CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The study of Shī'ism has been one of the most neglected branches of Islamic studies in the West. During the last few decades, however, a select group of scholars have devoted serious attention to specific areas of Shī'ī Islam. The pioneers in this group include Rudolph Strothmann (1877–1960), and Louis Massignon (1883–1962) followed by Henry Corbin (1903–1978). The contributions of Corbin are unique in providing an invaluable understanding of Shī'ī thought, both Ismaili and Ithnā'asharī. More recently, scholars like Etan Kohlberg, Wilferd Madelung, Heinz Halm, Husain M. Jafri, Moojan Momen, Farhad Daftary, M. A. Amir-Moezzi and others have greatly enhanced our understanding of Shī'ī Islam.

Despite this recent research, the history and doctrinal development of Shī'ī Islam, especially the first two centuries, have not received the share of modern scholarship they deserve. The Shī'a have generally been regarded by Sunnī heresiographers as 'deviators' from the 'norm', representing a heterodoxy as opposed to an orthodoxy. Many later Western scholars of Islam, too, have adopted the same dichotomy and have treated Shī'ī Islam as a heresy. Considering that we owe most of our sources to those who were in due course to become the Sunnī majority, it is not surprising that the Shī'īs are assumed to have diverged from the 'true path'. The 'orthodoxy-heterodoxy' dichotomy gives a very simplistic view of an

extremely complex doctrinal development which evolved over several centuries. In addition, this dichotomy, when understood from a Christian context, is inappropriate because of the absence of any central ecclesiastical authority in Islam.

Muslim society is, and always has been, pluralistic. The message of Islam was revealed in the cultural milieu of the time and the resulting responses had to be gradual, interactive and diverse. In the course of its rapid expansion, the umma established by the Prophet assimilated a variety of social groups with extremely diverse traditions and inclinations. This encounter of Islam with a kaleidoscope of traditions naturally meant varied interpretation as well as understanding. For the Shī'a themselves, Shī'ism is one response to the message of Islam, a response in which the role of 'Alī b. Abī Tālib is pivotal. The Shī'a see their genesis in the Qur'an and in the special rapport that existed between the Prophet and 'Alī. This is based on certain Qur'anic verses, several traditions of the Prophet and various historical events that took place during the lifetime of the Prophet. More specifically, the Shī'a believe that the Prophet Muhammad appointed 'Alī as his successor at Ghadīr Khumm not long before he died.1

Shī'ism has usually been explained with reference to political and social factors. More emphasis needs to be placed on the religious phenomenon of Shī'ī Islam which was the crucial factor in determining its external history. In this sense, Shī'ism is believed to have existed at the time of the Prophet, when a group of individuals including Salmān al-Fārisī, Abū Dharr al-Ghiffārī, al-Miqdād b. al-Aswad al-Kindī and 'Ammār b. Yāsir used to be referred to as Shī'at 'Alī and Aṣḥāb 'Alī.² The word Shī'a literally means follower or supporter, and in the early days of Islam it was used in conjunction with other individuals such as 'Uthmān and Mu'āwiya. With time, however, the word came to specifically denote those who supported 'Alī, both religiously and politically.

Historically, the roots of Shī'ī Islam go back to the time immediately following the Prophet Muḥammad's death when Abū Bakr was elected by some of the companions as the Prophet's

successor, or *khalīfa* (caliph) at the *saqīfa* (assembly hall) of Banū Sa'āda in Medina. The election was carried out in haste as the rivalry between the Anṣār (indigenous Medinans) and the Muhājirūn (Meccan immigrants) threatened to split the community. 'Alī, who was a cousin of the Prophet as well as his son-in-law, was not present at the deliberations since he had stayed at the Prophet's deathbed. Although 'Alī was not sent for, it is significant that at the *saqīfa* some people did object to giving *bay'a* (allegiance) to Abū Bakr, declaring that they would not offer *bay'a* to anyone but 'Alī. Such sentiments, contained in the earliest surviving historical material, are extremely important from an historian's point of view.

