

# Islamic Alternatives

Non-Mainstream Religion in Persianate Societies

Edited by  
Shahrokh Ræi

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Philip G. Kreyenbroek

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All pictures were taken by the author during fieldwork.

## Preface

In the last few years, a research project entitled “The Khāksār Order between Ahl-e Ḥaqq and Shiite Sufi Order”, funded by the German Research Foundation, has been carried out by the editor of the present book at the Institute of Iranian Studies at the Georg-August University of Göttingen. This book is the proceeding of the symposium “Islamic Alternatives; Non-Mainstream Religion in Persianate Societies”, which was held within the framework of this project and with the financial support of the same foundation at the University of Göttingen in April 2014.

The tradition and belief system of the Khāksār in question is closely connected to several cultural and religious traditions across a vast geographical area in the orient: the territory of Persianate societies, which might also be called ‘the territory of wandering dervishes’.

The vast historical and cultural relations and associations, the similarities between the Khāksār Order and the Futuwwa tradition or religious communities (such as the Ahl-e Ḥaqq and Bektashi order in different geographical territories), the relationship between this order and Dervish groups in Pakistan and Central Asia on the one hand and its connection with the official orthodox Shia on the other hand – all these ideas were also considered in the formation of this symposium and the present proceeding.

The common points and cultural relations of these numerous and diverse cultural traditions as well as the heterodox movements in this region are so substantial that understanding the related aspects of each helps us gain a deeper knowledge of the whole subject matter.

Diverse domains of Iranian cultural history – which are in close or far association with the Khāksār tradition – and its connection with several cultural phenomena such as Naqqālī (dramatic storytelling), Pardekhānī (storytelling by reading paintings), Maddāhī (singing Shiite mourning), Ta‘zīyeh (Shiite ritual dramatic art), and also the tradition of Zūrḥāneh (the centre of Iranian heroic sport) have turned it into a multi-dimensional cultural phenomenon. When studying this order and belief system, all these different aspects should be considered. The Khāksār, especially the ‘Ajam branch of this order, have played an important role in the transmission of cultural phenomena in Iran since the Safavid Era, and the Khāksār Dervishes were actively present on the streets of Iranian cities and villages while wandering and praising ‘Alī from this era until at least the end of the Qajar Era. As a result, the image that forms in the mind of Persephones after hearing the word “Dervish” resembles the traditional image of a Khāksār Dervish.

This symposium and the present proceeding attempted to gather as many specialists of these diverse but associated themes as possible in order to get to a better understanding of these concepts. Obviously, analysing all related dimensions requires more articles and studies.

The discussed subjects and the groups under study in most of the papers are so interconnected that it is difficult to categorise them into specific themes. The articles mainly include several key words and interrelated themes. Therefore, their order in this categorisation could as well be different to a great extent without facing a problem in the understanding of the main idea. However, in order to achieve a structure and to facilitate the presentation of the main subjects, they are divided into five categories.

- Papers which analyse Shiism, its first decades, and also the concept of the Futuwwa which was later interwoven with Sufism.
- Papers which specifically and mainly focus on the Yāresān tradition.
- Articles which study key concepts in these religious groups from a cultural anthropological perspective.
- Articles with a specific focus on Khāksārs.
- Articles which investigate the relationship between the folklore tradition and Sufism in general as well as Khāksār and Yāresān traditions.

Obviously, the speakers from different universities and research institutes in Europe and Iran who participated in this symposium and presented their ideas (first in form of their speeches and then as articles) have played the main role in the formation of this collection and helped enrich it.

Their scientific experiences, gathered in different geographical and cultural territories and with diverse and possibly interconnected heterodox religious groups within the region, allowed for a productive exchange of valuable knowledge. Thus, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the honourable contributors of this volume.

I would also like to express my special thanks to Professor Ulrich Marzolph, Dr. Stéphane A. Dudoignon, and Dr. Khanna Omarkhali, who contributed to this symposium with their fruitful papers.

Dr. Mohammad Ali Soltani, who has been in close relationship with the followers of the Khāksār and Yāresān for decades, participated in this symposium as a reliable representative of these two religious traditions. At this point, I would like to express my very sincere thanks to him. He also gave a detailed seminal speech in Persian which unfortunately, for technical reasons, we were not able to publish in this volume.

Finally, I would like to thank the German Research Foundation, the Georg-August University of Göttingen, and the director of its Department of Iranian Studies, Prof. Philip Kreyenbroek who supported me in organising the symposium and publishing this proceeding. This publication is also indebted to Peter Welk and Pierke Bosschieter for proofreading and formatting it, as well as preparing the index.

May this proceeding present an opportunity for a better understanding of Islamic groups that have different ideas from orthodox Islam, and for attracting the academic attention to these groups and their role in the cultural diversity of these societies.

