

Gullberg and Gunnar Ekelöf. Similarly, the very personal kind of mysticism that he developed through the years has had more impact as a literary model than as an exegesis of Sufism. His work strikes a grandiose but solitary chord in Swedish writing and Persian scholarship of the 20th century.

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(BO UTAS)

HERMENEUTICS of pre-modern Islamic and Shi'ite exegesis, the principles and methods, or philosophy, of scriptural interpretation, as distinct from the act of interpretation (e.g., *tafsir*, *ta'wil*, for which see exegesis ii., iii., vi., and vii.). While the term hermeneutics began to rise to its current prominence in literary criticism and cultural studies in the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher (d. 1834) in the early 19th century, when it pertained to Biblical scholarship (in the first instance), it is nonetheless a useful concept with which to consider the history and development of scriptural exegesis in Islam. Every aspect of the highly-developed Koranic sciences ('*olum al-Qor'ān*) may be seen as constituting an Islamic hermeneutic or art of interpretation. The later codifications of these sciences, such as Badr-al-Din Zarkaši's (d. 794/1392) *al-Borhān fi 'olum al-Qor'ān* (Cairo, 1957-58) and Jalāl-al-Din Soyutī's (d. 911/1505) *al-Etqān fi 'olum al-Qor'ān* (Osnabrück, 1980), may be classified as works on hermeneutics precisely because these works are more concerned with how one interprets rather than with the actual interpretation itself.

HERMENEUTICS OF ISLAMIC EXEGESIS

The issue of scriptural interpretation was of major importance early in the history of Islam, as one of the first questions to preoccupy Muslim scholars was whether it was permissible at all to interpret the Koran (Birkeland, 1956). The majority deemed it not only permissible but unavoidable, and therefore began to regulate the methods by which it should proceed. How to understand, or interpret, the meaning of a given verse or phrase was very early on given more attention than the actual act of interpretation itself in some respects, for not everything in the Koran was considered absolutely clear and unambiguous, including the all-important requirements of Islamic Law (*šari'a*). It became an axiom of Koranic hermeneutics that, since the Koran is the Word of God, the best explanation or interpretation must come from within it, one verse clarifying or explaining another. The next best explanation was provided directly by the Prophet Moḥammad, either verbally or through his behavior, and can be found in his normative example, or *sonna*. After this, for Sunni Muslims the best explanation was provided by the Companions of the Prophet (*saḥāba*), via their teachings preserved in Hadith, then their successors, the Followers (*tābe'un*), then the Followers of the Followers (*atbā' al-tābe'in*), and through to the subsequent generations of religious scholars (cf. Ebn Taymiya, pp. 93-105).

Such hermeneutic principles were refined and elaborated through practice. For example, with regard to the Koran as its own best explicator, there are a number of key verses which provide further guidance, pre-eminent among which is Koran 3:7. This verse establishes the basic hermeneutic categories of clear, unambiguous verses (*moḥkamāt*), requiring no interpretation, as distinct from allegorical, figurative, or ambiguous verses (*motāšābeḥāt*). There was a significant hermeneutical controversy over this classification due to the differences of opinion

on how to read and punctuate the text of this particular verse of the Koran, which reads: "but those in whose hearts is doubt pursue forsooth that which is allegorical seeking (to cause) dissension by seeking to explain it none knoweth its explanation save God and those who are of sound instruction say we believe therein the whole is from our Lord but only men of understanding really heed" (tr. Pickthall, 3:7, punctuation removed). The controversy developed over how to read the last part, the two possibilities being: (1) "none knoweth the explanation save God and those of sound instruction (*al-rāseḩun fi'l-'elm*)"; or, (2) "none knoweth the explanation save God. And those of sound instruction (*al-rāseḩun fi'l-'elm*) . . ." Two basic hermeneutic issues were involved: firstly, deciding how to read the verse, and secondly, identifying "those of sound instruction" (See McAuliffe, pp. 46-62). For Shi'ites, in general, *al-rāseḩun fi'l-'elm* refers to the Prophet and the Imams (Amir-Moezzi, pp. 197-98). Another important distinction between the two sects is that, while for Sunni scholars the interpretation of the Prophet alone was binding, that offered by his Followers of the ensuing generations not having nearly the same authority and being subject to negotiation through Hadith criticism (e.g., Ṭabari, *Jāme' al-bayān 'an tā'wil āy al-Qor'ān*), for Shi'ites, direct and unerring (*ma'ṣum*) divine guidance continued even after the death of the Prophet through the divinely appointed Imams. As a result, in the controversy over how to read Koran 3:7, the prevailing interpretation amongst Shi'ites was the first possibility, with *al-rāseḩun fi'l-'elm* referring to the Imams, in addition to the Prophet, as bearers of knowledge of the true explanation of the Koran.

