



SHAYKHISM

SHAYKHISM (ŠAYḲIYA), a school of Imamite Shi‘ism founded at the beginning of the 13th/19th century.

ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION

Shaykhism is a religious school of Twelver Shi‘ism whose founding is attributed to [Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā’i](#) (d. 1241/1826; [Figure 1](#)). Born in the eastern Arabian peninsula, Aḥsā’i studied in the *‘atabāt* (Shi‘ite shrine cities of Iraq) at the end of the 12th/18th century and the beginning of the 13th/19th century. Shaykhism emerged in parallel with the decline of the traditional [Aḳbāri](#) school of exegesis. Its dominant branch, known as Kermāni, could just as well be considered a partial continuation of the Aḳbāriya because it perpetuated the critique of the “principles of religious law” (*oṣul-e feqh*) adopted by the rationalist school (*oṣuli*) by denying any legitimacy to [ejtehād](#) (see *Ejtehād wa taqlid*, the major work of [Abu’l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi](#) [d. 1969; q.v.], entirely dedicated to this question; Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti, “Resāla dar jawāb-e sā’el-i,” p. 183; see also Moḥammad-Karīm Khan Kermāni, *Hedāyat al-ṭālebin*, pp. 97, 100, 140). On the other hand, like the Aḳbāris, the Šayḳis declared their opposition to the philosophers and theologians. However, whereas the Aḳbāris criticized the latter using a literalistic reading of the traditions, Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā’i formulated his rejection via theosophical investigation and esoteric arguments. Thus Shaykhism is based on both traditional and charismatic authority. On the one hand, the Šayḳi school claims to return to the foundations of Shi‘i Islam, that is, to the teachings of the Prophet and the Imams contained in the Hadith (Amir-Moezzi, 1997, pp.



33-39); on the other, it stresses the fact that the science of Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'i and his main disciple and successor, Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti (d. 1259/1843; [Figure 2](#)), was inspired by the prophet and the Imams, in particular by the Imam of Time (Aḥsā'i, *Resāla-ye šarḥ-e aḥwāl*, pp. 10-15; Rašti, *Dalil al-motaḥayyerin*, p. 20; Moḥammad-Karim Khan, *Hedāyat al-ṭālebin*, pp. 62-67, 71-73, 116).

Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'i was born in 1166/1753 in a small village near al-Aḥsā', within the territory of Baḥrayn. From his earliest youth, he displayed a great interest in and a real aptitude for the religious sciences. He was said to be able to read the Qur'an at the age of five. He began to study Arabic, and then theology, with many nearby authorities. It is possible that, at that time, he was in contact with the works of the Imami scholar Ebn Abi Jomhur Aḥsā'i (d. after 906/1501). At the same time, it appears, he frequently experienced intense visions, in which he saw the Imams in dreams. Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'i was on the whole unsatisfied by the possibilities for study in his native region and decided, at the age of 19, to move to the 'atabāt (Rašti, *Dalil al-motaḥayyerin*, p. 12). Until the end of the 1790s, he studied with several *aḵbārī* masters, including Shaikh Ḥosayn 'Oṣfur, the nephew of the famous Imami jurisprudent Shaikh Yusof Baḥrāni (d. 1186/1772). As a result, he received the *ejāzāt-e rewāyat* (document certifying his ability to transmit the education he had received) and the *ejāzat-e derāyat* (document certifying his ability to produce an education from the most important religious *oṣuli* of his time, including Sayyed Moḥammad-Mahdi Baḥr-al-'Olum (d. 1212/1797) in 1209/1794-95 (Abu'l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi, *Fehrest-e kotob-e mašāyek*, p. 205). Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'i left the 'atabāt around 1209/1794 in the wake of a serious epidemic and returned to Baḥrayn, from which he had to flee once more because of attacks led by the Wahhabites in the Shi'ite regions of eastern Arabia (MacEoin, 1985, p. 674). He then settled at Basra, frequently shuttling back and forth between this town and the 'atabāt. In 1221/1806, aged 53, he decided to make a pilgrimage to Mašhad to the tomb of the Eighth Imam, 'Alī al-Rezā. Thereafter he remained in Iran for nearly ten years. He visited many towns (Abu'l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi, *Fehrest-e kotob-e mašāyek*, pp. 208-11). First he stayed in Yazd, where he taught between 1222/1807 and 1228/1813. At this time, the ruling Qajar monarch, Faṭḥ-'Alī Shah (r. 1212-50/1797-1834), invited him several times to join him at Tehran. Aḥsā'i declined at first and later on relented, but then moved to Isfahan (Aḥsā'i, *Resāla al-kāqāniya*, in idem, *Qewāmi al-kalem* I, pp. 120-29). Aḥsā'i's distancing attitude toward the ruling Qajar has since been interpreted as the symbolic foundational act of apoliticism of Kermāni Shaykhism. He then wished to leave Iran, but the



governor of Kermānšāh, [Moḥammad-ʿAli Mirzā Dawlatšāh](#), asked him to settle in his town. He established good relations with him and stayed there for two years. At that time, Kermānšāh was a very dynamic town, because of its location on the road to the *ʿatabāt*. Aḥsāʾi left Iran in 1816 on a pilgrimage to Mecca and then stayed in the *ʿatabāt*. He returned to Kermānšāh in 1234/1819, going on tours from there to visit other Iranian towns. He remained in Iran for about five years. His teaching made him famous and renowned throughout the country until 1239/1824. A conflict then arose at Qazvin after a debate on the question of physical resurrection (*maʿād-e jesmāni*) in Islam.

One of the ulama of this town, Mollā [Moḥammad-Taḳī Baraḡāni](#) (d. 1263/1847), declared a *takfir* (excommunication) against Aḥsāʾi (Tonokāboni, pp. 44-48; MacEoin, 1989b; Momen, 2003, pp. 320, 321, 323, 324; Abuʾl-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi, *Fehrest-e kotob-e mašāyek*, pp. 190-91, 196-97).

Aḥsāʾi had also composed some critical commentaries on the work of [Mollā Ṣadrā Ṣirāzi](#) (d. 1050/1640) titled *Šarḥ-e ketāb al-ḥekma al-ʿaršiya* and *Šarḥ ketāb al-mašāʿer*, and also criticized other philosophers of the Isfahan school, such as Mollā [Fayḏ-e Kāšāni](#) (d. 1090/1679, q.v.; Cole, 2001a; Cole, 2001b; Lawson, 2005). He had also called into question the usual interpretation of the clerics concerning the spiritual body (*al-jasad al-bāqi*) during the resurrection (*maʿād*; Aḥsāʾi, *Šarḥ al-ziārat al-jāmeʿa*, pp. 364-66; idem, “al-Resāla al-qaṭifiya”; Corbin, 1960, pp. 99-174). This last doctrine also implied a new reading of the role of the world that mediates between the physical and spiritual worlds that Aḥsāʾi called “*hurqelyā*” (Corbin, 1972, IV, pp. 287-90). After this conflict at Qazvin, Aḥsāʾi remained one more year in Iran, at Kermānšāh, before leaving for Karbalāʾ. But even that town became dangerous for him. He left with his family, retiring to Mecca. He died on 21 Dūʾl-qaʿda 1241/27 June 1826 and was buried at Baḳīʾ cemetery in Medina during a pilgrimage to the holy places.

