



The Transformation of Radj'a Doctrine of Shi'a: A Case Study on the Nusayrīs, the Druzes and the Bābī-Bahāīs

Şi'a'nın Ric'at Doktrininin Dönüşümü: Nusayrî, Dürzî, Bâbî ve Bahâîler Üzerine Bir Olgu İncelemesi

Aydın BAYRAM

Assistant Professor, Artvin Çoruh University, Faculty of Theology, Artvin/Türkiye
aydinbayram@artvin.edu.tr | orcid.org/0000-0002-1620-9859 | ror.org/02wcpmn42

Article Information

Article Type

Research Article

Date Recieved

15 November 2023

Date Accepted

28 December 2023

Date Published

31 December 2023

Plagiarism

This article has been scanned with iThenticate software. No plagiarism detected.

Ethical Statement

It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited (Aydın Bayram).

Licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

Cite As

“ Bayram, Aydın. “The Transformation of Radj'a Doctrine of Shi'a: A Case Study on the Nusayris, the Druzes and the Bābī-Bahāīs”. *Kader* 21/3 (December 2023), 942-959. <https://doi.org/10.18317/kaderdergi.1391455> ”

Abstract

As one of the main tenets of mainstream Shi'a, the *radj'a* doctrine is potentially open to radical interpretations. In the background of this belief, the concept of *ghayba* (occultation) with the special meaning attributed to it has vital importance. According to the Imāmiyya or Twelve Imams (Ithnā 'Ash'ariyya) Shi'ism, which has survived to date within Shi'ism and constitutes the vast majority of them, the twelfth imam, Muhammad b. al-Hasan went into major occultation in 941. According to this doctrine, it is believed that one day the hidden imam will return and rule over the whole world, which is filled with injustice. In fact, examples of the belief in *radj'a* can be traced back to earlier periods. In the early history of Islam, some extreme sects (*ghulāt*) emerged by claiming the immortality of important figures such as, 'Alī b. Abī Tālib (d. 40/661) and his son Husayn (d. 61/680). The 10th century also became the scene of such claims among Shi'a such as the return of the hidden imam, Muhammad b. al-Hasan who is believed to be in occultation and will one day reappear to guide all humanity. This study examines three sub-sects of Shi'ism, namely the Nusayrīs, the Druzes and the Bābī-Bahāīs that all interpret the doctrine of *radj'a* from a gnostic point of view. The first two emerged in the tenth century simultaneously, while the Bābī-Bahāīs in the nineteenth. It is worth to note here that the concept of *bāb* has played the mediating role in the approach to the *radj'a* doctrine. Ibn al-Nusayr, the founder of the Nusayrī sect, put forward a ground breaking approach to the doctrine by declaring himself as the gateway to the eleventh and twelfth imam. In addition, the belief in the incarnation of God's soul into the body of 'Alī, and later on its transfer to bodies of the imams until it reached the twelfth imam, spread. The Druzes focused directly on the divinity of al-Hakīm bi-Amrillah rather than on the concept of *bāb*. The Bābīs and Bahā'īs, on the other hand, interpreted the doctrine of *radj'a* on the basis of the concept of *bāb* and the claim of messiahship, and a new religion. Especially, the Nusayrīs and the Druzes interpreted *radj'a* phenomenon and transformed it into *hulūl* (incarnation) and *tanāsukh* (metempsychosis). The Bābī-Bahāī community, however, transformed the doctrine of *radj'a* into the doctrine of prophethood by refusing the termination of the prophethood with the prophet Muhammad. Thus, they claim to be a new religion that abolishes the rules of previous religions. The purpose of this study is to analyse the way in which the selected sub-sects of Shi'a have approached the doctrine of *radj'a* and the extent of their interpretation of this phenomenon.

Keywords: Shi'a, the Nusayrīs, the Druzes, the Bābīsm-Bahā'ism, Radj'a, Hulūl, Tanāsukh.

Öz

Şiâ'nın temel inanç ilkelerinden biri olan ric'at doktrini potansiyel olarak radikal yorumlara olanak sunmaktadır. Ric'at inancının arka planında gaybet anlayışı ve ona yüklenen insan üstü özel mana son derece hayati öneme sahiptir. Şiîlik içerisinde günümüze ulaşan ve Şiîlerin büyük çoğunluğunu oluşturan İmamiyye ya da On iki İmam (İsnâ aşeriyye) Şiîliğine göre, on ikinci imam Muhammed b. el-Hasan, 941 yılında büyük gaybete gitmiştir. Bu doktrinle, gizli imamın bir gün geri döneceğine, zulüm ve haksızlıklarla dolu olan tüm dünyayı adaletle hükmedeceğine ve refaha ulaştıracağına inanılır. Esasında ric'at inancıyla ilgili ortaya atılan iddiaları daha erken dönemlere götürmek mümkündür. İslam tarihinin erken dönemlerinde, Ali b. Ebi Talib (ö. 40/661) ve oğlu Hüseyin (ö. 61/680) gibi önemli şahsiyetlerin ölümsüzlüğünü iddia eden bazı radikal mezhepler (*gulât*) ortaya çıkmıştır. Onuncu yüzyıl da yine Şiîler arasında gaybette olduğuna ve tüm insanlığa rehberlik etmek üzere bir gün yeniden ortaya çıkacağına inanılan gizli imam Muhammed b. el-Hasan'ın dönüşüne dair bu tür iddialara sahne olmuştur. Bu çalışmada Şiâ içerisinde ortaya çıkmış üç alt grup olan Nusayrîler, Dürzîler ile Bâbî ve Bahâîler'in ric'at doktrinine yükledikleri anlam incelenmektedir. İlk ikisi eş zamanlı olarak onuncu yüzyılda, Bâbî ve Bahâîler ise on dokuzuncu yüzyılda ortaya çıkmıştır. Ric'at doktrinine yaklaşımda bâb kavramının aracılık görevini üstlendiğini ifade etmek gerekir. Nusayrî fırkasının kurucusu Muhammed b. Nusayr en-Nemîrî (ö. 270/883), kendisini on birinci ve on ikinci imama açılan kapı olarak ilan ederek ric'at doktrinine ezber bozan bir yaklaşım ortaya koymuştur. Buna ilaveten, tanrının ruhunun Hz. Ali'nin bedeninde zuhur ettiği, sonrasında da bu ruhun on ikinci imama gelinceye kadar imamların bedenlerine intikal ettiği inancı yayılmıştır. Dürzîler bâb kavramından ziyade doğrudan Hakim Biemrillah'ın ulûhiyyetine odaklanmışlardır. Bâbî ve Bahâîler ise bâb kavramı temel olmak üzere mehdilik ve yeni bir din olma iddiasıyla ric'at doktrinini te'vil etmişlerdir. Özellikle Nusayrî ve Dürzîler ric'at inancını yorumlayarak bunu hulūl ve tenasüh dönüştürmüşlerdir. Bâbî ve Bahâîler ise nübüvvet vazifesinin Hz. Muhammed ile son bulduğu inancını reddederek ric'at anlayışını nübüvvet dönüştürmüşlerdir. Böylece onlar, önceki dinlerin hükümlerini ortadan kaldıran yeni bir din olma iddiasında bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Şiîlik içerisinde neş'et ederek ortaya çıkmış yukarıda adı geçen mezheplerin ric'at doktrinine nasıl yaklaştıklarını ve bu olguyu ne olarak yorumladıklarını ortaya koymaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şiâ, Nusayrîler, Dürzîler, Bâbî ve Bahâîler, Ric'at, Hulūl, Tenasüh.

