

ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY
AND THEOLOGY

An Extended Survey



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ABBREVIATIONS

- EI*¹, *EI*² = *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, first, second edition
EIS = *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* or *Handwörterbuch*
GAL = Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, second edition
GALS = Supplementbände of *GAL*, first edition
GAS = Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (details of these works will be found in the General Bibliography, section A, p.164)
- N.B. n.14/6 means chapter 14, note 6; and similarly B/D means section D of the General Bibliography.

NOTE ON THE SOURCES

For theologians and philosophers who died after about 900 the primary source is their own works, and these are now relatively easy of access. Many of the most important works are now in printed editions, and these are continually being added to. There are also much wider facilities for obtaining photographic reproductions of manuscripts. Carl Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* (see Bibliography) aimed at providing a complete list of manuscripts and printed editions; but of course it has nothing after its date of publication (1943, 1949). It is in process of being supplemented and brought up to date by Fuat Sezgin's *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, but that is progressing only slowly. Details of printed books and of important articles, sometimes with brief descriptions, are contained in the *Abstracta* which constitute the second half of each annual volume of the *Revue des études islamiques*.

For the earlier period only a few complete works exist, and these mostly short, though further discoveries are made from time to time. Much reliance has thus to be placed on the secondary information derived from historians and other writers, and notably from the heresiographers (writers of accounts of the sects). The secondary sources have to be handled cautiously and critically, especially since the names of the sects were originally nicknames and could be used differently by different people. It has also to be realized that the material in the best-known works of heresiography comes from Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite sources, and that in other strands of Islamic theology many points were viewed differently. In my book *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* I attempted a radical critique of the sources for the early period, and I will here assume that this is accepted. I will also omit detailed references to matters dealt with in the *Formative Period*. The German translation of this work has some small additions which take account of material published after the English version went to print, notably some works of Professor Josef van Ess of Tübingen dealing with the Murji'ites and the Qadarites. The same volume also contains a section on 'Islamische Theologie, 950-1850', which is parallel to the second half of the present book.

Part One

THE UMAYYAD PERIOD AND ITS PRELUDE

CHAPTER ONE

THE BEGINNINGS OF SECTARIANISM

Between Muḥammad's migration to Medina in 622 and his death in 632 he was able to build up a state of considerable power. A measure of the size of the state is that on an expedition towards Syria at the end of 630 Muḥammad had 30,000 men behind him. Many, perhaps most, of the nomadic tribes of Arabia were in alliance with him, the chief exceptions being those in the Byzantine sphere of influence. The immediately following period, from 632 to 661, is known as that of the 'rightly-guided caliphs'. Abū-Bakr (632-4) was mostly occupied in quelling the revolt of certain tribes against the Medinan political system. Under 'Umar I (634-44) a phenomenal expansion took place; Syria and Egypt were wrested from the Byzantine empire and Iraq from the Persian. For the first half of the reign of 'Uthmān (644-56) expansion continued into North Africa and Persia; but about 650 it slowed down, discontent appeared among the troops (who were identical with the citizen body), and in 656 'Uthmān was killed by mutineers. 'Alī, the cousin and son-in-law of Muḥammad, was then acclaimed as caliph in Medina, but Mu'āwiya, governor of Damascus, among others, refused to recognize him. In the struggle between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya the latter was slowly gaining the upper hand when in 661 'Alī was murdered for a private grievance. Mu'āwiya's caliphate was then generally recognized, and the Umayyad dynasty thereby established.

This recital of historical events is not irrelevant to our theological concern. Exponents of the sociology of knowledge would hold that all theological and philosophical ideas have a political or social reference; and the standpoint of this survey is in accordance with such an outlook. The connection between theology and politics is particularly close and obvious in the Middle East. The Old Testament is full of it. In the early seventh century the disaffection of the native Christians of Syria and Egypt to the Byzantine emperor found a focus in the Monophysite and Nestorian heresies. It is therefore not surprising that in the discussions in chapters 1-3 it will be difficult to

say what is politics and what theology. Nevertheless, apart from the 'false prophets' who inspired the revolts, known as the Ridda or 'apostasy', from about 632 to 634, no theological element is discernible in the political conflicts within the Islamic state until just before the beginning of the Umayyad period. This was not due, either, to the absence of strife and tension. The rivalry between the two main tribes of Medina continued almost to the time of Muḥammad's death; in the appointment of a successor the jealousy of the Medinans towards the Meccans came to light; in the wars of 'apostasy' certain nomadic tribes were opposing the Medinans, Meccans and certain other nomadic tribes; and the accession of 'Alī brought into the open a clash of interests between at least three different groups of Meccans.

