

Book to go!

The Shia

Hamid Kasiri



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Book to Go!

“Book to Go!” as a new book series deals with some relevant issues from the perspective of the Shia Islam. Everything presented here is ***“Shiite Discourses”*** and was published in my previous works, but some readers was interested to have them in a new compact form so that they can take them with on travel, on the subway and ...!

These multi-volume study booklets are a kind of ***“Book to Go!”*** and try to remind us in a different way of actions and lead us to harmony between faith and praxis and in life with others: *“Behave toward people the way, you want them to behave toward you.”* And this is my way, so follow it and do not follow the other paths.

This book series is published in the hope of contributing to a better understanding of *“Shiite Discourses”* in the 21st century. ***“Book to Go!”*** aims to motivate people to think. It thus doesn't mean, “cash and carry” or “cash and go”, but rather ***“cash and read”!*** This is because reading leads to the revival of the soul and refresh the mind!

Hamid Kasiri
(Amin-ul-Islam Mazandarani)
Vienna, at 03.03.2023!



Preface

The aim of this study is to provide *thought impulses* for broadening reader's horizons, which lead to further encounters with Shia Islam and what is reflected in it. It therefore intended to present it in a transparent and understandable manner for the current Western generation - and especially for **academics**.

In my writings I would like to provide the reader with current information on **key Shiite topics**, in order to enable readers to deal with Western and non-Western Shiites without misunderstandings and prejudices.

This open interaction in a dialogical togetherness wants to end the state of a separate coexistence and do its discursive method, pioneering work in cooperation.

The fact that Shia Islam still plays a decisive and very important role in people's lives is probably an undisputed fact. Here and there it is criticized that the influence of religions has decreased, that societies are largely secularized. It may also be true that

religions do not play an essential role in some areas, but they have not completely disappeared from human life.

Even today, the Shiite tradition influences not only the private life of believers, but also the profession, politics and the structure of the world, that is, the most important aspects of their lives as human beings are part of the faith. Past and current events have repeatedly confirmed that the Shiite tradition is an enormously important factor for the formation and development of opinions in society.

Therefore, it intends to break down those same prejudices and - in the sense of a cross-cultural and intercultural positional flexibility - to look for ways to research the meaning of Shia Islam and to present it clearly. In this way, prejudices are reduced and the way to its thinking and faith is paved.

Through this study, the attentive reader understands that what we call *Shiite thinking* is not a culture-specific (e.g., Eastern or Western) product, but simply universal. That is why we are constantly asked by the academic side to publish further studies on Shiite thinking (and faith) to develop solid bridges of understanding for its inter-and transcultural mediation.

The Shia

Wilaya Teachings

God has placed a special talent in every human being that by discovering that talent and finding his inner character, one can discover the vocation of his life and act accordingly. The vocation of this studies is to introduce the Shiite belief and teachings. Because many people show grate interest to it and its teachings.

The reason for searching for Shia Islam also lies in the spiritual longing in which the people also live. The wish for a different way of life drives them further to the rational real life based on the *Shiite Wilaya teachings*.

This book series also deals with the Shiite view, which has particularities such as *spirituality* and *rationality*. For the reader interested in Shiite theology and Shiite spirituality, this book series can be beneficial and of course saturate their hunger for spirituality and bring their search for meaning to the

goal and fulfill their hope for accurate understanding of Shiite thought and belief.

Such aspiration becomes all the clearer when one becomes familiar with the Shia Islam and its particularities. Originally the “**Shia**” is as old as Islam itself,¹ and in the reality “Shia” is one of the Islamic schools of theology and law that is widespread in all countries.

“**Shia**” is originally meant to be a follower, whether a follower of truth or falsehood, so it is like the word “**Imam**”, which can have a positive or negative meaning according to the suffix it takes, such as:

1. the right Imam² (الإمام الحق), or
2. the false Imam³ (الإمام الباطل).

¹ Halm, Heinz: *Schia Islam. Von der Religion zur Revolution*. (Shia Islam. From religion to revolution.) Beck, Munich, 1994, p. 8.

² In this sense we read in the Hl. Quran as follow: “*And We made them leaders guiding by Our command. And We inspired to them the doing of good deeds, establishment of prayer, and giving of zakat; and they were worshippers of Us.*” Hl. Quran 21:73.

”وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ
وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ.”

³ In this sense we read in the Hl. Quran as follow: “*We made them (Pharaoh and his followers) leaders inviting (others) to the Fire. And on the Day of Judgment, they will not be helped.*” Hl. Quran 28:41.

