THE EARLY SHIITE *GHULĀH*

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Writing the history of early politico-religious movements is often fraught with difficulties. As regards the early Shiah, not least of these difficulties results from the existence of later more or less consolidated forms of Shiism. The various strands of early Shiite thought underwent a process of reformulation, selection and coalescence and Shiism attained its formal doctrinal aspect. The most important of these forms of Shiism in terms of size, Imanism, began to emerge during the latter part of the ninth/third century 260/873–4, after the occultation of the twelfth imam Muḥammad al-Muntaẓar. The historian's access to the grey area of uncertainties before that time must be largely acquired through the medium of later Shiite writers who either viewed past events and doctrinal formulations as a precursor to the present situation as they perceived it, or in contradistinction to it. They were not writing for disinterested scholarly motives, but rather to instruct and confirm people in their faith. They had little interest in historically accurate beginnings.

The problems associated with a study of the so-called Shiite *ghulāh* are even more acute and are compounded by the subsequent Imāmī attempts to denigrate, stigmatize and ulitmately to dissociate.

The primary sources of information regarding the *ghulāh* groups are the Islamic heresiographical tradition (*firaq*), Shiite biographical dictionaries of *Hadīth* relators (*rijāl*) and, to a lesser extent, historical works (*ta'rīkh*).

A Source-Critical Survey: the *Ghulāh* in *Firaq*, *Rijāl* and *Ta'rīkh*

Firaq

The works of *firaq* are by far the most important source of material on the *ghulāh*. The heresiographical tradition within Islam was at its inception a Shiite tradition, the first three heresiographers being the Shiites Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. 199/814), Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 208/823) and Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq (died after 247/861). These were

sources for the later and still extant works by such as the Imāmī al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (d. between 300 and 310/912 and 922) and the great Shiite *Muḥaddith* Saʿd b. ʿAbd Allah al-Qummī (d. 301/913).

The material in these Shiite heresiographies was arranged according to the descendant of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib who was followed, the *ghulāh* being abstracted from this and criticized. This arrangement is reflected in the *Firaq al-shīʿah* of al-Nawbakhtī where there is no special section devoted to the *ghulāh*. The material is ordered under certain headings and the sects are located within these.[1] For example, some of the sections under which al-Nawbakhtī refers to the *ghulāh* in the sub-headings of his book are:

> How the groups separated after the death of ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān;
> Those supporting the imamate of ʿAbd Allāh b. Muʿāwiyah;
> The doctrine of *tanāsukh* and *rajʿah*;
> Their differences regarding the *ʿilm* of the imam.

Later, the *Farq bayna al-firaq* of the Sunnī (Abd al-Qāhir b. Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 430/1038) was the earliest work in which the organizational basis of the heresiographical tradition is the sects themselves. In al-Baghdādī's and subsequent works, the sects have become the main focus of attention and are grouped together according to their purported similarity of doctrine.

Whatever the organization of the tradition, however, the particular viewpoint of the heresiographers did not permit of objective analysis and comment. It is important to recognize that they were not impartial observers and both the Shiite and Sunnī heresiographers were primarily interested in demonstrating the theological standpoints of their own particular schools of thought. They did not do this directly, but rather by contrasting their own interpretation of Islam with others with which they disagreed. This induced them to castigate those they considered as heresiarchs and to ascribe to them doctrines which these latter perhaps never held. It also caused them to interpret these doctrines in as unfavourable a light as possible, in such a way that they would be anathema to others and thus dissuade any potential imitators. Al-Baghdādī, who displays the most interest in the sects in their own right, is primarily concerned with refuting and denigrating their ideas. This is equally the case regarding those groups identified by him as falling within the Islamic community, as well as those

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[1] Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī's *Maqālāt al-islāmiyīn* (Cairo 1969) is similarly arranged in order of topics and sects are mentioned under these giving their respective views.

which were excluded. Similarly, in talking of the heterodox sects, ʿAli b. Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm (d. 459/1064) in *al-Faṣl fī al-milal wa-al-ahwāʾ wa-al-niḥal* gives the following reason for his work: 'Let us proceed ... and describe their detestable tenets so that this work may render clear to every reader that they are engrossed in error and absurdity, and may thus prevent those whom Allāh wishes to guide the right way from joining them or from continuing [to be] with them.'[2]

Also problematic as far as an assessment of sectarianism is concerned is the fact that the heresiographical tradition often operated within a number of presuppositions which adversely affected the accounts. One of these relates to the number of sects in Islam. A frequently quoted *ḥadīth* states that the Prophet Muḥammad asserted that Islam would eventually become divided into seventy-three sects, all of which would be doomed, apart from one. This tradition had a profound effect on the organization of the books of *Firaq*. Al-Baghdādī lists these seventy-three sects at the beginning of his heresiography and proceeds to interpret his material in conformity with this number. In a like manner, both Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī's (d. 330/941) *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn* and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī's (d. 548/1153) *al-Milal wa-al-niḥal* adhere to this *ḥadīth* as an underlying concept.

In order to conform with the terms of the *ḥadīth*, the heresiographers felt themselves duty-bound to manufacture sects as was appropriate. This could be achieved by various means. For example, a part of the Kaysāniyyah believed in *badāʾ* (changeability of the Divine Will) so mention is made of a sect called the Badāʾiyyah;[3] some Shiites believed in *tanāsukh* (metempsychosis) and *rajʿah* (eventual return of the imam), so there are allusions to the Tanāsukhiyyah[4] and the Rajʿiyyah.[5] In his zeal to make his classification of sects correspond to the prescribed seventy-three, al-Baghdādī includes among the sects of the *ghulāh* a certain Ḥulūliyyah. This group was not a sect at all but rather a name adopted by him to encompass those who believed in the incarnation of God's spirit in men, even though these groups might well disagree fundamentally on other matters. Similarly, the

[2] ʿAli b. Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm, 'The Heterodoxies of the Shiites in the Presentation of Ibn Ḥazm', tr. I. Friedlaender, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 28 (1907), 40–41.

[3] Israel Friedlaender's commentary to 'The Heterodoxies of the Shiites in the Presentation of Ibn Ḥazm', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 29 (1908), 72.

[4] Friedlaender, Commentary, 12, 26.

[5] Ibid., 24, 25.

name of an individual could be taken, and with the addition of the suffix *-iyyah*, turned into a sect. This confusion in terminology greatly complicates an examination of the relations between sects, and indeed the existence of a sect at all.

Later writers exceeded the number of doomed sects beyond the original seventy-two. Taqiyy al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (846/1442) states that the Shiites are divided into 300 sects,[6] while the relatively small Khaṭṭābiyyah are divided into fifty sects.[7] Nevertheless, they always considered that there were seventy-two principal heterodox sects, the others being minor variations. Indeed, al-Maqrīzī quotes the Prophetic *ḥadīth* at the beginning of his short notice on the Islamic sects and stresses its authenticity.[8]

Similarly, there was the presupposition, which found its way into the work of the heresiographers, that after the appearance of the Qur'ān there was no development of theological doctrine. All theology was considered as being present in the Qur'ān from the beginning and was adhered to by the earliest Islamic community. Because of this, the heresiographers were not disposed to comment on any evolution of ideas in their works and did not ask whether a sect contributed to the development of thought. The most they could do was to say that a group or person placed more emphasis on one doctrine than another. In the main, however, they are concerned to say whether, according to their own criteria, the doctrine is right or not. This also had an effect on the organization of the later heresiographies, where groups are collected together according to their similarities of doctrine. In this way, historical connections were ignored and inevitably confused.

