

Persianization of *Shaykhīsm*: The Doctrine of *Rukn-i Rābi‘* from Aḥmad al-Aḥsā’ī to Karīm Khān Kirmānī

The juridico-theological school, shaped around the teachings and charismatic personality of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā’ī (d. 1241 H/1826), has been the subject of lively debate since its emergence in the nineteenth century. Scholars were particularly interested in the question of authority and spiritual leadership in *Shaykhīsm* and its culmination in the doctrine of the Fourth Pillar (*rukṇ-i rābi‘*), which has been elaborated upon mostly by Aḥsā’ī’s disciple and the last influential leader of the school, Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī (d. 1288 H/1871). While there is abundant information about the doctrine of the Fourth Pillar in the writings of Kirmānī, our knowledge about the nature of leadership as well as of the identity of the holder of the office of *rukṇ-i rābi‘* in the writings of the preceding *Shaykhī* leaders is lacking. Although they touched briefly upon the issue, none contributed to it as Kirmānī did. In fact, he turned *rukṇ-i rābi‘* into the cornerstone of his school. Moreover, he played an important role in the Persianization of *Shaykhīsm* in different ways, from writing in Persian to engaging in the political vicissitudes of the Qajar era.

In this paper, I will first discuss the conception of leadership in the key texts of the *Shaykhī* leaders including Aḥsā’ī, Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī (d. 1259 H/1843) and Mullā Mīrzā Ḥassan Gawhar (d. 1266 H/1850). Second, I will analyze the doctrine of *rukṇ-i rābi‘* in Kirmānī’s texts to examine how it relates to tradition with regard to new questions and the quest for establishing a separate school with clear boundaries. Third, I will contextualize Kirmānī’s attempts to Persianize the *Shaykhī* creeds and argue that they should be understood in the broader perspective of the nationalistic aspirations of mid-nineteenth century Persia.

Key terms: *Shaykhism*, the Fourth Pillar, spiritual leadership, Aḥsā'ī, Rashtī, Kirmānī.

Introduction

Unlike what is argued in the existing scholarship,¹ the doctrine of *rukn-i rābi'* goes back to the writings of Aḥsā'ī and his attempt to define the nature of “true knowledge” (*‘ilm al-ḥaqīqī*). In what one can call his quest for originality, Aḥsā'ī proposes the term *qurā'i zāhirah* (lit. visible towns), both as a level of being and of knowledge. Reading and interpreting the intentions of the author, one needs to have Aḥsā'ī's *imamology* in mind to grasp what he means by visible towns. He discusses visible towns pervasively and in nearly all his writings, particularly in *Sharḥ al-Ziyārat al-Jāmi'at al-Kabīrah* (Commentary on the Grand Comprehensive Visitation) and *Jawāmi' al-Kalim* (Comprehensive Words). He also calls *qurā'i zāhirah*, *‘ulemā al-mujtahidūn* (scholars/lawyers who are entitled to conduct ijtihad) or simply *‘ulemā-i Shī'ī*². Aḥsā'ī's elaboration on visible towns and their relation to the levels of gnosis is unclear and is in fact scattered throughout numerous treatises of *Jawāmi'*, his interpretations of some *ḥadīth*,³ as well as in his commentary on the *Sharḥ*.

¹ - Hamid, Idris Samawi, *Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī in Philosophy in Qajar Iran*, Reza Pourjavadi (ed), 2019 (Leiden and Boston: Brill), pp. 66-124.

Dāryūsh Rahmānīyān and Muḥsin Sirāj, Aṣl-i Ma'rifat bi "Rukn-i Rābi'" dar Andīshay-a Shaykhīyah, *Muṭālī'āt-i Tārīkh-i Islam*, 3, No. 8, Spring 1390, pp. 53-76.

Ghulām Hossein Zargarī Nejād and Muḥsin Sirāj, Uṣūl-i Dīn wa Madhhab wa Naẓariya-ye Nātiq-i Wāḥid dar Andīshay-i Shaykhīyah, *Muṭālī'āt-i Tārīkh-i Islam*, 3, No. 10, Fall 1390, pp. 79-92.

² - Aḥsā'ī, *Risāla Fī Jawāb al-Mullā Fath 'Alī Khān* (Treatise to the Questions of Mullā Fath 'Alī Khān), Vol. 8, 1430 Hb, p. 573. To avoid repetition, I refer the readers to my article where I discussed *qurā'i zāhirah* in more detail. See:

Leila Chamankhah, "Conflicting Worldviews: Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī's Risālat al-Rashtīyah and the Problematic of Akbarīan Mysticism", *Iranian Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2020.1777392>, published online 20 July 2020.

³ - Interestingly, when it comes to clarifying *aḥādīth* and *akhbār*, the *Shaykhī 'ulemā* hardly ever use 'exegesis' (*tafsīr*), but instead *taw'īl* (interpretation). Furthermore, unlike similar schools (Sufism and *ḥikmat*

Aḥsā'ī discusses *ma'rifa* and its distinction from *ilm* when pondering *ma'ād* (resurrection) and *i'ādat al-ajsām* (lit. resurrection of bodies, also bodily resurrection),⁴ and argues that *ilm* is only obtainable through conventional conduits, particularly *'aql* (lit. reason)⁵, but *'aql* is insufficient to help us understand the corporal resurrection of *ajsām*. In his distinction between exoteric and esoteric sciences, Aḥsā'ī points to his dreams of the *imāms* as they embed the *ma'rifa*, which is traditionally untransferable to others. However, as we will observe in the following, his successors claim that they have inherited their master's very particular gnosis that he had gained through his personal dreams. Pertinent to this, is the transformation of personal experiences (here Aḥsā'ī) to any claim to universal authority.

Rational source/evidence (*a-dalīl ul-'aqlī*) only indicates spiritual *i'ādah* and is incapable of explaining bodily resurrection, which is indicated in the Book and the Sunnah, particularly in the teachings of the *imāms*. Aḥsā'ī concludes that those who question the validity of *i'ādat al-ajsām* are graduates of the schools of philosophy, Sufism (particularly that of Mumīt al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (d. 637 H/1240), Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1045 H/1640) and the like, and in order to understand the intricacies of bodily resurrection one needs to be equipped with *ma'rifa* (gnosis), which is the most suitable method (Ibid.).

discourse) in which *Qur'ānīc* exegesis plays a central role, the *Shaykhī 'ulemā* do not dedicate much space to it and their focus is more on the interpretation of *ḥadīth*, or in their own terminology *khabar*.

⁴ - Aḥsā'ī discusses resurrection in a number of texts, including *Risāla fī Jawāb al-Ākhund Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusseyṇ Bāfqī* (Treatise Responding the Questions of Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusseyṇ Bāfqī), n.d.b, n.p., p. 6. Among his followers, Karīm Khān Kirmānī has discussed the issue in his texts, particularly *Irshād al-'Awām*, extensively. See: Kirmānī, *Irshād al-'Awām*, Vol. 4., 1267 H/1850, n. p. 146 ff.

⁵ - Aḥsā'ī, *Jawāb al-Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭūq* (A Response to al-Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭūq), Vol. 8, 1430 Hc, p. 13.

In a treatise called *al-Risālat al-Tūbaliyyah*⁶ (the Treatise on the Questions of Shaykh ‘Alī Tūbalī), which is published in the eight volume of his magnum opus, *Jawāmi‘ al-Kalim*, Aḥsā’ī lists seven levels of *ma‘rifa* (gnosis) including gnosis of *tawḥīd*, gnosis of His signification (*ma‘rifat al-ma‘ānī*), gnosis of His gates (*ma‘rifat al-abwāb*), gnosis of the *imām*, gnosis of the *imām’s* pillars (*arkān*), gnosis of *nuqabā* and gnosis of *nujabā*,⁷ though he only explains the first four and remains unclear about the rest. Furthermore, by these seven levels the [*Shaykhī* ?] cause (*amr*), which is nothing but *sirr* (secret),⁸ is now completed and perfected. From this perspective, *Shaykhism* is the secret, and can be only comprehended through these seven tools of gnosis. This sentence is the gist of the *Shaykhī* teachings, because it shows how *ma‘rifa* and the way it is conceptualized form the spirit of the school and eventually set its boundaries with other tendencies, including *Uṣūlī* jurisprudence, philosophy, Sufism and the *ḥikma* discourse.

The first kind of *ma‘rifa*, *ma‘rifat al-tawḥīd*, is not attainable by anybody, not even the prophet and/or angel, because His Essence is the absolute unknown (*al-majhūl ul-muṭlaq*). However, He shows Himself, first and foremost, through *ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadiyyah*, as His *nūr*, *nār*, *athar*, *ṣifat* and *mashīyyat al-awaliyyah* (lit. light, fire, effect, quality/attribute and Primal Will, respectively). His unknown Essence does not bear any obligation (*taklīf*) to

⁶ - *Al-Risālat al-Tūbaliyyah* is written as a response to the questions of the certain Shaykh ‘Alī Tūbalī, though I did not find any information in the *Shaykhī* texts about him and his interests.

⁷ - Aḥsā’ī, *al-Risālat al-Tūbaliyyah* (the Treatise on the Questions of Shaykh ‘Alī Tūbalī), Vol. 8., 1430 Hd, p. 132. It is to be mentioned that Aḥsā’ī, Rashtī and Gawhar had only mentioned four including *tawḥīd*, *ma‘ānī*, *abwāb* and imamate. These four are the typical *Shaykhī* stations of gnosis and of existence, while in Kirmānī they are expanded to seven levels including *tawḥīd*, *ma‘ānī*, *abwab*, *imam*, *arkān*, *nuqabā* and *nujabā* (Kirmānī, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 4, Op. cit., second part, p. 36).

⁸ - Here Aḥsā’ī refers to the famous *Shī‘ī ḥadīth*, known as *ḥadīth-i sirr* stating that “*inna amrinā sirr o fī sirr, wa sirr o mustatar, wa sirr o la yafidu illā sirr, wa sirr ‘alā sirr wa sirr o muqannā bil sirr*” (Al-Qumī, 1404 H, p. 28). I have explained the *ḥadīth* and its importance in the *Shaykhī* discourse elsewhere. See: Leila Chamankhah, *the Conceptualization of Guardianship in Iranian Intellectual History (1800–1989)*; *Reading Ibn ‘Arabī’s Theory of Wilāya in the Shī‘a World*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 76.

anybody to know Him and it is only through knowing His *athar*, here *ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadīyah*, that one is able to understand Him⁹. Since He is both *‘ilm* and *ma‘lūm* and *dalīl* and *madlūl*, the logical consequence of this argument is that *ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadīyah* is Him and He is *ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadīyah*, except for the fact that He is the creator and *ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadīyah* is the creature¹⁰.

Ma‘rifat al-ma‘ānī, or to be more precise, the gnosis of the signification of His actions (*ma‘rifat al-ma‘ānī-ya af‘ālihi*)¹¹, is His deeds through His signification, i.e., the Prophet and the *imāms*. This is how the famous *ḥadīth* from the sixth *imām*, stating that “there are states (*ḥālāt*) between us and Him, in which we are Him and He is us” makes sense, because His significations are His *fi‘l* and *mashīyya* through them He acts and puts His *fi‘l* into effect¹². But if in Aḥsā’ī’s hierarchy of *ma‘rifā* there is a space for *ma‘rifat al-abwāb* and room for *ma‘rifat al-imām*, then how should one understand *ma‘rifat al-ma‘ānī*? *Ma‘rifat al-ma‘ānī* indicates the spiritual body of the *imāms* as the body of light, their cosmic role, their path (*sabīl*) and their teachings, because His *ma‘ānī* are His actions and deeds, which means that it is through them that He acts. Bringing another *ḥadīth* from the first *imām*, stating that “*naḥnu al-‘arāf al-ladhīna lā ya‘rifullāh bi sabīl-i ma‘rifatinā*” (lit. we are the heights, no one knows God unless s/he knows our path)¹³, Aḥsā’ī points toward the cosmic role of the *imām*,

⁹ - Aḥsā’ī, *Jawāb al-Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭūq*, Vol. 8, 1430 Hc, Op. cit., p. 8

¹⁰ - *Jawāb al-Shaykh Aḥmad*, pp. 9-10.

¹¹ - *Jawāb al-Shaykh Aḥmad*, p. 10.

¹² - *Jawāb al-Shaykh Aḥmad*.

¹³ - Aḥsā’ī, *al-Risālat al-Tūbalīyyah*, Vol. 8, 1430 Hd, Op. cit., p. 51. Other than *Jawāmi‘*, the notion of *‘arāf* (lit. the heights), which relates to the cosmic role of the *Imām*, is repeated in almost all Aḥsā’ī’s writings, including a short treatise written on the questions of *al-Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusseyṇ al-Baḥrānī* (n.d., pp. 23 ff), when the author discusses his *imamology*. *Al-‘arāf* is the name of the seventh *sūrah* of the *Qur’ān*, where the people of the heights (*aṣḥāb ul-‘arāf*), also *rijāl* (lit. men) (7:46-49), on the Day of Judgment will stand at the heights, overwatching people and “know all by their marks. They will call out to the inhabitants of the Garden, ‘peace be upon you!’ They will not have entered it, though they hope. And when their eyes turn toward the inhabitants of the Fire, they will say ‘Our Lord! Place us not among the wrongdoing people! And the

which as Amir-Moezzi explains, “refers to the Imam ... in his universal ontological acceptance. Knowledge of his reality is thus equivalent to what can be known about God, since the true revealed God – He who manifests what can be manifested in God – is the Cosmic Imam”.¹⁴

The third kind of *maʿrifa* is “*maʿrifat al-abwābiḥi*” (gates), by which Aḥsāʾī means “the gnosis of divine names” (*maʿrifat al-rawḥāniyyat al-asmā*)¹⁵, or *kalimah* (also *kalimat al-ḥusnā* or *kalimat al-tāmāt*), through which He communicates. He induced *kalimah* to Adam and *kalimat al-ṭayyib* ascends to Him, which is different from the *Qurʾānīc* words. *Kalimat al-ḥusnā* is a blessing which has been written for the Sons of Israel (or through which He perfected His religion for them), and through which He promised to destroy their enemies, make them His caliphate on earth and make it an ever-lasting, perennial blessing for them and their progeny who are the household of the Prophet. Furthermore, it is *kalimat al-wilāya*, *khātām al-wilāya*, *kalimat al-shahādātayn*, *tuḥfat u min al-nūr* (a gift made of light), and is assigned to those patient vicegerents (*khulafā*), leaders (*imāms*) and inheritors (*wurrāth*) of Him, i.e., *ʿibādī al-ṣāliḥūn*, who will inherit the earth and eventually rule it¹⁶.

inhabitants of the Heights will call out to men whom they know by their marks. Your accumulating has not availed you, nor has your waxing arrogant” (Nasr, 2015, p. 742). Inspired by this *Qurʾānīc* usage, there exists a bulk of *Shīʿa ḥadīth* about *ʿarāf*, in which *imāms* are regarded as those *rijāl* who use their *wilāyat al-takwīnīya* to intercede on behalf of people on the Day of Judgment. Furthermore, *ʿarāf* also refers to sinful believers, whose hearts are with the people of *janna*, although their eligibility to enter it is pending the intercession of the *imāms*. See:

Mehdi Akbar Nizhād and Rūḥullāh Muḥammadī, “Mafhūm Shināsi-yi ‘Arāf wa ‘Arāfiyān dar Riwayāt-i Tafsīrī” (the Conception of the Heights and the People of the Heights in Interpretive Narratives), *Majall-yi Pazhūhishhā-yi Qurʾān wa ḥadīth*, No. 1., 43, 1389 *Shamsī* / 2010, pp. 11-30.

¹⁴ - Amir-Moezzi and Jambet, *What is Shīʿī Islam? An Introduction*, 2018, p. 14.

¹⁵ - Aḥsāʾī, *al-Risālat al-Tūbaliyyah*, Vol. 8, 1430 Hd, Op. cit., p. 132.

¹⁶ - *Al-Risālat al-Tūbaliyyah*, p. 151.

In the following, Aḥsā'ī again comes back to the *imāms*, when he describes *kalimah* as a thing by which prayers are accepted and needs are met (*al-manzūl u bihil ḥawā'*). Here, *kalimah* is the *imām* to whom each has been assigned a role and the believer calls upon them when needing help¹⁷. If our interpretation of Aḥsā'ī's gnosis of gates is credible, then *abwāb* (words and His secret which is expressed through words) occupy a lower position than that of signification, i.e., the Prophet and the *imāms*, though here again he allocates a room to the *imāms* and their cosmic roles. This is what Henry Corbin, and following him, Amir-Moezzi and many others have called *imamology*.¹⁸ In *al-Risālat ul-Rashīdiyyah* (lit. the Treatise on the Questions of Mullā Rashīd) Aḥsā'ī sheds more light on these three levels of gnosis and maintains that the Prophet and his household have three stations (*martabah*): that of *ma'ānī* (otherwise *ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadiyyah* and absolute being or *wujūd-i muṭlaq*), which is the locus of His will, that of *abwāb* or the locus of delimited being (*wujūd-i muqayyad*), and that of *imām* and *ḥujja* (also *quṭb*). In terms of their hierarchical order, *ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadiyyah* obviously occupies the highest status, then comes gates and the lowest is *imāms*, though they are all manifestations of one thing, which is deity whose Essence remains unknowable¹⁹. Aḥsā'ī's expansion on this topic testifies to the validity of our analysis.

¹⁷ - *Al-Risālat al-Tūbālīyyah*, p. 152.

¹⁸ - It was Corbin who coined this term to explain the very characteristic of *Shī'a* theosophy. In his book *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, he indicates this point by saying that "While *prophetology* is an essential element of Islamic religion as such, in *Shī'a* theosophy it is divided into *prophetology* and *imamology*. Beside the prophetic function, which delivers the message of the literal Revelation, there is the initiatic function, which initiates into the hidden meanings of revelations, and which is the function of the *Imām*" (Corbin, 1977, p. 58).

And, for Amir-Moezzi's discussion of imamology, See:

Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi and Christian Jambet, *What is Shī'i Islam? An Introduction*, translated into English by Kenneth Casler and Eric Ormsby, 2018 (London and New York: Routledge), pp. 13 & 65-69.

¹⁹ - Aḥsā'ī, *al-Risālat ul-Rashīdiyyah*, Vol. 1, 1430 He, pp. 149-150 & *Risāla Fī Jawāb al-Mullā Kāzīm ibn 'Alī Naqī al-Simnānī*, Vol. 2, 1430 Hf, pp. 287-288.

Aḥsā'ī's immediate successor and the second *Shaykhī* leader, Seyyed Kāẓim Rashtī (d. 1259 H/1843) briefly mentions the first four levels of *ma'rifa* briefly, when discussing *'ilm* and its nature in the first volume of the highly complicated and confusing, *Jawāhir al-Ḥikam* (lit. the Jewelry of Wisdoms). Treading the path Aḥsā'ī had paved for him earlier, the only contribution he makes is to replace *ma'rifat al-ma'ānī* with *ma'rifat al-bayān*, using this *Qur'ānīc* verse to say that We “created man [and] taught him speech” (55: 3&4)²⁰, because the light/ *'ilm* which is created for a few Elect²¹ is only expressed and articulated by the Prophet and his household, or in other words, they are the only ones who know and are able to articulate the meaning hidden in the *bayān*²².