A theological factor first comes into contact with politics in certain disputes which took place among the followers of 'Alī. These were mostly men from nomadic tribes, now settled in military camp-towns in Iraq; and the disputes occurred when 'Alī, after defeating one group of Meccan opponents in a battle near Basra, was trying to collect a sufficient army to meet his more serious rival, Mu'āwiya, who had at his disposal the army occupying Syria. Among the troops under 'Alī's command were some who were deeply attached to him; they are said to have sworn that they would be 'friends of those whom he befriended and enemies of those to whom he was hostile'. In other words, these men believed that a leader or imam such as 'Alī could make no mistakes and do no wrong. The opposing group not merely thought that 'Alī was capable of making mistakes, but regarded him as actually in error because he was not sufficiently definite in his support of those responsible for the murder of 'Uthmān. This second group considered themselves in a sense the spiritual descendants of the men who had killed 'Uthmān (though there does not appear to have been much personal continuity). 'Uthmān, they held, had sinned in that he had not punished the crime of a prominent member of his administration; and by this sin he had forfeited the privileges that went with membership of the community, thereby rendering it not merely no sin but even a duty for Muslims to kill him.

There were probably many men in 'Alī's army whose views came somewhere between these extremes; but it is the extremes that are important for the later theological developments. The two groups described are in fact the beginnings of the two great sects of the Shi'ites and the Khārijites. The Shi'ites derive their name from the fact that they are *par excellence* the 'party' (*shī'a*), that is, of 'Alī. The Khārijites (in Arabic usually *Khawārij*, singular *Khārijī*) were so called because they 'went out' or 'seceded' (*kharajū*), first from 'Alī and then from Mu'āwiya and the Umayyads. The best-known instances of such 'secessions' are two which occurred while 'Alī was getting ready to march against the army of Syria. The first party, who

went to a place called Ḥarūrā', returned when 'Alī met some of their grievances; but some of the second party refused to be reconciled and were eventually massacred.¹ The frequency with which the story of these events is repeated should not be allowed to obscure the fact that there were five other small risings against 'Alī and about twenty during the reign of Mu'āwiya (661-80). There were also, of course, several more serious Khārijite risings at various times during the Umayyad period, and some historians have suggested that 'Khārijite' simply means 'rebel'; but a study of the theological side of the movement will show that this is not so.

The occurrence of risings under both 'Alī and Mu'āwiya proves that they were not due to personal dislike of the rule of either man, but must have resulted from some general features of the situation. Reflection suggests what these features were. The men concerned in the Khārijite risings were not of Meccan or Medinan origin, but men from nomadic tribes. Thirty years earlier these men and their fathers had been living the free life of the desert. Now they were caught up into the vast organization of the Muslim army. When the campaigns were over, they went back not to the familiar desert but to camp-cities in Iraq or Egypt. At this early period all Muslims were expected to take part in military service, and in return they received a stipend from the state. The amount of the stipend varied according to the priority of the family in adherence to Islam. Though there is scope here for many economic grievances, there do not appear from the records to have been any such. It therefore seems probable that the underlying reason for the risings was the general sense of *malaise* and insecurity consequent on the rapid and abrupt changes. It is further probable that the incipient Shi'ite movement is a different response to the same sense of *malaise* and insecurity.

This hypothesis makes possible an explanation both of the different responses to the situation of the Shi'ites and the Khārijites, and also of the intense hostility between them. In a time of change, insecurity and crisis men tend to look for salvation to the thing in their past experience that has proved most fundamental and satisfying (whether they are fully conscious of what they are doing or not). It appears to be a fact that some men believe that salvation (or the attainment of the supreme end of human life) is to be found in the following of a leader who is endowed with more than human qualities. Such qualities are usually believed to be the gift of a god, though occasionally they may be thought of rather as a natural endowment. It is convenient to use the sociological term 'charismata' and to speak of a 'charismatic leader'. It also appears to be a fact that other men look for salvation not to a leader but to a community possessing certain charismata. By being a member of such a community (and by doing nothing to forfeit one's membership) a man attains salvation.

The negative form of this belief occurs in the tag: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. The positive aspect was prominent in the thought of many Muslims, for they spoke of the Islamic community as 'the people of Paradise', implying that all the members would eventually attain to Paradise.

The existence of deep-seated beliefs of this kind explains the appearance of the Khārijite and Shī'ite movements during the caliphate of 'Alī. In the stresses and strains of the completely new life into which they had been plunged, men were in need of something firm and secure. Deep, probably unconscious, impulses made them seek this security, some by following a leader with the charisma of infallibility, others by trying to ensure that the community of which they were members was a charismatic one. For the first group the old Arab belief that special qualities of character were handed down in certain families justified them in taking 'Alī as a leader of infallible wisdom, even when his actual political decisions were hardly in accordance with this belief. The second group had a certain advantage in that the community of Muslims had undoubtedly been founded by a divinely inspired prophet and possessed a way of life supernaturally revealed to it; to ensure that this community remained the people of Paradise, however, it was necessary, some of them felt, that those who broke the rules should be excluded from it. In this way there arose the distinctive Khārijite tenet that those who have committed a grave sin are thereby excluded from the community. Positively the Khārijites were seeking security in the knowledge that the community to which they belonged was a supernatural or charismatic one.

