



MOFAẒẒAL AL-JO'FI

MOFAẒẒAL al-JO'FI, Abu 'Abd-Allāh Abu Moḥammad b. 'Omar (d. before 799), a prominent member of the Kufan *gōlāt* and companion of the sixth and seventh Shi'ite imams Ja'far al-Šādeq and Musa al-Kāẓem. In the Imami and Noṣayri traditions he is known as the author of a number of apocryphal texts with diverse contents and origins.

As a non-Arab, Mofaẓẓal was a *mawlā* of the Kufan Jo'fi clan of the Yemeni tribe of Maḍḥej. He was a money-changer (*ṣayrafī*), and likely the financial agent of the imams Ja'far al-Šādeq and Musa al-Kāẓem, for whom he was able to raise money through his network of acquaintances (Kašši, nos. 592, 595; Barqi, II, p. 481; Kolayni, II, p. 209; Massignon, 1969a, p. 524, 1969b, pp. 49-50). At one point Mofaẓẓal probably belonged to the *Khattabiyya*, one of the *gōlāt* movements. This spoiled Mofaẓẓal's relations with Ja'far al-Šādeq, who had denounced its leader Abu'l-Ḳaṭṭāb al-Asadi (d. 755-56) for deifying him. Eventually Mofaẓẓal severed his ties with the *Khattabiyya* and was reconciled with Ja'far. Till the end of his life Mofaẓẓal remained a close associate of both imams, dying during al-Kāẓem's lifetime, that is, before 799 (Najāši, II, p. 359; Ebn al-Ġazā'eri, VI, p. 131; Kašši, nos. 586, 593; Baġdādi, pp. 249-50; Šahrastāni, I, pp. 122-23, 132; Aš'ari, p. 13; Kolayni, I, p. 320; Mofid, p. 319). According to some reports, Mofaẓẓal was closely associated with Ja'far's son Esmā'il and even taught him *Khattabiyya* ideas, angering thereby his father (Kašši, nos. 581, 586; Sāmarrā'i, p. 289; Daftary, 2007, pp. 91-92).

Not much is known about Mofaẓẓal's religious beliefs. There are just several *hadith* where he is shown as arguing about the imam's divinity and stating



that the imams distribute the sustenance of people. The imam's deification is an idea typical for the *golāt*, and the second statement could be an echo of the beliefs of the *mofawweza*—a group of *golāt* who taught that God delegated the imams and the Prophet to create all beings and to provide for them (Modarressi, 1993, p. 21). However, these traditions always end with the imam's refutation of such views (Kašši, nos. 587, 591; Kolayni, VIII, pp. 231-32).

The sources on Mofazzal's life are few (Amin, X, pp. 132-33). There are two short notes in Najāši's and Ebn al-Ġazā'eri's biographical dictionaries, a brief passage in Šayḡ Mofid's *Eršād*, around forty hadith in Imami collections, and a short letter attributed to Mofazzal titled *Wašiyat al-Mofazzal* (Ḥarrāni, 1956). The attitudes toward Mofazzal in these texts are quite different: Najāši and Ebn al-Ġazā'eri have called him a heretic and an unbeliever, while Šayḡ Mofid considered him a learned man and a righteous scholar (Najāši, II, p. 359; Ebn al-Ġazā'eri, VI, p. 131; Mofid, p. 288). In hadith, Mofazzal constantly appears as the close associate of the two imams—save for the brief period of disgrace with Ja'far al-Šādeq because of his Khatabiyya leanings (Kašši, nos. 216, 461, 502, 581-98, 982; Kolayni, I, pp. 52, 308, 309, 320, II, pp. 92, 192, 209, IV, p. 575, VIII, pp. 231-32, 279-81, 273-74; Šaffār, pp. 144, 257, 284; Barqī, II, pp. 168, 197, 368, 481; Ṭusi, 1991, II, p. 189, III, p. 104). *Wašiyat al-Mofazzal* presents a sympathetic image of Mofazzal, recording his conflicts with some members of the Kufan Shi'ite community. The two biographers criticized Mofazzal because of his *golāt* beliefs condemned in the later Imami tradition, while Mofid praised him because of his high position among the Kufan Shi'ites and his close ties with the two imams. His positive portrait in the *Wašiyat al-Mofazzal*, written by the Nošayri Ḥasan b. Šo'ba al-Ḥarrāni, reflects that the [Nošayris](#) revered Mofazzal as the *bāb* (lit. "door"; see [BĀB \(1\)](#)) of the [Imam 'Ali al-Rezā](#).

