

SHIITE MARJA'İYAT: THE ASSOCIATION OF SHIITE QUIETISM AND ACTIVISM

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ABSTRACT

Immediately following the occultation of the last Shiite Imam, ideas concerning who has the right to lead the Ummah converged around two positions. One position held that the most predominant Shiite jurist should rule until the emergence of the Imam (Shiite Activism). The second position maintained that any government except that which belongs to the innocent Imam is idolatrous and Muslims must therefore tolerate all the oppressions of any state until the Imam's emergence (Shiite Quietism). This paper examines the political rhetoric, manifestos and ideology of each faction based on a series of documents and interviews conducted among the scholars of Qom and Najaf Seminaries. It explores whether an association between the two factions is possible, what its nature would be, and what impact it would have on the politics of the Middle East and on a wider arena of international relations.

INTRODUCTION

Beyond their meaningful population in the Middle East and more specifically the Persian Gulf region - which contains the most important sources for the world's fossil fuels - what makes the study of political Shiite even more interesting is its numerous and complex discourses in comparison with the majority of Sunni Muslims. Since Sunnites Jurisprudence does not recognise Ijtihad, the making of a decision in Sharia by a personal effort, there are just two political discourses identified by the faith: Caliphate discourse, and the Islamic Secularism¹(Shakouri, 2007). The former discourse has been diminished after the dissolution of Ottoman Empire on 1922, and the latter is what mainly *practiced* in most of Islamic countries in present era. On the other hand, the dynamism of Shiite Jurisprudence has produced a series of diverse political

discourse. Perhaps the fundamental discourse in politics of the Shia Muslim is the Imamate, which lasted until the Occultation of their twelfth Imam on 941 A.D. The theory of Imamate mainly rests on the idea of “the permanent need for a divinely guided Imam who could act as the authoritative teacher of the mankind in all religious matters. The Imam thus is the legate successor of the prophet [Muhammad]. He is infallible in all his acts and words. ... Whoever obeyed the Imam was a true believer, and whoever opposed or rejected him, an infidel ”(Madelung, 1971:p.497, Bakhsh, 1984a). Following the Occultation of the last Shiite Imam, the dominant political discourse was confiscation of the state, whereby the Shiite jurists believed that the state authority is constantly occupied by an unjust ruler (Sachedina, 1998). Since Shiite communities were weak and unable to establish their own government, they follow the theory of sanctioning the government until the sixteenth century when Shah Ismail founded the great Shiite dynasty in Persia on 1501. It was the first time in the post-occultation history that notable Shiite Ulama migrated to Iran from all around the region, especially Jabal Amil to propagate a new Shiite political discourse in alliance with the Safavid rulers (Arjomand, 1984). This was the valid discourse until the early twentieth century and the impact of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, when again a majority of Shiite Ulama of Iraq and Iran seminaries supported the civil movements to limit the authority of the unjust ruler, the monarch. Perhaps Akhond Muhammad Kazem Khorasani (1839-1911) and his adjunct, Muhammad Hussein Gharavi Na’ini (1860-1937) ² were the earliest apostles of the necessity of the constitution in Islamic states (Hairi, 1977, Algar, 1980). Although in some aspects the Ulama movement failed in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, it transplanted the most modern Shiite political doctrine, what has later been called the *Absolute Guardianship of Islamic Jurists* (Wilayat –e- Motlagheye Faqih), proposed by Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of Iran Islamic Revolution, in 1970. Although the theory of Guardianship of Islamic Jurists was briefly initiated by works of Mulla Ahmad Naraqji, another religious figure of the early nineteenth century (Martin, 2003), it was Ayatollah Khomeini who used the socio-political vacuum to grasp the opportunity to develop and to refine it as a foundation of the Islamic government. This mainly happened while

he was in Iraq serving his sentence of exile. According to his thoughts “sovereignty belongs to God alone and law is His decree and command. The law of Islam, divine command, has absolute authority over all individuals and the Islamic government” (Khomeini, 1979:p.37); he continues that it is obvious for “anyone who has some general awareness of the beliefs and ordinances” that the Islamic Jurist ³ has the righteous authority to establish the government in Imam’s occultation time” (Khomeini, 1979:p.1). The difference within Shiite clerics regarding how to rule the Ummah and who has the right to do that is still valid. In this sense it requires us to understand these factions in more detail and to provide evidence if there is a chance for them to become converged around a focal point.

