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Author: Ali Rabbani Golpayegani

translate: Mohammadreza Farajian Shushtari

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► Alley No. 18, Muallim Gharbi Street (Hujjatiyeh), Qom, Iran

Tel: +98 25 378 36 134 Tel-Fax: +98 25-37839305-9 (Ext 105)

► Boulevard Muhammad Ameen, Y-track Salariyah, Qom, Iran

Tel: +98 25-32133106

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Ali Rabbani Golpayegani

translate

Mohammadreza Farajian Shushtari



**Al-mustafa International
Translation and Publication Center**

Publisher's Foreword

To begin and execute a research is like walking in the path of development and evolvement. When the seeds of the “questions” are planted, in the soil of the mind of the researcher, this phase initiates, and its end is culminated when the result and the outcome of knowledge and wisdom is gained.

Evidently, this end is a new chapter in itself, for growth, and announces beforehand this good news to humans. For the result of all those mental efforts will not only bring the blooming and flowering of talent and all kinds of Blessings to humans, but it also makes the mind of the researcher to ponder and shape new, more questions.

This will produce a great collection of growing plants and flowers for the seeking mind... Those “questions” are in fact, the seeds, which according to the necessities of Time and the strength of the researchers will grow and bloom by themselves. They will make Culture and Civilization to move forward.

In like manner, the increasing rate of transferring oneself from one place to another place and the decrease of the distances will make those seeds travel miles and miles, to faraway places, in order to install them inside the curious mind of other seekers. This will bring an amazing diversity and a novelty for another civilization...

It is true then, that the presence of knowledge and a good, capable management will help this project to develop itself and one has to admit indeed, that it has always played an important role...

Al-Mustafa International Publication and Translation Center, because of its global mission, and its special position among the Religious Schools and the colorful human diversity that it has developed inside itself, sees it as a moral duty to procure all the appropriate conditions for any research works, and takes its role in this matter, most seriously. To procure all kinds of necessary grounds, with an excellent management of all the existing possibilities and talents, and to care and protect all its researchers in religious fields; these are the most crucial responsibilities of the Department of Research in this International center.

We dearly hope that by being attentive to all these autonomous scientific movements, and by fortifying all the existing motives, we shall be able to witness the blooming of the Religious Culture in every part of this wide world!

Preface by Al-Mustafa International Research Center

Al-Mustafa International Research Center, as the most excellent center for production and reproduction of the Islamic and human sciences and knowledge in Al-Mustafa International University, and the most supreme center to meet the scientific needs of this institution, has always sought to present great works in the field of Islamic and human sciences to the world of knowledge. Since expanding the profound Islamic theories is among the goals of Al-Mustafa International University and following the movement of translation of Islamic sources is one of its primary policies, this seminary institute established the translation center in order to propagate the divine knowledge and introduce the holy school of Ahl al-Bayt ^{PBUT} and it has taken the measures to translate scientific and religious texts and sources into various languages.

The present work, titled as *An Introduction to Shi'a Study*, is a manifestation of the attempts made by the colleagues of the Research Center and especially the Translation Office. The work has been translated by Mohammad Reza Farajian Shoushtari from Persian to English and evaluated by Seyyed Abdolmajid Tabatabaee and the translation project has been supervised by Seyyed Abazar Hashemi. Having gone through the translation, revision, evaluation and final quality control, the work is presented to all those around the world who are interested in Islamic and human sciences.

Hussein Mottaqi
The Head of the Al-Mustafa
International Research Center

Table of Contents

Preface	11
Part One: General Issues	
Chapter One: The Concept of Shi'a and its Branches.....	19
Meaning of "Shi'a"	19
"Shi'a" in Usage	21
Chapter Two: History and Origin of Shi'a.....	33
1. Emergence of Shi'a during the Time of the Prophet(s).....	33
2. Emergence of Shi'a after the Demise of the Prophet(s).....	35
3. A Combination of the two First Views	36
Chapter Three: Wrong Ideas about the History and Origin of Shi'a.....	49
1. Invention of Shi'a by 'Abd Allah b. Sabā.....	49
2. Emergence of Shi'a at the Time of Imam Ali(a).....	52
3. Emergence of Shi'a after the Event of Karbala.....	54
4. Creation of Shi'a by Iranians	56
Chapter Four: Shi'a at the Time of Caliphs	61
Chapter Five: Shi'a at the Time of Umayyads.....	69
1. Before the Uprising of Karbala	69
2. After the Event of Karbala	73
Chapter Six: Shi'a at the Time of 'Abbasids.....	81
Chapter Seven: Shi'a References in Primary and Secondary Principles of Religion.....	91
1. The Glorious Qur'an	91
Immunity of the Qur'an from Alteration.....	92
Validity of the Appearance of the Qur'an	95
2. Conduct of the Noble Prophet(s) [Sunnah]	99
Imams(a) and the Sunnah of the Prophet(s).....	100
3. Speech and Act of the Ahl al-Bayt(a)	102
A) Verse of Tathir.....	102
B) Hadith of Tha'qalayn	106
C) Hadith of Safina	107
D) Hadith of Amān Ahl al-Ard.....	108
E) The Ahl al-Bayt in Nahj al-Balāgha.....	108
4. Intellect.....	111

