The Heirs of the Prophet

Charisma and Religious Authority in Shiʿite Islam

Liyakat N. Takim

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To Fatima,

and to the light of our eyes and fruits of our hearts,

Farzana, Ali Akber, and Suhayl-Hasan

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Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction xi

Chapter One: "The Scholars Are Heirs of the Prophets" 1

Chapter Two: The Holy Man in Islam 37

Chapter Three: Routinization of Charismatic Authority: The Shiʿi Case 78

Chapter Four: The Office of Charismatic Authority: The Functions of the *Rijal* 109

Chapter Five: Textual Authority and the Struggle for Legitimacy in Biographical Texts 145

Conclusion 181

Notes 185

Bibliography 217

Index 229

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Introduction

"The scholars are heirs of the prophets" is a famous tradition that has been reported from the Prophet Muhammad. When I examined the provenance and deployment of this tradition in the classical period of Islam (570–1258 C.E.), I realized that the title "heirs of the Prophet" was more than an honorific epithet. As scholars belonging to different factions contested the right to assume the title, it was obvious that the exclusivist claims to be the heirs of the Prophet reflected a wider struggle within the Muslim community to wield prophetic prestige through demonstrations of authority, which were based on the Prophet's legacy.

The "heirs tradition" as it was called, also became a polemical tool that could be and was used by its bearers to wrestle authority from competing factions. The deployment of the "heirs tradition" extended beyond excluding scholars, who belonged to other factions, from legitimating and exercising authority in the Muslim community. It also was used to impose authoritative and exclusivist rendition of texts, beliefs, and religious practices.

This study explores how different religious factions within the Muslim community competed to be the heirs of the Prophet, and demonstrates the interplay between power and knowledge and the ensuing tensions among these factions. My exploration of the classical texts seeks to uncover and elaborate the methods and strategies employed by the learned class, as well as other groups, to wield and legitimize authority on behalf of the Prophet.

My investigation into the different groups' self-understanding of post-Muhammadan authority and the struggle for legitimacy is predicated on a textual, phenomenological, and chronological approach to the study and interpretation of juridical, biographical, heresiographical, hagiographical, exegetical, and polemical texts. I also examine how various groups made use of hermeneutical tools in constructing authority and vindicating their claims to be the exclusive heirs of the Prophet.

A number of recent studies have tackled the question of authority in Islam. For instance, Hamid Dabashi[1] has written on the general notion of authority in Islam while Saʿid Arjomand[2] and Abdulaziz Sachedina[3] have focused on the authority of the jurists in the post-*ghayba* (940 C.E.) period in Shiʿi Islam.[4] The works of Patricia Crone, Martin Hinds,[5] and Muhammad Qasim Zaman[6] examine the struggle for authority between the caliphs and Sunni scholars. My study goes beyond their work in that it fills the lacuna of inquiry into the struggle for authority between and within the disparate groups that claimed to be the heirs of the Prophet. The project also treads new ground by examining the impact of the juxtaposition of different genres of authority in the Shiʿi community during the times of the imams.

My discussion of how the "heirs tradition" shaped and molded leadership and other related institutional structures in the classical period of Islam is couched within the framework of the models of charismatic leadership postulated by Max Weber (1862–1920). In attempting to locate an Islamic equivalent of Weber's tripartite typology of the modes of authority (rational-legal, traditional, and charismatic), in chapter one I discuss Weber's characterization of charismatic authority, and contrast this with the genres of authority dominant in pre-Islamic Arabia. I then examine the exercise of authority in the post-Muhammadan era by deploying Weber's typology of the routinization of charismatic leadership in the establishment of the charisma of office.

After the death of Muhammad, the discussion of authority was soon cast under the designation "heirs of the Prophet." The first chapter of this study goes on to, therefore, examine the ramifications of claiming to be the "heirs of the Prophet," the emergence of the scholarly elite as the sole carriers of religious knowledge, and the struggle for authority that ensued among scholars and their followers in different groups. While examining the competition for Muhammad's charismatic authority after his death, I investigate the Shiʿi self-understanding of authority and argue that this was an important factor in the formulation of a distinct Shiʿi leadership founded upon its legal system.

Using the conceptual framework postulated by Rudolf Otto, I trace the emergence of the holy man in Islam and the type of authority that he wielded in the Muslim community in the second chapter. This chapter also contrasts Sufi and Shiʿi variations in the conceptualization of the holy men and examines the methods through which the holy men validated their claims to spiritual authority. I also compare and contrast the authority wielded by the jurists and holy men. Whether it is acquired or inherited, the charisma of the holy man is in contradistinction to the charisma of office as defined by the jurists.

A largely unexplored dimension of religious authority in Islam is the routinization of charismatic authority in Shiʿism during the presence of the imams. In my discussion on post-Muhammadan authority, I argue that Shiʿism

in the eighth century manifests a major variation from the traditionally accepted, Weberian understanding of the rise of routinized charisma. In chapters three and four, I extend my discussion of authority and the "heirs traditions" to include the deputies of the Shiʿi imams.[7]

My interest in the disciples of the imams, the *rijal,*[8] was initially kindled during my study in Qum, Iran, in 1983–1985. I heard then that a prominent scholar, Jaʿfar al-Subhani, had been delivering lectures on the study of the biographical profiles of the *rijal.* When I attended his lectures, I realized not only the depth of the subject but also the paucity of research on the *rijal* among contemporary Western scholars.[9]

Chapter three contends that the delegation of the imams' authority to their close associates was an important landmark in Shiʿi history insofar as it signified a transition from the centralized, universal, charismatic authority of the imams to a more structured and regionalized charismatic office of the *rijal*. In the process of divesting their authority to their close disciples, the imams were routinizing their charismatic authority and diffusing their charisma into a newly emerging symbiotic structure. I examine how the affirmation of the charismatic office of the imams' prominent disciples and "heirs" to their knowledge interacted with and often militated against the absolute nature of the imam's charismatic authority.

In the fourth chapter, I examine how the authority of the disciples of the imams evolved and was enhanced in the very functions they performed. The chapter delineates the various activities of the *rijal,* and contends that these were highly significant in asserting a divergent concept of religious authority in the Muslim community. I also argue that, by performing various activities in the office of charisma, the *rijal* constructed a normative basis or a "sectarian syndrome" through which "orthodox" views and beliefs could be distilled and differentiated from those espoused by their opponents. An important consequence of this process of establishing "orthodoxy" was the accentuation of the authority of the *rijal* and the construction of boundaries of identity and exclusion.

The chapter goes on to demonstrate that, as agents of the imams, the *rijal* also established paradigmatic precedents in various fields, which subsequent Shiʿis could emulate. The "living *sunna,*" which was generated by the paradigmatic activities of the *rijal,* was incorporated into the Shiʿi canonical tradition that crystallized in the ninth and tenth centuries.

The fifth and final chapter explains how later biographers, faced with contradictory appraisals of important personages, on the one hand, and the need to depict an idealized image of them, on the other, encountered, grappled, and finally shaped the authoritative images of those individuals. I demonstrate that Shiʿi biographers were engaged in hermeneutical activity and a textual enterprise that evolved into an increasingly restrictive interpretation and canonical

evaluation of the disciples of the imams. The appraisals of the biographers laid claim to an exclusivist hermeneutic and became sufficiently entrenched to impose an authoritarian evaluation on those they profiled. The chapter also offers evidence of a different and radical form of idealization in later Shiʿi biographical literature.

In the second section of this chapter, I compare and contrast Sunni and Shiʿi profiles of two important Shiʿi disciples of the imams, demonstrating the tussle for authority and the struggle for legitimacy that is evinced in the biographical texts. By comparing Sunni and Shiʿi biographical literature, my book adds a new dimension to the questions of textual authority and hermeneutical enterprises in Islamic biographical dictionaries. Such an approach should lead scholars to consider new ways of understanding the function of sacred texts within the communities that engage and appropriate them for developing a charismatic authority and a sense of loyalty to it.

CHAPTER ONE

"The Scholars Are Heirs of the Prophets"

Why doesn't a company from every party among them (the believers) go forth that they may apply themselves to obtain an understanding of religion so that they may warn their people upon their return so that they may be cautious? (Qur'an 9:122)

SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL, diverse groups have wielded authority in the name of religion. These groups have espoused primitive or archaic religions and even founded religions.[1] The manifestation of religious authority in societies has taken different forms, ranging from traditional, scriptural, and charismatic to ecclesiastic and imperial forms.

In this chapter, I propose to examine the role of authority in shaping and molding leadership and other related institutional structures in the classical period of Islam. Initially, I will discuss the type of authority dominant in pre-Islamic Arabia and examine how Muhammad's prophetic movement impinged on the prevalent structures. The chapter will also focus on the nature, vicissitudes, and transformations that the Prophet's charismatic movement had on the established social institutions and the different modes of authority that emerged after his death. More specifically, I will focus on the struggle for authority that ensued between various groups that claimed to be the heirs of the Prophet in the post-Muhammadan era.

I intend to discuss the notion of religious authority and its role in shaping leadership within the Muslim community within the framework of the model constructed by Max Weber (1862–1920) on charismatic authority. In his exposition of the types of authoritative domination, Weber conceptualized a tripartite

typology of the modes of authority: rational-legal, traditional, and charismatic. In the rational-legal case, authority rests in the legality of patterns of normative rules. Obedience is, in this case, owed to those exercising the authority of office by virtue of the formal legality of their commands and within the scope of authority of the office. Their authority is derived from their holding official positions whose power is based on and circumscribed by the law. It was this form of authority that was most prevalent in the time of Weber. He says, "The most common form of legitimacy is the belief in legality, i.e., the compliance with enactments which are formally correct and which have been imposed by an accustomed procedure."[2]

The second form of authority that Weber postulated was the authority of tradition. This mode of authority rests on beliefs in the legitimacy of standardized and sanctified practices from time immemorial. Authority is predicated on the sanctity of ancient traditions and is bound to precedents and norms transmitted from erstwhile figures. Traditional authority further stipulates that obedience be given to those persons who occupy the traditionally sanctioned position of authority and whose roles and functions are defined by traditional norms.[3] Opposition to those exercising leadership within the community is construed as a challenge to the authority of transmitted traditions and even to a "sacred past."

Unlike the rational-legal mode of authority, the obligation to obedience here is not based on the impersonal order, but is a matter of personal loyalty within the area of accustomed obligations. For Weber, the sacredness of traditions is the oldest and most universally held form of authority.[4] As I discuss below, it was this mode of authority (allegiance to tribes and clans based on traditional authority) that was widely prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia. The authority of normative traditions was exemplified by the Meccan aristocracy that claimed authority based on descent from illustrious ancestors and their normative praxis.

The third mode of authority that Weber postulated is what he called authority based on personal charisma. The etymology of the word "charisma" lies in the name of the Greek goddess Charis, who personified grace, beauty, purity, and altruism.[5] Weber defines charisma (gift of grace) as "A certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional qualities."[6] According to Weber, these qualities are often regarded as originating from the divine. It is primarily this form of authority with which I will be concerned in this book.

In contrast to the two types of authority previously described, charismatic authority originates from outside of rather than within prevailing institutional

structures. This genre of authority can be appropriately termed anti-institutional in that it frequently inverts social norms, normative traditions, and traditional forms of authority. Charismatic leaders create social revolutions as they challenge and transform traditional and rational norms, overturning all notions of sanctity.[7] It is due to this factor that charisma becomes a creative and revolutionary social force in society, and an antithesis of routine.[8]

For Weber, charismatic leaders radiate the divine force of charisma. They and their followers genuinely believe that the leaders embody specific supernatural gifts of body and mind, which are considered intrinsic to the personality of the leaders. The charismatic figure commands respect because he has an innate gift of grace that is opposed to all institutional routines. Central to the charismatic traits of the leader is what his followers perceive to be the divine sanctification of the mission. Thus, the main source of a charismatic leader's authority is metaphysical.[9] Because of the leader's purported connection with the divine, charisma is a quality that is frequently, though not always, associated with holiness, heroism, or an acute sense of mission or calling.

A corollary to the metaphysical dimension of charismatic authority is the belief that charismatic leaders are bearers of special extraordinary gifts and feats that make them outstanding. Thus, submission to charismatic authority also rests on the devotion to a leader's exceptional and uniquely personal qualities that distinguish him from his peers. Intense emotional arousal and great pathos accompany the call by the charismatic prophet demanding, in the process, complete obedience.[10] The conflation of these features makes the call of the charismatic leader often irresistible and compelling.

In contrast to legal and traditional modes of authority, Weber maintains that pure charismatic authority is transient, available only during the lifetime of the charismatic leader. The death of the charismatic leader deprives the nascent movement of its pristine source of authority. The charisma of the leader is then depersonalized, transformed into a charisma of office or is inherited in the form of what Weber aptly called hereditary charisma. I will discuss these features later on in this chapter.

The Authority of the Prophet of Islam

Weber further distinguished between two types of prophets: the shaman and the ethical prophet. Whereas the former type uses ecstasy as a tool of salvation and self-deification, the ethical prophet is believed to have a divine ethical mission and a systematic remodeling of life along the lines of the great

biblical prophets.[11] In trying to locate an Islamic equivalent of Weber's tripartite division of authority, it is correct to state that Muhammad's mission bears the hallmarks of Weber's characterization of charismatic authority (anti-institutional, a challenge to and final overthrow of existing social structures and norms, intrinsic personal traits and gifts that attracted the masses, belief in the divinely appointed mission). Muhammad further exemplified Weber's description of the ethical prophet insofar as he fashioned the moral community of the righteous by outlining principles for ethical behavior and promises for redemption to the faithful. The Prophet's call to moral uprightness was thus conjoined to the establishment of a just social order.

The Muslim community (*umma*) that Muhammad established in Medina was structured in accord with his personal charisma. He replaced tribal affiliations with allegiance to the *umma* based on submission to one God and acceptance of his prophethood. The authority that Muhammad was claiming was comprehensive in that his charismatic appeal was linked to his spiritual, military, and political power, thereby enhancing his already considerable religious authority. Thus, the all-embracing authority of Muhammad meant that to be a Muslim necessitated acceptance of his religious, moral, legal, and political authority. Muhammad's claim to prophethood based on divine designation and a fusion of different forms of authority was a close approximation to the Judaic tradition of this archetype. Hence, although the claim to charismatic authority based on divine appointment was new in Mecca and the surrounding areas, antecedents of claims to charismatic authority could be traced to the times of earlier biblical prophets.

In its investiture of authority to Muhammad, the Qurʾan replaced traditional tribal authority with a new ethical-moral structure that negated the old normative order. Acceptance of the message of Muhammad also entailed the abandonment of many pre-Islamic ancestral heroes, customs, and practices. In deconstructing an old social order, Muhammad constructed a new one.[12] The juxtaposition of Muhammad's charismatic authority and traditional Arab aristocracy inevitably led to a confrontation and struggle that culminated in the triumph of Muhammad's charismatic authority.

The Qurʾan further presented a challenge to the nascent Muslim community to establish a just social order under the charismatic authority of the Prophet Muhammad. Moreover, it supported Muhammad in his claim to exclusive charismatic authority. It maintained that this mode of authority could be traced to erstwhile prophets and that the charisma of the previous prophets had been transmitted to their offspring, the succeeding prophets.[13] The question that needs to be answered here is: what happens to the charisma when the founder of charismatic domination passes away and there is no acknowledged charismatic successor?

Post-Muhammadan Authority: The Routinization of Charisma

Weber extended his concept of pure charisma into a continuum that culminated in the routinization of charisma. This is the return to a more mundane form of existence when pure charisma wanes. The most important factor in the dispersion and eventual disappearance of pure charisma is the death of the charismatic leader, for it is this feature that leads to his charisma being transformed to the office of charisma. In the process of being routinized, the disciples transfer the charismatic aura of the leader to traditional institutions and ideologies that carry out the functions that were previously undertaken by the charismatic leader. This transition is an essential component of the routinization process. Once it is routinized, charisma has few traces of the revolutionary powers of the pure charisma of the leader.

Routinization of charisma is necessary, according to Weber, due to the intrinsically transient nature of charisma. In the process of the depersonalization of charisma, charismatic authority becomes institutionalized so that charisma becomes a mere component (sometimes a very insignificant constituent) of a new social structure that emerges after the death of the charismatic leader. Eventually charisma either recedes or is obliterated and is displaced by institutional structures and traditions that replace the belief in the heroic qualities of charismatic figures. Routinization of charisma is in stark contrast to life under the charismatic leader because routinization signifies the transition from the extraordinary to the ordinary, from the revolutionary charismatic domination to a more structured charisma of office.

An important feature of the period after the death of the charismatic leader is the paucity of charismatic figures to succeed him. In the absence of a universally acknowledged charismatic successor, routinization of Muhammad's authority was the only recourse the Muslim community had. After him, no one could command allegiance or embody the different forms of authority the way that Muhammad had done. Certainly Abu Bakr (d. 634), the first of the rightly guided caliphs, lacked the charismatic appeal and qualities of Muhammad. The standard Sunni perspective of post-Muhammadan authority is that the routinization (hence institutionalization) of prophetic charisma that characterized the early Muslim community was a natural corollary to the death of Muhammad.

In his capacity as the Prophet of God, Muhammad was the focus of both religious and political authority. After him, the early caliphate during the times of the rightly guided caliphs (632–661) was also conceived along politicoreligious lines. These caliphs undertook many religious and political functions of the Prophet especially because there was, as yet, no distinct group of scholars that could occupy a separate religious office. At least in the

early period of Islamic history, there was no distinction between the offices of the *ʿulamaʾ* (a scholarly elite) and that of political authority, the caliphate.[14]

The caliphs often used their own understanding of the law to enact provisions that were not explicitly stated in the revelatory sources. They also deduced laws based on practical necessity. The "donkey case" that was explicated by ʿUmar al-Khattab (d. 644) is a good example of this kind of improvisation.[15] In the process of deducing injunctions that were neither stated in the Qurʾan nor made explicit in the prophetic practices, the caliphs frequently differed among themselves. For example, Abu Bakr fixed the punishment for the consumption of wine at forty lashes whereas ʿUmar and ʿAli (d. 656) stipulated that eighty lashes be the appropriate penalty.[16]

Without a charismatic leader to succeed him, there was always the possibility that routinization would also precipitate the segmentation of the Prophet's all-embracing charismatic authority into different realms. The first obvious sign of the disintegration of the type of authority established by Muhammad was its displacement by a distinct political authority of the rightly guided caliphs. As Hamid Dabashi has shown, various forces led to the subsequent diffusion of the Prophet's comprehensive authority into the political (caliphate), religious (the *ʿulamaʾ*), spiritual (Sufism), legal (the *qadis*), and military (*umaraʾ*) realms.[17]

Apart from the diffusion of charisma, routinization of charismatic authority also reflects a tendency to revert to the situation before the appearance of the charismatic authority. In the early history of Islam, routinization of the Prophet's authority was accompanied by a reassertion of the traditional, pre-Islamic, Arab political culture that had been largely marginalized by the Prophet. As I have mentioned earlier, pre-Islamic Arab authority was conceived along tribal lines. In fact, tribal solidarity was the most significant factor that dominated Arab society before the appearance of Islam. Different forces led to the partial emergence of the traditional mode of authority after the death of the Prophet in 632 C.E. Pre-Islamic mode of authority surfaced immediately after Muhammad's death when some of his followers invoked an erstwhile tribal procedure for the selection of a chief.[18] The convening of the tribal council and the selection of Abu Bakr as the first caliph to succeed the Prophet was the incipience of the routinization of charisma. At the same time it was the first manifestation of the reemergence of the pre-Islamic polity.

The insistence by Abu Bakr and many of his followers that the leadership be restricted to a person of Qurayshi descent was a further example of the reassertion of traditional notions of authority. All future Umayyad and ʿAbbasid caliphs were Qurayshis. This was a perpetuation of a pre-Islamic norm that only tribal affiliates to the tribal chief (that is, the Prophet) could succeed him, a notion that is absent in the Qurʾan. The preponderance of pre-Islamic

Qurayshi aristocracy was an important constituent to the routinization of the Prophet's authority since it signified the resumption of an ordinary stable mode of existence, which, as I have mentioned, is often concomitant to the routinization of charisma.[19]

Pre-Islamic traditions and notions of Arab aristocracy resurfaced at various times during the reign of the first four caliphs. During the caliphate of ʿUmar, Islam came to be identified with the Arabs. He tried to keep non-Arab Muslims out of Arabia, especially from Medina. According to Wilferd Madelung, the caliph regarded all Arabs, whether Muslims or Christians, as his primary subjects.[20] The councils, prominent members, and tribal affinity, as prescribed by pre-Islamic tribal norms, decided the successor to ʿUmar b. al-Khattab in 644 C.E.

Pre-Islamic tribal affiliations emerged again during the reign of ʿUthman (d. 656) when members of his clan engaged in nepotism and appropriation of economic and political powers. When the Umayyads were in power between 661 and 750 C.E., political leadership was restricted to the Umayyad clan. Arab Muslims were granted honorific status relegating, in the process, non-Arabs to a status of second-class citizens. Despite the Qurʾanic injunction on egalitarianism, Arab sense of pride in Arab identity reasserted itself soon after the Prophet's death. Non-Arab converts to Islam, whatever their previous social standing, were treated as second-class citizens (*mawali*). Degrees of social stratification aimed at perpetuating social distinctions between Arabs and non-Arabs were enforced more so in places like Iraq than in Arabia. For example, the procedure of becoming a client by contract was recognized by the school of Iraq rather than in Medina.[21] The preceding discussion indicates that the routinization of prophetic charisma was accompanied by the emergence of pre-Islamic tribal order. It was the manifestation of this tribal order that was to engender further segmentation of the Prophet's comprehensive authority.

The Authority of the Umayyad and ʿAbbasid Caliphs

The establishment of the Umayyad dynasty (661–750) after the assassination of ʿAli in 661 C.E. perpetuated caliphal claims to both religious and political authority. Although they were not experts in religious matters and their acts deviated significantly from Islamic normative praxis as explicated by the Qurʾan and Prophet, the Umayyad caliphs portrayed themselves as religious figures who could adjudicate on and intervene in legal and doctrinal matters.[22] They reportedly appropriated the title *khalifat Allah* (God's Caliph), a title that had religious connotations since it symbolized the fusion of religious and political authority.[23] The title *khalifat Allah* also implied divine legitimation for

the power that the caliph exercised since he was depicted as the deputy of God rather than of the Prophet.

In substantiating their thesis that the Umayyad caliphs sought religious and political authority, Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds rely partially on evidence provided by numismatics. Coins from the reign of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwan (d. 705), for example, bear this nomenclature.[24] However, Crone and Hinds do not mention that the use of this title in official contexts is very rare. They also fail to explain the fact that many coins conjoin this title with *amir al-muʾminin* (commander of the believers) and that many other coins do not bear the title *khalifat Allah* at all. It is quite possible that *khalifat Allah* may have been used purely for propaganda purposes and to glorify the caliph rather than to enhance his claim to rule on God's behalf. Crone and Hinds also draw heavily on panegyrics of Umayyad court poets in corroborating their thesis. However, by insisting on a literal rendering of these verses, they may be reading too much into the poems. They do not take into account that the panegyrics may have been expressed as part of courtly etiquette that necessitated usage of imagery, flattery, and poetical language in the hope for generous rewards from the caliphs.

Different epithets were invented to glorify and refer to the Umayyad caliphs. The caliphs proclaimed themselves to be blessed and rightly guided; they were the tent pegs and basis of religion; soteriology was contingent on the recognition and acknowledgment of the authority of the caliphs.[25] In essence, the Umayyad caliphs were claiming to be the deputies of God on earth.[26] The Umayyad caliphs also adopted some doctrines that characterized Shiʿi views of their imams. The caliphs were seen as superior to all mankind, ranking below only the prophets.[27] Like the Shiʿi imam, the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwan was regarded as immune from error.[28] Some caliphs also used the Prophet's staff and cloak as a symbol of their power and to legitimize their claim to have inherited the Prophet's authority.[29] Crone and Hinds maintain that in the first two centuries, the caliphs laid claims to religious authority along the same lines that the Shiʿis had accorded authority to their imams. Indeed, the caliphs' authority resonated very closely with the Shiʿi view of the comprehensive authority of the imam. Crone and Hinds further maintain that it was only later on that this authority was wrestled away from the caliphs by the scholarly elite.

The Umayyad claim to religious authority was expressed in a myriad of forms. Some caliphs were seen as capable of issuing legal judgments, many of which were accepted by the jurists.[30] In fact, the *Muwattaʾ* of Malik b. Anas (d. 795), a famous jurist of Medina, contains references to the judgments of various Umayyad caliphs.[31] The caliphs Marwan and Umar II (d. 720) are cited as authorities of prophetic traditions[32] and some juridical opinions of ʿAbd al-Malik

b. Marwan are also cited.[33] It was even claimed that religious acts could be validated by the presence of the caliph, a view that was later endorsed by Ghazali.[34] To accentuate their religious authority, the Umayyad caliphs enforced laws on marriage, divorce, ritual, and other matters.[35] The caliphs also proclaimed themselves as the guardians of the community, leaders of the army, and defenders of the *shariʿa,* conferring on them an aura of religious authority. In essence, the caliphs presented themselves as the ideal religiopolitical imams. A corollary to the Umayyad rulers' contention that God had bestowed the caliphate to them was that any disobedience to them was construed as disobedience to God's wishes. This was tantamount to disbelief.[36]

Due to the authority invested in them, some caliphs even claimed the prerogative of formulating and establishing a binding *sunna*. The aforementioned caliph ʿAbd al-Malik and the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Mahdi (d. 785) are both reported to have "made" unprecedented *sunna* or normative praxis.[37] For Muslims, *sunna* is important as it designates a symbolic link with the times of the Prophet, an embodiment of the Muslim connection with and continuation of an idealized past. The Umayyad claim to formulate the *sunna* was significant to their claim to wield religious authority since their acts could be incorporated in normative praxis. It was later asserted that the caliphs derived their authority not from the Prophet but directly from God. Stated differently, the functions of the Prophet were now undertaken by the caliphs who were, to use a distinctly Shiʿi term, divinely designated. The caliphs were representing God in the same way that the prophets had done earlier.

After defeating the Umayyads in 750 C.E., the ʿAbbasid caliphs also sought to clothe their rule in religious terminology and symbolism. Like their Umayyad predecessors, the ʿAbbasid caliphs laid claims to religious authority by projecting themselves as the righteous ones whom God had guided. They were the standards of guidance, the doors to God's mercy, the repository of God's blessings and where justice could be dispensed.[38] The caliph al-Mansur (d. 775) declared himself the authority of God on earth.[39] The ʿAbbasid caliphs also gave public expression of their religious proclivities and commitment to the *sunna* (the writing of the *Muwattaʾ* is just one example) by reportedly performed a wide array of "religious" functions including those of transmitting traditions[40] and exercising *ijtihad* (reasoning). Prominent jurists like Malik, Shafiʿi (d. 820), and Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 855) recognized the caliph's competency to exercise *ijtihad*.[41] The caliph was thus as capable as a scholar in deducing laws that were not mentioned in the Qurʾan and *sunna*. Some ʿAbbasid caliphs also upheld, in conjunction with the scholars, religious norms by persecuting deviants like the Manicheans.[42]

The ʿAbbasid caliphs further sought to cover themselves with a certain religious aura by advancing exaggerated claims to divine authority. The caliph

was addressed as the shadow of God on earth, and visitors were expected to kiss the ground before addressing him. The title "shadow of God" implied that the caliph was invested in sacred divine glory. The famous jurist Abu Yusuf's work also contains elements that legitimized the caliph's religious authority. He states that the caliphs are the deputies of God on earth and the revivers of the *sunna*. The obvious implication is that obedience to them is tantamount to obedience to God.[43]

The caliphs clearly wielded much authority in the Muslim community in the eighth and ninth centuries. Acceptance of this authority was normally expressed by giving the oath of allegiance (*bayʿa*) to the caliph. The *bayʿa* was an important vehicle that was designed to recognize and assert the authority of a ruler and to promise him obedience. It was normally offered to a new caliph whose succession had been established by the testamentary designation (*ʿahd*) of his predecessor. Such oaths of allegiance were significant precisely because they reflected statements of social obligations and became a means for acknowledging that the caliph's authority was binding on the citizens. Breaking the oath was considered a major social taboo, especially as the oath of allegiance was normally offered in public.

This binding effect of the oath was further reinforced by the religious character that the *bayʿa* connoted from early ʿAbbasid times. Due to the caliphal claims to be ruling on behalf of God and the theocratic nature of the state, the oath of allegiance was often used as a rhetorical device against those who reneged on their *bayʿa* since swearing an oath of allegiance to the caliph was construed as an allegiance to God. Breaking the allegiance could invoke God's punishment and curse.[44] To depose rulers or engage in any insurrection was tantamount to arrogating oneself the role of God.[45] The *bayʿa* was also offered on the condition that its recipient fulfill the conditions entailed in the divine prescriptions. If the ruler violated any of these prescriptions (e.g., guarding the boundaries of Islam, enforcing the legal injunctions of Islam, etc.), those who offered the *bayʿa* to the caliph were released from their obligations.

For the caliphs, *bayʿa* was important precisely because it was a vehicle for securing loyalties of the citizens in the name of God and reducing the chances of rebellion. When faced with rebellion, the caliphs often reasserted their authority by reminding people of their allegiance.[46] Thus, the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Muqtadir (d. 932) reminded rebels that to break the oath of allegiance was to perjure oneself in front of God.[47] These types of loyalties held the community intact and perpetuated caliphal dominance.

The *bayʿa* was a device that facilitated both the acceptance and the protection of the authority of the caliph when it was challenged. Due to the significance attached to the *bayʿa,* Muslim legal discourse on warfare focused not only on fighting non-Muslims and defending against attacks by outsiders but

also articulated rules of warfare against Muslim rebels who broke their allegiances and challenged the authority of the caliph. Citizens were expected to remain loyal to the caliphs and distance themselves from rebels and their activities. On its part, the army was expected to defeat rebels in accordance with the rules of engagement that were defined in the juridical manuals.[48] The sole earthly punishment enunciated in Islamic juridical literature for violators of the *bayʿa* was one of extreme severity: capital punishment.

The Authority of the Scholarly Elite

I have stated previously that the Umayyad caliphs' self-definition of authority saw them claiming to be God's representatives on earth. The religious authority that the Umayyad and ʿAbbasid caliphs claimed was gradually contested by an emerging scholarly elite, the *ʿulamaʾ*, especially when the caliphs' lifestyles deviated significantly from Islamic norms.

Under the Umayyad and ʿAbbasid caliphs, Muslims lived under rulers who did not endeavor to create the Qurʾanic ideal of a just social order. Despite their religious pretensions, the culture developed by the ʿAbbasid caliphs was highly aristocratic, indulging in elaborate and luxurious habits that were based largely on courtly traditions imported from the Persians by the caliph al-Mahdi (d. 785).[49] Another caliph, Harun al-Rashid (d. 809), was famous for his extravagant spending on poets and women.[50] Al-Rashid alienated himself from his citizens by replacing the simple lifestyle of the Prophet and the early caliphs with elaborate pomp. He also distanced himself from supervising the daily affairs of the community, thus further reinforcing the emerging administrative authority of the *wazirs*. The caliphs' authority was gradually taken over by those around them. Political power came to reside with the rapidly emerging Barmakid family who had surrounded the caliph in his court.[51] This was far removed from the egalitarian vision that was posited by the Qurʾan. The caliphs were regarded by many Muslims as corrupt and, therefore, were never accorded the reverence that was offered to the rightly guided caliphs. The erosion of the caliph's religious authority probably began in the Umayyad period and culminated during the ʿAbbasid reign. Under such circumstances, the Muslim community sought to assert its religious autonomy from the rulers.

The routinization of the Prophet's all-embracing charismatic authority, combined with the reemergence of pre-Islamic norms and the un-Islamic lifestyles of the caliphs, created a vacuum in the religious field, a lacuna that was filled by the scholarly elite, the *ʿulamaʾ*. It was probably during the times of the Umayyad caliphs that the office of a definitive class of scholars emerged.[52] Appropriating the title "*waratha al-anbiya*" (heirs of the Prophets),

the scholars sought authority based on their claim to be successors to the Prophets. Their authority was grounded on their acclaimed role as the inheritors of the religious traditions that connected the prophetic times to their own. These traditions referred primarily to the scholars' understanding and interpretation of the religious sciences, especially the Qurʾan, *hadith,* law, and theology. It was the knowledge, purportedly transmitted from the companions of the Prophet, that linked the scholars to the Prophet, for it was this that they had inherited and guarded.[53] It was this same knowledge that enabled the scholars to extract rulings not directly mentioned in the revealed sources. The establishment of a religious scholarly elite, and their claim to religious authority, was a further manifestation of the diffusion of the Prophet's all-embracing authority and the institutionalization of the office of charisma.

Although the term *ʿulamaʾ* was initially used as a generic term, applied to those endeavoring to learn and transmit Islamic sciences, the domain of the *ʿulamaʾ* was soon differentiated into several fields of specialization. These included the interpretation of the Qurʾan, compilation of the traditions of Muhammad in the form of the *hadith* literature, and the formulation and articulation of Islamic law. A group within the scholars, the *qadis* (judges), was concerned with giving legal decisions and administering the law in courts under the authority of the caliphs.[54] Other related sciences in which the scholars were engaged included Arabic language and grammar, collection and compilation of the biography of the Prophet, and, at a later period, the compilation of biographical dictionaries of the companions, their successors, and other transmitters of traditions. ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbbas (d. 687–688) was reportedly an expert in Qurʾanic exegesis (*tafsir*), while Ibn Ishaq (d. 767) had composed a biographical account of the Prophet. Hasan al-Basri (d. 728), an important representative of the early *ʿulamaʾ*, was, for a time, a judge in Basra and a theologian. He is also frequently mentioned in Sufi texts as a prominent ascetic. Gradually, the *ʿulamaʾ* emerged as a powerful entity that could challenge the authority of the caliphs.

The Relationship between the Caliphs and the ʿUlamaʾ

The precise nature of the interaction between the political and religious authorities has been disputed in recent Western scholarship on the topic. When they came to power in 750 C.E., the ʿAbbasid caliphs claimed to be the protagonists of Islam. They regularly attracted specialists in religious law to their courts and consulted them on problems that pertained to legal and theological issues. The caliph al-Mansur (d. 775), for example, commissioned Malik b. Anas (d. 795) to compose his famous work on jurisprudence, *al-Muwattaʾ*.

Harun al-Rashid (d. 809) appointed Abu Yusuf (d. 799) as his chief judge and commissioned him to compose a treatise on the land tax (*al-kharaj*). This was a long treatise on public finance, taxation, criminal justice, and other related subjects. Some jurists were appointed to the judiciary and employed by the government as legal advisers. Gradually, the scholars emerged in the ʿAbbasid era as a visible and increasingly influential religious group. As I have mentioned, however, the caliphs also saw themselves as capable of elucidating matters pertaining to religious issues. Just like the jurists, the caliph was expected to exercise *ijtihad* in resolving legal problems.[55]

Not all scholars agreed to be co-opted by the ʿAbbasid regime. A large number of scholars, for example, supported the revolt by al-Nafs al-Zakiyya (the Pure soul) (d. 762) against al-Mansur. These included prominent jurists like Malik b. Anas and Abu Hanifa.[56] Many scholars did not accept government positions since they felt that acceptance of such positions could be construed as an endorsement of government policies. Other scholars preferred to remain autonomous from the ruling elite. Sufyan al-Thawri, for example, refused to participate in the judicial administration of or even give religious advice to the caliph.[57] Hasan al-Basri was also famed for his anti-Umayyad attitude and ascetic exercises.[58] The emerging scholarly elite distanced itself from the political corruption. In fact, the probity and piety of a religious scholar were often measured by his detachment from worldly power and direct political involvement.

The relationship between the caliphs and the scholars took a decisive turn under the caliph al-Mansur. In response to the prevailing diversity in the application of Islamic law, his administrator, Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ (d. 756) urged the caliph to establish uniformity in the legal field by codifying a coherent legal system.[59] The caliph, Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ insisted, should incorporate Islamic law within the state in the light of the Qurʾan and *sunna,* especially where there was no legal precedent. Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ also urged al-Mansur to incorporate the *ʿulamaʾ* within the state apparatus and assert caliphal authority over them. This would curb the autonomy of the scholars. Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ wanted to impose an undisputed rule of the caliph and ensure that the law became uniform so that it was applied equally in all parts of the Islamic empire. This was an important measure that exacerbated tensions between the religious and political authorities in the Muslim community.

Tensions between the caliphs and the *ʿulamaʾ*, the contenders for religious authority, reached a climax during the *mihna,* an inquisition on the doctrine of the created Qurʾan that was initiated by the caliph al-Maʾmun before he died in 833 C.E. This period was marked by a dispute on the nature and extent of the caliph's authority. To vindicate his claims to religious authority, al-Maʾmun added the title "imam" to his name on the coins and letters he wrote.[60] He was the first ʿAbbasid caliph to appropriate the term imam, thus accentuating the

fusion between religious and political authority. Some coins suggest that he also described himself as the *khalifat Allah*.[61]

As the religious-political authority, al-Maʾmun tried to impose the Muʿtazilite doctrine of the created Qurʾan on the community. Through the inquisition, al-Maʾmun tried to redefine orthodoxy in terms of accepting the belief in the created Qurʾan. Not only was the caliph defining the orthodoxy, he was also to be seen as the defender of that orthodoxy. Thus, the *mihna* signified caliphal attempts at asserting control over religious doctrine and praxis.

Al-Maʾmun's move was vehemently opposed by some *ʿulamaʾ*, especially Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 855). A member of the scholarly elite, Ibn Hanbal, was regarded by many as an imam and as a symbol of scholarly opposition to the caliph. Protest from the scholars and the imprisonment of Ibn Hanbal further enhanced the authority of an autonomous group of scholars who claimed complete independence from the ruling elite. According to Crone and Hinds, after the *mihna* a rapprochement and division of labor was worked out, by which scholars were incorporated in the political structure. The caliphs needed the scholars to validate their authority. By recognizing the political authority of the caliphs, the *ʿulamaʾ* could concentrate on cementing their own religious authority.

This view of an ongoing, acrimonious relationship between the ʿAbbasid caliphs and the scholars has been challenged by Muhammad Qasim Zaman. In contrast to the arguments advanced by Crone and Hinds, Zaman maintains that the caliphs and scholars were in close mutual dependence and that the caliphs played an integral part in shaping early Sunnism.[62] Caliphate collaboration with the scholars also meant that the end of the inquisition signaled a return to normal relations between caliph and the scholars, not, as has been suggested by Crone and Hinds, the scholar's triumph after a protracted struggle.

Zaman further argues that the scholars benefited from caliphal support and patronage. They often praised and prayed for the caliphs. Ibn Hanbal, for example, extolled the virtues of al-Mutawakkil.[63] Zaman claims that there is little evidence to suggest that, apart for the interregnum of the inquisition, there was a struggle for authority between the caliphs and *ʿulamaʾ*.[64] He further challenges the view that the failure of the inquisition to force the *ʿulamaʾ* to accept the doctrine of the created Qurʾan confirmed the separation between religion and state, the caliphs and the scholars. Even after the *mihna,* Zaman states, the caliphs were involved in the religious life of the community and they continued to patronize many religious scholars. In conjunction with the *ʿulamaʾ,* al-Mutawakkil, for example, dissolved the *mihna*.[65] A letter written by the caliph al-Muʿtadid (d. 902) suggests that the caliphs continued to regard themselves as religious authorities and heirs of the Prophet even after the *mihna*.[66] Zaman maintains that the state was not only establishing an orthodox

position but also supporting and patronizing the guardians of orthodoxy as well as protecting the *sunna* from falling into oblivion.

Overall, Zaman's work argues that the notion of a bifurcated authority, with the caliphs and scholars contesting for leadership of the community, is not tenable. Zaman's thesis rests on selected illustrations and anecdotes. For example, he presents anecdotal evidence of early ʿAbbasid patronage of the *ʿulamaʾ* that ranged from almsgiving and appointment of judges to promoting the study of *hadith*. Zaman also examines three early ʿAbbasid texts that attempt to delineate the caliph's functions. He quotes Abu Yusuf's *Kitab al-Kharaj* and claims that the caliph was required to conform to a definitive and precisely defined transmitted *sunna*.[67]

In constructing his model, Zaman acknowledges that the narratives of caliphal-*ʿulamaʾ* cooperation could be literary inventions rather than documentary evidence of what actually occurred.[68] Many reports and anecdotes whose presence is acknowledged by Zaman belie his exposition. He accepts the stories about the caliphs and their relations with the *ʿulamaʾ* almost at face value while ignoring the contrary evidence presented by Crone and Hinds. Zaman also ignores reports of ʿAbbasid caliphs' attempts to impose doctrinal interpretations asserting that "claims to religious authority . . . are scarcely attested for [al-Maʾmun's] predecessors."[69]

In addition, the work of Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ, which Zaman cites to vindicate his thesis on caliphal-*ʿulamaʾ* cooperation, is concerned more with accentuating caliphal power and control than with fostering closer relations with the scholars. Zaman also adduces evidence from the treatise of Abu Yusuf's *Kitab al-Kharaj*. However, this has limited value as its authenticity has been questioned by Norman Calder; it was probably composed under caliphal pressure. Furthermore, the scholars' support of various ʿAlid revolts against the ʿAbbasids seems to challenge Zaman's notion of their political quietism and endorsement of caliphal policies, especially as many scholars who were close to the caliphs reportedly endorsed the rebellions. By ignoring these issues, Zaman plays down the role of the scholars in these revolts and their opposition to the caliphs. Zaman's work overlooks evidence of antagonism between the scholars and the caliphs and also disregards reports suggesting that the scholars differed among themselves regarding their interaction with the caliphs.

The Emergence of the Shariʿ Men in Sunni Islam

Islamic law, the *shariʿa,* occupies a central role in Muslim devotional practices. Indeed, obedience to God is frequently measured by adherence to His law. The concern for articulating and implementing God's law led to the establishment

of the office of jurists. The Arabic term that denotes a jurist (*faqih*) was originally used to refer to anyone possessing knowledge (*fiqh*) of a thing. In its older application, like the term *fiqh, faqih* was used in contradistinction to an *ʿalim*—that is, it referred to a speculative, systematic lawyer who exercised rational faculties independently of any textual source. The *ʿalim,* on the other hand, was a specialist in the traditional elements of religious law. Later, as *fiqh* became a technical term for the science of religious law (*shariʿa*) and in particular for the science of its derivative details (*furuʿ*), *faqih* became a technical term for a specialist in religious law.[70] It is in this later sense of a jurist who was concerned primarily with discerning and articulating the law that I use the term *shariʿ* man.

The incipience of the concept of a *shariʿ* man can be traced to the Prophet himself. Although the Qurʾan has many verses of legal import, it provides only general guidelines on the legal verses it mentions. In fact, Qurʾanic legislation amounts to about six hundred verses, many of which relate to prayers, fasting, and pilgrimage.[71] The lack of a detailed exposition of legal verses accentuated the role of the Prophet as the explicator of the law. In addition to being seen as a lawgiver, the Prophet came to be viewed as a paradigmatic model whose very actions were seen as the basis of the *shariʿa*.[72] Hence the Prophet was seen as the source of the law (*masdar al-shariʿa*).

The first generation of those who came after the Prophet (called successors) was associated with a discussion on the legal import of Qurʾanic verses. Many successors are mentioned as having acumen in juridical matters. These included figures like Saʿid b. al-Musayyab (d. 712) in Medina, ʿAlqama b. Qays (d. 692), ʿAmir b. Sharahil (also called Shaʿbi) (d. 721–728) in Kufa,[73] Muslim al-Yasar (d. 719), and the aforementioned Hasan al-Basri. Ibrahim al-Nakhaʾi (d. 713), a slightly younger Kufi, is also mentioned as a jurist. The Umayyad period also saw the emergence of the seven scholars of Medina.[74] These experts in the legal field tried to define Islamic law in precise legal terms and were actively involved in expounding legal doctrine, especially on issues that pertained to rituals, inheritance, marriage, and so on.[75] These early jurists formed the provenance of the *shariʿ* men—a group of scholarly elite who specialized in the study of Islamic legal science, the *shariʿa*. The role of the jurists became increasingly important because, as noted, the Qurʾan provided only a brief outline of the law. Hence, it was essential that the jurists elaborate the law from the Qurʾan and *sunna* and formulate other sources of law as circumstances determined. Whereas the jurists (*fuqahaʾ*) discovered and articulated the law, the *qadis* (judges) implemented it, often using local customs and their own understanding (*raʾy*) of the law. As a matter of fact, it was quite common for scholars to wear diverse hats. Juynboll notes that ten of Basra's judges were also jurists while some were also transmitters of *hadith*.[76]

Gradually, the scholars came to exercise almost exclusive control over the religious, juridical, and educational fields.

Increased legal activities by the *shariʿ* men led to the development of personal schools of law. Guided by a corpus of precepts and laws and their own independent reasoning, the *shariʿ* men, especially in the ʿAbbasid period, attempted to construct a legal edifice by developing and elaborating a system of *shariʿa* law binding on all Muslims. They began to interpret and develop Islamic law, invoking various hermeneutical principles like *maslaha* (derivation and application of a juridical ruling that is in the public interest) and *istihsan*[77] to respond to the needs of the times. Gradually, the *shariʿa,* as articulated by these jurists, became a structured, normative praxis; and an amorphous flow of religious experience developed into a fixed pattern of laws, a comprehensive system that governed personal and public demeanor. By creating a homogeneous religious life based on the law, the *shariʿ* men hoped to replicate the paradigmatic demeanor of Muhammad in minute details. This commitment to the *shariʿa* also enabled Muslims to internalize the archetypal figure of Muhammad at a very deep level, making him a living presence in their lives.[78]

The goal of the jurists' endeavor was to comprehend and articulate the law of God in minute details. The *shariʿ* men saw the world as an exoteric juristic construct; their mission was to determine and formulate normative law and praxis. As far as the *shariʿ* men were concerned, the Islamic community was to be imbibed by the law, for the *shariʿa* was deemed to be pervasive, dominating every facet of a person's life. The jurists stressed the performance of legal commandments because salvation was deemed to be contingent on realizing and implementing the law.

As the influence of the *shariʿ* men over the lives of the people increased, they came to exercise extensive but not exclusive control of Muslim public and personal life. Religious authority came to reside in the developing religious corpus and the scholars who could expound and interpret the sacred texts. Claiming to possess the requisite knowledge to interpret God's will, they issued edicts to guide the community in their own times. It was knowledge, purportedly inherited from the Prophet, that distinguished the scholars from the rest of the community. It was knowledge that also made the community of believers dependent on the *ʿulamaʾ* and justified the subordination of the laity to the emerging authority of the scholars. As Calder states, "the *fuqahaʾ*/*ʿulamaʾ* as heirs of the Prophet, custodians of revelation, with a unique access to necessary knowledge, enunciated for the Muslim community the law they should follow if they were to achieve an orderly social life and, ultimately, salvation."[79]

Routinization of charisma, initiated by the Muslim leaders immediately after the Prophet's death and the concomitant establishment of the charisma of office, led to a gradual diffusion and dissipation of the Prophet's comprehensive authority by the ninth century. Judicial power fell into the hands of the *qadis,* political authority was appropriated by the caliphs, administrative powers rested with the *wazirs* (administrators), military authority was exerted by the military commanders (*amirs*), and, as we will see in the next chapter, the Prophet's spiritual authority came to rest with the Sufi shaykhs. The function of articulating the law came to rest in the hands of the *shariʿ* men, although administration of the law remained in the hands of the caliphate, which utilized the law to enforce control over the society. The fragmentation of the Prophet's authority also resulted in the gradual bifurcation of the leadership into religious and political branches. By the time of Baqillani (d. 1013), a prominent jurist of the eleventh century, it was recognized that the right to preserve and propound the law lay with the scholars (imams), whereas the right to execute it lay with the political imams, the caliphs.[80]

Different Conceptions of Authority among the Shariʿ Men

As the group of jurists grew in number during the first few decades of the eighth century, they developed into the "ancient schools of law." Among the *shariʿ* men of the eighth century, there were different notions of authority. There was, at this time, a two-fold conception of the revelatory sources, which included both the message embodied in the Qurʾan and the *sunna* exemplified by the practices of the Prophet. The authority of the *shariʿ* man was predicated not only on his pronouncement of the law but also on his interpretation and articulation of correct prophetic practice based on the normative revelatory sources. As we will see, this often necessitated the refinement of hermeneutical skills to harmonize apparent contradictions between prophetic traditions and even, at times, between the Qurʾan and *sunna*.

The different conceptions of authority between the *shariʿ* men in the eighth and ninth centuries can be illustrated by a comparison of the *shariʿ* men of Medina and Kufa. The *sunna* in Medina was informed not only by transmitted reports from the Prophet but also by the agreed practices of the community. The local character of the traditional practices was partially incorporated in the Medinese concept of prophetic *sunna*. Thus, as a source of authority, prophetic *sunna* was one among other forms of *sunna*. As a matter of fact, preference was frequently given to local practice over reports of prophetic practice, since, it was argued by the scholars of Medina, that contemporary practice could interpret or supplement earlier precedence. This

view is corroborated by ʿAbd al-Salam b. Saʿid Sahnun (d. 840), a prominent scholar of Medina. Referring to the textual transmission of the *sunna,* he states, "Only what is corroborated by practice is followed and considered authoritative."[81] The view that there were different conceptions of the *sunna* is further substantiated by a letter written by Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ to the caliph al-Mansur. He states that some judges claim to follow the *sunna* but in reality they followed their own predilections in the name of the *sunna*.[82]

The Medinese view that the collective experience of the community was to be preferred over textual reports on prophetic practice is further corroborated by the formulations of Malik b. Anas, an important early *shariʿ* man of Medina. His legal opinions were documented in the *Muwattaʿ*, the first written exposition of Islamic law. In this work, Malik often transmits earlier or contemporary Medinese practice on a legal point, thereby accentuating the authority of Medinan practices. He also cites different reports on the practices of the Prophet to vindicate his own legal opinion. He then accepts or rejects these in the light of his own reasoning and the practices of Medina. This selective process can be corroborated from his frequent usage of the statement, "This is the opinion that we (the people of Medina) hold." The term that Malik often invokes (*ʿindanaʾ*—that we have recourse to) refers to the views of the jurists of Medina.[83] The elevated status that Malik accords to Medinese practices can be further discerned from his practice of authenticating only those traditions that are agreed on by the people of Medina to the exclusion of other places.[84]

Malik further asserts that all people are bound to the *ʿamal* (contemporary practices) of Medina since they reflect prophetic practices.[85] For Malik, it was the link to the Prophet that made the *ʿamal* of Medina normative. As he states in a letter to al-Layth b. Saʿid, "all people are subordinate to the people of Medina. . . . the Messenger of Allah was living among them and they were present during the very act of revelation."[86] Due to his emphasis on Medinese practices, Malik's *Muwattaʾ* represents the law as a lived reality rather than a text-based construct. I say this because Malik maintains that prophetic *sunna* was preserved by the practices of the people of Medina. The *Muwattaʾ* suggests that the *ʿamal* of Medina was considered stronger and more reliable than transmitted *hadith* and that it could even override and have precedence over traditions.[87]

For Malik, authority lay in the practices of the previous generations of Medinese, which, he maintained, accurately reflected prophetic practice. The authority of the jurists was also augmented by the fact that they were the guardians and transmitters of the correct *sunna*. However, Malik's own authority as the *shariʿ* man of his time was tacitly enhanced in his interpretation and issuance of juridical verdicts on legal points.[88]

It was in the interpretive realm that the *shariʿ* man in Medina manifested his legal authority. His authority developed not only by compiling transmitted

traditions and the opinions of previous *shariʿ* men, but also by interpreting these in light of current practice. The exercise of hermeneutic skills conferred authority to the *shariʿ* man because his understanding and enunciation of prophetic *sunna* became an intrinsic part of contemporary practices and a binding precedent for subsequent practices. Moreover, Malik's hermeneutical skills empowered him to venture beyond the realms of prophetic and Medinese practices. At times, Malik even resorted to analogy to extend the purported reference of a prophetic tradition. Thus, although a prophetic tradition allowed the killing of wild dogs only in the sacred area by a sacralized pilgrim, Malik extended this permission to apply to all wild animals in the sacred area.[89] This suggests that the jurists of Medina sometimes resorted to their own reasoning in their formulation of the correct *ʿamal.* It is thus correct to state that the expression "practices of Medina" was a composite term that incorporated the Qurʾan, *sunna,* and the interpretations of Medinan jurists. The authority of the Medinan *shariʿ* man was interwoven in the *sunna* he was promoting because it contained his interpretation of correct practice.

A study of Malik's *Muwattaʾ* and early Medinese practice further suggests that the authority of the *shariʿ* man was not confined to his interpretation of scripture and prophetic traditions. Rather, his authority was also predicated on demonstrating the claim that the Medinan practice on a legal point could be traced to the earlier generations' definition of practice, which, in turn, originated with prophetic practice. Viewed in this light, it is correct to say that his interpretation was not concerned with extending the canon but limiting its possible conclusions. Thus, the authority of the *shariʿ* man was, in part, contingent on his ability to function as a mediator between established authority and present circumstances. The *Muwattaʾ* seems to reflect the pivotal roles of the jurist of Medina in deducing, enunciating, and even formulating normative law and praxis. It was here that his authority lay.

The idea of the pervasive authority of the Medinan jurists is further corroborated by Jonathan Brockopp's "Great Shaykh" theory. Based on his study of some early Maliki texts, he maintains that apart from residing in the Qurʾan and *sunna,* religious authority in Medina was also transmitted through an individual, a "Great Shaykh" as Brockopp calls him, who was invested with authority due to the knowledge of the religious sources.[90] The "Great Shaykh" theory postulates that authority resides in the great imams of Medina and in the practices of the people of Medina. The shaykh is not only the interpreter of the Qurʾan and *sunna,* but also the judge of the correct practices, and also a source for deducing laws that are not found in the revelatory sources. Viewed in this light, the shaykh becomes a living source on matters that are not treated in the revealed texts. Thus, authority not only resides in the practices of Medina, but also is extended to include the "Great Shaykh" who interprets and decides on normative *sunna*.

In contrast to the jurists of Medina, the *shariʿ* men of Kufa had a variant view of authority. For them, acceptance of authority based on local practice was tantamount to equating contemporary practice with prophetic practice. They further argued that equating *sunna* with the practices of a local area did not necessarily mean that this approximated with prophetic practice. The *shariʿ* men of Kufa posited authority based on local reasoning rather than on local practice. Abu Hanifa, the epitome of the Kufi *shariʿ* men, is reported to have stated, "I refuse to follow the Followers (*tabiʿun*) because they were men who practiced *ijtihad* and I am a man who practices *ijtihad*."[91] For the *shariʿ* men of Kufa, their interpretations based on reasoning (*raʾy*) on an agreed precedent also constituted authority.

The Kufi *shariʿ* men's different notion of authority was also expressed in their claim to use analogy in the extension of prophetic practice and in their ability to decide on rational grounds, as opposed to ruling on the basis of transmitted practice that purportedly reflects prophetic practice. Thus, the authority of Abu Hanifa was also constructed on how he determined, based on his reasoning, which precedents were most consonant with what was known of the general outlines of prophetic practice and the circumstances surrounding its implementation.[92] His authority was further predicated on his exercise of juristic reasoning in the solution of problems that were not explicitly treated in revelatory texts. The jurists of Kufa considered *raʾy* to be an equally authoritative factor in the decision of a point of law, and its results were later regarded as the decisive opinions of erstwhile authorities. As a matter of fact, the reasoning of a scholar was included in the canon and, in later times, was actually considered an element in jurisprudence. The extensive usage of reasoning and analogy in the construction of authority among the *shariʿ* men of Kufa does not mean that they neglected the opinions of erstwhile jurists. In some cases, Abu Hanifa appropriates the views of his predecessors (in particular his teacher Hammad [d. 737]) in addition to his own *ijtihad*.

The views of another prominent *shariʿ* man of the time, Muhammad b. al-Idris al-Shafiʿi (d. 820) differed considerably from those of Medina and Kufa. Prior to his time, the sources for reports about prophetic practices were based largely on the living traditions of Muslim communities. This gave rise to diversity between the different schools of law. At the same time, it had the effect of legitimizing local practices. Shafiʿi attacked the diverse notions of authority proposed by other schools. He contended that for local opinions to be considered authoritative, the proponents of reasoning had to demonstrate a clear link between their reasoning and prophetic practice. In other words, the interpretations of the *shariʿ* man had to arise within rather than outside of the perimeters of prophetic *sunna*. If this could not be demonstrated, then the *sunna* would

not be accepted as it might have arisen from the opinions of local authorities or customary law.

Shafiʿi fixed a concept of authority based on the transmission and interpretation of texts. He identified *sunna* strictly with prophetic practice transmitted by sources that had been authenticated. The Medinans and Kufans would have to base their authority on a universal standard, namely, the *sunna* as reported in accredited traditions. Focusing on the famous Qurʾanic verse "Obey God and His messenger," Shafiʿi further circumscribed the definition of the *sunna,* restricting it to a textual record of prophetic practice. By making it a textual account of the prophetic practice necessary for understanding the Qurʾan, Shafiʿi posited the *sunna* as an extension of revelation insofar as it elaborated Qurʾanic verses. It also specified the revelation by contextualizing or providing the rationale behind Qurʾanic statements. Due to this, the *sunna,* for Shafiʿi, was a medium through which the Qurʾan could be interpreted in order to formulate and elaborate the law. By his insistence that the *sunna* could only be established by authenticated *hadith,* Shafiʿi was challenging the Medinan concept of a composite *ʿamal*.

Shafiʿi's concept of textual authority extended beyond the Qurʾan to include the interpretation of the Qurʾan. In this way, the exegete's analysis became part of subsequent understanding of the canon. The authority of the *shariʿ* man was conceived by Shafiʿi as his ability to derive and articulate the law from both the Qurʾan and the *sunna*. Since the *sunna* was in a fluid state at this time and was open to interpretation and manipulation, the authority of the *shariʿ* man was accentuated in the very canon he was interpreting. Stated differently, the interpretations and opinions of eighth-century authorities came to be included in what was subsequently seen as the canon. The overriding authority that Shafiʿi accorded to traditions meant also that the Qurʾan was to be interpreted in the light of the *sunna* of the Prophet as embodied in authenticated traditions. It is in this context that we can contrast the methodology of Malik and Shafiʿi. Whereas Malik evaluated *hadith* against the background of Medinese *ʿamal,* Shafiʿi judged Medinese *ʿamal* by accredited *hadith*. This reflects a major point of contention between the jurists in the eighth and ninth centuries—that is, the primacy of text or action-based source for normative *sunna*.[93]

Shafiʿi's contribution lay precisely in extricating the prophetic practices from the myriad of reports putatively transmitted from the Prophet. The *sunna* became textualized and its contents were tied to the Qurʾan. With the efforts of Shafiʿi, *sunna* became a canonized interpretation of the Qurʾan. When there were apparent contradictions with regards to revelation, Shafiʿi had recourse to interpretive reasoning to harmonize the *sunna* with the Qurʾan. Interpretive reasoning, the science of harmonizing apparent contradictions between traditions

and between traditions and the Qurʾan, was significant because it provided authorization for later scholars to use hermeneutics to formulate their own definition of practice on the basis of these sources.[94]

This emphasis on hermeneutics meant that the interpretive reasoning of later scholars became authoritative because of their derivation of normative praxis from the revealed sources. In the process of textualizing and elucidating earlier precedents, the *shariʿ* man was simultaneously establishing precedents that came to form a part of canonical authority.

The *shariʿ* men's authority extended beyond the interpretation and explication of texts. Invoking principles such as *maslaha* (enacting a legal point that is most conducive to the welfare of the community), analogy, reasoning, and other innovative hermeneutical devices, they were able to go beyond the texts that had empowered them. In their functions as the interpreters and explicators of the divine will, the *shariʿ* men embodied the office of charisma in their own times.

By the ninth century, through the efforts of *shariʿ* men like Shafiʿi, the view that the authority of the prophetic *sunna* overrode other forms of *sunna,* had become firmly entrenched in the sources of Islamic law. Through their assiduous efforts, the *shariʿ* men were recognized as the authoritative interpreters of the law. Shafiʿi's efforts resulted in a semblance of unity being imposed on the arbitrary decisions reached by the earlier jurists. Differences between the schools were construed as God's blessings in the community. Recognition and acceptance of this internal pluralism were essential in accommodating the differing legal points advanced by the various jurists.

Apart from the caliphs, the scholars had to contend with other groups who challenged their authority. As I will discuss in chapter four, various speculative thinkers, especially the *ghulat,* postulated an alternative form of authority by deifying the imams and generally exaggerating their status. Challenges against the *shariʿ* men also arose from various philosophical, mystical, and sectarian groups.[95] These groups collectively challenged the *shariʿ* men's exclusivist claims as the true exponents of Islamic law and beliefs. They formulated different laws, came up with a different notion of religious authority and articulated an alternative spiritual mode of authority. The Sufi holy men challenged the authority of the *shariʿ* men by positing an alternative understanding of religious authority based on an esoteric interpretation of Islamic revelation. The philosophers had a different concept of religious authority based on the idea of a perfect man.[96] The Shiʿis, on the other hand, brought forth their own *shariʿ* men who could effectively challenge the legitimacy of the authority of the Sunni *shariʿ* men. It is to the authority of the Shiʿi *shariʿ* men that I now turn.

Charismatic Authority in Shiʿi Islam: The Concept of Hereditary Succession

To claim that Muhammad's authority was charismatic is stating the obvious. Of greater interest is to compare how the early Muslim community saw the diffusion or, in the Shiʿi case, perpetuation of this mode of authority. Apart from being routinized, the charisma of the founder can also be inherited by his disciples or family members. According to Weber, the concept of hereditary charisma entails that the charisma "is participated in by the kinsmen of the bearer, particularly by his closest relatives."[97]

When charisma is inherited, the charisma of the leader is perpetuated in a particular line, often leading to friction among family members who claim exclusive inheritance of the charisma. Many of the revolutionary characteristics associated with charismatic authority (e.g., challenge to social structures and norms, establishment of a new mode of authority) are lost in hereditary charisma since the new charismatic figure inherits rather than creates a social order. Hereditary charisma therefore seeks to perpetuate existent social structures rather than to establish new ones.

The Shiʿi definition of post-Muhammadan charismatic authority is radically different from the Sunni perspective. Whereas the Sunnis sought to diffuse the personal charismatic authority of the Prophet by claiming that it was routinized, the Shiʿis tried to perpetuate it. The Shiʿis saw the Prophet's comprehensive and all-pervading political and religious authority as having been transmitted to the imams. The belief in the imamate posited an inherited charismatic structure of domination in which the religious and political authorities were fused in the figure of the imam.

The charismatic force of the imams was not as revolutionary as that of the Prophet since their mode of authority was a perpetuation rather than the initiation of prophetic charisma. Thus, rather than institutionalizing or overthrowing a social structure, charisma remained an important element in it. Although the authority of the imams was not equal to that of the Prophet, since they did not have direct revelatory experience, they were regarded as charismatic leaders exercising "the authority of the extraordinary and personal gift of grace (charisma) the absolutely personal devotion and personal confidence in revelation, heroism, or other qualities of individual leadership."[98]

It should be noted that the principle of hereditary succession was not unknown to Arab tribes, for it was consistent with the Arab emphasis on noble lineage, *nasab*. Among the Quraysh, the most important and powerful tribe at the time of Muhammad, hereditary succession was an accepted principle.[99] Despite this, the principle of hereditary charisma as espoused by the Shiʿis was challenged and partially emasculated because it had to contend with a

much larger force that had routinized the charisma of the Prophet. The Shiʿis could not afford legitimacy to the routinized office of the caliphate since this would challenge the authority of the imams as the rightful successors of the Prophet. Furthermore, the Shiʿis had to contend with the possible clash between hereditary charisma and the reemergence of traditional Arab polity, which had attempted to resurrect itself after the death of the original charismatic authority. Thus, early Shiʿism marked a radical departure from early Sunnism in that it rejected rather than reinstated the pre-Islamic Arab political culture.

The juxtaposition of the divergent modes of authority meant that from the very beginning, the adherents of hereditary charisma in Islam rose as a dissenting group in conflict with those who had institutionalized charisma by creating the charisma of office. This dissent manifested itself in different forms during the course of Shiʿi history. Initially, Shiʿi protest expressed itself by contesting Abu Bakr's succession to the Prophet, advocating instead the succession of ʿAli based on the principle of charisma of descent. Later conflicts between ʿAli and Muʿawiya (d. 679), Husayn (d. 680), and Yazid (d. 684), and the various Shiʿi revolts against both the Umayyad and ʿAbbasid caliphs were further manifestations of these differences. Political opposition and rebellion against a central government formed the basis of the development of a distinct sectarian movement that postulated its own concept of religious authority and leadership.

The basis of the Shiʿi belief in the principle of hereditary succession can be traced to numerous utterances that Muhammad is reported to have spoken in favor of ʿAli.[100] The Shiʿis further base their concept of post-Muhammadan authority in light of the Qurʾanic principle of succession. After examining the Qurʾanic principle and examples of hereditary succession Madelung states, "Yet he (Muhammad) could not have seen his succession essentially other than in the light of the narrations of the Qurʾan about the succession of the earlier prophets just as he saw his own mission as a Prophet, the resistance of his people with which he met, and his ultimate success by divine grace in the light of the experience of the former prophets as related in the Qurʾan."[101]

A corollary to the Shiʿi belief in hereditary charisma was that the Shiʿis refused to accept the fragmentation of the Prophet's authority. In fact, Shiʿism not only sought to perpetuate Muhammad's charismatic legacy for the next 230 years (until the year 864 C.E. when the twelfth imam was believed to have entered a short occultation), it also saw this form of authority as the only viable source of authority. Rather than traditionalizing or routinizing prophetic charisma, the Shiʿi case exemplifies the continuation of charismatic authority up to the time of the twelfth imam.

It is to be remembered that appeal to the principle of hereditary charisma was not restricted to the followers of what was subsequently called Twelver

Shiʿism. In fact, many candidates from ʿAli's family claimed that the charisma was retained in one or another particular line of their family. Even the ʿAbbasids claimed to have inherited the prophetic charisma through ʿAbbas, the uncle of the Prophet. Various *ghulat* sects also believed that the charisma of their leaders had been successively transmitted from the Prophet.

Hereditary Charisma and Hereditary Traits: The Authority of the Imams

Since the purpose of the imamate is to perpetuate the Prophet's charismatic authority and guide humankind, a corollary to the principle of hereditary charisma is that the imams partake in the peculiar extraordinary traits hitherto reserved for the prophets. Stated differently, the charisma that the imams inherited entails that they become recipients of certain extraordinary traits that are hallmarks of charismatic figures. Curiously, Weber thought that personal traits did not play a significant role in the principle of hereditary charisma. He states: "In the case of hereditary charisma, recognition is no longer paid to the charismatic qualities of the individual, but to the legitimacy of the position he has acquired by hereditary succession. . . . personal charisma may be totally absent."[102] Weber's views are refuted in the Shiʿi conceptualization of hereditary charisma in which personal traits and the charisma of the imams are highly significant in the legitimation of their authority.

In Shiʿism, religious identity is conceived in terms of devotion to the imams. The believers are to coalesce under the figure of the imam who, because of his charismatic qualities and divine appointment, becomes the edifice around which the religious aspirations of his followers are founded. Various traditions cited in Shiʿi sources accord complete authority to the imams. It is through them that God can be worshipped and known. The Shiʿi imams were addressed in terms that resonate with those employed to refer to the Umayyad and early ʿAbbasid caliphs. They were referred to as the imams of guidance and justice, God would guide people through them; they were the pillars of religion and life for humankind. The imams were the sole guides to proper conduct in the crucibles of history. Shiʿism also posited a distinctive charismatic lineage of redemptive figures who offered salvation to the faithful. This is because soteriology, as envisaged in Shiʿism, was contingent on the recognition of and loyalty to the imams in general and to the imam of the time in particular.

Three principles encapsulate the charismatic authority of the imams: *nass, ʿilm,* and *ʿisma*.[103] The doctrine of divinely sanctioned authority or divine designation (*nass*) stipulates that ʿAli had been designated by the Prophet to succeed him, inheriting, in the process, his many traits. Thus, ʿAli's authority, and

that of the subsequent imams, is legitimized through the act of designation (*nass*). The question of *nass* is important as it links the imams in a concatenated chain culminating in the ultimate source of authority, the Prophet. The principle of divine designation is also important in the Shiʿi conception of authority because it accords the legitimation required in assuming the office of the imamate based on hereditary charisma. Moreover, as Abdulaziz Sachedina says, "*nass* was the only guarantee that the imam was infallible, for according to the theory of imamate, only an infallible imam could succeed another infallible imam. As a result, *nass* and *ʿisma* (infallibility) were made interdependent to ensure the succession of the rightful imam."[104] The belief in *nass* is also significant in the Shiʿi conceptualization of hereditary charismatic authority as it restricts the leadership to a single candidate by negating the claims of rival contenders to the imamate. For the Shiʿis, any claim to political authority without proper designation is viewed as a political innovation because it lacks divine mandate.

