

WORKS ON *HADĪTH*  
AND ITS CODIFICATION,  
ON EXEGESIS AND ON THEOLOGY

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Part One

THE CONTRIBUTION OF EASTERN IRANIAN  
AND CENTRAL ASIAN SCHOLARS  
TO THE COMPILATION OF *HADĪTHS*

*(A. Paket-Chy)*

At the outset, one must observe that there is a lack of information about the initial efforts in the compilation of Islamic traditions, or *hadīth*, in the pre-ʿAbbasid period. We do know, however, that in the last years of that period, al-Zuhri complained about the *hadīths* of ‘the eastern scholars’.<sup>1</sup>

Besides several traditional *tafsīrs* (Qur’anic commentaries), the effort of Husayn b. Wāqid of Merv (d. between 774 and 776) should be considered as one of the first compilations of *hadīth* in the East. The works of Ibrāhim b. Tahmān of Nishapur (d. 780), especially his *al-Sunan fi ’l-fiqh* [The Customary Procedures Concerning Legal Science], are also to be noted. However, a turning-point in the movement for the compilation of *hadīth* in Central Asia was the role of ʿAbd Allāh b. Mubārak of Merv (d. 797), who was educated by Central Asian traditionists such as al-Rabiʿ b. Anas, as well as by scholars from other regions. He compiled several *hadīth* works, in particular a *Musnad* (collection of *hadīths* organized on the basis of the first authority in the chain of guarantors above the Prophet), which made its author celebrated as the founder of such literature in Khurasan. Half a century later, Is’hāq b. Rāhūya (Rāhawayh) of Nishapur (d. 852), one of the most famous scholars of Central Asia, compiled a voluminous *Musnad* (still in manuscript); this was later accepted as one of the most important works of its kind.

1. For general references to this part, see Goldziher, 1888–9, Vol. 2; Guillaume, 1921; Sezgin, 1967; *ET*<sup>2</sup>, ‘Hadīth’ (J. Robson).

## The age of ‘the Six *Sahīhs*’ (850–900)

The 50 years of compilation of the six recognized canons (*Sahīhs*) marks the peak of *hadīth* studies in Central Asia. The authors of these canons were not only concerned with their methods of compilation and the technical points of such studies, but also aimed to defend Islamic dogma and the religious beliefs of their society.

Among the various religious schools, that of the Hanafites was the most important and was an active rival to the school of the *as’hāb al-hadīth* (partisans of *hadīth*), the conservative traditionists. At the time when the former school was moving towards an integrated theological and legal system, the *as’hāb al-hadīth* of Central Asia were likewise compelled to compile comprehensive works on theology and law as accessible references for learned people. Because few were capable of rigorous *hadīth* criticism, it was indispensable to place in such comprehensive works solely those *hadīths* confirmed as veracious, i.e. those considered *sahīh*, or ‘sound’.

The Ibn Rāhūya mentioned above, leader of the traditionists of Central Asia in the first half of the ninth century and an opponent of the Hanafites and their imam, Abū Hanifa, propounded the idea of such a compilation, but it was his pupil, Muhammad b. Ismā‘il al-Bukhāri (d. 810) who spent some 16 years on this and created the first *sahīh* collection of *hadīth*. The original title he selected for the work was *al-Jāmi‘ al-musnad al-sahīh (al-mukhtasar) min umūr Rasūl-Allāh wa sunanih wa ayyāmih* [The Comprehensive, Sound, (Concise) Collection of Matters Concerning the Messenger of God, his Ways of Behaviour and his Military Campaigns], which captures the general scope of the author’s methodology. He planned a comprehensive and concise reference work containing the selected *musnad* and *sahīh* traditions of the Prophet, but in fact, included only a minority of the *sahīh* traditions which he had heard during the years of his education. There is a wide range of opinions as to the exact determination of the *shurūt* (conditions; sing. *shart*) considered by al-Bukhāri and also by his follower Muslim for their acceptance of a *hadīth* as *sahīh* and for their placing it in their canons. In any case, the *hadīths* that were introduced in both canons were always considered the most credible traditions in *hadīth* literature.

Although there had been several *hadīth* collections and law books in the Arab lands, such as the *Muwatta’* [The Clearly Trodden Way] of Mālik, the *Musannaf* (*hadīth* collection arranged in chapters) of ‘Abd al-Razzāq, the *Sunan* (a generic term for collections of authoritative traditions; lit. ‘custom’; sing. *sunna*) of Sa‘id b. Mansūr and the *Musannaf* of Ibn Abi Shayba, before the compilation of his canon, al-Bukhāri was the first author to devote his work entirely to *sahīh* traditions. Other features, such as the comprehensiveness of the work and its wide range of religious subjects, distinguish al-Bukhāri’s work from those of his predecessors.

Concerning comprehensiveness of subjects, one may note that al-Bukhāri considers both legal and religious aspects in his canon. Hence he allocates several parts of the work to such subjects as theological problems and dogmatics; ethical questions and morals; stories about the previous prophets and the *Sīra* [Life of the Prophet]; exegesis; and even such general matters as medicine and the interpretation of dreams. His canon is not an abstract collection of prophetic traditions. At the beginning of every chapter the related verses of the Qur'an are given, and in the middle of chapters one can find the related opinions and *fatwās* (legal opinions) of the Companions of the Prophet and their successors, and sometimes the opinions and explanations of the author. Regarding legal discussions, about which the prophetic traditions are very limited, al-Bukhāri tries to bridge the gap and lack of information by giving non-prophetic traditions and also by the indirectly related prophetic *hadīths*. As to his sources, beside his dependence on the verbal relations of *hadīth* teachers, he profits directly or indirectly from previous *hadīth* compositions, such as Mālik's *Muwatta'* and the works of Ibn Mubārak, as well as early lexical and exegetic sources such as the *Majāz al-Qur'ān* [Figurative and Allegorical Interpretation of the Qur'an] of Abū 'Ubayda (d. c. 824).

Regarding the sectarian and polemical position of al-Bukhāri's canon versus divergent views, there is, on both the theological and the legal level, a particular attention to the opinions of the Hanafite school, as seen in the chapters dealing with a refutation of its theological teachings with regard to such problems as faith, free will and the attributes of God. On the subject of legal principles, al-Bukhāri opposes the use of *ra'y* (personal opinion or judgement) and *qiyās* (reasoning by analogy), allegedly employed by the Hanafites, and disapproves of the *hiyal* (legal fictions; sing. *hila*) which the Hanafites were wont to apply.

The movement started by al-Bukhāri was followed by Abū 'l-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjāj al-Qushayri of Nishapur (d. 875), who compiled a second *Sahīh*, which was somewhat better classified, and, regarding the validity of the *isnāds* (chains of authority supporting a *hadīth*), was considered the most reliable canon after that of al-Bukhāri. His work is characterized by the gathering of analogous *hadīths*, solely in one particular passage, comparing the *isnāds* and *matns* (the actual subject-matter of the *hadīth*), and by a notable accuracy in *isnād* distinctions. It should be pointed out, however, that, as regards the comprehensiveness of the subjects and its secondary information, Muslim's canon is placed lower than al-Bukhāri's.

In the last quarter of the ninth century, there arose a new compilation movement of four scholars of Central Asia (with the exception of one located at Qazvin) in following the *sahīh* literature, sc., the canons of Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistāni (d. 888), Abū 'Īsā Muhammad al-Tirmidhī (d. 892), Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Nasā'i (d. 915) and Ibn Māja al-Qazwīni (d. 887). These scholars worked almost contemporaneously on canons which contain traditions other

than *sahīh* tradition, i.e. *hadīths* at a lower level of technical validity, technically termed *hasan* (good). The four canons are known as ‘the Four *Sunan*’ and were celebrated alongside ‘the Two *Sahīhs*’, known by extension as ‘the Six *Sahīhs*’ (*al-Sihāh al-sitta*).

Among the Four *Sunan*, Abū Dāwūd’s is accepted as the most trustworthy; al-Tirmidhi’s as the most comprehensive in terms of the variety of subjects; al-Nasā’i’s as the most comprehensive regarding the *isnāds*; and Ibn Māja’s as the best classified, in spite of the fact that it is the least authoritative and its place as the Sixth *Sahīh* not so certain as the others. The wide currency of the Two *Sahīhs* in Central Asia during the tenth century did not leave a great opportunity for circulation of the Four *Sunan*, but by the eleventh century they had attained a more important position than in the past.

In spite of the renown of the six canons, suggesting the concept of Six *Sahīhs*, it was Ibn al-Qaysarāni (d. 1113) who formally proposed its adoption, and in the following period it was accepted by most *hadīth* scholars. However, besides this concept, there were others, such as those of ‘the Five *Sahīhs*’ (excluding Ibn Māja’s work); ‘the Six *Sahīhs*’, including Mālik’s *Muwatta*’ or the *Sunan* of al-Dārimi (of Samarkand, d. 869) instead; and ‘the Seven *Sahīhs*’, adding the *Muwatta*’ or the *Sunan* of al-Dārimi next to the one of Ibn Māja.

In addition to the *sahīh* and *sunan* literature, there existed other kinds of *hadīth* studies in the same period. The most important are those on the topics of ‘*ilm al-rijāl* (study of the persons in the *isnāds*) and ‘*ilal al-hadīth* (causes, occasions of the traditions) considering the *isnāds*, and *gharīb al-hadīth* regarding the rare words in the texts. Among such works, the *rijāl* works compiled by the authors of the Six *Sahīhs*, the ‘*Ilal*’ of al-Tirmidhi and the *Gharīb al-hadīth* of Shamir b. Hamdūya of Herat (d. 869) are worthy of mention.

## Subsequent *hadīth* literature

The history of *hadīth* literature in the eastern Islamic world after the age of the six canons may be divided into two periods, of which the first (c. 900–1200) was one of growth, with the creation of a large number of *hadīth* works, whereas in the subsequent one (c. 1200–1500), *hadīth* literature in Central Asia began to decline.

During the tenth century, *sahīh* literature continued in two forms, both dependent on the preceding *sahīhs*. In this period, one may note independent *sahīhs*, such as those of Ibn Khuzayma of Nishapur (d. 923) and Ibn Hibbān of Bust (d. 965), both considered as the most authoritative canons after ‘the Six’. The next step was the compilation of supplements to the preceding canons, such as the *Mustadrak* of al-Hākim al-Naysābūri Ibn al-Bayyī<sup>c</sup> (d. 1014). In spite of the high validity of these works in *hadīth* literature, they were criticized by rigorist scholars because of the particular concepts of the authors

regarding the conditions of a *sahīh* tradition. In addition to the above-mentioned independent or supplemental *sahīhs*, there existed a special method of *sahīh* compilation known as *mustakbraj*, in which the author presents a new version of the preceding canon but inserts his own *isnāds* instead of those of the original. Among famous examples of the *mustakbrajs* on al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*, the works of Abū Bakr al-Ismā'īli (d. 981) and al-Ghitrifi (d. 987), both of Gurgan, should be mentioned. Also notable are the *mustakbraj* on Muslim's *Sahīh* by Abū 'Awāna al-Isfarāyini (d. 928), and that of Abū Dharr al-Harawī (d. 1043) on the Two *Sahīhs*.

The other aspect of *sahīh* literature of this age was the compilation of the *hadīths* of the Two *Sahīhs* into one collection. In these works, called *al-Jam' bayn al-Sahīhayn* [The Bringing Together and Comparing of the Two *Sahīhs*], the author undertook to compare the *isnāds* of the Two *Sahīhs* and register the repeated *isnāds* all together. The pioneer of this kind of *hadīth* compilation was the scholar of Nishapur, Abū Bakr al-Jawzaqī (d. 998), whose method was followed by several authors, such as Ibn al-Furāt al-Sarakhsī (d. 1023) and Abū Bakr al-Barqāni (d. 1034).

As to the *sunans* compiled at the time, the *al-Sunan al-kubrā* [The Great *Sunan*] of Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 1066) is a major reference for the *hadīths* and sometimes a useful source for the opinions of Companions and Successors, all by *isnāds*. In particular, it is a traditional text for the Shafi'ite law school.

The classic *musnad* literature was continued during this period; several important texts include the *musnads* of Hasan b. Sufyān of Nasa (d. 915) and Haytham b. Kulayb of Chach (present-day Tashkent) (d. 946). A new phenomenon in the *musnad* literature of Central Asia at this time was the compilation of numerous *musnads* for Abū Hanifa, the imam of the Hanafites, appearing in the first half of the tenth century; these included the *Musnad Abī Hanīfa*, the most famous one over the ensuing centuries, compiled by al-Hārithī of Bukhara (d. 951), and those compiled by Ibn 'Adi of Gurgan (d. 976) and Ibn Khusraw of Balkh (d. 1126). It seems that there was a certain disappearance of theological differences between the Hanafites and other groups called by the general title *ahl al-sunna wa 'l-jamā'a* (Proponents of the *Sunna* and the Muslim Community) contemporaneously with the beginning of the Ghaznavid dynasty; but above all, the Hanafites now began to gain ground over the Shafi'ites and others and become the dominant law school in eastern Persia and Central Asia. Nevertheless, in the first half of the tenth century, a Shafi'ite scholar of Nishapur, Abu 'l-'Abbās al-Asamm (d. 957), embarked on collecting the *musnad* traditions employed by al-Shāfi'i from the latter's works and compiled them into a volume known afterwards as the unique *Musnad* of al-Shāfi'i. Besides the *sahīhs*, *sunan* and *musnads*, there were some important works on *gharīb al-hadīth*, such as the *Gharīb al-hadīth* of al-Khattābī of Bust (d. 998), *al-Gharībayn* [The Two Works on the Rare Words in the Qur'an] by Abū 'Ubayd of Herat (d. 1011) and *al-Fā'iq* [The Excellent, Outstanding Work] by

al-Zamakhshari of Khwarazm (d. 1143). In the field of commentaries, al-Khattābī appears again as the first compiler of two commentaries on al-Bukhārī's and Abū Dāwūd's canons for the first time; it was one and a half centuries before al-Fārisī of Nishapur (d. 1135) began writing a commentary on Muslim's canon.