8 An Introduction to Shi'a Study

The Qur'an and Intellectual Thinking	111
The Noble Prophet(s) and Intellectual Thinking	112
Imams(a) and Intellectual Thinking	113
Shi'a Scholars and Intellectual Thinking	114

Part Two: Unity and Justice

Chapter One: Monotheism and Polytheism	119
Purification and Comparability	123
Rejecting Seeing by the Eyes	125
Negation of Incarnation and Union	125
Faith and Disbelief	126
Chapter Two: Divine Justice	129
Truth of Divine Justice	129
Manifestations of Divine Justice	129
Intellectual Goodness and Badness	131
Purposefulness of Creation	132
Human Being and Volition	133
Bada' and Destiny	135
Bada' and Absolute Power of God	137
Bada' and the Effect of Good and Bad Actions of Human Being in His Destiny	138
Necessity of Lutf ["Grace"]	139

Part Three: Prophethood and Imamate

Chapter One: Prophethood and Mission	145
Philosophy of Prophethood	145
Miracle and Prophethood	148
Prophethood and Infallibility	150
Sahw al-Nabi Fallacy	153
Seal of Prophethood	157
The Question of the Impossibility of Abrogation	159
Chapter Two: Truth and Rulings of Imamate	161
Shi'a and Imamate	161
1. Truth and Aspects of Imamate	161
2. Attributes of Imam	172
3. The Way of Knowing Imam	182
Chapter Three: Proofs for Imamate	185
1. Verse of Wilaya	185
2. Verse of Tabligh	188
3. Verse of Ikmal Din ["Perfection of religion"] and Disappointment of Disbelievers	190
Removing an Ambiguity	192
4. Hadith Ghadir	192
5. Hadith of Manzila	197
6. Hadith al-Dar	199
7. Hadith of the Twelve Caliphs	200
8. Hadith of Nuqaba' of Bani Israel	202
9. Hadith of Thaqaalayn	203

Chapter Four: Mahdism in Islam	205
Belief in the Promised Mahdi(a)	205
Lineage of the Promised Mahdi(a)	207
Birth and Life of the Promised Mahdi(a)	209
Arguments for the Existence of Imam al-Mahdi(a)	210
Occultation and Its Philosophy	211
1. Occultation of Imam(a), among Divine Secrets	212
2. Fear for Being Murdered	213
3. Trial for Believers	215
4. Description of the Occultation	215
Existential Influences of the Hidden Imam(a)	217
The Issue of the Long Life of Imam al-Mahdi(a)	219
The Time and Signs of the Coming	220
Chapter Five: Shi'a and Raj'a	223
Chapter Six: Exaggeration and Exaggerators	229
The Phenomenon of Exaggeration in the World of Islam	230
Signs of Exaggeration	231
Sects of Exaggerators	232
Imams' (a) Position against Exaggerators	233
Opposition of Imamiyya Theologians with Exaggeration and Exaggerators	234
Wrong Understandings and Accusations	236

Part Four: General Issues about Ma'ād

Chapter One: Philosophy of Qiyāma and Truth of Ma'ād	243
Truth of Ma'ād	244
Chapter Two: Grave and Barzakh	247
Chapter Three: Events and Stations of Qiyāma	249
1. Reckoning and the Scale	249
2. Širāt [Path]	249
3. A'rāf	250
4. Liwā' al-Ḥamd	250
5. Hawḍ al-Kawthar [Kawthar Pool]	250
Chapter Four: Qiyāma and Intercession	251
Requesting Intercession	252
Wahhābis and Intercession	253
Arguments or Questions of Wahhābis	253
Review and Analysis	254

