

## EARLY ATTESTATIONS OF THE TERM ‘ITHNĀ ‘ASHARIYYA’

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Beginning in the period of the Lesser Occultation (260-329/874-941), Imāmī works contain numerous references to the belief in a series of twelve Imams.<sup>1</sup> The centrality of this belief is illustrated by the introduction of the term “Ithnā ‘ashariyya” (Twelvers), which came to be used side by side with the older “Imāmiyya”. In the following lines, an attempt will be made to trace some early attestations of this term.

### I

The terminology used during the Lesser Occultation can best be examined in contemporaneous heresiographical works. These include the earliest extant heresiographies written by Imāmī authors: *Kitāb firaq al-shī‘a* of al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (d. between 300 and 310/912-922) and *Kitāb al-maqālāt wa l-firaq* of Sa‘d b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ash‘arī al-Qummī (d. 299/911-912 or 301/913-914).<sup>2</sup> In both works, various circumlocutions are used to describe the proto-Twelve sects (*firaq*) of the pre-Occultation period: members of these sects are usually identified as the *aṣḥāb* or *shī‘a* of a particular Imam. Only once are they called “al-Shī‘a al-‘alawiyya”.<sup>3</sup> Contemporaries of Mūsā al-Kāẓim who affirmed (*qatā‘ū‘alā*) his death and recognized his son ‘Alī al-Riḍā as the eighth Imam are called “Qat‘iyya”.<sup>4</sup> Both heresiographies end with a description of the Shī‘ī sects which sprang up following the death in 260/874 of the eleventh Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī. Al-Nawbakhtī knows of fourteen such sects;<sup>5</sup> one of them, the twelfth in al-Nawbakhtī’s enumeration, is the Imāmiyya.<sup>6</sup> Al-Nawbakhtī depicts members of this sect as holding that al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī died, leaving behind a son who is the Proof (*ḥujja*). This son is in hiding, and his name must remain a secret. A similar description is given by Sa‘d b. ‘Abd Allāh in his portrayal of the Imāmiyya; here they appear as the first of fifteen sects into which the Shī‘a

split after al-‘Askarī’s death.<sup>7</sup> Neither Sa‘d nor al-Nawbakhtī explicitly states that in Imāmī belief the number of Imams is twelve.

Another author who was active during this period is the Ismā‘īlī *dā‘ī* Abū Hātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/934). In the heresiographical section of his *Kitāb al-zīna* he recognizes three major divisions of the Shī‘a: Kaysāniyya, Rāfiḍa, Zaydiyya.<sup>8</sup> One of the Rāfiḍī sects is the Qaṭ‘iyya. They are described (in an extension of the original meaning of the term) as upholding the imamate not only of ‘Alī al-Riḍā but also of some of al-Riḍā’s descendants.<sup>9</sup> Those among the Qaṭ‘iyya who upheld the imamate of al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī subsequently split into eleven sects, none of which is known by a specific appellation (*wa laysat lahum/lahā alqāb mashhūra*).<sup>10</sup> There is not one sect whose description matches exactly the depictions of the Imāmiyya given by Sa‘d and by al-Nawbakhtī. Al-Rāzī’s sixth sect comes closest: they held that al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī had died leaving behind a two-year old son called Muḥammad, who is in hiding from his enemies. He is al-Imām al-Qā‘im.<sup>11</sup>

Of the heresiographies written by non-Shī‘īs, two in particular deserve mention. The first is the *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn* of the Mu‘tazilī author Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 319/931), which survives only in part.<sup>12</sup> In the excerpt cited in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *Mughnī*,<sup>13</sup> al-Balkhī records some of the main tenets of the Imāmiyya, including the belief that the Prophet specifically designated ‘Alī as his successor and that most of the Companions apostatized. He then identifies the Qaṭ‘iyya of his day as “the leaders of the Imāmiyya and the most numerous among them” (*wujūh al-imāmiyya wa aktharuhum ‘adadan*); they claim that the eleventh Imam is al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī (i.e. al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī). Al-Balkhī adds: “al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī died in our time leaving no offspring behind, so their case became confused to them”.<sup>14</sup> In this excerpt there is no reference to a group upholding the imamate of an offspring of al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī. The second text, also called *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn*, is the famous heresiography of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/935-936). Al-Ash‘arī identifies “al-Imāmiyya” with “al-Rāfiḍa”, regarding them as the second of three factions (*aṣnāf*) which together make up the Shī‘a.<sup>15</sup> The first sect of the Rāfiḍa/Imāmiyya (out of twenty-four) are the Qaṭ‘iyya, who are referred to as “the generality of the Shī‘a” (*jumhūr al-shī‘a*).<sup>16</sup> Al-Ash‘arī provides the names of the twelve Imams in which the Qaṭ‘iyya believe, emphasizing that the last, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, is the awaited Hidden Imam (*al-ghā‘ib al-muntaẓar*).<sup>17</sup>

In sum: these heresiographers, who died between 299/911-912 and 324/935-936, show varying degrees of awareness of Twelver doctrine, but none uses the term “Ithnā‘ashariyya”.