Shahrokh Raei  
Freiburg im Breisgau, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2016



# **Early Shi‘ism and Futuwwa**





# New Remarks on Secrecy and Concealment in Early Imāmī Shi‘ism: the Case of *khatm al-nubuwwa*

## Aspects of Twelver Shi‘i Imamology XII<sup>1</sup>

Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi

Paris

The practice of *taqiyya*, which could be translated as “tactical dissimulation”, means “to hide a truth on the faith of those who are not worthy of it” (*al-taqiyya kitmān haqīqa imāniyya min ghayr ahlihā*).<sup>2</sup> In this sense, it is almost synonymous with two other technical terms: *kitmān* and *khab’*. *Taqiyya* is the action name of the 8<sup>th</sup> form of the root *WaQaYa/Waqā*, which evokes the sense of conservation, protection, and refrain from something by fear for one’s own security. The 8<sup>th</sup> reflective form means to protect oneself against something, to avoid something out of fear. In theological language, the word has come to mean to hide one’s own religious affiliation or to even deny it, in case of a serious threat to one’s physical integrity or life. Based on three Qur’ānic verses (3:28, 16:106 and 40:28), the *taqiyya* was apparently first practiced in this meaning by the Khārijis and is regarded as lawful in all branches of Islam if necessary.<sup>3</sup> It is to apply, in juridical terms, the legal concepts of vital need (*darūra*) and temporary authorisation (*rukḥṣa*), as explained by Ḥanafī scholar Shams al-Dīn

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- 1 This study is the twelfth in a series of articles devoted to the Twelver Shi‘i imamology. The ten first studies are now covered by M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La religion discrète. Croyances et pratiques spirituelles dans l’islam shi‘ite*, Paris, 2006 (chapters 3 and 5 to 14; English translation: *The Spirituality of Shi‘i Islam: Beliefs and Practices*, London & New York, 2011); the eleventh one is: “Icône et contemplation: entre l’art populaire et le soufisme dans le Shi‘isme imamite (Aspects de l’imamologie duodécimaine XI)”, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 20 (2006 – in reality 2012), pp. 1–12 (also published in *Differenz und Dynamik im Islam: Festschrift für Heinz Halm zum 70. Geburtstag*, H. Biesterfeldt und V. Klemm (eds.), Würzburg, 2012, pp. 473–492 (English translation in P. Khosronejad (ed.), *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shi‘ism*, London & New York, 2012, pp. 25–45).
  - 2 K.M. al-Shaybī, “al-Taqiyya uṣūluhā wa taṭawwuruhā”, *Revue de la Faculté des Lettres de l’Université d’Alexandrie* 16 (1962–1963), p. 15 (whole article: pp. 14–40).
  - 3 M.A. Amir-Moezzi, “Dissimulation”, *Encyclopaedia of the Qur‘ān*, J. MacAuliffe (ed.), Leiden, vol. 1 (2001), pp. 320–324. On this practice among the early Khārijis, see Shahrastānī, *Livre des religions et des sectes*, vol. 1, transl. by D. Gimaret and G. Monnot, Paris-Louvain, 1986, pp. 383 and 414.

al-Sarakhsī (d. 483/1090) in his *al-Mabsūt*.<sup>4</sup> But the *taqiyya* has historically become one of the most striking features of Shī'ī Islam, as a sort of symbol or emblem Shī'ī. Even by opponents of the Shī'īs, it is considered to be a proof of falsehood, hypocrisy, and contradictory opinions of the latter. From al-Malaṭī's *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa l-radd 'alā ahl al-ahwā' wa l-bida'* ("The Book of Awakening and the refutation of the supporters of passionate opinions and reprehensible innovations") through the contemporary Wahhābi ideologists to the rigorous neo-ḥanbali Ibn Taymiyya in his *Minhāj al-sunnat al-nabawiyya fī naqḍ kalām al-shī'a* ("Path specified by the prophetic *Sunnah* to refute the Shī'ī theology") in the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century, the heresiographers and Sunni polemicists have all presented Shī'ism as a false faith mainly due to the practice of *taqiyya*.<sup>5</sup> Curiously, some orientalist and other scholars have adopted the same attitude. In 1906, in his monograph on *taqiyya*, Ignaz Goldziher describes the concept as a "futile imposture" while denouncing the lack of morality among Shī'īs; the authors of the article "Taqiyya" in the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Rudolph Strothmann and Moktar Djebli, warn against the great moral dangers of the tactical dissimulation.<sup>6</sup>

And yet for more than a century and a half, the complexity of the concept had already been quite finely developed by the learned French traveller, Count Arthur de Gobineau. In his famous book *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie centrale*, published in Paris in 1865, Gobineau, while stressing the importance of the *taqiyya* and its practice among the Shī'īs, insists on its massive existence within three other religious communities: Nusayri-Alawis in Syria, Christians in the regions of Trabzon and Erzurum in Anatolia, and Zoroastrians in Iran. Thus, for him, the *taqiyya* is an essential element of physical survival for minority communities in a hostile environment, but also of spiritual survival insofar as it allows these minorities to preserve their specific religious doctrines.<sup>7</sup>

