



ISLAM IN IRAN X. THE ROOTS OF POLITICAL SHI'ISMS

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3. Islamic Political Movements

A series of articles on Political Islam in Iran can be viewed in two categories: One, consisting of “Roots of Political Shi’ism,” “Jihad in Islam,” and “Martyrdom in Islam,” examine the historical and theological antecedents of modern Islamic political ideas.

The above entries will thus facilitate a deeper understanding of contemporary Islamic political movements, which are then discussed in detail in the following six entries: “Islamic Movements in 20th Century Iran,” “Islam and Democracy,” “Islam and Socialism,” “Islam and Fundamentalism,” “Islamic Revolution of 1977-79,” and “Islamic Republic of Iran.”

X. THE ROOTS OF POLITICAL SHI'ISM

By “political Shi’ism” we mean here the politicization of theological and legal doctrines of Twelver Shi’ism among some thinkers, often *motakallem* and/or *faqih*, in certain specific historical contexts, in order to make of these doctrines an ideology of legitimization of religious authority and power. Excluded from our study are contemporary revolutionary movements because separate articles are dedicated to them (see xiv-xvii, below), and the



philosophers—especially Hellenistic thinkers—whose political thought, often without any original Imami specificity, also requires a separate article in itself (Vakili, pp. 14-16; Jambet, 2000, *passim* and 2004, pp. 241-78). The present study is comprised of three parts: The initial quietism, the ancient roots of political Shi'ism, and aspects of theologian-jurist power.

THE INITIAL QUIETISM

The study of different categories of sources that have come down to us seem to show that the imams of Twelver Shi'ism would have largely opted for a quietist attitude, isolated from political power. This attitude seems to have prevailed, more particularly, after the tragedy of Karbalā' and the massacre of Imam Ḥosayn and his dependents in 61/680 (Amir-Moezzi, 1992, part III-1, with the special case of the eighth Imam, al-Rezā', an exception that confirms the rule). The technical term for this attitude is *qo'ud*, literally remain “seated”; whence the surname *al-qā'ed* (the Seated), of imams, as opposed to *al-qā'em* (the Standing), the twelfth and final imam, the only imam permitted to “rise” as “insurgent” (*qiām*, *koruj*) against injustice, as the Mahdi (see section 2, above). The impression that emerges from the earliest corpus of Imami sources is that after Karbalā' the period of understanding between spiritual and temporal power had forever changed. The imams, based on traditions that are attributed to them, seem to have concluded that henceforth “the religion of truth” (*din al-ḥaqq*), i.e., Shi'ism and temporal power had become two poles forever irreconcilable: “Forever” since “the ideal city,” governed by a just ruler, can only be realized at the end of time, with the Mahdi, the eschatological savior as the only truly just sovereign (*al-soltān al-ādel*). He is the only being authorized to legitimately fight the unjust, the only one able to avenge the oppressed and establish a world of knowledge and justice. Thus, according to the tradition attributed to many among the imams: “Any banner raised before the end of time and the uprising of the *qā'em* belongs to a rebel against God” (*tāgūt*; see Kolayni, 1969, II, pp. 121-22; No'māni, chap. 5, pp. 161-68 and chap. 14, p. 393, no. 53). From now until then the world will be governed irrevocably by the unjust and any attempt at rebellion, even apparently legitimate, is inevitably doomed to failure and suffering: “Dust always falls upon him who raises it” (i.e., the rebel is bound to be the victim of his own revolt), says a tradition going back to Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādeq, “any revolt from one among us (the Shi'ites) will be no more than additional suffering for us (the Imams) and our believers” (*al-Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiya*, “*esnād*,” p. 22, no. 62; Kašši, pp. 262-63, 290-93; No'māni, pp. 244, 48, 283, 286, 291). In order to



maintain the purity of his faith, the Imami believer is urged to tolerate patiently the injustice of the world until the advent of the Mahdi. Not only is he forbidden from rebelling against established power (as we have just seen) but he is also forbidden from seeking to establish power, since in general, any power before the Return of the Hidden Imam is illegitimate. Kolayni went as far as to dedicate an entire sub-chapter of “The Book of Faith and Infidelity” from his *Oṣul men al-Kāfi*, to traditions forbidding Shi‘ite believers any kind of leadership (*re’āsa*), religious and/or political (Kolayni, *K. al-imān wa’l-kofr*, chap. on *ṭalab al-re’āsa*, in idem, n.d., III, pp. 405-7). Similarly, apart from exceptional cases in which his or his co-religionist’s life is endangered, the believer is forbidden from collaborating with power (Kolayni, 1980, V, pp. 105-12; Ebn Bābuya (see BĀBĀWAYH) 1970, III, pp. 106 and 108; Ṭusi, 1980, VI, pp. 330-36; Madelung, 1980, passim; Karimi Zanjāni-Aṣl, pp. 199 ff.). How was it then that a religious movement, presented in its sacred texts as essentially initiatory, esoteric, mystical and quietist (Amir-Moezzi, 1992, passim), was within its own ranks able to give rise to a politico-religious ideology justifying the taking of power by jurist-theologians, and assuming power, as recently illustrated by the principal political theory of Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian Islamic Revolution, namely the doctrine of the power of the jurist (*welāyat-e faqih*)? This paradox of Shi‘ism is the result of a long doctrinal process based upon certain major historical turning points.