Philologically, Imam is a human being, book or otherwise, followed by other people, whether he/it is right or wrong.

The term “**Shiite**” is used for Muslims who follow the Prophet Muhammad (s) and the Imams of his family (*Ahl-ul-Bait*). This term is not understood by the Shiites as separation or division:⁴

Shia, which means “party” in the original word (in the sense of a following), is said to those who regard the succession of the noble prophet (s) as the privilege of the members of the *Ahl-ul-Bait* (family of the prophet) and strive for their school in all areas of knowledge of Islam.

In other word: „Shiah, which literally means partisan or follower, refers to those who consider the Prophet’s succession - as the special right of the Prophet’s family and who in the field of the Islamic sciences and culture follow the school of the household of the Prophet”.⁵

"وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَيْمَةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا يُنصَرُونَ."

4 Falsely, Shia Islam seen by some non-Shiites as a division of the Islamic world community, which deviates from the mostly Sunni-understood religion of Islam.

5 Tabatabai S. M. H. (Allama): *Shi'ite Islam*. State University of New York Press, 1975, p. 31.

This is also clarified in the following: “The first name that appeared at the time of God’s Messenger was the Shia Salman, Abu Dharr, Miqdad and Ammar. They became famous under this name.”⁶ This word, which can mean “followers”, “successors” and “members of a party”, appears in the Quran.

As an example, we quote some verses from the Quran: “*Truly, Abraham belonged to his (Noah’s) Shia.*”⁷ It continues: “*And he (Moses) entered the city at a time when its inhabitants were in a state of carelessness; and he found two men who fought together, one of his own party (Shia) and the other of his enemies. He who was from his party (Shia) called him to help him who was of his enemies.*”⁸

As you can see, the term “Shia” has no sectarian meaning. *Shia* refers to a faithful successor and not to sectarian ideology. But how could the faith of a prophet like Abraham or Moses be understood sectarianally? Or how could God the Exalted call the faithful followers of a prophet an evil man? Was the Prophet Abraham a sectarian? What

⁶ Lothrop, Stuard: *Hädhir-ul-Aalam Al-Islami Wa Madhiha*. Cairo/Egypt, Dar-ul-Fikr Al-Arabi, 1932, Vol. 1, S. 188.

⁷ *Hl. Quran* 37:83.

⁸ *Ibid.* 28:15.

about the prophets Noah, Moses, or Jesus Christ?

If the word “*Shiite*” were a term of division, Allah would not use it to describe the actions of His high-ranking prophets, nor would the Prophet have praised those described with this term. Faith in God and his messengers has always been based on an *idea of unity* that calls people to understand themselves as a community.

There have always been moments in history when this term was also used for unbelievers, but from the Quran verses just quoted it can be deduced that the use of this term can only have a positive meaning for the followers of a prophet. In this sense the Prophet Muhammad (s) uses this term for the followers of Imam Ali.

Looking at the history of Islam and the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, one can find hadiths of the Prophet in both the Sunni and Shiite Hadith collections, where the word “Shia” is used specifically for the followers of Imam Ali (s). In the following we quote some of the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (s) from the main Sunni hadith collections, Quran commentaries, history books and biographies:

- In a hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (s) said: “Good news, oh Ali! Truly, you and your *Shia*, you will be in paradise.”⁹
- When the following verse of the Quran was revealed: “But those¹⁰who believe and do good works, they are the best creatures”, the Prophet said to Imam Ali: “This applies to you and your *Shia*.”¹¹

⁹ Ibn Hanbal, Ahmad: *Fadhail-us-Sahaba*. Mo-assasah ar-Risalah, Beirut/Lebanon, 1983, Vol. 2, p. 655. Al-Isfahani, Ahmad Abunoaim: *Hilyate-ul-Auliaa wa Tabaqat-ul-Asfia*. Daar-ul-Fikr, Beirut/Lebanon, 1998, Vol. 4, p. 329. Al-Khatib al-Bagdadi, Ahmad Ibn-Ali: *Tarikh Baghdad*. Dar-ul-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut/Lebanon, 1977, Vol. 12, p. 289. At-Tabarani, Abu l-Qasim Sulaiman ibn Ahmad: *Al-Mujm-ul-Kabir*. Matbaah Ibn Taimiyyah, Cairo/ Egypt, 1984, Vol. 1, p. 319. Al-Haythami, Nur-du-Din Ali: *Majma-uz-Zawaid*. Maktaba-tul-Qudsi, Cairo/Egypt, 1994, Vol. 10, p. 21-22. Ibn Asakir, Ali ibn al-Hasan (Ad-Dimashqi): *Tarikh Madinat Dimashq*. Dar-ul-Fikr, Beirut/Lebanon, 1995, Vol. 42, p. 331-332. Al-Hathami, Ahmad ibn Muhammad Ibn Hajar: *As-Sawaiq al-Muhriqah*. Maktaba-tul-Fayyadh, Cairo/Egypt, 2008, Chapter. 11, sect. 1, p. 247.

