Qiṣaṣ Contribution to the Theory of *Ghaybah* in Twelver Shī'ism

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In this paper, I analyze the role of *qiṣaṣ* (narrative stories) materials, which are often incorporated into the Twelver Shī'ite theological discussions, by focusing mainly on the stories of the al-Khiḍr (or al-Khaḍir) legend in the tenth and the eleventh century *ghaybah* discussions. The goal is to demonstrate the essential function that the narrative elements have performed in argumentations of the Twelver Shī'ite theory of Imam.

The importance of *qiṣaṣ* materials in promulgating the doctrine of *Imāmah* in the Twelver Shī'ism tended to be underestimated in the previous studies because of the mythical and legendary representations of *qiṣaṣ* materials.

My analysis makes clear that *qiṣaṣ* materials do not only illustrate events in the sacred history, but also open possibilities for the miraculous affairs to happen in the actual world. In this sense, *qiṣaṣ* materials have been utilized as a useful element for the doctrinal argumentations in the Twelver Shī'ism.

Keywords: stories, al-Khiḍr, occultation, Ibn Bābawayh, longevity

Introduction

In this paper, I analyze how *qiṣaṣ* traditions have been utilized in the promulgation of Twelver Shī'ite doctrine.

The term *qiṣaṣ* (sing. *qiṣṣah*) means narrative stories addressed in the Qur'ān principally. However, it also includes the orated and elaborated tales and legends based on storytelling that flourished in the early Umayyad era (Norris 1983, 247). Their contents vary: archaic traditions spread in the pre-Islamic Arab world, patriarchal stories from Biblical and Jewish sources, and Islamized sayings and maxims of the sages and the ascetics of the day.¹

In spite of a variety of the different sources and origins, Muslim faith has accepted these stories as long as they could support and advocate the Qur'ānic

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message and its worldview. They were accumulated and preserved in the works called *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* (the prophetic stories), and they are acknowledged, even today, as a sourceful repository of the Sacred history and Islamic worldview (Rippin 1993, 252-253).

Unfortunately, there were few who studied and evaluated the role narrative traditions performed in the development of Twelver Shī'ite doctrine.² This is partly because *qiṣaṣ* traditions can be easily considered irrational and esoteric in both context and form of expression, from which neither exact knowledge in terms of Islamic jurisprudence nor irrefutable conclusion in theological argument would be reached directly.³

Another reason for the paucity of study is that the early Shī'ite thinkers with extreme and "heretical" tendencies would cite such stories with intention, which leads many scholars of Shī'ism to associate *qiṣaṣ* materials with the *ghulāt* (extremist Shī'ites) sects and to separate them from the mainstream of Shī'ism.

However, in fact, *qiṣaṣ* materials appeared quite often in theological works and doctrinal discussions of Twelver Shī'a. It is particularly true in their *ghaybah* discussions.

After the eleventh Imam, al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī, died in 260 A.H./874 A.D., apparently leaving no heir, his followers split into more than ten groups with different opinions regarding who should be a candidate for the next Imam (Momen 1985, 59-60). Among them were those who believed the eleventh Imam had a son who was predestined to be and properly appointed as the next Imam. In order to survive the factionalism of the day, they interpreted the situation of this Imam, who neither appeared in public nor became fully recognized by the people of the time, as possessing a special mode of existence that caused him to remain discrete and detached from the rest of the world. His situation was defined as *ghaybah* (occultation).

The concept of *ghaybah* has a history in Shī'ism. It had already been proclaimed by the Kaysānites and the Wāqifites with the idea of the eschatological reappearance of the Imam as the *Mahdī* (the Islamic Messiah) in the future (al-Nawbakhtī 1984, 22-30). Therefore, it was crucial for the proto-Twelvers to reinterpret the notion of *ghaybah* in a more appropriate form for their Imam. In the tenth and the eleventh centuries, many *ghaybah* texts were composed for this purpose.⁴ In such works, we can find that *qiṣaṣ* materials function effectively to elucidate and vindicate the twelfth Imam's *ghaybah*.