4 Al-Sarakhsī, *al-Mabsūt*, Beirut, n.d., pp. 38–47.

5 Al-Malaṭī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh*, S. Dederling (ed.), Istanbul, 1936, pp. 24–25; Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-sunna*, n.l., n.d., vol. 1, p. 159–160. On the violent attacks of the ottoman thinker Mu'īn al-Dīn Mīrẓā Makhdūm, *al-Nawāqīd li bunyān al-Rawāfiḍ*, see E. Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī-Shī'ī views on *taqiyya*", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 (1975), p. 395 (whole article: pp. 395–402; repr. in id., *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shī'ism*, Aldershot, 1991, article no. III). On the Wahhābis, see M. Litvak, "More harmful than the Jews: anti-Shī'ī polemics in modern radical Sunni discourse", in M.A. Amir-Moezzi, M.M. Bar-Asher and S. Hopkins (eds.), *Le shī'isme imāmīte quarante ans après. Hommage à Etan Kohlberg*, Turnhout, 2009, pp. 302–303 (whole article: pp. 293–314). Also see al-Nawbakhtī, *Fīraq al-shī'a*, French translation by M.J. Mashkour, *Les sectes shīites*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Tehran, 1980, pp. 79–80 (the two concepts of *taqiyya* and *badā'* divine versatility – are denounced by opponents of Shī'is as concepts used by them to justify their contradictions and lies).

6 Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der *taqiyya* im Islam", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 60 (1906), p. 217 and 224 (whole article: pp. 213–226; repr. *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. J. Desomogyi, Hildesheim, 1967–70, vol. 5, pp. 59–72); *EI2* (French version), vol. 10, pp. 145–146.

7 A. de Gobineau, repr. 1928, pp. 1–18 and particularly pp. 12–13 and 16–17; cited by D. De Smet, "La pratique de *taqiyya* et *kitmān* en islam chiite: compromis ou hypocrisie?" in M. Nachi (ed.),

Indeed, for more than fifty years, the complexity of the concept has been discussed from various angles in many studies in Shī'ism in general and in Twelver Imāmī Shī'ism in particular.<sup>8</sup> The authors of these studies (including Asaf A. Fyzee, Henry Corbin, Etan Kohlberg, Hans G. Kippenberg, Josef van Ess, Maria Dakake, Daniel De Smet, Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, and myself) were able to show (on the base of a large number of old and new sources) that beyond concealment tactics, the *taqiyya* fills a highly religious and spiritual role, since it is completely a part of the Shī'ī piety. It is precisely for this reason – because it is not just a temporary ploy prompted by a temporary situation – that Sunni heresiographers have so violently denounced it. Afterwards, Hans Kippenberg and Josef van Ess saw the sanctity of the *taqiyya* as an influence of Christian *disciplina arcani* itself, based on Matthew 7:6: “Do not give dogs what is holy, do not throw your pearls before pigs, they might trample them, then turn against you and shred you”; Gospel's passage was quoted almost verbatim by the Ismā'īlī thinker Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. 412/1021) in order to justify the religious

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*Actualité du compromis. La construction politique de la différence*, Paris, 2011, pp. 148–149 (whole article: pp. 148–161).