Besides the principle of divine appointment, the authority of the imam came to be measured by the *ʿilm* (divinely bestowed knowledge) that he had reportedly inherited from the Prophet. The possession of the divinely bestowed knowledge is important in the study of the Shiʿi concept of religious authority because, in the absence of any political investiture, this was the only factor that could prove the claim to imamate when disputes arose regarding the identity of a true successor of an imam. Knowledge becomes the source of authority and the only feasible means to legitimize any claim to authority.

Due to the principle of hereditary charisma, the Shiʿis maintain that the *ʿilm* of an imam is transmitted in a concatenated chain to all subsequent imams. Thus, although the charisma of an imam can, theoretically, be inherited by any one of a number of his sons, it is the belief in the divinely inspired knowledge that restricts the charisma to a particular individual. *ʿIlm* acts as a mitigating factor, ensuring that only one candidate among several contenders for the imamate can inherit the imam's charisma. In this context, we can comprehend the Shiʿi insistence that inherited authority must be complemented by inherited knowledge, for it is the latter characteristic that enables the imam to interpret the divine message authentically.[105] The twin principles of *nass* and *ʿilm* thus become a focal point in the Shiʿi theory of leadership as they guarantee and protect the divine message from adulteration by transmitting it through a divinely protected chain of authority. Acknowledging the correct imam becomes equivalent to accepting the original source of authoritative guidance, the Prophet.

Shiʿi understanding of sacred history further stipulates that this *ʿilm* and the concomitant authority be fully retained in a particular line of the Prophet's family, more specifically among the *ahl al-bayt*. It is therefore related from

Muhammad al-Baqir (d. 733–737), the fifth imam, that *ʿilm* should not be sought from the East or the West, rather, it was to be acquired from the *ahl al-bayt* only.[106] It was probably to accentuate the concepts of centralized charismatic authority and *ʿilm* that the eighth Shiʿi imam, ʿAli al-Rida (d. 818), is quoted as telling a companion that when faced with a legal problem with no Shiʿi around, he should, "solicit the legal opinion of the local (Sunni) *faqih* and then do the opposite, since Sunni *fiqh* is based on falsehood."[107] Stated differently, it was the source rather than the substance of the knowledge that was important. Only knowledge derived from the *ahl al-bayt* was valid since it was inherited from the Prophet.

The Shiʿi view of charismatic authority further stipulates that along with *ʿilm,* the authority of an imam is further substantiated by the scrolls and weapons of the Prophet that the imam reportedly inherited. The weapons and the armor of the Prophet are decisive in establishing the authority of an imam for these are among the signs (*ʿalamat*) that can establish the identity of the true imam. The weapons can only fit a divinely designated imam.[108] Like the other imams, Jaʿfar al-Sadiq (d. 765) is reported to have possessed the white *jafr*. This was composed of the Torah of Moses, the Gospel of Jesus, the Psalms of David, and other divinely revealed books. Al-Sadiq is also said to have owned other scrolls that would empower him with extraordinary powers of prevision.[109] Every imam is also reported to have possessed other scrolls like *al-Jamiʿa* and the *mushaf* of Fatima[110] that empowered him with extraordinary *ʿilm*. Due to the scrolls that he possessed, the imam's *ʿilm* was reportedly greater than that of the prophets.[111] Even the *jinns* would visit the imams to seek responses to their questions.[112] The scrolls are important to Shiʿi understanding of religious leadership since they authenticate the imam's claims to authority, thereby nullifying rival claims to the imamate. They also point to where the authentic *ʿilm* is located, for it is only the possessor of the scrolls who has the authoritative divinely inspired knowledge. As a matter of fact, in his book *Basʾair al-Darajat,* the ninth- to tenth-century traditionist al-Hasan al-Saffar (d. 902) cites one hundred traditions on the imams' knowledge being interwoven with the scrolls to underscore the connection between the authority of the imam and the possession of scrolls.[113]

The principle of hereditary charisma implies not only the transmission of prophetic charisma and supernatural qualities but also the appropriation of roles. Apostolic authority is essentially paradigmatic. Imitation of the model of the imams, as heirs to the paradigmatic figure of authority, became an increasingly important feature in Shiʿism. To serve as exemplary models, the imams, like the Prophet, are believed to possess the trait of immunity from sins (*ʿisma*). *ʿIsma* is important in the Shiʿi concept of authority and essential to the imams' mission to set paradigmatic precedents because the community

cannot possibly follow one whose actions are immoral or sinful. The principle of *ʿisma* also means that, as exemplary models, the pronouncements of the imams acquire normative force and, together with the actions and sayings of the Prophet, are regarded as the primary source of law after the Qurʾan.[114] Due to the Shiʿi belief in the imams' immunity from error, the principle of *ʿisma* also serves as a polemical weapon, for it is meant to "protect the law against the corruption which, in the Shiʿi view, the use of arbitrary individual reasoning (*raʾy, ijtihad*) of the Sunnite lawyers and the unreliable transmission of *hadith* by the Sunnite traditionalists introduced in it."[115]

The principles of hereditary charisma, special knowledge, and infallibility meant that the imams could also claim to authentically interpret the revealed scriptures. It was believed that God revealed both the text of the Qurʾan and its exegesis (*taʾwil*) to the Prophet. Both of these were transmitted to the imams. Due to this factor, the imams have a unique relationship with the Qurʾan, for their authority extends to the exegetical realm. Since the scripture and the imams are thought to be of revealed status, both the principles of hereditary succession (imamate) and the imams' exegetical role through the divinely inspired *ʿilm* have to be recognized and acknowledged. The two sources of authority, the Qurʾan and the family of the Prophet, as the famous *hadith al-thaqalayn* (tradition of two weighty things) maintains, will not be separated until the day of judgment.[116] The exegetical function of the imam also means that he is regarded as the speaking Qurʾan (*al-Qurʾan al-natiq*).

The acknowledgment of an existent authority outside of scripture is qualified by the assertion that the relationship between the scripture and the charismatic successors to the Prophet is exegetical. This exegetical function of the imams is accommodated by the special hermeneutic skills that the imams are believed to have possessed and is a testimony to the spiritual powers and gifts that they reportedly inherited from the Prophet. Thus, the principle of hereditary charismatic authority is interwoven with the belief in the imam's spiritual ascendancy over other exegetes.

The Shiʿi insistence on the infallibility of the imam and his special relationship with the scripture underlines the tension of human involvement in the revelatory process. It is quite possible that revelation can be misconstrued or adulterated by those exercising authority in their communities. This possibility is circumvented in Shiʿism by the Shiʿi insistence that authority outside of scripture can function as a source of guidance only when it is accompanied by an authoritative interpreter who is immune from error. Stated differently, the dichotomy between divine scripture and possible human misrepresentation is resolved by according revelatory status to the charismatic imams who are designated as exempla. Thus, the principle of *ʿisma* ensures that the human factor in scriptural exegesis will not undermine its authority. Due to *ʿisma,* the imam

exercises interpretive authority over the *shariʿa,* and Qurʾanic hermeneutics become the exclusive monopoly of the imams. The Qurʾan and the imam's ability to interpret it authentically become an intrinsic part of one another, and together they constitute an indispensable source of authority.

These various features, the Shiʿis believe, are the definitive marks of where the Prophet's charisma is located after him. These collective features also legitimize the office of the charismatic figure of the imam. It is in the context of the imam's connection with the law and his perceived capacity to formulate the law and establish a *sunna* that we can discuss the concept of the *shariʿ* man in Shiʿism.

The Emergence of the Shiʿi Shariʿ Man

Earlier in this chapter, I stated that in Sunni Islam, the *shariʿ* men developed independently of and, at times, in opposition to the political authority. The compromise of religious ideals by the political authority left a lacuna in the legal field that was filled by the *shariʿ* men. The incipience of the crystallization and elaboration of Shiʿi law coincides with the rise of Sunni schools of law. As with the Sunni experience, a distinct Shiʿite scholarly elite, which was composed of the imams and their disciples, emerged in the eighth century. They were interested in both formulating the law and discovering paradigmatic prophetic precedents for the situations they encountered. This intellectual movement emerged during the times of the fifth and sixth imams, Muhammad al-Baqir and Jaʿfar al-Sadiq.

Shiʿi imams and Sunni scholars lived side-by-side and often interacted as their legal schools developed simultaneously.[117] For example, Muhammad al-Baqir, who is credited with laying the foundations for the establishment of the Jaʿfari school of law, was a contemporary of a prominent Kufi legal scholar Ibrahim al-Nakhaʾi and the Medinese scholar al-Zuhri (d. 742). Even in Sunni circles, al-Baqir is highly regarded as a learned scholar from whom many scholars in *hadith* transmitted legal traditions. Ibn Hajar, for example, cites a long list of those who narrated traditions from him. Ibn Hajar's list is complemented by al-Dhahabi who cites more transmitters of al-Baqir's traditions.[118] His son Jaʿfar al-Sadiq was reportedly the teacher of Abu Hanifa and Malik b. Anas. As a matter of fact, even within Sunni circles, the Shiʿi imams were accorded the status of *ʿulamaʾ* in their own right.[119]

Apart from the imams, some of their disciples are also reported to be the *shariʿ* men of the community. The historian Yaʿqubi mentions Jabir al-Juʿfi (d. 745) as one of the *fuqahaʾ* (jurists) of the Shiʿi community.[120] Another eminent disciple, Burayd b. Muʿawiya (d. 767), is also mentioned by the famous

Shiʿi biographer Najashi, to be a great jurist.[121] Other disciples of the imams like Aban b. Taghlib (d. 758) were authorized by them to issue juridical edicts (*fatawa*) and to respond to legal questions, generating the practice of *ifta* (issuing juridical opinions) in the Shiʿi community.[122] Many reports pertaining to the legal field are reported on the authority of disciples of the imams like Jamil b. Darraj, (n.d.), ʿAbd Allah b. Bukayr (n.d.), Aban b. ʿUthman (n.d.), and others.[123] They are viewed by the Shiʿis as authoritative transmitters of Shiʿi legal traditions and among the eminent jurists of their times. In fact, the tenth-century biographer Kashshi cites a consensus reached by Shiʿi scholars of the time on the disciples' trustworthiness and profound knowledge of legal issues.[124] In addition to the imams, these, and other disciples also became the Shiʿi *shariʿ* men in their time.

Circumstances that led to the rise of the *shariʿ* man in Sunni Islam also precipitated a concurrent need for a *shariʿ* man to emerge in Shiʿism. The vacuum in religious leadership combined with the requirement to interpret and articulate the law meant that the *shariʿ* men became the main source of religious authority in both the Shiʿi and Sunni realms. The fact that this authority came to them from different sources was, in the end, a moot point. In reality, they were both performing the same function. In their articulation and elaboration of the law, the Shiʿi *shariʿ* men paralleled their Sunni counterparts.

The Shiʿi and Sunni Shariʿ Men: A Comparison

The different conceptualizations of the *shariʿ* men in Sunnism and Shiʿism can be characterized in the following manner: Routinization of authority immediately after the Prophet's death had diffused the charisma of the Prophet in Sunni Islam. The establishment of a political authority that either ignored or violated normative Islamic praxis led to a bifurcation of the religious and political ideal. In the absence of the ideal and comprehensive religiopolitical authority, both the Sunni and Shiʿi *shariʿ* men took upon themselves the responsibility to discover and formulate the law.

The concept of hereditary charisma in Shiʿism perpetuated the fusion of political and religious authority. Since the imam is believed to have inherited the comprehensive authority of the Prophet, the Shiʿi concept of the *shariʿ* man is interwoven with the sacred character of all authority, including the sacralization of the political order. Along with other functions, the imams inherited the role of the Prophet as the *shariʿ* men. Thus, like the Prophet himself, the imam was regarded as the *shariʿ* man par excellence in Shiʿism.

Furthermore, the *shariʿ* man in Shiʿism was the law incarnate since the imam's actions, speech, and periods of acquiescence embodied the law just

like those of the Prophet himself. Whereas legal traditions in Sunni *hadith* literature are traced back to the Prophet, since he is the *shariʿ* man par excellence, Shiʿi *hadith* often culminate in the figures of the imams, who are seen as having inherited the Prophet's knowledge and other traits. As such, legal pronouncements by the Shiʿi *shariʿ* man are seen as equally authoritative and binding as legal prescriptions originating from the Prophet himself. Like the Prophet, the imams are also considered as the source of *shariʿa* (*masdar al-shariʿa*).

In contrast to his Sunni counterpart, the *shariʿ* man did not develop through time. Rather, the Shiʿi belief in the special *ʿilm* available to the imam meant that the imam was born a *shariʿ* man. It is in this context that we can comprehend Shiʿi traditions that claim the ninth imam, Muhammad b. ʿAli al-Jawad (d. 835), could respond to legal questions at a very young age.[125]

In Sunnism, the term imam designated one whose actions or commands or opinions were precedents that might be used as a source or justification for the law. Eminent, erstwhile jurists, like the founders of the schools of jurisprudence, were also referred to as imams. The term imam was used specifically in this context by al-Shafiʿi in his *Kitab al-Umm*.[126] The *shariʿ* men became, for the Sunnis, the religious imams of the community. The Prophet's role as mediator between God and the community was reenacted by these *shariʿ* men. Moreover, the division of authority in the Sunni world meant there were several imams often in uneasy coexistence. Sunni scholars advanced the concept of differentiated authority by creating a foundation on which hierocratic authority could exist with but yet be independent of political authority. Thus, they had distinguished between the imam as the repository of knowledge or enunciator of the law and the imam as political power or executor of the law.[127] The imamate of the caliph was distinct and separated from that of the jurists. The former's authority rested on the power he exercised, whereas the authority of the jurists was based on their ability to interpret and explicate God's law.

In contrast to the Sunni view that the religious imam (the *shariʿ* man) was the expounder of the law while the political imam (caliph) was merely an executor of the law, Shiʿi Islam saw its *shariʿ* man to be the actual embodiment of the law. In the Shiʿi understanding of authority, the term imam has been used exclusively for the leader of the community in the sense of an ordained recipient of the prophetic, authoritative, personal charisma. The Shiʿis thus defined their imam as both the repository of knowledge and executor of the law.

For the Sunnis, the authority of the imams was based not in any inherent traits; rather, it was founded on the knowledge of the law, a status that was accorded to the Shiʿi *ʿulamaʾ* only after the major occultation of the twelfth imam in the tenth century. The Sunni *shariʿ* men attained the title imam by the

knowledge they acquired. The Shiʿi *shariʿ* men, the imams, were born with the title imam due to the knowledge they inherited along with the comprehensive authority of the Prophet.

The continuation of charismatic authority in the lines of the imams meant that, just like the Prophet, there could, in theory, be only one *shariʿ* man at a time in Shiʿism. Like the Prophet, the imam was the source of all legal prescriptions (*sunna*) and the sole possessor of gnosis. Political exigencies in the Muslim world forced the imams to delegate their religious authority to their close disciples.[128] In the eighth century, Shiʿism saw a more differentiated concept of the *shariʿ* man because the imams had to generate their own *shariʿ* men to represent them in the Muslim community.

The Heirs of the Prophet

Having discussed the concept of religious authority as advanced by various groups within the Muslim community, we are now in a better position to understand the ramifications of the title "heirs of the Prophet." This was an honorific epithet that conferred authority to those who claimed it. Various groups claimed to be heirs of the Prophet during the early period of Islamic history, thereby validating their claims to religious and/or political authority. Even the philosophers claimed to be the heirs of the Prophet.[129]

There is significant evidence to suggest that both the Umayyad and ʿAbbasid caliphs sought this title. For the caliphs, their position as the political leaders of the Muslim community entitled them to the honorific epithet, since, as rulers of the community, they held the same office that the Prophet himself had occupied. As I have discussed, the caliphs also laid claims to be religious leaders who were divinely sanctified in their positions. The caliphs supported their claim to be inheritors of prophetic authority in different ways. They claimed, for example, to possess the cloak that the Prophet had worn.[130] Al-Maʾmun is reported to have stated that God had allowed the rulers to inherit the caliphate from the Prophet.[131] Some caliphs claimed the right to exercise *ijtihad* while others claimed to establish a *sunna*. The claim to be heirs of the Prophet also meant that the caliphs could demand obedience from the community. The caliphal image as religious figures was devised probably to acquire religious prestige, rival the Shiʿi view of their imams, and collaborate on an equal footing with the *ʿulamaʾ*.

The *ʿulamaʾ*, the religious leaders, also laid claims to the religious authority of the Prophet. Their status was deduced from the following tradition reported from the Prophet: "*Al-ʿulamaʾ waratha al-anbiya*" (the scholars are heirs of the Prophets).[132] Although the *waratha* tradition, as it was subsequently called, may

have been a polemical tool used by the *ʿulamaʾ* to wrestle authority from the caliphs and other contestants, the tradition emphasized that the Prophet had bequeathed knowledge only, knowledge that was now firmly in the hands of the *ʿulamaʾ*.[133] What distinguished the scholars from the rest of the community was their ability to interpret, define, and articulate the law. It was this factor that empowered the scholars to exercise religious authority over the community. The authority that the *ʿulamaʾ* exercised became an important vehicle for the transmission of prophetic knowledge.

As heirs to the Prophet, the scope of the *ʿulamaʾ*'s authority was vast. One of their functions was to serve as the *shariʿ* men. It was the *shariʿ* men who performed the prophetic function of mediating between God and the community, of elucidating and explicating the law. By continually citing the *waratha* tradition and reminding the community of their status based on the heirs tradition, the prestige and function of the *shariʿ* men were formalized and vindicated.

Crucially, the claim by the *ʿulamaʾ* that they were the exclusive heirs to the Prophet gave rise to the possibility of an extension of the Prophet's authority, since it signified that the *ʿulamaʾ* inherited not only the knowledge but also the authority of the Prophet as the guardians of the community. The heirs tradition further enabled them to claim the title of imams of the community. Even the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Mahdi used the term *aʾimmat al-haqq* (the imams of the true path) to refer to the scholars.[134] It was in this context that Ibn Hanbal stated that the role of the *ʿulamaʾ* was to guide the community and defend God's religion against "the errors of the extremists."[135]

As I have discussed in this chapter, the relationship between the two groups that claimed to be the heirs of the Prophet, the caliphs and the *ʿulamaʾ*, was often acrimonious. The *waratha* tradition was, to some degree, responsible for the juristic contention that the rulers were subservient to the *shariʿ* men. The rulers were to consult with and rely on the *shariʿ* men because the latter formulated, upheld, and executed God's law. After all, since Muslim societies were based on the *shariʿa* and the *shariʿ* men were the authoritative figures in matters pertaining to the law, it was obvious that the rulers needed to consult them in any matter that impacted the legal practices of the community.

Loyalty and obedience to the *ʿulamaʾ* were based on the knowledge they possessed and the prophetic heritage that this symbolized. The laity's loyalty to the caliphs, on the other hand, was grounded in the *bayʿa* that they gave to the caliph. Though arising from different origins, the sense of obedience entailed in the *bayʿa* and the recognition of the prophetic heritage enhanced the authority of both the caliphs and the *ʿulamaʾ*.

The designation "heirs of the Prophet" was clearly a popular and much coveted title, for, as I have discussed, the Umayyad and ʿAbbasid caliphs and the Sunni scholars claimed it. Furthermore, the title could be used in the polemical

discourses of various groups because it could be employed to exclude and marginalize groups that did not have a strong basis for their claims to be heirs to the Prophet. In the next chapter, I will demonstrate how the Sufi holy men also claimed to be the true heirs of the Prophet.

The collective traits that the Shiʿi imams had inherited also enabled them to lay claim to being the heirs of the Prophet. In Shiʿi *hadith* literature, the *waratha* tradition appears in many texts.[136] Thus, in one tradition, Jaʿfar al-Sadiq is reported to have claimed that "We (the imams) are the true heirs of the prophets."[137] Traditions such as this would serve to refute the Sunni and Sufi contentions that religious authority rested amid their ranks. Whereas Sunni scholars claimed to be heirs of the Prophet based on the prophetic knowledge that they had acquired and the functions they performed, the Shiʿi imams claimed to be the heirs based on the traits and knowledge they had inherited from the Prophet. The concept of the imams as heirs to the religious and political leadership of the Prophet forms the basis for the legitimacy of the divinely appointed imam, source of learning and, as we will see in the next chapter, saintly mediation with the divine.

The Shiʿis added extra dimensions to their arguments to vindicate their claims that the imams were the exclusive heirs of the Prophet. Apart from the knowledge of the Prophet, the Shiʿis maintained that the imams had the scrolls and weapons of the Prophet.[138] The Shiʿis argued that the weapons would fit the imams only, thus providing incontrovertible proof as to who were the true heirs of the Prophet. In addition, as they belonged to the family of the Prophet, the *ahl al-bayt* (something that most caliphs and *ʿulamaʾ* could not claim), the Shiʿi imams contended that they were the Prophet's heirs based on lineal descent. I explore this theme further when I discuss the concept of the rise of the holy man in the next chapter.

The title "heirs of the Prophet" had far-reaching repercussions. The ramifications of the title extended beyond bestowing honorific epithets and authority to the *ʿulamaʾ*. Since they saw themselves as the custodians of the knowledge of the Prophet and the imams, Shiʿi *ʿulamaʾ* in the post-*ghayba* (occultation) period also claimed to be heirs of the Prophet.[139] Al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli (d. 1277), for example, declares the jurists to be the heirs of the prophets. The sixteenth-century jurist Husayn b. al-Hasan al-Karaki (d. 1592–1593) refers to himself as heir of the prophets[140] whereas Muhammad al-Baqir al-Bihbihani (d. 1791) refers to the jurists as the caliphs or successors of the Prophet.[141] Similarly, the contemporary Iranian scholar Ayatullah al-Muntaziri, interprets the *waratha* tradition as referring specifically to the jurists.[142]

Both the Sunnis and Shiʿis cite various texts as theoretical justifications for the exclusive authority of the jurists. The main difference between them is that whereas the Sunnis present their exclusive authority as deriving directly from

prophetic authority, Shiʿi jurists present their exclusive authority as deriving from prophetic authority through the intermediate authority of the imams.

Some Shiʿi scholars even claimed that they were intermediaries to the imams and the Prophet. According to the Safavid scholar Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi (d. 1699), the *ʿulamaʾ* were the doors to paradise; to insult them would cause the wrath of God to descend. It was through them that the imams could be accessed.[143] It is to the authority of the holy man that I now turn.

CHAPTER TWO

The Holy Man in Islam

Insights have come to you from your Lord; one who experiences them, it will be for his own self; one who is averse to them, then it will be to his own loss; I am not your protector. (Qurʾan: 6:104)

RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY is not confined to the scholarly elite. It can also be conferred to or acquired by a holy man. In this chapter, I intend to examine the emergence of the holy man in Sufism and the authority that he wielded in the Muslim community. I will contrast this with the genre of authority that was exercised by the Shiʿi holy man. In addition, I will examine the role of the shrine culture in enhancing the authority of the holy man.

It is essential, at the outset, to define the holy. The term "holy" refers to the source or object of religious veneration that is separated from the realm of the mundane and connected to the divine. The concept of holiness is extended to include attributes of people and actions that have claimed connection with God. It also comprises things and objects that derive their sanctity or holiness from association with God.[1]

In his *The Idea of the Holy,* Rudolph Otto examines the different genres of primary religious experience. He divides the holy into two distinct elements: the moral/rational and nonrational.[2] As an ethical category, the holy denotes a sense of piety and morally upright demeanor that is predicated on the performance of various acts of ascetic and devotional exercises. From this ethical perspective, holiness becomes a process of sanctification that is conjoined to the purification of the heart.

Otto uses the term "holy" primarily in a nonrational and nonethical sense. Holiness is, for Otto, a moment of spiritual encounter with a metaphysical link that encapsulates every religious tradition. This comprehensive definition means that the sacred or holy is a universal religious phenomenon that governs human interaction with an object of veneration. Otto further maintains that since God is not a rational object of discernment, the nature of religious experience is not connected to thoughts about God but to a feeling whose object is the holy. Hence, the encounter with the holy is, for Otto, an emotional rather than an intellectual experience.

Feelings for the holy are a necessary part of religious experience. Otto calls these feelings or awareness of the presence of the divine "the *numinous*." The word is derived from the Latin *numen,* referring to a divine spirit or localized power that the Romans perceived in nature. The *numinous* is the object of religious experience or feeling, and is held by the religiously devout to be a reality transcending the experience of an individual.[3] Experience of the *numinous,* Otto claims, is an intrinsic component that is associated with any encounter of the holy, because it lies at the heart of all types of religious experiences.[4]

Otto further elucidates his theory of emotive experience of the *numinous* by maintaining that the experience of the holy has a three-fold characteristic: (1) the *numinous* experience is a mystery of such intensity that the self is entirely subsumed within it. The awareness of this mystery is completely different from our everyday experience. (2) It is also tremendous insofar as it overpowers and captivates the worshipper, generating an awe-inspiring feeling that one has in the presence of a superior power. The feelings of awe are often accompanied with feelings of exaltedness or majesty reflecting the highest form of emotions of the mysterious. The effects of the sense of being overpowered by the *numinous* vary from sudden eruptions of emotions that emerge from the depths of the soul to intoxicated frenzy.[5] (3) At the same time, the holy is so fascinating that human beings are often captivated by and drawn to communicate with it. The sense of fascination with the *numinous* entices many to establish a deep, personal relationship with the *numinous*.

Otto's typology of the *numinous* experience suggests that the holy is a mysterious "other" whose character is incommensurate with and totally alien from our own. The experience of holiness reveals a unique category of value and state of mind that cannot be investigated by normal empirical methods. Hence, holiness becomes an aspect of the deity that transcends and even eludes comprehension in either rational or ethical terms.[6] Due to this factor, the holy cannot be taught or rationalized, it can only be awakened and perceived in the mind.

Characteristics of the Holy Man

Otto's typology of religious experiences and his conceptualization of the holy are important leads to our understanding of the authority, characteristics, and functions of the holy man in Islam. As I have mentioned, Otto maintains that the holy is a totally mysterious, incomprehensible, and even irrational experience. The encounter with the holy in its true and complete sense can elude those who are not properly initiated on the spiritual path. It is in this context that we can understand the need for and functions of the holy man.

According to Otto, the element of holiness is an important corollary to any close association with the *numinous*. In fact, the realm of the holy is established wherever and whenever the divine is manifested or experienced in any of one a myriad of forms. Thus, holiness can be attributed to people, actions, and objects that claim connection with God. One can speak of holy places (where the divine is encountered), holy time (when one communicates with the divine), and a holy man (who has access to and mediates between the divine and the human). It is in the sense of a saintly figure that I will use the term holy man in this study.

A salient feature in the portrait of the holy man is that his quest for the direct experience of the *numinous* is accompanied by intensely personal forms of spiritual activity ranging from asceticism, devotional exercises, and meditation, to protracted periods of self-mortification. Isolation, detachment from and renunciation of the world grant the holy man great spiritual, intellectual, and moral gifts. His profound religious experience enables him to have intimate communion with the divine in an intensive way. Gradually, the holy man attains extraordinary abilities that become a potent medium for expressing supernatural powers. In addition, he becomes an important means to the attainment of personal holiness

Most holy men are not content to merely experience and communicate with the divine. The authority of the holy man is also intertwined with his ability to bring to the deity the collective needs of his community and to translate divine signs, symbols, and communications to others. Thus, like a priest or diviner, the holy man often functions as an interpreter and mediator, converting divine languages into profane ones.[7] The multitudinous powers of the holy man enable him to make the remote, transcendent God relevant to the particular needs of the people. The mediatory function of the holy man makes him a focus of hopes and an agent of cure. These curative powers earn him social recognition and enhance his authority. As I will discuss, the experience of the divine also grants him intercessory powers, enabling him to impart blessings long after death. Salvific efficacy of the holy man lies in his being seen as a medium of divine-human interaction. Due to his spiritual connection, the holy man offers the profane world a sacred encounter.

The holy man's authority is further contingent on the performance of extraordinary feats, like miracles, that enable him to exercise authority over his followers. Miracles take different forms, ranging from curses, exorcisms, and healings, to demonstrating powers of fertility, and so on. The holy man's supernatural powers are further vindicated by his ability to defeat demonic powers, ancient fetishes, and exhibiting victory of good over evil. The subjugation of desires and his close proximity to the divine empower the holy man to overcome destructive forces like demons, bad weather, and diseases.[8] Miracles and other extraordinary feats are important to any claim to religious authority as they legitimize the status and powers of the holy man.

Extraordinary powers, together with the inability of the laity to experience the *numinous* directly, mean that the elements of awe, fascination, and captivation that ensue from a direct experience of the *numinous* are transferred to the holy man. This is because the mediation and extraordinary powers of the holy man enable ordinary people to experience something of the awe and majesty of the *numinous* in him. In many instances, people are captivated and inexorably drawn to the holy man himself since he becomes the vehicle for experiencing the *numinous*.

An important caveat is in order at this point. It would be a mistake to think that holy men constitute a singular, monolithic, entity. Rather, holy men can be leaders of various types of groups ranging from mystical sects, self-appointed evangelists, wandering ascetics, groups that practice voodoo, or those practicing stoic quietism. Furthermore, as I will discuss, holy men demonstrate diverse characteristics and approach the divine in radically different ways.

The Genesis of the Holy Man in Islam

The preceding remarks on the diverse facets of the holy man provide a conceptual framework for examining the authority of the holy man in Islam. In Islamic terminology, a holy man is called the friend or protégé of God, the *wali* Allah. In the Islamic context, the term is applied to Sufi shaykhs, a Shiʿi imam, a pious and devout person, or even a religious scholar.

As I discussed in chapter one, routinization of the Prophet's charismatic authority after his death meant that the *shariʿ* man rose to prominence in the eighth and ninth centuries and gradually appropriated the legal role of the Prophet, that of explicating and elucidating the law. The development of a distinct group of jurists, the formation of the diverse schools of law (*madhahib*) in the eighth and ninth centuries, and the emphasis on the exoteric dimension of Islam meant that obedience to God was generally measured by obedience to His law. Rather than explicating the process of experiencing the divine, the jurists

stressed the submission to the law of the divine. Within Sunni Islam, this emphasis on the exoteric dimension of Islam crystallized itself in the formation of theological schools, the schools of law, the marginalization of various extremist (*ghulat*) groups, and a general aversion to Sufism.

The concept of the holy man was fully developed and expressed in the mystical traditions of Islam, that is, in Sufism and esoteric Shiʿism. It was during the Umayyad dynasty in the eighth century that a distinct group of mystics emerged. The rapid expansion of the Islamic empire in the first century of Islam, the worldly outlook of the Umayyad rulers and their perceived violation of Islamic norms, and a general disdain of religious principles, led many Muslims to believe that the ideals and values that were established by Muhammad had been compromised by the ruling elite. These were major factors that precipitated the emergence of a distinct group of piety-minded people, the early mystics of Islam.[9] Thus, the holy man in Islam arose at roughly the same time as the *shariʿ* man did, in the eighth century.

The prototype of the early mystic was a figure whom I discussed in the previous chapter, Hasan al-Basri (d. 728). As I mentioned there, the *shariʿ* men often wore different hats. Hasan al-Basri was a proponent of the Qadariyya, a theological school that defied the Umayyad-supported doctrine of predestination. He was also an eminent mystic of his time. Hasan al-Basri is reported to have embraced a spirituality founded on asceticism and an otherworldly outlook. Preaching the concepts of a fearful and overpowering deity, his simple and austere lifestyle can be construed as a subtle form of criticism and dissent against the luxury of the Umayyad court and their general lifestyle.

Later on, certain mystical doctrines of love, the beatific vision, gnosis, absorption into the divine, and the theory of mystical states, were added to Sufism. Mystics, including Rabiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya (d. 801), Dhuʾl-Nun (d. 859), Bayezid Bistami (d. 874), al-Hallaj (d. 922), and others either elaborated or introduced novel concepts regarding the experience of the *numinous* within the framework of Islamic mysticism.

Within the Sunni mystical tradition, the Sufi shaykh came to be identified as the holy man of Islam. The shaykh exhibits many traits that characterize the holy man previously discussed. He performs excessive acts of asceticism, self-mortification, and other devotional and spiritual exercises like continuous prayer, vigils, remembrance of God (*dhikr*), reflection on the Qurʾan, and emulation of the prophetic model. In addition, like the holy men in other religious traditions, the shaykh's profound mystical experience enables him to have an intimate communion with the divine in an intensive way. For example, the tenth-century Sufi holy man Muhammad b. ʿAli Tirmidhi (d. 905–910), talks of an ineffable sense of joy felt in the heart. As he states, "[I] felt something was made upright in my heart, and when I experienced this sweetness my interior

twisted itself and contracted. . . . This sweetness spread through my loins and through my veins. It seemed to me that I was close to the location of God's Throne."[10] Those who are close to God, Tirmidhi continues, "hear supernatural speech as they converse with him. They occupy a position close to the prophets." They are able to experience God's splendor, glory, and magnificence.[11] Anecdotal accounts of such mystical experiences resonate closely with Otto's categorization of the experience of the *numinous*.

Charisma and the Authority of the Sufi Holy Man

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the comprehensive nature of the Prophet's charismatic authority meant that he was considered both a religious and a political figure. The juxtaposition of the temporal and religious realms within the personality of the Prophet meant that the Sufis could locate the spiritual authority of the Prophet within his comprehensive authority. For them, the mystical element was deeply embedded within the charismatic authority of the Prophet. Just as the *shariʿ* man could look back at Muhammad as the epitome of Islamic legal orthodoxy, the Sufis saw the Prophet as the best example of a holy man, the perfect human being (*al-insan al-kamil*). For the Sufis, Muhammad was not only a paragon for the Muslims in general, he was also a spiritual archetype for all humankind. It was this factor that made him a holy man par excellence.

In contrast to the *shariʿ* man's vision of a routinized charisma of office, Sufi claims to be the heirs of the Prophet are premised on various modes of authority that link the shaykh to the Prophet, for these are the primary method through which the Sufis can validate their own claim to authority. The authority of the Sufi holy man can be based on imitation of the prophetic model, spiritual and biological lineage, and on the blessings (*baraka*) that emanate from the holy man. These diverse modes of authority converge in the figure of the Prophet. It is through these multivariate modes of authority that Sufi shaykhs claim to have either acquired or inherited the prophetic charisma.

Sufi holy men validate their claim to be the spiritual heirs of the Prophet by emulating the Muhammadan model in their practices. Imitation of the Muhammadan paradigm is predicated on the Qurʾanic injunction to emulate the paradigmatic precedent of the Prophet (33:21). The holy men try to instill in their lives a sense of the spiritual experience of the Prophet by imitating his outer behavior and replicating not only his spiritual exercises, but also his reported inner states, exemplifying his every act. For many Sufis, spiritual connectedness to the Prophet is correlated to the degree with which the adept imitates him. Due to the principle of spiritual modeling, the charisma of the

Prophet can, at least to some degree, be experienced through the saint. This is an important way through which the Sufis claim to be his spiritual heirs.

Emulation of the Prophet in every possible way is an important means to attaining holiness, experiencing something of the charisma of the Prophet, and replicating his mystical states. For the Sufis, imitating the spiritual demeanor of the Prophet becomes a replication of his mystical quest since they believe that the shaykh can experience the *numinous* in the same way that the Prophet did. Historically, many mystics even encouraged the *fanaʾ fiʾl-rasul* (annihilation in the Prophet) suggesting a very deep and intimate relationship with him.[12] Annihilation includes meditation on the Prophet's attributes and continuous invocations of blessings on him.

The Sufis believe that the virtues and spiritual states of the Prophet are reflected in and exhibited by the shaykh. Due to his pervading presence and charismatic appeal, contemporary Muslims can somehow experience Muhammad's character and charisma. The disciples of the Chisti scholar Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (d. 1905) compared their shaykh's speech to that of the Prophet. "When Rashid Ahmad spoke, it was like the Prophet speaking. My heart opened like a flower."[13] Thus, the holy man becomes a replica of the Muhammadan model of the time. Imitating the Muhammadan paradigm is an important component in the construction of the holy man's authority.

Apart from imitating the Prophet, the Sufis inculcate and express deep love for him. In fact, in Sufi circles, love for God is expressed by loving His Prophet. Muhammad's virtues are frequently recounted and blessings invoked on him. Due to the veneration of and love for the Prophet, the daily prayers of many Sufi orders contain prayers of blessings on the Prophet. Such prayers, as Valerie Hoffmann reminds us, are believed to be extremely beneficial to the spiritual well-being of the Sufis.[14]

Besides modeling, authority in Sufism is also conceived in terms of a spiritual lineage traced to the Prophet. As a matter of fact, the spiritual genealogy of the holy men forms a central part of their authority. Sufis often trace the authority of their holy men and, in turn, the holy men's shaykhs, in a concatenated chain culminating in the Prophet and finally to God. Many of these genealogies are traced to the Prophet through his family as he is believed to have taught and transmitted spiritual exercises to his family.[15] It is the spiritual chain that legitimizes the genealogy-based authority of a Sufi holy man for it connects him to the source of the spiritual model, the Prophet himself. Spiritual lineages are also raised to ʿAli b. Abu Talib, an important figure in the Sufi spiritual chain. Just like the Shiʿis, Sufis see ʿAli as the recipient of esoteric knowledge and the inheritor of the divine light located in the Prophet.[16] Many Sufis feel a sentimental allegiance to the family of the Prophet without explicitly accepting the Shiʿi doctrine of the imamate.

Reverence for distinguished genealogy crystallized itself in the form of *sayyid*s, who, as descendants of the Prophet, are venerated by both the Shiʿis and the Sufis. Authority based on descent from the Prophet is inherited rather than acquired because the charisma of the Prophet is believed to have been transmitted through his progeny and available even in contemporary times through them. In pre-Islamic Arabia, the term *sayyid* referred to the chief of a tribe.[17] His authority in his tribe was based on his ancestry and personal qualities like discretion, liberality, and command of language. With the advent of Islam, the term connoted a title of honor for descendants of the Prophet. Several traditions describe the two grandsons of the Prophet, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and their parents, as *sayyid*s. Al-Hasan and al-Husayn are also addressed as *sayyiday shabab ahl al-Janna,* "the two leaders of the young men of paradise"[18] while their mother Fatima, is lauded by the Prophet as "mistress of the women of this community/my community" or as "mistress of the women of the people of Paradise (*ahl al-janna*)."[19] Due to the *sayyid* factor, belonging to or being a descendant of the "house of the Prophet" has become a mark of social distinction and elevated status in most of the Islamic world.

The importance of authority predicated on the principle of biological lineage can be discerned from the fact that *sayyid*s are exceptionally efficacious figures within Muslim communities. They are treated differently from non-*sayyid*s in most Islamic societies. For example, in many social settings, a *sayyid* who distinguishes himself by a pious life becomes revered as a holy man. His blessing is expected to bring good fortune, while his wrath brings misfortune. In Yemen, the *sayyid* acts as an intermediary between disputing parties. It is popularly believed that he can drive away locusts and that his prayer can put an end to infertility, while his curse will make it continue. Many *sayyid*s are visited for their healing powers, and reverence for them is frequently expressed in various forms of gifts of land.[20]

Not only do the *sayyid*s reportedly enjoy divine favors, they also enjoy great social status. Thus, the "sons of the Prophet of God" may be certain of divine forgiveness, and any wrong inflicted by them must be accepted like a dispensation of God, if possible with gratitude. The mystic Ibn al-ʿArabi states, "It behooves every Muslim who has faith in God and in what He has revealed to recognize the truth of the word of God, 'God will remove the stain from you, O people of the House, and purify you completely. (33:33)' It is therefore not fitting for a Muslim to criticize them, neither for what is not in keeping with the honor of those of whom God has testified that He has purified them and removed the stain from them, nor for pious works or good deeds they have performed, but always to remember God's watchful care for them."[21]

The exaltation of the *sayyid*s is extended to the juridical field where certain legal edicts reflect the different treatment of *sayyid*s. For example, the ruling

on menopause is different for women who are descendants of the Prophet. In his discussion on menstruation, Ayatullah Abuʾl-Qasim al-Khuʾi (d. 1992) states in his *Minhaj al-Salihin* that a woman who is fifty years old is considered to have attained menopause. Thus, the rules that pertain to the monthly period (*haidh*) are no longer applicable to her. She is no longer exempted from prayers and fasting even when she experiences her monthly period. If, however, she is a *sayyid,* then, as a precautionary measure, she should combine the acts performed by a woman who experiences irregular blood (*istihadha*)[22] with abstinence from those acts that a menstruating woman keeps away from. This, al-Khuʾi adds, is to be done after she (the female descendant of the Prophet) has attained the age of fifty until she becomes sixty years old.[23]

The favorable treatment of *sayyid*s is reflected in the laws of *khums* (the fifth). In the Shiʿi legal system, *khums* is used in a much broader sense than in the Sunni legal system where it is confined to the booty taken from enemies defeated in battle. In Shiʿi jurisprudence, in addition to other items, *khums* is payable on a fifth of what Shiʿis earn after all expenses have been paid. Al-Khuʾi, who was regarded by many Shiʿis as the most learned religious authority of his time, states, "*Khums* should be divided into two parts. One part is the portion of the *sayyid;* it should be given to a *sayyid* who is poor, or an orphan, or to one who is stranded without money when he travels. The second portion belongs to the imam. During the present time [of occultation], it should be given to a *mujtahid*."[24] This bifurcation of the *khums* revenue excludes non-*sayyids* who are instead to receive a share of *zakat* and voluntary alms (*sadaqa*).

Authority Based on the Transmission of Holiness: The Concept of Baraka

Baraka is another important component in the Sufi understanding of religious authority. Literally the term "*baraka*" refers to blessings. *Baraka* also refers to a "beneficent force, of divine origin, which causes superabundance in the physical sphere, prosperity and happiness in the psychic order."[25] As a category of religious authority, it also connotes concepts of holiness and sanctity.

In social contexts, derivatives of the word are often utilized in various expressions of politeness and gratitude, in compliments, and in euphemisms. *Baraka* also encompasses a host of other related ideas: prosperity, luck, completion, plenitude, and extraordinary power.[26] Popular culture locates *baraka* in certain acts, days, months, numbers, and places. The Qurʾanic usage of the term further accentuates this comprehensive notion of *baraka*. The Qurʾan mentions that the olive tree and the night of power (*layl al-qadr*) in the month

of Ramadan are imbibed with *baraka*. The text of the Qurʾan itself is also believed to be charged with *baraka*. In Tunisian speech and writing, the term *al-shajarah al-mubaraka* (the blessed tree) refers to the olive tree. Due to this, there is much opposition to the cutting of old, unproductive, olive trees since this is seen as an attack against divine munificence.[27]

Sufis conceive of *baraka* as a divine gift that is granted to certain people due to their experience of the *numinous*. Stated differently, God can implant an emanation of *baraka* in prophets and holy men. Due to his excessive self-mortification and asceticism, it is also believed that a holy man can acquire *baraka*. In fact, a Sufi's reputation as a holy man is contingent on the *baraka* that he either inherits or earns. Since it has social ramifications, *baraka* is an important vehicle through which the transcendent deity becomes an immanent, personal God. The mediating factor here is the holy man who acquires and then dispenses the *baraka*. The *baraka* that emanates from the shaykh means that his authority is inevitably enhanced.

The *baraka* that the holy man reportedly possesses can be transmitted in diverse ways. One way is by donning his cloak (*khirqa*). Sufis often kiss the cloak of the holy man in the hope of acquiring some *baraka,* a feature that is dominant in some Shiʿi circles too. Touching or shaking the hand of a holy man can also result in the transmission of *baraka*. In some Sufi circles, *baraka* is attained by drinking the water that contains the spit of a holy man. The holiness inherent in *baraka* can also be transmitted to successive generations through descent. In this sense, *baraka* is fused with sacred lineage. *Sayyid*s, in particular, are believed to have inherited the *baraka* of the Prophet. These sacred personages, in turn, may transmit *baraka* to the masses, either during their lifetime or after their deaths. Due to the principle of charismatic lineage, it is also believed that children of holy men become contemporary recipients of the *baraka* that is transmitted by the saint.

In its various forms, *baraka* becomes the process by which divine grace appears and is dissipated in different spectrums of society. Due to this "multiplier effect," *baraka* becomes diffused, conferring authority to the recipients. The grace that accompanies *baraka* can be transmitted through lineage, physical contact, and even by prayers and meditation.

Baraka accompanies the holy man even after his death since it is believed that the *baraka* is embodied in the tomb of the holy man and in the line of his descendants. In fact, *baraka* locates authority on the dead as much as on the living, accentuating, in the process, the cult of saints around the shrines of holy men. The Sufi complex or *zawiya,* especially if it is centered on the grave of a holy man, becomes an institution for transforming divine energy into mundane ones. At the center of this is the holy man whose holiness is a conflation of sacred genealogy, inherited *baraka,* charisma, and personal asceticism.[28]

It would be wrong to conceive of *baraka* as a purely personal phenomenon that is centered on a holy man. On the contrary, *baraka* has social ramifications and is expressed on the sociopolitical plane as much as it is evident at the personal level. At the social level, whether located in saints, objects, or days, *baraka* finds concrete expression in various forms. The effects of *baraka* are evident in the fulfillment of desires by the intercession of the holy man, the increase in food supplies due to an abundance of rain, or the purported protection against diseases and natural calamities by reciting the Qurʾan and offering prayers. It can also take the form of acceptance of congregational prayers for rain[29] and prayers offered in the month of *baraka,* the month of Ramadhan.

It is also believed that the *baraka* of a holy man can sanctify and legitimize political figures. It is here that the authority embodied in *baraka* is expressed on the political plane. *Baraka* is deeply intertwined with power. The power that is associated with *baraka* is conferred not only to the holy man but is also transferred to whosoever the holy man chooses.[30] Hence, the divine gift has immense temporal and social ramifications. *Baraka* empowers the saint, enables him to interact with rulers, and allows him to legitimize their authority. *Baraka* also epitomizes the indispensable role that the holy man plays as a mediator between the divine and the laity.

The Miraculous Prowess of the Holy Man

Acts of piety and moral uprightness are quintessential attributes of the holy man. Like the holy men in other religious traditions, the legitimacy of the Sufi holy man's claim to authority is vindicated by the performance of miracles or extraordinary feats. In fact, miraculous acts are the most articulate expression of his supernatural abilities and a vital component in the social recognition of the authority and status of the shaykh. Miracles also exhibit tangible evidence that the holy man has experienced the *numinous* and, because of this, he has become a repository of supernatural powers.

The Qurʾan notes that Muhammad's adversaries asked him to perform miracles as a legitimation of his prophetic call. In response, the Qurʾan does not ascribe any miraculous powers to Muhammad. Rather, cosmic harmony and the perfect functioning of nature are pointed out as evidence of God's miracles. However, subsequent biographical works on Muhammad abound with anecdotes of his supernatural feats. The pagan poet al-Aʿsha calls him a Prophet who sees what you (ordinary people) do not see.[31] Gradually, the image of the Prophet became more embellished, with more miracles attributed to him, idealizing him, in the process, as the perfect "holy man" who

was empowered with extraordinary miraculous abilities.[32] This was an important consideration in the subsequent veneration of the Prophet.

The cult of the holy man has come to occupy an important place in Islamic hagiographic literature. Sufi literature is replete with accounts of the miraculous abilities of the holy man. An important genre of miracle reportedly performed by Moroccan holy men, for example, is what Vincent Cornell calls "epistemological miracles." This refers to the ability of the holy men to read the minds of the people and to foretell the future (*firasa*). In his examination of 163 biographical profiles of Moroccan shaykhs in the formative period of Moroccan Sufism (eleventh and twelfth centuries C.E.), Cornell notes that the holy men's paranormal abilities having to do with knowledge are mentioned nearly three times as often as those dealing with power over nature.[33] In all probability, this indicates that in the formative period of Moroccan Sufism, the power of the holy man was conceived in terms of his knowledge. For the early Moroccan Sufis, knowledge and power were inextricably linked. This genre of miracle was the most cogent manifestation of his experience of the *numinous* and proximity to the divine.

Whereas miracles are important manifestations of the authority of the holy man, public recognition of the holy man is governed, to a large degree, by how he impinges on the lives of ordinary people. Hence, power miracles that influence the lives of people are important in the social recognition of the holy man's authority because these genres of acts impact them most. Power miracles also evince the holy man's influence on the environment and his access to the supernatural. The miraculous prowess of the Sufi holy men includes *firasa* (clairvoyance) and the ability to disappear from sight and practice *buruz* (exteriorization).[34] The holy men could reportedly tame wild beasts and traverse enormous distances in a very short time span. Due to their supernatural abilities, they could also produce food and rain in seasons of drought, heal the sick, and help barren women become pregnant. In popular culture, it is commonly believed that all tongues agree in praising the holy men except those who are jealous of them.[35] It is also held that one who opposes or hates a holy man dies as a non-Muslim and comes to an evil end. This is due to the saint's identification with God.[36]

Many instances of the power miracles of the Sufi holy men have been recorded. The famous mystic Mansur al-Hallaj was famed for his often bizarre and incriminating miracle working. He could, for example, produce out-of-season food and drinks for his disciples. He could restore sight to the blind and read the consciences of his disciples.[37] Sufi biographical literature also records miraculous accounts of holy women, too.[38] Many legendary anecdotes have been transmitted surrounding the personality of Rabiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya (d. 801). Most Sufis did not rejoice at these favors. In fact, Rabiʿa

is said to have disclaimed these miraculous powers and was anxious to avoid a reputation for performing miracles.[39]

Another source of authority of the holy man lies in the realm of the exegetical. The hermeneutical authority of the holy man is premised on his ability to furnish an esoteric exegesis to an existent text. Like the *shariʿ* man, the authority of the holy man is enhanced in his very exegesis and interpretation of the text since he adduces symbolic and esoteric meanings to verses from the scripture. These symbols generate a richness of meaning that furnishes new insight to an existent hermeneutical tradition, revealing, in the process, new depths within an existing scripture. Through his extensive usage of symbols, he becomes the basis of transformation in the exegetical tradition.

By challenging prevalent exegesis, holy men often express their interpretations against established authority. The resultant conflict creates a new authoritative base for the holy man. In this, the holy man further challenges the authority of the traditional exegesis of the Qurʾan. In essence, the holy man's esoteric exegesis is a defiant message to the *shariʿ* man that authority is not restricted to a single, unmistakable, hermeneutic of the divine commandment. Rather, scripture has infinite capacity to encompass new forms and interpretations. As Ibn ʿArabi (d. 1240) a great mystic, says about Sufi exegesis: "It varies with the state of the listener, his moments in the stations of his mystical journey and his different degrees [of attainment]. As he reaches higher stations, new doors are opened to him through which he looks upon new and subtle meanings."[40]

It has to be remembered that the holy man in Islam arose within an institutionalized framework that was dominated by the traditionally minded *ʿulamaʾ*. Hence, his novel interpretation of scripture and claim to charismatic authority based on personal, mystical experience was bound to clash with prevalent structures of political and religious authorities. The contrast between the exegeses of a *shariʿ* and holy man can be discerned from Mahmoud Ayoub's work, *The Qurʾan and its Interpreters*. In this work, Ayoub juxtaposes the commentary of traditional, exoteric, Qurʾanic commentators with some Sufi interpretations.

The contrast between the *shariʿ* and holy man's approach to Qurʾanic hermeneutic is exemplified in the understanding of the unconnected letters that preface the second chapter of the Qurʾan, *sura al-baqarah*. The letters, *alif lam mim,* are seen as belonging to a group of obscure verses in the Qurʾan. The thirteenth-century Ashʿari exegete, Fahkr al-Razi (d. 1209), takes a theological approach in explicating the meaning of these letters. He states that God knew that a group of his community would assert the eternity of the Qurʾan; thus, He mentioned these letters to indicate that His words are made up of letters, and that the Qurʾan could not be eternal.[41] The Muʿtazili exegete Zamakhshari (d. 1144) adopts a different approach. He argues that the general

consensus among the scholars is that each group of letters may serve as a name for a new *sura* (chapter).[42] These interpretations can be compared to Ibn ʿArabi's esoteric understanding of the same letters. He states that *alif* refers to the divine essence, which is the First of existence, *lam* stands for the active intellect, which is called Gabriel, and *Mim* refers to Muhammad who is the end of existence. Through him the circle of existence is completed where its end is connected to its beginning. Ibn ʿArabi concludes with a typical Shiʿi esoteric exegesis; the letters also mean that this is the book promised as the all-encompassing form alluded to in the *jafr* and the *jamiʿa,* the scrolls that contain knowledge of all events.[43] Shiʿis believe that these scrolls are in the possession of their imams.

The dichotomy between the exoteric and esoteric exegesis of the Qurʾan can be further adduced by examining the interpretation of verse 2:37 of the Qurʾan. The verse mentions that God had revealed to Adam certain words that he could use to repent for his lapse. There is much difference of opinion among the exegetes on the composition of these words. Some commentators claim that the words took the form of protracted and elaborate prayers attributed to Adam whereas others maintain that they refer to theological debates between God and Adam (Tabari). However, Ibn ʿArabi, adopts a typically esoteric approach stating that the words were "(mystical) lights or states of the realm of dominion and the realm of the subtle spirits. Every subtle being is a divine word because it belongs to the realm of command, as Jesus is called the Word." Ibn ʿArabi further states that it may also be that Adam received from God gnosis, sciences, and truths.[44] It is this kind of esoteric and symbolic exegesis that distinguishes the holy man from the *shariʿ* man. It also demonstrates the ability of the holy man to challenge the hermeneutic of the *shariʿ* man.

The Authority of Holy Sites and Objects

The belief in the charismatic authority of the holy men and the extraordinary powers they reportedly had at their disposal gave rise to the idea of holy places, especially where these holy men are buried. The sanctity that is associated with the holy men is transferred to the places that contain their bodies. Due to this, the graves of saints are visited very frequently, especially in times of difficulties and natural calamities.

In his *The Cult of the Saint,* Peter Brown explores the medium through which the laity could experience the sanctity of the dead saint in Late Christian Antiquity. He coins the term "*praesentia*" to denote the presence of the holy man at his shrine.[45] The shrine embodies a sense of spiritual power and divine presence, which are diffused to and felt by those present in the shrine.

In addition, the presence of the holy man in the grave affords the laity the opportunity to experience the *baraka* that pervades the shaykh because it is believed that his shrine is an important channel for the transmission of divine blessings. Touching the shaykh or any object associated with him is seen as an effective medium to experience this *baraka*. Through the pilgrimage, the *praesentia* of the dead saint is felt and his charismatic authority acknowledged. The dead shaykh retains an active presence in this world through the shrine culture.

The shrine in which the holy man is buried is a complex that integrates the tomb, the holy man buried in the tomb, and the *baraka* that is embodied at the shrine. The shrine also underscores the relationship between the holy man, the masses, and holy places. The tomb is important as it contains the holy man and embodies his charismatic appeal. The masses visit the holy place to renew allegiance with the holy man and enhance their progress on the spiritual path. Visitation to the shrine is also encouraged to experience the *baraka* of the holy man. Spiritual emanation or *baraka* of the holy man is acquired through the performance of various forms of liturgies. Spiritual exercises like *dhikr* (chanting God's name), specific breathing techniques, *samaʿ* (mystical dances), and devotional music (called *qawwali*s in the Indian subcontinent) are interspersed with songs that are chanted in honor of the holy man at the shrine.

The shrine is electrified by the thousands of pilgrims who engage in *dhikr,* remembrance rituals, and other forms of protracted prayers. The intense rituals at the shrine of the holy man embody the fusion of holy place, holy time, and holy man. It is on such occasions that the charismatic appeal of the holy man becomes most evident. Besides the *baraka* associated with the multitudinous rituals performed at the shrine, the spiritual exercises enhance the spiritual journey of the pilgrims and reflect their love for the holy man. These collective exercises at the shrine further accentuate the cult and cultivate the legacy of the deceased holy man who is closely linked to the memory of the saint during his lifetime.

The *praesentia* of the holy man at the shrine is interwoven with his *potentia,* his power to assist the pilgrims. After all, what is the point of having a shaykh who cannot help those who come to him asking for assistance? The *potentia* of the shaykh manifests itself in various forms, from the healing of the sick, alleviating calamities afflicting the people, to the restoration of their sociopolitical rights. The supernatural powers of the saint further enhance the authority of the dead shaykh and his ability to touch the lives of those who visit his shrine. Those who are healed or benefit from the *potentia* of the saint enjoy enhanced social status as they have been touched by the special powers of the saint.[46]

Experiencing the *potentia* of the saint is often a consequence of showing due reverence (*reverentia*) to him. According to Brown, *reverentia* implies, "a willingness to focus belief on precise invisible persons . . . in such a way as to commit the believer to definite rhythms in his life (such as the observation of the holy days of the saints), to direct his attention to specific sites and objects (the shrines and relics of the saints)."[47] *Reverentia* is demonstrated by focusing on the holy man's attributes, glorifying him, and seeking his intercessory powers. It requires learning and inculcating the shrine etiquette, which shows due respect to the shaykh. It also necessitates acknowledging, imploring, and beseeching the saint's powers. Within the Shiʿi tradition, Jaʿfar al-Sadiq (d. 765) explains the etiquette to be observed when a pilgrim wishes to visit the shrine of Husayn b. ʿAli in Kerbala. The pilgrim is recommended to perform a ritual bath (*ghusl*) in the Euphrates River. Al-Sadiq then explains that performing the *ghusl* in the Euphrates and reciting the salutations to Husayn cleanses and purifies one so that a person becomes as pure as when he was born. The imam then enunciates the method of greeting Husayn at the door of the shrine.[48]

Reverentia to the shaykh is further expressed by observing his holy days and commemorating sacred moments like the *ʿurs* at the shrine. The *ʿurs* is celebrated as it marks the holy man's death anniversary, his union with God. The *ʿurs* further highlights the *praesentia* of the saint. The recounting of the holy man's incredible achievements and virtues, and the songs sung in his favor connect the present with the past. The collective memory of the holy man's attributes generates a passion for the model now located at the shrine. The passion at such occasions makes the *praesentia* of the shaykh even more real and the holy man is integrated into the lives of the people long after his death. However, the *potentia* of the saint holds the individual in a further bond of personal obligation. Should he stop the *reverentia,* then the visitor could effectively let loose both the *potentia* and *praesentia* of the shaykh.

The authority of the holy man and the shrine is also connected to the use of a whole range of paraphernalia associated with the saint, his shrine, and related material objects. It is in this context that we can comprehend the importance of holy objects. An object becomes holy when it manifests or acts as a medium with the sacred. In a sense, the divine reveals itself through holy objects, which have expressive power as vehicles of supernatural meaning, and are an important means to the attainment of personal holiness. Holy objects offer salvific opportunities because the *praesentia* of the holy man can be experienced by objects that come into contact with the shrine. In popular Sufi and Shiʿi culture, tying a sick person to the shrine is believed to be therapeutic. When it is not possible to bring him to the shrine, then bringing home a string that has been tied to the shrine is believed to be an equally effective

method to cure an ailment. Such objects recreate the presence of the holy man, extending the possibility of attaining his *baraka* and curative powers. The shaykh acts through the objects just as he acts through his physical presence. Objects and the shrine itself collectively institutionalize the shaykh's saintliness and create an image of a miraculous agency working through the holy man long after his death.

Relics serve to remind the masses of both the *praesentia* and *potentia* of the shaykh and evoke the emotional passion associated with him. They obviate the need for pilgrimage since they extend the physical presence of the holy man and provide a modicum for constructing his sanctity and extending his authority.[49] The sanctity of the holy man is therefore not restricted to a particular site; rather, it is dissipated beyond the locality of the shrine of the local community. This marks the universalization of the *praesentia* and *potentia* of the shaykh and the transmission of *baraka* through secondary objects that have made contact with the shrines. These contact relics, as Brown terms them, are believed to be as full of the saints' *praesentia* as any of the physical remains.[50] Thus, translations (movements of relics to people) can become as important as and even replace pilgrimages (movements of people to shrines). Due to the shrines and objects, the *praesentia* and *potentia* enhance the authority of the holy man long after his death.

Shrines are important for our understanding of the holy man's charismatic authority. The charisma of the holy man is objectified through its inscription at the shrine. The holy man has inscribed his character on the place that he initially founded and in which he was eventually buried.[51] The shrine becomes a focal point for evoking the *praesentia* of the holy man since the charisma of the saint is believed to be transferred to and available at the shrine. It is the shrine that makes the holy man's charisma widely felt and accessible for it is here that the deceased holy man is able to diffuse *baraka* to his visitors.

In *The Pure and Powerful,* Nadia Abu Zahra examines the appeal of the shrine of a popular female saint, Zaynab (n.d.), the daughter of ʿAli and Fatima, and the granddaughter of the Prophet. Most Shiʿi sources claim that Zaynab was buried in Damascus. However, other texts maintain that she was buried in Cairo. Biographical sources on Zaynab portray her as an epitome of purity, with powers to heal the sick and alleviate pain.[52]Among the laity in Egypt, she is also seen as the mother of all Egypt who looks after the welfare of the people. She is specifically linked to the weak, the oppressed, and the women.[53]

Egyptians who are neither Sufis nor Shiʿis visit her shrine regularly to seek her blessings, protection, and cure from various illnesses. As Nadia Abu Zahra states, "Egyptians not only love al-Sayyida Zaynab, but also demand her love, protection and reassurance."[54] The rituals performed at her shrine include lamentations and wailing, which are integrated with various forms of

powerful invocations and complaints about injustices and violations of rights. The masses seek her help by placing letters on her tomb and by pleading with her to restore their violated rights. These rituals reflect her pervasive influence in public life long after her death. Through these rituals, Zaynab (popularly known as al-Sayyida in Cairo) is integrated into the fabric of the lives, dreams, and aspirations of the people. These shrine rituals are a statement of the people's living condition, their aspirations, and expectations from Zaynab. They also reflect the demands for social justice, and symbolize the role of Zaynab as a model for those defying tyrannical regimes. The presence of Zaynab at the shrine is believed to be complemented by her miraculous powers, the *potentia* of the saint.

The Sociopolitical Functions of the Holy Man in Sufism

Mysticism in the West is often conceived along antinomian lines. Theoretical models that posit a dichotomous relationship between the spiritual and the temporal spheres cannot adequately explain the functions of the holy man in Islam. To comprehend the social discourse of the Sufi holy man, the concept of sainthood has to be widened so that it embraces both the spiritual and social realms. This is because sainthood in Islam is as much a social reality as it is a metaphysical concept.

From its inception, Islamic mysticism did not insist on isolation from the world or political quietism. On the contrary, social integration has been considered important for the holy man since his authority is, in part, contingent on recognition from the public. Initially, public acknowledgment of the holy man's authority may depend on validation by his fellow Sufi peers. Eventually, his impact on the community has to be such that the community accords him the status that his powers merit. Assimilation of the Muhammadan paradigm means that, apart from modeling himself on the Prophet's demeanor and spiritual qualities, the Sufi holy man has to symbolize the Prophet's social attributes. Thus, like the Prophet, the shaykh has also been a protector of the poor and a leader of the masses.

The authority of the Sufi holy man is expressed at the social level by helping potential mystics attain a mystical understanding of religion and the world, and by emphasizing an immediate apprehension of the *numinous*. The holy man initiates and guides others on the path, leading many of his disciples to attain spiritual realization and the opening of the heart to the divine light.[55]

The social functions of the holy man in Islam extend beyond initiating and guiding disciples on the spiritual path. Like the holy man of Late Antiquity,

the Sufi holy man often mediates between the human and the divine. The mediatory functions of the holy man in Islam can be traced to the time of the Prophet himself for the Prophet is believed to have had intercessory powers.[56] Since the ninth century, Sufis have expected their holy men, as spiritual heirs to the Prophet, to perform similar mediatory functions between God and human beings, and even between different factions.[57]

It is in his social discourse that the holy man impinges on his society most. This includes mediating disputes and reconciling feuding couples. He also cures diseases, averts calamities, and makes amulets. Historically, the growth of the holy man's authority meant that he could compete with scholars in shaping the lives, beliefs, and practices of their followers. Vincent Cornell cites the case of a prominent Moroccan holy man, ʿAbd al-Jalil Wayhan (d. 1143). He mediated local disputes and represented the local population in front of government officials.[58] Wayhan also impinged on his society as he symbolized the popular aspirations of the oppressed for socioeconomic justice.

The authority of the holy man's discourse transcended the localized rural setting. The holy man played multifaceted social and institutional roles as his social activities were interwoven with his role as a politically conscientious figure. In fact, many Sufis were closely connected to the social and political institutions of their times. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, several Sufi political groups emerged that fought and defeated local rulers in places like Tabaristan.[59] As a matter of fact, a local Marʿashi state emerged from a Sufi order. Other Sufi movements in Subzavar, Khurasan, appropriated millenarian notions to establish a political state.[60]

Through their social and political roles, the Sufi shaykhs were integrating spiritual elitism with social populism, a feat that the traditional *ʿulamaʾ* found difficult to replicate. This was because Sufism provided a vehicle for expressing aspects of popular piety within Islam. It also tolerated local cultures and superstitions. This popular outreach meant that Sufism had an appeal for all classes within a community. As I will discuss, the popular appeal of the holy men also enabled them to proclaim themselves as the heirs to the Prophet.

The social intercourse of the holy man means that he must not be conceived in terms of discrete components of holy traits. Rather, as Cornell argues, the life of the holy man must be constructed on his total impact on society, ranging from his being a paragon for upright moral conduct to his performance of epistemological and power miracles.[61] Viewed from this context, the holy man is a symbolic nexus of piety, power, and ethics, far from the reclusive, single dimension, isolated ascetic, categorized in many texts. The various sociopolitical roles of the holy man inevitably enhance his image and authority in the minds of the public.

The *potentia* of the shaykh is felt at the social level too. An oath sworn in the name of the holy man can become a statement of binding social and economic obligations. The oath becomes efficacious in such contracts because it is popularly believed that to renege on an oath sworn in the name of a holy man could lead to the infliction of calamities or illness. In this way, the saint functions as the conscience of the community, governing its interactions and affairs, and maintaining social justice long after his death. For example, in popular Shiʿi culture, an oath taken in the name of al-ʿAbbas (d. 680), the half-brother of Husayn, is often considered to be the most binding of all oaths.[62]

Just like the *bayʿa* offered to the caliph, the oath sworn in the name of a holy man demonstrates both the *reverentia* and *potentia* of the saint. The popular belief that breaking an oath can lead to calamity suggests that, due to his connection with the divine, the power of the holy man is considered to be more lethal than that of the ruler. This is another manifestation of the authority and status accorded to the holy man in many Muslim communities.

The Genesis and Authority of the Shiʿi Holy Man

In the last chapter, I discussed different forms of Shiʿi opposition to the Sunnite majority. As the Shiʿis envisaged a radically different notion of charismatic authority after the Prophet, their dissent expressed itself in political and religious forms. Under the leadership of the sixth imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, the Shiʿis even formulated their own distinct school of law. Shiʿi dissent also took an esoteric form. After all, if the Shiʿis could proffer their own *shariʿ* man, why could they not present their own holy man? In this, the Shiʿi imams came to rival the Sufi shaykhs.

The mystical tradition that developed in the classical period of Islam was also embraced by the Shiʿis. While in Sunnism Islamic esotericism was crystallized in a Sufi form, it engulfed Shiʿism in its entirety.[63] As Shiʿi esotericism is centered on the spiritual powers and teachings of the Prophet and the imams, it is correct to state that the genesis of Shiʿi esotericism can be traced to the very beginning of its sacred history. As I have discussed in chapter one, the principle of hereditary succession that had enveloped early Shiʿism meant that transcendental status constituted the main source of charisma of the imam. In addition to being the *shariʿ* man, Shiʿism further posits the imam as the holy man, having inherited the spiritual powers of the Prophet based on the principle of hereditary charisma. The spiritual powers of the imam also enable him to directly experience the *numinous,* thus making him a holy man who could rival the Sufi holy man.

As he inherits the comprehensive authority from the Prophet, the imam is also believed to exercise both juristic and spiritual authorities over the lives of his followers. The Shiʿi belief in the spiritual authority of the imams is symbolized in the belief in the comprehensive authority (*al-wilaya al-mutlaqa*) of the imam. Stated differently, the imam possesses *wilaya* not only in the sense of temporal but also spiritual authority over the lives of the believers. The *wilaya,* it is believed, was transmitted by the Prophet to ʿAli and subsequently to the rest of the imams. It is because of this factor that ʿAli is regarded as the *fatih al-wilaya* (the one through whom the *wilaya* commenced among the imams). The *wilaya* enables the imam to provide salvation to his followers and guide them both in the exoteric and esoteric sense.

