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The Shia Imams and Muslim Unity Part 2

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Abstract

This is the second part to a series of articles that will outline the stance of the Shia Imams with respect to Muslim unity. Part I was published in the previous issue of Al-Taqrib and it defined the meaning of 'Muslim unity' and went on to enumerate the characteristics of such unity, especially as found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It also outlined some practical methods of creating unity and preventing division, by giving examples from the sirah of the Prophet (S). This present part continues by touching on the advent of exaggeration (ghuluw) and the forging, infiltration, and distortion of traditions. The section concludes by referencing the main topic of the series by noting that the Ahl al-Bayt stuck firm to the foundations of seeking unity. The common qualities of these spiritual authorities in their theological, political, legal, and social debates were generosity and knowledge, expressed with utmost empathy and magnanimity, as their goal was always guidance towards the ultimate truth.

Keywords: Qur'an, Sunnah, Shia Imams, Muslim unity, Shia schools of thought, Sunni schools of thought, practice of the Ahl al-Bayt, unity, exaggeration, extremism.

The obstacles and problems that the Imams faced in their lifetime

The Shia Imams faced important obstacles and problems during their lifetimes. They were unable to introduce their religion of unity as they desired. The most important problems that they faced were:

1. Various forms of political pressure

It can be concluded from a general review of the events of the first three centuries of Islam that most of the hostilities and politico-ideological challenges faced by the caliphs and the Ummayad and Abbasid workers were from the followers of 'Ali—the Shia—and the Shia leadership. During the presence of the Imams, the caliphs' most important task was protecting their political strength. By doing so, they were forced to spill the pure blood of the children of the Prophet of Islam. The Divine Sanctuary and the city of the Messenger of Allah were disrespected; the titles 'excessive' (musrif) and 'shedder of blood' (saffah) were attributed to them.[1]

Not only did they continuously harass the followers of 'Ali and the family of the Prophet (S), in order to solidify their power, they also imprisoned them and murdered them. They tried to legitimize their rule—to make their rule permanent and acceptable by the people—by using various methods such as creating sects. The following are some of the methods that the Abbasid and Ummayad caliphs used to consolidate their political power. These methods also caused ideological differences in the Islamic society:

- Destroying and harassing scholars or individuals who opposed them politically or ideologically.

- Propagating various theological opinions, for instance predestination, confronting the Qadriyyah sect, and strengthening the ideology of Murji'ah.

- Stating that competing ideas are tantamount to disbelief or corruption; or completely destroying the competing idea.

- Creating parallel customs (sunnah) and sanctifying the customs (sunnah) of the companions.

- Forging traditions about the merits of the caliphs, strengthening the foundations of the caliphate, and supporting the imitation of the Sunnah.

- Strongly fighting the sect of the Ahl al-Bayt and its followers and creating divisions amongst most of the Shia.

These problems can be considered the most important causes of dispute and division in the Islamic society during those times.

The wars of the Ummayad and Abbasid caliphate against the Shia and the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt are especially prominent. They were very sensitive about the Shia. They considered Shia ideology to be their biggest politico-ideological adversary. Due to this, the mutual confrontations between them and the Shia were very harsh. The divisions of the first Shia into Fatimi and Kisani, then into Zaydi and Ja'fari, or Imami and Isma`ili, and Waqifi, Qa'ti, and other divisions resulted in some Shia being separated from the path of the Twelver Shias and their strong connection to politics is a form of the political rulers

confrontations with Shiaism and the changes of that era.

A summary of the problems that the Ahl al-Bayt faced during that era has been clearly reported from Imam Baqir (‘a) and in a speech by Zayd bin ‘Ali. According to what the Imam said, the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt were under so much pressure in that era that if a person was labeled a heretic or disbeliever it would be easier on him than if he was considered to be a Shia.2

The pressure and limitations set upon the Shia Imams and their followers by the caliphate (especially during the Abbasid reign) forced them to adopt the policy of taqiyah. Ideological and political damage accrued on account of the fact that the Imams did not have the ability to effectively rule over all of the Shia who were spread out in various regions. These tragedies caused many dangerous disputes during the period of the Imams and which have lasted until the contemporary times. For instance:

● Formation of deviant sects amongst the true Shia.

● Formation of two branches of the ‘Alawi Sayyids: Hasani and Hussayni.

● Confusion amongst the companions of the Imams regarding the true characteristics and identity of the Imam.