Further reflection along these lines shows why there was such bitterness between Khārijites and Shī'ites. For both groups the question was one of whether they were going to attain salvation or realize their supreme end; one might say roughly that it was a matter of life and death. In this situation the beliefs of each group contradicted those of the other; and so each group was in the position of preventing the other from attaining salvation. The Khārijites, not convinced of the infallibility of the leader, saw rather that he might make a mistake and thereby lead the whole community into a course of action which would cause them to forfeit their status as people of Paradise. The Shī'ites, on the other hand, were horrified at the prospect that ordinary uninspired members of the community might, by their interpretation of its scriptures (which the Shī'ites did not regard as infallible), cause the inspired leader to adopt a course of action which he knew to be wrong. In this way each group's chance of salvation, as they saw it, was endangered by the other group. It is not surprising that there was bitter hostility between them.

What has been said so far is fairly well established. When it comes, however, to the question why some men should turn to the

charismatic leader and others to the charismatic community, there is an explanation that can be given, but for the moment it must be regarded as a hypothesis needing further examination (chiefly by comparing parallel instances in other cultures). It is conceivable that the two reactions to the same situation are due to ultimate and fundamental differences in the human constitution; but this is a dubious theory with serious consequences, and so it is preferable, if it can be done, to explain the differences by hereditary or environmental factors. There are two points which help towards an explanation.

The first point is that there are resemblances between the little groups of Khārijite rebels and the effective units of nomadic society. In the risings during the reigns of 'Alī and Mu'āwiyā we are usually told the number of men involved, and it varies between thirty and five hundred, with an average of about two hundred. They did not retire to the desert, so far as we can judge, but merely withdrew to a safe distance from the towns of Iraq, and presumably kept themselves alive by raiding or by levying food from the countryside, until a government force suppressed them. Each little band presumably regarded itself as the core of the community of genuine Muslims, though not denying that there were genuine Muslims apart from the band. Most other men, however, were not genuine Muslims and therefore could be killed with impunity. Thus in various ways the little revolting bands were creating a form of life not unlike that of the divisions of a nomadic tribe. It was not exactly regression to desert conditions, for the basis of the Khārijite group was religion and not kinship. Yet it is significant that the Khārijites, like the nomads in earlier days, became noted for their skill as poets and orators; and, despite their Islamic faith, the sentiments expressed in their poems are close to those of the pagan nomads.

The second point to be noted is that, when one asks to which tribes the early Shī'ites and Khārijites belonged, a definite difference is found. The difference is not absolute, for a great many tribes are mentioned on both sides; but what can be asserted is that (1) a significant proportion of the early Shī'ites came from the tribes of South Arabia, and (2) the doctrinally important individuals and sects among the Khārijites (during the Umayyad period as a whole) were mainly from three northern tribes. Moreover, there does not seem to be anything in the history of the period from 622 to 656 to explain this difference of reaction. The northern tribes as a whole had been earlier in joining the Muslim raids into Iraq; but at least one tribe prominent among the Shī'ites had shared in the early raids. 'Alī had been sent by Muḥammad to perform special duties in South Arabia, but there is no mention of his gaining the special affection of the people. Whether the environments from which the members of these tribes came had been deeply influenced by Judaism or Monophysite or Nestorian

Christianity is a point that could be further investigated; but, even if some such influence can be proved, it does not look like giving the whole explanation.

The hypothesis to be put forward is that the difference in reaction is due to century-old traditions. The South Arabian tribes stood somehow within the tradition of the ancient civilization of that region, more than a thousand years old. In this civilization there had been divine or semi-divine kings. Even if the Arab tribesmen of the seventh century had not themselves lived under kings, they must unconsciously have been affected by the tradition, within which it had been usual in times of danger to rely on the superhuman leadership of the king. Because of this they in their time of crisis looked about for a leader of this type, and thought they had found one in 'Alī. The members of the northern tribes had not been within the sphere of influence of the belief in divine kingship. On the contrary, the normal practice in the desert tribes was for all the adult males to be regarded as in certain respects equal; and there are traces of 'democratic communities' of this kind far back in the pre-history of Iraq. Along with this practice of equality went a belief that outstanding excellence belonged to the tribe and the tribal stock, so that merely to have the blood of the tribe in one's veins gave one a place of honour in the world. The Arabs of the time just before Muḥammad gave this belief a this-worldly interpretation; but in the crisis round about 656 it would not be surprising if the idea of a small community of genuine Muslims evoked a deep unconscious response from those who had lived in this 'democratic' tradition. This at least is the view that is here propounded as a hypothesis.²

NOTES

1. See the sources given in notes 2/1, 2/6.
2. The views expressed in this chapter are formulated with greater detail in my previous writings: 'Shī'ism under the Umayyads', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1960, 158-72; 'Khārijite Thought in the Umayyad Period', *Der Islam*, xxxvi (1961), 215-31; 'The Conception of the Charismatic Community in Islam', *Numen*, vii (1960), 77-90; *Islam and the Integration of Society*, London 1961, 94-114. These works are summarized and supplemented in my *Formative Period*, 9-59.