To support this idea, this article focuses on al-Khiḍr as a main *qiṣaṣ* element many scholars employed to substantiate their *ghaybah* theory. The next

section deals with the general understandings and ideas of al-Khiḍr found in the Islamic religious context. Then, Section II explains how the narrative traditions were employed in *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-ni'mah* by Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Bābawayh (d. 381/991), which was the earliest extant *ḥadīth* compilation concerning *ghaybah* in the Twelver Shi'ism. In Section III, application of the al-Khiḍr legend in *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-ni'mah* is scrutinized. And then, to highlight the difference between the traditionist and more rational approaches, the cases of al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/1022) and Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifāh al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) are briefly examined in the last two sections.

I. Al-Khiḍr Legends

Al-Khiḍr is a well-known legendary figure who can be found in many types of Islamic literature. Most famous would be the story of his encounter with the Prophet Moses in the Qur'ān 18:65-66. It says:

Then, they [the Prophet Moses and his servant] found one of Our servants upon whom We had bestowed a mercy from Us, and whom We had taught from Our side knowledge. (Bell 1960, 280)

Although there is no precise statement of his name, al-Khiḍr, in the story, the Qur'ān exegetes have usually agreed that the servant of God, who is described here as “the one on whom the God bestowed his Mercy from Himself and had taught knowledge from His own presence,” is al-Khiḍr (Franke 2000, 60).

Another famous story about him is the one related to the spring of life and Dhū al-Qarnayn (this “Holder of the two horns” is believed to represent Alexander the Great). In this story, al-Khiḍr is described as a vanguard of the search troop of Dhū al-Qarnayn, and he was the only person who reached the spring of life and won ageless life through the merit of the water (Franke 2000, 45-52; Wensink 1978, 904). Some versions of this story describe al-Khiḍr as an eternal-wanderer with many similarities to the stories of Elijah.⁵

Further, in Sufi literature, al-Khiḍr is regarded a holder of unique knowledge from the Unseen World. This image raises his status to a living patron saint who can perform miracles and provide some blessings and support for the supplicating believers (Wensink 1978, 905). As a result of these diverse reports, al-Khiḍr has become one of the most popular Islamic hagiographical figures whose stories permeate the Islamic folklore and the popular culture as well.

One of the reasons why such a variety of Islamic literature has referred to

al-Khiḍr is that his status and character have never been fully-fixed or put in definitive terms. Even the Qur'ān has no direct reference to him, whereas other pre-Islamic prophets and legendary figures who play significant roles in the Islamic religious context usually enjoy clear identifications. Al-Khiḍr is unique in the sense that he is free from any specific identification as one actual historical figure in this physical world.⁶ Moreover, he is not confined to a well-integrated character in a story or a legend. This trait of his has enabled many Muslim thinkers to make flexible interpretations of and frequent references to al-Khiḍr in their theological or doctrinal discussions as a means for supporting their views.

Al-Khiḍr traditions started to appear in the Twelver Shī'ite works in the latter half of the tenth century.⁷ They were found not only in the Qur'ān exegeses but also in the *ḥadīth* literatures concerning theological and dogmatic issues. They can be divided into the following three groups according to their contents: stories on his longevity,⁸ stories derived from the aforementioned Qur'ānic verses, and episodes of his encounters with people.

II. Ibn Bābawayh's *Ghaybah* Discussion as a Traditionist

Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-ni'mah is one of the earliest extant works concerning the occultation of the twelfth Imam which was supposedly written after Ibn Bābawayh's visit to Nishapur in 352/963-4 (Akhtar 1988, 47; Sachedina 1978, 112). By this time, the latter half of the tenth century, the occultation of the twelfth Imam had continued for almost a century, which is extraordinarily and supernaturally long and beyond human nature. The prolongation of his concealment severely disturbed the belief in the Imam, while the non-Twelver Shī'ite scholars criticized the theory of *ghaybah* itself (Sachedina 1978, 2-3). How can a human being live such a long period without any communication with his people? No clear answers had been proposed by scholars before Ibn Bābawayh, since, in the earlier period, it was considered fairly possible for the twelfth Imam, who was purported to have hidden himself in 260/874, to return or reappear in the near future. On the contrary, after the so-called Major Occultation in 329/941, justifying such a prolonged concealment of the Imam became a major object of the religious discussions.