Some 200 works and treatises are attributed to him (Abuʾl-Qāsem Kān Ebrāhimi, *Fehrest-e kotob-e mašāyekh*, pp. 280-357).

Only after the excommunication of Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾi, and then his death, could the Šayḳi school truly be said to be born. Its members then preferred to call themselves Kašfiya (“those who reveal”) or Poštesari (“behind the head” [of the Imam]). This term contrasted with [Bālāsari](#) (“above the head”), which designates those who position themselves above the head of the Imam in order to pray when they visited his mausoleum. Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾi had forbidden his disciples to pray with their back turned to the tomb of the Imām Ḥosayn at Karbalāʾ. His basis for this was a Hadith stating that when one visits the tomb of an Imam, he is in fact present with the believer. During the 19th



century, the term *bālāsari* increasingly came to designate only those Shi‘as who were frankly hostile to the Šayḳis rather than all of them (MacEoin, 1989a; Rafati, p. 48). Sometimes, rather than being called Bālāsari, the adversaries of the Šayḳi were referred to as *motašarre’* (those who are tied to the law). This was especially true at Tabriz. It was primarily their adversaries who bestowed on them the title Šayḳiya, but the Šayḳis, of whatever stripe, accepted this title and gradually stopped calling themselves Kašfiya. The Kermāni Šayḳi master Abu’l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi (d. 1969) reviewed this development in his *Fehrest-e kotub-e mašāyek-e ‘eẓam*: “We are they who are called Šayḳis and are the disciples of the Shaikh because in his teaching we find the complete tradition of Shi‘ism with all the virtualities it implies. This name was given to us; we did not choose it. But we accept it as an especially valuable badge of honor, for, because of its inherent meaning and its true sense, to us it is the equivalent of the title ‘Muslim.’ And because they thus distinguish us due to our association with our eminent Shaykh, it also happens that they call us a minority. We glory in this appellation as well, for at the very time of the holy Imams, their companions and their friends too were never more than a minority” (tr. from Corbin, 1972, p. 229).

The Šayḳi school was organized and structured under the direction of Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti, one of the most faithful pupils of Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā’i. Aḥsā’i had designated him as his “qualified representative” (*nā’eb al-manāb*). He was born in Rašt in 1212/1798, to a family of Arab origin that had fled Medina and settled in Gilan, two generations earlier, in the wake of an epidemic of plague. He left his town at the age of 15 to join Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā’i in Yazd (Abu’l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi, *Fehrest-e kotub-e mašāyek*, pp. 146-48). Thereafter he accompanied him everywhere until he settled in Karbalā’, at the request of his master, in 1825. That is where he taught. The Shi‘i community was then blemished by a new split: A small number defected to this new school that was developing, at the time led by Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti, while the majority adhered to the rationalist *oṣuli* school. Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti died young, on 11 Du’l-qa’da 1259/2 January 1844, at the age of 45. He appears to have been poisoned on the order of Najib Pāšā, the Ottoman governor of Bagdad. He composed some 400 essays and treatises, many of which are lost, apparently because his house and library were looted twice (Corbin, 1972, p. 230; Abu’l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi, *Fehrest-e kotub-e mašāyek*, p. 157).

The origin of the first Šayḳi networks in Iran goes back to the time when Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā’i lived and taught there. He enlisted an initial group of



disciples who then in turn taught the religious sciences. Nonetheless, nowhere in Iran is there a Šayḳi community going back to the time of Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'i. This sounds reasonable, because the Šayḳi school had not really been created during his lifetime, even though he influenced many scholars at Yazd, Isfahan, and Kermānšāh, the three Iranian cities in which he had lived and taught the longest. Ḥājj Moḥammad-Karim Khan Kermāni (d. 1288/1871; Figure 3), the founder of the Kermāni branch upon the death of Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti, gives a list of ten important ulama who regularly attended the lectures offered by Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'i in Yazd (Moḥammad-Karim Khan, *Hedāyat al-ṭālebin*, p. 39). It was in fact the excommunication (*takfīr*) of Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'i in 1239/1824 that prompted his disciples to form an independent current within Shi'ism. But this occurred only at the end of Aḥsā'i's life. Thus the oldest Šayḳi communities in Iran go back to the time of Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti, who put great effort into the propagation of Šayḳi doctrine. Nonetheless, the highest priority was the consolidation of Shaykhism in the 'atabāt, notably in Karbalā', which at the time was the most prominent intellectual center in the Shi'i world, and where Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti benefited from some of the funding provided by the state of Awadh to the ulama of the town (Litvak, 2000). It was in Karbalā' that Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti met the most distinguished Shi'i scholars. He succeeded in organizing the Šayḳi community of the town into a small but cohesive and coherent group. The many historic events that took place during the years following Aḥsā'i's death only reinforced this sense of unity among disciples. Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti began by stimulating many doctrinal debates with the great *oṣuli* figures of the 'atabāt of his time. This was determinative in the construction of a Šayḳi minority to oppose Osulism that had recently overtaken Akhbarism. At the same time, these more open polemics also aggravated the insecurity in which the Šayḳis lived. Some of the town's non-Šayḳi ulama organized an anti-Šayḳi front. Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti felt threatened after a debate that took place on 1 Rajab 1243/18 January 1828 (Nicolas, II, pp. 15-17). In particular, he faced Sayyed Mahdi Ṭabāṭabā'i (d. 1260/1844), Moḥammad-Ja'far Astarābādi (d. 1263/1847), and Moḥammad-Šarif Māzandarāni (d. 1245/1829). Sayyed Mahdi Ṭabāṭabā'i declared the Šayḳis to be infidels (*koffār*) and held many meetings for the purpose of urging the ulama, as well as the general population, to require the expulsion of Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti from Karbalā' (Litvak, 1998, p. 60). Then, a stronger campaign was led by Shaikh 'Alī Kāšef-al-Ġeṭā', who sent letters to the religious leaders of many Muslim countries including the Ottoman Empire, India, and of course Iran, to request their support in his struggle against Shaykhism. On the other hand, several major *oṣuli* figures opposed this campaign, the most influential



being [Ḥājj Ebrāhim Kalbāsi](#) (d. 1262/1846) and Mollā Moḥammad-Bāqer Šafti (d. 1260/1844; Moḥammad-Karim Khan, *Taḍkerat al-awliā'*, p. 68; Abu'l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi, *Fehrest-e kotob-e mašāyekh*, p. 188). Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti then went to Najaf to take part in a debate, during which he demanded a halt to the slander and defamation (Nicolas, II, pp. 21-26). Despite his caution, reinforced by the practice of [taqiya](#) (dissimulation) regarding many doctrinal questions, this was the beginning of physical attacks on his person. He escaped several assassination attempts (Rašti, *Dalil al-motaḥayyerin*, pp. 90-104, 130-33). His home was attacked several times and his library burned.