THE ROOTS OF POLITICAL SHI‘ISM

The first turning point, and perhaps the most important, occurred in the 10th century. This golden age of “the Renaissance of Islamic Humanism,” the period of “the Iranian intermezzo,” to quote Vladimir Minorsky’s description (see Minorsky, p. viii), between the end of the Arab domination and the arrival of the Ghaznavids (q.v.) and later the Seljuk Turks in the following century, was also the Shi‘ite century of Islam. With Buyids (q.v.) at the center of the empire, Hamdanids in Syria and northern Iraq, Fatimids (q.v.) in North Africa, Zaydis in the Yemen and finally Carmatians (q.v.) in Southern Iran, Bahrain and parts of Arabia, the most important regions in the land of Islam were governed by different Shi‘ite branches and families.

This period was also the rationalizing turning point of Islam. Learned and intellectual Muslims had now assimilated the subtleties of Hellenic culture and thought, and texts had begun to be translated in great numbers since the previous century. Among the many contributions of this translated literature, scholars were particularly fascinated by Aristotelian dialectic, logical



reasoning, dialectical reasoning and its various intellectual tools. It was especially the jurists and theologians of different Schools that discovered in dialectical reasoning a particularly efficient weapon to convince and overcome their adversaries in their frequent polemical sessions. The term '*aql*, meaning henceforth "reason" (and not "intelligence"/"intellect" as had been the case hitherto) became a key term for this entire century (Kraemer, introduction).

Finally, for Twelver Shi'ites, this century represents the end of the period of historical imams. According to tradition, the twelfth and final imam disappeared definitively in 329/940-41, only four or five years before the arrival of the Buyids in Baghdad. The Imamis from then on found themselves deprived of a physical leader. For a doctrine entirely dominated by the figure of the imam and different aspects of his authority, this state of affairs proved to be highly awkward. This disturbing situation was also felt by the Buyid princes, and especially by those religious scholars who desired to justify their power, since, as we have seen, numerous texts attributed to the imams explicitly forbade believers to engage in positive political activities. Moreover, the Shi'ite scholars were also embarrassed since in this century of triumphant reason and well-established Sunni orthodoxy, they found themselves legatees of a body of sacred texts, the corpus of Hadith, strongly distinguished by esoteric, mystical and even magical traits, that is to say, "non-rational" elements and doctrines perceived as deviant and heretic.

It was in this lively context within Imamism that a "rationalist" movement led by brilliant jurist-theologians trained by Shaikh al-Mofid (413/1022) and his disciples was firmly established. This movement, called the "School of Baghdad," was to progressively distance itself from the original esoteric tradition represented especially by the traditionalists (*mohaddet*) of "the School of Qom and Rayy" (Amir-Moezzi, 1992, parts I-1 and I-2; idem, 1993, pp. 69 ff.). These jurist-theologians presented themselves as the only legitimate authorities permitted to fill the void left by the Occultation. In order to enable Twelver Shi'ism to survive as an organized religion, compromises, doctrinal redefinitions, as well as dogmatic and legal re-developments seemed indispensable. Adapting Shi'ism to the prevailing rationalism, trimming doctrines deemed too deviant so as not to offend the recently formed orthodoxy, providing justifications for the exercise of power shared with the Buyids and through them with the 'Abbasids—these seem to have been the primary objectives of the Doctors of rationalist law in the School of Baghdad.



At first, the School distanced itself from esoteric doctrines considerably in the name of reason (*‘aql*). It is indeed in the name of reason that Shaikh al-Mofid dedicated a critical commentary to the “Profession of Faith” (*Resālat al-e’teqādāt*) by his master Ebn Bābuya (381/991; Mofid, 1951a, passim; Idem, 1951b, pp. 11 ff.; McDermott, chaps. II, XII and XIV). His disciple, al-Šarif al-Mortazā (436/1044), also educated in rationalist Mo‘tazelite theology, went as far as to request his co-religionists to censor for themselves entire passages from Kolayni’s *Kāfi*, one of the most prestigious collections of Hadith, containing, according to the new rationalist norms, several absurd traditions with regard to reason (Mortazā, 1863, introduction and pp. 98 ff.). Irrational, these could only be inauthentic, such is al-Mortazā’s line of argument briefly stated (Mortazā, 1954, pp. 81-83). Thus begins to develop in Shi‘ite milieu what had already existed a century before in Sunnism: the science of criticism of Hadith (*‘elm al-ḥadīth*), a discipline whose purpose is to develop the criteria for authenticity in traditions (Hadith). Thus, in the name of reason, the rationalist scholars were to remain silent about a number of esoteric traditions, initiatory and mystical, mainly regarding imamology, and bearing in them all the Shi‘ite particularity, in order that divergences with Sunnism could be attenuated and the rationalist movement could associate with circles of power without encountering obstacles too formidable to surmount. Very often, these kinds of traditions were to be taxed with heresy and attributed to those “extremist” (*ḡālin* pl. *ḡolāt*, q.v.) who fabricated Hadith (Amir-Moezzi, 1997, pp. 18 ff.).