SHIITE ACTIVISM AND QUIETISM: ROOTS AND PERSONALITIES

The belief that the twelfth Imam, Mahdi (The divinely-guided one), is alive but has been occulted and the establishment of “the just Islamic order” awaiting his return, is central to the Shiite tenet (Sachedina, 1998, Cook, 2011). According to Shiite Islam, the last Infallible Imam, Hujjat Ibn al-Hasan al-Mahdi (b. 869), had a Minor Occultation that lasted sixty-nine years and terminated 941 A.D and since then is experiencing the Major Occultation. Shia Muslims believe that during the former period, the Imam had appointed four special deputies ⁴ to function as the medium between himself and the Ummah, to act as the leaders of the community in its religious and social affairs. Ali Ibn Muhammad al-Samarri (d. 941), the last of the Four Deputies, claimed to have received a letter (tawqi’) from the Imam indicating:

“Ali Ibn Muhammad al-Samarri! May God grant the great reward to your Muslim brothers in mourning of your death; you will pass away in six days. Order everything and DO NOT appoint any successor for yourself as the Long Occultation period has been already started ... As God wishes, I will re-emerge after a long period when the Earth is filled by

oppression and brutality ... Be aware that anyone who claims that he has seen me or come on my behalf is a liar and calumniator ...”⁵

The start of the Major Occultation period was concurrent with the vacuum in leadership of the Ummah since the Imam had not appointed any deputy for himself. However, based on some Hadith and beliefs, during this period, the learned jurists had been appointed as the Imam's general deputies (Sachedina, 1994). This, however, remains one of the main controversies of the Shiite doctrine over the last ten centuries, especially when it comes to the right of rule and political affairs.

For more than a millennium the belief that the Infallible Imam will one day return and fill the world with justice and morality has given the Shiite Muslim a unique aspiration. However, when it comes to the politics the Shiite doctrines sound paradoxical. The central question among Shiite Muslims is: What is their social role until the date? Who should rule their community until their sole just ruler, Mahdi, will re-emerge? In this sense immediately following the start of the Major Occultation, ideas about who has the right to rule the Ummah converged around two positions. One faction emphasizes a more introverted position and believes that, although all the rulers are unjust, Shia should tolerate the oppressions and be quiet until its Imam's Occultation terminates and be crowned as the heir of God on the Earth. The other advocates a more extrovert and more active position towards society and believes that until the date, Muslims should strive to deliver the rule of God on Earth and should struggle against the idolatrous rulers by supporting the rule of the Shiite learned jurist.

The *advocates of Shiite Quietism* mainly justify their stance by referring to a Hadith of Imam Jaafar al-Sadeq- the Sixth Shiite Imam- indicating that *any flag which rises prior to the rise of Mahdi, is idolatrous*⁶. In this sense, they believe that the main duty of a Muslim is to preserve his faith and as the “establishment of an Islamic social order without divine intervention through the return of the infallible Imam is impossible,” he should not be involved in any political activity

against the unjust ruler to change his sociopolitical status. The position affirms the doctrine of positive coexistence with the state in order to shield the true Shiite faith from outsiders and unbelievers (McEoin, 1984). This practice of precautionary dissimulation is rooted in early history of Shiism and known as *Taqiyyah* (Enayat, 2005, Sachedina, 1994). Thus *Taqiyyah*, which was declared as one of the duties of Shiite community under the oppression, shows the will to survive under tyrannies of outsiders until the rise of the Last Imam. Shia should remain passive and avoid pressing its true belief against the government, either Shiite or Sunni or even non-Muslim, to be able to live under adversity imposed by the unjust rulers. Nonetheless, the historical events have shown that in some situations, the Quietists believe that a learned jurist may monitor government and offer admonition to the ruler whenever they observed a fundamental deviation from Islamic jurisprudence ⁷.

