



## MOḶAMMESA

**MOḶAMMESA**, an early extremist Shi'ite (*ḡolāt*) sect who divinized five members (*ahl al-kesā'/Āl-e 'abā* “the family of the cloak”) of the Prophet Moḡammad’s family, including Moḡammad himself, his cousin ‘Ali b. Abi Ṭāleb, his daughter Fāṭema, and his grandsons **Imam Ḥasan** and **Imam Ḥosayn**. It is not clear whether the term Moḡammesa (pentadists) referred to an organized group or a sect or was applied to disparate individuals and groups. The term is used only in outsiders’ accounts, never in the few surviving original texts detailing this belief.

Sa’d b. ‘Abd Allāh Qomi’s heresiography (pp. 56-59; cf. Madelung, 1993; for a shorter but similar account, see Rāzi, p. 307) provides the most detailed description of the Moḡammesa’s doctrine. According to this work, the Moḡammesa taught that God was Moḡammad and that he became manifest in four members of his family, namely ‘Ali, Fāṭema, Ḥasan, and Ḥosayn. Qomi (Ar. Qommi) attributes to them a number of other doctrines and terminology appearing in primary *ḡolāt* texts that are not necessarily associated with Moḡammesa teachings. Thus, God had become incarnate in numerous persons throughout history, including biblical patriarchs, Jesus, kings, *ḡolāt* personalities, such as Abu’l-Ḷaṭṭāb Asadi (d. ca. 138/755), Moḡira b. Sa’id, and others. Salmān Fārsi was God’s **Bāb** (lit. “Gate, Door”), who appeared in human form together with Him throughout history, while Abu Darr Ḡefāri and Meqdād b. ‘Amr, two companions of the Prophet, were the two *yatims* (“unique ones”; for attestations of these views in *ḡolāt* literature, see Jo’fi, 2004, pp. 77-80; idem, 2007, pp. 102-3; *Ādāb*, p. 265). The Moḡammesa were antinomians,



Qomi goes on, allowing what religion forbade and considering formal acts of worship redundant for those who had reached a certain degree of spiritual perfection. For them, duties and prohibitions were in reality names of individuals, and performing a duty or abiding by a prohibition was in reality following that person. Finally, they taught that the souls of sinners underwent reincarnation (*tanāsoḳ*, q.v.) into other human bodies and into sub-human species and objects. The believers, meanwhile, did not reincarnate but went through seven degrees of spiritual perfection, ultimately reaching God and becoming able to contemplate Him in His luminosity.

The antinomian views attributed to the Moḳamma are also well attested in *ḡolāt* writings, along with other cosmological and theological ideas and terminology. In particular, the notion that duties and prohibitions are names of persons appears to be a frequently recurring motive (for a list of excerpts from *ḡolāt* writings featuring this idea, see [ESHĀQ AḤMAR NAḲĀ'Ī](#); see also Jo'fi, 2004, p. 79; idem, 2007, p. 40; Ḥarrānī, p. 145).

Original texts featuring Moḳamma teachings are the *Omm al-ketāb* and a number of excerpts from earlier *ḡolāt* writings preserved in Noṣayri literature. The *Omm al-ketāb* is a multi-layered text, whose main part was written in *ḡolāt* circles probably in the late 9th-early 10th century (cf. Anthony, p. 18; Halm, 1982, pp. 113-98). Here, all of the five persons are nearly identified with God, presented as five eternal (*qadim*) lights of different colors that existed when nothing else was, and from whose beams everything was created. They are seated on the divine throne (*taḳtgāh-e izadī*) at the head of the believers, and in humanity (*bašariyat*) they are called Moḥammad, 'Ali, Fāṭema, Ḥasan, and Ḥosayn. They are connected (*peyvasta*) to the Speaking Spirit (*ruḥ-e nāṭeqa*), who is God (*Omm al-ketāb*, par. 113), and all the fives in the world, such as the five fingers, are derived from their light (*Omm al-ketāb*, pars. 81-83, 96-98). Their divinity is asserted more openly in the so-called “school anecdote,” where the Lord successively manifests Himself to 'Abd-Allāh b. Saba' in the form of Moḥammad, 'Ali, Fāṭema, Ḥasan, and Ḥosayn, each time openly declaring His divinity (*Omm al-ketāb*, pars. 39-42; Anthony, p. 27; Halm, 1982, pp. 132-33).

Excerpts of other original texts by the Moḳamma have been preserved in the writings of the [Noṣayris](#), whose own doctrine also contains pentadist elements. This is not surprising, as the Noṣayris were initially based in Iraq and are an offshoot of the Iraqi Kufan *ḡolāt* (Friedman, pp. 23-25). When they emigrated to Syria in the 10th century, they apparently took along with them a large

number of *golat* texts, including those written by the Moĳammaṣa: late 10th-century Noṣayri author Ḥasan b. Šo'ba Ḥarrāni says that he had in his library nearly 250 books containing, among others, the teachings of the pentadists (*taĳmis*), whom he considers “close to Divine Unicity” (*tawḥid*; Ḥarrāni, pp. 12, 14). The Moĳammaṣa were still known to 13th-century Noṣayri author Naššābi (Bar-Asher and Kofsky, p. 20).