During the twelfth century, the attraction of *hadīth* schools in Khurasan was still able to draw *hadīth* seekers from other regions of the Muslim world; but in the more westerly lands of eastern Persia, including Gurgan and Rayy, the *hadīth* schools began to decline from the middle of the tenth century onwards.

In the first years of the thirteenth century we still find a *hadīth* book, the *Muʿjam al-shuyūkh* [Encyclopedic Work on Leading Scholars], compiled in Khurasan, in 18 parts (*juz*'s), by Abu 'l-Muzaffar al-Samʿānī (d. 1218); but soon afterwards, in 1220, the Mongols of Chinggis Khan appeared in Central Asia and eastern Persia, leaving a trail of devastation in the towns there. Although many of these towns revived, Islamic culture and scholarship there suffered severe setbacks. *Hadīth* studies were among those affected by these events; but there was a counter-balance to this in a greatly increased interest in Sufism and mystical compositions in both Persian and Arabic.

In any case, works emanating from Central Asia during this later period were very limited in number, and in regard to quality, the *hadīth* literature of the region was not able to compete with that of the western Islamic lands. Two samples of the *jamʿ* ('collection') literature may, however, be mentioned. The first is a combination of 15 compendiums, a work of Muhammad b. Mahmūd al-Khwārazmī (d. 1247): entitled the *Jāmiʿ masānid Abī Hanīfa* [Collected Work of the *Musnads* of Abū Hanīfa], it is considered the most comprehensive reference on the subject. The second is the *Mashāriq al-anwār al-nabawiyya* [Places of the Gleams from the Prophetic Lights] of Hasan b. Muhammad al-Saghānī (d. 1252), a scholar who was born in Lahore, educated in Ghazna and spent the last part of his life in Baghdad. The author, who was a Hanafite jurisconsult and traditionist as well as a lexicographer, proposed a new form of combination between the Two *Sabīhs* regarding the classification of the subjects in the *Mashāriq*, and for this it met with great success as far away as Anatolia.

The literature of commentaries on the *sabīhs*, while limited in the early periods, flourished extensively between the thirteenth and the fifteenth century. They included the commentaries on al-Bukhārī's canon by Muhammad b. Yūsuf al-Kirmānī (d. 1384) and his son Yahyā al-Kirmānī (d. 1430), a commentary on Muslim's canon by Shams al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1366) and also a summary of Abū Dāwūd's canon by Muhammad b. Hasan of Balkh (thirteenth century).

As for *hadīth* compilation among the Imami Shiʿites in Central Asia, the summit of achievement was the period of compiling 'the Four Books' (c. 900–1050): *al-Kāfi* [The Sufficient (Book)] by Muhammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī of

Rayy (d. 940–1); *Man lā yahduruhu 'l-faqīh* [He Who Has No Legal Expert (to Consult)] by Ibn Bābuya (Bābawayh) of Qum (d. 991); and two works entitled *Tahdhīb al-abkām* [The Refining of the Bases of Law] and *al-Istibsār* [The Far-Sighted (Book)] by Muhammad b. Hasan al-Tūsī (d. 1068), who spent the last part of his life in Iraq. Of the Four Books, the *Kāfi* (which covers theological, ethical and other religious instructions as well as legal matters) is regarded as the most authoritative and comprehensive by the Shi'ites. Ibn Bābuya's work was compiled as a jurisprudential handbook; the *Tahdhīb* is considered the most comprehensive regarding the variety of *isnāds* and texts of traditions, although it is primarily concerned with law; and, finally, the *Istibsār* is a reference work for contradictory legal traditions.

In addition to the Four Books, there were many other works on a wide range of subjects compiled by the Imami traditionists of Central Asia. Some examples are the works of Ahmad al-Barqī of Qum (d. 887 or 893) and Muhammad b. Mas'ūd al-<sup>c</sup>Ayyāshī of Samarkand (ninth century), and the numerous works of Ibn Bābuya, beside his main work mentioned above. During the twelfth century, there were still some *musnad* collections of Imami *hadīths*, such as the *Arba'ūn* [Forty (Traditions)] of Muntajab al-Dīn of Rayy; but the changed political and social conditions, and the decline of political Shi'ism during the following century, caused the *hadīth* literature of the Imamīs to decline within the region of Central Asia.

## P a r t T w o

### QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS

(C. Gilliot)

## Introduction and origins

The mobility of scholars throughout the period known as Islam's 'Classical Age' makes it rather difficult to present this discipline according to strictly regional criteria. Moreover, the very notion of a 'Central Asia' remains vague. Hence the choices we have had to make here may appear, in many cases, somewhat arbitrary; thus Qur'anic commentators who belonged to Iran proper have been excluded. We have, however, given pride of place to scholars from Khurasan, since their region constituted a major meeting-ground for intellectual exchange between Central Asia proper and the Near East. Yet even here, the number of Qur'anic commentators was so great, including both the better-known scholars and the more obscure, that we have had to restrict our survey to only a very few. This has meant neglecting such intellectual centres as Merv

and Rayy, under-represented in this study even though they too enjoyed considerable influence in Central Asia.

Together with Merv, Balkh was the most important urban centre during the initial centuries of Muslim sway in Transoxania. The Companions of the Prophet left little trace here, however, for only in the years after 699, with the commander Qutayba b. Muslim, did Muslim government become firmly established. Just as in Syria, interest here in things religious developed among circles of *muqātila* (warriors),<sup>2</sup> as attested by the very name borne by two well-known Qur'anic commentators from this region, both called Muqātil.<sup>3</sup>

#### AL-DAHĤĤĀK B. MUZĀHIM

One of the first Qur'anic commentators mentioned for this region was al-Dahhāk b. Muzāhim al-Hilālī,<sup>4</sup> who died at Balkh c. 723. The various guaranteed 'chains of transmission' (*isnāds*) concerning his exegesis go back to the Prophet's Companion Ibn 'Abbās, although al-Dahhāk probably never met him personally. He seems instead to have studied exegesis in Rayy with one of Ibn Abbās' disciples, thereby coming into contact with part of the Basran tradition in Qur'anic exegesis. Al-Dahhāk's own Qur'anic interpretations are preserved in later recensions. He is described as imparting his teachings to as many as 3,000 young men and we may suppose that he expounded the text of the Qur'an and delivered moral lessons to the warriors of Transoxania. Some of his exegetic traditions, one of which notably draws upon a Midrash dealing with the creation of Adam, show him to have been a narrator of the old-fashioned type, one who moreover borrowed from the Persian legendary lore circulating in this area. As with many of the older commentators, and notably with Ibn 'Abbās himself,<sup>5</sup> however, it might be going somewhat too far to attribute to al-Dahhāk an actual body of Qur'anic exegesis in the strict sense of the term. Instead, he should be regarded as one who imparted oral teachings on various passages of the Qur'an, and this, later, came to be considered as a *tafsir*.

#### MUQĀTIL B. HAYYĀN<sup>6</sup>

This commentator from Balkh (d. 753) may have been the son of an Iranian military slave who managed to rise in the world, since his father saw service

2. Van Ess, 1991-7, *TG* II, p. 508.

3. For the beginnings of the exegesis, see Gilliot, 1990*b*, pp. 81-100.

4. Sezgin, 1967, pp. 29-30; Gilliot, 1982, pp. 168-79; Van Ess, 1975, pp. 113-14; 1991-7, *TG* II, pp. 508-9.

5. Gilliot, 1985, pp. 127-84.

6. Van Ess, 1991-7, *TG* II, pp. 510-16; his hypothesis has been recently challenged, however, by Crone, 1997, pp. 238-49.

with, among others, the commander Yazid b. al-Muhallab and then rose to become, for a spell, the governor and even the judge of Samarkand. Muqātil b. Hayyān also spent some time in Tabaristan, in the service of the last Umayyad governor of Khurasan, Nasr b. Sayyār, but in the end, he had to flee from Abū Muslim; hence he went to Kabul, where he carried out missionary activities until his death in eastern Afghanistan.

Muqātil b. Hayyān did not compose a complete commentary on the Qur'an, but rather proceeded as a *qāss* (preacher) of *qisas* (sermons or narratives; sing. *qissa*), one imparting exegetic interpretation within the framework of edifying lessons, so that he appears more in the light of a popular storyteller than in that of a jurist. Interpretations of a Midrashic type were notably to be found in his sermons, and such exegesis later found only rather lukewarm appreciation among adherents of the Iraqi rational school. One of his interpretations, which he attributed to the Prophet himself, thus represented the sun as a body borne each evening up to the seventh heaven where it would come to a stop beneath the Throne, with God then deciding each dawn whether it should rise in the east or in the west. Such interpretations of his are quoted by al-Tabarī and also by Abu 'l-Futūh al-Rāzi (d. in or after 1131).

#### MUQĀTIL B. SULAYMĀN<sup>7</sup>

Abu 'l-Hasan Muqātil b. Sulaymān al-Balkhī was born in Balkh, where his father served as judge. He seems to have died in 767 (or perhaps as late as 775). He probably left his native town through incurring the disfavour of the governor Nasr b. Sayyār. After being caught up in the civil warfare, he later seems to have taught in Mecca, Damascus and Beirut, and dwelt for a spell in Baghdad and then in Basra, where he died. Both Muqātils shared, in fact, the experience of being *ghāzīs* (warriors for the faith). Three of Muqātil b. Sulaymān's works of Qur'anic commentary have come down to us and have been published. These are the *Tafsīr Khams-mi'at āya* [Commentary on Five Hundred Verses], the *Kitāb Wujūh al-Qur'ān* [Book of the Purports of the Qur'an], a kind of rudimentary concordance, and a *Tafsīr* (or Qur'anic 'Commentary' proper).

Most Muslim jurists and traditionists later branded this Muqātil with the reputation of having been a poor transmitter of *hadīths*, although they all always qualify him as a 'great Qur'anic commentator'. So far as his qualifications for transmitting *hadīths* were concerned, however, Muqātil was hardly an isolated case in his day; one need only mention in this regard Ibn Is'hāq (d. 767), the author of the celebrated *Sīra* [Life of the Prophet]. For in Muqātil's age, not only did the *hadīths* not yet enjoy the pride of place which they came

7. Van Ess, 1991–7, *TG* II, pp. 516–32; Gilliot, 1991, pp. 39–92; Goldfeld, 1978, pp. xiii–xxx.

to command some 50 to 100 years later; the whole system of *isnāds* had not yet been codified at all. Thus the criticisms levelled at Muqātil actually betray a discernible historical trend towards backward projection, whereby ancient scholars came to be judged according to standards which only found widespread acceptance at a much later date.

Writers on heresy and theology have also depicted Muqātil as one given to anthropomorphism and it is true that his recently published commentaries do show traces of such tendencies,<sup>8</sup> although not the extreme positions once ascribed to him. The problem here is that his work has been transmitted through two recensions, a Baghdadi and an 'Iranian' one,<sup>9</sup> only the first of which has actually come down to us; it is possible that later redactors of his text suppressed propositions which appeared shocking to them.

But Muqātil's commentary poses yet another problem, in so far as whatever has been authentically preserved of his material soon came to be mingled, in this eastern part of the Muslim world, with elements of the Kufan tradition represented by the commentator Muhammad b. al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī (d. 763), who partly drew in turn on interpretations offered by Ibn 'Abbās. Finally, the Baghdad version – as published – includes interpolations probably due to one of the transmitters of this material, al-Tawwāzi (d. 920), himself a grammarian and a specialist in Qur'anic readings.

With these qualifications duly in mind, this version of Qur'anic commentary does hold interest as an example of exegesis belonging to an early period. It mainly proceeds by way of paraphrase and narrative, with very little resort to *hadīth* – drawing, instead, on what would later come to be known as *Isrā'iliyyāt* ('Tales from the Jews') and, generally, on the legendary lore of this whole part of the world, of which echoes were already to be found in the Qur'an, and which was now adapted to the purposes of the new faith.

Muqātil belonged to an intellectual environment of scholars in the religious sciences who did not yet observe the rules later laid down to distinguish the 'sound' from the 'unsound'. Moreover, while he takes linguistic matters into consideration, he never quotes a single grammarian and almost never any philologist, and with good reason: the great grammarians had not yet appeared on the scene. Later generations, however, would buttress the soundness of their interpretations and traditions by resort to grammar and philology, thereby providing what they regarded as a positive basis for critical discernment, even though such knowledge had been gleaned, and in some cases even fabricated, in light of the Qur'an, the *hadīth* and the interpretations.<sup>10</sup> Since, moreover, a number of theological points had not yet been entirely fixed in this age, some

8. Gilliot, 1991, pp. 54–68; Van Ess, 1991–7, *TG* II, pp. 529, 550, 723–4.

9. Van Ess, 1991–7, *TG* II, pp. 519–23; Gilliot, 1991, pp. 40–6.

10. Gilliot, 1990a, pp. 165–203.

representations can also be distinguished in Muqātil's writings which would shock later upholders of orthodoxy, especially in regard to notions which came to prevail such as the 'sinlessness of the Prophets'.