DIVISIONS WITHIN THE ŠAYḲIYA AFTER THE DEATH OF SAYYED KĀẒEM RAŠTI

Upon the death of Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti, most of his pupils left Karbalā', which had become too hostile, and developed Shaykhism in their homelands. They were basically Iranian, Arab, and Indian pupils. The nascent Šayḳi community split into two main, theologically distinct, branches, called Kermāni and Tabrizi, because their centers were founded respectively in Kermān and Tabriz (see [Figure 4](#)). Other students, such as Mollā Ḥasan Gawhar and Mirzā Moḥiṭ Kermāni, also claimed the right to lead the young Šayḳi community in Iraq but achieved much more limited success (Tonokāboni, p. 186).

On the whole, it is usually the Kermāni branch that is meant when Shaykhism is discussed or mentioned. It was founded by Moḥammad-Karim Khan, who belonged to the Qajar royal family. He was the eldest son of [Ebrāhim Khan Zāhir-al-Dawla](#), a nephew of the ruler Fath-'Ali Shah as well as a disciple of Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti, with whom he had established a deep relationship during a stay at Karbalā' (Moḥammad-Karim Khan, *Taḍkerat al-awliā'*, pp. 55-58). Zāhir-al-Dawla admired the theosophical position of Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'i but was not able to get to know him personally. Having commanded the Qajar armies in Khorasan and Gilān, Zāhir-al-Dawla was made governor of the province of Kermān and Baluĉestān for twenty-two years (1218-40/1803-24; Bāmdād, I, p. 21). During his youth and adolescence, Moḥammad-Karim Khan studied at the Ebrāhimiya, a school (*madrassa*) built by his father, and left for Karbalā' at the age of 16 or 17 (Modarresi Čahārdehi, pp. 171, 174-75). He remained only a few years at the 'atabāt and returned to Kermān as the representative of Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti. During this period, in 1250/1834, he established a major library in the Ebrāhimiya School. This institution was also where he did the major part of his teaching. Moḥammad-Karim Khan only went out in the company of disciples and pupils and at the same time led an



ascetic life (Manoukian, pp. 164-66). His doctrinal position divided Kermān society deeply. Upon his death, his body was taken to the precinct of the mausoleum of the Imām Ḥosayn at Karbalā', where he was buried. His literary output is immense. He is credited with 278 works, divided into the following 15 categories: theosophy (*ḥekmat-e elāhiya*); Shi'i dogmatics and controversies; sermons and homilies; Qur'an commentaries; Hadiths of the Imams; principles of law (*oṣul-e feqh*); jurisprudence; treatises on prayer and devotion; medicine; treatises on light, optics, and the science of perspective and mirrors; treatises on colors, music; astronomy, mathematics, the science of the astrolabe; alchemy, dream interpretation, geomancy; calligraphy, poetry, grammar; responses to various questions (Abu'l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi, *Fehrest-e kotob-e mašāyeḡ*, pp. 440-577). His doctrinal work is especially admired for its hermeneutics of the Shi'i doctrine of *rejāl al-ḡayb* ("men of the invisible") or *ahl al-ḥaqq* ("people of truth"). Above all, he promoted faith in the hidden elite, or the companions of the Imam of Time, in the course of the exposition of the doctrine of the *rokn-e rābe'* ("fourth pillar"; see below). Thanks to the establishment of many agricultural lands belonging to members of his family as *waqf* (charitable endowment), Moḥammad-Karim Khan was able to make the Ebrāhimiya school the new spiritual center of the Kermāni branch of Shaykhism, where a large number of students (*ṭollāb*) studied the religious sciences (Hermann and Rezai, pp. 97, 99-100). These ulama, who usually returned to their homelands after studying at Kermān, developed Ṣayḡi circles where they spread the doctrine developed by Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'i and his successors. The establishment of *waqf* also allowed him to finance the religious ceremonies of the community, notably the '*Āṣurā*' (Hermann and Rezai, p. 96). A considerable number of the Ṣayḡis of Iraq, Baḡrayn, and to a lesser extent India at that time recognized the authority of Moḥammad-Karim Khan and then that of his successors (Cole, 1988, pp. 185-89;). Upon his death, he was succeeded by his brother Ḥājj Moḥammad Khan Kermāni (d. 1324/1906), and then the descendants of the latter: Zayn-al-'Ābedin Khan (d. 1360/1941), Abu'l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi (d. 1389/1969), and 'Abd-al-Reżā Khan Ebrāhimi (d. 1979). Upon the assassination of 'Abd-al-Reżā Khan on 26 December 1979, Sayyed 'Ali Musawi (d. 2015), one of his Iraqi students, became the head of the order; thus the center of the order transferred from Kermān to Basra. The ancestors of Sayyed 'Ali Musawi had already represented the Kermāni Ṣayḡi masters in Iraq for several generations.

The Tabrizi branch was started by two clergymen from Tabriz, each of whom



had a group of disciples: Mollā Moḥammad Māmaqāni (d. 1269/1852) and Ḥājj Mirzā Šafi‘ Teqat-al-Eslām Tabrizi (d. 1301/1884; Werner, pp. 81-82, 122-26, 224-28, 252; Bayat, p. 59). Mollā Moḥammad Māmaqāni seems to have had more disciples, but he died shortly after Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti. His son, Mirzā Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Teqat-al-Eslām (d. 1303/1885-86), had not managed to attract a large number of disciples at his death. Mirzā Šafi‘ Tabrizi then had to assume the leadership of the Tabrizi Šaykis. He had attended the lectures of Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā’i and Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti, as well as those of the renowned *oṣuli* clergyman Shaikh Moḥammad-Ḥasan Najafi (Rafati, pp. 142-44). The Tabrizi Šaykis founded several mosques and madrasas at Tabriz called Ḥojjat-al-Eslām, Šāḥeb-al-Amr, and Kāẓemiya. Like the Ebrāhimiya school in Kermān, they were all supported by *waqf* (Werner, pp. 75, 81-82, 226). Tabrizi Shaykhism then split into separate trends driven by quarreling families, namely the Teqat-al-Eslāmi, the Ḥojjat-al-Eslāmi, the Mo‘in-al-Eslāmi, the Osku’i, and the ‘Amid-al-Eslāmi. On the doctrinal level, the differences were minimal to nonexistent. During the 20th century the Osku’i family achieved considerable importance. Today, the school is primarily found in Kuwait and is also known by the name Eḥqāqi.