Another case of rupture with the past was the practice of *ejtehād*. According to the original Shi‘ite point of view, as it appears in the earliest corpus of remaining texts, the Qur’ān and Hadith (traditions going back to the Fourteen Impeccable Ones, the *Čahārdah Ma‘sum* [q.v.]) are the only authoritative sources in religious matters. Any other system or criteria is rejected. Any new legal case, not foreseen by the Qur’ān or Hadith, remains “in suspension” (*waqfa*, *tawaqqof al-ejrā’*, *soqut*) until the imam provides his solution (one of the imams during the period of historic imams or the Hidden Imam after his advent). In conformity with explicit guidance by the imams, any other personal effort by jurist-theologians is rejected and declared forbidden, and this encompasses analogical reasoning (*qiās*), individual reasoned opinion (*ra’y*), or the effort of personal interpretation (*ejtehād*) (Kolayni, n.d., I, pp. 73 ff.; No‘māni, p. 77 ff.; Ebn Bābuye, 1984, pp. 6-7; also Brunschvig, pp. 202-3; Amir-Moezzi, 1992, pp. 37-38; idem 1997, pp. 7-16). However, ever since the first half of the 10th century, a certain kind of rationalizing *ejtehād* was exercised in the field of law by such thinkers as Ebn Abi ‘Aqil and Ebn Jonayd



Eskāfi (Baḥr al-ʿOlum, II, pp. 211-20, III, pp. 301-8; Modarressi, pp. 35-39). After Mofid's ambivalent stance in this regard (Mofid, 1962, 50 f.; idem, 1971b, pp. 115-16) al-Šarīf al-Mortazā explicitly presents *ejteḥād* as the field for the application of reason in cases left in suspense by the Qur'ān and Tradition (Mortazā, 1967-68, p. 646, 672, 760, 786 ff.; McDermott, iii, chap. 17; Arjomand, pp. 52 f.). Another great figure of the rationalizing Buyid School of Baghdad, Shaikh al-Ṭusi (460/1067), specialist in the science of Hadith and theoretician of the prerogatives of the Doctor of Law, is the author, among other works, of two renowned compilations of traditions with tellingly significant titles: *Tahḍīb al-aḥkām* (Rectification of the principles) and *al-Esteḥsār fī mā'ktolefa fih men al-aḳbār* (Clarification of the problem relating to traditions subject to divergence; see bibliography). These compilations seem to have had two main objectives: to provide a systematic revision of ancient compilations and to present law (*feqh*) as by far the most important religious discipline (Amir-Moezzi, *EI2*). With his intelligent attenuation of the sometimes extremely radical positions of his master al-Mortazā, Shaikh al-Ṭusi is able to offer to law and therefore to jurists (*faqih*, pl. *foqahā'*), a status and field of action almost independent of the figure of the imam. Indeed he systematically presents the entire body of jurist-theologians as delegates of the imams during Occultation (Ṭusi, 1896, pp. 25 ff., pp. 51-57, 61-63; Idem, 1970, p. 278). The monumental work by Ṭusi sealed the definitive dominance by the jurist-theological rationalist tradition later known as *Oṣūliyya* or the School of the *mojtaheds*, practitioners of *ejteḥād*. This dominance that continues to this day, led to the marginalization, and at times the violent repression of the original tradition whose tenants are the Traditionalist *Akbāriyya*, the esotericists and the mystics, including some among the philosophers (regarding the history of the latter, from the medieval period to modern times, see Amir Moezzi and Jambet, 2004, chaps. 3 and 4 of part III, pp. 221-78).

Another sign of the distance of the rationalist tendency in relation to foundational texts: political activity. The Occultation and its consequence—the absence of an “infallible” authority providing leadership for the believers—drove the Doctors of Law to exercise their own authority, in order to ensure that the community had a collective and organized religious life (Eliash, *passim*; Madelung, 1982, pp. 164-65). Thinkers and jurists attempted to provide solutions in order to resolve the flagrant contradiction that existed between the Hadith forbidding believers from collaborating with those in power and their participation in the Buyid government and thus in the Abbasid State. It is again from the tenth century onwards that the rationalist