The proponents of Shiite Activism, on the other hand, have another interpretation of the fundamentals of the faith and seek to preserve Shiism by holding a more confrontational posture. They believe that the sovereignty over humanity belongs to God, who asserts this through his Prophet and the twelve Infallible Imams, and during the Occultation of the Last Imam, the most learned Shiite jurist should take the leading position and practise the sociopolitical demands of the Ummah on Earth. Therefore, they ask for an active involvement of the religious authorities and Shiite masses, when there is a chance of success, against the tyrannies and discrimination of any government. They justify this posture by referring to a Quranic verse ordering Muslims to *Enjoin the Good and Forbid the Evil* ⁸, which is again one of the main principles of Shiite jurisprudence. In this sense, they argue that, in order to preserve the principles of their faith, Shia Muslims should not only practise their personal duties, but also in a more social arena, they have to take clear position and offer resistance to any threatening alien forces (Keddie, 1983b). In this path, they reserve a unique role for the general deputies of the Imam, the learned jurists, to lead the community while he serves his Occultation.

The post-occultation era has constantly witnessed the confrontation of these two Shiite factions; and perhaps is the main reason behind the key paradox that Shia Islam has encountered. Scholars like Shariati (2005) and Dabashi (2011) identify the paradox inherited in Shiite political fate, they state that throughout its history, it has achieved success and enjoyed legitimacy among the masses whenever it has been combative and in a position of opposition against the central government, but that, as soon as it gets power, it loses its legitimacy. The conflict between these two factions seems central to this so-called paradox. During last ten centuries, there were some movements, like the Buyids (945-1055) and the Safavids (1501-1729) that have succeeded in establishing Shiite governments. They were generally empowered by gaining high support among Shia Muslims who had suffered from years of discrimination and oppression, but as soon as they established their government, they were facing a great amount of criticism by groups of Shiite clerics condemning them for unfairly occupying the post of the Infallible Imam. Therefore, they soon lost their legitimacy and after a while were replaced by non-Shiite dynasties. The history of Shiism is full of these controversies and it is still this disparity that shapes its contemporary life, and may change its future role.

The establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran based on Ayatollah Khomeini's theory was indeed the apex of the Shiite Activism doctrine in the contemporary history. Ayatollah Khomeini was among the most notable Shiite religious figures, who believed that the time for practising Taqiyyah is over and urged Muslims to rise against the unjust rulers and to institute the rule of justice and equity (Sachedina, 1994). Born and raised in Iran, Ayatollah's early life was concurrent with the fall of the Persian Qajar dynasty and the rise of Pahlavi. Iran at the time had witnessed a constitutional revolution (1905-1911) in which the Shiite clerics had played a seminal role in limiting the monarchy's power and handing it to the will of the nation (Hairi, 1977). One of those constitutionalist clerics was Ayatollah Hassan Modarres (1870-1937), who was nominated by Akhond Khorasani, the religious leader of the revolution, to become the member of the National Consultative Assembly in Iran in order to monitor the bills and to