CHAPTER TWO

THE KHĀRIJITES

Mu'āwiya reigned as universally recognized caliph from 661 to 680. His power rested chiefly on the army composed of the Arabs settled in Syria, and he made Damascus his capital. In the practice of the nomadic Arabs a chief was usually succeeded by the best qualified member of his family; primogeniture and even sonship gave no special rights. This gave little guidance in arranging for the succession to the caliphate. Mu'āwiya tried to have his son Yazīd acknowledged as successor before his own death, but even so there were some who did not accept Yazīd. The opposition led to a catastrophic civil war when Yazīd died in 683, leaving only a minor son. 'Abd-Allāh ibn-az-Zubayr (or, more simply, Ibn-az-Zubayr), who had defied Yazīd from Mecca, now gained control of much of Iraq as well as of the region of Mecca and Medina. There was widespread confusion, and vast tracts of the caliphate were under the effective control of neither the Umayyads nor Ibn-az-Zubayr. Under the leadership of a member of another branch of the family the Umayyads fought back; in 691 they completed the recovery of Iraq, and before the end of 692 extinguished the last flames of revolt in Mecca.

The expansion of the caliphate, which had continued under Mu'āwiya but had been stopped by the civil war, was now resumed. In the east the Muslims extended their sway to Central Asia and north-west India; while in north Africa they pressed westwards into Morocco, and in 711 crossed the straits into Spain. To the north there were frequent expeditions against the Byzantines, but no permanent occupation of territory proved possible. The vastness of the territories ruled led to ever-increasing internal tensions, and the clumsy administrative machine lumbered along with creaks and groans. From about 730 or 735 it must have been clear to acute observers that the empire was slowly breaking up, and some of these observers attempted, by staging a revolt, to create an alternative government. None was successful, however, though they played a part in weakening the Umayyads, until eventually in 750 the armies of the 'Abbā-

sid movement from the east swept into Iraq, liquidated the Umayyad regime, and established the new dynasty of the 'Abbāsids.

Two Khārijite movements which greatly stimulated theological development sprang up and grew to a considerable size during the civil war of Ibn-az-Zubayr.¹ The first of these is the sub-sect of the Azraqites (Azāriqa), so named from their original leader, Nāfi' ibn-al-Azraq.² Some of the Khārijites from Basra had sympathized with Ibn-az-Zubayr (as an opponent of the Umayyads) and had given him active help. In time, however, they seem to have realized that, even if successful, he would not rule according to their ideas. When Basra went over to him in 684, the Azraqites took to the mountains eastwards. Though their leader was killed in the following year, they were able to increase and maintain their strength, so that for a time (about 691) they were a threat to Basra. After the end of the civil war the Umayyad armies were able to exterminate them (but there are some mysterious references to isolated Azraqites in the eastern parts of the caliphate at later dates).

The Azraqites stimulated theological thinking because, with a fair measure of logic, they worked out the Khārijite position to an extreme conclusion. The basic principle, which had been formulated in Qur'ānic words by some of 'Alī's followers who disagreed with him, was: 'no decision but God's' (*lā ḥukma illā li-llāh*), that is, 'the decision is God's alone'; by this was meant that judgement was to be given in accordance with the Qur'ān. This further implied that all who had committed a grave sin were destined for Hell and belonged to the 'people of Hell', since in the Khārijite view this was clearly stated in the Qur'ān. In addition it was held that 'Uthmān had sinned in not inflicting a punishment prescribed in the Qur'ān.

The Azraqites now went still further, on the ground that the existing authorities had also sinned, and asserted that those who did not join their band in fighting the existing authorities were sinners. The members of their band were the true Muslims; their camp alone was the 'house of Islam' (*dār al-Islām*) where Islam was truly observed. Those who 'sat still' at home and did not make the *nijra* or 'migration' to their camp were sinners and unbelievers, outside the community of Islam. This migration, of course, was parallel to the *hijra* of Muḥammad from Mecca to Medina in 622. By thus excluding from the Islamic community even those Muslims who did not agree with them in every detail, they made it lawful to kill such persons, and also their wives and children; for according to old Arab usage there was no wrong in killing someone not a member of one's tribe or an allied tribe, though it would be unwise to do so if the victim's tribe was strong. This puritanical theology became a justification for sheer terrorism, and the Azraqites became noted and feared for their widespread massacres. It is said that when a man went to them and said he

wanted to join their band he was given a prisoner to kill; if, as is likely, it was a prisoner from the man's tribe, the killing would break his ties with his tribe and attach him irrevocably to the Azraqites. Doubtless this happened sometimes, but whether it was a regular practice we cannot be certain.

The second sub-sect that became prominent about the same time was the Najdites (Najadāt or Najdiyya).³ The nucleus consisted of Khārijites from central Arabia (from a district called the Yamāma) who helped Ibn-az-Zubayr in Mecca, but later returned to their native region and established a form of autonomous rule. From 686 to 692 their leader was Najda; hence their name. For a time they ruled vast tracts of Arabia—more even than Ibn-az-Zubayr—including Bahrein and Oman ('Umān) on the east coast, and parts of the Yemen and Ḥaḍramawt in the south and south-west. There were many quarrels about the leadership, and after the death of Najda in 692 the sect split up, and the parts either disappeared or were suppressed by the Umayyad generals.