¹⁰ *Hl. Quran* 98:7.

¹¹ Suyuti, Jalal-ud-Din: *Ad-Durr-ul-Manthur*. Al-Maktabah al-Marashi, Qum/Iran, 1978, Vol. 6, p. 379. At-Tabari, Muhammad Ibn al-Jarir: *Tafsir Jami-ul-Bayan*. Dar-ul-Hijr, Cairo/Egypt, 2001, Vol. 24, p. 556. Ibn Asakir, Ali ibn al-Hasan (Ad-Dimashqi): *Tarikh Madinat Dimashq*. Dar-ul-Fikr, Beirut/Lebanon, 1995, Vol. 42, p. 333 and 371. Haytami, Ahmad ibn Muhammad Ibn Hajar:

- He continued: “I swear to the One who holds my life in His hands that this man (Ali) and his *Shia* will secure salvation on the day of judgment.”¹²
- The Prophet (s) also said: “Oh Ali! You and your *Shia* will face Allah (on the day of judgment), satisfied with yourself and with Him, and your enemies will come to Him, angry and stiff-necked.”¹³

We can say with certainty that the Prophet, when he describes the Followers of Imam Ali with this term, had no intention of dividing the Islamic world community into different groups or sects. On the contrary, he wanted to motivate Muslims to join Imam Ali.

By depicting the situation and the sublime position of Imam Ali’s followers in the hereafter, he actually wanted to show the

Al-Sawaiq al-Muhriqah. Maktaba al-Fayyadh, Cairo/Egypt, 2008, Chapter. 11, Sec. 1, p. 246-247.

¹² Ibn As-Sabbagh Al-Maliki, Nur-ud-Din: *Al-Fosul-ul-Mohemmah fi Marefat al-Aemmah*. Dar-ul-Adhwa, Beirut/Lebanon, 1988, p. 117.

¹³ Ibn Al-Athir, Abu al-Hassan Ali ibn Muhammad: *Al-Nihaya fi Gharib Al-Hadith*. Al-Maktabat-ul-Ilmiyyah, Beirut/Lebanon, 1979, Vol. 4, p.106. At-Tabarani, Sulaiman ibn Ahmad: *Mujam-ul-Kabir*. Matbaah Ibn Taimiyyah, Cairo/Egypt, 1984, Vol. 1, p. 319. Al-Haythami, Nur-ud-Din Ali: *Majmauz-Zawaid*. Maktaba-tul-Qudsi, Cairo/Egypt, 1994, Vol. 9, No. 14168.

Muslims some exemplary people who are not only righteous in this world, but who will also find their way to God in the hereafter because of their faith and good deeds. This is the orientation or guidance that he gave to his deputy during his lifetime and to his successor after his death.

To further document this argument, we quote the following hadith, in which the Prophet Muhammad (s) said: *“Shortly after me, disunity and hatred will spread among you. When such a situation occurs, go and seek Ali, because he can separate the true from the false.”*¹⁴

From the above-mentioned Quranic verses and prophetic hadiths, it becomes clear that the term “Shia” appears in both the Quran and the Sunnah and denotes the faithful followers of a prophet or an Imam (here of Imam Ali) but has no negative meaning. Unfortunately, however, the efforts of the opponents of Islam in its early days and the activities of the Umayyads throughout history did not take the Quranic and prophetic instructions seriously.

¹⁴ Al-Mottaqi Al-Hindi, Ali: *Kanz-ul-Ummal*. Mo-assah ar-Risalah, Beirut/Lebanon 1985, Vol. 2, p. 612, No. 32964.

Most Muslims have ignored the voices of the Imams, and that is why divisions and disunity are visible in the Islamic world community. Especially nowadays we observe not only divisions, but also often open hostility within the Islamic community, which has turned Muslims into not only divided brothers, but also archenemies. In this situation, the “Shia”, i.e., the group that followed the Prophet Muhammad (s) is underestimated in some areas, and it was even referred to as non-Muslims and made the object of all forms of discrimination and persecution.

In any case, today there is an Islamic school with hundreds million followers that cultivates its own tradition, thinking and perspective - a perspective that is rooted in the revelation of the Quran and the prophetic tradition. Nevertheless, it has undoubtedly profited from the deposit of other cultures, especially for the revision of the tradition to which it invites everyone today.