These sentiments survived in varying degrees during the period when the Muslims were led by Abū Bakr for over two years and then by 'Umar for nearly ten years. Upon 'Umar's death, 'Alī was offered the caliphate on condition that he rule according to the Qur'an and the sunna of the Prophet as well as the precedents set by Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Some traditions maintain that he declined the second condition, while others maintain that he agreed to do so to the best of his ability. However, his reply was considered evasive and the caliphate was offered to 'Uthman. It was in 'Uthman's time that a popular movement first appeared in Kūfa in favour of 'Alī, calling for the removal of 'Uthman, Malik al-Ashtar became the leader of the movement, and although he and the Kūfans played no role in the siege of the caliph's palace carried out by the Egyptians, he played a major role in securing 'Alī's succession. 'Uthmān was assassinated during the insurrection in Medina and amidst this chaos 'Alī was elected as the fourth caliph in the year 35/ 656. He immediately had to face a rebellion from two of the Prophet's companions, Talha and al-Zubayr, who were joined by 'A'isha, a widow of the Prophet and daughter of Abū Bakr. The three were defeated by 'Alī at the Battle of the Camel with particular help from Mālik al-Ashtar, who managed to arouse Kūfan support. But 'Alī also encountered major opposition from Mu'āwiya, a relative of 'Uthmān and the governor of Syria. This led to the prolonged and inconclusive Battle of Siffin in 36/657, as well as to the secession of the Khawārij (Khārijiyya) or 'separatists' from 'Alī's army.

In 40/661, when 'Alī was assassinated by a Khārijī, Ibn Muljam, his son al-Ḥasan was elected caliph. However, al-Ḥasan ceded the caliphate to Mu'āwiya, who had managed to bribe his commanders and was threatening to attack. Mu'āwiya then went on to found the Umayyad dynasty (41/661–132/750). After the death of al-Ḥasan, his brother al-Ḥusayn, counting on the support promised by the people of Kūfa, eventually set out to challenge Yazīd, son of Mu'āwiya, who had succeeded to the Umayyad throne. But the promised support crumbled and al-Ḥusayn met his tragic death at the hands of Umayyad forces at Karbala in 61/680. This tragedy evoked powerful emotions and became the focus of profound themes of guilt and betrayal. 'Alī and his sons, especially al-Ḥusayn, played a significant role in promoting Shī'ī sympathies.

'Alī is assigned a crucial role in history by all Muslims. To the Sunnis, he was a great champion of Islam in its early struggle to survive, and one of the 'rightly-guided' caliphs who features as the fountainhead of esoteric knowledge. 'Alī figures at the head of most of the initiatory chains (silsilas) of Sūfī orders and he is also credited with laying down the first rules of Arabic grammar. To the Shī'a, however, 'Alī had a special spiritual function alongside that of the Prophet, which, in their view, gave him pre-eminence and endowed him with the right to the leadership or imamate, and this function was passed on by designation to his descendants. The Prophet Muhammad's affection and regard for 'Alī were evident to all. As noted, they were cousins, and 'Alī was married to the Prophet's daughter Fātima. In addition, Ibn Ishāq notes that the youthful 'Alī had been brought up in Muhammad's care, and was the first male to believe in him and accept the message of Islam. Muhammad himself had been brought up in the household of 'Alī's father, Abū Tālib, who at the time was the chief of the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraysh.

In the lifetime of the Prophet, his close kin (ahl al-bayt) enjoyed a unique religious status recognised by the Qur'ān. More

specifically, 'Alī had a special rapport with the Prophet which did not go unnoticed among certain sections of the community. As is known, 'Alī was singled out by the Prophet for certain important tasks and was involved in many far-reaching decisions which were either preceded or followed by Qur'ānic injunctions. At the age of thirteen, 'Alī responded to the Prophet's earliest request for help when the injunction was revealed: 'And warn thy clan, thy nearest of kin' (26:214).3 On the night when the Prophet left Mecca for Medina, 'Alī occupied his bed, shocking the conspirators who had come to kill the Prophet. When the Prophet emigrated to Medina he established an ukhūwwa (or brotherhood) so that every muhājir had an anṣār as a brother; he himself chose 'Alī as his brother, another indication of his affinity towards him.4

In the course of Islam's struggle for survival, 'Alī's display of courage made him a renowned warrior whose stamina and skill were to become legendary. In most early expeditions, such as Badr and Khaybar, 'Alī was the standard-bearer, and at Fadak and Yemen he led as a commander. Holding the standard at Khaybar was another of 'Alī's distinctions; this much coveted honour was bestowed after the Prophet announced that the banner would be given to the man who loved God, His Messenger and through whom God would grant victory.5 The famous tradition 'You are to me as Aaron was to Moses', recorded by almost all historians and traditionists, was addressed to 'Alī when the Prophet, on leaving for the Tabuk expedition, appointed his son-in-law as his deputy. Furthermore, the task of communicating the Sūra al-Barā'a to the people of Mecca was initially given to Abū Bakr, but following a Qur'anic revelation 'Alī was asked to deliver the message, retrieving the chapter from Abū Bakr.6