The Najdites originally held views similar to those of the Azraqites, but their responsibility for governing a large territory made them less rigorous in their interpretation. Those who 'sat still' and did not actively support them were not regarded as unbelievers (and so outside the community) but only as 'hypocrites' (*munāfiqūn*). It is also reported that they authorized members of their sub-sect who lived under non-Khārijite rule to conceal their true opinions—a practice known as *taqiyya* or 'prudent fear'. Such points show that the Najdites did not have the same clear line of demarcation between themselves and other Muslims as did the Azraqites. Much of the accounts of Najdite views is taken up with legal points of the kind that would naturally arise in the administration of a large state; for example, there were questions about the treatment of captured women by the leaders of an expedition, and about the punishment of isolated cases of theft and adultery.

In what is recorded of Najdite views on such matters we see the beginnings of a reconsideration of the Khārijite conception of the true Islamic community so as to make allowances for human imperfections. The strict Khārijite view, from which the Najdites presumably started, was that a man who commits a grave sin belongs to the 'people of Hell'. For the Azraqites living in a camp the man guilty of theft or adultery could easily be excluded from the camp; but it was not easy for the Najdites to banish every thief and adulterer from the entire region which they ruled. They may have thought that it was not even desirable. This was not due to any moral laxity, for they are said to have been strict about wine-drinking, but presumably to the realization that any normal community is bound to contain both good and bad.

It was necessary, however, to find a theoretical justification for the course of action that was practically desirable. This the Najdites did by making a distinction between fundamentals in religion and non-fundamentals. Among the latter they included novel legal points where no official decision had been given. Persistence in theft or adultery was regarded as 'idolatry' (*shirk*), presumably on the ground that it implied a false view of the nature of the community and its law or way-of-life. This would be one of the fundamentals, and like errors in the other fundamentals would involve exclusion from the community and inclusion in the 'people of Hell'. Isolated lapses into theft or adultery, however, were not regarded as affecting fundamentals. The common view that thieves and adulterers went to Hell had therefore to be modified. The Najdites allowed that God might punish them, but insisted that, if he did so, it would not be in Hell, and that he would eventually admit them to Paradise. Thus membership of the community and soundness on fundamentals led to salvation, to Paradise.

While the Azraqites and Najdites were facing the problems of autonomous Khārijite rule, there was a body of moderate Khārijites in Basra who were concerned rather with the problems of living under non-Khārijite Muslim rule. This body of pious men, with little direct interest in politics, seems to have been in existence throughout the reign of Mu'āwiyā. Some of them helped Ibn-az-Zubayr in Mecca for a time; after 684 they accepted, perhaps actively supported, his lieutenant in Basra, and in due course also accepted the Umayyad governor. Unfortunately our information about these people is slight. There appears to have been intense theological activity in Basra about this time, during which the foundations of most later Islamic theology were laid, but we have only tantalizing glimpses of it. It is possible, however, to say something about the chief questions discussed.

The main problem was how to justify the acceptance by Khārijites of a non-Khārijite government. It had been customary for Muslims to distinguish between the 'sphere of Islam' (*dār al-islām*) and the 'sphere of war' (*dār al-ḥarb*); the former was where the sovereign ruled according to Islamic principles, the latter was where there was no such sovereign and where it was the duty of Muslims to fight if success seemed possible. Neither of these descriptions fitted the position of the moderate Khārijites in Basra. Some therefore spoke of themselves as being in the 'sphere of prudent fear', in which they had to conceal their true opinions. This was associated with the view that non-Khārijites were 'unbelievers' and 'idolaters' (*kāfirūn*, *mushrikūn*). As time went on, however, it began to seem paradoxical to apply the term 'idolaters' to upright God-fearing Muslims who differed from them on a few points. Some therefore allowed that these

were at least 'monotheists' and that they themselves were living in the 'sphere of monotheism'. Yet others spoke of their sphere as that of 'mixing', and apparently held that, because the government is neither pagan nor strictly Islamic, some things cannot be precisely stated, and a measure of compromise, or rather of indefiniteness and indecision, is necessary.

One of the questions to which much attention was given was that of the marriage of believing women (that is, Khārijites) to 'unbelievers' (that is, non-Khārijites), or—what really amounted to the same thing—the sale of believing slave-girls to unbelievers. This raised in a serious form the problem of the relation of the small community of true believers (as they considered it) to the wider community of ordinary 'unbelieving' Muslims. According to the Qur'ān a Muslim woman might not marry any but a Muslim man; in other words, her marriage had to be within the community. Since the purchaser of a slave-girl was entitled to have marital relations with her, the sale of a slave-girl to an 'unbeliever' made a breach of the Qur'ānic rule likely. The story is told of a man called Ibrāhīm who was kept waiting by a slave-girl and vowed he would sell her to the bedouin. Another member of his sect challenged him, but the majority seems to have gone with Ibrāhīm. That is to say, they decided that they were in some sense members of the wider community. In making this decision they were coming near to abandoning the original Khārijite conception of a 'community of saints', which committed no grave sins and held all the right views.