check if they are compatible with the Shiite jurisprudence. His most famous statement, "Our Religion is Our Politics, Our Politics is Our Religion" which later in the wake of the 1979 Islamic Revolution was chanted in the street by followers of Ayatollah Khomeini, was perhaps the first sign of Shiite Activism in modern-state of Iran (Rajabi, 2009). The commencement of the Pahlavi was simultaneous with the foundation of the Shiite Seminary in Qom by Ayatollah Abd al-Karim Haeri Yazdi (1859-1937), a true advocate of the Shiite Quietism. Reza Shah was initially thoughtful in his dealing with Shiite clerics (Sachedina, 1994). However, when he started his socioeconomic reforms to modernize the country, he became despotic towards Ulama in Qom, and restrained the religious mourning and in addition banned women from wearing Hijab (Abrahamian, 2008). Despite some scattered opposition to the rule of Monarchy at the time, the Shiite clerics mainly were silent striving to institutionalise the newborn seminary in Qom and its establishments. Years later, when Reza Shah's was abdicated as ruler and his young son -Mohammadreza Shah Pahlavi- held the office; the Qom Seminary was at its most influential period under the lead of Grand Ayatollah Boroujerdi (1875-1961). He was the one who made the Qom Seminary the central religious authority in Shiite world, the position that Najaf Seminary in Iraq used to bear for centuries. Grand Ayatollah Boroujerdi was the one and only Marja' Taqlid among Shia Muslim between 1947 until 1961 when he passed away (Mottahedeh, 1985). He provided a peaceful relationship with Pahlavi Monarchy while he was in office by remaining quiet about the overall political circumstances and focusing on religious affairs. This made Shah respect the Qom Seminary's authority and prevent any action, which might lead to a clash of interests for both parties. However, not all the Shiite clerics had the same opinion as the Grand Ayatollah. Some like Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim Kashani (1882-1962), the speaker of the parliament, or a young clergy, Mojtaba Navwab Safavi (1924-1955), were among the internal critics of the Grand Ayatollah Boroujerdi's practice of Quietism. In this way, imitating the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Navwab Safavi founded a Shiite hardliner organization, Devotees of Islam, with the purpose of assassinating the secular figures of the Pahlavi's regime (Taheri, 1986). The conflict between the Qom

Seminary authorities, Quietist at the time, with those Shiite Activists was so intense in a way that the Grand Ayatollah did not issue any statement opposing the execution of Devotees of Islam's members by the regime (Husseini, 2000). When the Grand Ayatollah passed away, Mohammadreza Shah, by then strong enough to be called the region's gendarme, initiated a series of reforms, the Iranian White Revolution (Abrahamian, 2008) which ignited a severe dispute between Shah and a group of Shiite clerics under leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. The criticisms became so caustic for the regime that it led to the exile of Ayatollah Khomeini (1964-1979) to Turkey and then Najaf in Iraq. Ayatollah Khomeini was more and more determined as he had witnessed the dispute between the advocates of Quietism and Activism. He had seen how Ayatollah Modarress and Navvab Safavi, member of Shiite clerics, were killed because they tried to establish the rule of Islam in Iran. He had seen how his mentor, Grand Ayatollah Boroujerdi, strived to protect the Shiite authority in Iran by remaining quiet and not harshly putting pressure on the tyranny of the unjust ruler as well. However, years in exile provided him with an opportunity to think and to develop his ideology of the Islamic government in Najaf Seminary. Meanwhile in Iran, the regime was unaware of how Ayatollah's followers were endeavoring to establish an underground social movement through a very simple medium: the Mosques' pulpits (Bakhash, 1984b). In 1970s, he started to lecture about his idea of the Islamic Government and theory of the *Absolute Guardianship of the Jurist* in Najaf. According to his innovative formulation of Shiite politics in post-occultation era, *whether* general or specific, all affairs of a state should be based on the rule of Islam; therefore a learned jurist should manage the state in order to prevent any diluting of Islamic teachings (Gheissari and Nasr, 2006). His theory not only denies the role of any monarchy or secular government, Shiite or whatsoever; it also opposes the supremacy of western hegemony in the Islamic world (Fradkin, 2009). For the first time in the history, Ayatollah Khomeini reserved a special role for the Shiite authority to rule over people and to establish the state while the Imam is serving his Major Occultation (Martin, 2003). His theory gained an admirable support among the Shiite of Iran. Masses filled the street chanting against the Shah and asking for Imam

Khomeini to come back from exile. Undeniably, Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic State that he established blew a new spirit into Shiite Activism and marginalized the Shiite Quietism, at least in Iran, to date.

