

Abu l-Qāsim al-Balkhī al-Ka‘bī’s Doctrine of the *Imāma**

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Introduction

Abu l-Qāsim ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd al-Ka‘bī/al-Balkhī (d. 319/931) was the last major theologian in the Baghdādī Mu‘tazilī School.¹ Though a native of Khurāsān, where he also spent most of his life, it was in Baghdad that he was trained in *‘ilm al-kalām* under Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāt (d. c. 300/913).² Al-Ka‘bī belonged to the generation of Mu‘tazilīs who struggled to justify their religious legitimacy at a time when the *abl al-ḥadīth* (the Traditionalists) had made final strides in establishing their spiritual and religious authority as orthodox Islam (*abl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a*) under the post-*mihna* policies of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs.³ The former Mu‘tazilī disciple of Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī (d. 303/915-6), Abu l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/935-36) became, no doubt, the most memorable representative of the struggle of al-Ka‘bī’s generation of Mu‘tazilīs to gain religious legitimacy. Al-Ash‘arī’s renown is partially explained by his selfconscious turn to Traditionalism and coinage of a traditionalist *‘ilm al-kalām* that was later to develop into the “Ash‘arī” school.⁴ Al-Ka‘bī provided other theological solutions to the same challenges that were faced by al-Ash‘arī, and examining his theology remains necessary for a full understanding of the predicament of his generation of Mu‘tazilīs.

This contribution examines al-Ka‘bī’s doctrine of the *imāma*, which is essential for situating him, along with the Baghdādī school in particular and the Mu‘tazilīs in general, in relation to other schools and sects, namely Imāmism, Zaydism and Sunnism, which were undergoing the last phases of their formative periods. Before I turn to his doctrine, a note on the nature of the available sources for examining al-Ka‘bī’s doctrines in general is necessary here. None of

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1 For an overview of the doctrines of al-Ka‘bī see Josef van Ess, “Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī al-Ka‘bī,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1, pp. 359-62, and ‘Abbās Ziriyāb, “Abu l-Qāsim Balkhī,” in *Dā‘irat al-ma‘ārif-i buzurg-i islāmī*, vol. 6, pp. 151-56.

2 Abu l-Ḥusayn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān al-Khayyāt, cf. GALS, vol. 1, p. 341.

3 On the post-*mihna* policies of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs, see Dominique Sourdel, “La politique religieuse des successeurs d’al-Mutawakkil,” *Studia Islamica* 13 (1960), pp. 5-21.

4 Richard M. Frank, “Ash‘arīyah,” in *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol. 1, pp. 449-55.

al-Ka'bi's approximately 48 cited or quoted works is extant, with the exception of his *Qabūl al-akhhbār wa-ma'rifat al-rijāl* and a section of his *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyin* entitled *Dhikr al-Mu'tazila*, preserved in a unique manuscript edited by Fu'ād Sayyid.⁵ Thus, al-Ka'bi's doctrine on the *imāma*, as well as all his theological doctrines, survives in fragmentary quotations in the works of his opponents. This article reconstructs al-Ka'bi's doctrine on the *imāma* from the fragments that are quoted in five theological traditions. Both the manner in which al-Ka'bi's doctrines are quoted as well as the textual contexts in which these quotes appear will be given priority for our understanding of his views and how they stand in relation to those of their predecessors in the Baghdādī Mu'tazilī school. Therefore, before I turn to reconstruct and examine al-Ka'bi's doctrine, I will first present the views of the Baghdādī Mu'tazilīs before al-Ka'bi.⁶

I. The Baghdādī Mu'tazilī Doctrines on the Imāma Prior to al-Ka'bi

Unlike the Baṣran Mu'tazilī school that began with a noncommittal position regarding the superiority of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/660) and only reached a pro-'Alid position with Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī in the beginning of the classical period,⁷ the Baghdādī Mu'tazilī school upheld, throughout its history but with varying degrees of emphasis, the doctrine of the *imāma* of the *mafdūl* (the less excellent candidate). This doctrine maintains that the *imāma* of the less excellent candidate is acceptable. The validity of the *imāma* of the first two caliphs, despite the presence of the most excellent candidate, namely 'Alī, follows from this doctrine.⁸ This, however, is not to say that important details about the doctrine of the *imāma* were identical for all Baghdādī Mu'tazilīs; significant variants survive both in Baghdādī Mu'tazilī primary sources and in other sources. The Baghdādī Mu'tazilīs, however, held different positions on other aspects of the *imāma* doc-

⁵ For a list of al-Ka'bi's works, see Fu'ād Sayyid (ed.), *Faḍl al-i'tizāl wa-ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila*, Tunis [1974], pp. 46-55.

⁶ Only two titles of al-Ka'bi's lost works include an exclusive discussion on the subject matter of the *imāma*, *Jawāb al-mustarshid fi l-imāma* (*A Response to the Inquirer about the imāma*) (cf. Yāqūt b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*. *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās, Beirut 1993, vol. 4, p. 1493) and *Kitāb al-Kalām fi l-imāma 'alā Ibn Qība* (*The Book on the imāma in refutation of Ibn Qība*) (cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, ed. Riḍā Tajaddud, Tehran 1973 [repr. Beirut 1988], p. 219).

⁷ For a general overview of the Baṣran Mu'tazilī position on the *imāma*, see Wilferd Madelung, "Imāma," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New Edition, vol. 3, pp. 1163-69.

⁸ See below for the doctrine of each member of the Baghdādī Mu'tazilī school on this question. Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd (d. 656/1258) presents a unified Baghdādī Mu'tazilī front on this question (with the exception of Ja'far b. Ḥarb (d. 236/850); see *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, ed. Ḥasan Tamīmī, Beirut 1963, vol. 1, p. 28), while al-Jishumī (d. 494/1101) stresses the prominence of this position among "those who hold pro-Shī'ī views among the Mu'tazilīs like al-Iskāfī and Ibn al-Mu'tamir (*man tasbayya'a min al-Mu'tazila*)" (*al-Uyūn fi l-radd 'alā abl al-bida'*, MS Milano, Ambrosiana B 66, f. 8b).

trine, most importantly about the opponents of ʿAlī and the caliphate of ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (d. 23/644). The only two extant sources on the Baghdādī Muʿtazilī positions on the *imāma* written by Baghdādī Muʿtazilīs are Pseudo al-Nāshīʾ al-Akbar's (d. 293/906) *Kitāb Uṣūl al-niḥāl* and al-Khayyāṭ's *Kitāb al-Intiṣār*, written in refutation of the accusations of Ibn al-Rāwandī (fl. 4th/10th century).⁹ After the generation of Jaʿfar b. Mubashshir (d. 234/849) and Jaʿfar b. Ḥarb (d. 236/850), the only available sources for the Baghdādī Muʿtazilī doctrines on the *imāma*, including those of al-Kaʿbī, are non-Baghdādī sources.