- 8 E.g. A.A. Fyzee, “The Study of the Literature of the Fatimid *Da'wa*”, in G. Makdisi (ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honour of H.A.R. Gibb*, Leiden, 1965, pp. 232–249; H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien. Aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, Paris, 1971–1972, index s.v. *taqīyeh* and *ketmān*; E. Kohlberg, *op. cit.* (supra no. 5); id., “*Taqiyya* in Shī'ī Theology and Religion”, in H.G. Kippenberg and G.G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Secrecy and Concealment. Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions*, Leiden, 1995, pp. 345–380; E. Meyer, “Anlass und Anwendungsbereich der *taqiyya*“, *Der Islam* 57 (1980), pp. 246–280; M.J. Kister, “On ‘Concessions’ and Conduct. A Study in Early Islam”, in G.H.A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies in the First Century of Islam Society*, vol. 3, Carbondale, 1983, pp. 89–107; A. Layish, “*Taqiyya* among the Druzes”, *Asian and African Studies* 19 (1985), pp. 245–281; Hans G. Kippenberg, “Ketmān. Zur Maxime der Verstellung in der antiken und frühislamischen Religionsgeschichte”, in J.W. van Herten et al. (eds.), *Tradition and Re-Interpretation in Jewish and Early Christian Literature. Essays in Honour of Jürgen C.H. Lebram*, Leiden, 1986, pp. 172–183; A. Schimmel, “Secrecy in Sufism”, in K.W. Bolle (ed.), *Secrecy in Religions*, Leiden, 1987, pp. 81–102; J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, vol. I–VI, Berlin – New York, 1991–1997, index, s.v.; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin dans le shi'isme originel*, Lagrasse – Paris, 1992 (2007<sup>2</sup>), index s.v.; D. Steigerwald, “La dissimulation (*taqiyya*) de la foi dans le shī'isme ismaélien”, *Studies in Religion* 27/1 (1998), pp. 39–59; S. Makārim, *al-Taqiyya fī l-islām*, Beirut, 2004; L. Clarke, “The Rise and Decline of *Taqiyya* in Twelver Shi'ism”, in T. Lawson (ed.), *Reason and Inspiration in Islam* (supra no. 1), pp. 46–63; M. Dakake, “Hiding in Plain Sight: the Practical and Doctrinal Significance of Secrecy in Shi'ite Islam”, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 24/2 (June 2006), pp. 324–355; M. Ebstein, “Secrecy in Ismā'īlī Tradition and in the Mystical Thought of Ibn al-'Arabī”, *Journal Asiatique* 298/2 (2010), pp. 303–343; D. De Smet, *op. cit.* (supra no. 7); O. Mir-Kasimov, “Techniques de garde du secret en Islam”, *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 228/2 (avril – juin 2011), pp. 265–287. The last fascicle of the Spanish review *Al-Qanṭara* 34/2 (2013) is devoted to *taqiyya*. Several articles concern different Shī'ī trends: D. De Smet, “La *taqiyya* et le jeûne de Ramadan: quelques réflexions ismaéliennes sur le sens ésotérique de la charia”, pp. 357–386; M. Ebstein, “Absent yet All Times Present: Further Thoughts on Secrecy in the Shī'ī Tradition and in Sunnī Mysticism”, pp. 387–413; R. Gleave, “The Legal Efficacy of *taqiyya* Acts in Imāmī Jurisprudence: 'Alī al-Karākī's *al-Risāla fī l-taqiyya*”, pp. 415–438.

practice of the *taqiyya*, i.e. to hide the secret doctrines of the community of those who are not worthy of it.<sup>9</sup>

It is in this context that I translated the term with “custody” or “guarding the secret”, a literal translation of the Arabic expression *hiḏz al-sirr*. Countless traditions attributed to the holy imams of Shī‘ism reported from early compilations of hadith-s emphasize the esoteric nature of some Shī‘ī teachings and the canonical duty, for the initiated believer to keep these doctrines hidden.<sup>10</sup> Most of these traditions date back to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> imams Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. about 115/733) and Ja‘far al-Šādiq (m. 148/765): “Our teaching is difficult, arduous, and it is a secret, made secret and protected by a secret”;<sup>11</sup> “nine tenths of the religion (i.e. the religion of the imams) consist of keeping the secret, and whoever does not practice it has no religion”;<sup>12</sup> “keeping the secret is part of our religion (i.e. to us, the imams)... Whoever does not practice this is devoid of faith”;<sup>13</sup> “God’s rule is to keep the secret”;<sup>14</sup> “he who divulges our teachings is like him who denies it”;<sup>15</sup> “to support our cause (i.e. us, the imams) not only means to know and to admit it, but it also means to protect and to keep it hidden from those who are not worthy of it”.<sup>16</sup>

Schematically, one could say that *taqiyya* has two dimensions: an external or “political” dimension called “prudential *taqiyya*” by Etan Kohlberg (made necessary by the fear of a minority community living in a hostile environment) and then an inner “initiatory” dimension which the same scholar calls “non-prudential *taqiyya*”

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- 9 Kippenberg, *op. cit.* (see no. 8), p. 173; van Ess, *op. cit.* (no. 8), vol. 1, p. 313; al-Kirmānī, *al-Risāla al-waḏī‘a fī ma‘ālim al-dīn*, manuscript, Cambridge Or 1455 Arberry 9, fol. 49r, cited by D. De Smet, *op. cit.* (see no. 7), p. 154. On the *disciplina arcani* in early Christianity, among those considered to be faithful of it, like Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Saint Basil, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, etc., see e.g. *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, ed. by A. Vacant and E. Mangenot, tome 1, Paris, 1937, fasc. 2, col. 1738–1758; J. Daniélou and H.I. Marrou, *Nouvelle histoire de l’Église*, Paris, 1963, vol. 1, pp. 99ff.
- 10 On the early compilations of Imāmī hadith-s, see E. Kohlberg, “Shī‘ī Ḥadīth”, in A.F.L. Beeston *et al.* (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature I. Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 299–307; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin* (see *supra* no. 8), pp. 48–58.
- 11 E.g. al-Šaffār al-Qummī, *Bašā‘ir al-darajāt*, ed. Mīrzā Kūčebāghī, Tabriz, s.d. (circa 1960), section 1, chapters 11 ff., pp. 20 ff. On the importance of the notion of secret in Imāmī Shī‘ism, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La religion discrète* (*supra* no. 1), pp. 220 ff. and index *s.v.* *sirr*, pl. *asrār*.
- 12 Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfi*, ed. J. Muṣṭafawī, with Persian translation, 4 vols., Tehran, n.d. (the 4<sup>th</sup> vol., translated by H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī, is dated 1386/1966), “Kitāb al-īmān wa l-kufī”, bāb al-*taqiyya*, no. 2, vol. 3, p. 307.
- 13 *Ibid.*, no. 12, vol. 3, p. 312; also al-Barqī, *Kitāb al-maḥāsīn*, ed. J. Muḥaddith, Tehran, 1370/1950, pp. 202–203; Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl al-dīn*, ed. ‘A.A. Ghaffārī, Qumm, reprint. 1405/1985, bāb 35, no. 5, vol. 2, p. 371.
- 14 Ja‘far al-Šādiq (attributed to), *Tafsīr*, ed. P. Nwyia, *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph* (Beirut), 43 (1968) p. 194; ed. ‘A. Zay‘ūr, *al-Tafsīr al-ṣūfi li l-Qur‘ān ‘ind al-Šādiq*, Beirut, 1979, p. 136.
- 15 Al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, bāb al-idhā‘a, no. 2, vol. 4, p. 77.
- 16 Al-Nu‘mānī, *Kitāb al-ghayba*, ed. ‘A.A. Ghaffārī, Tehran, 1397/1977, bāb 1, no. 3, p. 55. On other early sources on the *taqiyya*, see Amir-Moezzi, *Guide divin*, no. 685, pp. 311–312.