Aḥsā'ī and Rashtī relegate conventional *'ilm* and instrumental reason and substitute them with *ma'rifa* and divine light (*'aql* as hiero-intelligence) and inner prophet (*nūr-i ilāhī wa nabī-yi bāṭinī*) respectively, which are gifted to a few Elect so that they are able to grasp *ma'rifa*.²³ Although in the *Shaykhī* texts, *'aql* is used pervasively, it should not be equated with instrumental, modern-Western understanding of reason, but rather means *nūr*, *nūr-i baṣīrat* (also *nūr-i dil*) or *ḥujjat al-bāṭinah* (lit. the esoteric proof) and its beneficiaries, i.e., *'uqalā* as *ulu l-albāb* (lit. the owners of the hearts). The gift of *'aql* is not for everybody

²⁰ - Nasr, 2015, p. 1310.

²¹ - Due to its hierarchical and non-egalitarian nature, *Shaykhism* has been the religion/belief of the elect. Denis MacEoin shows how it was attractive to members of the Qajar court and they chose it as “an important private religious alternative” (MacEoin, 2009, pp. 135-136 & Lawson, 2005, pp. 139-140).

²² - Rashtī, *Jawāhir ul-Ḥikam* (the Jewelry of Wisdom), 1432 H/2011, Vol. 1., p. 40.

²³ - *Jawāhir ul-Ḥikam*, p. 309. Thanks to Professor Amir-Moezzi, we now know what the *imāms* meant by *'aql* and that *'aql*, i.e., hiero-intelligence, is the best approach in understanding their teachings (Amir-Moezzi, 1994, p. 7). Needless to say that Aḥsā'ī and following him the rest of the *Shaykhī* leaders, used *'aql* in this way and from this perspective, *Shaykhism* represents an orthodox *Shī'ī* approach to the teachings of the *imāms*, although Amir-Moezzi's methodology and theory have been critiqued by a number of new scholars such as Muḥammad Ja'far Riḍāi and Muḥammad Naṣīrī in “Naẓariya-yi 'Imāmat-i Bāṭinī dar *Tashayyu* 'Nukhustīn' dar Būta-yi Naqd” (A Critique on the Theory of “the Divine Guide in Early *Shī'ism*), in *Naqd va Naẓar*, The Quarterly Journal of Philosophy & Theology, Vol. 17, No. 3, Autumn, 2012, pp. 173-198.

equally, but for a Few Elect.²⁴ Furthermore, it “points to man’s conformity with religious beliefs, ethical values, and social norms” (Ebstein, 2019, p. 201).

Rashtī is less conservative in expressing himself on *rukṇ rābi*‘ and we see the first hint of the fourth pillar in one of his treatises, entitled *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah* (Treatise on the Effective Proof), which is actually his last writing.²⁵ Regarding the abovementioned *Risāla*, it was Rashtī and not Kirmānī who contributed to the doctrine of the fourth pillar, i.e., the fifth station of *maʿrifa* and the fourth station of belief, for the first time.²⁶ In addition, *al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah* is a refutation of Christianity and Judaism, as well as an apology in defense of the *nubuwwat al-khāṣṣah* of the Prophet and the *wilāya* of ʿAlī. Rashtī, as distinct from the conservative outlook of his master, as well as his own previous works, develops arguments for the status of the fourth pillar and connects it to visible towns, and the importance of the leadership of *ʿulemā-yi Shīʿī* in the life of believers. Other than his reasonings which are divergent from those of Aḥsāʾī, Rashtī is more radical in his arguments for the office of the fourth pillar, and there is reason to believe that the emergence of the term, *Bāb*, e.g., the

²⁴ - Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Ibrāhīmī, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Jumuʿah* (the Exegesis of the *Sūrah* of Congregational Prayer), n.d.f, pp. 42-43. Bringing a *ḥadīth* from the first *imām*, in which he distinguishes between *ʿaql ul-maṭbūʿ* and *ʿaql ul-masmūʿ*; Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Khān clarifies that whatever one gains by physical senses won’t be beneficial until it is backed by intellectual perceptions which are obtainable by natural disposition too (Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Ibrāhīmī, n.d.f, p. 43). He brings another *ḥadīth* from the same *imām*, in which *fuʿād* equalizes *ʿaql* and is inclining towards it (*Tafsīr Sūrat al-Jumuʿah*, p. 59). Also, in *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Munāfiqīn* (the Exegesis of the *Sūrah* al-Hypocrites), he equates *ʿaql* with *qalb*, *faṭrah* (lit. natural disposition) and *nūr* (Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Khān, n.d.c, p. 25), and argues that *ʿaql ul-maṭbūʿ* is identical with *qalb al-kawnī* (universal/cosmic heart). *ʿAql ul-masmūʿ* is identical with *qalb al-sharʿī* (religious heart), with its guidance *al-Raḥmān* is worshiped and *khavar* is heard but beware of *qalb al-kawnī/ʿaql ul-maṭbūʿ*, because if it is taken as a model, then obligation (*taklīf*) will be removed (or *sharʿa* will be breached) and the believer will be considered as *majnūn* (lit. mad) (*Tafsīr Sūrat al-Munāfiqīn*, p. 22).

²⁵ - *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah* was written in 1258 H, one year before the author’s death on an island called Ḥaṣwah, next to the Kufa mosque.

²⁶ - Rashtī died in 1259 H/1843 and *al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah* was written one year before in 1258 H/1842. Considering the year of the writing, the text can be regarded as the culmination of Rashtī’s outlook on the Shaykhī creeds, particularly on spiritual leadership, which had not been articulated before.

special vicegerency of the Hidden *imām* and its controversial usage by the subsequent *Shaykhī* leaders, is in this treatise too.

Aḥsā'ī had also used the gnosis of *abwāb* (the third level of gnosis) but any similarity is nominal, because as we saw, he used *abwāb* as *kalimah* and as the middle position between *ma'rifat al-ma'ānī* and *ma'rifat al-imām*, while Rashtī and following him Kirmānī (and later 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, d. 1229 H/ 1850), indicated the *Shī'ī* scholars of the time of the Occultation as the *Bāb* and the absolute representative of the Hidden *imām*.²⁷ Rashtī's argument for the office of *bābīyat* (special vicegerency/visible town) is as follows: "in order to complete His blessing for people and finish His proof for them, He has sent *nuwwāb* and *abwāb* (both vicegerents), who are the guided scholars (*'ulemā-i rāshidūn*) and trustees. Their [job] is to preserve His religion and act as pillars of His faith. ... They are the visible towns (*qurā'i zāhirah*) and *ḥadīth* experts, without them there is no guidance and people go astray"²⁸. There exists *ḥadīth* for them, Rashtī claims, and they are appointed by the *imām* to judge (*ḥukm*) between people and distinguish right from wrong.²⁹ From this perspective, Rashtī's writings contained certain elements which not only deviate from the classic *Imāmīte*

²⁷ - Rashtī, *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah* (the Treatise of Certain Proof), n.d.a, p. 4 & Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 4, Op. cit., *passim*.

Kirmānī's use of this term merits more clarification. He believes in two types of *bābīyat*, all-encompassing and specific (*kullī* and *juz'ī*, respectively). The first kind of *bābīyat* is designated to the Prophet and his household and the latter is assigned to "others", including the rest of the prophets and special vicegerents of the *imām*. See:

Kirmānī, *Irshād*, Op. cit., 1267 H/1850, Vol. 4, part one, pp. 308-313.

²⁸ - Rashtī, *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah*, n.d.a, Op. cit., pp. 4-5.

²⁹ - *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah*, p. 5. Here Rashtī uses visible towns or special vicegerent as the judge. Some later scholars such as by Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī (Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Mahdī Fāḍil Narāqī, d. 1245 H/1829), the prominent jurist of the nineteenth century. used *faqīh* as the judge. See:

< <https://kadivar.com/904/> >, last accessed 4/4/20.

teachings³⁰, but also flamed the existing messianic longing of his time and prepared the ground for the emergence of the *Bābī* movement.³¹

Furthermore, Rashtī also uses *qurā'ī zāhirah* interchangeably, for both the special vicegerent and the all-encompassing ones³², i.e., the *Shī'ī 'ulemā* or in his own word, *al-abwāb al-a'zam*, *al-sabīl al-aqwam* and *al-nūr al-mu'azzam* (the greatest gates, the most rectified path and the most sublime light)³³. Rashtī believed that “for the Concealed Light and the Awaited Hidden there are assigned gates by God”, and there exists *ḥadīth* for them³⁴. As

³⁰ - Eschraghi, *Kāzem Raṣṭī*, 2013.

³¹ - Eschraghi ascertains “there is a strong possibility that at least Raṣṭī had entertained certain expectations into which he had initiated some of his students orally, rather than in writing” (*Kāzem Raṣṭī*, 2013).

³² - ‘*Āmm* or ‘*āmmah* are usually translated as general, but what does general as opposed to specific mean? I chose all-encompassing as I believe it conveys the intent of the authors better.

³³ - Rashtī, *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah*, Op. cit., n.d.a, pp. 101-102.

³⁴ - *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah*, pp. 4-5, This lengthy part of *al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah* is very revealing:

قول ان الله سبحانه يجب ان يجعل دائما في (في الخلق خل) علم هداية و رشاد و دليل بين العباد لان الله سبحانه بعد ان انزل الخلق من عالم الارواح الي عالم الاجسام (الاجساد خل) و من عالم السعة الي عالم الضيق و من عالم العلم الي عالم الجهل ليبرهم قدرته و يبين لهم حكمته و يعرفهم ضعفهم و نقصانهم حتي بقروا برؤيتهم [دليل اقرار به ربوبيت خداوند چيزی جز ضعف و ناتوانی آدمی نبوده است] فاتي بهم الي هذه الدار المظلمة الغاسقة المكدرة المدلهمة ثم جعل سبحانه لهم ادلاء راشدين و علماء مستحفظين و حفاظا معصومين حتي يبين لهم ما جهلوا و يردعهم اذا تعدوا و يظهر لهم الحق اذا عموا و لم يجعلهم في الحيرة هائمين و لا في الجهل مغموين بل بعث لهم علماء ذاكرين فقال لهم فاسئلوا اهل الذكر ان كنتم لاتعلمون قال تعالى فلا و ربك لا يؤمنون حتي يحكموك في ما شجر بينهم ثم لاجدوا في انفسهم حرجا مما قضيت و يسلموا تسليما فلم يزل (فلم يزل رسل خل) الله تترى يتلو بعضهم بعضا يهدون الخلق الي الله و يدلونهم الي سبيله حتي تتم حجة الله و تكمل نعمة الله و لنلايقولوا لولا ارسلت الينا رسولا فنتبع آياتك من قبل ان نذل و نخزي الي ان انتهت النبوة (النبوة خل) الي محمد صلي الله عليه و آله صاحب النور الابهر و الجبين الازهر و حامل الاسم الاكبر فقام فيهم هاديا و مهديا و كان بالمؤمنين عطفوا رحيموا و وليا حفيا فلما انتهت ايامه و لم يظهر كمال الظهور احكامه اقام نفسه مقامه و لم يزل الخلفاء و الاوصياء بين اظهر الخلق لهدايتهم و دلالتهم الي ان مد الجور باعه و اسفر الظلم قناعه و دعي الغي اتباعه فلبوه في كل مقام و اعرضوا عن اولئك الاعلام عليهم من الله آلاف التحية و السلام الي ان قتل من قتل (قتل منهم خل) و سبي من سبي الي ان اقتضت المصلحة لآخرهم الغيبة فغاب عن ابصار الناس الذين يوسوس في صدورهم الخناس من الجنة و الناس فما اقتضت (فما اقتضت للحق سبحانه خل) حكمته ان يجعل الخلق مع ذلك في ظلمة بهما و حيرة صماء لا يمكنهم الاهتداء الي السبيل و لا يسعهم مشاهدة الحق ان راموه بالدليل اكمالا للنعمة لهم و اتماما للحجة عليهم فجعل للغائب المنتظر و النور المستتر نوابا و ابوابا هم العلماء الراشدون و الامناء المهتدون قواما للدين المبين و اركاننا للشرع المتين و جعلهم اوعية لسره و خزنة لبعض علمه الذي تحتاج اليه رعيته و هم القرى الظاهرة للسير الي القرى المباركة فقال تعالى و جعلنا بينهم (بينهم اي بين الخلق خل) و بين القرى التي باركنا فيها و هم الائمة قري ظاهرة و هم اولئك الاعلام من العلماء الكرام الذين يتأدبون باداب ائمتهم و ينجون منهجهم هجم بهم العلم علي حقيقة الايمان فاستلنا من احاديثهم ما استوعر علي غيرهم و استانسوا بما استوحش منه المكذبون و اباه المسرفون اولئك اتباع الامام و للدين عصام و للشرع قوام و الهداة للانام فيجب علي الخلق اتباعهم و التجنب عن خلافهم لانهم العدول الذين ينفون عن هذا الدين تحريف الغالين و انتحال المبطلين و قد وصف الله سبحانه شأن من خالفهم و اعرض عنهم بقوله الحق و قالوا ربنا باعد بين اسفارنا يعني ليس لنا حاجة الي هؤلاء الاعلام بل نصل الي الائمة عليهم السلام من دون الاقتداء بهم و الاخذ عنهم فاخبر الله سبحانه عن سوء حال هؤلاء القائلين و قبح عاقبة المعرضين الخاسرين بظلمهم انفسهم (انفسهم و تنكبهم عن جادة الهداية الموضوعة لهم فقال سبحانه و ظلموا انفسهم خل) فجعلناهم احاديث و مزقناهم كل ممزق باختلاف آرائهم و اختلاف احوالهم و عدم اهتدائهم الي الحق الواحد و جعل صدورهم ضيقة حرجة كأنما يصعد الي السماء و لكن في هذا الزمان حصل مدعون يدعون كل يقول انا ذلك العالم المنصوب للهداية من جانب صاحب الولاية مع اختلاف آرائهم و تباين احوالهم ،

و كل يدعي وصلا بليلي **** و ليلى لا تفر لهم بذاكا

اذا انبجست دموع في خدود **** تبين من يكي ممن تبكي

و حيث ان الحق لا بد ان يكون ظاهرا و طريقا مهيبا و يجب ان يكون لحامل الحق و الناطق بالصدق و نائب الامام و الحاكم عنه عليه السلام بين الانام دلالات و علامات بها تتبين المحق من المبطل و الموافق من المناق و الصديق من العدو ليهلك من هلك عن بينة و يحيى من حي عن بينة و هذه العلامات و البينات و الدلالات علي قسمين اجمالية و تفصيلية فالاجمالية تقدم بيانها الان و التفصيلية نؤخرها ليكون بدو هذه الرسالة و ختمها كوضعها لبيان الهادي الي الخلق و الدال عليه و الشجرة الطيبة التي اصلها ثابت و فرعها في السماء تؤتي اكلها كل حين باذن ربها ، فاقول اما العلامة الاجمالية فهي التي اشار اليها مولينا الصادق عليه السلام في مقبولة عمر بن حنظلة و العبرة بعموم اللفظ لا بخصوص المورد (المحل خل) علي ما قالوا في هذه

we will observe, such a loose and careless use of the term *bāb* for both special and all-encompassing vicegerents of the *imām* is not restricted to Rashtī, Karīm Khān Kirmānī also uses it injudiciously³⁵. Not only is there *ḥadīth* about them, Rashtī claims, but also one needs to admit their leadership and guidance if one wants to reach the *imāms* and have access to them³⁶.

I assume this is the first time in a *Shaykhī* text wherein the right of judgeship and adjudication is endowed to the special vicegerents of the *imām*. Furthermore, what makes this text and the author's arguments innovative, if not to say radical, is Rashtī's generous and arbitrary use of the *Shī'a ḥadīth* treasury, particularly that of *Maqbūla-yi 'Umar ibn-Ḥanẓalīh*³⁷ to stand for his arguments. Aḥsā'ī had never talked about the office of *nīyābat al-khāṣṣah* (later known as *ruknīyat*), let alone assigned the right of judgeship to it. Also, his apolitical nature prevented him from using statements such as *Maqbūla-yi 'Umar ibn-Ḥanẓalīh* as proof to support his claim. *'Umar ibn-Ḥanẓalīh's ḥadīth*, famous as *Maqbūla*,³⁸

المقبولة في مقام الشهرة فقال عليه السلام انظروا الي رجل منكم روي حديثنا و نظر في حلالنا و حرامنا و عرف احكامنا فارضوا به حكما فاني قد جعلته عليكم حاكما و اذا حكم بحكمنا فلم يقبل منه فكأنما بحكم الله.

Rashtī, n.d.a, pp. 3-5. Regarding this, it is obvious that Rashtī's approach to the messianic fervor of his time was more radical and blatant than the very timid attitude of his predecessor, Aḥsā'ī.

³⁵ - Kirmānī in the first volume of *Irshād* uses the term *Bāb* for several statuses including the prophet (*bāb-i a'zam*), the *imāms*, special vicegerents of the *imāms* and *qurā'ī zāhirah*. He argues that *bāb* can be alive and visible too, since there is no need for the *bāb* to be Hidden and/or dead (Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 1, p. 123).

³⁶ - *Risālat al-Hujjat al-Bālighah*, p. 5.

³⁷ - For the abovementioned *ḥadīth*, see:

<
http://shiaonlineibrary.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%A8/646_%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%87-%D9%88%D9%81%D9%82%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%AE-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B8%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%AC-%D9%A1/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%81%D8%AD%D8%A9_413 > last accessed 01/20/2021.

³⁸ - It is called *maqbūla* (lit. accepted by many), because the majority of the *fuqahā* accepted it and issued *fatwā* based on it. The *ḥadīth* is narrated in the first volume of *Kitāb al-Kāfi, Bāb al-Ikhtilāf al-Ḥadīth, ḥadīth* number 10. 'Umar ibn-Ḥanẓalīh, one of the followers of the sixth *imām* asks him whether it is permitted

has been discussed by a number of modern scholars, chief among them Mohsin Kadivar in his book *Nazarīyahāy-i Dawlat dar Fiqh-i Shī'a* (Theories of State in the *Shī'a* Jurisprudence), in which he argues that the *ḥadīth* only assigns the right of judgeship to the *faqīh* at the time of the occultation and does not specify the right of guardianship (*wilāya*) to him, which covers a vaster area than judgeship³⁹. Rashtī's interpretation of the *ḥadīth* allocates a more significant place to the role and the office of *bābīyat*, because he binds it to *wilāyat al-zāhira* of *ḥākim al-ʿādil* who rules, and not just 'judges' on behalf of *sulṭān al-ʿādil*, who is the Twelfth *imām*⁴⁰. He endows the right of *wilāya* to the *bāb* of the *imām* which is definitely more than just judgeship.

Let us return to our question, which is the relationship between the nature of *ma'rifa* and the office of *rukniyat al-rābi'* of the *bāb* of the *imām*. Since Rashtī does not go forward with his explanation of the hierarchy of gnosis, and we are clear about what the gnosis of the *imām* is,⁴¹ one can therefore guess that the special vicegerent (*qurā'i zāhirah*) is the bearer of the *ma'rifat al-arkān*. In the following, Rashtī clarifies that *īmān* (faith) will not be complete unless four factors are put together. These factors include confession to *tawḥīd*

(*ḥalāl*) for the *Shī'as* to refer their case (*ikhtilāf*) on inheritance or debt to the *sulṭān* of the time or judges (obviously a non-*Shī'a* one), and the *imām* responds: "whoever, rightfully or unlawfully (*bi ḥaqq yā nā ḥaqq*), goes to them and asks them for judgment and arbitration, has referred to *ṭāghūt* (lit. false deities), hence Allah has ordered to turn your back to *ṭāghūt* and abnegate them (*kufṛ*)" (Kulaynī, *Kitāb al-Kāfī*, 1375 *Shamsī*/1996, Vol. 1., p. 197). For his opinion, the *imām* brings *āyah* sixty *sūrat al-Nisā'* (Women) saying that: "Hast thou not seen those who claim that they believe in that which was sent down unto thee and in that which was sent down before thee, desiring to seek judgment from false deities, although they were commanded not to believe in them? But Satan desires to lead them far astray" (Nasr, 2015, p. 220). I should add that in the main *Kāfī* text, the abovementioned *āyah* is *āyah* twenty-three of *sūrat al-Nisā'*, which is wrong. Other than *Kitāb al-Kāfī*, the *ḥadīth* is narrated by Shaykh Ṣadūq (d. 381 H/991) in *Man lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh* and Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Tūsī, known as *Shaykh Tūsī* (d. 460 H/1067) in *Tahdhīb ul-Aḥkām* and *al-Istibṣār*.