● Plans of claiming to be the Mahdi and the immortality of the Imams.3

With all of this, the Shia Imams were able to introduce their religion, to the extent that was possible, through wise efforts and through choosing the most suitable methods for political and intellectual confrontation. They were able to cast their competitors and opposition aside. But, it cannot be denied that those historical problems made it difficult for the contemporary era to correctly understand and present their religion.

2. Internal competition and dispute amongst the companions of the Shia

The companions of the Imams, the Shia, and groups attributed to the Shia took part in the heat of the intellectual battles and harsh ideological confrontations that took place between the Islamic sects at large.4 According to the historical research by specialists in Islamic sects, nicknames such as: rejected (rafidhah), mamturah, and donkey (himariyah) were used for Shia sects. The first people to accuse the companions of the Imams of anthropomorphism were Shias. According to the research of Nawbakhti, the most famous researcher of Shia sects, each Shia group, or groups attributed to the Shia, would consider the other Shia sects disbelievers, polytheists, and permissible to kill.5

It is interesting to note that the eighth Imam answered a question by Sulayman bin Ja’far about Hisham ibn Hakam, one of the most famous companions of the Imams. He said: “Allah have mercy upon him. He was a generous person. Some of his companions [other companions of the Imam] were envious of

him and irritated him."[6]

In another case the Imam embraced the supporters of Yunis, who were labeled disbelievers by other companions, and considered them to have been saved.[7] Note that the eighth Imam does not consider Yunis or Hisham's opinions to be contrary to the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt. But, it seems that some of the companions of the infallible Imams treated each other in a different way. There are many similar disputes which can easily be found in the books about the science of the transmitters of traditions and Shia books of traditions.

3. The advent of extremism and exaggeration (ghuluw)

The movement of extremism or exaggeration was one of the most dangerous and most difficult movements that the Shia Imams were faced with. The negativity which stemmed from this group is clearly seen in the confrontation that the Imams had with this ideology. It was extremely harmful because the supporters of this ideology disguised themselves as friends of the Ahl al-Bayt. They spread their ideology, political and intellectual goals, and carelessness by using religious sources as a pretext. They labeled the Imams with illegitimate attributes. They commonly forged traditions about the merits of the Imams. They would also argue against their opponents using some deviant theological opinions.[8]

The actions and words of the exaggerators damaged the image of the Imams and the Shia amongst some people of low capacity. Furthermore, some people refrained from expressing the balanced Shia view while using the excuse that they were preventing misunderstanding. For instance, it has been narrated that when the discussion of Ghadir Khum was brought up in the presence of Abu Hanifah, he said: "I told my companions not relate the events of Ghadir Khum." Haytham bin Habib Sirafi asked him: "Why did you give such an order? Was the tradition of Ghadir Khum not transmitted to you?" He answered: "This tradition was transmitted to me. With me, it is established. But, since a number of people have become exaggerators, I gave the order not relate this tradition."[9]

The harmful effects of this movement are not only relegated to the period of its conception. Rather, the present Shia society is faced with some of the cultural effects and problems that have remained from that time.[10] It seems as if it is impossible to completely solve this problem while differences regarding the principles and limitations of exaggeration exist. In any case, the advent and popularity of this event amongst the companions and those attributed to the Imams; the advent of it in the heart of Shiaism was so much that whenever the term 'exaggerator' was used without any surrounding circumstances the Shia exaggerators unintentionally come to mind.

Traditional and contemporary authors do not find any clearly instances of this term other than in reference to Shia groups.[11] But, none of the Islamic sects have been exempt from cases of exaggeration and certain levels of exaggeration. Some common exaggerative sects have nothing to do with Shiaism or the Shia Imams; their exaggeration is about other people.[12]

This movement cannot be precisely depicted due to differences of opinions amongst Shia scholars regarding the essence and formation of exaggeration and the exaggeration of anti–Shia scholars regarding the number of Shia sects and Shia exaggerators.

Most of the scholars from Qom, for instance Shaykh Saduq, rejected many of the great characteristics and miracles of the Prophet and the Imams. The people who believed in those characteristics and miracles where accused of exaggeration. The belief that the Prophet was never distracted in prayer was considered to be an instance of exaggeration.[13]

Those who held such beliefs were cursed. But, some of the scholars from Baghdad, for instance Shaykh Mufid, believed that it was not possible for the Noble Prophet to be distracted in prayer. He also established some characteristics and merits of the Imams which were rejected in Qom. He accused his opposition, the Qummi scholars, of shortcomings in their understanding of the Prophet and the Imams.[14]

It has been stated that the criterion of Baghdadi scholars about exaggeration is different than the criterion of Qummi scholars. They believe that exaggeration is the negation of the creation of the Imams and the belief that they are divine and immortal.[15] It is interesting that amongst some of the cases and beliefs that were considered a criterion by the Qummi scholars in accusing someone of exaggeration are certain beliefs about the Imams that are presently considered as the necessities of the Shia sect.