The pervasive and comprehensive *wilaya* of the imam led Shiʿism to becoming a distinctive movement based on loyalties to and identification with spiritually authoritative human beings. At the nexus between the divine and human, the imam is considered the exclusive and legitimate, religious and spiritual heir of the Prophet who endeavored to recreate his ideal community and to have acted as intermediary with God. In addition, the imam is believed to have replicated the prophetic paradigm, which was centered on an heir of the Prophet living within the Muslim community. As his authority resonates strongly with that of the Prophet, the imam becomes an extension of the personality of the Prophet.

Shiʿism posits the spiritual authority of the imam to be predicated on two main features: asceticism and knowledge. Asceticism is an important consideration in the legitimation of the authority of the imam since it helps structure his spiritual and moral life, generating a constant mindfulness of God. The imam duplicates the Prophet's spiritual journeys and devotional exercises. It is this element that enables the imam to experience the *numinous* in the same way that the Prophet did. For the Shiʿis, asceticism is as essential to the source of the imam's authority as his knowledge, and one that animates the image of the imam as a holy man.

To emphasize the ascetic qualities of the imams, Shiʿi biographical literature contains copious reports on the imams' piety, excessive acts of devotional worship, meditation, and acts of self-denial and control. For example, in a sermon recorded in the *Nahj al-Balagha,* ʿAli b. Abu Talib engages in a lengthy description of the attributes of the pious ones. Reflecting on their exalted stations he states, "They see what others cannot see and they hear what others do not hear. They have access to divine secrets."[64]

The fourth Shiʿi imam, ʿAli b. al-Husayn (also known as Zayn al-ʿAbidin—d. 713–714), is also renowned for his excessive piety, asceticism, and acts of generosity. He is reported to be the author of *al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiya,* a collection of spiritual supplications and moving conversations (*munajat*) with God.

His son, Muhammad al-Baqir, was also known for his deep piety and extensive knowledge of the legal sciences.[65] The Sufi authors Abu Nuʿaym al-Isfahani (d. 1037) and Farid al-ʿAttar (d. 1220) attribute the quality of *zuhd* (asceticism) to Jaʿfar al-Sadiq. According to the famous heresiographer Muhammad Shahrastani (d. 1153), al-Sadiq had renounced the allurements of worldly things and lived a life of complete detachment from all earthly pleasures.[66]

Besides the elements of piety and asceticism, the principle of hereditary charisma requires that the authority of the imams be based on the charisma of lineage. The concept that leadership is based on genealogy is firmly embedded in Shiʿism, since comprehensive authority is restricted to the lineal descendants of ʿAli and Fatima, who, together with their progeny, constitute the household of the Prophet, the *ahl al-bayt*. Thus, prophetic descent is inextricably linked to the charismatic authority of the imam. As Vernon Schubel notes, "Alid loyalism focuses its attention on the human component of the Qurʾanic event, emphasizing loyalty to the man Muhammad and, by extension, to his family."[67]

Based on the principle of *nass* that I discussed in the last chapter, correct lineage in the form of prophetic descent is necessary to legitimize the imam's claim to authority. Attachment to the imams and the emphasis on prophetic descent enhanced the authority and social status of the *sayyids* (often called *imam-zadeh*—offsprings of the imams) by strengthening the charisma of lineage. Due to this factor, *sayyids* have become exceptionally pervasive figures in popular Shiʿism. For example, *Fadaʾil al-Sadat* (excellences of the *sayyid*s) is a treatise on the supremacy of the *sayyids* composed in 1691–1692 by a descendant of the famous Shiʿi gnostic, Mir Damad. Hostility to the *sayyid*s, he states, will bring punishment in the next world and is a sign of illegitimate birth.[68] The emphasis on honoring the descendants of the Prophet precipitated the cult of the shrines of *sayyid*s. The tombs of many *sayyid*s have become a focus of pilgrimage, a phenomenon widely prevalent in many parts of the Shiʿi world today.

Authority Based on the Epistemological Miracles of the Imams

As the heir of the Prophet, the imam inherits not only the authority but also the powers of the Prophet. The authority and miraculous powers of the imam are interwoven with his extraordinary knowledge. Besides the exoteric *ʿilm* that I discussed in the last chapter, Shiʿis believe that the imam also inherits esoteric knowledge that empowers him to have access to the inner meanings of the Qurʾan and enables him to provide an esoteric hermeneutic of the text. The spiritual interpretation of the scripture and teachings of the prophetic revelation means that the imam can demonstrate the living, unfolding, and growing

hermeneutic of the revealed book.[69] According to the French scholar Henry Corbin, there can be no full realization of the truth without the imams for they provide access to the gnosis, the *haqiqa* of the book. Without them, the gnosis, the quintessential truth of the book, can never be known.[70] The Shiʿi belief that the holy and *shariʿ* man merged in the figure of the imam means that he offers two hermeneutics of the same text, one that explicates the traditional, exoteric exegesis of the scripture and the other that elucidates the hidden meanings of the book. An important principle in the Shiʿi exegetical tradition is the exclusive interpretive role of the imam. The Shiʿi holy man has the exclusive privilege of furnishing both the exoteric and esoteric interpretations of the Qurʾan.

The Shiʿis differ from the Sufis on the question of esoteric knowledge of the Qurʾan. Whereas the Sufis maintain that this knowledge is available through a process of gradual unveiling as the Sufi progresses on the path, the Shiʿis believe that the knowledge is transmitted, rather than acquired, through the Prophet's family lineage. Hence, the esoteric knowledge of the Qurʾan is available to the imams from the very beginning. The first Shiʿi exegetes were the Prophet and the imams themselves. The belief in the imams' access to esoteric knowledge and the interpretation of the Qurʾan can be traced to many traditions reported from the imams themselves. Early Shiʿi exegetes, like ʿAli b. Ibrahim al-Qummi (d. 919) and Muhammad b. Masʿud al-ʿAyyashi (n.d.), point to many esoteric interpretations of Qurʾanic verses.[71] It is to be remembered that for the Shiʿis, due to the principle of hereditary *ʿilm,* the interpretations and *hadith* of the imam are equivalent to the traditions and elucidations given by the Prophet himself.

Besides the esoteric knowledge that he inherits, the imam's authority is also believed to rest on special cognitive powers of celestial origin, which enable him to know hidden things. This occult knowledge of the imam is more diverse than that of the Sufi holy man. In the Shiʿi conceptualization of epistemology, the cosmogonic origins of the imam's knowledge means that he is well acquainted with both the visible and invisible world and that he possesses knowledge of the past, present, and future events. The celestial knowledge of the imam further extends to the hermeneutic science of all previous heavenly scriptures and all languages, including the languages of the animals. Shiʿi *hadith* literature also suggests that a column of light provides answers to the imam's questions at will.[72] The extraordinary abilities of the Shiʿi holy man include access to the occult sciences and the ability to read the minds of the people.[73]

The sources of the imam's multivariate knowledge are many: His knowledge may be inherited from the previous imam, or it could be acquired through from the scrolls that have been handed down from the previous imam. It could also be attained through direct contact with an angel. In this sense, the

imam is regarded as *muhaddath,* for it is believed that the imam hears but does not see an angel.[74] In addition, occult knowledge is transmitted to the imam by the marking of the heart and the piercing of the eardrum.[75] Some traditions further indicate that the imam receives celestial inspiration on the night of power (*layl al-qadr*),[76] and that every Thursday night, his spirit ascends in a pilgrimage to the divine throne, where it is filled with all the knowledge the imam requires.[77]

In addition to these sources, the knowledge of the imam is animated by *ruh al-qudus,* the holy spirit. Most Shiʿi traditions distinguish between the angel Gabriel and the spirit. *Al-ruh* is said to be a celestial entity that is superior to the angels. The spirit performs essentially the same function as the angels, apprising the imam of developing circumstances and supplying him with information not contained in other sources. The spirit further enhances the authority of the imam by providing additional information that strengthens and guides him.[78]

A report cited by the Sunni biographer al-Fasawi (d. 890) accentuates the connection between the authority of the imam and his supernatural knowledge. The tradition indicates that the close disciples of the imams believed that the imams had extraordinary spiritual and epistemological powers that enabled them to predict the fate of their faithful disciples. In his *Kitab al-Maʿrifa,* al-Fasawi quotes Muhammad b. Samki (n.d.) as saying:

> When I wanted to go for the pilgrimage, Zurara b. Aʿyan, the brother of ʿAbd al-Malik, told me: "If you meet Jaʿfar b. Muhammad (al-Sadiq) give him my regards and ask him: ʿInform me whether I (Zurara) will go to hell or heaven?'" I met Jaʿfar b. Muhammad and told him: "O son of the Prophet, do you know Zurara b. ʿAyan?" He said: "Yes, [he is] a Rafidi and a wicked (*khabith*) person." He (Ibn Samki) said: I told him that he (Zurara) sends you his greetings and says: "Inform me whether I will go to heaven or hell?" He (al-Sadiq) said: "Tell him he will go to hell." Then he continued, "Do you know how I realized that he is a Rafidi? He maintains that I have knowledge of the unseen. Whoever claims that anybody but God, the most High, knows the unseen is an infidel, and he will go to hell." He (Ibn Samki) said: When I arrived in Kufa, he (Zurara), along with other people, came to receive me. He asked me, "Did you undertake my request?" I informed him of what al-Sadiq had said. He said, "Indeed, the son of the Prophet has dissimulated (*ittaqa*)."[79]

The report, whether factual or contrived, is an important indication of what Zurara (d.767), along with other Shiʿis, reportedly believed in the middle of the third century. Zurara is depicted as a Rafidi[80] who believed in an imam's (specifically al-Sadiq's) occult knowledge through the divinely inspired *ʿilm,* a

view that was shared by other prominent disciples of the imams like Muʿalla b. Khunays (n.d.) and Jabir al-Juʿfi (d. 745). By his repudiation of Zurara (as seen by terms like Rafidi, *khabith*), al-Sadiq is portrayed by al-Fasawi as a respectable figure who declined what were seen as extravagant claims on his *ʿilm* made by the Shiʿis. He is therefore exonerated from all these genres of claims made on his behalf. The tradition also corroborates the contention that the power of the imam was believed to be intertwined with his esoteric knowledge.

For the Shiʿis, the imams not only possessed esoteric truths, they embodied, lived, and taught them to some of their closest disciples. The gnostic teachings of the imams encouraged their disciples and subsequent Shiʿis to engage themselves in this field. Traditions cited in Shiʿi sources indicate that the imams would often share spiritual secrets with some of their close disciples. In a tradition that accentuates the close relationship between al-Sadiq and Muʿalla b. Khunays, the imam is quoted as warning him to, "[C]onceal our secrets, for one who conceals our secrets, God creates for him a light between his eyes and gives him strength among the people."[81] These secretive teachings can often be difficult to handle, only those whose hearts have been purified can accept them.[82]

Disciples like Muʿalla can be seen as examples of zealous Shiʿis who, due to their fervor, could not conceal Shiʿi beliefs regarding the extraordinary powers of the imams. Muʿalla's zeal is depicted in a tradition, which shows how, on certain festive occasions, he would publicly praise the imams as the rightful occupants of the caliphate and would curse their enemies who had "deviated from the *sunna* of the Prophet."[83] Muʿalla was executed, according to the tenth-century Shiʿi biographer Kashshi, because he had disseminated the secrets of the imams that had been confided to him.[84] It is to be noted that the idea of the imams urging their disciples not to divulge traditions that embodied their esoteric teachings was not uncommon among the earlier imams. Muhammad al-Baqir had reportedly instructed Humran b. Ayʿan (n.d.) not to divulge certain traditions to persons like al-Hakam b. ʿUtayba (d. 732), an adversary of the Shiʿis of the time.[85]

In his *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʿism,* Amir Moezzi claims that initial imamism was permeated with esotericism and that the esoteric traditions more faithfully represent the original teachings of the imams.[86] Moezzi reduces early Shiʿism to a cosmogonic level, ignoring, in the process, the very rich and diverse theological-juridical dimensions of Shiʿi Islam. Furthermore, he does not successfully demonstrate the reasons for the transition from the esoteric to the exoteric approach by Shiʿi thinkers of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Moezzi neglects much of the early legal tradition, which is included in the same texts that contain esoteric traditions. Kulayni's (d. 933) *al-Kafi* is a good example of the juxtaposition of such esoteric and exoteric literature. By

focusing on al-Saffar's *Basa'ir al-Darajat,* Moezzi also neglects the works of a contemporary of al-Saffar, Fadl b. Shadhan (d. 873). Shadhan's numerous works indicate that the imams' theological-cum-juridical teachings were just as likely to be acquired and transmitted by their disciples as their esoteric works.[87] Furthermore, Moezzi does not take into consideration that many esoteric notions regarding the imams may have been interpolated in the Shiʿi *hadith* literature by the *ghulat* (extremists) and ascribed to the imams.[88]

The Power Miracles of the Imams

Apart from the extraordinary knowledge that reflects his epistemological powers, the imam's authority is based on other traits that distinguish him from other contenders to leadership. A salient source of authority for the Shiʿi holy man is his ability to perform power miracles. More specifically, miracles of the imam are seen as evidence that he has experienced the *numinous* and that, in return for his piety and devotion, he has been empowered with spiritual and temporal authority by the divine. In Shiʿi hagiographical literature, miracles are presented as evidence of the verity of the imam's claims to spiritual authority and powers. Stated differently, just as God had conferred extraordinary knowledge to the imam, he had also granted him the ability to perform extraordinary feats as a further basis for legitimizing his authority. Hence, the hagiographical accounts of the lives of the imams contain copious anecdotes of their miraculous abilities.

Whereas a Sufi holy man can perform miracles after attaining some degree of spiritual perfection, the imam is believed to be able to perform miracles at birth. Just like Jesus, Musa al-Kazim (d. 799), the seventh Shiʿi imam, is reported, for example, to have spoken from the cradle.[89] Muhammad al-Baqir reportedly had knowledge of the occult[90] and could provide vision to a blind disciple, Abu Basir al-Asadi.[91] Al-Kazim is even reported to have resuscitated the dead.[92] Some traditions further claim that the imams could traverse the universe with great ease, heal the sick, and walk on water.[93] Just as the imam is able to dominate men, the miracles allow him to dominate nature. He can communicate with animals and appear in far-distant places on the same day. The miraculous abilities of the imam are seen as verification of divine legitimation of the Shiʿi holy man's authority. These miraculous stories not only indicate the authority enjoyed by the imam over nature; they convey in a dramatic and powerful way the overwhelming powers of the imam. Miraculous acts are the most articulate and tangible expression of the supernatural abilities of the imam and a vital component in the recognition of his authority. More specifically, the miracles that the imam performs are seen as veritable

evidence that he has experienced the *numinous* and that, in return for his piety and devotion, he has been empowered with spiritual and temporal authority by the divine. The incredible accounts of the Shiʿi holy man are interwoven with the recurrent theme of the absolute requirement to accept the authority of and give allegiance to the imam of the time.

Many disciples of the imams are depicted as beneficiaries of their miraculous abilities. Al-Sadiq is reported to have stroked the face of the aforementioned Muʿalla b. Khunays, enabling him to see his distant family in Kufa. In another tradition that extols the miraculous abilities of the imam, when al-Sadiq heard of Muʿalla's execution, he prayed for Dawud b. ʿAli, the governor in Medina, to be killed. As soon as he lifted his head from prostration, al-Sadiq heard that the governor had died.[94] It is to be noted that the claims to extraordinary powers of the imams were not accepted by all Shiʿis. Fadl b. Shadhan, a prominent disciple of the eleventh imam, Hasan al-ʿAskari (d. 874), claimed that the imam of his time had correct knowledge of the *shariʿa* and could interpret the Qurʾan authentically but did not possess abilities to perform miracles nor was he conversant with all languages.[95]

The authority of the imam is also differentiated from that of the Sufi holy man by the belief in the preexistence of the imam. Before assuming a terrestrial existence, the imams were reportedly silhouettes of light revolving around the throne of the all-merciful.[96] The imams are also said to have existed as abstract entities in the form of light, shadows,[97] or particles.[98] In these states, they would acknowledge the unity of God and glorify Him. Various Qurʾanic verses are cited to vindicate the belief in the preexistence of the imams.[99]

The imam's celestial link and miraculous origins is further evinced in his method of conception. A mysterious being brings a special heavenly elixir to the imam who is then asked to copulate with his spouse that night. The imam is born from this special union that has cosmic origins.[100] As I discussed in the last chapter, the imam also possesses the weapons of the Prophet. These features collectively distinguish the true imam from other contenders for the imamate and from the Sufi holy men.

Comprehensive authority, hereditary charisma, biological lineage, celestial origins, and the special knowledge and powers of the imam mean that the Shiʿi understanding of authority is a conflation of the genealogical conception of sanctity with the miraculous. The phenomenon of complementary authorities means that the power of the imam is interwoven with his authority and sanctity. As a matter of fact, the imam enjoys multiple sources of authority since the other sources of authority that animate the Sufi holy men—modeling, *ʿilm,* spiritual travel, and supernatural powers—are also available to the Shiʿi imam. Due to this, the imam is more deeply connected with the center of authority. Those who have only a biological or spiritual connection have a technical but

not necessarily an intimate connection with the center.[101] Since they enjoyed multiple sources of authority, Shiʿis believe that *baraka* or blessing is diffused more comprehensively and exclusively through this particular lineage of the Prophet's family.

Visitation (Ziyara) to the Graves of the Imams

The Shiʿi belief in the charismatic authority of the imams and their extraordinary powers gave rise to the notion of holy places, especially where these holy men are buried. The sanctity and authority that are associated with the imams are transferred to the places that contain their bodies, as the spirituality of the imams is believed to be embodied in the space they have sacralized. The special spiritual powers of the Shiʿi holy men and the belief in the efficacy of their graves to grant *baraka* precipitated the belief that it was meritorious to visit (*ziyara*) these graves. It was at the shrine that both the *praesentia* and *potentia* of the Shiʿi holy man could be experienced.[102] The merits of visiting the shrines of the imams can be discerned from the following tradition reported from Jaʿfar al-Sadiq in Shiʿi sacred literature. He is reported to have said that every day 70,000 angels visit the grave of ʿAli who is believed to be buried in Najaf, near Kufa. Al-Sadiq is further reported to have stated that one who visits the grave of ʿAli will receive the reward equivalent of 100,000 martyrs and God will forgive his past and future sins.[103] Another tradition from al-Sadiq indicates that if the pilgrim walks to visit the shrine of ʿAli, then, for every footstep he takes, God will write for him the reward of performing two obligatory pilgrimages to Mecca (*hajj*) and one lesser pilgrimage (*ʿumra*).[104]

As a holy place where people visit to seek forgiveness and intercession, the shrine embodies the authority of the imam and mediates with the divine in the same way that the imam did during his lifetime. It is here that the Shiʿi comes to plead with the imam to use his intercessory powers. Even the Prophet and the angels pray for those visiting the shrine of al-Husayn.[105] Visitation to the shrine is prefaced by a series of detailed and formal pre-entrance rituals that clearly invoke a sense of reverence for the imam and the holy place that he has been buried at. Before entering the shrine, the pilgrim is recommended to express *reverentia* to the imam by performing a series of rituals.[106] In one tradition, Jaʿfar al-Sadiq explains that when he wishes to visit the shrine of Husayn in Kerbala, the pilgrim should first perform a ritual bath (*ghusl*) in the Euphrates River and send salutations to Husayn. By performing the *ghusl* in the river, the pilgrim becomes as pure as the day he was born.[107] The pilgrim is also asked to wear two pieces of clean clothes, walk in peace and tranquility, take short footsteps, be in a state of humility, to weep, and praise God while

sending greetings to the Prophet. The pilgrim is also to curse those who killed Husayn.[108] The imam then explains how to send salutations to Husayn at the door of the shrine.[109]

The rituals offered at the shrine of the imam differ markedly from those performed at the shrines of the Sufi holy men. Like their Sunni counterparts, Shiʿi jurists were suspicious of music as it could intoxicate or corrupt the soul. The Shiʿis also prohibited other Sufi practices such as the Sufi dances and criticized some of the Sufi states on the path. Thus, pilgrims do not perform *dhikr* or musical sessions at the shrines of the imams. Instead, the *ziyara* to the imams' grave is more structured and formal. The pilgrim initially sends salutations to the imam, acknowledges his authority, affirms allegiance to the imam, and then beseeches him to mediate with God.

The following excerpt of a *ziyara* offered to ʿAli in Najaf epitomizes the genre of salutations offered to the imams. After praising God and blessing the Prophet, the pilgrim states,

> I have come to you, O my master, O the trustworthy one of Allah and His proof, as a visitor, acknowledging your rights and befriending your friends, an enemy to your enemies, seeking closeness to Allah by visiting you. So intercede for me with Allah, your and my Lord, so that I may be free from hell and my needs are fulfilled in this and the next world. I bear witness that you are close to Allah, you are His door and you are the beloved of Allah, His face through which He is approached. You are the path to Allah, a servant of Allah, and the brother of His Prophet, peace be on him. I have come to you, seeking closeness to Allah, most mighty and majestic, by visiting you, seeking your intercession. I ask for your intercession so as to be saved from hell. I seek refuge from hell through you, running away from my sins that are a burden. I have come running to you, hoping for the mercy of my Lord. I have come to you seeking your intercession, O my master. Through you, I seek closeness to Allah so that my needs are fulfilled. So intercede with Allah for me, O Commander of the Faithful, for I am the servant of Allah and your follower. I am visiting you for you have a praiseworthy station, a notable and eminent position with Allah.[110]

Salvific efficacy is extended to the shrines, for it is believed that by visiting the imam and acknowledging his authority, the pilgrim is assured of salvation. For example, it is believed that performing the *ziyara* of the seventh imam, Musa al-Kazim, is like performing the *ziyara* of the Prophet. One who visits the seventh imam in al-Kadhimayn, Iraq, will be rewarded with heaven.[111] The Shiʿite faithful also congregate at the shrines to hear repeated affirmation of the historical injustices endured by the progeny of the Prophet. This is an important ritual as it helps mediate Shiʿi Islam to the younger generation. The

lectures or sermons delivered at the shrines seek to prove the verities of Shiʿi beliefs and liturgical practices, thereby reaffirming the authority of the imams over the populace. They also act as a catalyst for moral edification, teaching Shiʿis that their sacred history demands allegiance to the family of the Prophet under all circumstances. Thus, the shrines and the rituals that are performed there become important tools in perpetuating Shiʿi heritage and ethos.[112] The *ziyara* becomes a statement of Shiʿi piety and reinforces the emotional attachment and devotion to the imams. It reaffirms the belief in the powers of the imams to intercede for the pilgrim and is also seen as an affirmation of the pilgrim's love and commitment to the cause of the imams and an acknowledgment of their hereditary charismatic authority.

Like the shrine of the Sufi saint, the *praesentia* of the imam at the shrine is interwoven with his *potentia,* his power to assist the pilgrims. Due to his *potentia,* the imam is also believed to bring to God the needs of his community. The mediatory function of the imam is a testament to his *potentia* and makes him a focus of hopes and an agent of cure. These curative and intercessory powers enable him to impart blessings and intercede for his followers long after his death.

The shrines of the imams are also believed to embody their charisma. Whether he is alive or dead, the spirituality of the imam is embodied in the space he has sacralized. The presence of the imam in the grave provides the laity the opportunity to experience the *baraka* that pervades the imam because it is believed that his shrine is an important channel for the transmission of divine blessings. Touching the shrine of the imam or any object associated with it is seen as an effective medium to experience this *baraka*. It is the shrine that makes the imam's charisma widely felt and accessible, for here he is able to disseminate *baraka* to the pilgrims.

Religious identity, expressions of patterns of authority, love and loyalty, are revitalized through the *ziyara* and the rituals at the places these holy men have sacralized by their presence. The *ziyara* evokes the *praesentia* and *potentia* of the imams, indicating to the participants that the imams are as powerful and charismatic in their deaths as they were in their lives. At the shrines of the imams, the pilgrim is also able to experience the charisma, curative, and salvific powers of the imam. In addition, the belief that the sick can be cured at the shrine and the enhanced social status enjoyed by those who are cured further augment the authority of the imam.[113]

The Ziyara through Objects and the Corpse Traffic

As in Sufi shrine rituals, visitation to the shrine of the imam is connected to the use of a whole range of paraphernalia associated with the imam, his

shrine, and related material objects. Objects help construct the physical presence of the imam and extend his sanctity, charisma, and powers beyond the shrine. In this way, these vehicles anthropomorphize the sanctity of the imam. Objects and the shrine itself collectively create an image of a miraculous agency working through the imam long after his death. At the same time, objects extend the *praesentia* and *potentia* of the imam beyond the shrine complex, allowing distant Shiʿis to experience the imam's curative and other miraculous powers.

Pilgrims return bearing symbolic substances (like relics or the soil of Kerbala) imbued with sacred power. Such objects perform another important function. They evoke the memories and emotional passion associated with the shrines of the imams, and facilitate the performance of pilgrimage in the home country if the pilgrim cannot travel to the shrines themselves. Thus, the objects that are kept at homes are used to interact with the imams in the same way that a pilgrim would at the holy places.

The belief in the authority and charismatic appeal of the imams gave rise to the notion of the sanctity of their burial places. Popular Shiʿi belief maintains that it is meritorious to be buried in close proximity to their burial places. Just as the believer sought to visit the shrine of the imam when he was alive, he chooses to be close to him after his death.

Shiʿi sacred literature also recommends that purgatory (*barzakh*), identified as the period between death and resurrection, should be spent in close proximity to the imams. The cemetery in Najaf, called Wadi al-Salaam (valley of peace), is a favorite burial ground for many Shiʿis. The significance of Najaf is connected to the burial site of ʿAli. Not only was ʿAli a powerful religious, political, and spiritual figure in his life, it is believed that he can also be implored and beseeched for help after his death. Shiʿi traditions relate that burial in the vicinity of ʿAli's grave will obviate the questioning by the angels in the grave when a person is initially buried.[114]

A prominent jurist of the last century, Ayatullah al-Khuʾi (d. 1992) states that, according to some traditions, those buried in Najaf will not be punished in the grave.[115] Other traditions even claim that those who are buried in the vicinity of ʿAli's tomb will enter heaven without being questioned.[116] This is based on the belief in ʿAli as a protector and intercessor and is further evidence of the purported salvific efficacy of the imams.

The fact that burial near the shrines of the imams is emphasized and sought after by the Shiʿis corroborates the view that both the *praesentia* and *potentia* of the imam can be experienced after his death. The special sanctity of and rewards for burial near the shrines of the imams generated the practice of corpse traffic, a practice that was encouraged after the Safawids came to power in Iran in 1501. Although Shiʿi scholars have ruled that it is prohibited to exhume

bodies, this is allowed under some circumstances. They have permitted the practice of exhuming and transporting the corpse to a holy place so as to gain the rewards of burial near the imams. Shaykh Jaʿfar Kashif al-Ghita (d. 1812), an important jurist, issued a ruling allowing the transportation of corpses.[117] According to a contemporary Shiʿi jurist, Ayatullah Seestani, "When the deceased has willed that his body be transferred to sacred places before burial, and if it was intentionally or forgetfully buried elsewhere, then the body can be exhumed, provided that doing so does not result in any disrespect to the deceased."[118]

The transportation of corpses to the holy places increased though the ages especially as the number of Shiʿis living outside of Iraq increased. The notion of transporting a corpse indicates that both the *praesentia* (burial in the proximity to the imams) and *potentia* (in the form of intercessory powers) of the imam can be experienced even after the death of the faithful Shiʿi. The corpse traffic also reflects the enduring authority of the imam long after his death.

The Shiʿi Holy Men in Sufi Literature

The present discussion on esoteric Shiʿism and the sanctity and authority of the imams suggests that there is much conceptual convergence between Sufism and Shiʿism. The spiritual legacy of the imams led the Shiʿi holy men to play an important role in the construction of the spiritual edifice in the classical period of Islamic spirituality. However, the importance of the imams as spiritual guides extends beyond esoteric Shiʿism. The imams feature prominently in Sufi literature too, not as imams in the Shiʿi theological sense, but as great mystical, esoteric figures.

This coalescing of Shiʿi, Sunni, and Sufi tendencies in the figure of the imams can be discerned from a study of figures like ʿAli b. Abu Talib and Jaʿfar al-Sadiq. For the Shiʿis, ʿAli is the first divinely appointed imam, having inherited the Prophet's spiritual and temporal authority and his extraordinary powers. For the Sunnis, he is the last of the rightly guided caliphs, a much venerated and respected figure. For the Sufis, he is a prominent ascetic and an archetype of spirituality in the early period of Islam. Many Sufi orders are traced to him since he appears as the spiritual authority par excellence after the Prophet.[119] The reverence with which ʿAli is held by Shiʿis and Sufis alike shows, to some degree, how Shiʿism and Sufism are connected at the esoteric level. The parallels between early Shiʿi and Sufi figures are extended to some companions of the Prophet. The early Sufi ascetic, Abu Dharr al-Ghaffari (d. 653), is identified as a prominent Shiʿi figure due to his pro-ʿAlid stance.

The confluence between esoteric Shiʿi and Sufi holy men and the spiritual functions of the imams are further corroborated by a study of the lives of early

Sufi figures like al-Hasan al-Basri, Bishr b. al-Harith al-Hafi (d. 841), and Bayazid al-Bistami (d. 877–878), who were in close contact with the Shiʿi imams. Other Sufi figures like Abu Bakr Shibli (d. 945), and al-Junayd (d. 910) were also affiliated to the Shiʿis.[120]

The special sanctity of the imams and their descendants is acknowledged by Sufis for, like the Shiʿis, they also revere the family of the Prophet.[121] Sufis also include one or more of the first eight imams among their spiritual ancestors. This is because these eight imams formed the "golden chain," linking subsequent generations to the Prophet himself.[122] They also formed genealogical, spiritual, and *isnad* (transmitters of *hadith*) chains. For example, ʿAli al-Rida, the eighth Shiʿi imam taught Maʿruf al-Karkhi (d. 815), who then brought Sufism to Baghdad. Maʿruf had reportedly converted to Islam due to the pervasive influence of al-Rida.[123] Other Sufi groups like the Bektashi, Kubrawiya, and Niʿmatullah trace their lineage to ʿAli b. Abu Talib through ʿAli al-Rida and Maʿruf al-Karkhi.[124] Naqshbandi Sufis believe that all twelve imams deserve reverence and can function as spiritual guides after their deaths.[125] Naqshbandi genealogies normally include at least one of the following Shiʿi imams: Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, ʿAli al-Rida, or ʿAli b. Abu Talib.[126]

The common spiritual heritage and connection between the Shiʿi and Sufi holy men can be further discerned from the influence of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq. He was, according to Abu Nuʿaym al-Isfahani and Farid al-Din ʿAttar, among the foremost saints and mystics[127] and an early Sufi teacher. His influence on Sufism can also be corroborated from reports that he composed a mystical commentary (*tafsir*) on the Qurʾan[128] and authored works on mysticism.[129] Al-Sadiq's spiritual affinity is further confirmed in Sufi literature in which he is portrayed as an ascetic and known for his esoteric articulation of mystical thoughts in his search for the ultimate truth, *haqiqa.*[130] Jaʿfar al-Sadiq's mystical ideas and the fact that the Sufis view him as a great mystical teacher suggest that there were many parallels between Shiʿi and Sufi mystical concepts and figures in the early period of Sufi thought.

In Sufi circles, veneration of the Shiʿi imams and the progeny of the Prophet extends to the popular levels. Egyptians believe that by the virtues and blessings of the *ahl al-bayt* (family of the Prophet), God answers every prayer and fulfills hope. Love for the family of the Prophet is seen as obligatory for all those who love God and the Prophet. This is because the love for the *ahl al-bayt* has many spiritual benefits for those who travel the Sufi path.[131] Like his sister Zaynab, Husayn (d. 680), the grandson of the Prophet, is intensely venerated and loved. He is addressed as *Baba* (father) in Egypt. It is believed that he can cure both physical and spiritual illnesses.[132]

The preceding discussion indicates that both Shiʿism and Sufism are interwoven with the esoteric dimension of the Islamic revelation and that, in their

early history, both were inspired by the same sources and shared many common views. Due to the common spiritual heritage, there is much agreement on issues like authority, its transmission, *baraka,* qualities of the holy man, and, to some degree, the identity of the saints. Furthermore, Shiʿi mystical tradition shares many features with mainstream Sufism, such as the development of powers of self-denial, acts of devotion, and asceticism. Like Sufism, the very heart of Shiʿi mysticism is the distinction between subject and object and an experience of the world in which the seer and the seen are one.[133]

Shiʿism and Sufism also share other concepts regarding spirituality. In both traditions, transmission of spiritual teachings and authority is symbolized by the presence of hidden knowledge and instruction, the extraordinary and efficacious powers of the holy men, and the use of spiritual hermeneutics in the understanding of the Qurʾan. All imams are believed to have inherited and subsequently bequeathed the cloak of the Prophet.

Shiʿite archetypal notions of their imams resonate closely with Sufi conceptions of their holy men. Like the Sufi shaykh, the imam is believed to possess the divine light that he transmits to his successor. Each imam is said to designate his own successor and transmit the esoteric lore that enables him to discover and authentically interpret the sacred meaning of scripture. Similarly, Shiʿis seek a path to God through the mediation of the imam just as Sufis seek union with God through the instruction of the shaykh. Like the Sufi holy men, the imams lead an active social life and interact with the community. As a matter of fact, social interaction reinforces rather than replaces their spiritual authority.

Distinctions between Shiʿi and Sufi Holy Men

The parallels between the Sufi and Shiʿi holy men that have been discussed should not disguise significant differences that exist between them. Due to the comprehensive authority of the imam, Shiʿism predicates a much broader definition of the holy man. Whereas the authority of the Sufi shaykh is predicated primarily on his spiritual traits, the authority of the Shiʿi holy man rests on other features like *ʿilm, nass,* and *ʿisma*. Among these three principles, *ʿisma* (infallibility) ensures that the imam acts in a just manner and provides an infallible esoteric interpretation of the Qurʾan. This factor also ensures that the imam is free from corruption and enables him to preserve and transmit the holiness he inherits. The doctrine of *ʿisma* makes the Shiʿi holy man an infallible spiritual director, a spiritual figure that the Sufis could not produce.

The holy man in Sufism emerges through time when he is sufficiently empowered to display saint-like qualities and perform miracles. He is also recognized on the basis of inherited capacities (the *sayyid* form), or on the basis of

demonstrating ascetic qualities in his demeanor. The Shiʿi holy man, on the other hand, is born holy since Shiʿism posits holiness as an intrinsic rather than an acquired trait of the imam. It is his lineage, the knowledge bestowed on him, and God's will that determine his sanctity. Stated differently, the Shiʿi imam cannot choose not to be holy. The Sufi holy man, on the other hand, may attain his holy status by being a disciple of a shaykh, or by acquiring his lore and knowledge, and often after undertaking extensive ascetic exercises. Furthermore, whereas the Sufi holy man acquires *baraka* because of his acts and piety, the Shiʿi holy man is infused by it at the time of his birth. As a matter of fact, *baraka* pervades the figure of the imam from his very birth.

The Sufi shaykh can only perform miracles once he has traversed some stages on the path (*tariqa*). For a Sufi, miracles are incidental occurrences that can distract him from his goal of self-realization. For the imam, miracles are intrinsic to him. Just like the ability to dissipate *baraka,* the imam is believed to be capable of performing miracles from birth. The twelfth Shiʿi imam, the Mahdi, for example, is reported to have testified to the imamate of his eleven predecessors when he was born.[134] A distinction should also be made between the Shiʿi and Sufi view of the miracles performed by their holy men. Whereas prophets and imams can work miracles, Sufi saints are deemed capable of *karamat* (favors from God), a lesser form of this type of occurrence.[135] Many Sufis distance themselves from such narratives, seeing them as potential snares on their path to God.

The Holy and Shariʿ Men: A Comparison

The product of the various patterns of authority and functions of acquiring and transmitting religious knowledge, which I have discussed in this and the previous chapter, was to increase the prestige and status of the holy and *shariʿ* men, both of whom had laid claims to being the veritable heirs of the Prophet. A comparison of the holy and *shariʿ* men affords a comparative insight into the world of those who exercised religious authority in the Muslim community.

Through the various modes that I have outlined, Sufi shaykhs also claim to have acquired the charisma of the Prophet. Hence, they contest the *shariʿ* men's claim to be the exclusive heirs of the Prophet. The Sufi holy men consider themselves to be the heirs of the Prophet insofar as they lay claims to the spiritual authority of the Prophet. Other shaykhs are heirs to the Prophet based on a genealogical link to him or having duplicated his spiritual journey. By imitating the Prophet in minute detail, the Sufis even claim to have acquired the *baraka* of the Prophet. These experiences collectively explicate and vindicate Sufi claims to be the heirs of the Prophet.

The *shariʿ* man derives his authority from the Prophet based on transmitted knowledge in textual sources. The jurist is fired by a passion for codified law since his primary concern is to articulate and explicate the law in minute details, offering, in the process, nuanced interpretations of legal verses in the Qurʾan.[136] His stress on explicating and implementing the *shariʿa* suggests that he is not concerned with establishing esoteric communication with the transcendent. Rather, in his view, soteriology is contingent on the correct understanding and performance of the law. Due to the focus on the exoteric dimension of Islam, the *shariʿ* man emphasizes obedience to rather than the love for God. Since the law is sufficient proof of God's existence, the *shariʿ* man is not concerned with performing miracles or with proving God's existence in any other way.

Contrary to the outlook of the holy man, the *shariʿ* man does not locate holiness in any mystical ascension or union with the infinite. Rather, fulfillment of the holy lies, for him, in the actualization of the *shariʿa* in the empirical world. Central to the holy man's differences with the *shariʿ* man is the latter's confining of religious knowledge to jurisprudence, *hadith,* biographical literature, Qurʾanic exegesis, and other exoteric sciences.

The epistemological approach of the *shariʿ* man is decidedly different from that of the holy man. The latter's approach is to experience the divine in this world, to overcome his base qualities and replace them with divine-like qualities. Although the holy man in Islam does not disregard the realm of the *shariʿ* man, his emphasis is on the inner world, the spiritual path that will lead to illumination and spiritual purification. In addition, the holy man talks of the removal of veils, which allows him to enter into the station of contemplative vision (*maqam al-shuhud*) and the domain of invisible things (*maqam al-ghuyub*).

Furthermore, whereas the jurist functions within the context of revealed texts, the shaykh works within the realms of mystical experience. The holy man stresses the need for exploring a different, more esoteric understanding of Islamic texts. As I have discussed in this chapter, Ibn ʿArabi's Qurʾanic esoteric exegesis differed appreciably from that of traditional Muslim exegetes. The divergent understanding and esoteric explication of the same text and concepts were bound to provoke the ire of the traditionally minded scholars who saw the danger in such mystical analysis of the sacred text.

The distinction between the visions of the holy and *shariʿ* men can be discerned from how they view the principle of *tawhid,* the belief in God's unity. The *shariʿ* man sees *tawhid* as an affirmation of a theological doctrine; a formal attestation and confirmation of the belief in divine unity, the transcendent God. For the holy man, *tawhid* means that the ultimate reality is only God, and that everything else besides God is a mere illusion. Whenever he sees an object, he sees the presence of God before it. *Tawhid* also means, for the holy man, traversing a path that

culminates at the stage where he is absorbed in divine unity. He is at one with God, a point at which the distinction between the subject and object is obliterated. Whereas the *shariʿ* man sees *tawhid* as the attestation of God's unity and complete submission to His will, the shaykh sees it as the way to perfection; the experience of God's unity, or to be at one with Him.

Charisma of the Shariʿ and Holy Men

As I discussed in the last chapter, for the *shariʿ* man, routinization of charisma means that the founder's charisma is transformed into the office of charisma. Sufism, on the other hand, does not delineate a linear development from charisma to stable authority structures, that is, the office of charisma. Charisma, for the Sufis, is to be found primarily in the charismatic individual, the holy man. It may be inherited or acquired by his traversing the Sufi path (*tariqa*). It is then diffused to different levels of society. Vestiges of the holy man's charisma endure in different ways and can be felt even at his shrine or through the *baraka* that he dispenses. Whether it is acquired or inherited, the charisma of the holy man is in contradistinction to the charisma of office as defined by the *shariʿ* man. This is because the latter's authority is based on the routinization of the pure charisma of the founder. The charisma of the charismatic leader is initially diffused in the office, and gradually dissipates or disappears.

The shaykh's charisma, on the other hand, is based on his self-denial and self-mastery, on his love, and ability to reach out to others. This personal charisma is fused with deep inner piety and a spiritual orientation so that he can touch the hearts of those he meets. It is the inherited or acquired personal charisma that distinguishes the holy man and enables him to interpret the same scripture that the *shariʿ* man reads in a different way. In this, *baraka* also plays an important role, for it is *baraka* that empowers the holy man to have spiritual insights into the scripture.

The holy man introduced the genealogization of charisma together with saint worship, the brotherhoods, and hereditary leadership. The *shariʿ* man, on the other hand, tried to replace this synthesis with one based on a properly defined credal and juridical orthodoxy. The distinction between the two forms of charismatic authority is further evinced in the way they view *baraka*. In the concept of *baraka* can be seen the disjuncture between inherited charisma and the charisma of office that the *shariʿ* men had created. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, *baraka* is an essential component in the Sufi conceptualization of the authority of the holy man. *Baraka* is an indication of the charisma and powers of the holy man and his experience of the *numinous*. By acquiring and then transmitting *baraka,* the authority of the holy man is

acknowledged and enhanced. Contrary to the outlook of the holy man, the *shariʿ* man is not concerned with dissipating *baraka* or performing miracles. Moreover, the *shariʿ* man does not seek a mediating figure nor does he visit a shaykh or shrine to acquire *baraka*. Since the original charisma dissipates and gradually vanishes, each person approaches God directly, without any recourse to a shaykh or charismatic figure. This contrast shows clearly the distinction between the powers of the person-centered authority of the holy man with the scripture-centered authority of the jurist.[137]

The coexistence of two contrasting forms of charismatic authority means that Sufi shaykhs are an alternate, spiritual elite, in competition with the *shariʿ* men for the loyalty of the masses. Intrinsically, Sufism is distinctly plebian and more appealing to the masses. The laity is likely to be attracted by the more tolerant and lax attitude of the holy men than the rigorous demands of the *shariʿ* men. It is here that the two heirs of the Prophet, the holy and *shariʿ* men, rival each other. Due to this, relationships between the Sufi holy men and the *shariʿ* men are frequently uneasy. The holy men are often viewed with much consternation by the *shariʿ* men. The confrontation between the two has led to the confinement, rather than assertion of, the spiritual life within the wider circle of religious orthodoxy.

Tensions between the two modes of authority are further exacerbated when the holy man's inner experience takes social expression. His attempts at communicating his mystical experience inevitably lead to a clash of these two forms of authority. His articulation of personal experience, the esoteric hermeneutic of traditional texts, his mediatory role and charismatic appeal, combined with the purported ability to perform miracles, are often seen as a threat to the religious authority established by the men of the law. Moreover, statements made by some holy men are bound to scandalize the *ʿulamaʾ*. For example, al-Hallaj was executed for his seemingly blasphemous statement "I am the truth." ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Gilani (d. 1166) is reported to have stated that "my foot is on the neck of every mystic"[138] whereas Bayazid Bistami reportedly exclaimed, "Glory be to me."[139] Ibn Batuta (d. 1377) records an incident in which a holy man was condemned to death by some *qadis* for claiming that he was above the Prophet since he could abstain from women.[140]

Similarly, tensions between the *shariʿ* and holy men manifested themselves at different points in Shiʿi history. Sensing the challenge of Sufism, the Shiʿi *shariʿ* man, Muqaddas al-Ardabili (d. 1585) declared Sufism to be characterized by an unacceptable belief in unification with the divine and the manifestation of the divine in human beings.[141] He also condemned the Sufis as being *kafir*s (unbelievers) and *zindiq*s (atheists). Another *shariʿ* man, al-Hurr al-ʿAmili (d. 1693), wrote a tract refuting the views and practices of Sufism.

Seventeenth-century Iran witnessed a great tussle for authority between the gnostic Shiʿis, led by Sadra al-Din Shirazi, also known as Mulla Sadra (d. 1641), and the legally minded *shariʿ* men, led by ʿAllama Majlisi the second (d. 1699). The holy men, whether they were Sufis or Shiʿis, shared a profound disillusion with the *shariʿ* men who had claimed an exclusivist interpretation of Islamic revelation. They were also highly critical of the Shiʿi *shariʿ* men's intent to monopolize religious power and confine religious experience in terms of formal obedience to the law. The *Sih al-Asl,* written by Mulla Sadra, is a theosophical discussion of the sciences of the soul, which Sadra believes is the key to all sciences. In this text, Mulla Sadra attacks the *ʿulamaʾ* for their overly legalistic approach. He is highly critical of the ignorance and stifling attitude of the *ʿulamaʾ* who were committed to the letter of the law and exoteric dimension of religious teaching.[142] Sadra is also appalled at the growing power and monopoly of the scholars and their contention that the masses are to blindly follow their religious edicts. To minimize the religious persecution that he had to endure, Sadra sought refuge in a small village near Qum for ten years. He even had to resort to *taqiyya* (dissimulation) and wrote in a cryptic manner. In the process of marginalizing the holy man, the *shariʿ* men declared themselves to be the sole guardians and interpreters of the Qurʾan and the traditions of the Prophet and imams.

However, we should not construe the relationship between the jurist and the mystic to be always antithetical. Sufi practices and traditions do not constitute a separate entity; rather, they are woven into Islamic normative law. This is because there is no intrinsic contradiction between Islamic spirituality and a close adherence to Islamic law. The holy men had to be well acquainted with knowledge of the law for the *shariʿa* was deemed to be the prerequisite for the *tariqa*. Esotericism, therefore, supplemented rather than replaced exotericism. There was another reason why the holy man had to be well versed in Islamic law. To avoid the assiduous accusations of being negligent of the law, the holy man had to demonstrate faithful adherence to the *sunna* (practices of the Prophet). Thus, the outer demeanor of the holy man had to conform to the demands set by the *ʿulamaʾ*'s explication of normative *sunna*. In addition, due to the principle of spiritual modeling that I outlined earlier, the holy man had to be well versed in Islamic law. This was essential for one who sought to base his private and public demeanor on the archetypal figure of the Prophet.

Many holy men studied, practiced, and preached formal Islam. In the medieval period, the holy man in the Moroccan countryside was a defender of and spokesman for normative Islam and played a vital role in the spread of Islam. He was both a legal scholar and a mystic.[143] Al-Ghazali (d. 1111) is perhaps the best example of a *shariʿ*-cum-holy man who reconciled Islamic mysticism with orthodoxy. The Hanbali jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) criticized hard-hearted

ʿ*ulamaʾ* for making blanket condemnations of all forms of Sufism.[144] Writing in the fourteenth century, the Shiʿi gnostic Haider ʿAmuli attempted to reconcile the esoteric and exoteric dimensions of Shiʿism. He urged the orthodox Shiʿi *shariʿ* men to accept the validity of the mystics' esoteric interpretation of the imams' teachings. He openly declared that his spiritual mentors were the imams and the people of unity (*ahl al-tawhid*) among the Sufis. In recent times, Khumayni (d. 1989) rebuked the *shariʿ* men in the Islamic seminaries for their outright condemnation of Shiʿi mystics. He tried to reconcile gnosticism with mainstream law and creed-centered Shiʿism.[145]According to Hamid Algar, when he began to speak against the Shah in 1963, Khumayni had completed the preliminary and essential "journey to God," and was ready to engage actively in politics.[146]

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that besides the jurists, the Sufi shaykhs and Shiʿi imams also saw themselves as the "heirs of the Prophet." The authority of the *shariʿ* man is predicated on his comprehension, interpretation, and articulation of normative law. The Sufi holy man seeks legitimacy for his claim to be the heir of the Prophet by tracing his spiritual and genealogical lineage to the Prophet and replicating his spiritual experience. As the spiritual heir to the Prophet, the holy man exemplifies the living paradigm of the prophetic ideal. Such modeling becomes an important source of authority for the holy man as he seeks to link himself to the Prophet through a spiritual paradigm. The holy man's authority is accentuated at the social level by his intercessory roles, especially as he is believed to have access to the divine. By tracing the Islamic roots of the holy man and their own spiritual authority to the Prophet, the Sufis vindicate their claims to be spiritual heirs of the Prophet and the holy men of Islam of their times.

Being the heir of the Prophet also means, for the Sufi holy man, partaking in his spiritual attributes and light. Whereas the scholar is an heir in the sense that he comprehends, preserves, and transmits the Prophet's knowledge, the Sufi is an heir in that he treads the spiritual path that has been articulated by the Prophet. Saintly qualities have not only to be acquired, they have also to be asserted in and recognized by the public. These occur through the holy man's saintly appearance and demeanor, the performance of various genres of miracles, and the training of disciples who can experience and promulgate his saintly qualities. The authority of the holy man is further enhanced at the shrine where his *praesentia* and *potentia* can be experienced. Holy objects can extend his authority to remote places removing, thereby, the need to visit the shrine of the holy man.

As immediate descendants of the Prophet, the Shiʿi imams also claimed to have inherited his charismatic authority, knowledge, incredible powers, and weapons. These collective features enabled them to advance their own, exclusivist claims to be the true heirs of the Prophet. The power that was inextricably linked to the knowledge and other traits of the imams enabled them to have access to the *numinous,* allowing them to experience, to use Otto's typology, the tremendousness, mystery, and fascination of the divine.

The imam derives his authority from the traits as well as charisma that he reportedly inherits from the Prophet. The Sufi holy man derives his authority from his direct experience of the *numinous,* the traits he cultivates, and different forms of the link to the Prophet. The *shariʿ* man's authority, on the other hand, is predicated on his functions as the inheritor and preserver of the prophetic *ʿilm*.

Through the different ways of linking themselves to the Prophet, the Sufi holy men, the scholars, and the Shiʿi imams each appropriated the title "heirs of the Prophet" for themselves. The net effect was to establish rivalry between the contending heirs. In the process, inherited charisma often had to contend with the presence of its routinized form. It is to the question of the clash between different types of charismatic authority in the Shiʿi world that I turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Routinization of Charismatic Authority: The Shiʿi Case

Ask those who remember if you do not know.
(Qurʾan: 21:7)

IN CHAPTERS ONE AND TWO, I traced the emergence of the *shariʿ* and holy men in Islam, and examined the basis of their claims to be the heirs of the Prophet. The needs of the times and the dissolution or transmission of the Prophet's charismatic authority precipitated the rise of multivariate forms of authority. In chapter one, I also discussed the routinization of the Prophet's comprehensive, charismatic authority soon after his death in those Muslim circles that later came to be identified with Sunni Islam. The Shiʿis, on the other hand, posited a differentiated concept of the authority of the *shariʿ* and holy men. They affirmed the transmission of the Prophet's authority to his successors, the imams. In this chapter, I propose to examine the routinization of charismatic authority in Shiʿi Islam.

As I noted in chapter one, Weber posited the routinization of charisma to be an inexorable product of the waning of pure charisma. Routinization, according to Weber, is the return to a more mundane and ordinary mode of existence that emerges after the death of a charismatic leader. Once it is routinized, the essential characteristic of charisma as a force for social change is attenuated. In the process of depersonalization, charismatic domination becomes institutionalized so that charisma becomes a mere component (sometimes a very insignificant constituent) of a new social structure that emerges after the death of the charismatic leader.

However, Weber's typology of charismatic authority does not envisage the conceptual convergence and confluence of the two modes of authority, charisma and its routinized form. In addition, Weber does not speculate on the possible ramifications of the juxtaposition of these two types of authorities. I will argue in this chapter that Shiʿism in the eighth century manifests a major variation from the traditionally accepted Weberian understanding of the rise of routinized charisma. Contrary to what Weber postulated, routinization in eighth-century Shiʿism does not exhibit a linear evolution from charisma to stable authority structures, that is, the office of charisma. In fact, the charisma of the imams was institutionalized during, rather than after, their lifetimes. As I will discuss, routinization of the imams' charismatic authority was interwoven with the need to provide religious guidance to their followers in far-flung areas.

Hereditary Charismatic Authority and the Shiʿi Worldview

A corollary to the concept of the imams' hereditary charisma is the Shiʿi worldview, which maintains that the imams, as the inheritors of the Prophet's comprehensive, charismatic authority, are to provide authoritative guidance to their followers at all times. The view that the teachings of the imams must be disseminated to the community even under the most inimical conditions precipitated the need for the agency of the disciples of the imams, the *rijal*.[1] After all, if the imams could not communicate with their followers, what was there to stop them from appointing agents who could perform the same function on their behalf?

It was, above all, the question of the perpetuation of divine guidance through the leadership of the imams that necessitated authoritative figures who could perform the functions of the imams and express their will to their followers when access to the imams became difficult. In fact, the question of authoritative guidance to the community was a consistent *topos* in Shiʿi discussions on the contribution of the *rijal*. The constant surveillance of the imams that was reportedly exercised by the caliphal authorities[2] meant the imams had to abandon their political ambitions, especially in view of the numerous ʿAlid revolts against the ʿAbbasids, all of which had ended in failure.[3] In all probability, it was the failure of the various ʿAlid revolts to overthrow the ʿAbbasid regime and the repressive measures adopted by the caliphs against any opposition to their regime that persuaded the imams to accentuate their role as the exponents of the *shariʿa* rather than assuming the comprehensive, sociopolitical leadership that had been envisaged for the Prophet himself.

The bifurcation of the imams' religious and temporal roles was clearly implied in many statements reported from the imams in which they dissuaded their zealous followers from engaging in any political activity. For example, when ʿAbd al-Malik b. Aʿyan (n.d.) wept in front of Muhammad al-Baqir and lamented that he had hoped to witness the rising of the eschatological leader, the Mahdi, the imam is quoted as telling him, "Are you not satisfied that your enemies are killing each other while you [reside] safely in your homes?"[4] Similarly, Hariz b. ʿAbd Allah al-Sijistani, a prominent jurist and transmitter of *hadith,* was rebuked by Jaʿfar al-Sadiq for joining in an armed rebellion against the Kharijis.[5]

Political theory, as articulated by the imams, maintained that the office of the imamate should not be contingent on the imam's investiture as a political leader. Rather, due to the adverse political circumstances, the imams' duty to exercise political authority was held in abeyance until the conditions would become more conducive for them to assume the comprehensive authority that they inherited from the Prophet.[6] The depoliticization of the imamate and the imams' recoil from political activities also enabled them to devote themselves to the explication of various juridical and doctrinal topics, founding, in the process, alternative legal and theological schools and accentuating their religious rather than political authority. In the process of depoliticizing the imamate, Shiʿi leaders like Muhammad al-Baqir and Jaʿfar al-Sadiq emerged as authoritative figures whose scholarly discourses encapsulated a multiplicity of topics, which were simultaneously debated in the Sunni milieu. The subjects discussed ranged from legal and theological issues to Qurʾanic exegesis and the enunciation of ethical precepts.[7] Gradually, Shiʿism under the imams became an introverted, quietist movement.

Another important ramification of the depoliticization of the imams' authority in eighth-century Shiʿism was the delegation of this authority to their disciples. The rise to prominence of certain individuals, who undertook various functions on behalf of the imams, should be construed as a pragmatic response to the Shiʿi community's need for religious leadership and guidance on the one hand, and the inability of the imams to have continuous access to their followers on the other. The imams reportedly trained the *rijal* so that they could transmit their teachings in the legal, theological, and ethical realms to their distant followers. In addition, the imams are reported to have instructed their disciples on how to engage in various genres of debates with their interlocutors.[8] These disciples were dispersed in various areas of the Islamic world like Kufa, Qum, and Khurasan.

The delegation of the imams' authority to their close associates was an important landmark in Shiʿi intellectual history insofar as it signified a transition from the centralized, universal, charismatic authority of the imams to a more

structured and regionalized charismatic office of the *rijal*. In the process of divesting their authority to their close disciples, the imams were routinizing their charismatic domination and diffusing their charisma into a nascent, symbiotic structure, one that was dominated by the *rijal*.

Routinization and the Delegation of Authority

In discussing the routinization of the imams' charisma, it is essential to comprehend, at the outset, the process by which the imams invested authority in their close associates and the significance of this process in establishing the charismatic office of the *rijal*. At the beginning of his biographical work (*kitab al-rijal*), Kashshi cites a tradition from Jaʿfar al-Sadiq in which he quotes the Prophet as saying,

> This religion will be carried in every century by an upright person through whom the invalid interpretations will be nullified and the deviation of the extremists and false claims of the ignorant persons (*jahilin*) will be refuted.[9]

The above report is collocated with other traditions of similar purport. The traditions emphasize the importance of acknowledging the significant contribution of the *rijal* as the reliable transmitters of the traditions of the imams and the bearers of their divinely bestowed knowledge. In addition, Kashshi cites other reports, which indicate that the imams encouraged their close associates to acquire and disseminate their teachings. In his *Usul al-Kafi,* Kulayni quotes Muhammad al-Baqir as telling Muhammad b. Muslim al-Thaqafi (d. 767), a prominent disciple, to "acquire knowledge from its bearers and teach it to your brothers in faith (*ikhwan*) just as the *ʿulamaʾ* have taught it to you."[10]

Any claim to exercise authority on behalf of the imam had to be furnished with proper evidence of delegation from the imams. It was only through an explicit authorization from the imams that the *rijal* could substantiate their claims that the authenticated form of *ʿilm* was being transmitted. Once their position as the representatives of the imams had been ratified, the *rijal* could both contribute toward the edification and promulgation of Shiʿi dogma and play significant and active roles in the judicial and financial affairs of the community.[11]

In substantiating reports of the imams' delegation of their authority to the *rijal,* Shiʿi biographical sources record various laudatory remarks in favor of the close disciples of the imams. For example, Kashshi quotes Jaʿfar al-Sadiq as saying, "Abu Basir al-Muradi (n.d.), Burayd b. Muʿawiya (d. 767), Zurara (d. 767), and Muhammad b. Muslim are the tent pegs (*awtad*) of the world."

Had it not been for them, al-Sadiq continues, "the prophetic traditions would have been disrupted and obliterated."[12] Apart from indicating al-Sadiq's high regard for these *rijal,* the report attempts to establish the preponderance (in the comprehension of the teachings of the imam) of certain disciples over others concerning whom such favorable remarks were absent.

Al-Sadiq is further quoted as saying that Zurara, along with three other associates of his, were "the protectors of religion and the confidants of my father in matters pertaining to the *halal* and *haram* (lawful and unlawful)."[13] "They are," he continues, "the repositories of my secrets and through them all innovations (*bidʿa*) are nullified."[14] By extolling the virtues of the associates and expressing complete confidence in their reliability, not only was the authority of the *rijal* legitimized but their status as embodiments of the imams' *ʿilm* was simultaneously enhanced.

The investiture of the imams' authority in their associates is also evident in various statements in which the imams are reported to have recommended their distant followers to seek religious guidance from their trusted authorities. When the Shiʿis approached al-Sadiq after the uprising of Abuʾl-Khattab (d. 755) and urged him to appoint someone to whom they could refer in matters pertaining to religious guidance and the canonical ordinances (*al-ahkam*), he is reported to have said, "I appoint over you Mufaddal b. ʿUmar (d. 796), listen to him and associate [yourselves] with him, for he does not say [anything] about God and me except what is true."[15]

The Shiʿis were specifically asked to refer to those who had been personally trained by the imams in the juridical and theological fields. ʿAbd al-ʿAziz b. Muhtadi (n.d.), an associate of the eighth imam, ʿAli al-Rida (d. 818), complained to the imam saying, "I cannot meet you at all times, from whom shall I seek guidance in religious matters?" Al-Rida is reported to have said, "Take it from Yunus b. ʿAbd al-Rahman (d. 823)."[16] In the absence of the imams, *rijal* like Yunus b. ʿAbd al-Rahman, who were trained by and enjoyed the confidence of the imams, were seen as the protectors of religion against innovation or adulteration.

It was through the process of delegation that the authority of the *rijal* became enshrined in the Shiʿi community as they performed various tasks on behalf of the imams. The consequence of the delegation of the imams' authority was the routinization of their charisma and the concomitant creation of the office of charisma. Gradually, the office of charisma became a pervasive force that animated the discipleship network centered on the *rijal*. It is to be noted that the delegation of the imams' authority to the *rijal* continued even during the period of the later imams. However, since they were either incarcerated or placed under house arrest, the tenth and eleventh imams had significantly fewer disciples.[17] This had the effect of emasculating the functions of the charismatic office.

The deputyship of the *rijal* and the routinization of charismatic authority in Shiʿism were interwoven, therefore, with the question of seeking guidance from only those personages who were personally trained by the imams. As I discuss in the next chapter, the authority conferred to the *rijal* led them to shape the definition and structure of Shiʿi beliefs and praxis. Without the deputyship and diverse activities of the *rijal,* it is difficult to envisage how the imams could have communicated with their distant adherents effectively, or how fourth-century Shiʿis could have traced their theological and jurisprudential rulings to the imams.

Routinization and the Transmission of the Imams' ʿIlm

Apart from appointing certain disciples to act on behalf of the imams, routinization of the imams' authority also entailed the transmission of their knowledge. As disciples who had been instructed by the imams, the *rijal* were recognized as possessors of the authentic knowledge that could protect God's religion against innovation or adulteration. The divinely bestowed *ʿilm* that was reportedly located in the imam could only be passed on within a specified line of transmission. Since they embodied the knowledge of the imams, it was only the *rijal* who could disseminate their teachings to other Shiʿis. It is in this context that we can comprehend the instruction the seventh imam, Musa al-Kazim, gave to his followers. He is reported to have said, "Do not take knowledge pertaining to religion from other [persons] than our Shiʿis."[18]

The view that the knowledge of the imams was transmitted to their disciples is epitomized in different ways. Muhammad b. Muslim (d. 767) is reported to have narrated 30,000 traditions from al-Baqir and 16,000 traditions from al-Sadiq during his four-year sojourn in Medina. A study of Muhammad's profile indicates that he was acknowledged as one of the eminent jurists of his time. It was, in all probability, his close attachment to the imams and his erudition in legal matters that led ʿAbd al-Rahman b. al-Hajjaj (n.d.) and Hammad b. ʿUthman (d. 805)[19] to state, "No one among the Shiʿis was more learned (*afqah*) than Muhammad b. Muslim."[20] This report is cited by Kashshi in the same tradition in which he stresses Muhammad's close association with the imams, a point suggesting that the standing of the disciples in the Shiʿi community was commensurate with their comprehension of the imams' teachings and close association with them. To be seen as the authoritative agents of the imams, it was essential for the *rijal* to possess these two qualities (sound *ʿilm* and sound belief). Muhammad's importance as a sagacious jurist in Shiʿi circles can be further adduced from remarks

made by al-Mufid who says, "Muhammad was among the foremost jurists of Kufa and a Shiʿi leader from whom matters concerning the *halal* and *haram* could be sought."[21]

A report in Tusi's *Tahdhib al-Ahkam* shows how al-Baqir read with Muhammad b. Muslim a copy of the *Kitab al-Faraʾid,* a book that was reportedly dictated to ʿAli by the Prophet.[22] Only the most trustworthy disciples could be shown such erstwhile scrolls. The *hadith* then indicates how this *ʿilm,* acquired from the imam, was transmitted to the Shiʿi community.[23] Muhammad's prominence can be further discerned from other reports indicating that he was contemporary to and connected with other *shariʿ* men of his time, including famous jurists of Kufa like Ibn Abi Layla (d. 765) and Abu Hanifa (d. 767).

Shiʿi sources maintain that the knowledge of the imams was transmitted to their close associates in different ways. For example, the plenitude of traditions and books that were reportedly given by al-Baqir to Jabir al-Juʿfi (d. 745) enabled the latter to claim that he partook in the imam's *ʿilm*.[24] In his *Sahih,* Muslim b. Hajjaj (d. 875) mentions that Jabir had apparently boasted of having heard 50,000 to 70,000 prophetic traditions from al-Baqir. Due to the esoteric nature of some of these traditions, he was told not to relate them to anyone.[25] Some texts were composed and presented by the *rijal* to the imams to authenticate. Once verified by an imam, a book forms an important mode for transmitting the teachings of the imams and constitutes an intrinsic component of the imams' *ʿilm,* for in theory an act or speech authenticated by an imam constitutes a *sunna*. Thus, the book of ʿUbayd Allah b. ʿAli al-Halabi (n.d.) was reportedly approbated by al-Sadiq.[26] Another disciple, Muslim al-Nahwi (n.d.) issued legal edicts, an act that was also approved by al-Sadiq.[27]

Apart from transmitting the teachings of the imam, another reason can be discerned for the Shiʿi insistence on the need for the deputies of the imams. The *rijal* provided a link to the imams and assured subsequent jurists that the teachings disseminated by them formed an intrinsic part of the divinely inspired *ʿilm* that had been reportedly located in the imams. In the disciples, post-*ghayba* Shiʿi jurists could rely on authorities who formed indispensable links in the transmission of the *ʿilm* of the imams. As Sachedina says,

> They [the *rijal*] provided a continuation of religious leadership among the Imamites. This sense of continuity in the religious leadership furnished the crucial justification needed in the recognition of the Shiʿi transmitters as the only authoritative spokesmen for the imams' will in the community.[28]

Gradually, the charisma of the imams became dispersed and efficacious within the institutional structure that they helped establish. A close study of

Shiʿi biographical literature further suggests that the disciples saw themselves as appropriating some of the diffused charisma of the imams. Although not explicitly expressed, the concept of an office of disciples that was imbued with charisma is implied in various genres of reports. A disciple could, for example, appropriate charisma by claiming that his statements accorded exactly with those of the imams. Mufaddal b. Qays b. Rummana (n.d.) is reported to have said, "My speech [in what I say] is [based on] the statements of Jaʿfar b. Muhammad (al-Sadiq)."[29] The special appeal of the disciples is also implied in traditions from the imams that promise salvation to the disciples, or those reports that exhibit a very close relationship between the disciples and the imam. In a tradition cited by al-Mufid, al-Sadiq is quoted as saying that he and his father will intercede for Humran b. Aʿyan (n.d.). They will then take him by the hand and will not leave it until they all had entered heaven.[30]

The charismatic force of the disciples can also be inferred from certain supporting statements issued by the imams. These genres of reports indicate that certain disciples were part of the family of the Prophet, the *ahl al-bayt*.[31] As a report preserved in al-Mufid's *al-Ikhtisas* states, those who belong to the *ahl al-bayt* will be saved.[32] These types of reports are particularly indicative of the charismatic appeal of the disciples since they imply that, due to their affiliation with the *ahl al-bayt,* the *rijal* shared some of the charisma of the imams.

The preceding discussion suggests that the delegation of the imams' authority, transmission of their knowledge, and the establishment of a network of disciples were salient traits that characterized the routinization of the imams' charismatic authority. In the process, the office of charisma was institutionalized. The teachings of the imams could only exert historical influence if they were connected to a vibrant and active group that carried the charismatic imams' message. The delegation of the imams' authority in eighth-century Shiʿism also indicates that the appearance of *ʿulamaʾ* serving as agents of the occult imam was not a ninth-century phenomenon. Rather, it was the continuation of a process of routinization initiated in the times of the fifth and sixth Shiʿite imams. However, a discussion on the authority of the *ʿulamaʾ* during the *ghayba* (occultation) of the twelfth imam lies beyond the purview of the present study.

The Process of Routinizing the Charisma of the Imams

The discussion on the delegation of the imams' authority to their disciples substantiates the view that routinization of the imams' authority was not an

event that occurred immediately after the death of an imam. Rather, it was a process that gradually diffused the charismatic authority of an imam to the nascent charismatic office of his close disciples while he was still alive. In all probability, the process of the unfolding of routinization was largely contingent on the disciples' capacity to perform various functions on behalf of the imams.

Since I have posited routinization as a process rather than an event, it can be argued that routinization and the accompanying movement toward traditional or rational-legal types of authority[33] does not necessarily require the complete negation of charismatic authority. The authority of the imams that was constituted in the concept of hereditary charisma was not a transitory phenomenon that could be easily attenuated. Thus, the routinization of the imams' charismatic authority did not signify the evaporation of their charismatic features but their embodiment in an institutional setting that could be invoked when new obligations had to be articulated or when the followers of the imams had to seek guidance directly from them. The vestiges of charismatic authority were to be found even in routinized charismatic institutions.