Differences among the Baghdādī Muʿtazilī positions with regard to ʿUthmān and the opponents of ʿAlī display certain similarities to those of the Batrī Zaydīs who also accepted the first two caliphs through the doctrine of the *imāma* of the *mafdūl*, but who rejected the legitimacy of the last six years of the caliphate of ʿUthmān and rejected all the opponents of ʿAlī.¹⁰ Among our sources, al-Malaṭī (d. 377/987) stands alone in listing the Baghdādī Muʿtazilī school as a sub-sect of the Zaydīs.¹¹ Madelung explains this attribution on Malaṭī's part by the similarity between the Baghdādī Muʿtazilī school and the Batrī position on *tafḍīl* (as accepting the less excellent candidate as legitimate) and pertinently notes that there is no historical connection between the Baghdādī Muʿtazilīs and the earlier Zaydīs, namely those before Abu l-Qāsim al-Raṣṣī (d. 246/860).¹²

Meanwhile, we find this Batrī position identically formulated in the work of the founder of the Baghdādī school, Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir (d. between 210/825 and 226/840).¹³ No source explicitly lists Bishr as a Batrī Zaydī.¹⁴ According to him, only the first six years of the *imāma* of ʿUthmān are acceptable, and he rejects al-Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām (d. 36/656), and all other opponents of ʿAlī.¹⁵ In agreement with the Batrī school, Bishr also held that anyone who fought ʿAlī was

⁹ Josef van Ess, *Frühe Muʿtazilitische Häresiographie. Zwei Werke des Nāshīʾ al-akbar (gest. 293 H.)*, Beirut 1971. On the possible authorship of this work by Jaʿfar b. Ḥarb and its false ascription to al-Nāshīʾ al-Akbar, see Wilferd Madelung, "Frühe muʿtazilitische Häresiographie. Das *Kitāb al-Uṣūl* des Gaʿfar b. Ḥarb?," *Der Islam* 57 (1980), pp. 220-36.

¹⁰ Al-Jishumī, *al-ʿUyūn fī l-radd ʿalā abl al-bidaʿ*, f. 8a: "The Batris, the followers of al-Ḥasan b. Ṣāliḥ, Kuthayyir al-Nawāʾ and Sulaymān b. Jarīr upheld that the *imāma* is valid by the contract of one man from among the best of Muslims, and is acceptable in the less excellent. They [the Batris] also uphold the *imāma* of the two shaykhs (i.e. Abū Bakr and ʿUmar)." On the Batris and their difference from the Jārūdī branch of the Zaydīs, see Wilferd Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehre der Zaiditen*, Berlin 1965, pp. 49-51.

¹¹ Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Malaṭī, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa-l-radd ʿalā abl al-abrūʾ wa-l-bidaʿ*, ed. Muḥammad Zahid b. al-Ḥasan al-Kawtharī, Baghdad 1968, p. 27.

¹² Madelung, "Frühe muʿtazilitische Häresiographie," p. 228; idem, *al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm*, pp. 42, 78.

¹³ Pseudo al-Nāshīʾ, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-niḥāl*, in van Ess, *Frühe Muʿtazilitische Häresiographie*, p. 52.

¹⁴ Al-Jishumī, *al-ʿUyūn fī l-radd ʿalā abl al-bidaʿ*, ff. 8b-9a. Al-Jishumī draws attention to the similarity between the Batris and "some of the Muʿtazilīs" based on the question of the *Imāma* of the *mafdūl* "upholding *tafḍīl* is the way of the Batris and those who professed the Shiʿī position among the Muʿtazilīs, such as al-Iskāfī and Ibn al-Muʿtamir and others."

¹⁵ Pseudo al-Nāshīʾ, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-niḥāl*, pp. 57-58.

in the wrong.¹⁶ Later Baghdādī Muʿtazilis would distance themselves from this latter position of Bishr. We can therefore safely assume that al-Malaṭī had Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir in mind when he states that the Baghdādī Muʿtazilis are a subsect of the Zaydis.

Abū Mūsā al-Murdār (d. 226/841), Bishr's disciple, maintained his teacher's doctrine on the *imāma* of the *mafdūl*.¹⁷ As to al-Murdār's position with regard to ʿUthmān and his killers, the sources disagree about where he stood on this question. Al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) reports that al-Murdār deemed both ʿUthmān and his murderers to be grave sinners. According to al-Murdār, however, ʿUthmān's grave sin could not justify his murder.¹⁸ Al-Khayyāt, however, defends al-Murdār and Jaʿfar b. Mubashshir against Ibn al-Rāwandī's accusations that they held that ʿUthmān and his betrayers (*khālidīhi*) were grave sinners and that both men considered the caliph an unbeliever (*tabarraʿū minhu*). Rather al-Khayyāt holds that al-Murdār refrained from making any statement about ʿUthmān and those who betrayed him but condemned to hell those who killed him.¹⁹ According to al-Baghdādī, al-Murdār condemned both ʿUthmān and his murderers [to hell].²⁰ For al-Khayyāt, however, al-Murdār only condemned ʿUthmān's murderer [to hell]²¹ but refrained from judging ʿUthmān and his opponents who betrayed him (*al-wuqūf fī ʿUthmān wa-khālidīhi*). Clearly there is a disparity between al-Baghdādī and al-Khayyāt's reports on al-Murdār; a disparity that requires an explanation. In the case of al-Khayyāt he held an anti-Shīʿī bias in general and an anti-Twelve Shīʿī one in particular. This bias can explain why he was concerned to cast al-Murdār in the most possible proto-Sunnī guise. So we find al-Khayyāt recount that al-Murdār never condemned either ʿUthmān or his opponents. Meanwhile, al-Baghdādī was less concerned with casting al-Murdār in any favorable fashion in Ashʿarī eyes, and committed to highlighting any pro-Shīʿī sentiment al-Murdār may have ever expressed. Al-Khayyāt's presentation of al-Murdār opts to emphasize his condemnation of the murder of ʿUthmān and his refraining from condemning the political stance of the two parties, namely ʿUthmān and his opponents. Although we cannot accuse al-Khayyāt of straightforward lying to cover up for al-Murdār's pro-Shīʿī position, he was clearly presenting the information to appeal to the post-*mihna* audience whose

¹⁶ Abu Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-shīʿa*, ed. Hellmut Ritter, Istanbul 1931, pp. 13-14; ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, Baghdad 1963, p. 292.

¹⁷ Pseudo al-Nāshīʿ, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-niḥāl*, p. 52.

¹⁸ Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 288.

¹⁹ Al-Khayyāt, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār wa-l-radd ʿalā Ibn al-Rāwandī al-mulḥid*, ed. Albert Nader, Beirut 1957, p. 74.

²⁰ Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 288: *wa-zaʿama al-maʿrūf minhum bi-l-Murdār anna ʿUthmān fa-saqa wa-anna qātīlīhi fasaqū aydan li-anna fisq ʿUthmān lam yūjīb qatlabu, fa-ʿalā qawlibī yakūnu kilā l-fariqayn fi l-nār.*

²¹ Al-Khayyāt, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār*, p. 74: *al-barāʿa min qātīlīhi wa-shahāda ʿalayhim bi-l-nār.*

views were influenced by the conscious pro-*ahl al-ḥadīth* policy of the caliph al-Mutawakkil (232/847-247/861).²²

Hence we are more prudent to accept al-Baghdādī's rendering of al-Murdār's doctrine of the *imāma*. In the case of Bishr, al-Khayyāṭ chooses to remain silent about his position on ʿĀ'isha (d. 58/678), the widow of the Prophet, Ṭalḥa b. ʿUbayd Allāh (d. 36/656) and al-Zubayr as well as his condemnation of the last years of ʿUthmān, since without a doubt Bishr's position does not serve the self-image that al-Khayyāṭ was trying to nurture about the Muʿtazilī sectarian position in his *Kitāb al-Intiṣār*.