Turning now to the specific question of the *ghulāh*, the inconsistencies and contradictions within the heresiographical tradition must necessarily render any conclusions based on the evidence of these works as little more than tentative. There is rarely any conformity of opinion regarding the existence of a sect, whether it is to be classed as a *ghulāh* group or not, and if so, what doctrines they are purported to have held. Even within the work of one author apparent inconsistencies arise. A case in point is al-Ashʿarī, who classes the Bayāniyyah among the *ghulāh* in one place,[9] and yet among the moderate Rāfiḍah of the Imāmiyyah in another.[10] He also classes the Ḥarbiyyah among

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[6] Taqiyy al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-al-iʿtibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-al-āthār* (Beirut 196–8), II: 241.

[7] Ibid., 252.

[8] Ibid., 245.

[9] Al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 66.

[10] Ibid., 97.

the *ghulāh* in one place,[11] and among the moderate Rāfiḍah in another.[12] Similarly, the Mughīriyyah are classed as *ghulāh*[13] and elsewhere as simply Rāfiḍah.[14]

With regard to the criteria employed in the identification of the *ghulāh*, it would seem that the defining characteristic as far as the heresiographers were concerned was a belief in the divinity of others apart from God, and/or the ascribing of prophecy to someone after Muḥammad. This can be seen from an examination of those accused of *ghulū*, the vast majority of whom have these doctrines ascribed to them. Only in one case, that of al-Baghdādī's Rāwandiyyah, is a sect described as attributing divinity (to the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr) and yet not specifically stated to be *ghulāh*. It is also noteworthy that Ibn Ḥazm identifies a number of early Shiite groups which he does not describe as *ghulāh* but which share the doctrines of *raj'ah*, anthropomorphism, *badā'*, *tanāsukh*, *ibāhah* (libertinism) and *sabb* (castigation of the *Ṣaḥābah*, especially Abū Bakr and ʿUmar). This implies that in general these qualifications were taken by the heresiographers as insufficient criteria on which to base accusations of *ghulū*.[15]

Elsewhere, the heresiographers supply general statements outlining their notion of the *ghulāh* groups which help to clarify the overall impression evinced in their examination of specific groups. Al-Nawbakhtī, the author of the earliest extant heresiography, says of the *ghulāh* that they 'all agree in denying the divinity of God ... and establishing divinity in the body of a creation'.[16]

According to Ibn Ḥazm: 'As to the extremists among the Shiites, they are divided into two parties: (1) one attributing prophecy after the Prophet to some other person, (2) the other attributing divinity to anyone beside Allāh, thus joining the Christians and the Jews.'[17] Al-Shahrastānī likewise remarks that the *ghulāh* bestowed divine qualities on the imams: 'The *ghālīyah* are those who went to extremes regarding their imams, whom they excluded from the limitations of creatures

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[11] Ibid., 68.

[12] Ibid., 96.

[13] Ibid., 69.

[14] Ibid., 68.

[15] This conclusion is based on an examination of all the *ghulāh* identified by al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (*Firaq al-shīʿah* Istanbul 1931), Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, (*Muslim Sects and Divisions*, tr. A.K. Kazi and J.G. Flynn [London 1984], al-Ashʿarī (*Maqālāt*), ʿAbd al-Qāhir b. Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī (*al-Fark bayn al-firak*, tr. A.S. Halkin [Philadelphia 1978]) and Ali b. Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm ('Heterodoxies').

[16] Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 41.

[17] Ibn Ḥazm, 'Heterodoxies', 55.

and upon whom they bestowed divine qualities.'[18] Finally, al-Baghdādī, while speaking of the Shiah, states that 'The *ghulāh* among them, however, who hold to the divine nature of the imams … '[19]

Now, it is perhaps not coincidental that the term *ghulū* appears twice in the Qur'ān with the meaning of the deification of Jesus, as was done by the Christians: 'O People of the Book. Don't be extreme in your religion (*lā taghlū fī dīni-kum*), nor say anything of God but the truth. Jesus Christ the son of Mary was [no more than] an apostle of God.'[20]

Thus *ghulū* here is the false attribution of divinity. It would therefore appear that the heresiographers have largely adopted the Quranic definition as a criterion for the formulation of their classifications, augmented with the denial that Muḥammad was the last of the prophets.

Ibn Khaldūn lends credence to this posited connection between the Quranic text and the heresiographical definition of *ghulū* when he states that from among the Shiah are the *ghulāh* who believe in 'the divinity of the imams. They either assume that the imam is a human being with divine qualities, or they assume that he is God in human incarnation. This is a dogma of incarnation that agrees with the Christian tenets concerning Jesus.'[21]

The Qur'ān was of central importance in Islamic culture and was formally considered to pertain to every circumstance. Most Muslim thinkers therefore attempted to relate it in some way to their ideas, and to express these ideas with Quranic terminology. This is not to say that the doctrines of the *ghulāh* necessarily accommodated this formalistic schema, and there was perhaps little in some of the identified groups and individuals to make them conform to the Quranic definition. Indeed, as will be treated in more detail subsequently, the term *ghulāh* was essentially one of opprobrium. But, just as the heresiographers formally adhered to the Prophetic *ḥadīth* stating that there would be seventy-three sects in Islam, so there seems to have been a predisposition to apply the Quranic definition in their treatment of heterodoxy.

[18] Al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*, 149.
[19] Al-Baghdādī, *al-Fark*, 36.
[20] Qur'ān 4:171. See also 5:80 with the same import.
[21] 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, tr. F. Rosenthal (Princeton 1958), I: 406. The few allusions to the *ghulāh* in the *Muqaddimah* largely adhere to those found within heresiography. Ibn Khaldūn restricts the term to the Shī'ah and corroborates the standard definition: 'the Imāmîyah and the extremist Shī'ah who believe in the divinity of the imams and the incarnation of the deity in them' (*Muqaddimah*, II: 186).

As is the case regarding all those accused of *ghulū* even when the heresiographers had every intention of impartiality in dealing with groups not conforming to their standards, which was hardly ever, their reports are often so garbled, confused and self-contradictory as to be virtually useless for any coherent and comprehensive investigation of the ideas of a particular group or individual. It is as if a sentence was taken from here, a quote from there; small fragments of information bandied together in an ad hoc fashion and overlaid with, in the eyes of the modern scholar, misguided attempts at interpretation and personal appraisal of certain illusive points. Of course, as far as the heresiographers were concerned, this did in no way militate against the usefulness of the information, their main aim being simply to illustrate the ignominies of the *ghulāh*.

Thus, while it may be alleged that the speculations of the early Muslims appear relatively naive against the background of subsequent theological and philosophical developments, it cannot be maintained that those of the *ghulāh* were as devoid of sense, structure and homogeneity as their surviving traces would indicate. All that is available are those ideas of which the heresiographers were aware and have chosen to record. There was doubtless much else that escaped their attention and still more known only to the groups and individuals themselves. There are, understandably, very few certainly authentic traces remaining. It was not the ideology of the ruling classes and was thus not recorded in a lasting form. It is of interest whether some of the early Shiite groups developed a written doctrine or rather contented themselves with a purely oral tradition. Such information would be useful in determining the extent of institutionalization of doctrine and hence the degree of internal organization. The heresiographers, however, make no explicit reference to either possibility, although judging from the lack of form and detail in their accounts if a written doctrine did exist they had little recourse to it.