Part Five: Some Secondary Principles in Fiqh

Chapter One: Taqiyya in Islam	263
Definition of Taqiyya	263
Taqiyya and Reason	263
The Qur'an and Taqiyya	264
Taqiyya against Muslims	266
Taqiyya in the Hadiths of the Ahl al-Bayt(a)	267
History of Shi'a and the Necessity of Taqiyya	269

10 An Introduction to Shi'a Study

Answering Two Questions	270
Exceptions of Taqiyya.....	273
Chapter Two: Sunna and Bid'a	275
Meaning and Usage of "Sunna"	275
Meaning and Usage of Bid'a.....	277
Prohibition of Bid'a.....	279
Bid'a and Deviation	280
Fighting Bid'a	280
Good and Bad Innovation in the Views of Sunnis	281
Recognition of Bid'a	284
Chapter Three: The Method of Performing Wudu	289
Verse of Wudu	290
1. The Manner of Washing the Face and the Hands.....	290
2. Necessity of Wiping the Feet	292
Answering Criticisms:.....	295
Chapter Four: Prostrating on the Earth	297
Chapter Five: Khums in Islam	301
From what khums has to be paid?	301
Usage of Khums	303
Chapter Six: Temporary Marriage	305
The Necessity of Temporary Marriage	305
The Qur'an and Temporary Marriage	306
The Sunnah and Temporary Marriage.....	307
Rulings and Features	307
The Assumption of the Temporary Marriage's Abrogation.....	308
The Assumption of Abrogation in Hadiths	310
A Speech from Fakhr al-Din Rāzi	312
Answering Questions	313
Stop Abusing.....	315
List of Sources	317

Preface

By researching in the history of religions, especially divine religions, this fact is discovered that upon their emergences religions gathered their followers as a united community by offering certain principles, rulings and manners; but, after a short time, they divided, due to different reasons, in different sects and schools having different beliefs and traditions. The Islamic community too was not left unaffected of this historical phenomenon and after the demise of the noble Prophet(a), many schools and sects emerged in the world of Islam. According to a hadith narrated from the Prophet(a), he(a) himself had foreseen this phenomenon and had given the news about the emergence of seventy and three sects among Muslims.¹

Disagreements were first little and limited, but they gradually grew and obviously not all disagreements about different religious issues lead to the emergence of different schools and sects, but only those disagreements lead to the emergence of different schools which are about important religious issues, including primary and secondary principles, such as disagreements in the Unity and attributes of God, the Prophethood and Imamate, methods of understanding the Qur'an

1. Based on this hadith, the noble Prophet(a) said, "Jews divided into seventy and one sects, Christians divided into seventy and two sects and my ummah will divide into seventy and three sects." To know about the chain of transmission, text and content of this hadith, refer to: al-Farq bayn al-firaq, pp. 4-9; Buhuth fi al-milal wa al-nihal, vol. 1, pp. 21-40.

and the conduct of the noble Prophet(a), etc. Due to these disagreements, sects such as Mujassima, Mushabbiha, Mu'awwila, Sifatiyya, 'Adliyya, Qadariyya, Jabriyya, Mufawwida, Murji'a, Wa'idiyya, Tafdiliyya, Hashwiyya, Salafiyya, etc. were emerged.

One of the most essential disagreements in Islamic community is the disagreement over caliphate and Imamate.¹ This disagreement emerged from the first moments after the demise of the noble Prophet(a) and has continued to the present time. The essence of this disagreement is about the rightfulness and designation of a person who could carry out the religious and political leadership of the Islamic community as the caliphate of the noble Prophet(a).

Some believed that the caliph of the Prophet(a) should have the same attributes and characteristics of the Prophet(a). He should be the best personality in knowledge and action and should be infallible. Since recognition of these attributes is beyond the competence of non-infallible persons, the caliph of the Prophet(a) should be designated by him; therefore, the noble Prophet(a) announced Ali b. Abi Talib(a) as his caliph and Imam of the Islamic community after himself. Adherents of this belief are considered "Shi'a". On the other hand, others do not believe in the necessity of such qualifications and attributes for the caliph of the Prophet(a) and rejected designation of Imam by the Prophet(a) and believe that the Prophet(a) left this issue to the will and choice of Muslims. This group is generally called Ahl al-Sunna [Sunnis]; while, they are also called other names referring to their differences of opinion in other religious issues; and basically, [different sects of] this group disagree on who should be called and named Ahl al-Sunna.² The same way, among the first group (Shi'a)

1. "The greatest disagreement in the community is the disagreement over Imamate; for there has never been any religious principle for which swords have been unsheathed, like when swords have been unsheathed for Imamate in all times", Shahrastani, *al-Milal wa al-nihal*, vol. 1, p. 24.

