

# The relationship between Shia and protests in sight of Madlong and Halm

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## Abstract

The study scrutinizes the relationship between Shia and protest in the era ending in the time of Imam Asgari [Peace be upon him]. Two high-cited orientalists, Madlong and Halm, are considered in this reviewing study and it is similarly but with different deductions inferred from both that the role of Imam in social protests is confirmed. A continuous identified history is given by Madlong for Imam Shia, at least after Imam Jafar Sadeq [P.B.U.H]. He believes that Imam Jurisprudence had completely illuminated the basic concepts of this gilder (Shia) such as Imamate (pontificate) itself. He generally claims a leadership role for Imam in all the aspects of the society including protest. But Halm thinks the main identification of Imam Shia has been recognized in the beginning of the Short Occultation and not before that. Hence the relationship between Shia and protest could not be relevant to Imam Asgari or his ancestors. However, it is possible to look at the topic for all of Imams separately.

**Key Words:** Shia, Protest, Orientalist

## 1. Introduction

Islam development in Arabic peninsula is to a large extent indebted of justice movements which give people tidings. It is inferred by a precise regard to the holy Quran and the Hadiths (great speeches) that movements against prejudice and solidarity are of important interest of Islam. "And incline not toward those who do wrong, lest the Fire should touch you, and you have no protectors other than Allah, nor you would then be helped." <Refer to: Hud 13> and "Then it will be said to them who wronged themselves: "Taste you the everlasting torment! Are you recompensed (ought) save what you used to earn?"><Refer to: Yunus 52>. Not accepting the current situation and trying to quit passivity are among the holy Quran recommendations. Islam gives enough aggression to the Muslims for rejecting the non-desirable conditions. Enjoining good and forbidding wrong means one must not give up when the conditions are not desirable and should do his best to change them (Motahari, 1988: p. 55).

The spiritual tendency to fight against the oppression and cruelty .The first instances of such tendency appeared when the companions of Imam Ali objected to the Caliphate (succession to the holy prophet) of Abu-Bakr. Imam Ali [P.B.U.H], about human rights, says: "I promise to God that I will make the tyrants to give the rights of the oppressed back to them even they do not want to do so." (Nahj-el-Balagha, speech 136). Shia movement has basically been a supporter for correct implementation of Laws and believes the society leadership belongs to Imam Ali and his sons (Lampton, 2001). The spirit was recovered by the movement of Imam Hussein [P.B.U.H] which later got the element of battle against oppression and protecting Enjoining good and forbidding wrong.

The relationship between Islam –especially Shia- and the controversy against the governmental oppression has been of special interest of many famous thinkers. But the spirit has mostly been quoted as "protest" by the orientalists and the scholars of Islam. In fact, a positive concept in Muslim's own beliefs is –in its best mode- considered as a neutral aspect by them. The attempt to be neutral in creating a scientific work ended in a different vision to what the Islamic scholars think.

The importance of the topic gets bold because Shia has recently been focused by western media. This focus starts by Islamic revolution in Iran and Action movement by Hezbollah in Lebanon. To their opinion, the concept of martyrdom in order to fulfil the religious and political goals was the main features of the movements (Cole and

Keddi, 1986). The formality of Shia in the Middle East, such as Iran and Syria, affected the post-colonialism discipline of the western countries (Salamey and Othman, 2011). Iraq has also influenced on them. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq not only took the government from the minority group of Sunnites and bestowed it to the majority group of Shias, but also gave the opportunity to the Shias of other places to claim their rights (Nasr, 2006: p. 179). All above came to the conclusion that Shia was a threatening power. The U.S attack to Iraq in 2003 could be considered as one of the consequences of this understanding of Shia.

The belief and explanation of the orientalist about the relationship between Shia and protest are important. In fact, their understanding about the issue affects their society. If they explain Shia as a suicide religion, the people of their countries and consequently, the other countries will think so. The strategic position of the Middle East and especially the issue of Persian Gulf duplicated the importance. Our society requires a detailed understanding about the deem of other countries people about Shia and its relationship with justice. Unfortunately, Iranian thinkers paid not enough attention to such an important topic so far.