## II

In his *Murūj al-dhahab*, the renowned author Abū l-Ḥasan al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 345/956) on several occasions mentions the Imāmiyya or Ahl al-imāma.<sup>18</sup>

The most explicit reference to Twelver doctrine occurs in the following passage: "In the year 260 [=874] [al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī] died during the caliphate of al-Muʿtamid, aged twenty-nine. He is the father of the awaited Mahdī—that is, of the twelfth Imam—for the Qaṭʿiyya among the Imāmiyya, who are the generality of the Shīʿa" (*wa huwa abū l-mahdī l-muntaẓar wa l-imām al-thānī ʿashar ʿinda al-qaṭʿiyya min al-imāmiyya wa hum jumhūr al-shīʿa*).<sup>19</sup> Al-Masʿūdī adds that after the death of al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī the Qaṭʿiyya split into twenty groups over the issue of the identity of the awaited Mahdī; for details al-Masʿūdī refers his readers to two of his books, the *Sirr al-hayāt* and the *Kitāb al-maqālāt fī uṣūl al-diyānāt*.<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere he describes the Ahl al-imāma as holding that the imamate passed from ʿAlī to various others, eventually reaching the Lord of the Age (*Ṣāhib al-waqt*).<sup>21</sup> He goes on: "In our own time—this being the year 332 [=943-944]—the Ahl al-imāma from among the Shīʿī sects have much to say about the Occultation and about the practice of *taqīyya*".<sup>22</sup>

The term "Ithnā ʿashariyya" only occurs once in al-Masʿūdī's extant writings. It appears in a passage from what is probably his last work, *al-Tanbīh wa l-ishrāf* (written in 344-345/955-956).<sup>23</sup> Here al-Masʿūdī states that in his earlier works (*fīmā salafa min kutubinā*) he mentioned the views of various sects, including the Qaṭʿiyya. He then refers to two groups among the Qaṭʿiyya. The first are the Ithnā ʿashariyya, who believe that "in our time" the awaited Imam is Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī. They base their belief that there are just twelve Imams on a tradition in the book of Sulaym b. Qays, where the Prophet tells ʿAlī: "You and twelve of your descendants are the leaders of the truth" (*anta wa thnā ʿashar min wuldika aʿimmat al-ḥaqq*).<sup>24</sup> The second group are the Aṣḥāb al-nasaq. They maintain that in every generation there is a divinely-appointed Imam, either apparent or concealed, but they adhere neither to a fixed number of Imams nor to a particular time (for the arrival of the Mahdī) (*wa aṣḥāb al-nasaq minhum al-qāʾilūn bi anna llāh ʿazza wa jalla lā yukhlī kull ʿaṣr min imām qāʾim li llāh bi ḥaqq ṣāhir am bāṭin wa lam yaqṭaʿū ʿalā ʿadad maḥṣūr wa lā waqt muʿayyan mafhūm*).<sup>25</sup> The "earlier works" to which al-Masʿūdī refers in this passage have not survived, leaving us in the dark as to which, if any, contains the division of the Qaṭʿiyya into two groups. Nor is it clear how these two relate to the twenty groups of the Qaṭʿiyya mentioned in the *Murūj*.

This passage from the *Tanbīh* is also significant in that it provides a possible clue to al-Masʿūdī's own religious affiliation. There is convincing evidence that al-Masʿūdī was a Shīʿī. Some scholars have gone further and identified him as an Ithnā ʿasharī.<sup>26</sup> This, however, does not easily tally with al-Masʿūdī's statement that the tradition about the twelve Imams is cited only by Sulaym (*wa lam yarwi hādihā l-khabar ghayr Sulaym b. Qays*).<sup>27</sup> The tradition in question is thus a *khabar al-wāḥid* (an "isolated tradition"), since it was transmitted by a single authority. Now for al-Masʿūdī, the trustworthiness of a *khabar al-wāḥid* depends on a number of factors,

including the reliability of the source in which it is cited.<sup>28</sup> As there are no pronouncements on Sulaym's book in either the *Murūj* or the *Tanbīh*, it is impossible to tell how al-Mas'ūdī regarded an isolated tradition which appears there.<sup>29</sup> It is unlikely, at any rate, that someone emphasizing that the tradition about the twelve Imams appears only in a single source would be a Twelver Shī'ī. If al-Mas'ūdī did not consider himself an Ithnā 'asharī, then it might tentatively be suggested that he belonged to the Ashāb al-nasaq, who differed from the Twelvers precisely on the question of the number of Imams. This group appears to have vanished (possibly merging with the Twelvers) not long after al-Mas'ūdī's death.