Introduction

The expected saviour belief is not peculiar to the Muslims, it rather exists among other religions and cultures of the world. From Jews and Christians to Buddhists and Hindus they all have similar approaches to the expected saviour albeit some differences are available.¹ Within the Islamic context, it can be traced back to the first century of the Islamic calendar that proclaims on the expected saviour were raised. Figures, such as Abdullah b. Saba' and Mukhtar b. Abī 'Ubayd al-Thaqafī (d. 67/687) played pivotal role in discussing the need for a divine mission for 'Alī b. Abī Tālib (d. 40/661) and his family. Thus, some extreme views, such as drawing similarities between the creator and the created, and seeing some divine characteristics on humans arose amongst the Muslim community. These proclaims and approaches were called as *ghulūw* (lit. extreme) and as an adjective of that term, *ghalī* (p. *ghulāt*) groups and sects emerged in Islamic history. Thereby, they were considered as heretics due to their extremist ideas. Such views were generally accepted by some *ghulāt* sects, namely Saba'iyya, Kāmiliyya, Albāiyya, Mughīriyya, Mansūriyya, Khattābiyya, Kayyāliyya, Hishāmiyya, Nu'māniyya, Yūnusiyya, Nusayriyya and Ishāqiyya.² These *ghulāt* sects are mainly associated with Shi'a community, which is confirmed by Shi'i heresiographers, such as al-Qummī (d. 301/913-4) and al-Nawbakhtī (d. 310/922) with their extremist ideas.³

It is commonly known that the Shi'a with three main branches namely, Zaydiyya, Ismā'īliyya and Imāmīyya has survived to the present day and all constitutes a minority within the whole Muslim community. Within this minority, there has been much turmoil and divergence throughout Shi'a history. One of the doctrinal disagreements that has existed within the Shi'a is the *radj'a*. The word of *radj'a* literally means "return" and it is generally attributed to the return of an imam into the earth in order to revive and establish a reign of justice before the end of the world.⁴ It is correlated with the term of *mahdī* (lit. rightly guided one) that he has been expected by many Shi'a groups to come to the earth and save people persecuted over the centuries. The *radj'a* has a base called *ghayba*, which means absence from the creation and presence with God.⁵ The term *ghayba* has a specific meaning among the main branch of Shi'ism, Imāmīyya or *Ithnā-Ash'ariyya* (Twelvers), that the last imam Muhammad b. al-Hasan is in occultation and is expected to reappear in eschatological times.⁶ It has two phases: minor occultation lasted from 260/874 to 329/941, during which the last imam maintained his authority over the community through his four emissaries (*sufarā*) and from that date on he went on to the major occultation. Over the years, this expectation became one of the basic principles in the belief of the mainstream Shi'i community (Twelvers). Sometimes, however, heretical approaches were observed within the

¹ Ömer Faruk Harman, "Beklenen Kurtarıcı İnancının İslâm Öncesi Dinî Arka Planı", *Beklenen Kurtarıcı İnancı*, ed. Yusuf Şevki Yavuz (İstanbul: Kuramer Yayınları, 2017), 44.

² Abu'l-Fath Tâcuddīn Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karim al-Shahrastani, *al-Milal wa'l-Nihal* (Damascus: Muassasah al-Risalah Nashirun, 2015), 192-205.

³ Abu Muhammad Hasan b. Musa b. Hasan al-Nawbakhtī - Sa'd b. Abdullah al-Qummī, *Kitab Al-Firaq al-Shi'a* (Istanbul: Matbaat al-Dawla, 1931), 49-75.

⁴ Etan Kohlberg, "Radj'a", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition*, ed. C.E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 8/371-372.

⁵ D.B. Macdonald, "Ghayba", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition*, ed. B. Lewis et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 2/1026.

⁶ S.H. Nasr, "Ithna-Ashariyya", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition*, ed. B. Lewis et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 3/277.

Shi'a that *mahdī* candidates emerged and claimed initially representing the imam (*al-mahdī*), then the soul of 'Alī b. Abī Tālib transmigrating through the imams to himself, and even God's incarnation (*hulūl*) with themselves.

Previous research indicates that various sub-sects within Shi'a have approached the *radj'a* phenomenon in different ways and have shown a variety of tendencies.⁷ One of the recent studies examines the relationship between *radj'a* and *ghayba* in earlier *ghulāt* sects of Shi'a. It deals mainly with the Saba'iyya, Kāysaniyya, Jārudīyya, Baqīriyya, Ja'fariyya, Nāwusiyya, Mūsawiyya, Ismā'īliyya, and some others that emerged with the death of the eleventh imam Hasan al-'Askari in 873.⁸ It seems some went astray and were called as *ghulāt* since claiming mythical arguments, such as that 'Alī did not die in 661 and is waiting to return to the earth. Saba'iyya and Kāysaniyya can be given as examples of that early proclaim.⁹ As regards as with the earlier eschatological doctrines including *radj'a*, *ghayba*, and *mahdī*, Daftary points out that although early radical Shi'ites and their free religious speculations were accepted as innovation (*bid'a*) by the Imāmiyya, the criteria of exaggeration changed over time. As a result, approaches towards these notions amongst Shi'ites were no longer considered as an exaggeration.¹⁰ Because it harms to the doctrine of the imamate, which is closely related with the *radj'a* doctrine. As a *raison d'être*, the imamate doctrine is one of the main tenets of the Imāmī Shi'a that 'Alī and his descendants are in charge with maintaining this role until the end of the world.¹¹ According to the Imāmiyya, the last Imam Muhammad b. Hasan is believed to be in occultation and as being *mahdī* "the rightly guided one" he will one day return "to fill the earth with justice, as it is now filled with injustice."¹² This is one of the main pillars of the Imāmiyya¹³ that whoever rejects this doctrine is not a Shi'ite.¹⁴ However, some other sects also emerged within Shi'a, claiming that the spirit of God was incarnated (*hulūl*) into their leaders, and then it transmigrated (*tanāsukh*) through imams to their leaders. Since the time of the last imam, three extremist sects within Shi'a are known, namely the Nusayriyya, the Druzes, and more recently the Bābīs-Bahāīs, with the above exaggerated claims. As a result, the main aim of this study is to examine how the *radj'a* doctrine was transformed into the doctrine of incarnation and transmigration in these three *ghulāt* sects. The relationship between idea and fact is the main impulse of this study, which is commonly used in researching within the discipline of

⁷ al-Nawbakhtī - al-Qummī, *Kitāb Al-Firaq al-Shi'a*, 41-5-; Abū al-Hasan 'Alī ibn Ismā'il ibn Ishāq al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa-ihtilāf al-musallīn* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1963), 46; Abu Mansur Abdulqahir b. Tahir b. Muhammad al-Tamīmī Abdulqahir al-Baghdādī, *Al-Farq Bayna'l-Firāq Wa Bayānu'l-Firqah al-Nājiya Minhum* (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1995), 255-271; William Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 59-61.

⁸ Halil İbrahim Bulut, "Şii Fırkalarda Gaybet ve Ric'at İnancı", *İslāmiyyât Dergisi* 8/1 (2004), 144-152.

⁹ al-Nawbakhtī - al-Qummī, *Kitāb Al-Firaq al-Shi'a*, 19-20.

¹⁰ Farhad Daftary, *A History of Shi'i Islam* (London: I.B.Tauris Publishers, 2013), 40.

¹¹ Abu Abdullah Ibn al-Muallim Muhammad al-Shaikh al-Mufid, *Awā'ilu'l-Maqālāt* (Qumm: al-Mu'tamar al-'Alamī li-Alfiya al-Shaikh al-Mufid, 1992), 41.

¹² Heinz Halm, *Shi'a Islam: From Religion to Revolution*, trans. Allison Brown (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), 35.

¹³ al-Shaikh al-Sadūq Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Alī b. Husain Ibn Babawayh al-Qūmmī, *Al-I'tiqādāt* (Qumm: al-Mu'tamar al-'Alamī li-Alfiya al-Shaikh al-Mufid, 1992), 60.