The text is available here: < <https://www.noorlib.ir/View/fa/Book/BookView/Image/3712> >, last accessed 4/4/20.

³⁹ - Kadivar, *Nazarīyahāy-i Dawlat dar Fiqh-i Shī'a* (Theories of State in the *Shī'a* Jurisprudence), 1378, p. 151.

⁴⁰ - Rashtī, *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah*, n.d. a., Op. cit., p. 8.

⁴¹ - In fact, gnosis of the *imām* as well as that of *tawḥīd* are the clearest ones in these texts.

(corresponds to the first level of *maʿrifa*), confession to *nubuwwa* (corresponds to the second and third levels of *maʿrifa*), confession to the *wilāya* of ʿAlī and his sons (corresponds to the fourth level of *maʿrifa*, i.e., *maʿrifat al-īmān*) and finally confession to *Shīʿism* or the principle of *tawallā* and *tabarrā* (friendship with the friends of God and enmity with His enemies), which corresponds to the fifth level of *maʿrifa*.⁴² Confession to *Shīʿism* is complementary to *tawḥīd*, *nubuwwa* and *wilāya* and if a believer does not recognize and confess it, the first three will not be beneficial to him⁴³.

It needs to be mentioned that Rashtī, sometimes uses *qurāʾi ḡāhirah*/the office of *bābīyat* for both the all-encompassing and the special vicegerents (*nāʾib-i khāṣṣ* and *ʿāmm*) of the *imam*.⁴⁴ However, he does not discuss the last two levels of *maʿrifa*, i.e., the gnosis of *nuqabā* and *nujabā*, and leaves it to his successor, Kirmānī, to elaborate on them. Now, we are able to see the evolution of the doctrine of the fourth pillar in only a few years because Rashtī, in a break from Aḥsāʾī's tradition, argues that "the office of these Guided Scholars (lit. *ʿUlemāy-i Rāshidūn/abwāb*), which is simply called *Shīʿism*, is the fourth principle of *īmān* (faith)"⁴⁵, standing after *tawḥīd*, prophethood, and imamate⁴⁶.

⁴² - Rashtī, *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah*, pp. 73-74.

⁴³ - *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah*, p. 74.

⁴⁴ - *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah*, pp. 91-105.

⁴⁵ - *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah*, p. 73 ff.

⁴⁶ - Kirmānī, as will be observed, just repeats these four in his voluminous *Irshād*, Vol. 4-1. Interestingly, ibn ʿArabī has a similar discussion on the four pillars, or in Michel Chodkiewicz's word "four corner-stones" (Chodkiewicz, 1993, p. 92) of Islam, namely *risāla*, *nubuwwa*, *walāya* and *īmān* and among these, the first one, or the status of *rasūl* is the most comprehensive one, because it contains the other three (Chodkiewicz, 1993). Further research is needed to clarify whether Rashtī and Kirmānī, despite their harsh tone toward Sufism and particularly the *Akbarīan* one, were acquainted with *al-Shaykh al-Akbar*'s doctrine of the four pillars, or it was their own invention. It appears to this author that due to the incredible influence of ibn ʿArabī's philosophy on intellectual activities of the post-Mongol Persia and its acceptance, they had familiarity with his ideas.

The opening lines of *al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah* reveal Rashtī's intention in composing this treatise, which is "to clarify the path" (lit. *awḍaḥ al-sabīl*) with the help of proofs such as *rukn-i rābi*⁴⁷. Rashtī argues that if the *imām* is the gate to the Prophet and his status is that of *tafṣīl* (specification), in the same way, visible towns are also the gate to him⁴⁸, and denying such a gate is heresy, as it is the holder of both esoteric and exoteric gnosis. Rashtī, more than his prudent predecessor, inflamed the messianic fervor of his time.⁴⁹ So much so that not only did he not appoint any successor, but also he "alluded obliquely to an "affair" or "cause" (*amr*) which would occur or appear after him"⁵⁰, and since both Aḥsā'ī and he were regarded by "a section of the Shaykhi community at this period" as gates⁵¹, one can imagine how his enunciation of an imminent cause descending upon his followers could have made them impatient and restless for the appearance of the cause.

Rashtī's location in *Shaykhism* is interstitial, in that he shared the interest of his master in the occult sciences, in *ʿilm al-ḥurūf* and numerology (which were in fact his main concerns),⁵² but at the same time, contributed some innovations such as *rukn-i rābi*, which paved the way for more elaborations by his successor Kirmānī. Also, in Rashtī, we observe the first, albeit very limited, efforts of writing in Persian by a *Shaykhī* leader. *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah* is in Arabic, though Rashtī tested his skills in writing in Persian too, and wrote a bilingual treatise (both Persian and Arabic) entitled *Maqāmāt al-ʿĀrifīn* (The Stations of

⁴⁷ - *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah*, p. 2.

⁴⁸ - Rashtī, *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah*, n.d. a., Op. cit., pp. 105-106.

⁴⁹ - And, *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah*, in which the *Shaykhī* messianism not only is theorized appropriately, but also elevated to a new grade, testifies to this fact.

⁵⁰ - MacEoin, *the Messiah of Shiraz*, 2009, p. 140.

⁵¹ - *The Messiah of Shiraz*.

⁵² - He was the main commentator on the works and writings of his master and more than Aḥsā'ī used "coded language and esoteric expressions" (Eschraghi, *Kāzem Raštī*, 2013, Op. cit.), although that makes understanding of his ideas difficult.

Gnostics). Armin Eschraghi maintains that he “produced a few Persian works, the most voluminous among which is the Oṣul-e ‘aqā’ed”.⁵³

However, none of the *Shaykhī* leaders wrote about the fourth pillar and its corresponding *ma‘rifā* as Kirmānī did. With Kirmānī, *Shaykhīsm* became a systematic and structuralized school of thought, revolving around the doctrine of the fourth pillar and with a tendency to clarify the intricacies and complexities of the *Shaykhī* cause to ordinary people (*‘awām*)⁵⁴ and to familiarize them with the Guided Path. But if *Shaykhīsm*, according to Kirmānī is the Secured Sect (*firqaya nājiyah*) and belongs to the Elite, why would he want to reach out to people and write in Persian? In part, the impact of his time and the new socio-cultural developments of mid-Qajar Iran, and in part because *Shaykhīsm* was under suspicion, if not to say attack, by both the hierocracy and the Monarchy for nurturing the messianic fervor of *Bābīsm*. With regard to the time of Kirmānī’s activities, which was concomitant to the formation of the *Bābīsm*, one comes to the conclusion that Kirmānī did not want his school to bear any resemblance with *Bābīsm* or to be identified with it.

Unlike Aḥsā’ī and Rashtī who wrote in Arabic and for intellectuals, Kirmānī overcame his urge to write in the language of the educated elite, and instead wrote in Persian; the language of the *‘awām* and of the “ignorant”⁵⁵. Kirmānī shares the despise of his masters⁵⁶

⁵³ - Kāzem Raštī.

⁵⁴ - *‘Awām-i kal an‘ām*, which goes back to verse one-hundred and seventy-nine of the *Sūrat al-A‘rāf* (the Heights), saying that “We have indeed created for Hell many among jinn and men: they have hearts with which they understand not; they have eyes with which they see not; and they have ears with which they hear not. Such as these are like cattle. Nay, they are even further” (Nasr, 2015, p. 755).

⁵⁵ - Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 1., p. 10 *passim* & *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 2., p. 49.

⁵⁶ - All the *Shaykhī* leaders display repugnance toward Sufism, though they borrow its language (as in the cases of Aḥsā’ī, Rashtī and Kermanī) and even worldview (Rashtī). Rashtī has a text entitled *Maqāmat ul-‘Arifin* (lit. the Stations of the Mystics) in which he discusses *tawḥīd* from a pure *‘irfānī* perspective. Not only is his terminology loaded with mysticism, but his worldview is mystical as well, and if the reader does not know the author, it’s hard to pinpoint whether it is written by an anti-Sufi, *Shaykhī* author or a mystic.

toward *Uṣūlī* jurists (or in his own words, just *mullās*), philosophy, Sufism (particularly that of ibn ‘Arabī)⁵⁷, Sunnism, and any kind of *bāṭinī* interpretation of the *Qur’ān* to make sure that he is the true heir to their legacy, though his most important concern always remained the newly formed *Bābī* movement. His main book in Persian, *Irshād al-‘Awām*, which should be treated as a *Shaykhī* manifesto, is in fact a refutation on all these intellectual currents and even includes Persian literature and literary figures such as Hafiz of Shiraz as well.⁵⁸ Each volume of this book is dedicated to one *Shaykhī* principle (*rukn*), including *tawḥīd*, *nubuwwa*, imamate and *rukn-i rābi‘*, and except for the last volume, which focuses on *rukn-i rābi‘* and Kirmānī’s arguments for this office, the other three volumes contain classic *kalāmī* arguments that *Shī‘ī* scholars could use to uphold the fundamentals of their faith.

The *Shaykhī* school in the hands of Kirmānī becomes even more exclusionist, and as *firqa-ya nājiya-ya munjiya-ya jalila-ya marḥūma-ya Shaykhīya* (the saved, secured, honored and blessed sect of *Shaykhism*)⁵⁹ shuts its door on ordinary people who were supposed to be the main receivers of the *Shaykhī* teachings. Before turning my attention to *rukn-i rābi‘* and its gnosis, I will briefly discuss the gnosis of *tawḥīd*, *nubuwwa* and that of the *imām* in Kirmānī’s *Irshād*. Kirmānī’s methodology is confusing when he attempts to clarify *tawḥīd*

Although, in the same text, he criticizes ibn ‘Arabī and his Sufism as being fraud, misleading, and delusional (Rashtī, n.d.b, pp. 17ff). The only exception Rashtī makes is the *Dhahabī* Sufi *Shaykh* Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī Dhahabī (otherwise Dhahabī Shīrāzī) (d. 1173 H / 1759) (*Maqāmāt al-‘Ārifin*, p. 14) because Aḥsā’ī was his disciple for a while and learnt Ibn ‘Arabī’s *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah* (Meccan Revelations) with him (Lawson, 2005, p. 128). Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī is one of the sources of Rashtī when he wants to discuss how ‘*aql*, i.e., hiero-intelligence is identical with *naql* (transmitted sources) (*Maqāmāt al-‘Ārifin*, p. 14).

⁵⁷ - Following in Aḥsā’ī’s footsteps, Kirmānī describes ibn ‘Arabī as “the heretic, misbelievers and Sunni Sufi” (Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 1., Op. cit., p. 21).

⁵⁸ - *Irshād*, Vol. 1., pp. 37-38.

⁵⁹ - *Irshād*, Vol. 1., pp. 123-125. Or as his son, Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn Ibrāhīmī, utters it in his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Munāfiqīn* (the Exegesis of the *Sūrah* al-Hypocrites): “salute be upon them [the *imāms*], because we [the *Shaykhīs*] are made His pure and sincere devotees (*al-khālīṣīn al-mukhlāṣīn*) to the *wilāya* of the household of the Prophet”. See: Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn Khān, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Munāfiqīn* (the Exegesis of the *Sūrah* al-Hypocrites), n.d. c, p. 5.

and its *ma'rifa*. On one hand, his theology appears to be coherent, meaningful and devoid of any conflict between reason and religion when he describes God as a reasonable one whose actions can be understood by humans. Here our author bears some slight resemblances to Aḥsā'ī and Rashtī, whose perception of the Deity was that of an unknowable Essence, who needs to reflect Himself in His names and attributes (the prophet and the *imāms*) if He wants to be knowable to people.

Furthermore, divine laws are at perfect peace and harmony with the laws of nature, although in defiance of Muslim philosophers, Kirmānī borrows their arguments to defend a wise (*ḥakīm*) God, who operates according to the rational laws of nature and that is why His justice and wisdom necessitate Him to send the prophets, or in Kirmānī's words, kings to guide people to the right path.⁶⁰ Interestingly, and at odds with the teachings of his masters, Kirmānī's explanation of *tawḥīd* requires us to know Deity not through His names and attributes, but through *maḥsūsāt* (lit. sensible things) which are visible and tangible. However, it is confusing when Kirmānī warns people of the unreliability of the reasons of "*ḥukamā* and theologians and Greeks", because they had brought nothing but doubts and suspicion and led believers astray.⁶¹ In such a theology, He is known and worshiped based on His visible deeds rather than the manifestations of the invisible Essence in nature or in names/attributes on one hand, and the illusions of philosophers on the other.⁶²

Kirmānī's discussion of the office of *nubuwwa* and its *ma'rifa* which comes after *ma'rifat al-tawḥīd* is a synthesis of several trends, including a typical *kalāmī* argument, a Sufi

⁶⁰ - Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 1., Op. cit., pp. 13-15.

⁶¹ - *Irshād*, Vol. 1., p. 15.

⁶² - *Irshād*, Vol. 1., p. 11. Do not delude God.

allegory and a classic *Shaykhī* one. It is *kalāmī* when he argues that the prophets in general and the Prophet of Islam in particular (as well as the *imāms*), are the *ḥujja* (proof) of God on earth and *maʿṣūm* (immaculate). It is Sufi when he considers prophets as *dil* (heart), standing at the center/middle of the universe to save it from annihilation, and a classic *Shaykhī* explanation when he is obsessed with modulating everything and moving it to hiddenness, even when it is the *maqām-i ʿiṣma*, or assigning the *wilāyat al-takwīnīyah* to the Prophet.⁶³ Kirmānī's innovation rests in his discussion of the gnosis of *nubuwwat al-khāṣṣah*, when he argues that *ʿawām* (ordinary people) have three levels of *maʿrifā* to the office of the Prophet, and in doing so, he specifies the three levels of *maʿrifat al-maʿānī*, *abwāb* and *risālat* (Kirmānī's addition to this hierarchy) to the office of prophethood.⁶⁴

Kirmānī adopts a *Shaykhī* methodology when he discusses the Deity's *maʿrifat al-bayān* and brings the same arguments as his predecessors to prove that *maʿrifat al-bayān* is the highest modulation of *maʿrifā* and only a few of the few, the Elect, or in Kirmānī's terminology *khawāṣṣ-i khawāṣṣ*, have access to it.⁶⁵ Furthermore, this *maʿrifā* has characteristics such as being oral and concealed in the hiddenness (chests) of the few Elect until it is transmitted to *Shaykh-i Ajall-i Awḥad*, Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsāʾī and his successor Seyyed Kāẓim Rashtī due to their *wilāya* which is a ray⁶⁶ of the sun of the *wilāya* of the

⁶³ - *Irshād*, Vol. 1., pp. 51-71.

⁶⁴ - *Irshād*, Vol. 1., pp. 114-158.

⁶⁵ - Kirmānī's son and successor, Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Khān Ibrāhīmī (d. 1360 H/1942) calls it *ṭarīq-i khāṣṣah* (the special path) as opposed to *ṭarīq-i ʿāmmah* (the general path), i.e., the mainstream trend of *uṣūlī* jurisprudence. In the Shaykhī discourse, the term *khāṣṣah* (starts from Rashtī onwards) is also used for the kind of *taʿwīl*, e.g., *taʿwīl-i khāṣṣah*, which is conducted by the *Shaykhīs* and it is against *taʿwīl-i ʿāmmah/ʿāmmī*, which is used by others; the *uṣūlīs*. For more information see:

Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Khān Ibrāhīmī, *Ṣawāʿiq ul-Burhān Fī Radd al-Dalāʾil al-ʿIrḥān* (lit. the Thunderbolt of the Proof in the Refutation of the Reasons of Mysticism), n.d.a., n. p., *passim*.

⁶⁶ - He also argues that the term *Shīʿa* comes from *ashaʿa* (lit. ray), because *Shīʿas* are created from the *ashaʿa* of the *imāms*. See: Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 1., Op. cit., p. 101.

Prophet and ‘Alī.⁶⁷ *Ma‘rifat al-nabī* is a trio, starting from *ma‘rifat al-ma‘ānī* as the highest type of *ma‘rifat*. It means that a believer to be able to know the Prophet based on his position as one of the manifestations of the Deity’s Essence, and it is called *ma‘ānī* because it is apparent, unlike *ma‘rifat al-bayān* which is always hidden.⁶⁸ The Prophet as *abwāb* refers to his station as the highest gate (*bāb-i a‘zam*) of His emanation to people, because had it not been for his sake, nobody would benefit from His blessings.⁶⁹

The last level of the gnosis of *nubuwwa* is *ma‘rifat al-risālat*, indicating the *ma‘rifa* of the Prophet as it is known by ordinary people, the lowest of the low, due to their meager capacity for understanding, and therefore, they need to know him through his *sharī‘a* which is the outward dimension of his message. Furthermore, the station of *risālat* is the station of *qutbīyat* and that of *ghawth* (aid/succor), without him the universe would be annihilated, and although all the Fourteen Illuminated are considered as a *ghawth*/pole and reflect His *qutbīyat*, the highest one is the Prophet.⁷⁰

The Doctrine of *Rukn-i Rābī‘* and Its Modulations

Kirmānī is creative and rich in his terminology and usually coins several equivalents for one word. If Aḥsā’ī and Rashtī had used *‘ulemā-ye Rāshidūn* or *‘ulemā-ye Shī‘a* to refer to

⁶⁷ - *Irshād*, Vol. 1., pp. 104-110.

⁶⁸ - *Irshād*, Vol. 1., pp. 114-118.

⁶⁹ - *Irshād*, Vol. 1., p. 123. I believe the doctrine of *wilāyat al-takwīnīyah* is inspired by this famous, though inauthentic *ḥadīth-i qudsī*, saying that “*Yā Muḥammad, wa ‘izzatī wa jalālī, lawlāk li mā khalaqt ul-aflāk*” (Oh Muḥammad, I swear by My dignity and My glory, if you were not, I would not have created Paradise). Source for the *ḥadīth* <

http://fa.wikishia.net/view/%D8%AD%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AB_%D9%84%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%DA%A9 >, last accessed 12/30/20.

⁷⁰ - Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 1., Op. cit., pp. 130-140.

qurā'i zāhirah, Kirmānī uses numerous words,⁷¹ including, but not limited to, *nikān-i Shī'a*, *nujabā*, *nuqabā*, *Shī'ayān-i kibār*,⁷² *ḥākim-i ḥāfiẓ*,⁷³ *ḥākim-i zāhir*⁷⁴ vs. *ḥākim-i ghāyib*, e.g., the *imām*,⁷⁵ *awlīyā* and *mu'minīn-i kāmīl bāligh*.⁷⁶ Like gnosis, *qurā'i zāhirah* (which corresponds *ma'rifat al-arkān*), is also modulated and consists of eight towns or ontological stations, including the Apparent Law (*sharī'at-i zāhirah*), the Apparent Path (*tarīqat-i zāhirah*), the Apparent Truth (*ḥaqīqat-i zāhirah*), the Specific *nujabā* (*nujabā-yi juz'ī*), the Specific *nuqabā* (*nuqabā-yi juz'ī*), the All-Encompassing *nujabā* (*nujabā-yi kullī*), the All-Encompassing *nuqabā* (*nuqabā-yi kullī*)⁷⁷ and finally *arkān* (pillars/*abwāb*) who are the special vicegerents of the *imām* and those who come immediately after him.⁷⁸ The owners of the station of *sharī'at-i zāhirah*, i.e., the *Shaykhī 'ulemā*, maintain the order of this world and are the transmitters (*ruwwat*) of the *ḥadīth* and the proof of the Prophet and the *imāms* to people, and like them are the proof of God.⁷⁹

⁷¹ - Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 4., Op. cit., p. 99.