As an eminent representative of the traditionist circle of Qumm in the latter half of the tenth century, Ibn Bābawayh took full advantage of the traditions for vindicating the claim on the concealed twelfth Imam. In his *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-ni'mah*, he constantly had recourse to *qiṣaṣ* materials, including al-Khiḍr traditions, which amounted to more than six hundred *ḥadīths*.⁹

First, most of the *qiṣaṣ* materials were used to support his view that *ghaybah* is not peculiar and exclusive to the twelfth Imam. For Ibn Bābawayh, *ghaybah* denotes, in the simplest sense of the word, a state of hiding from the eyesight of the majority without any means of communication. Therefore, it can be bestowed, by the Will of God, upon any religious person, or more precisely, any *Hujjat Allāh* (proof of God) who cannot reveal either himself or his sacred mission publicly (Ibn Bābawayh 1401 A.H., 20-21).

As is well known, in the Twelver Shi'ite theology, an Imam is considered to be a *Hujjat Allāh* who shares common basic *sunnah* (customary procedure) with the prophets, except for the ability to receive divine revelations (Fyzee 1942, 89-92). Based on this tenet, Ibn Bābawayh defined *ghaybah* as a *sunnah* attributed to any *Hujjat Allāh* generally.

In order to support this view, he called attention to the *qiṣaṣ* traditions about the pre-Islamic prophets, starting from Adam up to Jesus as precedents for *ghaybah*. Basically, these archaic stories reported only well-known episodes of the prophets in accordance with the Qur'ān. However, Ibn Bābawayh interpreted them as historical evidence for the *sunnah* of "hiding" or "concealment" that occurred quite often among the pre-Islamic *Hujaj Allāh* (sing. *Hujjat Allāh*).

The story of the Prophet Moses is one of the examples. The famous story of his being born in secrecy and abandoned in the Nile was represented as a story of his concealment from the Israelites and this enemy, the Egyptian Pharaoh.¹⁰ Ibn Bābawayh explained this story by saying that there had been no contact between Moses and his people until he returned to Egypt as a prophet and a liberator. Before that, no one had known of his survival nor had recognized him even though there had existed some expectation and prophecy for the advent of a savior among the Israelites. Ibn Bābawayh called Moses' situation "*ghaybah*" (Ibn Bābawayh 1401 A.H., 145-153).

Another example is the story of the Prophet Joseph. His people, including his father and brothers, had neither recognized him nor heard anything about him until he himself revealed his identity. His life in Egypt far away from his family was also considered, by Ibn Bābawayh, to be "*ghaybah*" (Ibn Bābawayh 1401 A.H., 141-145). In the same manner, Ibn Bābawayh employed large numbers of the *qiṣaṣ* narratives of the prophets. As a result, the semantic range of the word "*ghaybah*" was expanded to the level that reached not only the twelfth Imam but also the patriarchal prophets, which confirmed the consecutive and undeniable occurrence of *ghaybah* in the Sacred history.

The second strategic application of the *qiṣaṣ* narratives in *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-ni'mah* is found in the biographical descriptions of the twelfth

Imam's life that included many details beyond the limit of the above-defined *ghaybah* concept. Such biographical information of the twelfth Imam is based on the supposition that no one can deny any situation of the Imam when there exists authoritative stories which are well-known and fully approved as parts of the Qur'ānic historical vision. These stories, then, would provide precedents for the Imam's similar situations and prove their validity in the light of the Qur'ānic worldview.

The life story of the twelfth Imam in *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-ni'mah* started from the narratives on his mother. She was said to be a slave-girl of Byzantine origin who had a prophetic vision of becoming mother of the *Mahdī*. Her story was fully elaborated with many traditions where Maria and Fatimah, the two blessed motherly ladies in Islam, often took important roles (Ibn Bābawayh 1401 A.H., 417-423). Next was the Imam's hidden birth under the threat of the Abbasid Caliph, which followed the example of Moses who was born secretly under the threat of the Egyptian Pharaoh.¹¹ Then, the occultation of the Imam after his father's death occurred in his boyhood. For this part, Ibn Bābawayh introduced many stories on the prophets' *ghaybah*, which confirmed the meaning of *ghaybah* as hiding of any *Hujjat Allāh*, as mentioned above. After the *ghaybah*, the Imam was told to return as the *Mahdī* in the eschatological future. Again, the Imam's circumstances and conditions were expounded upon in many eschatological traditions that had already permeated Islamic literature (Ibn Bābawayh 1401 A.H., 649-655).