Even though the very division of schools into Qummi and Baghdadi and the supporting evidences for such a division can be seriously questioned, there is no doubt about the existence of fundamental differences regarding the limits and confines of exaggeration. For instance, the late Mamaqani answers those who considered Muhammad bin Sanan to be weak in the transmission of traditions because he was accused of exaggeration. He says:

…We have repeatedly stated that one cannot rely on an accusation of exaggeration because the modern beliefs of the Shia regarding the levels and stations of the Imams; the beliefs which are considered necessities of the sect, were considered exaggeration in that era. This reached such a level that people of the stature of Shaykh Saduq considered the belief that the Prophet (S) and the Imams were not distracted in prayer to be exaggeration. This belief amongst the contemporary scholars is considered to be a necessity of the sect.[16]

Some Sunni scholars have also provided another interpretation of the meaning and scope of exaggeration. They hold: “The Shia exaggerators in the past and in the common view of the Shia were people who would say bad things about ‘Uthman, Zubayr, Talhah, Mu’awiyah, and those who fought against ‘Ali (r), but the contemporary view is that exaggerators are those people who label these great individuals as disbelievers and who loath the two Shaykhs.”[17] It is natural that this group considers all of the traditions transmitted against the companions and the first caliphs to be forged by exaggerators.

In any case, even though the exaggerators were never able to hold a clear mandate and to play the role of an independent theological sect, nevertheless their tangible presence in some Shia traditions and

beliefs cannot be overlooked.

Shia Imams were sensitive about the exaggerators. They rejected their ideology and methodology on various levels.[18] According to the traditions which have reached us, those grand individuals negated exaggeration by presenting the correct beliefs of the Ahl al-Bayt sect in opposition to the beliefs of the exaggerators (for instance, they emphasized the servitude to Allah, and they mentioned deviant theological beliefs as well as the plans of the exaggerators). They also presented their hatred of the exaggerators and severely confronted their leaders. It is interesting that some traditions mention the reasons behind the conception of this negative trend.

For instance Imam Sajjad ('a) said: "If a group of our Shia will come to love us so much that they say about us what the Jews said about 'Uzayr and what the Christians said about Jesus, the son of Mary, then they are not from us and we are not from them."[19]

Imam Sadiq ('a) said:

I swear by Allah, we are but the created slaves of Allah that Allah has chosen. We do not have any strength to negate or harm ourselves. If He has been merciful towards us it is through His mercy; if He punishes it is due to our sins. We do not have any authority over Allah. We will die and enter our graves. Then, we will be raised, we will stand and be interrogated.[20]

Likewise, Imam Sadiq ('a) stated while rejecting official exaggerators: "I swear by Allah, nobody except Allah has determined our sustenance; I, myself, needed food for my family—it occupied my mind. When I secured their livelihood I became relaxed." There are many similar traditions against the exaggerators.[21]

In another tradition the Imam told youth to stay away from the exaggerators and their corrupt behavior. They are considered worse than polytheists because of their exaggerations.[22]

The following supplication of Imam Ridha ('a) can be used to depict the ideologies of the exaggerators:

O' God, I seek absolution from Thee in respect of Thy Strength and Power. There is neither strength nor power save in Thee. O' God, I declare myself before Thee as having nothing to do with those who assert in respect of us things which we ourselves do not know. O' God, to Thee belongs creation and Thou possessest the power of command; 'Thee (alone) do we worship and from Thee do we seek help'. O' God, Thou art our Creator, and the Creator of our ancestors, near and remote. O' God, none deserves lordship save Thee; and divinity befits none except to Thee. So do Thou curse the Christians who belittled Thy greatness, and do Thou curse those who declare Thee to resemble Thy Creature. O God, verily we are Thy slaves and the sons of Thy slaves. We have no power over ourselves in respect of profit, loss, death, life or resurrection. O' God, he who asserts that we are lords—we seek absolution from Thee in respect of him. O' God, he who asserts that we have the power of creation and providing—we seek absolution from Thee in respect of him, an absolution similar to that of Jesus, son of