From the doctrinal point of view, the Kermāni and Tabrizi branches are distinguished by two specific questions. First, the Tabrizi Šaykis are much closer to Osulism, recognizing appeal to *ejteḥād*, although it remains limited in use. Second, they accuse Moḥammad-Karim Khan and his successors of inventing the doctrine of *rokn-e rābe’*, “the fourth pillar” (Abu’l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi, *Fehrest-e kotob-e mašāyeḳ*, pp. 92-93; Hermann, 2007a, pp. 20, 79-80). On the other hand, the two branches agree in their critique of Sufism and of the theosophy of the Isfahan school of theosophy.

Later on, after the death of Moḥammad-Karim Khan in 1288/1871, a third branch emerged that has been especially overlooked by researchers, the Hamadāni Šaykis, also known as *jandaqi*, *eṣṣafāni*, or *mirzā bāqeriya*. The terms *hamadāni*, *jandaqi*, and *eṣṣafāni* obviously refer to locations in Iran, while the name *mirzā bāqeriya* comes from the name of the founder, Ḥājj Moḥammad-Bāqer Šarif Hamadāni Ṭabāṭabā’i (d. 1319/1901). He disputed the leadership of Shaykhism by Moḥammad Khan as well as his interpretation of the doctrine of the *rokn-e rābe’* (Moḥammad-Bāqer Hamadāni, *Eṣṣāqiya*; Hermann, 2007a, pp. 94-103; idem, 2007b). He seems to have challenged the authority of Moḥammad-Karim Khan shortly before the latter’s death, demanding to be officially named the representative of the Kermāni Šayki in



Hamadān, despite an earlier refusal. He resolved not to submit to the response of Moḥammad-Karim Khan and virtually seceded, in spite of proclaiming himself leader of the Kermāni Šayḳis of Hamadān. He stated, among other things, that the two previous successions had confirmed the fact that it was unacceptable for the succession to be transmitted through a family line, here the Ebrāhimi (Bāmdād, VI, pp. 209-11). However, the great majority of Kermāni Šayḳis rallied to the authority of Moḥammad Khan.

Born in 1239/1829, Moḥammad-Bāqer Hamadāni began his studies in Isfahan, where he was attracted to Šayḳi thought (Moḥammad-Karim Kermāni, *Tāriḳ-e 'ebrat le-man e'tabar*, p. 231). Upon the death of Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti, he chose to recognize the authority of Moḥammad-Karim Khan, whom he joined at Mašhad for that purpose. He had studied beside him at the Ebrāhimiya school and then became the “representative” of Moḥammad-Karim Khan at Nā'in, where he inspired a circle of religious studies. After the death of Moḥammad-Karim Khan, it was basically a part of the Šayḳis of Isfahan, Nā'in, and Hamadān that chose to recognize his authority. Moḥammad-Bāqer regularly traveled between these three towns, finally settling in Hamadān in 1311/1893-94 (Moḥammad-Karim Kermāni, *Tāriḳ-e 'ebrat leman e'tabar*, p. 52).

The eruption of violence against the Hamadāni Šayḳis in 1315/1898 forced him to leave the town and seek refuge in [Jandaq](#), a town in Nā'in sub-province. Upon his death, his body was taken to the mausoleum of Imām Reżā at Mašhad (Bāmdād, VI, p. 211). He was a prolific scholar and the author of more than 150 works.

DOCTRINE

Despite the excommunication of Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'i and the continual attacks against Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti, the doctrine they taught seems to have been strictly orthodox. Above all, they preached a return to the teaching of the Imams as it was contained in the Hadith, and they played a major role in the resurgence of Shi'i gnosis (Corbin, 1972, pp. 206, 211, 225). Because of the importance they accorded to the Imams as the cause of active creation, they were also accused of being Shi'i extremists (*ḡolāt*), which they refuted easily enough (Aḥsā'i, *Šarḥ al-ziāra*, pp. 11, 64, 76; Abu'l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi, *Fehrest-e kotob-e mašāyek*, pp. 228-29).

The Šayḳi masters and their prominent students wrote several thousand especially dense treatises, of which only a few have been skimmed or analyzed by researchers. Thus many important themes still remain unstudied. This is



especially the case for Qur'anic and Hadith exegesis (*tafsir*) that comprise the heart of the doctrine developed by the Kermāni and Hamadānis Šayḳis, who basically assigned greater importance to the revealed text (*naql*) than to reason (*ʿaql*). To this extent they appear to be heirs to Akhbarism. It is therefore not surprising that there are comparatively fewer works on *feqh*. The number of works on the *rokn-e rābe'* is equally striking. The best way to get an idea of this is to consult the extensive catalogue of works of the Kermāni Šayḳi order compiled by Abu'l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi in his *Fehrest-e kotob-e mašāyeḳ*. He lists chronologically the works written by each of the Kermāni Šayḳi masters from Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'i to himself, classified by topic. The catalogue begins with a history of Shaykhism with biographies of each major master; it is the first such work in Šayḳi literature, which had always been exclusively doctrinal (Abu'l-Qāsem Ebrāhimi, *Fehrest-e kotob-e mašāyeḳ*, pp. 2-279). Most of these treatises remained in manuscript until the second half of the 20th century. Only in the 1960s and 1970s did the Kermāni Šayḳis begin to publish a large number of them through their publisher, Sa'adat. Nonetheless, distribution has often been limited only to members of the school, and they are accessible in only a few public libraries in Iran today (Monzawi). In the West as well, public collections are rare (Amir-Moezzi and Schmidtke; Corbin, 1972, p. 213). This also explains the scarcity of studies of the development of Shaykhism after the death of Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti. Therefore, concentration here will be on certain specific doctrines that were enhanced and developed by the successors of the first two masters during the 19th and 20th centuries: the *rokn-e rābe'*, belief in political neutrality, and the refutation of Sufism.

The rokn-e rābe' ("fourth pillar"). There are many differences by author and by period regarding the list of "principles of the religion" (*oṣul-e din*), which, however, seems to have become fixed by the 19th century (see SHI'ITE DOCTRINE). The Shi'i ulama recognized three principles of religion (*oṣul-e din*) as common to the Sunnis and the Shi'as: *tawḥid* (the oneness of God, monotheism), *nobowwat* (the cycle of prophecy), and *ma'ād* (resurrection). They added two *oṣul-e maḏhab* (principles of the school, here the Imamite school) or *foru'-e din* (derivations from religion) specific to the Shi'as, namely *ʿadl* (justice) and *emāmat* (cycle of the Imamate). However, the Kermāni Šayḳis posit a different classification. For them, the *ma'ād* is one of the *foru'-e din* and the *emāmat* is one of the *oṣul-e din*. But primarily, they add a fourth pillar in *oṣul-e din*, the *rokn-e rābe'* (Moḥammad-Karim Khan, *Eršād al-ʿawāmm* IV; idem, *Rokn-e rābe'*; idem, *Tawḥid, nobowwa, emāma, Ši'a*; ʿAbd-al-Rezā Khan Ebrāhimi, *Dusti-e dustān*; Amir-Moezzi, 2001; Corbin, 1972, pp. 274-86). It has