The author is trying to answer to the question of what the orientalist think about protests of Shia. For, the opinions of two famous orientalist, Wilfred Ferdinand Madelung and Heinz Halmare studied.

## 2. Literature Review

To the idea of many scientists, Shia is political religion (gilder). It explicitly exerts some commands about the factors of a political formation (government) which are extractable from the holy Quran, the stories about the holy Prophet [P.B.U.H], and other Imams [P.B.U.T] (Sadr Haj SeyedJavadi, 2001: p. 352). In another word, Shia is a politically active gilder. The Shias pursued constructing a government by the descendants of Imam Ali throughout the history, upon a belief of their legitimacy which made hard situations for them many times or started many movements against the government. Thus the political aspect of Shia is a key topic to define in explanation of its relationship with protest.

Although Shia is involved with protest, scholars of Islam have different ideas about it. ModaresTabatabaei (2010) believes the concentration on the political role of Imams has replaced by their scientific religious role after Karbala and the occupation of the power seats by Umayyad and Bani-Abbas. The only politically active Imam after Karbala was Imam Kazem [P.B.U.H] (ModaresiTabatabaei, 2010: pp. 29-41). Louër(2008) thinks although Shia makes a sacrificed unified identification for itself, but the mutual identification has not necessarily ended in protest. The Shia societies took different policies based upon their historical experiences, interests and concerns (Louër, 2008).

It seems, based on Salamey and Othman (2011) findings that the protest to the government was not the agenda for some Imams and some took a special attitude for their protest. The Shia societies of the history took different policies in their protest against the government. While many Sunnite governments had a non-truthful regard at Shia groups and show cruel behaviors toward them. Despite the behavior, the Shia heads kept the protesting flow all over the time (Salamey and Othman, 2011).

ShahroughAkhavi (1983) considers the social actions of Shia behind the concept of Imam. Therefore, the victory is only obtainable through a justice governed by Imams (Akhavi, 1983: p. 14). Imamiyeh believes in explicit command of the holy Prophet to giving the authority to Imam Ali and eleven descendants of him- the corpora-moral authority of all the Muslims in this world and the other one in succession of the holy Prophet (Sadr Haj SeyedJavadi, 2001: p. 6). So the role of Imam is very important in Shia beliefs. A more-detailed look at the political protests of Shias shows that they were usually made upon the concept of Imam. The origin of Islamic discussions is the difference of Shias and Sunnites visions in selecting the governor of the Islamic territory. Shias do not deem the topic limited to the political aspects, but consider it as an inseparable part of Islamic ideology (Vaezi, 2004: p. 49).

Scholar of Islam has comments on Taghiya (reservation). Dakake (2006) thinks the Shia group's leadership, membership, and doctrine require some secrecy. This fact led to some misleading strategies of Shias upon which they actively show reservation (Dakake, 2006: p. 325). Moreover, he thinks reservation is not just a pragmatic strategy, but it is made due to their belief about their selectiveness by God. Amid Zanjani (2010: p. 297) says Imamiyeh do not hesitate in the fact that Imam Ali, himself, accepted the other three caliphates (successors) and also admitted to be the forth reluctantly, but interpret the fact through the concept of Taghiya (reservation) and considering the benefits of the Islamic government as a whole.

### 3. Methodology

Referring to written, oral, and visual resources, the author of a reviewing study attempts to answer the main question of the study. Reviewing studies use questions instead of hypotheses and answer to the main question by researching through taking notes from valid resources.

The descriptive study is made to increase the public specialized knowledge of a topic. Such studies do not present a theory or even not check any hypotheses; they just collect the data and information in a special context in order to arrange a set of useful data for future use (Farokhzad, 2005: p. 16).