¹⁴ Ibrahim al-Musawī al-Zanjānī, *Aqā'id al-Imāmiyya al-Ithnā As'ariyyā* (Qumm: Qumm Intisharat Hadrat Mahdī, 1984), 2/240.

the history of Islamic sects. This research is limited to merely the three *ghulāt* sects of Shi'a, though some radical sects, for example Yazīdiyya (Ezidis), has emerged within Sunnism claiming similar arguments. While studying such doctrinal aspect of the selected sub-sects, this study suggests further understanding of these sects by examining their theological arguments on *radj'a* doctrine.

1. Radj'a doctrine in Shi'a and its transformation into hulūl and tanāsukh

The idea of the returning imam among Shi'a beliefs can be traced back to the first century of Islam, when such names as Abdullah b. Saba' and Mukhtar al-Thaqafi come to mind, who raised the *ghayba* claims for 'Ali b. Abī Tālib and Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya, respectively. From that time until the third century of Islam, many voices were heard in relation to the *radj'a* doctrine.¹⁵ For instance, in Imāmī branch of Shi'ism, the death of the sixth imam Ja'far al-Sādiq (d. 148/765) led to the first major split within Shi'ism. In addition to Ismā'īliyya and Imāmīyya, some believed that Imam Ja'far did not die and still alive being hidden, waiting one day to return triumphantly.¹⁶ Both in the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, the Shi'a community organised several revolts against the state authority claiming the right to rule the Muslim community that God had given to the descendants of 'Ali b. Abī Tālib. Until the eleventh imam Hasan al-Askari, they never became formal political leader of the whole Muslim community. They were rather regarded as spiritual leader for the Muslim community by Shi'ite believers. According to them, the last imam Muhammad al-Mahdi is in occultation and he will return in a day. Consequently, over the years *radj'a* became one of the main tenets of Imāmī Shi'ites.¹⁷ It is not only about the return of the *imam*, but also does good and evil communities include in eschatological times. According to the Imāmī Shi'ites, this term is mainly associated with the role of the last imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, as saviour of the world.

Halm and Brown acknowledge that in its formative period, "Shi'ism fluctuated several times between the model of an incarnate, present imam and that of an absent 'hidden' imam, before the 'occultation' model finally found widespread acceptance."¹⁸ The Shi'ites historically approached to the occultation model from different aspects resulting in further schism. Al-Qummī and al-Nawbakhtī gave an account on the fragmentation of the Shi'ites. For instance, with the death of Hasan al-Askari, the Shi'ite community divided into fourteen or fifteen groups that some of which rejected the death of al-Askari by ending the imamate line with him as *qāim imam* and believed in his occultation; some accepted his death and followed his brother Ja'far as the successor *imam*; and some believed that Hasan al-Askari had a son named Muhammad who was not commonly known due to security reasons, and they accepted him as the successor *imam*. According to the imamate tradition, it is impossible for an imam not to appoint his successor, nor is the earth without an *imam*. Thus, the Imamiyya established the doctrine of *radj'a* on the occultation and return of the last imam Muhammad based on traditions and historical events developed over the

¹⁵ Abu Muhammad b. Ali b. Ahmad b. Saed al-Zahiri Ibn Hazm, *Al-Fasl Fi'l-Milāl Wa'l-Ahwa' Wa'l-Nihāl* (Beirut: Dār al-Jeyl, 1996), 5/34–37.

¹⁶ Halm, *Shi'a Islam: From Religion to Revolution*, 24.

¹⁷ al-Sadiq, *Al-'tiqadāt*, 60–63; al-Shaikh al-Mufid, *Awāilu'l-Maqālāt*, 46.

¹⁸ Halm, *Shi'a Islam: From Religion to Revolution*, 24–25.

years.¹⁹ At that time, another contemporary heresiography writer, al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935-6) pointed out that Shi'ite community divided into two groups on the subject of *radj'a*: one is the majority of them, who claimed that the return to life of some dead people, whatever happened to the sons of Israel, similar things would happen to the community of the Prophet Muhammad. The other group went an extreme side by denying the end of life and resurrection. They argued that a soul would travel from body to body, and if it is good one, it reaches to the best place. If it is evil, it is transferred to the bodies in which his soul will suffer pain and harm. Thus, the world will continuously go on like this forever.²⁰

As regards as the occultation and possible types of return of the imam, some Shi'ites have interpreted the situation radically differing from the mainstream Shi'a society. The Nusayrīs, the Druzes and the Bābī-Bahā'ī community are subject to this study, particularly have approached this phenomenon and brought about new ideas to the *radj'a* doctrine that transformed into *hulūl* (incarnation) and *tanāsukh* (metempsychosis). Before examining the views of these sects, it is useful here to give a brief definition of these two terms, *hulūl* and *tanāsukh*. The former can be defined as "infusion, the indwelling of God in a creature."²¹ In other words, it means the transfer of the divine essence or attributes to a human being. The latter is used in so-called 'heresiographical' literature to denote the concept of transmigration. It has two specific usage: transmigration of spirits from one body to another (metempsychosis) and transmigration of a divine element from one imam to another.²² There is a close relationship between these two concepts since they include metaphysical elements as well as meaning. Whereas, the most obvious difference seems to be on the identity: *hulūl* is essentially from God to human; while *tanāsukh* varies from human to human, from human to animal, plants, and so on.

1.1. The Nusayrīs and their understanding of the *radj'a* doctrine

The Nusayrīs (ʿAlawites) broke away from the mainstream of Shi'ism at the end of the ninth century and established an esoteric theology under the leadership of Muhammad b. Nusayr al-Namirī (d. 270/883). He lived in the time of the tenth and eleventh imams, namely ʿAlī al-Hādī (d. 254/868) and Hasan al-ʿAskarī (d. 260/874). Ibn Nusayr was known with his extreme views among Shi'a. He initially claimed the prophethood for himself saying that ʿAlī al-Hādī was god. He also made some other extraordinary claims such as, believing in metempsychosis and making prohibitions lawful, including marriage between man and man (homosexuality).²³ He then declared being the *bāb* of the eleventh *imam*. During minor occultation, therefore he was one of main candidates who conducted emissary role between the hidden *imam* and the Shi'a society at that time.²⁴ As a consequence of his extreme views, he was considered by the main stream Shi'a community as heretical and excommunicated. This sect was initially called al-Namirīyya in reference to its founder. Early heresiographical works written by al-Kummī, al-Nawbakhtī, and

¹⁹ al-Nawbakhtī - al-Qummī, *Kitab Al-Firaq al-Shi'a*, 97-109.

²⁰ al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyin wa-ihtilāf al-musallin*, 46.

²¹ L. Massignon - [G.C. Anawati], 'Hulūl', *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition*, ed. B. Lewis et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 3/571.

²² D. Gimaret, 'Tanasukh', *The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition*, ed. P.J. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 10/182.

²³ al-Nawbakhtī - al-Qummī, *Kitab Al-Firaq al-Shi'a*, 95.

²⁴ Yaron Friedman, *The Nusayri-'Alawis: An Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 75.

Abu al-Hasan al-Ash‘arī gave this name, but later the Nusayrī affiliation was used to identify this sect.²⁵ Today, members of that sect prefer to be called as Alawī since 1924, when an insider Muhammad Amin Ghalib al-Tawīl published a book called “History of the Alawites” (*Tā’rikh al-‘Alāwiyyūn*).²⁶

Relevant literature suggests that the Nusayrīya sect, although originating among the Shi‘a Muslims, has a cosmogony of a gnostic nature derived from pagan, Christian, and Islamic traditions, particularly the early Shi‘ī *ghulāt* and the esoteric approach of Ismā‘īliyya.²⁷ Furthermore, it has a syncretic theological construction that mixes different religious theories of cosmogony.

