

Shia Ghulat in Khorasan and Mawarannahr in the first Islamic centuriesNabiollah ghasemikhatir¹, Hassan Bigonah²¹ Technical University of Imam Muhammad Bagher, Sari, Iran
GhasemikhatirN@gmail.com² Torbate jam branch, Islamic Azad University, Torbate jam, Iran
scientificgroup22@yahoo.com

Abstract: The issue of the present article is Shia Ghulat in Khorasan and Mawarannahr in the first Islamic centuries. One of the basic issues of Islam history and the religious beliefs is the advent of different sects. Various religious sects emerged in the history of Iran, after Islam, one of which is Shia Ghulat in Khorasan and Mawarannahr in the first centuries of Iran after Islam. This article touches this pivot point of why the sect of Ghulat emerged. Moreover, it answers the question that what historical, social, political, and religious backgrounds were. Besides, it asks the continuity reasons of their beliefs and opinions until the 6th Century AH. In addition, this article searches their political and social activities.

[Nabiollah ghasemikhatir, Hassan Bigonah. **Shia Ghulat in Khorasan and Mawarannahr in the first Islamic centuries.** Journal of American Science 2012;8(4):412-416]. (ISSN: 1545-1003). <http://www.americanscience.org>. 54

Keywords: Ghulat, Shia Ghulat, Ghulat revolt, Khorasan and Mawarannahr, political and social results

1. Introduction

The present article is written on Shia Ghulat in Khorasan and Mawarannahr in the first Islamic centuries. In the history of Islam religious beliefs, many religious sects were created. Many religious sects emerged in the history of Iran after Islam; Shia Ghulat can be named as one of them. The basic question of this article is that what factors caused such sects to be created, and why such beliefs are created and why they continued for many years. Moreover, what historical, religious, political, and social results they been resulted in? One can answer that it was a set of religious beliefs available in Iran before Islam and the continuity of these beliefs even after prevalence of Islam in Iran, political, social, geographical, and mental and cultural condition, all played roles in the advent of such beliefs (M. Abdur Razzaq, 1959).

An important point that should be mentioned here is that, the advent of these sects and their beliefs did not have only religious, doctrinal motives. It seems that political and social motives affect the advent of them more, since these sects were considered more to be the founders of political and social eroticism factors. Although the ideology of these political movements and social action are derived from their beliefs, it seems that political and social effects of their activities have been viable than their religious beliefs. Although some part of their religious beliefs had been remained until the 6th century, it seems that the reason for non-persistency of the beliefs of these sects has been incompatibility of their beliefs with the original Islamic beliefs. One more reason was that their religious thoughts and beliefs were eclectic.

1.1. The Meaning of Ghulat

Ghulat is the plural form of Ghali, which means braggadocio in Persian. (Nobakhti, Hasan Ibn Moosa: Ferghe Alshia, Tarjomeye Mohammad Javad Mashkour, p. 35). They are sects of Shia who were Shia extremist, they exaggerated about their Imams and considered them as God, or they regarded divinity for their Imams and their followers, or these people believed in reincarnation (Mashkour, Mohammad Javad: Tarikh e Shia va ferghehaye Islam ta gharn e chaharom e hejri, p. 151).

Most of them are common in beliefs and they are not more than one sect in fact, that are mentioned by different names in the books of history and sects. Almost all of sects of Shia are regarded as Ghulat except Asna Ashari, Zaidiyyah, and some of the Ismailism. Other Muslims and moderate Shi'iate reject the attributions that Ghulat denotes to their Imams and followers. Therefore, most sects of Islam know Ghulat outside of Islam because of their blasphemous remarks. According to Shahrestani; they simulate one of Imams to God and they know God as being situated in humans' bodies, and they incarnate God such as those who believe in reincarnation, Judaism, Christians (Mashkour, *ibid.*; 151).