(prompted by the need to keep the secret and to protect certain doctrines from the uninitiated).<sup>17</sup> Daniel De Smet has convincingly shown that the two dimensions are not always separable and often communicate with each other.<sup>18</sup> They are also presented as being firmly linked in the passage cited from the Gospel of Matthew.

But what applies to the custody of the secret? Which teachings are to be protected at the same time that initiated faithfully from the ignorance often accompanied by the violence of uninitiated adversaries? It is true that almost all Shi'ī works – whether the corpus of Hadith, theological, and exegetical writings or legal treaties – contain a more or less long chapter on the specific duty of guarding the secret – on different terms that designate it (*taqiyya*, *kitmān*, *khab'*, etc., as we have already seen), on its doctrinal necessity, its sacredness, its conditions of application. In Shi'ism, there are even monographic treatises devoted to the *taqiyya*. But it is equally true that objects covered by this duty will not necessarily be found in these chapters or those treatises. These objects are scattered, often piecemeal, in the vast corpus of doctrinal works, using a technique which itself belongs to the practice of the *taqiyya* and is called “the dispersion of information” (*tabdīd al-'ilm*).<sup>19</sup> The objects of the *taqiyya* are recognisable by their esoteric and initiatory characters, allusive formulas that sometimes accompany them, inviting the faithful to be discrete about them, their distance, or their break with Sunni “orthodox” data. If need be, this once again confirms theories of specialists on the “cult of secrecy” in religious traditions, from Georg Simmel through Paul Christopher Johnson to Antoine Faivre and others, that “the secret” is often a sort of figure of speech, a rhetorical device designed to pique the curiosity of the listener or reader and to draw attention to the nature of teaching, but the “secret” is never left completely hidden. We know that in Shi'ism, part of these “secrets” are messianic data, information about the history of Qur'ān writing and the theory of falsification of the “official” Qur'ān, the perception of the history of the early days of Islam, the attitude towards the Companions of the Prophet, the hidden meanings of the scriptures, some spiritual exercises as well as especially imamological doctrines concerning the nature, status, and functions of the saints of Shi'ism *par excellence*, i.e. the imams.<sup>20</sup> Among these imamological beliefs on which the *taqiyya* applies, one, to my knowledge, has not attracted the attention it deserves, given its huge religious and political significance: the proper prophetic abilities of the imams.

The earliest reports on these capacities are to be found in the ancient corpus of Imāmī Hadit, the oldest sources of which having been compiled roughly between 850 and 950 AD. These are the works of the *muḥaddithūn*, such as al-Sayyārī, Abū Ja'far

17 E. Kohlberg, “*Taqiyya* in Shi'ī Theology and Religion” (*supra* note 8), pp. 346 ff., 368 ff.

18 D. De Smet, “La pratique de *taqiyya*...”, pp. 152–153; id., “La *taqiyya* et le jeûne de Ramadan...” (*supra* note 8), p. 357.