Although recent studies reflect that the Nusayrīs reject the *hulūl* theory and evaluate it as a form of apostasy,²⁸ as can be seen below, the Nusayrīs paradoxically have beliefs and approaches on *hulūl* and *tanāsukh*. According to them, God has repeatedly showed himself to humanity in the form of a human being. For instance, one of their holy book called *kitāb al-majmū‘* (the comprehensive book) includes a syncretic approach of various religious theories and doctrines. It consists of sixteen chapters that reflect the religious doctrines and rituals of the Nusayrīs as in the form of a catechism. It was released in Arabic by an ex-member of Nusayrīs, Sulaiman Efendi from Adana after his conversion to Judaism, Islam and Christianity while he was in exile in Beirut.²⁹ From its first chapter, called commencement (*al-awwal*) to the last it has thoroughly phrases and salutations towards a divinity of ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib, and his re-appearance in the body of the founder of the sect and other saints as well as religious figures of Ismā‘īlī branch of Shi‘a. To give an example, the following quotation from the first chapter indicates that ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib is considered as Allah, and thus salutations, prayers are all made for the sake of ‘Alī:

“Sure is he to who obtains the friendship of him with the prosper bald forehead! My beginning is to acknowledge myself a humble creature. I commence with the commencement of yielding my love to the holiness of the archetypal divinity of the Prince of Bees, ‘Alī 'Ibn 'Abī Tālib, denominated Haidarah ‘Abū Turāb -in reliance upon whom I undertake and by whom I accomplish, through the remembrance of whom I am secured, in whom I am saved, to whom I betake myself, in whom I am blessed, of whom I ask help, in whom I begin and in whom I end, with orthodoxy in religion and faithfulness to the indubitable truth.”³⁰

²⁵ al-Shahrastani, *al-Milal wa'l-Nihal*, 204.

²⁶ H. Halm, ‘Nusayriyya’, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition*, ed. C.E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 8/146–147.

²⁷ Meir M. Bar-Asher - Aryeh Kofsky, *The Nusayri-Alawi Religion: An Enquiry into Its Theology and Liturgy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1–2; Daftary, *A History of Shi‘i Islam*, 186.

²⁸ Reyhan Erdoğdu Başaran, ‘Er-Risāletü'l-Numāniyye Eseri Doğrultusunda Nusayrî-Alevî İnancında Tevhîd İlkesinin İzahı’, *e-Makalat Mezhep Araştırmaları Dergisi* 14/2 (2021), 958; Reyhan Erdoğdu Başaran, *Nusayrîlik İshakilik Alevîlik - Tarih, Literatür ve İnanc-* (Ankara: Eskiye Yayınları, 2023), 48.

²⁹ There is not an exact date when this tract was written, but well known orientalist Edward Salisbury translated it into English and published in 1864. Ahmet Turan published it by translating into Turkish, in 1996. See Edward E. Salisbury, ‘The Book of Sulaiman’s First Ripe Fruit, Disclosing The Mysteries of the Nusairian Religion by Sulaiman Effendi of Adhanah’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* VIII/2 (1864), 228.

³⁰ Edward E. Salisbury, ‘The Book of Sulaiman’s First Ripe Fruit, Disclosing The Mysteries of the Nusairian Religion by Sulaiman Effendi of Adhanah’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* VIII/2 (1864), 234–235.

It is pointed out from the above passage that 'Alī b. Abī Tālib is obviously considered as Allah. He is also attributed with the name and features of Allah when a believer seeks refuge to the transcendental being. Furthermore, the Nusayrī testimony has problematic as far as the uniqueness of Allah is concerned. For example, the Nusayrī testimony is termed as following: "There is no God but 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, with the bald forehead and temples, the adorable; and no intermediary but lord Muhammad, worthy to be praised; and no communicator but lord Salmān al-Fārsī, the pattern."³¹ Another divine feature, which is creating, transmigrates from 'Alī to Muhammad, from Muhammad to Salmān, from Salmān to the five orphans, who are responsible for the creation and maintenance of the whole universe.³² Indeed, the Nusayrīs believe in creation as happened in following way: 'Alī created Muhammad from his own light, then from that light Muhammad created Salmān, and Salmān created the five orphans, namely Mikdād b. Aswad al-Kindī, Uthman b. Madh'un an-Najāshī, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, Abdullah b. Rawāha al-Ansarī, Kanbar b. Kādān ad-Dausī. Friedman points out that the Nusayrī concept of divinity resulted from the Neoplatonic thought. Accordingly, it is an extremely abstract God, from which all creation emanates as light from the sun. There is a gradual regression of created beings, from the more exalted to the more inferior.³³

As mentioned above, the Nusayrī testimony consists of three elements, and the first letters of these three elements (ع - ayn for 'Alī, م - mim for Muhammad, and س - for Salmān) symbolically refer to that testimony. There seems to be a close resemblance to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. According to Sulaiman Effendi, "these three are their Most Holy Trinity, Ali being the Father, Muhammad the Son, and Salmān al-Fārsī the Holy Ghost."³⁴ However, a recent research shows that one of the pioneers in Nusayrī theology, al-Jillī (d. 384/994) advocates the principle of *tawhīd* (oneness of God) and denies any connection of the Nusayrī belief in triad formula with Christianity.³⁵ Friedman asserts that triadic doctrine has been gradually established in the theology of the Nusayrīs. He reflects on the historical development of this triad doctrine and claims that proto-Nusayrī sources did not speak of a triad at all, but rather it was established by the Nusayrī sect. Furthermore he draws attention to early *ghulāt* sources in the 8th and 9th centuries that they speak clearly of two aspects only, the abstract God and his first emanation, a dual concept also known from the Ismā'īlī doctrine, namely the *sāmīt* (silent) and the *nātiq* (speaker). The latter is the representative and outward aspect of the former. He argues that the Nusayrīs added a third element to the two aspects of the divinity, which is the *bāb*.³⁶ There is also a close similarity between the Nusayrī triad formula (ع - م - س) with a Jewish sect called Sefer Yetzira.³⁷ This explains fairly enough the reason behind the triad doctrine in terms of both historical and theological impacts. In other words, the Nusayriyya emerged as a combination of

³¹ Salisbury, "The Book of Sulaiman's First Ripe Fruit", 241.

³² Turan, "Kitābu'l- Mecmu'u'nun Tercümesi", 12.

³³ Friedman, *The Nusayri-'Alawis: An Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria*, 72.

³⁴ Salisbury, "The Book of Sulaiman's First Ripe Fruit, Disclosing The Mysteries of the Nusairian Religion by Sulaiman Effendi of Adhanah", 247.

³⁵ Başaran, 'Er-Risāletü'l-Numāniyye Eseri Doğrultusunda Nusayrī-Alevī İncancında Tevhīd İlkesinin İzahı', 964.

³⁶ Friedman, *The Nusayri-'Alawis: An Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria*, 74.

³⁷ Friedman, *The Nusayri-'Alawis: An Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria*, 96.

Hellenistic and Persian cultures as well as mixing doctrines from Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.³⁸

Regarding the issue of transformation of *radj'a* doctrine, initial point invented by the Nusayrīs is the *bāb* formula. Then it becomes one of the triad doctrine as mentioned before. Nevertheless, a criteria based on the warning of the last imam just before the grater occultation, “whoever claims to have had contact with him, is a liar”³⁹ seems to be a great obstacle in *bāb* claims. For the Imāmī Shi‘a, from that date on, no one knows the time of reappearance of the last imam. On the other hand, however, the Nusayrīs attempted to struggle over this phenomenon and brought in a different approach. Then, what was the main argument of Ibn Nusayr by becoming a *bāb* of the last imam?