The *Moḡamma* is another *golāt* group that accorded Mofazzal a high position in their spiritual hierarchy (Ḥarrāni, 2006, p. 58; Friedman, p. 287; Halm, 1981, p. 78; 1982, p. 302).

Among the subjects of the Khatabiyya, several heresiographers mention a group that is called *Mofazzaliya* after Mofazzal al-Jo'fi. They are said to have deified Ja'far al-Šādeq and considered Mofazzal a prophet or an imam; they also dissociated themselves from Abu'l-Ḳaṭṭāb after Ja'far had repudiated him (Aš'ari, p. 13; Baġdādi, pp. 240-50; Šahrastāni, I, pp. 122-23, 132; Ḥemyari, pp. 221-22). This sect is only mentioned in several heresiographic works, and does

not appear in any other source featuring Mofazzal. Since not all accounts are uniform, it remains uncertain whether such a group existed at all (Abu Tammām, p. 112).

Nine works attributed to Mofazzal have been published, both as separate books and as part of larger Imami texts. Most of them are also published in volume VI of the collection *Selselat al-torāt al-'Alawi (al-Majmu'a al-mofazzaliya*, eds. Abu Musa and Shayḵ Musa, n.p. (Lebanon), 2006). In addition, there are a number of manuscripts with works attributed to him (Modarressi, 2003, pp. 333-37; *GAS*, I, pp. 530, 534; Tehrāni, II p. 484, IV, pp. 482-3, 91, XXV, p. 237; Ivanow, 1933, p. 64; Halm, 1978, p. 166) in the collections of Isma'ilis in India (Bohrās).

None of the available Mofazzal texts contains any conclusive proof of his authorship, and indeed most are later compositions, written between the 9th and 11th centuries. Almost all these texts are written in the form of a dialogue or a correspondence between Mofazzal and Ja'far al-Ṣādeq, in which the former asks questions and the latter responds. The corpus ranges from *ḡolāt* works to rationalistic treatises of likely Mu'tazilite provenance, which show the amount of reverence accorded to Mofazzal by different schools within Shi'ism long after his death. While some texts are related in their content and their milieus of composition, the corpus as a whole is not unified by anything but Mofazzal's name, and does not form a single theological or literary tradition.

Three texts are dialogues between Mofazzal and the imam about the doctrines of the Kufan *ḡolāt*, and they provide invaluable first-hand accounts of their teachings. The *Ketāb al-ṣerāṭ* (ed. Capezzone, 1995; ed. 'Abd-al-Jalil, Benghazi, 2004) was likely composed in Kufa between the two Occultations, that is, the years 874 and 941. Its key doctrines are the idea of the path (*ṣerāṭ*) which leads the believer to God and consists of seven consecutive degrees of spiritual perfection, God's manifestation in human form (*tajalli*), the possibility of transmigration of souls (*tanāsok*, *nask*) and reincarnation (*mask*, *mosuḳiya*), and the myth of creation and fall, all typically *ḡolāt* teachings (Bar-Asher and Kofsky, pp. 85-86; Friedman, pp. 244-46; Capezzone, pp. 295-315). The *Ketāb al-haft wa'l-azella*, also called *Ketāb al-haft al-šarif*, (ed. Arif Tamir and Ignace Khalifé, Beirut, 1960; ed. Moṣṭafā Ġāleb, Beirut, 1964; ed. Arif Tamir, Beirut, 2007) consists of at least seven separate layers and was composed roughly between the 8th and 11th centuries. Each of the layers contains a particular version of *ḡolāt* teachings and mythology. Emerging in Kufa, the book was



transplanted to Syria by the Noṣayris, who added several layers. Its final form is attested among the Nosayris in 11th-century Syria, where, subsequently, it fell into the hands of the Nezāri Ismaʿilis (Halm, 1981, pp. 16-86; 1982, pp. 240-74; Daftary, 2004, p. 163; Friedman, pp. 243-44). *Al-Resāla al-mofazzaliya*, in which Jaʿfar tells Mofazzal about such ideas as the vision of God and the relation between God and his attributes (Friedman, p. 246), is the shortest *ḡolāt* text attributed to Mofazzal (*al-Majmuʿa al-mofazzaliya*, ed. Abu Musa and Shayḵ Musa, pp. 9-18). Its origin is difficult to determine because the 2006 edition does not provide any information about its manuscripts, and the short text itself does not offer any internal clues. Since its ideas and terminology resemble those of the two previous works, it probably also belongs to the literature of the Kufan *ḡolāt*.