⁷² - *Irshād*, Vol. 4., p. 42.

⁷³ - *Irshād*, Vol. 4., p. 22.

⁷⁴ - Sometimes referred to as *Ṣulṭān-i Zāhir*, Vol. 4, p. 13.

⁷⁵ - *Irshād*, Vol. 4., pp. 13-16.

⁷⁶ - *Irshād*, Vol. 4., p. 4. These figures, in addition to the prophets and the *imāms* are all *walīs* and Kirmānī uses the allegory of heart, *dil* (lit. heart) to explain their status: as heart is positioned at the middle of the body, these people act as moderators to save this world from falling into the abys of extremes. It is the status of moderation. *Niqābat* and *nijābat-i juz'ī* and *kullī* are defined in terms of their relationship with the office of *wilāya* as well as that of *'ilm*. See: Kirmānī, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 4., Op. cit., pp. 76-78.

⁷⁷ - In the fourth volume of *Irshād*, Kirmānī clarifies that the stations of *niqābat* and *nijābat-i juz'ī* correspond to *wilāya-i juz'ī* that they possess and *niqābat* and *nijābat-i kullī* to *wilāya-i kullī* (Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Op. cit., Vol. 4., p. 75).

⁷⁸ - *Irshād*, Vol. 4., p. 97. Reminiscent of the seven stations of gnosis/love in Sufism (*haft shahr-i 'ishq*), it seems that Kirmānī had a love-hate relationship with Sufism, because despite condemning Sufis, he uses their terminology and discourse.

⁷⁹ - *Irshād*, Vol. 4., & Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābī'* (the Blessed Treatise of *Rukn-i Rābī'*), 1368 H/1948, *passim*.

Gnosis of these eight classes and submitting to them make the fourth pillar of *Shaykhism*, i.e., *rukn-i rābi‘ imān* or *ma‘rifā*. They share the *wilāyat al-takwīnīya*⁸⁰ of the Fourteen Illuminated⁸¹, they are obligatory to obey (*wājib al-iṭā‘ah*, a status which is typically assigned to the *imāms* in the *Shī‘a kalām*) and like the *imāms*, they enjoy the status of *nafs-i qudsī*.⁸² Kirmānī calls *Uṣūlī* jurists *‘ulemā-ye ṣāhirah* (lit. the apparent scholars)⁸³ and removes them from the hierarchy of the holders of the fourth pillar, as opposed to *qurā’i ṣāhirah* who are the *Shaykhī ‘ulemā*.⁸⁴ Although *rukn-i rābi‘* comes last, it is the first truth (*ḥaqīqat-i awwal*)⁸⁵ and is eternal and everlasting.⁸⁶

Kirmānī is confusing on whether any of the *Shaykhī* leaders claims *rukniyat-i rābi‘* for himself. On one hand, he is very clear and straightforward about *rukn-i rābi‘* being an office and the fourth principle of the faith (*aṣl-i imān*), “and since the Book, the sunnah and ‘aql support the presence and the legitimacy of the [holders’] office, one needs to confess their existence, seeks for their friendship (*tawallā*) enthusiastically and looks for their appearance”.⁸⁷ He also clarifies that as a “dilapidated and dying man”, he has no political ambitions or claim to rulership, and “his time is divided between teaching and writing (*dars*

⁸⁰ - On *wilāyat al-takwīnīya* Kirmānī argues that the Hidden *imām* is *nafs-i muṭlaq-i kullī* and the owner of *wilāyat al-takwīnīya*, while *nufūs-i muṭlaq-i juz‘ī* is every *walī* who can obtain this status as a result of his efforts (Kirmānī, *Irshād*, Vol. 4., p. 79).

⁸¹ - Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 4., Op. cit., p. 84.

⁸² - *Irshād*, Vol. 4., p. 53.

⁸³ - They are called *‘ulemā-ye ṣāhirah*, because “they failed to see the truth as it is and are reliant on reasoning, arguments and exoteric *‘ilm*” (*Irshād*, Vol. 4., p. 78), as opposed to the holders of the office of *rukn-i rābi‘* belonging to those who are armed with esoteric knowledge.

⁸⁴ - *Irshād*, Vol. 4., p. 78.

⁸⁵ - Reminiscent of the status of *ḥaqīqat al-awwalīyah* or *ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadiyah*.

⁸⁶ - Ibn ‘Arabī’s presence here is visible, the term *a‘yān-i thābita* (lit. permanent archetypes) has the same characteristics.

⁸⁷ - *Irshād*, Vol. 4., p. 94 & Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābi‘*, 1368 H/1948, Op. cit., pp. 14-19.

wa mashq) and praying for the longevity of the Qajar Monarchy”,⁸⁸ to which he was biologically and administratively attached.⁸⁹

On the other hand, he maintains that the perfect *Shī‘as* or the selected *Shī‘as* (*Shī‘ayān-i khāṣṣ*) are the holders of the fourth pillar and are obliged to obey.⁹⁰ *Ruknīyat-i* or *bābīyat* in Kirmānī’s discourse consists of two types: all-encompassing and specific (*kullī* and *juz’ī*, respectively). The former is designated to the Prophet and his household and the latter is assigned to ‘others’, including, but not limited to, the previous prophets and special vicegerents of the *imām* (also perfect *Shī‘as* or *Shī‘ayān-i kibār*).⁹¹ It seems that Kirmānī has completely given up his pendulum swing between these two readings of *ruknīyat-i rābi‘* (or probably better to say, his temptation to assign such an office for himself and his progeny), *after* the emergence of the *Bābī* movement, because he did not want to be identified with it. In *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābi‘* (the Blessed Treatise of the Fourth Pillar), once again he clarifies that the fourth pillar is not “a claim of monarchy”⁹² and/or “a thirteenth imamate”,⁹³ that he or any member of his clan, i.e., the *Kirmānī Shaykhīs*, is practicing when the real ruler, the Twelfth *imām*, is absent, and that *Shaykhīsm* must not be identified with “*Bābī-yayi mulāḥida*”⁹⁴ (lit. the infidel *Bābīs*), who are the archenemy of both the monarchy and the religion. We shall return to this topic in the following.

⁸⁸ - *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābi‘*, 1368 H/1948, p. 20.

⁸⁹ - *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābi‘* is written after *Bābīsm* and therefore Kirmānī’s withdrawal from his initial teachings about *rukn-i rābi‘* should be treated with caution.

⁹⁰ - Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 4, Op. cit., p. 84 & *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābi‘*, 1368 H/1948, Op. cit., pp. 20-21.

⁹¹ - Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 4, part one, Op. cit., p. 308 & Vol. 4, part two, pp. 65 ff.

⁹² - Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābi‘*, 1368 H/1948, Op. cit., p. 19.

⁹³ - *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābi‘*,

⁹⁴ - *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābi‘*,

Obsessed with modulating things (terms, stations and states), Kirmānī argues that *bābīyat-i juz'ī* (otherwise *juz'īya*) embraces several groups, even animals and dead nature, and cites the hoopoe of Suleyman and the dog of the People of the Cave (*aṣḥāb-i kahf*) as examples.⁹⁵ They are *bāb-i juz'ī* because they own a non-all-encompassing *wilāya*, i.e., they enjoy some aspects, or one aspect of divine knowledge having been revealed to the Prophet in total, and the closer they are to the source of emanation or *wilāyat-i kullīya* of the Prophet, the larger their share of the portion of the blessing of *wilāya*. Kirmānī clarifies that the *Shaykhī 'ulemā* who came before him are not only *walī*, i.e., the medium of His emanation, but also the ultimate cause (*'illat-i ghā'ī*) of creation due to their piety and *'ilm*. Kirmānī's statements here are fairly revealing, because they show how the *Shaykhī* leaders saw their status and how they impacted on later developments such as the formation of *Bābīsm*. Kirmānī reads:

“Isn't it enough for them [i.e. the *Shaykhī 'ulemā*] to be God's righteous servant, ascetic in this world, willing for the Hereafter, [while] having broken from people, connected to Him, fully obedient to their guardians [i.e. the *imāms*], gnostic to a gnosis around which Islam and faith (lit. *imān*) are rotating, and the salvation of both worlds is dependent? [It is] that gnosis, which is related to religious matters and has been known by their peers who came before. [They are] pious, virtuous and trustworthy of God, His prophet and all believers in this world and the Hereafter. God has created them as the intermediary of His attention and care and the ultimate cause which means everything, including the Earth, the Heaven, and the Hereafter is created for them to appear. Had it not

⁹⁵ - Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 4, Op. cit., p. 66-67.

been for their existence and the reason behind their creation, no alive being (*junbandih*) would have survived or received emanation (*fayḍ*), and nothing would have been created.

Isn't it enough for them? Yes, it is, I swear to God it is"⁹⁶

Kirmānī's portrayal of the office of *bābīyat* or *rukniyat*⁹⁷ is in fact of a miniature prophethood which is typical of the status of prophethood in Abrahamic religions. The trio of intervention in the cycle of *fayḍ*, accessibility to prophetic knowledge⁹⁸- as opposed to conventional *ʿilm* which is fake, misleading, and cheap - as well as *khilāfat fi al-arḍ* are the principle motifs of the office of prophethood in Abrahamic religions. However, the problem is that Kirmānī on one hand warns his followers to be careful not to resemble Sufis, Jews and Christians, who elevated their religious leaders to a Godly status and exaggerated their position, but on the other hand, assigns them the station of *ʿillat-i ghāʾī* which is far higher than that.

Space does not allow me to discuss the details of Kirmānī's theological and juridical approach, however, what has been expounded so far helps us to see how Kirmānī structures the scattered ideas of his precedents in a coherent way, and purges them from the redundancy of occult sciences, lettrism, numerology and endless discussion on the nature of the true knowledge, and it is exactly here where the main difference between Kirmānī and his rival, then classmate in Rashtī's circle in Karbala, Mullā Ḥassan Gawhar, rests. Although

⁹⁶ - Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 4, part 2, Op. cit., pp. 67-68.

⁹⁷ - *Kermanī Shaykhism* is famous as *Rukniyah*.

⁹⁸ - The dichotomy of *ʿilm* (knowledge) vs. *maʿrifa* (gnosis) is a central topic in *Shaykhism*. Regarding what I have discussed so far, it should be clear that the *Shaykhī* leaders devalue conventional *ʿilm* which is obtainable by intellect and the main reason they undermine the alternatives such as Sufism, philosophy, and *uṣūlī* jurisprudence is because they prioritize *maʿrifa* over *ʿilm*. In the *Shaykhī* discourse, *maʿrifa* means the teachings of the *imāms* having been crystalized in the *aḥādīth*, although Aḥsāʾī considers his dreams as *maʿrifa*.

Gawhar's ideas shaped another sub-branch of *Shaykhism*, namely the *Shaykhī* school of Tabriz, Tabrizī *Shaykhism* lacks the doctrine of the fourth pillar, and while Gawhar shares the basic *Shaykhī* tenets with Kirmānī, he significantly differs from him on *rukṇ-i rābiʿ*.

In the fourth volume of *Irshād*, which is on the gnosis of *rukṇ-i rābiʿ*, Kirmānī develops an argument for the legitimacy and necessity of the vicegerent of the hidden *imām* and refers to this person as *ḥākim-i zāhir* (the apparent ruler); an allusion that can have political connotations, and that is why it bears resemblance to preceding prophethoods. He maintains that the proof (*ḥujja*) must be visible and present among people: “and now you know that the *ḥujja* will not be presented to people unless they are able to see him and ask him for the proof”,⁹⁹ because it is not reasonable for God to leave people without bringing them a visible, apparent proof when the *imām* is absent. Kirmānī here becomes very close to stripping the *imām* of his functionality when he is absent.¹⁰⁰ Pertinent to this is another argument by him in the first volume of *Irshād* when he states that “that time is gone when the *bāb* [of the *imām*] must have been invisible”,¹⁰¹ which means that in this new era the *bāb* of the *imām* must be visible and accessible by people, because he is the only available gate of emanation from God to people. In terms of the closeness to the *imām*, the outermost status is that of *sharīʿat-i zāhirah*, which, as the term sounds, is the status of the visible *Shaykhī* leader and the innermost is *rukṇ* or *bāb*.

The binary of *ḥujjat al-bāṭinah* and *ḥujjat al-zāhirah* (the exoteric proof) is a central theme in all *Shaykhī* writings, though the only non-esoteric/non-hidden entity that is valued

⁹⁹ - Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 4, Op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ - *Irshād*, Vol. 4, Op. cit., pp. 13-15.

¹⁰¹ - Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 1, Op. cit., p. 123,

and taken seriously by the *Shaykhī* writers is *qurā'ī ṣāhirah*, which refers to themselves, otherwise, the priority is with the *bāṭinah*. For example, in *Tafsīr al-Sūrat al-Ḥujarāt* (the Exegesis of the *Sūrat* of the Private Apartments),¹⁰² Karīm Khān Kirmānī differentiates between these two kinds of proof; the exoteric proof which are the prophets and the *imāms*, while the esoteric proof is *'uqūl ul-khabar*, or proof which reveals the true meaning of the *khabar/ḥadīth* of the *imāms* and disseminates them.¹⁰³ Also, *'ilm* indicates *ḥadīth* or any other teachings that go back to the school of *ahl ul-bayt*, and if a *ḥadīth* lacks the *imāms* confirmation and his assistance in interpretation, is it not valid and should be left aside.¹⁰⁴ The exoteric, *al-ṣāhirah*, is likened to *ṭāghūt* (lit. tyrant), which must be avoided (Ibid.) and *al-bāṭin* is *wilāya* (or *ma'rifat al-Islam*, which is more important than Islam itself) or the great tidings (*naba' 'azīm*) (38:67), whose acknowledgment makes one a *mu'min* vs. just a Muslim. It is *'aql* and not *'ilm* or any exoteric proof that leads one to *īmān* (faith), which is to acknowledge the *wilāya* of 'Alī and his progeny.¹⁰⁵

Let's come back to Kirmānī's critical statement one more time when he said that a: we, the *Shaykhī 'ulemā* do not claim to be the *bāb* or *rukṇ*, because he is invisible and our duty is to go find him, but b: if the vicegerent of the *imām* must be visible and his invisibility makes him illegitimate and strips him of his functions, then the holder of the status of *sharī'at-i ṣāhirah* or the *Shaykhī 'ālim* can step forward and act as the *rukṇ* or *bāb*. However, the problem with the *Shaykhī* leaders, particularly Kirmānī, is that they push the *rukṇ* or

¹⁰² - It is to be noted that the *Shaykhī* writers never use the term *tafsīr*, and instead use *ta'wīl* for their exegesis of the *Qur'ān*.

¹⁰³ - Kirmānī, *Tafsīr al-Sūrat al-Ḥujarāt* (the Exegesis of the *Sūrat* of the Private Apartments), n.d. f, n. p. pp. 7-8 & 29.

¹⁰⁴ - *Tafsīr al-Sūrat al-Ḥujarāt*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁵ - *Tafsīr al-Sūrat al-Ḥujarāt*, p. 64 & Zayn ul-Ābidīn Ibrāhīmī, *Ṣawā'iq ul-Burhān Fī Radd al-Dalā'il al-'Irfān* (the Thunderbolt of the Proof in the Refutation of the Reasons of Mysticism), n.d. a, n.p., *passim*.

vicegerents even further into the hiddenness and concealment, like the *imām* himself, and since the affairs of believers cannot be abandoned, there needs to be someone to take initiative and accept responsibility, i.e., the *Shaykhī* *‘ulemā* who wears the mantle of *rukniyat*. It is needless to remind that was it not for the political weight and ambitions of such a belief, the transfer from *rukniyat-i rābi‘* to *bābiyat* in the messianic endeavor of Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī would not have happened.

Gawhar neither discusses the issue of leadership in the absence of the *imām*, nor goes further than the four levels of gnosis which is typical in any *Shaykhī* discussion.¹⁰⁶ The last station of *qurā’i zāhirah*, e.g., *sharī‘at-i zāhirah*, as we observed above, is the status of the *Shaykhī* scholar, which in fact is the first station of the spiritual journey that a believer should take to reach the *imām*. Now, it is easier for us to read and grasp Kirmānī’s intention with his conception of *rukniyat-i rābi‘*: the *imām* is not available and that can make him insufficient, and since the entire hierarchy of *qurā’i zāhirah* lives a remote and inaccessible life too, there must necessarily be an intermediary between the *imām* and people because the community of believers cannot survive without him, and this medium is but the *Shaykhī* scholar. Therefore, acknowledging the *wilāya* of, and gnosis to the *awliyā*, is the fourth pillar of the *Shaykhī* school.¹⁰⁷

Reading his main book, *Irshād al-‘Awām*, as well as other texts containing his discussion of the *Shaykhī* creeds, one observes the character of an orthodox jurist-theologian, whose thought displays similarities with Aḥsā’ī. Kirmānī attempted to

¹⁰⁶ - Gawhar, *Sharḥ-i Ḥayāt-i Arwāḥ* (the Commentary on the Life of Souls), 1423 H/2002 (Kuwait: Jāmi‘-i Īmām Ṣādiq), p. 571.

¹⁰⁷ - Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 4, Op. cit., *passim*.

deconstruct Rashtī and structuralize his idea of *bābīyat* by emphasizing the *rukṇ-i rābīʿ* and clarifying how he differs from any other false claimant. By doing so, he discredited Shīrāzī's claim of being vicegerent to the hidden *imām*. However, the nature of their claims is the same at its core, with the significant difference being that Shīrāzī breached the veil and revealed what he was not supposed to, while the passive messianism of Kirmānī remained loyal to the confines of the fourth pillar. Kirmānī is reluctant to use the term *bāb* to avoid any similarity with *Bābīsm* that was active at that time, and instead, turns his face to *nāṭiq-i wāḥid* (also *ḥākim-i zāhir*, *ḥākim-i llāhī*, and *ḥākim-i bar ḥaqq-i zamān*), i.e., an individual who is an expert on the law of God and his existence saves the world from annihilation.¹⁰⁸ Here we see the coexistence of the exoteric and esoteric, or merging the esoteric with exoteric (law). Ansari calls it “a substitute jurisprudence” to the existing *uṣūlī* jurisprudence, which is achieved when messianic trends abandon their chiliastic fervors and settle down.¹⁰⁹

Here also *nāṭiq-i wāḥid* has an *Ismāʿīlī* tone, as in early *Ismāʿīlī* texts when the term *nāṭiq* was used to refer to the law-giving Prophets. Literally, *nāṭiq* means 'speaking-prophets', and since *Ismāʿīlīs* had a broad understanding of religious history, i.e., as a cyclical time, the cycle of each Prophet is the cycle for announcing a law (speaking of a new law). There are six enunciators or *nāṭiqs*. *Ismāʿīlīs* like many other *Shīʿa* communities also believed that there would be a *qāʾim* - who would be the last *imām* bringing an end to the cycle of all religious laws. In early *Ismāʿīlī* literature, the *qāʾim* was referred to as the seventh *nāṭiq*, however, later *Ismāʿīlīs* stopped using the term.¹¹⁰ In Kirmānī's terminology, *nāṭiq-i wāḥid*

¹⁰⁸ - *Irshād*, Vol. 4., pp. 17-18 & Kirmānī, *Irshād*, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 2, p. 134.