Another relevant episode is that of *mubāhala* (mutual cursing) which is connected with the Qur'ānic verse 3:61 where the Prophet is addressed: 'If anyone disputes with you in this matter [concerning Jesus] after knowledge has come to you, say: "Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then let us swear an

oath and place the curse on those who lie." This verse was revealed when the Christian delegation from Najrān visited the Prophet in the year 10/631-2 because they did not accept the Islamic doctrine on Jesus. Although the *mubāhala* did not, the reports tell us, take place, as the Christians excused themselves from it, the Prophet's proposal to involve the family in this ritual under such religious circumstances, and its sanction by the Qur'ān, must have raised the status of his family.

The Qur'ān thus accords the ahl al-bayt of the Prophet an elevated position above the rest of the faithful. In the light of the narrations of the Qur'ān on the succession of the previous prophets, it is highly probable that the Prophet saw his own succession in the same light. As the Shī'a see it, the Prophet was, in his own way, preparing the Muslims and giving them indications of his preference before declaring 'Alī as the mawlā (or 'master') of the people at Ghadīr Khumm. It seems rather odd that if, as the Sunnīs hold, the Prophet did not designate a successor, Abū Bakr should break with the Prophet's sunna by explicitly appointing 'Umar as his successor as well as putting it in writing. This suggests the possibility of the Shī'ī view that the Prophet did in fact appoint 'Alī explicitly, but that the community decided to ignore his choice.

Until the time of al-Ḥusayn, there seems to have been no dispute about leadership among the Shī'a themselves. After his tragedy, differences arose resulting in various Shī'ī groups. These groups acknowledged imams mainly from the descendants of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, the sons of Alī by Fāṭima, and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, his son by Khawla of the Banū Ḥanīfa tribe. The identity of the Shī'ī imams, that is, which of 'Alī's descendants inherited his authority, as well as the discussion about the nature and extent of his authority, have always been one of the main reasons for the existence of several tendencies and inclinations among the Shī'a who, from the time of al-Ḥusayn, were never a monolithic group.

Within a year of al-Husayn's tragedy, a movement known as the Tawwabun (Penitents), those who repented their inability to help al-Husayn in his hour of trial, arose to fight the

Umayyads. However, they were overwhelmed by the Umayyad forces and most of them lost their lives. Those who survived joined al-Mukhtar b. Abī 'Ubayd al-Thaqafī, who had been in exile for his participation in the Kūfan revolt under Muslim b. 'Aqīl, and who organised his own movement calling for the avenging of al-Husayn's death. It is believed that al-Husayn's son Zayn al-'Ābidīn was approached and, on his refusal, Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya became the figurehead of Mukhtār's movement. Mukhtār was able to mobilise the mawālī, the non-Arab Muslims who were treated as second class citizens under the Umayyads. In 66/685 he successfully revolted in Kufa, proclaiming Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya as the Mahdi, the divinely-guided saviour who would establish justice on earth and deliver the oppressed from tyranny (zulm). This doctrine proved very appealing to the mawālī, who were considered socially and racially inferior to Arab Muslims. They provided a valuable recruiting ground for any movement opposed to the exclusively Arab order under the Umayyads. Mukhtār's success proved short-lived but his movement survived under the name of Kaysāniyya.

Meanwhile, a small group of Shī'a supported al-Husayn's only surviving son, 'Alī b. al-Husayn, who carried the title of Zayn al-'Ābidīn, 'the Ornament of the Pious'. The situation in which he found himself after Karbala led Zayn al-'Ābidīn to avoid participation in political life. Under Zayn al-'Ābidīn's son Muḥammad al-Bāqir, who is the subject of this study, this group, later known as the Imamiyya, began to acquire prominence. It has been generally assumed that al-Bāqir led an inconspicuous life. Some modern scholars have not only doubted his achievements, but even doubt whether he claimed the imamate for himself.8 However, an investigation of these issues, from the Shī'ī as well as the general Islamic perspective, suggests that there is substantial evidence to show that, although al-Baqir refrained from taking part in active politics, he played a significant role in history, both from an intellectual and religious point of view. He emerges as a versatile leader and scholar conversant not only in matters of rites and rituals, but also in the

exegesis of the Qur'ān, the traditions of the Prophet, questions pertaining to law as well as theological topics of both a mundane and a spiritual nature. Before al-Bāqir's time, Shī'ī learning had not come into its own. Al-Bāqir's life saw a flowering of knowledge in various fields. That he played a pivotal role in this cusp of history is attested by the vast number of traditions that have been reported from him. He was also the first Shī'ī imam to engage in systematic teaching.