In the third generation of Baghdādī Muʿtazilīs, the generation of al-Murdār's students, namely Jaʿfar b. Ḥarb and Jaʿfar b. al-Mubashshir, the Baghdādī Muʿtazilī position on the *imāma* of ʿUthmān developed separate tendencies. One tendency returned to the non-committal stance of Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/748); we encounter it in Ibn al-Mubashshir who refrains from making any statement about ʿUthmān and the ones who betrayed him.²³ The other tendency grew closer to the proto-Sunnī position, as with Jaʿfar b. Ḥarb who accepted the *wilāya* (rule) of ʿUthmān, dropping any conditions for accepting the legitimacy of ʿUthmān's last six years.²⁴ According to al-Jishumī's account, Ibn Ḥarb takes some (further) steps towards the proto-Sunnī position: he gives up altogether on deciding who is better, ʿAlī or Abū Bakr (d. 11/632). He forsakes the doctrine of *imāmat al-mafḍūl* yet keeps his preference for ʿAlī over ʿUthmān.²⁵ However, with regard to the killers of ʿUthmān, both Jaʿfar b. Ḥarb and Jaʿfar b. Mubashshir agree on consigning them to hell and they both accept the repentance of ʿĀ'isha, Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr. This latter stance on the repentance of ʿAlī's enemies represents a pro-Sunnī position that none of the Baghdādī Muʿtazilīs had adopted thus far.²⁶

Yet the Baghdādī school was still to bring forth a strong pro-ʿAlid in Abū Jaʿfar al-Iskāfī (d. 240/854), a disciple of Ibn Ḥarb who, as we have just seen, had distanced himself from the Batrīs in his position on ʿUthmān. As with al-Murdār, al-Khayyāṭ chooses to downplay al-Iskāfī's pro-Shīʿī views in his doctrine on the *imāma*. Thus we find al-Khayyāṭ stating that al-Iskāfī's position on ʿUthmān is parallel to that of Jaʿfar b. Ḥarb, where al-Iskāfī is described as accepting ʿUthmān's *wilāya* (rule), deeming his murderers worthy of hell, and accepting the repentance of ʿĀ'isha, Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr.²⁷ Al-Khayyāṭ attributes no pro-Shīʿī

²² For a discussion of the political and intellectual climate in the immediate aftermath of the *miḥna*, which is centered on key Baghdādī Muʿtazilī figures, see Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam* 1-6, Berlin 1991-97, vol. 4, pp. 88-119.

²³ Al-Khayyāṭ, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār*, p. 74.

²⁴ Al-Khayyāṭ, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār*, p. 74.

²⁵ Al-Jishumī, *al-ʿUyūn fi l-radd ʿalā ahl al-bidaʿ*, f. 93a.

²⁶ Al-Khayyāṭ, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār*, p. 74.

²⁷ Al-Khayyāṭ, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār*, pp. 75-76.

position to al-Iskāfi regarding those who did not fight on ‘Alī’s behalf, because al-Iskāfi is said to have not condemned them as deserving hell.²⁸ Al-Khayyāt was, however, aware of the “extreme” pro-Shī‘ī tendency that was attributed to al-Iskāfi. In contrast to these statements he reports that in none of al-Iskāfi’s work does he find anything that would attest to extreme Shī‘ī views, while recognizing that al-Iskāfi was among the pro-Shī‘ī Mu‘tazilis.²⁹

But unlike our sources on al-Murdār’s doctrine on the *imāma*, with al-Iskāfi we have more than one source that confirms that his pro-Shī‘ī views were more than what al-Khayyāt had wished to acknowledge. These sources are al-Jishumī and Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd. Both Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd and al-Jishumī describe al-Iskāfi as upholding the *imāma* of the *mafḍūl*.³⁰ While al-Jishumī remains vague in his descriptions of al-Iskāfi’s pro-Shī‘ism, Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd provides some concrete references: he quotes from al-Iskāfi’s work against al-Jāhīz (d. 255/869) entitled *Naqḍ al-‘uthmāniyya*, a work which is supposed to include refutations of claims made by al-Jāhīz about Abū Bakr’s superiority to ‘Alī,³¹ as well as explicit attacks against Mu‘āwiya (d. 60/680) for having spread false prophetic traditions attacking ‘Alī’s reputation.³²

Given what we know about al-Khayyāt’s agenda against Ibn al-Rāwandī in his *Kitāb al-Intiṣār* and the existence of two sources that back up al-Iskāfi’s pro-Shī‘ī leanings, we are safe in accepting that al-Iskāfi was strongly pro-Shī‘ī despite al-Khayyāt’s attempt to downplay this important characteristic of al-Iskāfi’s thought.

As for the post-*miḥna* generation of Baghdādī Mu‘tazilis, namely Abū Mujālid (d. 268/882) and his student al-Khayyāt, we have to completely rely on non-Baghdādī Mu‘tazilī sources to reconstruct their views on the *imāma*.³³ Abū Mujālid was a student of Ja‘far b. Mubashshir, and al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/1032) includes him among the Mu‘tazilis who support ‘Alī in all of his wars, in addition to accepting ‘Ā’isha, Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr’s repentance.³⁴ Al-Mufid also states that Abū Mujālid and his student al-Khayyāt accepted the legitimacy of the one-man oath of allegiance given to Abū Bakr and ‘Uthmān.³⁵ We also know from Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd that Abū Mujālid supported the *imāma* of the *mafḍūl*. Therefore, with Abū Mujālid we encounter a mild version of the Shī‘ī leanings of the Baghdādī Mu‘tazilis already expressed by Ja‘far b. Ḥarḥ.

²⁸ Al-Khayyāt, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār*, pp. 75-76.

²⁹ Al-Khayyāt, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār*, pp. 75-76.

³⁰ Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 1, p. 28; al-Jishumī, *al-‘Uyūn fī l-radd ‘alā ahl al-bida‘*, fol. 8b.

³¹ Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 4, pp. 217, 219, 263-65, 269.

³² Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 1, p. 782.

³³ On the Mu‘tazilis in general immediately following the *miḥna* and Abū Mujālid in particular, see van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, pp. 55-121 and 94-96.

³⁴ Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-‘Ukbarī al-Mufid, *al-Jamal wa-l-nuṣra li-sayyid al-‘itra fī ḥarḥ al-Baṣra*, ed. ‘Alī Mir Sharīfī, Qum 1995-96, pp. 65-66.

³⁵ Al-Mufid, *al-Jamal*, p. 91.