1.2. A short Course in the Development of Ghulat Beliefs

Shahrestani writes in *Almelal va Alnahl* on the beliefs of Ghulat beliefs: "The basis of Ghulat initially structured beliefs are 4: simile, Contexta, return and recarnation. The followers of these beliefs had different names in each country. They were called Khoramie and Kodieh in Esfahan, Mazdakie

and Sanbadieh in Yazd, Zagholieh in Azerbaijan. Moreover, they were called Mahmarahou (Indo Americans) in some regions and Mabizieh (White dressed) in Mawarannahr." (Shahrestani, *ibid.* 132). Discussing on evolution of Ghulat beliefs is so much that cannot be completed in this article. Therefore, a brief mention to it is enough here.

Abdullah Ibn Sina, whom the history of Ghulat refers, no matter he was a real or a legendary character, Saba'iyya is used to describe Ghulat of Kufa, and they believed in a spectacular trait of Imam Ali (PBUH). Ibn Sabba was the first person who promulgated the belief that Ali (PBUH) hasn't died and predicting his return. Saba'iyya was mostly composed of Southern Arabia Sabanian (Mohammad Jafari: *ibid.* 347-348). Islamic historians and the authors of most of the nations, religions, and belief books believe that the major part of Shia Ghulat opinions are in contrast with their beliefs with the original Shia'ism principals and even with the Sunnis', and therefore, most of them are considered atheist. However, since they had these radical beliefs about their Imam, they are regarded as a part of Shia sects under the title of Shia Ghulat, in turn dividing into different sects that were named. One of the most important or the major belief of Shia Ghulat in Iran and in the early Islamic centuries is the religious solidarity of all these sects in the belief that the Imam of Abu Muslim or even his divinity. Moreover, they believed that this issue played a significant role in rebellions and political revolts and social movements including Sisaniyya (Stadis followers), Sinbadiyya (Sinbad followers), Rawendiyya (the followers of Abdullah Rawendi), Mobayezeh (white dressed, Mokanna followers), Issaciyya (the followers of Issac Turk), Khoramdinan Babakiyya (followers of Babak Khoramdin), Maziariyya (followers of Maziar Ibn Gharen) and Mahmarahou (Indo Americans) of Gorgan.

1.3. Ghulat Sects

The sects of Ghulat are divided into two major parts in Iran: 1. Mobayezeh or White Dressed, 2. Khoramdinan or red garments. The sects of Mobayezeh or White Dressed included Rawendiyya, Issaciyya, Sinbadiyya, sisaniyya, whose place was in Khorasan and Mawarannahr. Khoram dini sects included zagholiyya, kodiyya, maziariyya, babakiyya, mohmarch, whose place was in Azerbaijan, Esfahan, Tabarestan, and Gorgan. Bartold writes on the sects of Mobayezeh or White Dressed:

The major aficionados of Abu Muslim were the sect of Mobayezeh or white garment after his death who found in Khorasan and Mawarannahr. Their apparent mark is white flag and clothing. He

continues that the sect of Abu Muslim continued its existence after Abu Muslim's death. Moreover, the heads of one series of Shia movements related their actions with the name of Abu Muslim in Iran and Mawarannahr. The token of this sect (at the time of apparent movement) included white color in clothing and flag. Therefore, this sect that used to operate by the name of the man who caused Abbasid black flag to win in the past [Abu Muslim] was named as White Garment [Mobayezeh in Arabic]. However, their activities never suspended about White Dressed, i.e. Abu Muslim sect [this sect existed even in the twelfth century AD-the sixth AH, although it rarely emanated publicly]. (Bartold, Vasily Vladimirovich: *Turkestan Nameh (Turkistan dar ahd e tahajom e Mogholan)*, version 1, translated by Karim Keshavarz, Tehran, p. 436). As it was mentioned Ghulat sects was devotees of Abu Muslim and believed in Imam of his divinity except White Dressed, were Red Garments who were called under the title of Khoramdinan.