Doctors open a distinct chapter in their works, a chapter entitled “collaboration with power” (*al-‘amal ma‘a’l-soltān*) or “the exercise of power” (*‘amal al-soltān*). It is interesting to note that the science of Hadith criticism, development of the Shi‘ite theory of *ejtehād*, and justification of political power of the jurist-theologian by means of this literary genre, had always been in close connection and underwent strictly parallel developments in the historical evolution of the rationalist movement. The reason for this is relatively simple: the criticism of Hadith, political activity and the practice of *ejtehād* had been explicitly rejected in the early corpus attributed to the imams. To be able to put them into practice, in order to consolidate the foundation of the jurists’ authority, the jurists had no other choice but to distance themselves from this corpus. The recourse to rationalism enabled them to develop a critical science of Hadith to be able to declare disturbing traditions as inauthentic or to subject them to biased interpretations precisely by having recourse to *ejtehād* (Amir-Moezzi, 1997, pp. 21 ff.). It is true that ever since the period of the imams, some believers or groups did not follow quietist directives of the imams and devoted themselves to political activities. One can mention those who launched or participated in revolutionary insurrections of a messianic nature. For example, some notable families (Āl-e Nawbakht, Āl-e Jonayd, Āl-e Forāt, Āl-e Yaqṭin) were very active in the administration of the state (Monzavi, pp. 748-50) and some religious scholars in the region of Rayy attempted to set up a small independent state at the end of the 9th century (Yāqut, III, pp. 121 ff.). Yet, these cases seem to have been exceptional and the great majority of believers, including the learned and religious scholars, refrained from any actual political activity. Here too, one must await al-Mofid’s work to witness the first attempts at theoretical justification for large-scale collaboration of religious Shi‘ites with Buyid power. The “founder” of the rationalist movement qualifies and imparts nuances to the famous tradition according to which any power, prior to the Return of the Hidden Imam, is unjust: unjust power is either illegitimate (such is the case with the Abbasids and in general with non-Shi‘ites), or legitimate (the case of the Buyids, since it is a matter of staunch Shi‘ites, ready to render power to the Hidden Imam in the event he were to return). According to Shaikh al-Mofid, it is permitted for the Shi‘ite jurist-theologian to collaborate with legitimate albeit unjust power if this collaboration leads to the promotion of the rights of the Shi‘ite community and prevention of its repression (Mofid, 1971b, pp. 40-42; idem, 1989, pp. 811-12). Henceforth, the notions of justice and injustice are to occupy a central position in political Shi‘ite thought.



The two most famous disciples of Shaikh Mofid, the brothers Šarif, al-Rāzi (406/1016) and al-Mortazā (already mentioned), occupied, one after the other and succeeding their father, a number of important posts as senior civil servants in the administration of the Abbasid State, controlled by the Buyids (Ebn al-Jawzi, VII, pp. 255 ff.; Ebn al-Aṭir, IX, pp. 236 ff.). Inspired by Moʿtazelite ideas regarding evil, al-Mortazā developed fresh thinking concerning the notions of justice and injustice of political power, most notably in his treatise *al-ʿamal maʿa l-solṭān*. There he goes as far as to declare collaboration with the authorities to be obligatory if it enables the re-establishment of neglected rights of the Shiʿites. Basing his argument on a Hadith attributed to imam Jaʿfar according to which “(the sin of) collaboration with power may be expiated by meeting the needs of brothers (Shiʿites),” he declares that he who assumes the responsibility to defend the rights of Shiʿites under the authority of an unjust or illegitimate sovereign, indeed does so tacitly upon the order of the true just sovereign—the Hidden Imam; which is why believers owe him absolute obedience (Madelung, 1980). The ambiguity of al-Mortazā ʿAlam al-Hodā’s character, assiduously frequenting the court and the caliphs, becomes apparent in another text, *al-Resāla fiʾl-ġayba*, in which he explains or rather accounts for the duration of the Occultation in terms of the tyranny of the caliphs and persecution of the Shiʿites (Sachedina, 1978). A little while later, Shaikh al-Ṭusi will complete this development by implicitly setting aside the classical doctrine of universal reign of injustice until the advent of the Mahdi. Indeed, according to him any ruler can be considered just if he commands good, forbids evil, and distributes religious taxes equitably and according to Shiʿite law. This is the doctrine of Divine Grace (*loṭf*), according to which God, in his justice, cannot let his worshippers live indefinitely under unjust governments (Ṭusi, 1970, pp. 356 ff.; Idem, 1983, pp. 208-21). Thus, the great theoretician at the end of the Buyid period introduced a new theory that rendered legitimate the establishment of a “just power” during the Occultation.

The fall of the Buyids. The fall of the Buyids, the reestablishment of a rigorous form of Sunnism, and the violent repression of the Shiʿites in the capital were the main reasons for the progressive transfer of the intellectual center of Shiʿism from Baghdad towards another Iraqi city, Ḥella. During the entire 12th and 13th centuries, the learned men of the Ḥella School, almost all belonging to the rationalist movement, were to consolidate even further the speculative bases of the *Oṣuli* tendency (Calder, 1989, pp. 64-68). The Mongol invasion during the middle of the 13th century, the fall of the Sunni caliphate and of the