Al-Bāqir lived at a critical juncture in Islamic history. The study of the Qur'an was a principal concern of Muslims. Steps were taken to establish a more adequate script as well as to construct rules of Arabic grammar in order to preserve the Qur'anic text from corruption. The first such attempts were made in Kūfa and Baṣra, for it was there that the need was first felt. However, Medina, where al-Baqir resided, continued to be regarded as the centre of religious learning where the foundation of studies connected with the Qur'an was laid. The interpretation of the Qur'an also necessitated a careful study of its grammatical structure and vocabulary, giving rise to the twin sciences of philology and lexicography. The manner in which Qur'anic passages were applied was based on recollections of actions or sayings of the Prophet which had some bearing on the subject of the text. Rules for conducting daily life and affairs were also sought in the practice of the Prophet (sunna). Thus the science of tradition (hadīth) came into being. The study of the Qur'an and hadith formed the basis upon which the study of kalām (theology) and figh (jurisprudence) were built. Thus, al-Baqir lived at a time when various scholars were pursuing these studies and travelling far and wide in search of traditions. These traditions necessarily included much historical material, mainly about the Prophet's military expeditions (maghāzī) as well as other aspects of his life (sīra). Alongside this material, however, accounts of early Islamic history also began to appear.

By the time of al-Bāqir, the various groups had begun to argue over different juridical issues. The traditionists opposed the jurists regarding the position of the *sunna* of the Prophet

and the exegetes gave varying interpretations of Qur'ānic verses, all apparently based on Prophetic traditions. Furthermore, serious theological discussions took place among scholars on topics revolving around the imamate such as *īmān*, *islām* and *qaḍā' wa qadar*, some of which had obvious political undertones. Therefore, it is also to this period that we may trace the rudiments of many of those religio-philosophical movements and religio-political communities which formed the earliest sects such as the Khārijiyya, the Qadariyya and the Murji'a. The Shī'a, one of the camps into which the Muslims split on the issue of the imamate, also took clear shape during al-Bāqir's period.

As noted earlier, it was over the person and function of the head of the community that differences and discussions arose. This naturally evoked different responses and opinions. One of these concerned the question of the fitness of the ruler to rule when he sins. This doctrine of 'sin' became the most characteristic feature of the Khārijiyya, who seceded from 'Alī's army, protesting at the proposal to arbitrate. They put forward the slogan 'lā huhm illā lillāh', 'decision belongs to God alone'. They believed that any Muslim, including the imam, on committing a mortal sin becomes an apostate and hence deserves death.

At the opposite extreme to the Khārijiyya, and mainly as a reaction to it, were the Murji'a, who shrank from judging human conduct, leaving this exclusively to God, to be determined after death. By refusing the *umma* the right to judge, the Murji'a denied the duty to 'enjoin good and forbid evil', thus encouraging political quietism. But the question of human or moral responsibility continued to trouble the community. From around 70/690, the Qadariyya, so called because they debated the meaning of the Qur'ānic term *qadar*, 'predeterminism', upheld in one form or another the principle of free will, believing that man was the author of his acts and human will was free. The term *qadarī* seems to have been used in diverse senses by various people. In Baṣra, the Qadariyya were a school of theology, but in Syria they were primarily a movement holding that the ruler was answerable for his actions, and that if he

should be guilty of unrighteousness he should abdicate or be removed.

The reaction to this view was the emergence of the Jabariyya, who held that man's actions were completely predetermined. In addition to these movements or schools, ad hoc responses to problematic situations were made by individuals with greater or lesser influence such as the companions, mystics and political leaders. It was in such an environment that al-Bāqir responded to the numerous queries that were brought to him by Shī'a and non-Shī'a alike.

During al-Bāqir's time, many groups were dissatisfied with their rulers. The pious were undoubtedly disturbed at the state of affairs into which society had sunk. They detested especially the rulers who, by leading a luxurious life themselves, set an undesirable example to others, thus sanctioning that which religion abhorred. The twin cities of Mecca and Medina, especially Mecca, had been transformed into centres of luxury where wealth and singing girls from the conquered lands poured in. This led many people to indulge in pastimes like chess, backgammon, dice and habits such as drinking and gambling. In such an atmosphere it was not long before poetry began to reappear, especially of the sensual type like that of 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'a in Mecca and Jamīl in Medina.