Other hermeneutic principles and categories were also formed early on and had enduring effects. Controversies over exegesis frequently revolved around two general types of approaches: (1) *tafsir be'l-ma'tur* and, (2) *tafsir be'l-ra'y*. The first refers to interpretations based on Hadith; the second refers to interpretations based on personal opinion, independent of the Hadith corpus and the preceding tradition. These two polarities can be regarded as characterizing the main tendencies in Sunni and Shi'ite exegesis. In Sunni Islam, the monument of and to *tafsir be'l-ma'tur* is Abu Ja'far Ṭabari's (d. 923) *Jāme' al-bayān 'an tā'wil āy al-Qor'ān* (Cairo, 1981). Here, one of the important hermeneutical principles is that only an upright, honest, believing Muslim can have anything of value to say on the meaning of the Koran. Thus 'elm al-rejāl is a subsidiary hermeneutical science. But it is important to note that this exegete himself often indicates his preference for one explanatory Hadith over others due to a variety of reasons, the most frequent being grammatical. It is also instructive to note the wording of the title of this first major *tafsir* work. While *ta'wil* would eventually come to stand for (threatening) esoteric, mystical interpretation and *tafsir* in some respects for "orthodox" interpretation, this distinction developed due to more than mere lexical considerations.

Early in the exegetical tradition, it became commonplace to ascribe four areas of meaning to each verse or

word of the Qor'ān: *zāher*, *bāṭen*, *ḩadd*, and *ma'tla'*. Thus, in a work of exegesis ascribed to the 6th Imam, Ja'far al-Ṣādeq, and taken up amongst the early (Sunni) Sufi exegetes, Tostari (d. 283/896) and Solami (d. 412/1021), these categories represented the four senses to scripture. On the basis of prophetic Hadith, other divisions included "seven readings" (*ahrof*) together with the foundational, standard hermeneutic pair: *zāher/bāṭen* (Böwering, pp. 138-42). This terminology continued to develop, multiply, and acquire new meanings throughout the long, unbroken, and vigorous history of Islamic scriptural hermeneutics.

A comparative study of the hermeneutics of Ṭabari (*tafsir be'l-ma'tur*), Avicenna (d. 1037; philosophical *tafsir*), and Ebn 'Arabi (d. 1240; mystical exegesis) has pointed out that even the widely divergent methods represented by these three figures are but a mere sampling of the overall tradition (Heath, pp. 173-210). Nonetheless, they represent a very instructive sampling, in that they represent three of the more influential hermeneutic stances in Sunni Islam. It is therefore no surprise that analogues of these exegetes can also be found in the Shi'ite tradition.

HERMENEUTICS OF SHI'ITE EXEGESIS

Shi'ite hermeneutics with its distinctive character and trajectory as a "minor tradition" was forged in the context of, and in conversation with, the larger tradition of *tafsir* represented by Sunni exegetes, such as Ṭabari, Zamaḩ-ṣari (d. 1144), Faḩr-al-Din Rāzi (d. 1204), and Ebn Kaḩir (d. 1373). Methods of interpretation in Shi'ite exegesis themselves vary considerably, often according to the socio-political fortunes of the community, and it is also important to bear in mind that Shi'ism refers to several quite distinct traditions in the first place (Zaydi, Isma'ili, Twelver). The subsequent discussion is restricted to the hermeneutics of exegesis in the Twelver tradition.