Among the politically quiescent Khārijites of Basra is a small group called the Wāqifites (*Wāqifiyya*, *Wāqifa*). Their name means 'those who suspend judgement'. They were not important in themselves, but they merit attention because they mark a transitional stage between the Khārijites and the Murji'ites (*Murji'a*), who will be described in chapter 4. It has been noticed above how some even of the morally stricter Khārijites, because they felt that a single lapse into theft or adultery did not deserve to be punished by exclusion from the community, were forced to say that the persons guilty of these crimes would not be punished in Hell. In a sense, then, they were playing down the importance of immoral or anti-social conduct. This was inevitable because of their rigid distinction between the 'people of Paradise' and the 'people of Hell'; and that distinction was part of the communalistic way of thinking natural to the Arabs. For the pre-Islamic Arab the courage of an individual man had not been simply his own, but also in a sense his tribe's; it was only possible for him to be courageous because he came of courageous stock. The morality of the nomadic Arabs was dominated by loyalty to kin, that is, to one's tribe or clan or family; on behalf of a kinsman almost anything was permitted. This communalistic way of thinking is

finding expression in those Khārijites who emphasized the corporate unity of the 'people of Paradise' at the expense of certain points of individual morality. In so doing they were going against the more individualistic outlook of the Qur'ān, according to which each man as an individual has to answer for his own sins on the Day of Judgment.

The distinctive position of the Wāqifites was that they suspended judgement on such questions as whether slave-girls should be sold to 'unbelievers'. In effect they were saying that it is impossible for men to draw a clear dividing-line between the 'people of Paradise' and the 'people of Hell'. This further enabled them to insist that wrongdoers should be punished but not excluded from the community, on the ground that a human being was unable to know their ultimate fate and so had to suspend judgement on it. In this way they countered the tendency to minimize the seriousness of crime and wrongdoing. Thus the Wāqifites and other Khārijites thinking along similar lines were preparing the way for the later Sunnite conception of the Islamic community. They managed to retain something of the old Arab communal outlook and communal feeling, and to attach to the Islamic community as a whole the values formerly attached by the nomad to his tribe. At the same time they made provision for the maintenance of law and order that was essential for the survival of a large civilized community. It is hardly possible to over-estimate the importance of the theological discussions in Basra in the period from about 690 to 730. It was here that the foundations of all later Islamic theology were laid. Why theology should have developed in Iraq, especially Basra, rather than in Syria, Egypt or even Medina, is not clear; but it is a fact, and it is worthy of being further pondered.

Perhaps the most important contribution of the Khārijites to the development of Islamic thought and Islamic civilization was their insistence that the life of the community and the decisions of its rulers must be based on the Qur'ān. Presumably many Muslims agreed with this in theory, but the Khārijites were prepared to stand up to the governmental authorities in defence of their view. Had they not felt so strongly about this, the empire might well have gone back to pre-Islamic principles and developed into a secular Arab state. The point was eventually accepted by the whole community in the form of the doctrine that all social and political life must be based on the Shari'a or revealed divine law. To the Qur'ān, however, as a source of our knowledge of the Shari'a, the main body added another, namely, Muḥammad's *sunna* or standard practice as recorded in sound Hadīth, taking his acts and words to be based on the divine 'wisdom' (*ḥikma*) given to him according to several verses of the Qur'ān.⁴

There continued to be manifestations of Khārijism of various kinds after 700. In the closing decades of Umayyad rule there were

several risings involving larger numbers of men than the risings against Mu'āwiya, but, though these were nominally attached to one or other of the more moderate sub-sects, none contributed appreciably to the development of theology. Khārijite doctrines also came to be held by various groups in the Arabian peninsula, North Africa and elsewhere.⁵ As a result more or less durable states were constituted in two regions, both based on the Ibādite form of Khārijism.⁶ From 777 to 909 the Rustamid dynasty united all the Ibādites of North Africa from a centre in western Algeria, while in 793 the Ibādites of Oman established a polity which has continued to exist to the present day, though not without some periods of eclipse. The existence of these states led to modifications of Ibādite doctrine, to make it a suitable basis for a permanent community, and not just for a rebel band; but their arguments had ceased to be of interest to the main body of Muslims. The small Ibādite states were thus able to preserve their form of life in almost complete isolation from the world around them, thanks to their professing a distinctive doctrine; and the doctrine, instead of being the basis for the life of the whole Islamic community, became the instrument of cohesion and distinctive identity for various small groups. Meanwhile the important doctrines which had characterized the earliest Khārijites—their conception of the true Islamic community and their insistence that its life should be based on the Qur'ān—had, after being purged of unsatisfactory aspects, been taken up by other Muslims, while the main theological discussions had moved away from the topics to which other special Khārijite doctrines were relevant.