Muqātil's commentary thus encountered a rather mixed reception. Al-Tabari never quotes him, possibly because of the lack in Muqātil's work of *isnāds*, although Muqātil is often cited by such writers as al-Tabrizi (d. 1153), Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī (1148–1209)<sup>11</sup> and al-Qurtubī (d. 1272) in their own works of exegesis.

## Corpora of exegesis based on *hadīth*

### THE SUNNIS

#### ʿAbd b. Humayd (or Hamīd)

This commentator and scholar (d. 863) of *hadīth* was born in Kish in what is now Uzbekistan and is the author of a major collection of *hadīths*. While his commentary on the Qur'an has not come down to us as such, it is found abundantly quoted by a later writer like al-Suyūti (d. 1505); hence all hope is not lost of one day discovering a manuscript of ʿAbd b. Humayd's own complete work.<sup>12</sup>

#### Al-Tabarī

While Abū Jaʿfar Muhammad b. Jarir b. Yazīd al-Tabari does not strictly belong to the region with which we are concerned – he was born at Amul near the Caspian Sea – this major commentator must nevertheless be presented here, given his importance for all later exegesis based upon *hadīth*. Once he had completed his initial training in his own native region, notably in such fields as *hadīth*, historiography and the Qur'anic and judicial disciplines, al-Tabarī went off 'to search for knowledge' in the wandering manner usual among the literati of his age, staying in Rayy, Baghdad, Basra, Kufa, Egypt, Mecca and several Syrian towns, where he followed the lectures of a most impressive number of masters: as attested by the *isnāds* offered in his own commentary on the Qur'an, in his *History* and in other works.<sup>13</sup> He then settled in Baghdad, where he died in 923.

It seems that al-Tabarī was a conscious competitor of other scholars in three fields of knowledge, and he wanted to do better than at least three of his predecessors. In law, he appears to have wanted to outdo al-Shāfiʿī, not only

11. Lagarde, 1996, p. 162.

12. Sezgin, 1967, p. 113.

13. Gilliot, 1994b, pp. 309–51.

because he tried to establish his own *madh'hab* (legal school), the Jaririyya. In *hadīth*, he probably wished to compete with Ibn Hanbal and Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 838). In historiography, it is likely that he wished to continue and do better than Ibn Is'hāq for the pre-prophetic and prophetic periods (see further on his work here, below, Chapter 4, Part One).<sup>14</sup>

The title of al-Tabari's commentary on the Qur'an is *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān* [The Sum of Clarification Concerning the Interpretation of the Verses of the Qur'an].<sup>15</sup> This work represents the ultimate accomplishment in Qur'anic exegesis on *hadīth*: from the author's own lifetime down to the present day, it has been regarded as the model of its kind, in both the Islamic East and the Islamic West. A main characteristic of the work is the care lavished by al-Tabari on ensuring the appearance of complete chains of guaranteed transmission: 13,026 different *isnāds* are thus offered in some 35,400 cases.<sup>16</sup> In this regard, the work yields a precious mine of information concerning earlier sources for exegesis.

Because of the many stories related by al-Tabari in the form of *hadīths*, he has often been regarded as essentially something of a compiler. Irritation has even been felt in some quarters on account of his transmission of numerous 'legendary' traditions, or *Isrā'iliyyāt*.<sup>17</sup> Nearly all commentaries on the Qur'an, however, and even the canonical *al-Kutub al-Sitta* [Six Books] of Sunnism, contain these. Moreover, while al-Tabari assuredly also played the part of a compiler, to reduce him to such a role would be to overlook the task he set himself, consisting in no less than sifting all the data he transmitted according to the criteria of the Sunni orthodoxy of his own day and environment. Indeed, al-Tabari often adopted an outright theological stand, notably against the Mu'tazilites. In addition, there are places in his commentary where he actually speaks out in the tones of a speculative theologian (*mutakallim*),<sup>18</sup> something which can hardly have been acceptable to partisans of the Hanbalite trend in theology, who in Baghdad occasionally made life difficult for al-Tabari, even going so far as to accuse him of harbouring Shi'ite tendencies.

Al-Tabari's commentary also came to amount to something of a legal *summa*,<sup>19</sup> and not only for the followers of his own *madh'hab*, that is, the adherents of al-Shāfi'i's school, but also for members of the Hanafite and Malikite schools. Much like other scholars of his day, al-Tabari tended to regard the master Ibn Hanbal less as a jurist than as a *muhaddith* (traditionist). Indeed,

14. Gilliot, paper delivered at the conference, 'The Life and Works of Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari', University of St Andrews, 30 August–2 September 1995 (to be published).

15. Gilliot, 1987, pp. 366–70.

16. Horst, 1953, p. 291.

17. Gilliot, 1993*b*, pp. 277–89; 1994*a*, pp. 237–70.

18. Gilliot, 1990*a*, Ch. VII.

19. Gilliot, 1993*a*, pp. 41–94.

al-Tabarī had first come to Baghdad to hear Ibn Hanbal's lessons on *hadīth*, although he reached the capital just after Ibn Hanbal's death in 855. In conclusion, al-Tabarī's commentary has continued to be regarded by succeeding generations, down to the present day, as one of the key sources for exegesis in Islam.

#### Abū Bakr al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī<sup>20</sup>

An interesting case regarding theology and law is offered by this scholar (d. 976), who was born and died at Chach in Central Asia. He travelled as far as Egypt for his studies, and his masters in exegesis included, for a time, al-Tabarī. After agreeing for a while with the Mu'tazilite trend, he adhered to Ash'arite doctrine, and is regarded as having introduced the school of al-Shāfi'ī to Transoxania, where hitherto Abū Hanifa's school had prevailed. He dwelt for a spell in Bukhara and Nishapur and composed a 'Major Commentary' on the Qur'an (*al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*) which now appears to be lost, although once drawn upon by later writers.

#### Abu 'l-Layth al-Samarqandī

A Hanafite jurist, a theologian and a Qur'anic commentator, Abu 'l-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 983) was also known by such titles as al-Faqih (The Judge) and Imām al-Hudā (Imam of Guidance). He should not be confused with Abu 'l-Layth Nasr al-Samarqandī, whose title was al-Hāfiz (He who Knows the Qur'an by Heart). According to Van Ess, 'Like his teachers, he combined solid juridical knowledge with a predilection for propagating popular morality in terms of asceticism: in Transoxania a jurist almost inevitably had to deal with proselytizing among the Turkish tribes.'<sup>21</sup> Abu 'l-Layth's Qur'anic commentary, entitled *Bahr al-ʿulūm* [The Ocean of Sciences], is of only average size and belongs to the genre of exegesis which relied on *hadīth*.

#### The school of Khurasan, especially in Nishapur

As noted at the outset, Khurasan, and especially the city of Nishapur, was a major seed-bed for commentators on the Qur'an, hence special mention should be made here of this region.

#### *Mīrak al-Rawwās al-Balkhī*

This Qur'anic commentator appears to have been a staunch upholder of the *sunna* and an opponent of the Mu'tazilites, who were at that time numerous in his native city of Balkh. If our current identification is correct, then this Mīrak

20. Not to be confused with Sayf al-Dīn Abū Bakr al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Fāriqī (d. 1113), author of the *Hilyat al-ʿulamā'* (Brockelmann, 1937–49, Suppl., Vol. 1, p. 674).

21. Van Ess, 1985, p. 333.

also seems to have been a Hanafite and the author of an *i'tiqād* (exposition of belief) wherein he expounds upon Sunni doctrine; but his *Major Commentary* has apparently left no trace in later exegesis.

*Ibn Habib al-Naysābūrī*

This scholar (d. 1016) was a Karramite (see p. 107 below on the Karramites) before adhering to Shafi'ism. He composed a commentary on the Qur'an which was once appreciated and famous but is now lost. One of his most enthusiastic disciples, however, was the commentator Abū Is'hāq al-Tha'labī, who received permission to transmit the master's commentary and who mentions it among the sources for his own exegesis.

*Abū Is'hāq al-Tha'labī*

Al-Tha'labī (d. 1035) is the author of the celebrated *Qisas al-anbiyā'* [Tales of the Prophets], but we know little about his life. He was a specialist in readings of the Qur'an, a traditionist, a commentator and a man of letters. He studied with a large number of masters and transmitted many *hadīths*. But Ibn al-Jawzī, while recognizing the importance of his commentary, and Ibn Taymiyya also, fault him for integrating too many *hadīths* which they consider unsound.

Except for the introduction, al-Tha'labī's commentary on the Qur'an, entitled *al-Kashf al-bayān 'an tafsīr al-Qur'ān* [Unveiling and Elucidation in Qur'an Exegesis], is so far unpublished.<sup>22</sup> Such a regrettable gap is not altogether due to chance, however. For one thing, this is a very lengthy commentary, and the (mistaken) opinion has prevailed that the essence of Qur'anic exegesis embodied according to *hadīth* could already be found in the great work by al-Tabarī. For another, al-Tha'labī does not hesitate to draw upon the exegesis of men like al-Kalbī and Muqātil b. Sulaymān, two commentators regarded with suspicion by the orthodox both in former times and especially in our own day.

Even the printed introduction to al-Tha'labī's commentary is of major importance, however, since he includes therein the names of various commentators and also information on the various lines through which their material was transmitted. In many cases, al-Tha'labī bears better witness than al-Tabarī to the state of Qur'anic exegesis in the eastern reaches of the Islamic world, and especially in Khurasan.

*Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Hirī al-Naysābūrī*

This scholar (d. 1038) was born in al-Hira, a suburb of Nishapur; he stayed for a while in Baghdad in 1032 while on pilgrimage to Mecca, but soon returned to Nishapur. A traditionist, al-Hirī was also a commentator and a specialist in Qur'anic studies, writing a book entitled *al-Kifāya fi 'l-tafsīr* [The Exhaustive Commentary]. Although this is a commentary based on *hadīth*, it does not

22. Goldfeld, 1984; Gilliot, 1988, pp. 157–61; Schoeler, 1990, pp. 19–21, no. 17.

offer whole *isnāds*, but only mentions the initial link in each chain. Even here, al-Hiri's work is far less well documented than al-Tabari's. For the rest, the usual materials making up Qur'anic commentary are to be found in these writings: grammar, variant readings, and narratives which here are usually abridged. On juridical subjects, while al-Hiri mentions the opinions of both the Hanafites and the Shafi'ites, he himself openly endorses those of the Shafi'ite school to which he himself belonged.

*Abū 'Uthmān al-Sābūnī (d. 1057)*

Al-Sābūnī's commentary is far more grounded in the 'sound' transmission of 'orthodox' exegetic *hadīth*,<sup>23</sup> at least if one is to believe the praise bestowed upon this traditionist and commentator by the *as'hāb al-hadīth*.

*Abu 'l-Hasan al-Wāhidī*

This scholar of Nishapur (d. 1076) was one of the most noted disciples of both al-Tha'labī and al-Sābūnī. He found fame not only for his commentaries on the collected works of several great poets, but also for his exegesis of the Qur'an, being the author of no fewer than three Qur'anic commentaries entitled respectively 'Extended', 'Abbreviated' and 'Medium-sized'. He also wrote a *Kitāb Asbāb al-nuzūl* [Book on the Occasions and Causes of Revelation], on the revealing of the chapters and verses of the Qur'an.

*'Alī b. Saḥl al-Naysābūrī al-Shāfi'ī*

Al-Shāfi'ī (d. 1098) lectured in various schools, notably in the Nizāmiyya *madrasa* of Nishapur (see above, Chapter 1, Part One, p. 37), but the commentary he composed has been lost.

*Nizām al-Dīn al-Naysābūrī al-A'raj*

This scholar (d. after 1329) was the last of the commentators of Nishapur to be dealt with here. He originally hailed from Qum, but eventually removed to Dawlatabad in central India. He enjoyed a grammatical turn of mind and was generally regarded as a 'sage', that is, one attuned to philosophy and logic and also to mathematics and astronomy. He displays considerable veneration for the family of the Prophet, but makes no concessions to Imami Shi'ite teachings, and so shows himself to have been a Sunni.

One of al-A'raj's masters in the exact sciences was the astronomer Qutb al-Dīn al-Shirāzī and it was apparently at his insistence that al-A'raj composed his commentary, entitled *Gharā'ib al-Qur'an wa-rahā'ib al-Furqān* [Wonders of the Qur'an and Things to be Desired in the Revelation],<sup>24</sup> a task which took him some five years. The end result is a well-planned book with the author proceeding along exactly the same lines, in four stages, for each verse, portion

23. Bulliet, 1972, pp. 134–8.

24. Monnot, 1981, pp. 369–73; 1982, pp. 273–8; 1983, pp. 317–18; 1990, pp. 280–2.

of a verse, or group of verses: (a) variant readings (*qirā'āt*); (b) pauses (*wuqūf*), which were also the subject of his eighth introduction; (c) literal exegesis (*tafsīr*); here al-A'raj mainly borrowed from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzi and al-Zamakhsharī; and (d) spiritual exegesis (*ta'wīl*).