The study uses two famous western scholars of Islam who are selected based on some criteria. One of the criteria was having specific knowledge and preferably written works in Shia. Thus, those scholars such as Buman and Hageman, who mostly compared the religions, or those ones, like Hunke, whose focus was mainly on cultural aspect of Islam were eliminated.

Wilfred Ferdinand Madelung and Heinz Halm have almost all the criteria. Among most important works of Halm we can mention "Shia Islam: from gilder toward revolution" and "Shia". Of Madelung's most famous works are "Islamic schools and gilders in the Middle Ages", "Islamic gilders", and "Shia". Madelung is called as the "father" of Shia studies in Britain (Ehyahassani, 2008: p. 296). Both of these scholars are not known as political individuals. Although Madelung was the cultural dependent of German Embassy in Iraq, he does not have a political face. Two decades of Halm's works show he had not exceeds the scientific discipline before the political events in Islamic countries (Mousavian, 1996: p. 32). Moreover, both of these two scholars have focused enough on the political aspect of Shia.

This paper surveys the relationship between Shia and the protests before the end of Imam Asgari's lifetime based on the ideas of orientalist. The other note is that the paper only considers twelve-Imam Shia.

### 4. Findings

The section reviews the comments of Wilfred Ferdinand Madelung and Heinz Halm, respectively. Madelung was born in 1930 in Germany. His family migrated to the USA in 1947. He immigrated to Egypt in 1952 and witnessed the revolution of Egypt in his one-year stay there before going back to Germany. He was missioner as the cultural dependent of German Embassy in Iraq within the years between 1958 – 1960 (Ehyahassani, 2008: p. 296). The revolution of July 14<sup>th</sup> was occurred during his stay there.

Madelung has a scrutinizing viewpoint toward the individual little events which ultimately ended in constructing a gilder called "Shia". His opinion about the fact that selecting the successor of Prophet Muhammad was a historical ... of Islam led him to write the book, "Prophet Muhammad Succession". Based upon his comments, it is not possible to recognize whom Prophet Muhammad exactly had selected as his successor before passing away, but he sure was not Abu-Bakr. Madelung claims that the succession of Prophet Muhammad should be regarded from the holy Quran's view which is based on will and not on consensus (or consulting) (Madelung, 2006: p. 33).

Madelung explained Imam Ali's reaction to the Caliphate selection in details. On his opinion, Imam Ali accepted the other three caliphates with no hesitation or objection (Madelung, 2006: p. 28). While he admitted that Imam Ali was sure about his truthfulness about Caliphate because of his relativeness to the Prophet, his knowledge about Islam, his long company with the Prophet, and his effort in protecting the goals of Islam. His delay in accepting the Caliphate showed his belief in his own priority. He accepted just because of the Muslims' alliance (Madelung, 2006: p. 212). Reading Madelung's comments, we came into the conclusion that Imam Ali, as the founder of Shia, had a protesting approach toward the political incidents, but in a reforming manner and not insurgent.

Madelung (1998), in 'Islamic Gilders', says about the importance of Shia groups leaders' Caliphate acceptance: "There was a disagreement after the martyrdom of Imam Bagher between the Kofi Shia about the rebellion of his brother, Zaid – the son of Ali – because he denied confirming the oppression of the first two Caliphates to Imam Ali so that extremist companions of Imam Bagher approached to Imam Sadegh and created the gilder of Imamiyah under the leadership of him with special jurisprudence, principals and theology" (Madelung, 1998: p. 128). It reveals the importance of prior Caliphates denying among the Imami Shias.

Madelung asserts the lessons of Imam Sadegh have effects on the relationship between Shia and protest. The fundamental theory of this Imam about the leadership of Muslims leads to a key role for Imams in protesting reactions of Muslims: "Imam Sadegh convert the verses of his father in jurisprudence into a total systematic legal command. This idea was based on the belief of human being's inevitable need to a divine leader in every aspects of religious life. The leader should be sinless, and the rejection, disobedience, or even ignorance about him is equal to the rejection of the Prophet himself. Hence a majority of companions of the Prophet exited Islam by accepting Abu-Bakr as the Caliphate and a large portion of the society was always in a despicable status." (Madelung, 1998: p. 129).

