

Preface

In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا وَنَبِيِّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّاهِرِينَ وَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى أَعْدَائِهِمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and may the blessings of Allah be upon our Master and Prophet, Muhammad, and his pure progeny, and may the curse of Allah be upon all their enemies.

History of Shi'ism as the History of a Living School and Combatant Followers

The history of Shi'ism {*tashayyu'*} is inseparable from the history of Islam as it is the continuation of Islam of the Prophetic period under the stewardship of the successors of the Prophet of Islam (S)¹—the members of his Household {*Ahl al-Bayt*} ('a).² Furthermore, the origin of the term *Shi'ah*³ is traceable back to the Holy Prophet (S) himself.

The initial nucleus of the Shi'ah was composed of the great and distinguished Companions {*sahabah*}⁴ of the Prophet of Islam (S) who, as per instruction of the Prophet (S), believed in the expediency of the leadership of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) after the Prophet (S).

After the demise of the Prophet of Islam (S), the formation of {the selection in} Saqifah and the climate that emerged in the selection of the caliph, the path of Shi'ism took a different turn in history. It is because the Shi'ah insisted on the leadership of 'Ali ('a) and remained around the members of the Prophet's Household {*Ahl al-Bayt*} ('a). By enduring the difficulties and adversities, they did not abandon

their ideals and beliefs. Thus, they kept their distance from government affairs, causing them to face much enmity and disfavor from the governments of the time.

Although the Shi'ah difference of view with the supporters of the *de facto* caliphate was first on the question of caliphate and succession to the Prophet (S), they also called on the Imams from the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a)—the genuine fountainhead of Islamic knowledge and learning—after the demise of the Prophet (S) for matters relating to the principles of beliefs {*'aqa'id*}, jurisprudence {*fiqh*}, *hadith*,⁵ *tafsir* {exegesis of the Qur'an}, and other Islamic sciences. Over time, the Imams became renowned in these fields compared to the followers of the *de facto* caliphate, and the trend of their intellectual and cultural path took a different course.

This affair itself had an eminent effect on the historical and cultural trend in Shi'ism, continuously protecting it from distortion {*tahrif*} and other forms of setbacks.

In the light of adherence to the Imams from the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a), the Shi'ah actually became the repository of *Ahl al-Bayt*'s knowledge and their spiritual inheritors throughout history. The culture of Shi'ism has always been an effulgent, dynamic, prolific, and authentic culture such that even some of their opponents have acknowledged this fact.

For example, Shams ad-Din Muhammad adh-Dhahabi (born 748 AH), one of Ahl as-Sunnah's distinguished eighth century (*hijri*) scholars (known for his anti-Shi'ah sentiment) in describing the status of Aban ibn Taghlib, one of the towering pupils of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq ('a), bitterly acknowledges this fact and after accusing him of "innovation in religion" (Shi'ism), approves of and introduces him as truthful, and thus writes:

Inclination to Shi'ism among the religious, pious and honest followers, and their followers, are plenty. In case the *hadiths* they are narrating are rejected, a great portion of the Prophetic works and *hadiths* will be lost and this evil is serious enough.⁶

On the other hand, like any other *madhhab* {sect} and *maktab* {school}, the Shi'ah, throughout these historical straitened circumstances and the ups and downs that transpired, was not immune from internal splits, which brought about immense predicaments. The infiltration of the *ghulat*⁷ into Shi'ah ranks had also exacerbated these predicaments notwithstanding the rejection of the former by the Imams ('a) of the Shi'ah.

Keeping this background in mind, one can guess what stages and pathways the Shi'ah have treaded during the past fourteen centuries in different realms and spheres.

This book, a relatively comprehensive, elegant and worthy glance at the historical trend of Shi'ism, is a product of relentless efforts and studies of the diligent researcher, Hujjat al-Islam Shaykh Ghulam-Husayn Muharrami, and has many distinguishing merits compared to other similar works—whose number is unfortunately few. Fortunately, it has now earned the kind attention of the authorities and is

about to be published, after passing (with an excellent grade) as a master's thesis. We are currently awaiting other significant works from this author.

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Qum

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- [1.](#) The abbreviation, "S", stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam* {may God's salutation and peace be upon him and his progeny}, which is used after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S). {Trans.}
- [2.](#) The abbreviation, "a" stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, *'alayhis-salam, 'alayhimus-salam, or 'alayhas-salam* {may peace be upon him/them/her}, which is used after the names of the prophets, angels, Imams from the Prophet's progeny, and saints ('a). {Trans.}
- [3.](#) In this volume, I maintained the word "Shi'ah" to refer to both the group (single collective unit) and the individuals constituting the group (plural). {Trans.}
- [4.](#) Companions {*sahabah*} refer to the Companions of the Prophet (S). In earlier times, the term was restricted to his close friends who had close contact with him. Later, the term was extended to include the believers who had seen him, even if only for a brief moment or at an early age. {Trans.}
- [5.](#) Hadith (pl. *ahadith*): tradition or report, specifically the traditions of the Prophet (S) and the infallible Imams ('a), i.e. their sayings, actions and tacit approvals of others' actions, or the narrations of these. {Trans.}
- [6.](#) Shams ad-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad adh-Dhahabi, *Mizan al-I'tidal* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 4.
- [7.](#) Ghulat (sing. *ghali*) are those who declare their faith in Islam but exaggerate in their beliefs about some prophets or Imams, e.g., those who believe that an Imam is an incarnation of God. This is against the fundamental Islamic belief that God does not incarnate into anyone or anything. {Trans.}

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