Mary, in respect of the Christians. O' God, we have never called upon them to assert what they do assert; so do not punish us for what they say and forgive us for what they allege. ***'My Lord! leave not one of the disbelievers in the land. If Thou shouldst leave them, they will mislead Thy slaves and will beget none save lewd ingrates'.*** (***71:26-27***) 23

In any case, on one hand these great personalities would emphasize the necessity to hold on to monotheism, the oneness of Allah's essences, attributes, and actions, and on the other, they would affirm their servitude and human characteristics, while going on to label some forms of exaggeration as disbelief. They tried to uncover the harmful effects and evil goals of exaggerators. Furthermore, they would refrain from having relationships with them and considering them in a positive light. Finally, they gave the orders to physically confront them. This can be clearly seen in the lives and speeches of the Imams.24 These grand personalities not only severely rejected the exaggerators' claims and considered their followers to be disbelievers, but they said: "We have no power to attract benefit to or dispel harm from ourselves in opposition to the will of Allah."

4. The forging, infiltration, and distortion of traditions

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The Shia Imams faced difficult conditions during the Ummayad and Abbasid dynasties. Their competition was active and present on the scene (both external and internal) and acted with bigotry and enmity. This caused problems and prevented the progression and propagation of traditions from the Ahl al-Bayt. These problems cannot be amended. Contradictions and ambiguities in traditions, the non-existence of surrounding circumstances mentioned in the traditions, and more importantly, the evilness of forging traditions resulted in confusion amongst some followers about the realities of religious obligations and duties. It is natural that the Imams were not able to be active and free regarding traditions, the explanation of the Qur'an, and the exposition of the religion. This was because of the political and theological environment of taqiyyah that existed at that time. It resulted in traditions not being inherited from them.

This is not the place to discuss traditions being tarnished by contradictory traditions, imprecision and misunderstandings in the transmission and memorization of traditions, and the indistinctness of transmission. But, the most important problem, the forging, infiltration, and distortion of traditions, was confirmed by the Imams. The problems of attributing traditions to the Imams, even in their lifetimes, cannot be disregarded. The following traditions depict this important issue:26

Some Shias asked Yunis bin `Abd al-Rahman: "Why do you place such difficulty on accepting traditions? Why do you reject so many of the traditions of our companions? What assurances do you have in rejecting these traditions?" He said: "Hisham bin Hakam narrated a tradition from Imam Ja'far Sadiq ('a) to me. The Imam said: 'Do not accept a tradition in our name unless it is in congruence with the Qur'an and the Sunnah, or if you find that our previous traditions confirm it. This is because

Mughayrah bin Sa'id—may Allah curse him—placed traditions in the books of my father's companions; traditions which my father never related. Take Allah into consideration; do not tie us to words that are in opposition to the words of Allah, the Most High, or the Sunnah of our Prophet, Muhammad (S). Whenever we want to speak we say: "Allah, the Mighty and Great, said [such and such] or the Messenger of Allah, may the peace of Allah be upon him and his family, said [such and such]."

Yunis said: "I went to Iraq and found a group of companions of Imam Muhammad Baqir ('a). I also found many companions of Imam Ja'far Sadiq ('a). I heard traditions from them and took their books of traditions. Later, I told Imam Ridha. The Imam rejected many traditions from amongst these traditions; he did not accept that they were the words of Imam Ja'far Sadiq ('a). He told me: "Abu al-Khattab lied about Abu 'Abdullah ('a). May Allah curse him as well as the companions of Abu al-Khattab ceaselessly, up until the present age. He intervened in the compilations of traditions of Abu 'Abdullah ('a). Do not accept a tradition in our name that is in opposition to the Qur'an, because whenever we say anything it will be in congruence with the Qur'an and the Sunnah..."[27]

Hisham bin Hakam heard the following from Imam Sadiq ('a):

Mughayrah bin Sa'id intentionally lied about my father. He took his students books' and mixed his students with my father's students. They took control of the offices of my father's students and gave them to Mughayrah. Mughayrah also added matters of disbelief and heresy and attributed them to my father. Then, he would return the books to his students encouraging them to circulate them amongst the Shia. Therefore, the instances of exaggeration that have found their way into the books of my father's students are all forgeries of Mughayrah bin Sa'id.[28]

Likewise, Kashi narrated that Yahya bin 'Abd al-Hamid wrote in a book confirming the imamah of the Commander of the Faithful:

I told Sharik: 'Some people imagined that Ja'far bin Muhammad is weak in the transmission of traditions.' He said: 'Let me narrate an incident to you. Ja'far bin Muhammad was a righteous and pious Muslim. But, an ignorant group of people socialized with him and said: 'Ja'far bin Muhammad narrated for us.' They falsely transmitted traditions from him in which they attributed lies to Ja'far bin Muhammad. They gained their livelihood from the people by narrating these forged traditions; they would receive dirhams and dinars. In this way they narrated every rejected ideology and the laymen who did not research accepted it. [This continued] until some of them died and some others were considered liars. Some of the exaggerators, for instance: Mufadhdhal bin 'Umar, Banan, 'Amr bin al-Nabti, and others attributed these words to the Imam: 'the obligation of prayer and fasting is lifted with the understanding of the Imam.' They said that Ja'far narrated from his fathers that 'Ali ('a) walks on the clouds, flies in the wind, speaks after death: mainly that the God of the heavens and the earth is the Imam. With these words they believed in a partner with Allah. But, by Allah, Ja'far did not say any of these words, but people narrated them from him and weakened him...[29]

Also, according to the narration of one of the researchers of the science of traditions:

The exaggerating transmitters of traditions of the sect would sometimes take a famous principle source or book and add traditions from themselves between the lines. Sometimes, they would distort the wording of the tradition to suit their desires. Then, on the back of the mentioned edition they would state that this edition was read in so and so month to so and so person in the presence of his students. Then, they would distribute the doubted versions between the pages of the book or they would give them to weak or untrustworthy scholars of traditions. In some cases, they would take a notebook filled exclusively with forged and exaggerated traditions and then write on the back of it: "Kitab so and so," or "Asl so and so." Then, they would insert this book or notebook in books or have illiterate children and elderly people sell them in order for it to seem as if these pages were bequeathed to them from great scholars of traditions.30

But, in later periods, through the tireless efforts of the Imams and their companions as well as Shia scholars of traditions and theologians, correct traditions have been distinguished from false traditions. Lately, the false traditions have been erased. But, many top Shia scholars believe that one cannot read Shia books of traditions and commentaries of the Qur'an with a complete peace of mind.

5. The categories of opposition during the lifetimes of the Ahl al-Bayt

The Shia Imams were physically present for more than two centuries. They were faced with various groups who politically or religiously opposed them. Various religious and non-religious sects existed during those years, leading the Imams to respond in different manners according to certain priorities and socio-political consequences. The categories of internal and external opposition to the religion of the Ahl al-Bayt were:

Members of non-Islamic religions and ideologies (including the Jews, Christians, Magians, and atheist groups such as Zanadiqah (secularists) and Dahriyun (materialists): A large portion of the Imams' debates which were reported, were confrontations with the ideologies of these groups. The Shia Imams cooperated with other Islamic groups and even the rulers of the time, in the fight against the proliferation and popularity of such ideologies. But, their confrontation was coupled with benevolence, guidance, and wisdom; it was not violent. This opposition will not be examined in this book because it does not pertain to Islamic unity.

The caliphs and political rulers (including the first three Islamic caliphs, the Umayyad caliphs, the Abbasid caliphs, the Zubayr family, and the governmental workers of their regimes): Each caliph obtained the caliphate through various methods and did not implement the same strategy. They did not have the same governmental goals and did not confront the Ahl al-Bayt and the Shia Imams in the same way. But, all of them were united in politically opposing the Ahl al-Bayt. The Ahl al-Bayt spoke about the

first three caliphs, especially the two Shaykhs, in a way which would strengthen Islamic unity; they were compassionate with the Muslims.

But, their policies of temporal silence, negative opposition, prevention of fruitless military excursions, and sometimes their apparent cooperation with the Ummayad and Abbasid caliphs are considered to have the purpose of protecting their lives, protecting the lives of their companions, allowing the foundations of their religion to survive, and supporting peace in the society. These grand individuals wanted to protect Islam's strength and the progression of the Islamic government, despite the existence of the Ummayad and Abbasid rulers. But, this method strengthened the principle of Islamic government, the Islamic ummah, and the protection of the unity of the Islamic ummah; it did not have the purpose of uniting with the oppressive rulers.