#### *Al-Baghawī*

As a traditionist and commentator, al-Baghawī<sup>25</sup> (d. 1122 or perhaps 1116) composed a medium-sized exegesis of the Qur'an, entitled the *Ma'ālim al-tanzīl* [The Salient Marks of Revelation]. It relies on *hadīth*, but the author's *isnāds* are abridged. Criticism levelled against al-Baghawī notably faults him for drawing to far too great an extent on biblical, and extra-biblical, legendary lore, though such usage was standard. Also held against him were his frequent quotations from the exegeses of al-Kalbī,<sup>26</sup> regardless of the fact that *hadīths* of similar or identical content were abundantly to be found in the commentaries of al-Tabarī and others. In this connection, it should be borne in mind that the commentaries by al-Kalbī, although a Shi'ite, were also appreciated in non-Shi'ite circles, notably among the Karramites, and were later considered, especially in Khurasan, as the 'sound' or authentic form in which the exegetic *hadīths* of Ibn 'Abbās were to be found.<sup>27</sup>

Al-Baghawī drew for the greater part of his materials on the commentary by Abū Is'hāq al-Tha'labī. As a result, one might regard al-Baghawī's commentary as a sort of abbreviation of al-Tha'labī's work – with those *hadīths* considered unacceptable by a strict traditionist like al-Baghawī duly expurgated. Indeed, this was probably the main reason for the praise heaped in some circles on al-Baghawī's work.

#### *Abu 'l-Barakāt al-Nasafī*

This scholar, who was also a jurist, a Hanafite theologian and a Qur'anic commentator,<sup>28</sup> was born in Nakhshab or Nasaf, some four days' journey from Bukhara. Al-Nasafī later taught in Kirman, went to Baghdad in 1310 and probably died on his return from this journey. His commentary bears the title *Madārik al-tanzīl wa haqā'iq al-ta'wīl* [The Perceptions of Revelation and the Truths of Interpretation]. The author himself intended it to be of only medium size, but in fact, it amounts to a compendium of exegesis that might satisfy the most orthodox of Sunnis.

So far as the Qur'an's *variae lectiones* are concerned, al-Nasafī restricts himself to the Seven *Sabīhs* (recognized readings), although he devotes special attention to any legal problems which may arise. In part, his commentary may be considered a kind of shortened version of those by al-Baydāwī and

25. From Bagh or Baghshur, a place in eastern Khurasan between Merv and Herat.

26. Sezgin, 1967, p. 34; Van Ess, 1991–7, *TG I*, pp. 298–301.

27. Van Ess, 1991–7, *TG I*, p. 299.

28. See Brockelmann, 1937–49, Vol. 2, pp. 196–7; Suppl., Vol. 2, pp. 263–8.

al-Zamakhshari, though he obviously refrains from repeating al-Zamakhshari's Mu'tazilite positions.

Where al-Nasafi briefly refers to biblical and extra-biblical lore, which is so abundant and developed in Muslim exegetic literature, he generally avoids taking any position at all. But on occasion he can react very strongly indeed. Thus, on Qur'an 38:21ff, he states: 'It is told that David sent forth Uriah, time and again, for to do battle against the Ammonites, in hope that Uriah might thereby be slain and that he might so wed his wife. Now such would not be fitting for simple Muslims, upon whom it is enjoined that they do good: how much less then for great Prophets!' At stake here for al-Nasafi, it will be readily understood, was his belief in the 'sinlessness of the Prophets'. But such tales had not disturbed Muqātil b. Sulaymān in the least, in an earlier age when such a belief had not yet taken firm hold.<sup>29</sup>

### THE KARRAMITES

#### Abu 'l-Hasan al-Haysam b. Muhammad

Through his mother's line, al-Haysam<sup>30</sup> (d. 1075) was descended from a whole family of Karramite scholars in Nishapur. He notably taught exegesis and *hadith* in Nishapur and was also recognized as a master in matters of rhetoric, poetry, literature and philology. The only text preserved from his grandfather Muhammad b. al-Haysam's circle exists in two manuscripts<sup>31</sup> containing 'Tales' of the Qur'anic Prophets (*Qisas al-Qur'ān*); J. Van Ess has pointed out the Karramite traits in this text (to be published).

#### Abū Bahr 'Atīq b. Muhammad al-Sūrābādī (d. 1101)

Although al-Sūrābādī's commentary has survived, we know very little about its author. Yet in his own time, he was the leading figure among the Karramites of Nishapur and is described as an ascetic who fasted by day and prayed by night. A partial edition of his work has been published, mainly pertaining to his recounting of the 'Tales of the Prophets'. The work is an important commentary in the classical sense, although (to a lesser extent) it also includes theological considerations.<sup>32</sup>

29. Gilliot, 1991, pp. 70–6.

30. Van Ess, 1980, pp. 68–73.

31. Van Ess, 1980; Schoeler, 1990, pp. 19–34; Brockelmann, 1937–49, Suppl., Vol. 1, pp. 529–3.

32. Van Ess, 1980, pp. 73–4.

## THE SHI'ITES

### Pre-Buyid exegesis

#### *Al-°Ayyāshī*

Abu 'l-Nadr Muhammad b. Mas'ūd al-°Ayyāshī al-Sulamī al-Samarqandī (d. c. 932) was one of the pre-eminent Shi'ite scholars of his day, to the point where Ibn al-Nadīm could refer to 'his books being a matter of importance in the regions of Khurasan'. Originally a Sunni, he converted to Shi'ism and had studied in such leading Shi'ite centres of the day as Kufa, Baghdad and Qum.

What survives of al-°Ayyāshī's commentary only extends as far as the end of sura 18, 'The Cave', but it certainly contained much more material than what we have now, as clearly appears from the quotations of later scholars. By the eighteenth century, however, such Imami Shi'ite scholars as al-Majlisī and al-Hurr al-°Āmilī were no longer familiar with the complete text of al-°Ayyāshī's exegesis.

In his introduction, al-°Ayyāshī stresses *hadīths* concerning the sole prerogative of the Shi'ite imams to expound Scripture. Elsewhere, he avoids introducing his own views explicitly, but rather reports pertinent *hadīths* from the imams and the Shi'ite scholars of the past. In this regard, his exegesis bears the stamp of Shi'ite literature in the age before the rise of the Buyids, a period when Shi'ite commentators did not feel entitled to emit opinions or judgements of their own without support from *hadīths* going back to the imams or other recognized Shi'ite scholars.

### Later Shi'ite exegesis

#### *Al-Tabrisī*

Amīn al-Dīn Abū °Alī al-Faḍl b. al-Hasan al-Tabrisī (or al-Tabarsī) al-Sabzawāri (d. probably in 1153) lived and taught for a long time in Mashhad al-Rida (Mashhad), then settled in 1128–9 in Sabzawar, where he spent the last 30 years of his life.<sup>33</sup> His exact ethnonym has given rise to some discussion. If he really came from Tabaristan, then his ethnonym would have to be read as al-Tabarsī; but in fact, he seems to have come from the district of Tabriz (in Arabic, Tabrish), between Qum and Aba in northern Persia.<sup>34</sup>

The title of his first commentary is the *Majma° al-bayān li-°ulūm al-Qur'ān* [The Confluence of Elucidation in the Sciences of the Qur'an], begun when he was more than 60 years old. But then he discovered the commentary by al-Zamakhsharī and was inspired by this to write a new exegesis, and then finally a third one, *Jawāmi° al-jāmi°* [Collections of the Collection], finished in 1147, a compilation of the two previous works.

33. Brockelmann, 1937–49, Vol. 1, p. 405; Suppl., Vol. 1, pp. 708–9; Monnot, 1982–83, p. 35.

34. Le Strange, 1905, p. 211.

Our concern here is with his first commentary, characterized by a distinct kinship with accepted Sunni exegetic writings. Al-Tabrisi goes over every portion of the Qur'anic text to be explained, with variant readings according to pertinent justification in grammar, *lugha* (lexicographical elements), *īrāb* (grammatical elements) and so on, all of course from a theological and juridical viewpoint. He often quotes such Sunni authorities in exegesis as Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid and Sa'īd b. Jubayr and also frequently draws on poetry.

Concerning passages of particular importance for Shi'ites, he gives the moderate Shi'ite point of view. The commentary is also Mu'tazilite in its outlook, with frequent quotations from Abū 'Ali al-Jubbā'i. Undoubtedly, as al-Tabrisi states in his introduction, his commentary owes a considerable debt to the *al-Tibyān fi tafsīr al-Qur'ān* [Elucidation of the Interpretation of the Qur'an] by the great Mu'tazilite and Shi'ite master Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tūsī (d. 1067). Still, al-Tabrisi's own work shows a remarkable degree of organization, and concern over linguistic issues is taken farther.

*Abu 'l-Futūh Jamāl al-Dīn al-Rāzī*

Al-Rāzī<sup>35</sup> came from an Arab family settled in Nishapur until his own grandfather decided to remove to Rayy, where this author taught (he died there in or after 1131). His *Rawḍ al-jinān wa-rawḥ al-janān fi tafsīr al-Qur'ān* [The Garden of Meadows and Repose of the Heart in Interpreting the Qur'an] appears to be the first such commentary in Persian. The author does not restrict himself to Shi'ite authorities, but also quotes al-Tabari, at length, and others. On theological issues, al-Rāzī well represents the Shi'ite dialectical theology of his day, which agreed with the Mu'tazilites on the justice and unity of God (*al-ʿadl wa 'l-tawḥīd*). But on more controversial issues, such as those concerned with defining the faith, intercession, and of course the imamate, he expresses the Shi'ite viewpoint.

THE MU'TAZILITES

*Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Balkhī al-Ka'bi*

This Hanafite jurist and Mu'tazilite theologian (d. 931)<sup>36</sup> served in his youth as secretary to the Zaydite ruler of Tabaristan, Muhammad b. Zayd al-Dā'i, and was later appointed vizier to the governor of Khurasan. Al-Ka'bi was one of the outstanding representatives of Mu'tazilite thought in Khurasan and became no less famous in Baghdad from the time when he studied in the capital under the Mu'tazilite master al-Khayyāt (d. c. 913) and the grammarian al-Mubarrad (d. 898). His major work was a 12-volume commentary on the Qur'an which

35. Massé, 1930, pp. 243–9; Monnot, 1995, p. 315, no. 13.

36. Ibn al-Nadīm, 1970, Vol. 1, p. 304; *EIr*, 'Abu 'l-Qāsem al-Ka'bi' (J. Van Ess); Van Ess, 1991–7, TG IV, p. 1068 (index).

has not survived except for quotations found in later works, notably the *Haqā'iq al-ta'wīl fī mutashābih al-tanzīl* [The Realities of Interpretation Concerning the Ambiguous Passages of Revelation] by al-Sharīf al-Rādī, the *Amālī* [Dictations] by al-Sharīf al-Murtadā and the Qur'anic commentary by al-Hākīm al-Jushamī; also, at least three citations occur in the commentary of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.

#### Abū Zayd Ahmad b. Sahl al-Balkhī

This scholar (d. 934)<sup>37</sup> was an Imami Shi'ite in his youth, and then spent many years in Iraq where he studied philosophy and the exact sciences (the so-called 'foreign sciences', that is, those of Greek origin). Those of his works dealing with the religious sciences, such as his commentary entitled *Nazm al-Qur'an* [The Fine Ordering of the Qur'an], were well received in orthodox circles. This work is lost, but passages are found quoted in later sources. Al-Balkhī also composed a book on rare words in the Qur'an (*Gharīb al-Qur'an*).

#### Abū Sa'd al-Muhsin b. Muhammad al-Hākīm al-Jushamī (al-Jishumī)

Born in the village of Jusham (or Jishum in Persian pronunciation) in the district of Bayhaq, al-Jushamī died in Mecca – where he was murdered – in 1101. He studied under Mu'tazilite and Zaydite scholars and then taught in Nishapur. Towards the end of his life, al-Jushamī himself professed Zaydite doctrines, and his works came to enjoy a considerable reputation, while he played a major role in transmitting the Mu'tazilite *kalām* (dialectical theology) among the Zaydites. At least two of his works on *kalām* have survived.

His commentary in nine volumes, *al-Tahdhīb fī 'l-tafsīr* [The Fine Trimming in Matters of Exegesis], survives in several manuscripts. One advantage of this commentary, compared with al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf* [The Unveiler], for example, is the solid support it shows for Mu'tazilite doctrine, along with many quotations and whole passages of Mu'tazilite exegesis which would otherwise have disappeared, from writers such as Abū Bakr al-Asamm and Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'i.

#### Al-Zamakhsharī

Jār Allāh Abu 'l-Qāsim Mahmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī was born at Zamakhshar in Khwarazm in 1075. Like other scholars of his day, he travelled for purposes of study, and once in Mecca for the pilgrimage, elected to stay for some time, whence his sobriquet, Jār Allāh (Neighbour of God). After returning home, he died in 1144 at the capital Jurjaniyya (Gurganj). In theology, he professed Mu'tazilite ideas; in law, he observed, in principle, the Hanafite system.

37. Van Ess, 1991–7, *TG* IV, p. 253; Rosenthal, 1989, pp. 287–301.

His commentary, entitled *al-Kashshāf ʿan haqāʾiq al-tanzīl wa-ʿuyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-taʾwīl* [The Unveiler of the Truths of Revelation and of the Essences of Utterances Concerning the Aspects of Exegesis], was finished in 1134 and was long considered ‘a model of Muʿtazilite exegesis of the Qurʾan’. In point of fact, while Muʿtazilite standpoints are certainly to be found therein, many of its theological opinions remain ‘often veiled’.<sup>38</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī brought together the doctrines of the two Muʿtazilite schools still active in his day, that of the Bahshamites, i.e. the disciples of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾi, and that of the followers of Abū Husayn al-Basrī, himself a dissenting disciple of the judge ʿAbd al-Jabbār.<sup>39</sup>

In the history of Muʿtazilism, however, al-Zamakhsharī amounts only to ‘a distant successor, one of almost only marginal importance’.<sup>40</sup> In fact, his reputation for exegesis rests not so much on his Muʿtazilism as on his qualities as a grammarian, philologist and master of rhetoric and literary criticism. While of course fully observing the Muslim position that the text of the Qurʾan might never be imitated (on account of its *ʿijāz*, or ‘miraculous inimitability’), the way in which al-Zamakhsharī threw light on the use of metaphor in the Qurʾan was nevertheless so acute that later commentators, even those most staunchly opposed to the least trace of Muʿtazilism, did not hesitate to draw inspiration from his exegesis – or even to plunder it outright. Ibn Khaldūn was even moved to write that, if Arabic rhetoric was more highly cultivated in the Muslim East, especially by Persians, than in the Muslim West, this was because the *Kashshāf* was far more widely studied there. Al-Zamakhsharī’s commentary was much glossed by later generations.