### III

Two early Isma'īlī texts have recently been published by Madelung and Walker. The first is the "Chapter on Satan" (*Bāb al-shayṭān*) from the *Kitāb al-shajara* by the Khurāsānī *dā'ī* Abū Tammām, who flourished in the first half of the 4th/10th century.<sup>30</sup> The *Bāb al-shayṭān* is a description of the seventy-two heretical sects of Islam, divided into three groups of twenty-four sects each. The third group consists of those who maintain that the first Imam after the Prophet was 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Here five divisions are distinguished: Zaydiyya, Kaysāniyya, 'Abbāsiyya, Ghāliya and Imāmiyya (*madhhab al-imāmiyya wa hum al-rāfiḍa*).<sup>31</sup> The term "Ithnā 'ashariyya" occurs a number of times:

(a) In describing the Ḥarbiyya (a sect of the Kaysāniyya), Abū Tammām states that after the death of Abū Hāshim they recognized 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr b. Ḥarb and, after his death, 'Abd Allāh b. Mu'āwiya (a great-grandson of 'Alī's brother Ja'far). After the death of 'Abd Allāh b. Mu'āwiya (in 129/746-747), they split up into three factions (*aṣnāf*). The third faction held that 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr and 'Abd Allāh b. Mu'āwiya had never been legitimate Imams, and that the Imam after Abū Hāshim was 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (i.e. 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn), who was followed by Muḥammad al-Bāqir. Abū Tammām adds: "This faction concurred with the Twelver Imāmiyya; the two are in complete agreement" (*wa jtama'a hādihā l-ṣinf ma'a l-imāmiyya l-ithnay 'ashariyya wa ttafaqū 'alā kalima wāhida*).<sup>32</sup>

(b) One of the sects of the Ghāliya mentioned by Abū Tammām is the Mansūriyya. Abū Tammām says that after the execution of the sect's founder Abū Mansūr al-'Ijlī, his followers split into two factions. The second faction claimed that the Imam after Abū Mansūr was Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (known as al-Nafs al-Zakiyya), and that he was followed by his brother Ibrāhīm. The Imam after Ibrāhīm was Mūsā b. Ja'far (i.e. Mūsā al-Kāzim). Abū Tammām observes: "Thus they ultimately became a part of the Twelver Qaṭ'iyya" (*wa ṣārū fī jumlat al-qaṭ'iyya al-ithnay 'ashariyya*).<sup>33</sup>

(c) In describing the Mufaddaliyya (who appear as the second sect of the Imāmiyya),<sup>34</sup> Abū Tammām says that they are of four types. The first type is described as follows: “The most numerous of them are the type who maintain that the Imam after the messenger of God, may God bless him and his family, was ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib, then al-Ḥasan, then al-Ḥusayn, then ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, then Muḥammad b. ‘Alī, then Ja‘far b. Muḥammad, then Mūsā b. Ja‘far, then ‘Alī b. Mūsā, then Muḥammad b. ‘Alī, then ‘Alī b. Muḥammad, and then Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan. According to them Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan has not died and will not die until he rises and fills the earth with justice as it is now full of oppression and wrongdoing. These are the Twelver Imāmiyya (*al-imāmiyya al-ithnā ‘ashariyya*)”.<sup>35</sup> The second type of the Mufaddaliyya also adhere to this list of twelve Imams, but claim that Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan will be followed by the Qā‘im “who will rise and fill the earth with justice and take possession of it. He is the awaited Mahdī”. Abū Tammām adds: “Even so they consider themselves among the Twelvers (*wa hum ya‘uddūn anfusahum min al-ithnay ‘ashariyya*), for they claim that the counting of the Imams begins from al-Ḥasan. In their view ‘Alī was not one of the twelve since he was superior to them in that he was both legatee (*waṣī*) and Imam at the same time”.<sup>36</sup> The third type claim that there will be fourteen Imams (the last three being Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, an unnamed Imam, and the awaited Mahdī);<sup>37</sup> “nevertheless”, says Abū Tammām, “this group also consider themselves Twelvers (*wa hā‘ulā‘ ayḍan ya‘uddūn anfusahum min al-ithnay ‘ashariyya*) since they insist that the twelve Imams are all from the lineage of al-Ḥusayn and that ‘Alī and al-Ḥasan are not to be counted among them”.<sup>38</sup>

Abū Tammām, then, knows of a sect called “Ithnā ‘ashariyya” (variants: Imāmiyya Ithnā ‘ashariyya, Qaṭ‘iyya Ithnā ‘ashariyya), but he does not provide them with a separate heading under this name. Walker has pointed to the similarity between Abū Tammām’s text and the sect list in al-Khwārazmī’s *Mafātīḥ al-‘ulūm*, a work written at the Sāmānid court in Khurāsān in about 370/980-981 or slightly earlier.<sup>39</sup> Al-Khwārazmī is much briefer, and has none of Abū Tammām’s references to the Ithnā ‘ashariyya. He does, however, cite the names and honorifics of the Imams “according to the doctrine of the Twelvers” (*alā madhhab al-ithnay ‘ashariyya*).<sup>40</sup>