Ismaʿīli strongholds, constitute a second major historical turning point from which once again Imami rationalist jurist-theologians were to benefit greatly. After Ebn Edris Ḥelli (598/1202), the first to present, next to the Qurʾān and the Tradition, reason (*ʿaql*) and consensus of jurists (*ejmāʿ*) as the methodological bases for law (Ebn Edris, p. 3; Löschner, index *s.n.*; Modarressi Tabātabāʿi, pp. 3 ff.), Moḥaqqueq Ḥelli (676/1277), author of a monumental work on law, *Šarāʿeʿ al-Eslām*, and the first to have given the Four Books (*al-kotob al-arbaʿa*) their status as authoritative books in Hadith, marked another decisive step in the establishment of an increasingly invasive canonical law in Shiʿite science (Moḥaqqueq Ḥelli, 1859, pp. 378-410; idem, 1900, pp. 7-8). Similarly, the social role of the jurist and perception of his authority as an intellectual and spiritual necessity occupied an increasingly greater place. At the same time, the theory of *ejtehād* is clarified and developed further in the monumental work by ʿAllāma Ḥelli (q.v.; 726/1325), a disciple of Moḥaqqueq. According to him, *ejtehād* constitutes the logical step following *imamate/walāya* of imams to the extent that the fallibility of jurists follows the infallibility of imams. If the imams did not practice *ejtehād*, it was because as inspired and infallible they simply had no need to. “The effort of personal interpretation in matters of faith,” the shortest path towards certainty in legal cases unforeseen by Revelation and Tradition, constitutes the jurist-theologian’s duty. The fallibility of the latter is as a consequence one of the essential components of *ejtehād* and the jurist who commits an error at the moment of his “personal effort” does not commit a sin (ʿAllāma Ḥelli, 1970, pp. 241 ff.; Halm, pp. 85 ff.; Kazemi Moussavi, 1985, pp. 37 ff.; Calmard, “Mardjòā,” p. 533b). ʿAllāma Ḥelli thus provides the *mojtahed* with great freedom of action. The infallible authority, reserved for the Hidden Imam, is projected into an indefinite and distant future. From this point onward, it is to the fallible “representatives” (*nāʿeb*, pl. *nowwāb*) of the imam that “legal responsibility” (*wilāya/walāya*) falls to resolve practical questions of the present (ʿAllāma Ḥelli, 1970, p. 244 ff.). Simultaneously, ʿAllāma Ḥelli develops a corollary concept of *ejtehād*, namely *taqlid*, imitation or emulation. One who does not meet the conditions to exercise *ejtehād* for himself—i.e., mainly the mass of believers—leaves it to the professional religious scholars. He thus becomes an “imitator” of a jurist-theologian *mojtahed*. The Shiʿites are thus divided into two categories: the *mojtaheds*, those who possess legal knowledge (therefore holders of authority), and their imitators who are supposed to scrupulously apply their directives to remain on the right path (Arjomand, pp. 139 ff.; Halm, pp. 88-89; Schmidtke, 1991, index *s.v.*). It is also interesting to note that a number of rationalist scholars of the Ḥella School were also collaborators of the Mongol Khans and



Ilkhanid rulers.

The Safavid period. Another historical turning point was the reign of the Safavids (907-1135/1501-1722) and the declaration of Twelver Shi'ism as the religion of state. Drawing legitimacy from its religious affiliation, seeking to convert all of Iran to Shi'ism in order to create a credible politico-religious axis in opposition to the Sunni caliphate of the Ottomans, Safavid power felt the need to assure itself of a firm religious ideological weapon. Thus, an entire religious system, if not an official "church" controlled by the state, was instituted. At the same time, the religious system gave rise to a group of professional religious jurists who progressively claimed its independence from power (Aubin, *passim*; Richard, pp. 39 ff.). This represents the beginning of what came to be known as the Shi'ite "clergy," a clergy that with time was to become more organized, increasingly hierarchic and powerful (Calvard, "Muḏjõtahid"; Idem, 1982). It was especially from the Safavid period onwards that the *mojtaheds* were to effectively obtain great prerogatives that Tradition had reserved exclusively for the imams: leading collective prayers, collecting specific religious taxes, monitoring justice, etc. (We return to this below). An innovation with considerable implications was the attribution by Shah Ṭahmāsb I of the title "the Representative of the Hidden Imam" to the jurist Moḥaqqueq al-Karaki (940/1534). This promotion occurred at the same time as a reformulation by Zayn-al-Din al-Āmeli known as "the Second Martyr" (965/1557) according to which representatives of the hidden imam during the Minor Occultation (See MAHDI IN TWLEVER SHI'ISM) are allowed to be called "particular representatives" (*nowwāb kāṣṣ*) whereas the *mojtaheds* are to be considered as "general representatives" (*nowwāb āmm*) of the imam during the Major Occultation (Arjomand, pp. 229 ff.). This reformulation of traditional elements authorized the jurist-theologians to preside "in the name of the imam" over religious tribunals and to collect certain religious taxes, as had done, according to tradition, the four representatives during the Minor Occultation (Calder, 1981, pp. 479-80; 1982, pp. 4 ff.). The application of these legal redefinitions, accompanied with the management of profits from endowments (*waqf*) assured the religious clergy substantial social influence and great financial independence.

The Qajar period. Under the rule of the Qajars (1209-1346/1794-1925) other decisive steps were to be taken. Although relations between the shahs and the *mojtaheds* had been problematic and at times even adversarial, it is undeniable that one party sought the confirmation of its legitimacy from the



other. Although for some time, the title, “special representative of the Hidden Imam” was held by the sovereign, with the agreement of the most influential clerics, the prerogatives of the latter were in return emboldened with the initiative of the powerful leader of the *mojtaheds*, Ja‘far Kāšef al-Ġeṭā’ (1227/1812) of Najaf who authorized Faṭḥ-‘Ali Shah to lead the holy war against the army of the Tsar in the name of the Hidden Imam (Lambton, *passim*; Kohlberg, 1976, pp. 82 f.; Hairi, pp. 280 ff.).