The *Kitāb al-Intiṣār* reflects al-Khayyāt’s interest in defending Mu‘tazilis against accusations of holding “Rāfiḍī” tendencies and thereby is a testimony to his anxiety to clear his predecessors from any such association. However, it is not a source of information on al-Khayyāt’s own doctrines on the *imāma*. Al-Khayyāt continued to support the *imāma* of the *mafḍūl*,³⁶ but his formulation of the *mafḍūl* is conditioned by a caveat, an excuse (*‘udbr*), that only al-Jishumī highlights.³⁷ For al-Khayyāt, although the specific excuse is not known, there is an ultimate *maṣlaḥa* (benefit) in what God chooses since he only does what is good. As for the details of al-Khayyāt’s doctrine on the *imāma*, we have in addition to al-Jishumī’s statement quotations in Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd’s *Sharḥ* in which al-Khayyāt provides excuses for some of ‘Uthmān’s actions.³⁸ Al-Mufid also reports that, like many of his predecessors, al-Khayyāt supports ‘Alī in all his wars, holds all his opponents responsible but forgives ‘Ā’isha, Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr.³⁹ Unlike earlier Baghdādī Mu‘tazilis whose views on the necessity of the *imāma* are not reported, al-Khayyāt holds the *imāma* to be necessary by reason.⁴⁰

Given this relatively fragmentary evidence we have on the Baghdādī Mu‘tazilī positions on the *imāma* prior to al-Ka‘bī, any systematic explanation of the political and theological reasons behind the specific shifts within their general pro-‘Alīd framework would be difficult to deduce. Nonetheless, one general tendency can be highlighted, namely a turn away from the more strongly pro-Shī‘ī views of the founder Bishr b. al-Mu‘tamir. This general turn is combined with a continuation of the preference for ‘Alī and the *imāma* of the less excellent (*mafḍūl*). In al-Khayyāt’s account of the *imāma* doctrine of his school, we had the opportunity to observe how he was eager to downplay the pro-Shī‘ī tendency in his school and highlight the pro-*proto-Sunni* elements.⁴¹ Having examined where the Baghdādī Mu‘tazilī doctrine on the *imāma* stands before al-Ka‘bī, we can now turn to identifying and examining al-Ka‘bī’s own doctrine in relationship to his school.

II. Al-Ka‘bī’s Doctrine on the *Imāma*

Al-Ka‘bī’s doctrine on the *imāma* is preserved in six theological traditions: (1) the Ash‘arī tradition in the work of ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, (2) the Māturīdī tradi-

³⁶ Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 1, p. 28.

³⁷ Al-Jishumī, *al-‘Uyūn fi l-radd ‘alā abl al-bida‘*, f. 93a.

³⁸ Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 1, p. 531.

³⁹ Al-Mufid, *al-Jamal*, pp. 65-66; Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 1, p. 534.

⁴⁰ See Ibn ‘Arafa, “*Bāb al-imāma min kitāb al-mukhtaṣar al-shāmil li-bn ‘Arafa*,” *Ḥawliyyāt jāmi‘at Tūnis* 9 (1972), p. 190, included in van Ess, “al-Khayyāt” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New Edition, vol. 4, pp. 1162-64.

⁴¹ As van Ess has already pointed out (*Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, pp. 300-1), the post-*mihna* pro-*Sunni* policy of the caliphs explains, to some extent, al-Khayyāt’s motives in his *Kitāb al-Intiṣār* in distancing himself from the strong Shī‘ī tendencies that were winning over some Mu‘tazilis, the most illustrious example being Ibn al-Rāwandī.

tion in the work of Abu l-Muʿīn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114), (3) the Baṣran Muʿtazilī tradition in the work of ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1024), (4) the Muʿtazilī Zaydī Baṣran tradition in the works of Mānakdim (d. 425/1034) and al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī, (5) the Imāmī tradition in the work of al-Shaykh al-Mufid and (6) a late Muʿtazilī tradition in the work of Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd. Each of these traditions preserves a different aspect of al-Kaʿbī's doctrine on the *imāma*. As will become apparent, despite their covering different aspects of al-Kaʿbī's doctrine, they are on the whole consistent with each other. The implications of the theological agenda of each of these works for their choice of quotations from al-Kaʿbī's doctrine are clearer in some cases than in others.

II.I. *The Ashʿarī Reception: al-Baghdādī*

Al-Baghdādī wrote after the beginning of the great occultation (*al-ghayba al-kubrā*), at a time of great tensions between Sunnī and Imāmī groups in Baghdad.⁴² His *Uṣūl al-dīn*, in which he quotes the *imāma* doctrine of al-Kaʿbī, belongs to the Ashʿarī *uṣūl al-dīn* genre, which started with al-Ashʿarī's *Lumʿaʿ fi uṣūl al-dīn*. In the section on the *imāma*, he lists the views of his major opponents on the doctrine of the *imāma*: the Imāmīs. However, he does not present their doctrines according to their own categorizations, so we sometimes find him lumping together Muʿtazilīs and Imāmīs under the same category.⁴³ Such categorization reflects al-Baghdādī's polemical prejudice, namely refuting the Imāmī influence on other pro-ʿAlid positions. Al-Kaʿbī's doctrine on the *imāma* is brought up in a chapter entitled "On the Characteristics of the *Imām* and his Tribe".⁴⁴ After listing the Ashʿarī position, which in accordance with the Sunnī mainstream proclaims the *imāma* to belong to the tribe of Quraysh, al-Baghdādī lists the positions that do not agree with his school. Among these positions comes, first, the Ḍirāriyya, which upholds that the *imāma* is valid outside of Quraysh, even if an eligible candidate is available in it. Second, al-Baghdādī mentions al-Kaʿbī, who recognizes that the *imāma* must belong to Quraysh unless a civil strife is looming, in which case he makes it permissible for the *Imām* to be elected outside of Quraysh:

Al-Kaʿbī claimed that Quraysh is more worthy (*awlā bihā*) of it [the *imāma*] than whoever may be worthy of it from outside of Quraysh. However, if civil strife (*fitna*) is feared, then [al-Kaʿbī claimed] it is acceptable to have the *imāma* outside of Quraysh.⁴⁵

When quoting al-Kaʿbī, al-Baghdādī associates him neither with the Baghdādī school nor with his teacher al-Khayyāṭ. It is also important to note that earlier

⁴² Henri Laoust, *Les schismes dans l'islam. Introduction à une étude de la religion musulmane*, Paris 1965, pp. 163-87.

⁴³ Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 291.

⁴⁴ Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 275.

⁴⁵ Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, pp. 293-94.

Baghdādī Muʿtazilīs were not represented in our sources formulating the characteristics of the *imāma* in terms of “Quraysh versus outside of Quraysh”. Instead, as we saw earlier, the *imāma* legitimacy question was cast by these earlier Baghdādī Muʿtazilīs in terms of the *imāma* of ʿAlī versus that of the first three caliphs. Most probably, al-Kaʿbī’s re-formulation of the characteristics of the *imāma* in Quraysh/non-Quraysh terms made him stand out among other Baghdādī Muʿtazilīs, and earned him the unfavorable attention of al-Baghdādī. This attention is triggered by al-Kaʿbī’s engagement with a particularly Sunnī formulation of the *imāma* legitimacy question. The Ashʿarī position that the *imāma* favors Quraysh is based on the Sunnī prophetic saying “the *Imāms* are from Quraysh.”⁴⁶ The exception in al-Kaʿbī’s formula, namely that a civil strife makes it permissible to have a non-Qurashī *Imām*, hints at a possible Murjiʿite influence on him. This influence may have filtered from a Ḥanafī eastern background or simply through a lingering archaic Sunnī tendency that was kept even by al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820).⁴⁷

While only al-Kaʿbī and Ḍirār b. ʿAmr (d. ca 200/815) to the exclusion of any other Muʿtazilīs are quoted in this chapter on the *imāma*, al-Kaʿbī is consistently absent from the remaining chapters on the *imāma* in *Uṣūl al-dīn*. Other Muʿtazilīs are listed in other chapters on the *imāma*; al-Nazzām (d. between 220/835-230/845) and Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir, for example, are quoted as stating that the arbitrators were in the wrong and thus are grave sinners (*fāsiq*).⁴⁸ Also highlighted are Wāṣil’s and ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd’s (d. ca 144/748) views on postponing judgment about ʿUthmān as well as al-Murdār’s condemnation of both ʿUthmān and his killers.⁴⁹ That al-Kaʿbī is not mentioned in other chapters dealing with the *imāma* is not because al-Baghdādī saw no difference between al-Kaʿbī and the Ashʿarīs; rather, it is more likely that it is because al-Baghdādī saw no urgency in refuting other aspects of al-Kaʿbī’s *imāma* doctrine. After all, the doctrines of the earlier Baghdādī Muʿtazilīs and Muʿtazilīs in general were clearly known to al-Baghdādī, as testified by the fact that he quotes Wāṣil and ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd.

