

Examining the Evolution and Representation of the Concepts of Imam, Imamate, and Imamiyya in Islamic Lexical and Theological Texts

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Abstract

The terms Imam, Imamate, and Imamiyya represent some of the most fundamental concepts in Islamic thought. Throughout history, they have faced significant conceptual and interpretive challenges within various theological and intellectual traditions of Islam. These concepts are reflected not only in the works of Muslim theologians but also in classical lexicons, where their meanings and usages have undergone notable transformations over time. With the rise of the translation movement in the Islamic world and the subsequent transmission of Islamic knowledge to the West, these crucial terms were often neglected or semantically reduced in many translated and secondary sources. This study adopts a theoretical and descriptive approach to examine the evolution and representation of these concepts in Islamic lexical and theological texts. It seeks to provide a framework for the study of specialized Islamic terminology based on authentic Muslim sources. The research first analyzes the place and function of each term within linguistic and theological contexts, and then explores their conceptual and historical dimensions within the discourse of Imamiyya. The findings demonstrate that a precise understanding of these terms requires returning to the linguistic, epistemological, and theological contexts in which they emerged. Only through such an approach can these concepts be authentically and accurately represented in contemporary Islamic studies.

Keywords: Imam, Imamate, Imamiyya, Islamic Terminology, Lexicography, Islamic Theology.

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Introduction

Islamic studies are one of the other branches of knowledge and science that spread throughout the centers of science in the world in general and in the West in particular. Like any branch of knowledge, it involves a special linguistic structure, and therefore needs specialized scientific dictionaries that undertake to clarify the terms of the sciences it contains.

Not only that, but as we will point out, the matter becomes more complicated when we discover that a large number of terms differ from one sect of Muslims to another, and in addition, some terms differ between one school and another or one scholar and another within one sect, and this makes the matter even more complicated and reveals how important it is to delve into this topic. Hence, the terms Imam, Imamate, and Imamyya are perhaps among the most important terms that should be part of a specialized dictionary for Islamic studies.

In this context, we saw that returning to the structure of science that logicians had proposed at the end of their works would help in developing a general plan and strategy that would be useful in shaping that vision (Al-Ttahanawi, Mohammad Ali, 1996, Vol. 1, p. 14). Thus, the basic problem or question that this article addresses is how to create a specialized dictionary to explain the terminological meanings of the branches of Islamic knowledge, focusing on some of the most controversial and important terms, which are Imam, Imamate, and Imamyya. Hence, it is important to note that, given the novelty of this project in Islamic studies in foreign languages, especially English, some attempts have been made, but they have not been without some gaps. Most of them took the form of mentioning the synonym of the term in the foreign language and did not explain it based on Islamic sources. Furthermore, important terms were not given their due, even in the form of the dictionary addressing the explanation of the term.

Definition

To begin with, it is worth clarifying the main elements as a base and foundation that plays an important role in determining the method of authoring that we should follow in creating the dictionary. Although, logicians emphasize that every science has a subject-matter that distinguishes it from other sciences and embodies an axis around which the issues and questions related to a science revolve. Then, the specialist investigates essential accidents or intrinsic properties of science's subject-matter (Al-Misri, Ayman, 2024, p. 27). And such essential accidents are only available in real sciences not conventional sciences (Subhani, Jafar, 2009, vol. 1, p. 15), while the subject of our article falls under conventional



sciences. Despite all that, specialists applied this logical rule to all branches of knowledge, whether real or conventional.

To explain, there are four degrees of existence for a thing. Two of them are real, i.e., do not differ among different people, and two are conventional, i.e., do differ among different people. The two real degrees are the existence of the thing in the external world, which is called the real existence, and the existence of the thing in the intellect, which is called the intellectual or mental existence. Whereas the two conventional existences are the linguistic existence and the written existence. The linguistic as well as the written existences only exist by convention that is by agreed consent between two or more individuals. Thus, they will differ among people according to their language, terminology and the signs used in writing them (Al-Muzaffar, Mohammad Rida, 1987, Vol. 1, p. 34).