¹⁰⁹ - Ansari, “Bāṭinī Nigarī dar Tashyūʿ wa Taṣawwuf dar Guftugū bā Hasan Ansari” (Esotericism in Shīʿism and Sufism: An Interview with Hasan Ansari) < <https://ansari.kateban.com/post/4227> >, 1398 *Shamsī*/2019, last accessed 02/10/2021.

¹¹⁰ - Daftary, *Historical Dictionary of the Ismailis*, 2012, p. 109.

has other equivalents such as *‘ālim-i maḥsūs* (lit. the tangible scholar), *‘ālim-i mashhūd*, *‘ālim-i nāṭiq* and *shakḥ-i thiqaḥ* (lit. the trustworthy man), to name a few.¹¹¹

By the Single Enunciator (*nāṭiq-i wāḥid*)¹¹² which embraces its *Ismā‘īlī* equivalent,¹¹³ Kirmānī restricts the holder of the office of the fourth pillar to the confines of the law: “it is incumbent for the *‘awām ul-nās* ... to recognize [and obey] a mujtahid,¹¹⁴ who is cognizant of the rulings of the Prophet” (Ibid., p. 18). The *Shaykhī* leader or *ḥākim-i zāhir*, the Single Enunciator, is the proof of God and in contrast to the *Bāb* who brings chaos and anarchy, oversees the *ḥikma* of this world, which is harmony, orderliness, and moderation.¹¹⁵

***Rukn-i Rābī‘* on Trial: How the *Shaykhī*/ *Bābī* Clash Pushed the Ambitions of the Office of *Ruknīyat-i Rābī‘* Behind the Wall of Political Conservatism**

Our account of the *Shaykhī* perception of gnosis and the claim of accessibility to *ma‘rifa* as opposed to *‘ilm*, which is obtainable by conventional learning, would be

¹¹¹ - Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābī‘*, 1368 H/1948, Op. cit., p. 9.

¹¹² - Aḥsā‘ī also uses *nāṭiq*, though in a different context. In the third volume of *Sharḥ al-Ziyārat al-Jāmi‘at al-Kabīrah* (Commentary on the Grand Comprehensive Visitation) Aḥsā‘ī uses this term for the eleven present *imāms* as opposed to the hidden *imam* or *ghā‘ib*. In this context, *imām al-nāṭiq* is *shāhid* (witness) to believers and their deeds (Aḥsā‘ī, n.d. a, Vol. 3, pp. 150-151).

¹¹³ - Mangol Bayat discusses the similarities between these two and rightly points to the combination of “political and religious motives” (Bayat, 1982, Op. cit., pp. 60-63), in both *Kirmānī Shaykhism* and the *Ismā‘īlī* movement, as the main factor in these resemblances.

¹¹⁴ - Needless to remind that in the *Shaykhī* theology, *ijtihad* means transmitting *ḥadīth* from the *ma‘ṣūm* and clarifying the *aḥkām* of the household of the Prophet (Kirmānī, 1368 H/1948, Op. cit., p. 18).

¹¹⁵ - In the *Shaykhī* context, *rukṇ-i rābī‘* is stripped of its messianic connotation and therefore, it should be regarded as an antithesis of the messianic figure of the *Bāb*. Furthermore, it undermines the *Uṣūlī faqīh* as well. It overshadows the *Bābī* messianism in the sense that the *Shaykhī nāṭiq wāḥid* knows the law and is to cut the endless chain of numerous Gnostics or the abovementioned *qurā‘i*. On the other hand, it contrasts with the *Uṣūlī* jurist due to the non-esoteric source of his knowledge which by itself discredit his claims of leadership. Kirmānī argues that jurisprudence and *‘ilm al-uṣūl* alone are not enough to bring salvation to believers, because *fiqh* has nothing to do with the true gnosis and it is only the *ḥākim-i ḥāfiẓ*, e.g., the *Shaykhī* scholar, who obtains knowledge from its true source, that is to say the *imām*. Furthermore, unlike the *Uṣūlī faqīh*, the *Shaykhī* jurist is the owner of *nafs-i qudsī* (Kirmānī, 1267 H/1850, Vol. 4, part 2, p. 53). Karīm Khān’s son and successor, Muḥammad Khān in *Jawāb-i Īrādātī dar Mas‘ala-yi Waḥdat-i Nāṭiq* (A response to the Critiques on a Single Enunciator), clarifies his father’s outlook that *nāṭiq-i wāḥid* is not a *mu‘aṣis* (lit. founder), but a follower of the *sharī‘a* of the Prophet (Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī, n.d. c, p. 7).

incomplete if we neglected to discuss the *Shaykhī/Bābī* clash. There is no doubt that the emergence of *Bābīsm* on the social and intellectual milieu of nineteenth century Iran, before everything else, was a blow to the name and reputation of *Shaykhīsm*, which, in its short history, had tried strenuously to preserve its puritanism from the redundancy of the *Uṣūlī* application of *‘aql* on one hand, and the Sufi temptation of *ta’wīl* on the other. We will come back to the *Shaykhī* skepticism of *ta’wīl* later, when we discuss Kirmānī’s refutations of *Bābīsm*.

There is truth in Armin Eschraghi’s analysis that the *Shaykhī* identity has been shaped, to a great extent, by the animosity of the *Uṣūlīs* (Eschraghi, 2013, Op. cit.), so much so that the more they were challenged by their *Uṣūlī* peers, the more they withdrew to the safe shelter of the teachings of the *imāms* as the only truthful narrative of Islam. To the same extent, Sufism, and particularly the Sufism of ibn ‘Arabī shaped the *Shaykhī* mystical (here mysticism as *ma’rifā*) discourse. It seems that the school, particularly the Kirmān branch, had to go through the same experience when Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī (later *Bāb*, lit. gate to the Unseen), made a series of claims that not only urged Kirmānī to modify his doctrine of *Ruknīyat-i Rābī’*, but also develop his political conservatism that was in sharp contrast to the revolutionary platform of the *Bāb*.

Karīm Khān Kirmānī had every problem with *Bābīsm*, but what irritated him most was Shīrāzī’s assertion of being the bearer of *ma’rifā*,¹¹⁶ which had itself paved the way for his claim of being the vicegerent of the *imām*, based on *nīyābat bil mu’jiz* that he took for

¹¹⁶ - I have discussed the issue in “The Conceptualization of Wilāya in the Bābī and Bahā’ī Texts: From Messianic Claims to the Secular Institutionalization of Guardianship,” *Journal of South Asia and Middle Eastern Studies*, No. 4, Vol. XL (Summer 2017), pp. 43-62.

himself in his writings, including *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Yūsuf* (lit. Joseph, also known as *Qayyūm ul-Asmāʾ*) and *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Kawthar* (lit. Abundant Good).¹¹⁷ Kirmānī also shared the disappointment of the non-*Shaykhī* mujtahids who had found Shīrāzī's knowledge of Arabic and classical Islamic studies poor and a mockery.¹¹⁸

In order to invalidate his mission, Kirmānī wrote five refutations (*raddīyah*) altogether, including *Izhāq ul-Bāṭil* (lit. Vanishing the False, written in 1271 H/1854),¹¹⁹ *Risāla-yi Tīr Shahāb Dar Rāndan-i Bāb-i Khusrān Maʿāb* (lit. the Treatise of the Shining Arrow in Repulsing the Misguided *Bāb*, written in 1272 H/1855), *Shahāb-i Thāqib* (lit. the Pellucid Star, written in 1272 H/1855), *Risāla Dar Radd-i Bāb-i Murtāb* (lit. the Treatise on the Refutation of the Doubtful *Bāb*, written in 1283 H/1866) and *Aḥwāl-i Bāb-i Khusrān Maʿāb* (the Stations of the Misguided *Bāb*, written in 1283 H/1866). Following him, his oldest son and successor, Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī (d. 1324 H/1906) wrote three treatises on the refutation of *Bābīsm* entitled *Risāla Fī Radd al-Bāb al-Murtāb* (lit. the Treatise on the Refutation of the Doubtful *Bāb*) in Arabic, *Risāla Dar Radd-i Baʿd-i Taʾwīlāt-i Bābīyah* (lit. the Treatise on the Refutation of Some of the *Bābī* Interpretations) and *Taqwīm ul-ʿIwaj* (lit. Rectifying the Distortions) in Persian. Kirmānī's younger son and successor to his brother, Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Khān Ibrāhīmī, penned *Risāla-yi Mubārakay-i Šāʿaqah Dar Radd-i Bāb-i*

¹¹⁷ - In the beginning of *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Yūsuf* and in *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Kawthar* (p. 29), Shīrāzī states that "*mā adʾaytu bābīyat al-manṣūṣ*" (I have not claimed the vicegerency based on appointment).

It is to be mentioned that *nīyābat bil muʾjiz* (lit. vicegerency based on miracle) and its pair, *nīyābat bi naṣṣ* (vicegerency based on appointment), are the inventions of Shīrāzī, and one cannot find them in the *Imāmī* tradition, including the *Shaykhī* one. He founded his vicegerency based on miracle, i.e., exegesis of *Sūrat al-Yūsuf* (as the *Qurʾān* is the miracle of the Prophet), because he did not have the *naṣṣ*, or *imām's* appointment, as opposed to the four special vicegerents who had come before him. Furthermore, the term *nīyābat* is not used in the *Shīʿī ḥadīth* compilations, and instead the four vicegerents are called *wakīl* (lit. agent) and their office was *wikālat* rather than *nīyābat*.

¹¹⁸ - This is the prevalent theme of all the refutations that we discuss here.

¹¹⁹ - *Izhāq ul-Bāṭil* was written in Arabic, though it was later translated to Persian by Kirmānī's younger son, Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Khān Ibrāhīmī, and we use the Persian copy in this paper.

Murtāb (lit. the Blessed Treatise of Thunderbolt on the Refutation of the Doubtful *Bāb*), *Mi'rāj ul-Sa'ādah* (lit. the Ascension of Felicity) and *Ṣawā'iq ul-Burhān Fī Radd al-Dalā'il al-'Irḑān* (lit. the Thunderbolt of the Proof in the Refutation of the Reasons of Mysticism).

Since some of these refutations were written at the behest of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh (1275 *Shamsī*/1896) or other courtiers, they have an apologetic tone, which is indicative of the fact that the *Shaykhīs* had to prove their loyalty to the Shah and their submission to Twelver *Shi'ism* by refraining from the messianic ambitions of the office of the fourth pillar. Reading through these refutations, one observes how the steady and uninterrupted line of the anti-*Bābī* and later the anti-*Bahā'ī* 'Otherizing' tradition, gradually became the predominant discourse of the *Shaykhī* school and shaped its political attitude towards the monarchy and nationalism of the nineteenth century.

The refutations, however, take on an aggressive tone when Kirmānī and his successors deal with the *Bābī* cause. Other than Karīm Khān and his two sons, Muḥammad Khān and Zayn ul-'Ābidīn Khān Ibrāhīmī, the next *Shaykhī* leaders from his progeny, Zayn ul-'Ābidīn's son Abul Qāsim Khān Ibrāhīmī, known as Sarkār Āqā (d. 1389 *Shamsī*/1969) and his son, 'Abd u-Riḍā Khān Ibrāhīmī (d. 1358 *Shamsī*/1980) did not get involved in these controversies. Tavakoli-Targhi shows how the first wave of the polemics, which was launched by the *Shaykhīs* of Kerman, laid the groundwork for later Otherizing anti-*Bābī* discourses, headed by the Islamists, who turned this tradition into an established official policy in post-revolutionary Iran. According to Tavakoli-Targhi, "the mode of encounter with the Babis and Baha'is"¹²⁰ over more than one hundred years is divided into two phases, and

¹²⁰ - Tavakoli-Targhi, *Anti-Baha'ism and Islamism in Iran*, 2008, p. 201.

Karīm Khān's polemics belongs to the first round of confrontations, which is called "the formative phase".¹²¹

While Tavakoli-Targhi is right about the leading role of the *Kirmānī Shaykhīs* in starting such polemics against the *Bāb*, he refuses to pay attention to the fact that Karīm Khān's refutations were not "xenophobic" and therefore did not misrepresent *Bābīs* as a "foreign entity" or "agents of the governments of Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, and Israel".¹²² For Karīm Khān, Shīrāzī was rather an ignorant, a misled, or a *fāsiq* than a foreign agent, and therefore, his refutations should be regarded as an inter-discursive polemic whose goal was both to humiliate the new representative of the hidden *imām* as just the orphan son of a humble mercer of Shiraz, and to represent his school as the only reliable narrative of Twelver *Shī'ism*. Karīm Khān as well as the *Shaykhīs* of Tabriz started the campaign, but their successors, i.e., the Islamists, went all the way down the road in their Otherizing discourse.

Refutations, regardless of their author, share several common and interrelated themes: the dichotomy of *‘ilm* vs. *ma‘rifā*, the definition of *‘aql* as hiero-intelligence;¹²³ or a divine gift which is endowed to a few Elect by His *mashīyyah* (Will) and the ineligibility of Shīrāzī to benefit from it, and their apologetic tone when it comes to *Ruknīyat-i Rābī‘*. The authors attempt to explain that the fourth pillar is not to assume the political and spiritual leadership for the *Shaykhī* leaders, but only to emphasize the principle of *tawallā wa tabarrā*

¹²¹ - *Anti-Baha'ism and Islamism in Iran*, pp. 201-202.

¹²² - *Anti-Baha'ism and Islamism in Iran*, p. 200.

¹²³ - From this perspective, *Izhāq ul-Bāṭil* is significant, because *‘aql* is described as the inner of the inner (*bāṭin-i bāṭin*), *awwal-i mā khalaqa* (the First Created), the meaning of the meanings, and the First Station (*awal maqām*) (*Kirmānī, Izhāq ul-Bāṭil*, n.d. a., pp. 11ff).

(lit. a doctrine that refers to the obligation of disassociation with those who oppose God and those who caused harm to and were the enemies of the Islamic prophet Muhammad or his family). Obviously Kirmānī extended this doctrine to include the *Shaykhī* leaders as well, because as Corbin explains, “the idea of the ‘Friends of God’ [*awliyā*] involves the idea of the permanent esoteric hierarchy, and *eo ipso* the conditions which determine its existence in the present period of the occultation of the Imam”.¹²⁴

Kirmānī channels the issue from different perspectives, though the goal is one: to disprove the entitlement of Shīrāzī to being the heir to the Prophetic gnosis which is only obtainable by *‘aql* (as hiero-intelligence and not instrumental reason) and since he has no benefit from it, he cannot inherit such a treasured legacy. In *Izhāq ul-Bāṭil*, he repudiates Shīrāzī’s claims that had not only questioned the divine status of the *Qur’ān* as a *mu‘jiz* (lit. miracle),¹²⁵ but also had postulated his book, the abovementioned *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Yūsuf* or *Qayyūm ul-Asmā’*, as a *bayyina* (lit. proof) for the veracity of his mission as the vicegerent of the hidden *imām*, i.e., *nīyābat bil mu‘jiz*. Kirmānī’s argument for the status of the Prophet as the First Emanated (*ṣādir-i awwal*) and the First Intellect (*‘aql-i awwal*) is philosophical and genealogically can be traced back to the *ḥakīms* of the School of Tehran.¹²⁶ According to Kirmānī, only one emanates from One, and if Shīrāzī believes otherwise (the emanation of two from One), then his argument is logically impossible (lit. *mumtani’*), because if we accept that Muḥammad is the only true Illuminated and honest (*ma‘ṣūm wa mu‘tadil-i*¹²⁷ *ḥaqīqī*)

¹²⁴ - Corbin, *the History of Islamic Philosophy*, n.d., p. 355.

¹²⁵ - The *Qur’ān* being a *mu‘jiz* and not a human product is the main claim about the Book.

¹²⁶ - Kirmānī, *Izhāq ul-Bāṭil*, p. 33. I have discussed this issue elsewhere, see:

Chamankhah, *the Conceptualization of Guardianship*, Op. cit., 2019, pp. 115-170.

¹²⁷ - *Mu‘tadil* is the one who does not go astray, and all his faculties are in good and well-balanced shape. It also means honest, as his attribute of *amīn* (reliable and trustful) testifies.

individual, then Shīrāzī's claim that he shares the same faculties is rationally *maḥāl*, because *mu'tadil-i ḥaqīqī* cannot be more than one. And if we insist that the emanation of two from One is possible, then there exist two choices: either one of them is not *mu'tadil*, (here Shīrāzī), or both are dishonest (both Shīrāzī and the Prophet), and since the dishonesty of the Prophet according to transmitted and rational resources (*manābi' 'aqlī wa naqlī*) is impossible, then Shīrāzī is the dishonest one.¹²⁸

To put it concisely, Shīrāzī's claim of being a new prophet after the Prophet of Islam and his book as a new revelation is void. Furthermore, any other claim of accessibility to divine knowledge, *ma'rifa*, is not acceptable either, because the dishonest one, the one who lacks the attribute of *i'tidāl* (honesty and immunity to error) is not sufficiently eligible to enjoy *'aql*.¹²⁹ The one who is not *mu'tadil* cannot be *ma'sūm*, and the non-immaculate one cannot be the prophet. Kirmānī also warns of any attempt to interpret Shīrāzī's words, because it is due to *ta'wīl* that many *bad'as* (innovations) and errors happen.¹³⁰ In the *Shaykhī* discourse, there is no conflict between *'aql* and *nubuwwa*, as both reveal His Will and describe His names and attributes (*asmā' wa ṣifāt*), and the same as in *nubuwwa*, *'aql* is immune to error and therefore reliable.¹³¹

The notion of moderation (*i'tidāl*) as a virtue, which alongside courage and wisdom, makes a person/polis just and harmonious is originally a Platonic one. For more information see:

A. C. Grayling (ed), *Philosophy 1: A guide Through the Subject*, 2004 (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

¹²⁸ - Kirmānī, *Izhāq ul-Bāṭil*.

¹²⁹ - *Izhāq ul-Bāṭil*.

¹³⁰ - *Izhāq ul-Bāṭil*, p. 34.

¹³¹ - Rashtī, *Maqāmāt al-Ārifīn* (The Stations of the Gnostics), n.d. b, n. p., p. 12. The *Shaykhī* scholars share the classic *Shī'a* paradigm in which there is not only no conflict between the intellect and prophethood (or *dīn*), but also both represent one thing which is deity, and it is in such a tradition that *'aql* is regarded as the inner *imām/ walī*, who himself is the heir to the esoteric knowledge of the Prophet. In *Maqāmāt ul-Ārifīn*, Rashtī narrates a *ḥadīth* from the first *imām*, saying that *'aql* is what leads you to worshipping the Merciful and reaching you the Heaven (Rashtī, n.d.b, p. 9).