II.II. *The Māturīdī Reception: Abu l-Muʿīn al-Nasafī*

Like al-Baghdādī, al-Nasafī quotes al-Kaʿbī’s opinion that the *imāma* belongs to Quraysh except if civil strife is feared, in which case it becomes acceptable for a

⁴⁶ This *ḥadīth* appears in Ibn Ḥanbal’s *Musnad*, see A.J. Wensinck, *al-Muʿjam al-mufabras li-alfāz al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī* 1-8, Leiden 1936-88, vol. 1, p. 92 (*Musnad*, vol. 2, pp. 129, 183, and vol. 4, p. 421).

⁴⁷ On Murjiʿism and early Sunnī doctrines on the *imāma*, see Wilferd Madelung, “Murḍjīʿa,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New Edition, vol. 7, pp. 605-7.

⁴⁸ Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 292.

⁴⁹ We have already encountered this position of Murdār above (al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 288).

non-Qurashī man to assume the *imāma*.⁵⁰ This view of al-Ka‘bī is listed by al-Nasafī in a chapter entitled “On The One Who is Most Worthy (*awḥā*) of the *imāma*.”⁵¹ Again, like *Uṣūl al-dīn*, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla* lists al-Ka‘bī close to Ḍirār, except that here Ḍirār’s position is listed after that of al-Ka‘bī and is worded differently, making it less likely that both authors were using the same source.⁵² Al-Nasafī labels the positions of al-Ka‘bī and Ḍirār as contradictory to that of the *Sunna*, as expressed in the prophetic tradition “the *Imāms* are from Quraysh,” already encountered in al-Baghdādī.⁵³ Moreover, al-Nasafī’s goal is similar to al-Baghdādī’s. He is not only interested in criticizing ‘unorthodox’ positions but is also concerned with systematically laying out his school’s position, as represented by its founder al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944). Al-Māturīdī’s doctrine combines a commitment to an *imāma* from Quraysh with the qualification that this person be the most pious and mindful of God as well as the most perceptive and knowledgeable of what is best for the community.⁵⁴

Moreover, al-Nasafī includes aspects of al-Ka‘bī’s doctrine on the *imāma* that were not mentioned by al-Baghdādī. One is quoted in a chapter on the “Impossibility of the Assignment of Two *Imāms*.”⁵⁵ Al-Ka‘bī is described as a follower of a certain Abu l-‘Abbās al-Qalānisi in holding that casting lots is an acceptable method to end any dispute in choosing between two potential *Imāms*.⁵⁶ This method of resolving a dispute would seem untenable had the *imāma* of one of the *Imāms* been considered legitimate with absolute certainty and necessity. In this conciliatory position towards the *imāma*, al-Ka‘bī again seems close to a Murji‘ī frame of mind.

The third and last quotation of al-Ka‘bī’s doctrine on the *imāma* in *Tabṣīrat al-adilla* ascribes to him a late Mu‘tazilī position on the *imāma* of the *mafdūl*.⁵⁷ Al-Ka‘bī is quoted as referring to his own work *‘Uyūn al-masā’il* for this position of his on the *imāma*,

[...] the Jarīris and the Ya‘qūbīs [i.e. among the Zaydis] prefer ‘Alī over all the companions of the Prophet. Most of the late Mu‘tazilīs have opted for this position. Al-Ka‘bī wrote that he chose this position, namely that of preferring ‘Alī over the rest of the companions, in his book entitled *‘Uyūn al-masā’il*.⁵⁸

In none of these three quotes of al-Ka‘bī do we find him associated with his Baghdādī school in general or his immediate teacher in particular. Indeed, none

⁵⁰ Maymūn b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla fī uṣūl al-dīn ‘alā tariqat al-Imām Abū Maṣū‘ al-Māturīdī* 1-2, ed. Claude Salamé, Damascus 1990-93, vol. 2, p. 828.

⁵¹ Al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, vol. 2, p. 828.

⁵² Cf. al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, vol. 2, p. 828; al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 275.

⁵³ Al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, vol. 2, p. 828.

⁵⁴ Al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, vol. 2, pp. 828-33.

⁵⁵ Al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, vol. 2, p. 826.

⁵⁶ Al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, vol. 2, p. 826.

⁵⁷ Al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, vol. 2, p. 834.

⁵⁸ Al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, vol. 2, p. 896.

of the Baghdādī Mu‘tazilī doctrines on the *imāma* is quoted here. The only Mu‘tazilī quoted in the *imāma* chapters of *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, in addition to Ḍirār and Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī, are Wāṣil and ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd. These last two refuse to take sides regarding the Battle of the Camel.⁵⁹ Abu l-Hudhayl (d. 227/841-2) and Ḍirār are cited as holding that one party should be culpable but that there is no evidence to support either side.⁶⁰ But the views of those named as expressing their position regarding the Battle of the Camel are nowhere associated with al-Ka‘bī. Like al-Baghdādī, al-Nasafī’s presentation of al-Ka‘bī’s doctrine stands out in the way it highlights his doctrine in isolation from his Baghdādī school in general and his teacher al-Khayyāṭ in particular.

II.III. *The Baṣran Mu‘tazilī Reception: ‘Abd al-Jabbār*

At one point in his career ‘Abd al-Jabbār had upheld a non-committal position (*taẓwīf*) regarding who is most worthy of the *imāma*, but he later proclaimed the superiority of ‘Alī and the *imāma* of the *mafdūl*.⁶¹ In his *Tathbīt dalā’il al-nubuwwa*, ‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes al-Ka‘bī on two occasions. *Tathbīt dalā’il al-nubuwwa* is mostly dedicated to proving the prophethood of Muḥammad but also includes refutations of the claims of Muslim and non-Muslim sects.⁶² Al-Ka‘bī is first quoted as defending the faith of Abū Bakr against accusations of hypocrisy, then quoted in defense of Abū Bakr but with the specific aim of refuting the claims of ‘Abd Allāh b. Saba’.⁶³ Both quotations are taken from the same work of al-Ka‘bī, entitled *Naqḍ Ibn al-Rāwandī*, but each one of them represents a different variant of the same original passage in al-Ka‘bī’s work.

1-[...] Abu l-Qāsim al-Ka‘bī said: “Whomever the commander of the believers considers most worthy [has to be the most worthy]. We cannot refute the prince’s [‘Alī’s] word that the best of this community after its Prophet are Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. No one who has some knowledge or some share of knowledge can refute this statement. The early Shī‘a used to prefer Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.” He [al-Ka‘bī] said: “Someone said to Shurayk b. ‘Abd Allāh⁶⁴ ‘Who is better, Abū Bakr or ‘Alī?’ He [Shurayk] responded:

⁵⁹ Al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, vol. 2, p. 887.