Like Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (1935-1980) was a notable vanguard among the Activist Shiite clergy in Iraq; however, what made the late Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, the Khomeini of Iraq, was indeed his endeavours to enflame the Shiite community of Iraq actively against the ruling Baath party. Since the revolt of 1920, for more than three-decades, Shiite religious figures carried on a practice of Quietism in Iraq. The political activities of Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr were simultaneous with the need for termination of this practice in order to maintain their true faith. In the late 1950s, a group of Shiite activists in Najaf formed the Islamic Dawa Party as a religio-political response to secular Baath regime (Duss and Juul, 2009, Sachedina, 1994). The main political discourse behind the group was the governance of the people, *Wilayat al-Ummah*, doctrine proposed by Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. According to his opinion, Islam provides the most powerful school of thought to take the leadership responsibility of all nations towards achieving excellence on the Earth; hence it is compulsory for all Islamic scholars to strive to establish the democratic state under the constant surveillance of a learned jurist (Kadivar, 2008). He believed that in the absence of the Infallible Imam, the most optimistic government can only be achieved by a universal democracy under close monitoring of the Marja'iyat, the functional deputy of Imam in his absence (al-Sadr, 1979). In the last months of his life, he declared his true belief by stating that "I demand, in the name of all of you and in the name of the values you uphold, to allow the people the opportunity truly to exercise their right in running the affairs of the country by holding elections in which a council representing the Ummah could truly emerge" (al-Sadr, 2003: p.15). Observing the victory of Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine, seemingly similar to al-Sadr's thoughts, in the neighbouring country made al-Sadr and his party more determined to pursue active resistance against the government. Sadr and his fellows clearly appealed to the Shiite population of Iraq by the novelty of their

thoughts, to rise and fight for their political rights. This made Saddam's regime to crack down on the party - first by arresting and executing Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr on April 1980. However years later, when Saddam had been dismissed from his office and the Iraqi people voted for a new government in a democratic election, Ibrahim al-Jaafari a former member of Islamic Dawa party became the first Iraqi prime minister in the transitional Government. He was succeeded by Nouri al-Maliki, the current prime minister of Iraq, another member of the Dawa party. It seems that the contemporary Shiite Activism seed that was planted by Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and irrigated by his execution, is now flourishing in post-Saddam Iraq.

Ayatollah Khomeini, and Muhamma Baqir al-Sadr both were among the leading Shiite clerics of modern history. Criticizing the Quietist status quo of the Shiite elite authorities in the region, their efforts empowered the Shiite Activism doctrine over its Quietist counterpart and, in a sense, shaped the Shiite world of the contemporary Middle East. The former succeeded in institutionalising his ideal Islamic government in Iran, while the latter's dream became true years after in Iraq. However, the conflict between the two factions is still valid, if one examines the situations in post-Khomeini Iran, and the new Iraq. Studying the development of Shiite political doctrines in the Middle East for last five decades proves that Shiite elite authorities have provoked Activism against the long established custom of Quietism, when they believe that the time is appropriate and the means are available, when the context was seemingly prepared. Ayatollah Khomeini rose against the tyranny of the Pahlavi only when he recognised the sociopolitical vacuum in the country and believed that he could gather a relative support among Shiite majority of Iran; he waited fifteen years in exile to reach that focal point. This is the case for al-Sadr's followers in Iraq. In other words, Activists are at heart Quietists, but believe that the time of reticence is over and the means are available to institutionalize the rule of God in the Islamic World. The question, which still remains unsolved, is whether there is a way for both factions to understand their very own nature and become united?