For Shi'ites, God revealed not only the Koran (*tanzil*) to Moḩammad, but also its interpretation and explanation (*ta'wil/tafsir*). This knowledge was passed on through the line of Imams who succeeded him, along with the many other symbols of their authority (*walāya*). Although the Imams are never seen as recipients of prophetic inspiration (*wahī*) the way Moḩammad is, they are nonetheless recognized as having been given information and having received communications (*moḩaddat*) from angels. This means that, for the entire period between the death of the Prophet and the beginning of the Greater Occultation of the twelfth Imam (941 C.E.), there was a hermeneutics of authority: that is to say, by virtue of the Imamate, unerring guidance, including the proper interpretation of the Koran, was available to the community. This is why the Shi'ite tradition refers to the Silent Book (*al-keṭāb al-ṣāmet*), meaning the text of the Koran itself, and the Speaking Book (*al-keṭāb al-nāṭeq*), meaning the Prophet or the Imam of the age (Ayoub, pp. 177-98). Such hermeneutic principles were established during the various periods of civil strife (*fitna*) of the first three centuries of Islam, when the role of the Imam in Shi'ism became

defined as that of a divine guide (Amir-Moezzi). Several early works of Shi'i exegesis bear witness to this absolute acceptance of the words of the Imams in explanation of the text of the Koran (e.g., al-Kufi, *Tafsir Forāt al-Kufi*, Najaf, 1354/1935). In addition to works of tafsir which uphold such a hermeneutic, one finds it also axiomatic in Hadith works, such as Kolayni's *Oṣul men al-kāfi* (Tehran, 1388/1968). Among the predominant themes of this earliest stratum of exegesis are the establishment of the authority of 'Ali, as the first Imam, the subsequent usurpation of his authority, the friends and enemies of God, the sinlessness ('*esma*) of the holy family, the covenant, and the return of the Hidden Imam, who will bring justice to the world. Statements affirming the incompleteness of the Koran were also recurrent during this period, on the basis of the belief that the so-called Uthmanic codex had been tampered with (*tahrif*) by the enemies of the holy family. The true Koran is believed to have been safeguarded by the Imams and is now in the possession of the Hidden Imam, to be reinstated at the time of his return. Another important hermeneutic postulate is that of the disappearance of other sacred texts or "scrolls" that had been entrusted to the Imams. Chief amongst these would be the so-called *Moṣḥaf Fātema*, a book said to have been revealed to Fātema through Gabriel as consolation during her mourning the death of her father. In this book the names and terms of the following eleven Imams are fixed. (This and other such books are discussed in Kohlberg, pp. 295-312.)

Significant developments were made in Shi'ite hermeneutics during the late 10th century, when scholars such as al-Šarif al-Rāzi (d. 405/1015), his brother, al-Sayyed al-Mortazā (d. 436/1044) and the most well-known Shi'ite exegete of the period, Abu Ja'far Ṭusi (d. 460/1067), began to modulate the radicalism of the earlier exegetes mentioned above. In a detailed study of the *Tafsir Forāt al-Kufi*, the *Tafsir al-Qommi*, and the *Tafsir al-'Ayyāshi*, Meir Bar-Asher (Jerusalem, 1999) has shown how these works may be taken to represent a pre-Buwayhid "school," and has outlined the way the tenor of the earlier exegeses was transformed into something much less "isolationist" with a more moderate and perhaps conciliatory attitude towards Sunnism. This stage may therefore be characterized as a hermeneutics of compromise (in relation to the greater Muslim community), in which such earlier polemical themes as the usurpation of 'Ali's rights and the incompleteness of the Koran were no longer emphasized, and often not mentioned at all, in Koranic exegesis. Many of the earlier radical positions were even dismissed by the leading Shi'ite scholars as extremism, or *golown* (see GOLĀT) and incarnationism, or *holul*. In addition, the new hermeneutic of compromise encouraged the citation of Hadith from Sunni sources and, with far-reaching implications for the future of Shi'ite jurisprudence (*feqh*, q.v.) and theology (*kalām*), the absorption and cultivation of Mu'tazilite thought. The overall result of these hermeneutic changes was the acquisition by Shi'ite exegetes of a kind of precedence over the Imam in matters of scriptural interpretation.