There must also have existed a sizeable body of doctrine which was simply not recorded by the heresiographers because it did not differ substantially from that held by the majority of Muslims and was not, therefore, of note. The heresiographers only provide those ideas which they considered as departing from the norm as they perceived it and no overall system is described. And of course, there is rarely the slightest indication of chronology.

Rijāl

During the tenth century the Shiite works of *rijāl* began to make their appearance. These were used to authenticate the relators of the

traditions upon which Imāmī law and doctrine were based. Notable among the compilers of these works are Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Kashshī (floruit in the first half of the fourth/tenth century) whose *Rijāl* is the earliest work of its type, Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Najāshī (d. 450/1058) and Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067).

The two works on the Shiite transmitters of *Ḥadīth* examined here, and which may be taken as representative of the genre, are the *Kitāb al-rijāl* of al-Najāshī and the *Maʿrifat ikhtiyār al-rijāl* of al-Kashshī which is an edited and abridged version by al-Ṭūsī of the no longer extant original.

The problems of identification of the *ghulāh* and the contradictions between the various sources describing them, which are found while studying the heresiographical tradition, are similarly in evidence here. Even within the earliest compilation of Shiite transmitters, the author reveals some doubts regarding the identification of the *ghulāh*. The following comment by al-Kashshī concerns a certain Dāwūd b. Kathīr al-Raqqī: 'The *ghulāh* say that he was one of their leading men … but I haven't heard any of our sheikhs cursing him, and I haven't come across any account of him apart from what I have shown in this section.'[22]

Elsewhere in the *Maʿrifah*, there is another indication of this kind of uncertainty. Although the example is somewhat dislocated from its context, it obviously refers to a dispute over whether someone was a *ghālī* or not. Al-Faḍl b. Shādhān says: 'Abū Ḥafs related execrable (*manākir*) traditions, but he wasn't a *ghālī*.'[23]

It is clear that the appellation *ghālī* was at least occasionally applied simply on the strength of someone's comments to that effect, without any corroborating evidence necessarily being supplied. In this case, it is hardly surprising that confusion and contradictions should ensue. Muḥammad b. Masʿūd al-Samarqandī, one of al-Kashshī's main sources of information on the transmitters, asks whether Abū Baṣīr was accused of *ghulū*. He receives the reply: 'He wasn't accused of *ghulū* but he used to confuse *Ḥadīth* (*kāna mukhalliṭan*).'[24]

Al-Najāshī likewise reveals that he is sometimes uncertain as to the information he has received. In his report concerning al-Ḥusayn b. Yazīd al-Nawfalī he remarks: 'Some of the Qummīs said that he became a *ghālī* towards the end of his life, but God knows best.'[25]

[22] Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Kashshī, *Maʿrifat ikhtiyār al-rijāl* (Mashhad 1970), 408.

[23] Ibid., 451.

[24] Ibid., 173, 476.

[25] Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Najāshī, *Rijāl* (Qumm 1398 AH), 27.

This general confusion over the identification of who was and who was not a *ghālī* is most readily evinced in a comparison between the works of al-Najāshī and al-Kashshī. For the most part, there is little correspondence of *ghulāh* personnel between them. Thus, of the twenty-two *ghulāh* mentioned by al-Najāshī, only some six or so are also identified as such by al-Kashshī, the rest either not figuring at all or not being classed as *ghulāh*. For example, al-Najāshī calls Sahl b. Ziyād a *ghālī*, whereas al-Kashshī mentions nothing about this in his notice on Sahl. This is equally the case when the *ghulāh* found in al-Kashshī are sought in al-Najāshī. Al-Kashshī describes al-Qāsim b. Yaqṭīn as a *ghālī*, whereas al-Najāshī simply remarks that he was *daʿīf*; al-Kashshī records that Dāwūd b. Kathīr al-Raqqī was considered as a *ghālī*, whereas al-Najāshī simply remarks that he was *daʿīf jiddan*.

It may be remarked in passing that this is also the case regarding those not accused of *ghulū*. Al-Kashshī refers to a certain Sālim b. Abī Ḥafṣah and related that the Shiite Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq cursed him and said he was a liar changing his *Hadīth*.[26] In Najāshī, however, the same Sālim is mentioned as relating *Hadīth* from Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq but is not condemned in any way.[27] Similarly, al-Kashshī castigates Abū al-Jārūd Ziyād b. al-Mandhūr,[28] whereas al-Najāshī levels no criticism at him.[29]

As the books of *rijāl* were concerned primarily with the authentication of traditions and they approached this by examining the relators, they were not particularly interested in the doctrines of the *ghulāh* except insofar as these contaminated what was related. Nevertheless, al-Kashshī's *Maʿrifah* does occasionally refer to the doctrines held by certain *ghulāh*. Despite the lack of correspondence between the *ghulāh* of the heresiographical tradition and those in *rijāl*, whenever the main qualifications for being a *ghālī* are mentioned in *rijāl*, they are the same as found within *firaq* literature. According to al-Kashshī, these criteria are basically the ascription of divine qualities to someone and the doctrine of the continuation of prophecy after Muḥammad, often alongside the abrogation of fundamental religious duties.[30]

[26] Al-Kashshī, *Maʿrifah*, 230.
[27] Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 134.
[28] Al-Kashshī, *Maʿrifah*, 230.
[29] Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 121.
[30] See al-Kashshī, *Maʿrifah* on the Khaṭṭābiyyah (299, 230); Muḥammad b. Bashīr (279, 478–80); ʿAlī b. Ḥaskah (518–19); al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Bābā who said he was a prophet sent by al-ʿAskarī (i.e. ascribing divinity to al-ʿAskarī) (520); Muḥammad b. Nuṣayr al-Numayrī (520–21); and al-Qāsim b. Yaqṭīn, who is only accused of abrogating prayer, *zakāh* and other religious duties (517).

Al-Najāshī supplies no indication as to what *ghulū* consists of. Usually the individuals accused of being *ghulāh* are simply stated to be such, but sometimes he adds a criticism. For example, in the notice on Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Hamadānī, al-Najāshī remarks that he 'invented *Hadīth*',[31] while Muḥammad b. Aslam al-Ḥalabī is said to have been 'corrupt in *Hadīth*'.[32] These notices offer no information as to the kind of corruption involved and thus do not differ from accusations levelled at relators considered to be simply *ḍaʿīf, ḍaʿīf jiddan* or *kadhdhāb*.

As far as the *muḥaddithūn* were concerned, *ghulū* lay primarily in its contamination of *Hadīth*. This is obviously so: if a *ghālī* did not appear in an *isnād* then he would be of no interest to the *muḥaddithūn*. As has been noted, there are reports that the *ghulāh* abrogated Islamic ritual, nevertheless, there are examples of others having done this without being vilified as *ghulāh*. The *Hadīth* must have contained something particularly objectionable for the relators to be condemned as *ghulāh* and not one of the other categories of opprobrium. Given what is reported of the doctrines of the *ghulāh* as found within the heresiographical tradition, it is possible that some of this *Hadīth* was concerned with the divine natures of the imams or the continuation of prophecy after Muḥammad. For the vast majority of individuals accused of *ghulū*, however, there is no information about the nature of their *ghulū*. These characteristics could conceivably be also applied to the others about whom there is no specific information, but as the writers of *rijāl* themselves at best only had the word of their predecessors on whether someone was a *ghālī* without any substantiating details, it is difficult to be certain.