According to the Nusayrī sources, the eleventh imam al-Askarī sent Ibn Nusayr a jar full of butter and milk as well as a message asking people who were present at the meeting of Ibn Nusayr to plant their date kernels together in Ibn Nusayr’s garden, promising that one tree would grow from them.⁴⁰ It is not difficult to guess that the message has an esoteric order to appoint Ibn Nusayr to lead the community. After vanishing the last imam, close friends and disciples of Ibn Nusayr considered that Ibn Nusayr had to be the legitimate successor of the absent imam. Thus, Ibn Nusayr claimed being the *bāb* of the last imam since his life coincided with the life of two imams, as well as with the appearance and the occultation of the last imam.⁴¹ Thereby, according to Ibn Nusayr, as a gift from the grace of Allah, humans could only understand inferior aspect of divinity with the mediator role of the *bāb*.⁴² It is noticeable that for Ibn Nusayr and his disciples, it is essential for the society to have a divinely guided one, who can communicate between the divine and humane. As a result, being the *bāb* of the last imam, Ibn Nusayr plays pivotal role in guiding humanity to comprehend the divine being. In addition to that, Ibn Nusayr was also considered as unique in terms of holding two posts. “According to the Nusayri tradition, Ibn Nusayr was the personification of both the *ism* and the *bāb* (the name of God and his gate), the first two and most important emanations of the divinity.”⁴³ The divine being can only be understood through the gate, which is the personification of Ibn Nusayr. In the following quotation, Bar-Asher and Kofsky illustrate a passage from al-Harrānī’s *Kitāb al-usāyfir* that sheds light to understand the incarnation of Allah and whose divine attributes to the *bāb*.

“There is no entrance [to the *ism*] other than through the *bāb*, and there is no knowledge other than through him; and the [visible] form is thus distinctive to the *bāb*. It is the *bāb* who created the worlds and formed the entities, and from him were the lights made manifest. He is the goal for every wise person and the aim of every knowing person, and he is the witness, and the testimony is upon him, and he is God’s expanding shadow...and the path leading and guiding to the *ism*. The *bāb* is the form of the visible reality of the interiority; and he is the divine body and the tree of

³⁸ Bar-Asher - Kofsky, *The Nusayri-Alawi Religion: An Enquiry into Its Theology and Liturgy*, 2–3.

³⁹ Halm, *Shi’a Islam: From Religion to Revolution*, 29.

⁴⁰ Friedman, *The Nusayri-Alawis: An Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria*, 9.

⁴¹ Friedman, *The Nusayri-Alawis: An Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria*, 15.

⁴² Friedman, *The Nusayri-Alawis: An Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria*, 79.

⁴³ Friedman, *The Nusayri-Alawis: An Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria*, 15.

happiness (shajarat tūbā) and the Lotus (sidrat al-muntahā) and the garden of refuge (jannat al-ma'wā). To him people return and arrive, and life and death are in his hands."⁴⁴

It can be inferred from this quote that the bāb is found on the nerve point in guiding the humanity towards the divinity. Because he is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the whole universe. The bāb is also almighty being representing the transcendental and omnipotent. Accordingly, the bāb is in the form of divine manifestation, otherwise it is impossible for human being to know the divine being without the bāb. As an outcome of his mercy, the divine being has showed himself in the body of human being. Thereby, God's incarnation had occurred several times until 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, from whom then through the remaining imams to the last one, and finally appeared in the body of Ibn Nusayr. Moreover, the manifestation of the divine being as in the form of *ma'nā* and *ism* happened in seven cycles. According to a Nusayrī catechism, a member of the sect asks the following question: "How many times did our master veil himself and appear in human form? It is answered in below quotation:

"He veiled himself seven times. The first time, he veiled himself in [the figure of] Adam in his cycle and age, and was named Abel; the second time – in Noah, and was named Seth; the third time – in Jacob, and was named Joseph; the fourth time – in Moses, and was named Joshua; the fifth time – in Solomon, and was named Asaph; the sixth time – in Jesus, and was named Simon [Peter]; and the seventh and last time – in Muhammad, and was named 'Alī."⁴⁵

According to Daftary, similarly to Ismailis, the Nusayrīs also espouse a cyclical view of history, which they combine with their Neoplatonised emanational cosmogony. Furthermore, he asserts that each manifestation of the deity occurred in seven eras in the form of a trinity: two entities or persons (*aqānīm*) emanate from the divine Essence (*ma'nā*), namely, the Name (*ism* or *hijāb*) and the gate (*bāb*), through which the believer may contemplate the mystery of divinity.⁴⁶ In the last manifestation of the deity, in Islamic era, for the Nusayrīs, these two divinely posts had been represented by twelve imams and whose *bābs*. The first *bāb* was Salman al-Fārisī while Ali being the *ism*. For the Nusayrīs, the *bāb* of the eleventh imam was Ibn Nusayr, who also became the *bāb* of the last imam since the last imam went into occultation. Consequently, by becoming the heir of *bāb* line Ibn Nusayr has been in occultation since then.⁴⁷ It should be remembered that Ibn Nusayr was cursed and excommunicated from the Shi'a community because of such claims.⁴⁸

As regards as the transmigration of souls, there are two possible paths in this cycle: good and evil. For the former, the soul of a rightful Nusayrī can immigrate to a better Nusayrī's body. By becoming more righteous the soul transmigrates a better body and is eventually being exalted to the world of light. All these process is called gnosis or esoteric knowledge (*ma'rifa*) as opposite of metempsychosis (*tanāsukh*). Friedman points out that "while the gnosis, the *ma'rifa*, leads to heaven; the transmigration into inferior creatures (*musūkhīyyāt*) is considered hell."⁴⁹ In the holy book of Nusayrīs, *kitāb al-majmū'* has seven types of metempsychosis, which are classified in the

⁴⁴ Meir M. Bar-Asher - Aryeh Kofsky, *The Alawi Religion: An Anthology* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2021), 62.

⁴⁵ Bar-Asher - Kofsky, *The Alawi Religion: An Anthology*, 91.

⁴⁶ Daftary, *A History of Shi'i Islam*, 187.

⁴⁷ Başaran, *Nusayrīlik İshakīlik Alevīlik -Tarih, Literatür ve İnanç-*, 51-52.

⁴⁸ Friedman, *The Nusayri-'Alawis: An Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria*, 8.

⁴⁹ Friedman, *The Nusayri-'Alawis: An Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria*, 107.

bad category, thus far from being one of them a Nusayrī should seek a refuge to the divine. These are namely: *Faskh*, *naskh*, *maskh*, *waskh*, *raskh*, *qash*, *qashāsh*.⁵⁰ Moosa explains these sorts of metempsychosis that passing of the human soul to various types of creation: *Faskh* from human to a plant, *naskh* from human to another human, *maskh* from human to animal, *waskh* from human to dirty things, *raskh* from human into short plants, *qash* from human to a dry plant or straw, and *qashash* from human to insects (flies, ants).⁵¹ To sum up, reward and punishment happen in this world by transmigrating the souls from one body to another. As a result, the Nusayrīs do not believe in resurrection and life in hereafter.

Having affected from the influence of Imāmīyya, either by education or political discourse. According to Daftary, contemporary Nusayrīs in Syria represent two types of identity: “the more conservative members of the community, living mainly in the Jabal Ansariyya region, uphold the traditional Nusayrī doctrines and rituals, while the urban ‘Alawī groups, known mainly as Ja‘farīs, are becoming progressively assimilated into Twelver Shi‘ism.”⁵²

To conclude this section, it can be argued that the Nusayrīs have contradictories in terms of rhetoric and theology. On the one hand, they deny *hulūl* and see it in the category of *shirk* (associate a partner to Allah). On the other hand, they give all divine features and acts to human under the triad formula of *ma‘nā*, *ism*, and *bāb*. While the Twelver Shi‘a awaits the return of hidden imam; in the time of occultation, Ibn Nusayr plays pivotal role by representing the perfect form of *bāb* in guiding his society.