⁶⁰ Al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, vol. 2, p. 887.

⁶¹ Abu l-Husayn Aḥmad Mānakdim Shashdīw, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, ed. [as a work by ‘Abd al-Jabbār] ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Uthmān, Cairo 1384/1965, p. 767.

⁶² Wilferd Madelung, “‘Abd al-Jabbār,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1, pp. 116-18.

⁶³ ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī, *Tathbīt dalā’il al-nubuwwa* 1-2, ed. ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Uthmān, Beirut 1966, vol. 1, pp. 61-63. In most early sources ‘Abd Allāh b. Saba’ is considered the head of a sect that denied the death of ‘Alī; the historical reality behind the mythical figure of ‘Abd Allāh b. Saba’, however, remains shrouded in ambiguity; see M.G.S. Hodgson, “‘Abdallāh b. Saba’,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New Edition, vol. 1, p. 51.

⁶⁴ Shurayk b. ‘Abd Allāh Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Nakha‘ī (d. 177/793) is described by both al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (*Tārīkh Baghdād*, Beirut 1966, vol. 9, pp. 279-95) and al-Dhahabī (*Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, ed. Shu‘ayb Arna‘ūt, Beirut 1996, vol. 8, pp. 200-16) to have held Shī‘ī

‘Abū Bakr.’ The person asking him continued: ‘[How] Do you say this when you are one of the Shī‘a?’ He [Shurayk] responded: ‘Yes, a Shī‘ī is one who says the likes of this. By God, the commander of the believers [‘Alī] has mounted this pulpit [literally these pieces of wood] and said: ‘The best of this community after its Prophet is Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. He [Shurayk] added: ‘Shall we refute his words? Shall we call him a liar? By God he [‘Alī] was not a liar.’” This was mentioned by Abu l-Qāsim al-Balkhī in refutation of Ibn al-Rāwandī’s objection to Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ in his book *Fī nazmī l-Qurʾān wa-salāmatihī min al-ziyāda wa-l-nuqṣān*.⁶⁵

2-Abu l-Qāsim al-Balkhī reported in his book, in which he refuted the objection of Ibn al-Rāwandī to Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ’s statement that the Qurʾān is free from additions and deletions: “The statement of the commander of the believers [‘Alī] that the best of this community after its Prophet are Abū Bakr and ‘Umar is transmitted in a manner that cannot be denied by any one with some degree of knowledge.” He [al-Ka‘bī] mentioned a group among those who reported their [i.e., Abū Bakr’s and ‘Umar’s] merit, nobility, strength and glory. Then he [al-Ka‘bī] said: “But according to us it is what ‘Alī himself wished that counts.” Then Abu l-Qāsim, may God have mercy on his soul, said that Shurayk b. ‘Abd Allāh was one of the most important Shī‘īs and he used to say: “The best of this community are Abū Bakr and ‘Umar and they are both better than ‘Alī. If I had said other than this, I would not be among the party of ‘Alī. Because he [‘Alī] had mounted this pulpit [literally these pieces of wood] and said: ‘Indeed the best of this community after its Prophet are Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. How can we call him [‘Alī] a liar? By God he [‘Alī] was not a liar!’”⁶⁶

3-Abu l-Qāsim said: “The report is correct but according to us it has a specific purpose. We did not single out this quote⁶⁷ for the purpose of mentioning what the commander of the believers said with regard to their [Abū Bakr’s and ‘Umar’s] excellence, for that is clearer than the sun and there is much [evidence] in support of it, and many lengthy and specific books were written about it. Rather, we mentioned it [this quote of Shurayk b. ‘Abd Allāh] in response to ‘Abd Allāh b. Saba’ and what came out of him [...].”⁶⁸

What we encounter in these quotations is a reference by al-Ka‘bī to an unusual early Shī‘ī statement he attributes to a certain Shurayk b. ‘Abd Allāh in which the latter preaches the superiority of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13/634-23/644). This position is doubly striking: first in that it is attributed to an early Shī‘ī figure and second in that it is presented as a statement by ‘Alī himself. Perhaps it is therefore no surprise that this Shurayk b. ‘Abd Allāh is considered not an early Shī‘ī but a Murji‘ī by the Twelver Shī‘ī al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (d. b. 300/912 and 310/922).⁶⁹ The purpose of al-Ka‘bī’s quotation of Shurayk, as he himself tells us, is to refute ‘Abd Allāh b. Saba’s claims made

leanings. He does not appear in the *riḡāl* works of either al-Najāshī (d. 450/1058) or al-Ṭūsī (d. 459-60/1066-7).

⁶⁵ ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Taḥbīt dalā’il al-nubuwawa*, vol. 1, pp. 62-63.

⁶⁶ ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Taḥbīt dalā’il al-nubuwawa*, vol. 2, pp. 548-49.

⁶⁷ The edited text reads “*lam naqṣid li-dbikr mā qālahū amīr al-mu’minīn fī faḍlibim*” I read the verb “*lam naqṣidhu*” with an attached pronoun.

⁶⁸ ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Taḥbīt dalā’il al-nubuwawa*, vol. 2, p. 549.

⁶⁹ Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-shī‘a*, p. 7.

against the integrity of Abū Bakr. Indeed there is nothing to suggest that al-Ka‘bī is quoted by ‘Abd al-Jabbār in his *Tāthbīt dalā’il al-nubuwwa* as upholding the preference that Shurayk proclaims of the superiority of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar over ‘Alī. Al-Ka‘bī’s own clarification that he quotes Shurayk to refute the attacks of ‘Abd Allāh b. Saba’ on Abū Bakr explains that he chose what seemed to him to be an early Shī‘ī figure in order to make a stronger case against followers of ‘Abd Allāh b. Saba’. In other words, these quotations do not contradict what we know of al-Ka‘bī’s preference for ‘Alī as documented by al-Nasafī, though it clearly demonstrates his commitment to defending the reputation of Abū Bakr.

II.IV. *The Baṣran Mu‘tazilī Zaydī Reception: Mānakdīm and al-Jisumī*

In his *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, Mānakdīm includes one lengthy quote on al-Ka‘bī’s position regarding how the necessity of having an *Imām* is known. Mānakdīm reports that for al-Ka‘bī the *imāma* is known by reason alone and, because of this position of his, he associates al-Ka‘bī with the Imāmīs who also hold the *imāma* to be necessary by reason.⁷⁰ In holding this position, Mānakdīm adds, al-Ka‘bī stands against the opinion of the Baṣran Mu‘tazilī Zaydīs.