Regarding the Sunnī *muḥaddithūn*, they employed their own criteria for deciding who were or were not *ghulāh* and tended to apply the term to anyone who diverged from their conception of Islam. In this way they extended the number of *ghulāh* groups. Some of the Sunnī *muḥaddithūn* seem to have termed those who spoke out against the caliphs ʿUthmān, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar as *ghulāh*, as well as those who transmitted *hadīth* on the vices of the *Ṣaḥābah*, or confined the *hadīth* they related to the virtues of the Ṭālibī family. Later *muḥaddithūn*, for example Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, had an even hazier conception.[33]

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[31] Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 239.

[32] Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 260.

[33] See Wadād al-Qāḍī, 'The Development of the Term "Ghulat" in Muslim Literature with Special Reference to the Kaysaniyya', in *Akten des. VII Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft*, ed. A Dietrich (Gottingen 1974), 295–319.

Ta'rīkh

In other areas too, the term *ghulāh* was not applied in the same way as found in the earlier Shiite works of heresiography and *rijāl*. In general, the writers of *ta'rīkh* paid little attention to the *ghulāh* and whenever they are mentioned in historical works it is usually in superficial accounts and often relates to their rebellions or executions. It is noteworthy, however, that as the historians were not concerned with the taxonomies and definitions of the heresiographical and *rijāl* traditions, several of them depart from the normal ascription of the term as usually applying only to the Shiah.

Thus, in Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk*, the *ghulāh* generally only warrant mention in terms of their antagonistic relationship with the ruling authorities. Al-Ṭabarī therefore deals with Mughīrah b. Saʿīd and Bayān b. Samʿān in the context of their alleged revolt in Kufa in 119/737 and their subsequent execution by Khālid al-Qasrī.[34] In contrast to the heresiographical works, al-Ṭabarī supplies little information regarding the doctrines of Mughīrah and Bayān. He also deals with Khidāsh and the Rāwandiyyah, his interest in these being likewise due their close connection with the political fortunes of the Abbasid caliphate. He refers to Khidāsh as being sent by Bākir b. Māhān to Khurasan as commander of the revolutionary movement there. Khidāsh apparently summoned people in the name of Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, propounded the Khurramiyyah religion and sexual libertinism and attracted a following. He was punished by Asad b. ʿAbd Allāh in 118/736.[35] In general, the heresiographers show no interest in Khidāsh and his connection with the Abbasid regime, but only remark that he revolted in the name of the Ṭālibī family and that some believed in his own prophethood.[36] Al-Ṭabarī has a little more to say about the Khurasanian Rāwandiyyah. He relates that in 141/758 they went to the caliph al-Manṣūr's palace in al-Hāshimiyyah near Kufa and circumambulated it saying: 'This is the palace of our God.' Al-Manṣūr is reported to have imprisoned 200 of them, but these were released by the other Rāwandiyyah and 600 of them returned to al-Manṣūr again. Finally, there was a fight and they were all killed.[37] Once again, this information contrasts with that found in the heresiographical tradition, where the

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[34] Muḥammad b. Jarir al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk* (Cairo n.d.), VII: 128, 129.

[35] Ibid., 109.

[36] Ibn Ḥazm, 'Heterodoxies', 36, 65.

[37] Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, VII: 505–6.

Rāwandiyyah are dealt with almost purely in terms of their doctrinal statements with little attention being given to the details of the confrontation between them and al-Manṣūr.[38] Al-Ṭabarī does, however, go on to describe two of the Rāwandiyyah whom he specifically refers to as *ghāliyyah*. One was a certain al-Ablaq who practised libertinism and who upheld the doctrine of *tanāsukh*, that God's spirit had originally inhered in ʿAlī and was then transmitted through all the imams. The other used to entertain the Rāwandiyyah in his house and let them use his wife.[39] None of the other *ghulāh* groups or individuals found in *firaq* and *rijāl* are mentioned.

Other later authorities, classed as writers of primarily historical works but having a wider conception of *taʾrīkh*, include information which is more akin to that found in the heresiographical tradition. ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-dhahab* embraces geographical, cultural and religious affairs and as a result he sees fit to mention some *ghulāh*. He remarks that they are eight sects (*firaq*), four of them are the Muḥammadiyyah and the other four are Muʿtazilah (which he says are the ʿAlawiyyah). He states that all of these belong to the Ahl al-Imāmah of which there are thirty-three sects in all.[40] Elsewhere, he refers to the Mughīriyyah, the ʿAlbaniyyah, the Muḥammadiyyah and al-Shalmaghānī, identifying them as *ghulāh* but offering no details apart from that some of them believed in *tanāsukh*. He also counts the Qadariyyah among the *ghulāh*.[41] Like al-Ṭabarī, he mentions the Rāwandiyyah in the context of them having been supporters of the Abbasids.[42]

Regarding al-Maqrīzī, on the whole he appears to follow al-Baghdādī's taxonomy of the sects. Among other things, this is seen in his denouncing those who do not follow the doctrines of his particular branch of Sunnism as being outside the Islamic community. He uses a wider definition of *ghulū* and employs the term to refer to non-Shiite groups, including the Muʿtazilah, the Qadariyyah, the Khawārij and the Murjiʾah.[43]

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[38] See, for example, al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 29–30 and 45–6 on some of the subgroups within the Rāwandiyyah; Ibn Ḥazm, 'Heterodoxies', 70.

[39] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, VIII: 83.

[40] ʿAli b. Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab* (Beirut 1978), III: 209. In contrast with this, al-Ashʿarī remarks that the *ghulāh* are 15 *firaq* (al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 66), and that the Imāmiyyah are composed of 24 *firaq* (88). The other heresiographers offer no number.

[41] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, II: 107.

[42] Ibid., III: 236.

[43] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II: 238–54.

Finally, the Andalusian Ibn ʿAbd Rabbi-hi (d. 328/940) is clearly more restrictive in his use of the term *ghulū* than is found within *firaq* and *rijāl*. In his *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* he has a section called *Bāb fī al-ghulū fī al-dīn*; this concerns *ghulū* in Sufism and nothing else.[44]

Ghulāh: a *Nomen Odiosum*

Although it seems plausible that the heresiographers, and perhaps the authors of Shiite *rijāl* works or the sources upon which these were based, have largely adopted the ascription of divinity and prophecy as the defining characteristics of *ghulū*, it is not certain that all the groups identified as *ghulāh* held these doctrines. The accusations often assume the form of a simple assertion to that effect without corroborating detail.