#### Abū Yūsuf ʿAbd al-Salām b. Muhammad al-Qazwīnī

Probably the most voluminous Qurʾanic commentary ever penned was that by the ‘preternaturally long-lived’ or *muʿammār* (Zaydite) Muʿtazilite scholar, Abū Yūsuf ʿAbd al-Salām b. Muhammad al-Qazwīnī (d. 1095), a disciple of the judge ʿAbd al-Jabbār. The number of volumes (*mujallads*) into which this commentary was divided amounted, we are told, to 300, 600 or even 700 volumes, deposited in the *waqf* (charitable endowment) attached to Abū Hanifa’s tomb at Baghdad. Even if this total must surely be somewhat exaggerated, there is no reason to doubt the testimony of Ibn ʿAqīl, who writes that al-Qazwīnī’s commentary on sura 2:102 (‘They followed what the Satans recited unto them’) took up an entire volume in itself. According to other sources, the first sura was dealt with in seven volumes. All in all, al-Qazwīnī’s was certainly the longest Qurʾanic commentary ever composed.

38. Gimaret, 1994, p. 11.

39. Madelung, 1986, pp. 485–95.

40. Gimaret, 1994, p. 11.

SUNNI EXEGESIS BASED ON *KALĀM*,  
OR DIALECTICAL THEOLOGY

**Abū Mansūr Muhammad b. Mahmūd al-Samarqandī al-Māturīdī**

This theologian, jurist and Hanafite commentator (d. 944) founded a school of *kalām* which came to be recognized as one of the two schools for orthodox Sunni doctrine, along with Ash‘arism. But al-Māturīdī’s doctrine, except for its Murji’ite definition of faith, was, in substance, more rationalistic in its approach, and so closer to Mu‘tazilism, than the doctrine of al-Ash‘arī.

Al-Māturīdī’s commentary, variously entitled *Ta’wīlāt al-Qur’ān* [The Esoteric Exegeses of the Qur’an] and *Kitāb Ta’wīlāt ahl al-sunna* [Book of the Esoteric Exegeses of the People of the *Sunna*],<sup>41</sup> is preserved in numerous manuscripts, of which several have survived complete. So far only his exegeses of the first two suras have appeared in print. The content of the work certainly does go back to al-Māturīdī, although not the exact wording, which seems to stem rather from the notes taken by several of his disciples. The commentary is of major interest not only as representative of Maturidite doctrine in Transoxania but also because it preserves much older exegetic material, including Mu‘tazilite interpretations. It might be added that al-Māturīdī deals with certain subjects in places unusual in Qur’anic commentary. But while his work was glossed, notably in the *Sharh* [Gloss] by ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Samarqandī (d. 1144), it has not, so far as appears, left traces in later Qur’anic exegeses.

**Fakhr al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muhammad al-Rāzī**

Considered in later traditional Muslim perceptions as one of the *mujaddids* (‘renovators’) supposed to be sent by God to the Community of the Faithful at the beginning of each Islamic century, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1148–1209), also known as Ibn al-Khatīb (Son of the Preacher), was born in Rayy, where his father served as preacher (*khatīb*). Fakhr al-Dīn was trained by his own father, who was an Ash‘arite and a disciple at one remove of Abu ‘l-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī. After his father’s death, al-Rāzī moved to Nishapur, to Rayy, and finally to Maragha in Azerbaijan, there to study dialectical theology and philosophy (*al-kalām wa ‘l-hikma*). Hence al-Rāzī’s general training was ensured by highly qualified scholars in dialectical theology, legal methodology, dialectics, disputation and philosophy. He then travelled to Khwarazm, but encountered opposition from the local Mu‘tazilites and also from the Karramites<sup>42</sup> in Transoxania. Finally he settled in Herat, whose ruler, the Ghurid Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muhammad, allowed him to open a school in the city. Although he went on further journeys to such places as Samarkand and northern India, he spent most of the rest of his life in Herat.

41. Götz, 1965, pp. 27–70; Rahman, 1981; Rudolph, 1997a.

42. *EP*, ‘Karrāmiyya’ (C. E. Bosworth).

Al-Rāzī's commentary, variously entitled the *Mafātīh al-ghayb* [Keys to the Unseen] and *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* [The Major Commentary], was a work of his mature years, begun in Khurasan and pursued in various places. According to a number of older sources, he did not himself finish this work. Indeed, a number of clues tend to hint that the exegeses of suras 29–36 are not from his own pen. The commentary enjoys its own niche in the field of Sunni interpretation of the Qur'an.<sup>43</sup> Certainly, all the usual apparatus of Qur'anic commentary is to be found therein: problems of grammar, textual variants, judicial issues, *hadīths* of the Prophet quoted and their successive exegeses – albeit without their *isnāds*, unlike the case with al-Tabarī and other commentators – and finally, references to previous interpreters of the Qur'an including, in this case, the Mu'tazilites.<sup>44</sup> But not only is al-Rāzī's exegesis of the type known as 'one relying upon personal opinion' (*bi 'l-ra'y*), but it is also very much a philosophical commentary, within the guidelines set by *kalām*. Where al-Rāzī considers it appropriate, he holds forth on various issues in the form of scholastic *quaestiones* (Arabic, *mas'ala*, pl. *masā'il*), to which he appends the opinions of different scholars with their lines of argument before concluding with his own. Although al-Rāzī's orientation was deliberately anti-Mu'tazilite, he owed a considerable debt to their exegeses.

#### TWO FURTHER COMMENTATORS

Here we must deal with two commentators who cannot be classified under any of the former headings. The first is al-Shahrastānī, a dialectical theologian whose Ash'arite tendencies have been pointed out, but whose Qur'anic exegesis is now perceived as showing a distinct Isma'ili strain. The second is al-Baydāwī, a dialectical theologian who betrays no such traits in his Qur'anic commentary, to the point of composing a work which became almost a manual for exegesis.

#### Tāj al-Dīn Abu 'l-Fath Muhammad al-Shahrastānī

Al-Shahrastānī came from the small town of Shahrīstan in what is now Turkmenistan, studying there and at Nishapur, where most of his teachers were former disciples of al-Juwaynī. He not only wrote the *Kitāb al-Milal wa 'l-nihal* [Book of Creeds and Sects], but also composed a commentary entitled *Mafātīh al-asrār wa masābīh al-abrār* [Keys to the Mysteries and Beacons for the Pious].<sup>45</sup> This last survives only in a single manuscript copied from the author's own original and includes a preface, an introduction in 12 chapters and a

43. Arnaldez, 1960, pp. 307–23.

44. Jomier, 1982, pp. 145–72.

45. Monnot, 1984, pp. 305–15; 1985, pp. 293–302; 1986, pp. 347–50; 1987, pp. 253–7; 1988, pp. 237–43; 1989, pp. 249–54.

commentary bearing on the first and second suras of the Qur'an. The original work itself was begun in 1143 and finished two years later. It is not known if the author went any farther than the first two suras, although it is likely that he did so.

There has been considerable debate concerning al-Shahrastāni's own doctrinal orientation. Was he a Sunni,<sup>46</sup> and still more, an Ash'arite one? A follower of the philosophers? Or a Shi'ite, perhaps even an Isma'ili?<sup>47</sup> Study of his commentary discloses that five or six passages therein are specifically Isma'ili.<sup>48</sup> Thus he addresses the second 'mystery' of Qur'an 2:1 (i.e. the meaning of the three enigmatic letters *alif, lām, mīm*), where he is concerned to equate these with the three principles of creation, sc., intellect, soul and matter; with the three spiritual beings, al-Jadd, al-Fat'h and al-Khayāl; and with the three archangels, Gabriel, Michael and the Seraph. Other Isma'ili traits may be seen in al-Shahrastāni's references to the opposing pair of the 'accomplished' and the 'so far unaccomplished' (*al-mafrūgh wa 'l-musta'naf*); his clearly and repeatedly enunciated distinction between the *wasī* (designated successor) who is heir to the Prophet, and the imam who comes after the *wasī*, and so on.<sup>49</sup>

Would it not be possible, then, to formulate a working hypothesis regarding the doctrine which evolved with al-Shahrastāni? He wrote his *Kitāb al-Milal* in 1127. He began his commentary 17 years later. He tells us that his knowledge of the Qur'an was merely literal at first, and that only when he came to Nishapur did the exegesis by his master Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Ansāri unfold its meaning to his burgeoning intelligence. His statement can be understood from three perspectives: that of *kalām*; that of a mystical orientation; and both of those at the same time, since this particular master was at once a dialectical theologian and a mystic.

Al-Shahrastāni did not, of course, derive his tendency to interpret the Qur'an according to Isma'ili thinking from this same master. More probably, al-Shahrastāni's guidance in these matters stemmed from another person whom he does not explicitly name but alludes to obliquely as his guide to this most subtle mystery (*ilā hādihā 'l-sirr al-latīf*). One cannot, therefore, rule out the possibility that al-Shahrastāni's initiation into Isma'ili gnosis occurred after he wrote his *Kitāb al-Milal*, which would explain the discrepancies we find regarding his doctrinal stand. Nevertheless, one should not reduce al-Shahrastāni's commentary to a question of Isma'ili metaphysics alone, for his exegesis belongs fully to the tradition of the great classical commentaries, in the light of the keen interest shown by the author both in linguistic issues and in exoteric exegesis (*tafsīr*). Al-Shahrastāni always takes pains first to present

46. Al-Shahrastani, 1986, pp. 52–63.

47. Madelung, 1976, pp. 250–9.

48. Monnot, 1987, pp. 255–3; 1988, pp. 238–40; 1989, pp. 249–53.

49. Monnot, 1989, pp. 252–3; 1995, pp. 291–5.

an exoteric interpretation, referring to the leading authorities in the field, before proceeding, if need be, to the *asrār* (secrets; sing. *sirr*) of the matter, that is, to an 'esoteric' exegesis (*ta'wīl*).

### Nāsir al-Dīn Abū Sa'īd 'Abd Allāh al-Baydāwī

This Shafi'ite jurist was born into a family of jurists and became judge for the province of Fars. Under the Mongol Il Khan Arghūn (1284–91), al-Baydāwī resumed his judgeship in his native town of Bayda, to the north of Shiraz. Several sources maintain that al-Baydāwī was granted this post as a reward for his commentary on the Qur'an, but this is somewhat difficult to believe, given that Arghūn was a Buddhist, indifferent to Islam and with little reason to show enthusiasm for this kind of literature. In later life, al-Baydāwī settled in Tabriz, and there he died.

Although al-Baydāwī wrote works on *kalām*, his great exegetic work was the *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl* [The Lights of Revelation and the Mysteries of Interpretation]. This was not only a rather short work, very different in its approach from the method followed by such dialectical theologians as al-Māturīdī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, but it also became one of the single most popular commentaries on the Qur'an in all Islam. As such, it has been the subject of many glosses, and with that of al-Khatīb al-Kāzarūnī, al-Baydāwī's work now forms part of the curriculum of the university of al-Azhar in Cairo.

Al-Baydāwī's commentary depends a great deal upon al-Zamakhsharī's, which is why it is often regarded as a mere abridgement of the *Kashshāf*. But al-Baydāwī actually draws upon a great many other sources, which he unfortunately fails to mention either in his introduction or in the text proper. He touches upon all the usual fields of Qur'anic interpretation. Whereas he deals more than al-Zamakhsharī does with variant readings and issues of grammar, he avoids, of course, repeating al-Zamakhsharī's theological views in so far as possible.<sup>50</sup> Some of these views of al-Zamakhsharī still lurk in al-Baydāwī's text, however, probably because al-Baydāwī himself remained unaware of their full implication. This is the reason why, over two centuries later, al-Dāwūdī wrote an addendum to his master al-Suyūṭī's gloss on al-Baydāwī's commentary, detecting those Mu'talizite ideas to be found in the text which al-Suyūṭī himself had overlooked.

### MYSTICAL EXEGESIS: THE COMMENTARY BY AL-SULAMĪ

No basic work exists on the history of mystical exegesis in Islam in general,<sup>51</sup> still less one which might concern the region under consideration here.

50. Nöldeke, 1919, pp. 176–7.

51. See nevertheless, Goldziher, 1920, pp. 180–262.

Consequently we must restrict ourselves to presenting the mystical exegesis of al-Sulamī alone.

Abū ʿAbd al-Rahmān Muhammad al-Sulamī came from a family of Arab origin settled in Nishapur. His education was seen to by his maternal grandfather, who had come into contact with the great Sufi master, Junayd, the outstanding mystical figure in the Baghdad of his day. His grandson himself was initiated into Sufism by the Hanafite judge Abū Sahl Muhammad al-Suʿlūki (d. 980). After long years of travel for study which took him to several cities of Khurasan and Iraq, and then on to Mecca, al-Sulamī returned to Nishapur in about 977.