Another cause of widespread discontent was the division of society between the ruling class, formed by the caliph's family and the aristocracy of Arab conquerors, and the non-Arab Muslims who were clients (mawālī) to the Arab tribes. Their espousal of Shī'ī and Khārijī causes in 'Irāq, Persia and elsewhere was one way in which the mawālī expressed their dissatisfaction. Thirdly, there were the non-Muslims, i.e. Christians, Jews and others who were known as dhimmīs for the tribute they paid in return for protection (dhimma). Last on the social ladder stood the slaves.

Thus, during the period in which al-Bāqir lived, groups of Muslims expressed their dissatisfaction in a number of ways – some resorting to political action, some acquiescing and others diverting their energies to religious learning. At the same

time, these groups placed before the people some hope of liberation which, they believed, could only be achieved through a divinely-inspired leader. Most believed that this leader, al-Mahdī, the rightly-guided, could come only from the Prophet's family, the ahl al-bayt. Since the identity of the ahl al-bayt, especially after al-Husayn, was open to speculation, many members of the Prophet's family exploited the situation and a variety of competing organisations appeared, each claiming some connection with the Prophet's family. Among the dissatisfied were several Shī'ī groups. Many of these not only publicly denounced the Umayyads but wanted to take immediate political action against the established regime. Thus the various groups such as those organised by Mukhtar, the Kaysaniyya in its various branches, the Zaydiyya and its sister branches as well as other 'Alids like al-Hasan al-Muthanna, who promoted the cause of his son al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, all put forward different conceptions of the imam and the imamate.

For example, the Kaysaniyya believed in the idea of a future deliverer who would restore justice. This notion stemmed from their eschatological doctrine of ghayba, the absence or occultation of an imam who will reappear as the mahdi. Other doctrines which distinguished the Kaysaniyya were that they condemned the first three caliphs before 'Alī as usurpers and considered 'Alī and his three sons, al-Hasan, al-Husayn and Muḥammad b. al-Hanafiyya, as successive, divinely appointed imams endowed with supernatural qualities. They taught raj'a, the return to life of the mahdi with his supporters for retribution before the qiyama. They also believed in bada', the possibility of a change in God's decisions. The Zaydiyya, on the other hand, propagated a more aggressive and revolutionary policy. They did not believe that the imamate was hereditary in nature. For them, the whole point of claiming the imamate was to bid for power, that is political power. This implied that the imam had to rise, sword in hand, seize power and thus gain recognition and authority.

To bring some sort of order to the chaos that prevailed, and to the divergent concepts of the imamate, al-Bāqir put forward

his own theory of the imamate based on the Qur'an and hadith. He also explained the necessary qualities and attributes that an imam had to possess, such as 'ilm and 'isma. These distinguished the imam from others and made him afdal al-nās, the best of mankind. In this manner, the imam declared himself as the representative of God on earth and the rightful interpreter of His words. By demonstrating the imam's role in providing both true knowledge in this world and intercession in the hereafter, al-Baqir also proposed a theory of the imamate that was not necessarily political and therefore did not depend on the acquisition of political power. This was quite timely as many had come to believe by then that the imam had to rise and assert his claims to political power. Since al-Baqir's theory did not pose a direct threat to the reigning Umayyads he was left in peace to pursue his intellectual and religious activities.

Around the same time the pious - usually referred to as the general religious movement or the 'pious movement' - were also beginning to construct all-encompassing religious and ethical codes of conduct. The result was a variety of interpretations given by different scholars on a number of questions. Evidence from this period shows that al-Baqir was an eminent and distinguished scholar of hadith. Numerous people sought his advice on many issues as well as the traditions of the Prophet on which he was considered a reliable authority. Al-Bagir played a significant role in the development of the prophetic traditions. Just before his time, the sunna was considered the 'custom' of a particular place and many scholars would give judgements according to the 'custom' of their own particular area rather than the traditions of the Prophet. Along with the 'pious movement', al-Baqir emphasised the importance of the sunna of the Prophet, but whereas the former included the traditions of the whole community - the traditions of the early community as well as those of the Prophet - al-Baqir accepted only traditions of the Prophet that were reported by the imams from the Prophet's family.