It is almost certainly the case that *ghulū* was often resorted to as little more than a *nomen odiosum*, employed to castigate those in disagreement but perhaps with little substance. In this, it would be like the common use of the terms Christian, Jew and *kāfir* to deride opposing groups and individuals. The heresiographies supply many instances of this, for example Ibn Ḥazm's definition of the *ghulāh* as being those who attribute 'divinity to anyone beside Allāh, thus joining the Christians and the Jews'. Offering further testimony of the use of the term as vilification, Isḥāq b. al-Ḥasan b. Bakrān, Muḥammad b. Urāmah al-Qummī and Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Sammān, who all wrote treatises entitled *al-radd ʿalā al-ghulāh* (Refutation of the *Ghulāh*) were themselves classed as *ghulāh*.[45] Also, in at least one case an attested *ghālī* stigmatized others as being such: Nasr b. Sabbah, on whose authority al-Kashshī often relates, is identified as a *ghālī*,[46] but in several places he in turn accuses other persons of *ghulū*.[47]

The pervasive tone of animosity can also be seen with reference to the alleged social composition of the *ghulāh* during the late Umayyad and early Abbasid periods. In general, there exists scant information regarding this, the sources mentioning only the names of the leading protagonists with hardly any biographical detail. However, given the general antagonism to those identified as *ghulāh*, it is to be expected that when their social origins are identified, these would be the lower levels of society. Thus, they are often described as commoners and as

[44] Ibn ʿAbd Rabbi-hi, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* (Cairo 1940), II: 194–200.
[45] See al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 53, 232, 239.
[46] Al-Kashshī, *Maʿrifah*, 322.
[47] Ibid., 322, 518, 519, 522.

uneducated: ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr b. Ḥarb al-Kindī had 'neither piety nor learning'[48] and Abū Manṣr al-ʿIjlī is described as 'illiterate'.[49]

Occasionally, however, the *ghulāh* are specifically identified as being weavers or straw merchants, which might perhaps be taken to indicate that they originated primarily from the less affluent members of society. Thus, Bayān b. Samʿān was a 'straw merchant in Kufa';[50] ʿUmayr was a straw dealer;[51] and Bazīgh was a weaver.[52] Sometimes others apart from the *ghulāh* are said to be so. For example, Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ, the leader of the Muʿtazilah, is similarly called a weaver,[53] and Muḥammad b. Karrām, a non-Shiite *ghālī* and purported leader of the Karrāmiyyah, is alleged to have had weavers among his followers.[54] The *Nahj al-balāghah*, however, supplies another reason for this appellation. It reports that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was speaking in Kufa about the ill effects of the proposed arbitration with the Umayyad Muʿāwiyah, and cursed al-Ashʿath b. Qays, one of the leaders within ʿAlī's coalition, by calling him 'a weaver and the son of a weaver'. The author of the *Nahj al-balāghah* then goes on to offer several reasons for ʿAlī's use of this term. The reason accepted by him is that al-Ashʿath was called a weaver 'to denote his foolishness and baseness because every base person is proverbially known as a weaver'.[55] This is certainly a more plausible explanation for the application of the word; that is, as a term of abuse.

A corollary of the polemical stance adopted by the heresiographers was probably a predisposition to adduce doctrines, either by spurious inference or simply hearsay, that the so-called sects themselves never entertained. A case in point is the allegations of libertinism (*ibāḥah*). This is a frequent accusation and usually takes the form of a complaint about either the disregard of the prescribed prohibitions and duties of Islam, including its fundamental tenets, or behaviour which is sufficiently heinous to be an outrage against human nature itself. The following account is typical and concerns the group attached to Muqannaʿ: 'In every one of their villages they have a mosque, in which they do not pray, but hire a muezzin who calls to prayer. They

[48] Al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*, 129.
[49] Al-Baghdādī, *al-Fark*, 18–19.
[50] Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 25.
[51] Ibn Ḥazm, 'Heterodoxies', 64.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*, 132.
[54] Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 34.
[55] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Nahj al-balāghah* (Cairo 1967), I: 291.

permit themselves to eat carcasses and pork. Every one of them enjoys intercourse with other men's wives.'[56]

Apparently even more outrageous was the Janāhiyyah, who 'did away with the obligatory prayer, fasting, alms-giving and the pilgrimage'[57] — that is, four of the 'five pillars of Islam'.

Concerning the accuracy of these accusations, the first thing to notice is that there is no consensus of opinion among the heresiographers as to who practised libertinism. It has been remarked that the selectivity which such as al-Nawbakhtī appears to employ in his charges is indicative of there being something of substance behind them.[58] Nevertheless, al-Shahrastānī appears to be even more selective than al-Nawbakhtī and yet the two authors do not concur concerning a single case. The terms in which the accusations are couched likewise offer no cause for confidence. They are characteristically vague and often give the appearance of set formulae encapsulating a stylized allegation. These accusations are more indicative of the heresiographers' approach to their subject matter, in which the *ghulāh* are to be vilified and castigated. Indeed, such polemics are a common feature of all religions when a foreign sect or competing ideology is being described and are largely founded on animosity and misunderstanding.

Rather than attempting to annul Islamic ritual and prescriptions as the heresiographers claimed, the early *ghulāh* were perhaps more concerned with defining their actual nature. Despite the heresiographers' accusations, it is noteworthy that several groups appear to have actually increased the religious duties of the believer. Indeed, of the specific examples of the abrogation of Islamic ritual just as many indicate an increase in the number and scope of the duties as show a neglect.[59]

The heresiographers mention a few reports which derive the alleged libertinism from the notion ascribed to some of the *ghulāh* that he who knows the Imam does not have to follow the normative strictures of Islam. Al-Nawabakhtī identifies a number of groups and individuals who adhered to this doctrine, among them being Hamzah

[56] Al-Baghdādī, *al-Fark*, 78.

[57] Ibid., 60.

[58] M.G.S. Hodgson, 'How did the Early Shī'a become Sectarian?', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75 (1955), 7.

[59] For example, Ibn Hazm records that some *ghulāh* 'make fun of their followers by imposing fifty obligatory prayers every day and night, while others reduce them to seventeen obligatory prayers with fifteen prostrations in each.' (Ibn Hazm, 'Heterodoxies', 36).

b. ʿUmārah,[60] the Ḥārithiyyah,[61] the Rāwandiyyah[62] and some of the Khaṭṭābiyyah.[63] Al-Baghdādī's notice concerning Abū Ḥulmān of the Ḥulmāniyyah, who said that whoever knows God is relieved of all interdictions and prohibitions, may be taken as another example.[64] But this doctrine is perhaps not entirely dissimilar from the later Sunnī position that if an individual holds the true faith, as exemplified in the five pillars of Islam, then he continues to remain a member of the Islamic community even though a sinner, and will eventually go to Heaven after perhaps initially being punished for his sins. Had Islamic history not taken the course it did, it is not improbable that later commentators hostile to the Sunnīs would have interpreted their position as also encouraging libertinism and examples would have been provided to corroborate their inference.

Further Remarks

In an examination of the *ghulāh* groups and individuals mentioned in the heresiographical tradition it is evident that they first make their appearance as proponents of one of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib's surviving sons, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyyah. Among the individuals said to have followed him in some way are Bayān b. Samʿān and Hamzah b. ʿUmārah al-Barbarī. Among the groups are the so-called Kaysāniyyah, a general term often used to encompass the early Shiah during the latter part of the Umayyad period and which Ibn Ḥazm considers as *ghulāh* (as does al-Ṭabarī). Other groups are the Karbiyyah, the Bayāniyyah and several more which are not identified by name. Before that time, the only other reference to *ghulū* concerns ʿAbd Allāh b. Sabāʾ, the perhaps apocryphal follower of ʿAlī.

The appearance of a highly speculative trend within Shiism contemporaneous with the disturbances surrounding al-Mukhtār b. Abī ʿUbayd, the ostensible emissary of Muḥammad al-Ḥanafiyyah, is perhaps significant. Al-Mukhtār (d. 67/686) gathered a considerable following of *mawālī* supporters during his abortive attempt to seize Kufa.[65]

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[60] Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 25.

[61] Ibid., 29.

[62] Ibid., 30.

[63] Ibid., 38.

[64] Al-Baghdādī, *al-Fark*, 79.