2. Ghulat Revolts in Khorasan and Mawarannahr in Early Islamic Centuries

2.1. Sinbad Revolts

Sinbad revolt was the first rebellion that was taken for Abu Muslim supporting and vengeance. "Sinbad revolt was the first symbol of Abu Muslim's murder aversion." (Elton, *ibid.*; 136). There are different opinions on name, style, reason, and the motivation of his revolt. "Sinbad was one of the richest men in Neishabour who joined the movement of Abbasid Black Garments under the lead of Abu Muslim Khorasani against Arabs and Umayyad since his son was murdered by Arabs of Khorasan and motivated people of Neishabour to rebel and kill the rich and supported Abu Muslim and Abu Muslim made a friendship with him. Sinbad sworn, "to take Abu Muslim's revenge after he was murdered." (Khezri, Seid Ahmad Reza, *Tarikh e Khalafat e Abbasi*; 33). Sinbad was one of Neishabour fire worshippers who had everything (Mirkhand, *Rozat alsafa*, version 3; 404), but he didn't have bias in his religion. Therefore, he succeeded in absorbing many of Shia Ghulat, Khoramdinan, Mazdakian, and Zoroastrians of Rey, Tabarestan, and Qomes. He collected one hundred thousand soldiers and went to Hamedan to move his troops to Baghdad after possessing Rey.

2.2. The Revolt of Issac Turk

Our awareness of Issac's movement is less than other movements (Sadighi, *ibid.* 188). Another person who rose after Abu Muslim's murder is Issac Turk who hoisted the flag of rebellion at the time of Caliph Manssur (136-158 AH) in Mawarannahr

(Bayat, Aziz Allah: *Tarikh e Iran az Zohour e Islam ta Dialameh*; 229). There are disagreements about his lineage. Some groups knew him from Alavian and Zayd Ibn Ali (PBUH) generation and the kids of Yahya Ibn Zayd (Sadighi: *ibid*; 188). Some knew him Turk.

It seems that Isaac Turk was one of Abu Muslim followers and an ignorant, illiterate man and he was a common Abu Muslim soldier (Bartold, *ibid.*). After Isaac who was one of his friends was murdered went to Turkistan and Mawarannahr to take his revenge by the use of former position and development of Abu Muslimiyya beliefs and collecting his friends (Ibn Alnadim: *ibid.*, - Khezri: *ibid.*). Isaac's work on the claim of Imamate developed daily and a many gathered around him (Parviz, Abbas: *Ghiam e Iranian dar rah e Tajdid e majd va Azemat e Iran*; 64). Many groups of Abu Muslimiyya sect, Razamiyya, Zoroastrians, and Khorramdiniyya joined him, because Isaac believed that Abu Muslim is a messenger from Zarathustra, Abu Muslim had eternal life, and he left to have the religion established (Ibn Alnadim: *ibid.*; 616- Sadighi: *ibid.*; 190- Elton: *ibid.*; 143- Zarinkoub: *Tarikh e Iran baad az Islam*; 405).

The beliefs of Isaac Turk had many similarities with the beliefs of Sinbad and his followers and it's not impossible that there had been some form of coordination and corporation between the two. Their white flag was seemingly a sign of opposition with Abbasid black color. There is no clear information about Isaac's work, but it is seemingly the responsible for accelerate the movement that is widespread in Central Asia, and is known as White dressed (Sepid Jamegan) in Persians and Mobayezeh in Arabic (Elton: *ibid.* 143).

2.3. Rawendiyya Revolt

Another revolt of Ghulat that took place by the aim of taking Abu Muslim's murder revenge was Rawendiyya revolt. They were one of the believing sects to Immat and divinity of Abu Muslim and his eternity and rose in Hashemiyya (Baghdad). Some attributes this sect to Ravand Kashan and some attribute it to Neishabour. These are a sect of Muslims that are considered as Abbasid or Shi'ite Al-Abbas and they are attributed to Abdullah Rawendi who believe that Imamate and Caliphate should be inherited to his uncle, Abbas Ibn Abdul Muttalib and his kids after the Prophet (Bayat, *ibid.*; 226).