It is obvious that the abundant hagiographical or anecdotal *qiṣaṣ* materials complemented the biographical portrait of the Imam, which had been quite ambiguous before.¹²

III. Al-Khiḍr in Ibn Bābawayh's *Ghaybah* Discussion

In Ibn Bābawayh's *ghaybah* discussion, al-Khiḍr traditions were utilized as a fundamental source of the detailed information of the twelfth Imam's longevity, which was the focal point of dispute of the day. The following quotation is a narrative story on al-Khiḍr and the spring of life cited in *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-ni'mah*.

Al-Khiḍr came across a spring. When he bathed his fish in the water, it became alive and swam in it. Seeing that, al-Khiḍr realized he had reached the water of life. Therefore, he threw his clothes away and jumped into the water. He immersed himself into the water and drank from it. Then, every one of them [men of Dhū al-Qarnayn] returned to

Dhū al-Qarnayn with fish, whereas al-Khiḍr returned without fish. Asked about his story, al-Khiḍr reported what had happened. He [Dhū al-Qarnayn] asked him, "Did you drink from that water?" He answered, "Yes." Dhū al-Qarnayn said, "You are its holder and are created for that pond. Then, rejoice in long stay in this world hiding from the eyes (*fa-ibshir bi-ṭūl al-baqā' fī-hādhih al-dunyā ma'a al-ghaybah 'an-al-abṣār*) until the Horn [of the Last Day] will be blown." (Ibn Bābawayh 1401 A.H., 386)

The story itself is a typical al-Khiḍr tradition on the water of life, which has no direct relation to the occultation of the twelfth Imam. However, the wording of "rejoice in long stay in this world hiding from the eyes until the Horn will be blown," which is found only in the quotation of Ibn Bābawayh, is highly suggestive of the Imam's condition.¹³ Al-Khiḍr's survival, described by the phrase "long stay in this world (*ṭūl al-baqā' fī-hādhih al-dunyā*)" was intentionally connected to *ghaybah* and put into the connotation of it. Although it is unclear whether such minute but well-suited phrasing in the quotation is purely original or not, it is still true that, without this phrase, the longevity and *ghaybah* could not be connected so easily, and, then, the longevity of al-Khiḍr could not be paralleled to the Imam's long absence so naturally.

Moreover, Ibn Bābawayh cited some traditions attributed to the Imams, who explicitly stated al-Khiḍr as a predestined model for the everlasting life of the forthcoming twelfth Imam.

As for the pious servant, I [the sixth Imam] mean al-Khiḍr, God did not extend his age neither because of the prophecy He portioned for him, nor the book He revealed upon him, nor the *Sharī'ah* by which the laws of the previous prophets were abolished. Further, [it was] not because of the *Imāmah* in which his followers must believe and for which the obedience to him is obligatory. However, because God knows, in advance, what He will ordain in *al-Qā'im*'s [the twelfth Imam's] age during his *ghaybah* and His servants' refusal of such a long extent of life, He extended the life of the pious servant [al-Khiḍr] necessarily as evidence of *al-Qā'im*'s age [longevity]. That is to cut the argument of the stubborn so that it will not let a man have an argument against God. (Ibn Bābawayh 1401 A.H., 357)

Ibn Bābawayh did not develop a straightforward discussion for vindicating

the Imam's *ghaybah* situation. Instead, he presented popular legendary stories with the closest attention to the detailed expressions of the text and the resulting impressions on the readers. His arrangement of the traditions stirs up natural feelings among the readers that the long absence of the twelfth Imam has a definitive tie to the scriptural and sacred historical events that they have supported and believed as religious truth.

IV. Al-Khiḍr in the Arguments of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

In contrast to a traditionist Ibn Bābawayh, the two different approaches to the question of the Imam's longevity are to be examined. In this section, the argument of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022) is studied, and that of his disciple, al-Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifāh al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) is considered in the next section. They preferred to employ more rational methods for vindicating the *ghaybah* of the twelfth Imam in the milieu of Baghdad, where the theological debates with other circles, such as the Ash'arites, the Mu'tazilites and the Zaydites, were frequently held (McDermott 1978, 127-131). In order to counter against their opponents, while explaining and presenting a clear concept of *ghaybah* for their followers, the Twelver scholars emphasized the theological validity of their *ghaybah* arguments. As a result, in their *ghaybah* discussions, the theological dialectic took more space than just simple enumerations of the sayings of the Prophet and the Imams. Consequently, *qīṣaṣ* materials, including al-Khiḍr legends, faded behind the background of the arguments. Al-Mufīd's discussion can be a typical case.