1.2. The Druzes and their approach to the radj‘a doctrine

The Druze sect emerged as an offshoot within Ismā‘īlī branch of Shi‘ism in the early eleventh century. The main reason for the exclusion from Ismā‘īlism is that deifying Fātimī Caliph al-Hākīm bi-Amrillah (d. 411/1021 or went into occultation).⁵³ During his reign (996-1021), al-Hākīm had unusual and contradictory practices to be implemented within the society such as, neglecting his selfcare by extending nails and beard-hair, as a caliph riding a donkey instead of a horse, forbidding women to walk on the streets, promoting night time shopping facilities, and so on.⁵⁴ It is implied that al-Hākīm wished to be regarded as a divine figure, above any rank which official Ismailism could give him.⁵⁵ Accordingly, he had brought some Ismā‘īlī preachers (*dā‘īs*), like Hasan b. Haydara al-Farganī (d. 409/1018), Nashtakin al-Darazī (d. 411/1020) and Hamza b. Ali (d. 411/1021), from Persia and Central Asia to Cairo in order to make propaganda for the public confirmation of the position. Daftary points out that these *dā‘īs* effectively founded a new religious movement, proclaiming the end of the era of Islam and the abrogation of its shari‘a. In 1017, (the opening year of the Druze calendar), Hamza and al-Darazī declared the divinity of al-Hākīm. It can be assumed that al-Darazī was so influential that, the adherents of this new movement later

⁵⁰ Salisbury, “The Book of Sulaiman’s First Ripe Fruit, Disclosing The Mysteries of the Nusairian Religion by Sulaiman Effendi of Adhanah”, 239.

⁵¹ Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shi‘ites: The Ghulat Sects* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 362–363.

⁵² Daftary, *A History of Shi‘i Islam*, 190.

⁵³ Ahmet Bağlıoğlu, *İnanç Esasları Açısından Dürzilik* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2018), 102.

⁵⁴ Halil İbrahim Bulut, *İslam Mezhepleri Tarihi* (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2016), 412.

⁵⁵ M.G.S. Hodgson, “Duru (Druzes)”, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition*, ed. B. Lewis et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 2/631.

became known as Daraziyya or Duruz; hence their general designation as Druzes.⁵⁶ In their holy book *Rasāil al-Hikmah* (the Epistles of Wisdom), the Druzes are also defined as *muwahhidūn* (monotheists) since they affirm that “there is no deity to be worshipped in the sky and no imam to be present on the earth except al-Hākīm”⁵⁷

It is obvious that the Druzes emerged within esoteric Ismā'īlī milieu. The Druzes have further advanced that esoteric approach resulting in a number of exaggerations. Until al-Hākīm, Fātimī caliphs maintained Ismā'īlī belief that the imamate duty as the representation of divine vicegerent on the earth. In the reign of al-Hākīm, however, Ismā'īlī esotericism was reached its peak by the conception of God. According to the Ismaili doctrine, the imamate line maintained with the seventh imam, Ismail b. Ja'far (d. 138/755-6) who died while his father Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 148/765) was still alive. Hence, they are also called *Sab'iyya* (sevener) since they believe in the imamate must continue with Ismail and his descendants. They have systematised every doctrine with the number of seven that the prophethood and imamate are all based on cyclical turn of seven such as seven *nātiq* (speaker-prophets), seven *wasī/sāmit/asās* (silent) and seven *imam* (leader). Cosmogony in Ismā'īlī doctrine is also explained by seven eras which ended with the prophet Muhammad as *nātiq*, 'Alī as *wāsī*, and Ismā'īl as *imam*. It is stated that Ismā'īlī influence on the Druze belief so fundamental that the Druzes borrowed from them many ideas varying from cosmogony, history, eschatology to religious duties and rites. For the Ismā'īlīs, *mahdī* is Muhammad b. Ismail who will return and establish justice rule in the world before the end of the world. The history of human being will end with his imamate that he is alone authority all over the issues in the final day.⁵⁸ However, this conception was slightly changed by the Druze theorists. As regards as the return of imam from the occultation, when al-Hākīm reappear to conquer and establish justice in the whole world, the Druzes will be the rulers of all mankind.⁵⁹ It shows that the *radj'a* doctrine not only does al-Hākīm include but also the whole Druze society whose souls already incarnated into highest level on the excellent bodies of the Druzes.

Although there is a great deal impact of Ismā'īlīs on the Druzes, it seems that the most important feature distinguishing the latter from the former is the conception of God with the principle of manifestation (*tajallī*).⁶⁰ In the Druze sources, seventy-three manifestations of God are mentioned. Hamza b. 'Alī explained in his epistles some of these manifestations, which began with the maqam of *Aliyyu'l-A'lā* and lasted with the maqam of *imam* in which represented al-Hākīm's body.⁶¹ According to the Druze sources, God has a divine (*lāhūtī*) and a humane (*nāsūtī*) aspect. His divine aspect cannot be perceived by anyone. Because he is far away from all perceptions, indeterminate and undefinable. Another dimension of God is his *nāsūtī* aspect. Since he is imperceptible and beyond perception in his divine aspect, he manifested himself to human beings in his humane aspect. Since the highest position is imamate, he manifested himself in the person of imam al-

⁵⁶ Daftary, *A History of Shi'i Islam*, 121.

⁵⁷ Aytakin Şenzybek, *Resâilü'l-Hikme'ye Göre Dürzi İnanç Esasları* (Konya: Selçuk Üniversitesi, Doktora Tezi, 2008), 11.

⁵⁸ Bağlıoğlu, *İnanç Esasları Açısından Dürzilik*, 52-53.

⁵⁹ Hodgson, “Duruz (Druzes)”, 2/634.

⁶⁰ Şenzybek, *Resâilü'l-Hikme'ye Göre Dürzi İnanç Esasları*, 126.

⁶¹ Ali Avcu, “Bâtınî Ekolleri Anlamada Anahtar Bir Kavram: Ezille/Gölgeler Nazariyesi [A Key Concept in Understanding of Esoteric Sects: The Theory of Shadows]”, *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 20/2 (2016), 127.

Hākīm. However, despite this, his divine aspect is not in question in this manifestation. He was manifested only in his humane aspect.⁶²

Existing *tanāsukh* understanding among the Ismailis further was developed by Hamza b. ‘Ali in the formula of *taqammūs*, which literally meant changing someone’s shirt. According to him, the number of souls has never been changed since the beginning of the creation and it is expected every soul to reach its perfection through transmigration.⁶³ There is not any transmigration between the species like happened in Nusayrīs, by contrast each soul transmigrates from a human body to another until it reaches perfection and then ascends to the stars, nearest position to God.⁶⁴ Once a body dies, the soul transmigrates to another body, which is a vehicle for the soul in its journey to acquire the knowledge of existence and happiness. Otherwise, he will go backwards in ignorance and will remain in the centre as well as experiencing contradiction and confusion because of a body that his ego has perverted from its natural position.⁶⁵ For the Druzes, it can not be thinkable the death of a soul, nor its resurrection. They interpret the existence of heaven and hell in an allegorical way. Accordingly, judgement day is the final stage in the development of souls that transmigration into different bodies will last at this stage. Regarding *radj’a* doctrine, the Druzes have the belief of re-appearance of both Hamza b. ‘Ali and al-Hākīm. According to the Druze sources, as soon as Hamza b. ‘Ali arrives to Mecca, God's second appearance in the form of al-Hākīm will happen with his sword in his hand. In the meantime, al-Hākīm will give the sword to Hamza to carry out punishment and rewarding process. Hamza b. Ali describes this as following way: "On the day of my resurrection, it will be by my hand to reward those who obey and follow what has been revealed, to punish those who rebel and deviate from the revealed truth with the sword of Mawlāna al-Hākīm, and to repay all creatures for what they have done."⁶⁶ For the Druzes, it seems that the judgement day will happen in this world just before all souls reach their final stage. Hence, they reject resurrection or life in hereafter, instead they believe in that the reward or heaven for the good souls is having the divine knowledge, otherwise punishment is hellfire or to be deprived of this divine knowledge.⁶⁷

In conclusion, the *radj’a* doctrine was further developed by the Druze theorists that not only al-Hākīm but also Hamza b. Ali would return to judge all souls who had reached the final stage of their metempsychosis. No more transmigration of souls will happen at this stage. Thus, having been rewarded with the divine knowledge, the Druzes or *muwahhidūn* will live in this world forever.⁶⁸

1.3. The Bābī-Bahāī movement and their approach to the *radj’a* doctrine

Another extreme interpretation regarding the *radj’a* doctrine within Shi‘ism emerged with Bābism, in Iran, in the 19th century. The decline of the Safāwī state brought political threats and

⁶² Avcu, "Bâtînî Ekolleri Anlamada Anahtar Bir Kavram: Ezille/Gölgeler Nazariyesi", 126.