Theological and jurisprudential sects: This category of religious opposition was given more attention by the Ahl al-Bay and caused more problems for unity. The main body of the populace, in contrast to the first two groups, consisted of this category. Differentiating between these ideological groups, especially due to their ideological progressions and internal branches, is not easy. But, in general, they can be divided into three main groups:

A. Followers of the Sunni sect

This group, which was commonly recognized through jurisprudence, was normally led by jurists, and later by some scholars of traditions. They formed two groups under contrasting titles: Ahl al-Hadith and Ahl al-Ray. Some of them, to varying degrees, received support from the Ummayad and Abbasid caliphs as well. These groups have been recognized in traditions and historical terminology under the titles of Ahl al-Hadith, Ashab al-Hadith, Ahl al-Ray, Ahl al-Athar, Nas, Qawm, Jama'at, and 'Ammah. With the passage of time all of them have been given the title Ahl al-Sunnah.[31] This group socially surpassed the Ahl al-Bayt's sect due to their political strength and support, their indifference and even opposition to some important theological discussions, and their consideration of popular discussions and practical teachings. When compared with the Shia and other theological and political sects their numbers were astonishing.

Likewise, they did not have any differences with the Ahl al-Bayt regarding the consideration of the Sunnah and the negation of innovation. But, they presented a unique description of Sunnah. By emphasizing the holiness and authority of the lifestyle (sirah) of the companions, especially the two shaykhs and the ten people promised paradise ('ashrah mubasharah), they disregarded the Ahl al-Bayt sect. Therefore, the opinions of obeying the ruler and strengthening the existing government (instead of justice and seeking the truth) became Islamic principles.

The Imams commanded participation in Friday and congregational prayers and the tolerance of sects. But, they also rejected syllogism, the application of discretion (istihisan), and opinion (from the Sunni sources of derivation), while giving importance to the Sunnah of the Prophet (S) and the Ahl al-Bayt as

a reference point. Some members of this group, especially during the lifetimes of the Ahl al-Bayt, were individuals close to the power of the caliphate. It seems as if the caliphs honored these people. There are some cases where the Ahl al-Bayt spoke harshly about them due to their positions within an oppressive government. In any case, this segment of the religious opposition did not hate the Ahl al-Bayt but at the same time they were not attached to their sect. This might be the reason that we see that the Ahl al-Bayt confronted this group through seeking unity with them.

B. Theological sects

The groups of religious opposition in this category, who sometimes were also present in the previous classifications, held names such as Khawarij, Murji'ah, Jabriyah, Qadariyah, Mutazialite, and Safatiyah. In comparison with the previous groups, these groups did not have a notable position in the general public. The relationships of these sects with the possessors of power are varied. The famous Sunni scholars of traditions and jurisprudents considered themselves to be competitors to these groups.

Some of the ideologies of the political and intellectual groups that are listed above, which normally appeared at the time of political upheavals, were benefited from and misused by the political authorities of the time. For instance, the Ummayad caliphs used the ideologies of predetermination and murji'ah to their benefit. But, generally, with only a few exceptions, they were religious groups holding theological identities (if we accept their independent existence as a sect) and which did not have much political support. The Ahl al-Bayt also confronted these ideologies, especially keeping in mind the clear deviations that some of them had, with open hands.

A large portion of the traditions from the Ahl al-Bayt about theological issues confronted innovations and cleared people of being considered innovators. Also, the importance that they gave to expressing theological issues such as determination, freewill, predetermination, the oneness of Allah, His attributes, the concepts of faith and disbelief, and also the necessity of referring to the Ahl al-Bayt can be seen. But, the existence of a strong motive in forging traditions against some of these sects and their leaders makes one seriously doubt about the authenticity of some of these traditions.

C. Shia sects

The twelve Imams were faced with immense political and intellectual pressures during the caliphate of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties (41-255). These pressures and the suffocating political-social atmosphere made it impossible for them to participate in political uprisings. Furthermore they were even unable to clarify, to the extent necessary, the station, duties, and instances of imamah—even for their closest companions. The problems that can be mentioned, in addition to the minute political and spiritual capacities, as well as the envy and competition of some members of the families of the Ahl al-Bayt, is that sometimes followers of the Imams or the children of the Imams would branch of from the main line of imamah.