The full list of al-Sulamī's works includes some 100 titles, of which 30 remain extant in manuscript. Little, however, has been printed besides his *Tabaqāt al-Sūfiyya* [Generations of the Sufis]. Thus only small extracts of his major commentary on the Qur'an, the *Haqā'iq al-tafsīr* [The Spiritual Realities of Exegesis], which exists in two versions, a longer and a shorter, have been published. After finishing this commentary, however, al-Sulamī then appended a separate addendum, entitled *Ziyādāt al-haqā'iq* [Additions to the Spiritual Realities], which has recently been published.<sup>52</sup>

Al-Sulamī was not an original author. He collected the larger part of his materials during the course of his travels, particularly in Merv, Baghdad and Mecca, and this shows most especially in his Qur'anic exegesis. His approach is methodical and rigorous. He bans subjects of an edifying, anecdotal or hagiographic nature. He moreover avoids those issues dealt with in juridical commentary or in exegesis based upon *hadīth*, as well as technical or philological points, that is, those materials pertaining to 'exoteric learning'. The only kind of interpretation he addresses is that which he considers the matter for a mystical exegesis of the Qur'an, according to the principle stated in his introduction: 'Understanding the Book of God according to the Language of the People of the Truth'.<sup>53</sup> Such an esoteric approach to interpreting the Qur'an naturally led to disapproval among orthodox divines. Even so, al-Sulamī's commentary remains a valuable document: not only are the Sufis' own understandings of Scripture enshrined therein, but his work also contributed to the establishment of mystical exegesis as an independent branch of Qur'anic hermeneutics. Thus al-Sulamī's exegesis came to represent, for Sufi interpretations of the Qur'an, what the commentary of al-Tabarī had been to traditional exegesis.<sup>54</sup>

It goes without saying that many further mystical commentaries were then composed in the region (and this down to a very late period), such as the *Bahr al-durar* [The Ocean of Pearls] by Muʿin al-Miskin (d. 1501 or 1502).

52. Böwering, 1995, pp. 35–56.

53. Böwering, 1991, p. 50.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

Part Three

THEOLOGY

(C. Gilliot)

## The beginnings of theology in the region

The beginnings of theology in the Iranian area – in the widest sense of the term – are difficult to pin down precisely, for several reasons. The written sources are far less numerous than for Syria or Iraq, for example. Also, local non-Muslim influences sometimes considerably retained their grip. Finally, from the very outset of the Islamic period, this area was one of cultural synthesis. So far as the study of *hadīth* is concerned, the great number of Kharijites in the area, coupled with the supremacy of the Hanafites in law and the unsettled conditions along the frontiers, meant that its development was much delayed. However, since the Muslim governors came with troops and officials, the Hanafites in Kufa saw the Iranian region as one where they might prosper, and later on, native-born scholars also took to travelling ‘in search of learning’. We have more information concerning conditions in eastern Iran, because this is where the ‘Abbasid revolution was sparked; hence the interest aroused in the region among the historiographers in Baghdad.

### JAHM B. SAFWĀN

This *qāss* (popular preacher and story-teller) (d. 746) mostly plied his calling in Transoxania. He almost certainly dwelt, and probably first preached, in the main urban centre of northern Bactria, Tirmidh (Termez), which was long a centre of his doctrines.<sup>55</sup> Exactly what the elements of Jahm’s doctrines were is not so easy to determine, but it seems that his conception of God conditioned his representations of faith, of which he had a minimalist concept, which might consist only in acknowledgement by the heart, not in affirmation by the tongue; this may have stemmed from the fact that Transoxania for several centuries remained ‘mission’ territory. For how was it possible to demand a detailed, explicit profession of the faith – be it only the simple *shahāda*, testifying to the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad – from people with whom communication was so difficult and who knew no Arabic?<sup>56</sup> For Jahm, all human existence lay under the sign of election through divine grace, and God alone determined what occurred. Acts might be attributed to men only in a

55. Van Ess, 1991–7, *TG* II, p. 557.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 497.

figurative sense, as we might say that a tree shudders, or the vault of the sky revolves, or the sun sets – but God acts thereby through the tree, through the vault of the sky and through the sun, although he creates in man a force by which an act comes into being. Indeed, in so far as outside the Creator nothing exists but what has been created, then the Qur'an, too, has been created.<sup>57</sup> All the same, we are dealing here not so much with a teaching of predestination as with a sort of universal determinism, if only on account of the fact that, in Jahm's view, God enjoys no previous knowledge; only when something occurs does He know it.

#### MUQĀTIL B. SULAYMĀN

Muqātil has already been considered as a Qur'an commentator (see above, p. 99–101), but he was also, like Jahm, a *qāss* (popular preacher), one living on the fringes of the *dār al-Islām* (Abode of Islam) as a *ghāzī*. However, his theological ideas were on many points diametrically opposed to those of Jahm. Indeed, theological accusations of anthropomorphism came to be levelled against him, although Muqātil's surviving works do not always show why this was the case. A possibility which cannot be ruled out, however, is that transmitters of Muqātil's writings, perhaps even later redactors of his works, suppressed a number of his original formulations which had provoked no undue shock when first uttered in Khurasan but then provoked outrage in Baghdad.

When discussing the Assimilationists (*Mutashabbihā*), al-Ash'ari (d. 935) singles out what he considers to have been a group of Muqātil's followers. A number of their tenets on God are summarized by al-Ash'ari thus: 'God is a body. He has fine flowing hair. In man's image, unto Him are flesh, blood, hair and bone. Unto Him are limbs and organs, such as hands, feet, head, eyes. His is a body that is compact. And despite this, He resembles nothing, nor does aught resemble Him.' Al-Shahrastāni, for his part, shows deference to Muqātil's memory, to the extent of ranking him among the 'Pious Ancients'. However, he discreetly indicates that Muqātil's doctrine concerning the 'form' of God is identical to that professed by a certain so-called Shaytān al-Tāq (The Satan of the Gateway), the sobriquet of one Muhammad b. al-Nu'mān Abū Ja'far al-Ahwal, referred to by the Shi'ites, however, as Mu'min al-Tāq (The True Believer of the Gateway).<sup>58</sup>

So far as the world to come is concerned, in Muqātil's view the joys of paradise for true believers and the punishments of hell for infidels are to last for ever. This is quite the opposite of what Jahm b. Safwān had maintained, probably on account of Jahm's own ontological system. As Jahm saw it, eternity

57. Van Ess, 1991–7, *TG* IV, pp. 627–8.

58. Al-Shahrastani, 1986, p. 540 and no. 206.

meant that nothing could any longer abide besides God.<sup>59</sup> One aspect of Muqātil's thought classes him with the Murji'ites, however: in his system, good works and pious acts are not to be included in what was considered faith.

#### THE KHARIJITES

The Kharijites may have fuelled an opposition movement which was at once political and religious, but as J. Wellhausen pointed out a long time ago,<sup>60</sup> this should not obscure the fact that they also made a considerable contribution to the development of Muslim theology. They forced it to develop both directly and indirectly by spurring thought on such issues as faith, predestination and free will. The Kharijite movement in the region spread essentially outside the main administrative urban centres, in such areas as Sistan and Khurasan; indeed, many of the leaders who gave their names to various Kharijite sub-groups stemmed from precisely these districts, or carried out part of their activities there.

It is not easy precisely to locate and localize these groups, whose followers tended to be referred to as 'folk along the borders' (*as'hāb al-atrāf* or *atrāfiyya*), probably meaning that they dwelt in areas still mainly peopled by 'infidels', that is, those not yet converted to Islam. Their numbers and strength enabled them to hold the 'Abbasid government in check during some three decades around the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries. (For details, see Volume IV, Part One, Chapter 2, pp. 42–4.)

#### THE MU'TAZILITES

The first contacts with the Mu'tazilite movement in some of the areas under consideration go back to the period of Wāsil b. 'Atā' (d. 748–9), who dispatched his missionaries thither. Thus a certain Hafs b. Sālīm was sent to Khurasan, where his base of operations became Termez; here he argued with Jahm b. Safwān.<sup>61</sup> Iran proved particularly receptive to the Mu'tazilite movement, and it was here, with Yemen, that it survived the longest.<sup>62</sup> Geographers and historians describe at length the Mu'tazilite communities of Khuzistan, Fars and Kirman.

The larger part of the Mu'tazilite writings which have been discovered over the last few decades, especially in Yemeni collections, go back to the Qādi 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Asadābādī (d. 1025), who served as chief justice in Rayy, and

59. Van Ess, 1991–7, *TG* II, p. 531.

60. Wellhausen, 1901.

61. Van Ess, 1991–7, *TG* V, p. 152.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

his circle of disciples. Some two-thirds of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theological summa, the *Kitāb al-Mughnī fi abwāb al-tawhīd wa ’l-ʿadl* [Book that is Sufficient for the Tenets Concerning Unity and Justice], have been preserved and published, while his teachings on *kalām* are succinctly presented in two other works. A disciple of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, one Abū Rashīd al-Naysābūrī (d. c. 1068), wrote a presentation of the controversial issues in dispute between the Muʿtazilites in Basra and Baghdad, the *Kitāb al-Masāʾil fi ’l-khilāf bayn al-Basriyyīn wa ’l-Baghdādiyyīn* [Book of Issues in Dispute between the Scholars of Basra and Those of Baghdad].

These works, together with various commentaries on them and on some works now lost, show the extent of literature on *kalām* cultivated by the circle of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s disciples, along with the ramifications which linked such writings to Zaydite thought in the Caspian region of the day; it was these links that helped these works to survive. When, in the course of the twelfth century, Zaydite literature from the Caspian area was introduced among the sister communities of Yemen, such Muʿtazilite writings thereby escaped the decline which then engulfed Muʿtazilite and Zaydite thought in the Caspian area.<sup>63</sup>

Further writings of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s school might be listed, and still others may one day be found and identified. One follower of the school deserves mention because he was important for transmitting Muʿtazilite *kalām* among the Zaydites: Abū Saʿd al-Bayhaqī, also known as al-Hākīm al-Jushamī<sup>64</sup> (d. 1101), who professed Zaydism towards the end of his life (see on him above, p. 110).

The works of the Khwarazmian Rukn al-Dīn Mahmūd al-Malāhimi, also known simply as Ibn al-Malāhimi (d. 1141), allow the reconstruction of part of the teachings of still another of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s disciples, Abu ’l-Husayn al-Basri (d. 1044). A portion has survived of Ibn al-Malāhimi’s very detailed work, the *Kitāb al-Muʿtamad fi usūl al-dīn* [Book to be Relied upon Concerning the Principles of Religion], as well as a shorter but completely preserved work, the *Kitāb al-Fāʾiq fi usūl al-dīn* [Outstanding Book Concerning the Principles of Religion]. Abu ’l-Husayn’s school also found followers among the Zaydites, and further exerted influence upon the Twelver Shiʿites. In the writings of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Abu ’l-Husayn’s followers are presented as one of the two still living schools of Muʿtazilism in al-Rāzī’s day. By this time, however, the Muʿtazilites had already yielded considerable ground to the Sunnis; they lingered on in Khwarazm down to at least the beginning of the fourteenth century, but without apparently producing any further significant works on *kalām*.

Yet in an earlier period there, Muʿtazilite missions had borne considerable fruit under the local ruling dynasty of the Maʾmūnids (995–1017). At the

63. Madelung, 1965, pp. 191 et seq.

64. Ibid., pp. 187–91; Van Ess, 1980, pp. 19–30.

request of a high official of the royal court in Gurganj, ‘Abd al-Jabbār wrote c. 1010 his *Kitāb Fadl al-‘tizāl* [Book on the Excellence of Mu‘tazilism], which remains to this day the best biographical source we have for the history of this school. Among other items of information, we are told that Mu‘tazilism was introduced into Khwarazm and spread there through the philologist, man of letters and physician Abū Mudar Mahmūd al-Dabbī al-Isfahānī (d. 1014 in Merv), although this information should be treated with caution.

Khurasan was also an important region for Mu‘tazilite thought, notably in Nishapur. Abū Zufar Muhammad al-Makki (d. ?) may have been the first Mu‘tazilite scholar to settle in this city.<sup>65</sup> The geographer and traveller al-Maqdisī, who traversed Khurasan and the rest of Iran in 984–5, tells us that there was still a sizeable Mu‘tazilite minority there.<sup>66</sup>

In so far as the spread of Mu‘tazilite thought in Transoxania was concerned, we know of three theologians from this region who moved to Khuzistan in the closing decades of the ninth century to hear the teachings of Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī: Abū Sa‘īd al-Urushānī (‘the man from Urushana’, on the middle Syr Darya), Abu ‘l-Fadl al-Khujandī (‘the man from Khujand’, in Ferghana) and Abu ‘l-Fadl al-Kishshī (‘the man from Kish’, to the south of Samarkand).