During the same period, the jurist Mollā Aḥmad Narāqī (1245/1830), for the first time it seems in his *‘Awā’ed al-ayyām*, employed the expression *wilāyat* (or *walāyat*) *al-faqih* to designate the delegation with decision making power given to the jurists, in the name of the Hidden Imam and due to privileges related to the exercise of *ejtehād*. However, the expression in Narāqī refers only to certain specific areas of law (the power to manage particular inheritances or responsibility for orphans, etc.) and does not at all include the right to govern (Kazemi Moussavi, pp. 40 ff.; Kadivar, pp. 17 ff.). At the same time, it is evident that leaving the management of believers’ affairs in the hands of the jurists makes the *welāyat al-faqih* vulnerable to politicization. At any rate, henceforth it features in all major legal works of the Oṣuli. Still during the early 19th century, two new complementary concepts, implying the authority of the jurist-theologian, are developed: *a‘lamīyat* (theory of the most learned *mojtahed*) and *marja‘īyat* (institution of the “source of imitation” par excellence). According to these theories, which are direct extensions of those developed by scholars at the School of Ḥella, the mass of believers must follow or “imitate” the directives and precepts of the most learned Doctor of Law. Although in theory based on theologico-legal competence, in reality the actual influence and hierarchy of the clerics is established based on the notion of leadership, a notion practically defined by popular acclamation and confidence of the believers as illustrated by the payment of religious taxes (Calmard, “Mardjòā”). A controversial notion, since, as we have seen, vigorously rejected by the imams, this leadership is exercised mainly by control over socio-professional and ethnic communities. Thus, from Moḥammad-Ḥasan Najafi, (1266/1849-50) to Ayatollah Borujerdi (1380/1961), the Twelver community experienced ten generations of “a unique and universal source of imitation” (Calmard, “Mardjòā;” Cole, pp. 40 ff.). At the same time, the formation of a network of theological seminaries (*ḥawza ‘elmiya*) in the holy cities of Iraq and Iran provided the religious authority a considerable social and intellectual foundation. Upon the death of Ayatollah Borujerdi, the collapse of the *marja‘īyat* institution led to the establishment of



several sources of imitation that were often discreetly competing with each other. The contained anger of certain religious milieu opposed to the policy of secularization and modernization of Reżā Shah, founder of the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-79), discovered its most virulent expression in the emphatic 'ideologization' of religious leadership carried out under the influence of Ruḥ-Allāh Kōomeyni (d. 1989), later to become Ayatollah. The Khomeinist doctrine and at its core "political and charismatic power of the jurist-theologian" (the expression employed with new meaning—and nothing specifically Shi'ite about it—is indeed *welāyat al-faqih*) was thus to follow directly in the historical evolution of the Oṣuli movement. As such, it may be considered as the accomplishment of a long millenary process from rationalization to ideologization (Calder, 1982b, *passim*; Amir-Moezzi, 1993, pp. 79-81).

The dominance of the theological-legal rational tendency was to ensure the permanence of Shi'ism as an organized religion after the profound crisis provoked by the Occultation. The life and work of great authors of this movement contributed to an intellectual dynamism and a lively debate of ideas that to this day characterizes Shi'ite thought. But at the same time, the rationalist religious system, developed ever since the Buyid period and applied generally from the Safavid period onwards, put into place an entire process of substitution, at least within the Oṣuli movement and its supporters: professional religious jurists replaced the imams, esoteric teachings of the imams were substituted by scholastic theology and law, and the initial quietism gave way to political activism (Amir-Moezzi, 2004, pp. 181-206).

ASPECTS OF JURIST-THEOLOGIAN POWER

The figure of the imam is at the center of all Shi'ite doctrines. For everything that has to do with individual religiosity and inner aspects of faith during the Occultation, the believer must maintain his mystical relation with "the living imam" of the time, i.e., the Hidden Imam, or more generally with the Fourteen Infallible Ones to whom he feels linked by an intense devotion. But absence of the physical person of the imam renders collective practices highly problematic for in order to be properly followed according to ancient Shi'ite law, they need either the direction of the imam or of an individual specifically designated by the latter. According to tradition transmitted by the earliest corpus of Hadith, these prerogatives exclusively reserved for the imam remain "suspended" during the entire duration of his absence since no one else has the right to claim them. It is especially the case with what is termed "the four legal domains" (literally the Four Precepts, *al-aḥkām al-arba'a*), most likely of



Zaydi origin (Madelung, 1965, p. 154), namely: religious justice (*ḥo-kuma šar'īya*) and legal punishments (*ḥadd*, pl. *ḥodud*); collection of certain religious taxes; collective prayers (on Fridays and of the two festivities i.e., sacrifice and at the end of the month of Ramadan); and finally, holy war (*jehād*) (Ṭusi, 1955-56 and 1980, s.v.; Ebn Edris, pp. 63, 70, 151-56, 161, 191, 197; Amir-Moezzi, 2004, pp. 207-20).