to do with belief in a Shi'i elite, which is in part occulted and assumes its full importance during the Occultation (*ḡaybat*) because of its relation with the Imam of Time. We can therefore speak of belief in the "true" Shi'as, hence the title of one of Moḥammad-Karim Khan's works on this subject: "*Tawḥid, nobowwa, emāma, shi'a*." This ideal community is in turn hierarchical. It includes a perfect Shi'a who has an immediate relationship with the Imam of Time, the *nāṭeq-e wāḥed* (the unique speaker), the *bāb* (the gate), representatives called *noqabā'* (the chiefs or the guides; [sing. *naqib*]), and *nojabā'* (nobles [sing. *najib*]). These three categories are occulted in the same way as the Twelfth Imam. Each member of this occulted elite is known only by the rank beneath it. Below the *nojabā'* are the ulama (scholars), who can also be called *ṣakṣ-e ṭeqa* (person worthy of trust). These two categories, unlike those higher in the hierarchy, are not occulted and are considered "manifest proof" (*ḥojjat-e zāher*) of God. At the base of this spiritual hierarchy is the community of the faithful (*mo'men*), who represent only a tiny minority of all Muslims or of Shi'as. They are also called "brothers" (*eḳwān* in Arabic or *barādarān* in Persian; Moḥammad-Karim Khan, *Eršād al-'awāmm* IV, pp. 427-508).

The existence of the *noqabā'* and *nojabā'*, and their functions, are for Moḥammad-Karim Khan and his successors quite explicit in the Qur'an and the Hadith (Moḥammad-Karim Khan, *Eršād al-'awāmm* IV, pp. 176-207; Moḥammad Khan, "Resāla dar jawāb-e Nawwāb Mirzā Sayyed 'Ali Yazdi"). There are always fewer *noqabā'* than *nojabā'*, and they intervene in occult ways in worldly affairs (Moḥammad-Karim Khan, *Eršād al-'awāmm* IV, pp. 371-73; idem, *Si faṣl*, pp. 102-3). The *nojabā'* exist among men basically to transmit the teaching of the imams to the elite of the faithful (Moḥammad-Karim Khan, *Eršād al-'awāmm* IV, pp. 252-73). Like the *noqabā'*, they are divided into *nojabā'-e kolli* (full nobles) and *nojabā'-e joz'i* (partial nobles; 'Abd-al-Rezā Khan Ebrāhimi, *Dusti-e dustān*, pp. 183-98). Upon the death of a *naqib*, he is immediately replaced by one of the *nojabā'*. *Noqabā'* and *nojabā'*, more than any other members of the spiritual elite, provide a link between the Imam of Time and the faithful, and they symbolize the status of perfect man (*ensān-e kāmél*; Moḥammad Khan, "Resāla dar jawāb-e so'ālāt-e ba'zī").

While no Shi'i theologian has yet put this in writing and affirmed this spiritual hierarchy linking the Imam of Time with the faithful, this theme has never been completely absent from their concerns. The idea was mentioned as "preeminence of the Shi'as" (*faẓl al-Ši'a*) by Ebn Bābuya (Bābawayh, d.



381/991), Shaikh Mofid (d. 413/1032), [Ḥaydar Āmoli](#) (d. after 787/1385), and many others, although they never considered it so precisely as did Moḥammad-Karim Khan. The tradition most often cited by writers on belief in the “true” Shi‘as is the *Ḥadith al-komayl*, the inaugural discourse of Imām ‘Ali with his disciple Komayl b. Zīād, the end of which deals with the “initiates of the invisible” (Amir-Moezzi, 1998, pp. 213-14). The rank of the masters and clergy of the Kermāni Šayḳi school has appeared uncertain for some, and the Šayḳi masters have often been accused of laying claim to the status of *naqib* or *najib*. But careful reading of the Šayḳi masters’ literature show that they denied this claim and regard themselves as true ulama (Abu’l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi, *Fehrest-e kotob-e mašāyeḳ* pp. 112, 116; Moḥammad Khan, *Eshāqiya*, p. 167; Moḥammad-Karim Khan, *Si faṣl*, pp. 31-33). The true ulama exist to provide the manifest proof (*ḥojjat zāher*) of God. Moḥammad Khan defined them as a group within the Šayḳi, those who actively pursue research in religious science (*‘elm*) and who succeed in it. He also calls them the “fruits” or “vestiges” (*āṭār*) of the *nojabā’* (Moḥammad Khan, *Eshāqiya*, pp. 169-70, 196-97). It seems impossible to doubt that the Kermāni disciples, for their part, accorded them the status of true ulama and thus considered them proof (*ḥojjat*) of God on earth. Otherwise, they would have no legitimacy. The clergy of the school are thus associated with one of the categories of the *rokn-e rābe’*, which is in a position to initiate the faithful in knowledge of the *nojabā’* (‘Abd-al-Rezā Khan Ebrāhimi, *Dusti-e dustān*, pp. 183-87). This is certainly the sense in which in their works they invite every Shi‘a to seek out the religious elite who are able to initiate them in knowledge of the *nojabā’*, which in their eyes constitutes an obligation inherent to Occultation. As the fourth and last principle of the religion, the *rokn-e rābe’* appears at the center of their doctrinal reflection. Moreover, the *rokn-e rābe’* is also presented as the “objective” or “purpose” of the religion. The elaboration of the doctrine of the *rokn-e rābe’*, gradually exposed over two centuries by the Kermāni Šayḳi masters, is surely the most important contribution of the Šayḳi to the intellectual history of Shi‘ism in the modern and contemporary period. The best examples of this continuing revelation of the doctrine of *rokn-e rābe’* are certainly the two contemporary works of ‘Abd-al-Rezā Khan Ebrāhimi (*Dusti-e dustān*) and his son Zayn-al-‘Ābedin Ebrāhimi (*Abwāb al-imān*).

Apoliticism. The doctrine of the Kermāni Šayḳi masters implies a *de facto* apoliticism assumed and asserted to be a religious obligation. The little weight accorded to the clergy during the Occultation, the illegitimacy of *ejtehād*, the elitist and minoritarian dimension of the school, and belief in an occulted elite



representing the Twelfth Iman are further points of doctrine implying apoliticism. Even the duty to “ordain the good and prohibit the evil” (*al-amr be'l-ma'ruf wa'l-nahy 'an al-monkar*), the doctrine underlying every political movement in Islam, seems for the Kermāni Šaykī masters to be severely limited in the course of the Occultation (Hermann, 2007a, pp. 203-6). The Kermāni Šaykī masters also argued for the nonapplication of legal penalties (*ḥadd-e šar'i*) during the Occultation. The main Kermāni Šaykī treatise on this subject is late. It is the *Siāsat-e modon*, written at the beginning of the 1970s by 'Abd-al-Rezā Khan Ebrāhimi in a context of increasing politicization of the clergy (Hermann, 2008). To the best of our knowledge, the Hamadāni ulama defended the same approach toward politics as the Kermāni Šaykīs, but a close reading of their vast doctrinal output would be necessary to be sure.