In two other works ascribed to Mofazzal, *ḡolāt* ideas are present but not central. The *Mā yakun ʿenda zoḥur al-Mahdi* is an apocalyptic treatise mainly focusing on what will happen after the appearance of the Mahdi. The text discusses mainstream Shiʿi concepts such as temporary marriage (*motʿa*) and *ḡolāt* ideas such as the cycles of history and eons (Turner, pp. 177-95).

The *Ketāb mā eftaraḏa Allāh ʿalā al-jawāreḥ men al-imān*, quoted in Ṣaffār al-Qommi’s *Baṣāʿer al-darajāt* (pp. 546-56), is a long letter, allegedly written by Jaʿfar in response to a query by Mofazzal. It refutes several accusations, such as sexual promiscuity and incest, which heresiographers ascribed to the *ḡolāt*. A curious idea, attributed specifically to the leader of the Khattabiyya Abu’l-Ḳaṭṭāb al-Asadi and alluded to in the *Ketāb al-haft* (ed. Tamir, 2007, p. 39), is that religious obligations and prohibitions are men (*rejāl*), and that religion is the knowledge of these men (Nowbaḳti, p. 38; Kašši, nos. 512-513; cf. Dakake, p. 130). The letter is obviously a response to the polemics against the *ḡolāt* that has found expression in later heresiographic accounts.

The *Tawḥid al-Mofazzal* and the *Ketāb al-ehlilaja* stand out among the Mofazzal texts for their peculiar style and the absence of Shiʿite ideas. Preserved in the *Behār al-anwār* of Moḥammad-Bāqer Majlesi, both works (III, pp. 57-151, 152-98) are rationalistic treatises aiming to prove God’s existence mainly through the argument from design. There is nothing properly Shiʿite in either text save for the names of Jaʿfar and Mofazzal. In fact, the *Tawḥid al-Mofazzal* is the Shiʿite adaptation of the Muʿtazilite treatise *Ketāb al-dalāʿel wa’l-eʿtebār ʿalā al-ḳalq wa’l-tadbir* (Chokr, pp. 85-87, 100-102; Turner, p. 184), attributed to Jaḥeḏ (d. 869). Even if it was not written by Jāḥeḏ, its various features indicate a composition from the second half of the 9th century. Some



elements in the *Ketāb al-ehlilaja* suggest that it originated roughly at the same time or perhaps a little later, probably during the same period when the Shi'ite adaptation of the *Tawhīd al-Mofazzal* occurred. One could speculate that the two works are the earliest specimens of the Mu'tazilite influenced Shi'ite thought (Madelung, 1979, p. 15).

The *Waṣīyat al-Mofazzal* (Ḥarrāni, 1956) consists of two parts. The first is Mofazzal's testament, in which he admonishes the Shi'ite community to be pious and to perform their religious duties. In the second half Ja'far al-Ṣādeq vindicates Mofazzal, condemning the Shi'ite community of Kufa for their enmity towards his disciple. There is no indication that the text is apocryphal, although it could very well be a later composition written by Mofazzal's followers (Modarressi, 2003, p. 334).

The *Do'ā' samāt* is a prayer which Moḥammad b. 'Oṭmān al-'Amri, the second agent of the twelfth imam, related on the authority of Mofazzal al-Jo'fi from Ja'far al-Ṣādeq (Ebn Ṭāwus, pp. 533-38; Majlesi, XC, pp. 96-101).

A text on the value of rice attributed to Mofazzal, titled *Rewāyat al-rozz wa-mā fihi men al-faẓl*, has been preserved in the manuscript of Moḥammad b. Ṭāher b. Ebrāhim al-Ḥāreṭi's chrestomathy of Isma'ili literature titled *Majmu' al-tarbiyāt* (Ivanow, 1963, pp. 59, 101).

Lastly, there are three titles of lost works ascribed to Mofazzal: *Ketāb al-yawm wa-layla*, *Elal al-šarā'e* (Najāši, II, p. 416), and *Ketāb*, which is probably his notebook of hadith (Ṭusi, 1977, p. 169; Modarressi, 2003, p. 337).

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