It can be inferred from above that Madelung believes Imam Sadegh, by editing a total theory for Imamt, not only lets Imams take some strategies for protesting such as revolution or reformation strategies, but also asserts the relationship between Shia and other societies upon which Shias have to reject the governments that do not belong to sinless Imams. Moreover, protesting actions to reform these societies should be done.

The approach of Imam Sadegh to Taghiya (reservation) and the special method of battle have significant effects on the protesting movements of the era. This Imam did not follow establishing an Islamic government or sitting on the Imam seat and prevented his companions from battle for power. In fact, he did not think Imam and Caliphates should be the same before the arrival of Ghaem (the savior: twelfth Imam): "Although Imams were the only legal leaders of the Islamic society, their Imamt did not depend on their power of government. Imam Sadegh did not have any wishes for government and strictly prevent his companions from rebellion efforts. He predicted that Imams would not be the governors until the time that one of them took the power of governing on the whole world. The submission aspect of this evolutionistic base for near future was empowered by the concept of Taghiya (reservation). He commanded his followers to use Taghiya (preservative) strategies in confronting the conditions" (Madelung, 1998: p. 129).

Based on Madelung, it can be concluded the Imam of each time chose the protest policy for Shia. For example, some of Shia decided to rebel against the government but their contemporary Imam disagreed. Zaidies believed that Imam should be a warrior who did not use Taghiya (reservation); but the disagreement of Imam caused them go another way different from Shia. The knowledge of Imams about the conditions led them to make diverse decisions about justice and oppression rejection. Their decisions were mostly made upon Taghiya (reservation) to save the minority in-danger gilder of Shia. Kenrick Abbott (1990) asserts the establishment of Bani-Abbas government as a Sunnite group led Imams to suggest their companions use Taghiya (reservation) as an attitude to continue protesting (Abbott, 1990: 19).

HeintzHalm was a German orientalist who published considerable texts about Islam and especially Shia. His isolation from politics adds to the credit of his comments in comparison to the other political orientalists. Of course his childhood in a non-Muslim country and his Christian religion occasionally led to some wrong judgments. It is important to know his definition about Shia before talking about the relationship of Shia and protesting based on his ideas.

Shia is an Arabic word which means "party". The companions of Imam Ali who stands against Muawiyah and Syrians. The party continues existing after Imam Ali's martyrdom. His stay in Kufa led to constitute a strong group of his devotee, who companied him in Seffein war [against Muawiyah] and were eager to see his son in the government position (Halm, 1997: p. 6). Shia acted like a party in order to gain a political power and never forget about this characteristic afterwards. They never – even when they were weak – ignored attempting for political power (Halm, 2006, pp. 15 & 16).

Reviewing Halm's comments about Shia, we conclude that the twelve-Imam Shia and especially the concept of Imamt were constituted within 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries after the martyrdom of the 11<sup>th</sup> Imam. Halm, in the book "Shia", asserts: "Imamisunnat confirms the fact that a certain population gathered around Imam Hussain's children after the Karbala event, but it is of dubiety if Imam Safegh's father and ground father were known as Imams in their lifetime or they were later called this way. Nevertheless, Imami society appeared in Imam JafarSadegh's lifetime" (Halm, 2006: p. 66).Halm thought the Imami Shia was constructed based on Imam Sadegh's speeches, but it is not clear if the concept of Imamt was sure made at the time as it is now.

Giving this comment, Halm presents some issues about the relationship between Shia and protest. First of all, there is no data based upon his comments about this relationship until the martyrdom of Imam Asgari due to his belief in Imami Shia construction from that time on. That is why when he talks about the topic, he ignores analysis and just spends on historical views. The conclusion he came to prevented him from considering the Shia

history before the Great occultation as a part of a whole. The perspective led him to analytically ignore even the Imam concept itself as the most basic concept of Imami Shia. Hence his expressions about Imami Shia and the concepts of it, including protests, are discrete.