I have argued that the process of routinizing the charisma of the imams was intertwined with the delegation of their authority to the *rijal* and the gradual concentration of power and knowledge in a distinct group of religious scholars. The universal and all-embracing authority of the imam that was located in Medina was complemented by the routinized and regional authority of the *rijal* in distant areas like Kufa, Qum, and Khurasan, even though the institutional structures that manifested the authority of the *rijal* took time to construct. Geographical and political considerations segmented Shiʿism into regional communities, each with its own distinct scholar or group of scholars expressing the routinized authority of the imam. Yet, as I will discuss, it was precisely the routinization of the imams' authority that precipitated a challenge to the imams' own charismatic authority.

The notion of a definitively structured, routinized, and hierarchical charismatic office of the *rijal* is alluded to in many traditions. It is epitomized in the following report cited in Kashshi's work on the disciples of the imams. More specifically, Kashshi mentions the presence of a group of prominent Shiʿi theologians who successively defined, articulated, and defended Shiʿi beliefs, forming, thereby, a structured chain of Shiʿi disciples. Fadl b. Shadhan (d. 873), a contemporary of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh imams, is reported to have said,

> I am the successor of those before me. I met Muhammad b. Abi ʿUmayr and Safwan b. Yahya and others [besides them] and I was associated with them for fifty years. And [as for] Hisham b. al-Hakam, may God have mercy on him, he

> died and Yunus b. ʿAbd al-Rahman, may God have mercy on him, succeeded him. He refuted our opponents. When Yunus died, he did not leave a successor apart from al-Sakkak and he refuted our opponents until he, may God have mercy on him, died and I am their successor.[34]

The report presents a succession of prominent *rijal* who were actively engaged in discourses and defended Shiʿi beliefs within the wider Muslim community. It is also to be noted that most of those mentioned were leading Shiʿi theologians of their times. It is in a report such as this that the importance attached to the *rijal* as the exponents of Shiʿi beliefs can be deciphered.

The tradition is important as it depicts a stratified, hierarchical office of disciples during the physical presence of the imam. The tradition can also be construed as vindicating the position of the post-*ghayba* jurists and their undertaking the leadership of the Shiʿi community for it establishes a precedent that subsequent Shiʿi theologians and jurists could emulate. Furthermore, the role of the *rijal* as articulators of Shiʿi beliefs is depicted as having been sanctioned by the imams themselves. The scope of the structure, as it emerges from the report, is limited to the theological field. It is possible to envisage the existence of a similar typology of scholars in the jurisprudential field with prominent Shiʿi jurists succeeding each other and explicating the nuances that characterize the Shiʿi legal system.[35]

The Rijal *as the Shariʿ Men of the Shiʿi Community*

Routinization of the imams' charismatic authority was accompanied by an intellectual movement in eighth-century Shiʿism, one in which the disciples of the imams were to play a prominent role. It was the institutional office of the *rijal* that ensured the survival of the imams' teachings in the midst of the vicissitudes of the Sunni milieu. The charismatic office of the *rijal* also helped to establish an edifice on which Shiʿi jurisprudence and theology could be defined and expressed. In the sectarian discourses that were conducted in Kufa and Baghdad, questions such as the necessity of an imam, along with the qualifications and process of designating an imam, were freely discussed, and a distinctly Shiʿi legal system was elaborated and explicated. As I discuss in chapter four, the *rijal* debated and were engaged in the discussion of subjects that were at the nexus of Sunni intellectual discourse, presenting, in the process, distinctive Shiʿi pronouncements on the topics. The imams are reported to have instructed their disciples on the questions that were posed in the course of the *rijal*'s discourses with their adversaries.

Routinization of the imam's charisma, delegation of authority, and transmission of knowledge were conflated traits that greatly empowered the *rijal*. By acquiring and transmitting the legal traditions of the imams, the *rijal* participated with the imams in their role as the Shiʿi *shariʿ* men of the time. Although they were trained by and represented the imams, the *rijal* gradually became qualified *shariʿ* men in their own right. It is not uncommon for a disciple to be described as a *faqih* or to be credited with treatises in the legal field. In fact, there are many reports indicating that *fiqh* works were composed by many disciples of the imams. Muhammad b. Muslim, for example, is reported to have authored a book titled, "Four hundred questions on the chapters concerning what is lawful and unlawful."[36] The Shiʿi biographers Najashi (d. 1058) and Tusi (d. 1067) list the titles of some of these works, none of which are extant. In all probability, the incipience of Shiʿi juridical tracts can be traced to the times of these *shariʿ* men in the eighth century. Many of these treatises were available to Shiʿi *hadith* compilers like Kulayni (d. 939) and al-Saduq (d. 991) in the tenth century. They undertook to systematically incorporate them in their own *hadith* works.[37]

The accredited role of the *rijal* as the *shariʿ* men of their time is also confirmed by the biographer Ibn al-Nadim (d. 995) in his *Kitab al-Fihrist*. He devotes a section in his book to the prominent Shiʿi *rijal* and then states, "These are *fuqahaʾ* who relate *fiqh* from the imams."[38] Many of these *shariʿ* men were seen as experts in the *ahkam Allah* (God's legal ordinances). In Shiʿi biographical works, this epithet is often applied to figures like Muhammad b. Muslim and Yunus b. ʿAbd al-Rahman.

The activities of the charismatic office of the *rijal* in enunciating alternative legal and theological schools began, in all probability, during the latter part of the Umayyad dynasty. By the time the ʿAbbasids came to power, many of these *rijal* were acknowledged as accomplished jurists and theologians. Najashi, for example, notes that when Aban b. Taghlib (d. 758), a disciple of the fifth and sixth imams, entered the mosque in Medina, the students of classes that were held in the mosque would disperse and the Prophet's pillar would be cleared for him to occupy as a mark of respect.[39] Najashi further states that Aban was well versed in all fields of knowledge including the Qurʾan, *fiqh, hadith,* Arabic language, and grammar. As I discuss in chapter five, Aban was also highly respected in the Sunni biographical literature.

The juridical and theological pronouncements of the *rijal* and their penchant toward Shiʿism were recognized in the wider Muslim community. Figures like Aban b. Taghlib, Jabir b. Yazid al-Juʿfi, Zurara b. Aʿyan, Humran b. Aʿyan, Muhammad b. ʿAli al-Ahwal (n.d.) and Hisham b. al-Hakam (d. 807)

are frequently cited in Sunni *hadith,* theological, and heresiographical works.[40] The function of the *rijal* as the *shariʿ* men of their time is further corroborated by Kashshi in his work. When he examines the associates of the imams, on three separate occasions, Kashshi cites the eminent jurists of the time under the title, "Designating the *fuqahaʾ* [of the imams]."[41] Kashshi states in each citation that the community had accorded them with [the status of] *fiqh* (*wa inqadu* [or sometimes *inqarru*] *lahum biʾl-fiqh*). Kashshi clearly implies an acknowledgment or a consensus, reached by the Shiʿi community, regarding the status of the eminent *shariʿ* men, a point that suggests that the authority of the *rijal* was contingent not only on the imam's appointment, but also on an acknowledgment by the Shiʿi community regarding their status. According to Jaʿfar Subhani, a contemporary *rijal* scholar, Kashshi's reference to the *ashab al-ijmaʿ* (as they came to be called) signified that most of the legal traditions were reported by these *rijal*. Shiʿi jurisprudence, he states, rests largely on the traditions narrated by them. Without the illustrious figures, Subhani adds, Shiʿi *fiqh* would have no foundation to rest on.[42] Increasingly, the authority of the *rijal* and their role as the *shariʿ* men in the community were intertwined with the legal tradition that was evolving during their time.

Due to their erudition in and contribution to the legal field, the *rijal* became part of the juristic community that I described in chapter one. The laity, on the other hand, was expected to yield to the authority of the juristic community constructed around the charismatic office of the *rijal*. The knowledge that the *rijal* acquired enabled them to become mediating figures between the community and the imams.

The charismatic office of the *rijal* was able to attract many followers. The heresiographer al-Shahrastani (d. 1153) mentions the followers of Zurara (called the Zurariyya) who had maintained distinct views regarding the knowledge of the imam. They believed, for example, that since the knowledge an imam possessed was not acquired through a discursive process, it was innate.[43] Jabir al-Juʿfi also had many students who heard and recorded traditions from him.[44] Najashi further substantiates the view that the *rijal* attracted many followers. When he discusses the role of Yunus b. ʿAbd al-Rahman as an important *shariʿ* man in the community, he makes frequent references to the students of Yunus.[45] The stratification of the *rijal* and the importance their students attached to the traditions they transmitted suggest that Shiʿism in the eighth and ninth centuries was characterized primarily by a comprehensive body of revealed law, tradition, and beliefs containing descriptions of articles of belief and actions to be interpreted by a small body of specially qualified scholars.

The Epistemic Authority of the Rijal

The discussion on the roles of the *rijal* as the *shariʿ* men and transmitters of the teachings of the imams indicates that the *rijal*'s authority was epistemic. This mode of authority refers to the leadership of those erudite figures or experts in a given field who serve as a referent point for others.[46] Epistemic authority is inherently relational since it involves at least two people, one of whom is a specialist in a field and can instruct the other. Since it is confined to a specialized field, epistemic authority tends to endow its bearer with extra charisma and authority, especially as only a few trained experts can participate in the field. The *rijal*'s epistemic authority was anchored in the training that they had received from the imams and in their functions as the *shariʿ* men and theologians in the Shiʿi community. As I will discuss in this chapter, their epistemic authority was also located in their hermeneutical skills and the interpretive enterprises in which they were engaged.

The epistemic authority of the *rijal* can be further discerned from their engagement in various forms of discourses and in their ability to instruct other Shiʿis. This mode of authority was also expressed in their public articulation and pronouncement of matters pertaining to Islamic law and beliefs. The prestige and stature of these experts of Shiʿi jurisprudence and theology can be adduced from a tradition cited by Jamil b. Darraj (n.d.), a disciple of the fifth and sixth imams. He remarks that, compared to Zurara, he and his contemporaries were like children around a teacher.[47]

The epistemic authority of the *rijal* was further accentuated by the "delegation traditions" through which the imams referred their followers to those associates whom they had personally trained. Thus, it is correct to state that the routinized office of charisma was predicated on the two modes of authority that I have delineated: the delegation from the imams and the epistemic authority that was anchored in the scholastic activities of the *rijal*. Reports of the imams divesting their authority to the disciples had to be corroborated with evidence that the *rijal* had been trained by the imams to become competent leaders in the religious fields.

Epistemic authority demanded obedience from the masses, because it reflected the teachings of the imams and a proper articulation of the law. Whereas epistemic authority provided the basis for transmitting the teachings of the imams and inferring rulings from their teachings, the delegation from the imams showed, for the Shiʿis, that the knowledge was rooted in its authentic source, the family of the Prophet. Delegation was as crucial as epistemic authority because it ratified the *rijal*'s position as the appointed deputies of the imams. As a matter of fact, the status of these *rijal* was to be measured, in part, by their comprehension of the imams' teachings, their ability to transmit these teachings to the

community with great veracity, and their loyalty to the imams. Thus, al-Sadiq is reported to have said, "[A]cknowledge the status (*manazila*) of the *rijal* among us based on the traditions they report from us."[48] *ʿIlm* possessed by the *rijal* became important since it was the source of authority and the means for legitimizing any claim to authority, showing who had been deputed by the imams. Stated differently, what was transmitted was as crucial as who transmitted it because the validity of knowledge was contingent on its source.[49] Only knowledge that came from the house of the Prophet was deemed to be valid.

The Rijal *as the Shiʿi Holy Men*

The need for an epistemic authority that could explicate and elucidate the teachings of the imams during their physical presence gave rise to the question of the personal characteristics or features of the *rijal*. Although they could not claim to be divinely appointed or infallible, due to their various functions, the *rijal* could partake in at least some "holy" qualities of the imams.

As I discussed in chapter two, the belief that the imams were holy figures is depicted in various ways in Shiʿi hagiographic literature. They are portrayed, for example, as possessing miraculous powers. Some disciples actively promulgated the view that the imams possessed extraordinary abilities and could perform both power and epistemological miracles. Several traditions cited in al-Saffar's *Basaʾir al-Darajat,* for example, claim that ʿAli could traverse the clouds.[50] Jabir al-Juʿfi is accused in Sunni literature of construing the Qurʾanic verse, "I will never leave the land until my father permits me or God commands me (12:80)" as referring to ʿAli residing in the clouds. ʿAli, according to this interpretation, would proclaim the appearance of his son (the Mahdi) and urge people to follow him.[51]

Some *rijal* are reported to have propagated the view that the imams could communicate with the divine. According to Humran b. Aʿyan, a close companion of al-Baqir and al-Sadiq, ʿAli had talked to his Lord through the angel Gabriel. ʿAli is even said to have been transported to the skies by Gabriel to arbitrate disputes between angels.[52] Apart from elevating the status of the imams, the numerous traditions on the epistemological and power miracles of the imams enhance their "holy" stature and allude to their complete superiority over the masses.

The supernatural qualities of the imams, which I discussed in the previous chapter, lead to the obvious question concerning the extent to which these attributes were transferred to or acquired by their disciples. After all, if the *rijal* could appropriate the juridical authority of the imams to become the Shiʿi *shariʿ* men, why could they not also acquire their spiritual authority?

The holy stature of the disciples of the imams is depicted in different ways. Many disciples are reported to have been the recipients of the extraordinary abilities of the imams. The reputation of the *rijal* was enhanced in reports, which indicate that they were the beneficiaries of the miraculous powers of the imams. When Jabir al-Juʿfi reportedly approached al-Baqir complaining of his penurious state, the imam struck the earth with his foot and extracted gold from it.[53] Al-Baqir reportedly split the ceiling to show Jabir the kingdom of the heavens and the earth (*malakut al-samawati waʾl-ard*) in the same way that God had shown Abraham (6:75).[54] Jabir al-Juʿfi visited other kingdoms that Abraham was not shown.[55] Al-Baqir is also reported to have taken the same Jabir to places where prominent Qurʾanic figures like Dhuʾl-Qarnayn and Khidr had visited.[56]

Like Jabir and Muʿalla b. Khunays, Abu Basir al-Asadi (d. 767), a blind disciple of the imams, is depicted in the early Shiʿi texts as having received special treatment from them. Traditions reported by al-Asadi portray himself as a loyal disciple of the imams who was a beneficiary of their favors and miraculous abilities. When he visited al-Baqir, the imam, through his miraculous powers, made al-Asadi see the world for the first time.[57] The report is particularly favorable to al-Asadi as it indicates that he benefited from the imam's esoteric powers. That it was construed in this favorable manner by subsequent Shiʿi scholars can be discerned from the frequent mention of this tradition among the favorable reports on al-Asadi.[58]

The miracles and other supernatural abilities of the imams are also reported to have empowered the disciples in the spiritual realm. According to traditions preserved in al-Saffar's *Basaʾir,* the imams could initiate disciples to the arcane elements of their esoteric knowledge and even supernatural powers.[59] ʿUmar b. Hanzala (n.d.), for example, asked al-Baqir to share with him the supreme names of God. When ʿUmar uttered the names his body began to tremble.[60] According to some traditions, all periods of history are characterized by the initiation of the disciples by the imam into the esoteric aspect of the sacred book.[61]

A study of Shiʿi *hadith* and biographical literature indicates that the *rijal* were more than passive beneficiaries of the extraordinary knowledge and miraculous abilities of the imams. If the imams could transmit knowledge pertaining to the legal ordinances to their close associates, what was preventing these *rijal* from having access to the esoteric *ʿilm* of the imams? As a matter of fact, some disciples reportedly claimed to have acquired the extraordinary knowledge and abilities of the imams, enabling them to perform feats that could be matched or surpassed only by the imams. In this manner, some *rijal* claimed to have appropriated imam-like attributes and, like the imams, projected themselves as extraordinary figures who could perform epistemological and power miracles.

In his introductory reports, Kashshi cites traditions not only on the imams' esoteric *ʿilm,* but also on the acquisition by their loyal companions of this genre of *ʿilm*. In effect, Kashshi is advancing the view that the investiture of the imams' legal and spiritual authorities and extraordinary powers to their close associates was not an eighth-century innovation. On the contrary, it could be traced back to the close companions of the Prophet. By exhibiting their loyalty to the imams, the *rijal* could not only acquire their esoteric *ʿilm,* but could further appropriate those elements that would invest extraordinary powers in them.

According to Kashshi, due to the *ʿilm* acquired from the imams, Maytham al-Tammar (n.d.) could predict future events,[62] a feat that was later matched by Muhammad b. Sinan (d. 835), a disciple of the tenth imam.[63] ʿAli b. Abu Talib had reportedly dictated the *ʿilm al-balaya waʾl-manaya* (esoteric knowledge on future events) to Rushayd al-Hujri (n.d.).[64] In addition, he taught Salman al-Farisi (d. 644–647) the greatest name of God. This enabled him to partake in the imams' esoteric *ʿilm*. Due to his supernatural knowledge, Salman could even foretell the unfolding of events in Kerbala in minute details.[65] Al-Baqir is reported as saying that, just like ʿAli, Salman al-Farisi was also a *muhaddath,* that is, he could hear but not see angels.[66] These traditions elevate Salman to the stature of the imams since, like them, he could reportedly converse with angels.

The claim by the disciples to have appropriated some extraordinary powers from the imams was not confined to the early imams. Some companions of the fifth and sixth imams also laid claims to imam-like features. Abuʾl-Khattab, who was at one time a close disciple of al-Sadiq, reportedly claimed that the divine particle had entered into al-Sadiq and was subsequently transferred to him.[67] He also asserted that the imam had transferred his authority to him by designating him to be his *wasi* (successor) and *qayyim* (deputy or executor of his will) and by entrusting to him the greatest name of God (*al-ism al-aʿzam*) that was supposed to empower its possessor with extraordinary strength in comprehending hidden matters. Other traditions suggest that Abuʾl-Khattab claimed to be better than al-Sadiq and ʿAli.[68] Reports that Bayan b. Samʿan (d. 737) and Abu Mansur al-Ijli (d. 742), two extremist figures, claimed to be the successors (*wasi*) of al-Baqir and that his extraordinary powers had been transferred to them suggest that al-Baqir was also regarded as a spiritual leader who possessed and could transmit supernatural powers.

The claim to have attained supernatural status was not restricted to the extremist elements among the disciples of the imams. Like the imams, some *rijal* claimed that they could perform extraordinary feats. When he profiles Jabir al-Juʿfi, the Sunni biographer Ibn ʿAdi (d. 975) mentions an element that is curiously absent in earlier biographical texts, Jabir's ability to perform miracles. In

fact, Jabir is credited with a number of power miracles. ʿUthman b. Shaʿbi (n.d.) reported from his grandfather that, like Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 922), Jabir could produce fruits from his garden in an off-season.[69] Jabir could also allegedly emulate al-Baqir in miraculously transporting people to distant places to meet the imam.[70] In addition, Jabir was reportedly empowered to bring water from the Euphrates River to the people[71] and could perform many other types of miracles.[72]

Jabir is also reported to have been endowed with the ability to perform epistemological miracles. He is believed to have received esoteric truths from al-Baqir, secrets that he apparently found difficult to conceal.[73] Ibn ʿAdi's biographical work indicates that Jabir was also empowered to predict future events. Other reports suggest that al-Baqir had made Jabir consume a special elixir (*qaʿb jayshani*), a drink that helped him memorize 40,000 traditions.[74] Jabir's epistemological abilities further empowered him to have secret knowledge of the death of the Umayyad caliph, Walid II (d. 743–744) before anyone knew about the caliph's demise.[75]

The notion of the extraordinary powers of the disciples of the imams was prevalent even in the tenth century. Shiʿi sources claim that in the short occultation of the twelfth imam (874–935), the *safirs* (agents) of the imam performed miracles as proof of their claims to be his rightful representatives. The fourth *safir,* ʿAli b. Muhammad al-Samarri (d. 940–941), for example, predicted the time of his demise. Other supernatural powers of the *safirs* included those of divination, knowledge of diverse languages, clairvoyance, and what Amir-Moezzi calls supersensual communication with the hidden imam.[76] Later Shiʿi texts even claimed that the *ʿulamaʾ* could perform miracles. Biographies of prominent Shiʿi *ʿulamaʾ* such as Tunkabuni's *Qisas al-ʿUlamaʾ* are replete with accounts of the scholars' miraculous deeds.[77]

It is to be noted that although some *rijal* claimed to have access to esoteric knowledge and hidden powers, there are no reports to suggest that they were regarded as gnostics, mystical figures, or that their graves were venerated by the Shiʿis. No *baraka* is reported to have been transmitted by the disciples of the imams. Hence, the *rijal* cannot be regarded as spiritual or holy figures in the sense that I described in chapter two.

The Struggle for Authority: Charismatic Authority and Routinized Charisma

Hereditary charisma, which was the chief source of authority for the imams, was largely prevalent as a potent "anchoring force," deriving its legitimacy from the Prophet himself. The routinized authority of the *rijal,* on the other

hand, sought legitimacy through association with the imam. This new order of authority coexisted with rather than replaced hereditary charisma. The juxtaposition of the charisma of the imams and the nascent institutionalized office of charisma inevitably impinged on the Shiʿi community. As Weber states, an important feature in the routinization of charisma is the disciples' appropriation of powers of control.[78] The coexistence of the divergent modes of authority was bound to generate tension within the Shiʿi community.

The transition from a charismatic leader to the office of charisma was interwoven with the emergence of the regional authority of the disciples of the imams. In their role as the Shiʿi *shariʿ* men, prominent *rijal* like Zurara, Burayd b. Muʿawiya, and Muhammad b. Muslim symbolized the growing authority of the disciples, who in places like Kufa and Qum had assumed leadership of the Shiʿi community. The increasing functions of the *rijal* also meant that the community came to rely on their transmission of the imams' teachings and pronouncements. Furthermore, since the disciples were seen as the spokesmen of the imams, the community also became increasingly dependent on their interpretation and understanding of these teachings. As I discuss below, the *rijal* gradually assumed an active, and sometimes interpretive, role in the unfolding of the Shiʿi legal system.

A close study of Kashshi's work indicates that the affirmation of the regional office of charisma of the *rijal* militated against the comprehensive, charismatic authority of the imams. Initially, the *rijal* were regarded as veracious transmitters of the traditions that they had heard from the imams. At this point, the imams are reported to have uttered many remarks in favor of the *rijal*. However, the office of charisma provided the matrix through which the *rijal* expressed disparate views. Gradually, the *rijal* emerged as independent thinkers who often challenged statements of the imams, engendering much friction between charismatic authority and its routinized form.

A few examples will suffice to illustrate the tensions that existed between the imams and a number of their disciples.[79] Differences between the imams and their disciples had emerged from the time of al-Baqir as some of his associates challenged his legal and theological pronouncements. Zurara had differed with al-Baqir when he argued that there was no intermediate position between a believer and nonbeliever.[80] In another tradition, al-Baqir is quoted as saying, "O God, have mercy on the disciples of my father, for I know that some of them consider me inferior in rank."[81]

Muhammad b. Muslim and Zurara had both maintained views on *al-istitaʿa* (human capacity to perform acts) that differed significantly from al-Sadiq's definition, a point that led the imam to dissociate himself from both of them. Zurara's nuanced views on theology, which often differed from the imam's teachings, were stated in his lost work, *Kitab al-Istitaʿa*. Of greater interest is

that other disciples like Muhammad b. Muslim and Burayd b. Muʿawiya al-ʿIjli concurred with the views of Zurara rather than those of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq.[82]

Zurara's challenge to the legal pronouncements of the imams probably began during the time of al-Baqir. An important tradition shows how Zurara asked the imam for a ruling on the inheritance left by a grandfather. Al-Baqir told Zurara to visit him the following day when he would show him the *Kitab al-Faraʾid*. As I have stated before, this was a book that the Prophet reportedly dictated to ʿAli. When Zurara visited the imam the following day, al-Baqir was sleeping. Al-Sadiq read with him (*aqraʾahu*) the book. When Zurara studied the contents, he found these to differ from the rulings that were known among the masses. As he read through it, Zurara remarked, "[This is] invalid (*batil*)." When al-Baqir questioned him about the book the following day, Zurara is reported to have said, "It is invalid, there is nothing [correct] in it." Al-Baqir said, "But what you have read is the truth (*al-haqq*) which the Prophet dictated to ʿAli." At that point, Zurara said, "Satan entered [my heart] and whispered (*waswasa*) in it. [I thought] How does he know that it is the Prophet's dictation and the handwriting of ʿAli?" Before Zurara spoke, al-Baqir said, "O Zurara, do not doubt, by God, why should I not know that it is the dictation of the Prophet and the handwriting of ʿAli, for my father has related to me from my grandfather, that the Commander of the Faithful told him that." The tradition concludes with Zurara finally expressing remorse for doubting the words of the imam.[83]

Differences between the imams and their disciples extended to the theological realm. Hisham b. Salim al-Jawaliqi (n.d.) and al-Ahwal, who were both prominent Shiʿi theologians, are accused in Shiʿi and non-Shiʿi sources of maintaining that God is hollow to the navel while the rest [of His body] is solid, a view that was rejected by al-Rida.[84] Shiʿi accounts of al-Jawaliqi's anthropomorphism are confirmed by Sunni sources. In his *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin,* al-Ashʿari (d. 935) mentions some of the anthropomorphic views allegedly held by al-Jawaliqi. Apart from being accused of believing that God had the shape of a man, he is also reported to have said that God had, like His creatures, five senses, hands, eyes, legs, nose, mouth, and black hair. He was, moreover, a bright radiant light.[85] Like Hisham b. Hakam, another famous Shiʿi theologian, al-Jawaliqi is reported to have maintained that God's will was equivalent to his movement. Whenever He wills something, He moves, and that which He wishes occurs.[86]

Muhammad b. ʿAli al-Nuʿman al-Ahwal, another prominent disciple of the imams, was accused of maintaining that God's knowledge of things is limited,—that is, He knows of things only when he determines (*qaddara*) or wills (*aththara*) them.[87] Before He determines them, it is impossible for Him to know a thing. This is because a thing is not a thing until He decrees it and creates it by that decree. The decree, according to al-Ahwal, is God's will.

The corporeal views of Hisham b. al-Hakam are also quoted by al-Ashʿari. Many accusations of anthropomorphism against him are confirmed in the early Shiʿi *hadith* and biographical texts. Kulayni cites a tradition that depicts ʿAli b. Abi Hamza (n.d.)[88] telling al-Sadiq, "I have heard Hisham reporting from you that God is a body (*jism),*" a charge that the imam refuted.[89] Other disciples differed on major theological doctrines. They refused to accept that the imams were infallible (*maʿsum*), maintaining instead that they were merely pious and upright individuals.[90]

Later disciples also disagreed with the imams on many issues. Yunus b. ʿAbd al-Rahman differed with the eighth imam on theological matters. He is criticized for accepting and defending the opinions of Hisham b. al-Hakam. His views did not always accord with the imams' stated pronouncements.[91] Like Hisham, Yunus is alleged to have adopted the corporeal view that God is a thing unlike other things although things are different from Him.[92] He had also adopted Zurara's theory on *istitaʿa,* which, according to al-Rida, was based on error.[93] Yunus is further accused of denying that heaven and hell have been created, a view that led him to be cursed by al-Rida.[94] That the Shiʿis were not sure of his status can be adduced from a title of a book written by Saʿd b. ʿAbd Allah al-Qummi (d. 913), "The book on the blemishes (*mathalib*) of Hisham and Yunus [b. ʿAbd al-Rahman]."[95] The criticisms against Yunus were also compiled in a literary form. According to Najashi, Yaʿqub b. Yazid al-Hammad (n.d.), a reliable associate of the ninth and tenth imams, wrote a book entitled *Kitab al-Taʿn ʿala Yunus* (The Book on the Accusations against Yunus).[96]

The ninth-century disciple Fadl b. Shadhan is accused of misleading the Shiʿis in Khurasan. He would, for example, forbid people from giving the agents of the imam their *khums*. He had, according to the eleventh imam al-Hasan al-ʿAskari (d. 874), ignored the imams' letters and was misguided. Due to this, a *tawqiʿ* (interdiction) was issued by al-ʿAskari against him.[97]

The differences that have been reported between the *rijal* and the imams substantiate the view that the disciples were actively engaged in religious discourses. In propounding their disparate views, the *rijal* had, at times, encroached on the authority of the imams. In all probability, the divergent teachings of the *rijal* had gained considerable acceptance within certain Shiʿi circles. In response, the imams occasionally found it essential to refute statements that were contrary to their teachings since they could not possibly condone any aberration from their theological and juridical positions. If left unchecked, it would not only create confusion within the Shiʿi ranks but could possibly lead the *rijal* to challenge the imams' authority. Paradoxically, the very function that the *rijal* performed on behalf of the imams appears to have engendered differences between the imams and their associates. The

confluence of charismatic authority and its routinized form generated, at least in some quarters, a crisis in religious authority.

It was in response to such differences and the segmentation of the community that al-Sadiq is quoted as telling ʿAbd al-Rahim b. al-Qasir to ask Zurara and Burayd, "What is this *bidʿa* (innovation) that you have been preaching? Donʾt you know that the Prophet of God has said, ʿEvery *bidʿa* leads [people] astray?'"[98] The condemnation of Zurara and Burayd is said to have been in response to their definition of *al-istitaʿa,* which, as stated, was contrary to al-Sadiq's formulation. When Zurara was told of al-Sadiq's condemnation, he is reported to have remarked, "I will never renounce that [view of *al-isititaʿa*]."[99]

Many confused Shiʿis resorted to questioning the imams regarding the divergent opinions of their disciples, most of whom had previously been appointed by the imams. These questions, in themselves, are further evidence of the tensions prevalent between charismatic authority and its routinized form in eighth-century Shiʿism. Since the imams foresaw the distinct possibility of a distortion of their teachings and communal fragmentation, they sought to distance themselves from the views propounded by their disciples by issuing disparaging remarks against some of them. Muhammad b. Muslim, for example, was cursed for believing that God does not know of a thing until it exists, a view that was considered to be contrary to al-Sadiq's teachings.[100] In other reports, al-Sadiq is reported to have instructed a disciple not to visit Zurara nor accompany his bier for he was worse than the Jews, the Christians (*al-Nasara*), and those who believe that God is the third of the three.[101] In another tradition, al-Sadiq says Zurara will not die except having strayed (*taʿih*).[102] In response to the escalated tensions between Zurara and Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, Zurara is reported to have remarked, "May God have mercy on Abu Jaʿfar (al-Baqir). As for Jaʿfar, my heart has turned away from him."[103] When he was further questioned, Zurara said that he had turned away from al-Sadiq as the latter had revealed his defects.

The differences in ritual details between the imams and their prominent disciples also point to the role of the *rijal* as the prominent jurists of the Shiʿi community. Al-Sadiq, for example, is reported to have informed his followers that Abuʾl-Khattab had deliberately misinterpreted his ruling on the correct time for the evening (*maghrib*) prayers.[104] Similarly, Yunus was cursed by al-Rida for differing on a ritual point.[105] The juridical contribution of the *rijal* can also be inferred from the legal traditions reported by the likes of Zurara and Muhammad b. Muslim. As noted, they often reverted to their own understanding of the imams' traditions, leading, eventually, to major rifts between the imams and their associates.

Another report indicates that when an associate described the corporeal pronouncements of Hisham b. al-Hakam to al-Kazim, the imam retorted,

"May God fight him (*qatalahu Allah*), does he not realize that a body is limited (*mahdud*)?"[106] So repugnant were some of Hisham's views to the Shiʿis themselves that, according to al-Rida, "He [Hisham] is not one of us. One who believes that God is a thing, we dissociate ourselves (*baraʾa*) from him in this world and in the next."[107] In explaining these genres of deprecatory remarks, later Shiʿi sources point to a tradition, cited in Kashshi's text, in which al-Sadiq is reported to have stated that he issued disparaging remarks against some of his disciples so as to protect them from the political authority who might suspect them of Shiʿi proclivities. Stated differently, it was in the interests of the *rijal* that they be condemned and cursed by the imams. I will pursue this theme in chapter five when I consider the role of the biographical literature in constructing the authority of the disciples.

The disciples' recourse to independent methods of argumentation in their debates and their divergent statements regarding theological and juridical issues put the imams in an awkward position. On the one hand, they could not possibly concur with the conclusions reached by disciples like Hisham b. al-Hakam, Zurara, and al-Ahwal since these were, on occasions, contrary to the imams' teachings. On the other hand, to criticize the disciples publicly might lead to a cleavage between the disciples and the imams and would detract from their public prestige, and, in the process, emasculate the leadership of the Shiʿi community. It was due to the awkward position the imams found themselves in that al-Ahwal was instructed by al-Sadiq not to engage in any further debates.[108]

Tensions within the Routinized Office of Charisma

When the office of charisma was routinized, Shiʿi doctrines and jurisprudence were still in an embryonic form. The lack of a coherent, standardized doctrine or a unified legal system is reflected not only in various statements uttered by the *rijal* that contradicted the imams' pronouncements but also from numerous other reports stating that the *rijal* differed among themselves on many theological issues, agreeing only on the central doctrine of the imamate. The conflicts between the imams and their disciples apparently extended to the office of charisma—that is, between the *rijal* themselves. I will cite only a few of the many differences between the *rijal* that have been reported.

According to Ibn al-Nadim, Muhammad b. Khalil al-Sakkak (n.d.) differed with his teacher, Hisham b. Hakam, on most things apart from the question of the imamate.[109] Hisham b. al-Hakam is said to have written a book titled, "A refutation of [the views held by] Hisham b. Salim al-Jawaliqi."[110] The two prominent Shiʿis disagreed on the issue of divine body and form. In fact, their dispute was serious enough for the Shiʿis to arrange a debate between

them regarding God's unity and attributes. After the debate, ʿAbd al-Rahman b. Hajjaj labeled Hisham b. al-Hakam an infidel and a heretic.[111] So pronounced were these differences that a disciple of the imams, ʿAbd Allah b. Jaʿfar b. Malik (n.d.), wrote a book on the differences between Hisham b. al-Hakam and Hisham b. Salim al-Jawaliqi.[112]

Hisham b. al-Hakam also composed a book in which he refuted the views of a fellow Shiʿi, al-Ahwal.[113] Jabir al-Juʿfi and Zurara also differed on many issues. They disagreed, for example, on the question of whether air had been created or not.[114] ʿAbd Allah b. Yaʿfur and Muʿalla b. Khunays, two prominent disciples of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, disagreed on the status of the imams. The former, who represented a moderate branch in the Shiʿite community of Kufa, rejected the attribution of superhuman qualities to the imams. He maintained that they were merely righteous and pious learned men whereas Muʿalla compared the imams with prophets.[115]

The following tradition epitomizes the differences among the *rijal* that were often generated by variant interpretations of the teachings of the imams. Humran b. Aʿyan is quoted as asking al-Baqir, "We pray with them [the masses] on Fridays and they pray [according to] their time, what shall we do?" He said, "Pray with them." Humran then met Zurara and said to him, "He [al-Baqir] has told us to pray with them." Zurara said, "This cannot be except by interpretation [of traditions]." Thereupon Humran said, "Come with me so that we can hear [the verdict] from him [the imam]." When they entered to see the imam, Zurara said to him, "Humran has informed us from you that you ordered us to pray with them whereas I refuted that." Al-Baqir said to them, "Husayn b. ʿAli would pray with them two cycles (*rakʿas*) and, after they completed [their prayers], he would stand up and add another two."[116]

A study of Shiʿi biographical texts further suggests that there were intense arguments and polemicized discourses within the office of charisma, that is, among the companions of the imams. These controversies among the *rijal* sometimes resulted in serious disputes and generated much antagonism within the Shiʿi ranks, often leading the disciples to label each other as infidels.[117] As I have indicated, many of these companions of the imams even composed tracts refuting the views of their fellow Shiʿi peers.

The differences among the *rijal* on legal and theological issues reflect the range of views that were maintained in early Shiʿism. The differences between the disciples may have been caused by their own understandings and formulations of various theological and legal points, which, as noted, were often at variance with the imams' stated positions. The disparate and sometimes conflicting legal rules enunciated by the Shiʿi *shariʿ* men corroborate the point previously made that the Shiʿi legal system was, at that time, in an embryonic stage. It is to the source of the diversity that I turn next.

The Rijal *and Interpretive Reasoning*

The eighth and ninth centuries, the time of the *rijal,* witnessed the formative period of both the Sunni and Shiʿi legal systems. At a time when no agreement had been reached regarding the definitive sources of law, arbitrary human reasoning, or *raʾy,* was predominant in certain parts of the Islamic world as a valid source for legal inferences. As I discussed in chapter one, the developing Hanafi jurisprudence in Kufa was characterized by the extensive use of *raʾy.* For that reason, its adherents were labeled as *ashab al-raʾy* (the people of *raʾy*). Besides *raʾy, qiyas* (analogy) was also employed in the derivation of law in Kufa. Moreover, the frequent reference to custom (*ʿurf*) in the sources signifies an element of arbitrary reasoning in the legal system. *Raʾy, ʿurf,* and *qiyas* express juristic speculation rather than a disciplined legal practice based on textual sources or documented precedence.

The Kufi jurist Hammad b. Abi Sulayman (d. 738) exerted considerable effort in formulating a legal theory based on personal reasoning.[118] Other Kufi figures that were well known for their use of personal opinions in the derivation of Islamic law include Ibrahim al-Nakhaʾi (d. 713), Abu Hanifa (d. 767), al-Shaybani (d. 805), and Abu Yusuf (d. 798). Since it entailed a degree of juristic speculation, *raʾy* was often attacked and rejected by many early jurists. In a treatise that, according to Joseph Schact, was composed around 757 C.E., Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ (d. 757) rejected *raʾy* as it was too arbitrary.[119] Before this time, the Caliph Umar II (d. 720) had also expressed doubts regarding the validity of *raʾy* as an authoritative source of law.[120]

It is important to comprehend the significance of Kufa as an important center of intellectual activity where many of the disciples resided. As a matter of fact, over eighty percent of the more than 3,000 individuals mentioned by Tusi in his list of those who related traditions from al-Sadiq bear the ascription "al-Kufi."[121] In Kufa, there was an uneasy juxtaposition of the reasoning of individual jurists, local consensus, and precedents reported from the Prophet. The *rijal* lived in this ambience of juristic diversity and disputation.

The friction between the *raʾy* of the school of Kufa and the local *sunna* of the Medinan school, which I discussed in chapter one, is reflected in the relations between the *rijal* and the imams, where many of the tensions between the two schools are replicated. In the pluralistic environment of Kufa, where there was close interaction between diverse factions and ideas were freely exchanged, some disciples were seemingly vulnerable to cross-cultural and doctrinal influences. It was here that *raʾy* posed a major threat to the Shiʿis as their views could be swayed by the Kufi penchant toward independent reasoning in the derivation of juridical rulings. The freedom that the *rijal* enjoyed in Kufa encouraged some of them to interpret the teachings of the imams based on the

hermeneutical principles embodied in *raʾy* and *qiyas,* eventually leading them to differ with the imams' teachings and to promote their own juristic authority.

The Shiʿi legal system in Kufa was characterized by the transmission of traditions from the imams and the use of individual reasoning. *Raʾy,* as practiced by the *rijal* in Kufa, was not always based on an authoritative text or sound traditions from the imams. Rather, it was probably based on practical considerations. In addition to *raʾy,* the disciples also resorted to *qiyas* in their deductions of laws that were not explicitly stated in the Qurʾan or traditions from the imams. Although *qiyas* and *raʾy* are often condemned in the same sentence, and sometimes used interchangeably, *qiyas* signifies a more defined type of *raʾy.*[122] *Qiyas* represents the technique by means of which a jurist can apply an underlying principle from a text to a new case that is not directly discussed in the revelatory sources. It is often used to discover the rationale behind a legal opinion so that the same ruling can be invoked when that rationale exists.[123]

The office of charisma that was constructed by the routinization process in Shiʿism gradually came into conflict with its source, the charismatic authority of the imams. In this, both *raʾy* and *qiyas* played pivotal roles. In fact, in Shiʿi biographical literature, *raʾy* and *qiyas* constitute important *topoi* that are employed to signify the escalated tensions between the imams and their disciples. The employment of *raʾy* and *qiyas* within Shiʿi circles can be discerned from a tradition cited by Kashshi. Ibn Muskan (n.d.) is reported to have said that he and his companions had mentioned something concerning the *halal* and *haram* to Zurara. Zurara's response was apparently based on his own opinion. Ibn Muskan asked him, "Is this according to your view or [based on] a narration?" He said, "I know, isn't the authority of independent reasoning (*raʾy*) better than traditions (*athar*)?"[124] Similarly, when Hisham b. Salim asked Zurara to confirm a tradition that he had related to him in the past, Zurara is reported to have responded, "By God, I would not have said that except [that it was based] on my own opinion."[125]

Disciples like Zurara and Hisham b. al-Hakam symbolized the growing authority and increasing independence of the *rijal* in places like Kufa, where the disciples of the imams were responsible for shaping the religious lives and practices of the Shiʿis. Apart from Zurara and Hisham, other disciples also resorted to *raʾy* and *qiyas* in their debates. Al-Ahwal, for example, used *qiyas* in his polemical discourses. His mode of argumentation was based on principles that were seemingly contrary to al-Sadiq's teachings, for the imam is reported to have told al-Ahwal after he had defeated his interlocutor in a debate, "You did not utter a word of truth because you resorted to *qiyas* which is against my religion."[126]

The view that many disciples often resorted to *qiyas* is substantiated in Samʿan b. Mihran's (n.d.) confession to al-Kazim. He is reported to have told the imam,

> When we (the Shiʿis) meet, we sometimes discuss about something for which, thanks to your blessed presence, we have a written document. However, we occasionally encounter something for which we have no idea; in this case we compare it to the case which is most similar to it, and about which we have information with the use of analogical reasoning. The imam is reported to have told him, "You have nothing to do with analogical reasoning; those before you have perished due to such reasoning."[127]

According to Sharif al-Murtada (d. 1044), disciples of later imams like Yunus b. ʿAbd al-Rahman and Fadl b. Shadhan had also used *qiyas* on certain occasions. Indeed, according to him, Yunus resorted to *qiyas* in his legal inferences.[128] It was due to this factor that a prominent *rijal* scholar, Muhammad Bahr al-ʿUlum (d. 1797), admitted that Ibn al-Junayd al-Iskafi (d. 991), who was accused of employing *qiyas* in his legal formulations, had prominent predecessors in the application of *qiyas*. These included erstwhile figures like Fadl b. Shadhan who had based some of his rulings on divorce and inheritance on independent reasoning.[129] Ibn Shadhan's employment of *qiyas* in resolving legal issues is also mentioned by al-Saduq in his juridical text, *Man La Yahduruhuʾl-Faqih*. At one point in this work, al-Saduq rejects an opinion on inheritance that was expressed by Fadl b. Shadhan. In his refutation, al-Saduq states, "This [conclusion] is reached [only] by *qiyas*."[130] It should also be noted that the employment of *raʾy* did not begin in al-Sadiq's time. Some of the disciples of al-Baqir, like Muhammad b. al-Hakim (n.d.) and Muhammad al-Tayyar (n.d.) were also rebuked for resorting to their personal judgments in their inference of juridical rulings and theological views.[131]

Some reports indicate that the imams urged their disciples to infer legal precepts based on the general guidelines that they provided. Al-Sadiq is reported to have said, "We are only obliged to announce to you the principles (*al-usul*). You are obligated to deduce (*tafarriʿu*)."[132] It would appear that some disciples went beyond these guidelines and formulated laws based on their independent reasoning.

Ramifications of the Rijal's Interpretive Enterprises

The charismatic office that the *rijal* occupied wielded enormous authority in shaping the social and religious lives of the Shiʿis, especially in areas where access to the imams was not possible. As their authority increased, the *rijal* became more than passive transmitters of traditions. Since they engaged in interpretive and, at times, legislative enterprises, *raʾy* and *qiyas* empowered the *rijal* with hermeneutical strategies to make a finite tradition yield a myriad of

different interpretations on juridical rulings. The hermeneutical constructs that were intrinsic to *raʾy* meant that, like many other jurists of Kufa, the practices and legal opinions of the *rijal* were sometimes premised on the exercise of juristic reasoning in solving problems that were not explicitly discussed in the revelatory texts or in the traditions of the imams.

The hermeneutical tools inherent in *raʾy* and *qiyas* also enabled the *rijal* to depart significantly from the pronouncements of the imams. This resulted in a clash of authority between inherited charisma and its routinized form and signified the partial independence of the office of charisma over hereditary charisma. At a time when Shiʿi law had yet to assume a normative or canonical character, *raʾy* generated a variety of legal and theological interpretations and conclusions independently of tradition. This is an important observation because, as I demonstrate in the next chapter, in the process of transmitting and interpreting the traditions of the imams, the *rijal,* as the *shariʿ* men of the time, were simultaneously establishing paradigmatic precedents that came to form a part of canonical authority. Their actions, pronouncements, and understanding of the traditions of the imams constituted important components in the developing Shiʿi legal system. Like his Sunni counterpart, the authority of the Shiʿi *shariʿ* man was accentuated in the very traditions he was interpreting.

Raʾy and *qiyas,* as exercised by the *rijal,* were partially responsible for the transmission of contradictory traditions on some legal points. Many of these traditions were incorporated in texts that were compiled in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The differences in legal rulings that *raʾy* and *qiyas* had created in Shiʿi jurisprudence can be discerned from a study of Tusi's *al-Istibsar Fi Ma Ikhtalafa Min al-Akhbar*. In this work, Tusi cites different and often opposing traditions on many legal points. He then engages in a process of harmonizing conflicting traditions by employing various forms of hermeneutical strategies, imposing, at times, his own preconceptions on the traditions. In one such tradition, al-Sadiq is reported to have forbidden the consumption of the leftovers of Jews. An opposing tradition reported from the same imam permits the performance of the *wudu* (ritual ablution) from a vessel containing the remnants of water drunk by a Jew, an act that would have made the water impure. To resolve the inconsistency between the traditions, Tusi reinterprets the second tradition and states that the Jew may have converted to become a Muslim. The conversion would mean that the water had retained its original state of purity (although no such conversion is reported in the tradition).[133] Through this interpretation, the anomaly between the two traditions is resolved.

The *rijal's* hermeneutical enterprises that were centered on *raʾy* created a diversified, rather than a uniform, legal system. In this process, the *rijal* were

the mediating figures between the imams and the Shiʿis. It was in the interpretive field that their authority was augmented. The rise to fame and the enhanced authority of some *rijal* may have posed a threat to the imams' own authority, a point that is possibly alluded to by al-Sadiq's statement, "Those who have claimed leadership (*mutaraʾisun*) like Zurara, Burayd, Muhammad b. Muslim and Ismaʿil b. Jabir al-Juʿfi will perish."[134]

Raʾy had proven to be extremely embarrassing for the Shiʿis since the imams and their disciples were contradicting each other, sometimes in public. The imams reacted to the threat from *raʾy* by issuing interdictions against some of their disciples. This was done so as to create a strict and more structured method of *hadith* transmission and discourage the disciples from resorting to *raʾy* and *qiyas*. It is *raʾy,* al-Sadiq says, that leads people to perdition.[135] Even if they reached the right conclusion based on *raʾy,* al-Sadiq states in another tradition, they will not be rewarded for it. If they erred, they will be punished.[136] The only safe path was to stick to the traditions of the imams. Traditions that prohibit the Shiʿis from using *qiyas* and *raʾy* indicate the refractoriness that independent thinking was causing among the Shiʿis. By its vehement attacks against *raʾy,* Shiʿi literature acknowledges the important role of *raʾy* in eighth-century Shiʿism, its challenge to the authority of the imam, and the need to nullify its potency.[137]

If left unchecked, *raʾy* would threaten the authority of the imams, because the *rijal* would no longer be bound to their pronouncements. A *topos* in Shiʿi biographical literature is marked by the laudatory remarks concerning disciples who had memorized and preserved the *hadith*s of the imams. Thus, in one report al-Sadiq is reported to have said, "I have not found anyone who has accepted my words, is obedient, and followed the footsteps of the associates of my father except for two people, may God have mercy on them—ʿAbd Allah b. Yaʿfur and Humran b. Aʿyan. They are sincere believers among our Shiʿis."[138] In contrast, those who resorted to *raʾy* and *qiyas* were unequivocally condemned for having deviated from the imams.

This dichotomy between *raʾy* and *riwaya* (transmission from the imams) becomes even more significant when we bear in mind the Shiʿi worldview that, as noted earlier, orients the Shiʿi faithful to the sole authoritative figure of the imam who, through his narrations, leads the faithful to salvation. *Raʾy* can be seen as a breach of the worldview since it engenders an alternative source of guidance and a diffusion rather than centralization of authority.

It is plausible to maintain that the genesis of the later development of the *Usuli* and *Akhbari* schools can be traced to the times of the imams with disciples like Zurara, Yunus b. ʿAbd al-Rahman and Hisham b. al-Hakam representing the independent-minded Shiʿis in contrast to those like Humran and ʿAbd Allah b. Yaʿfur who transmitted traditions with great faithfulness.[139]

Since Abu Hanifa is generally considered the chief proponent of arbitrary reasoning, those Shiʿis practicing *raʾy* and *qiyas* were depicted as the followers of Abu Hanifa rather than of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq. It was to discourage *raʾy* among his followers that al-Kazim reportedly cursed Abu Hanifa for employing *raʾy* against the *riwaya* of ʿAli b. Abu Talib.[140] "But for Abu Hanifa," al-Baqir is reported to have declared, "the people would have found the truth."[141] In contrast to the imams of the other Sunni schools of law, Abu Hanifa has come under severe condemnation in Shiʿi literature. This is because his methodology directly impacted the authority of the imams and introduced an element of speculation into Islamic legal science. In addition, his emphasis on *raʾy* and *qiyas* exerted considerable influence among the Shiʿis living in Kufa. Although not precipitated by it, independence from the *hadith*s of the imams was accelerated by the Abu Hanifa factor in Kufa. In all probability, it was because of this reason that Shiʿi criticisms of Abu Hanifa and aversion to his methodology continued to the tenth and eleventh centuries, when Shiʿi authors compiled numerous tracts denigrating Abu Hanifa and criticizing his arbitrary methods of deducing juridical rulings.[142]

Diffusion of the imams' charisma, creation of the office of charisma, and the assiduous use of *raʾy* were conflated features that had major ramifications in the Shiʿi concept of authority during the times of the imams. The foregoing discussion on the struggle for authority in eighth-century Shiʿism indicates that the establishment of the office of charisma led to a diffusion of and evolution in the imams' comprehensive authority. The independent-minded *rijal* sought an extension of authority beyond sacred figures and texts. They extended authority to incorporate human reasoning and further located it in the interpretation of scripture and traditions of the imams. In addition, the *rijal* themselves emerged as authoritative figures, not only because they were trained and designated by the imams, but also due to their personal interpretations of the teachings of the imams. Thus, for many Shiʿis, authority rested in the past (the Prophet), the present (the charismatic imam), in the texts (Qurʾan and the *sunna* as exemplified in the developing *hadith* literature), and due to their interpretations, the scholarly elite (*rijal*).

The *rijal* became the heirs of the Prophet insofar as they could claim to be the recipients and custodians of the knowledge of the Prophet. The view that the appellation "heirs of the Prophet" can be appropriated by any scholar besides the imams is confirmed by Khumayni (d. 1989). He states,

> Some people are of the opinion that probably the imams are intended (by the "heirs tradition"). But it would appear that, on the contrary, the scholars of the community—the *ʿulamaʾ*—are intended. The tradition itself indicates this, for the virtues and qualities of the imams that have been mentioned elsewhere are

> quite different from what this tradition contains. The statement that the prophets have bequeathed traditions and whoever learns those traditions acquires a generous portion of their legacy cannot serve as a definition of the imams. It must therefore refer to the scholars of the community.[143]

Like the imams, in their capacity as the Prophet's heirs with access to his knowledge, the *rijal* preserved, transmitted, interpreted, and declared the law for the Shiʿi community. In the process, they differed with the imams on many theological and legal points. The tensions between the imams and their disciples and the conflict among the *rijal* themselves suggest that the struggle for authority was not only between but also within the different groups that claimed to be heirs of the Prophet.

Conclusion

Weber's analysis of charismatic authority and his categorization of the forces that lead to the routinization of this authority provide us with important tools for the analysis of social change and the sociological study of religious movements. However, his model and categorization of routinized charisma as subsequent to the charismatic figure are too simplistic to explain the diverse forces that emerge and the tensions that are generated when both modes of authority coexist.

Furthermore, his theoretical framework is too inflexible to postulate a dichotomous or polarized relationship between the two modes of authorities. The model is problematic in explicating the factors that accentuated the partial independence of the *rijal* from the imams. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, the juxtaposition of the two types of authority engendered much friction and, in some cases, segmentation of the community.

The process of routinization introduced new conceptual frameworks of authority in Shiʿi Islam. Authority, as conceived in Shiʿi texts, was located not only in a living model (the imam) but also in the investiture of his authority to his trained representatives. Some of these associates appropriated the juridical and spiritual authority of the imams, whereas others claimed to possess imam-like attributes. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the authority of the disciples was further enhanced by their communal activities.

Routinized authority also empowered the *rijal* with hermeneutical and exegetical strategies. Their enterprise was expressed in expansive law and the legal traditions that they transmitted from the imams. The personal conclusions of the *rijal,* which were often premised on hermeneutical tools, were sometimes incorporated in the law they enunciated. Living in places like

Kufa, where they were free from the direct supervision of the imams and often susceptible to a myriad of cross-cultural influences, the *rijal* sometimes employed these tools to depart significantly from the legal and theological pronouncements of the imams.

Although they did not replace the imams, the *rijal* gradually became important leaders in the charisma of office. This institution fused religious and communal leadership, and reflected the amorphous nature of the Shiʿi establishment, which included numerous leaders coexisting with each other. The focus in the office, however, was on the religious, rather than political, authority of the *rijal*.

Just like their Sunni contemporaries, the authority of the *rijal* as the *shariʿ* men of their time was tacitly enhanced in their interpretations and juridical verdicts on legal points. Their authority devolved not only on transmitting the *hadith* of the imams, but also on interpreting them in light of current practice and needs. However, this should not be construed as the complete independence of the *rijal* from the imams. Despite their differences and at times strained relations, most of the disciples continued to function as the deputed agents of the imams. It is to an analysis of the functions that characterized the charismatic office of the *rijal* that I turn in my next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Office of Charismatic Authority: The Functions of the Rijal

Acknowledge the status of the rijal among us in accordance with the traditions they report from us.
(The Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq)

IN CHAPTER THREE, I examined the process of the institutionalization of charismatic domination in Shiʿi Islam. I argued that the process of the routinization of the imams' charisma and the creation of the office of charisma in the eighth century were linked to the need to perpetuate religious teachings by those personages who were trained by the imams. I further stated that the delegation of the imams' authority to their disciples enabled the centralized, charismatic authority of the imams to be diffused among a set of special disciples and engendered the geographical, regional authority of the *rijal*.

In this chapter, I will argue that the office of charisma that was created by the imams enabled the *rijal* to exercise authority and play significant roles in the Shiʿi community. More specifically, I intend to examine how the *rijal,* as occupants of the office of charisma, performed various didactic and polemical functions in the Shiʿi community, and how their authority evolved and was enhanced in the very functions they performed. I intend to further show that, by proclaiming the authority of an imam, framing their discourses, and performing other tasks related to their positions as the deputies of the imam, the *rijal* constructed a normative basis through which "orthodox" views and beliefs could be distilled and differentiated from those espoused by their opponents.

In discussing the activities of the *rijal,* it is important to bear in mind that the disciples were responding to the historical vicissitudes that were precipitated by the adverse sociopolitical climate of the times. Thus, the functions of the agency of the discipleship were not confined to narrating traditions and pronouncing nuanced juridical points. On the contrary, due to the constant surveillance over the imams by the caliphal authority, the functions of the disciples evolved over time to encompass multiple roles. Gradually, those who were entrusted to occupy the charismatic office assumed the roles of socioeconomic and religious leaders of the community.

A study of the contribution of the *rijal* requires a meticulous examination and reconstruction of discrete components that are interspersed in different genres of Sunni and Shiʿi literature. This is necessary because a composite framework of their diverse roles can only be formulated from a careful study of various juridical, biographical, heresiographical, and polemical texts. The significance of the *rijal*'s contribution can also be assessed from the refutations of the views ascribed to the *rijal,* which have been recorded in Sunni heresiographical, theological, and historical texts. In defining and delineating the multiplicity of roles of the *rijal,* an attempt will be made to isolate particular thematic constants or key concepts that are dispersed in different genres of Shiʿi and Sunni literature, emphasizing, in the process, those that are consistently stressed in the disciples' relationship with the Shiʿi community. Detecting patterns in these *topoi* can lead us to the origins and possible motives for their selection in Shiʿi literature.[1] The activities of the *rijal* can be divided into eight major fields. I will discuss each of these in turn.

Acknowledgment and Proclamation of the Imamate of a Succeeding Imam

An important function of the *rijal,* which is mentioned in Shiʿi biographical and hagiographical literature, was their identification and proclamation of an imam's successor after his death. After the time of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, the imams had to contend with rival claimants to the imamate as various factions posited their own distinctive successor to an imam. Shiʿi sources maintain that, amid the confusion that often arose after the death of an imam, the *rijal* were largely responsible for the allegiance that was paid to a succeeding imam. By their recognition and acknowledgment of an imam, the *rijal* were identifying the charismatic authority of the time and refuting claims made by rival contenders. In the process, they were also promulgating and perpetuating the concept of the imams' hereditary charisma.

The identification and proclamation of an imam's successor was often difficult for the disciples. According to Shiʿi sources, the imams could not publicly designate their successors due to the "difficult times." Kulayni, for example, cites a report that indicates how Hisham b. Salim al-Jawaliqi (n.d.) and Muhammad b. ʿAli al-Nuʿman al-Ahwal (n.d.) were eventually guided to al-Kazim after the death of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq in 765 C.E. Initially, they had questioned ʿAbd Allah (d. 765), al-Sadiq's eldest son. When he failed to answer their questions on the *zakat* (alms tax) to their satisfaction, they abandoned him.[2] This corroborates my previous contention that the knowledge of an imam was seen as an important criterion in the acknowledgment of his authority, for it was this factor that became the basis for legitimizing any claim to the imamate. The failure of ʿAbd Allah to answer the questions posed by Shiʿis like al-Jawaliqi and al-Ahwal led them to al-Kazim, who is reported to have substantiated his claim to the imamate by displaying his erudition in the legal field.

Besides acknowledging an imam's authority, the *rijal* also proclaimed the designation of an imam to their companions. Some associates are reported to have anticipated the disparate claims for leadership that would arise following an imam's death. They thus questioned him about his successor. Kulayni cites numerous instances in which the disciples, anticipating the myriad of factions that would arise following al-Sadiq's death, questioned the imam regarding his successor.[3] Similarly, after the death of al-Kazim, there was considerable confusion as to the identity of his successor. At this point, ʿAli b. Yaqtin (d. 798–799), a close associate of al-Kazim, claimed that he had heard the imam designating ʿAli al-Rida as his successor.[4] In another tradition, Kashshi states that after ascertaining the identity of al-Kazim's successor, Yunus b. ʿAbd al-Rahman urged other Shiʿis to recognize his leadership.[5]

Besides establishing the claims of an imam, a *nass* report from a disciple performs the polemical function of nullifying the claims advanced by rival contenders. The rise of factionalism and the *nass* reports suggest that there were no strictly defined and generally accepted principles of succession at the time. They also confirm the extent of confusion created, even for the close disciples of the imams, and the challenges that the *rijal* encountered in ascertaining the identity of an imam's successor.

The matter of reporting the designation (*nass*) is of vital importance to the Shiʿis as it elevates the status of one who transmits that tradition. This is because it exemplifies the disciple's loyalty to the Shiʿi cause. Moreover, the imam's expression of confidence in the disciple by confiding in him the identity of his successor is an important indication of the prestige enjoyed by the disciple. In this context, we can comprehend how later jurists and biographers

came to evaluate the reliability (or otherwise) of erstwhile Shiʿi figures. For example, after citing a *nass* tradition on the imamate of al-Rida, Kashshi adds, "The tradition shows the status of the reporter (and) his concern for his religious affairs."[6] The view that a *nass* report enhances the authority of a disciple is substantiated by the fact that, in the biographical texts, such a report is frequently cited among the favorable remarks on a disciple. Furthermore, a *nass* tradition is important for the Shiʿis as it links the imams in a concatenated chain, culminating in the ultimate source of comprehensive authority, the Prophet. Acknowledging the correct imam becomes equivalent to accepting the original source of authoritative guidance, the Prophet.

A soteriological reason can also be discerned for depicting the *rijal* as the promulgators of an imam's claim to religious leadership. According to al-Baqir, without the acknowledgment of all the imams, salvation cannot be attained.[7] By citing reports on a *nass* proclamation of an imam, the *rijal*'s salvation is implicitly promulgated. The Shiʿis cannot possibly be expected to emulate or receive religious instructions from a disciple whose salvation has not been ensured.

The significance attached to a disciple's acknowledgment of the imam of the time can be seen in the biographical profiles on Zurara b. Aʿyan. Amid the confusion that arose after al-Sadiq's death, he had apparently failed to acknowledge the imamate of al-Kazim. Kashshi notes that after al-Sadiq's death, Zurara, who lived in Kufa, sent his son ʿUbayd to Medina to inquire about the imam's successor. According to Kashshi, Zurara did not acknowledge the imamate of al-Kazim as he died before ʿUbayd returned from Medina. A report in Kashshi's work further quotes Zurara as saying, "My belief concerning the identity of the [current] imam is contingent on the news that my son ʿUbayd brings [back] to me."[8] Other reports suggest that he took the Qurʾan as his imam. The view that Zurara had failed to acknowledge the imamate of al-Kazim is further substantiated from another report that is cited by Kashshi. He quotes al-Kazim as saying that Zurara had expressed doubts regarding his imamate, but that the imam had sought forgiveness for him.[9]

In contrast, both al-Ashʿari (d. 941) and al-Shahrastani (d. 1153) remark that Zurara had initially accepted the imamate of ʿAbd Allah, the eldest surviving son of al-Sadiq. When he could not answer the questions posed to him by the Shiʿis, many of them, including Zurara, rejected his imamate.[10] However, both Tusi and Najashi maintain that Zurara died in 767 C.E., two years after the death of al-Sadiq. During the intervening period, Zurara would clearly have heard of al-Kazim's imamate and should have acknowledged it. No report of such acknowledgment has been recorded nor has Zurara narrated any traditions from al-Kazim, a point that raises many questions regarding Zurara's reliability, for, in the Shiʿi view, salvation cannot be extended to one who does not acknowledge the imam of his time.

To exonerate Zurara from the accusation of failing to acknowledge the imamate of al-Kazim, al-Saduq cites a report in his *Kamal al-Din* that is conspicuously absent in earlier texts. The report is attributed to al-Rida and states that Zurara had, in reality, accepted al-Kazim's imamate. He sent ʿUbayd to Medina merely to seek permission from al-Kazim to publicize his imamate.[11] The tradition seeks to rehabilitate Zurara, which is an important measure because Zurara is seen by Shiʿi scholars as an indispensable disciple around whom many *hadith*s revolve. The rehabilitation of Zurara, it appears, began from an early stage. The report also attests to the importance that the Shiʿis attached to both the acknowledgment and proclamation of the imamate of a succeeding imam and the hermeneutical tools employed by later Shiʿis in embellishing the image of earlier figures. I intend to pursue this theme further in the next chapter when I consider the authority conferred by texts.

It is important to note that it was only from al-Sadiq's time onward that the *rijal* reported the identity of a succeeding imam. Before this time, the imams apparently alluded to the identity of their successors without being questioned by their associates. The point can be established from al-Mufid's *Kitab al-Irshad.* In his discussion on the proofs of the imamate of the first five imams, al-Mufid locates the authority of a succeeding imam based on excerpts of his excellences and virtues without citing any *nass* report from his disciples.

In the case of the fourth imam, Zayn al-ʿAbidin (d. 713–714), al-Mufid says that his imamate is confirmed because he was the most excellent (*al-afdal*) person in his time and because of the rational necessity of having an imam at all times. Al-Mufid then cites a tradition, which states that the names of the twelve imams have been recorded in the preserved tablet (*al-lawh al-mahfuz*). Moreover, al-Mufid appropriates other modes of authority to confirm the legitimacy of Zayn al-ʿAbidin's imamate. He adds that the imamate of the fourth imam is proven from reports, which state that he had received the *wasiyya* (testamentary bequest) from his father. This included the scrolls and the weapons of the Prophet.[12] However, no designation of or questions on the imam's successor are reported.

As I stated earlier, it was only from al-Sadiq's time that Shiʿism had to contend with a myriad of factions that competed for leadership. This is probably because it was in this milieu that, after the establishment of the ʿAbbasids, the leadership of the ʿAlids became a contentious issue with different ʿAlid leaders challenging the legitimacy of the ʿAbbasid regime. This era also coincided with the rise of various extremist (*ghulat*) groups, a fact that contributed to the rise of different factions within the Shiʿi community. It was in response to the claims to leadership by different groups that the *rijal* reported *nass* traditions on the succeeding imam, a point that substantiates the view that, henceforth, the disciples were largely responsible for proclaiming the imamate of a succeeding imam.

When there were disputes and differences on the identity of the charismatic authority, the charismatic office of the *rijal* apparently resolved them by narrating *nass* traditions.

Reports regarding the difficulties of ascertaining the identity of the correct imam indicate that, after al-Sadiq, the imams had to increasingly rely on their disciples to legitimize and proclaim their authority in the Shiʿi community. Paradoxically, the charismatic office that the imams had created became a definitive factor in the public acknowledgment and legitimation of the imams' own charismatic authority. Despite the reported differences between the two forms of authority, the juxtaposition of charismatic authority and its routinized form in eighth- and ninth-century Shiʿism enabled the *rijal* to publicly acknowledge the identity and authority of hereditary charisma.

The rise of dissenting factions after the demise of an imam further indicates the fluidity of Shiʿi beliefs and the absence of a coherent, systematic process for identifying a succeeding imam. In the midst of the confusing circumstances, the *rijal* were reportedly the forerunners in the crucial matter of acknowledging the correct imam. In the course of discerning the identity and proclaiming the authority of an imam, a disciple's own status was tacitly enhanced. By citing *nass* traditions, the *rijal* were also constructing a "norm" and defining strict lines of succession through which the identity and authority of a succeeding imam could be acknowledged. At the same time, they were perpetuating the principle of hereditary charisma and attenuating the claims of rival candidates.

The Rijal *as Transmitters of Traditions*

The times of Muhammad al-Baqir and Jaʿfar al-Sadiq coincided with an increasing interest in the acquisition and transmission of prophetic traditions. As the jurists sought to formulate a comprehensive legal system based on the Qurʾan and traditions from the Prophet, they turned to *hadith* as a source for legal precedents. Both Muhammad al-Baqir and Jaʿfar al-Sadiq were engaged in the transmission of *hadith* and both came to be highly regarded in Sunni juridical, *hadith,* and biographical texts. Al-Sadiq, in particular, is acknowledged as an erudite jurist and quoted frequently in Sunni *hadith* literature, where he is also regarded as an authority and a reliable transmitter of *hadith*.[13] For example, Ibn Hajar (d. 1449) has a lengthy profile on al-Sadiq. He quotes Ibn Hibban (d. 965) as stating that al-Sadiq was one of the most trustworthy people and a master in jurisprudence.[14]

According to al-Mufid, 4,000 traditionists narrated *hadith* from al-Sadiq alone.[15] The importance of al-Sadiq as a source of Shiʿi *hadith* reports can be

discerned from the fact that in al-Saduq's *Man La Yahduruhuʾl-Faqih* sixty percent of the traditions are traced to him, while fifteen percent of the *hadith* are traced to his father, al-Baqir.[16]

The *rijal*'s role as the transmitters of Shiʿi *hadith* can be properly assessed within the wider context of providing authoritative guidance to the community. *Hadith* was an indispensable medium through which the nuanced legal and theological teachings of the imams could be disseminated in the intellectual atmospheres of Kufa and Baghdad. The disciples are reported to have heard and transmitted thousands of traditions from the imams. For example, Muhammad b. Muslim al-Thaqafi is alleged to have heard over 30,000 traditions from al-Baqir,[17] and Jabir al-Juʿfi had reportedly heard over 70,000 traditions from the same imam.[18]

Al-Sadiq apparently encouraged his disciples to transmit his teachings by narrating traditions. He is reported to have said, "We do not consider a *faqih* among them (the Shiʿis) as a *faqih* until he is also a narrator [of our traditions]."[19] The report indicates that the Shiʿi legal tradition was interwoven with the *hadith* literature—that is, the *rijal* were to perform the didactic function of disseminating the legal teachings of the imams by narrating their traditions. The importance of *hadith* as a vehicle for transmitting the imams' teachings can be also assessed from the fact that the status of the *rijal* was to be measured, in part, by the traditions that they transmitted from the imam. Thus, Kashshi quotes al-Sadiq as saying, "Acknowledge the status of the *rijal* among us in accordance with the traditions that they report from us."[20] The tradition draws a direct correlation between the prestige of a disciple and the numbers of traditions he reports. The status that was acquired by transmitting traditions from the imams further encouraged the Shiʿis to narrate *hadith* rather than resort to *raʾy,* which, as I discussed in the last chapter, was identified with the practice of heretical groups. In all probability, reports that encouraged the transmission of traditions accentuated the preponderance of the traditions of the imams over the personal reasoning that was exercised by some disciples.