⁶³ Bağlıoğlu, *İnanç Esasları Açısından Dürzilik*, 54.

⁶⁴ Hodgson, "Duruz (Druzes)", 2/634.

⁶⁵ Bağlıoğlu, *İnanç Esasları Açısından Dürzilik*, 178.

⁶⁶ Şenzybek, *Resâilü'l-Hikme'ye Göre Dürzi İnanç Esasları*, 418.

⁶⁷ Bağlıoğlu, *İnanç Esasları Açısından Dürzilik*, 190.

⁶⁸ Şenzybek, *Resâilü'l-Hikme'ye Göre Dürzi İnanç Esasları*, 419–420.

challenges that led to the establishment of a new central state under the Qajār dynasty to preserve Iran's territorial integrity. Like other Muslim territories, Iran became under the influence of European colonialism. As far as theological issues are concerned within Shi'ism some ulama prepared religious formulas in order to solve the problems, which the society tackle with. One of that Shi'i ulama was Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i (d. 1241/1826) who established a sufi order (*Shaykhism*) within Shi'ism and proposed "perfect Shi'i idea (*Kāmil Shi'i*)" as a preparation for returning the hidden imam. As a pupil of al-Ahsa'i, Kazim Rashti (d. 1259/1843) succeeded in the leadership of Shaykhism and implied that *bāb* was amongst the members of the cult. But he did not appoint anyone to be a successor after him. As a result, the cult fragmented into two main factions: one grouped around Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad Shirāzī, the *bāb* (d. 1266/1850) and the other around Hajī Mullā Muhammad Karim Khan Kirmānī (d. 1288/1871). These two factions went on completely different routes, the first moving away from the exoteric practices of Islam and focusing on the revelation of its esoteric (*bātini*) characteristics, and finally on a new revelation following the emergence of the hidden imam; the second emphasizing the continuing role of the Prophet and the Imams and seeking accommodation with the Shi'i majority which had formerly excommunicated the founder of the school and his successor.⁶⁹

In 1844, Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad initially claimed to be the *bāb* of the hidden imam and then moved a step further by announcing himself as the expected *mahdī*. He began to propaganda tours in Shiraz, Isfahan, Tehran, and Tabriz and recruited 18 leading figures within the Shaykhism by taking their allegiance. These last developments caused turmoil within the Shi'i society that was eagerly awaiting the return of the hidden imam. The emergence of the Bābī movement and its extremist ideas led the Shi'i ulama to issue a *fatwā* on the apostasy of Mirza 'Alī Muhammad. Due to his claims to be the *bāb* and the expected *mahdī*, he was executed - in Tabriz in 1850.⁷⁰ After him, the Bābī movement transformed into Bahāism and his esoteric views have been further elaborated by Mirza Husayn Ali and Mirza Yahya. Based on the statements of claimed Bābī holy book *al-Bayān* written by 'Alī Muhammad, he explained that he was sent as a prophet like the prophet Muhammad was sent.⁷¹ Therefore, Mirza Husayn 'Ali (*Bahāullah*) is believed that the expected one in all religions and "the one whom Allah will reveal" foretold by the Bāb.⁷² In *al-Bayān*, according to Mirza 'Alī Muhammad, the validity of the Prophet Muhammad's message lasted with the time of twelve imams that the last imam's occultation a millennium had passed and as a new revelation, his turn began in 1844.⁷³ In believing so, the Bāb claims that *shari'a* law brought by Prophet Muhammad has been abolished and replaced with the best in order to bring humanity to perfection.⁷⁴ According to Bābīs-Bahāīs, the prophethood continued with Mirza 'Alī Muhammad and Mirza Husayn 'Ali, as the most recent manifestation of God (*mazhār*). Even these

⁶⁹ Denis Martin Maceoin, *From Shaykhism to Babism: A Study in Charismatic Renewal in Shi'i Islam* (Cambridge: King's College, Ph.D Thesis, 1979), 114–115.

⁷⁰ Fatih Topaloğlu, "Bābīlik-Bahāīlik", *İslâm Mezhepleri Tarihi*, ed. Mehmet Saffet Sarıkaya - Mehmet Ümit (Ankara: Nobel, 2022), 316–317.

⁷¹ Topaloğlu, "Bābīlik-Bahāīlik", 317.

⁷² *Bahai Dini Tarihi, Öğretileri ve Toplumsal Çalışmaları* (İstanbul: Bahai Eserleri Basım Dağıtım, 2016), 19.

⁷³ Topaloğlu, "Bābīlik-Bahāīlik", 321.

⁷⁴ Ethem Ruhi Fırlalı - Ramazan Şimşek, "Bahāīlik ve El-Kitabu'l-Akdes (Türkçe Çeviri)", *E-Makalat Mezhep Araştırmaları Dergisi* III/2 (2011), 14–16.

two are classified with great prophets as well as other religious figures. The below quote describes the importance of that last manifestation.

“The major manifestations of God that we know of are Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, and more recently the Bab and Baha'ullah. Their common goal is to tame the souls and correct the morals of all the people of the world.”⁷⁵

As regards as the *radj'a* doctrine in Imāmī Shi'a, the idea of perfect Shi'i offered by al-Ahsā'i transformed into *bāb* in the hands of Kazim Rashtī, and finally gave fruit as *bāb* and the expected saviour (*al-mahdī*) commencing another revelation of God to humanity. Because of their heretic views, Ahmad al-Ahsā'i, Kazim Rashtī, and 'Alī Muhammad (the Bāb), they were all condemned as unbelievers.⁷⁶ It can be concluded that *radj'a* doctrine of Shi'a has been shaped as prophethood by the hands of Bābīs and Bahāīs. In addition to that Hurūfism had a great influence on the construction of theology of Bābīs and Bahāīs.⁷⁷ Because all religious duties and beliefs are formulated based on numerical values of numbers, particularly number nineteen.

Unlike the Nusayrīs and the Druzes, Bābīs and Bahāīs do not necessarily believe in reincarnation of Allah's soul to human bodies. However, they recommence revelation after a millennium of the twelfth imam's occultation. According to them, the prophethood seems to continue in a cycling process with every thousand year until resurrection.

Conclusion

This study reflects the radical views of some Shi'i *ghulāt* sects on the doctrine of *radj'a*, which many Shi'ites today await the return of the hidden imam from the major occultation (*ghaybat al-kubrā*). Contrary to the conventional approach of the Shi'ites, the Nusayrīs, the Druzes and the Bābī-Bahāīs have interpreted the *radj'a* doctrine and reached extreme results that caused their excommunication from the mainstream Shi'a. It seems that such radical approach has entailed a systematic rejection of existing beliefs and rituals in order to justify these extreme theories. It can be predicted that previous exaggerators within Shi'a had impacts on the formation of radical views of these sub-groups. Esoteric method of Isma'ilism has a great influence on the theology of the Nusayrīs and the Druzes. As having been detailed above, the Nusayrīs explain the *bāb* formula based on the Isma'ili *nātiq* and *sāmit* doctrine. God incarnates between these terms and finally takes the body of *bāb*, who is Ibn Nusayr. In similar vein, the Druzes as an offshoot of Isma'ilism see al-Hākīm as the manifestation of God. These interpretations are the peak of *radj'a* doctrine as a result of radical approach of these two sects in glorifying a human being with divine attributes. The religious systems of the Druzes and the Nusayrīs are strikingly similar, with one major exception: al-Hākīm is God to the Druzes, while 'Alī is God to the Nusayrīs.⁷⁸ This is not the case with Bābīs-Bahāīs in terms of glorifying a human being with the divine attributes. However, they clearly deny the finality of the prophethood and glorify a human being with prophetic attributes. Based on *radj'a* doctrine, they developed a perfect Shi'i formula as a preparation for the imam's return, but the imam reappeared in the mission of a prophet abrogating previous *shari'a* laws.