The second text published by Madelung and Walker is the *Kitāb al-munāzarāt*, a personal memoir by Ibn al-Haytham recording his meetings and conversations with two Ismā‘īlī leaders, Abū ‘Abd Allāh (known as “al-Shī‘ī”) and his brother Abū l-‘Abbās. The first meeting with Abū ‘Abd Allāh took place in the Maghribī city of Raqqāda on 3 Rajab 296/27 March 909.<sup>41</sup> One of the subjects discussed was the disagreements among the Shī‘īs following the death of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq. After describing a number of groups which were formed at that time, Ibn al-Haytham continues: “The generality of the Shī‘a affirmed that the imamate went to Mūsā, then to his son, ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā. It was he whom [the caliph] al-Ma‘mūn killed after first

making him his son-in-law by marrying him to his daughter. Thereafter, the imamate went to his son, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī, then to al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad, then to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, and they are the Continuators (*al-wāṣila*), the Ithnā ‘ashariyya. They claim that the Imams are twelve in number, and that the imamate was transferred solely from father to son and did not revert to a brother because the imamate does not remain among brothers following the case of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn’’.<sup>42</sup> Ibn al-Haytham goes on to quote Abū ‘Abd Allāh’s refutation of Twelver doctrine.<sup>43</sup>

There are two points of interest here. The first is the term ‘‘Wāṣila’’, which does not seem to be otherwise attested. It is employed to refer to those who are otherwise known as ‘‘Qat‘iyya’’. (‘‘Qat‘iyya’’, in turn, is the name by which Ibn al-Haytham refers to the group normally called ‘‘Wāqifa’’, i.e. those who ‘‘stop’’ the imamate with Mūsā al-Kāzim.)<sup>44</sup> The second point concerns the term ‘‘Ithnā ‘ashariyya’’. If Ibn al-Haytham’s is a faithful record of the conversation held in Raqqāda, then it would prove that this term was already in use some thirty-five years after the death of al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī. It must be borne in mind, however, that Ibn al-Haytham wrote his memoirs not earlier than 334/946, when he was about sixty years old.<sup>45</sup> The possibility cannot be ruled out that he ascribed knowledge obtained in the intervening years to the time of his meeting with Abū ‘Abd Allāh.

#### IV

Twelver authors of the Buwayhid period (334–447/945–1055) use various terms in referring to their religion, including ‘‘al-Imāmiyya’’, ‘‘al-Shī‘a’’, ‘‘al-Ṭā‘ifa’’, ‘‘al-Firqa al-muḥiqqa’’ and ‘‘al-Madhhab’’. What of the term ‘‘Ithnā ‘ashariyya’’? An examination of a significant body of Twelver texts of that period has yielded the following results.<sup>46</sup>

There are two references to ‘‘Ithnā ‘ashariyya’’ in *al-Fuṣūl al-mukhtāra* of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044). In this book, al-Murtaḍā records excerpts from a number of works of his teacher al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), especially from al-Mufīd’s *al-Uyūn wa l-maḥāsin*. Both references are found in a lengthy section dealing with the historical divisions within the Shī‘a.<sup>47</sup> At one point al-Mufīd sets out to refute the Kaysānī claim that Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya is the Mahdī. He puts forward a number of arguments in support of the doctrine of ‘‘al-Imāmiyya al-Ithnā ‘ashariyya’’ on the Mahdī, for example that the name and *kunya* of their Mahdī are identical to those of the Prophet.<sup>48</sup> The second reference is found towards the end of this section. Here al-Mufīd cites al-Nawbakhtī’s enumeration of the fourteen sects that arose after the death of al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī, and then declares: ‘‘In our own time—this being the year 373 [=983-984]—none of the sects which we have mentioned exists any longer. The one exception is al-Imāmiyya al-Ithnā ‘ashariyya who believe in the imamate of a son of

al-Ḥasan who bears the name of the Messenger of God ... They are the largest and most knowledgeable Shī'ī sect".<sup>49</sup>

A further reference occurs in a short epistle of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā entitled *al-Ḥāl ba'da imām al-zamān* (or. *ba'da l-ḥujja al-muntaẓar*) *fī l-imāma*<sup>50</sup> In this epistle, al-Murtaḍā and his anonymous interlocutor agree on two points. The first is that as long as mankind is in a state of *taklīf* (i.e. the obligation to carry out the duties imposed by God), there must exist an Imam who looks after the interests of the believers, and to whom obedience is due (*muftaraḍ al-tā'a*). The second point is that the coming of the twelfth Imam does not necessarily coincide with the lifting of *taklīf*; it may well be that mankind will remain in a state of *taklīf* not only during the reign of the twelfth Imam, but also in the period following his death. The interlocutor's point is this: let us assume that the state of *taklīf* will indeed persist beyond the time of the Mahdī. This entails that after the Mahdī there must be an Imam, and if this is so, then the appellation "Twelvers" would no longer apply.<sup>51</sup>