19 On the *tabdīd al-'ilm*, see Amir-Moezzi, *Guide divin*, index s.v.

20 These topics are the principal subjects studied in already cited works of M.A. Amir-Moezzi. On the issue of the falsification of the “official Qur'an” in Shi'ism, see now E. Kohlberg and M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification. The Kitāb al-Qirā'āt of Ahmad b. Muḥammad al-Sayyārī*, Leiden-Boston, 2009.

al-Barqī, al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, al-Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya al-Ṣadūq, or the authors of early Qurʾānic exegesis like the *Tafsīr*, attributed to the eleventh imam al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, al-ʿAyyāshī, or Furāt al-Kufī.<sup>21</sup> Traditions whose contents will be discussed here are cited from these as well as similar books, in particular the *Kitāb al-Kāfī* (“sufficient Book”) by al-Kulaynī (d. c. 329/940–941), probably the most complete compilation of this period.<sup>22</sup>

The hadith-s concerning the prophetic qualities of the imams seem to include several groups, probably corresponding to multilayer phases. In one group, all prophetic quality is radically derived from the imams. Through this kind of tradition, they keep saying that their status is similar to that of imams of previous prophets and that their jurisdiction applies only to licit and illicit, that is to say, a juridical science purely “orthodox”. The aim of this kind of tradition seems to be the respect for the dogma according to which Muḥammad is the last prophet and therefore Islam the last religion. Al-Kulaynī grouped these traditions in a chapter aptly titled “The repugnant nature of the belief in the prophecy of the imam” (*karāhiyat al-qawl fīhim* [i.e. *fī l-aʿimma*] *bi l-nubuwwa*; as we know from elsewhere, this clearly means that some professed such doctrines in Shīʿī circles).<sup>23</sup> However, on closer inspection, one has the impression that our traditionalist applied a form of *taqiyya* here. The chapter includes only seven very short hadith-s in which a subtle evolution is clearly visible: while the first hadith-s emphasise that Muḥammad is the last prophet, the Qurʾān the last revealed Book, and the imams only guarantors of a good legal functioning of Islam, the last traditions of the chapter attribute to the imams an increasing impact on the sacred space.<sup>24</sup> In the penultimate hadith of the chapter – while the imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq separates himself from those who believe in the divine or prophetic nature of imams –, he describes imams as treasurers of the knowledge of God (*khuzzān ʿilm allāh*), the interpreters of God’s cause (*tarājimat amr allāh*) or even the clear proof of God (*al-ḥujjat al-bāligha*). And then, in the last hadith, the same Jaʿfar is said to have stated that the only difference between the imams and the Prophet Muḥammad is the number of women legally allowed to marry! The following chapters in al-Kulaynī feature a much larger number of traditions and seem to aim at qualifying strongly, if not contradicting, the first group of “orthodox” hadith-s we mentioned. Indeed, in the following chapter,

21 On these sources, see the book cited in note 20 and the studies mentioned in note 10.

22 On this major author and his work, see now M.A. Amir-Moezzi and H. Ansari, “Muhammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (m. 328/939–40 ou 329/940–941) et son *Kitāb al-Kāfī*. Une introduction”, *Studia Iranica* 38/2 (2009), pp. 191–247; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux et le Coran parlant. Sources scripturaires de l’islam entre histoire et ferveur*, Paris, 2011, chapter 5 (expanded version of the previous article). Traditions concerning prophetic abilities of the imams were echoed by countless other compilations of traditions. In order to avoid making the footnotes too heavy, I shall confine myself mainly to the *Kāfī*.

23 Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī* (*supra* note 12), “K. al-ḥujja”, hadith-s nos. 696 ff., vol. 2, pp. 9 ff.

24 Respectively traditions nos. 1 to 5 and 6 to 7 of the aforementioned chapter.

the imams are appointed by the two technical terms *muḥaddath* and *mufahham*, respectively, “to whom speak the heavenly entities” and “to whom is given the understanding of heavenly things”.<sup>25</sup> The following chapters contain anthropogenic traditions according to which the imam is created from the same heavenly substance as the Prophet Muḥammad. He has five spirits, the most noble of whom is called the Holy Spirit or Spirit of Holiness (*rūḥ al-quḍs*) – a label, as we know, of the entity or faculty allowing for the reception of revelation.<sup>26</sup> The imam is the vehicle of the celestial entity called Spirit (*al-rūḥ*) as mentioned in the Qur’ān (e.g. Q. 17:85 and 42:52.): “The Spirit proceeding from the Order of the Lord”; thanks to this celestial being, which is superior to the archangels Michael and Gabriel, the imam is able to receive divine revelations directly.<sup>27</sup>

It is interesting to note that in some traditions, by facing the imam who lists his own prophetic abilities, his interlocutor (often an intimate disciple) seems to be transfixed by the enormity of the statements of his master. So the imam assures his disciple of his sincerity and at the same time asks him to remain discrete.<sup>28</sup> Of course, what is at stake is the Islamic dogma of the absolute end, the final interruption of prophecy after Muḥammad. I will get back to this later.