Absence of the imam, the needs of an organized religious community, especially in legal and economical affairs, as well as the increasing influence of jurist-theologians in the social and political life from the 10th century onward, quite rapidly provoked a revision of ancient law. As we have seen, the seizure of power by the rationalist Doctors of Law, thanks to scholars from the Schools of Baghdad and Ḥella as well as of Safavid Iran, took place by a process of appropriating prerogatives of the imam. This gradual appropriation and thus politicization of Shi'ism are clearly illustrated by problems presented by the “four legal domains.”

The first legal domain. According to early Shi'ite law, Shi'ite judges-theologians must be personally nominated by the imam. For legal punishments foreseen by the Qur'ān (amputation of a thief's hand, death sentence of an assassin, application of Talion Law, etc.) the imam is considered as the sole individual authorized to properly apply the Qur'ānic precepts to individual cases (Ebn Edris, p. 203). As a consequence, in the absence of the imam and therefore of an individual specifically designated by him, religious jurisdiction and application of the *ḥodud* became prone to polemical debate. Whereas the Traditionalists were to attempt more or less successfully to keep away from judicial matters, the Rationalists, prominent on the socio-political scene since the Buyid period, confronted the problem. Their embarrassment and the ambiguity of their attitude are evident ever since the work of al-Šarīf al-Mortažā. Whereas in his *Mas'ala fi'l-'amal ma'a'l-solṭān*, he states that the Shi'ite judge, working tacitly under instructions from the Hidden Imam, is authorized to apply legal punishments (Madelung, 1980, pp. 22-23), on the other hand, in his *Resāla fi'l-Ġayba* he writes that before the Return of the Hidden Imam, legal punishment cannot be applied and blame for this abnormal situation falls upon those who compelled the imam to enter Occultation (Sachedina, 1978, passim). After him, Shaikh Ṭusi saw no obstacle for a religious judge to assume his function if the latter met four conditions: sound mind; knowledge of the Qur'ān and Shi'ite Hadith; proficiency in Arabic; piety and moral rectitude (Ṭusi, 1970, I, pp. 303 ff.). In order to justify the



assumption of this role by a jurist-theologian, Ṭusi, and after him almost all his successors, often based their argument on the famous Hadith of Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādeq reported by 'Omar b. Ḥanẓala according to which Shi'ite judges are the representatives and the spokesmen of the imam. These scholars, however, failed to specify that the Hadith in question dealt with the period during the presence of the imam and did not foresee the Occultation (Kadivar, pp. 17-18). These theories of the founder of the School of Baghdad were rejected by certain religious scholars from the School of Ḥella, particularly Ebn Edris and Moḥaqqueq (Ebn Edris, p. 197; Moḥaqqueq, 1982-84, I, p. 138) for whom Qur'ānic sentences are impracticable in the absence of the imam and judges during Occultation can only serve as non-religious, civil servants (*'orfi, madani*). On the other hand, 'Allāma Ḥelli supported Ṭusi's theories by declaring that, since capable of *ejtehad* Doctors of Law are authorized to apply legal punishments ('Allāma Ḥelli, n.d., pp. 83-84; Idem, 1989, I, p. 353). Of course, during the Safavid period great figures of the Shi'ite clergy were to follow Ṭusi and 'Allāma's path. From the 17th century, the clergy presided over religious tribunals and applied legal punishments. From the following century onwards, their power to excommunicate (*takfir*) adversaries was to be added; which explains why these prerogatives are found to be at the basis of numerous offences and repressive actions, at times bloody: from putting to death of adepts of the traditionalist Akbāriyya movement ordered by Waḥid Behbahāni, the leader of the Oṣuliyya in the 18th century, and the fierce repression of Sufis by the sons of the latter (Algar and Arjomand, s.v.), to the execution of intellectuals and "servants of the West" after the Islamic revolution of 1978-79, to say nothing of the massacres of Babis and Baha'is in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The second legal domain. Another critical question: religious taxes, "the Fifth" (*ḵoms*), income taxes and property tax (*ḵarāj*) more precisely. Still according to early Shi'ite law, collection and distribution of these taxes are rights exclusively reserved for the imam and to individuals specifically designated by him. From the Occultation onward, leaders of the religious hierarchy stopped paying the *ḵoms*. (Sachedina, 1980; Madelung, 1981, pp. 193-94; Calder, 1981, pp. 470-71; Idem, 1982a, pp. 39-43). According to a commentary on the Qur'ānic verse 8:41, *ḵoms* consists of two equal parts. The first, called, "the share of the imam," belongs to God, the prophets and the Imams. The other half, "the share belonging to descendants of the imams," is transferred to orphans, the poor and to travelers among the *sayyed*. After Shaikh al-Mofid and his disciples, such as Shaykh al-Ṭusi or Abu'l-Ṣalāḥ al-Ḥalabi, jurist-