[65] Out of 6,000 men said to have taken refuge in the Kufan palace with al-Mukhtār at the end of the revolt, only 700 are reported to have been Arabs (ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh* [Beirut 1965], III: 385–6).

Moreover, in Kufa later generations of 'Arabs' with Persian mothers had already, by the time of Mukhtār, been introduced into the tribal units along with the assimilation of non-Arab *mawālī*. The active participation of these and the *mawālī* in Mukhtār's rebellion opened the gateway for the introduction of new mythological and eschatological concepts which eventually helped to enrich and broaden the base of early Shiite thought. Among the ideas apparently introduced during this time and subsequently were those of the occultation (*ghaybah*) of the imam and his eventual return to establish justice (*raj'ah*). More importantly, the term *mahdī* ('guided'), which had previously indicated no more than a political leader, was now introduced with the eschatological meaning of the awaited messiah. The notions also included the attribution of knowledge of the *ghayb* to Mukhtār and, according to one account, he himself is alleged to have stated that Gabriel brought him revelations from God.[66]

These deliberations were considerably facilitated by the absence of overt political activity on the part of the Kufan Shī'ah for almost fifty years after the defeat of Mukhtār's enterprise. But to understand how such a speculative tendency could have arisen in the first place, it is necessary to refer to the circumstances in which those newly converted to Islam, both Arab and non-Arab (but mainly non-Arab), found themselves. These converts inevitably carried with them many of their old traditions and notions when they entered the new faith. Many were probably only embracing Islam because of the economic and social benefits accruing from conversion: the social, political and economic sphere in which they operated and which offered the best chance of upward mobility was dominated by Islam. Many of them came from religious and cultural backgrounds which, long before Islam, had established a coherent and self-consistent world picture. The niceties of their beliefs had been developed and built up into an exhaustive system providing solutions to a large number of cosmological, existential and eschatological problems, as well as legal systems. Thus, the religions among which the nascent Islam found itself a newcomer were elaborate, sophisticated and thorough in a way which the new faith could not pretend to be. The neophytes were not surprisingly dissatisfied with the relative naiveté and poverty of Islamic theology as compared with what they had ostensibly renounced. Numerous questions which has received complete and satisfactory treatment were now ignored or dealt with ambiguously and partially. This dissatisfaction, both on the part of the new converts

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[66] Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 20.

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and some Arab Muslims eager to create a religion the equal of any other, led them to develop the raw materials available to them within the Islamic revelation, often infused with ideas from older religions. A number of studies have pointed out the often striking parallels between the speculations of the *ghulāh* and those of other religions.[67]

As to the heterodox nature of many of the doctrines ascribed to the early *ghulāh*, it is obvious that extremism of any form can only be judged in terms of a generally agreed norm, and that without this standard it could have no substance. As far as the Imamis were concerned — and they were the ones responsible for initially adopting the term *ghulāh* and identifying its personnel — extremism was judged against the growing consensus of Imami/Shiite opinion regarding their faith. Prior to the emergence of this consensus there could properly speaking be no extremism because there were very few standards against which it might be judged. In this, it was similar to the omnipresent appeal of early dissidents to the *sunnah* of the Prophet, a term which, until the compilation and acceptance of Prophetic normative *Ḥadīth*, could likewise have no substantive import.

The *ghulāh* should be viewed as part of the general Shiite intellectual endeavour to provide the bases of their faith. They represented one aspect of Kufan speculations and many of their opinions were not at the time considered as extreme as later commentators in hindsight would have them. One illustration of this may be seen in an examination of the *isnāds* attached to the Kufan traditions featuring an encounter between the Shiite imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) and the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr. Here, a number of the relators, albeit relatively few, are stigmatized in the heresiographical tradition as being *ghulāh*. This is similarly the case when the *isnāds* attached to all the other traditions regarding al-Ṣādiq and which contain a pronouncedly esoteric element are taken into account. On the other hand, many of these *isnāds* also contain relators who are considered by the Shiite *Muḥaddithūn* to be trustworthy or *thiqah*, often relating directly from a *ghālī*.[68] It is unlikely that all these trustworthy relators were later spuriously inserted into the *isnāds*. Had there occurred such a

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[67] See, for example, Friedlaender's Commentary, and W.F. Tucker, 'Revolutionary Chiliasm in Umayyad Iraq', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan 1971.

[68] Among the *ghulāh* relators who were contemporaries of al-Ṣādiq are the Basran ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mismāʿī and the Kufans ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Qāsim, al-Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar, Abū Baṣīr (d. 150/767), who, it is claimed, associated with the *ghulāh*, and ʿAbbād b. Yaʿqūb (d. 200/815).

process of purification the *isnāds* would also certainly have been purged of all their *ghulāh* and *daʿīf* relators, as probably transpired concerning the extant legal *Ḥadīth* attributed to al-Sadiq.

Thus, the seemingly unexpurgated form of the *isnāds* in question here give them a certain credibility. If this is the case, then it may be assumed that a trustworthy relater was not averse to recounting material supplied to him by a *ghālī*, and hence there can have been nothing in much of the material related by the *ghulāh* which offended other, retrospectively more acceptable, traditionists of the time. It follows that a good deal of the type of information which the *ghulāh* transmitted was not considered as 'extreme'. If a trustworthy relator was quite willing to accept material from a *ghālī* and to transmit it in his name, then it can be assumed that at the time in question there was not general opprobrium attached to the latter individual even though he may have entertained notions which were subsequently condemned. The appearance of *ghulāh* in the *isnāds* probably indicates that many of their traditions were accepted by their contemporaries.

There is a further consideration which indicates that the term *ghulāh*, and as a corollary the censure it invoked, was only retrospectively applied to certain groups and individuals. This concerns the time when polemical treatises directed against them began to be composed, these typically being called *al-Radd ʿalā al-ghulāh*. As can be seen from an examination of the dates of these treatises, they do not begin to make their appearance until the time of ʿAlī al-Riḍā (d. 203/818). In fact, nearly half of these treatises belong to the time of al-Riḍā, indicating a pronounced polemical activity against the *ghulāh* in this period; that is, some hundred years or so after the initial upsurge of *ghulāh* activity as identified in the sources. The dates of the first three heresiographers of Islam, Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. 199/814), Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 208/823) and Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq (died sometime after 247/861) similarly attest to this period having witnessed the beginning of interest in the divisions within early Shiism. That these are considered to be Imamis is also evidence that it was they who were primarily interested in *firaq* at this stage. This proposed retrospective and therefore anachronistic reference to 'extremism' is not obviated by the relatively late date of the heresiographies and *rijāl* works which contain references to *ghulū*.

All the works of *Radd ʿalā al-ghulāh* are attributed to men acknowledged to be Imamis. It was indeed the Imāmīs who were primarily concerned to identify and castigate the *ghulāh* because it was the Imāmīs who were largely threatened by their existence. The Ismāʿīlīs

and the Zaydiyyah for example, although not conforming with Imāmī doctrine in several fundamental respects, represented no threat and thus were not castigated. The appellation of *ghulāh* was retrospectively applied by subsequent commentators on the *rijāl* who castigated relators of traditions formulating a nascent version of the established Shiite theory of the imamate, law, doctrine and theology. In some cases this perhaps meant that the *ghālī* in question held beliefs regarding the divine nature of the imam and the continuation of prophecy and thus propagated ideas not conforming with the doctrinal positions of later Shiism. These earlier formulations were subsequently found to be unacceptable because they advocated a view which could only appeal to a relatively select group. When Imamism began to expand and stabilize it was necessary to purge its unifying doctrine of all that was unpalatable to its increasingly heterogeneous following and, just as importantly, to the more moderate Sunnī majority. In this process of moderation, concession and compromise, Imamism and the other Shiite sects followed the dynamics of many communities and groups which are fated not only to survive but to grow.