Al-Bāqir's approach formed the basis from which Shī'i law

and theology emerged. He thus became instrumental in founding a separate school, the madhhab ahl al-bayt, having distinct views on many aspects of fiqh. Moreover, like the aṣḥāb al-hadīth, al-Bāqir and his school also rejected the use of ra'y (opinion) and qiyās (analogy) when giving judgements on juridical questions. Thus, amidst the varying interpretations given by the different scholars, al-Bāqir's followers were able to seek advice and guidance from him on such legal matters and this distinguished them from other groups.

Al-Bāqir also contributed to the theological doctrines concerning *īmān*, taqiyya, qadā' wa qadar, the unity of God, as well as a host of other topics that were discussed and hotly debated in his time. Thus, he emerges not only as the guide and spiritual leader of a particular group, having founded a separate school and provided a doctrinal basis for it, but also as one of the most distinguished scholars of the period, disseminating knowledge on all aspects of Muslim life.

As noted earlier, scholarly studies of the early history of Shī'ī Islam have been deplorably inadequate. This has been mainly because contemporary Shī'ī sources have not been available, and because of the persistence of an Orientalist tendency to study Shī'ism from a Sunnī perspective. For this reason, in addition to the general Islamic sources and Western studies on the period, particular attention will be paid in this study to Shī'ī sources which have so far been virtually ignored. Among the general Islamic sources that have been used, the most important are the chronicles such as those produced by al-Tabarī (d. 311/923) and al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/897). Then there are the biographies of prominent figures in collections such as the Ansāb al-ashrāf of al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), the Kitāb al-ţabaqāt of Ibn Sa'd (d. 231/845) and the Ta'rīkh madīnat al-Dimashq of Ibn 'Asākir (d. 572/1176), which is essentially a biographical dictionary. Some relevant background material is also found in works written on the theme of the Arab conquests (futuh) such as the Futuh al-buldan of al-Baladhuri, the Futuh Misr of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam and the Kitāb al-futūḥ of Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī (fl. 2nd-3rd/9th century).

Poetry from the period by poets such as Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī, Kumayt, Farazdaq and others has also proved useful, as has the collection of verses and biographical details about poets in the Kitāb al-aghānī of Abū al-Faraj al-Işfahānī (d. 357/ 967). Another such work is the Kitāb al-shi'r wa'l-shu'arā' of Ibn Qutayba. There is also a tradition of heresiographical works in which the beliefs, practices and the main personalities of the various Muslim groups involved are described. One of the earliest is the Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn of al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935). However, al-Shahrastānī's (d. 548/1153) Kitāb al-milal wa alniḥal, although late, is an outstanding work in this category. In addition, general Muslim works on tafsir and hadith, as well as the biographical literature such as Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb of Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani are useful. These and other such works have been listed in the bibliography under general Islamic sources and have been used extensively.

An attempt has been made in this survey to include Shī'ī sources of all persuasions — Zaydī, Ithnā'asharī and Ismaili. Among the Zaydī sources, one particular manuscript has been extensively used, especially in the chapter on al-Bāqir's contribution to fīqh, namely the Amālī Aḥmad b. 'Īsā of Muḥammad b. Manṣūr al-Murādī,9 which contains many traditions of al-Bāqir reported from Abū al-Jārūd on different juridical issues such as prayer, divorce, the rites of pilgrimage and other miscellaneous aspects of fīqh. Alongside the Majmū' al-fīqh attributed to Zayd b. 'Alī, other Zaydī sources have been used mainly from the quotations of Western scholars.

As far as Ithnā'asharī sources are concerned, the earliest extant works are collections of hadīth known as uṣūl (singular aṣl). The number of uṣūl is usually estimated at 400, of which only thirteen are known to have survived in manuscript. Their contents include traditions of a historical, doctrinal, legal, anecdotal and polemical nature. At a later stage, these various uṣūl, most of which are attributed to the disciples of Imams Bāqir and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq,¹º were incorporated into larger works known as jawāmi' which in turn served as sources for subsequent Shī'ī works. Among Ithnā'asharī compilations a unique position

is occupied by those concerned with the virtues and prerogatives of the imams. One of the earliest of these to have survived is the Baṣā'ir al-darajāt of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (d. 290/963). It is believed that al-Ṣaffār included in this work many of the sayings from a document (ṣaḥīfa) which the Prophet dictated to 'Alī.' Many of the traditions found in the Baṣā'ir were incorporated by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941) in his major work al-Kāfī fī 'ilm al-dīn which is divided into three parts: al-uṣūl, al-furū' and al-rawḍa. It is the uṣūl and furū' which are relevant to this study.