theologians suggest to believers that they burn or bury the first part if not save it until the Return of the Hidden Imam (Mofid, 1989, p. 277; Ṭusi, 1977, p. 255; Ḥalabi, index, s.v.). As for the second part, they ought to distribute it themselves or pay it to jurist-theologians trusting the latter to re-distribute it properly. Moḥaqqueq Ḥelli in the 13th century, was to have been the first to justify collection by clerics, two parts of the *koms*, as well as the alms-giving (*zakāt*), by the prolongation of the period of the Occultation and the impossibility to hoard this tax until the Return of the Hidden Imam (Moḥaqqueq, 1900, p. 298 f.). From then onward, the rationalist-jurists almost unanimously agreed that it is the *mojtahed*'s duty to levy these taxes on income to be used in the best interests of the community. Property tax posed an even thornier problem to the extent that according to Islamic law in general, it is used mainly to support the State and its functionaries. Well, what to do if this rule is unjust? During the entire medieval period and until the advent of the Safavids, countless and technically detailed discussions were held by the jurists to address this problem but without ever arriving at a definitive solution (Madelung, 1981, *passim*). This came much later with Moḥaqqueq Karaki, (940/1534) referred to, as noted earlier, as the “representative of the Hidden Imam” by the Safavid ruler Ṭahmāsb I, for he was the first to offer a systematic justification for regarding the *mojtaheds* as the beneficiaries of this tax. One must specify that these donations, sometimes quite considerable sums, that rulers offered to clerics originated mainly from the *karāj*. Karaki thus found himself responsible for an immense fortune, which is why he felt obliged to justify himself by writing an entire treatise dedicated to the collection of *karāj* (Karaki, 1895). Although these theories became the official doctrine of the Shi‘ite clergy (Madelung, 1981, *passim*), it also had its significant opponents such as Ebrāhim b. Solaymān Qaṭifi of Bahrayn (945/1538) and Moqaddas Ardabili (993/1585) (see Bibliography) (Madelung, 1981; Newman, *passim*).

The third legal domain. Collective prayers, especially those of Fridays accompanied by a sermon (*koṭba*) in which problems of communal life are exposed, have an undeniable political dimension. According to early Shi‘ite law, these prayers can only be led by the imam or someone specifically designated by him. Once the latter is absent, the Shi‘ites seem to have accepted that these prayers cannot be carried out and must remain “suspended” until the Return of the Hidden Imam. This state of affairs prevailed during the entire medieval period since one of the most frequent accusations from Sunni authors against Shi‘ite “heresies” relate precisely to this non-execution of



collective prayers (Ṭehrāni, 1990, pp. 69-71). Here too, things begin to change with the establishment of Imami clergy during the Safavid period. From the very beginning of this period, more than a hundred books and treaties were written for or against the legality of collective prayers, the Friday prayer specifically, during the Occultation (Ṭehrāni, 1934-78, XV, pp. 62-82). Again, the role played in this regard by Moḥaqqueq Karaki proved to be decisive. Not only did he declare the Friday prayer and its direction by a cleric to be legal but also obligatory. For this position, he had recourse to the exegesis of some works of rationalist masters of the past, in this case, the two Ḥelli, Moḥaqqueq and 'Allāma, as well as Moḥammad Ebn Makki known as "the First Martyr" (786/1384), thinkers however, who had never explicitly declared that collective prayer was practicable in the absence of the imam (Karaki, 1988, *passim*). The obligatory nature of the Friday prayer was henceforth to become a dogma defended by the Safavid State. Throughout Iran, Karaki appointed mullahs to posts as "Friday imam" and "leader of prayer." Those who opposed this doctrine were arrested, reduced to silence or still yet, violently forced to direct the collective prayer (Newman, *passim*; Karimi Zanjāni Aṣl, p. 237 ff.; see EMĀM-E JOM'A).

The fourth legal domain. With regard to holy war, one witnessed the same kind of evolution. Based on fundamental texts of Shi'ite law, holy war can only be declared and led by the imam in person or by someone specifically designated by him. The classical authors had established a clear distinction between offensive jihad (*jehād*) declared "in suspense" during the Occultation, and defensive jihad considered legal, if not obligatory in case of external attack. Linking offensive holy war to the Return of the Mahdi once again provided Sunni heresiographers with an opportunity to condemn the Shi'ite by comparing them to the Jews. The numerous argumentative works on the subject, written after the advent of the Safavids, show, here again, that from this period onward the Doctors of Oṣuli Law sought to appropriate this other prerogative of the imam. And this is actually what does occur in the 19th century: for the first time, a Shi'ite jurist-theologian summoned the State to offensive holy war; in the event, as already noted, the *mojtahed* and "representative of the Lord of the Time (i.e., the Hidden Imam)" Shaykh Ja'far Kāṣef-al-Ġeṭā' authorized the Qajar ruler Faṭḥ-'Ali Shah to lead a holy war against the Tsar. Some years later, another *mojtahed*, Sayyed Moḥammad Eṣfahāni drove the same Shah to undertake a second holy war. The result turned out to be disastrous for Iran which had to definitively surrender the entire Transcaucasian territories to the Russians (Lambton, *passim*; Kohlberg,



1976; Arjomand, p. 221 ff.).

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