In other traditions, some shades are introduced, presumably to save the “orthodox” dogma of the superiority of the Prophet Muḥammad to every human being in general and to the imams in particular. According to these nuances, differences are established between a prophet messenger (*rasūl*), a simple prophet (*nabī*), and an imam-*muḥaddath*: the prophet-messenger sees and hears the angel in a dream as well as while awake, the simple prophet sees and hears the angel only in dream; and finally, the imam-*muḥaddath* hears but does not see the angel.<sup>29</sup> But even these shades appear to be occasional and seem to have been elaborated in retrospect because they are apparently contradicted by other allusive and tasty traditions. According to one of them, the

25 Al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, nos. 703 ff.; on these terms and especially the first one, see E. Kohlberg, “The Term ‘Muḥaddath’ in Twelver Shi’ism”, in *Studia Orientalia memoriae D.H. Baneth dedicata*, Jerusalem, 1979, pp. 39–47 (= *Belif and Law in Imāmī Shi’ism* – *supra* note 5 –, article no. V); Amir-Moezzi, *Guide divin*, index s.v. and especially pp. 176 ff.

26 Al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, nos. 707 ff. See also al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣā’ir al-darajāt*, (*supra* note 11), section 9, ch. 14 and 15. On the “five spirits”, see K.D. Crow, “The ‘Five Limbs’ of the Soul: A Manichean Motif in Muslim Garb?”, in T. Lawson (ed.), *Reason and Inspiration in Islam* (*supra* note 1), pp. 19–33; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, “Les cinq esprits de l’homme divin (Aspects de l’imamologie duodécimaine XIII)” (forthcoming in *Der Islam*).

27 Al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, nos. 711 ff.; also al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣā’ir al-darajāt*, section 9, ch. 16.

28 *Ibid.*, nos. 704 and 707.

29 Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣā’ir al-darajāt*, section 8, chapter 1, pp. 368–374; al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, kitāb al-ḥujja, bāb al-farq bayn al-rasūl wa l-nabī wa l-muḥaddath, nos. 434 ff., vol. 1, pp. 248–250; see also E. Kohlberg, “The Term ‘Muḥaddath’”, *passim*; Amir-Moezzi, *Guide divin*, p. 178. The presentation of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb as a *muḥaddath* by Sunni authorities (Y. Friedmann, “Finality of Prophethood in Sunnī Islām”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986), p. 203 (the whole article: pp. 177–215)) seems to be part of the controversial anti-Shi’i discourse, with the aim to neutralise the prophetic abilities of ‘Alī by those of the second caliph (see A. Hakim, “‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb, calife par la grâce de Dieu”, *Arabica* 54/3 (2008), pp. 317–336).



imam Ja‘far al-Šādiq shows “the fluff of angels” (*zaghāb al-malā‘ika*) to an intimate disciple and falls into his house, which he keeps carefully.<sup>30</sup> According to another hadith, before the imam hears the clear question of a follower: “Do angels appear to you?”, the same imam denies an answer and simply caresses the head of one of his sons, saying: “With regard to our children, angels are nicer than ourselves.” In the same hadith, Ja‘far seems to declare by allusion that angels come to shake hands with him (*mušāfaha*).<sup>31</sup> All this would indicate that the imam, as the greatest prophet, is able to hear but also to see the angel and to be awake. Once again, al-Kulaynī brought together these traditions in a chapter entitled “Angels come into the imams’ houses, trample their carpets and provide them with information” (*inna l-a‘immat tadhulu malā‘ika buyūtahum wa taṭa‘u busuṭahum wa ta‘ūhim bi l-akhbār*).<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, like Muḥammad, previous prophets, and ancient sages, the imam is capable of heavenly ascension; he rises to the divine throne in order to increase knowledge or to meet the spirits of holy men of the past.<sup>33</sup> He has the holy scriptures of previous religions, which he can read in their own language, he knows the events of heaven and earth, of the past and the future, and he holds miraculous supernatural powers and thaumaturgical faculties.<sup>34</sup>

Al-Šaffār al-Qummī (d. 290/902–903), a contemporary of al-Kulaynī, devotes chapters 14–19 of the ninth section of his *Kitāb Bašā‘ir al-Darajāt* to the imams’ five spirits, just like the prophets, the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit proceeding of the order of the Lord (see above).<sup>35</sup> Out of the large number of traditions, I shall confine myself to mention only one particularly representative one. A disciple said to Imam Ja‘far al-Šādiq that ‘Alī, the first Imam, claimed in Yemen – where he had been sent to by the Prophet – that he proceeded according to the precepts of God and Muḥammad; yet how could he claim such a thing while the Qur’ān was not yet fully revealed and the Prophet was absent? Ja‘far replied: “He has been informed by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>36</sup> In other words, through his Holy Spirit, individual correspondent of the celestial entity of the same name and often equivalent to the angel Gabriel (the angel of revelation), the imam, namely ‘Alī, had the ability to receive the revelation directly, without depending on the person of Muḥammad or the Qur’ān.

30 Al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, nos. 1021 and 1022, vol. 2, p. 241.

31 *Ibid.*, no. 1020, vol. 2, pp. 240–241. The term *mušāfaha* (“to shake hands with somebody”) also means “to be face to face, to stand in front of someone”. In both cases, the visible presence of the angels seems to be obvious.