The *ghulāh* were certainly not at the time considered as such due to esoteric or supernatural elements in the material which they related. Taking the traditions related about Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq as an example, it is clear that the transmission of such information was not an uncommon phenomenon in Kufa and was not limited to those circles later vilified as *ghulāh*. These traditions probably owe more to the general intellectual climate of Kufa and the predispositions of a significant number of its inhabitants, rather than to the speculations of isolated groups of 'heterodox' thinkers. The *ghulāh* were not radically different from their fellow Muslims; they operated with the same mentalities and their concerns were shared with others.

Traditions which, although they do not explicitly assert the divinity of al-Ṣādiq, present him as in possession of miraculous powers were quite common in Kufa during his lifetime. As noted above, these are occasionally related on the ultimate authority of someone later associated with *ghulū*, but very often the relator is considered as *thiqah* or there is no opprobrium attached to him. A typical tradition of this sort is the following, taken from al-Arbīlī's *Kashf al-ghummah* and related on the authority of ʿAlī b. Abī Ḥamzah al-Thumālī (d. 150/ 767), a Kufan who is considered by the Shiite *muḥaddithūn* to be *thiqah*.[69]

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[69] Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 83; al-Kashshī, *Maʿrifah*, 406.

I made the pilgrimage with al-Ṣādiq. Along the way we sat under a dry
date palm. He moved his lips uttering a prayer which I did not under-
stand, then he said: 'O date palm, feed us that which God has provided
you for the sustenance of His servants.' So I looked at the palm which
had bent over towards al-Ṣādiq and it had bunches of dates on it. Al-
Ṣādiq said: 'Approach, say '*bi-ismi Allāhi* and eat.' So I ate some dates
from it; they were the sweetest and best dates. An Arab we were with
said: 'I have never seen such powerful magic!' Al-Ṣādiq replied: 'We
are the heirs of the prophets, there are no magicians or soothsayers
amongst us. Rather, we pray to God and He replies. If you want me to
I will pray to God to transform you into a dog so that you will go back
to your house, enter it and wag your tail.'

In his ignorance the Arab said: 'Yes.' So al-Ṣādiq prayed to God and
the Arab immediately became a dog and went away. Al-Ṣādiq said to
me: 'Follow him.' So I followed him to his quarter. He went into his
house and started to wag his tail to his family and children. Then his
family took a stick and chased him out. I returned to al-Ṣādiq and told
him what had happened. While we were talking about this the dog
approached, stood in front of al-Ṣādiq and wept. He came up rolling
over in the dust and yelping. Al-Ṣādiq had mercy on him and prayed
for him so that he became an Arab again. 'Do you believe now, O
Arab?', asked al-Ṣādiq. 'Yes, a thousand times', he replied.[70]

Other such traditions include al-Ṣādiq's raising someone from the
dead,[71] related by Jamīl b. Darrāj who was a transmitter of al-Ṣādiq's
Ḥadīth and considered *thiqah*;[72] al-Ṣādiq exacting revenge on the
killer of his *mawlā* Muʿallā b. Khanīs by use of the Ineffable Name
of God,[73] related by a number of people including the Kufan Abū al-
Maʿza who was a transmitter of al-Ṣādiq's *Ḥadīth* and considered
thiqah;[74] and al-Ṣādiq being able to cure illnesses by means of a
prayer,[75] related on the Kufan ʿAbd Allāh b. Sinān, a transmitter of
al-Ṣādiq's *Ḥadīth* and considered *thiqah*.[76]

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[70] ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā al-Arbīlī, *Kashf al-ghummah fī maʿrifat al-aʾimmah* (Tabriz 1381
AH), 411–12; repeated in Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Beirut
1983), IIIL: 110–11.

[71] Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib* (Najaf 1956), 365.

[72] Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 92.

[73] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, 357; see also Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī,
al-Shāfī fī sharḥ uṣūl al-kāfī (Najaf n.d.), III: 182–3 where Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq talks
about the name being given to the prophets.

[74] Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 96.

[75] Al-Kulaynī, *Sharḥ* VII: 136. See also VII: 138 for similar related on the
Kufan Muʿāwiyah b. ʿAmmār (d. 175/791) who is considered *thiqah* (al-Najāshī,
Rijāl, 292).

[76] Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 148.

The strong propensity among certain quarters in Kufa to ascribe supernatural qualities to al-Ṣādiq is amply demonstrated in the several *Ḥadīth* regarding him, Muḥammad b ʿAbd Allāh al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah and the latter's father ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan. In Medina, the relationship between al-Ṣādiq and Muḥammad was represented primarily in terms of al-Ṣādiq's opposition to him on the grounds that his rebellion would fail as the Abbasids would accede to the caliphate.[77] However, the Kufan treatment of al-Ṣādiq's position regarding Muḥammad came to be expressed in other ways. The following is a typical tradition of this sort: 'A group heard Abū ʿAbd Allāh [i.e. al-Ṣādiq] say, having been asked about Muḥammad: "I have two books in which are the names of every prophet and king who will rule and, by God, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh is not in either of them."'[78]

Here, it is evident that the Kufan representation of al-Ṣādiq has coloured their conception of al-Ṣādiq's predictions concerning the ultimate defeat of Muḥammad, which originated in Medina, and rather than being simply predictions they have been infused with a more overtly supernatural dimension. This was similarly the case regarding the relationship between al-Ṣādiq and ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan. In the Medinan traditions which feature an encounter between them, al-Ṣādiq is represented as adopting a quietist approach to political authority while ʿAbd Allāh presses either his own or his son's claims to the caliphate. In the Kufan traditions, however, this is transformed into a competition for the imamate with all its attendant symbols. The following tradition is typical, related on the authority of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Kathīr, a Kufan contempoary of al-Ṣādiq.[79]

> A man entered Medina asking for the Imam. They directed him to ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan, so he questioned him for a while. Then he departed and they directed him to Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad, so he went to him. When Jaʿfar looked at him he said: 'You came into this town of ours asking for the Imam and a group of al-Ḥasan's descendants met

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[77] See the traditions based primarily on Medinan authorities and contained in Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyīn* (Tehran 1970), 205 ff., 248, 255; see also al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III/I: 254.

[78] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, IIIL: 272, related by the Kufan ʿUmar b. Udhaynah (on him see al-Kashshī, *Maʿrifah*, Index 206); for similar referring to the *Kitāb ʿAlī* see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, IIIL: 272 related on ʿAnbasah b. Najād, who is considered *thiqah* (on him see al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 213) on the Kufan Muʿallā b. Khanīs (on him see al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 296). For similar traditions related by Kufans see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, IIIL: 270, 273; al-Arbīlī, *Kashf al-ghummah*, 385; al-Kulaynī, *Sharḥ*, III: 203.

[79] For ʿAbd al-Raḥman see Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī, *al-Fihrist*, Najaf n.d.), 232.

you and led you to ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan. You questioned him for a while and then departed. If you wish, I will tell you what you asked him about and what his reply was. Then some of al-Ḥusayn's descendants met you and said: "If you want to meet Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad then do so." '

The man said: 'You are right. It was as you say.'