Whether it was their desire or not, a new sect would be formed which was based on their particular ideology. The instances of these offshoots were numerous. They were recorded, possibly with exaggeration, by Shia authors who wrote about the various sects, such as Nawbakhti and Ash'ari Qummi. The main sects are: Kisaniyyah, Zaydiyyah, Ghullat, Isma'iliyyah, Waqifiyyah, and some other smaller sects. It is interesting to note that sometimes the problems that the Ahl al-Bayt faced in confronting these groups, especially the Ghullat, were more severe than the problems they faced confronting non-Shia sects. These sects opened doors weakening and defaming the Ahl al-Bayt sect due to their political and intellectual fanaticism. The fact that they sometimes played a role in the imprisonment and murder of the Imams will be overlooked for the time being.

The opportunity to discuss how the Imams confronted each one of these groups does not exist here. It is only natural that they tried to integrate the 'Alawi forces and the Shia. They would confront them mercifully to try and quell their differences. But, the method of confrontation that they implemented in regards to each one of these sects was not the same. It was expected that the way they confronted the deviant people and the exaggerators who struck the Ahl al-Bayt's school of thought with severe blows was very different from the way they confronted the people who were not able to bear the pressures of the Ummayad and Abbasid dynasties; who willingly or unwillingly deviated from the continuity of imamah. Along these lines, the Imams treated the sayyids from Imam Hasan's ('a) progeny and the Zaydis compassionately. The Imams would mention their political mistakes and would even shed tears for them. But, in regards to the deviant exaggerators, they used the harshest terms and sometimes permitted their executions.

It is suitable to remind the reader that through a general examination of the political lives, beliefs, and stances of this opposition group, it can be understood that a large portion of traditions from the Ahl al-Bayt are about the duties, qualities, and stations of imamah and the necessity to refrain from fanatic political movements and uprisings. It seems as if all of the groups that have been mentioned were unanimous in their discredit of and general opposition to the Shia Imams' school of thought. But the characteristics, purposes, and methods of opposition differed. Therefore, considering the length of the period of imamah and the various conditions that the Imams were in, a clear and uniform method of confrontation cannot be described. But, it is concluded from the collection of ethical, social, and theological confrontations of the Ahl al-Bayt against these groups that the purpose was to bid the right and forbid the wrong, employing the policy of attracting and guiding, and being firmly based on the principle of unity. The common practice of these ambassadors of guidance and spiritual healers in their various theological, political, legal, and social confrontations was that they were based on generosity and knowledge—always being in consonance with fair disputation and observing propriety in criticism and aiming only to guide.

1. 'Ali 'Abd al-Razzaq, al-Islam wa usul al-hukam, p.131
2. Ibn Abl al-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, v.11, p.44; Rasul Ja'fariyan, Hayat Fikri Siyasi Imaman Shia, p.312; Tafsir Furat Kufi, p.42; Likewise, refer to: Ahmad Amin, Fajr Islam, pp. 274-275; For further analysis, refer to: Âuha al-Islam, v.3, p.277 and up