The position of the Tabrizi Šaykī ulama, on the other hand, was quite different, and several major political figures have come from them. Worthy of mention are 'Alī Āqā Teqat-al-Eslām Tabrizi (d. 1330/1911), who was one of the chief architects of the Tabriz constitutional movement (Hermann, 2007a, pp. 255-347; idem, 2010b; Faṭḥi, 1973; idem, 1975), and Shaikh Moḥammad Kīābāni (d. 1920), who, having been a committed pro-constitutionalist, advocated the autonomy and perhaps by extension the independence of Iranian Azarbaijan (Kasravi; Katouzian, pp. 155-72). By contrast, the Kermāni Šaykī master Zayn-al-Ābedin Khan, who worked at the time of the constitutional movement, hardly ever alluded to these events in his work. He simply indicated that if it was a just and legitimate movement it would be therefore guided by the Imam of Time himself, whose *parousia* alone would “fill this world with justice and fairness just as it had been filled with oppression and tyranny” (Hermann, 2007a, pp. 240-55; Idem, 2010a; Zayn-al-Ābedin Khan Kermāni, 1973, pp. 442-43).

The Critique of Sufism. Even though Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'i knew a [Dahabi](#) master, Qoṭb-al-Din Moḥammad Širāzi Dahabi, and studied with him during his youth in Aḥsā', he nevertheless radically rejected Sufism. He broadly criticized the idea of unification of the faithful with God as the final stage of the Sufi path (*ṭariqa*) and rejected the doctrine of “unity of existence” (*waḥdat al-wojud*; Lawson, 2010, pp. 24-26). Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti even presented the rejection of Sufism as an essential criterion for being Šaykī (Rašti, *Dalil al-motaḥayyerin*, p. 15; idem, “Resāla dar jawāb-e sā'el-i,” pp. 209-19). It is important to stress that the masters of all three Šaykī branches followed this tradition. Among the Kermāni Šaykī masters, it was certainly



Moḥammad-Karim Khan who devoted the most pages to it, especially in his magnum opus *Eršād al-‘awāmm* (IV, pp. 316-24), but in other works as well. His successor, Moḥammad Khan, also criticized belief in the transmigration of souls (*tanāsok*), which was defended by many Sufis, and criticized their encouragement of abandoning the *šari‘a* (Moḥammad Khan, *Resāla dar radd-e ta‘wīlāt-e Bābiya*, pp. 105-10). Their successors also frequently confirmed their rejection of Sufism (Zayn-al-‘Ābedin Khan Kermāni, *Dorus*, pp. 76-79; ‘Abd-al-Reżā Khan Ebrāhimi, *Dusti-e dustān*, p. 109). Moḥammad-Bāqer Hamadāni also returned to these questions in several essays (e.g., “Resāla mobāraka dar radd-e mas‘ul,” pp. 37-39). According to the Šayḳi masters, the status of the Sufis was lower than that of the *oṣuli* jurists to the extent that they were accused of changing Shi‘i law as it was taught by the Imams, but not necessarily the teachings of the Imams, on the *welāyat*.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ŠAYḲI AND NON-ŠAYḲI SHI‘AS

The doctrinal differences between the Šayḳi and non-Šayḳi Shi‘as gave rise to serious tensions during the Qajar era, which often took the form of discrimination or the threat of violence. After their forced departure from Karbalā’ in 1259/1843, the Šayḳis continued to be victims of violence and a variety of forms of social segregation, although this diminished to a certain extent after the end of the constitutional movement and the accession of the Pahlavis, but never disappeared. Those measures were in essence initiated and controlled by members of the clergy who issued decrees (*ḥokm*) imposing humiliating regulations on the Šayḳis. Such decrees were most often justified in terms of ritual impurity (*najasāt*), which followed the idea of unbelief (*kofr*) of which they were accused. We know that the clerics in general considered the infidel (*kāfer*) to be ritually impure (*najes*; Algar, 1992). For the Shi‘i jurists, this followed from the first part of the Qur’anic verse (Sura 9:28): “O believers, the idolaters are unclean, so they should not approach the Holy Mosque after this year.” The social consequences of these accusations of impurity could be considerable. By means of *ejtehād*, certain clerics interpreted this concept of ritual impurity very freely in order to impose strict societal regulations on non-Muslim or non-Shi‘i religious communities, including non-*oṣuli* Shi‘i minorities. These last, for example, found themselves forbidden access to the bathhouses. Some Muslims accused of heterodoxy could also be refused the right to be buried in a Muslim cemetery. Still, in the name of ritual impurity, some jurists attempted to segregate economically the members of the Šayḳi community by forbidding all commercial intercourse



(*mo'āmela*) with them (Moḥammad-Karim Kermāni, *Tāriḳ-e 'ebrat le-man e'tabar*, p. 64).

These execrations, moreover, were accompanied by more or less serious physical violence depending on the time and place. Every time violence was instigated against the Šayḳis during the Qajar period, the process was quite similar. It was usually a low-ranking clergyman, or sometimes a *mojtahed*, who would launch a campaign against the Šayḳis by declaring them unbelievers and impure. Then *jehād* (holy war) was proclaimed against them and their blood and property declared licit (*ḥalāl*). This meant that the population was exhorted to pillage and kill them. This pressure, regularly supported by decrees and inflammatory oratory, sometimes remained entirely oral. The purpose was then to forestall any new conversions to the Šayḳi school. The very fact of adherence to Shaykhism was not without risk, so it was natural that some sympathizers were reluctant to take the plunge. On the whole, beyond certain known explosions of violence such as those that took place at Hamadān in 1315/1898 and Kermān in 1324/1906, it is difficult to obtain specific information on the *modus vivendi* prevailing between Šayḳi and non-Šayḳi in the Qajar period. It could differ noticeably from place to place. The attitude of the *oṣuli* religious elites of the town or region controlled the situation to a great extent.