In addition to Shīrāzī's poor arguments which were not able to convince Kirmānī of the veracity of his claims,¹³² his trivial knowledge of Arabic was another reason that led Kirmānī to humiliate him as less literate than a Bedouin who has never attended a school.¹³³ Kirmānī also calls Shīrāzī, the son of a humble salesman from Shiraz. In consideration of his own high-ranking socio-economic strata - and a *fāsiq* (debauchee), because he called himself the vicegerent of the Hidden *imām* and invited people to jihad. However, according to a *Shī'a* tradition, not only is there no jihad during the Occultation, but also turning the *harām* of Muḥammad to *halāl* makes one a *fāsiq* (Kirmānī, n.d.g, p. 18). We know that Shīrāzī also believed in this critical Islamic dictum that the *harām* and *halāl* of Muḥammad are to be observed and respected until the day of judgment; a principle which testifies to the finality (*khātamiyyat*) of Islam and the effectiveness of its *sharī'a*.¹³⁴ However, since he had a different interpretation¹³⁵ of *qiyāmat* (resurrection), which was based on a wrong understanding of *ta'wīl*, as well as a non-literal interpretation of resurrection, he argued that the *qiyāmat* of Islam is but its completion and perfection. However, when a religion becomes perfected and complete, there is no need to observe its laws, therefore, it is time to abandon

¹³² - Shīrāzī, in the abovementioned *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Yūsuf* claimed that he is the vicegerent, the *bāb*, of the *imām*, which as we observed, believed to be based on miracle. In the book of *Bayān*, which was dedicated to Muḥammad ibn Ḥassan, he took a further step and set forth a new claim, i.e., being the *qā'im*, or the forerunner and the annunciator of the appearance of the awaited Mahdi, the *Qā'im* of the End of Time, who is also called Man Yuḥziruhullāh (lit. He whom God shall make manifest). Therefore, *qā'im* is the title of Man Yuḥziruhullāh, and if anybody makes him *maḥzūn* (lit. upset), must be murdered, and believers must stand up (*qiyām*) as soon as they hear *Man Yuḥziruhullāh*, whose title is *Qā'im* (Shīrāzī, n.d., p. 230). He also added that the reason he did not reveal his *qā'imīyat* in his first book was because people were not ready for it. Regarding this confusing terminology, it seems that he believed in both the general *qā'imīyat* and the specific one, including both himself and Muḥammad ibn Ḥassan. In other words, he believed in *qā'imīyat* as an attribute (*ṣifāt* or *waṣf*), which is assigned to both himself and to the Twelfth *imām*, although his own mission or *qā'imīyat* has come first. Furthermore, until the end, Shīrāzī remained a firm believer of Muḥammad ibn Ḥassan.

¹³³ - Kirmānī, *Izhāq ul-Bātil*, Op. cit., pp. 38-47, Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi Tīr Shahāb Dar Rāndan-i Bāb-i Khusrān Ma'āb* (lit. the Treatise of the Shining Arrow in Repulsing the Misguided Bāb), n.d. g, n. p., pp. 12 ff & Muḥammad Khān, *Taqwīm ul-'Iwaj* (Rectifying the Distortions), n.d.a. n. p., p. 19, 124-125.

¹³⁴ - For more information: <https://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/o/HNU/hnu-171.html.utf8>

¹³⁵ - We will come back to this *different* meaning when we discuss *ta'wīl* in Muḥammad Khān's texts.

the Islamic *sharīʿa*, because it is the *qīyāmat* of Islam. A cycle of prophecy is closed and a new *dawr* (circle) is started, which is the birth of the new revelation that has its own laws.

The pinnacle of Kirmānī's apologetic tone is *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābiʿ* (The Blessed Treatise of the Fourth Pillar), which was written in response to a query of Mīrzā Ḥusseyṇ Khān Qazwīnī (d. 1298 H/1881, also known as Mushīr al-Dawlah and later Sipahsālār, the prime minister of the time), which had asked him to clarify *rukṇ-i rābiʿ* and how it may have nurtured Shīrāzī's claims. After elucidating on *rukṇ-i rābiʿ* and its place in the *Shaykhī* theology, Kirmānī contends that this doctrine did not aim to bring any new religion or to claim any spiritual authority like that of the *imām*, but to revise (*munaqqah*) and explain what already exists in a new way. So, the fourth pillar should not be regarded as an innovation, but just an elucidation of the principle of *tawallā wa tabarrā*, which has a long history in *Shīʿa* Islam.¹³⁶ He concludes that "Islam is [only] what we mentioned",¹³⁷ and if Shīrāzī and the like want to interpret and return it to their nonsensical hallucinations, then "we hate them, may God curse them and we consider enmity with them obligatory".¹³⁸ By "Islam is what we mentioned", Kirmānī between the lines claims that the *Shaykhī* school provides a historical opportunity for the teachings of Islam to be taught in a right way, because they have long been distorted by the *uṣūlī* jurists, misrepresented by Ibn ʿArabī's mysticism and now manipulated by the *Bābīs* as well.

Like his father, Muḥammad Khān adopted a tough and irreconcilable stance against *taʿwīl* and called the teachings of the *Bāb taʿwīl bi muzakhrafāt* (lit. nonsense

¹³⁶ - Kirmānī, *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābiʿ*, 1368 H/1948, Op. cit., pp. 25-26.

¹³⁷ - *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābiʿ*, p. 26.

¹³⁸ - *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābiʿ*.

interpretations); which means that both his teachings and his method are absurd and misleading. However, the author is more worried about Shīrāzī's methodology than his message, because his message is grounded on a *Shī'a* basis, which in principle, is acceptable by Muḥammad Khān, and it is his method that has brought such a confusion and led believers astray. For Muḥammad Khān, the teachings of the *imāms*, which he calls *ḥaqq*, are clear and perfect and believers are expected to obey and apply them. However, if there is a need for interpretation of the *akhbār* of the *imāms*, they must be interpreted in the right way according to the principles of *ta'wīl*, which it does not seem that these *mu'awwalīn-i zāllīn* (lit. misguided interpreters) are aware of.¹³⁹

It is not only that Shīrāzī himself interprets the Islamic teachings, particularly the *akhbār* of the *imāms*, which are clear and explicit enough not to need any interpretation, but also his followers make the same mistake when they try to fit Shīrāzī's heretical teachings into an Islamic framework: they recourse to interpretation in order to avoid any opposition from the *'ulemā* and the establishment. Muḥammad Khān teaches that the main principle of *ta'wīl* is the proportionality of the meaning and the word (*ma'nā wa lafẓ*),¹⁴⁰ because meaning is like the soul to the body and if one interprets a *lafẓ*/word arbitrarily, the meaning will be lost and this is how religious rulings will be altered, i.e., the *ḥarām* of Muḥammad becomes *ḥalāl* and vice versa.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ - Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī, *Risāla Dar Radd-i Ba'd-i Ta'wīlāt-i Bābīyah* (the Treatise on the Refutation of Some of the Bābī Interpretations), n.d. b., n. p., p. 6.

¹⁴⁰ - *Risāla Dar Radd-i*.

¹⁴¹ - *Risāla Dar Radd-i*, pp. 6-7.

Due to the fact that the meaning and the word are proportional, the *Qur'ān* is regarded as a *mu'jiz*, because God knows which word corresponds to its suitable meaning,¹⁴² and since each word of the *Qur'ān* has seventy inner (*bāṭinī*) meanings and for each meaning there are seventy outer (*ẓāhirī*) words, then it is only Him, who knows which word conveys the suitable meaning. To conclude, interpreting the words by strange and farfetched meanings only undermines the religion and results in *kufī* (heresy).¹⁴³ Bringing a *ḥadīth* from an unknown *imām* in which believers are banned from interpreting the *akhbār*, Muḥammad Khān concludes that interpreting a *khavar* arbitrarily is equal to seeking worldly pleasures, including leadership, and prioritizing this world over the Hereafter.¹⁴⁴

Prohibition of interpretation does not only apply to the *Qur'ānīc* verses, but also to the signs of the imamate as well, which are either ignored by the *Bāb* or distorted by him in order to suit his purpose. Muḥammad Khān brings a lengthy list of the signs of the time of Occultation and of the appearance (*'alā'im-i ẓuhūr*), as well as those of the Hidden *imam*, and argues that these signs are clear enough not to need any interpretation.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, interpreting the signs of the imamate and *nubuwwa* in order to claim a new revelation while the cycle of prophethood is closed, is not acceptable.¹⁴⁶ For an individual, alongside the necessity of having the signs of the imamate and *nubuwwa* in order to be able to wear the mantle of the *imām* and of the *nabī*, there is another requirement, which is having the potentials of the imamate and *nubuwwa*, which again, the *Bāb* lacks. These potentials, like

¹⁴² - *Risāla Dar Radd-i*, p. 7.

¹⁴³ - *Risāla Dar Radd-i*.

¹⁴⁴ - *Risāla Dar Radd-i*.

¹⁴⁵ - *Risāla Dar Radd-i*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁴⁶ - *Risāla Dar Radd-i*, pp. 14-15.

the signs, are obvious and explicit and don't need interpretation either.¹⁴⁷ Regarding these two, i.e., signs and potentials, no one can recourse to *ta'wīl* to abrogate the Islamic *sharī'a* and claim a new religion. Neither is Shīrāzī eligible to benefit from any gnosis which is a requirement for such important offices.¹⁴⁸

The *Shaykhī* leaders observed how by the *Bābī's* misinterpretation of the most essential tenets of *Shī'ism* (from the *Qur'ān* to *ḥadīth*, to *intizār*, immanent *zuhūr*, *raj'a* and the like), not only is one of their doctrinal cornerstones, i.e., *ta'wīl*, being distorted and abused,¹⁴⁹ but also, they were being condemned¹⁵⁰ for nurturing such a brand-new trend in interpretation according to which right would be misrepresented as wrong and vice versa. As an example, according to a *ḥadīth*, known as *ḥadīth-i Ridā'* (lit. of mantel), the Prophet asks 'Alī not to leave his house (or literally, not to wear his mantel in order to leave his house) until he has finished the collection of the *Qur'ān*, known as the *Qur'ān* of 'Alī). Based on this *ḥadīth*, it was believed that the *imām* would bring the *Qur'ān*, i.e., the *Qur'ān* of 'Alī with him when appeared.¹⁵¹ Twice in the *Bayān*, Shīrāzī testifies to the existence as well as the veracity of this *ḥadīth* and argues that the *Qā'im* must reveal it (must reveal the *Qur'ān kamā anzal a-llāh* according to the commentaries of 'Alī) when he appears and therefore the current *Qur'ān* is not reliable.¹⁵² Muḥammad Khān challenges him because he 'believes' that Shīrāzī in his writings, particularly in the abovementioned *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Yūsuf*, claims that he has

¹⁴⁷ - *Risāla Dar Radd-i*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁴⁸ - *Risāla Dar Radd-i*, p. 20.

¹⁴⁹ - Ansari rightly explains the centrality of *ta'wīl* in *Shaykhism* and its contribution to the general current of interpretation in the Qajar period: < <https://ansari.kateban.com/post/3483> >, last accessed 1/13/2021.

¹⁵⁰ - And as we observed earlier, almost all the refutations were written as a response to these condemnations.

¹⁵¹ - Majlisī, *Biḥār ul-Anwār* (the Oceans of Lights), n.d., Vol. 28., pp. 262-282.

¹⁵² - Shīrāzī, *Bayān*, n.d. a, n. p., p. 22 & p. 163.

brought this copy of the *Qur'ān*, while *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Yūsuf* is just a *tafsīr* and Shīrāzī makes *taḥaddī* with it to both challenge those who can bring such a thing, and to argue that he is the *nāyib bil mu'jiz* of the *imām*. Furthermore, Shīrāzī never claims that he has brought a new Book.

Undermining his application of *ta'wīl*, Muḥammad Khān argues that “the new Book” means but the *Qur'ān* will be brought again by the *imām*, as the original *Qur'ān* is preserved by him and will be revealed to people after he has appeared. In the same way, the new *sharī'a* which is supposed to be brought by the *imām* is nothing but the *sharī'a* of Islam which will be renewed (*tajdīd*) by him, and therefore, the *Bāb*'s intention of abrogating the Islamic *sharī'a* is a result of interpretation and distortion of the message of Islam.¹⁵³ Therefore, the *sharī'a* is not changeable, but since it has not fully and appropriately been put into practice, the last *imām* will apply it and revive the sunnah of the Prophet.¹⁵⁴ As will be discussed below, Muḥammad Khān clarifies the real meaning of the “new *sharī'a* and the new Book”,¹⁵⁵ as it appeared in these *aḥādīth* and maintains that by these two words, they meant the current Islamic ones, albeit with changes to make them work more effectively for the needs of the people.¹⁵⁶

In *Taqwīm ul-'Iwaj* he ascertains that “at every time, God has appointed some *'udūls* (lit. just people, also *Nāṭiq-i Wāḥid*)¹⁵⁷ to refute *ta'wīl-i jāhil* (lit. the interpretations of the

¹⁵³ - Muḥammad Khān, *Risāla Dar Radd-i Ba'ḍ-i Ta'wīlāt-i Bābīyah* (the Treatise on the Refutation of Some of the Bābī Interpretations), n.d.b, Op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁵⁴ - *Risāla Dar Radd-i*, pp. 23-24.

¹⁵⁵ - *Risāla Dar Radd-i*, p. 25.

¹⁵⁶ - *Risāla Dar Radd-i*.

¹⁵⁷ - In a short treatise entitled *Jawāb-i Intiqādātī dar Mas'alay-i Nāṭiq-i Wāḥid* (A Response to the Critiques on the Single Enunciator), Muḥammad Khān explains that *'udūls* are more than one and friendship with them is incumbent (*farḍ*) on all believers (the principle of *tawallā* and *tabarrā*), though only one of them is *Nāṭiq-i Wāḥid*. For more information see:

ignorant), and the interpretation of the ignorant is one which is not supported by any *Qur'ānīc* proof",¹⁵⁸ while *ta'wīl-i ḥaqq* has rigid and incontrovertible reasons from both the *Qur'ān* and the *ḥadīth* (Ibid.). He confirms that the *ta'wīl* is *ḥarām* and the best way to understand the teachings of the Prophet and the *imāms* is to let them speak for themselves.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, Shīrāzī's denial of the *khātamiyya* of the Prophet and of the truthfulness of the *Qur'ān* is baseless.¹⁶⁰ Rational and natural laws deny the occurrence of miracles, Muḥammad Khān argues, but the possibility of the occurrence of a miracle is extremely high according to *'irfānī* principles,¹⁶¹ though Muḥammad Khān does not elucidate on what he means by *'irfān*. It seems that the *imāms'* or the prophets' spiritual capacity to make things happen in the real world is what he means by "*qā'iday-i 'irfān*",¹⁶² which cannot be grasped by the conventional and mediocre intellect of Shīrāzī and his like.¹⁶³

If his father had embarked on his anti-*Bābī* attacks from a philosophical perspective, for Muḥammad Khān the most effective starting point is Shīrāzī's (mis)interpretations of Islamic and *Shī'a* events, signs, and sacred sources (the *Qur'ān* and the *ḥadīth*). For example, we saw how Shīrāzī had interpreted *qīyāma* (lit. resurrection) in a symbolic way, so much so that he called the abrogation of Islamic *sharī'a*, the *qīyāma*, or the advent of his own

Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī, *Jawāb-i Intiqādātī dar Mas'alay-i Nāṭiq-i Wāḥid*, n.d.c, n. p., p. 8.

Given this and unlike what the *Shaykhī* leaders, including Muḥammad Khān, want to argue that they don't assume any personal leadership, obviously they perceive themselves as one of the *'udūls*, i.e., *Nāṭiq-i Wāḥid*, whose main task is to warn people of the traps in the path.

¹⁵⁸ - Muḥammad Khān Kirmānī, *Taqwīm ul- 'Iwaj*, n.d. a, Op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁵⁹ - *Taqwīm ul- 'Iwaj*, p. 81. This is what Henry Corbin calls *kashf ul-maḥjūb* and is equal to phenomenology. For Corbin's discussion of *ta'wīl* in Shaykhism. See:

Henry Corbin, *En Islam Iranien: Aspects spirituels et philosophiques, IV: L'Ecole d'Ispahan, L'Ecole shaykhie, Le Douzième Imām*, 1978, (Paris: Gallimard), Livre VI, pp. 296-300.

¹⁶⁰ - Kirmānī, *Taqwīm ul- 'Iwaj*, n.d. a, Op. cit., pp. 45-58.

¹⁶¹ - *Taqwīm ul- 'Iwaj*, p. 108.

¹⁶² - *Taqwīm ul- 'Iwaj*.

¹⁶³ - *Taqwīm ul- 'Iwaj*, pp. 108 ff.

mission. Pertinent to this, is his *ta'wīl* of the *raj'a* (lit. return) of the Hidden *imām*, in which he classifies it as the reincarnation of past souls to new bodies.¹⁶⁴ Muḥammad Khān believes that Shīrāzī's thoughts on reincarnation have a non-Islamic genesis and come back to the teachings of figures such as Avicenna, ibn 'Arabī (d. 638 H/1240) and his follower "Mullā 'Abdul Razzāq" ('Abdul Razzāq Kāshānī (also Qāshānī, d. 735 H/ 1335?).¹⁶⁵ The culmination of Shīrāzī's belief in reincarnation, according to Muḥammad Khān, is belief in the appearance of the divine in the human body,¹⁶⁶ having been crystalized in the doctrine of Man Yuḏhiruhullāh (lit. He whom God shall make manifest).¹⁶⁷

For Muḥammad Khān, Shīrāzī's mission is but a new narrative of the zindiqs of the past, who believed in the circle of life and the return of previous souls into the wrong bodies, i.e., human, animal and plant bodies. While, according to Muḥammad Khān, like *ta'wīl*, in this case also there must be a correspondence between soul and body, which means that not every soul can be fitted to everybody and vice versa. There must necessarily be proportionality between the density of soul and the strength or weakness of jism (body) because denser souls¹⁶⁸ logically belong to stronger bodies which are created from the elements of souls, though they occupy an inferior level. For example, the body of the *imāms*

¹⁶⁴ - What one understands from the writings of Shīrāzī is that he believed in two kinds of *raj'a*, including the *raj'at-i 'aynī* (also *dhātī*) and *raj'at-i waṣfī* (or *ṣifātī*). In his pre-*Bayān* writings, particularly in the abovementioned *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Kawthar* as well as *Ṣaḥīfat al-'Adliyah*, he believed in *raj'at-i 'aynī*, which means that he saw himself as the return of the *imāms*. In the post-*Bayān* writings, he believed in the return of the *waṣfī* and the reason could be because in the pre-*Bayān* period, he was in *taqīyya* (also *taqīya*, lit. dissimulation) and preferred not to disclose his intentions. It is to be added that in the *Shī'a* tradition it is believed that the *imāms* will return *bi dhāt* (or *raj'at-i 'aynī*) and not their attributes. Here, I list the names of his writings in which he mentions the notion of *raj'a* (both types): *Bayān*, *Ṣaḥīfat al-'Adliyah*, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Kawthar*, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Yūsuf*, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Ḥamd*, and *Lawḥ-i Haykal al-Dīn*.

¹⁶⁵ - *Taqwīm ul-'Iwaj*, p. 41.

¹⁶⁶ - *Taqwīm ul-'Iwaj*, p. 42.

¹⁶⁷ - As we observed earlier in this paper (p. 34, footnote no. 58), what Muḥammad Khān asserts about the Bāb is different from what he had really said in his writings, including *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Yūsuf* and *Bayān*.

¹⁶⁸ - Although Muḥammad Khān never explains what he means by dense, but we can grasp his intention which is the capability of being more capable of carrying spirituality. Dense here is more spiritual.

are created from clay, which in origin is no different from the nature of the soul but stands at an inferior level and therefore is denser. On the other hand, the bodies of the *Shīʿas* of the *imāms* are created from an inferior clay and therefore their soul is different from that of the *imāms*.¹⁶⁹

Accordingly, a spiritual soul like that of the prophets and/or the *imāms* cannot be returned to the body of an ordinary person, let alone the body of an animal.¹⁷⁰ Muḥammad Khān uses this to censure Shīrāzī on another argument, that the soul of Mahdi is a general soul and not a specific one, and can reincarnate (*ḥulūl*) to any *jism*, including himself.¹⁷¹ Using the notion of *hūrqalyā*, Muḥammad Khān does not see any conflict between enjoying a long age span of 1000 years and *rajʿa* to this world with a corporal body whenever time is ready.¹⁷² He calls Shīrāzī the Golden calf, which can neither be regarded as an *imām* nor a prophet, because there is no *ḥadīth* about him, nor does one single sign support his false and baseless claims.¹⁷³

Following in the tradition of his predecessors, Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Khān Ibrāhīmī wrote two important refutations, of which *Ṣawāʿiq ul-Burhān Fī Radd al-Dalāʾil al-ʿIrfān*¹⁷⁴ came first (1320 H) and *Risāla-yi Mubārakay-i Ṣāʿaqah Dar Radd-i Bāb-i Murtāb*¹⁷⁵ was written later, intended only to be a summary of all the illuminations he had posited earlier in *Ṣawāʿiq*. It is in *Ṣawāʿiq* that we find the lengthiest and the most systematic anti-*Bābī* refutation written by a *Shaykhī* leader. Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Khān has every reason to refute *Bābism*; from

¹⁶⁹ - *Taqwīm ul-ʿIwaj*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁷⁰ - *Taqwīm ul-ʿIwaj*, p. 50.