The second result of Halm's approach led to separate stories about the protests of Imams. Based upon his comments, the movements of Shia in the time of Imam Ali were political to gain the power and not religious arising from the gilder (Halm, 1997: p. 6). Imam Hassan's not interference in politics after his peace was used as evidence to this claim. Halm says, about Imam Sadegh, "in spite of non-political approach of Jafar Sadegh [P.B.U.H] his Hussaini spirit was again completely vivid" (Halm, 2006, p. 65). It means that

It is implied from the comment that Imam Sadegh was not a rebellion encourager but a reformist leader. In fact, protest in his time was done by teaching, expressing the condition, and trying to confirm the identity of Imami Shia. However, the character of Imam Sadegh leads to a large population in Iraq for supporting him. The fact that Bani-Abbas Caliphs were so worried about ended in high protection of next Imams and killing them.

Based on Halm's comments, when Harun-o-Rashid put Imam Kazem under observation, the number of Shias increased because of his presence in the capital. Moreover, some Shias had important positions in the government. The Imam not only agreed with their careers, but also encouraged them - such as Ali-ben-Yaghtin - to help Shias through their authorities (Halm, 1997: p. 69). Such actions show the same approach of Imam Kazem as his father, Imam Sadegh.

When talking about Imam Ghaem, Halm says: "he will seek for his right - the government. In contrast to his fathers, who were patient and peace-looking, would use GUN" (Halm, 2006: p. 79). Therefore, it can be inferred from him that all the Imams except for the Ghaem, had peaceful approaches in protesting

Shia, on its own side, is not a revolution ideology. The gilder tolerated many suffers for centuries. The initial image of a Shia is a freedom martyr, not a revolutionist. The Shia goal is to obtain the legal position of power for the sons of the Prophet, which is now considered for Imam Ghaem. Up until the time of his arrival, the Shias should wait, be hopeful, and say prayers. The traditional Shia is non-political and always is doubtful about governor. It is a result of modern era to change of Shia into an evolutionism ideology (Halm, 1997: p. 133).

## 5. Conclusion

Reviewing the literature of the relationship between Shia and protest, the author answered to a question – what the orientalist who know Iran, Islam, and the Middle East well, think about the relationship. There seem to be different ideas about the topic. The comments of two famous orientalist, Madelung and Halm, were then studied to answer to the question.

Based on Madelung's comments, the society conditions and the comments of Imam have key roles in constructing the relationship. The concept of Imam makes conditions in Imami Shia societies on which every kind of movement should be done according to the Imam's command. The main need of Islamic societies is actually an Imam to guide people in any aspects including protest. Therefore, any kind of protesting, including reformism or equipped, should be based on the command of Imam. For example, despite the good chance for constructing a protesting movement at the time of Imam Sadegh, he disagreed. While Imam Kazem had a more protesting approach than him.

Heintz Halm, the same as Madelung but from another perspective, thinks Imam has a key role in protesting approach of a society. In fact, Madelung thinks that Shia jurisprudence was basically constituted at the time of Imam Sadegh. As a result, a complete identification of Imami Shia was recognized during his lifetime. Having such opinions, Madelung assumed a continuous history for Shia and knew its relationship with protests. While Halm did not think so.

Halm believed in a discrete Imami Shia history. In another word, Imami Shia, according to his comments, did not have a certain formation prior to Imam Asgari. Based on his ideas, some Imams at their own eras were not known as how they were later known amongst Imami Shia society. Moreover, in spite of the construction of Imami Shia jurisprudence at the lifetime of Imam Sadegh, the main concepts such as Imam were known in later centuries as what it is now. Having this kind of approach to Imami Shia, Halm did not imagine any



relationship between Imami Shia and protest at least until the shorter occultation. Thus, the relationship between protesting and Shia, on his opinion, should be surveyed on the lifetime of each Imams separately.

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