In his reply, al-Murtaḍā states that it is possible that the Mahdī will be followed by a number of Imams who will safeguard the religion and the interests of the believers. This, he maintains, does not contradict Twelver doctrine, since this doctrine is based on the belief in a particular line of twelve Imams. Al-Murtaḍā seems to be distinguishing between two categories of Imams: the original twelve, and those who will follow the Mahdī. In this he echoes earlier traditions which speak of power in the post-Mahdī era devolving on the friends (*awliyā'*) of God, or on men from the House of the Prophet (*rijāl minnā ahl al-bayt*).<sup>52</sup> Al-Murtaḍā goes on: "This belief does not exclude us from being called 'Ithnā 'ashariyya', because in our view this name is given to those who affirm the imamate of twelve Imams. Since we affirm this doctrine and no one else concurs with us, we alone are called by this name, to the exclusion of all others".<sup>53</sup>

Finally, the Twelver genealogist Abū l-Ḥasan Najm al-Dīn 'Alī b. Abī l-Ghanā'im al-'Umarī al-Nassāba (alive in 443/1051–2)<sup>54</sup> refers to the ninth Imam, Abū Ja'far al-Thānī, as *imām al-shī'a al-ithnay 'ashariyya*.<sup>55</sup>

Four attestations are a meagre harvest indeed.<sup>56</sup> Particularly noteworthy is the absence of the term in various passages dealing with the belief in twelve Imams. Ibn Bābawayh (d. 381/991), for example, never uses the term "Ithnā 'ashariyya" in his creed, the *I'tiqādāt al-imāmiyya*.<sup>57</sup> The term is also absent from some major works of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, including the creed known as *Awā'il al-maqālāt*,<sup>58</sup> the *Kitāb al-irshād*, which deals with the biographies of the twelve Imams,<sup>59</sup> and the *Fuṣūl al-'ashara fī l-ghayba* (written in 411/1020–1), which deals with the occultation of the twelfth Imam.<sup>60</sup>

The sparing use of the term "Ithnā 'ashariyya" in Twelver Shī'ī works of the Buwayhid period may indicate that the term had not yet fully established itself. It is also possible that by continuing to use some of the older terms, Twelver Shī'ī authors wished to highlight their claim that they were the only legitimate successors of the original Shī'a.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, the fact that

several Twelver scholars of the time did use the term shows that they found nothing objectionable in it.

In non-Imāmī heresiographical works, the term "Ithnā 'ashariyya" is employed by 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), who takes it as a synonym of "Qaṭ'iyya".<sup>62</sup> So too does Abū l-Muzaffar al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 471/1078–9) in his *al-Tabṣīr fī l-dīn*.<sup>63</sup> Neither uses the term "Ithnā 'ashariyya" as the title of a section. The first to do so is Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) in his *al-Milal wa l-niḥal* (written in 521/1127). For him, "Ithnā 'ashariyya" denotes both the (original) Qaṭ'iyya and its various offshoots.<sup>64</sup>

## V

To conclude: there is no clear-cut evidence that the term "Ithnā 'ashariyya" was already in use during the Lesser Occultation. Ibn al-Haytham's reference to "al-Wāṣila al-Ithnā 'ashariyya" may be an instance of back-projection, and the scant information about Abū Tammām renders it impossible to tell whether his heresiography was written during the Lesser Occultation or at a later time. The earliest firmly datable attestation appears to be the passage in al-Mas'ūdī's *al-Tanbīh wa l-ishrāf*, a work written in 344–345/955–956. During the Buwayhid period, Twelver authors largely ignored this term, preferring to retain older appellations such as "Shī'a" or "Imāmiyya".<sup>65</sup> Beginning with Abū Tammām and 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, non-Imāmī heresiographers speak of "al-Ithnā 'ashariyya"; yet it is only with al-Shahrastānī that it finally comes into its own.

## Acknowledgment

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## Notes

- 1 See the discussion in Kohlberg, "Imāmiyya".
- 2 For the relationship between these two works and the sources on which they draw see Madelung, "Bemerkungen".
- 3 Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, ed. Ritter, p. 47 = ed. Baḥr al-'Ulūm, p. 73; Qummī, *Maqālāt*, p. 70.
- 4 Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, ed. Ritter, p. 67 = ed. Baḥr al-'Ulūm, p. 101; Qummī, *Maqālāt*, p. 89. See already ps.-Nāshī, *Uṣūl*, pp. 47, 48 (Arabic). The form "Qaṭ'iyya" is also attested (e.g. Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, IV, p. 216, §2532, p. 349, §2798). For a discussion of the various meanings of the term "Qaṭ'iyya" see Modarressi, *Crisis*, p. 62, with note 37.
- 5 Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, ed. Ritter, p. 79 = ed. Baḥr al-'Ulūm, p. 119. The original section on the thirteenth sect is missing in both editions; it is, however, cited in a later work (Murtaḍā, *Fuṣūl*, p. 260, lines 17–19, cited in Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XXXVII, p. 22). The sect that appears in both editions of the *Firaq* as number thirteen is in fact number fourteen in the original enumeration. Cf. Mashkour, *Nawbakhtī*, p. 109, note 1 (whose account, however, is not quite correct).