The pentadist passages found in Noṣayri literature present ideas similar to those of the *Omm al-ketāb* and Qomi's Moĳammaṣa. The only major difference is that 'Ali is sometimes substituted with a certain Moḥsen, who is probably 'Ali's third, unborn son believed to have been killed by 'Omar while still in Fāṭema's womb (Halm, 1982, p. 387, n. 689). It is unclear whether the introduction of Moḥsen is a Noṣayri innovation or an earlier *golat* element. In any case, it is found both in works written by Noṣayri authors and in passages of earlier *golat* texts that they quote. Thus, the five prayers are said to be in reality the five members of the pentad (with Moḥsen instead of 'Ali), which is quite in keeping with Qomi's statement that for the Moĳammaṣa duties and prohibitions are in reality persons (Ḥarrāni, p. 113). The five are said to be united in one (Moḥammad b. Senān, p. 62), and God is said to appear in five individuals, one female and four male (*Majma' al-aĳbār*, p. 63). Ḥarrāni enumerates the names of men who, according to the Moĳammaṣa, were in the position of Bāb, including Salmān Fārsi, Abu'l-Ķaṭṭāb, and [Mofaẓẓal Jo'fi](#) (Ḥarrāni, p. 58). The same work also contains a tradition narrated on the authority of several early *golat* personalities, where Imam [Ja'far al-Šādeq](#) calls the five members of the Prophet's family God's five lights (pp. 172-72).

Pentadist ideas crop up in works written by the Noṣayris themselves; for instance, in a text attributed to [Ḥosayn Kaṣibi](#), one of the founders of Noṣayrism, God is said to have concealed Himself in five, become manifest in five, and manifested five. In *Ḥāwi'l-asrār*, attributed to the 10th-century Noṣayri author Moḥammad Jelli, the five *takbirs* (expressing the formula *Allāho Akbar*) are said to signify that Moḥammad had appeared in five persons in three historical cycles (Jelli, p. 269; cf. Ṭabarāni, p. 108). In one story found in a later Noṣayri work, 'Ali drinks five cups, which are said to represent Moḥammad, Fāṭema, Ḥasan, Ḥosayn, and Moḥsen (*Majma' al-aĳbār*, p. 141).

References to real people who held Moĳammaṣa beliefs are very few. Several members of a 10th-century family called collectively “Karkiyun” (because of their origin in Baṣra's quarter of Kark) are one example. Qāsem b. 'Ali b. Moḥammad Karkī, his sons Ja'far and Moḥammad, and his brother Abu



Aḥmad were governors of several provinces of the ‘Abbasid caliphate, and one of them was vizier in the courts of al-Rāzi (r. 322-29/934-40) and al-Mottaqi (r. 329-33/940-44). Yāqut says that they were Moḳamma, as they believed that ‘Ali, Fātema, Ḥasan, Ḥosayn, and Moḥammad were five eternal specters (*ašbāḥ*) and lights (*anwār*), and adding that this is a “well-known teaching” (Yāqut, pp. 447-48).

Another pentadist, who apparently learned the Moḳamma doctrine from the Karḳiyun, was Moḥammad b. Moẓaffar Abu Dolaf Azdi Kāteb, whom Ṭusi portrays as a madman who adhered to “extremism” (*ḡolow*), the teaching of the “delegators” (*mofawweẓa*), and was a “pentadist” (*moḳammes*). This, according to Ṭusi, was the result of having been brought up and taught by the Karḳiyun, who were famous Moḳamma (Ṭusi, pp. 254-56; Ḥelli, 163; Massignon, pp. 524-25).

Another Moḳammes was Abu’l-Qāsem ‘Ali b. Aḥmad Kufi (d. 352/963), who claimed descent from Imam Musā al-Kāẓem. He was initially an Imami of “good faith,” who wrote many orthodox (*sadiq*) books, but toward the end of his life he became a pentadist and began writing on their teachings. The pentadist doctrine, which Ḥelli describes as part of Abu’l-Qāsem’s biography, slightly differs from what is found in other sources. He says that the Moḳamma believed that five among the Prophet’s companions—Salmān Fārsi, Meqdād b. Aswad Kendi, ‘Ammār b. Yāser, Abu Ḍarr Ġefāri, and ‘Amr b. Omayya Žamri—were delegated with the welfare of the world (*mowakkalun be-masā’el al-‘ālam*; Ḥelli, p. 233; Ebn Šahrāšub, p. 57; Madelung, p. 517). It is not clear whether they also believed in the divinity of the Prophet and his four descendants, or whether this was the only pentadist element in their teachings.

A group that taught a slightly different version of the pentadist doctrine of the Moḳamma was the ‘Alyā’iya (for questions concerning this designation, see Halm, 2000; idem, 1982, p. 229), allegedly founded by Imam Ja’far al-Šādeq’s contemporary Baššār Ša’iri. They considered ‘Ali as God and “agreed with the Moḳamma on the four persons” (‘Ali, Fātema, Ḥasan, and Ḥosayn), which probably means that they divinized them as well. They considered Moḥammad as ‘Ali’s slave and his envoy to the humanity (Qomi, p. 59; Rāzi, p. 307; Šahrastāni, I, p. 179; Ebn Ḥazm, p. 66). A follower of the ‘Alyā’iya was the famous 9th-century “heretic” Ešḥāq Aḥmar Naḳa’i. An early *ḡolāt* work titled *Ādāb ‘Abd-al-Moṭṭaleb*, where Ešḥāq appears as the chief narrator, contains an echo of the ‘Alyā’iya teaching as presented by the heresiographers. It says that

God manifests in five persons (which is the usual set, with Moḥsen instead of ‘Ali, see above), and adds that ‘Ali is God and Moḥammad is his apostle (*rasul*; *Ādāb*, pp. 263-65; cf. Halm, 1981, pp. 61-64).

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