Furthermore, Mānakdīm reports al-Ka‘bī’s position on whether it is necessary to have an *Imām* at all times. In refutation of the Imāmī position that “God has to reveal an *Imām* through a specific designation (*naṣṣ*), because people need him”, al-Ka‘bī maintains that people have to elect an *Imām* in case God does not reveal his appointment through a text.⁷¹ That an *Imām* should be posited is deemed necessary for the benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) of the community. What al-Ka‘bī intends by *maṣlaḥa* is not clear to Mānakdīm, so he suggests two interpretations: either a religious *maṣlaḥa* or a worldly one. He concludes that al-Ka‘bī must have the second kind in mind:

Abu l-Qāsim disagreed with us on this question [the knowledge of the need for an *Imām*] and said: “We know of the necessity of the need for an *Imām* through reason and it is this view that the Imāmīs have adopted.” [...] Abu l-Qāsim says: “It is necessary for people to appoint him [an *Imām*] if God did not reveal his appointment, because their *maṣlaḥa* is in that.” This may imply that he intends by this a religious *maṣlaḥa* in accordance with the Imāmīs who take the *imāma* to be a Divine grace in matters of religion (*lutf fi l-dīn*), or it can imply that he means by it a worldly *maṣlaḥa* in accordance with what some of our friends say [i.e., Baghdādī Mu‘tazilī]. If he [al-Ka‘bī] intends the first meaning, then the difference between him and the Imāmīs is in the aspect that I have mentioned [i.e., that an *Imām* is made known by God through specific designation (*naṣṣ*)]. Because of this it is not necessary [in al-Ka‘bī’s view] for the *Imām* to be infallible. The Imāmīs [by contrast] hold the infallibility of the *Imām* to be necessary. If he [al-Ka‘bī] intends the second meaning, then the difference between him and the Imāmīs

⁷⁰ Mānakdīm, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, p. 758.

⁷¹ Mānakdīm, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, p. 758.

is apparent because they hold the *imāma* to be a grace from God, like knowing God through His Oneness and Justice and other Divine graces. He [al-Kaʿbī] does not uphold this position.

Like his Muʿtazilī Zaydī predecessor,⁷² al-Jishumī quotes al-Kaʿbī’s position that the necessity of the *Imām* is known through reason. In his *al-ʿUyūn fī l-radd ʿalā abl al-bidaʿ* at the beginning of a chapter entitled “On the *Imāma* and on Whether It is Known to be Necessary by Reason”, al-Jishumī associates al-Kaʿbī with the Imāmīs in claiming that it is by means of reason that the necessity of the *imāma* is known: “The Imāmīs said that it is known to be necessary by reason. This is also the position of Abu l-Qāsim al-Balkhī.”⁷³ Al-Kaʿbī follows the position of his teacher al-Khayyāṭ, although al-Jishumī neither mentions this similarity between al-Kaʿbī and al-Khayyāṭ nor attributes this position to al-Khayyāṭ in the first place. This position was also upheld by al-Jāḥiẓ and Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044) and was not seen as characteristic of al-Khayyāṭ’s branch of the Baghdādī school.⁷⁴ Both Mānakdīm and al-Jishumī compare al-Kaʿbī’s position to the Imāmī one and remain silent about any association between him and his Baghdādī Muʿtazilī school. This is particularly noteworthy given that details about members of the Baghdādī Muʿtazilī school, both as a group and as distinct individuals, are mentioned by these authors without fail, but they are mentioned separately from al-Kaʿbī.

In addition to the quotations of al-Kaʿbī’s doctrine on the *imāma* in Baṣran Muʿtazilī-Zaydī sources, we also have references to his association with prominent Zaydī figures. We know that al-Kaʿbī worked as a secretary for the Zaydī *Dāʿī* Muḥammad b. Zayd (d. 287/900) and spoke highly of him, showing his high esteem of the *Dāʿī* but revealing nothing explicit regarding his political and doctrinal allegiance to him.⁷⁵ Furthermore, there are several references to al-Kaʿbī and

⁷² Although al-Jishumī became a Zaydī towards the end of his life, there is evidence in the works cited here that he was a Zaydī when he wrote them. See Wilferd Madelung, “al-Ḥākim al-Diḡshamī,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New Edition. Supplement. Fascicules 5-6, p. 343.

⁷³ Al-Jishumī, *al-ʿUyūn fī l-radd ʿalā abl al-bidaʿ*, f. 89 a. On the Imāmī position regarding the knowledge of the necessity of the *imāma* through reason, see Madelung, “Imāma,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New Edition, vol. 3, pp. 1163-69.

⁷⁴ On this position of al-Kaʿbī, cf. Madelung, *al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm*, p. 143. A different variant of al-Kaʿbī’s position is reported by Madelung in which al-Kaʿbī maintains that the necessity of the *imāma* is known by both reason and revelation (referring to Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *Faṣl muntazaʿ min Kitāb al-Uṣūl*, MS Wien Glaser 114 for this variant).

⁷⁵ We find al-Kaʿbī quoted praising the *dāʿī* Muḥammad b. Zayd in Bahāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥasan Ibn Isfandiyyār’s *Tārīkh Ṭabaristān*: “Sayyid Imāmī Mufid Abū Ṭālib related that he had a learned secretary called Abu l-Qāsim al-Kātib al-Balkhī, noted for his eloquence and excellence, who used to say that his Prince so far excelled all others for whom he had acted as secretary such that, to use his own expression: ‘I could have imagined that it was Muḥammad the Prophet of God dictating one of his revelations (94).’ ” A similar quote is found in al-Jishumī’s *Jalāʾ al-abṣāʾ*; see Wilferd Madelung, *Arabic Texts Concerning the History of the Zaydī Imāms in Ṭabaristān, Daylamān and Gilān*, Beirut 1987, p. 122.

Zaydis in al-Jishumī. Al-Jishumī quotes al-Ka'bi as praising the Zaydī Imāms al-Qāsim (d. 246/860), al-Hādī (d. 298/911), and al-Nāṣir (d. 322/934), adding that the Mu'tazilis had a role in supporting them,⁷⁶ but al-Jishumī does not comment on this claim of al-Ka'bi. Al-Jishumī's silence on the matter suggests that although he was not in agreement with al-Ka'bi about the Mu'tazilī support of the Zaydī Imāms, he did not care to refute him either. Given the limited nature of the information we have about al-Ka'bi's doctrine it remains ultimately hard if not impossible to gauge how much influence al-Ka'bi's interactions with the Zaydī *Dā'īs* exerted on his formulation of his doctrine of the *imāma*.⁷⁷

II.V. *The Baghdādī Mu'tazilī Imāmī Reception: al-Shaykh al-Mufid*

The *imāma* doctrine was one major point of disagreement between al-Mufid and the Baghdādī school, which influenced him in other aspects of his theology.⁷⁸ The similarity between the *imāma* doctrines of al-Ka'bi and al-Mufid, namely knowing the necessity of the *imāma* through reason, which was brought up by al-Jishumī and Mānakdīm, is not addressed by al-Mufid. Moreover, in a work dedicated to accounting for the different positions on the Battle of the Camel, entitled *al-Jamal*, al-Mufid mentions al-Ka'bi's position about 'Alī's opponents in the Battle of the Camel, namely 'Ā'isha, Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr. Al-Ka'bi is listed along with other Mu'tazilis who held the same opinion, including his teacher al-Khayyāt and his teacher's teacher Abū Mujālid, as well as all prior Baghdādī Mu'tazilis, with the exception of the two Ja'fars, Ja'far b. Ḥarb and Ja'far b. al-Mubashshir. In this list of the Baghdādī Mu'tazilis two Baṣran Mu'tazilis are also included: al-Shaḥḥām (d. after 257/871) and Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī. Al-Ka'bi is quoted by al-Mufid as subscribing to the position that 'Alī was always right in all of his wars, with the exception of al-Ka'bi's acceptance of the repentance of 'Ā'isha, Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr.⁷⁹

In addition to reporting about where al-Ka'bi stood regarding the Battle of the Camel, al-Mufid also reports al-Ka'bi's position on the number of people necessary to give a valid oath for the *imāma*. Along with his teacher al-Khayyāt and his teacher's teacher Abū Mujālid, al-Ka'bi is said to have accepted the oath of one person for a caliph as sufficient since he accepted the oath of 'Umar b.