This is precisely the strength of Shiite thought, that although it has combined different elements, dominates them so rationally that, while preserving its Islamic content, it represents its own culture, its own system of thought and its own worldview.

So, when we look at the history of Islam and the current state of the Shiite tradition, we are inspired when we discover relatives. Believers who devote themselves to the same God and Lord with us and have their experiences with Him, learn the same thing. And at the same time, we are encouraged and enriched by the fundamental experience with God appearing again and again up-to-date and in a new light and opens up His infinite possibilities to us. The same applies in synchronous alignment if we turn to contemporary forms of Shia Islam - as well as Shiite existence in general - in other cultures.

With God, we will be able to orient ourselves and find our way around if we pursue each phenomenon with an analytical view and at the same time with the empathy that can be inherent in Shiite existence. With heuristic dynamism, they will give us access to other - and from this - other phenomena. Such a response to the concrete phenomena of the faithful existence, as far as it is possible for reflection, constitutes the fulfilment of Shiite fundamental theological aspirations. It carries the content of the Islamic faith with its existential reality of experience, so that both illuminate each other and together form a whole form.

The Imamites

Shiatu Ali

The Imamites are named according to one of their theological principles, the *Imama*, which is the succession of the Prophet by the twelve Imams. Because of the number “twelve” they are also called Twelver-Shia (Ithnaaschari). They represent a basic direction of Islam and are the largest group among the Shiites. To understand this, it is important to get an idea of Shi Islam.

The name *Shia* is derived from “Followers of Imam Ali” (Shiatu Ali, شيعَةُ علي), since Imam Ali was appointed several times during his lifetime by the Prophet Muhammad (s) as successor (Caliph) and after his death as trustee (وصى). That is why the Shiites believe in Imam Ali (s) as their first Imam. In addition to the generic term “Shia”, other terms are also used which, although otherwise, are identical in spirit. They are not different currents, but the same current with different names:

- “*Imami*”,
- “*Ithnaaschari*” and
- “*Jafari*”

are different names of the Twelver Shia Islam and do not indicate any differences in content. They all are the same ***Shiatu Ali***. The reasons why Shia Islam has different names are as follows:

- o *Twelver-Shia*: Because of the number “twelve” they are also called “Twelver-Shia” (*Ithnaaschari*). Because they believe on 12 Imams from the progeny of the Prophet Muhammad (s).
- o *Imami*: Because of the belief in the Imams, they are called “Imami” (“the believers in Imama”).
- o *Jafari*: Because most of the Shiite theological and legal teachings came from Imam Jafar As-Sadiq, they were called *Jafari*.

The “***Imami School***” is attributed to the 14 sinless people (Masum).¹⁵ This school, - in contrast to the *Ashari* and *Mutazili*, - is not only a theological but also a school of law. The Shiites become the Islamic

¹⁵ The Prophet Muhammad, Fatemeh Az-Zahra and the 12 Imams of the posterity of the Prophet, i.e., the *Ahl-ul-Bait*.

teachings via *Ahl-ul-Bait*. In this sense, they are nearer to the Prophet and his Sunnah.

In terms of content, there are similarities between *Imami* and *Mutazila*, which can be attributed to the fact that the *Mutazila* also recognizes the Imams of the *Ahl-ul-Bait* as their Imams, but does not accept their flawlessness and the Imams of the *Ahl-ul-Bait* are among their great teachers. For the *Imami*, however, only the teachings of their “14 Purse” are binding.

Book to Go!

"Book to Go!" as a multi-volume study booklet is a kind of **"cash and read"** and tries to remind the readers different ways of thinking and actions. Its compact content leads to harmony between faith and praxis and in living with others.

The Shia

Originally the **"Shia"** is as old as Islam itself, and in the reality "Shia" is one of the Islamic schools of theology and law that is widespread in all countries. The term **"Shiite"** is used for Muslims who follow the Prophet Muhammad (s) and the Imams of his family (*Ahl-ul-Bait*) and strive for their school in all areas of knowledge. In a hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (s) said: *"Good news, oh Ali! Truly, you and your Shia, you will be in paradise"*. This Study focuses on the belief and thinking of the **Imamite world community!**

Prof. Dr. Hamid Kasiri

Author of several book series on nonviolent, Dialogue, *"Just peace"* and Shia Studies. His monographs on Shia Islam at universities are now considered as classics. He is the founder and owner of **"ILogos International Publications"**, Vienna/Austria.