Rayandiyya knew Abu Muslim a prophet, who knew the unseen, and that Abu Jafar Manssur raised him and Manssur is God, since he knows their secrets (Ashari Qomi: *ibid.*). Abdullah Rawendi was Abbasid's supporters in Khorasan who invited people. In spite of Abu Muslim, he avoided the bloodshed. When Abdollah and his followers were murdered,

some of them knew Abu Muslim as God, and Abu Muslim killed many of them. They hid somewhere and rose after Abu Muslim was murdered. Anyway, one of the important movements that took place with the memory of Abu Muslim for taking his revenge was Rawendian movement that had complicated and astonished principals. Since this group, who pretended their interest in Manssur Abbasi sought to kill him. Those who were mostly from Khorasan sought to surprise Manssur and kill him as he had killed Abu Muslim by deception (Khezri: 36- Yosefi: 169). Manssur kept two hundred of them. Then they rejected Manssur and they didn't know him as God and they knew him as the usurper Caliph (Mahkour, *ibid.*; 85). They said that if Manssur doesn't accept to be our god, we will kill him and know another one as the divinity. Therefore, they broke their promise with Manssur. (Dinvari, Abu Hanife Ahmad Ibn Abi Davood: *Akhbar altaval*, Translated by Mahdavi Damghani; 424- Khandmir: *ibid.*). They did the same thing with Manssur that Abu Muslim did with their lead, Abdullallah Rawendi.

Ustadh Sis movement is a movement that was held in the early Islamic centuries in Great Khorasan including some parts of Sistan, Afghanistan, and Mawarannahr. Although he is not regarded as Shia Ghulat, there were a group of Muslims Shia Ghulat, and Abu Muslim's devotees in the revolt. (Zarinkoub, Abdulhossein: *Rozegaran e tarikh e Iran az Aghaz ta Soghout e Saltanat e Pahlavi*; 333). Ustadh Sis was the Magi in Khorasan who considered him as the Zoroaster promised and claimed to be a prophet, and sought to revive the old Zoroaster religion with some idioms. He called him a Muslim before the revolt, penetrated in the Eastern part of Iran, and found lots of power. Therefore, when he went to Sistan, many people supported him (Khezri, *ibid.* 40). Despite these facts, the outset of his revolt is considered from Badghis in Herat by many sources (Grdyazi, Abu saeed Abdulhey Zahhak bin Mahmood: *Zin alakhbar ya tarikh e gardyezi*, p. 276- Ibn Asir: *ibid.*; Version, 9, p. 236- Yaghoobi: *ibid.*; version 2, p. 373- Ibn Khaldoon: *ibid.*; Version 2, p. 308- Moghaddasi, *ibid.*; Version 6, p. 88). The outset of job and providing for the revolt in 147 AH (Yaghoobi: *ibid.*; Version 2) and the outset of his revolt in 150 AH. (Ibn Asir: *ibid.*; Version 9, p. 236). They mentioned the number of his followers three hundred thousand (Zamchi Esfazari, Moeen aldin: *Rozat aljanat fi Osaf Madiney e Alharat*, Version 1, p. 381, and Version 2, p. 49). The claims of Ustadh Sis was similar to the claims of prophecy and Zoroastrianism promoted in Neishabour who was murdered by Muslim (Zarinkoub: *Roozegaran e Tarikh e Iran*, p. 334).