## Hanafite tradition before al-Māturidī

### THE BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF HANAFITE THEOLOGY IN THE EIGHTH AND EARLY NINTH CENTURIES<sup>67</sup>

The Murji‘ite school apparently took root swiftly and strongly in eastern Khurasan, in Juzjan, in Tukharistan, in Balkh, in Samarkand and generally throughout Transoxania, on account of what seems to have been the rapid development of Abū Hanifa’s school, to such an extent that scholars in Kufa – probably hostile to Abū Hanifa – nicknamed the whole town of Balkh ‘Murji’abad’ (Murji’ville).<sup>68</sup>

A well-known judge in Balkh was Abū Mutī‘ al-Hakam al-Balkhī (d. 814). From Abū Hanifa, this Abū Mutī‘ transmitted a series of doctrinal pronouncements which were soon grouped together under the title *al-Fiqh al-akbar* [The Greatest Legal System], probably the first text for Murji‘ite guidance to circulate in Balkh. Over the years, this text was reshaped and enlarged several times and is now known by the title *al-Fiqh al-absat* [The Most Extensive Insight],

65. Van Ess, 1991–7, *TG* IV, pp. 251–3; Arazi, 1979, pp. 285–6.

66. Bulliet, 1972, pp. 33–8, 252–3.

67. Rudolph, 1997a, pp. 25–77.

68. Madelung, 1982, p. 36; 1985.

as compiled by one Abu 'l-Hasan 'Ali al-Fārisi (d. 947). It contains the typically Murji'ite tenet regarding the faith, whereby if a man were to convert to Islam in an infidel land, and continue there to profess Islam while remaining without knowledge of either the Qur'an or the required Muslim devotions, then he should still be considered a believer.<sup>69</sup> As it stands now, the text is not written according to any consistent plan and is filled with interpolations and repetitions. The single portion certainly due to Abū Hanifa is only to be found in the beginning, and the various theological tenets borne along within this body of writing pertain, we may be sure, to polemics in Balkh against the followers of Jahm and, on occasion, against Muqātil b. Sulaymān himself. The defining of the human capacity to act (*istitā'a*), as given in this text, seems to have been at first directed against the Qadarites but then to have been modified for use against the Mu'tazilites. On account of these various reshapings, it is rather difficult now to recover the teachings of Ibn Muti' in their original form.

Abū Hanifa's teachings then found their way to Samarkand with Abū Muqātil al-Samarqandī (d. 823).<sup>70</sup> Abū Muqātil himself penned the record of the conversations he allegedly held with Abū Hanifa on the basic doctrines of the Murji'ites in his *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa 'l-muta'allim* [Book of the Learned One and of Him Who Would Acquire Learning]. Abū Muqātil's text expresses the Murji'ite stand on the faith, but also contains traits of ascetic thinking and provides a more popular-oriented version of Murji'ite teachings. Otherwise, Samarkand does not seem to have given birth to any further eminent representatives of Murji'ite thought; instead, the city looked for guidance along these lines towards Balkh.<sup>71</sup>

Murji'ites were also to be found in Herat, but there were far fewer in Bukhara, where a strongly entrenched Sunni traditionalism brought its powerful influence to bear upon Hanafite tenets. Murji'ite thought was well represented in Merv, however, where those judges whose names are known to us are seen to have been Hanafites even well into the twelfth century. Regarding Nishapur, we know little concerning the dominant religious atmosphere before the early tenth century – although here, as often elsewhere, we do know that most of those who followed Murji'ite tenets were also Hanafites. By the early eleventh century, followers of the Shafi'ite rite only prevailed in Nishapur, and here it is clear that a 'Sunni reaction' had paved the way for them.

69. Wensinck, 1932, p. 103.

70. Van Ess, 1991–7, *TG* II, pp. 560–2; Madelung, 1982, pp. 37, 39; Rudolph, 1997a, pp. 45–57.

71. Madelung, 1982, p. 39.

## The state of theology in the ninth century

One gains an impression of relative stagnation in eastern Islamic theology in the course of the ninth century, when the situation in Central Asia is compared with developments in Iraq after the period of the *Mihna* (inquisition) there between 833 and 851. This did not mean that the Hanafites gave way; quite the contrary, since the most important judicial positions in the Central Asian region were bestowed upon them. In the eastern lands in general, Hanafite thought predominated by a wide margin, and its stress lay in concentrating on problems of law. Even so, the paucity of theological texts from this age should induce some caution in our search for the reasons underlying such theological stagnation. One name in theology stands out, however, that of Abū Bakr Muhammad al-Samarqandī (d. 881–2), who wrote a *Radd ‘alā ’l-Karrāmiyya* [Refutation of the Karramites] and delved in dialectical theology, although the only work of his to have survived is one on issues of law.

### THE KARRAMITES AND THE HANAFITE ELEMENTS IN THEIR THEOLOGY

It might appear surprising that we should deal here with a figure like Ibn Karrām, instead of relegating him to the category of founders of ‘sects’, as did the heresiographers. Al-Shahrastānī, however, classifies him, while not sparing censure, of course, among those who professed that God had attributes.<sup>72</sup> But there is more to it than this. As U. Rudolph puts it: ‘On many basic positions, both in law and in theology, [his ideas] were built upon representations earlier developed by Abū Hanīfa and even further pursued by the eastern Hanafites.’<sup>73</sup>

The ascetic Muhammad b. Karrām al-Sijistānī al-Naysābūrī (d. 869)<sup>74</sup> came from Sistan. Those writers on heresy and theology who discuss his teachings mainly level charges against him of anthropomorphism and literalism and accuse him of having disputed God’s wisdom, of having separated the issue of one’s adherence from the heart from one’s formal profession of the faith, and of having forged a large number of *hadīths* in support of his own tenets. In fact, Ibn Karrām seems to have regarded the Mu‘tazilite view of this world as ‘the best of all possible worlds’ (*aslah*) as absurd and ‘that it was just as impossible to know the acts of God as it was to know what were His rational laws’. It follows, then, that while Ibn Karrām seems to have belonged to the Hanafite

72. Al-Shahrastani, 1986, pp. 347–61.

73. Rudolph, 1997a, p. 84.

74. *EP*<sup>2</sup>, ‘Karrāmiyya’ (C. E. Bosworth); Bosworth, 1960, pp. 5–14; Madelung, 1988, pp. 39–53; Van Ess, 1980; 1991–7, *TG* II, pp. 609–10; Rudolph, 1997a, pp. 82–7.

school of law, he differed from it on more than one issue. It appears that his view of the law as something irrational allowed him to carry his thinking one step farther and so to consider as enjoying relative value only, for example, those stipulations which enjoined ritual purity.

The ascetic character of this doctrinal group, sometimes considered 'a Sunni group holding a central position of defence against the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites on the one hand and the *ahl al-hadīth* on the other',<sup>75</sup> along with its missionary claims, helped it spread in the course of the eleventh century throughout the central and eastern Islamic world, and make its presence notably felt in Nishapur. The group's last stronghold lay in the highlands of Ghur, in central Afghanistan. The founders of the various splinter groups into which the Karramite doctrinal trend finally disintegrated were also the last theologians of this particular school. Thus Muhammad b. al-Haysam al-Nābi (or al-Nāwī, d. 1019 in Nishapur), who originally came from the Hari Rud valley, tried to reform the older doctrines of the school on so many important points that some observers wanted to clear him of any suspicion of ever having been a Karramite.

## Theology in the age of al-Māturīdī

At about the time that al-Ash<sup>c</sup>ari (d. 935) was writing his *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* [Discourses of the Muslims], the Hanafite jurist Abū Mutī<sup>c</sup> Mak'hūl al-Nasafi (d. 930) was composing his own *al-Radd 'alā 'l-bid'a* [Refutation of (Blame-worthy) Innovation]; he was ancestor in turn to a line of scholars which finally produced the notable Maturidite theologian Abu 'l-Mu<sup>c</sup>in Maymūn al-Nasafi al-Mak'hūli (d. 1104). Mak'hūl's work offers a valuable source of information for the author's own region, especially as, unlike al-Ash<sup>c</sup>ari, Mak'hūl gives vent to his own opinions regarding the various 'heretical' views he sets forth. Even so, modern scholars have had some difficulty in characterizing Mak'hūl's own theological scale of values. At one stage, his writings were regarded as an expression of classical Hanafite doctrine, but recently he has been perceived as bestowing on his *fiqh* a very distinct Karramite slant.<sup>76</sup> As with the Karramites, Mak'hūl spurns this world and all material possessions, but does not, however, display his Karramite commitments and, indeed, may be at times taking some pains to hide them.

Such caution and restraint as observed in some Karramite circles finally vanish, however, in the *Kitāb al-Sawād al-a<sup>c</sup>zam* [Book of the Vast Majority (of People)], where the theological tenets of the Hanafites in Transoxania in this period are clearly set out. The Samanid ruler Ismā'il b. Ahmad (892–907)

75. *EP*, 'Karrāmiyya' (C. E. Bosworth).

76. Rudolph, 1997a.

ordered a group of scholars versed in Hanafite religious learning to compose this handbook, in the hope of stemming the tide of heresies threatening Transoxania and especially Samarkand. The scholars' choice fell on one Abu 'l-Qāsim Is'hāq al-Samarqandī (d. 953), also called al-Hakīm (The Wise One) because he was a Sufi. The *Kitāb al-Sawād al-ʿazam* is of tremendous importance for our knowledge of theological trends in the Transoxania of this age, for it even helps us to assess developments concerning the author's immediate contemporary, al-Māturidī, although it is not yet clear whether al-Hakīm was a disciple of al-Māturidī, the first 'Maturidite' as it were, or whether his handbook was a mere traditional document on Hanafite doctrine.<sup>77</sup>

Al-Māturidī's teachings in themselves did not represent an absolute break with previous theological trends in Samarkand in particular, or in Transoxania in general, even if he introduced some changes. But the development of his theology went through several stages, in which one should distinguish three categories of representations. In the first category, there are those articles of faith where al-Māturidī, and the author of the handbook, are in agreement with such eastern Hanafites as Abu 'l-Muqātil al-Samarqandī and Abū Mutīʿ al-Balkhī. In the second category, there appear doctrinal elements concerning articles of faith which are common both to al-Māturidī and to the author of the handbook, but which are not to be found in the writings of earlier Hanafites; how such a development occurred we do not know. At best, we might suppose that discussions held by these two men with the Karramites, notably on anthropomorphic conceptions of God, spurred the development of al-Māturidī's and al-Hakīm's own theological ideas. In the third category, finally, we have those theological tenets wherein al-Māturidī and al-Hakīm diverge. Such divergence, then, shows that these two scholars were not linked in a relationship of master to disciple. In this regard, it is al-Hakīm who stands for traditional Hanafite thought while al-Māturidī blazes new trails, seeking further to refine a doctrine.

## Al-Māturidī and Maturidism

### AL-MĀTURIDĪ AND HIS THEOLOGY

We have few biographical data for Samarkand's major theologian, al-Māturidī (d. 944), and from his own hand we possess only two works: his commentary on the Qur'an (see p. 112 above) and his *Kitāb al-Tawhīd* [Book on Unity]. The purpose of this last was to present Islamic theology as an all-embracing construction, one based upon unassailable argumentation. The book is divided

77. Madelung, 1985, p. 30; Rudolph, 1997a, pp. 111–12.

into two parts. The first part, after the author has discussed his own theory of knowledge, deals with God: the Creation, God's Being, Revelation and the Divine Act. The second part deals with man and his acts: human action, sin and faith.

At the outset, it may be noted that al-Māturidī does not develop a systematic conception of being and seems even somewhat uninterested in the finer shades of this particular discipline of thought. Instead, his insistence on the fact that all that exists consists of 'accidents' may well be a reaction against dualist thinkers (notably the Manichaeans), a number of whom were still to be found in Samarkand and who held that the world is constituted of 'bodies'. In contrast to thinkers of other Sunni trends, notably the Ash'arites, al-Māturidī professes the possibility of a rational knowledge of God, and in this regard stands close to the Mu'tazilites. But he argues at all costs against deducing therefrom any analogy of the form of Being whatsoever between the Creator and the Created.

Concerning God's unity, one might say that al-Māturidī, more than other theologians, emphasizes God's name as the One, specifically insisting that God's unity cannot be confused with the numeral *one* of arithmetic; such representations of transcendence, of the incomparable character of the supreme principle, are already to be found in the Neoplatonists. Concerning the doctrine of the divine attributes, Transoxanian Hanafite theologians had argued that God did have attributes, such as His knowledge and His might, but that these were independent entities, not identical with God's existence. These attributes differed from those which went by the same name among human beings but could not be stripped of their meaning through allegorical interpretation; and regardless of whether these attributes pertained to God's entity or to God's acts, they were eternal. Al-Māturidī not only agrees with these three fundamental tenets – which contrast with the tenets defended by Mu'tazilite theology – but also provides bases for them through argument.

While al-Māturidī professes belief in the doctrine of the Beatific Vision (*ru'ya*) of God in the afterlife, he does not consider this identical to a perceptive *idrāk* ('apprehension' or 'grasp') by eyesight, for eyesight consists in 'apprehending the limits of a thing', and this is excluded for God.

A fundamental concept completes al-Māturidī's discourse on theodicy, or the issue of God's justice: it concerns the issue of God's wisdom. For the Mu'tazilites, the justice and wisdom of God constituted norms which might be apprehended through reason. In the Ash'arite view, by contrast, God alone determined what justice and wisdom might be, and such concepts were not at all to be regarded as objective norms, nor indeed might they be apprehended through reason; al-Māturidī agrees here with al-Ash'arī that God acts freely and does so in a supreme measure.

So far as human actions are concerned, or regarding the issue of predestination or free will, the Hanafites had defended the notion that man, when he

acts, at all times enjoys the capacity of acting in one of two opposing directions. Al-Māturidī takes this argument further, by developing the idea of man's *ikhtiyār* (free choice). Al-Māturidī distinguishes two capacities for action in man. The first of these capacities is enjoyed by man as something innate; the second, however, man only secures by means of the act itself, and therein lies his possibility of choice. But thereby, too, man remains dependent upon his Creator.

Regarding faith and sin, al-Māturidī, here again, observes older Hanafite tradition, but bases it upon solid argument. Moreover, he rejects the traditional doctrine upheld by al-Ash'arī according to which faith is uncreated. In al-Māturidī's view, faith in its substance may neither wax nor wane, but consists essentially in the adherence of the heart, as expressed through the verbal profession of the creed. As al-Māturidī further sees it, a believer, even one who has committed a serious sin, remains a believer; he may be punished by God in hell but not eternally, and the Prophet may intercede favourably on his behalf.