3. Detailed description: Khastgah paydayish tashayu' wa firqh-ha shi'i dar 'asr imaman, chapter five
4. For examples, refer to: al-Farq bayn al-furuq, pp. 11,25, and 215; al-Tabsir fi al-din, pp. 25,41, and 111; Shatibi, al-I'tisam, pp. 454 and up.
5. Refer to the translation of Firaq al-Shi'ah, pp. 47,65,85, and 110; for further information about the fighting between the companions of the Imams refer to: Hussayn Mudaras, Muqaddamah bar fiqh shi'ah, pp. 32-34
6. Mamaqani, Tanqih maqal, v.3, p.297
7. Kashi, p.259, number 477; For more examples refer to: Sayyid Ahmad Safa'i, Hisham bin Hakam, pp. 76-79; Kashi, pp. 475-508
8. For instance, the traditions which state that the Imams have complete knowledge of the unseen, that they interfered in creation, claims that the Qur'an was distorted, stating that the present Qur'an is not an authority, fanatically attributing or explaining some verses to be about the Imams or their opposition. It is enough to say of the effect that they had in the field of traditions about the distortion of the Qur'an is that some noteworthy Shia scholars were deceived.
9. Saduq, al-Amali, printed by Jami'ah Mudarasin, pp. 26-27
10. Akdhubah, Tahrif al-quran bayn al-sunnah wa al-shi'ah, p.66
11. For instance: al-Maqalat wa al-firaq, p.66; al-Millal wa al-nahl, p.155; Muqadamah ibn Khaldun, p.832; Sharif Yahya, Mu'jam al-firaq al-islami, discussion of ghulat
12. For instance, refer to the reports of Abu Hatim Razi in al-Zinah, pp. 305-306; Nawbakhti in Firaq al-Shi'ah, pp. 61-62; Ash'ari Qumi in al-Maqalat wa al-firaq, p.69. These sources mention sects such as the Kisani, Ghulat 'Abbasiyah, and Rawandiyah who exaggerated about the children of 'Abbas; the Salmaniyah sect who believed that Salman was either Allah or a prophet, the Hashimiyah sect who exaggerated about Abu Hashim, the Razamiyah sect who believed that God was incarnated in Abu Muslim, and the Abu Muslimiyah sect who exaggerated about Abu Muslim. The claims of these exaggerators and the claims of other exaggerative sects such as the Khurmainah, Muzadakiyah, and the Babakiyah do not have any connection with the Shia Imams and their followers were not Shia. Also, refer to the report by Asfarayni in al-Tabsir fi al-din about sects such as the Halajiyah, Khurmiyah, Ahl al-Tanasukh, Khabitiyah, and Hammariyah (sects of the Mutazailites) and also the Yazidiyah and Maymunah sects (sects of the Khawarij).
13. Man la yahdharah al-faqih, v.1, p.358; for further information refer to Musanafat al-shaykh al-Mufid, v.11, "Risalah fi 'adam al-sahw al-nabi", The Science of Traditions Quarterly, number 2, article: "Ibn Ghadha'iri wa mutahiman bih ghuluw dar kitab al-dhu'afa'" by Ni'mat Allah Safari
14. Mufid, Tashih al-i'tiqad, p.135; also refer to Bihar al-anwar, v.25, pp. 347-351
15. I'tiqadat al-imamiyah, pp. 135-136; Safari Furushi, Ghaluyan, pp. 341-342
16. Tanqih al-maqal, v.1, fayidah 25, p.212
17. Tarikh tashayu' dar Ïran, v.1, p.36 narrated from Dhahabi, Mizan al-i'tidal fi naqd al-rijal, v.3, p.552
18. For detailed information about how the Imams confronted this issue refer to: Bihar al-anwar, v.35, p.361 and up; Sami al-'Azizi, al-Jadhur al-tarikhiyah wa al-nafsiyah lil-ghuluw wa al-ghulah, pp. 269-313; Safari Furushi, Ghaliyan, pp. 151-171
19. Kashi, number 191
20. Ibid., number 403
21. For examples, refer to: Rijal Kashi, traditions regarding Abu al-Khattab and Mughayrah bin Sa'id; Bihar al-anwar, v.25, pp. 261-350
22. Bihar al-anwar, v.25, p.265
23. Saduq, al-I'tiqadat, p.74
24. For information about the Imams severe confrontation with exaggeration and authorization (tafwidh): Bihar al-anwar, v.25, p.350; Óusi, al-Ghaybah, pp. 244-254
25. The importance and relevance of this discussion with the subject of Islamic unity is because, unfortunately, external opposition to Shia thought always use them as documents against the Shia sect and they create misunderstandings amongst some of the Shia who are opposed to the bringing together of the Islamic sects. This is all despite the fact that the foundation of the Ahl al-Bayt sect and Shia thought is nothing other than rational reasoning in theology and action.
26. It would be beneficial to mention that, unfortunately, the Shia scholars have not given this issue what it deserves. There

are not comprehensive or independent works regarding the forging of traditions in Shia books of traditions. Some of the scholars who wrote about this subject put most of their effort into the forged traditions which exist in the Sunni books of traditions. But, there are great scholars of traditions, for instance, 'Allamah Majlisi who wrote an independent chapter in the 25th volume of Bihar al-anwar introducing the exaggerators and their forging of traditions, the famous professor Hasani in his two books al-Muwdhu'at fi al-thar wa al-akhbar and Darasat fi al-hadith wa al-muhaddathin, the late 'Allamah Shushtari in al-Akhbar al-dakhilah, and professor Bahbudi in Ma'rafah al-hadith who wrote about this issue. But, an independent, comprehensive work, which this subject deserves, has not been published.

27. Rijal Kashi, p.224, number 401. There are many such traditions in Rijal Kashi and the 25th volume of Bihar al-anwar, pp. 261-352

28. Ibid., number 402

29. Ibid., p.324, number 588

30. Bahbudi, Ma'rafah al-Hadith, p.42

31. al-Zinah fi al-kalimat al-'arabiyah, third section, p.42; for general information about the concepts, instances, historical development of the term Ahl al-Sunnah refer to the magazine Haft Asiman, number 17, pp. 257-261

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