SHIITE MARJA'YIAT: HISTORY AND DEFINITION

Hassan Ibn Ali Ibn-Abu Talib (625-669) is the second Shiite Imam. After Ali was martyred on 661 A.D. he took the office and became the fifth caliph of the Prophet, though for a short time. He continued to fight with Muawiyah (602-680), the rebellious governor of the Syria, as his father did. However finally, Hassan, who was betrayed by the heads of his army, was made to sign a truce and abdicated the Caliphate to Muawiyah after only about six months in office. Upon the treaty, the Shiite Second Imam migrated to Medina and resigned from politics and became quiet for the rest of his life. After Hassan, his younger brother, Hussein, received the post of Imamate. He became loyal to his brother's treaty with Muawiyah, and remained relatively quiet to politics. The Caliphate of Yazid was concurrent with the great requests of Iraq's Muslims from Hussein, to migrate to Kufa and establish the true Islamic government. Upon those requests, Hussein left Medina for Kufa in 680 but was intercepted by the Caliphate army in Karbala and brutally killed, along with his companions and family members. For this he is given the title the Lord of Martyrs (Seyyed al-Shohada) in Shiite Islam.

After the ruthless death of the third Shiite Imam, his son, Ali Ibn Hussain, became the fourth Shiite Imam. He and his next seven successors, the remaining Shiite Imams, were under the harsh surveillance of Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates. Some like Musa Ibn Ja'far (d.799), the seventh Shiite Imam, had spent most of his life in prisons of Harun al-Rashid, the resourceful Abbasid Caliph. In such a situation the Shiite communities of Iraq, Hejaz, and Iran were required to refer to someone in order to ask their religious questions. This perhaps was how the Marja'iyat first originated by the recommendations of Infallible Imams; personalities like, Zararah Ibn-Ayan Sheibani (d. 767) were among the first *Maraje'*^{*} of the Shiite jurisprudence. Imam al-Sadeq says: *If this man, Zararah, did not exist my traditions would have been lost*⁹. This notion of

* Plural for Marja'

Imams' specific deputies has lasted until 941 A.D, the beginning of the last Imam major Occultation.

Marja' Taqlid is derived from two distinctive Arabic terms: *Marja'* and *Taqlid*. The former simply means the source and the reference. Taqlid, on the other hand, is misunderstood in numerous interpretations of the concept. In the mainstream of current literature, Taqlid is mistranslated as imitation or emulation (Amanat, 1988, Moussavi, 1985, Gleave, 2007): Imitation in the sense that a person observes an action and replicates it exactly as it is, a sort of behaviour that a monkey would do¹⁰. This fundamentally differs from how the Shiite authorities define and believe in. Taqlid from the infinitive of *Qalaba-dah* basically refers to throwing *Qiladah* (necklace or more precisely dog's leash) on somebody's neck. In this sense the act of Taqlid in the Ancillaries of the Shiite Faith is not blindly mimicking whatever a learned jurist does or says; it is a metaphor meaning that people can, through a leash on the neck of a learned jurist, follow him in order to have less responsibility in practising the complexities of their faith (Makarem Shirazi, 2009). It is like assuming their accountability to their Marja' Taqlid. This also becomes legitimate based on fundamental beliefs of Shiism on *Ijtihad* that literally means personal striving and exertion and, as Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr states in Shiite jurisprudence, it "signifies the application by a jurist of all his faculties to the consideration of the authorities of law with a view to finding out what in all probability is the law" (Sistani, 2012). In this regard every Shiite learned jurist, in a way, declares that he himself will be responsible in front of God and the public for any consequence his deeds or statements may have. It was based on this profound and accountable concept of Marja'yiat that Sheikh Tusi (d.1067) institutionalized the Twelver Shiite jurisprudence by founding the Najaf Seminary on 1037 A.D. - a place which became the main cradle of numerous Shiite Maraje', who have played vital roles in preserving and distributing the fundamentals of the faith over the last millennium.