There was another reason for encouraging the disciples to collect and transmit the *hadith* of the imams at this time. The increased ʿAlid revolts against the ʿAbbasids and subsequent surveillance of the imams necessitated that the traditions of the imams be recorded and transmitted to subsequent Shiʿis. Due to the volatile political circumstances and the anti-ʿAlid measures adopted by the caliphs, the imams apparently realized that there was a great need to prevent their teachings from falling into oblivion. Thus, al-Sadiq is reported to have told his followers to "Preciously guard your writings, for soon you will have great need of them."[21]

The emergence of Shiʿi *hadith* at this point in Shiʿi history was also crucial in that it helped crystallize and propagate the distinct doctrinal positions that

the Shiʿis had espoused. As transmitters of Shiʿi *hadith,* the *rijal* recorded legal and doctrinal positions in contradistinction to the emerging Sunni legal and theological *hadith*. The pervasive theory of hereditary charisma, which epitomized the imam's position as the head of the community, was enhanced and effectively promulgated through the *hadith* literature. As Buckley has recently shown, by transmitting *hadith,* the *rijal* were asserting normative beliefs and practices, defining Shiʿi orthodoxy and, in the process, designating the heterodoxy.[22] As transmitters of the imams' *hadith,* the authority of the *rijal* was further accentuated since they were seen as the bearers and exponents of the imams' normative traditions.

The *rijal* used *hadith* to propagate and refute certain theological stances. For example, they employed *hadith* to promulgate the doctrine of *rajʿa*. This refers to the belief in the return of the imams to rule the world before the end of time.[23] Among the disciples of the imams, Jabir al-Juʿfi, in particular, is reported to have promulgated this doctrine.[24] A report cited by Ibn Saʿd shows how the Shiʿi belief in *rajʿa* was repudiated in Sunni circles by citing *hadith*. Al-Baqir was reportedly asked by Zuhayr b. Jabir,

> "Is there anyone among you, the *ahl al-bayt,* who accepts [the doctrine of] *rajʿa*?" He replied, "No." He was then asked, "Is there anyone among you, the *ahl al-bayt,* who vilifies (*yasubbu*) Abu Bakr and ʿUmar?" Al-Baqir replied, "No, for I love and befriend them and I seek forgiveness for them."[25]

The tradition demonstrates how *hadith* was made to oppose *hadith*. In the Sunni works, the Shiʿi imams were projected as respectable figures who distanced themselves from their own disciples and denounced the beliefs they espoused. Moreover, the emphasis on the *ahl al-bayt* in the report underscores the point that, in the Sunni works, Shiʿi beliefs were rejected by the imams themselves and other members of the Prophet's family. The traditions that the *rijal* transmitted for advancing particular theological stances were often refuted by opposing traditions quoted in Sunni circles from the imams themselves. In the sectarian literature of refutation and counterrefutation, *hadith* was used to propagate and reject particular doctrinal points. Apart from substantiating particular beliefs, *hadith* was also used as a potent weapon to nullify the claims of rival schools.

Another important reason for accentuating the *rijal*'s role as the transmitters of the traditions of the imams can be discerned. By narrating *hadith,* they could set the hearts of the Shiʿis at rest, a point that alludes to the confusion that had permeated the Shiʿi community. In this context, al-Sadiq is reported to have said, "a reporter of our traditions [through whom] the hearts of the Shiʿis are strengthened is better than a thousand worshippers."[26] The significant role that

hadith played in setting "the hearts of the Shiʿis at rest" can be fully comprehended only when it is viewed in the wider context of numerous reports of *hadith* fabrication. Starting with ʿAli Zayn al-ʿAbidin, the fourth imam, every imam is reported to have had an adversary who distorted or falsified his traditions. Mukhtar b. Abi ʿUbayd (d. 687) is accused of forging lies against Zayn al-ʿAbidin[27] whereas Mughira b. Saʿid (d. 737) is charged with interpolating al-Baqir's traditions.[28] Similarly, Abuʾl-Khattab (d. 755) is accused of distorting the traditions of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq. Yunus b ʿAbd a-Rahman had heard and recorded Shiʿi traditions when he visited Kufa. When he went to Medina, he presented these to al-Rida. The imam denied that these were uttered by al-Sadiq or al-Kazim and blamed Abuʾl-Khattab and his companions for fabricating their *hadith*s.[29] Such reports of interpolation in and fabrication of traditions increased the importance of the *rijal* as protectors of *hadith* against those figures who interpolated and attributed traditions to the imams.

The traditions that the *rijal* narrated were also significant in that they refuted the claims of their adversaries who differed with them on various theological and juridical issues. Especially after the death of al-Sadiq, the rise of factionalism had obfuscated and polarized the Shiʿi community. Initially, the Shiʿis had to contend with the challenge of the Fathis, who claimed that ʿAbd Allah, the eldest son of al-Sadiq, had succeeded the imam. The death of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq had also precipitated chiliastic beliefs among some of his followers. The Nawusiyya, for example, believed that al-Sadiq had gone into an occultation and expected his return in the "near future."[30]

After the death of al-Kazim in 799 C.E., the Waqifis, who proclaimed his messianism, also posed a protracted and potent threat to the Shiʿis. Some seemingly close associates of the imams like Abu Basir al-ʿAsadi (d. 767) and ʿAli b. Abi Hamza al-Bataʾini (n.d.), had reported traditions supporting the Waqifi thesis on the messianism of al-Kazim.[31] The extent of the Waqifi challenge to the Shiʿi community and the need to combat this threat can be discerned from a study of Tusi's *Kitab al-Ghayba*. The author devotes more than thirty pages to quoting and refuting Waqifi beliefs and traditions whereas he devotes barely two pages to discussing the Kaysaniyya (those who accepted Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya as the messiah) and the Nawusiyya. In refuting Waqifi beliefs, Tusi quotes copious traditions on al-Kazim's death and how, through the miracles performed by al-Rida, many Waqifis recanted their messianic beliefs and accepted his imamate.[32] Tusi further refutes many traditions, quoted by the Waqifis, in support of their messianic belief.

It is also important to note that due to their association with the imams and the *rijal,* many of the traditions narrated by Waqifis were incorporated in the Shiʿi *hadith* manuals. Karram al-Khathʿami was a Waqifi whose book on *hadith* was related by a number of Shiʿi transmitters. Despite his Waqifism, many

of his traditions have been included in Shiʿi literature. In fact, the four main Shiʿi *hadith* works contain more than one hundred of his traditions.[33] Similarly, ʿAli b. Abi Hamza al-Bataʾini, a disciple of al-Sadiq and al-Kazim, was one of the founders of Waqifism. His traditions appear in numerous Shiʿi works. Such anecdotes indicate the degree of interaction between the Waqifis and the disciples of the imams and the appearance of their traditions in Shiʿi literature. These anecdotes also indicate that the role of the *rijal* as traditionists is to be assessed in the context of the rise of sectarianism and segmentation within the Shiʿi community.

Hadith, as a mode of discourse, frequently assumed polemic overtones, reasserting, thereby, the demarcation lines between Shiʿism and other schools of thought. Through the narration of polemical traditions (traditions directed at neutralizing the claims of rival factions), the *rijal* refuted the Nawusi and Waqifi messianic contentions and the beliefs of other groups. The polemical traditions were based largely on reports from al-Sadiq, which foretold the rise of the Waqifis and warned his followers against associating with them. For example, al-Sadiq is quoted as stating that the Waqifis will be the worst of creation.[34] The *rijal* employed *hadith* from the imams to counter the traditions that the Waqifis had transmitted to substantiate their claims. In the environment of sectarian polemics, *hadith* became a polemical tool for nullifying the claims of rival factions.

The *rijal* transmitted different genres of traditions. The legal, theological, and paraenetical traditions performed the didactic function of disseminating the teachings of the imams. The *nass* traditions were supposed to put the confused Shiʿi hearts at rest and to assure them of the identity of a succeeding imam. The polemical traditions, on the other hand, refuted the claims of rival contenders to the imamate. The significance of the *rijal*'s role as transmitters of traditions cannot be overstated. It is to be remembered that Shiʿi beliefs were often expressed and defended in the midst of the pluralistic and cosmopolitan environment of Kufa. By reporting various genres of traditions, the *rijal* were protecting Shiʿi beliefs against the impingement of extraneous beliefs and practices.

In addition to the threat from various factions that arose after the death of an imam, the Shiʿis had to contend with the *ghulat*. In the heresiographical literature, the term *ghulat* is used to apply to a myriad of different groups who held extremist views regarding various figures.[35] The Sunnis saw the *ghulat* as a divergence from a major divergent group—the Shiʿis. Rather than concentrating on the extremist elements, the Sunnis were more concerned with exposing and refuting Shiʿi beliefs. Thus, they applied the term *ghuluww* to any group or person who deviated appreciably from their tenets.[36] Even some eminent Shiʿi figures like Zurara were considered as *ghulat* by some Sunni authors.[37] Al-Jahiz

(d. 868/69) labels the poet al-Kumayt al-Asadi (d. 744) an extremist due to his staunch Shiʿi beliefs.[38]

The Shiʿis, on the other hand, had to distance themselves from the extremist beliefs espoused by the *ghulat* since these could endanger their lives and reputation. Shiʿi concern at repudiating *ghulat* beliefs can be seen from the fact that the authors of all seventeen books that refute the *ghulat* (*al-Radd ʿala ʾl-Ghulat*), were Shiʿis.[39] The Shiʿis accused the *ghulat* of ascribing extremist traditions to the imams and interpolating them in their favor. Bayan b. Samʿan (d. 737), for example, is said to have believed in the divinity of ʿAli and that, through the process of metempsychosis, the divine particle had been transmitted to himself.[40] As noted in chapter three, the Shiʿis were often influenced by other factions in areas like Kufa, which appears to have been a nexus of much *ghulat* activity. Both Mufaddal b. ʿUmar and Jabir al-Juʿfi are reported to have been influenced by the *ghulat*. The former is reported to have believed that the imams determined the sustenance of people.[41] He was also associated with an extremist group that had allegedly fabricated traditions and taught that acknowledgment of the imams' authority was sufficient to absolve his followers from undertaking daily rituals.[42]

Some *ghulat* figures like Abuʾl-Khattab had been politically active. By claiming to act on behalf of al-Sadiq (who was reportedly seen by him to be God incarnate)[43] the Shiʿis' coexistence with the wider Muslim community was endangered. Thus, it was essential for the imams to disown the *ghulat*. In this regard, al-Sadiq is quoted as saying, "May God's curse be upon him [Abuʾl-Khattab], I dread him all the time, whether I stand, sit, or lie in my bed, may God make him taste the heat of iron."[44]

Such statements from an imam served multiple purposes. They articulated and delineated the "orthodox" position (stating what was and what was not acceptable to the Shiʿis). By distancing himself from extremist views, the imam defined his position and shaped his image in the Muslim community. Significantly, the image of those disciples who upheld the "orthodox" views and dissociated themselves from the extremists was also embellished. By their transmission of anti-*ghulat* traditions, the *rijal* were refuting the pro-*ghulat hadith* and, simultaneously, distancing themselves and the imams from the beliefs propounded by the *ghulat*.

The authority of the *rijal* was enhanced by the very traditions they transmitted, since they repudiated the claims of disparate groups and upheld Shiʿi beliefs. The polemical traditions reported by the *rijal* reflect the community's attempts at self-identification and differentiation from the Sunnis. They also confirm the Shiʿi community's attempts at extricating elements that it felt were extremist and marginal. Charges of deviation leveled against the Waqifis, *ghulat,* and other factions, assume a clearly defined and well-articulated position

from which such a movement allegedly occurred. Anecdotes about the *rijal*'s refutation of the Waqifis and *ghulat* also argue for the doctrinal rectitude of the disciples who were claiming an "orthodox" image for themselves. In the process, the office of charisma is projected as the custodian of "orthodox" beliefs and praxis.

The foregoing discussion indicates that, by transmitting traditions from the imams, the *rijal* were disseminating their teachings, proclaiming the identity of the correct authority, and perpetuating the principle of hereditary charisma. They were also identifying the variant factions with extremist, peripheral, and isolated groups. As they transmitted the traditions of the imams, the *rijal* projected themselves as authoritative figures through whom normative and canonical beliefs and praxis could be divested from those promulgated by the Waqifis and the *ghulat*. This point can be further adduced from a remark reported from Jamil b. Darraj (n.d.), a disciple of the sixth imam. After quoting al-Sadiq's praises for his four eminent companions, Jamil is reported to have said, "We would recognize the companions of Abuʾl-Khattab by their (*rijal*'s) hatred [of them]."[45]

Literary Compositions

As I discussed in chapter one, routinization of the Prophet's comprehensive authority in the Sunni case meant that it displaced his charismatic authority. In Shiʿism, on the other hand, routinization of the imams' charismatic authority resulted in the coexistence of two different forms of authority. The charismatic office of the *rijal* supplemented rather than displaced the hereditary authority of the imams. The functions of the *rijal* were interwoven not only with transmitting the teachings of the imams, but also with upholding the central thesis of the hereditary charisma of the imams. Both Sunni and Shiʿi sources agree that the concept of hereditary charismatic authority was at the center of the *rijal*'s discourses and literary works.

The intellectual challenges in the eighth and ninth centuries necessitated that the *rijal* participate in the contemporary scholarly discourses. The teachings imparted by the imams to the *rijal* empowered them to engage in various debates and disputations with Muslims from other schools of thought. In particular, the disciples had to respond to the various charges and refutations of their beliefs that were leveled by the Muʿtazilis and the *ahl al-hadith*.[46]

The disciples refuted the charges of their adversaries by composing a wide ambit of literary works. They wrote numerous tracts on the subject of the imamate and other related issues, expounding their arguments by citing traditions and rational proofs. The compilations also took the form of refutations of the

views of others and a defense of Shiʿi beliefs. To preserve their teachings for posterity, the imams encouraged their disciples to compose tracts in different fields. Kulayni cites a report in which al-Sadiq is quoted as actively encouraging Mufaddal b. ʿUmar to "preserve and disseminate your knowledge among your brothers, and, when you die, bequeath your books to your children, for there will come a time when there will be [so much] confusion that they will not get close to religion except through their books."[47] It is important to note that the disciples were writing as individual jurists or theologians. In all probability, there was a lack of a collective or coherent response by the Shiʿis, a view that can be substantiated by the juridical and theological differences among the *rijal* themselves.

The genesis of a distinctive body of Shiʿi literature can be traced to the late Umayyad period. At this time a number of anti-Umayyad books appeared. Beside this genre of literature, Shiʿi transmitters of *hadith* had also started to record traditions from the imams.[48] A study of the biographical works of Tusi and Najashi indicates that the associates of the imams are reported to have written copiously on diverse theological, jurisprudential, historical, and paraenetical issues. It is quite common to find compositions on issues like *zuhd* (asceticism), *rijal* (biography), *tafsir* (exegesis), and issues connected to Islamic law. As chiliastic ideas became more widespread among the Shiʿis during the times of the later imams, the *rijal* also composed books that pertained to eschatology. ʿAli b. Mahzayar, a disciple of the eighth and ninth imams, for example, wrote *The Book on the Calamities* (of the end of time), while Fadl b. Shadhan is reported to have composed a work titled *The Book on the Occultation*.[49] By the end of the ninth century, about 1,000 Shiʿi works in various fields were available.[50] Just like the traditions they transmitted from the imams, the literary compositions of the *rijal* embodied their didactic role.

In some cases, the compositions of the *rijal* were received and read by later scholars. Thus, in his profile of Anas b. ʿIyad (d. 815), Najashi states that he had read his book with his teacher Ahmad b. ʿAli b. Nuh.[51] Najashi also claims to have seen al-Ahwal's book *Kitab Ifʿal La Tafʿal* which was in the possession of his contemporary, al-Ghadaʾiri's son, Ahmad (n.d.).[52] In the eleventh century, Sharif al-Murtada (d. 1044) asked the Shiʿi community to refer to the book of ʿUbayd Allah al-Halabi, a disciple of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, in the absence of a qualified legal expert.[53] Ibn Tawus (d. 1266) had a copy of Hisham al-Jawaliqi's book on *hadith* and quoted from it in his work.[54] Similarly, Muʿawiya b. ʿAmmar al-Duhni's entire work on *hajj* appears to have survived for posterity. His work is quoted in numerous Shiʿi juridical manuals.[55]

Besides transmitting the teachings of the imams in their expositions, the literary texts the *rijal* composed had polemical connotations. Many of their treatises focused on promoting and defending the belief in the hereditary

charismatic authority of the imam. The Shiʿi theologian Muhammad b. Khalil al-Sakkak (n.d.), for example, is reported to have written a book titled *The Book on the Refutation of One Who Denies the Necessity of the Imamate based on Designation*.[56] Hisham b. al-Hakam had composed a book on the imamate. Excerpts from it are quoted in later Shiʿi and Sunni works.[57] Maytham al-Tammar had also composed a book on the imamate, whereas other Shiʿi scholars refuted the Zaydi and Muʿtazili beliefs in their tracts.[58] The *rijal* also repudiated the *ghulat* in their polemical texts. Al-Hasan b. ʿAli al-Faddal (d. 838), for example, is credited with a book titled *A Book on the Refutation of the Extremists*.[59] Both Fadl b. Shadhan and ʿAli b. Mahzayar (d. 868) are also reported to have composed anti-*ghulat* tracts.[60]

The importance of the works of Hisham b. al-Hakam, and other theologians like him, can be comprehended from the titles of the works that he allegedly composed.[61] Hisham wrote many tracts on the imamate, free will, and predestination. He also refuted beliefs held by the opponents of the Shiʿis. Thus, for example, he is reported to have refuted the Zaydi belief in the imamate of the "inferior" and rejected Muʿtazili views regarding Talha and al-Zubayr, two important companions of the Prophet who had later turned against ʿAli.[62]

I mentioned in chapter three that differences existed within the charismatic office that was occupied by the *rijal*. Some disciples are reported to have refuted the views of fellow Shiʿis in literary form,[63] whereas others had apparently questioned the imams and recorded their responsa. Safwan b. Yahya (d. 825), an eminent associate of the eighth and ninth imams, composed a book on the questions that were posed to al-Kazim.[64] Some books that were written by the *rijal* were presented to the imams to authenticate. Once verified by an imam, a book was integrated within the framework of his *sunna* for, in theory, an act or speech that was authenticated by an imam constituted an approbated practice. The book of ʿUbayd Allah b. ʿAli al-Halabi, for example, was reportedly authenticated by al-Sadiq.[65]

A distinctive feature of eighth-century Shiʿi literary aspirations was the compilation of four hundred *usul* works (*al-usul al-arbaʿu miʾa*).[66] Al-Mufid was the first scholar to have referred to the *usul* that the Shiʿis composed. An *asl* refers to a notebook that comprises traditions that were heard directly from the imams. A *kitab,* on the other hand, may include *hadith* reports from the imams but is transmitted through an intermediary.[67] There is much controversy within the Shiʿi ranks on the merit of the *usul* works. However, the authors of the *usul* works enjoy a higher prestige than other authors as they are seen as reflecting the imams' exact sayings and transmitting their teachings.[68] It was possibly for this reason that both Tusi and Najashi differentiated between the authors of *usul* works and those who had composed a *kitab,* listing, in the process, the indices of the various genres of works composed in the preceding era.

Many of the legal pronouncements of the fifth and sixth imams were collected and included by their disciples in their compilation of the *usul* literature. Many of these *usul* works are mentioned by Ibn Nadim, Tusi, and Najashi, and were incorporated by post-*ghayba* Shiʿi scholars like Kulayni, al-Saduq, and Tusi in their compilations. According to Madelung, "the *usul* were the ultimate sources of the later extant collections of Shiʿi traditions like Kulayni's *al-Kafi*."[69] Both al-Saduq and Tusi indicate that they depended on the *usul* works available to them.[70] Harun b. Musa al-Talaʿakubari (d. 995–996) appears to have been an important figure who transmitted all the *usul* works available to him in his time.[71] The view that the *usul* works that were compiled by the *rijal* were incorporated in subsequent works is confirmed by Hurr al-ʿAmili (d. 1692). After quoting the *usul* works at his disposal, he states, "I have studied the traditions of these fourteen *usul* books and I have found most of these to be present in *al-Kafi* and other reliable texts."[72]

The importance of the literary compilations of the *rijal* for the Shiʿis cannot be overstated. Their legal traditions and theological beliefs rest mainly on the traditions transmitted and books composed by the *rijal*. The literature transmitted by the *rijal* is a further indication of the importance attached in Shiʿism to their role as the authoritative links to the imams' knowledge. Whereas the polemical discourses were directed mainly at their rivals, the books were composed with the dual purpose of defending doctrinal positions and providing religious guidance to the Shiʿis. It is probably due to this that we read of titles of books on *rajʿa,* rituals, history, and the excellences (*fadaʾil*) of the imams.

The literary output of the *rijal* was highly significant as it positioned the issues of the imamate, qualifications, traits, and appointment of the imam in the center of Shiʿi discourses. The texts that the *rijal* compiled also positioned the disciples as the authoritative figures of the Shiʿi community who transmitted and defended the teachings of the imams in various forms. That the literary activities of the *rijal* were becoming increasingly important and well known in the community can be discerned from the numerous works that Muʿtazili and other scholars composed to refute the Shiʿi thesis on the imamate and other related topics. Muʿtazili sensitivity to the Shiʿi challenge is also indicated by the polemics they engaged in with the Shiʿis and by the polemical texts they wrote to refute their thesis. This, in itself, is testimony to the impact that the literary activity of the *rijal* had in the community.

Polemical Discourses

I mentioned in chapter three that the epistemic authority of the *rijal* empowered them to enunciate and, at times, interpret distinctive beliefs and praxis. In

the discourses with their interlocutors, the disciples focused on various topics of theology that were anchored on the central doctrine of the charismatic authority of the imams. In the process, the *rijal* constructed the edifice of a theological underpinning for Shiʿi doctrines and systematically laid the foundation for the elaboration of Shiʿi dogma.

A study of the topics discussed by the *rijal* indicates a definitive shift, which is consonant with the functions they performed in the community. Faced with increasing criticisms from the Muʿtazilis and the *ahl al-hadith,* the disciples became more concerned with the legal and theological underpinnings of their faith, rather than with the political ramifications of the doctrine of the imamate. The works of Kashshi and Kulayni indicate that, rather than discussing when and under what conditions the imams would assume political authority, the *rijal* annotated the discussion on the imamate to the necessity of prophethood and linked it to the more general question of God's perpetual guidance of human beings. Through the efforts of the *rijal,* the discussion on hereditary charisma was appended to the debate on the charismatic authority of the Prophet.

In the eighth and ninth centuries, Shiʿi beliefs came under increasing attack, especially from the Muʿtazilis, who refuted the central doctrine of the imamate as it was enunciated by the Shiʿis. The Muʿtazilis' disputations were predicated mainly on *kalam* (speculative theology) arguments and other forms of rational tools to vindicate their doctrinal positions. The *rijal* saw the need to respond with equally sophisticated tools of reasoning and methodological terminologies. Hisham b. al-Hakam, for example, did not confine his disputations to the traditions from the imams since these genres of traditions and style of argumentation would not have been accepted by his opponents. In his discussion with a Muʿtazili interlocutor, ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd (n.d.), Hisham is reported to have argued, based on rational premises, the need for a divinely guided imam at all times.[73] Other *rijal* also developed *kalam*-based arguments in their discourses, arguing, for example, on the rational basis of hereditary charismatic authority and other traits of the imams.

The office of charisma that was established by the imams fully contributed to the environment of refutation and counterrefutation, especially in places like Kufa and Baghdad where sectarian polemics were rife. Topics that were at the nexus of Muʿtazili and Ashʿari discussions were also debated by the eighth- and ninth-century Shiʿis.[74] The *rijal* defined, articulated, and defended Shiʿi beliefs, discussing, in the process, questions such as the creation of the Qurʾan, anthropomorphism, the nature and extent of God's *ʿilm,* the need for an imam, and the infallibility of the prophets and imams. Juridical and theological dynamics dominated and characterized much of the discourse in which the *rijal* were engaged.

The names and views of the disciples who were engaged in these discussions are cited in both Sunni and Shiʿi texts. In his *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq,* al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (d. 1037) mentions some of the eminent theologians who were affiliated to al-Sadiq. These included figures like Zurara and Hisham b. al-Hakam.[75] Other prominent Shiʿi theologians at this time included figures like al-Ahwal and Hisham b. Salim al-Jawaliqi. Their views are mentioned and refuted in theological tracts, like those of al-Ashʿari's *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin* and al-Khayyat's *al-Intisar*. A study of these works indicates that the views the *rijal* propounded were well known when the tracts were compiled in the ninth century.[76]

The view that the Shiʿi office of charisma was engaged in debates with their interlocutors is corroborated in many other reports. Along with other disciples like ʿAli b. Maytham Tammar[77] and al-Sakkak[78] (n.d.), Hisham b. al-Hakam participated in a symposium arranged by Yahya al-Barmak (d. 805) in Harun al-Rashid's court.[79] According to the historian al-Masʿudi (d. 957), Hisham discussed the question of the imamate, that is, whether it should be based on divine appointment or *ikhtiyar* (the imam was to be chosen by the people).[80] Ibn Qutayba (d. 889) notes that Hisham debated with Abuʾl-Hudhayl (d. 840), al-Nazzam (d. 836), and al-Najjar (d. 836), three prominent Muʿtazili theologians.[81] In addition, other Shiʿi theologians like Zurara and Muhammad b. Muslim debated with Abu Hanifa on legal and theological issues.[82] A comparison of Sunni and Shiʿi sources indicates that the *rijal* participated in the intellectual discourses and contributed to the crystallization and articulation of an elaborate Shiʿi belief system.

The significance and impact of the contribution of the *rijal* in the realm of intellectual discourse are further underscored by the fact that their arguments were refuted by their opponents. An important Muʿtazili thinker who wrote on the imamate was al-Jahiz. In his *ʿUthmaniyya* and other works, he refutes Shiʿi positions in great detail. His views were later refuted by Ibn al-Rawandi (d. 859), a Muʿtazili who converted to Shiʿism. Although the works of al-Jahiz and Ibn al-Rawandi are not extant, al-Khayyat's theological tract provides us with much information on the views of eighth- and ninth-century Shiʿis and those of their Muʿtazili opponents. In fact, it is possible to reconstruct from this work outlines of the debates between Ibn al-Rawandi and al-Jahiz, and the views advanced by the *rijal*.

The polemical role of the *rijal* and their discourses on the hereditary charismatic authority of the imams cannot be understood properly unless due attention is paid to the doctrinal underpinnings that have been reported from the early Shiʿis. This is because their contribution in this field was largely dictated by their theological stances. It is therefore necessary to briefly recapitulate the salient features that characterized the theological positions of the *rijal*.

Shiʿi beliefs in the eighth and ninth centuries can be discerned not only from tenth- and eleventh-century Shiʿi works, but also from the fragments of views held by figures labeled as Rafidis in various polemical and heresiographical texts. The Rafidis, as the Shiʿis were labeled by their opponents, dissociated themselves from the first two caliphs.[83] They also maintained that the community had apostatized by rejecting ʿAli's imamate after the Prophet's death.[84] Hisham b. al-Hakam is reported to have maintained that most of the companions of the Prophet had erred in rejecting the rights of ʿAli b. Abi Talib. This, adds al-Khayyat, "is the Rafidi view and is well known among us."[85] According to the Muʿtazili al-Hakim b. al-Jushami (d. 1101), Hisham and his companions had introduced into Islam the idea of *takfir al-sahaba* (considering the companions to be infidels).[86]

The *rijal* also argued for the need for an infallible imam who could ensure that no vitiation of religious beliefs or practices occurred.[87] Moreover, they maintained that the imams possessed the divinely inspired *ʿilm* that was contained in scrolls such as the *jafr*. According to Ibn Qutayba, the Shiʿis maintained that the *jafr* contained all the knowledge the imam required, and foretold all events that would occur to the day of resurrection.[88] Sufyan b. ʿUyayna reportedly abandoned Jabir al-Juʿfi because the latter believed that the Prophet had transmitted his knowledge to ʿAli, who had, in turn, taught it to al-Hasan. Jabir also taught that this knowledge was, through a concatenated chain, transmitted to al-Sadiq.[89]

Some Shiʿis apparently insisted that changes had been made in the Qurʾan[90] and that God's knowledge of things was produced in time.[91] As a matter of fact, al-Khayyat mentions the Shiʿi theologian al-Sakkak, who was questioned and defeated on the extent of God's knowledge.[92] The Shiʿis were also accused of condoning and promoting the concept of *taqiyya* (dissimulation). Al-Sadiq himself is reported to have practiced it when confronted by two Zaydis.[93]

The pivotal role that the *rijal* played in promulgating the belief in the hereditary charismatic authority of the imams is further evinced by the following report. In his *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra,* the biographer Ibn Saʿd (d. 848) quotes Fudayl b. Marzuq (n.d.) as asking ʿUmar and al-Husayn, the brothers of Zayd b. ʿAli (d. 737),

> "Is there among you, the *ahl al-bayt,* one to whom obedience is obligatory (*muftarad al-taʿa*), whom you acknowledge, and if one does not acknowledge him, he dies the death of ignorance (*jahiliyya*)?" They said, "By God, this [view] does not prevail among us. Whoever has said this about us is a liar." He (Fudayl) said, "I told ʿUmar b. ʿAli, 'May God have mercy on you, do you believe that this position [of the imamate] belonged to ʿAli and that the Prophet designated him,

then it belonged to al-Hasan [after] ʿAli had designated him, then to al-Husayn, [as] al-Hasan had designated him, then it belonged to ʿAli b. al-Husayn, al-Husayn having designated him, then it belonged to Muhammad b. ʿAli and that ʿAli had designated him?ʾ He [ʿUmar] said, 'When my father died, he did not bequeath [even] two words. May God fight (*qatalahum*) them. They are merely using us to propagate their views.' Then he continued, ' . . .Yes this Muʿalla b. Khunays, by God, I thought about this at length when [I was] in bed. I was amazed at a community whom God has caused to be confused when Muʿalla b. Khunays misguided them.'"[94]

The report testifies to the existence of the doctrine of the imamate and its transmission through the principle of hereditary succession at least in Ibn Saʿd's time, which is much earlier than the extant Shiʿi texts. The tradition also demonstrates the role that some of the close companions of the imams played in propagating the concept of the hereditary charisma of the imams. It is to be noted that the report links Muʿalla b. Khunays to an important Shiʿi doctrine, that of the transmission of the imamate in a specifically preordained chain. The tradition also substantiates the point previously made that, in the Sunni sources, it is the *rijal* rather than the imams who are held responsible for formulating heretical doctrines. In the case under consideration, Muʿalla is blamed for concocting the belief in the imamate.

Another point of note is that Muʿalla is rebuked by a member of the *ahl al-bayt*. This corroborates the point I made earlier that, in Sunni circles, the children of the imams are projected as distancing themselves from certain doctrines circulated by the *rijal*. The report becomes an important tool for arguing against the doctrine of the imamate because even members of the Prophet's family are depicted as refuting this important belief.

The *rijal* are reported to have played an active role in promulgating other Shiʿi doctrines. As I have noted before, Jabir al-Juʿfi propagated the belief in *rajʿa* while other Shiʿis reportedly believed in *badaʾ* (alteration in divine decree).[95] Al-Khayyat cites some of the arguments advanced by the Shiʿis in their vindication of these beliefs. Most of these are predicated on the interpretations of Qurʾanic verses. In the case of *badaʾ*, they cited the *hadith,* "Voluntary alms alters the decreed destiny" to support their belief that God may modify His announced decisions in accordance with changing circumstances.[96]

Another important Shiʿi jurist-cum-theologian of the ninth century was Fadl b. Shadhan. According to Najashi, Fadl's father was a student of Yunus b. ʿAbd al-Rahman, a remark that underscores the point made in chapter three that Yunus had his own circle of followers.[97] Within Shiʿi circles, Fadl was known as a proficient jurist and an extremely effective theologian. An alleged author of 180 books, many of his works appear to be polemical in

nature, embodying vitriolic attacks on beliefs held by opponents. He is reported to have refuted beliefs held by the Muʿtazilis, Murjiʿis, and the *ghulat*. Fadl is also reported to have written against the philosophers and refuted the Hashwiya (extreme traditionalists).[98]

The titles of his works indicate that Fadl was a proponent of major Shiʿi doctrines like those of the imamate and *rajʿa.* Fadl is also purported to have composed important tracts on juridical practices that differentiate the Shiʿis from the Sunnis. He defended Shiʿi practices like *mutʿa* (marriage for a fixed duration) and the wiping of the feet (*mash al-khuffayn*) during the ritual ablution.[99]

An extant work of Fadl is the *Kitab al-Idah*. The arguments expressed in this book are similar to some of the Shiʿi beliefs known to have been propagated in his time. The *Idah* purportedly contains some of Fadl's most potent disputations.[100] Amid the polemical discourses, the author mentions some of the Shiʿi beliefs, such as *ʿisma, nass,* the doctrine of *rajʿa,*[101] and the event of Ghadir, when the imamate of ʿAli was reportedly publicly proclaimed and acknowledged.[102] Fadl typifies the rhetorical arguments that may have been at the core of the Shiʿi debates.

Another prominent Shiʿi theologian was Muhammad b. Nuʿman al-Ahwal. He is deemed to be important in Shiʿi texts due to his witty style of argumentation and numerous polemical discourses. His astuteness enabled him to overcome several opponents in his debates. Thus, according to Kashshi, he argued and overcame Zayd b. ʿAli on the question of the need for a divinely appointed imam to whom obedience was obligatory.[103] One of his greatest adversaries is said to have been Abu Hanifa with whom he had numerous discussions on the imamate and on the doctrine of *rajʿa.* The poet Sayyid al-Himyari (d. 789) is reported to have praised al-Ahwal for his discussions with Abu Hanifa.[104] According to Ibn Hajar, al-Ahwal debated with Abu Hanifa on many issues, including the *fadaiʾl* (excellences) of ʿAli.[105]

The investiture of the imams' authority to their associates was further consolidated by various reports in which they encouraged the *rijal* to argue on various theological issues on their behalf, vindicating, in the process, central Shiʿi beliefs. Al-Sadiq, for example, is reported to have encouraged al-Ahwal to debate with his opponents.[106] Kulayni notes how a Syrian debated with many disciples in the presence of al-Sadiq, all of whom overcame the Syrian's arguments.[107] The imams' encouragement to their associates to debate on their behalf further indicates an investiture of their authority to their close companions.

Besides arguing for various doctrines, Shiʿi sources suggest that the *rijal* had specialized in different fields of discourse. Aban b. Taghlib (d. 758) was reportedly an expert in Arabic grammar, Zurara in jurisprudence, al-Ahwal in *kalam,* al-Tayyar (n.d.) in *al-istitaʿa* (human capacity to perform acts), Hisham b. Salim al-Jawaliqi in *al-tawhid* (principle of God's unity) and

Hisham b. al-Hakam on the imamate.[108] ʿAli Maytham al-Tammar is also reported to have had discussions with the Muʿtazili ʿAli al-Aswari on the imamate.[109] As a matter of fact, al-Tammar is reputed to have been the first Shiʿi theologian to uphold the principle of hereditary charisma. In their discourses, the *rijal* laid the basis for the elaboration and more systematic exposition of Shiʿi doctrines by later theologians. Ibn al-Rawandi (d. 859), who wrote almost a century after these *rijal,* copiously quotes and defends the views of Hisham b. al-Hakam. Similarly, later Shiʿi theologians like al-Mufid, al-Murtada, and Tusi elaborate on most of the doctrinal positions that were discussed by eighth-century Shiʿis.

The foregoing discussion indicates that the polemical function of the *rijal* is confirmed in ninth-century Sunni texts in which the *rijal* are accused of defending and vindicating beliefs related to the imamate. Apart from the beliefs in anthropomorphism and creation of God's *ʿilm,* no attempt was made by subsequent Shiʿis to refute the charges leveled at their *rijal* in the Sunni works. On the contrary, the Shiʿis cited many traditions to support these beliefs, whose provenance is mentioned in the Sunni texts to lie in second-century Rafidism. Most doctrines, like those of *nass,* the infallible qualities of the imam, and *rajʿa,* were accepted by the Shiʿis as originating from the imams, although they were transmitted, articulated, and defended by the *rijal*. A comparison of Sunni and Shiʿi theological and heresiographical texts indicates that Sunni accusations against the *rijal* are confirmed in Shiʿi texts, where the Rafidis in the Sunni texts become the *rijal* of the Shiʿi imams.

The charismatic office of the *rijal* promoted and consolidated its self-understanding of post-Muhammadan charismatic authority. In their disputations regarding the imamate, the *rijal* presented the imam as the living embodiment of the ideal successor of the Prophet, whose acts and speech established paradigmatic precedents. The inherent motive for the disputations—especially those pertaining to the imamate—was to characterize the origins of the community as divinely sanctioned. The doctrine of the imamate was co-opted into a resistance discourse and used to assert a divergent concept of religious authority in the post-Muhammadan era. Employing the more sophisticated *kalam* style of disputation in conjunction with traditional interpretation of Qurʾanic verses and prophetic traditions, the *rijal* argued for the preponderance of the hereditary form of charismatic authority over its routinized form. In the negotiative process the theologians were engaged in, the concept of authority after the Prophet's death became a battle of rhetorical devices, often employing Qurʾanic hermeneutics and traditions from the Prophet to vindicate their respective points.

The *rijal,* in their role as the representatives of the imams, were expressing the legitimate and consequently "orthodox" beliefs. In the interactions that

drew parameters of separation and differentiation, the *rijal* constructed boundaries of identity and exclusion and conceived salvation along strictly sectarian lines.[110] They established the basis for Shiʿi self-definition and its differentiation from Sunnism, positing, in the process, Sunnism as an aberrant other.

Establishing Legal Precedents: Formation of the Shiʿi Concept of Sunna

Apart from transmitting, articulating, and defending Shiʿi beliefs and practices, another important function of the *rijal* was to establish normative precedents in the legal field. In the texts on *usul al-fiqh,*[111] the practices of the *rijal* are admitted as authoritative precedents for the derivation of juridical rulings. Such precedents are regarded as having been "silently approved" (*taqrir*) by the imams, and in addition to the utterances (*aqwal)* and actions (*afʿal*) of the imams, are incorporated in the Shiʿi concept of normative practice (*sunna*). In their function as the deputies of the imams, the *rijal* offered alternative solutions for resolving problems that were not explicitly discussed in the revelatory texts.

It is in the realm of the *sira* (behavioral pattern) that the deputies of the imams play a prominent role in the formation of the Shiʿi concept of *sunna*. The *sira* is characterized as a non-verbatim revelatory proof (*al-dalil al-sharʿi ghayr al-lafzi*).[112] The discussion of the *sira* is anchored in the doctrines that undergird any Shiʿi discourse on the imams, that is, *ʿilm, nass,* and *ʿisma*. The *ʿilm* of the divinely appointed imam is believed to be divinely protected, and their juridical pronouncements, acts, or omissions are construed as reflecting the actual ruling and intent of the Lawgiver. The rulings of the imams, the scholars of *usul* argue, do not arise from independent reasoning (*raʾy*), rather, they arise from the infallible *ʿilm* reportedly bestowed to the imams in their capacity as the source of the *sharīʿa.*[113] The infallible imam will never perform an act or acquiesce when he witnesses an act that has been prohibited by the Lawgiver. Since he is the representative of the *sharīʿa,* any act or abstinence from it constitutes a *sunna*. The *usuli* tools of vindicating the validity of the conduct of the *rijal* greatly help a jurist in the inference of a juridical ruling, especially when no explicit or articulated proof (in the form of an utterance from an imam) is available.

The contribution of the *rijal* to the Shiʿi concept of *sunna* is two-fold—they not only report the statements and actions of the imams but also perform acts, which are integrated into the *sunna*. The *rijal* actively contribute to the formation of the *sunna* that is reported to have been approved by an imam. His endorsement is valid only when he is able to express his possible objections and he is not constrained by *taqiyya*.[114]

In *usul* literature, the conduct under consideration is either founded on the authority of reasonable people (*al-sira al-ʿuqalaʾiyya*) or on a revelatory authority such as the paradigm of the imams (*al-sira al-mutasharriʿa*). Both patterns of conduct replace the need for a written text and become a "binding *sunna*" for the Shiʿi community. Although no reported text is essential for the *sira* based on the paradigm of the imams, the continuous practice of the disciples on a certain mode of behavior is a sufficient proof for a jurist to rule that the imams approved the demeanor. The rationale behind *al-sira al-mutasharriʿa* is that, if a practice existed in the past, it must have had a basis in the Qurʾan or *hadith,* even if a contemporary jurist is not able to discern that rationale now.[115] It is in this sphere that the role of the *rijal* as the "formulators of Shiʿi *sunna*" becomes palpable.

In demonstrating that an act based on this type of *sira* is binding, Muhammad al-Baqir al-Sadr cites the example of the wiping of the feet (*mash*) during the ritual ablution. According to Shiʿi jurists, the wiping can be performed with even a part of the palm (*al-kaff*).[116] This was the *sira* in the times of the imams, al-Sadr claims. How can this be ascertained? Suppose, he says, this was not the *sira* and it was incumbent on the worshipper to wipe the feet using the complete palm. If that was the case, one would have expected some traditions to be narrated on this incumbency, especially as this act affected all those who performed the ablutions. One would have expected many questions to be asked on whether it was obligatory to wipe the feet with the complete palm. The numerous questions would have solicited many answers. As the issue affected the Shiʿi populace at large, al-Sadr suggests, it is correct to assume that at least some of these questions and answers would have been transmitted to us, especially as there were many incentives to inquire about the topic (because it affected the religious practices of all Shiʿis). Since no questions or answers have been reported, there was no apparent need to inquire about the particular ruling under consideration. The conclusion, states al-Sadr, is that there was no *sira* indicating the incumbency of the *mash* with the whole palm.[117]

Al-Sadr then poses the question, "Can it be ascertained that an associate's behavior was based on the teachings of an infallible imam? Is it not possible that a *sira* arose out of a disciple's own personal reasoning or intuition?" He argues that, although this is theoretically feasible, the possibility of such an occurrence diminishes when it is remembered that a *sira* is formed only when most of the associates behave in a certain manner. While it is possible for a few disciples to have deviated from an imam's teachings, such an occurrence is almost impossible for all the associates to have agreed on. In a sense, *al-sira al-mutasharriʿa* is a close approximation to *ijmaʿ* (consensus) in that the collective actions of the disciples are seen as approbative and constituting *sunna*.

The *rijal* constitute an intrinsic component in the authority of precedence. The absence of reports (in the form of questions and answers) concerning a given practice is taken to establish its permissibility (wiping with a part of the hand). The *sira* is established sometimes by the performance of an act (the behavior of the associates in a certain manner) or by its omission (when, as in the example cited earlier, it is claimed that they did not act in a certain way). In either case, the imam's silence is equivalent to his approbation. In this way, the *rijal* play a major role in the formation of a *sunna,* one that leads a jurist to issue a ruling by examining an imam's reaction to an act that is performed by a disciple.

The principle of *al-sira al-mutasharriʿa* is also invoked to rule on the question of shaving the beard. Most Shiʿi jurists have ruled that, based on an obligatory precaution, it is not permissible to shave the beard. Although there is no conclusive *hadith* to issue an interdiction on the issue, the continuous practice of the imams and their companions is sufficient proof for a jurist to rule that the entire beard should not be shaved.[118] However, a contemporary jurist, Ayatullah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah rejects this opinion. He states that the prohibition on shaving the beard was predicated on the need to differentiate between Muslims and Jews at the beginning of Islamic history. As the circumstances have now changed, Fadlallah rules that shaving the beard is permissible.[119]

An essential prerequisite in *al-sira al-mutasharriʿa* is that a particular behavior of the *rijal* can be traced to the times of the imams. It is because of the imam's endorsement of the act, either by his verbal approval or his acquiescence, that this genre of *sira* generates certainty in a jurist that the true intent of the *Shariʿ* (Lawgiver) has been expressed. The solutions worked out by the *rijal* were also admitted as authoritative precedents by later Shiʿi jurists. Since the practices of the *rijal* were purportedly consistent with the *sunna* of the imams, they provided an alternative paradigm from which jurists could derive their rulings. Moreover, as I have demonstrated in chapter three, the *rijal* exercised much influence in distant areas, a point that substantiates the view that their acts, along with those of the imams, were seen as establishing authoritative precedents that were incorporated in later juridical corpus. Gradually, through the concept of *al-sira al-mutasharriʿa,* the canonical authority that was confined to the Qurʾan, the *sunna* of the Prophet and the imams, was extended to incorporate the approbated practices of the companions of the imams. The *sunna* that was generated by the paradigmatic activities of the *rijal* was incorporated in the Shiʿi canonical authority that crystallized in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Among the non-verbatim proofs, the other type of *sira* used to discern the intent of an imam is called *al-sira al-ʿuqalaʾiyya*. It is assumed that all reasonable beings accept and behave according to common norms and values. This being

the case, a particular principle can be established by arguing that the pattern of behavior was common to all rational beings, whether they lived in the times of the imams or not, and that no objection had been raised by the Lawgiver.

In proving the validity of this genre of *sira,* al-Sadr cites the example of the tendency of all reasonable people to accept the apparent meaning of a person's speech. This must have also been the practice of the imams, he says. If they understood the locution of people in a different way, one would have expected this demeanor to be reflected in the reports that have been transmitted, especially as this behavior would be contrary to the accepted praxis established for understanding people's speech. As no report of this type of behavior has reached us, it can be established that the *sira* of the imams was the same as that of reasonable beings—that is, acceptance of the apparent meaning of a word.[120]

At this point, a possible objection can be raised: How can a jurist be sure that the imam did not object to a particular form of conduct but that his objection was not transmitted to posterity? Al-Sadr responds that *al-sira al-ʿuqalaʾiyya* is so well entrenched that, given its common occurrence, one would expect the imam to issue more than one or two prohibitions. On the contrary, just as the behavior was deeply rooted among the laity, a commensurate prohibition against practicing the *sira* is to be expected. The interdiction cannot be in the form of isolated reports. Moreover, one would expect many incentives to record such an objection, for it would have contravened a commonly accepted norm for understanding people's speech. At least some of the objections would have been transmitted to us.[121]

It is from this type of *sira* that the validity of traditions reported by a single transmitter (*khabar al-wahid*) is established with any degree of conviction. In examining this point, al-Sadr states that the acceptance of a reliable person's report must have been the accepted mode of behavior in the times of the imams. Had this not been the case, the associates of the imams would have questioned them on an alternative mode of transmitting information that ran contrary to the common praxis of accepting a reliable person's report. If the *sira* of the imams was contrary to the norm, many questions would have been posed, resulting in many answers, some of which would have reached us.[122] The imams' acquiescence in the face of all reasonable people's practice of accepting singular reports is construed as an established practice and, hence, authoritative. As it posits a link with the behavior of all rational beings, *al-sira al-ʿuqalaʾiyya* becomes an important source for legal prescriptions employed by Shiʿi jurists.

Al-sira al-ʿuqalaʾiyya differs from *al-sira al-mutasharriʿa* in that the latter is restricted to those who lived during the times of the imams and accepted their authority, whereas the former is premised on the conduct of all reasonable people at all times. The net result is the same—a practice that is

not opposed by the imams is regarded as authoritatively binding. Implicit in the discussion of the *sira* is the concept of the "living *sunna* of the *rijal*." Contrary to the Sunni view, the concept of the "living *sunna*" was admitted in Shiʿism at least up to the occultation of the twelfth imam in 874 C.E. This was due to the presence of an imam who could not only interpret the Qurʾan and *sunna,* but could further establish paradigmatic precedents. The belief in the "living *sunna* of the imam" generated and perpetuated the concept of the "living *sunna* of the *rijal,*" for it allowed the disciples to perform acts that were incorporated within the spectrum of authoritative precedents. The actions of the deputies of the imams provided the necessary flexibility in dealing with the sociopolitical contingencies that arose during the times of the ʿAbbasids. Their acts, which were often a response to the challenges they encountered, later formed a part of Shiʿi normative and political jurisprudence. For example, in the case of ʿAbd Allah b. Sinan (n.d.), a state treasurer during the times of the caliphs al-Mansur and al-Mahdi, a precedent was established that working for a tyrannical government was permissible, provided such an act did not constitute aiding the government in its tyranny.[123]

Through the concept of the "living *sunna* of the *rijal,*" the authority of the *rijal* was integrated with the authority of accepted practice. The authority of the *rijal* was predicated on the claim that their practices were within the parameters of the imams and could therefore be incorporated in the unfolding legal system. The authority of the disciples was also contingent on their ability to function as mediators between the charismatic authority and prevalent circumstances. It was here that the *rijal* exercised the hermeneutical skills I referred to in the previous chapter. Whereas in the polemical discourses the authority of the *rijal* was interwoven with their definition of correct belief, in the legal field their authority was linked to the formation and enunciation of correct practice. By instituting paradigmatic precedents, the *rijal* perpetuated the concept of the living *sunna* in Shiʿism.

The foregoing discussion suggests that besides revelation, which in Shiʿism includes the Qurʾan and the *sunna* of both the Prophet and the imams, another pragmatic source of law was available. This was the approbated practice of the disciples of the imams. The role of the *rijal* in the formation of the *sunna* meant that, as the *shariʿ* men of the community, they defined, articulated, and, at times, were responsible for the evolution of Shiʿi jurisprudence. Apart from "establishing" the *sunna,* the *rijal* were responsible for transmitting it to the Shiʿis. Hence they perform a dual function—one was the formation of an endorsed *sunna,* the other was connected to its transmission to the later generation. Due to this dual role, the *rijal* assumed importance not only in the juridical, historical, and biographical manuals, where the imams' reactions to the

activities of their associates were recorded, but also in the *usul* works where the validity of depending on the *sira* of the *rijal* was justified.

A major contention of the Shiʿi discussion on the *sira* is to depict the law as divinely sanctioned in that the imam, in his capacity as the representative of the Lawgiver, had approbated the actions of his disciples. The discourse on the *sira* also underlines the concern to legitimize present acts by tracing them to the past, thus validating the Shiʿi insistence that their religious practices are based on the conduct of the imams. In this, the *rijal* are reported to have played a major role since their acts are incorporated within the *sunna* of the imams. The *rijal* thus not only elucidate normative beliefs and doctrines but also help establish normative and paradigmatic behavior. This, together with the idealization of the *rijal*[124] and their other contributions, is a further indication of the increasing authority of the *rijal*.

The Jurists of the Community

As I described in the first chapter, the times of the fifth and sixth imams witnessed the rise of the *shariʿ* men in different parts of the Islamic world. These jurists undertook the systematic discovery and formulation of Islamic law, which was, at this time, in a state of continuous flux, with divergent views expressed regarding the correct juridical opinion on a legal question. There was also much debate over what constituted authoritative practice and the sources of Islamic law. The law of God was interwoven with the search for God's law.

An important characteristic of the Islamic legal experience of the time was its pluralistic nature. At one point there were more than ten schools within the Sunni tradition alone.[125] The *rijal* contributed to the pluralistic ambience of Islamic law since the training they received from the imams enabled them to engage in a creative legal discourse and participate in the juristic culture that was centered on the developing legal tradition in Islam. As they transmitted and, at times, interpreted the law, the *rijal* contributed to the formation of an alternate legal system.

I demonstrated in chapter three that the juridical role of the *rijal* was the product of the imams' concern to furnish their followers with guidance, especially in matters that pertained to legal ordinances. Due to their competence and special understanding of the teachings of the imams, the *rijal* epitomized a special class of trained scholars in the legal and theological fields. They positioned themselves as the articulators of an authentic Islamic legal tradition and functioned within the scholastic milieu of Kufa, where the imams of the emerging legal system, like Abu Hanifa and al-Shaybani, were formulating

their own legal points. In the midst of the rise of various schools of law and the enunciation of nuanced legal points, the authority of the regional, charismatic office of the *rijal* was accentuated in the functions they performed.[126] In the process, the *rijal* were challenging the dominant Sunni axiom that their legal scholars represented the authentic and "orthodox" interpretation of the law. It was here that there was bound to be competition for legal orthodoxy. The presence of a rival Shiʿi school of law can be inferred from Abu Hanifa's creed. He mentions legal differences with the Shiʿis, indicating that a distinct Shiʿi legal school was active in his time.[127]

The presence of distinct Shiʿi legal practices is also mentioned by Khalifa al-Khayyat in his *Kitab al-Intisar*. Referring to the Shiʿi opposition to the community, he states, "[Their opposition] is evident from their [divergent] beliefs concerning ritual purity, prayers, the *adhan* (call to prayer), the number of units of prayers, the *tashahhud* (a part of the prayer that entails testifying to God's unity and the prophecy of Muhammad), and the obligatory acts. It is as if the Prophet who was sent to us was different from the one sent to them."[128] The final remark poignantly demonstrates the existence of divergent Shiʿi legal practices in the ninth century when al-Khayyat was writing. He attributes the origins of these practices to the Shiʿis of the eighth century.

Many reports within Shiʿi circles indicate that, as trained representatives of the imams, the Shiʿi *sharīʿ* men were able to articulate and, at times, apply hermeneutical skills in the elucidation of the legal precepts of the imams. Furthermore, their erudition in the legal field empowered them to challenge the juridical positions of other schools of law. In one instance recorded by Kashshi, when a woman posed a question to Abu Hanifa as to whether it was permissible to extract a living child out of the womb of a mother who had just died, Abu Hanifa admitted his incompetence in ruling on the issue. He directed her instead to Muhammad b. Muslim al-Thaqafi and asked her to inform him of Muhammad's response. Muhammad answered her question based on a tradition that he had heard from Muhammad al-Baqir.[129] The report depicts the preponderance of the knowledge of the *rijal* over that of the other imams in Kufa. It also portrays the *rijal* as loyal associates of the imams who transmitted their legal teachings in the form of *hadith* reports, whereas other jurists in Kufa resorted to arbitrary reasoning in the formulation of legal opinions.

Shiʿi jurists also articulated legal pronouncements through their literary compositions. The afore-mentioned ʿUbayd Allah al-Halabi's book was the first systematic Shiʿi book of law. The Ismaʿili jurist, Qadi al-Nuʿman incorporated the entire work in his *Kitab al-Idah*. By the middle of the eighth century, many other books were written in the legal field. These works served as the source for later *hadith* and legal works.

The model of the prominent *rijal* that was advanced by Shiʿi legal and theological sources created a stratification between those who knew and those who did not. It emphasized the dependence of the Shiʿi community on the legal experts, who were viewed as the spokesmen of the imams. The juridical role of the *rijal* enhanced their authority to such an extent that they were seen as transmitting, exemplifying, and even, at times, interpreting God's law.

Routinized charisma, erudition in the legal field, appointment by the imams, establishment of paradigmatic precedents, and a proliferation of literary compositions, were conflated features that established the reputation of the *rijal* as accomplished *shariʿ* men of the Shiʿi community. The appellations *faqih* (jurist) and *mutakkalim* (theologian), which were applied to many disciples in both Sunni and Shiʿi texts, is further testimony of the evolution in the functions of the *rijal* from being transmitters of traditions of the imams to becoming the legal experts and accomplished theologians of the community.

The construction of the authority of the *rijal,* which was initially predicated on the "deputy" traditions, was further enhanced by their functions in the community. As in the theological realm, the efforts of the *rijal* to define the correct legal practices created a nexus between authority and normative praxis.[130] It was this sense of establishing normative practices that accentuated the authority of the *rijal* especially since these practices were seen as embodying the juridical rulings of the Shiʿi community in the eighth and ninth centuries.

The Rijal *as the* Hukkam *(Adjudicators of Disputes)*

The Shiʿi community gradually evolved as a separate entity that coalesced under the leadership of the imams. As the imams' followers increased in numbers, there was a concurrent need to resolve disputes that emerged in the community. An important tradition cited by Kulayni illustrates how al-Sadiq is reported to have envisaged the role of the *rijal* as the arbiters of disputes within the community. The famous tradition, reported by ʿUmar b. al-Hanzala (n.d.), is in the form of a question posed by him to the imam. "What should be done, in the case of two of our companions, who are in dispute over a debt or inheritance?" The imam is reported to have replied, "He should seek one among you who narrates our traditions and who is well versed in what is permitted and prohibited (*halal* and *haram*). They should be satisfied with him as a *hakim* (judge), for I have appointed him a judge over you. If he judges in accordance with our rulings and [someone] does not accept [them], then he has indeed deemed light God's ordinances and has rejected us."[131]

The statement "I have appointed him a judge over you" that is cited in the tradition endorses the appointment of Shiʿi jurists as deputies of the imams

to execute justice in matters that impacted the Shiʿi community.[132] The *maqbula*[133] of ʿUmar b. Hanzala, as the tradition came to be called, also commands the Shiʿis to refer their cases to a qualified jurist who was well versed in the legal rulings of the imams. In another tradition that pertains to the judicial affairs of the community, al-Sadiq is reported to have told a disciple, "Designate as judge someone among you who is acquainted with our instructions concerning what is permitted and prohibited, for I appoint such a person a judge over you."[134] The two traditions envisage a class of judges who possess appropriate juridical competence in handling the legal affairs of the community. The traditions signify an extension of the authority of the *rijal* since, besides acting as the spokesmen of the imams, they could now actively participate in resolving disputes within the community.

The *maqbula* allows the *rijal* the flexibility of dispensing judicial authority within the community in the absence of the incarcerated or exiled imams. The *maqbula* also indicates that the Shiʿis were responsible for seeking out the most qualified jurist who, apart from being the most upright, was also well versed in the traditions of the imams. Al-Sadiq was further asked, by Ibn Hanzala, to whom should the Shiʿis refer if two transmitters reported his traditions. He is reported to have said, "Seek the most morally upright (*aʿdal*) or most learned (*afqah*) of the two and the most truthful (*asdaq*) in reporting traditions."[135] The recognition of the most trustworthy, upright, or reliable person was left to the discretion of the community. The authority of the disciples was to be legitimized not only by the imam's appointment, but also by the community's own evaluation of the credentials of the *rijal*.

Al-Sadiq's instructions to the Shiʿis that they were to look for the person among them who was most cognizant of the imams' legal rulings also attests to the conferral of authority from a central to a diffuse and unspecified group of disciples. The most important criterion stated in the tradition is the comprehension of the imam's judgments. The *maqbula* indicates that this was a conceptual movement from the explicator of the law to the rule of the law. The imam's judicial authority was decentralized, and, in the process, dissipated to the office of charisma. Authority was now contingent on the interpretation of revelation, and conferred on those who could extrapolate the law from sacred texts. As Calder states, "the rule of the law was gradually taking over the rule of the charismatic leader."[136]

The *maqbula* is further evidence of the part played by the community in proclaiming its leaders. The establishment of a disciple as an arbiter was an informal process, which depended on public assessment of his qualities. The community was given the responsibility of seeking the traits of *ʿadala* (upright leadership) specified in various traditions of the imams, and, based on these, acknowledging its leaders. In their attempts at exercising effective control of the

community's judicial affairs, the *rijal* depended on the acknowledgment by the laity. In all probability, in distant areas, it was often the followers rather than the imams who "made" the *rijal,* occasionally even challenging or refusing to accept their authority. It was probably due to the suspicions raised against some *rijal* that Kashshi makes frequent references to Shiʿis who sought clarifications from the imams regarding the reliability of some disciples.[137]

Since the office of *qadi* (judge) in the Shiʿi community lacked official legitimacy and was not a part of the state apparatus, the office of administering justice among the Shiʿis was highly informal. In practice, it meant that litigants could choose an arbiter from a wide range of qualified jurists. Shiʿi sources cite some examples of *qadis* within the community. According to Muhammad al-Baqir al-Majlisi (d. 1699), the imams appointed many judges to act on their behalf in various provinces.[138] Hurr al-ʿAmili cites forty-seven traditions that purportedly appoint the disciples as *muftis* (those who issue juridical edicts) and *qadis,* signifying the delegation of the imams' judicial authority.[139] Najashi also mentions a few associates of the imams who were judges. He states, for example, that ʿAnbasa b. Bajjad al-ʿAbid, a disciple of the sixth imam, was a *qadi*.[140] Hafs b. Ghiyath, who transmitted traditions from both al-Sadiq and al-Kazim, was appointed by Harun al-Rashid as the judge for the eastern half of Baghdad. Later, he served as a judge in Kufa for thirteen years.[141] Nuh b. Darraj (n.d.) was a *qadi* in Kufa and later on also in the eastern half of Baghdad.[142]

The *maqbula* prohibits the Shiʿis to resort to judges appointed by the government. The tradition further states, "Whoever does that has resorted to rulings issued by a tyrannical state."[143] This indicates that, whereas for the Sunnis the validity of a *qadi*'s judicial authority was contingent on appointment by the de facto ruler, the Shiʿis distinguished between sacred and profane authority. They based their judicial theory on a hermeneutic structure that construed all judicial processes carried out in the absence of the imam as illegitimate. For the Shiʿis, a *qadi* derived his legitimacy not only from his competence, but also because of the delegation from an imam. The imams' delegation of judicial authority meant that judges appointed by the state lacked the religious validity necessary to pass judgments. Thus, judgments from a profane *qadi* (one who was appointed by a de facto power) were invalid even if they were correct. As the real authority rested with the imams, adjudication by a profane power was not only illegitimate but also contrary to the Shiʿi soteriological vision since it contravened the imam's explicit delegation of this office to his associates. Hence, the source, rather than substance, of the law was important in deciding the validity of a judicial ruling.

As legitimate authority was confined to the Shiʿi community, the Shiʿis were becoming fully autonomous and independent of the wider Sunni community. The sacred community was not to be associated with the actual polity.

As the actual state fell short of the Shiʿi vision of the ideal, the tension between the two was resolved by the coexistence of the ideal Shiʿi community with the real, that is, a distinct community that had its own ritual practices, accepted the authority of a separate charismatic leader, transmitted its own distinct legal and theological traditions, and existed in the midst of a hostile majority. As the ideal could not be actualized, it was to exist within the real. This is further confirmation of the enhanced authority of the *rijal* that was linked to the creation of the office of charisma.

Historically, the Shiʿi community existed as a minority within the larger Islamic polity. In a sense, the Shiʿis constituted a community within a community, preserving religious and communal independence from the political structure, and maintaining autonomy from the de facto regime. Religious authority rested, in theory, with the charismatic imams. In practice it was often wielded by the charismatic office of the *rijal*. The judicial activities performed by the *rijal* reflect the increasing trend in promoting their authority in different fields.

The Rijal *as the* Wukalaʾ *(Administrators)*

The diverse roles of the *rijal* indicate that their authority was premised on a merger or fusion of multiple roles in the Shiʿi community. Historical vicissitudes necessitated the extension of the roles of the *rijal* beyond the realm of the epistemic. Due to political exigencies, some *rijal* were required to perform a wide ambit of administrative and financial functions on behalf of the imams.

The imams would often receive gifts, alms, charitable donations, and endowments. To facilitate the collection of these dues from their distant followers, they authorized special agents (*wukalaʾ*) to handle the dues on their behalf. The role of the disciples as financial and administrative agents of the imams signified an extension of their role as qualified transmitters and interpreters of the imams' teachings.

Among the various dues was the *khums,* a religious tax that, according to Shiʿi jurists, was levied on income and other forms of wealth. Half of the *khums* was to be distributed to the needy from the descendants of the Prophet, whereas the other half was to be spent for the welfare of the community. According to Hossein Modaressi, al-Baqir and al-Sadiq did not collect the *khums* from their followers because the Mahdi, the messianic imam, was expected to collect it when he reappeared.[144] It was the ninth imam, Muhammad al-Taqi al-Jawad (d. 835), who instituted the collection of *khums* on certain kinds of income.[145] Besides the *khums,* the system of collecting religious dues on behalf of the imams included the *zakat* and other voluntary donations and endowments.

The earliest reference to the establishment of the administrative function of the deputies can be traced to the time of al-Sadiq. To divert the suspicions of the caliphate authority, he is reported to have appointed special agents who would receive the religious dues on his behalf.[146] The imam communicated with these agents through an underground network. Initially, the system of collecting and administering the religious dues was quite rudimentary, with certain deputies informally collecting the *zakat, sadaqat,* and other dues. However, by the time of al-Kazim, the system had evolved into a well-organized institution. The areas that were covered by the agency also expanded during the time of al-Kazim as his followers were dispersed into different parts of the Islamic world.[147]

Kashshi cites an instance of how the imams would encourage their followers to submit various types of religious dues to their agents. When a disciple brought some dues for al-Kazim, the imam is reported to have instructed him to submit it to Mufaddal b. ʿUmar.[148] Similarly, ʿAbd al-Rahman b. al-Hajjaj was a disciple of al-Sadiq. Kashshi states that he would also carry monies collected from the Shiʿis to al-Kazim.[149]

Gradually, the *rijal* were entrusted with managing the administrative and financial affairs of the Shiʿi community. As the ʿAbbasids became suspicious of their activities, some of these agents were arrested and imprisoned by the ʿAbbasid authorities. For example, Muhammad b. Abi ʿUmayr (d. 832), a prominent disciple of al-Kazim, reported many traditions from the imam and was well known for his literary compositions. During the time of Harun al-Rashid, he was reportedly imprisoned and tortured, because he refused to disclose the identity of agents who worked for al-Kazim.[150]

During the time of the ninth imam, the *wikala* system was further developed as the followers and agents of the imams were located in more distant places like Ahwaz, Hamadan, Rayy, Basra, and Wasit.[151] The system of collecting religious dues seems to have undergone further revision during the time of the tenth imam, ʿAli al-Hadi (d. 868). The *wikala* movement was forced to become more surreptitious at this time because the imam was exiled in Samarra and carefully watched by the ʿAbbasid caliph, al-Mutawakkil (d. 861). Based on instructions from the imam, each area seems to have had a chief agent with subagents who would receive directions from him. As the activities of the imam became more restricted, the agents played a more active and decisive role in the administration of the revenues that were collected.

Paradoxically, the *wikala* system became a catalyst for generating differences and segmentation within the Shiʿi community after the death of al-Kazim in 799 C.E. During his imprisonment in Baghdad, large sums of monies were collected by his representatives in different parts of the Islamic world. When al-Kazim died, some of these agents, like Hayyan b. al-Sarraj

(n.d.), refused to hand over the dues to the eighth imam, ʿAli al-Rida. Hayyan was one of the leaders of the Waqifis who propagated the belief in the messianism of al-Kazim after his death and claimed that he was in occultation.

The nature of the *wikala* agency was based on administrative and financial rather than epistemic considerations. Hence, most of the financial agents of the imams were not trained in the legal or theological fields, nor were they transmitters of the imams' traditions. However, some transmitters of traditions, who were considered part of the charismatic office of the *rijal,* were also authorized to collect funds for the imams. ʿAli b. Mahzayar al-Ahwazi (d. 868), for example, was a scholar who composed thirty books. He was also an administrative agent of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh imams. The four agents of the twelfth imam during the short occultation, on the other hand, were administrators rather than scholars of the Shiʿi community.

The administrative function of the *rijal* is further proof of the evolution in the regional leadership and dominance of the charismatic office of the *rijal*. As the realm of the discipleship system extended beyond the epistemic, the authority of the disciples became more comprehensive and entrenched. In fact, the biographical profiles of the *rijal* exhibit a complex amalgamation of diverse roles that included an integration of religious and socioeconomic functions. In the process, the office of charisma became an important medium for accessing the charismatic figure of the imam.

Conclusion

With the routinization of the imams' charisma and the concomitant creation of the institution of disciples, we see the development from a loosely connected to a more concretized and structured community of followers that coalesced around the imams and, in distant areas, around the charismatic office of the *rijal*. This was a pragmatic and inevitable response by the community to the vacuum created by the difficulties of accessing the imams. The charismatic office supported an intellectual edifice on which Shiʿi jurisprudence and theology was defined and expressed. It also ensured the survival of the imams' teachings in the midst of the vicissitudes of the Sunni milieu.

The authority of the *rijal* was located in a broad nexus of religious roles and institutions. The establishment of the office of charisma meant that their role within each field of activity was anchored in upholding the pervasive belief in hereditary charisma and other auxiliary beliefs like *ʿisma* and the divinely inspired knowledge of the imams. The various functions of the *rijal* that I have adumbrated underscore the view that a disciple became important (or was invested with authority) due to the charismatic office that he occupied and the

functions he performed within that office. The *rijal* asserted this authority by expressing themselves in different ways.