¹⁷¹ - *Taqwīm ul-ʿIwaj*, p. 55.

¹⁷² - *Taqwīm ul-ʿIwaj*.

¹⁷³ - *Taqwīm ul-ʿIwaj*, pp. 36-37.

¹⁷⁴ - Since now on *Ṣawāʿiq*.

¹⁷⁵ - Since now on *Ṣāʿaqah*.

the claimant's poor Arabic to *taḥaddī* of the *Qur'ān*¹⁷⁶ and to questioning the notion of *khātamiyyat* of the Prophet. Two themes are prevalent and outstanding in *Ṣawā'iq*: the conformity of *dīn* and *ʿaql* that makes the Book and all Islamic teachings reasonable, and illogicality of Shīrāzī's *ta'wīls* that makes his cause so absurd and unreasonable.

The *Qur'ān* is a miracle because its message is in full harmony with *ʿaql*, i.e. hiero-intelligence, and if Shīrāzī and his folk don't understand this, is because they don't benefit from the divine gift of *ḥikmat* and *ma'rifa*, i.e., *ʿilm ul-awallīn wa al-ākharīn*, which is bestowed only on the prophets and the *imāms*; although those who spread the *akhbār* of the *imāms*, are eligible to share this divine gift too.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, in the case of the valid *ta'wīl*, only *rāsikhūn dar ʿilm* (those who are firm and steadfast in divine knowledge) and the owners of *ʿaql* can fulfill such an important task.¹⁷⁸ Since Shīrāzī is neither gifted with divine knowledge nor benefits from a sufficient measure of literary Arabic, his *ta'wīl* is but turning good (*khayr*) to evil and mixing *nāsikh* with *mansūkh*.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, the only eligible class to conduct the *ta'wīl* of the Book and of the *akhbār* and to spread the message of the *imāms*, is *umanā wa thuqāt* (lit. trustworthy people), who guide believers in the absence of the *imām*.¹⁸⁰

Hence, not only should the *khavar* (*ḥadīth*) of the *imāms* come to us by them, but also they are to interpret it, and this kind of *khavar* is called *khavar-i muḥkam* (trustworthy and

¹⁷⁶ - We observed how the *Shaykhī* leaders were misunderstood regarding their belief that Shīrāzī had claimed that he had brought a new *Qur'ān*. He never claimed such a thing.

¹⁷⁷ - Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Ibrāhīmī, *Ṣawā'iq ul-Burhān Fī Radd al-Dalā'il al-'Irḥān* (the Thunderbolt of the Proof in the Refutation of the Reasons of Mysticism), n.d. a, pp. 14-20.

¹⁷⁸ - *Ṣawā'iq*.

¹⁷⁹ - *Ṣawā'iq*, p. 21.

¹⁸⁰ - *Ṣawā'iq*, p. 22.

valid *ḥadīth*) as opposed to weak *ḥadīth*.¹⁸¹ Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn Khān ascertains that if a *ḥadīth* has come to us from a source other than the trustworthy people, one should test it with the *Qur’ān* until one makes sure that the *ḥadīth* is *muḥkam* and reliable. It should be mentioned that Shīrāzī is not the only unreliable source for *ta’wīl* and transferring *khavar*, for Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn Khān, *akhbār-i ‘āmmah* or “a *ḥadīth* that has been narrated by the *‘āmmah* scholars and incorporated into the *ḥadīth* compilations and is in harmony with the *‘āmmah* (here majority) is untrustworthy too.”¹⁸² Needless to say that by the terms *‘āmmah* and *fuqahāy-i ‘āmmah*, Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn Khān means the *uṣūlī* jurisprudence and scholars who, as mentioned above, played a major role in shaping the *Shaykhī* identity. In short, any *khavar* which is opposed to, and not just different from, the *‘āmmah*, must be taken as valid.

Here, Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn Khān is a true heir to the legacy of Aḥsā’ī, when in one of his *ḥadīth* interpretations entitled *Risāla Fī Jawāb al-Ākhund al-Mullā Muḥammad Husseyn Bāfqī* (A Response to the Questions of Ākhund al-Mullā Muḥammad Husseyn Bāfqī), the former draws the first sketches of his esoteric *ta’wīl* approach, focusing on the distinction between two kinds of scholars, those who are enchanted by this world (*‘āliman maftūnan*) and called *quṭṭā’ u-ṭarīq* (lit. bandits) and those pious *‘ālims* who guide believers to the right destination. In Aḥsā’ī’s terminology, *quṭṭā’ u-ṭarīq* can be either Sufis, or philosophers or *uṣūlīs* who are seduced by the world and mislead people. Furthermore, Aḥsā’ī uses the term *ṭuraq-i ‘āmmah* (the mainstream path/method) as opposed to his own path which is of the *khāṣṣah* (lit. elite). How is this distinction being made? And what is it based on? It is in fact based on Aḥsā’ī’s interpretation of the word *ni‘ma/na‘ma* (lit. blessing) in a *ḥadīth* from an

¹⁸¹ - *Ṣawā‘iq*, pp. 22-26.

¹⁸² - *Ṣawā‘iq*, pp. 26-27.

unknown *imām*, stating that “*bayn al-mar’ wa al-ḥikmat-i ni’mat/na’mat al-‘ālim*” (lit. between Man and wisdom there is a blessing [which is the existence] of a scholar).¹⁸³

Aḥsā’ī explains that if one reads the term blessing as *na’mat*, then *na’mat* would be benefiting from a scholar, but if blessing is read as *ni’mat*, then it is but *wilāya*, i.e., the spirit of Islam, and means to obey and follow a *walī* and not just a scholar, who is obedient to the *imāms’* teachings and follows their path (Ibid.). Between the lines, in the second reading, blessing equalizes the non-*uṣūlī* mujtahid, non-philosopher and non-Sufi who only represent the exoteric dimension of the faith. While on the other hand, it is only the guardian (*walī*), representing the esoteric dimension of Islam, who is eligible to lead people to the right path.¹⁸⁴

Having said this, what does the *Shaykhī* conception of *ta’wīl* mean?¹⁸⁵ First and foremost, according to Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn Khān, only valid and reliable *ḥadīth* by a trustworthy person, i.e., *ḥadīth-i muḥkam*, which have come to us by trustworthy people are interpretable. Second, one should avoid interpretation as much as possible, and instead serve the *ẓāhir* of the *ḥadīth*, because controversy in the religion is forbidden. Third, if with these conditions *ta’wīl* is still needed, then one must have a proof (*shāhid*) from the *ẓāhir* of

¹⁸³ - Aḥsā’ī, *Risāla Fī Jawāb al-Ākhund Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusseyṇ Bāfqī* (Treatise Responding the Questions of Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusseyṇ Bāfqī), n.d. b, p. 12.

¹⁸⁴ - In his obsession with modulating things and giving them further esoteric dimensions, Aḥsā’ī classifies *Shī’as* into three groups: firstly *al-sābiqūn* (also *al-khiṣṣīn*), or the prophets like Abraham. The second are those who are in close contact with the first group and dependent on them, called *mugtaṣidūn min al-khiṣṣīn*. Figures such as Salman the Persian are among the second group. The third group include people like Abū dhar, called *khawāṣṣ*, whose station is different from that of Salman, whose path, i.e., *ṭuraq-i khāṣṣah* is against the *ṭuraq-i ‘āmmah* of those who only believes in Islam and not *imān/wilāya* which is the heart of the faith (Aḥsā’ī, n.d.b, Op. cit., pp. 12-15).

¹⁸⁵ - The *Shaykhī* leaders have written eight exegeses on different *sūrahs*, or a part of a certain *sūrah*, altogether, however, these writings are not called *tafsīr* by their authors, but rather *ta’wīl*, which is indicative of our earlier analysis that the *Shaykhī* school must be called a school of *ta’wīl* despite its serious critiques on the Sufi and *Bābī ta’wīl*.

other *aḥādīth/akhbār* to conduct interpretation, otherwise, interpretation is not recommended. Therefore, interpreting to anything other than *ḥaqq* is not allowed and interpretation of *ḥaqq* must be done with due attention to its exoteric meaning, because interpretation and *ẓāhir* are like soul and body and both need each other. On the other hand, *ẓāhir* must also be in full conformity with the teachings of the *imāms* (*naṣṣ* or *akhbār* of the household of the Prophet),¹⁸⁶ and from this perspective, *ta'wīl* is but returning the meaning of words to their origin, i.e., the tradition of the fourteen illuminated. Fourth, *ta'wīl* must be done with the help of *ʿaql* (*nūr/qalb*/natural disposition), because Aḥsā'ī's path and tradition in interpretation is based on *ʿaql (wa sabīluhū fī al-ta'wīl huwa al-ʿaql)*, which he himself has taken from the *imams*.¹⁸⁷

Since religion is in full conformity with *ʿaql*, then the reality of *nubuwwa* and imamate can be grasped only by rational means and methodology.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, believers are described as the owners of *ʿaql*, which means that one cannot believe in the message of Islam and of the previous revelations if one does not benefit from *ʿaql*, which is also called *noor* (*nūr*). Bringing a *ḥadīth* saying that “And He has created believers from His light”,¹⁸⁹ Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Khān argues that although there exists only one light, which is gifted to believers of the message of God (obviously Shīrāzī has been left behind), it is but manifested in different forms (*ṣūrat*) and that is why, according to another *ḥadīth*, Salman knows what Abū dhar does not and vice versa. Given this, it is impossible for the soul of Salman to be reincarnated

¹⁸⁶ - Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Ibrāhīmī, *Ṣawāʿiq*, n.d. a, Op. cit., pp. 27-28.

¹⁸⁷ - *Ṣawāʿiq*, p. 16.

¹⁸⁸ - *Ṣawāʿiq*, p. 89.

¹⁸⁹ - It is a famous *Shīʿī ḥadīth* narrated from different *imāms*, particularly the sixth and the eighth, stating that man is created from His light. See:

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālīd Barqī, *al-Maḥāsīn* (lit. Merits), Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusseinī (ed), 2nd edition, n.d. (Qum: Dār ul-Kutub al-Islāmiya), pp. 131-132.

in the body of Abū dhar, because although both souls have drunk from the same spring, their *qālib* (lit. form) is different, and therefore Shīrāzī's claim of being the reincarnated soul of the early Muslim believers or their return to this world through the *jism* of *ḥurūf-i ḥayy* (Letters of the Living) is absurd and ridiculous.¹⁹⁰ Being 'ineligible to share the prophetic gnosis' means Shīrāzī is disqualified from being one of the *ahl ul-sirr* (people of the secret), because the secrets of the religion as well as the secrets of the time, i.e., the esoteric and exoteric knowledge, are only revealed to an *awḥad* (lit. one single person or *nāṭiq-i wāḥid*), and that *awḥad* is not Shīrāzī.¹⁹¹

The *awḥad* is the confidant of the *sirr* (also *mā'qūlāt*), while the disciples of Shīrāzī, this *shidhādh*¹⁹² of the household of the Prophet, are ignorant and oblivious and that is why they recourse to interpretation to prove their claims¹⁹³. In his 'Otherizing' anti-*Bābī* campaign, Zayn ul-Ābidīn Khān attempts to find a non-*Shī'a* genesis for Shīrāzī's interpretations and he finds it in Ibn 'Arabī's teachings as well as in those of the *ḥikma* discourse¹⁹⁴. It is their fraudulent interpretations that make the *Bābīs* assign false claims to the *imām* such as bringing a new *sharī'a* and a new Book, while the *imām* does not change anything in Islam unless he makes it more perfect and complete.¹⁹⁵ Throughout *Ṣawā'iq*,¹⁹⁶ the author adopts an apologetic tenor when it comes to the fourth pillar, which means that *rukṇ-i rābi'* was the Achilles heel of the *Shaykhī* writers and they had to draw their

¹⁹⁰ - *Ṣawā'iq*, p. 116.

¹⁹¹ - *Ṣawā'iq*, p. 141.

¹⁹² - *Shidhādh* or *shidhādh ul-āfāq* (lit. hustlers, sing. *shādh*), is a pejorative term which is broadly used to call any foreigner rebellious who stands against the status quo and causes bloodshed and violence.

¹⁹³ - *Ṣawā'iq*, p. 161.

¹⁹⁴ - *Ṣawā'iq*, pp. 275 ff.

¹⁹⁵ - *Ṣawā'iq*, p. 446.

¹⁹⁶ - *Ṣawā'iq*, pp. 151-153 & pp. 443 ff.

boundaries with the *Bābīs* on any messianic connotations that it might have had. One can imagine that if they had not written so effortlessly on *rukn-i rābī*, which ultimately caused the school to acquire an aloof and politically conservative coloring, they would have faced the same persecution as the *Bābīs* did.

Now, we are in a better position to grasp Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn Khān’s intention regarding the term *‘irfān* (lit. gnosis) in *Ṣawā‘iq ul-Burhān Fī Radd al-Dalā’il al-‘Irfān*, which in fact is written as a response to the famous *Bahā’ī* preacher, Mīrzā Abu al-Fadhl Gulpāyagānī (d. 1332 H/2011). Gulpāyagānī did not write a book called *al-Dalā’il al-‘Irfān*, although he is the author of *al-Farāid* (lit. the Unique Things), which is regarded as the most theoretical *Bahā’ī* apology, in which the author adopts *ta’wīl* and interprets Islamic sacred sources to prove the truthfulness of his beliefs. Since there are five years between the dates of the completion of *al-Farāid* and *Ṣawā‘iq* (written in 1315 and 1320, respectively), one can assume that *Ṣawā‘iq* is a response to Gulpāyagānī’s book, in which *ta’wīl* plays a central role. So, what Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn Khān is seeking to reject and undermine by the term *‘irfān*, is the fake and baseless claims of accessibility to knowledge that the *Bābī’s* and later *Bahā’ī’s* had put on the table. In the manner of his predecessors and as a true heir to the legacy of Aḥsā’ī, who had dealt with Ibn Arabī’s mysticism in the same way earlier (the first article of this book), Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn Khān also undermines Gulpāyagānī’s claims of having *‘irfān/ma’rifā*, which was believed to have been crystalized in the *Bahā’ī* teachings.

The fact that he mentions *Risāla-ya ‘Iṣma wa Raḥ’a* (the Treatise on Infallibility and Return) of Aḥsā’ī as the only source of reference in the entire *Ṣawā‘iq*, is indicative of his whole-hearted devotion to his master’s legacy. For *al-Shaykh al-Awḥad* and his inheritors,

there is only one genre of *ʿirfān* and it is the pure *Shīʿism* of the teachings of the *imāms*, which now is represented by the *Shaykhī* leaders. For them, Shīrāzī and his like are merely “*rahgudharī az ahl-i badʿat*” (lit. a passerby heretic),¹⁹⁷ who aim to inflict a blow to the faith, though Shīrāzī only wastes his time, because his skepticisms are rationally abstaining and not supported by transmitted sources either (*mumtaniʿ ʿaqlī wa naqlī*).¹⁹⁸ Given this, the *Bābī* movement played a significant role in making the *Kirmānī Shaykhīs* revise *rukn rābiʿ* and purge it of its radical connotations. As history proves, the more *Bābīs* radicalized the latent messianic motives of *Shaykhism*, the more Kirmānī and his scions became persuaded to adopt a conservatist stance in both politics and spiritual authority.

Conclusion:

Aḥsāʾī not only wanted to be the heir of the *ʿilm* of the Prophet of Islam, but also all the preceding prophets, as Muhammad himself was heir to such a divine gift that came to him from his preceding peers. The key was *maʿrifa*, which was claimed to have been inherited by him through dreams emanating from the *imāms*, and since the *imāms* were the heirs to the Prophetic knowledge, indirectly, he inherited the *ʿilm* of the Prophet too. The contrast between *ʿilm* and *maʿrifa* is the predominant theme of many Aḥsāʾī’s texts, particularly *al-Jawāmiʿ*, where the author sheds light on *ʿilm* and its pair *ʿaql* (instrumental reason), emphasizing that these two are prone to go astray. Moreover, figures such as “Mumīt al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī *wa* al-Ghazālī *wa* a-Niẓām *wa* al-Jabāʾī *wa* al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī *wa* Shaykh ul-Isḥrāq *wa* Sūfiya”,¹⁹⁹ who refuse to gain their *maʿrifa* from its source, the *imāms*, are misguided.

¹⁹⁷ - Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn Ibrāhīmī, *Risāla-yi Mubārakay-i Šāʿaqah Dar Radd-i Bāb-i Murtāb* (the Blessed Treatise of Thunderbolt on the Refutation of the Doubtful Bāb), n.d. b, n. p., p. 2.

¹⁹⁸ - *Risāla-yi Mubārakay-i*, pp. 30-31.

¹⁹⁹ - Aḥsāʾī, *Jawāb al-Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Šāliḥ ibn Ṭūq*, 1430 Hc, Vol. 8., Op. cit., p. 13.

Ma'rifa is the twin of the *imāms* and is only available from them. Ironically, here Aḥsā'ī is very reminiscent of Ibn 'Arabī, who also asserts that he is the heir to the *wilāyat al-khāṣṣah* of the Prophet.

We observed how the foundation laid by Aḥsā'ī equipped other *Shaykhī* leaders with the conceptual tools and ideological lens to further investigate this dichotomy and the nexus between *ma'rifa* and *rukniyyat-i rābi'*. Along with the abovementioned figures, Aḥsā'ī attacks the *uṣūlīs*, this *quṭṭā' u-ṭarīq*, whose job is to mislead people and make them confused. The term *quṭṭā' u-ṭarīq* was later converted to *rahgudharī az ahl-i bad'at*, i.e., Shīrāzī, who without benefiting from the gift of *'aql*, this prophetic requirement, led people to the wrong path. Given this, none of the *Shaykhī* leaders attempt to harmonize the dichotomy of the esoteric/exoteric, because the emphasis on the former is one of the pillars of *Shaykhism*. Furthermore, they stuck with the Otherizing discourse of Aḥsā'ī, though in the case of the Kerman branch, this discourse expands to include the *Bābī* and *Bahā'īs* too. However, in terms of the language, the *Kirmānī Shaykhīs* distanced themselves from the sophisticated and technical language of Aḥsā'ī and Rashtī, and adopted a more popular and understandable literature, though writing in Arabic was still regarded as a gesture of philosophical self-glorification and self-aggrandizement.

However, their concerns remained the same: to defend the *Shaykhī* tenets including interpretation vs. exegesis, *ijtihād* in the *Shaykhī* sense and its nexus to *shakhṣ-i thiqaḥ* as opposed to the *uṣūlī* mujtahid, and the orthodox discourse of their leaders. On the other hand, and as we will observe in the next chapter, in politics the *Kirmānī Shaykhīs* after the emergence of *Bābism* adopted an engaging approach with the court, though like Aḥsā'ī they

mainly, but not entirely, remained politically aloof. Mangol Bayat asserts that Karīm Khān had the intention of separating his way from the court and the religious establishment in Tehran in order to follow his own political ambitions,²⁰⁰ but she does not provide us with any proof that can support her claim. Alongside the refutations and a handful of other texts, which were written at the behest of the Shah or other courtiers, Karīm Khān wrote two important, albeit concise, treatises entitled *Khātamiyah Nāṣariyah* and *Nāṣariyah dar Jihad*, which prove otherwise. Pertinent to this, is this undeniable fact that all the *Shaykhī* leaders attempted to maintain a close and friendly position with the political establishments of their time.