While Tabriz was shaken by regular and sometimes even violent conflict between Tabrizi Šayḳis and *motašarre's*, the situation was much more difficult in Hamadān. The Šayḳi minority in Tabriz was sizable, armed, and protected by its urban bandits organized into gangs (*luṭi*). The regular confrontations between Tabrizi Šayḳis and *motešarre'sin* Tabriz did not lead to the massacre of the Šayḳis of the town, nor to their forced departure, even though some clergymen regularly called for *jehād* against them and some Tabrizi Šayḳis were killed during the 19th century. The first serious conflict was led by the *mojtahed* Ḥājjī Mirzā Aḥmad Ḳo'i (d. 1265/1848-49; Bāmdād, I, p. 100). The balance of power gradually evened out, and the Tabrizi Šayḳis found themselves less impotent in the face of the violence directed against them. The two communities lived in distinct quarters of the town and did not intermarry. Hamadān and Kermān, on the other hand, were wracked by veritable civil wars. Many Šayḳis of Hamadān were killed in 1315/1897-98, and most of the survivors were forced to flee. The war broke out shortly after the assassination of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, at the beginning of the month of Šawwāl 1315/late February 1898. The many excommunications and



declarations of impurity against the Šayḳis of the town led by several local clergymen, including Mollā ‘Abd-Allāh Borujerdi, were the starting-point of the call for “holy war in the way of God” (*jehād fī sabil Allāh*; Moḥammad-Karim Kermāni, *Tāriḳ-e ‘ebbat le-man e’tabar*, p. 191; Moḥammad-Bāqer Hamadāni, “Radd-e ‘abbāsi,” pp. 117-18, 123). Several hundred or thousand thugs (*luṭis*) of the town and region participated in this extreme violence. Many Šayḳis were tortured and killed and their houses and businesses systematically looted (Moḥammad-Karim Kermāni, *Tāriḳ-e ‘ebbat leman e’tabar*, pp. 86, 116, 143-44). Most of the survivors, including the master of the school, Moḥammad-Bāqer Hamadāni, were forced into exile.

While the methods aimed at the eradication of Shaykhism at Kermān were very similar to those used at Hamadān, the consequences were not the same because the violence against the Šayḳis proved a failure and its perpetrators succeeded neither in killing them nor in forcing them to flee. A clergyman from Khorasan, Šamširi, and a cleric from the town, Mirzā Moḥammad-Reżā, surrounded themselves with *luṭis* and thugs when they called for *jehād* against the Kermāni Šayḳis at the beginning of the month of Jomādā I 1323/July 1905 (Scarcia, 1963, pp. 225-26). Unlike at Hamadān, this conflict did not erupt but seethed under the surface, with violence extending over several months between periods of relative calm. The Kermāni Šayḳis, notably, were able to benefit from the stronger reaction of local government forces that attempted to put an end to the aggression (Nāẓem-al-Eslām Kermāni, I, pp. 341, 349). On the other hand, the master Moḥammad Khan was forced to leave Kermān for the nearby town of Langar, and these events remained etched in the memory of the Kermāni Šayḳis throughout the 20th century (Abu’l-Qāsem Khan Ebrāhimi, *Šekāyat-nāma*, p. 10; see also Kāleši).

THE ROLE OF THE ŠAYḲIS IN THE CONDEMNATION OF BABISM

The question of Šayḳi attitudes toward the emergence of the [Bābi](#) movement and religion and of [Bahaism](#) is very delicate. It is certainly one of the most polemicized aspects of the history of the creation of the Šayḳi school and its expansion in Iran upon the death of Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti. It is also, in fact, the aspect of the history of the school that has received the most attention in Iran and elsewhere. It is, however, unfortunate that the discussion and the works devoted to this subject have mostly been tendentious and partisan ever since the 19th century. The main reason may be sought in the ambiguity concerning the influence, real or imagined, that Sayyed Kāẓem Rašti had on the founder of Babism, Sayyed ‘[Ali-Moḥammad Bāb](#)’ (d. 1266/1850), during his stay in Karbalā’.



The Šaykīs, of all schools taken together, find themselves entrapped between, on the one hand, the accusations of a faction of the *oṣuli* clergy who consider them the inspiration, or even the creators, of Babism, and, on the other hand, the assertions of the Bāb and the Bahai religious leaders who claim the intellectual and spiritual heritage of the first two masters of the Šaykī school.

It appears, however, that the historical and especially doctrinal link thus drawn between Shaykhism and Babism and then Bahaism is mainly false. Any personal relationship between Sayyed Kāẓem Raštī and the Bāb must have been minimal, since he was not initiated into Shaykhism. The principal specialists in Babism and Bahaism have observed: “In any event he did not stay long enough in Karbalā’ to fully grasp the essence of Rashtī’s teachings; and if he attended only three of his lectures, as seems almost certain, his debt to Aḥsā’ī or to Rashtī is limited at most” (Amanat, p. 141); “*Pourtant, même s’il [the Bāb] a suivi certains des cours de Seyyed Kāẓem Rashtī en Irak et s’est ensuite référé à lui en tant que ‘mon professeur,’ le Bāb n’a débuté aucune étude formelle du Šaykism*” (Smith, p. 19). The discussion of this inherent link between Shaykhism and Babism was used by a part of the *oṣuli* clergy to discredit Shaykhism with the Shi’i masses. On the other hand, for the Babi, Bahai, and Azali religious leaders, this relationship was necessary in order to establish historical and doctrinal legitimacy: They had to present themselves as the successors of Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā’i and Sayyed Kāẓem Raštī, who perhaps represented, at the beginning of the 19th century, the most serious challenge to the authority of the clergy. The Babi and Bahai religious leaders, for their part, represented them as revolutionary dissidents. This is the sense in which one can interpret this statement by the Bahai master [Shoghi Effendi](#) (d. 1957), who proudly represented Bahaism as a process of transformation of Shaykhism into a religion that was spreading throughout the world: “[Bahā’ism is] *la transformation de l’école Šaykī, simple secte hétérodoxe et relativement négligeable de l’islam shi’ite duodécimain, en une religion mondiale*” (quoted by Smith, p. 151).

A few scholars, including Henry Corbin, have stressed that these attempts of the Bahai leaders to lay claim to the Šaykī heritage are greatly exaggerated (Corbin, 1972, p. 213, note 6).

Most extant historiography in this area tends to perpetuate the confusion among Shaykhism, Babism, and Bahaism. This problem is encountered in *oṣuli* doctrinal refutations of Shaykhism, in both Persian and European scholarly works on Babism and Bahaism, and in works on Shaykhism (Hermann, 2007a,



pp. 154-67). This historiographic approach also explains why the vast majority of work on Shaykhism deals basically with the first two masters of the order and why the others have been so neglected.