⁷⁵ Bahai Dini: Tarihi, Öğretileri ve Toplumsal Çalışmaları, 41.

⁷⁶ Maceoin, *From Shaykhism to Babism: A Study in Charismatic Renewal in Shī'i Islam*, 36.

⁷⁷ Fiğlalı - Şimşek, “Bahâilik ve El-Kitabu'l-Akdes (Türkçe Çeviri)”, 31.

⁷⁸ Moosa, *Extremist Shi'ites: The Ghulat Sects*, 318.

Their theological system is also based on an extremely esoteric sect, Hurūfism as well as *bātinī* exegesis.

Bibliography

- Ash‘arī, Abū al-Hasan ‘Alī ibn İsmā‘īl ibn İshāq al-. Maqālāt al-islāmīyīn wa-ihtilāf al-musallīn. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1963.
- Avcu, Ali. ‘A Key Concept in Understanding of Esoteric Sects: The Theory of Shadows’. Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi 20/2 (2016), 101–135.
- Baghdādī, Abu Mansur Abdulqahir b. Tahir b. Muhammad al-Tamimī Abdulqahir al-. Al-Farq Bayna’l-Firāq Wa Bayānu’l-Firqah al-Nājiya Minhum. Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1995.
- Bağlıoğlu, Ahmet. İnanç Esasları Açısından Dürzîlik. Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2. Basım., 2018.
- Bar-Asher, Meir M. - Kofsky, Aryeh. The Alawi Religion: An Anthology. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2021.
- Bar-Asher, Meir M. - Kofsky, Aryeh. The Nusayri-Alawi Religion: An Enquiry into Its Theology and Liturgy. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Başaran, Reyhan Erdoğdu. ‘Er-Risâletü’l-Numâniyye Eseri Doğrultusunda Nusayrî-Alevî İnançında Tevhîd İlkesinin İzahı’. e-Makalat Mezhep Araştırmaları Dergisi 14/2 (2021), 948–969. <https://doi.org/10.18403/emakalat.1023074>
- Başaran, Reyhan Erdoğdu. Nusayrîlik İshakîlik Alevîlik -Tarih, Literatür ve İnanç-. Ankara: Eskiyei Yayınları, 2023.
- Bulut, Halil İbrahim. İslam Mezhepleri Tarihi. Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2016.
- Bulut, Halil İbrahim. ‘Şii Fırkalarda Gaybet ve Ric’at İnanç’. İslâmiyât Dergisi 8/1 (2004), 139–156.
- Daftary, Farhad. A History of Shi’i Islam. London: I.B.Tauris Publishers, 2013.
- Fığlalı, Ethem Ruhi - Şimşek, Ramazan. ‘Bahâilik ve El-Kitabu’l-Akdes (Türkçe Çeviri)’. E-Makalat Mezhep Araştırmaları Dergisi III/2 (2011), 7–144.
- Friedman, Yaron. The Nusayri-’Alawis: An Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Gimaret, D. ‘Tanasukh’. The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition. ed. P.J. Bearman et al. 10/181–183. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Halm, H. ‘Nusayriyya’. The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition. ed. C.E. Bosworth et al. 8/145–148. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- Halm, Heinz. Shi’a Islam: From Religion to Revolution. trans. Allison Brown. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997.
- Harman, Ömer Faruk. ‘Beklenen Kurtarıcı İnançının İslâm Öncesi Dinî Arka Planı’. Beklenen Kurtarıcı İnanç. ed. Yusuf Şevki Yavuz. 41–86. İstanbul: Kuramer Yayınları, 2017.
- Hodgson, M.G.S. ‘Duruz (Druzes)’. The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition. ed. B. Lewis et al. 2/631–634. Leiden: Brill, 1991.

- Ibn Hazm, Abu Muhammad b. Ali b. Ahmad b. Saed al-Zahiri. *Al-Fasl Fi'l-Milāl Wa'l-Ahwa' Wa'l-Nihāl*. 5 Volume. Beirut: Dār al-Jeyl, 1996.
- Kohlberg, Etan. 'Radj'a'. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition*. ed. C.E. Bosworth et al. 8/371–373. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- Macdonald, D.B. 'Ghayba'. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition*. ed. B. Lewis et al. 2/1026. Leiden: Brill, 1991.
- Maceoin, Denis Martin. *From Shaykhism to Babism: A Study in Charismatic Renewal in Shi'ī Islam*. Cambridge: King's College, Ph.D Thesis, 1979.
- Massignon, L. - [G.C. Anawati]. 'Hulūl'. *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition*. ed. B. Lewis et al. 3/570–571. Leiden: Brill, 1986.
- Moosa, Matti. *Extremist Shi'ites: The Ghulat Sects*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988.
- Mufid, Abu Abdullah Ibn al-Muallim Muhammad al-Shaikh al-. *Awāilu'l-Maqālāt*. Qumm: al-Mu'tamar al-ʿAlamī li-Alfiya al-Shaikh al-Mufid, 1992.
- Nasr, S.H. 'Ithna-Ashariyya'. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition*. ed. B. Lewis et al. 3/277–279. Leiden: Brill, 1986.
- Nawbakhti, Abu Muhammad Hasan b. Musa b. Hasan al- - Qummī, Sa'd b. Abdullah al-. *Kitab Al-Firaq al-Shi'a*. Istanbul: Matbaat al-Dawla, 1931.
- Sadūq, al-Shaikh al-, Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. ʿAli b. Husain Ibn Babawayh al-Qūmmī. *Al-I'tiqadāt*. Qumm: al-Mu'tamar al-ʿAlamī li-Alfiya al-Shaikh al-Mufid, 1992.
- Salisbury, Edward E. 'The Book of Sulaiman's First Ripe Fruit, Disclosing The Mysteries of the Nusairian Religion by Sulaiman Effendi of Adhanah'. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* VIII/2 (1864), 227–308.
- Şenzybek, Aytekin. *Resâilü'l-Hikme'ye Göre Dürzi İnanç Esasları*. Konya: Selçuk Üniversitesi, Doktora Tezi, 2008.
- Shahrastani, Abu'l-Fath Tâcuddîn Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Karim al-. *al-Milal wa'l-Nihal*. Damascus: Muassasah al-Risalah Nashirun, 2015.
- Topaloğlu, Fatih. 'Bâbîlik-Bahâîlik'. *İslâm Mezhepleri Tarihi*. ed. Mehmet Saffet Sarıkaya - Mehmet Ümit. 313–327. Ankara: Nobel, 2022.
- Turan, Ahmet. 'Kitâbu'l- Mecmu'u'nun Tercümesi'. *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 8 (1996), 5–18.
- Watt, William Montgomery. *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*. Oxford: Oneworld, 1998.
- Zanjānī, Ibrahim al-Musawī al-. *Aqāid al-Imāmiyya al-Ithnā As'ariyyā*. 2 Volume. Qumm: Qumm Intisharat Hadrat Mahdī, 1984.
- Bahai Dini: Tarihi, Öğretileri ve Toplumsal Çalışmaları. İstanbul: Bahai Eserleri Basım Dağıtım, 2016.