⁷⁶ Al-Jishumī, *al-Uyūn fī l-radd 'alā abl al-bida'*, f. 8a.

⁷⁷ In another passage in his *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-masā'il* (MS Ṣan'ā', al-Jāmi' al-kabīr, al-Maktaba al-Gharbiyya, *ilm al-kalām* # 99, f. 29a), al-Jishumī relates that the Baghdādī Mu'tazilis claim to be Zaydis. We have no reason for suggesting that the Baghdādī Mu'tazilis referred to by al-Jishumī are al-Ka'bi and his followers.

⁷⁸ On the elements of al-Shaykh al-Mufid's theology in which he claims to have followed the doctrine of the Baghdādī Mu'tazilis, see Martin McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufid* (d. 413/1022), Beirut 1978, *passim*.

⁷⁹ Al-Mufid, *al-Jamal*, pp. 75-66.

al-Khaṭṭāb as sufficient to establish the caliphate of Abū Bakr.⁸⁰ In this position, al-Kaʿbī is perceived as holding a position separate from that of the Baṣran Muʿtazilīs. Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʿī posits four people as a minimum for an oath to be valid. The rest of the Baghdādī Muʿtazilī opinions on this question are not related, which could have been the result of their not voicing any position on this question.

II. VI. *A Late Muʿtazilī Reception: Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd*

Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd had strong ʿAlid sympathies; he was not a Shīʿī but a Muʿtazilī who upheld the Baghdādī Muʿtazilī view that ʿAlī was the most excellent of the Prophet’s companions and was influenced by the views of Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044).⁸¹ Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd’s quotation of al-Kaʿbī’s doctrine on the *imāma* includes listing al-Kaʿbī’s views along with other Baghdādī Muʿtazilīs, listing his views along with those of his teacher or listing his views on his own. On the question of the superiority of ʿAlī over Abū Bakr, Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd claims that al-Kaʿbī like his teacher al-Khayyāṭ and all members of the Baghdādī school attest that ʿAlī was more excellent than Abū Bakr.⁸² The Baghdādīs that are mentioned here by Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd include Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir, Abū Mūsā al-Murdār, Jaʿfar b. Mubashshir and al-Iskāfī.

Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd also attributes to al-Kaʿbī and to his teacher al-Khayyāṭ the merit of upholding that the *imāma* should be in the family of the Prophet, in the following order: “The best of the Muslims are ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, then his son al-Ḥasan, then his son al-Ḥusayn, then Ḥamza b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, then Jaʿfar b. Abī Ṭālib, then Abū Bakr b. Abī Quḥāfa, then ʿUmar b. Khaṭṭāb, then ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān.”⁸³ Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd reports having read this position attributed to al-Kaʿbī in a work of Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Baṣrī (d. 369/979) whose title he does not provide. He also attributes this position to earlier Baghdādīs according to a work he read which he attributes to Abū Jaʿfar al-Iskāfī.⁸⁴

To al-Kaʿbī and his students, who remain unnamed, Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd ascribes the belief that ʿAlī is the most excellent, but because of the *aṣlah* (the optimum) for the community God made the less excellent *Imāms* before him:⁸⁵

This is a declaration of the position of our friends among the Baghdādī Muʿtazilīs. They claim that he [ʿAlī] is the most excellent and most deserving of the *imāma*. [They claim] that if it were not for God and His Messenger’s knowledge that it [the *imāma* of the

⁸⁰ Al-Mufid, *al-Jamal*, p. 91.

⁸¹ Wilferd Madelung, “Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1, pp. 108-10.

⁸² Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 1, p. 28.

⁸³ Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 3, p. 645.

⁸⁴ For the list of works by al-Iskāfī on the subject of the *imāma*, see van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 6, pp. 301-2.

⁸⁵ Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 1, p. 479.

mafdūl] is for the *aṣlah* of all those legally responsible in front of God (*mukallaḥūn*), then anyone who would have preceded him (*man taqaddama ‘alayhi*) [‘Alī] would have been a loser.

As we have seen, al-Khayyāt also upheld this position, but there is no reference to him on this doctrine by Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd. Furthermore, one aspect of al-Ka‘bī’s doctrine on the *imāma* is attributed to al-Ka‘bī alone; namely his virulent attack on ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr (d. 73-4/692).⁸⁶ The only other Mu‘tazilī who is quoted by Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd as attacking ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr is Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Baṣrī.

Some of our friends used to disown a group of the companions, whose good deeds they deemed to have become valueless, such as al-Mughīra b. Shu‘ba. Our Shaykh Abu l-Qāsim al-Balkhī used to say [the following] when the name of ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr was mentioned in front of him: “No good is in him!” Once he [al-Ka‘bī] said: “I do not approve of his prayer and his fasting and they will both be of no good to him, because the Prophet, peace be upon him, told ‘Alī, peace be upon him: ‘Only a hypocrite can hate you.’”⁸⁷

What characterizes Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd’s account of al-Ka‘bī’s doctrine are the parallels he draws between al-Ka‘bī and his school in general and al-Ka‘bī and his teacher al-Khayyāt in particular. Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd highlights those aspects in which al-Ka‘bī stands apart from his school, namely in his interpretation of the *imāma* of the *mafdūl* as being for the *aṣlah* of the believers. Although we know from al-Jishumī that al-Khayyāt had already adopted this position, Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd makes no mention of it. In fact, as we already saw, Mānakdīm also ascribed this interpretation of the *imāma* to al-Ka‘bī, without associating him with his teacher.

Conclusion

In major aspects of his *imāma* doctrine, al-Ka‘bī continued trends that were already present in the Baghdādī Mu‘tazilī school. With the exception of the ambiguous passages in which ‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes al-Ka‘bī as defending the integrity of Abū Bakr by citing a report by a certain Shurayk b. ‘Abd Allāh upholding the excellence of Abū Bakr, all the sources discussed here agree that al-Ka‘bī upholds the doctrine of the *imāma* of the *mafdūl*. Following the more conciliatory tendency within the Baghdādī school, already started by Ja‘far b. Ḥarb, al-Ka‘bī accepts the *imāma* of ‘Uthmān as well as the repentance of ‘Ā’isha, Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr. In two aspects of his doctrine, al-Ka‘bī follows particular doctrines of al-Khayyāt not present in earlier Baghdādī Mu‘tazilīs, these being first, his interpretation of the *imāma* of the *mafdūl* as being for the *aṣlah*, and second his belief

⁸⁶ Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 1, p. 30.

⁸⁷ Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 1, p. 30.

that the necessity of knowing the *Imām* is dictated by reason. In this latter aspect of his doctrine, both Zaydī sources, i.e., Mānakdīm and al-Jishumī, recognize an affinity between al-Ka‘bī and the Imāmīs, although they do not recognize al-Ka‘bī’s following his teacher in it. Al-Mufid on the other hand does not see this affinity between al-Ka‘bī and the Imāmīs. In formulating the doctrine of the necessity of an *imāma* with Quraysh, while accepting the *imāma* from elsewhere to avoid a civil strife, al-Ka‘bī ventures into new territory in so far as the “formulation” of the doctrine of the *imāma* is concerned. This is documented by both al-Nasafī and al-Baghdādī, who testified to al-Ka‘bī’s willingness to engage with proto-Sunnī formulations of the *imāma* doctrine when prior Baghdādī Mu‘tazilis had not.

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