through both independent research and collaborative projects with scholars from all over the globe.

ICAIR's objectives further involve facilitating opportunities for scholars of Islamic studies to continue their research through scholarships, sabbaticals and post doctorate grants, in addition to providing skills-training to faith leaders, to help them better cater for the needs of the community.

The Centre operates on the basis that modern and advanced research does not contradict with Islam and its cultural identity; but rather, that it falls in line with Islam's injunctions, which also emphasise that the civilised progress of any society cannot occur without observing moderation, and more importantly a complete awareness of its historical legacy and cultural context.

ICAIR encourages all innovative intellectuals, who are committed to strengthening Islamic studies, to contribute their articles and share their research to be considered for publication and collaboration.

In line with this vision, ICAIR conducts various academic activities to achieve its fundamental goals that serve the espoused approach vis a vis Islamic studies, such as producing research papers, short articles, booklets and books, convening conferences, workshops, training

sessions, and holding seminars oriented to both specialists as well as the wider English-speaking audience. It also publishes the peer-reviewed the Al-Qalam Journal for Advanced Islamic Research in English.

ICAIR's interim central hub is located in the Dar al-Tableegh Office in Northwood, London-UK.

Conference Report “Shia Theology: Beliefs & Methodologies”

The Islamic Education Department of The World Federation of KSIMC hosted its first academic conference, “Shia Theology: Beliefs & Methodologies” on 28 November, 2021. The conference was attended by renowned scholars and researchers from around the world. The presentations included:

- Special Address: “The Approach of the Imams (a) in Dealing with Different Ideologies” by Ayatollah Ja‘far Sobhani
- Paper One: “The Methodology of Jurists in Authenticating Narrations” by Sayyid Munīr al-Khabbāz
- Paper Two: “Is Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’ Authentic? A Discussion in ‘Ilm al-Rijāl” by Shaykh Dr Mohammed Ali Ismail
- Paper Three: “Establishing the Rational Methodology for Studying Shia Theology” by Shaykh Dr Ali Husain Al-Hakim
- Paper Four: “An Exploration of the Concept of Ghuluw in Shia Islam” by Shaykh Dr Vinay Khetia
- Paper Five: “The Qur’anic Understandings of ‘Ilm ul Ghayb” by Dr Mahjabeen Dhala

The event began with an address from WF Secretary General Arifali Hirji and a Qur’anic recitation by Sayyid Jalal Masoomi, followed by a special address from Ayatollah Ja‘far Sobhani emphasising the importance of such conferences for Islamic research. During intervals, traditional Islamic *nashīds* were performed by Sayed Jalal Masoomi and Nazar Al-Qatari. The conference was livestreamed to thousands of viewers worldwide.

The papers presented delved into the authentication of Imāmī Shī‘ī texts and traditions, and the role of rational theology in forming Imāmī Shī‘ī beliefs, with a focus on countering extremist ideologies. The event concluded with a note of thanks from the organisers and a token of appreciation ceremony.