The *Shaykhī* school had come a long way to becoming Persianized at the hands of Karīm Khān Kirmānī, however, as discussed earlier, although the process of Persianization had been initiated by Rashtī, its impact was limited. One can see how by infiltrating an *Ismāʿīlī* term, e.g., *nāṭiq wāḥid* to the *Shaykhī* terminology, Kirmānī and his progeny were able to separate their way from the *Bābīs* on one hand and the extreme esotericism of Aḥsāʾī on the other. Further research will shed more light here on the author's conjecture of the *Ismāʿīlī* roots of this term.²⁰¹ Moreover, as explained by Farhad Daftary, in *Ismāʿīlī* thought the term *nāṭiq* refers to "a speaking or law-announcing prophet who brings a new religious law (*shariʿa*), abrogating the previous law and, hence, initiating a new *dawr*²⁰² in the

²⁰⁰ - Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, 1982, p. 81.

²⁰¹ - What reinforces this conjecture is this fact that Kerman was home to the 46th *Nizārī Ismāʿīlī imām*, Ḥasan ʿAlī Shāh (1219-1298 H/1804-1881), known as Agha (Aga) Khan I (also known as Agha Khan Maḥallātī), after he became appointed as the governor of Kerman by Muḥammad Shāh Qajar (d. 1264 H/1848). Although that governorship was short-lived and ended up in Agha Khan's dismissal from his office, but the city remained a fortress for the minority *Ismāʿīlī* population. Therefore, *Ismāʿīlī* ideas were in circulation and were used by Kirmānī. See:

Farhad Daftary, *Historical Dictionary of the Ismailis*, 2012 (Lanham: the Scarecrow Press, Inc), p. 9.

²⁰² - Both italic and bold are from the main text.

religious history of humankind”.²⁰³ If this is the case, then Kirmānī strips it of its messianism and uses it in a totally opposite way: a law expert or a jurist who puts an end to the radicalism of the *Bāb* as well as that of his master Rashtī.

To conclude, *Bābism* can be regarded as the legitimate child of the teachings of the first two *Shaykhī* leaders (Rashtī, who was constantly inflaming the *intizār* culture played a more significant role), because it brought to the fore the latent potential of *Shaykhism*. On the other hand, it should be treated as a distortion of the *Shaykhī* passive messianism as well, because it breached the veil that was not supposed to be violated. However, it is not just the notion of messianism (passive and active, respectively) that is shared by them. The concept of evolution and/or gradual growth, or to be more precise, the “progressive evolution of divine revelation”,²⁰⁴ which is prevalent in *Shaykhism* and was taken by the *Bāb* later, shows how the latter was nourished by the *Shaykhī* culture.

Bibliography

- Aḥsā'ī, Aḥmad, *Sharḥ al-Ziyārat al-Jāmi'at al-Kabīrah* (Commentary on the Grand Comprehensive Visitation), Vol. 3, n.d. a, n.p. < <http://www.alabrar.info/> >.
- Al-Aḥsā'ī, Aḥmad, *Risāla-ya 'Iṣma wa Raj'a* (Treatise on Infallibility and Return), in *Jawāmi' al-Kalim* (Comprehensive Words), Vol. 5, 1430 Ha (Basra, Al-ghadīr), pp. 201-457.

²⁰³ - Daftary, *Historical Dictionary*, 2012, Op. cit., p. 211.

²⁰⁴ - Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, 1982, Op. cit., pp. 72-75.

- Aḥsā'ī, Aḥmad, *Risāla Fī Jawāb al-Mullā Fath 'Alī Khān* (Treatise to the Questions of *Mullā Fath 'Alī Khān*), in *Jawāmi' al-Kalim* (Comprehensive Words), Vol. 8, 1430 Hb (Basra, Al-ghadīr), pp. 563-593.
- Aḥsā'ī, Aḥmad, *Jawāb al-Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭūq* (A Response to *al-Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭūq*), in *Jawāmi' al-Kalim* (Comprehensive Words), Vol. 8, 1430 Hc (Basra, Al-ghadīr), pp. 4-24.
- Aḥsā'ī, Aḥmad, *al-Risālat al-Tūbalīyyah* (the Treatise on the Questions of Shaykh 'Alī Tūbalī), in *Jawāmi' al-Kalim* (Comprehensive Words), Vol. 8, 1430 Hd (Basra, Al-ghadīr), pp. 39-266.
- Aḥsā'ī, Aḥmad, *Risāla Fī Jawāb al-Ākhund Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusseyṇ Bāfqī* (Treatise Responding the Questions of Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusseyṇ Bāfqī), < <https://www.alabrar.info/library/ALF101/f0000> >, last accessed 01/31/2021. n.d.b, n.p.
- Aḥsā'ī, Aḥmad, *al-Risālat ul-Rashīdiyyah* (Treatise on the Questions of *Mullā Rashīd*), in *Jawāmi' al-Kalim* (Comprehensive Words), Vol. 1, 1430 He (Basra, Al-ghadīr), pp. 145-152.
- Aḥsā'ī, Aḥmad, *Risāla Fī Jawāb al-Mullā Kāẓim ibn 'Alī Naqī al-Simnānī* (Treatise on the Questions of *Mullā Kāẓim ibn 'Alī Naqī al-Simnānī*) in *Jawāmi' al-Kalim* (Comprehensive Words), Vol. 2, 1430 Hf (Basra, Al-ghadīr), pp. 286-318.
- Al-Aḥsā'ī, Aḥmad, *Risāla Fī Jawāb al-Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusseyṇ al-Baḥrānī 'An Wāḥid Wa Arba 'In Mas'ala*, < <https://www.alabrar.info/library/BE286/f0000> >, last accessed 01/31/2021. n.d.c, n.p.

- Akbar Nizhād, Mehdī and Rūḥullāh Muḥammadī, “Mafhūm Shināsi-yi ‘Arāf wa ‘Arāfiyān dar Riwayāt-i Tafsīrī” (the Conception of the Heights and the People of the Heights in Interpretive Narratives), *Majall-yi Pazhūhishhā-yi Qur’ān wa Ḥadīth*, No. 1., 43, 1389 *Shamsī* / 2010, pp. 11-30.
- Amir-Moezzi, Mohammad Ali and Christian Jambet, *What is Shī‘ī Islam? An Introduction*, translated into English by Kenneth Casler and Eric Ormsby, 2018 (London and New York: Routledge).
- Amir-Moezzi, Mohammad Ali, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiism; the Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, Translated into English by David Streight, 1994 (New York: State University of New York Press).
- Ansari, “Bāṭinī Nigārī dar Tashyū‘ wa Taṣawwuf dar Guftugū bā Hasan Ansari” (Esotericism in Shī‘ism and Sufism: An Interview with Hasan Ansari) < <https://ansari.kateban.com/post/4227> >, 1398 *Shamsī*/2019, last accessed 02/10/2021.
- Bayat, Mangol, *Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran*, 1982 (New York: Syracuse University Press).
- Barqī, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālīd, *al-Maḥāsin* (lit. Merits), Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusseinī (ed), 2nd edition, n.d. (Qum: Dār ul-Kutub al-Islāmīya).
- Chamankhah, Leila, *the Conceptualization of Guardianship in Iranian Intellectual History (1800–1989); Reading Ibn ‘Arabī’s Theory of Wilāya in the Shī‘a World*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

- Chamankhah, Leila, "The Conceptualization of Wilāya in the Bābī and Bahā'ī Texts: From Messianic Claims to the Secular Institutionalization of Guardianship," *Journal of South Asia and Middle Eastern Studies*, No. 4, Vol. XL (Summer 2017), pp. 43-62.
- Chamankhah, Leila, "Conflicting Worldviews: Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī's Risālat al-Rashtīyah and the Problematic of Akbarīan Mysticism", *Iranian Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2020.1777392>, published online 20 July 2020.
- Chodkiewicz, Michel, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabī*, 1993 (Cambridge: the Islamic Text Society).
- Corbin, Henry, *En Islam Iranien: Aspects spirituels et philosophiques, IV: L'Ecole d'Ispahan, L'Ecole shaykhie, Le Douzième Imâm*, Livre VI, 1978, (Paris: Gallimard).
- Corbin, Henry, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth from Mazdean Iran to Shiite Iran*, translated into English by Nancy Pearson, with a new prelude to the second edition by the author, 1977 (New Jersey: Princeton University Press).
- Corbin, Henry, *the History of Islamic Philosophy*, translated into English by Liadain Sherrard, n.d. (London & New York: Kegan Paul International).
- Daftary, Farhad, *Historical Dictionary of the Ismailis*, 2012 (Lanham: the Scarecrow Press, Inc).
- Ebstein, Michael, "The Human Intellect: Liberation or Limitation? Some Notes on 'Aql in Classical Islamic Mysticism", in *Journal of Sufi Studies* 8 (2019), 198-223.
- Eschraghi, Armin. "Kāzem Raṣṭī." 2013. <
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kazem-rasti-sayyed> >, last accessed 01/31/2021.

- Gawhar, Ḥassan, *Sharḥ-i Ḥayāt-i Arwāḥ* (the Commentary on the Life of Souls), 1423 H/2002 (Kuwait: *Jāmi‘-i Īmām Ṣādiq*).
- A. C. Grayling (ed), *Philosophy 1: A guide Through the Subject*, 2004 (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Hermann, Denis, *Kirmānī Shaykhism and the ijtihād: A Study of Abū al-Qāsim Khān Ibrāhīmī’s Ijtihād wa taqlīd*, 2015 (Series: Bibliotheca academica, Reihe Orientalistik, Band 24), Würzburg: Ergon – Verlag GmbH.
- Hamid, Idris Samawi, *Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā’ī in Philosophy in Qajar Iran*, Reza Pourjavadi (ed), 2019 (Leiden and Boston: Brill), pp. 66-124.
- Ibrāhīmī, Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn, *Ṣawā’iq ul-Burhān Fī Radd al-Dalā’il al-‘Irfān* (the Thunderbolt of the Proof in the Refutation of the Reasons of Mysticism), n.d.a, n.p.,
- Ibrāhīmī, Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn, *Risāla-yi Mubārakay-i Ṣā‘aqah Dar Radd-i Bāb-i Murtāb* (the Blessed Treatise of Thunderbolt on the Refutation of the Doubtful *Bāb*), n.d.b, n.p.
- Ibrāhīmī, Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Munāfiqīn* (the Exegesis of the *Sūrah* al-Hypocrites), n.d.c, n.p.
- Ibrāhīmī, Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn, *Risāla dar Tafsīr-i Sūra-yi Kawthar dar Sharḥ-i ‘Ibāratī az Kitāb-i Irshād* (Treatise in the Exegesis of the *Sūra-yi* Abundant Good in the Explanation of the Book of *Irshād*) n.d.d., n. p.
- Ibrāhīmī, Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn, *Mi‘rāj ul-Sa‘ādah* (the Ascension of Felicity), n.d.e, n.p.
- Ibrāhīmī, Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Jumu‘ah* (the Exegesis of the *Sūrah* of Congregational Prayer), n.d. f., n. p.

- Kadivar, Mohsin, *Nazarīyahāy-i Dawlat dar Fiqh-i Shīʿa* (Theories of State in the *Shīʿa* Jurisprudence), 3rd edition, 1378 (Tehran: Ney Publication).
- Kirmānī, Muḥammad Karīm, *Irshād al-ʿAwām* (the Guidance of the People), Vol. 1-4, 1267 H/1850, n. p.
- Kirmānī, Muḥammad Karīm, *Risāla-yi Mubāraka-yi Rukn-i Rābiʿ* (the Blessed Treatise of *Rukn-i Rābiʿ*), 1368 H/1948, n. p.
- Kirmānī, Muḥammad Karīm, *Izhāq ul-Bāṭil* (Vanishing the False), n.d.a., n. p.
- Kirmānī, Muḥammad Karīm, *Risāla-yi Tīr Shahāb Dar Rāndan-i Bāb-i Khusrān Maʿāb* (the Treatise of the Shining Arrow in Repulsing the Misguided *Bāb*), n.d.b., n. p.
- Kirmānī, Muḥammad Karīm, *Shahāb-i Thāqīb* (the Pellucid Star), n.d.c., n. p.
- Kirmānī, Muḥammad Karīm, *Risāla Dar Radd-i Bāb-i Murtāb* (the Treatise on the Refutation of the Doubtful *Bāb*), n.d.d., n. p.
- Kirmānī, Muḥammad Karīm, *Aḥwāl-i Bāb-i Khusrān Maʿāb* (the Stations of the Misguided *Bāb*), n.d.e., n. p.
- Kirmānī, Muḥammad Karīm, *Tafsīr al-Sūrat al-Ḥujarāt* (the Exegesis of the Sūrat of the Private Apartments), n.d.f, n.p.
- Kirmānī, Muḥammad Karīm, *Risāla-yi Tīr Shahāb Dar Rāndan-i Bāb-i Khusrān Maʿāb* (lit. the Treatise of the Shining Arrow in Repulsing the Misguided *Bāb*), n.d.g, n.p.
- Kirmānī, Muḥammad, *Taqwīm ul-ʿIwaj* (lit. Rectifying the Distortions), n.d.a, n. p.
- Kirmānī, Muḥammad, *Risāla Dar Radd-i Baʿd-i Taʿwīlāt-i Bābīyah* (the Treatise on the Refutation of Some of the *Bābī* Interpretations), n.d.b, n. p.
- Kirmānī, Muḥammad, *Jawāb-i Intiqādātī dar Masʿalay-i Nāṭiq-i Wāḥid* (A response to the Critiques on Single Enunciator), n.d.c, n. p.

- Kirmānī, Muḥammad, *Risāla Fī Radd al-Bāb al-Murtāb* (the Treatise on the Refutation of the Doubtful *Bāb*), n.d.d., n. p.
- al-Kulaynī al-Rāzi, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb ibn Ishāq, *Kitāb al-Kāfī* (The Sufficient Book), Vol. 1., Muḥammad Bāqir Kamara’ī, 1375 *Shamsī*/1996 (Qum: Uswah Publication).
- Lambton, Ann K.S., *Qājār Persia* (eleven studies), 1987 (Austin: University of Texas Press).
- Lawson, Todd, *Heterodoxy and Orthodoxy in Twelver Shī‘ism: Aḥmad Aḥsā’ī on Fayḍ Kāshānī (the Risālat al-‘Ilmiyya)*, in *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran*, Robert Gleave (ed), 2005 (London and New York: Routledge), pp. 127-54.
- MacEoin, Denis M., *the Messiah of Shiraz*, Vol. 3, 2009, (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2009).
- Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Biḥār ul-Anwār* (the Oceans of Lights), Vol. 28., n.d., n.p.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein and Others (eds), *the Study Quran, a New Translation and Commentary*, 2015 (New York: HarperCollins Publishers).
- Al-Qumī, Abu Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Babawayh, *Man lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh* (For Him Who is Not in the Presence of a Jurisprudent), ‘Alī Akbar Ghaffārī (ed), 4 Vols, 1363 *Shamsī*/1984 (Qum: Mu’asasat al-Nashr ul-Eslāmī).
- Raḥmānīyān, Dāryūsh and Muḥsin Sirāj, “Aṣl-i Ma‘rifat bi ‘Rukn-i Rābi” dar Andīshay-a Shaykhīyah”, *Muṭālī‘āt-i Tārīkh-i Islam*, 3, No. 8, Spring 1390, pp. 53-76.
- Rashtī, Kāẓim, *Jawāhir ul-Ḥikam* (the Jewelry of Wisdom), Vol. 1., 1432 H/2011(Basra, Shirkat al-Ghadīr)
- Rashtī, Kāẓim, *Risālat al-Ḥujjat al-Bālighah* (the Treatise of Certain Proof), n.d.a, n. p.

- Rashtī, Kāẓim, *Maqāmāt al-‘Ārifīn* (The Stations of the Gnostics), n.d.b, n. p.
- Rashtī, Kāẓim, *Asrār ul-Shihāda* (the Secrets of the Martyrdom), n.d.c, n. p.
- Ridāī, Muḥammad Ja‘far and Muḥammad Naṣīrī in “Naẓarīya-yi ‘Imāmat-i Bāṭinī dar Tashayyu‘ Nukhustīn’ dar Būta-yi Naqd” (A Critique on the Theory of “the Divine Guide in Early Shī‘ism), in *Naqd va Naẓar, The Quarterly Journal of Philosophy & Theology*, Vol. 17, No. 3, autumn, 2012, pp. 173-198.
- Al-Ṣaffār al-Qumī, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥassan ibn Farrukh, *Baṣā‘ir al-Darajāt fī Faḍā’il-i Āl-i Muḥammad* (the Insights in the Precedence of the Household of the Prophet), Mīrzā Muḥsin Kūchih Bāghī Tabrīzī (ed), 1404 H (Qum: Manshūrāt-i Maktabat Ayatollah al-‘Uẓma Mar‘ashī Najafī).
- Shīrāzī, Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad, *Bayān*, n.d. a, n. p.
- Shīrāzī, Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad, *Ṣaḥīfat al-‘Adliyah* (the Book of Justice), n.d. b, n. p.
- Shīrāzī, Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Kawthar* (the Exegesis of the *Sūrat* Abundant Good), n.d. c, n. p.
- Shīrāzī, Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Yūsuf* (the Exegesis of the *Sūrat* Joseph), n.d. d, n. p.
- Shīrāzī, Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Ḥamd*, (the Exegesis of the *Sūrat* the Opening), n.d. e, n. p.
- Shīrāzī, Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad, *Lawḥ-i Haykal al-Dīn*, (Talisman of the religion), n.d. f, n. p.
- Tavakoli-Targhi, Mohamad, *Anti-Baha’ism and Islamism in Iran*, in *The Baha’is of Iran: Socio-historical studies*, Dominic Parviz Brookshaw and Seena B. Fazel, 2008 (London and New York: Routledge), pp. 200-232.

- Zargarī Nejad, Ghulām Hossein and Muḥsin Sirāj, “Uṣūl-i Dīn wa Madhhab wa Naẓariya-ye Nāṭiq-i Wāḥid dar Andīshay-i Shaykhīyah”, *Muṭālī‘āt-i Tārīkh-i Islam*, 3, No. 10, Fall 1390, pp. 79-92.
- Ṭūsī, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad Ibn Ḥasan, *Tahdhīb ul-Aḥkām fī Sharḥ al-Muqni‘ah* (Rectification of the Statutes in Explaining the Disguised), ‘Alī Akbar Ghaffārī (ed), 10 Vols, 1417 H/1996 (Tehran: Ṣadūq).
- Ṭūsī, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad Ibn Ḥasan, *Al-Istibṣār fī ma Khtalafa min al-Akḥbār* (Reflection Upon the Disputed Traditions or The Perspicacious), 4 Vols, 2nd edition, 1413 H/1992 (Beirut: Dār ul-Aḍwā’).

Websites:

- <https://kadivar.com/904/>
- <https://www.alabrar.info/>
- <http://shiaonlinelibrary.com/>
- <https://www.noorlib.ir/view/fa/default>
- <https://www.kateban.com/>
- <https://fa.wikishia.net/view/%D8%B5%D9%81%D8%AD%D9%87%D9%94%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%84%DB%8C>
- <http://www.bahailib.com/index3.php?code=524>