- 6 Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, ed. Ritter, pp. 90–93 = ed. Bahr al-‘Ulūm, pp. 131–134. This sect is first identified as “al-Imāmiyya” (p. 90 = p. 131) and, at the end of the passage, as “al-Shī‘a al-imāmiyya al-ṣahīḥat al-tashayyu‘” (p. 93 = p. 134). Only two other sects are given names: the tenth, called “al-Nafīsiyya” (p. 89 = p. 131), and the last (pp. 93–94 = pp. 134–135), called “al-Faḥiyya al-khullas”.
- 7 Qummī, *Maqālāt*, pp. 102–106. Sa‘d b. ‘Abd Allāh refers to them as “al-Shī‘a al-imāmiyya al-muhtadiya” (p. 106).
- 8 Rāzī, *Zīna*, p. 286. For this work see ‘Imād al-Dīn, ‘*Uyūn*, pp. 168–169 (the pages have been printed in reverse order) and the discussion in EIran, s.v. “Abū Ḥātem Rāzī” (H. Halm) and Halm, *Reich*, p. 258 = *Empire*, p. 290. For the various senses of the term “Rāfiḍa” see Kohlberg, “Rāfiḍa”.
- 9 Rāzī, *Zīna*, pp. 290–291.
- 10 Rāzī, *Zīna*, pp. 292, 293.
- 11 Rāzī, *Zīna*, pp. 292–293. Cf. Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, ed. Ritter, pp. 84–85 = ed. Bahr al-‘Ulūm, pp. 125–126 (*al-firqa al-sādīsa*); Qummī, *Maqālāt*, p. 114 (*al-firqa al-hādiya ‘ashra*).
- 12 Cf. EIran, s.v. “Abu’l-Qāsem al-Balkī al-Ka‘bī” (J. van Ess).
- 13 ‘Abd al-Jabbār does not say which work of al-Balkhī’s he is using, but judging from the context, it is in all likelihood the *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn*.
- 14 Cited in ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, XX/ii, p. 176.
- 15 Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, ed. Ritter, pp. 16–17 = ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, pp. 88–89. As noted by Gimaret, the Imāmiyya for both al-Balkhī and al-Ash‘arī include the Kaysāniyya (Shahrastānī (Gimaret), p. 476, note 1).
- 16 Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, ed. Ritter, p. 17 = ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, p. 90. Cf. Shahrastānī (Gimaret), p. 495, with note 114. Al-Ash‘arī refers to each of the first ten sects as *firqa*; sects eleven to twenty-four are each inexplicably referred to as *ṣinf*. The same phenomenon occurs with the division of the Ghāliya: sects one through ten are each called *firqa*, and sects eleven to fifteen are each called *ṣinf* (Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, ed. Ritter, pp. 5–16 = ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, pp. 66–88).
- 17 Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, ed. Ritter, pp. 17–18 = ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, pp. 90–91. The twenty-fourth sect, which is not given a name, is virtually identical to the Qat‘iyya (ed. Ritter, p. 30 = ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, pp. 104–105). The only difference is that for the Qat‘iyya, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan is the Qā‘im who will appear and fill the earth with justice as it is now filled with injustice, while adherents of the twenty-fourth sect say that he will fill the earth with justice and will suppress injustice (*yaqma‘ al-ẓulm*).
- 18 See Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, index, s.vv.
- 19 Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, V, pp. 107–108, §3156, cited in Majlisī, *Bihār*, L, p. 336; referred to in Pellat, “Mas‘ūdī”, p. 74.
- 20 Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, V, p. 108, §3156. For these books, both lost, see Pellat, “Mas‘ūdī”, p. 75; Khalidī, *Historiography*, pp. 157–158; Shboul, *Mas‘ūdī*, pp. 60, 63.
- 21 This appellation of the twelfth Imam is less common than “Ṣāhib al-zamān”.
- 22 Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, IV, p. 62, §2261. The *Murūj*, written in 332/943–944, was revised between 332 and 336/947–948 and again in 345/956. The text of 332–336 is the only version that has survived (Khalidī, *Historiography*, pp. 155–156; EI<sup>2</sup>, s.v. “al-Mas‘ūdī” (Ch. Pellat)).
- 23 Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbīh*, pp. 231–232. This passage is referred to in Shahrastānī (Gimaret), p. 497, note 116.
- 24 In the available versions of *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays* there are a number of references to twelve Imams, but the tradition cited by al-Mas‘ūdī is not among them. It was known, however, to a late 4th/10th-century Zaydī scholar, who argued that