2. About different usages of the term "ahl al-Sunna", see: *al-Kalam al-muqarin*, pp. 12 – 18.

too disagreements emerged on imamate and thus different divisions appeared in it.¹

Since after the noble Prophet(a) individuals were chosen for the leadership of the Islamic community as his caliph who were often void of characteristics acceptable by Shi'a and their leadership was lacked religious legitimacy; therefore, their relationship with Shi'a has not been generally friendly and empathetic and mostly led to aggression. This is evident in most of Umayyad and 'Abbasid periods and their many evidences are recorded in historical sources. This put Shi'a in a difficult social and political situation and provided the grounds for slanders and deviations about their beliefs and opinions; so much that they were sometimes mentioned as a group who tried to destroy Islam. This is while realistic and unbiased researches in the Qur'an and the tradition reveals this truth that fundamental beliefs of Shi'a are originated from the heart of the Qur'an and the tradition. That is why the founder of this school is the noble Prophet of Islam(a) and he(a) named this thought and its adherents Shi'a.

According to what was mentioned, a realistic research in the history and beliefs of Shi'a seems necessary; whereas previously distinguished thinkers of Shi'a separately or through historical and ideological discussions have discussed this issue and have left valuable works. But, it is quite evident that different cultural and social conditions require appropriate researches. Therefore, the stream of research and writing will always be flowing in this regard.

The chapters which deserve to be researched about in Shi'a school are:

1. Terminology and meaning of "Shi'a" and "Tashayyu"
2. The time and the way Shi'a emerged
3. Major present sects of Shi'a
4. Developments of Shi'a during the history of Islam

1. About the sects of Shi'a, refer to Firaq al-Shi'a, written by Abi Muhammad Hasan b. Musa Nawbakhti and al-Fusul al-mintara min al-'uyun wa al-majalis, written by Sayyid Murtada.

5. Studying Shi'a Imams(a) and their attributes
6. Distinguished Shi'a personalities in Islamic sciences and teachings
7. Role of Shi'a in enriching Islamic culture and civilization
8. Sources and references of Shi'a thought in primary and secondary principles of Shi'a
9. Shi'a beliefs in primary principles of religion
10. Shi'a views in secondary principles of religion

It is evident that researching in the mentioned topics is a vast study which would not fit even in several volumes and is also beyond one person's competence. Since the present work is written as an educational text for a two or three credit course, it cannot contain discussions about all the above-mentioned issues and in cases which has addressed, it could not make an all-encompassing and comprehensive study of them. Therefore, some of the chapters have been skipped from discussions and other chapters have been discussed briefly. Here, what has been focused more, are the history of the emergence of Shi'a and criticism of wrong views about it and also discussions regarding Imamate, especially the infallibility of Imam and the clear texts and proofs about Imamate.

It needs to be noted that about the infallibility and proof of imamate, two issues should be discussed, one is the necessity of the infallibility and proof of Imamate which are about general imamate and the other is proving the infallibility of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt(a) and the existence of proofs for their Imamate which is discussed in special Imamate.

Since teaching all discussions of this book in two or three credits is not practically possible, it is appropriate that respected teachers focus more on the issues which have higher priorities (such as the history of the emergence of Shi'a and the issues regarding imamate) which are less discussed in previous and next stages of education and leave researches about issues which are historical and narrative to the students and only discuss their analytical points.

At any rate, a research named as introduction to Shi‘a cannot be void of major Shi‘a discussions in primary and secondary principles of religion; especially those issues about which Shi‘a have special position and dissenters and doubters present a wrong interpretation of them and demonstrate Shi‘a irrational and illegitimate.

It is to note that this book has passed the stages of receiving educational feedbacks and the author has fully rewritten some parts using criticisms and suggestions of respected scholars; so that, the book’s structure has been revised some cases, numbers and the quality of references. I thus feel obliged to express my gratitude towards those respected scholars and express my readiness to receive constructive criticisms and suggestions of experts.

It is also necessary to express my gratitude to the respected educational deputy of the Global Center for Islamic Sciences and also to the esteemed head of the office for planning and compilation of textbooks at that center, Hujjat al-Islam wa al-Muslimin ‘Izzuddin Rezanejad and his respected colleagues.

I ask the Merciful God to increase their successes in propagation of genuine Shi‘a teachings.

And our concluding call is that ‘All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds’.

Ali Rabbani Golpayegani
Qom Seminary
Muharram 27th, 1424/ March 31, 2003