In the absence of a centrally recognized ʿAlid leader, especially after the time of al-Sadiq, every imam had to contend with a rival claimant to the imamate. It was here that the *rijal* played a crucial role in acclaiming the "true imam" of the time. More significant, when their authority was not widely acclaimed, the imams needed the *rijal* to proclaim their imamate. Ironically, the authority that was conferred by the imams to the *rijal* was later used to legitimize the imams' own claims to authority.

Hadith played a pivotal role in the Shiʿi community. The traditions of the imams served two main purposes. The first purpose was to disseminate the teachings of the imams on a wide ambit of religious topics. The other function of *hadith* was purely polemical: to uphold the claims of hereditary charismatic authority over its routinized form. The function of the traditions reported by the *rijal* was testimonial, that is, to vindicate and acknowledge the absolute authority of the imam. Without recognition of the "saved authority" and detachment from all false contenders, the community could not possibly be saved. *Hadith* also connected the disciples with the imams, and the disciples with each other. It further helped to cultivate certain images about the imams, the *rijal,* and their opponents. More significant, the proliferation of Shiʿi *hadith* asserted the community's independence from Sunni *hadith* literature, their legal, and theological schools.

Amid competing factions that sought legitimacy by claiming to be "orthodox," the *rijal* are reported to have made a major contribution in enunciating orthodox Shiʿi beliefs and practices, positing, in the process, a "normative" view of Shiʿism. In their various functions, several features can be detected in the formation of the "sectarian syndrome."[152] These include identification and acknowledgment of the correct and therefore "saved" authority, consolidation (defence of beliefs), proselytization (literary activities, discourses), and the creation of an "orthodox" institution. In associating the *rijal* with "orthodoxy," Shiʿi sources identify their rivals as "heterodoxy" and espousing peripheral beliefs.

An important consequence of this process of establishing "orthodoxy" was the accentuation of the authority of the *rijal*. In the course of their disputations, they were performing the function that reportedly had been envisaged by the Prophet. Not only were they the bearers of the imams' *ʿilm,* but they became, due to their polemical role, "the nullifiers of the claims of invalid interpreters and repudiators of the deviations of the extremists."[153]

The distinct evolution of these strands of thought, although initially not clear-cut (as seen by the dissensions within the Shiʿi ranks), became more pronounced in ninth- and tenth-century texts, in which the beliefs of the respective

schools were more clearly itemized. Due to their contribution, the *rijal* presented themselves as the indispensable means for recognizing the "charismatic authority." This view of the *rijal* became more pronounced as access to the imams became more restricted. Thus, because of their proximity to the imams, the *rijal* were accorded due reverence, especially because, through them, the arguments of their opponents were neutralized.

CHAPTER FIVE

Textual Authority and the Struggle for Legitimacy in Biographical Texts

We have encountered a community that has differentiated between the transmitters who report these traditions. They have authenticated those who are reliable among them and have deemed weak the unreliable ones. (Shaykh Tusi)

BESIDES THE MODES OF AUTHORITY that I have discussed in the previous chapters, authority can also be constructed by and anchored in texts. In this chapter, I intend to examine the construction and animation of authority in biographical texts. My discussion of the literary construction and depiction of authority will be cast within the framework of Shiʿi biographical and hagiographical literature. More specifically, I will examine how these genres of literature employ various structures, features, and characteristics to portray and embellish images of their holy men, the imams.

The chapter will also discuss the construction of the *rijal*'s authority in the biographical texts. I will argue that, by idealizing and embellishing the profiles of the disciples, the biographical lexica impose certain preconceived typologies and images of the disciples of the imams. In the process, they bestow and, at times, even diminish the authority of the *rijal,* and posit a normative interpretation for subsequent readers. In the second section of this chapter, I will compare Sunni and Shiʿi profiles on two important Shiʿi disciples of the

imams and will examine the tussle for authority and struggle for legitimacy that is evidenced in biographical texts.

Structures and Features of Shiʿi Biographical Texts on the Imams

The term biography designates both the written and oral accounts of persons deemed to be important. Historically, oral traditions preceded and even shaped the written form.[1] Whether in written or oral form, biography is important as it informs us about important personages, the way their lives were formed, shaped, or enriched, and how they impacted their surroundings. Through the use of certain terminologies and hermeneutical constructs, biographical texts can sometimes embellish or even diminish a person's character.[2] As such, biographies mediate between the person who is profiled in the text and the reader. As Plutarch (n.d.) says: "Biography is revelatory discourse, aimed at disclosing a person's inner self."[3]

Biographical texts employ various structures and features in constructing and depicting the authority of the persons they profile. These traits include sources, types of characterizations, motifs, social impact, as well as the attitude and intention of the biographer.[4] A discussion of these multivariate characteristics will take me beyond the purview of the present study. In my analysis of the biographical profiles of the imams, I will confine my discussion to the structures that Shiʿi biographical works employ in authority construction and examine how these texts accord authority to those who they profile.[5]

A salient feature of the biographies of the Shiʿi holy men, the imams, is that their profiles are a product of the fusion of diverse images. Shiʿi biographies synthesize the supernatural and historic elements so as to depict several ideal traits that constitute the holy man. They express the multifaceted reality of the imam by portraying him as a teacher, a philosopher, a charismatic, a sage, and even a politician at one time or another in his life. The manifestation of these different facets of the imam's life is significant because they portray him as an exemplary charismatic figure who exercised comprehensive authority in the community.

Biographies of the Shiʿi imams take the form of a literary enumeration of virtues and excellences, which are frequently portrayed through idealized traits. The imams are depicted as human beings par excellence, and as the intermediaries between the divine and the human. In addition, the biographies employ different prisms to characterize and synthesize the sanctity, holiness, virtues, and supernatural character of the imams. The biographies stress the imams' hereditary charisma, divinely inspired knowledge, divine appointment,

extraordinary feats, acts of extreme asceticism, and model character. These images collectively provide a prosaic indication of the authority, moral rectitude, and abilities of the imams. The diverse traits in the biographical presentation of the imams are expressed at the doctrinal level by the concepts of *nass, ʿilm,* and *ʿisma,* features that I have described in previous chapters.

In addition, biographical tracts enhance the authority of the imams by stressing the social impact of their ascetic and virtuous qualities. Social ramifications are important blocks in constructing the authority of holy men. The narration of important historic events and the social impact of holy men are crucial to biographies if they are to become meaningful in the lives of the readers. Just like the Sufi holy men I described in chapter two, the imams are reported to have touched and changed the lives of their disciples. For example, Jaʿfar al-Sadiq's pervasive influence as a teacher was so profound that, according to al-Mufid, he attracted 4,000 students.[6] As I discussed in chapter two, Sufi saints inspired and, at times, captivated their disciples by their charisma, appearance, and demeanor.

Another important structural element of biographical texts is that they often depict accounts of the lives of the holy men in a mode that is called "aretalogical." The term refers to a collection of stories or legends that focus on the supernatural qualities of the characters being profiled. The miracle aretalogy, as it is called, is highlighted in order to depict and distinguish the holy men through miracle narratives. These narratives become literary motifs in many biographical texts. Various combinations of these aretalogical motifs are deployed to depict the lives of the imams and the authority they reportedly enjoyed. These include an authoritative (and even esoteric) hermeneutic of scripture, receipt of divinely inspired knowledge, power and epistemological miracles, the ability to read the minds of people, prophetic descent, capacity to avert impending evils at the hands of rulers or other enemies, and so forth.

In biographical texts, miracles provide evidence for the verity of a holy man's claims to spiritual authority. Furthermore, by emphasizing his miraculous prowess, the texts convey, in a dramatic and powerful way, the overwhelming powers of the imam and the favors the divine has bestowed on him. Biographies also stress the miracle aretalogy because it performs the important function of differentiating the authoritative leaders from false claimants to authority.

Many of these features are evident in al-Mufid's *Kitab al-Irshad,* a hagiographical work on the lives of the imams.[7] In a section that enumerates the miracles of ʿAli, the first Shiʿi imam, al-Mufid states that ʿAli's power encapsulated not only human beings but even extended to nature. According to him, ʿAli made the sun revert to an earlier position in the sky on two occasions, during and after the time of the Prophet.[8] The use of such modalities and aspects of the

imams proves, for the audience, the functioning of the divine agency in the world through the lives of the holy men. They also indicate the divine favors and blessings bestowed on ʿAli.

The synthesis and conflation of asceticism, extraordinary feats, and superior intellectual capacities engender a composite portrait of the imams in the texts. In a sense, their charisma is remembered in the biographical dictionaries; it is also sensed, transmitted, and perpetuated through narratives. In his profile on ʿAli, al-Mufid appends a section on the imam's virtues, qualities, and achievements to his account of ʿAli's heroic military exploits. ʿAli's authority is further amplified by a discussion of the concept of hereditary charismatic authority (the belief in *nass*) and by a review of his role in the last years of the Prophet's life. This is followed by a discussion of ʿAli's legal decisions.[9] By merging the human and the divine elements of the imam, al-Mufid's miracle aretalogy enhances the concept of sainthood by representing it as both a metaphysical proximity to the divine (*walaya*) and the exercise of spiritual and political authority on earth (*wilaya*).[10]

Another structure that is often employed in the biographical texts of holy men is the sermon aretalogy. In contrast to the miracle aretalogy, the sermon aretalogy encompasses the discourses, paraenatical traditions, admonishments, and sayings of the holy men. In this genre of aretalogy, attention is paid to the personal characteristics and virtues rather than the miraculous prowess of the imams. Anecdotal narratives, sermons, traditions, and an enumeration of the imams' incredible qualities and feats are important literary building blocks in the construction of their character. Since they are seen as a source of moral edification, homilies make up a substantial portion of the biographical accounts of the imams.

It is in this domain that the imams articulate ethical axioms, issue admonishments, and establish paradigmatic precedents for their followers. In his *Kitab al-Irshad,* before he discusses the miracles that ʿAli is reported to have performed, al-Mufid includes a section he calls "The Memorable Words and Speeches of the Commander of the Faithful." Here, he lists ʿAli's sermons on diverse subjects such as asceticism, knowledge, and death, and his speeches after various battles.[11]

Besides building the authority and character blocks of the important personages that serve a school, biographical texts also reconstruct the early history of that school and relate it to the life of a community.[12] The texts indicate how a community viewed and narrated its past, the interaction between its various figures and heroes, the authority it accorded them, and, at times, the struggle for legitimacy between its various factions. In a sense, the community's concept of authority and how it envisaged that authority to be acquired, exercised, and transmitted to future generations is depicted in the

texts. Biographies also depict the struggle for legitimizing any claim to authority. As I discussed in chapter three, Kashshi's *rijal* work informs us not only about the lives of the disciples of the imams, but also about the structure of and struggle for authority between the charismatic authority and its routinized form. It is to the question of the depiction of the *rijal*'s authority that I now turn.

Biographical Literature and the Juridical Corpus in Islam

To comprehend the construction of the *rijal*'s authority in biographical texts, it is essential to define and understand the science of biographical criticism (*ʿilm al-rijal*) and the significance of biographies in evaluating the transmitters of traditions who feature in the juridical literature. *ʿIlm al-rijal* is the discipline that examines the status of the transmitters of traditions who figure in the *isnad* (chain of transmissions) that is usually appended to a *hadith* report. The study of biography is important as it provides information on the transmitters of traditions, who are evaluated to assess their character, their reliability in transmitting traditions, their moral probity, and their religious affiliations. It is on the basis of such information, derived from the biographical works on the *rijal,* that a tradition can be classified as authentic, reliable, weak, and so on.[13] The appraisal of a reporter directly affects the authenticity of a tradition he transmits, since his status is the single most important factor in determining how a *hadith* is classified.[14]

Shiʿi legal thought recognizes four sources of law—the Qurʾan, consensus, intellect, and *sunna*. The first three sources play very limited roles in generating legal injunctions.[15] This is because the Qurʾan contains few details regarding its legal injunctions whereas the consensus is valid only during the physical presence of the imam. As for the intellect, its role is confined to the establishment of an intrinsic relation between a ruling derived on the authority of revelation and that derived on the authority of reason.[16] It is from the *sunna* that most *shariʿa* rulings are derived. Since the *sunna* is transmitted primarily in the form of *hadith* reports, those who transmit traditions from the Prophet and the imams play a decisive role in determining which *hadith* reports are accepted in the juridical manuals. Only traditions that have been transmitted by those reporters who have been authenticated in the biographical works can be used in deducing *shariʿa* rulings.

Besides providing information on the veracity or mendacity of the *ruwat* (transmitters of traditions), biographical texts also indicate who reported from whom. An examination of an *isnad* can tell us not only approximately when a tradition may have been circulated, but it can also empower an investigator to

detect anomalies in the *isnad,* especially if a disciple reports on the authority of someone whom he had obviously never met. It is only through careful scrutiny of the biographical works that irregularities can be detected in a seemingly impeccable chain of transmission that is appended to a *hadith* report.

It is in this context that the significance attached to the biographical texts can be comprehended. The juristic authority of the *rijal* is contingent, to a large degree, on their validation in the biographic dictionaries. Provided the transmitters have been authenticated in the biographical works, a jurist can cite the traditions they report as sound proof in support of his legal judgment. The importance of *ʿilm al-rijal* and the biographical texts, therefore, lies in their determination of which transmitters of traditions are to be accepted as reliable and, in the final analysis, determining the community's religious practices.

Biographical Texts on the Rijal: *Structures and Literary Forms*

The compositions of Kashshi, Tusi, and Najashi, the primary Shiʿi biographers of the tenth and eleventh centuries, are indispensable for assessing the characteristics and structural framework of the biographical literature on the *rijal*. These texts are also important for constructing a coherent picture of the authority that the *rijal* wielded in the Shiʿi community during the times of the imams. The biographers based their profiles on discrete components, which they found in various genres of literature. The texts they used in defining the *rijal* and depicting their functions in the office of charisma ranged from erstwhile Shiʿi autobiographical fragments and doctrinal works to polemical discourses and juridical compilations. They also used reports contained in various Sunni polemical, biographical, and heresiographical tracts. These accounts were supplemented with oral narratives transmitted by the Shiʿi community.

In all probability, Shiʿi investigations into the veracity of the disciples of the imams had begun by the early ninth century. The incipience of Shiʿi *rijal* works can be traced to ʿAbd Allah b. Jabla al-Kinani (d. 834) who is reported to have composed a biographical work on the *rijal*.[17] He was a contemporary of al-Hasan b. ʿAli al-Faddal (d. 838), who is also credited with a book on the same topic.[18] Shiʿi sources credit another contemporaneous disciple of the imams, al-Hasan b. Mahbub (d. 838), with a *rijal* work entitled *Kitab al-Mashyakha*.[19] The biographical works further indicate that by the end of the ninth century, Hasan b. ʿAli al-Faddal's son, also called ʿAli (n.d.), and another disciple, Ahmad b. ʿAli al-ʿAqiqi (d. 893) had composed biographical works.[20]

As a matter of fact, statements made by Tusi and Najashi indicate that, by their time, the construction of authority in biographical literature by employing the science of *al-jarh waʾl-taʿdil* (the wounding and authentication) was well developed among the Shiʿis.[21] By Tusi's time, the basis for evaluating the *rijal* had been so well established that he states in his work on *usul,*

> We have encountered (*wajadna)* a group that has differentiated between the *ruwat* (transmitters) reporting these traditions. They have authenticated those who are reliable among them and have considered weak the unreliable ones. And they have distinguished between those whose traditions and narrations can be relied upon and those whose transmissions cannot be relied upon, they have commended one [who is] worthy of praise and have criticized those who deserve to be censured. And they have said: "So and so (*fulan*) is suspect in his traditions, so and so is a liar, so and so is confused (*mukhtalat*) [in his traditions], so and so is an adversary (*mukhalif*) in his school and beliefs, so and so is a Waqifi, so and so is a Fathi," and other accusations that they have mentioned.[22]

Tusi unequivocally stresses that the processes of identifying and discriminating between the various *hadith* transmitters were well developed before his time. Najashi also attests to the development of these disciplines among the Shiʿis. On various occasions, he states, "the biographers have mentioned [his status to be] so."[23]

Another important scholar of Shiʿi biography, Muhammad b. ʿUmar Kashshi, also quotes the views of erstwhile *rijal* scholars. For example, he quotes the views of ʿAli b. al-Hasan al-Faddal and Fadl b. Shadhan on several occasions. At one point, Kashshi quotes the former as saying that ʿAli b. Abi Hamza al-Bataʾini was a liar.[24] Kashshi also states that he had erstwhile biographical texts at his disposal. Thus, he says in one profile, "I have found [a book] in the handwriting of Jibril b. Ahmad."[25]

I am not interested here in examining the motives that led to the compilation of Shiʿi biographical works before the times of Tusi and Najashi. We should note, however, that in their construction of a typology of the disciples of the imams, Tusi and Najashi indicate that they rely on biographical information provided by erstwhile sources. In addition to various laudatory comments reported from the imams, Tusi and Najashi also consider the *rijal*s' proselytization activities, virtues, treatises, anecdotes, and loyalty to the imams.[26] They enumerate various traits to characterize and classify the *rijal,* features that became literary motifs in subsequent biographical texts on the *rijal*. These features are important building blocks in the construction of the *rijal*'s authority and in the depiction of their functions in the office of charisma. By synthesizing these multivariate traits, Shiʿi biographical dictionaries have become

historical exempla of the characteristics that are used to depict the authority of the faithful and erudite disciples of the imams.

Kashshi's literary depiction of the *rijal* stands in contrast to the works of Tusi and Najashi. Although Kashshi's seminal work on the *rijal* is not extant, Tusi's abridged version of the original text is available.[27] The significance of Kashshi's work lies in the fact that he did not provide a standard appraisal of some of the closest companions of the imams. Rather than restricting his work to enumerating the literary compositions and assessing the reliability or otherwise of the *rijal* that he considers, Kashshi reconstructs the social and religious milieu of the associates of the imams. Beginning with the companions of ʿAli b. Abu Talib, Kashshi cites reports on them, most of which are in the form of comments allegedly uttered by an imam or a contemporary figure. Kashshi sometimes includes reports on the disciples' alleged supernatural abilities, their literary and other activities, and the views that they espoused. Rarely does he directly authenticate a person.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Kashshi cites instances of the imams' delegation of authority to their close associates. He also cites both laudatory and pejorative remarks, which reportedly were uttered by the imams concerning some of their most eminent disciples, such as Zurara, Muhammad b. Muslim, Yunus b. ʿAbd al-Rahman, and others. These reports are juxtaposed with the social reality of the disciples' often-strained relationship with the imams and the latter's attempts at limiting the authority and restricting the activities of their disciples. It was probably due to the inclusion of the contradictory and disparaging remarks against some disciples that Najashi considered Kashshi's work to be full of errors caused by his reporting from "weak" transmitters.[28]

Another literary form that Kashshi frequently employs is the anecdote, a biographical narrative that relates diverse features of a disciple, including the opinions of other *rijal* on a particular disciple and an enumeration of his discourses and other activities. It is in these anecdotes that the functions of the charismatic office of the *rijal* become evident. The anecdotes cited in Kashshi's work are important modes of biographical characterizations because they serve to demythologize the ideal type by giving it a concrete historical form. Citing narratives of the functions of the disciples, Kashshi gives concrete forms to ideals like loyalty, commitment to faith, and the proper understanding and transmission of the imams' teachings.

Often, the anecdotes are supplemented with both discourses regarding the lives of the disciples and paraenetical traditions cited from the imams. These are used not only as major literary blocks for depicting the character of the disciples, but also as techniques for edification, that is, for creating paradigmatic precedents of morally upright individuals. The details contained in his text make Kashshi's work indispensable for comprehending the construction

of and struggle for authority within the Shiʿi community. It is also an invaluable source for comprehending the relationship between the imams and the *rijal* and the struggle to legitimize the disciples' claim to authority.

It is to be noted that the structures and features in the biographies presenting the charismatic authority of the imams are quite different from those incorporated in the profiles on the *rijal*. The former include beliefs in hereditary charisma, stories of the supernatural, acts of extreme asceticism, and models of character. Collectively, these synthesize the sanctity, virtues, and supernatural character of the imams. The personal charisma of the imam is given concrete form in the biographical text by describing and stressing the impact that his extraordinary powers had on his community. The authority of the imam is further augmented by stressing his *walaya* (metaphysical proximity) and *wilaya* (social impact). In addition, the imam's image is enhanced by mentioning the miracles reported to have taken place near his grave.

In contrast to those who inherit charisma, the biographical narratives of those who occupy the office of charisma are characterized by an emphasis on their loyalty to the imams, their reliability in transmitting traditions, and their administrative contribution in the community. The authority of the *rijal* is also predicated on their juristic and epistemic accomplishments, their reported literary compositions, narratives from the imams and other disciples, their ascetic qualities, and their engagement in polemical discourses. Thus, it is correct to maintain that the emphasis in the biographical texts on the *rijal* is on their epistemic authority (or on the charisma of the office) rather than on authority based on miracles, *baraka,* and the charisma of lineage.

In their own ways, biographies of the charismatic authority and charismatic office employ different literary building blocks to construct the authority of and relationship between the imams and their disciples. These biographies may not tell us the indubitable historical facts or demonstrate the truth of a narrative, but they do provide us with evidence of how particular events were construed and remembered by the Shiʿi biographers in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Authentications and Authority Construction in the Rijal *Literature*

Tusi, Najashi and Kashshi not only outline the various achievements of the *rijal,* they also provide an evaluation of the *rijal* for posterity. The authority of the *rijal* is anchored, to a large degree, on the authentications (*tawthiqat*) that are provided in the biographical lexica. This is because the *rijal* who are authenticated are seen as affording authenticity to the material they transmit and as

expressing the will of the imam to the community especially in their capacities as the deputies of the imams. Without being authenticated, it is difficult to see how a disciple can be looked upon as an authoritative figure in the community.

The assessment on a transmitter in the biographical texts is also interwoven with the *ʿilm* that he transmits. If a transmitter's reliability is not assured, the authoritativeness of the material he transmits is ineluctably questioned. In a sense, the evaluations are linked to the authenticity of the Shiʿi *hadith* corpus since the latter depends largely on the appraisals provided in the biographical texts.

The authentications are also important for Shiʿi jurisprudence. Without the authentications, a Shiʿi legal edifice cannot be constructed around those whose reliability has not been established. The biographical lexica therefore provide the necessary justifications for the inclusion of *hadith* material in the juridical works. As I have discussed, the rulings issued by a jurist are governed, to a large extent, by the inclusion of traditions transmitted by those *rijal* who have been pronounced as veracious by the biographers.

Conceptually, a disciple who has not been pronounced reliable cannot figure within the framework of "regional leaders" or be considered as part of the charismatic office, for these require that the reliability and authority of a leader within the community be confirmed. Furthermore, the link that the *rijal* provide to the imams and their diverse activities on behalf of the imams require that both they and their functions be authenticated. In a sense, the authentications provided in the biographical dictionaries legitimate the activities of the *rijal* and provide continuity to subsequent generation of Shiʿis. In these ways, the texts accord authority to the *rijal*. Yet, in the process, the texts themselves became authoritative and important for subsequent biographers since they are an indispensable means to determining the integrity of and normative appraisals on the *rijal*.

Once the trustworthiness of a disciple has been attested to, the Shiʿis can assume that the imam is, through his trustworthy companions, speaking to the Shiʿi community. Hence, the authentications provided in the biographical dictionaries serve several functions. The most important of these is to accentuate the authority of the *rijal* and treat the material they transmit as constituting the *ʿilm* from the imams.

Biographical narratives and the authentications they provide are also important because they construct and identify a normative reading of the historical lives of the *rijal*. The authority of the disciples in the biographical literature is premised on their characterization as the bearers of Islamic canonical tradition and the embodiment of correct juridical praxis. By citing the disciples' functions and providing an appraisal of their veracity or mendacity, Shiʿi

biographers construct a sense of "orthodoxy" and express a normative evaluation of the *rijal* so as to insert them in the body of tradition that is utilized by the biographical culture.

By positing a structure for identifying trustworthy and unreliable characters, the biographers also construct an authoritative typology of the disciples of the imams. A typology is a form of discourse that reduces the community of specialists in the field into manageable, formal categories. A fundamental characteristic of a typology is that it enunciates a structure of authority in which all the elements that constitute the typology are linked to each other.[29] The typologies also afford a view of the structure of authority that exists within a community and how that authority is transmitted to a succeeding generation of scholars. Once it is defined in the biographical works, the authoritative legacy of the *rijal* is transmitted to the next group of biographers and becomes entrenched over time. Gradually, the texts construct an increasingly restrictive and specific typology of the *rijal,* imposing a well-defined position on them.

Biographers can, in this way, define a profile and, at the same time, create an authoritarian reading of a disciple's life.[30] According to Khaled Abou el-Fadl, the term "authoritarian" refers to "a heuristic methodology that usurps and subjugates the mechanisms of producing meaning from a text to a highly subjective and selective reading."[31] The authoritarian reading of a text is interwoven with the closing of the interpretive process, thereby restricting the text to a specific determination. This determination is then submitted as the final and only possible interpretation of the text.[32] In this sense, biographical hermeneutics are no different from the interpretive activities evident in other fields. The interpretive strategy can shape both future readings and the texts themselves, thus constructing the texts rather than arising from them.

In the biographical literature on the disciples of the imams, Tusi, Najashi, and Kashshi become mediators between the persons they profile and the reader. They construct hermeneutical parameters, thereby limiting their development in later biographical texts. They build typologies and parameters by deploying various genres of terminologies to express the authority and normative status of the disciples. For example, Tusi, Najashi, and Kashshi introduce terms like eminence *(wajih*) and pillar (*rukn*) when describing some prominent *rijal*. Thus, in his profile of Zurara, Najashi describes him as an eminent teacher among our (Shiʿi) companions of his time.[33] Similarly, Tusi depicts Hisham b. al-Hakam as a special associate (*khwass*)[34] and skillful in speculative theology (*kalam*).[35] That these genres of terminologies were introduced by scholars like Tusi, Najashi, and Kashshi can be evinced from the fact that

they did not claim that such remarks were cited in earlier texts. These terminologies became crucial blocks in constructing the authority of the *rijal* and creating an authoritarian typology in their profiles.

The terminologies and assessments that these biographers employ are significant in that they promote an authoritative image of and define future biographic discourse on the *rijal*. The terminologies also have the effect of reducing the plurality of views on a disciple to a singular, biographical opinion. The terminologies are thus important in imparting a sense of standardized evaluations of the disciples of the imams. This can be discerned from the fact that the terminologies that are cited by Tusi, Najashi, and Kashshi are frequently reproduced in subsequent appraisals of the *rijal*. When discussing the reliability of the disciples of the imams, one invokes the criteria and parameters constructed by the interpretive culture of these earlier biographers. Eventually, their biographic readings generate an embellished portrait of the *rijal* under the dominant and charismatic figure of the imams.

Polemics in the Biographical Lexica

The Shiʿi biographies I have considered posit the vision of a vibrant and erudite community during the times of the imams. As I have discussed in chapters three and four, they also predicate the credentials of the *rijal* as the deputed authorities, jurists, and theologians who significantly molded and impacted the Shiʿi community in their time. Biography, however, is not a simple subgenre of history. It is frequently used as a polemical tool.

The biographical works assume polemical undertones to assure the Shiʿis that they represent the correct and "orthodox" version of Islam, and to establish the preponderance of the Shiʿi community over other sectarian groups. Polemics in the biographies takes different forms. In enumerating the literary achievements of the disciples of the imams, the biographical works indicate not only the extent of the Shiʿi compositions available in their times, but also that, due to these texts, Shiʿi beliefs, practices, and *hadith* can be traced to the times of the imams.

The biographical texts also emphasize the various juridical and theological discourses of the *rijal,* thus indicating that the disciples often confronted and confuted their adversaries. The disciples' literary compositions, their activities, and the traditions favorable to them are interwoven into a historical narrative. These are important factors both in the crystallization of beliefs and in the establishment of the superiority of a school. In the process, the authority of those who represented the Shiʿi community and occupied the office

of charisma is tacitly enhanced. Al-Ahwal, for example, is reported to have composed a number of books that vindicated the doctrine of the imamate and argued for its transmission in a concatenated chain.[36] He is also reported to have written polemical tracts that refuted the doctrinal positions adopted by the adversaries of the Shiʿis.

Apart from providing an appraisal of the companions of the imams, Shiʿi biographical literature also sought to establish the preponderance of these Shiʿi scholars, who were engaged in the production of a formidable literary output. Thus, the biographies had apologetic and polemical undertones. They were apologetic in that they asserted, defended, and idealized the character and loyalty of the associates of the imams. The biographies engaged in polemics by proclaiming the preponderance of the arguments of the *rijal* over their interlocutors. By stressing their polemical functions, the authority of the *rijal* and their pivotal roles as the exponents and defenders of Shiʿi beliefs and praxis became more pronounced. It is here that the polemical function of the biographical works became evident.

Apart from emphasizing the authoritative status of the disciples, polemics in the biographical literature is also used to exhibit the rich Shiʿi literary heritage that, it is claimed, could surpass its Sunni counterpart. The Shiʿis, it is maintained, preceded the Sunnis in the construction of a juridical school, thereby enhancing the authority of the founder of the school, the imam himself, who had trained these eminent students. Other texts even claim that it was the Shiʿis who had preceded the Sunnis in composing works in the juridical, theological, and paraenetical fields. The Sunnis, it is claimed, merely emulated the literary models that had been established by the disciples of the imams.[37]

The polemical function of biographical texts is further affirmed in the works of Tusi and Najashi. They maintain, in the introduction to their texts, that they composed their works in response to the criticisms of their opponents, who had taunted them because they lacked reliable, erstwhile compositions or renowned scholars.[38] The purpose of their biographical works was to enumerate the various Shiʿi tracts that had been composed during the times of the imams, thereby refuting the accusations of their interlocutors.

By stressing the polemical functions of the *rijal,* biographical literature often assumes didactic overtones, for it becomes an exercise in communal edification and pride. The community is to take pride in the juridical, theological, and other contributions of the *rijal*. The Shiʿis are also encouraged to emulate the paradigmatic precedents established by the idealized companions of the imams. This is a good example of how biographical literature amalgamated diverse roles, providing exempla, and engaging in polemics, as well as effecting the rejection and marginalization of the "other."

Idealization and Authority Construction in the Biographical Texts

Biographies also construct authority by idealizing the past. They engage in the idealization process by promoting and even exaggerating accounts of a person's achievements so as to depict a particular image and enhance the authority of the person being profiled. Biographical texts are good examples of a major dynamic operative in biographical writing: the molding of a person's character to a preconceived model by deploying various hermeneutical stratagems.[39] For a biographer, there is a need to establish, document, and idealize the roots of a tradition that may not have been previously accepted.

Idealization is an important literary element in biographical literature as it authenticates the present and, at the same time, vindicates certain images or doctrines that are traced to the past. Thus, biographies become important vehicles for documenting certain notions related to the beliefs and practices of a school and a powerful tool for the propagation of those doctrines. In the process, biographies create and embellish a recollection of the community's past.

Biographies also engender syncretic portraits that are dominated by the biographer's ideals, often creating rather than relating history. Because of this, biographies can become personal statements that reflect the times of the biographers rather than of those profiled. The prisms biographers use—the clusters of ideals that define their models—create ideal types, which are brought to life by a confluence of various acts attributed to the idealized figures, and by an assemblage of acts and virtues that reveal facets of the idealized world of the biographer. It is here that biographies assume the character of hagiographical literature. Gradually, the distinction between the historical lives of those profiled and their idealized form becomes blurred.

Shiʿi biographers impose a "normative homogeneity" on the definition of discipleship by idealizing and typologizing their subjects as quintessential Shiʿis, and by characterizing their actions as conforming to the norms expected of loyal associates of the imams. As I discussed in chapter three, a salient trait of the Shiʿi *rijal* is their rehabilitation and the refutation of all charges that can discredit them in the eyes of the Shiʿis. In later Shiʿi literature, much effort is exerted to maintain the integrity and emphasize the loyalty of the *rijal*. It must be remembered that disciples like Zurara, Muhammad b. Muslim, and Hisham b. al-Hakam have been regarded as pillars from which many Shiʿi theological and legal traditions derive support. Reports discrediting the disciples can endanger the various teachings and legal opinions of the imams that the *rijal* transmit. Therefore, any report that might tarnish their image as the ideal disciples of the imams has been regarded as unreliable or as deliberately uttered by the imams so as to safeguard the lives of these eminent personages.

Different literary devices are employed in Shiʿi biographical literature to idealize the *rijal* and explain the negative comments made by the imams concerning some of their most prominent disciples. Tusi, for example, wrote a redaction of Kashshi's work. He and Najashi were fully aware of the pejorative remarks made against some of the prominent disciples. Yet neither of them makes any mention of the derogatory remarks against the prominent *rijal*. In fact, the works of Tusi and Najashi are notable for what they omit as much as for what they state. These biographers profile disciples like Zurara, Hisham b. al-Hakam, and al-Ahwal without expressing any negative comment or reservation regarding their reliability. In their construction of the disciples' authority, Tusi and Najashi articulate a coherent, yet selective, presentation of the *rijal* so as to insert them in the body of tradition utilized by later biographical culture.

Besides the omission of derogatory remarks, another literary device Shiʿi biographers use to idealize the *rijal* is the concept of mass authentication. The time of Hurr al-ʿAmili (d. 1692) marks the beginning of discussions on the possible significations of various statements made by the preceding scholars. By deploying various forms of hermeneutic stratagems, thousands of *rijal* are authenticated in later texts; this is another example of the later form of idealization of the *rijal*.

An example of the mass authentication of the *rijal* is provided by a remark made by al-Mufid in his *Kitab al-Irshad*. He states, "The specialists in tradition (*ashab al-hadith*) have compiled the names of those who narrated on his [al-Sadiq's] authority, who were reliable despite [their] differences in views and doctrines, and they were 4,000 men."[40] Scholars like al-Tabrisi (d. 1153) and al-ʿAmili and have claimed that, since al-Mufid has described them as reliable, all 4,000 companions of al-Sadiq are to be considered as trustworthy.[41] The implications of this claim are enormous, vindicating the acceptance of thousands of traditions transmitted by the associates of al-Sadiq. Mirza al-Husayn Nuri (d. 1902) goes further than his predecessors by claiming that these 4,000 students have also been authenticated by Ibn ʿUqda, an eighth century Zaydi biographer, in his list of the *rijal*.[42] However, one would have expected Tusi, who enumerates the companions of every imam in his work on the *rijal,* to mention their collective reliability. The absence of any such claim suggests that, at least in Tusi's time, the notion that all the companions of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq were reliable was not accepted by Shiʿi biographers themselves.

Contemporary *rijal* scholars like al-Khuʾi and Muzaffar have also refuted this claim, maintaining that many of these 4,000 companions have been considered to be weak by Tusi himself.[43] The claim of the "collective reliability" of the companions of al-Sadiq, declares al-Khuʾi, is parallel to the Sunni view that all of the companions of the Prophet are to be considered as morally upright and just, a view that was rejected by the Shiʿis.

A further example of mass authentication is provided in an inference drawn by al-Khuʾi himself. Referring to Ahmad b. Muhammad b. ʿUbayd Allah al-Jawhari, Najashi states in his profile, "I have seen this *shaykh,* he was a friend of mine and of my father and I have heard many things from him. I [also] saw that our teachers have considered him to be weak, so I did not report anything from him and I have avoided him."[44]

Statements such as these, al-Khuʾi claims, clearly indicate that Najashi would abstain from narrating traditions from teachers who were not reliable.[45] This inference has the effect of authenticating all of Najashi's teachers. Other scholars of biographical literature like Muhsini, for example, have refuted al-Khuʾi's deduction, stating that such remarks by Najashi do not necessarily indicate that he transmitted reports only from reliable reporters.[46]

In a sense, later *rijal* works have become a means of positing principles through which thousands of *rijal* can be authenticated. In the later works, the earlier assessments are reproduced, and the principles of authentication evolve so that more *rijal* are added within the ambit of reliable transmitters. The claim that the traditions of numerous *rijal* are reliable is a later biographical innovation, designed, as many of the later authentications are, to authenticate more disciples and justify the inclusion of their traditions in the juridical manuals. In the process, the image of the *rijal* is idealized and their authority affirmed.

Idealization among biographers of the last century has taken different forms. This can be inferred from al-Khuʾi's voluminous biographical work, *Muʿjam Rijal al-Hadith*. He juxtaposes the appraisal of erstwhile biographers and attempts to resolve inconsistencies and anomalies in the profiles of various *rijal*. In examining the denigrating remarks that were reportedly uttered by the imams concerning some of their closest associates, al-Khuʾi points to weak figures in the chains of transmission (*isnad*). For example, in his profile of Mufaddal b. ʿUmar (d. 796), al-Khuʾi quotes the views of some past scholars and notes some damaging reports regarding him. Mufaddal was, according to Ibn al-Ghadaʾiri, *daʿif* (weak) and a follower of Abuʾl-Khattab, a reported extremist. "As the *ghulat* have ascribed many traditions to him," Ibn al-Ghadaʾiri adds, "it is not permissible to transmit Mufaddal's traditions."[47] Najashi states that Mufaddal was *fasid al-madhhab* (deviant in his religious persuasions). Najashi further pronounces his traditions to be unsound and states that his books should not be depended on.[48]

Kashshi also reports many traditions on Mufaddal's alleged extremist views. For example, Hujr b. Zaida and ʿAmir b. Judhaʿa al-Azdi approached al-Sadiq and said, "Mufaddal b. ʿUmar says that you [the imams] determine the sustenance of the people." Al-Sadiq promptly refuted this view and then cursed Mufaddal.[49] Kashshi also states that Mufaddal circulated the view that Ismaʿil, the eldest son of al-Sadiq, would succeed his father as the imam. If

correct, the report may provide further evidence of Mufaddal's connection with Abuʾl-Khattab since the latter had reportedly also believed in Ismaʿil's imamate.[50] Due to his extremist tendencies, Mufaddal had many opponents within the Shiʿi community.[51]

Al-Khuʾi dismisses most of the denigrating reports against Mufaddal as having weak chains of transmission. However, he also notes that some of these reports against Mufaddal have strong *isnads*. Al-Khuʾi rejects them too, claiming that they must have arisen from *taqiyya* (dissimulation) or that they cannot oppose the numerically superior traditions that are in favor of Mufaddal. Moreover, al-Khuʾi continues, al-Sadiq is reported to have given a book called *Kitab al-Tawhid* to Mufaddal. This points to the confidence and eminent position Mufaddal enjoyed with al-Sadiq. In dismissing Najashi's unfavorable comments on him, al-Khuʾi states that al-Mufid's remark that Mufaddal was among the upright jurists is enough justification for rejecting Najashi's statement.[52] At the end of his section on Mufaddal, al-Khuʾi proclaims him to be reliable, a conclusion in stark contrast to earlier assessments.[53]

When he is confronted with denigrating reports against other *rijal* that contain strong *isnad,* al-Khuʾi employs different hermeneutical tools to reject them. For example, in his profile of Hisham b. al-Hakam, al-Khuʾi admits that a tradition from al-Rida that links Hisham with the killing of al-Kazim has a strong *isnad*. This report, al-Khuʾi argues, must be rejected and returned to those able to answer it (*la budda ʿan narudda ʿilmaha ila ahliha*).[54] Although it contains a strong *isnad,* the tradition is isolated and cannot oppose the numerous other traditions in favor of Hisham. Furthermore, al-Khuʾi adds, it is well known that al-Kazim was not killed because of Hisham's debates, but because he was the leader of the Shiʿis. Al-Khuʾi further maintains that the numerous accusations leveled against Hisham of corporealism (some of which are reported in Shiʿi works too)[55] were all fabricated and arose out of sheer jealousy against him. Al-Khuʾi does not expound on the various reports of Hisham's corporealism that are cited in the Sunni works.[56] Like many other *rijal,* Hisham is rehabilitated and idealized as an important protagonist of Shiʿi beliefs in his time.

Mamaqani, on the other hand, deploys a different method to idealize the disciples of the imams. He differs from al-Khuʾi in that he states that it is not sufficient to examine the chains of transmission and their deficiencies. In examining the numerous negative remarks against Zurara, Mamaqani asks, "How can we reject more than thirty unfavorable traditions [against Zurara] based only on weak chains of transmission especially when the purport of these traditions (condemning Zurara) is repeatedly transmitted?"[57] The only way to explain these remarks is by appealing to *taqiyya* (dissimulation). The remarks against the disciples were meant to act as a camouflage, to conceal the close links that the imams had with their associates.

However, Mamaqani's contention that the disparaging remarks against the disciples were uttered due to *taqiyya* cannot be substantiated in many instances. If the derogatory utterances by the imams had arisen solely out of a concern for their disciples' safety, then one would have expected to read many such remarks against Muhammad b. Abi ʿUmayr (d. 832), who was imprisoned by Harun al-Rashid when he refused to disclose the identity of the Shiʿis. However, even though his life was in obvious danger, no derogatory remarks against him have been recorded. Similarly, one would expect to read many deprecatory remarks against ʿAli b. Yaqtin (d. 798–799), whose life was in greater danger because, unlike the other disciples of the imams, he worked for the ʿAbbasids. No such utterances are recorded against him, however.

Furthermore, while *taqiyya* may help to explain some of the unfavorable remarks uttered against some disciples, it does not account for the divergent theological and ritual points that Zurara and other disciples had reportedly propagated in Kufa. Many of the curses issued by al-Sadiq appear in the form of responses to the disciples' deviations from his teachings rather than as general public censure. Most of the curses were issued only when Shiʿis, coming from distant places like Kufa, informed al-Sadiq of the disciples' deviant views. In all probability, the pejorative utterances were intended to caution the Shiʿis from referring to some disciples in their religious rulings rather than addressing a proclamation to the Muslims at large.

It is to be remembered that, according to some reports, al-Sadiq had asked his followers to refer to disciples like Zurara and Muhammad b. Muslim in matters pertaining to religious ordinances and faith. Perhaps the derogatory remarks proscribing them were issued at a later date, when the rift between them and the imam became clear. Kashshi's work suggests that the differences between the imams and their companions led to the imams' deprecatory remarks, not concerns for their disciples' safety.

Shiʿi biographical dictionaries are historical exempla of homogenizing the profiles of the disciples and portraying their ideal traits based on preconceived ideas of the characteristics of the imams' disciples. Through his intervention, the biographer decides how the disciples are to be depicted in the biographical discourse, and how their authority is to be constructed. The appraisals of biographers lay claim to an exclusivist hermeneutic, which can become sufficiently entrenched to impose an authoritarian construction on the history of those profiled. The imposition of normative or canonical evaluations in the biographical literature also has the effect of reducing subsequent biographical pluralism.

Through their biographies, Shiʿi biographers promoted personal convictions and affirmed postulates regarding the Shiʿi worldview of leadership and doctrines by a confirmation of past representatives of those traditions. The authentications provided in the biographies often reflect the juridical and social

world of the *rijal* as perceived by the biographers writing in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Later idealization of the *rijal* reasserts the canonical and standardized profiles of the disciples. Biographers like al-Khuʾi and Mamaqani restate a "normative version" of the definition of discipleship and promote a later understanding of loyalty and commitment.

In an environment in which different groups made claims to knowledge and authority, Shiʿi biographers show their subjects in action against representatives of other traditions. This not only vindicates their beliefs, but also promotes idealized pictures of these characters. As I demonstrate in the next section, the idealization of the *rijal* even took the form of authenticating and rehabilitating those disciples who had been considered weak by earlier Shiʿi biographers. The idealization of the *rijal* also shows the Shiʿi concern for asserting the conviction that what has been expressed in the post-*ghayba* era (Shiʿi beliefs, practices, and the *rijal* as the authoritative spokesmen of the imam) is not new, and can indeed be traced to the times of the imams. Through this process, prevalent beliefs and conduct are legitimized.

Legitimacy and the Struggle for Authority in the Biographical Dictionaries: The Cases of Aban b. Taghlib and Jabir al-Juʿfi

In this section, I intend to examine how two important Shiʿi personages, Aban b. Taghlib (d. 758) and Jabir b. Yazid al-Juʿfi (d. 745) are profiled in the biographical lexica. I have chosen to examine these disciples because, in contrast to other associates of the imams, they have been mentioned frequently in both Sunni and Shiʿi biographical texts. Hence, a chronological and comparative study of their profiles can enable a researcher to contrast how these two disciples are presented in their respective schools. Moreover, the comparative nature of this exercise can lead to the detection of any possible evolution in the profiles of the *rijal* concerned and how both the Sunni and Shiʿi schools came to adopt a definite position on a transmitter. Many features of biographical literature that I have previously described (structure, polemics, idealization) will become evident as I discuss the profiles of these two disciples.

I will also attempt to piece together a coherent picture of the two *rijal* based on the testimonies and views enunciated in the Sunni and Shiʿi sources. This method will enable us to see the chronological development in a disciple's profile—that is, to discern any "growth" in the profile. This line of study will also allow us to detect the ascriptions of views and beliefs to a person, which may have occurred at a later time. It is hoped that this "comparative approach" will enhance our understanding of the beliefs and doctrines of eighth-century Shiʿis, and the authority biographical sources accord to the disciples of the imams.

ABAN B. TAGHLIB (D. 758)

A disciple of the fifth and sixth imams, Aban's profile appears in all the major, early Sunni *rijal* works. Sunni sources are unanimous in praising him for his knowledge in various sciences, including Arabic language and as a prominent reader (*qariʾ*) of the Qurʾan.[58] Al-Kisaʾi (d. 804), one of the seven readers of the Qurʾan, read it with him.[59] In the ninth-century biographical lexica, the profiles of Aban are concise. Ibn Saʿd (d. 848) says that he was reliable (*thiqa*) in his narrations and that Shuʿba (d. 776) transmitted traditions from him.[60] In his profile, Khalifa Ibn al-Khayyat (d. 854) mentions the date when Aban died,[61] whereas Bukhari (d. 870) only mentions Aban's Kufi origins and cites some of the transmitters of his traditions, notably Shuʿba and Sufyan b. ʿUyayna (d. 794).[62]

The tenth-century biographer, Ibn Abi Hatim (d. 938) adds little to our sparse information on Aban. He quotes Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 855) and Yahya b. Maʿin (d. 847), both saying Aban was reliable.[63] A salient feature of Aban's profile in ninth-century Sunni *rijal* works is that he is deemed to be reliable and trustworthy. There is no mention of Aban having espoused Shiʿi beliefs, or of his being connected to or transmitting traditions from any of the Shiʿi imams. It would appear that the ninth-century writers may not have known that Aban was a Shiʿi. An alternative explanation, which will be discussed next, is that ninth-century Sunni *rijal* scholars simply ignored Aban's Shiʿi proclivities because the traditions that he transmitted were not objectionable by them.

It is in al-ʿUqayli's (d. 933) text that Aban's Shiʿism is explicitly stated for the first time. He notes that Aban was seen as "extreme in his Shiʿism."[64] Al-ʿUqayli also quotes Yazid b. Harun as saying that Aban was *saʾigh* (one who alters or falsifies speech).[65] He further states that Aban was seen as an extreme Shiʿi as he transmitted traditions against ʿUthman b. ʿAffan (d. 656) from Muhammad al-Baqir. It was due to these genres of traditions that Mansur b. al-Muʿtamar (n.d.) reportedly told Aban, "Get out of my presence, do not visit me again."[66]

A salient feature of al-ʿUqayli's profile of Aban is that the latter is called a Shiʿi, a point that earlier *rijal* scholars did not mention. The question of why Aban was not seen as a Shiʿi in the earlier works will be considered later on. Here, we need only note that Aban's profile had grown considerably by the time al-ʿUqayli composed his biographical work in the tenth century. Another tenth-century biographer, Ibn ʿAdi (d. 976) reports that al-Saʿdi (al-Juzajani, d. 870) said Aban was a deviant who belonged to a reprehensible school. However, Ibn ʿAdi defends Aban by stating that al-Juzajani's criticisms against Aban pertained only to his Shiʿi beliefs. They did not reflect his reliability as a transmitter of traditions. Despite his alleged heretical beliefs,

Aban's traditions could, therefore, be accepted. Ibn ʿAdi further quotes Ibn ʿUyayna as saying that Aban was a grammarian, a point that is also stressed in the Shiʿi *rijal* works.[67]

The foregoing indicates that in contrast to ninth-century biographers, tenth-century Sunni scholars acknowledged Aban's Shiʿi proclivities. Despite this, his traditions were accepted. Substantively, his profile appears to have grown, with numerous quotations on his reliability, juxtaposed to his inclinations toward Shiʿism. A more detailed profile on Aban emerges in the later works of al-Dhahabi (d. 1348) and Ibn Hajar (d. 1449). Al-Dhahabi states that Aban was "strong" (*jald*)[68] [in his traditions], and then quotes the appraisals of his predecessors, including Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Maʿin, and Abu Hatim, all of whom had deemed Aban trustworthy. He also cites some negative remarks from al-ʿUqayli and Ibn ʿAdi. Al-Dhahabi then poses the obvious question, "How can one who is labeled as a *mubtadiʿ* (innovator) also be considered as reliable and upright (*ʿadil*)?"

He responds by differentiating between two types of innovations (*bidʿa*). The first type is the smaller *bidʿa* (*al-bidʿa al-sughra*), which, according to al-Dhahabi, is tantamount to being a Shiʿi. This form of innovation was practiced by many successors (*tabiʿun*), he states. Al-Dhahabi further stresses that if their traditions are rejected, then the vestiges of prophecy will be obliterated. As for the greater *bidʿa,* al-Dhahabi continues, it is equivalent to being a Rafidi and to demeaning Abu Bakr and ʿUmar. The Rafidis' arguments constitute no proof, nor should we be concerned with them, al-Dhahabi states. In the past Shiʿism referred to one who denounced ʿUthman, al-Zubayr, Talha, and Muʿawiya, but the *ghali* (extremist) in our age, he adds, is the one who considers these eminent figures to be infidels and dissociates himself from Abu Bakr and ʿUmar.[69]

By means of this neat bifurcation of *bidʿa,* al-Dhahabi was able to accept Aban's traditions and yet call him a Shiʿi. It would have been difficult for him to reject Aban as a *hadith* transmitter since he had been authenticated in the earlier works. Furthermore, rejecting the traditions of Aban due to his Shiʿi penchant would have entailed the rejection of traditions narrated by many other successors. This, according to al-Dhahabi, would have resulted in the obliteration of the vestiges of the Prophet.

Al-Dhahabi not only juxtaposes the favorable and critical remarks on Aban, but also advances reasons for authenticating one who was seen by al-Dhahabi's informants as having deviated from the true path. Moreover, by his differentiation of the two types of *bidʿa,* al-Dhahabi may have been attempting to score a polemical point by suggesting that the later form of Shiʿism was affiliated with the extremists whereas the earlier Shiʿis, although differing with the Sunnis, were to be accepted, as they did not espouse extremist views.

Ibn Hajar quotes the opinions of previous biographical scholars on Aban stressing that he was both a Shiʿi and reliable. Apart from differentiating between the two types of Shiʿism as was done by al-Dhahabi, Ibn Hajar quotes previous assessments of Aban, constructing, in the process, a more complete picture of him.[70] The foregoing indicates that, already in the ninth century, Aban was called a Shiʿi by al-Juzajani; but it was only in the tenth century that this view was recorded and elaborated.

The earliest extant Shiʿi *rijal* work is that of al-Barqi (d. 887). By this time, the Shiʿis had already identified Aban as a prominent associate of al-Baqir and al-Sadiq.[71] However, since al-Barqi's text merely lists the companions of each imam, he neither authenticates Aban nor discusses his beliefs. In his other work entitled *Kitab al-Mahasin,* al-Barqi quotes many traditions that Aban reportedly heard from the imams.

As compared to their Sunni counterparts, ninth-century Shiʿi biographers and *hadith* reporters depict Aban as a disciple of the imams who reported *hadith* in their favor. Thus, al-Saffar (d. 902) quotes a tradition from Aban stating that, after the Prophet's death, ʿAli took Abu Bakr to a mosque where the Prophet was waiting to adjudicate on the contentious issue of the leadership of the community.[72] Aban was clearly seen by ninth-century Shiʿis as reporting polemical (mainly anti-Sunni) traditions. Al-Hasan b. Musa al-Nawbakhti (d. 912–913), the famous heresiographer, underscores the ninth- and tenth-century Shiʿi view of Aban as an authoritative figure and a loyal disciple of the imams. According to him, Aban recognized the imamate of al-Kazim immediately after the death of al-Sadiq, a view contradicted by most reports, which state that he died before al-Sadiq.[73]

Kashshi has preserved many reports on Aban, all of which are in his favor and present him as a close associate of the imams. Al-Sadiq was reportedly pained by Aban's death. The imam is also said to have told Muslim b. Abi Hibba (n.d.),[74] "Visit Aban b. Taghlib for he has heard many traditions from me and whatever he narrates to you from me, you may transmit it [as coming] from me."[75]

A tradition cited by Kashshi indicates how the Shiʿis depicted Aban as an important member of the charisma of office. Aban would sit in the mosque in Kufa and respond to questions posed by people, many of who were not Shiʿis. Aban is reported to have visited al-Sadiq and complained that the people demanded replies to their questions. He further stated, "I am scared to respond based on your teachings and what has been narrated from you." Al-Sadiq is reported to have told Aban, "See what you know of their teachings and answer them accordingly."[76] The tradition alludes to a point that is assiduously mentioned in the Shiʿi works, namely, that, in their capacity as agents of the imams, the disciples performed many functions, including that of disseminating their teachings.

Compared to al-Barqi, Kashshi, and Ibn al-Nadim, Tusi's profile of Aban is more detailed. Tusi states that he was "trustworthy and of great esteem and status (ʿ*azim manzila*) among our companions."[77] He also quotes al-Baqir instructing Aban to "sit in the mosque of Medina and issue juridical rulings to the people, for I would love [them] to see those of your caliber among my Shiʿis."[78] The tradition further evinces the role of Aban as a deputed agent who functioned in the charismatic office of the *rijal*. Tusi cites more details on Aban than Kashshi. He says that Aban was a reciter of the Qurʾan (*qari),* a *faqih,* and a grammarian. He further adds that Aban had a *Kitab al-Fadaʾil* (book of excellences [of the imams]) and an *asl* work.

Apart from repeating the numerous favorable remarks on Aban, Najashi adds comments on Aban that are absent in Tusi's work. He states that when Aban would visit the mosque in Medina, the students of the classes held there would stand up and clear the pillar of the Prophet as a mark of respect for him.[79] Najashi further states that Aban was well versed in major Islamic disciplines such as the Qurʾan, *fiqh, hadith,* and Arabic lexicography. Najashi's profile of Aban is even more detailed, for he also notes that Aban had heard 30,000 traditions from al-Sadiq. Like their Sunni counterparts, Shiʿi profiles of Aban tend to "grow" in the eleventh-century works of Tusi and Najashi, accentuating, thereby, his links with the imams and stressing his functions in the office of charisma.

Whereas the Sunni *rijal* works authenticate Aban by enumerating his teachers and narrators, the Shiʿi biographical texts concentrate on reporting his activities as an important disciple of the imams. Stated differently, the Shiʿis regard Aban as a disciple who performed various functions on behalf of the imams. These functions ranged from transmitting *hadith* to issuing juridical edicts in the mosque. The Sunnis, on the other hand, restrict his role to that of a narrator who transmitted traditions from various figures, including the imams. Tusi and Najashi claim that Aban was a jurist, a reciter of the Qurʾan, and a grammarian, whereas most Sunni *rijal* works mention only his role as a traditionist.

In emphasizing his different roles in the office of charisma, Shiʿi sources report that, due to his proficiency in the language, al-Sadiq instructed Aban to debate with an unnamed Syrian on Arabic grammar, leading eventually to the Syrian's defeat.[80] This report underscores the polemical nature of biographical literature. Aban is represented not only as a great jurist, but also as a proficient grammarian. He was apparently so accomplished in Arabic that he could debate and overcome his opponents in the nuances of Arabic grammar. It is possible that Aban's roles as a jurist and a linguist were later attributed to him by the Shiʿis. Alternatively, the Sunni works may simply have ignored his multitudinous roles and erudition in different fields, instead emphasizing the only function that was directly germane for them, his role as a *hadith* transmitter.

A study of Aban's profiles indicates that he was accepted in the early works by both Sunni and Shiʿi *rijal* authors.[81] No mention is made of his predilections toward Shiʿism in the early Sunni biographical texts, whereas the extant Shiʿi works (written in the ninth century) stress Aban's close association with the imams. However, ninth-century Sunni figures like al-Juzajani (who was well known for his anti-ʿAlid views[82]) and Ibn ʿAdi mention Aban's Shiʿism. The later works of al-Dhahabi and Ibn Hajar try to reconcile the fact that Aban's *hadith*s were acceptable with reports of his Shiʿi beliefs. In most Sunni and Shiʿi biographical works of the ninth century, Aban is presented as a respected figure who was authenticated by all the major *rijal* authors.

It is possible to construe a tussle for Aban between the Shiʿis and their opponents taking place in the ninth century. Sunni biographers clearly saw Aban as acceptable and trustworthy. To reject him due to his espousal of Shiʿi beliefs would have resulted in the rejection of traditions that had been transmitted by many other reporters in Aban's generation. Their traditions were documented in the Sunni *hadith* manuals. Ninth-century Shiʿis like al-Barqi, al-Saffar, and al-Nawbakhti saw him as an important disciple of the imams. Clearly, Aban was accepted and seen as authoritative by both camps. The issue was finally resolved in the tenth century when Aban's Shiʿism, already implied in statements by the likes of al-Juzajani, was explicitly admitted.

A study of the names of those reporting from Aban reveals that many figures who were later identified as being distinctly Sunni, like al-Aʿmash (d. 764), Shuʿba, and Ibn ʿUyayna, transmitted traditions from him. This point further substantiates the view that, in the early *rijal* works, Aban was accepted in both the Sunni and the Shiʿi works. With the emergence of distinct Sunni and Shiʿi schools, traditions reported by *rijal* like Aban (who was now strongly contested by the Shiʿis) could not be ignored, because they had been accepted by their predecessors.

Later Sunni generations had to deal with the vexing problem of accepting *hadith* from a transmitter who, by that time, was identified as a Shiʿi. Their acceptance was justified by claiming that Aban was a "mild" and therefore acceptable Shiʿi. Thus, although Aban's authority was challenged by those who claimed he was a deviant, it was eventually restored by distinguishing between the two types of *bidʿa*. At the same time, the Shiʿi development of Aban's image as a close disciple of the imams, who performed various functions on their behalf, made the Shiʿi identity of Aban even more tenable.

A comparison between the Sunni and Shiʿi profiles on Aban also indicates that whereas the Sunnis were concerned with justifying how to authenticate

and accept traditions from an apparent deviant, Shiʿi works saw Aban as an esteemed and close disciple of the imams who performed various functions on their behalf. They further quote various remarks from the imams in his favor. The imams' recommendations to their followers to refer to Aban in matters pertaining to religious beliefs and practices portray him as an agent of the imams who disseminated their teachings. Both Sunni and Shiʿi *rijal* works consider Aban reliable.

Aban does not appear to have engaged in substantial polemical discourses, nor do the titles of the books he reportedly composed indicate that he wrote on doctrinal issues. He is not, for example, reported to have engaged in discourses on theological issues like the beliefs in *badaʾ* (alteration of a divine decree), *rajʿa,* or on anthropomorphism, all of which are linked to several other Shiʿi figures. This probably accounts for the fact that he is not criticized in the anti-Shiʿi theological and heresiographical works. Although in the polemical works of al-Khayyat and al-Ashʿari there is much discussion of major Shiʿi figures and a refutation of their theological pronouncements, there is no mention of Aban's views. This fact may further explain why the Sunnis accepted him, despite his Shiʿi predispositions.

Modern Shiʿi *rijal* works elevate the status of Aban to a higher level than the earlier works. In his biography of Aban, Mamaqani changes the line of argumentation. He compares the merits of Aban to those of his Sunni counterparts. Due to Tusi's statement that Aban was well versed in every field of Islamic sciences, Mamaqani claims that Aban was better than the seven Qurʾan writers, better than Sibawayh and al-Kasaʾi (the grammarians) and the authors of the six *sahih* works, and better than Abu Hanifa, Shafiʿi, Malik and Ibn Hanbal.[83] By stressing the *rijal*'s epistemic accomplishments, Shiʿi biographical texts assume polemical undertones when they indicate the superiority of a disciple over his adversaries. In this way, Mamaqani tries to prove the superiority of the Shiʿi *rijal* over Sunni figures.

As I stated earlier in this chapter, the two major features of later Shiʿi *rijal* works are the portrayal of the *rijal* as the ideal disciples of the imams and the refutation of all accusations leveled at them, elevating them, in the process, to a higher level than in the earlier works. The biographies enhance the authority of the *rijal* by adopting polemic and salvific undertones. They identify the faithful disciples, and try to demonstrate that these disciples were the most accomplished in various Islamic disciplines. Not only do the texts construct the authority of the *rijal* by stressing the preponderance of Shiʿi beliefs, practices, and figures, they also cement the authority of the *rijal* by stressing their contributions in the office of charisma and by claiming that they were more accomplished than their Sunni counterparts.

JABIR B. YAZID AL-JUʿFI (D. 745)

One of the most famous and controversial figures in both Sunni and Shiʿi biographical works is Jabir b. Yazid al-Juʿfi, a disciple of the fifth and sixth imams. Jabir is controversial because he is accused of propagating doctrines that are viewed as "extremist" and is said to have been associated with the *ghulat*.

In the Sunni works, derogatory remarks concerning Jabir are evident from Ibn Saʿd's time in the ninth century. He quotes Sufyan (al-Thawri d. 778) as saying, "If he [Jabir] tells you, '(so and so) has related to me' or 'I have heard,' then that is acceptable, whereas if he says, '(so and so) has said (without citing his source), [it is] as if he is ascribing a tradition (*kaʾannahu yudallisu*) to someone.'"[84] Ibn Saʿd then quotes Qays b. al-Rabiʾ (n.d.) as saying that Jabir is very weak in his views and traditions. Ibn Saʿd also cites Ibn ʿUyayna as stating that when he was with Jabir in a house, the latter spoke in such a manner that the house almost collapsed.[85]

Although brief, Ibn Saʿd's assessment of Jabir is clearly negative, for he is not seen as a reliable transmitter of traditions. No mention, however, is made of his having espoused specific religious views, nor is any reason stated for his being seen as very weak. Moreover, there is neither an indication of Jabir's association with any of the imams, nor any elaboration of his Shiʿi beliefs.

Bukhari notes that ʿAbd al-Rahman b. Mahdi (d. 813) had abandoned [transmitting *hadith* from] Jabir. Bukhari also quotes Shuʿba (d. 776) as telling Jabir, "You will not die until you will have lied about the Prophet." Ismaʿil b. Abi Khalid then adds that only a few days and nights had passed before Jabir was accused of lying. Bukhari's profile of Jabir is also detrimental in that Jabir is accused of being a liar and being abandoned by many people. There is still no reference identifying him as a Shiʿi.[86] Al-ʿAjli (d. 874), a contemporary of Bukhari, on the other hand, says that Jabir was *daʿif* (weak) and extreme in his Shiʿism.[87] He does not expand on these charges against Jabir, however. It is to be noted that in the ninth-century Sunni biographical works, the reasons for Jabir's reputation as a liar are not mentioned nor are his views discussed.

The charges against Jabir are elaborated in ninth-century Sunni *hadith* and polemical works. In his *Sahih,* Muslim (d. 874) notes that many transmitters had stopped reporting traditions from Jabir due to his belief in *rajʿa*.[88] Sufyan (unidentified) is further quoted as saying that people would flock to visit and narrate traditions from Jabir before he made public what he made public (*qabla ʿan yuzhira ma azhara*). When this transpired, many people suspected Jabir's traditions and abandoned him. Sufyan was then asked, "And what did occur?" He said, "The belief in *rajʿa*."[89] The same Sufyan further states that

although he had heard about thirty traditions from Jabir, he did not deem it permissible to transmit any of them.[90]

The charges against Jabir regarding his extremist beliefs can be further corroborated from some of his reported interpretations of Qurʾanic verses. Jabir is accused by Sufyan of construing "I will never leave the land until my father permits me or God commands me" (12:80) as referring to ʿAli residing in the clouds. ʿAli, according to this interpretation, will proclaim the appearance of his son and urge the people to follow him when he reappears.[91] Muslim also mentions that Jabir apparently boasted of having heard 50,000 to 70,000 prophetic traditions from Muhammad al-Baqir that Jabir had not related to anyone.[92] This is the earliest source that I have seen in which the accusations against Jabir are elaborated and explicitly stated. Although the *rijal* scholars before Muslim clearly evince their suspicions regarding Jabir, they do not refer to Jabir's belief in *rajʿa,* a view that led many of his contemporaries to reject him.

Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), a contemporary of Bukhari and Muslim, also cites some of the accusations that were leveled at Jabir. In his *Taʾwil Mukhtalif al-Hadith,* Ibn Qutayba links Jabir with the Rafidis and states that Jabir was among those who believed in the doctrine of *rajʿa*.[93] In his *Kitab al-Maʿarif,* Ibn Qutayba mentions that Jabir was one who indulged in ambiguous activities and magical tricks,[94] and links him with other Rafidi figures like Zurara and al-Mukhtar b. ʿUbayd al-Thaqafi (d. 697).[95]

Al-Fasawi (d. 890), another ninth-century historian, mentions other beliefs that Jabir purportedly espoused that led to his estrangement. Apart from repeating many of the charges against Jabir that had been documented by Muslim, al-Fasawi quotes Ibn Hanbal as saying that people had abandoned Jabir because of his repugnant views.[96] Jabir is also reported to have claimed: "The legatee of the legatees (*wasi al-awsiyaʾ*) told me"—a view that further enhanced the suspicions that he was a Rafidi.[97] Sunni suspicions against Jabir were probably augmented by his traditions predicting the rise of the *Qaʾim,* the Messianic imam.[98]

Al-ʿUqayli (d. 933) also adds information on Jabir that is absent in earlier works. He says that Jabir reviled the *sahaba,* a practice that was apparently shared by many Rafidis of his time,[99] and that Jabir claimed al-Baqir had made him drink from a special utensil (*qaʿb jayshan*),[100] which helped him memorize 40,000 traditions.[101] No favorable comments on Jabir are made by al-ʿUqayli.

As in the case of Aban, tenth-century Sunni profiles on Jabir present additional material. The earlier remarks are recounted, and now he is closely aligned also to the main Rafidi views, including the vilification of the companions, beliefs in the transmission of the imamate based on divine designation (*nass*), and the imams' divinely inspired knowledge. In all probability, by Ibn

ʿAdi's time, Jabir's affiliation with Shiʿism was not only widely accepted, but also major Shiʿi doctrines were attributed to him. He was thus made to hold the multitudinous views the Shiʿis had propounded, despite the fact that many of these beliefs were not linked to Jabir in the ninth-century Sunni texts. In the tenth century, the Shiʿi identity of Jabir, implicit in the earlier sources, becomes explicit.

If Jabir's seemingly heretical views were known to the likes of Muslim, Ibn Qutayba, and al-Fasawi, they were surely also known to their contemporaries, Bukhari and Ibn Saʿd. Even Ibn Abi Hatim, a tenth-century *rijal* scholar, does not mention Jabir's belief in *rajʿa*. Why do the early *rijal* scholars like Ibn Saʿd, Bukhari, and Ibn Abi Hatim not mention Jabir's beliefs, just as they fail to cite Aban's affiliation to Shiʿism? A possible explanation is that ninth-century *rijal* scholars do not, as a general rule, discuss the beliefs and views propounded by particular figures. They appear to be more concerned with citing the assessments of their predecessors, which may or may not include a person's beliefs. This may explain why, although Bukhari and Ibn Abi Hatim cite profiles of Zayd b. ʿAli (d. 737), Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya, and Abu Jarud, they make no mention of the events and beliefs that arose from the actions of these figures.[102] The fact that Abu Jarud belonged to the Zaydiyya, or that Zayd led a major revolt in Kufa is not mentioned by any of these *rijal* scholars. They are content to cite the evaluations that were transmitted from eighth-century figures, ignoring, in the process, their own assessments of a person's beliefs and school of thought. This may explain the omission of important details concerning both Aban and Jabir from their texts.