- Sulaym was referring to the twelve Imams plus Zayd (Najāshī, *Rijāl*, II, p. 408, no. 1186; see the discussion in Modarressi, *Crisis*, pp. 100–101). An alternative explanation is that this tradition reflects the belief that the series of twelve Imams starts with al-Ḥasan (see further below). The Prophet is similarly cited as referring to himself, to twelve of his descendants and to 'Alī as the poles of the earth (Kulīnī, *Kāfī*, I, p. 534, no. 17). Al-Majlisī (*Bīhār*, XXXVI, p. 260) attempts to reconcile al-Kulīnī's tradition with the doctrine of twelve Imams.
- 25 Cf. the belief which the Ḥanafī Abū Muṭī' (d. 318/930) ascribes to the Imāmiyya, whereby the world cannot exist without an Imam from the offspring of al-Ḥusayn, whether apparent or concealed (*ẓāhir makshūf aw bāṭin mawṣūf*) (Bernand, "Radd", p. 82). The term "Aṣḥāb al-nasaq" was already used by the Mu'tazilī Ja'far b. Ḥarb (d. 236/850–851) to refer to those who believe in an uninterrupted series of Imams (ps.-Nāshī, *Uṣūl*, pp. 23, 26 (Arabic); referred to in Shahrastānī (Gimaret), p. 476, note 1).
- 26 See Khalidī, *Historiography*, p. 145; Shboul, *Mas'ūdī*, pp. 40–41.
- 27 Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 231.
- 28 See the discussion in Khalidī, *Historiography*, pp. 41–42.
- 29 For the conflicting views among Imāmī scholars on the *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays* see Kohlberg, "Imāmiyya", pp. 532–533. For the debate over *khavar al-wāhid* in 4th–5th/10th–11th century Shī'ism see Modarressi, *Introduction*, pp. 32–44 and, in general, EI<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "Khabar al-wāhid" (G. H. A. Juynboll); Hallaq, "Authenticity". For al-Mas'ūdī's legal methodology see Khalidī, *Thought*, p. 135; Stewart, *Orthodoxy*, pp. 66–67, 137–139.
- 30 Walker, "An Isma'ili Version", p. 162; Abū Tammām, *Kitāb al-shajara*, English introduction, p. 3.
- 31 Abū Tammām, *Kitāb al-shajara*, pp. 91–126 (Arabic) = pp. 88–115 (English).
- 32 Abū Tammām, *Kitāb al-shajara*, p. 102 (Arabic) = p. 97 (English).
- 33 Abū Tammām, *Kitāb al-shajara*, p. 109 (Arabic) = p. 102 (English).
- 34 At one point Abū Tammām equates the Mufaddaliyya with the Qat'iyya (*Kitāb al-shajara*, p. 124 (Arabic) = p. 114 (English)); see the English section, p. 112, note 257.
- 35 Abū Tammām, *Kitāb al-shajara*, p. 122 (Arabic) = p. 112 (English).
- 36 Abū Tammām, *Kitāb al-shajara*, p. 122 (Arabic) = p. 112 (English; I have slightly modified the translation).
- 37 In the text, the name of Aḥmad b. Mūsā b. Ja'far appears between Mūsā b. Ja'far and 'Alī b. Mūsā. His inclusion in the list is problematic, since it raises the number of Imams to fifteen.
- 38 Abū Tammām, *Kitāb al-shajara*, p. 123 (Arabic) = pp. 112–113 (English). Adherents of the second and third types apparently distinguished between two kinds of Imams: those who are counted among the twelve and those who are not. 'Alī, or 'Alī and al-Ḥasan, belong to the second kind. The fourth type are not described as Twelvers (Abū Tammām, *Kitāb al-shajara*, p. 123 (Arabic) = p. 113 (English)); their views are reminiscent of al-Mas'ūdī's Aṣḥāb al-nasaq.
- 39 Walker, "An Isma'ili Version", p. 165. Cf. Bosworth, "al-Ḥwārazmī", p. 85; van Ess, *Theologie*, IV, p. 353. The question of whether Abū Tammām and al-Khwārazmī drew on a common source is discussed in Walker, "An Isma'ili Version", pp. 165–167; cf. Abū Tammām, *Kitāb al-shajara*, English introduction, pp. 10–13.
- 40 Khwārazmī, *Mafāṭih*, pp. 32–33; cf. Bosworth, "al-Ḥwārazmī", p. 91.
- 41 Ibn al-Haytham, *Munāzarāt*, p. 3 (Arabic) = p. 65 (English).
- 42 Ibn al-Haytham, *Munāzarāt*, p. 36 (Arabic) = p. 92 (English, slightly modified).
- 43 Ibn al-Haytham, *Munāzarāt*, pp. 38–40 (Arabic) = pp. 93–95 (English).
- 44 Ibn al-Haytham, *Munāzarāt*, p. 37 (Arabic) = p. 92 (English; see note 34).