A work that is rarely used by scholars is the Ithbāt al-waṣiyya attributed to al-Mas'ūdī (d. 346/957) in which the transfer of the ruling authority and the religious testament of the ancient patriarchs from generation to generation since the creation of Adam is described. Another work that also has traditions on the nature of the imamate, as well as on other theological issues, is the Risāla al-i'tiqādāt al-imāmiyya of Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. 'Alī Ibn Bābawayh (d. 381/991).

In addition to traditions regarding the imamate, there are numerous others dealing with the virtues of 'Alī, the first imam, and his right to rule. These are grouped together under titles such as Khaṣā'iṣ, Manāqib or Faḍā'il 'Alī. Among many such works mention may be made of the Khaṣā'iṣ Amīr al-Mu'minīn of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1015). Thebiography of 'Alī and other imams has been dealt with by the renowned Ithnā'asharī scholar, Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022) in his Kitāb al-irshād. Al-Mufīd is also the author of the Kitāb al-jamal which contains traditions relating to the Battle of the Camel (36/656). Another work used in this study is the Nahj al-balāgha, the sermons of 'Alī as collected by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.

An invaluable source of traditions is provided by the early Shī'ī Qur'ān commentaries. One such work is the Tafsīr al-Qummī of Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ibrāḥīm al-Qummī (d.c. 307/919). This Tafsīr contains much historical material related to the Sīra but hardly pays any attention to linguistic problems and ignores many difficult Qur'ānic passages, perhaps due to

its polemical nature. Al-Qummī's first transmitter, Abū al-Faḍl al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim, incorporated into the work traditions from the Tafsīr Abū al-Jārūd, otherwise referred to as the Kitāb al-Bāqir by Ibn al-Nadīm. This is the Qur'ān commentary which Abū al-Jārūd Ziyād b. al-Mundhir transmitted from al-Bāqir. Other later Qur'ān commentaries include al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān of Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) and the Majmū' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān of al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭibrisī (d. 548/1153). These commentaries also contain many traditions although their main concern is with legal, linguistic and doctrinal problems.

Besides the *Uṣūl al-arba'u-mi'ah* and the *Furū' min al-hāfī* mentioned earlier, Shī'ī traditions of a legal nature are also found in the *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh* of Ibn Bābawayh and Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī's *Tahdhīb al-aḥhām* and *al-Istibṣār*. In fact legal traditions are also found in al-Ḥimyarī's *Qurb al-isnād* which is earlier than al-Kulaynī's *al-Kāfī*. Another earlier work which has a section on jurisprudence is the *Kitāb al-maḥāsin* of Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. Khālid al-Barqī (d. 274/887). Al-Barqī is also the author of the *Kitāb al-rijāl* in which he has listed the followers of the various imams. Later writers have commented upon these traditions, of which one of the most popular is the *Wasā'il al-Shī'a ilā aḥādīth al-sharī'a* by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī (d. 1104/1693).

Another category of Shī'ī traditions are works known as the amālī. These are dictations taken down by pupils from their shaykhs. As the amālī were usually dictated at a number of successive sessions (majālis, sing. majlis) they have sometimes been also referred to as majālis. Several such works have come down from prominent scholars like Ibn Bābawayh, al-Mufīd, al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā and Abū Ja'far al-Tūsī. The traditions in these works are not grouped according to specific themes but relate to different historical, doctrinal and legal issues.

Another useful source is the 'Umdat al-ṭālib, a Shī'ī genealogical work by Aḥmad b. 'Alī, known as Ibn 'Inaba (d. 825/1422), who is well informed about the early Shī'ī movements. Important material for the early period is also preserved in the

voluminous works of some later Shī'ī writers. Among them may be mentioned the Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib of Ibn Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192). A prolific writer who has written extensively on hadīth, theology and history is Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325). But perhaps the most famous and useful source is the encyclopaedic work, Biḥār al-anwār by Muḥammad Bāqir b. Muḥammad Taqī al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1700). Using a vast variety of Shī'ī sources which are scrupulously mentioned, al-Majlisī's work provides valuable information on early Shī'ī history, doctrine and tradition.