NOTES

1. Julius Wellhausen, *The Religio-political Factions in Early Islam*, Amsterdam 1975; translation (with additional notes) by R. C. Ostle of the German original, Göttingen 1901; thoroughly studies the Sunnite historical sources for the Khārijites and Shī'ites under the Umayyads. The main risings are also described in Wellhausen's *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, Calcutta 1927.
2. *EI*², art. Azāriḳa (R. Rubinacci); *Formative Period*, 20-3.
3. *Formative Period*, 23-5.
4. See below, ch. 9.
5. L. Veccia Vaglieri, 'Le vicende del Harigismo in epoca abbaside', *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, xxiv (1944), 31-44; Watt, 'The Significance of Khārijism under the 'Abbāsids', *Recherches d'Islamologie* (Anawati-Gardet Festschrift), Louvain 1978, 381-7.
6. *EI*², art. Ibādiyya (T. Lewicki). Khārijite (Ibādite) sources have been studied with interesting results by Italian scholars in Naples; see references in *EI*², art. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (Veccia Vaglieri).

CHAPTER THREE
THE EARLY SHĪ'ITES

Although the Shī'ites and the Khārijites were at opposite poles theologically for most of the Umayyad period, and were in this way complementary, their history was altogether different. Among the Shī'ites there were none of the intellectual debates that took place in Khārijite circles in Basra. For much of the time Shī'ism was quiescent, and anything that was happening was happening under the surface. Then suddenly, when a leader appeared, there would be an explosion. This is perhaps inevitable in a movement which places the emphasis on the leader.¹

On the death of 'Alī in 661 some of his followers were inclined to support the claims of al-Ḥasan, the son of 'Alī and Muḥammad's daughter Fāṭima; but al-Ḥasan had no political ability or ambition, and readily gave up his claims in return for the payment of a substantial sum of money by Mu'āwiya. In the troubled period following the death of the latter in 680 al-Ḥasan's full brother al-Ḥusayn was encouraged to lead a revolt in Iraq. The promised support was not forthcoming, but al-Ḥusayn and his small band could not be prevailed on to surrender and were eventually massacred by a vastly superior army at Kerbela (Karbala') in October 680. These tragic events are still annually commemorated by Shī'ites with a kind of Passion Play during the month of Muḥarram—the Arabic month in which the original disaster occurred. In 684 in the confusion of the civil war a group of men from Kufa calling themselves the Penitents raised an army of 4,000 men, not only to show their penitence but also to avenge al-Ḥusayn. When they marched against an Umayyad force, however, they were utterly defeated. Thus the beginning of the Shī'ite movement was a series of political failures.

The next event in Shī'ite history is slightly more successful and, apart from that, of great significance. This is the rising of al-Mukhtār in Kufa from 685 to 687. Up to this time all the Shī'ites, or at least all the prominent Shī'ites, had been Arabs. In Kufa, however, al-Mukhtār was also joined by *mawālī* or 'clients' and, because of

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tension between the Arabs and the clients, was more and more forced to rely on the latter. Though the rising was crushed by Ibn-az-Zubayr's general, it had sufficient success to give the clients the idea that they had a certain amount of political power if they wielded it aright. A man could become a client in various ways, but the clients intended in this context are probably all non-Arab Muslims. A member of one of the protected communities of Christians, Jews, etc., on becoming a Muslim left his own community and was attached as client to an Arab tribe (presumably because the Islamic community was regarded as a federation of Arab tribes). This was an inferior status, however, in some respects, and as more non-Arabs became Muslims there was a growing volume of dissatisfaction with it and a demand for equality. The clients attracted to Shī'ism appear to have included both persons from the older strata of the population of Iraq (who may be called Aramaeans) and persons of Persian stock. In the Persian empire under the Sasanian dynasty Iraq had been persianized somewhat, while Aramaean culture had spread in Persia proper. In Iraq there was a long tradition of divine kingship, and it would therefore be natural for the Aramaeans in particular to adhere to an Islamic sect which emphasized charismatic leadership. There were many Persians among the Shī'ites during the Umayyad period, but it must be borne in mind that the close identification of Shī'ism with Persia only dates from the sixteenth century. Nevertheless the rising of al-Mukhtār is an important stage in the development of Islam as a religion, because from this time onwards Shī'ism was linked with the political grievances and aspirations of non-Arab Muslims.

For fifty years after the death of al-Mukhtār in 687 there was no overt political activity among the Shī'ites, though Shī'ite religious ideas were doubtless spreading quietly beneath the surface. There are frequent references to the sub-sect which supported al-Mukhtār, though they are called not Mukhtārites but Kaysānites.² This is doubtless a nickname intended to emphasize their non-Arab character, since Kaysān was a prominent client. As signs of collapse became evident in the Umayyad regime, the Shī'ites appear once more on the political stage. Two leaders were executed in Kufa in 737 and another in 742, all suspected of organizing an underground resistance. In 740 there was a serious insurrection under a great-great-grandson of Muḥammad called Zayd, but it was quickly suppressed. Still more serious for the Umayyads was the revolt of 'Abd-Allāh ibn-Mu'āwiya, a great-grandson of Muḥammad's cousin Ja'far; this lasted from 744 to 747. Finally, the movement which replaced the Umayyads by the 'Abbāsids had much Shī'ite support, and on the religious side might be regarded as primarily a manifestation of Shī'ism. It remains to look at the theological developments accompanying these external events.³