- 45 Ibn al-Haytham. *Mumāẓarāt*. English introduction, p. 47.
- 46 The examination was based primarily on a search of the term “Ithnā/ithnay ‘ashariyya” in a compact disc entitled *Kutub mā qabla l-Shaykh al-Tūsī wa kutubuhu* on which some two hundred relevant texts have recently been recorded. Also included on it are various Imāmī works of the pre-Buwayhid period, as well as a number of non-Imāmī texts I am indebted to Mr. Avraham Hakim for putting me on the track of this CD.
- 47 Murtaḍā. *Fuṣūl*, pp. 239–266, cited in Majlisī. *Bihār*. XXXVII, pp. 1–28.
- 48 *Ma‘a anna l-imāmiyya l-ithnay ‘ashariyya awlā bihi fī l-ḥaqīqa min al-jamī‘ li anna sāhibahum ismuhu ism rasūl allāh (ṣ) wa kunyatuhu kunyatuhu* (Murtaḍā. *Fuṣūl*, p. 246, cited in Majlisī. *Bihār*. XXXVII, p. 8).
- 49 Murtaḍā. *Fuṣūl*, p. 261, cited in Majlisī. *Bihār*, XXXVII, p. 23.
- 50 Murtaḍā. *Rasā’il*, III, pp. 145–146. This text is not recorded on the above-mentioned CD.
- 51 Reading *kharajanā ‘an al-tasammī* (for *min al-qawl*) *bi l-ithnay ‘ashariyya*. Cf. p. 146, line 9.
- 52 See the traditions adduced by Amir-Moezzi. *Guide divin*, pp. 298–299 = *Divine Guide*, p. 123, with notes 665, 666.
- 53 *Wa lā yukhrijunā hādhā l-qawl ‘an al-tasammī bi l-ithnay ‘ashariyya li anna hādhā l-ism ‘indana yutlaq ‘alā man yuthbit imāmat ithnay ‘ashar imāman; wa qad athbatnāhā* (read thus for *athbatnā*) *nahnu wa lā muwāfiq lanā fī hādhā l-madhhab fa nfaradnā nahnu bi hādhā l-ism dūna ghayrinā* (Murtaḍā, *Rasā’il*, III, p. 146).
- 54 For whom see the references in Kohlberg, *Scholar*, pp. 239–240, no. 331.
- 55 ‘Umarī, *Majdī*, p. 128.
- 56 Even assuming that further references will be found, the overall picture is not likely to change significantly.
- 57 It is also known as *Risāla fī l-‘itiqādāt* and *Dīn al-imāmiyya*. For the doctrine of the twelve Imams see Ibn Bābawayh, *‘Itiqādāt*, p. 103 = *Creed*, pp. 95–96.
- 58 See e.g. Mufīd, *Awā’il*, p. 10 (“the Imāmiyya agree that there are twelve Imams after the Prophet”).
- 59 Al-Mufīd refers to “al-Shī‘a al-imāmiyya” who await the return of the twelfth Imam (Mufīd, *Irshād*, p. 345 = tr. Howard, p. 523).
- 60 The references in this work are mostly to the Imāmiyya (Mufīd, *Ghayba*, passim) and, occasionally, to “al-Shī‘a al-imāmiyya” (pp. 16, 18).
- 61 Note al-Mufīd’s assertion that all Shī‘ī sects deviated from the Imāmiyya (Mufīd, *Awā’il*, p. 7; Murtaḍā, *Fuṣūl*, pp. 239–240, cited in Majlisī, *Bihār*, XXXVII, p. 1).
- 62 Baghdādī, *Farq*, p. 64; cf. pp. 23, 53 (reading *al-qat‘iyya aw al-ithnā ‘ashariyya*). See Friedlaender, *Heterodoxies*, II, p. 52; Shahrastānī (Gimaret), p. 497, note 116; Kohlberg, “Imāmiyya”, p. 521, note 2.
- 63 Isfarāyīnī, *Tabṣīr*, p. 42. Cf. Ḥimyarī (d. 573/1177–8), *Hūr*, p. 166 (those who believe in twelve Imams are called “al-Qat‘iyya” or “al-Ithnā ‘ashariyya”).
- 64 Shahrastānī (Gimaret), pp. 497–506; see in particular p. 503.
- 65 Contemporary non-Imāmī authors also seem to have mostly kept to traditional names, particularly “Rāfiḍa”. It remains to be investigated to what extent these authors had recourse to the term “Ithnā ‘ashariyya”.

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