Al-Māturidī's thought involves a speculative theology, one allowing us to say that with him, indeed, dialectical theology made its true start in Transoxania.

#### THE FORMATION OF MATURIDITE THEOLOGY

This was the fruit of a long process, which can be summarized in three stages. In the course of the first one, lasting up to the end of the tenth century, nothing of importance occurred. Most of the Hanafites in Transoxania in this period clung to their old-fashioned Hanafite doctrines and paid no attention to what al-Māturidī wrote; this emerges from the fact that one of the dominant figures in the generation which followed al-Māturidī, Abu 'l-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 983), fails to mention the master once in any of his works.

The second stage begins c. 1000. North-eastern Persia now became aware of the existence of Ash'arism, in so far as Nishapur had become one of the main centres for Ash'arite thought by the end of the tenth century, with such illustrious Shafi'ite intellectuals to be found there as Abū Muhammad Ibn Fūrak (d. 1015)<sup>78</sup> and Abū Is'hāq Ibrāhīm al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 1027).<sup>79</sup> Towards the middle of the eleventh century, Abū Bakr Ahmad b. Muhammad Ibn Fūrak (or al-Fūrakī, d. 1085) became the first Ash'arite author to mention Transoxanians, at about the same time that the Transoxanian divine, Abū Shakūr al-Sālīmī, mentioned the Ash'arites. The main issues at stake now revolved around the eternity, or temporal nature, of the divine attributes of God's act, and also and especially on the need to determine whether or not God was creator as of all

78. *EP*<sup>2</sup>, 'Ibn Fūrak' (W. M. Watt); Gimaret, 1985, pp. 185–218.

79. *EP*<sup>2</sup>, 'al-Isfarāyīnī' (W. Madelung).

eternity – a tenet to which the Transoxanians subscribed. None of the disputing parties, however, as yet so much as mentioned al-Māturidi.

Mention of al-Māturidi finally occurs with the third stage, towards the close of the eleventh century, as we learn from the writings of two Hanafite authors of this period, the judge of Samarkand Abu 'l-Yusr al-Bazdawī (d. 1099) and Abu 'l-Mu'īn al-Nasafī (d. 1104). According to the first of these two writers, al-Māturidi had argued against the Mu'tazilites in favour of the eternity of God's attribute of creation, even before al-Ash'ari had taken up the intellectual struggle against them. The second writer has three Ash'arite theologians level attacks against the Transoxanian Hanafites, with one of these divines going so far as to brand what the Transoxanians were saying about the attribute of creation as a heresy which appeared in Transoxania after the Islamic year 400 (A.D. 1009–10).<sup>80</sup>

#### MOVING TOWARDS A MATURIDITE SCHOLASTICISM

As we have seen, detailed presentations of *kalām* only appear in Transoxania after the mid-ninth century. This was when Abū Shakūr al-Sālimī (active in the second half of the ninth century) wrote his detailed account of dogma, the *Kitāb al-Tamhīd fi bayān al-usūl* [Book of Introduction to the Elucidation of the Principles (of Religion)]. For his part, al-Bazdawī composed a treatise on dogma in 96 questions, the *Kitāb Usūl al-dīn* [Book of the Principles of Religion]. In general, however, the *qādī* (judge) more closely adhered to the tenets of the Bukharan divines, who on various points showed differences with al-Māturidi's positions. Abu 'l-Yusr's more famous brother, Abu 'l-Hasan 'Alī al-Bazdawī (d. 1089), was the author of a *Kitāb al-Muyassar fi 'l-kalām* [Elementary Handbook for Dialectical Theology], a manuscript of which still survives.

The true renovator of the Samarkand school, however, was al-Nasafī. In his *Kitāb Tabsirat al-adilla* [Book of Instruction on Cogent Proofs], he deals, precisely, with cogent proofs in connection with *kalām* theology. His *Kitāb al-Tamhīd li-qawā'id al-tawhīd* [Introductory Work for the Rules Concerning Unity]<sup>81</sup> found its commentator, a Hanafite thinker from Turkistan who studied in Bukhara and later taught in Baghdad, Damascus and Aleppo, Husām al-Dīn al-Sighnāqī (d. 1311).

An important role in spreading al-Māturidi's dogmas was played by yet another al-Nasafī, Abū Hafs 'Umar (d. 1142), who stated his beliefs in his *'Aqā'id* [Articles of Belief]. These *'Aqā'id* came to serve as an annotated textbook for scholastic studies and were several times even turned into verse. The best known of their several commentaries is that by Sa'd al-Dīn Mas'ūd al-Taftazānī (i.e. from Taftazan near Nasa in Khurasan, d. 1390), a disciple of

80. Rudolph, 1997a, pp. 356–9; 1997b, pp. 397–402.

81. Gilliot, 1989, no. 47; Rudolph, 1997b, pp. 399–402.

the Ash'arite teacher 'Adud al-Din al-Ījī (see below, p. 131) and his commentary in turn was covered with glosses and still more glosses; it remains in use to this day as a handbook for Maturidite theology.

The philosophical orientation chosen by the 'modern' practitioners of *kalām*, as this came to prevail in Ash'arite theology by the beginning of the twelfth century, had at first no effect on the Maturidite school. It took al-Taftazānī to forge ties between Maturidite theology and philosophy. His familiarity with the doctrines of the philosophers often shows in his commentary on Abū Hafs al-Nasafī's *'Aqā'id*, and another of his works, the *Kitāb al-Maqāsid* [Book of Aims], is entirely concerned with philosophical *kalām*.

Somewhat earlier, 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Ūshī, writing c. 1173, had set an account of dogma to verse, *al-Lāmiyya fi 'l-tawhīd* [Poem Rhyming in the Letter *Lām* Concerning Unity], which again attracted its share of commentaries, including several notably in Persian and Turkish. In the same period, one Nūr al-Dīn Ahmad al-Sābūnī al-Bukhārī (d. 1184) wrote a treatise on *kalām*, while a certain Jalāl al-Dīn 'Umar al-Hanafī, probably to be identified with the Bukharan judge and traditionist 'Umar b. Muhammad al-Ansārī al-'Aqīlī (d. 1200), wrote a *Kitāb al-Hādī fi 'ilm al-kalām* [Guidebook for the Science of Dialectical Theology].

## Ash'arite theology

Given the predominance of Hanafite, and Maturidite-Hanifite, theology in the areas of concern to us here, it will be readily understood why Ash'arite theology should be discussed only afterwards. Moreover, as elsewhere in this section, we will have to probe beyond the limits of Central Asia and touch on Persia generally, and especially on Tabaristan and Khurasan. For in Persia, 'the Ash'arite school moved even farther away from its traditionalist Hanbalite model, to serve the purposes of a theology of mediation'.<sup>82</sup> This is obvious in such a work as the *Kitāb Mushkil al-hadīth wa-bayānīhi* [Book on Difficult Points in *Hadīth* and their Elucidation] by Ibn Fūrak in which he tries to mitigate through interpretation the starker anthropomorphic aspects of *hadīth*, although not going so far in this as the Mu'tazilites had done. Several of his other theological writings have been preserved, but others are lost, including a *Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-Ash'arī wa 'l-Qalānīsī* [Book of the Dispute between al-Ash'arī and al-Qalānīsī], the latter being a little-known theologian of the school of Ibn Kullāb (d. 854), who lived at least a generation before al-Ash'arī.<sup>83</sup>

Mu'tazilite notions left an even stronger stamp on the thought of the

82. Madelung, 1987, p. 331.

83. Gimaret, 1989, pp. 227–62.

Khurasanian al-Isfarāyini. He was one of three contemporary masters of Ashʿarite thought, along with al-Bāqillāni (d. 1013) and Ibn Fūrak. Al-Isfarāyini also taught in Nishapur, but only one or two of his works are extant.<sup>84</sup>

Far more important in the traditions of the Ashʿarite school, however, was al-Isfarāyini's contemporary, the Imām al-Haramayn (Religious Leader of the Two Holy Places), Abu 'l-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī (d. 1085),<sup>85</sup> who was also favoured by the Seljuq vizier Nizām al-Mulk. Al-Juwaynī's bent was mostly conservative, with a proclaimed reliance on al-Bāqillāni. Unfortunately, we have only part of the text of his detailed account of *kalām*, the *Kitāb al-Shāmil* [Book of the All-Encompassing], but several other extant works of his are complete, including the *Kitāb al-Irshād ilā qawāṭif al-adilla fī usūl al-ʿitiqād* [Book of Guidance to the Incisive Proofs Concerning the Principles of Belief]; an *ʿAqīda Nizāmiyya* [Profession of Faith (dedicated to the vizier) Nizām al-Mulk], mainly a statement of belief; a *Kitāb Lumaʿ al-adilla fī qawāʿid ʿaqaʿid ahl al-sunna* [Book of the Flashes of Proof Concerning the Principles of the Doctrines of the People of the Sunna], setting forth his theological system (commentaries on it are extant); a *Kitāb Ghīyāth al-umam fī iltiyāth al-zulam* [Book of Helpful Rain for the Nations in the Confusion of their Darkness], again dedicated to the vizier Nizām al-Mulk,<sup>86</sup> especially concerned with the imamate; and finally, several further short treatises on *kalām*.

Al-Juwaynī's theology both summarizes and surpasses the 'method of the elders' so far as theologians of *kalām* were concerned. The 'method of the moderns' was brought in by al-Juwaynī's still more celebrated disciple, Abū Hāmid Muhammad al-Ghazālī, the Algazel of medieval Western scholars (1058–1111), born in Tus, and who taught both in Baghdad and in Nishapur. Followers of the 'method of the moderns' sought a new relationship with philosophy, especially with the kind of Islamized Aristotelianism elaborated by Ibn Sinā (Avicenna, c. 980–1037) and his school. The exponents of the older type of *kalām* had not shirked debate and confrontation concerning the theological options upheld by the philosophers. But the refutations offered by the scholars of old-fashioned *kalām* had been rather summary, betraying a poor familiarity with the underlying, basic concepts on which the philosophers built. Al-Ghazālī, however, studied Ibn Sinā's philosophy in depth and undertook to refute its heretical tenets on its own ground, in other words from the viewpoint of Islamic orthodoxy. But his own direct contribution to the production of *kalām*, whose value he sometimes assesses very negatively, is only represented by a rather insignificant and dogmatically conservative theological compendium, the *Kitāb al-Iqtisād fī 'l-ʿitiqād* [Measured Book Concerning Belief]; nevertheless, given its systematic resort to syllogism, the work well reflected the new 'method of

84. Van Ess, 1966, pp. 335–6, 497.

85. Nagel, 1988; Gilliot, 1992, pp. 241–60.

86. Nagel, 1988, p. 277.

the moderns'. Its importance lies in al-Ghazālī's recommendation to his disciples that they apply themselves to mastering Aristotelian logic.<sup>87</sup>

As time passed, it quickly became obvious that interest thus aroused in philosophy among students of *kalām* could not stay restricted to logic alone, and other philosophical disciplines increasingly influenced dialectical theology. Soon it became impossible to deal seriously with *kalām* without a thorough grasp of Ibn Sinā's philosophy. In fact, quite a few later theologians of *kalām*, in the wake and in the manner of al-Ghazālī, would in addition to their theological writings compose works pertaining to the field of philosophy alone. Nor was it unheard of for such theologians to reject, when writing theology, tenets which they themselves upheld when writing philosophy.

The link between *kalām* and philosophy is found again in another presentation of Ash'arite theology, the *Kitāb Nihāyat al-aqdām fi 'ilm al-kalām* [Book of the Utmost Steps Concerning the Science of Dialectical Theology] by al-Shahrastāni, in whose Qur'anic commentary, as we have seen (see above, p. 114), there lurked Isma'ili ideas.

The theology of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzi (see above, p. 112–13) was even further steeped in the legacy of philosophy. Without any doubt, al-Rāzi's works exerted the greatest influence on all later Ash'arite *kalām*. His main writings here are his *Kitāb al-Arba'in fi usūl al-dīn* [Book of the Forty Tenets Concerning the Principles of the Faith], a general presentation of dogma; and his *Muhassal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa 'l-muta'akhhirīn min al-'ulamā' wa 'l-hukamā' wa 'l-mutakallimīn* [Gist of the Thoughts of the Ancients and Those of the Latter Day from amongst the Scholars, the Wise Ones and the Dogmatic Theologians], where he sets forth the teachings both of the theologians of *kalām* and of the philosophers.<sup>88</sup> The Shi'ite philosopher Nasīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī (d. 1274) in turn critically glossed this second work of al-Rāzi in his own *Talkhīs al-muhassal* [Epitome of the Gist].

In the Ash'arite school, didactic handbooks were composed for the use of students of divinity, and then further completed with various commentaries and glosses. This type of writing is exemplified by the *Tawālī' al-anwār min matālī' al-anzār* [Rising Lights on the Horizon of Speculation] by al-Baydāwī, whom we have already encountered as a Qur'anic commentator (see above, p. 115). Another handbook which enjoyed even more widespread success was the *Kitāb al-Mawāqif fi 'ilm al-kalām* [Book of Standpoints Concerning Dialectical Theology] by 'Adud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 1355), used to this day as a manual of Ash'arite *kalām* by advanced divinity students, along with comments by al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī and further glosses by the Indian Muslim scholar 'Abd al-Hakīm al-Siyālkūti (d. 1657) and the Ottoman one, Hasan Chelebi al-Fanāri (d. 1481).

87. Ormsby, 1984.

88. For all his works, see Anawati, 1962, pp. 191–234.