Among Ismaili sources, one of the earliest works that has been particularly useful in this study is the Kitāb al-zīna of Abū Hātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/033).12 The section of interest here is the seventh dealing with Muslim schools and sects which has been edited by an Iraqi scholar, al-Sāmarrā'ī, and published in the appendix of his book al-Ghuluww wa al-firag al-ghāliyya fi alhadārat al-islāmiyya. Another early Ismaili writer whose various works have been extensively used is al-Qādī al-Nu'mān (d. 363/ 973), a versatile scholar who seems to have been equally at ease writing history, theology or law. Among his various works is the Sharh al-akhbar which has recently been published in three volumes.18 A further work of al-Qādī al-Nu'mān which is in manuscript, and which has proved useful, is the Manāqib li ahl al-bayt wa al-mathālib Banī Umayya. Use has also been made of al-Nu'mān's Kitāb al-īdāh, one of the earliest and most comprehensive works on figh of which only a portion, on salāt, has survived;14 his Da'ā'im al-Islām and its corresponding esoteric works, Ta'wīl al-da'ā'im and the Asās al-ta'wīl, both of which have been edited; the Kitāb al-himma fī ādāb atbā' al-a'imma which deals primarily with the subject of the imamate and al-Urjūza al-mukhtāra,15 in which al-Nu'mān explains the idea of the imamate and other related aspects in a poem. Other works of al-Qādī al-Nu'mān on figh, include al-Urjūza al-muntakhaba, Mukhtaşar al-idāh, Kitāb al-iqtişār, Kitāb al-yanbū', Mukhtaşar alāthār and Ikhtilāf uşūl al-madhāhib.16

The earliest esoteric work to contain some useful information is the Asrār al-nuṭaqā' of Ja'far b. Manṣūr al-Yaman, a contemporary of al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān. The Asrār is closely connected with another work by this author, the Sarā'ir al-nuṭaqā', and appears to be a revised and amplified version of the latter. Ja'far b. Manṣūr al-Yaman has written a number of other works and is considered to be one of the leading exponents of ta'wīl. Many of his works, such as the Kitāb al-farā'id wa ḥudūd al-dīn, which contains esoteric interpretations of the Qur'ānic chapters Yūsuf, Kahf and Nūr, are still in manuscript form. Others, such as the Kitāb al-kashf are edited. An interesting work that is ascribed to him is the Kitāb al-fatarāt wa al-qirānāt 17 This work, which deals with the prophecies and occult sciences believed to have been revealed by 'Alī, is also known as the Kitāb al-jafr of Mawlānā 'Alī b. Abī Tālib. 18 Another significant work of Ja'far b. Manṣūr is the Shawāhid wa al-bayān, also unpublished, which discusses Qur'ānic verses referring to 'Alī and his successors.

Another work that has been used in this study is the Risāla fī al-imāma by Abū al-Fawāris Aḥmad b. Ya'qūb (d. 413/1022). 19 This consists of answers given to various questions put to him concerning the imamate. Al-Mu'ayyad fī al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1077) was yet another learned Ismaili scholar whose many works are mostly in manuscript. The exceptions are Sīra al-Mu'ayyad and the Dīwān al-Mu'ayyad, both of which have been edited by M. Kāmil Ḥusayn. The first two volumes of his great work, al-Majālis al-Mu'ayyadiyya, consisting of 800 majālis in eight volumes are found in M. Ḥārithī, Majmū' al-tarbīya while some of his majālis are summarised by Muscati and Moulvi in their Life and Lectures of al-Mu'ayyad.

A work of a slightly later scholar that has also been used in this study is the 'Uyūn al-akhbār of Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn (d. 872/1467) which is in seven volumes. The volume most relevant for this study is the fourth, which has been edited by Muṣṭafā Ghālib. It consists of biographies of the imams after 'Alī until the last imam of the dawr al-satr (period of concealment). Idrīs has written many other works besides the 'Uyūn, famous among which is the Zahr al-ma'ānī, his work on ḥaqā'iq (inner truths).

One of the major problems of early Arabic and Islamic historiography revolves around the historicity of sources. As is known, most of these sources depended on a body of knowledge known as hadīth literature, both Sunnī and Shī'ī. In time, next to the Qur'ān, hadīth came to be regarded as the most important body of Islamic textual material responsible for the development of religious and ethical thought in Islam. The literature itself is unusually abundant and undoubtedly it is difficult to authenticate all that has been handed down to us. In the case of al-Bāqir, even if certain traditions from him are spurious, we should not discard his entire tradition as fictitious. The approach employed in this study is that of judicious use rather than outright rejection. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that these traditions represent not only the beliefs of the Muslims of the time but they constitute the mirror in which the Shī'ī consciousness revealed its own aspirations.