The first point to be made is that although, as the sources suggest, there may have been widespread sympathy for the Shī'ite position, this position itself was still extremely vague. In particular there was no general recognition that the imams later acknowledged by the Imāmite and Ismā'īlite branches of Shī'ism, the descendants of al-Ḥusayn, son of 'Alī, had any special status or special gifts. The tendency was rather to consider that the charismata requisite for the position of imam belonged potentially to all members of Muḥammad's clan of Hāshim, whether descended from Muḥammad through Fāṭima or not. (Descent from Muḥammad never in fact was prominent in Shī'ite claims, but at most secondary, since the position of 'Alī was independent of this.) Thus al-Mukhtār claimed that he was acting on behalf of the imam Muḥammad ibn-al-Ḥanafiyya ('the son of the Ḥanafite woman'), a son of 'Alī but not by Fāṭima. Some held that the imam after him was his son, Abū-Hāshim. A small group for a time took as imam a great-grandson of al-Ḥasan, known as Muḥammad the Pure Soul (an-Nafs az-Zakiyya). The rising under the great-grandson of Ja'far (Muḥammad's cousin and 'Alī's brother) has already been mentioned. Finally, the 'Abbāsids at first claimed to have inherited the imamate from Muḥammad ibn-al-Ḥanafiyya and Abū-Hāshim, but at a later date (officially from about 780) asserted instead that the true imam after the Prophet was his uncle al-'Abbās, who was of course their ancestor.

Complementary to this acceptance of a variety of men as having the divinely given qualities needed for leadership of the Islamic community there is the fact that no group of importance recognized the descendants of al-Ḥusayn as having any special position. For later Shī'ite theory the first three rightful imams of the community after Muḥammad are 'Alī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn; the fourth is the latter's son 'Alī Zayn-al-'Ābidīn, who died about 714; the fifth is his son Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d.733); and the sixth his son Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq (d.765). Even Imāmite sources, however, make it clear that these men, the fourth, fifth and sixth imams, were not active politically; and it would have been difficult for Muslims of this period to conceive of a religious claim that was not also a political one. Nothing at all is recorded of the fourth imam. Of the fifth imam it is reported that the men executed at Kufa in 737 and 742 claimed to be his emissaries; but there is confusion in the stories and it is doubtful if he gave them any support. The sixth imam, Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq, seems to have realized the possibilities of a Shī'ite movement and to have set about, doubtless with much caution and circumspection, organizing a body of supporters; but this would mostly take place before the end of the Umayyad period.

The Shī'ism of the Umayyad period was thus vaguer and more indefinite than later Shī'ism, and lacked any semblance of a coher-

ent theory. It was the manifestation of a deep unconscious need—a feeling in men's hearts that they would be happier and more satisfied spiritually if they had a charismatic leader to follow. The imam of whom the Shī'ites dreamed is precisely what is meant by a charismatic leader. The history of early Shī'ism, and indeed of much later Shī'ism also, is that of a pathetic quest for individuals to whom the dignity of imam may be attached. Most of those accepted as imam belied the hopes set on them; and yet the quest went on. The persistence of the quest shows the depth of the feeling involved. Men with political ambitions and qualities of leadership, but no shadow of a claim to the charismata of the Hāshimites, found a way of using this widespread desire for an imam. Al-Mukhtār, for example, asserted that he was acting as the emissary of a genuine imam, Muḥammad ibn-al-Ḥanafiyya; he may have had the consent of the latter in making this assertion, but it is certain that he received no active help from him. There are several later instances of a similar proceeding, and in some of them the imam invoked repudiated the self-styled emissary. Others seem to have resigned themselves to political inactivity in the foreseeable future; and they found a theological justification for this attitude in the theory that the imam was not dead but in concealment and that at an appropriate time he would return as the Mahdī or Guided One (a kind of Messiah) to right all wrongs and establish justice on earth.

Thus Umayyad Shī'ism is a veritable chaos of ideas and attitudes. A beginning of order was introduced by the idea of designation (*naṣṣ*)—this involves the view that there is only one imam at a time and that the imam designates his successor. In the Umayyad period, however, this was not wholly effective, since different groups recognized different imams. A different line was taken by the Zaydites, the followers of the Zayd who revolted in 740. They would have nothing to do with the idea of a hidden imam; one of the conditions of being imam was that the claim to be such was made publicly (and, of course, was made effective by military success). Zayd's revolt was a realistic attempt to provide an alternative government to that of the Umayyads. He therefore tried to gain the support not merely of the Shī'ites but also of the main body of Muslims, and to do this he made the assertion that, though 'Alī was the rightful imam after the Prophet and superior to Abū-Bakr and 'Umar, the 'imamate of the inferior' (*imāmat al-mafḍūl*) was permissible. This concession, however, seems to have alienated the more thorough-going Shī'ites and may have contributed to Zayd's failure.

The 'Abbāsīd movement shows a mixture of genuine religious feeling (though perhaps not in the top leadership) and shrewd political calculation. Realizing how widespread Shī'ite sympathies were, they claimed to be the rightful imams through inheritance by desig-