2.4. Mokanna Revolt

His real name was Ataya Hashem (Gerdyazi: *ibid.*; p. 155). Hashim ibn Hakim was from a village in Marv called Kazeh (Narashkhi, Abobakr Mohammad ibn Jafar: *Tarikh e Bokhara, tarjomey e abonasr alghobavi*, p. 90). He was called Moghaneh since he covered his face with a veil made of green silk (Birooni: *Asar albaghieh*, p. 315- Narashkhi: *ibid.*) or a cover made of gold (Mirkhand: *Rooze Alsafa, Version 3*, p. 415). And never uncovered his face (Moghadas: *afarinesh va tarikh*, version 6, p. 98). He knew magic spell. He used techniques of magic and spell to find many followers and he was professional at engineering and mechanic. (Elton, *ibid.*). His miracle was Maah Nakhshab and he brought a circular and illuminating shape out of Nakhshab well [near Bokhara] every night that threw light every two milestones (Mirkhand: *ibid.*; 278). Mokanna was one of the leaders of Abu Muslim Khorasani who joined Abbasid invitation (NarakhShia: *ibid.*). After Abu Muslim was murdered he became the minister or the secretary of Abdul Jabar Azdi substitute of Abu Muslim Khorasani and he became Amir of Khorasan (*ibid.*). At that time, he held his first revolt and claimed that he is a prophet. The second revolt of Mokanna took place in 159 AH and at the time of Mahdi Abbasi caliphate Manssur's son in Marv first. He believed him as the incarnation of Abu Muslim and at the same time the incarnation of prophets and the symbol of divinity (Zarrinkoob: *Roozegaran e tarikh e Iran*, p. 335) and claimed that Abu Muslim's soul has been transmitted to him and he is God (Dae Hasani Razi: *ibid.*; 179-Shahrestani: *ibid.*; 113-114). In addition, nobody can see him since he will be burned to divine glory. He built some typhoid mirrors to reflect the sunlight due to some people insisted and invited some people inside. Some burned because of the sunlight reflection and the other turned back and said "eyes do not understand him." (Dae Hasna Razi: *ibid.*; 185). Besides, he makes the dead alive and send his friends and followers to Heaven and his opponents to Hell (Narashkhi: *ibid.* 91).

3. Political Effects of Ghulat Beliefs

The memory of Abu Muslim's rise and his murder and the belief in him have been the persistent factor in intensifying and the emergent of rebellions and political and social activities, and all the movements especially, his own Ghulat are considered as vengeance and uprising extender.

These movements especially the leaders of these sects have reconciled the principals of Ghulat beliefs that were reincarnation, and simile about Abu Muslim. The first of them was Razamiyya, the follower of Razam ibn Sabegh who believed in his

Imamat. When he was murdered by Abu Muslim, they divided in two groups. Some believed in divinity and Abu Muslim's Imamat, and some believed in Manssur's divinity. Both of them were known as Rawendiyya. Daniel Elton writes "most yet not all of these revolts had a connection with Abu Muslim's vengeance thought or raising him to the Holy Site, although Abu Muslim suppressed any Ghulat opposition against the government in the beginning. Besides, all these rebellions had a tendency to blasphemous thoughts or even dangerous toward Islam or they have been thought in this way. These blasphemous thought have been exaggerated in references. Most of today authors have known them as indicator traits of open Ghulat oppositions (Elton, *ibid.*; 136). The special attribute of these movements was Abu Muslim vengeance or even raising him to the divinity; however, the color of clothing and their flag were special attribute for all Ghulat movements in Iran that was a sign of their opposition with Abbasid flag and clothing as Abbasid used black flag and slogan against Umayyad green color. The Ghulat of Khorasan chose white flag and clothing against Abbasid black color. Khoramdinan chose red flag and clothing in Gorgan and Azerbaijan.