This was an epoch-making shift, as a result of which the Shi'ites of Baghdad at this time became forever differentiated from the Fatimid Shi'ites who had been threatening the status quo of the Islamic heartlands. It is also during this period that inter-Shi'ite debates between Oṣulis and Aḳbāris (see AḳBĀRIYA) were first reported (Madelung, pp. 13-30.), although such debates would increase in substance and intensity during the future Safavid period, when Shi'ite hermeneutics were once again transformed and codified.

New hermeneutic principles continued to be developed in Shi'ism and cultivated, especially from the time of Yaḥyā Sohrawardi (d. 1191), through whom a mystical or anagogical approach to texts was introduced which included philosophical speculation about "the world of images" (*'ālam al-me'āl*). Major Shi'ite scholars, such as Mayṭam Baḥrāni (q.v.; d. ca. 1290), Ḥaydar Āmoli (q.v.; d. after 1385), and Ebn Abi Jomhur (q.v.; d. after 1499), to name only three, were deeply influenced by the eminent Andalusian Sufi Ebn 'Arabi (q.v.; d. 1240), in whose work they saw the reality of Shi'ism elaborated and explicated. Thus, whereas in the earlier literature a term like *bāṭeni* would refer to someone who saw in the Koran references to a secret code which explained the status quo and at the same time validated rival claims for religious authority, the same term now began to acquire a different meaning; the interior of the actual reader, rather than, or perhaps even in addition to, the interior of the text, was now indicated by the term. Shi'ite theological and philosophical speculation thus became, along with Sufism, one of the major traditions in which such a hermeneutic continued to be evolved. On this basis, for example, "hermeneutic deafness" is used by the French scholar of mysticism Henry Corbin (I, p. 148) to refer to the inability to hear the music of the encounter between scripture and reader that occurs over several hermeneutic levels as the spiritual growth of the individual proceeds.

The Persian Sufi 'Alā'-al-Dawla Semnāni (q.v.; d. 1336) was an influential representative of this mystical tradition of exegesis. Although he was not himself a Shi'ite, his hermeneutics exerted considerable influence on Shi'ite exegetes, especially his method of reading the Koran according to the "seven prophets of one's being." According to this method, the continuum from Adam to Moḥammad is understood to represent a hermeneutical ascent, requiring the reader to apply and reapply all his efforts to meditate on the divine verses with the aid of his own private and interior prophetic powers. Influenced by Semnāni, Shi'ite exegetes started to use such forms of scales and hierarchies to represent the same message, namely that scripture contains more than one level of meaning. For the Shi'ites, only God and the holy family know the true meaning, while everyone else must struggle according to this hierarchical principle in order to discover the meanings that make the most existential sense for themselves, in addition, of course, to following the directives in the exegetical transmitted reports (*aḳbār*) of the Shi'ite tradition.

During the Safavid period many of the aforementioned hermeneutical methods became consolidated and started to receive support from two very different directions, namely the Shi'ite tradition of philosophy (*ḥekmat*) and the corpus of Shi'ite *aḳbār* that were studiously collated, consolidated, and classified during this period. Philosophy, as it was cultivated and practiced within this milieu, served to make sense of the more supra-rational elements found in the Koran and the Hadith, such as bodily resurrection, the return of the Hidden Imam, and the ascent (*me'rāḳ*) of the Prophet. For example, in addition to works of exegesis on a few Koranic suras, Mollā Ṣadrā (d. 1640) wrote a vast commentary on Kolayni's *al-Kāfi*, in which he sought to find the inner philosophic meaning behind apparently irrational beliefs. This resulted in a kind of revivification of much of the pre-Bowayhid exegetical presuppositions through *ḥekmat*, with a consequent redefinition of the identity of the Twelver Shi'ite community. The earlier, once dismissed or vilified hermeneutic now reassumed pride of place. While the power, wealth, and self-sufficiency of the Safavid dynasty provided a safe realm for the propagation of such radical ideas, the attendant philosophical developments were also of key importance in this rehabilitation, chief amongst which was the recognition of an '*ālam al-meṭāl*, a true realm of the soul more real than the ordinary world of phenomena, in which supra-rational events, such as the continued life of the Hidden Imam and the ascension of the Prophet, were no longer the furniture of mere piety. These beliefs were now provided with an unassailable rational basis through *ḥekmat*, the greatest practitioner of which was the above-mentioned Mollā Ṣadrā.