It is only in the tenth century that some favorable material on Jabir begins to appear in his profiles. Ibn Abi Hatim quotes al-Thawri as saying that Jabir was upright in his traditions and that, "I did not see anyone who was more truthful in [transmitting] *hadith* than Jabir." Shuʿba, who was quoted by Bukhari calling Jabir a liar, is reported by Ibn Abi Hatim to have said that Jabir was truthful in transmitting traditions.[103]

Ibn Abi Hatim's profile of Jabir is, in fact, a mixture of favorable and contemptuous remarks. He quotes Ibn Hanbal as saying, "ʿAbd al-Rahman and Yahya had both abandoned Jabir." Yahya b. Maʿin calls him *daʿif*.[104] No attempt is made to explain why he was called a liar, or to reconcile the contradictory appraisals that appear in his profile as seen by the terms *daʿif* and *thiqa*. These conflicting remarks on Jabir can be explained by assuming that, after initially espousing beliefs that were acceptable to his peers, Jabir later propagated views that were found to be repulsive by many. It is from this perspective that the frequent appearance of the phrase *fa-tarakahu* (and he abandoned him) in Jabir's profile becomes comprehensible.

The contention that Jabir's profile grows considerably in the tenth century is corroborated by a study of Ibn ʿAdi's (d. 975) biographical text. A new element concerning Jabir is mentioned by Ibn ʿAdi, namely, his claim to perform miracles. ʿUthman b. Shaʿbi reported a tradition from his grandfather claiming that Jabir could produce fruits from his garden in the off-season, a point that corroborated his view that Jabir was a liar.[105] Jabir is also reported to have performed epistemological miracles like prophesying the revolt of Abu Saraya in 796 C.E., and the digging of the water canal in Kufa.[106] Other reports cited by Ibn ʿAdi regarding Jabir reveal that he was gradually aligned with the main Shiʿi beliefs. Thus, Ibn ʿUyayna turned away from Jabir because he believed the Prophet had transmitted his divinely inspired knowledge to ʿAli, who then taught it to al-Hasan. This *ʿilm* was transmitted to later imams.[107] As I discussed in chapter four, the *rijal* were accused of propagating and vindicating this belief.

Ibn ʿAdi also refers to some of the favorable material on Jabir, which was cited by Ibn Abi Hatim. Thus, al-Thawri is reported to have said that he did not see anyone who was more upright than Jabir in reporting traditions. Tenth-century Sunni ambiguity over Jabir can be discerned also from Ibn al-Shahin's (d. 995) biographical text. Despite the previous objections stated against Jabir, he includes him among the trustworthy transmitters of traditions.[108]

Favorable remarks on Jabir, based on utterances from al-Thawri and Shuʿba, appear in the tenth-century texts. While it is not clear why these remarks appear at this time, it can be surmised that, in the highly polemicized environment of the ninth century, the derogatory remarks against Jabir were emphasized so as to create an unfavorable image of him. This emphasis was necessary to refute the emerging body of Shiʿi beliefs, many of which had been linked to Jabir. Favorable views on Jabir may have been suppressed in order to amplify a negative image of Shiʿi figures, an image also depicted in the profiles of Shiʿi figures like Zurara and Hisham b. al-Hakam.[109] This may have been done with the further intention of marginalizing the Shiʿis and associating them with the *ghulat*. Later on, favorable remarks on Jabir were cited. In the Sunni *rijal* works however, the overall view regarding him remained unfavorable.

In his profile of Jabir, Ibn Hajar poses an interesting question. If Jabir was deemed to be weak, then why did al-Thawri and Shuʿba relate his traditions? As for al-Thawri, Ibn Hajar continues, he had stopped transmitting Jabir's traditions once he realized that Jabir had changed his views, that is, had accepted the belief in *rajʿa*. Shuʿba, on the other hand, continued to relate traditions from Jabir so as to publicize his views. Ibn Hajar clearly saw the need to resolve the apparent discrepancy between Shuʿba's reliability as a reporter and his transmission of *hadith* from one who was deemed to be a liar by many traditionists. By this interpretation, the inconsistency was removed and the reputation of

both al-Thawri and Shuʿba remained intact.[110] The ninth-century Sunni *rijal* works evidently saw Jabir as an anathema, due mainly to his belief in *rajʿa*. In the tenth-century sources, a link was forged between him and other Shiʿi beliefs, which were not mentioned in the previous sources. In most works, he was not deemed to be a reliable transmitter of *hadith*.

In Shiʿi biographical and *hadith* works Jabir is described as a prolific *hadith* transmitter and is said to have authored a number of works. Some of these have been quoted in later texts.[111] However, Shiʿi authors are divided on their assessments of Jabir. Al-Saffar indicates that the imams proclaimed him to be a sincere follower of their cause. Thus, al-Sadiq is quoted as saying that whereas Jabir was truthful in transmitting their *hadith,* Mughira b. Saʿid (d. 737) had lied against the imams.[112] Jabir is also depicted in the early Shiʿi texts as a recipient of the imams' miraculous abilities. Al-Baqir reportedly enabled him to see the kingdom of the heavens and the earth.[113] Kashshi cites many reports on Jabir; some are favorable to him, while others challenge his image as an authoritative figure in Shiʿi circles. In one report, Zurara quotes al-Sadiq as saying that he had seen Jabir meet al-Baqir once only and that Jabir had never gone to see him, a report that obviously contradicts the thousands of traditions that Jabir had reportedly transmitted from the imams.[114]

Al-Fasawi's tradition that Jabir referred to the imam as the "legatee of the legatees" is also cited by Kashshi. Contrary to the reports cited in most Sunni sources on the same issue, traditions cited by Kashshi indicate that Jabir had explicitly identified al-Baqir as the legatee. It was because of this, according to Kashshi, that Jabir was depicted as insane.[115]A tradition that is cited in Sunni works is thereby reinterpreted to make explicit what is implicit in the Sunni texts, namely, Jabir's acknowledgment of the imamate of al-Baqir by identifying him as the legatee.

Kashshi also quotes and further substantiates traditions cited by Muslim and al-Fasawi, which indicate that Jabir had heard thousands of traditions from al-Baqir and was closely associated with him. As compared to Sunni traditions on the same point, Kashshi's reports stress Jabir's affiliation with the imam who reportedly had entrusted Jabir with many books, some of which he was to narrate from only after the downfall of the Umayyads, while from others he was never to transmit.[116]

Jabir's position among the Shiʿis was not well established. Kashshi records many traditions stating that the Shiʿis approached the imams seeking clarification on Jabir's status. Thus, when al-Dharih al-Muharibi (n.d.)[117] questioned al-Sadiq about Jabir, the imam did not initially respond. When al-Dharih questioned him for a third time, al-Sadiq told him, "O Dharih, do not mention Jabir. Indeed, if the ignoble ones were to hear his traditions they would [also] repel (*shanaʿu*) or, he said, they might publicize them (*adhaʿu*)."[118]

Shiʿi reservations regarding the status of Jabir become more evident when we examine the profiles provided by Tusi and Najashi on him. In his profile of Aban, Tusi cites many laudatory remarks and mentions his eminent position among the Shiʿis, claiming that he was among "our companions." In Jabir's profile, on the other hand, Tusi merely states that he was an author of an *asl* and *tafsir* work. That Tusi neither authenticates Jabir nor transmits a single comment favorable to him is a firm indication of his reservations regarding Jabir's veracity as a *hadith* transmitter.[119]

Najashi is more overt in his criticisms of Jabir. He states that many reporters who were putatively weak transmitted traditions from Jabir. He further adds that Jabir was confused in his views and that al-Mufid had related some poems that referred to Jabir's confusion. Najashi also states that Jabir had reported few traditions on the *halal* and *haram* (the prescribed lawful and unlawful acts).[120] Najashi's comment when he enumerates the books of Jabir further evinces his reservations regarding him. He states, "These traditions and books appear [to be] fabricated, however, God knows best."[121]

The medieval Shiʿi scholar, Zayn al-Din al-ʿAmili (d. 1557), who is also known as Shahid II, states that one must refrain from authenticating Jabir because there was much controversy regarding his reliability,[122] a position that was adopted by ʿAllama al-Hilli (d. 1325), too.[123]

A comparison of the traditions reported in both Sunni and Shiʿi works on Jabir suggests that the Shiʿis tend to refute the charges against him by interpreting them in their favor. To the Sunni accusation that Jabir spoke of the "legatee of the legatees," the Shiʿis maintain that this claim referred to al-Baqir thereby making it palatable to them. On the thousands of traditions that he had allegedly heard, Kashshi substantiates the reports in the works of Muslim and al-Fasawi, which state that Jabir transmitted them from al-Baqir. Indeed, it is possible to conceive from this report that Jabir shared in the divine *ʿilm* that reportedly had been transmitted to the imams.

Kashshi also cites a tradition, which is reported in the *Tahdhib* of Ibn Hajar, concerning Jabir's occasional lapses into insanity. However, Kashshi's version attempts to refute these charges against Jabir. He records traditions stating that Jabir had deliberately pretended to be mad so as to avoid being arrested by the Caliph Hisham b. ʿAbd al-Malik (d. 743) who had ordered his arrest.[124] According to Kulayni, al-Baqir had written to Jabir instructing him to pretend to be insane to avoid being arrested. Within a few days of Jabir's receiving the letter from al-Baqir, Hisham's letter arrived in Kufa asking his governor to execute Jabir. When the governor found Jabir playing with children, apparently insane, he pardoned him.[125]

Kashshi also cites traditions alluding to Jabir's miraculous abilities in reports linking him with the *ghulat*. These genres of reports pertain especially to

those traditions reported by ʿAmr b. Shimr who was associated with extremist figures.[126] Jabir could, for example, make people "fly" to Medina from Kufa, and could even perform epistemological miracles like predicting the future.[127] Jabir's alleged "extremist" traditions can also be seen from the following tradition. A report transmitted by Jabir shows al-Baqir interpreting chapter 62 (*sura al-Jumʿa*) in the Qurʾan as referring to the *wilaya* (authority) of ʿAli and the dissociation from the first two caliphs.[128] Traditions of this type aroused Shiʿi suspicions against Jabir. It is difficult to determine whether Jabir was himself responsible for disseminating these types of extremist traditions or whether they were later attributed to him by figures like ʿAmr b. Shimr.

Overall, Kashshi's profile on Jabir is contradictory. Some reports tend to confirm the accusations leveled at Jabir in the Sunni works, others suggest that he was linked to the *ghulat*. For the Shiʿis, authenticating Jabir was difficult due to his alleged involvement with the *ghulat* and his transmission of traditions that were seen by tenth-century Shiʿis as "extreme." Not all Shiʿis agreed that Jabir was responsible for the propagation of extremist traditions, however. According to al-Nawbakhti, ʿAbd Allah b. al-Harith, a leader of the followers of ʿAbd Allah b. Muʿawiya (d. 748–749), spread the doctrines of metempsychosis and the preexistence of the human soul as shadows, and ascribed them to Jabir, who, in fact, had not espoused such beliefs.[129]

Jabir's profile can be contrasted with that of Aban. In the case of the latter, Sunni authors found him to be acceptable despite his Shiʿi inclinations. The Shiʿis on the other hand, saw Aban as a close associate of the imams and extolled his virtues. Jabir, in contrast, was rejected in virtually all the Sunni works. Although his traditions were initially accepted and he was seen as reliable, many people abandoned him once his belief in *rajʿa* became known. Kashshi cites conflicting remarks on him, but neither Tusi nor Najashi cite a single favorable comment on him or mention his close association with the imams, a point repeatedly stressed in Aban's profile.

Twentieth-century *rijal* scholars like al-Khuʾi and Mamaqani attempt to exonerate Jabir from the derogatory remarks reportedly uttered by the imams against him, thereby presenting an idealized image of him. Al-Khuʾi claims that many traditions against Jabir are weak in their chains of transmission.[130] He then quotes Ibn Qawlawayh (d. 978), ʿAli b. Ibrahim al-Qummi (d. 919), Ibn al-Ghadaʾiri (d. 1020), and al-Mufid, all of whom considered Jabir to be reliable. Al-Khuʾi argues that the authentications provided by these figures surpass Najashi's statement that Jabir was confused in his traditions. Al-Khuʾi then cites the favorable remarks on Jabir, including those on his preserving thousands of traditions that he received from al-Baqir and his reference to the imam as the "legatee of the legatees." Al-Khuʾi admits, however, that most of the favorable traditions have weak *isnads* too. Despite this, he authenticates Jabir.

As for al-Sadiq's statement that he had seen Jabir with his father only once, and that Jabir had never gone to see him, al-Khuʾi asserts that this statement must be attributed to *taqiyya*. In any case, al-Khuʾi continues, the report that Jabir had never gone to visit al-Sadiq does not preclude the possibility that the imam had met him at some other place where Jabir could have acquired the imam's teachings.[131] Al-Khuʾi also expresses amazement at Najashi's statement that very few traditions pertaining to the *halal* and *haram* are reported by Jabir. On the contrary, he argues, there are many reports from Jabir on this subject in the four major Shiʿi *fiqh* manuals.[132] Najashi may have thought that these were ascribed to Jabir later, al-Khuʾi suggests. It is to be remembered that Najashi must have been aware of the existence of these traditions in the Shiʿi juridical works, because they were compiled before his time. Jabir is thereby rehabilitated by al-Khuʾi and the reservations expressed by the earlier scholars are dismissed.

Mamaqani also mentions the unfavorable reports against Jabir and dismisses them as arising from *taqiyya,* especially the seemingly strange report that Jabir had never met al-Sadiq.[133] As for Najashi's statement that Jabir was confused in his traditions, Mamaqani says that Najashi's remarks were precipitated by Jabir's reports on the miracles the imams performed. These types of reports were seen at one time as being extremist, but are now thought to be among the essential requirements (*daruriyyat*) of Shiʿi faith.[134] For Mamaqani, Jabir's confusion (*ikhtilat*) lay precisely in his reporting of the imams' miracles, but now that these have been acknowledged as being an intrinsic part of Shiʿi faith, Najashi's negative appraisal of him is no longer valid. Mamaqani supports his contention by citing several traditions on the imams' miracles as witnessed and reported by Jabir.[135]

By utilizing various forms of hermeneutics, both Mamaqani and al-Khuʾi are able to accommodate Jabir. Mamaqani concludes that Jabir is reliable (*thiqa*), of high status (*jalil*), and dependable in his traditions, evaluations that clearly contradict earlier Shiʿi assessments of the same figure.[136] Mamaqani's biographical discourse reveals the multi-layered hermeneutical texture that is a prominent feature in his biographical enterprise. The rich multiplicity affords him a large measure of freedom to exclude unfavorable opinions at will. He constructs the building blocks of his discourse by interventions, counterarguments, and frequent refutations of erstwhile biographical texts. In this way, Mamaqani is able to determine how a disciple is portrayed and constructs the disciple's authority in his text.

The authority of the *rijal* in the earlier texts is interwoven with providing a normative appraisal thus promoting continuity and stability in the profiles. The later works of al-Khuʾi and Mamaqani, on the other hand, exemplify a hermeneutical process, an interpretive activity that indicates the ability of a text

to impact the present by idealizing the past. These biographers engage in a text-based hermeneutical enterprise, on occasion extending the authority of some *rijal* beyond the intent of earlier scholars like Tusi, Najashi, and Kashshi. Gradually, the idealized memory of a disciple replaces the memory of what he may have been like. Hermeneutical skills and interpretive activities are embedded in the biographical works to convey how the *rijal* should be perceived.

In comparing Sunni and Shiʿi profiles on Jabir, it can be said that many of the Sunni accusations against Jabir are confirmed in Shiʿi texts. Thus, to the Sunni charge of Jabir's belief in the *rajʿa,* Shiʿi texts cite traditions on *rajʿa* as reported by Jabir.[137] Since ninth- and tenth-century Shiʿis had espoused the belief in *rajʿa,* they could not blame Jabir for propagating this doctrine. Sunni accusations against Jabir regarding his reviling the *sahaba,* beliefs in the imamate, and the transmission of the imams' *ʿilm* are also accepted by the Shiʿis as being an intrinsic part of their religious beliefs. To the Sunni charge that Jabir believed that ʿAli resided in the clouds, al-Saffar cites many traditions on this topic under the heading "The Chapter on the Commander of the Faithful Traversing (*rukub*) the Clouds."[138] Al-Mufid quotes a tradition from al-Baqir in which the Prophet is quoted as telling ʿAli, "By God, you will ride [through] the clouds," thus confirming Sunni accusations against Jabir.[139]

The Shiʿis could readily accept Sunni accusations against Jabir because the Shiʿis had espoused most of these beliefs. For them, it was only Jabir's alleged links with the *ghulat* that were difficult to justify. In many ways, Jabir's profile is contrary to Aban's. The latter's authority was accepted (and contested) by both the Sunnis and the Shiʿis. Jabir, on the other hand, was rejected by the Sunnis while the Shiʿis exhibited reservations about him as well.

The profile of the two disciples shows that, initially, some disciples like Aban were acceptable to both camps. No mention is made in the early Sunni texts of his Shiʿism, a point that suggests that he may, initially, have transmitted traditions and held views that were acceptable by both schools. Once Aban's Shiʿism was known, it became necessary to legitimize the authority and justify the acceptance of traditions from a Shiʿi. This was done by characterizing him as a "mild" and therefore acceptable Shiʿi. By claiming that Aban was among "our companions," Tusi was refuting the Sunni contention that he was a "mild" Shiʿi who was different from other Shiʿis. The Shiʿi claim for Aban was further amplified by various reports of his engagement and activities in the charismatic office of the *rijal*. This is further proof of the tussle for Aban between the two camps.

Due to his belief in *rajʿa,* Jabir was deemed by the early and late Sunni works to be weak. Favorable assessments of him were suppressed, probably to enhance a negative image of him and to marginalize Shiʿi figures. Shiʿi biographical works also expressed certain reservations about him, although he was

never explicitly rejected by them. Initially, his authority was not well established in either school.

This discussion of the two disciples has shown also that, with the passage of time, the profiles of the *rijal* "grow." Aban's penchant for Shiʿism, for instance, was stressed only from al-ʿUqayli's time onward. The same author, possibly under the anti-Shiʿi environment that was prevalent, also ascribed views to Jabir that were missing in earlier texts. In both cases, the *rijal* were identified, at one time or another, with Shiʿism. Much effort was exerted by the later Shiʿi biographers to rehabilitate disciples like Jabir, raising them, at times, to levels higher than those accorded to them in the earlier works.

Conclusion

Biographical expression is the medium in which the human and the divine interact. It is here that irrational or supernatural qualities are located within the confines of sacred history. Due to the presence of the supernatural and other qualities of charismatic figures, biographical texts become an integral expression of the sacred literature of a community. Since sacred biography includes accounts of the lives of holy persons, it becomes a confluence of both biography and hagiography. Different features form literary vehicles to represent the ideal holy man in the historical figure.

Shiʿi biographical literature is a good example of how exemplum, polemic, rejection, and marginalization all combine in biographical portraits. The confluence of these literary devices constructs the authority of the imams and the *rijal* and portrays their ideal traits. Various literary motifs are employed to construct and cement the authority of the *rijal* in the biographical texts. These include: citations of favorable reports from imams, assertions of the *rijal*'s loyalty to the imams, their epistemic knowledge, rejection of denigrating remarks, the development of ideal models based on their contribution to the Shiʿi community, proselytization, and mass authentications based on inferences from earlier biographical texts.

At the social level, Shiʿi biographical literature is important not only because it constructs authority and describes how it was wielded, but also because it helps to create and highlight paradigmatic models and ideal types. It engenders identities, stating with whom followers should identify and from whom they should distance themselves. Biography also expresses a typology of leadership for comprehending those who exercise diverse forms of authority, and, at times, indicates the struggle for authority in different social contexts. Thus, the study of biographical literature is interwoven with the question of the authority exercised in the religious, political, and social realms.

In selecting, preserving, and evaluating the *rijal,* tenth- and eleventh-century Shiʿi biographers engaged in hermeneutical activity and an interpretive enterprise that became cumulative and evolved into a canonical representation of the disciples. The normative and "standardized" reading of the lives of the *rijal* was a construction that would be impossible for later scholars to ignore. The authentications and typologies created by the tenth- and eleventh-century Shiʿi biographers were also important as they participated in the process of authority construction. It has to be remembered that the imams also conferred authority to the *rijal* by appointing them as their deputies in the Shiʿi community. This supplemented the authority the *rijal* acquired by their epistemic accomplishments, and the authority constructed in the biographical literature.

Biography, whether that of the imams or of their disciples, is also employed to create and promote the preponderance of the Shiʿi school. Thus, biography is not simply a vehicle for reporting history; it is also an important tool to promote Shiʿi convictions and its concept of salvation history. In the Shiʿi biographies, there is a clear polemical concern to depict the Shiʿi community in the eighth century as a well-disciplined and largely monolithic unit. There is also a palpable attempt to embellish and idealize the past. In exonerating the prominent *rijal* from all blame, the functions of the biographical expositions include those of generating and embellishing a portrait of the *rijal* as loyal disciples of the imams. The reason for the idealization of the *rijal* is obvious—they report the traditions upon which the Shiʿi jurisprudential edifice rests. In the idealization of the prominent *rijal* can be discerned the Shiʿi belief regarding religious guidance from authorities who cannot commit any error or act of inadvertence that would affect the authoritativeness of what they transmit.

Conclusion

To comprehend the development of sacred authority and its implications for Muslim polity, it is essential to engage the classical heritage that has played a significant role in the exposition and legitimation of religious authority. My study into the significance and ramifications of the title "heirs of the Prophet" has shown that it was deeply interwoven with the question of authority and charisma in Islam.

The title conferred authority on those who claimed it and enabled them to perpetuate the Prophet's legacy in different forms. The "heirs of the Prophet" tradition also empowered those who exercised authority on behalf of the Prophet both to demand obedience and loyalty from the Muslim community and to marginalize and demonize the "other."

The appropriation of the prophetic mantle as heirs was not confined to a particular class. It included the Umayyad and ʿAbbasid caliphs, the scholars within the Sunni community, the Sufi holy men, the Shiʿi imams, and their disciples. These groups appropriated different dimensions of the prophetic legacy in their claims to be his exclusive heirs. They also advanced variegated notions of charismatic authority to vindicate their claims. As different factions coveted the title, their claims to be the heirs of the Prophet reflected a struggle within the Muslim community over who would wield power and exercise authority based on the Prophet's legacy.

For the Umayyad and ʿAbbasid caliphs, soteriology was contingent on the recognition and acknowledgment of their right to be the Prophet's heirs. They even claimed to be superior to all creatures as they sought to derive their authority directly from God. Their claim was based on possessing the temporal authority of the Prophet since, as rulers of the community, they occupied the same office Muhammad had.

As the scholars came to wrestle with the caliphs for power, they claimed religious authority on the grounds of their self-proclaimed role as the inheritors of the religious traditions. Their authority was also anchored in their interpretations and articulations of normative law. At the social level, the claim that they were the heirs to the Prophet's knowledge elevated the scholars above the masses, who became increasingly dependent on their interpretations and manipulations of the prophetic legacy, a legacy they claimed to be protecting and preserving. The establishment of a religious scholarly elite was a further manifestation of the diffusion of the Prophet's all-embracing authority and the institutionalization of the office of charisma.

The Shiʿis insisted that their imams were the sole inheritors of the prophetic legacy. The Shiʿi understanding of post-Muhammadan authority differed from those advanced by the other groups insofar as they claimed that their imams had inherited the same comprehensive authority the Prophet had possessed. The belief in the imamate posited an inherited charismatic structure of domination in which the religious and political authorities were fused in the figure of the imam.

The Sufis laid claims to a distinctive type of charismatic authority and leadership. They attempted to replicate the Prophet's spiritual journey, and advanced various modes of spiritual and biological links to vindicate their claims to be the true heirs of the Prophet. The sense of allegiance and obedience that was inherent in the heirs traditions was extended to cover the dead saints as the Sufis, like the Shiʿis, claimed that the *praesentia* and *potentia* of their holy men could be accessed at the shrine. This perpetuated the legacy of obedience to the authority of the holy men long after their deaths.

Claims to be the heirs of the Prophet went hand in hand with claims to possess charismatic powers and the ability to impact the lives and religious practices of the people. Whether it was inherited, acquired, or institutionalized charisma, the claim to possess charisma was used in conjunction with the heirs traditions to cement power and generate a sense of loyalty to those who wielded that power. Many became increasingly dependent on the interpretations provided by these heirs.

Due to the rivalry between the heirs, the Muslim community was segmented along different lines. In the Sunni world, the claims by the heirs to represent the Prophet resulted in the creation and, at times uneasy, coexistence of the political, religious, military, administrative, and judicial authorities. There were major differences between the Sufi shaykhs and between the imams and their disciples. The contending heirs not only vied for authority but also charged other groups with heresy and misappropriation of authority. The persecution of the *ʿulamaʾ*, the *mihna,* charges of extremism against the Sufis and the Shiʿis, and the refutation of arguments in polemical literature are all reflections of the wider struggle for authority between the heirs of the Prophet.

Differences between the heirs and their divergent interpretations of prophetic traditions gave rise to variant notions of the law and doctrines not only between but also within the groups that claimed to be the heirs of the Prophet. Under the *shariʿ* men, various schools of law emerged in Sunnism. The *rijal* differed with the imams and between themselves on many legal and theological points. Similarly, differences emerged between the diverse Sufi orders.

Due to the unfavorable political climate during their lifetimes, the imams had to diffuse their charismatic authority to their close disciples. Thus, the *rijal* became heirs of the prophetic legacy they inherited from the imams. The authority of the *rijal* was located in a broad nexus of religious roles and institutions and was predicated on different sources. Their authority was initially based on "delegation traditions" from the imams. The authority derived from the delegation by the imams was animated by epistemic authority, which was anchored in the scholastic activities of the *rijal*. Just like their Sunni contemporaries, the authority of the *rijal* was tacitly enhanced by their interpretations, juridical verdicts, and other activities. Later on, Shiʿi biographical texts further enhanced the authority of the *rijal* through various forms of textual and interpretive enterprises.

As the occupants of the charismatic office, the *rijal* asserted this authority by expressing themselves in their various activities and roles, furnishing them, in the process, with the ability to exemplify and articulate normative Shiʿi beliefs and practices. They consolidated their position within the community and gradually controlled judicial and other financial affairs. As they established paradigmatic precedents, their activities, which were reportedly approbated by the imams, came to be incorporated in the canonical authority and the unfolding legal system. In many ways, the *rijal* paralleled the struggle for legitimacy and authority in the Sunni community, where the *ʿulama* were wresting religious authority from the caliphs at about the same time. Whereas the *ʿulamaʾ* in the Sunni world had to struggle to attain religious authority, the imams conferred that authority on the *rijal*.

With the enhanced activities of the disciples, an independent Shiʿi community emerged, one that asserted its autonomy from the mainstream Sunni majority. The Shiʿis came up with their own charismatic leaders, theologians, jurists, and judicial authority. They formulated their own legal practices, and a distinctive imam-based *hadith* literature, which allowed them to remain independent from the Sunni community. In a sense, the "ideal" Shiʿi community, maintaining religious and administrative independence from the political structure, existed within a hostile Sunni majority. This separation is further confirmation of the ramifications of the enhanced authority and activities of the *rijal*.

The authority of the *rijal* was further augmented by the authority that was accorded to them in the texts. Textual authority is contingent not only on what

the text contains, but is also dependent on the history of how that text is understood. Due to their appraisals and the typologies they created in their texts, Shiʿi biographers participated in the process of authority construction. This supplemented the authority the *rijal* had acquired from the imams and from their own epistemic accomplishments.

Through the different ways of linking themselves to the Prophet, the caliphs, scholars, Sufi holy men, the Shiʿi imams, and their disciples each appropriated the title "heirs of the Prophet" for themselves. Using the *hadith* literature and other hermeneutical tools, these groups employed the *waratha* tradition to monopolize power and remind the laity of their allegiance to them. The net effect was to establish rivalry between the contending heirs.

The discussion of the heirs of the Prophet should be seen as a contest not only for religious authority, but also, ultimately, for determining who was the true representative of Muhammad in contemporary society. Whereas the Prophet's charisma may have dissipated, his knowledge, piety, and spiritual legacy have inspired different groups to put forward claims to exercise religious authority by representing him in their times.

Notes

Introduction

1. Hamid Dabashi, *Authority in Islam: From the Rise of Muhammad to the Establishment of the Umayyads* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1989).
2. Saʿid Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order and Societal Change in Shiʿite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986).
3. Abdulaziz Sachedina, *The Just Ruler in Shiʿite Islam: The Comprehensive Authority of the Jurist in Imamite Jurisprudence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
4. In this study, the term "Shiʿis" will refer to the eighth-/ninth-century figures who held certain doctrines and beliefs regarding the imams, which were subsequently accepted by the twelver school of thought. The term will not include those figures who were associated with the Zaydis or Seveners (later called the Ismaʿilis).
5. Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
6. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early ʿAbbasids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnite Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). The *ʿUlamaʾ in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
7. For a summary of Western scholarship on Shiʿism see Etan Kohlberg (ed.), *The Formation of the Classical Islamic World: Shiʿism* (Ashgate: Burlington, 2003), Introduction.
8. The term *rijal* will be used in this study to refer to those prominent personages who are seen in the twelver Shiʿi sources as having been closely associated with the imams. The term will also cover the theologians, transmitters of traditions, jurists, administrators, and others who performed various functions on behalf of the imams.
9. The contribution of the *rijal* has received scant attention in Western scholarship. Syed Hussein Jafri briefly mentions the *rijal* in his study on the history of early Shiʿism: (*The Origins and Early Development of Shiʿite Islam,* [London: Longman, 1978]). In the first chapter of *The Just Ruler,* Abdulaziz Sachedina examines

the delegation of the authority of the imams to the *rijal.* Basing his analysis mainly on Kashshi's (d. 978) work, he examines the rise to prominence and deputyship of the *rijal,* their increasing authority, and the derogatory remarks supposedly uttered by the imams against some of their close associates. Etan Kohlberg and Wilferd Madelung also mention some aspects of the disciples of the imams in various articles. In a short chapter, Ismail Poonawala discusses the relationship between the imams and some of their disciples: ("The Imam's Authority During the Pre-Ghayba Period: Theoretical and Practical Considerations," in *Shiʿite Heritage: Essays on Classical and Modern Traditions,* ed. Lynda Clarke [Binghamton: Global, 2001]). Although valuable, these works do not offer a comprehensive treatment of the *rijal* or their activities. I have tried to redress this imbalance in chapters three and four.

Chapter One

1. For details of the genres of authority exercised in these religions, see Waida Manabu, "Authority," in *Encyclopedia of Religion,* ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 1–2.
2. Max Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology,* trans. H. P. Secher (New York: Greenwood Press, 1962), 82.
3. Betty Scharf, *A Sociological Study of Religion* (London: Hutchinson University, 1970), 153.
4. Weber, *Basic Concepts,* 81.
5. Len Oakes, *Prophetic Charisma: The Psychology of Revolutionary Religious Personalities* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 25.
6. Max Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization,* trans. A. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (Glencoe: Free Press, 1957), 329. See also Weber, *"On Charisma and Institution Building,"* selected papers, ed. S. Eisenstadt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), xviii. For a critique of Weber's tripartite typology of authority, see Saʿid Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam,* Introduction.
7. Max Weber, "Charisma: Its Revolutionary Character and Its Transformation," in *Sociology and Religion: A Book of Readings,* ed. Norman Birnbaum and Gertrud Lenzer (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1969), 188.
8. The view that charismatic leaders only emerge from outside institutional structures has been questioned. Michael Hill, in particular, has raised the possibility of "latent charisma" that arises from within rather than outside of routinized institutions. This challenges the rigid demarcation between the three Weberian categories of authority discussed above. See Michael Hill, *A Sociology of Religion* (London: Basic Books, 1973), 172.
9. Dabashi, *Authority in Islam,* 35.
10. Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1944), 337.
11. See Oakes, *Prophetic Charisma,* 29 for more details on the shaman prophet.
12. Dabashi, *Authority in Islam,* 34. In his work, Hamid Dabashi draws on Weber's typology of charismatic authority and examines the process in which charisma is

located and expressed in the Islamic context. He also examines the various genres of authority that emerged from the clash between pre-and post-Islamic political culture, and assesses the ways in which Muhammad's authority led to and shaped the new social order instituted by the Prophet.

13. See Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), introduction, for such examples cited in the Qurʾan.
14. In this work, the term *ʿulamaʾ* will cover experts in both *hadith* and Islamic jurisprudence. It will also be used as a category to denote the learned class in the Islamic community, i.e., exegetes, historians, grammarians, etc. Thus, it will cover a wide range of signification.
15. See the examples cited by Noel Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978), 24–25.
16. Ibid., 26.
17. Dabashi, *Authority in Islam,* 92–93.
18. Ibid., 65–66.
19. Ibid., 73.
20. Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad,* 74.
21. Peter Holt, Ann Lambton, and Bernard Lewis, eds., *Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 2:553.
22. See Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph*. Crone and Hinds engage in a revisionist historiography. They argue that the nature of the Umayyad caliphate (650–750 C.E.) was akin to the Shiʿi conception of the imamate, embodying both religious and political authority. They thus challenge the traditionalist line that the Sunni form of caliphate had taken shape soon after the Prophet died.
23. The title that had been adopted by the earlier caliphs, *khalifat rasul Allah* (successor to the Prophet of God) disappeared soon after the second caliph ʿUmar.
24. Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices,* 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 65.
25. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph,* 33–36.
26. Ibid., 25–27.
27. Ibid., 102.
28. Ibid., 103. For an exposition of the Shiʿi view of the imam, see the discussion later on in this chapter.
29. See the example cited of the ʿAbbasid Caliph al-Muqtadir in Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 186.
30. Yasin Dutton, *Origins of Islamic Law: The Qurʾan, the Muwattaʾ and Medinan Amal* (London: Routledge & Curzon, 2002), 131. Marwan b. al-Hakam (d. 684) is regarded as one who instituted legal rulings. See Gerald Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661–750,* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2000), 14. There were instances when the rulings of the caliphs (including Muʿawiya and ʿUmar II) were rejected by the jurists. See Dutton, *Origins,* 150–52.
31. Dutton, *Origins of Islamic Law,* 121.
32. Ibid., 131.
33. Malik b. Anas, *al-Muwattaʾ* (Delhi: Taj, 1985), 284, 317, 345.

34. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph,* 33.
35. Ibid., 53.
36. Ann Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 46.
37. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph,* 52.
38. Ahmad b. Abi Yaʿqub al-Yaʿqubi, *Taʾrikh* (Beirut: Dar al-Sadir, n.d.), 2:350–51.
39. Saʿid Arjomand, "Shiʿism, Authority and Political Culture," in *Authority and Political Culture in Shiʿism,* ed. Saʿid Arjomand (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 2.
40. Muhammad Zaman, *Religion and Politics,* 121. Al-Mansur is also reported to have transmitted traditions, ibid., 126–27. Zaman may be reading too much into the religious pretentious of the caliphs. Few caliphs are mentioned as *hadith* transmitters, nor do they occur in the chains of transmission (*isnad*) outside their own family (mainly ʿAbbasid) circles.
41. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "The Caliphs, the *ʿUlamaʾ*, and the Law: Defining the Role and Functions of the Caliph in the Early ʿAbbasid Period," in *Islamic Law and Society* 4, no. 1 (1997): 21.
42. Zaman, *Religion and Politics,* 137–38.
43. Abu Yusuf, Yaʿqub b. Ibrahim, *Kitab al-Kharaj,* ed. Ihsan ʿAbbas (Beirut: n.p., 1985), 71.
44. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership,* 45.
45. John Kelsay, *Islam and War: A Study in Comparative Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 88.
46. An innovation that was introduced into the procedure from the Umayyad period was the renewal of the *bayʿa* whereby the Caliph or Sultan had recourse, during his reign, to a new *bayʿa* in favor of himself or his heir apparent. The ruler could resort to this to reassert the loyalty of his subjects. See E. Tyan, "Bayʿa," *Encyclopedia of Islam,* 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1:113.
47. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership,* 42.
48. See my article on this in "Islam—Shiʿa," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and War* (London: Routledge, 2003); John Kelsay, *Islam and War;* Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
49. *The Cambridge History of Islam,* 1:114.
50. Hugh Kennedy, *The Early ʿAbbasid Caliphate: A Political History* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 116.
51. The Barmakids were a Persian family of secretaries and *wazirs* who served the early ʿAbbasid caliphs in different administrative capacities. Yahya b. Khalid, for example, served as *wazir* to al-Rashid for seventeen years. For reasons that are still not completely clear, al-Rashid executed or imprisoned members of the Barmakid family toward the end of his reign.
52. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, 2.
53. Abu Yusuf also affirms the primacy of the *ʿulamaʾ*'s religious authority. He asserts that the *ʿulamaʾ* are the legatees of the *sunna*. See Zaman, "The Caliphs, the *ʿUlamaʾ* and the Law," *Islamic Law and* Society, 17–18.

54. Bryan Turner, *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 115.
55. Zaman, *Religion and Politics,* 209–10. Malik and Ibn Hanbal are said to have recognized the caliph's *ijtihad,* ibid., 103.
56. Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil al-Talibiyyin* (Najaf: Manshurat al-Maktaba al-Haydariyya, 1965), 283. For Malik's tacit support for the revolt, see also Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, *Taʾrikh al-Rusul waʾl-Muluk,* trans. Jane McAuliffe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 28:156.
57. Zaman, *Religion and Politics,* 79.
58. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 30–31.
59. See ʿAbd Allah b. al-Muqaffaʾ, "Risala fi al-Sahaba," in *Rasaʾil al-Bulagha,* 3rd ed., (Cairo: 1946), 117–34.
60. Norman Calder, "The Structure of Authority in Imami Shiʿi Jurisprudence," unpublished thesis (School of Oriental and African Studies, 1979), 25.
61. Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 45.
62. Zaman, *Religion and Politics,* 11.
63. Ibid., 191–93.
64. Ibid., 118.
65. Ibid., 145.
66. Ibid., 115–16.
67. Ibid., 95–96.
68. Ibid., 25–28.
69. Ibid., 11. See also Saleh Said Agha's review article in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31 (1999): 127–28.
70. Duncan Macdonald, "Fakih," *Encyclopedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 2:756.
71. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law,* 12.
72. This was probably based on the Qurʾanic verse, "There is in the Prophet of God an exemplary model for you" (33:21). See the discussion on the prophetic paradigm in the next chapter.
73. G. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of Early Hadith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 59.
74. Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 243.
75. Wael Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 15.
76. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition,* 85–87. For a list of early Medinan transmitters of *hadith,* see ibid., 41–42.
77. *Istihsan* refers to the preference of a ruling, which a jurist deems most appropriate under the circumstances. *Istihsan* is based on general equitable considerations as compared to the usual conclusion reached by the strict applications of the principles of *ijtihad*. For this reason, Shafiʿi considered it too arbitrary.
78. Karen Armstrong, *Islam* (New York: Random House, 2000), 61.
79. Calder, "The Structure of Authority," 19.

80. Ibid., 37.
81. Brannon Wheeler, *Applying the Canon in Islam: The Authorization and Maintenance of Interpretive Reasoning in Hanafi Scholarship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 31.
82. ʿAbd Allah b. al-Muqaffaʾ, "Risala," 126–27.
83. For other examples of statements that refer to the opinions of Medinese jurists, see Wael Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 33.
84. Schacht, *The Origins,* 23 citing al-Shafiʿi, *Kitab al-Umm*.
85. On the distinction between *sunna* and *ʿamal,* see Dutton, *Origins of Islamic Law,* 164.
86. Ibid., 37.
87. See ibid, 44 for anecdotes of scholars who gave preference to the *ʿamal* of Medina rather than prophetic practices.
88. An example of this is the consumption of a bird of prey received from people who were not sacralized for the pilgrimage. See Wheeler, *Applying the Canon,* 23–24.
89. Ibid., 27.
90. Jonathan Brockopp, "Competing Theories of Authority in Early Maliki Texts," in *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory,* ed. Bernard Weiss (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 19.
91. Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change,* 27. The followers (*tabiʿun*) were members of the generation of Muslims who followed the Companions of the Prophet. The term is also used to refer to those Muslims who knew one or more of the Companions but not the Prophet himself.
92. Wheeler, *Applying the Canon,* 40–41.
93. For an example of Shafiʿi and Malik agreeing on a ruling—one based on *hadith,* the other based on *ʿamal*—see Dutton, *Origins of Islamic Law,* 171.
94. I am not concerned here with examining the notion of Shafiʿi's hierarchy of legal sources. For a critique of the four sources theory in Shafiʿi's *Risala* see Joseph Lowry, "Does Shafiʿi have a Theory of "Four Sources" of Law" in Bernard Weiss (ed.), *Studies,* part one. Wael Hallaq has also questioned the view that al-Shafiʿi founded the science of *usul al-fiqh* with his *Risala*. He stresses the break between the *Risala* and other known *usul* works. See Wael Hallaq, "Was al-Shafiʿi the Master Architect of Islamic Jurisprudence?," in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* 25 (1993): 587–605.
95. Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 8.
96. See ibid., 9.
97. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology,* ed. Guenther Roth and Calus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 248.
98. Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology,* trans., ed., intro. by H. Gerth, and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 79.
99. Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad,* 5.
100. See for example, Syed Husain Jafri, *The Origins,* chapters 1 and 2.
101. Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad,* 16–17.
102. Weber, *Economy and Society,* 248.

103. In his discussion of the Shiʿi concept of hereditary charisma, Dabashi fails to discuss other modes of legitimacy of the imam's charismatic authority. These include the important roles of the scrolls (*jafr*), weapons, and miracles.
104. Abdulaziz Sachedina, *The Just Ruler,* 59.
105. Muhammad b. ʿUmar Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar Maʿrifa al-Rijal,* ed. al-Mustafawi (Mashad: Danishgahi Mashad, 1969), 420–21.
106. Ibid., 209. In another tradition, the imam is quoted as saying, "Anything that does not come from this house is invalid." Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Saffar, *Basaʾir al-Darajat fi Fadaʾil Al Muhammad* (Qum: Maktaba Ayat Allah al-Marʿashi, 1983), 511.
107. Muhammad b. ʿAli b. al-Husayn al-Saduq, *ʿIlal al-Sharaʿi* (Najaf: Maktaba al-Haydariyya, 1966), 531. A similar tradition is reported from Jaʿfar al-Sadiq. Ibid.
108. Muhammad b. Yaʿqub Kulayni, *Al-Kafi fi ʿIlm al-Din* (Tehran: Daftar Farhang Ahl al-Bayt, n.d.), 1:337–39.
109. Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Nuʿman al-Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad,* trans. I.K. Howard (London: Balagha & Muhammadi Trust, 1981), 414.
110. For details of these, see al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 161–62; Andrew Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shiʿism: Hadith as Discourse between Qumm and Baghdad* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 73–75.
111. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:388. It was due to his extraordinary *ʿilm* that al-Baqir is quoted as saying, "I can ask Moses and Khidr questions that they would not be able to answer." al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 230.
112. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 96.
113. Ibid., 182–84. See also Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:337–38 where al-Sadiq is reported to have claimed that he had the sword of the Prophet.
114. I will pursue this theme further in chapter four.
115. Wilferd Madelung, "Authority in Twelver Shiʿism in the Absence of the Imam," in George Makdisi et al., *La Nation Dʾautorite au Moyen Age* (Byzance: Occidental Paris, 1982), 164.
116. Meir Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imami Shiʿism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1999), 94. For other traditions on this, see ibid., 98–100.
117. Wilferd Madelung, "Shiʿi attitudes Toward Women as reflected in Fiqh," in *Society and Sexes in Medieval Islam,* ed. al-Sayyid Marsot (Malibu, 1979), 70–71.
118. Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Dhahabi, *Taʾrikh al-Islam wa Wafayat al-Mashahir waʾl-Aʿlam* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-ʿArabi, 2000), 4:299.
119. Ahmad Kazemi Moussavi, *Religious Authority in Shiʿite Islam: From the Office of the Mufti to the Institution of Marjaʿ* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1996), 45–46.
120. Yaʿqubi, *Taʾrikh,* 2:348, 2:363.
121. Muhammad Jawad al-Naʾini, *Rijal al-Najashi* (Beirut: Dar al-Adwa, 1988), 1:281.
122. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 330.
123. On the development of Shiʿi law during the course of Shiʿi history, see Hossein Modarresi, *An Introduction to Shiʿi Law: a Bibliographical Study* (London: Ithaca Press, 1984), chapter 4.

124. See Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 238, 375, 556. I intend to discuss the impact that the disciples of the imams had on the Shiʿi community in chapters three and four.
125. See, for example, al-Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad,* 485.
126. Calder, "The Structure of Authority," 5.
127. Even eleventh- and twelfth-century jurists such as al-Mawardi (1058) and al-Ghazali (d. 1111) emphasized the imamate of the caliph as the heir to the Prophet. See Arjomand, "Shiʿism, Authority and Political Culture," in *Authority and Political Culture,* 3.
128. See chapter three for a discussion on this.
129. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Full Flowering of Prophetic Philosophy in Mulla Sadra and the School of Isfahan," in *International Journal of Shiʿi Studies,* vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 18.
130. Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 1:292.
131. Crone and Hinds, *God*'s *Caliph,* 81, nn.146, 147.
132. Ibid., 98. For traditions on the scholars being heirs of the prophets in the Sunni tradition, see Arent Jan Wensinck, *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane* (Leiden: Brill, 1936), 7:321; Muhammad b. Ismaʿil Bukhari, *Sahih, Bab al-ʿilm qabl al-qawl waʾl ʿamal* (Baghdad: Dar al-Fikr, 1986), 1:23; Muhammad b. Yazid al-Qazwini Ibn Maja, *Sunan* (Introduction) (Ihya al-Turath al-ʿArabi, 1975), 1:81.
133. For a later application of the tradition to Sunni jurists see Ibrahim b. Musa al-Shatibi, *al-Muwafaqat fi Usul al-Shariʿa,* 4 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1991), 4:179.
134. Crone and Hinds, *God*'s *Caliph,* 98.
135. Ibn al-Jawzi, *Manaqib al-Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal* (Cairo: 1931), 167.
136. See, for example, Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:39. On the heirs tradition in other Shiʿite literature, see Shahri al-Muhammadi, *Mizan al-Hikma* (Qum: Maktab al-Aʿlam al-Islami, 1983), *Bab al-ʿilm,* 6:456; Muhammad al-Baqir al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar: al-Jamiʿa Lidurari Akhbar al-Aʾimma al-Athar,* 110 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya al-Turath al-ʿArabi, 1983), 2:92; al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisas* (Qum: Maktaba al-Zahra, 1982), 4.
137. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 129.
138. Muhammad b. ʿAli b. al-Husayn al-Saduq, *ʿUyun Akhbar al-Rida* (Mashad: Chapkhane Zindagi, n.d.), 213.
139. According to Ayatullah Khumayni, (d. 1989) the *waratha* tradition refers to the scholars as the true heirs of the prophets. See his argument as cited in *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini,* trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), 99–102.
140. See Devin Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shiʿite Responses to the Sunni Legal System* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998), 216.
141. Muhammad al-Baqir al-Bihbihani, *Risala al-Akhbar Waʾl-Ijtihad* (Tehran, n.d.), 9.
142. Devin Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy,* 216.
143. Colin Turner, *Islam Without Allah? The Rise of Religious Externalism in Safavid Iran* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2002), 178–79.

Chapter Two

1. William Oxtoby, "Holy, Idea of," *Encyclopedia of Religion,* ed. Mircea Eliade, 434.
2. Melissa Raphael, *Rudolf Otto and the Concept of Holiness* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 61.
3. Oxtoby, "Holy, Idea of," 432–33.
4. Raphael, *Rudolf Otto,* 151.
5. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy; An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational,* trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1929), 12.
6. Ibid., xvi.
7. Turner, *Weber and Islam,* 50.
8. Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 81.
9. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam,* 29–30.
10. Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism* (Richmond: Curzon, 1996), 22.
11. Ibid., 140.
12. Valerie Hoffmann, *Sufism, Mystics and Saints in Modern Egypt* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 64–65.
13. Arthur Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 20.
14. Hoffmann, *Sufism, Mystics and Saints,* 50.
15. Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 148.
16. Hoffmann, *Sufism, Mystics and Saints,* 71.
17. Bosworth, "*Sayyid,*" in *Encyclopedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 9:115.
18. Al-Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad,* 296.
19. Bosworth, "*Sayyid,*" *Encyclopedia of Islam,* 9:115. See also Muhammad b. ʿAli b. al-Husayn al-Saduq, *Risala al-Iʿtiqadat,* (*A Shiʿite Creed*), trans. A. Fyzee (Oxford: 1942), 108–9.
20. Bosworth, "*Sayyid,*" *Encyclopedia of Islam,* 9:115.
21. Ibid. In some areas of Pakistan *sayyids* are often associated with sainthood. See Lukas Werth, "The Saint Who Disappeared: Saints of the Wilderness in Pakistani Village Shrines," in *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality and the Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults,"* ed. Pnina Werbner and Helene Basu (New York: Routledge, 1998), 80.
22. Depending on the amount of blood, a woman who experiences irregular blood discharge may have to perform the major washing (*ghusl)* at different times during the day before she can offer her prayers.
23. Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i, *Minhaj al-Salihin,* 9th edition, 1:62.
24. Ibid., 1:371.
25. G. S. Colin, "Baraka," *Encyclopedia of Islam,* 1:1032.

26. Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 44.
27. Nadia Abu Zahra, *The Pure and Powerful: Studies in Contemporary Muslim Society* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1997), 12.
28. Geertz, *Islam Observed,* 51.
29. See the examples cited by Abu Zahra, *The Pure and Powerful,* 3.
30. See the examples cited in Omid Safi, "Bargaining with *Baraka:* Persian Sufism, ʿMysticism,ʾ and Pre-modern Politics," *The Muslim World* 90, no. 3–4 (2000): 275–76.
31. Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1971), 2:260.
32. See the examples cited in Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions,* 214.
33. Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 115.
34. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions,* 205. Some holy men, for example, are reported to have appeared at forty places at one time. See Hoffmann, *Sufism, Mystics and Saints,* 95.
35. Radtke and Oʾ Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood,* 124–25.
36. Hoffmann, *Sufism, Mystics and Saints,* 92.
37. Louis Massignon, *Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr,* trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 82–85.
38. See Goldziher, *Muslim Studies,* 2:270 nn; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions,* appendix 2.
39. Margaret Smith, *Rabiʿa The Mystic & Her Fellow Saints in Islam* (Lahore: Hijra Publishers, 1983), 37.
40. Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qurʾan and Its Interpreters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 1:6.
41. Ibid., 1:57.
42. Ibid., 1:58.
43. Ibid., 1:59–60.
44. Ibid., 1:85.
45. Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 88.
46. Ibid., 113.
47. Ibid., 119.
48. Al-Sayyid Husayn Talib, *Ziyarat Guide: Selected Supplications,* trans. by Liyakatali Takim (Toronto: Mebs Printing Pluss, 2000), 67–68.
49. Samuel Landell Mills, "The Hardware of Sanctity: Anthropomorphic Objects in Bangladeshi Sufism," in Pnina and Helene, eds., *Embodying Charisma,* 32.
50. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints,* 88.
51. Pnina Werbner, "Stamping the Earth with the Name of Allah," in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe,* ed. Barbara Metcalf (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 180.
52. Abu Zahra, *The Pure and Powerful,* xiv.
53. Ibid., 98.
54. Ibid.

55. Martin Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century: Shaikh Ahmad al-ʿAlawi, His Spiritual Heritage and Legacy,* 2nd ed. (London: George Allen, 1971), 104.
56. See the traditions cited in Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet,* 11, n.27.
57. Ibid., 11.
58. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint,* 57–58.
59. Arjomand, *The Shadow of God,* 68.
60. Ibid., 69.
61. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint,* 63–64.
62. See, for example, Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shiʿis of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 178.
63. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 104.
64. *Nahj al-Balagha,* 3rd edition (Karachi: Khorasan Islamic center, 1977), Sermon 226. Shiʿis believe that the *Nahj al-Balagha* comprises the sermons of ʿAli.
65. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʿism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam,* trans. David Streight (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 64.
66. Muhammad ʿAbd al-Karim Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions,* trans. A. Kazi and J. Flynn (London: Kegan Paul, 1984), 142.
67. Vernon Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam: Shiʿi Devotional Rituals in South Asia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 21.
68. Saʿid Arjomand, *The Shadow of God,* 147.
69. Charles Adams, "The Hermeneutics of Henry Corbin," in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies,* ed. Richard Martin (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 144.
70. Ibid., 139.
71. See, for example, Muhammad b. Masʿud al-ʿAyyashi, *Kitab al-Tafsir* (Tehran: al-Maktaba al-ʿIlmiyya al-Islamiyya, 1961), 2:126.
72. On the various sources of the imams' knowledge see Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide,* 70–75.
73. Ibid., 93.
74. Muhammad b. Ibrahim al-Nuʿmani, *Kitab al-Ghayba* (Tehran: Maktaba al-Saduq, n.d.), 66–67; Muhammad b. ʿAli b. al-Husayn al-Saduq, *Kamal al-Din Wa Tamam al-Niʿma* (Qum: Muʾassasa al-Nashr al-Islami, 1985), 339; al-Saffar, *Basaʾir al-Darajat,* 369–70.
75. Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide,* 16.
76. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir al-Darajat,* 220–25.
77. Ibid., 132.
78. Ibid., 463. ʿAli b. Ibrahim al-Qummi, *Tafsir al-Qummi* (Beirut: Matbaʿa al-Najaf, 1968), 2:279.
79. Yaʿqub b. Sufyan al-Fasawi, *Kitab al-Maʿrifa* (Baghdad: Riʾasa Diwan al-Aufaq, 1974), 2:672.
80. The term *Rafidi* refers to one who has seceded from the community. The term was applied in a pejorative sense to the Shiʿis by their opponents since they were seen as having abandoned the community. See Montgomerry Watt, "The

Rafidites: A Preliminary Study," *Oriens* 16 (1963): 110–121; Etan Kohlberg, "The Term "Rafida" in Imami Shiʿi usage," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 99 (1980).

81. Al-Nuʿmani, *Kitab al-Ghayba,* 38. See also Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Khalid al-Barqi, *Kitab al-Mahasin* (Najaf: Matbaʿa al-Haydariyya, 1964), 201.
82. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 21, 23.
83. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 382.
84. Ibid., 380.
85. Abuʾl-Qasim al-Khuʾi, *Muʿjam Rijal al-Hadith* (Beirut: Dar al-Zahra, 1983), 6:257.
86. Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide,* 28.
87. See, for example, his polemical work, *Kitab al-Idah* (Beirut: Muʾassasa al-Aʿlami, 1982).
88. The imams are reported to have complained that many extremist ideas were ascribed to them by extremist figures like Abuʾl-Khattab (d. 755). See Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 224–25 and the discussion on chapter four of this study.
89. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 2:86.
90. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 359.
91. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir al-Darajat,* 269.
92. Ibid., 272–73.
93. Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide,* 94–95.
94. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 378. Al-Saffar, with a slightly different version, also supports the view that Dawud died due to al-Sadiq's supplication. See al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 218.
95. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 539–41.
96. Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide,* 32.
97. On the three categories of shadows, ibid, 33–34.
98. Meir Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis,* 130.
99. Al-ʿAyyashi, *Kitab al-Tafsir,* 2:37.
100. Kulayni, *al-Kafi* 2:228–29; al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 431–33.
101. Arthur Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet,* 23.
102. In Shiʿi devotional literature, the term *ziyara* is used to refer to the pilgrimage to the sites where the imams are buried and to the salutations and greetings that the pilgrim offers to the imams. I will use the term in its secondary sense, the greetings offered to the imam at his shrine.
103. Talib, *Ziyarat Guide,* 1.
104. Ibid., 2.
105. Jaʿfar b. Muhammad b. Qawlawayh, *Kamil al-Ziyarat* (Najaf: al-Matbaʿa al-Mubaraka al-Murtadawiyya, 1938) 116–119. For a list of the special dates recommended to perform the *ziyara* see Mahdi Shams al-Din, *The Rising of al-Husayn: Its Impact on the Consciousness of Muslim Society*, trans. I. Howard (London: Muhammadi Trust,1985), 40.
106. See Liyakat Takim, "Charismatic Appeal or Communitas? Visitation to the Shrines of the Imams" in *Journal of Ritual Studies* 18.2 (2004): 106–120.
107. On the special merits of the river Euphrates see Ibn al-Qawlawayh, *al-Kamil,* 47–48. On the importance of shrine rituals in Shiʿism see Liyakat Takim, "Charismatic Appeal," in *Journal of Ritual Studies,* 106–120.

108. Talib, *Ziyarat Guide,* 72.
109. Ibid., 67–68.
110. Ibid., 14–15.
111. Ibid., 90.
112. See also Liyakatali Takim, "Foreign Influences on American Shiʿism," in *The Muslim World* 90, no. 3–4 (2000): 459–77.
113. For an example of a miracle experienced at the shrine of the seventh imam, Musa al-Kazim, see Nakash, *The Shiʿis of Iraq,* 181–82.
114. Al-Khuʾi, *Minhaj al-Salihin,* 1:96.
115. Ibid.
116. Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shiʿis of Iraq,* 196.
117. Mirza Muhammad Tunkabuni, *Qisas al-ʿUlamaʾ* (Tehran, n.d.), 198. Al-Khuʾi also rules that a body can be exhumed so that it can be transported to a holy place. *Minhaj al-Salihin,* 96–97.
118. Ayatullah al-Uzama Syed Ali al-Husaini Seestani, *Islamic Laws: English Version of Taudhihul Masaeʾl* (London: The World Federation, 1994), 121–22.
119. Nasr, *Sufi Essays,* 107–8.
120. Alden Williams, *Themes of Islamic Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 329.
121. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions,* 223.
122. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet,* 90. The term "golden chain" was coined because a Samanid ruler had a tradition on the unity of God, reported from ʿAli al-Rida, written and inserted in his shroud. See Muhammad al-Baqir al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar,* 49:127.
123. Michael David Cooperson, "The Heirs of the Prophet in Classical Arabic Biography" (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1994), 306.
124. Ibid., 306–7.
125. Colin Turner, *Islam Without Allah?,* 56.
126. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet,* 90.
127. John Taylor, "Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, Spiritual Forebear of the Sufis," *Islamic Culture* 40, no. 2 (1966): 97.
128. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam,* 41.
129. Taylor, "Jaʿfar al-Sadiq," 102.
130. Ibid.
131. Hoffmann, *Sufism, Mystics and Saints,* 77–78.
132. Ibid., 76.
133. For spiritual exercises in esoteric Shiʿism, see ʿAllamah Mutahhari, ʿAllamah Tabatabai, Imam Khumayni, *Light Within Me* (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, n.d.).
134. Al-Saduq, *Kamal al-Din,* 425.
135. See Vernon, *Religious Performance,* 23, for instances of miracles by Shiʿi holy men.
136. The *shariʿ* man's focus on the law resonates strongly with the vision of the *halakhic* man in Judaism. See Joseph Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication society of America, 1983).
137. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet,* 17.

138. Charles Lindholm, "Prophets and Pirs: Charismatic Islam in the Middle East and South Asia," in eds. Pnina and Helene, *Embodying Charisma,* 219.
139. Ibid.
140. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies,* 2:267.
141. John Cooper, "Some Observations on the Religious Intellectual Milieu of Safawid Iran," in *Intellectual Traditions in Islam,* ed. Farhad Daftary (London: Tauris, 2000), 149.
142. Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent,* 29.
143. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint,* xxxvi.
144. Ibid., 67.
145. Mutahhari, et.al., *Light Within Me,* 182.
146. Cited in Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 2000), 249.

Chapter Three

1. For a definition of the usage of the term *rijal* in this study, see the introduction to this work.
2. As examples of the ʿAbbasid oppression exerted on the imams, Shiʿi sources cite the cases of al-Mansur's (d. 775) threat to kill Jaʿfar al-Sadiq and Harun al-Rashid's (d. 809) imprisonment of al-Kazim (d. 799). See al-Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad,* 411, 454.
3. Examples are the revolts of Muhammad b. ʿAbd Allah (Nafs al-Zakiyya) (d. 762), Husayn b. ʿAli (d. 786) and Abu Saraya (d. 815). For a discussion on various ʿAlid revolts against the ʿAbbasids, see Hugh Kennedy, *The Early ʿAbbasid Caliphate;* C. Huart, "ʿAlids," *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam,* 32–33.
4. Kulayni, *Rawdat al-Kafi,* 245.
5. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal* (Qum: Maktaba al-Dawari, 1976), 105; Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 383–84.
6. See the discussion on the postponement of political activity to the future in Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism, The Idea of Mahdi in Twelver Shiʿism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), especially chapter 1.
7. Arzina Lalani, *Early Shiʿi Thought: The Teachings of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir* (London: Tauris, 2000), 8.
8. See the discussion on this in chapter four of the present study.
9. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 4.
10. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:42.
11. As I will discuss in chapter four, the deputies are reported to have performed a wide range of functions on behalf of the imams.
12. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 170. On the possible meaning of *awtad,* see Ignaz Goldziher, "Awtad," *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam,* 49.
13. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 137. On the identity of the other three *rijal,* see supra, 41.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., 327–28. On the controversy surrounding Mufaddal, see chapter five of this work.

16. Ibid., 483.
17. See the examples cited by Etan Kohlberg, "Imam and Community in the Pre-*Ghayba* Period," in *Authority and Political Culture,* ed. Saʿid Arjomand, 39–40. Ismail Poonawala, "The Imam's Authority During the Pre-*Ghayba* Period," in Lynda Clarke ed., *The Shiʿite Heritage,* 118–19. Ibn Nadim also lists some of the disciples of the imams. See Muhammad b. Ishaq b. Nadim, *Kitab al-Fihrist,* trans. Bayard Dodge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 1:535–44.
18. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 4.
19. On ʿAbd al-Rahman, see Ahmad b. ʿAli Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 165. On Hammad, see ibid., 104.
20. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 167.
21. Quoted in al-Khuʾi, *Muʿjam,* 17:248 citing al-Mufid's *Risala*.
22. There is some dispute as to the contents of this book. ʿAli is reported to have offered a *Kitab al-Faraʾid,* a text that contained the legal commands of the Prophet to ʿUthman but the latter rejected it. The *Kitab al-Faraʾid* may also refer to another text that is attributed to ʿAli. This refers to the monetary compensation for loss of life or bodily injuries. See Modarressi, *Tradition*, 10, fn 48. The full text of *K. al-Faraʾid* is quoted by al-Saduq in his *Faqih* and Tusi in his *Tahdhib*.
23. Muhammad b. Jaʿfar Tusi, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam* (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyya, n.d.), 9:270; Muhammad b. ʿAli b. al-Husayn al-Saduq, *Man La Yahduruhuʾl-Faqih* (Qum: Imam al-Mahdi, 1983), 4:192.
24. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 193.
25. Muslim b. Hajjaj al-Qushayri, *Jamiʿ al-Sahih* (Riyadh: Bayt al-Afkar, 1998), 1:21.
26. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 255.
27. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 253.
28. Sachedina, *Just Ruler,* 30.
29. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 184.
30. Al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisas,* 196.
31. For example, ʿAmr b. Yazid was seen as a member of the *ahl al-bayt*. See Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 331–32.
32. Al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisas,* 111.
33. These modes of authority have been defined in the first chapter.
34. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 539.
35. Denis MacEoin locates the routinization of the imams' charisma during the short occultation of the twelfth imam. He acknowledges that routinization meant the appointment of agents of the twelfth imam but does not go on to explore the implications of the coexistence of the charisma and its routinized form during the minor occultation. Moreover, although he mentions the existence of the agents of the imam, MacEoin fails to mention the presence of the *rijal* and the ramifications of the existence of the office of the *rijal* during the physical presence of the imams. See Denis MacEoin, "Changes in Charismatic Authority in Qajar Shiʿism," in *Qajar Iran: Political, Social and Cultural Change 1800–1925,* ed. E. Bosworth and C. Hillenbrand (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), 152–53.
36. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 226.

37. See the discussion on this in the next chapter.
38. Ibn al-Nadim, *Kitab al-Fihrist,* 1:536. For a list of early Shiʿi *fiqh* works, see Husayn al-Sadr, *Taʾsis al-Shiʿa* (Tehran: Manshurat al-Aʿlami, n.d.), 298–99.
39. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 8.
40. For a discussion of these figures, see Liyakatali Takim, "The *Rijal* of the Shiʿi Imams as Depicted in Imami Biographical Literature" (Ph.D. diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, 1990).
41. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar* 238, 375, 556. In all, he cites eighteen *rijal* as being the eminent *fuqahaʾ* of their times. Sachedina claims that "the *ahl al-ijmaʿ* had participated with the infallible Imam in reaching a legally authoritative consensus" (Sachedina, *Just Ruler,* 46). Sachedina seems to base his conclusion on Kashshi's statement. However, Kashshi's reference to the *ashab al-ijmaʿ* does not warrant such a conclusion. Moreover, Sachedina's statement regarding the *ahl al-ijmaʿ* has no basis in the Shiʿite legal tradition or in *usul al-fiqh* (theoretical basis of Islamic law).
42. Jaʿfar al-Subhani, *Kulliyat fi ʿIlm al-Rijal* (Qumm: Markaz Mudiriyat, 1987), 177.
43. Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Karim al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects,* 160.
44. Modarressi, *Tradition,* 93.
45. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 12, 200.
46. Michael Berger, *Rabbinic Authority* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 73–74.
47. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 134.
48. Ibid., 3.
49. Sachedina, *Just Ruler,* 32. For a discussion of some factual inaccuracies and other conceptual problems in Sachedina's work, see Hossein Modarressi, "The Just Ruler or the Guardian Jurist: An Attempt to Link Two Different Shiʿite Concepts," *Journal of the American and Oriental Society* 111 no. 3 (1991): 549–62.
50. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 408–9.
51. Muslim b. Hajjaj, *Sahih* (Introduction), 1:21; al-Fasawi, *Kitab al-Maʿrifa,* 2:715–16.
52. Al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisas,* 213.
53. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 376.
54. Al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisas,* 322–23.
55. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 405.
56. Ibid; al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisas,* 323.
57. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 269.
58. See, for example, al-Khuʾi, *Muʿjam,* 20:74; Hasan b. Yusuf b. ʿAli al-Mutahhar (ʿAllama) al-Hilli, *Khulasa al-Aqwal fi ʿIlm al-Rijal* (Najaf: Matbaʿa al-Haydariyya, 1961), 264.
59. Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide,* 78.
60. Ibid., 93.
61. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Only the Man of God is Human: Theology and Mystical Anthropology According to Early Imami Exegesis," in Etan Kohlberg (ed.), *Shiʿism* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 21–22.
62. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 78–79.
63. Ibid., 581–82.

64. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 264–66.
65. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 20.
66. Ibid., 12. Salman is also depicted as freely conversing with the angel of death (ibid., 52).
67. Hasan b. Musa Nawbakhti, *Firaq al-Shiʿa* (Najaf: al-Matbaʿa al-Haydariyya, 1936), 42–45, 71–72.
68. ʿAli b. Ismaʿil al-Ashʿari, *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin* (Istanbul: 1929–1930), 1:78. Mughira b. Saʿid (d. 737), who was at one time a disciple of al-Baqir, is also said to have laid claims to prophethood and revelation. See Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Dhahabi, *Mizan al-Iʿtidal fi Naqd al-Rijal* (Cairo: ʿIsa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1963), 4:161.
69. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1994), 2:50.
70. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 197.
71. Ibid., 198.
72. See Wilferd Madelung, "Djabir al-Djuʿfi," *Encyclopedia of Islam* (supplement), 232–33.
73. Lalani, *Early Shiʿi Thought,* 108.
74. Muhammad b. ʿAmr al-ʿUqayli, *Kitab al-Duʿafaʾ al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1984), 1:194.
75. Hurr al-ʿAmili, ed., *Asl Zayd al-Zarrad* (Haydari, n.d.), 80.
76. Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide,* 111–13.
77. Mirza Muhammad Tunkabuni, *Qisas al-ʿUlamaʾ*; Turner, *Islam Without Allah?,* 178.
78. Weber, "The Nature of Charismatic Authority," in *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building,* ed. S. Eisenstadt, 58.
79. During my research trip to Iran in November 1989, some contemporary scholars on the *rijal,* like Muhammad al-Rida Jalali in Qum and Waid Zadeh in Mashad, confirmed to me that it was quite possible for the *rijal* to disagree with the imams on theological questions like *al-istitaʿa* (power to perform an act), which, after all, were not among the *daruriyat* (essentials) of religious beliefs.
80. Etan Kohlberg, "*Baraʾa* in Shiʿi Doctrine," *Jerusalam Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986): 159.
81. Hossein Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shiʿite Islam* (Princeton: Darwin, 1993), 54, n 7.
82. Kohlberg, "Imam and Community," 36.
83. Kulayni, *Furuʿ min al-Kafi,* 7:94–95. See also Tusi, *Tahdhib,* 9:271.
84. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:136.
85. Al-Ashʿari, *Maqalat,* 1:109, 1:283.
86. Ibid., 1:115. See also ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Baghdadi, *al-Farq Bayn al-Firaq,* 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, 1978), 52.
87. Al-Ashʿari, *Maqalat,* 1:111, 1:291.
88. On whom see al-Khuʾi, *Muʿjam,* 1:231.
89. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:140. For a discussion on the status of Hisham b. al-Hakam in Shiʿi biographical literature see Takim, "Evolution in the Biographical Profiles," in *Shiʿite Heritage*."