According to the Shiite Jurisprudence, individuals have three alternatives in practising the Ancillaries of Islam, ranging from praying to Jihad (Momen, 1987). He should be either a learned jurist himself, who is able to infer and deduct personally from the religious sources. If he is not, he should follow a Marja' Taqlid's verdicts in these religious matters. And finally, if he is not a learned jurist, and does not want to follow any Marja', he "should act on such precaution which should assure him that he has fulfilled his religious obligation" (Sistani, 2012). It is impossible for the majority of believers to become acquainted with every single rule, complex fundamentals of Islamic law and to know how to reason from religious texts and resources. In this sense there is a need for some people to join Shiite seminaries, to endeavour to study and practise the original fundamentals of the faith's jurisprudence and become a learned jurist, a Mujtahid, who is capable of asserting the Ijtihad in religious matters. This process of practice and learning in general takes more than thirty years. Marja' Taqlid is among the most learned *a'lam*, and the most righteous *aslah* of these Mujtahids. Although there is no established and systematic pattern to appoint him as for example it is for the Pope in the Catholic church, among Mujtahids themselves it is quite well known who is the most qualified to hold the title of Marja' Taqlid for ordinary believers, in the era which they do not have access to the infallible Imam, the Occultation period. One major criterion to hold the office of Marja' Taqlid is how one learned jurist can attain the trust of his fellow-believers to receive their religious tax and distribute it among other religious students in various seminaries. Throughout its history, the Shiite Marja'iyat has been economically independent from governments and states. It receives the fund from Shiite believers, as their religious tax, and spends it properly. In this sense one major qualification of a Marja' Taqlid is that he should be just and not too fond of earthly matters. Anybody among Mujtahids who has these qualifications is eligible to become Marja', and as soon as other fellow Mujtahids believe that he has lost one or more of its qualities, they can declare him out of the office by their consensus. So in this sense, there is an enduring monitoring and control over a Marja' Taqlid, from the very first day he joined the

seminary as a religious student, up until the time he holds the office as the highest clerical authority within the Shiite community.

Over the last fourteen centuries, and especially since the major Occultation of the last Shiite Imam, plenty of Mujtahids have become Marja' Taqlid. There were as some periods when Shiite believers from all around the world referred to just one person as Marja' Taqlid - for instance, the period between 1945 to 1961, Grand Ayatollah Boroujerdi was the sole Marja' Taqlid in Shiite world (Mottahedeh, 1985). And there were some periods in history that Shiite believers followed several Marja' Taqlid, like the present situation. The common view has always been that, even though there may be more than one Marja' Taqlid, they generally respect each other's opinions on religious matters. Their dispute over a religious or social case is exactly similar to one that two physicians may have over a medical case. Although there might be some handful cases in overall history of Shiism that Marja' Taqlid had serious conflict with each other. There were some cases that two or more Marja' Taqlid had taken opposite political stances. It is absolutely relevant to their very personal deduction on how to preserve the fundamentals of the faith; in other world the strategy and main goal for every single Marja' or Shiite authority is the same, although they may differ in the tactics which they adopt. Some may believe that in order to preserve the faith and help the oppressed Shiite believer they should ask them to stir up unrest against the tyranny and establish a just state (e.g. Ayatollah Khomeini), whilst other may trust that, in order to defend the Shiite fundamentals over the distortions of outsiders, they should concentrate more on the cultivation of better qualified students within their religious seminaries (e.g. Ayatollah Khomeini). In this sense one may perceive that there is no fundamental difference between advocates of Shiite Quietist and their Activist counterparts.