This hermeneutic stage is best illustrated in the diverse works of Mollā Moḥsen-Fayz Kāšāni (d. 1680), outstanding pupil and son-in-law of Mollā Ṣadrā. Kāšāni wrote one of the best accounts of the '*ālam al-meṭāl* in his philosophical handbook *Kalemāt-e mahnuna*, (pp. 70-73). However, of greater relevance in the present context is his work of Koranic exegesis, entitled *al-Ṣāfi fi tafsir kalām-Allāh al-wāfi* (Beirut, 1979). This resembles in form the classical Hadith-based (*be'l-ma'tur*; see above) works, since the author selects several *aḳbār* to elucidate each given verse, with the support of his own occasional comments. The most significant part of this work for an understanding of hermeneutics is the introduction, for it sets out the following of his methodological principles: (1) the need to cling to the Koran; (2) the belief that all the knowledge of the Koran is held by the holy family; (3) the belief that most of the Koran came down about the holy family and their friends and enemies; (4) the meanings of the aspects (*wojuh*) of the verses, such as establishing which are *motashābeh*, and their *ta'wil*; in addition, validation is provided for the categories of *zāher*, *bāṭen*, *ḥadd*, and *maṭlā'*, and an explanation of the problem of abrogation (*naskh*). Here, reference is made to a frequently encountered Shi'ite hermeneutic device which helps to uphold the absolute infallibility (*'eṣma*) of the holy family, namely that several verses which appear to chastise or criticize the Prophet have actually

been revealed in the mode of "Even though I appear to be speaking to someone else (i.e., the Prophet), I really mean you who also hear" (e.g., 17:74); (5) the prohibition of *tafsir be'l-ra'y*. Here Kāšāni adds: "If someone claims that the Koran has only an exterior meaning, he speaks strictly from self and errs grievously . . . the Koran, the *aḳbār* and the *āṭār* (transmitted reports about the Prophet) all point to the inner meanings (*ma'āni*) of the Koran" (Lawson, p. 183, citing Kāšāni, 1979, I, pp. 35-36); (6) the collection and corruption of the text of the Koran; (7) the belief that the Koran explains everything; (8) the types of verses, their inner meaning and *ta'wil* and the types of language and the different ways of reciting the text (*qerā'āt*). Kāšāni also discusses here the idea that the Koran was sent down in seven possible readings (*aḥraf*), referring either to types of verses (e.g., commands, rebukes, narratives, etc.), or to seven inner levels of meaning to the Koran; (9) the belief that the Koran came down in Ramaḳān just like all other holy scriptures; (10) the role of the Koran as an intercessor on the Day of Resurrection, as well as the rewards for memorizing it and reciting it; (11) the recitation of the Koran and the proper behavior with respect to the Koran, explaining that true reading can only occur when the reciter has "a humble heart, a pure body, and a quiet empty place, for then he experiences the sweetness of converse with God, and the knowledge of His grace and His station through the receptivity of His blessings and the wondrousness of His allusions. And when he drinks of this chalice, he will not choose any state (*ḥāl*) over this state, nor any moment (*waqt*) over this moment. Nay, rather, he will forego all [other] acts of obedience and worship because in him is intimate conversation (*monājāt*) with his Lord without intermediary" (p. 73). He then cites Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādeq, as declaring, "By God! Indeed God has manifested (*tajallā*) himself to his creatures in His speech, but they do not see." (12) explanation of technical aspects of this *tafsir*, how to judge between conflicting Hadith, and explanation of why the author will occasionally refer to al-Bayzāwī's *tafsir*, even though he was not a member of his own sect; Kāšāni cautions the reader not to be shocked by this, because "every sect—even theirs—has a knowledge which may be useful . . . hidden inside their expressions is that which we have discovered through sincere love" (adapted from Lawson, pp. 180-86).