Al-Ṣādiq said to him: 'Return to ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan and ask him about the Prophet's coat of mail and his turban.' So the man went to ʿAbd Allāh and asked him about these things. ʿAbd Allāh took a coat of mail ... put it on and it was very long. He said: 'In such a way did the Prophet wear it.' The man returned to al-Ṣādiq and told him what had happened.

'He is not telling the truth', replied al-Ṣādiq. Then he took out a ring, struck it on the ground and the coat of mail and the turban fell from inside. Abū ʿAbd Allāh put on the coat of mail and it came to only half way down his thigh. Then he put on the turban and it was loose fitting. He then returned it to the stone of his ring. Al-Ṣādiq said: 'In such a way did the Prophet wear it. This turban was not spun on earth ... '[80]

But while those identified as *ghulāh* should not be considered as fundamentally different from their fellow Muslims, they may perhaps be taken to represent the most radical and vigorous expression of the speculative trend within early Shiism. They are to be typified as a heterogeneity of groups and individuals whose ideas often ensued from the extreme regard in which they held the imam. Many of these ideas were subsequently deemed as unacceptable by the later Shiah and Sunnis, and the *ghulāh* were castigated. Shiite apologists were eager to deny that their deliberations had any part to play in the development of Shiite doctrine and were inclined to show that their position had issued from more auspicious and respectable sources, notably al-Ṣādiq. Nevertheless, the notions of the *ghulāh* were not fixed doctrines or systems of beliefs but were capable of being adapted to suit different circumstances and situations, of providing a variety of meanings depending upon how they were emphasized and combined. It is therefore possible that some of the concepts introduced by the *ghulāh* had a lasting effect on Shiism and found their way into the accepted Shiite faith. Research on this area is still, however, noticeable by its absence.

[80] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, 349. For similar traditions see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, IIIL: 271, on the Kufan Ḥammād b. ʿUthmān (d. 191/806) who was a relator of al-Ṣādiq's *ḥadīth* (al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 173; al-Kashshī, *Maʿrifah*, 101); al-Arbīlī, *Kashf al-ghummah*, 382–3 and al-Kulaynī, *Sharḥ*, III: 188, both on the Kufan Saʿīd b. Simmān, who related *Ḥadīth* on al-Ṣādiq's authority and is considered to be *thiqah* (al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 129).

The *ghulāh* were particularly concerned with the definition of the imamate and the nature of the imam, the ensuing ascriptions of something approaching divinity and prophecy being testimony to the reverence with which they viewed him. It was perhaps the high regard paid to al-Ṣādiq by the *ghulāh*, and others who were receptive to their ideas, which helped to focus attention on him and to consolidate his position as leader of the emerging Shiite community in Kufa. Their view of al-Ṣādiq was in marked contrast to some of their contemporaries who, while according a high status to him, did not imbue him with any supernatural knowledge or infallibility. There are cases where some of al-Ṣādiq's companions denied him any infallibility and further instances where the companions of other imams ask them to give reasons for their positions on certain legal questions.[81]

More generally, while any strict connection between the ideas of the *ghulāh* and later Shiite doctrine is yet to be examined, it may be proposed that the problems they raised and the solutions adopted were instrumental in creating a potent spiritual dimension, a sentiment of mystery and a high emotional tone within Shiism as distinct from the primarily political overtones of earlier times and the subesquent ritual and legal norms. Clearly the ascription of divinity and prophecy to the imam was an untenable position and maintaining it would have served to ostracize the emerging Shiah from the Muslim fold and severely curtailed their appeal. Subsequently, however, while not giving the imams the title of God or prophet, established Shiite doctrine generally recognizes the imam to be a manifestation of the divine light and divinely protected from error (*maʿṣūm*).[82] This perhaps represents an implicit acceptance of a certain view on the nature of the imam, but accented in a way more acceptable to the Muslim majority.

The results of *ghulāh* speculations, and of others who were interested in such matters and yet escaped subsequent castigation, are perhaps witnessed in those lengthy sections of Shiite works, and *manāqib* in

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[81] See, for example, al-Ṭūsī, *al-Istibsār fī mā ukhtulifa fīhi min al-akhbār* (Tehran 1390 AH), I: 62–3, where Zurārah b. Aʿyan asks Muḥammad al-Bāqir where he received his information from concerning an aspect of ritual ablutions; al-Kashshī, *Maʿrifah*, 147, where Zurārah accuses al-Ṣādiq of lacking understanding; al-Kashshī, *Maʿrifah*, 158, where Zurārah remarks that he thought that al-Ṣādiq was more knowledgeable than he actually was.

[82] This is even though some later theologians such as Muḥammad b. Qiba al-Rāzī (fourth/tenth century), a leading figure in the Shīʿah community, did not accept that the imams were infallible and had knowledge of the *ghayb* (see Hossein Modarressi al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *An Introduction to Shiʿi Law* [London 1984], 27).

particular, dealing with the qualities of the imam, qualities which distinguish him above his fellow mortals. These sections include 'Ali b. 'Īsā al-Arbīlī's 'Concerning the Miracles of the Imam Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ṣādiq', Ibn Shahrāshūb's 'Concerning His Knowledge', 'On His Knowledge of the *Ghayb*', 'On His Going Beyond What is Ordinary' (*Kharq al-'ādāt*), and Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī's 'Book of Proof [i.e. of the legitimate imam]' (*Kitāb al-ḥujjah*). All these chapters record notices of al-Ṣādiq's miracles, his knowledge of all languages, his possession of prophetic scrolls[83] and the Prophet's weapons, his giving sight to the blind, his bringing the dead back to life, his knowledge of the Ineffable Name of God[84] and numerous examples of his potent prayers.

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[83] The Khaṭṭābiyyah claimed to own a prophetic book: 'One of the most astonishing facts is that the Khaṭṭābiyyah believe that Ja'far al-Ṣādiq entrusted to them a volume in which information can be obtained regarding any knowledge of the occult which they should seek. They call this volume "Jafr". They are of the opinion that only he who professes their views can read what is in it' (al-Baghdādī, *al-Fark*, 70–71). Al-Maqrīzī supplies a little more information. In the book is 'all which they need concerning knowledge of the unseen (*ghayb*) and the explanation of the Quran' (al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, III: 352). A more detailed statement regarding this text is given by Ibn Khaldūn (*Muqaddimah*, II: 209–10).

[84] Abū al-Khaṭṭāb used to assert that al-Ṣādiq 'taught him the Ineffable Name of God (*al-ism al-a'ẓam*)' (al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 38; also Sa'd b. 'Abd Allah al-Qummī, *al-Maqālāt wa-al-firaq*, [Tehran 1963], 51). Al-Mughīrah b. Sa'īd had previously placed a good deal of emphasis on this concept, introducing it as an integral part of his cosmology. When God wished to create the universe He uttered His Holiest Name (al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*, 152). Furthermore, al-Mughīrah also claimed to be in possession of this Name, and with its aid be able to 'resurrect the dead and rout armies' (al-Baghdādī, *al-Fark*, 50, 54). After al-Mughīrah's death his followers went on to say that he would 'restore to life seventeen men and give each of them one of the letters of God's Greatest Name, and they will rout armies and possess the earth'. Bayān b. Sam'ān also knew it and by means of it 'maintained that he could rout armies with it, and that he could invoke Venus and she would answer him' (al-Baghdādī, *al-Fark*, 47).