CONCLUSIONS

Both Quietist and Activist advocates are aware that a state, which is not ruled by infallible Imam, cannot be an ideal solution governing the Ummah. In this sense ruling in Occultation era does not have originality in Shiite Islam

jurisprudence. This is the comprehensive opinion among all Shiite clerical authorities, not only ones with the quiet approach but also among the active Shiite jurists. It is the teaching of the prophet and infallible Imams, as well as the preserving the fundamentals of Shiism during the occultation of its infallible leader, which has the originality and the highest priority for Shiite Maraje'. According to this, the dispute between two Marja' Taqlid about the right to govern and founding the Islamic state during this era, is derived from differences in their Ijtihad and is trivial. As it is obvious throughout the history, the Maraje' themselves did not have that much of problem in dealing with each others' verdicts, even though some of them are pro-Islamic government and some condemn that, generally based on their understanding of the context, and fundamentals of the faith.

This may shed light on a series of alternatives that may ultimately lead the two so-called factions of Shiism to unite with each other and gain a monolithic voice in the region under the Marja'iyat's umbrella. This institution traditionally has not been dependent on any source of routine power (e.g. government), and at the same time been clung to other parts of the Shiite clerical authority itself. This is one of the significant subjects that the current literature fails to address thoroughly. Throughout history, the most dangerous opposition to Shiite political supremacy was imposed from within; so in the case of the two factions reaching a common sense of alliance in their monitoring of political situations, they can overcome the very fundamental paradox inherent in Shiism (Shariati, 2005, Dabashi, 2008, 2011). Understanding how different factions of Shiite religious authorities evaluate the current political context of the Middle East region and the possibility of an opportunity for divergent factions within the Shiite elites to come up with an association to unite their political understandings towards one conclusive yet comprehensive viewpoint, is the concept that the current literature does not cover. One can only hope for a better understanding of this quasi-federal structure and the possibility of a closer association between the different factions of the Twelver Shiite communities in the Middle East.

NOTES

1. The Islamic Secularism refers to separation of state and religion, and not the secularization of the society. For more details see Abdel Raziq, Ali: *Al-Islam Wa Usul Al-Hukm: Bahth Fi-I Khilafa Wa-I Hukuma Fi-I Islam* (Islam and the Foundations of Governance: Research on the Caliphate and Governance in Islam), Critique and commentary by Mamdooh Haqqi (Beirut, 1978).
2. His book, *Tanbih al-ummah wa tanzih al-millah*, [The Admonition and Refinement of the People] first published on 1909 in Baghdad is still a key reference for understanding the roots of political Shiite.
3. Islamic Jurist or Faqih, according to Ayatollah Khomeini's viewpoint is one learned in the principles and ordinances of Islamic law, or more generally, in all aspects of the faith. For more information see *Islamic Government* pages 69-70.
4. Shia Tradition hold that four advocates acted in succession to one another: Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Asadi, Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Uthman, Abul Qasim Husayn ibn Ruh al-Nawbakhti, and Abul Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad al-Samarri.
5. See *Bihar-ul-Anwar*, by Allameh Majlesi (d.1110), Volume 51, Page. 361 (in Arabic)
6. See *Bihar-ul-Anwar*, by Allameh Majlesi (d.1110), Volume 52, Page. 143 (in Arabic)
7. The Tobacco Protest of Iran in 1890's is an example of this idea. The Shiite Quietist, Grand Ayatollah Mirza Shirazi, issued a fatwa against the Qajar Monarch and boycotted the use of tobacco for Muslims.
8. Quran, Chapter 9 – Verse 71: "The believers are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong ... those - Allah will have mercy upon them"
9. See *Montaha' Amal*, by Sheikh Abbas Qumi (d. 1940), Volume 2, Page. 871 (in Arabic)
10. This mundane misinterpretation is resembled (*reproduced?*) in speech of an Iranian Prof. Hashim Aghajari, dated November 2002. He went further and criticized the Marja'iyat system by declaring that: "The people are not monkeys who merely imitate. The pupil understands and then acts, and then tries to expand his own understanding, so someday he will not need the teacher". Which amazingly is still the mainstream trend even among some Iranian intellectuals!

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