A theological perspective centered on the figure of the Imam (together with such controversial themes as the corrupted nature of "the Koran that is among us") was in this way restored to Shi'ite hermeneutics in addition to some other more individualistic aspects implied in the multiple readings of the book, the incomparability of which is believed to make each reader feel that the Koran was revealed for them personally. This work by the Philosopher and *Aḳbārī* Twelver Shi'ite Kāšāni exerted such a huge influence on the following generations of Shi'ite scholars (though not all of them would agree with everything that he said) that he became known as "the Ḡazālī of the Ši'a."

See EXEGESIS ii., iii., vi., and vii.

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HERMES, the Greek god of boundaries, the 'trickster' of the Greek pantheon, and the guide of souls (*psychopompos*). Hermes was the inventor of fire and sacrifice, the first player of the lyre, the divine thief who stole the cattle of Apollo, and the messenger of the gods. Because of this last function, he came to be represented as a young man with winged sandals, a hat with wings (the *petasos*), and his chief symbol, the *caduceus* (or *kerykeion*), a staff encircled



by two coiling snakes (Burkert, 1985). The "herm," originally a heap of stones bearing his name, evolved into a pillar with a representation of male genitalia and crowned by a bearded head; it signaled the presence of Greek culture wherever Greeks settled.

Hermes was identified with the Roman god Mercury, god of commerce and trade, and came to be provided with a further symbol, the moneybag. In Egypt, he was, furthermore, identified with the Egyptian god Thoth; and under the name Hermes Trismegistus he came to be considered the source of a large number of writings (the *Corpus Hermeticum*) outlining the ways in which the soul could be released from the bonds of matter (Fowden, 1986).

Evidence for the presence of Hermes in the Iranian world is considerable. The god himself or his symbol can be found on coins: (1) Graeco-Bactrian (bronze issues of Diodotos II show the god; a coin of Euthydemus I, the caduceus; Holt, 1999); (2) Indo-Scythian (Azēs I, the god; Maues, the caduceus); and (3) Parthian (Phraates IV, Gotarzes I, Vologases I, Osroes, all showing the caduceus). In a surprising development, Hermes lent his chief symbols to the Kushan god Pharro, as is evident from Kushan coins (Gnoli, 1996) and seals (Callieri, 1997, p. 105). In the context of the gymnasium at Ai Khanum [Āy Kānom], an inscribed pillar (possibly part of a herm bearing the image of the father of the dedicators) was found with a Greek dedication to the gods Hermes and Heracles, patrons of the gymnasium (P. Bernard in Veuve, 1987, pp. 91-93, 111-12). Hermes is also represented on one of the rhytons from Nisa (Masson and Pugacenkova, 1982, pp. 101-2) and on (unprovenanced) Central Asian gold objects (Miho Museum, 2002, nos. 53, 74b).

Even further to the east, the god is found on a fragment of textile from Lou-Lan, thought to have been produced in Bactria (or Gandhara; Sakamoto, 2001). On the western borders of the Iranian world, many representations of Hermes have been found in Hatra (q.v.) and several cities of Parthian Syria. The god is also, finally, one of the four persons making up the deity Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes in the dynastic cult of Commagene (q.v.).

The question whether the god occurs in the Hellenistic East simply as a Greek god or in an *interpretatio orientalis* is a moot point. The association of the Mesopotamian Nabū and the Iranian god Tīr with the planet Mercury (Boyce, 1988) could have facilitated identification with Hermes (Tubach, 1986, pp. 380-81), but the evidence is inconclusive. A further association in Commagene has been suggested between Hermes and Mithra as well as Tīri, but it is likely that this was a local development (Boyce and Grenet, 1991, pp. 343-47). In all other cases, it would seem better to interpret the evidence as relating to the Greek god only.

Bibliography: M. Boyce, "The Lady and the Scribe: Some Further Reflections on Anāhīt and Tīr," *A Green Leaf. Papers in Honour of Professor Jes P. Asmussen* (Acta Iranica 28), Leiden, 1988, pp. 277-82. M. Boyce and F. Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism III. Zoroas-*