In the treatise concerning *ghaybah*,¹⁴ al-Mufīd addressed the issue of human longevity as a theological matter that could be solved on the basis of deductive reasoning rather than as a subject of miraculous nature that only the revelations and traditions could deal with. His main argument is as follows: to accept the principle that God never lets the earth exist without there being an Imam on it, which is perfectly acknowledged in the Twelver theology, then the survival of the twelfth Imam is obvious (al-Mufīd 1951, 368). Based on this theory of the perpetual existence of *Imāmah*, he maintained that there was no inconsistency in the conclusion that the twelfth Imam has a long life.

In his line of argument, it is not surprising that there was no reference to the words of the stories to attest to the existence of the long living. Even brief nomination of the prophets, such as Adam, Noah and Abraham, as examples of longevity, was no more than supplementary.¹⁵ Interestingly, al-Khiḍr, who was the most trusted representative for human longevity in the discussion of Ibn Bābawayh, was omitted from the list of longevity.

Although the reason for his omission needs more investigation, one possibility lies with al-Khiḍr's unsettled position, as he is neither a *Ḥujjat Allāh* nor an ordinary human being. While Ibn Bābawayh made the most of the commonality between the prophets and the Imams under the name of *Ḥujjat Allāh* to extend the application of *ghaybah* to the previous prophets, al-Mufīd was concerned more with the consistency of the principle of *Ḥujjat Allāh*, which is fundamental to the theory of *Imāmah*. Straightforward reference to al-Khiḍr, along with the prophets, as a precedent for longevity would give a wrong impression that al-Mufīd regarded al-Khiḍr also a *Ḥujjat Allāh*.¹⁶

It is also probable that al-Mufīd avoided using al-Khiḍr because al-Khiḍr is not an ordinary human, either. His supernatural trait would be disadvantageous when al-Mufīd tried to vindicate the existence of the hidden Imam on earth by referring to him as an ordinary human.

However, the omission of al-Khiḍr from the discussion of al-Mufīd does not mean that al-Khiḍr legends no longer played an important role in the eleventh century *ghaybah* discussions. Despite the rather indifferent attitudes and more limited position in the discussions, they still held certain important roles, which will be shown in the next section.

V. Al-Khiḍr in the Argument of Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifāh al-Ṭūsī

Al-Khiḍr reappeared in the argument of Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifāh al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), who was a disciple of both Ibn Bābawayh and al-Mufīd. His work on the twelfth Imam's occultation, *Kitāb al-ghaybah*, was written under the direction and the guidance of al-Mufīd, but it followed the methods of both teachers.¹⁷

In his discussion, the question of the prolongation of the twelfth Imam's concealment was addressed as a matter relevant to the notion of miracle (*mu'jizah*) in the "if-and-then" format of theological debate. Al-Khiḍr was referred to as an example of the miracle that occurred in a non-prophetic human being in the following way.

According to him, if opponents raise such a question as:

Despite such a long period since his [the twelfth Imam's] birth up to the day, no one knows the place and abode of the Master of the Age [the twelfth Imam]. No trustworthy man brings information [about the twelfth Imam's whereabouts], which is out of the natural order of things (*khārij 'an-al-'ādah*). That is because any person to whom the hiding from an oppressor would occur for the threat on his life, or some other reasons, would hide himself for a while or twenty years at

the longest. Besides, there always is a man who knows his place during his absence. His associates or neighbors should know his dwelling. Or they should report their meeting with him at least. (al-Ṭūsī 1408 A.H., 76)

To address such a criticism, he claimed that exceeding the natural order of things would happen by the Will of God in a special way. In this regard, al-Ṭūsī quoted al-Khiḍr as an example of this special case as follows:

This is al-Khiḍr, who has existed since the time of Moses up to our time in several communities. According to the biographers, his [al-Khiḍr's] place is unknown, and his company is only Moses according to his story in the Qur'ān. It is also said that he appears suddenly, and the person who meets him thinks him ascetic. Only after going their separate ways, does the name of al-Khiḍr come to his mind, which never occurred to him when he faced him. In spite of this, al-Khiḍr has been thought to be contemporary. (al-Ṭūsī 1408 A.H., 77)

It is obvious that al-Ṭūsī thought of the traditional stories about which Ibn Bābawayh presented detailed information in his *ghaybah* discussion, such as the report on al-Khiḍr's long existence in this world, his appearing in unexpected places, and the disguise in his identity. In contrast to Ibn Bābawayh, al-Ṭūsī did not quote each story, but only mentioned the name of al-Khiḍr to give evidence of God's capability in "exceeding the natural order of things" and to make it the reason for the twelfth Imam's occultation.

The second objection posed in al-Ṭūsī's discussion is more explicitly connected to miracles, as follows:

According to your [the Twelver Shī'ite] claim regarding your Master's [the twelfth Imam's] long life, such a long survival with perfect reason, power and vitality is a kind of breaking of the natural order of things (*amr khāliq li-al-'ādāt*). That is because he is said to be one hundred ninety-one years old now, since his birthday was in 256 [A.H.]. And normally, no human being survives such a long period of time. Therefore, how could the natural order of things be broken in him, while it is possible only through the hand of the prophets? (al-Ṭūsī 1408 A.H., 78-79)

As is obvious from the expression “breaking of the natural order of things (*amr khāliq li-al-‘ādāt*)” in the question, al-Ṭūsī treated the twelfth Imam’s long absence and survival as a relevant issue to the theological concept of “miracle.”¹⁸ He maintained that breaking the natural order of things, that is, miracle was not only a privilege of the prophets. Referring to al-Khiḍr again, al-Ṭūsī concluded that such breaking of the normal procedure of things really happened even to the non-prophets including Imams and any righteous believers, whether it was called “*karāmāt*” in the Mu‘tazilite circle or “*mu‘jizāt*” in his own circle (al-Ṭūsī 1408 A.H., 86-87).

Contrary to al-Mufīd, who probably considered al-Khiḍr ill-fitted or unnecessary in the discussion of longevity for his not being a *Hujjat Allāh*, al-Ṭūsī made the most of his legend and used him to explain the possibility for God to work miracles through the non-prophets.

Conclusion

Since the time when the eleventh Imam, al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī, died in 260/874, many Twelver Shi‘ite scholars continued to settle the questions regarding the following Imam’s *ghaybah*: the very existence of the twelfth Imam, the mode and situation of his occultation, the reasons for its prolongation, his reappearance as the *Mahdī*, and the repudiation of *ghaybahs* claimed for other persons. Their approaches were different, depending on their theological positions or the scholastic situations of the day. The early traditionists in the tenth century, such as Ibn Bābawayh, contributed mainly to creating a concrete illustrative image of the invisible Imam through the available traditional information. For them, more extensive quotation of hagiographical and anecdotal *qiṣaṣ* materials was favorable because the biographical portrait of the twelfth Imam could only be established by the collective information from the *qiṣaṣ* traditions. For example, the story of his mother was closely connected to Maria and Fatimah. His birth was modeled on the story of Moses’ birth. His occultation followed a *sunnah* of the past prophets. His reappearance and his eschatological task were explained by the *Mahdī* and his apocalyptic conquest. And, especially, his longevity and obscurity were shared with al-Khiḍr.

In contrast, the eleventh century theologians gave more articulate theological interpretations of the Imam’s *ghaybah* to settle their theological disputes with other religious groups.

In the discussion of al-Mufīd, who considered the logical consistency of the *Imāmah* theory to be most important, it was highly likely that the ambiguous figure of al-Khiḍr did not serve as a fully dependable solution to the theological

controversy. Al-Mufid made the *ghaybah* discussion totally independent of *qīṣaṣ* elements and tried to demonstrate pure logical argumentation.

On the other hand, al-Ṭūsī considered the traits and characteristics of al-Khiḍr as a basic component of his argument although his approach was primarily the same as that of al-Mufid.