Despite the connections established between Shaykhism and Babism by some polemicists and even scholars, the Šayḳī masters were among the most vigorous opponents of Babism. The Kermāni and Hamadāni Šayḳīs intervened principally on the doctrinal level, composing many treatises against Babism, while the Tabrizi Šayḳī ulama remained notorious for pronouncing a death sentence against the Bāb. The Kermāni Šayḳīs wrote thirteen refutations of the Bāb and Babism, seven of which were by Moḥammad-Karim Khan: *Ezhāq al-bāṭel*; *Resāla-ye tir-e šahāb dar rāndan-e Bāb-e ẓosrān-ma'āb*; *Rojum al-šayāṭin*; *Resāla dar radd-e Bāb-e ẓosrān-ma'āb*; *Resāla dar radd-e Bāb-e mortāb*; *Resāla-ye radd-e Bāb dar jawāb-e Nāṣer-al-Din Šāh Qājār*; *al-Šahāb al-tāqeb*; and *Resāla fī'l-radd 'alā al-Bāb al-mortāb*. He was certainly the Shi'i clergyman who wrote the most treatises against Babism during the Bāb's lifetime. Moḥammad Khan wrote four: *Resāla dar radd-e ta'wilāt-e bābiya*; *Taqwīm al-'awaj*; *al-Šams al-može'a*; and *Resāla dar jawāb-e ba'z ekwān-e Širāz*. Zayn-al-Ābedin Ebrāhimi, finally, devoted two works to the subject: *Šā'eqa* and *Me'rāj al-sa'āda*. Outside these thirteen items, anti-Babi rhetoric is included in many other Kermāni Šayḳī works not specifically dealing with Babism (Moḥammad-Karim Khan, *Si faṣl*, pp. 33-39; Moḥammad Khan, *Resāla dar 'qāyed-e Šayḳiya*, pp. 20-22). The vast majority of this literature is in Persian, because the Kermāni Šayḳī masters wanted to enable a large number of Iranians to read it.

The Tabrizi Šayḳī ulama were especially active on the juries and commissions that brought about the execution of the Bāb in 1266/1850 (MacEoin, 1997; Modarresi Čahārdahi, p. 200). The three clergymen who comprised the jury in Tabriz who interrogated the Bab and sentenced him to death were Tabrizi Šayḳīs, namely Mollā Moḥammad Māmaqāni, Mirzā 'Ali-Ašḡar Šayḳ-al-Eslām (d. 1278/1861), and Ḥājj Mollā Maḥmud Tabrizi (d. 1273/1856). Ḥājj Mollā Maḥmud, known as Neẓām-al-'Olamā', who was influential in the Qajar court at Tabriz and one of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah's tutors, provided the written transcript of the Bāb's case (Bāmdād, IV, pp. 59-60; Reẓāqoli Khan Hedayāt, X, pp. 423 ff.). The Tabrizi Šayḳīs also wrote several refutations of Babism, although they were less dense than those by the Kermāni Šayḳīs. One of the sons of Mollā Moḥammad Māmaqāni, Mirzā Moḥammad-Taḳī Māmaqāni (d. 1312/1894), wrote two works on the subject: *Šahifāt al-abrār* and *Nāmus-e nāṣeri*. The first one describes in detail the trial of the Bab in Tabriz. Other



members of the school, such as Mirzā ‘Ali-Aṣḡar and Mirzā Abu’l-Qāsem, devoted works to the question. The treatise of Mirzā Abu’l-Qāsem, *Qal’ al-Bāb*, remains well known (Bāmdād, II, p. 425).

Although the Hamadāni Šayḡis were no longer organized when the Babi movement began, they nonetheless wrote several treatises on the subject. The most significant of them, a large work called *Ḥojjat al-dāmeḡa*, was written in 1310/1892-93 by Sayyed Hāšem Lāhijāni, who was one of the most notable disciples of Moḡammad-Bāqer Hamadāni. It is arranged in three parts. The first one comprises the refutation itself of the Bab and Babism. The other two are a vast collection of Ḥadith regarding the Imam of Time and the events connected with his *parousia*. They are not accompanied by any commentary by the editor. Their primary purpose was to demonstrate that the claims of the Bab stood in contradiction to Shi‘i doctrine and the teaching of the Imams.

The Kermāni and Hamadāni Šayḡi ulama were especially prone to ridicule certain claims and arguments of the Bāb, including his successive claims to be the representative of the Imam of Time, and then the veritable messiah (Moḡammad-Karim Khan, *Resāla dar radd-e Bāb-e mortāb*, pp. 17-20; Hermann, 2007a, pp. 183-85), and finally the prophet bearing a new holy scripture, the *Bāyān* (Moḡammad Khan, *Resāla dar radd-e ta’wilāt-e bābia*, p. 41; Hermann, 2007a, pp. 185-86). They also pointed out that his Arabic was weak (Moḡammad-Karim Khan, *Resāla dar radd-e Bāb-e mortāb*, pp. 19-20; idem, “Resāla-ye tir-e šahāb ...,” p. 199. Sayyed Hāšem Lāhijāni, *ḥojjat al-dāmeḡa*, pp. 40, 52).

SHAYKHISM SINCE THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

The advent of the Islamic revolution in Iran (1978-80) brought about profound changes in the history of Shaykhism. The new regime banned Kermāni Shaykhism, closing the publisher Sa‘ādat in Kermān and the Ebrāhimiya School. The Kermāni Šayḡi master at the time, ‘Abd-al-Rezā Khan Ebrāhimi, was assassinated close to the mosque by unknown assailants on 26 December 1979 (Franz, p. 192). Thereafter, Iraq became the main center of the Kermāni Šayḡis. There are now many towns in Iraq with large Kermāni Šayḡi minorities, and the current master of the order, Sayyed ‘Ali Musawi, lives in Basra. It is hard to estimate the number of Kermāni Šayḡi disciples in modern Iran, but it seems as though they are continually decreasing. In Iraq, meanwhile, the Kermāni Šayḡi community has been growing over some thirty years. The Šayḡi community in Basra is one of the largest in the city, holding



up to 12,000 people. An extensive enterprise of translating Persian works into Arabic has been undertaken in Iraq, and a website has been created where some of the works of the school, from Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'i to contemporary authors, are available on line (www.alabrar.info).

The most active family in the Tabrizi branch, Shaikh Rasul Eḥqāqi, has lived in Kuwait since the second half of the 20th century, where they have published many works. This branch is also known as Tabrizi-Karbālā'i. Their major mosque in Kuwait City is called Ṣaḥaf. They also have centers in al-Aḥsā' and al-Hofuf in Saudi Arabia. Relatively uninfluential in Iran, it has succeeded in extending its authority into Pakistan, where it publishes many journals (*Eḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, in Sargodha; *al-Ṣerāṭ al-mostaqim*, in Chakwal; *al-Ṭaqilayn*, in Multan). Its reach has provoked many debates and tensions among the Pakistani Shi'i ulama (Naqvi).

After the Islamic revolution, the Hamadāni Ṣayḳis were not repressed to the same extent as the Kermāni Ṣayḳis and were able to reprint the complete works of Moḥammad-Bāqer Hamadāni and some of his disciples. The current head of the school, Ḥājj Sayyed Aḥmad Pur-Musawiān, lives in Mašhad. The Hamadāni Ṣayḳi also have a *ḥosayniya* in this town called Bāqeriya. It has become their principal center in Iran. The school also has several groups of adherents in Šāhrud in Semnān, in Gonbad-e Qābus/Kāvus in Golestān province, and finally in Tehran. Unlike the Kermāni and Tabrizi branches, the Hamadāni Ṣayḳis have not reached beyond Iran.

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