90. Hossein Modarresi, *An Introduction to Shiʿi Law: A Bibliographical Study* (London: Ithaca Press, 1984), 27.
91. Wilferd Madelung, "Hisham b. al-Hakam," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 3:496.
92. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 284.
93. Ibid., 145.
94. Ibid., 491.
95. Saʿd b. ʿAbd Allah al-Qummi, *Kitab al-Maqalat* (Tehran: Matbaʿa Hydery, 1963) (Introduction).
96. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 313.
97. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 543.
98. Ibid., 240.
99. Ibid. Ibn Hajar has a very brief profile on Burayd. He states that Burayd's definition of *al-istitaʿa* resembled that of Zurara (*Lisan al-Mizan* [Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1988], 8:2, 14).
100. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 169.
101. Ibid., 160.
102. Ibid., 149.
103. Ibid., 144.
104. Ibid., 228, 290.
105. Al-Khuʾi, *Muʿjam,* 20:214, quoting Ibn Idris, *Saraʾir*.
106. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:142.
107. Muhammad b. ʿAli b. al-Husayn al-Saduq, *al-Amali* (Tehran: Kitabkhane Islamiyya, 1941), 277.
108. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 191.
109. Ibn Nadim, *Fihrist,* 1:439.
110. Najashi, *Kitab Rijal,* 304–5.
111. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 279.
112. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 152.
113. Muhammad b. Jaʿfar Tusi, *Kitab al-Fihrist* (Qumm: 1983), 175. On the criticisms against Hisham see also Wilferd Madelung, "Some Remarks on the Imami *Firaq* Literature," in Kohlberg (ed.) *Shiʿism,* 159, fn. 38.
114. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 268.
115. Modarresi, *Crisis and Consolidation,* 30–31.
116. Muhammad b. ʿAli al-Muwahhidi al-Abtahi, *Taʾrikh ale-Zurara* (Isfahan: 1977), 53–54, quoting *al-Kafi*.
117. See Modaressi, *Introduction,* 26–28.
118. Joseph Schact, *Origins,* 238–39.
119. Ibid., 102–3.
120. Wael Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories,* 15.
121. R. Buckley, "Jaʿfar al-Sadiq as a Source of Shiʿi Traditions," *Islamic Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1999): 41.
122. On the linkage and condemnation of *qiyas* and *raʾy,* see Abu al-Fath Muhammad al-Karajiki, *Kanz al-Fawaʾid,* 2 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Adwaʾ, 1985), 2:28.
123. See Joseph Schact, *Origins,* 109–10, for examples of the *qiyas* of individual Iraqis. On the different meanings and usage of the term *qiyas* in Shiʿi traditions

see Robert Gleave, "Imami Shiʿi Refutations of *Qiyas,*" in Weiss, *Studies in Islamic,* 268–69.

124. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 156. Some of Zurara's legal opinions are also quoted by ʿAyyashi. See Muhammad b. Masʿud al-ʿAyyashi, *Kitab al-Tafsir,* 1:287.
125. Buckley, "Jaʿfar al-Sadiq," *Islamic Quarterly*, 46.
126. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 189.The rejection of *qiyas* was not restricted to twelver Shiʿis. Even Muhammad b. ʿAli al-Shawkani, a famous eighteenth century Zaydi jurist rejected *qiyas*. See Bernard Haykel, "Reforming Islam by Dissolving the Madhahib: Shawkani and his Zaydi Detractors in Yemen," in Weiss, *Studies,* 343–46.
127. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:73–74.
128. Cited in Muhammad al-Mahdi Bahr al-ʿUlum, *al-Fawaʾid al-Rijaliyya* (Najaf: 1965), 3:215 (quoting from an unpublished text of al-Murtada's *Risala*). Ayatullah Sayyid Ahmad Madadi, a respected scholar in Qum, told me in one of our discussions that his reading of *fiqh* texts had led him to conclude that Yunus was more "*ijtihad*-oriented," i.e., one who was more inclined toward an independent interpretation of traditions rather than restricting himself to quotations of *hadith*. Moreover, the constant reference to the companions of Yunus suggests that he had an independent school of thought. See also Kohlberg, "Imam and Community," 35, where the author discusses the independent-minded Shiʿis.
129. Bahr al-ʿUlum, *Fawaʾid,* 3:215–19. See also Modarressi, *Introduction,* 30. Sharif al-Murtada was also criticized for arriving at legal opinions based on *raʾy* without textual documentation or demonstrating precedents for his rulings. See Devin Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy,* 106.
130. Al-Saduq, *Man La Yahduruhuʾl-Faqih,* 4:197.
131. Kohlberg, "Imam and Community," 34. Kulayni also records traditions indicating that the imams would rebuke their followers for using *qiyas,* see *al-Kafi* 1:72–74. See also al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 146.
132. Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Hurr al-ʿAmili, *Wasaʾil al-Shiʿa ila Tahsil Masaʾil al-Shariʿa* (Beirut: Dar Ihya Turath al-ʿArabi, 1965), 18:40–41. See also Robert Gleave, *Inevitable Doubt: Two Theories of Shiʿi Jurisprudence* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 228; Modarresi, *Introduction,* 24–25.
133. Muhammad b. Jaʿfar Tusi, *al-Istibsar Fi Ma Ikhtalafa min al-Akhbar* (Beirut: Dar al-Adwaʾ, 1985), 1:18. Even the eminent *rijal* reported traditions that were in contrast with the accepted ruling. See, for example, Zurara's tradition (ibid., 1:223).
134. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 169.
135. Muhammad b. Khalid al-Barqi, *Kitab al-Mahasin*, 158.
136. Al-ʿAyyashi, *Kitab al-Tafsir,* 17.
137. For a sample of other traditions that proscribe the use of *raʾy* and *qiyas,* see Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shiʿism,* 105–6; Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy,* 106.
138. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 180.
139. For other examples of the "independent-minded Shiʿis" who resorted to *qiyas* and *raʾy,* see Modarressi, *Introduction,* 30–31.
140. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:73.

141. Ibid., 2:240.
142. See for example, al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 147; al-Barqi, *Kitab al-Mahasin,*165; al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisas,* 206; Ahmad b. ʿAli al-Tabrisi, *al-Ihtijaj* (Mashad: Saʿid, 1982), 361.
143. *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini,* 100.

Chapter Four

1. See the method adopted by John Wansborough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 14.
2. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 2:161–63.
3. According to al-Mufid, one of the major disciples to have reported the designation (*nass*) on al-Kazim was Mufaddal b. ʿUmar (d. 796). See al-Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad,* 437. This assertion is problematic especially as Mufaddal is said to have belonged to an extremist group.
4. Saʿid Amir Arjomand, "The Crisis of the Imamate and the Institution of Occultation in Twelver Shiʿism: A Sociohistorical Perspective," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 4 (1996): 494.
5. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 493.
6. Ibid., 451.
7. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:255. See also Muhammad b. ʿAli b. al-Husayn al-Saduq, *Risala al-Iʿtiqadat,* 108–9, where he quotes the Prophet as stating, "One who denies one of them (the imams) has verily denied me."
8. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 154–55.
9. Ibid., 155.
10. Al-Ashʿari, *Maqalat,* 1:102–3; Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects,* 160. This contention is difficult to accept as there is no report of Zurara's traveling to Medina to question ʿAbd Allah. See also Ibn Hajar, *Lisan al-Mizan,* 2:586, where he quotes Ibn al-Hazm as saying that Zurara took the Qurʾan as his imam.
11. Muhammad b. ʿAli b. Husayn al-Saduq, *Kamal al-Din,* 75.
12. Al-Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad,* 381.
13. For an assessment of al-Sadiq in the Sunni works, see ʿAbd Allah b. Muhammad al-Jurajani Ibn ʿAdi, *Al-Kamil fi Duʿafaʾ al-Rijal* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), 2:555; Al-Fasawi, *Kitab al-Maʿrifa,* 2:745; Ibn Abi Hatim, *al-Jarh waʾl-Taʿdil* (Hyderabad: 1952), 1:487; Al-Dhahabi, *Mizan,* 1:414–15; Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib,* 2:92–94.
14. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib,* 2:93; On al-Sadiq see also al-Dhahabi, *Mizan,* 1:414.
15. Al-Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad,* 408.
16. Buckley, "Jaʿfar al-Sadiq," 38.
17. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 163.
18. Muslim b. Hajjaj, *Sahih,* 1:106.
19. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 3. The Muʿtazili Khalifa al-Khayyat (d. 913) substantiates the view that the disciples of the imams reported many traditions from them. He accuses the Qatʿis (those who affirmed the death of al-Kazim and accepted the

imamate of al-Rida) of reporting strange traditions from al-Sadiq and al-Kazim. See al-Khayyat, ʿAbd al-Rahim b. Muhammad, *Kitab al-Intisar Waʾl-Radd ʿala Ibn al-Rawandi al-Mulhid* (Beirut: Dar Qabis, 1986), 99.

20. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 3.
21. Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide,* 27.
22. Buckley, "Jaʿfar al-Sadiq," 54.
23. Shiʿi exegetes like ʿAli b. Ibrahim al-Qummi (d. 919) and Muhammad b. Masʿud al-ʿAyyashi (n.d.) cite copious reports to vindicate the belief in *rajʿa* from the Qurʾan. See Muhammad b. Masʿud al-ʿAyyashi, *Kitab al-Tafsir,* 1:210–12; ʿAli b. Ibrahim al-Qummi, *Tafsir al-Qummi*, 1:24–25, 2:130.
24. See, for example, al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisas,* 258. As I will discuss in the next chapter, Muslim notes in his *Sahih* that many reporters had stopped transmitting traditions from Jabir due to his belief in *rajʿa*. This charge is repeated by Muslim's contemporary, Ibn Qutayba (d. 889). See ʿAbd Allah b. Muslim b. Qutayba, *Taʾwil Mukhtalif al-Hadith* (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1972), 10.
25. Muhammad b. Saʿd, *Tabaqat al-Kubra* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, n.d.), 5:321.
26. Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 1:40. See also al-ʿAmili, *Wasaʾil al-Shiʿa,* 18:67, where al-Baqir is quoted telling Fudayl al-Yassar, "Our traditions revive the hearts."
27. See Ibn Saʿd, *Tabaqat,* 5:213; Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 226.
28. See Ibn Saʿd, *Tabaqat,* 5:321; Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 226.
29. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 224–25. In another tradition, Fayd b. Mukhtar (n.d.) complained to al-Sadiq of the contradictory Shiʿi *hadiths* that were being circulated in Kufa. The imam directed Fayd to Zurara, thus further emphasizing the role of the *rijal* as the bearers of the imams' normative traditions. See ibid., 135–36.
30. They quoted al-Sadiq as stating, "If you see my head rolling toward you from the mountain, do not believe it, because I am your Lord." Hasan b. Musa al-Nawbakhti, *Firaq al-Shiʿa,* 67.
31. On al-Asadi's pro-Waqifi traditions, see Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 475–76. On al-Bataʾini's *hadiths,* see Tusi, *Kitab al-Ghayba,* 46.
32. Tusi, *Kitab al-Ghayba,* 47.
33. Modarressi, *Tradition,* 138.
34. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 458–59.
35. Wadad al-Qadi, "The Development of the Term *Ghulat* in Muslim Literature with Special Reference to the Kaysaniyya," in Kohlberg (ed.) *Shiʿism,* 178–79.
36. Ibid., 184. On the different criteria of *ghuluww,* see ibid., 186.
37. See Liyakatali Takim, "Evolution in the Biographical Profiles," in *Shiʿite Heritage*. On the different understanding of extremism see the profile on Aban b. Taghlib in chapter five of the present work.
38. ʿAmr b. Bahr al-Jahiz, *al-Bayan waʾl-Tabyin,* 4 vols. (Cairo: Maktaba al-Khanji, 1948–50), 1:46.
39. Wadad al-Qadi, "The Development of the Term *Ghulat,*" in Kohlberg (ed.) *Shiʿism,* 183.
40. Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects,* 130–31.
41. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 322.
42. Ibid. 327. See also Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation,* 28. On Mufaddal's extremist tendency see Modarressi, *Tradition,* 333–35.

43. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 298–99. See also ibid., 291–92, where it is reported that he claimed to have acquired knowledge of the unseen from the imam.
44. Ibid., 290.
45. Ibid., 138.
46. See Joseph Schacht, "Ahl al-Hadith," *Encyclopedia of Islam,* 1:258.
47. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:67.
48. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 225. Even before this time, Harith b. ʿAbd Allah al-Hamdani, a companion of ʿAli, is reported in both Sunni and Shiʿi sources to have recorded traditions. According to Ahmad b. Hanbal, Abu Ishaq al-Sabiʿi reported extensively from Harith's book. Modarressi, *Tradition,* 46.
49. Arjomand, "The Crisis of the Imamate," 500.
50. Modarressi, *Tradition,* xiv.
51. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 78.
52. Ibid., 228. See Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects,* 161 on this book.
53. Wilferd Madelung, "The Sources of Ismaʿili Law," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies,* 35 (1976): 34.
54. Modarressi, *Tradition,* 271.
55. For a list of citations of his work see ibid., 327.
56. Tusi, *Fihrist,* 132.
57. Modarressi, *Tradition,* 262. His book titled *Kitab Ikhtilaf al-Nass fiʾl Imama* was, according to Madelung, quoted by Hasan b. Musa al-Nawbakhti in his heresiographical work. It was also available to later Muʿtazili scholars. See Wilferd Madelung, "Some Remarks," in E. Kohlberg (ed.) *Shiʿism,* 156–59.
58. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 175–76.
59. Ibid., 26.
60. On the works of Fadl b. Shadhan, see ibid., 217.
61. For a discussion of the accusations leveled against Hisham b. al-Hakam and the Shiʿi defense of him, see Liyakatali Takim, "Evolution in the Biographical Profiles," in *The Shiʿite Heritage,* 293–99.
62. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 304–5. For a list of Hisham's works, see Sezgin, *Geschichte,* 540.
63. Ibn Nadim, *Fihrist,* 1:439.
64. Tusi, *Fihrist,* 83.
65. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 160.
66. For a more detailed discussion on the origins and ramifications of the *usul* literature, see Etan Kohlberg, "*Al-Usul Arbaʿu Mʾia,*" *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam,* 10 (1987).
67. See Agha Buzurg al-Tihrani, *al-Dhariʿa ila Tasanif al-Shiʿa* (Beirut: Dar al-Adwa, 1983), 2:127. This distinction is challenged by Modarressi who maintains that an *asl* refers to "a notebook in which the collector of *hadith* writes down all reports he hears from his sources, a rough, and ordered copy. *Kitab,* is a book that is a collection put together in a kind of order and compiled as a book." See Modarressi, "The Just Ruler," 558. Without substantiating his claim, Modarressi also maintains that many authors of *usul* works never met the imams and that some of the *usul* works were not transmitted directly from them. See Hossein Modarressi, "The Just Ruler," 558.

68. Al-Abtahi claims that one who has composed an *asl* work is more likely to be reliable. See Muhammad ʿAli al-Muwahhidi al-Abtahi, *Tahdhib al-Maqal fi Tanqih Kitab al-Rijal* (Najaf: 1971), 1:90.
69. Madelung, "Shiʿi Attitudes Toward Women as Reflected in Fiqh," in *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam,* ed. al-Sayyid al-Marsot (Malibu: 1979), 71, n.5.
70. Al-Saduq, *Man La Yahduru,* 1:3; Tusi, *Tahdhib,* 1:1. Al-Saduq also lists some of the *usul* works available to him. For a list of these, see al-ʿAmili, *Wasaʾil,* 20:62.
71. Kohlberg, "Al-Usul," 135.
72. See the sixteen *usul* works extant in Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Idris al-Hilli, *Mustatrafat al-Saraʿir* (Qum: Madrasa al-Imam al-Mahdi, 1987), 170. The existence of Shiʿi *fiqh* works in the pre-*ghayba* period is further evidenced from the extant work of al-Barqi's *Kitab al-Mahasin* in which the author quotes various *fiqh* points from al-Sadiq (307–9).
73. Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 1:239.
74. See Mehdi Mohaghegh, "Al-Sharif al-Murtada and the Defense of the Imamate," in *The Shiʿite Heritage,* 125.
75. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *al-Farq Bayn al-Firaq,* 43–49.
76. Wilferd Madelung, "The Shiʿite and Kharijite Contribution to pre-Ashʿarite Kalam," in *Islamic Philosophical Theology,* ed. Parvez Morewedge (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), 121.
77. On whom see Tusi, *Fihrist,* 87.
78. See Ibn al-Nadim, *Fihrist,* 1:439.
79. ʿAli b. Husayn al-Masʿudi, *Muruj al-Dhahab wa Maʿadin al-Jawhar* (Qum: Dar al-Hijra, 1983), 3:372. On the contents of his last debate see al-Saduq, *Kamal al-Din,* 362–68.
80. Al-Masʿudi, *Muruj al-Dhahab,* 3:371.
81. Ibn Qutayba, *Taʾwil Mukhtalif al-Hadith,* 14. On Hisham's discussions with Abuʾl-Hudhayl, see also al-Masʿudi, *Muruj,* 4:21–22.
82. Sachedina, *The Just Ruler,* 48.
83. Ahmad b. ʿAli al-Nasaʾi, *Kitab al-Duʿafaʾ waʾl-Matrukin* (Beirut: Dar al-Maʿrifa, 1986), 181. See also Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 9, where the author quotes the Khariji Ibn Ibad (c. 700) as rebuking the Rafidis for their dissociation from the first two Caliphs.
84. Al-Khayyat, *al-Intisar,* 37, 100–1.
85. Ibid., 101.
86. Etan Kohlberg, "The Attitudes of the Imami Shiʿis Towards the Companions of the Prophet" (Ph.D. diss., Oxford, 1971), 74.
87. Al-Khayyat, *al-Intisar,* 115–16. Hisham had apparently stated that the prophets could commit sins whereas the imams could not. See al-Ashʿari, *Maqalat,* 1:121. This view was rejected by later Shiʿis.
88. Ibn Qutayba, *Taʾwil,* 71. See also *al-Intisar,* 110–11, where al-Jahiz is quoted as referring to the Rafidi belief in the *ilham* (divine inspiration) of the imams. On the Shiʿi belief in the *jafr,* see al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 150.
89. ʿAbd Allah b. Muhammad al-Jurajani Ibn ʿAdi, *Al-Kamil,* 2:539.
90. Al-Khayyat, *al-Intisar,* 117.

91. Ibid., 50. Traditions in Kashshi's work also suggest that both Zurara and Muhammad b. Muslim had maintained this view. Both were severely rebuked by al-Sadiq for this.
92. Ibid., 81–82; al-Ashʿari, *Maqalat,* 1:291.
93. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 174.
94. Ibn Saʿd, *Tabaqat,* 5:325.
95. al-Khayyat, *al-Intisar,* 112.
96. Ibid., 95.
97. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 216.
98. Christopher Melchert, "The Imamis Between Rationalism and Traditionalism," in *The Shiʿite Heritage,* 275–76.
99. Tusi, *Fihrist,* 124–25; Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 216–17. For a list of his works, see also Sezgin, *Geschichte,* 537.
100. Modarressi maintains that the book was actually composed by Ibn Rustam al-Tabari and erroneously attributed to Ibn Shadhan. See Modarressi, *Tradition,* xvii.
101. Fadl b. Shadhan, *Kitab al-Idah*, 195–96.
102. Ibid., 52.
103. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 186; Ibn Nadim, *Takmila al-Fihrist,* 8.
104. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Lisan al-Mizan,* 5:340–41.
105. Ibid.
106. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 189.
107. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:241–43.
108. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 276.
109. Al-Khayyat, *al-Intisar,* 75.
110. On this, see Volf Miroslav, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theology of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 66.
111. Muhammad al-Baqir al-Sadr (d. 1980), a modern jurist, defines *usul* as "the study of the collective principles [established] in the extrapolation of a juridical ruling." *Durus fi ʿIlm al-Usul* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, 1978), 1:38–39. Besides establishing the collective principles, *usul al-fiqh* sets forth the theory of juristic practice to deduce further laws that cannot be directly derived from the revealed sources.
112. The *sira* is defined as an unarticulated proof for which no speech from the imam is reported. The *sira* is in contrast to a *hadith* of or an act performed by an imam, which is classified as an articulated proof (*al-dalil al-shariʿ al-lafzi*).
113. Muhammad Rida Muzaffar, *Usul al-Fiqh* (Beirut: Dar al-Taʿaruf, 1983), 2:61.
114. Ibid., 2:66.
115. See Ayatollah Muhammad ʿAli Taskhiri, "Combining Legal Rulings," in *The Shiʿite Heritage,* 237–38, n.17.
116. Abuʾl-Qasim al-Khuʾi, *Minhaj al-Salihin,* 1:33.
117. Al-Sadr, *Durus,* 2:180–81.
118. I am grateful to Ayatullah al-Sayyid Fadhil Milani for this observation.
119. Ayatullah al-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah, *World of Our Youth,* trans. Khaleel Mohammed (Montreal: Organization for the Advancement of Islamic Knowledge and Humanitarian Services, 1998), 216.

120. Al-Sadr, *Durus,* 2:182.
121. Ibid., 2:184.
122. Ibid., 2:197.
123. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 411. Ibn Sinan was also an author of many books. Later on, ʿAli b. Yaqtin worked for Harun al-Rashid.
124. See the discussion on this in the next chapter.
125. Khaled Abou El-Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), 38.
126. Rather surprisingly, Joseph Schacht dismisses all the legal contributions of Shiʿi scholars, saying that the authentic literature of the Twelver Shiʿites starts only toward the end of the third/ninth century. The evidence presented in this study suggests otherwise. See Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence,* 262.
127. Ibid., 263.
128. Al-Khayyat, *al-Intisar,* 117.
129. See the full tradition as cited by Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 162–63.
130. See the approach of Abou El-Fadl, *Speaking,* 97–98.
131. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:86–87.
132. Later on, some jurists claimed a more comprehensive notion of authority from this tradition, maintaining that it allowed the exercise of other politically related functions in the Muslim community. See Khumayni, *Islam and Revolution,* 92–95.
133. A *maqbula* is a tradition whose text has been approved and accepted by the *hadith* scholars, and whose effects have been put into practice, even though the reliability of its transmitters has not been confirmed by the jurists.
134. Al-ʿAmili, *Wasaʾil al-Shiʿa,* 18:99–100.
135. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 87.
136. Norman Calder, "The Structure of Authority in Imami Shiʿi Jurisprudence," 73.
137. See, for example, the profile of Yunus b. ʿAbd al-Rahman in Kashshi's text. He indicates that Shiʿis from Qum often questioned al-Rida in Medina seeking to verify the credibility of Yunus.
138. Kohlberg, "Imam and Community," 38.
139. Ahmad Kazemi Moussavi, *Religious Authority in Shiʿite Islam,* 49.
140. Muhammad Jawad al-Naʾini, *Rijal al-Najashi,* 2:158. Kashshi cites the case of ʿUrwa al-Qattat who was also a judge (*Ikhtiyar,* 371).
141. Yusuf b. ʿAbd al-Rahman Mizzi, *Tahdhib al-Kamal fi Asmaʾ al-Rijal,* 24 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1994), 7:56; Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Taʾrikh Baghdad,* 14 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-`Arabi, n.d.), 8:188–200. On his traditions from al-Sadiq see Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 135.
142. Jassim Hussain, *The Occultation of the Twelfth Imam* (Cambridge: The Muhammadi Trust, 1982), 46.
143. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 1:86–87.
144. Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation,* 12.
145. Ibid.
146. In his *Kitab al-Ghayba,* Tusi enumerates the administrative agents of each imam. Among the agents of al-Sadiq he mentions Nasr b. Qabus al-Lakhmi. ʿAbd al-Rahman b. Hajjaj was also one of the main agents of the imams to the time of the

eighth imam, ʿAli al-Rida. See Ismail Poonawala, "The Imam's Authority During the Pre-Ghayba Period," in *The Shiʿite Heritage,* 120.

147. For details of this, see Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation,* 13–14.
148. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 328.
149. Ibid., 431. Ziyad al-Qandi was another financial agent of al-Kazim in Baghdad. He also worked in the state treasury as an assistant to Jarrah al-Ruʾasi, the state treasurer, during the time of al-Rashid. After the death of al-Kazim, Ziyad became one of the founders of the Waqifis. Ibid., 466–67.
150. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 229; Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 591–92; Jassim Hussain, *The Occultation,* 80.
151. Hussain, *The Occultation,* 46.
152. On this, see Wansborough, *Sectarian,* 99.
153. See Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 4.

Chapter Five

1. "Biography," *Encyclopedia of Religion,* ed. Mircea Eliade, 220.
2. I will cite concrete examples of these in the second section of this chapter.
3. Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity,* xi.
4. For details of these, see ibid, 55.
5. See also Liyakatali Takim, "Authority Construction in Biographical Texts: The Cases of Humran b. Aʿyan and Muʾmin al-Taq," *International Journal of Shiʿi Studies* 1, no. 1 (2003): 125–155.
6. Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad,* 408.
7. For another hagiographic account of the lives of the imams, see Shaykh ʿAbbas al-Qummi, *Muntaha al-Amal* (Qum: Chapkhane ʿIlmi, 1946).
8. Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad,* 261.
9. Ibid., chapter 5.
10. For a discussion of these, see Cornell, *The Realm of the Saint,* introduction.
11. Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad,* part 1, chapter 6.
12. Berger, *Rabbinic Authority,* 13.
13. Tihrani, *al-Dhariʿa,* 10:80.
14. Other factors such as *qaraʾin* (indicators) and the text of the tradition can also determine the acceptability of a tradition. See chapter six of Liyakat Takim, "The *Rijal* of the Shiʿi Imams," for a discussion of the various forms of *qaraʾin*.
15. See the discussion on this by al-Khuʾi (*Muʿjam Rijal al-Hadith*), Muhammad al-Muzaffar (*al-Fawaʾid al-Rijaliyya),* ʿAbd Allah Mamaqani (*Tanqih al-Maqal*), and Jaʿfar al-Subhani (*Kulliyyat fi ʿIlm al-Rijal).*
16. Sachedina, *The Just Ruler,* 44.
17. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 150. Scarcia Amoretti, "*ʿIlm al-Ridjal,*" *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 3:1150. According to al-Barqi, al-Kinani was also a companion of al-Kazim. Barqi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 49. Tusi cites a profile of al-Kinani but does not mention his *rijal* work. See Tusi, *Fihrist,* 104.
18. Najashi, *Kitab Rijal,* 26. On al-Faddal's work, see Tihrani, *al-Dhariʿa,* 10:89–90.

19. Strictly speaking, a *mashyakha* work does not list the companions of the imams, but rather enumerates the teachers of the author. I am grateful to Ayatullah al-Sayyid Fadhil Milani for this observation. See also the extant portions of Ibn Mahbub's work in Ibn al-Idris, *Mustatrafat,* 77.
20. On ʿAli b. al-Hasan al-Faddal, see Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 181–2. On al-ʿAqiqi, see ibid, 59; Tusi, *Fihrist,* 24–25. According to Tihrani, al-Hilli also depends on al-ʿAqiqi's work. See Tihrani, *al-Dhariʿa,* 10:131.
21. According to al-Khuʾi, over one hundred Shiʿi *rijal* works were composed between the times of Ibn Mahbub and Tusi, i.e., between the ninth and eleventh centuries. Muhsini, a contemporary scholar in *rijal,* disputes this figure, saying it is exaggerated. However, a perusal of the works of Najashi and Tusi indicates that many books on the *rijal* were composed before their times. See al-Khuʾi, *Muʿjam,* 1:42; Asaf Muhsini, *Buhuth fi ʿIlm al-Rijal* (Qum: 1983), 130–31. For a complete list of Shiʿi *rijal* works, see Tihrani, *al-Dhariʿa,* 10:81 ff.
22. Tusi, *ʿUdda al-Usul* (Tehran: Sayyid al-Shuhadaʾ, 1983), 366.
23. See, for example, Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 90, 118.
24. Muhammad b. ʿUmar Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar Maʿrifa al-Rijal,* 403–4.
25. Ibid., 235, 442. See Kashshi, 593, 604 where he quotes the book of Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. Bandar al-Qummi in his profile of a *rajul*. On the *rijal* works before Kashshi's time see Jaʿfar al-Subhani, *Kulliyat*, 38–39.
26. Of the two biographical works, Najashi's work has been considered more valuable than Tusi's. This is because Najashi provides more information regarding the lives of the disciples. In addition, he describes each disciple in greater detail, citing his ancestry, tribe, and place of residence. Najashi also quotes the opinions of erstwhile biographers on many *rijal* and lists the books that each disciple reportedly composed and, where relevant, the imams from whom he reported his *hadith*.
27. Tusi's abridged version of his text is called *Ikhtiyar Maʿrifa al-Rijal*.
28. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 263.
29. Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change,* 1.
30. On the authoritarian reading of a text see Abou El-Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name,* 67.
31. Ibid., 5.
32. Ibid., 92.
33. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 125.
34. The term *khwass* refers to those disciples of the imams who, due to their loyalty and erudition, were especially close to the imams and are to be distinguished from the larger body of disciples.
35. Tusi, *Fihrist,* 175.
36. Ibid., 132. Ibn al-Nadim, *Fihrist,* 1:438.
37. See, for example, the list of Shiʿi compilations in various fields by Sayyid al-Sadr, *Taʾsis al-Shiʿa*.
38. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 2; Tusi, *Fihrist,* introduction.
39. Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity,* 15.
40. Al-Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad,* 408.

41. See al-ʿAmili, *Wasaʾil al-Shiʿa,* 20:115.
42. Mirza al-Husayn Nuri, *Mustadrak al-Wasaʾil* (Tehran: al-Maktaba al-Islamiyya, 1964), 3:770. However, even Tusi's list of these *rijal,* which he extracted from Ibn ʿUqda's work, does not amount to 4,000 narrators.
43. Al-Khuʾi, *Muʿjam,* 1:57–59. Muhammad al-Muzaffar, *al-Fawaʾid al-Rijaliyya* (Qum: 1985), 66.
44. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 63.
45. Al-Khuʾi, *Muʿjam,* 1:50.
46. Muhsini, *Buhuth,* 61.
47. Al-Khuʾi, *Muʿjam,* 18:293.
48. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 295. For a list of Mufaddal's alleged works see Sezgin, *Geschichte,* 534.
49. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 323.
50. Ibid., 321. See also Bernard Lewis, *The Origins of Ismaʿilism* (Cambridge: 1940), 33–34 where the author discusses Abuʾl-Khattab's reported connections with Ismaʿil.
51. Hujr b. Zaʾida al-Hadrami, who is described as a very close disciple of al-Sadiq, was a staunch opponent of Mufaddal. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 323, 326.
52. Al-Khuʾi, *Muʿjam,* 18:304.
53. Ibid. Al-Khuʾi is not consistent in his assessment of Mufaddal. Although he authenticates him in his profile, at other times, when Mufaddal transmits a tradition, he states that the report is weak due to the presence of Mufaddal in the *isnad*. See ibid., 18:245, 17:39.
54. The phrase indicates that the author is not able to provide a completely satisfactory answer. He therefore returns the matter to those who have the infallible *ʿilm,* i.e., to the imams. During my visit to Najaf in October 1988, I had hoped to meet al-Khuʾi and to question him on his defense of the *rijal*. Due to his ill health, I was not able to speak to him. I was able, however, to speak to one of his students, Sayyid Mahdi al-Kharsan. When I asked him about the rejection of a *sahih* but unfavorable report, he dismissed the question, indicating that he would prefer not to respond.
55. On these, see Takim, "Evolution in the Biographical Profiles," in *Shiʿite Heritage,* 295.
56. Al-Khuʾi, *Muʿjam,* 19:294.
57. Mamaqani, *Tanqih,* 1:441.
58. Ibn Kathir, *Al-Kamil fiʾl-Taʾrikh* (Beirut: n.p., 1965), 5:508; Mizzi, *Tahdhib al-Kamal,* 20:146.
59. Modarressi, *Tradition,* 109.
60. Ibn Saʿd, *Tabaqat al-Kubra,* 6:360.
61. Khalifa b. al-Khayyat, *Kitab al-Tabaqat* (Baghdad: Matbaʿa al-`Ani, 1967), 166.
62. Muhammad b. Ismaʿil al-Bukhari, *Taʾrikh al-Kabir* (Hyderabad: Matbaʿa Jamʿiyat Daʾirat al-Maʿarif al-ʿUthmaniyya, 1942), 1:453.
63. Ibn Abi Hatim, *Kitab al-Jarh waʾl-Taʿdil,* 1:296–97.
64. Muhammad b. ʿAmr al-ʿUqayli, *Kitab al-Duʿafaʾ al-Kabir,* 37.
65. Ibid., See Edward Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Lahore: Islamic Book Center, 1982), 1747 on a *saʾigh* as one who embellishes speech with lies. However, as

will be noted, al-Juzajani (d. 870) called him *zaʾigh* (deviant), a more appropriate charge against Aban, especially in view of the fact that he is not considered to be a liar by any of the Sunni biographers.

66. Al-ʿUqayli, *Kitab al-Duʿafaʾ,* 37. The contents of the traditions are not cited.
67. Ibn ʿAdi, *al-Kamil,* 1:380.
68. See Lane, *Lexicon,* 2:442 for the meaning of *jald*.
69. Al-Dhahabi, *Mizan al-Iʿtidal,* 1:5–6.
70. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Tahdhib,* 1:93–94.
71. Al-Barqi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 9, 16.
72. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 274.
73. Al-Nawbakhti, *Firaq al-Shiʿa,* 79. On his death in 758 C.E., see Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 8.
74. On him see al-Khuʾi, *Muʿjam,* 18:147.
75. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 331.
76. Ibid., 330.
77. Tusi, *Fihrist,* 17.
78. Ibid. For Kashshi's variant reading of the same tradition see Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 330.
79. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 8.
80. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 276.
81. There are many other examples of transmitters who reported from both the Shiʿi imams and Sunni figures. Hence, they appear in both Sunni and Shiʿi *hadith* literature. ʿAbd al-Rahman al-ʿArzami (d. 796), for example, transmitted *hadith* from al-Sadiq among others. See Ibn Abi Hatim, *al-Jarh,* 5:282; Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 237; Tusi, *Fihrist,* 108. Similarly, Abu al-ʿAlaʾ al-Khaffaf, a Kufi Sunni transmitter, narrated traditions from al-Baqir. See Modarressi, *Tradition,* 313.
82. See Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib,* 1:93–94.
83. These are the imams of the Sunni schools of law. See Mamaqani, *Tanqih al-Maqal,* 1:4.
84. *Tadlis* refers to the act of "tampering with *isnads* in order to make them appear more reliable than they are in reality" (Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition,* 180). See also Lane, *Lexicon,* 3:903 on the definition of *tadlis* as the ascribing of a tradition to a person whom the transmitter did not meet.
85. Ibn Saʿd, *Tabaqat,* 6:345.
86. Bukhari, *Taʾrikh,* 1:210.
87. Muhsin al-Amin, *Aʿyan al-Shiʿa* (Beirut: Dar al-Taʿaruf, 1951), 4:54, citing al-ʿAjli's *Taʾrikh*.
88. For a discussion on the Shiʿi belief in *rajʿa* see Douglas Karim Crow, "The Death of al-Husayn b. ʿAli and the Early Shiʿi Views of the Imamate," in Kohlberg (ed.), *Shiʿism,* chapter three.
89. Muslim b. Hajjaj, *Sahih* (Introduction), 1:20.
90. Ibid., 1:21.
91. Ibid. Al-Fasawi, *Kitab al-Maʿrifa,* 2:715–16.
92. Muslim, *Sahih*, 1:21.
93. Ibn Qutayba, *Taʾwil,* 10.
94. Ibn Qutayba, *Kitab al-Maʿarif,* 480.

95. Ibid., 624.
96. Al-Fasawi, *Kitab al-Maʿrifa,* 2:164.
97. Ibid., 2:716. The identity of the legatee is not disclosed.
98. Al-ʿAyyashi, *Tafsir,* 1:64–65; al-Saduq, *Kamal,* 286, 330, 395; Nuʿmani, *Kitab al-Ghayba,* 200–1, 237–38.
99. Al-ʿUqayli, *Kitab al-Duʿafaʾ*, 1:193.
100. I have not been able to locate the meaning or the precise significance of this utensil.
101. Al-ʿUqayli, *Kitab al-Duʿafaʾ*, 1:194.
102. On Zayd b. ʿAli, see Ibn Abi Hatim, *al-Jarh,* 1:568. For Ibn al-Hanafiyya see ibid., 4:26.
103. Ibn Abi Hatim, *al-Jarh,* 1:497–98.
104. Ibid. Ahmad b. ʿAli al-Nasaʾi (d. 915) also cites negative assessments on Jabir. He too does not state why people abandoned Jabir. See Ahmad b. ʿAli al-Nasaʾi, *Kitab al-Duʿafaʾ*, 163.
105. Ibn ʿAdi, *al-Kamil,* 2:538.
106. Modarressi, *Tradition,* 91.
107. Ibn ʿAdi, *al-Kamil,* 2:539.
108. ʿUmar b. Ahmad Ibn Shahin, *Taʾrikh Asmaʾ al-Thiqat* (Beirut: 1986), 88.
109. Takim, "Evolution in the Biographical Profiles," 293–99.
110. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhib,* 2:50.
111. Jabir's book on a description of heaven and hell is cited in al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisas,* 359–65. His book on *tafsir* was received by Najashi and Tusi.
112. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 238, 460. See also Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 192.
113. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 405. See also al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisas,* 322–23.
114. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 191.
115. Ibid., 192.
116. Ibid., 193.
117. On whom, see Tusi, *Fihrist,* 69.
118. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 193. On Shiʿi suspicions against Jabir see Modarressi, *Tradition,* 92.
119. Tusi, *Fihrist,* 45. In his lengthy profile on Jabir, Modarressi does not mention the significant point that neither Tusi nor Najashi authenticate Jabir. See Modarressi, *Tradition,* 86–103.
120. Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal,* 93–94.
121. Ibid., 94.
122. Mamaqani, *Tanqih,* 1:204.
123. ʿAllama al-Hilli, *Khulasa al-Aqwal fi ʿIlm al-Rijal,* 35.
124. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 195.
125. Kulayni, *al-Kafi,* 2:245–46.
126. Najashi states that ʿAmr was "very weak" and had interpolated many traditions that were reported by Jabir. *Kitab al-Rijal,* 204.
127. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar,* 197.
128. Al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisas,* 129–30. See also ibid., 278 for the interpretation of other verses as referring to the *wilaya* of the imams.
129. Nawbakhti, *Firaq,* 35. Wilferd Madelung, "Djabir," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (supplement), 233.

130. Al-Khuʾi, *Muʿjam,* 4:21.
131. Ibid., 4:25. Al-Abtahi told me in one of our conversations that, in his lectures he delivered in Najaf, al-Khuʾi had originally considered Jabir to be weak. Later, he changed his views on him.
132. Ibid., 4:26.
133. Mamaqani, *Tanqih,* 1:203.
134. Ibid., 1:204.
135. Ibid.
136. Ibid.
137. See the traditions cited by al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisas,* 257–58. The reasons for the Sunnis' rejection of the belief in *rajʿa,* according to al-Abtahi, is that the doctrine stipulates that the imams will return to extract vengeance against those who had wronged them. Since this has negative ramifications against the Sunni caliphs, *rajʿa* had to be rejected by them. This was confirmed to me in one of my conversations with him in 1989.
138. Al-Saffar, *Basaʾir,* 408–9.
139. Al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtisas.,* 317. See also ibid., 199 for other traditions of this genre. The view that ʿAli traversed the clouds does not appear to have gained much acceptance among the Shiʿis.

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Index

Aban b. Taghlib, 31, 88, 128; profile of, 163–69, 171–72, 175–76, 178–79
ʿAbbasid(s), ʿAlid relationship with, 79, 113, 115, 141; caliphs, 6–7, 9–15, 25–26, 33–34, 141, 181; charisma of, 26; as heirs of Prophet, 33; and scholars, 13, 15
ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwan, 8–9
Abu Hanifa, 13, 21, 30, 84, 101, 106, 125, 128, 135–36, 169; creed of, 136; personal reasoning, 21, 106
ahl al-bayt, 27–28, 35, 58, 69, 85, 116, 126
al-Ahwal, Muhammad b. ʿAli, 88, 96, 99–100, 102, 111, 121, 125, 128, 157, 159
ʿAli b. Abu Talib, 6–7, 25–26, 53, 57–58, 106, 122, 126–28, 148, 152, 166, 173, 178; authority of, 57, 148, 176; divinity of, 119; grave of, 64, 67; miracles of, 91, 93, 147–48, 166, 171, 173, 178; Shiʿi view of, 25–26, 68, 84, 96, 126, 128; Sufi view of, 43, 68–69; ziyara of, 65
ʿAlid, leadership, 113, 143; loyalism, 58; revolts by, 15, 79, 115; stance, 68; views of, 168
al-Asadi, Abu Basir, 62, 92, 117
asl, 167, 175; *see also* usul arbaʿ mia
authority, xii; of ʿAbbasid caliphs, 9–10; of Abu Hanifa, 21–22; of ʿAli, 26; administrative, 11; apostolic, 28; charismatic, xii, 1–6, 24–25, 28; of baraka, 45–47; in biographical texts, 145, 151, 158, 163; caliphal, 8–14, 33, 110, 141; charismatic: *see* charismatic authority; comprehensive, 6–8, 12, 18, 31, 33, 42, 57–58, 63, 70, 79–80, 112, 120, 146, 149, 182; delegation of, 80–81, 83, 85–86, 88, 90, 128, 143, 152, 180, 183; epistemic, 90–91, 153, 183; exercise of, xi–xii, 1–2, 40, 181; of heirs of the Prophet, 33; hereditary: *see* charisma, hereditary; of holy man, 23, 37, 39–40, 42–43, 47–56, 70, 73–74, 76–77, 147, 182; of Imams, xiii, 8, 24–29, 33, 36, 57–60, 62–68, 71, 77, 80, 82, 85–86, 91, 94–95, 97, 102, 105–7, 109, 111, 113–14, 119–20, 122, 124–26, 128, 133, 138–39, 143, 147, 153, 157, 179, 183; of jurists, xii; Kufi view of, 21; of Medinan practices, 19–20; of Muhammad, xii, 4–8, 11, 18, 24–27, 33–34, 36, 42, 78–79, 112, 120, 124, 181; post-Muhammadan, xi–xii, 5, 24–25, 129, 182; political, 5–8, 14, 18, 27, 30–32, 80, 98, 148; pre-Islamic, 5–6; of reasoning, 102, 149; rational legal, 1–3, 86; religious, 8–15, 17, 20, 23–24, 31, 33–35, 40, 45, 71, 74, 129, 140, 181, 183–84; of rijal, xiii, 31, 81–83, 86, 89–90, 94–

authority *(continued)*
95, 99, 102–3, 105, 108–9, 112, 116, 119, 123–24, 135–40, 142–43, 145, 149–54, 156–57, 159–60, 169, 177–80, 183–84; routinization of, xii–xiii, 5–7, 31, 107; Shiʿi routinization of, 78–79, 83, 86–87; of sayyids, 44, 58; Shafiʿi's view of, 22; of shariʿ men, 18–23, 31–32, 35, 72–74, 76–77, 104; Shiʿi view of, xii; 24, 27–28, 30, 32, 56, 78, 104, 106–7, 132, 183; spiritual, xii, 18, 42, 57, 68, 70, 76, 91, 147; struggle for, xi–xii, xiv, 14, 75, 77, 98, 104, 106–7, 146, 153, 179, 182; Sufi view of, 42–43, 73, 182; of sunna, 23; textual, xiv, 145–46, 183; traditional, 2–3, 6, 86; types of, xii, 1–2; of ʿulamaʾ, 11–12, 17, 33–34, 182; of Umayyad Caliphs, 7–9; 11
Ayoub Mahmoud, 49

al-Baqir, Muhammad b. ʿAli, 28, 30, 58, 80, 91, 93–96, 106, 112, 116, 140, 174–76; and disciples, 61, 80–81, 84, 92, 94–96, 98, 100, 103, 167, 174–75; hadith of, 30, 83–84, 114–17, 136, 164, 171, 174, 176, 178; and extremists, 93; knowledge of, 62; miracles of, 92, 174
baraka, authority of, 47, 73; of dead, 46; definition of, 45; expressions of, 47; of holy men, 42, 46–47, 51, 53, 64, 70, 73; popular culture and, 45; power of, 47; of Prophet, 71; in Qurʿan, 46; of Ramadhan, 46–47; of rijal, 94, 153; of tree, 46; of sayyids, 46; of shariʿ men, 74; Shiʿi view of, 64, 66, 70; of shrine, 51, 66; Sufi view of, 46, 73; transmission of, 46, 53, 66, 71, 73
al-Basri Hasan, 12–13, 16, 41, 69
bayʾa (allegiance), to caliph, 10, 34, 56; violation of, 11
biography, definition of, 146, 179; literature on, 121; profile, xiii, 48, 112, 142, 146, 150–51, 153, 155–56, 158–60, 162; Shiʿi, 151, 180; study of, 149, 169
Brown, Peter, 50, 52–53
Bukhari, Muhammad b. Ismaʿil, 164, 170–72
Burayd b. Muʿawiya, 30, 81; authority of, 95; condemnation of, 98, 105; differences with Imams, 96, 98

caliphs, ʿAbbasid, 9, 11–13, 15, 25–26, 33–34, 181; authority of: *see* authority; bayʿa, 10, 34, 56; corrupt, 11; deputies of God, 10; fatwa by, 8; as heirs: *see* heirs of Prophet; ijtihad by, 9, 13, 33; and imams, 9, 18, 32; opposition to, 14–15, 79; orthodoxy, 14; power of, 8, 15; rightly guided, 5–6, 11, 68; and the sacred, 10; and scholars, 13–15, 182; sunna of, 9; Umayyad, 7–9, 11, 25, 33–34, 94, 181
charis (Greek goddess), 2
charisma, definition of, 2; diffusion of, 5–6, 81, 183; grace, 3, 24; hereditary, 3, 24–29, 31, 56, 58, 63, 66, 73, 77, 79, 86, 94–95, 104, 110, 114, 116, 120, 124, 127, 129, 142–43, 146, 148, 153; metaphysical, 3; pure, 5, 73, 78; Shiʿi view of, 26, 28, 56, 64; types of authority, xii, 1–2; of holy men, xii, 49, 53, 73; of Imams, 26–29, 77, 79, 84, 85, 95, 106, 142, 148, 153; of imams at shrines, 66; of leader, 3, 5, 24, 73, 78, 95, 138, 140; of office, xii, 3, 5, 12, 18, 23, 25, 42, 73, 79; 82, 85–86, 90, 95, 99–100, 102, 104, 106, 108, 150, 182; of rijal, 85, 95; of Prophet, 3, 5, 26, 28, 30–31, 42–44, 120, 184; personal, 2, 4, 24, 26, 32, 73; routinization of, xii, 5–7, 73, 78–79, 107; routinization of Prophetic, 11, 18, 25, 40, 42, 71, 78; routinization of Imams, 79, 81–83, 85–88, 109, 120, 142
charismatic authority, 3–4, 24, 73–74, 86, 98, 181; of Muhammad, xii, 4, 6,

24–26, 78, 124; of Imams, xiii, 24, 26–28, 33, 58, 67, 77, 80, 86, 95, 102, 109–10, 114, 122, 124–26, 137, 153, 183; of holy men, 49, 51, 53; origins of, 2
charismatic leadership, xii, 3, 5–6; gifts, 3; lineage, 46, 58, 153
charismatic office, of rijal, xiii, 81–82, 86–89, 95, 99–100, 102, 104, 108–10, 114, 120, 122, 124–25, 129, 136, 138, 140, 142, 150–54, 157, 166–67, 169, 178, 183
charismatic successor, 4–5, 29
Cornell, Vincent, 48, 55
corpse, traffic, 66–68; transportation, 68
Crone, Patricia, xii, 8, 14–15

al-Dhahabi, Muhammad b. Ahmad, 30, 165–66, 168

al-Faddal, al-Hasan b., 122, 150–51
Fadl b. Shadhan, 62, 86, 127–28, 151; books of, 121–22, 128; differences with Imams, 63, 97; and qiyas, 103

ghayba (occultation), 25, 32, 45, 85, 94, 134, 142; book on, 117, 121; post, xii, 35, 84, 87, 123, 163
Ghulat, authority of, 23; beliefs, 26, 119–20; definition of, 118; figures, 119; hadith of, 119; interpolation by, 62, 160; and Jabir al-Juʿfi, 170, 173, 175–76, 178; rise of, 113; Shiʿi repudiation of, 119, 122, 128; rijal and, 119–20, 122, 170, 175–76
ghusl (ritual bath), 52, 64
great Shaykh, theory of, 20

hadith, of Aban b. Taghlib, 164–69; ahl al- ,120, 124; authenticated, 22, 149, 151, 160; of al-Baqir, 30, 83, 115, 171; on burial in Najaf, 67; classification of, 149; compilation of, 12; contradictions in, 22, 104, 116, 161; esoteric, 61–62, 74, 84, 92; extremist, 119, 176; fabrication of, 117, 160; function of, 143; of ghulat, 118–19, 160; on heirs of Prophets, xi–xiii, 33–35, 180–82, 184; of imams, 28, 29, 35, 59–62, 85, 91, 102, 104–6, 108, 115–16, 118, 121–22, 124, 136, 138, 142–43, 174; of Jabir al-Juʿfi, 170, 172–77; legal, 30–32, 61, 88–89, 98, 107, 115, 123, 135, 158; literature, 12, 115, 117, 143, 154, 156; maqbula, 137–39; Medinan, 19; on nass, 111–14, 118; Prophetic, 8, 18, 20, 82, 84, 107, 114, 129, 183; Qurʾan and, 23; reports of, 149–50; rijal: *see* rijal, traditions of; of al-Sadiq, 83, 114–15, 167; secret, 61; Shafiʿi and, 22; shariʿ men and, 72, 75, 104; Shiʿi, xiii, 26, 32, 35, 52, 59–63, 67, 69–70, 81, 88, 91–92, 97, 113–18, 121, 123, 136, 143, 151, 154, 159, 174, 178, 183; study of, 150; Sunni, 32, 89, 114, 116, 135, 143, 168, 170; transmission of, 12, 16, 20, 29–30, 69, 80, 105, 114–16, 118, 121–22, 149, 151, 167; as vehicle, 116, 127, 184; Waqifi, 117–18; on ziyara, 64
al-Hasan b. ʿAli, 44, 126–27, 173
heirs of Prophet, authority of, xii, 182; caliphal claims, 14, 34; competition for, xi, xii, 1, 33, 71, 74, 77, 107, 181–84; holy men as, 55, 71, 74, 78; imams as, 28, 35, 76; philosophers as, 33; rijal as, 106–7, 183; shariʿ men as, 71, 74; Shiʿi ʿulamaʾ as, 35; Sufi view of, 35, 42–43, 55, 76, 106, 182; title, 33, 35, 77, 106, 181, 184; tradition on, xi, xiii, 11, 34, 181; ʿulamaʾ as, 17, 33–35, 106, 182
al-Hilli, Yusuf b. Mutahhar (ʿAllama), 175
al-Hilli, Muhaqqiq, 35
Hisham b. al-Hakam, 86, 88, 105, 122, 124–25, 155, 158; authority of, 102, 158; book of, 122; condemnation of, 97, 99–100; corporeal views, 96–98, 161; defense of, 129, 159, 161, 173; differences with other Shiʿis, 99–

Hisham *(continued)*
100; discussions of, 122, 124–26, 129, 161; and al-Kazim, 161
Hisham b. Salim, 96, 99–100, 102, 111, 125, 128
holy men, asceticism, 41; authority of: *see* authority, of holy men; baraka of, 42, 46–47, 51, 70, 73; biographies of, 146–48, 179; characteristics of, 39, 41; 70, 76; charisma: *see* charisma, holy men; emergence of, xii, 35, 37, 40–41; esoteric, 72; exegesis of, 20, 49–50; functions of, 39, 54–55; genealogy of, 43; great shaykh theory, 20; heirs: *see* heirs of Prophet; knowledge of, 48; and law, 20, 75; as leaders, 40; miracles of, 39–40, 47–48, 53, 56, 59, 63, 70–71, 76, 147; Moroccan, 48, 55; Muhammad as, 42–43, 47; mystical experience of, 39, 41, 43, 74; objects and, 53; power of, 51–53, 56; presence of, 51–53; reverence for, 52; rijal as: *see* rijal, holy men; salvation of, 39; sayyids, 44; and shariʿ men: *see* shariʿ men, holy men; Shiʿi, 56, 59, 62, 64, 68, 70–71, 75, 145–46, 182, 184; shrines of, 46, 50–53, 64–66, 76, 182; and society, 55; Sufi, 23, 35, 41–43, 46; 48, 54–55, 59, 62–63, 65, 68–71, 74–77, 147, 181, 184; tawhid and, 72–73; urs of, 52; as wali, 40
hukkam (adjudicators) rijal as, 137
Humran b. Aʿyan, 61, 85, 88, 91, 100; favorable reports on, 105
Husayn b. ʿAli, 25, 44, 52, 56, 69, 100, 127; shrine of, 64–65

ibn Abi Hatim, 164, 172–73
ibn al-ʿArabi, 44, 49–50, 72
ibn Hajar, 30, 114, 128, 165–66, 168, 173, 175
ibn Hanbal, Ahmad, 9, 14, 34, 164–65, 169, 171–72
ibn al-Muqaffaʾ, 13, 15, 19, 101
ibn al-Nadim, 88, 99, 123, 167
ibn al-Rawandi, 125, 129
ibn Saʿd Muhammad, 116, 126–27, 164, 170, 172
idealization, xiv; in biographical literature, 158, 160; importance of, 158; of rijal, 135, 159, 163, 180
ijmaʿ, 131; ashab, 89
ʿilm, esoteric, 92–93; of holy men, 63, 70; of imams, *see* imams; prophetic, 7; of rijal, 91, 93, 175; rijal criticism, 149–50; Shiʿi view of, 27, 32; 58–61, 130, 147; transmitted, 83–84
Imams, acknowledgement of, 65, 69, 112–14, 128; ahl al-bayt, 35; as ascetics, 57; authority of: *see* authority, of imams; biographies of, 146–48, 180; burial near, 67–68; caliphs as, 18, 32; charisma of: *see* charisma, of imams; cloak, 70; conception of, 63; deputies of, xii, xiii, 33, 80–82, 84–85, 90–91, 108–9, 130, 134, 137, 139, 154, 183; disciples of, xiii, 31, 60–61, 63, 79–83, 86–89, 92–95, 100, 102–3, 105, 107, 111, 116, 118, 121, 134, 143, 145, 149–53, 155–58, 162–63, 166–69, 180; greeting of, 52, 65; Ghulat view of, 23; hadith: *see* hadith, of imams; Ibn Hanbal, 14; heirs: *see* heirs, of Prophet, 56–57, 59, 71, 91, 145, 182; holy spirit of, 60; infallible, 27–29, 70, 97, 124, 126, 130–31; ʿilm of, 26–29, 32, 58–60, 63, 82–84, 89, 92–93, 111, 123, 126, 130, 142, 154, 178; al-Maʾmun, 13; of Medina, 20; miracles of, 58, 62–63, 67, 71, 92, 94, 148, 153, 174, 177; as muhaddath, 60; objects and, 67; political theory of, 80; preexistence of, 63; and Qurʾan, 29–30, 59; routinization of authority, xiii, 79, 81, 85–88, 109, 120, 142; and salvation: *see* salvation; sayyids, 58, 77; scholars as, 18, 32, 34; scrolls of, 28, 35, 50, 59; as shariʿ men, 31–33, 57, 59; and shariʿa, 30, 32, 79; Shiʿi view of, 8, 24, 26–28, 32–33, 35, 79, 182;

and shrines: *see* shrine; sira of, 131–34; spiritual powers of, 56–57, 60, 62, 64, 66; successor of, 27, 70, 110–12; Sufi view of, 68–69; sunna of, 132–35; Sunni view of, 32, 106; teachings of, 61–62, 79, 82, 84–87, 90–91, 95, 99–102, 106, 115, 118, 120, 123, 135, 140, 142–43, 152; Umayyad caliphs and, 8–9; weapons of, 28, 35, 63; wilaya of, 57
infallibility, 27, 29, 70, 124
ʿisma: *see* infallibility

Jabir b. Yazid al-Juʿfi, 30, 61, 84, 88, 91, 126, 163, 170–76; condemnation of, 105, 126, 170–78; defense of, 176–78; differences with other disciples, 100, favorable reports on, 84, 92, 171–76; ghulat influence on, 119, 170, 175–76; miracles of, 92, 94, 173–74, 176–77; profile on, 170–78; rajʿa belief in, 116, 127, 170–72, 176, 179; students of, 89, traditions by, 115, 170–76
al-Jahiz, ʿAmr b. Bahr, 118; 125
al-Jawad, Muhammad b. ʿAli al-Taqi, 140

Kashshi, Muhammad b. ʿUmar, 31, 61, 81, 83, 86, 89, 93, 95, 99, 102, 111–12, 115, 124, 128, 136, 139, 141, 149–53, 155–56, 159–60, 162, 166–67, 174–76, 178, 186
al-Kazim, Musa b. Jaʿfar, 62, 65, 83, 98, 102, 106, 111–13, 117–18, 122, 139, 141–42, 161, 166
al-Khuʾi, Abuʾl-Qasim Ayatullah, 45, 67, 159, 160–61, 163, 176–77
Khumayni, Ruhullah Ayatullah, 76, 106
Kulayni, Muhammad b. Yaʿqub, 61, 81, 88, 97, 111, 121, 123–24, 128, 137, 175

law: *see* shariʿa

Madelung, Wilferd, ix, 7, 25, 123
madhhab: *see* schools of law
al-Mahbub al-Hasan b., 150
al-Majlisi, Muhammad al-Baqir (ʿAllama), 36, 75, 139
Malik b. Anas, 8–9, 12–13, 19–20, 22, 30, 169
Mamaqani ʿAbd Allah, 161–63, 169, 176–77
al-Maʾmun, 13–15, 33
al-Mansur, 9, 12–13, 19, 134
mihna (inquisition), 13–14, 182
Muʿalla b. Khunays, 61, 63, 92, 100, 127
Mufaddal b. ʿUmar, 82, 121, 141, 161, damaging reports on, 160–61, ghulat influence on, 119, 160–61
al-Mufid, Muhammad b. Muhammad, 84–85, 113–14, 122, 129, 147–48, 159, 161, 175–76, 178
Muhammad the Prophet, xi, 1, 4–5, 12, 17, 25, 41–42, 47, 50, 136, 181; authority of, xi–xii, 4, 6, 24–25, 129, 182, 184; as model, 42–43, 54, 58; Sufi view of, 42–43; sunna of, 17; routinization of authority of, 5
Muhammad b. Muslim al-Thaqafi, 81, 83, 115, 136, 158, 162; authority of, 95; books of, 88, condemnation of, 98, 105, 152; debates by, 125; differences with Imams, 95–96, 98; praises of, 81, 84, 152
al-Murtada, ʿAli b. al-Husayn (Sharif), 103, 121, 129
Muslim b. Hajjaj, 84, 170–72, 174–75
al-Muwattaʾ, 8–9, 12, 19–20

Najashi, Ahmad b. ʿAli, 31, 88–89, 97, 112, 121–23, 127, 139, 150–53, 155–61, 167, 175–78

objects, 51–52, 66–67; holy, 52–53, 76; secondary, 53; and shrine, 66–67
Otto, Rudolph, xii, 37–39, 42, 77

potentia, 51–54, 56, 64, 66–68, 71, 76, 182
praesentia, 50–53, 64, 66–68, 76, 182

qadi (judge) 6, 18; as lawyers, 16; legal decisions of, 12; office of, 139; Shiʿis as, 136, 139; Shiʿi view of, 139; Sunni view of, 139
qiyas (analogy), 101–2, 104–6; role of, 102; usage of, 103–6

al-Rashid, Harun, 11, 13, 125, 139, 141, 162
rajʿa (return of Imams), 116, 123, 127–29, 139, 169–74, 176, 178
raʾy, 16, 21, 29, 101–6; ashab, 101; Shiʿi view of, 105–6, 115, 130
reverentia, 52, 56, 64
al-Rida, ʿAli b. Musa, 28, 82, 96–99, 111–13, 117, 161; in Sufi literature, 69; Waqifis and, 117, 142
rijal, activities of, xiii, 83, 87–90, 110, 128, 132, 151,154, 169, 183; as administrators, 140; as arbiters, 137; authority of: *see* authority of, rijal; biographical works on, 142, 149–53, 158–60; books by, 121–23; contribution of, 79, 81, 83, 98, 110, 135, 144, 157; condemnation of, 99; definition of, 185; deputyship of, xiii, 80, 82–83, 86, 90; differences with imams, 95, 97, 99, 101, 105, 108, 183; differences with other rijal, 99–100, 121; discourses of, 87, 120, 124–26, 128–29, 134, 143, 156; disputations by, 120, 122, 124–29, 157; evaluation of, 151, 153–56, 159–60, 180; function of, 89–90, 95, 110, 115–16, 118, 120, 137, 140–42, 157; as heirs: *see* heirs of Prophet; as holy men, 91; idealization of, 135–36, 158–61, 163, 180; as independent thinkers, 95, 99, 102, 104, 106–8; interpretation by, 104, 106–7, 134; knowledge of, 89, 91, 93–94, 136; leadership of, 84, 108; link to imams, 80, 84, 153–54; literature on, 81, 121, 149; office of: *see* charismatic office, rijal; proclamation of imam, 110–14, 143; qualities of, 83, 92; and qiyas, 103–4; and raʾy, 101–5; salvation of, 112; science of, 149–50; as shariʿ men, 88, 98, 104, 135, 137, 140; sira of, 135; sunna of, xiii, 130–32, 134; status of, 90–92, 95, 115, 137; taught by imams, 83, 120; teachings of, 97; and traditions, 81, 84, 89, 90–91, 93, 95, 103–4, 110, 114–20, 137, 143, 154, 168, 180
riwaya, and raʾy, 105–6
routinization, of Prophet's authority, 5–7; 11, 31, 40, 78, 120; of charisma, xii, 5–7; 18, 73, 78, 95, 107; of Imams, 79, 81–83, 85–88, 109, 142; in Shiʿism, 78–80, 83, 86, 102, 120; Weber's typology of, xii

Sachedina, Abdulaziz, xii, 27, 84
al-Sadiq, Jaʿfar b. Muhammad, 52, 60–61, 64, 80–82, 91, 95, 102–3, 110–14, 116, 120–21, 126, 140, 160, 174; and Abuʾl-Khattab, 82, 93, 98, 119; as ascetic, 58; criticisms of disciples, 96–100, 105, 162, 174; and disciples, 63, 81–85, 91, 96–100, 105, 113, 121–22, 125, 128, 137–38, 141, 159, 161–62, 166–67, 177; hadith of, 83, 101, 104, 114–15, 117, 139, 159, 167; heir of Prophet, 35; knowledge of, 60; and raʾy, 105–6; as teacher, 30, 147; school of law of, 56; scrolls of, 28, Sufi view of, 68–69; and visitation of shrines, 64; and Waqifis, 118
al-Saduq, Muhammad b. ʿAli b. al-Husayn, 88, 103, 113, 115, 123
Safawids, 67
Salman al-Farisi, 93
salvation, by ecstasy, 3; by imam, 57, 67, 85, 105; by law, 17; of rijal, 112, 130; Shiʿi view of, 26, 112, 130; at shrines, 65
sayyids (descendants of Prophets), 44–46, 58, 70

scholars: *see* ʿulamaʾ
schools of law, diverse, 21, 40, 136; shariʿ men and, 17–18, 183; Shiʿi, 30, 56, 136; Sunni, 30, 41, 106, 136, 183
Schubel Vernon, 58
scrolls, 28, 35, 50, 59, 84, 113, 126
al-Seestani, Ayatullah, 68
shafaʿa (intercession), by holy man, 47; at shrine, 64; by imams, 65
al-Shafiʿi, Muhammad b. Idris, 21, 32
shariʿ men, authority of: *see* authority, shariʿ men; definition of, 16; functions of, 34, 90; as heirs: *see* heirs of Prophet; and holy men, 48–50, 59, 71, 74–76; imams and: *see* imams, shariʿ men; influence of, 17; in Kufa, 18, 21; and law, 17–18, 23, 31–32, 34, 72, 75, 183; Malik b. Anas as, 19; in Medina, 18–20; miracles of, 74; and office of charisma, 23, 73; opposition to, 23; origins of, 16, 41, 135; Shafiʿi and, 21, 23; rijal as, 30–31, 87–90, 95, 104, 108, 134, 137; Shiʿi view of, 23, 30–33, 56, 59, 78, 88, 95, 136; Sunni view of, 17, 23, 31–32; and tawhid, 72–73
shariʿa, biographical works, 149; and caliphs, 6, 9, 12–13; derivation of, 101–2, 135; and fiqh, 15–16; holy men and, 75–76; imams and, 30, 32, 63, 79, 130; Muwattaʾ, 19–20; Prophet and, 16; rijal and, 107, 135, 137; and schools of law, 18–19, 21, 30, 56; Shafiʿi and, 22–23; and shariʿ men, 9, 12, 16–18, 23, 31, 34, 72, 75, 135; Shiʿi, 30–31, 89, 104, 136, 149
shaykh: *see* holy men
shrine, burial near, 67; charisma of, 53, 66; culture of, 37, 51; etiquette of, 52, 64–65; of holy men, 46, 50–53, 65, 73, 76, 182; of Husayn, 64–65; miracles at, 52–53, 66; objects and, 52–53, 67; rituals at, 51–54, 66; salvation at, 65; of sayyids, 58; of Shiʿi imams, 64–67; visitation to, 51, 53, 58, 64, 67; of Zaynab, 53–54
sira, al-mutasharriʿa, 131–33; of rijal, 134–35; Shiʿi view of, 130, 135; al-ʿuqalaʾiyya, 131–34

tawthiqat (authentications), 151, 153–54, 160, 162, 176, 180; mass, 159–60, 179
al-Thawri, Sufyan, 13, 170–71
tradition: *see* hadith
Tusi, Muhammad b. Jaʿfar, 84, 88, 101, 104, 112, 117, 121–23, 129, 150–53, 155–57, 159, 167, 169, 175–76, 178

ʿulamaʾ, and ʿAbbasids, 15; authority of, 11–12, 33–35, 182–83; and caliphs, 12–15, 33–34; community, 17; as heirs, 33–34, 106; knowledge of, 34; office of, 6, 12; miracles of, 94; Shiʿi view of, 30, 32, 35–36, 81, 85, 94; Sufi shaykhs and, 49, 55, 74–76
ʿUmar b. Hanzala, 92, 137–38
ʿUmayr, Muhammad b., 86, 141, 162
urs (wedding), 52
usul arbaʿ miʾa, 122–23
usul al-fiqh, 130–31; scholars of, 130; usulis and, 105; works on, 122–23, 131, 135, 151

Waqifi, beliefs, 117–18, 120; founders of, 118, 142, 151; and rijal, 118, 120; threat of, 117; traditions for, 117–18; traditions against, 118
weapons (of Imam), 28–29, 35, 63, 77, 113, 116
Weber Max, xii, and modes of authority, xii; 2, 79; and routinized charisma, xiii, 5, 78, 95; charismatic authority, 2–4, 107; and hereditary charisma, 3, 24, 26; types of prophets, 3

Yunus b. ʿAbd al-Rahman, 82, 87, 111, 127; condemnation of, 97–98, 105, 117; praises of, 82, 88, 152; qiyas, 103, students of, 89

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim, xii, 14–15
Zayn al-ʿAbidin (ʿAli b. Husayn), 57, 113, 117
Zaynab bint ʿAli, 53–54, 69
Ziyara, of ʿAli, 65; of imams, 64–66; of al-Kazim, 65; in Shiʿism, 66
Zurara b. Aʿyan, 60, 88, 95–96, 112, 118, 125, 128, 152, 155, 158–59, 162, 171; and al-Kazim, 112–13; authority of, 102, condemnation of, 60–61, 98, 105, 161; defense of, 161, 173–74; differences with Imams, 95–99; 102, 105, 162; differences with other disciples, 100; followers of, 89–90; praises of, 81–82

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About the Author

Liyakat Takim is an associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Denver. He has published over 30 articles in various journals, books, and encyclopedias. In addition, Professor Takim has translated four books. Professor Takim has taught in American and Canadian universities and has lectured in various parts of the world. His current research examines reformation of Islamic law in contemporary times.

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Liyakat N. Takim is Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Denver.

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