Despite the varying extent of the applications of *qīṣaṣ* elements in discussion, there is no doubt that *qīṣaṣ* materials and elements have a certain validity in the theological discussions of the Twelver Shī'ism. *Qīṣaṣ* materials have been important and indispensable in the sense that they reflect the tolerance of the Muslim faith for the revealed "stories" or legends. The more popular a narrative story is, the less objectionable its content becomes in forming a "fact" of religious history. The Twelver Shī'ite doctrine of *Imāmah*, including the *ghaybah* theory, is typically dependent on and deeply embedded in this religious history.

Notes

- ¹ Kister stated the origin of the stories and tales on the grounds of Nagel (Kister 1988, 82-83).
- ² Kohlberg is the one who mentioned the importance of the Biblical and Jewish stories and traditions in the development of Twelver Shī'ite doctrine (Kohlberg 1976, 526-528).
- ³ On the paucity of study in this field, see Amir-Moezzi 1994, 5-28.
- ⁴ The main extant works on this subject are as follows: al-Kulaynī (d. 329/939), *Uṣūl al-kāfī*; al-Nu'mānī (d. ca. 360/971), *Kitāb al-ghaybah*; Ibn Bābawayh (d. 381/991), *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-ni'mah*; al-Mufid (d. 413/1022), *Uddat al-rasā'il*; al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), *Kitāb al-ghaybah*.
- ⁵ The similarity between al-Khiḍr and the prophet Elijah, or Jeremiyah, as being an eternal wanderer, is often mentioned. On their resemblance, see Friedlaenders 1915, 693-695; Franke 2000, 136-162.
- ⁶ Al-Khiḍr could be a cousin of Dhū al-Qarnayn or a prince of a kingdom (al-Majlisī 1992, 439-441). This version is quoted from *Tafsīr al-Qummī* (a contemporary scholar of the eleventh Imam). See also Ibn Bābawayh 1410 A.H., 391. There also exist some reports that count him among the prophets on account of similarities to Jeremiah or Elijah.
- ⁷ According to Franke, the stories on al-Khiḍr began to appear in the Islamic literature such as *ṭabaqāt*, biographies of saints, and hand writings of Sufis as well as the Twelver Shī'ite works in the same period (Franke 2000, 8-12).
- ⁸ Most of these traditions explain the reasons for his ever-lasting life, typical of which are the above-mentioned legend of water of life and the story of his burying Adam's body (Ibn Bābawayh 1401 A.H., 384-393).
- ⁹ He employed numerous legendary narratives. Together with the stories on al-Khiḍr, stories on Dhū al-Qarnayn and on Bilawhal wa-Yawdāsaf were also quoted (Ibn Bābawayh 1401 A.H., 393-406, 577-638).
- ¹⁰ See the Qur'ān 7:103-160, 18:60-82, 20:9-98, 28:7-43, etc. for the stories on Moses.
- ¹¹ Ibn Bābawayh also cites many reports of eyewitnesses of his birth and reports of those who met the Imam after that (Ibn Bābawayh 1401 A.H., 424-482).
- ¹² The information concerning the twelfth Imam that was claimed, by his close associates, to be a witnessed historical fact is only about his birth, his official appointment as the next Imam, and some letters and papers from him (Ibn Bābawayh 1401 A.H., 424-522).

- ¹³ There is not any version of the water of life story with the same expression as Ibn Bābawayh's. On the variants of this story in the Shī'ite literature, see, for example, al-Majlisī 1992, 116, 127, 443-444.
- ¹⁴ "al-Fuṣūl al-'asharah fi-al-ghaybah" provides explanatory answers to the questions by the theological opponents concerning the concealed Imam (al-Mufīd 1951, 342-402).
- ¹⁵ Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd picked up only those who were recognized or at least recorded in scriptural or historical sources (al-Mufīd 1951, 368).
- ¹⁶ Al-Khiḍr was generally considered no more than a devout servant of God, although there have been many interpretations of him as a prophetic figure.
- ¹⁷ On the characteristics of his *ghaybah* text, see Yoshida 2000.
- ¹⁸ "Breaking the natural order of things" is one of the four conditions of a prophetic miracle (*mu'jizah*) according to Mu'tazilite and Shī'ite theology. See McDermott 1978, 84-85; Gardet 1978, 615.

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