32 *Ibid.*, nos. 1020 ff., vol. 2, pp. 240 ff.

33 M.A. Amir-Moezzi, “L’imam dans le ciel. Ascension et initiation (Aspects de l’imamologie duodécimaine III)” (*supra* note 1; now in *La religion discrete/The Spirituality of Shi‘i Islam*, ch. 5).

34 M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Guide divin*, part III–2.

35 Al-Šaffār al-Qummī, *Bašā‘ir al-darajāt*, section 9, ch. 14–19, pp. 445–466. On this author and his work, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, “Al-Šaffār al-Qummī (m.290/902–903) et son *Kitāb bašā‘ir al-darajāt*”, *Journal Asiatique* 280/3–4 (1992), pp. 221–250; and *id.*, *Le Coran silencieux et le Coran parlant* (*supra* note 22), ch. 4; A.J. Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shi‘ism: Hadith as Discourse Between Qum and Baghdad*, Richmond, 2000, ch. 5 and 7.

36 *Bašā‘ir al-darajāt*, section 9, ch. 15, no. 8, pp. 452–453.

All these capabilities are part of what is referred to as "the knowledge of the invisible world" (*'ilm al-ghayb*), that Islamic orthodoxy is later reserved exclusively to the prophets or even to God. But there is more. Many reports suggest that particularly initiated disciples of the imams are also capable of prophetic exploits. It says first that they were created from the same substance as the prophets, from the luminous material of the celestial world of *'Iliyyūn*.<sup>37</sup> Then, the initiated adept, designated by the technical expression "probated faithful" (*mu'min mumtaḥan*), is constantly put on an equal footing with the angel of the nearby (*malak muqarrab*) and the prophet messenger (*nabī mursal*).<sup>38</sup> And in fact, if we look at the heresiographical and historical works, the great "heretics" of early Islam – almost all of them from secret Shī'ī circles – have claimed to be the place of the manifestation of God and/or were sent by God with miraculous prophetic abilities, of course qualifying imams, but also prophets, especially Muḥammad and Jesus Christ. We have the examples of Abū Manṣūr al-Ijlī, Bayān b. Sam'ān, Abū l-Khaṭṭāb, or even the famous tortured mystic al-Ḥallāj.<sup>39</sup> Hence the massive use of two prophetic traditions in Shī'ī corpus: "The sages are the inheritors of the prophets" (*al-'ulamā warathat al-anbiyā*) and "Sages of my community are similar to prophets of Israel" (*'ulamā 'ummatī ka-anbiyā' Banī Isrā'īl*)<sup>40</sup>.

In this respect, the tradition called the "hadith of rank" (*hadith la-manzila*) seems to be symptomatic. "In relation to me, you occupy the same rank occupied by Aaron in relation to Moses, except that there is no prophet after me" (*anta minni bi manzilat Hārūn min Mūsā illā annahu lā nabīyya' ba'dī*), the prophet Muḥammad said to 'Alī. This version of the tradition, called the "long version", is reported by a variety of both Sunni and Shī'ī sources – and rightly so, because it highlights the considerable weight of 'Alī's religious "rank" – placed on the very same plane as the biblical prophet Aaron –, while respecting the "orthodox" dogma that Muḥammad is the last prophet.

37 Ibid., pp. 96–97.

38 M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Seul l'homme de Dieu est humain. Théologie et anthropologie mystique à travers l'exégèse imamite ancienne (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine IV)" (*supra* note 1; now in *La religion discrete/The Spirituality of Shi'ī Islam*, ch. 8).

39 On these characters and generally the ones heresiographers called "extremists" (*ghulāt*), see e.g. H. Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis. Die Extreme Schia und die 'Alawiten*, Zürich & München, 1982; W. Tucker, *Mahdīs and Millenarians: Shiite Extremists in Early Muslim Iraq*, New York, 2008; P. Crone, *The Nativist Prophets in Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism*, Cambridge, 2011; J. van Ess, *Der Eine und das Andere. Beobachtungen an islamischen häresiographischen Texten*, Berlin & New York, 2011; S.W. Anthony, *The Caliph and the Heretic. Ibn Saba' and the Origins of Shi'ism*, 2012; M. Asatryan, *Heresy and Rationalism in Early Islam: the Origins and Evolution of the Mufaḍḍal Tradition*, PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 2012. On artificial and probably late dates of the heresiographical distinction between the "moderate Shi'ism" of the imams and the "extremist Shi'ism" of the *ghulāt* (especially in the early times), see Amir-Moezzi, *Guide divin*, pp. 313 ff.

40 On the very important role of the imams' disciples, see E. Kohlberg, "Imam and Community in the Pre-Ghayba Period", in S. Amir Arjomand (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism*, Albany, 1988, pp. 25–53 (= *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shi'ism* – *supra* note 5 –, article no. XIII); and now L.N. Takim, *The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shi'ite Islam*, New York, 2006, *passim*.