3.1. Social results of Ghulat Beliefs

Ghulat beliefs didn't have only religious nature; however, they had some beliefs in social political context and these beliefs caused some movements created that aimed at social reforms as well as religious attributes. "In the beginning Shia Ghulat exaggerated their Imams, but since the second century AH, some of these sects mixed their exaggerating issues with politics and opposed Umayyad and Abbasid governments. Shia Ghulat are mostly from Iranian and other nations governors and slaves released (Mashkour: *ibid.*; 152-160). Ghulat dissatisfaction and their movements against Abbasid arose from their social positions regarding social side. Ghulat revolts and beliefs against Abbasid can be known as facing with dissolving village environment of Khorasan with urban societies and modern emerging system. Elton writes:

"Ghulat revolts show the diagram of village society efforts for resistance against submitting and obeying an Islamic Arab-Iran emerging group of Khorasan. These rebellions took place in separated sites and mostly in mountains and rural regions. Their fans were mostly from lower classes and villagers and surprisingly their leadership was mostly by high class Iranians and by religious attractions that can be the last samples of ancient noblesse. References tried to indicate these leaders, as evil people. Unusual religious thoughts may be regarded as the source of social solidarity of Ghulat; however, the charges of

blasphemy and heresy were due to misunderstanding and full gimcrack in references" (Elton: *ibid.* 136).

4. Conclusion

The emergence of Ghulat sect was fully depended on the available belief context in the regions where this sect has been found as well as historical, political, social, geographical, and suitable though and cultural contexts for those regions. Moreover, suitable religious contexts in Islam and a set of religious beliefs in Iran before Islam the continuity of which were affective in the emergence of this sect. Ghulat sect and their beliefs were mostly affected by motivations and political, social, and historical factors and condition more than being affected by religious context and they have taken place to stand against Arab lordship and against tyranny and opposition of Abbasid Caliphs and frustration of them to take Abu Muslim's revenge. Ghulat of Khorasan and Mawarannahr were important religiously more than and before they were important socially and politically, it seems that their beliefs remained far from long-term historical continuity since the beliefs were not compatible with Islamic major beliefs. However, social and political effects that were left by the revolts and rebellions of Ghulat were a little bit more lasting. Although, the influence of their beliefs continued during the sixth century AH and the political revolts didn't last until the third century AH, they were highly extensive in political and social movements and revolts. Although they couldn't succeed completely in their political and social activities, they were highly important for the movements to achieve political independence of Iran, although the ideology of political and social movements and activities were resulted from their beliefs. Therefore, political and social effects of their activities resulted from their religious beliefs clearly (until the sixth century AH) were lasting for a longer

time than their political, revolts, and movements (until the third century AH). However, these beliefs saved the continuity secretly in the angles of mind, soul, body, culture, and the history of some part of Iran.

Acknowledgements:

Authors are grateful to the persons for support to carry out this work.

Corresponding Author:

Nabiollah ghasemikhatir
Technical University of Imam Muhammad Bagher,
Sari, Iran
Email: GhasemikhatirN@gmail.com

References

1. G. Sarton. *Op. cit.*, p. 532. For the Imam Ja'far as Sadiq. See, *ibid.*... p. 508.
2. M. Abdur Razzaq, *Tahmid li Tarikh al Falsafat al Islamiy*, Cairo, 1959, p. 202.
3. M. J al Mughniya, *as shia wat Tashayyu*, pp. 134-5.
4. Muhammad Baqir al Majlisi, *Bihar al Anwar*, new edition, Tehran, 1385 A.H, vol. 47, p. 171 quoting *Qutb al Din ar Rawandi*, *al Kharaj wa l Jaraih*, p. 234.
5. Muhammad Husayn al Muzaffar, *Tarikh ash Shia*, Dar az Zahra, Beirut, 3rd edition 1402/1982 pp. 53, 55.
6. Muhammad Jawad al Mughniya, *ash Shia wal Hakimun*, al Maktab al Ahliya, Beirut, 1st edition 1961, p. 75.
7. Wellhausen, *Tarikh and Dawlati l Arabiya* (Trans into Arabic of his *History of the Arabs*), p. 489, quoted by M. J. al Mughniya *is his ash Shia wa l Hakimun*, p. 135.