Since lexicography was considered a conventional science—and before we explain the terms Imam, Imamate, and Imamiyya as among the most important terms that should be included in the specialized Islamic lexicon—we will address lexicography based on the eight elements that logicians have mentioned at the end of their books as a significant outset of every science are called the eight headings (Qutb al-Din Shirazi, Mahmoud ibn Masoud, 2004, p. 27). Definition, subject-matter, principles, issues, goal, benefit, rank and founder are eight themes related to every science that embody its identity in some ways and thus enable the student to have an overview about the science he or she is about to study (Al-Misri, Ayman, 2023, p. 10). To apply this outset to lexicography, some of these eight headings will be pointed out here:

1. Definition

Linguistics is of several branches, among them are the disciplines of morphology, syntax, and semantics (Crystal, David. "Branches of Linguistics." <https://sheffield.ac.uk/linguistics/home/all-about-linguistics/about-website/branches-linguistics>). Semantics occupies an important aspect of linguistics which is in general the study of the meaning of words, and it is covered by sub branches, what concerns us of these sub branches is lexicology, which is in turn a discipline dealing with the vocabulary of a language and the properties of words as the main units of the language. Thus, it actually covers broader investigation than the meaning of words, such as its morphemic structure, history and meaning as well (Payne, Laura. "Lexicography." Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/technology/lexicography>). The investigation of scientific terminology, although it shares some similarities with semantics, is also more specific than the investigation those aspects, including the meaning of words. Here the researcher will encounter the



difference between the word and the term. More light will be shed on this difference.

The important point here is that creating dictionary, whether it deals with the linguistic meanings of words or the meanings of terms, consists of two parts: lexicology and lexicography. Lexicography is simply: the skill, practice, or profession of writing dictionaries. It refers to the compiling, editing, or writing of a dictionary (Advanced American Dictionary, 2013, p. 985). While lexicology, the study of the words in a given language, including their origins, evolution, meanings, usage, and contexts (Payne, Laura. "Lexicography." Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/technology/lexicography>). Accordingly, the specialized dictionary will be subject to both, with a difference imposed by the difference between the word and the term.

2. Subject-matter

The subject-matter of lexicography as mentioned above is precisely the scientific meaning of the term in special sciences, and not the meaning of words. To clarify, it is good to differentiate between the word and the term, because they cannot be used interchangeably, even though they both are, as we mentioned previously, conventional and belong to linguistic existence in some way.

First, to analyze linguistic signification briefly, three levels can be referred to: word, meaning, and instance. The word indicates the meaning, and the meaning, in turn, discloses its instances or individuals. For example: The word "human being" indicates the meaning of a "rational animal," and "rational animal" is applied to its individuals Ammar, Hussein, and Siraj. Therefore, there are two connections: first between the word and its meaning, and second between the meaning and its individuals. Conventional existence is the first of these two connections, which—based on the system of words-meanings equivalence that is made by a linguistic contract—can be in multiple forms, such as unequivocal and equivocal (Yazdi, Abdullah ibn Hussein, 1991, p. 26), for the word sometimes indicates only one meaning, like the signification of the word "human being," and sometimes can indicate more than one meaning, like the signification of the word "ring" in English, which can indicate both "jewelry" or the sound made by a phone. What matters here is that the term has the same connection with its meaning; although it is a conventional connection, it occurred later than the word's conventional connection with its meaning, that is, through transferring the word from its original meaning to a new meaning. Thus, the term is a word with different signification, in other words, a word is a meaningful element in a language. While a term is a word but has a particular meaning in a specific field. For further



clarification, the difference between the linguistic and terminological meanings is that the first refers to the meaning that the people of language used the word for, and the second refers to the meaning that the people of a certain field have agreed to give to that word or to use that word for. For example, the word Imam in Arabic language, refers to an individual who takes precedence over others (Ibn Manzur, Mohammad ibn Makram, 1994, Vol. 12, p. 26), regardless of whether he is worthy of being given precedence and priority over others or not. While in terminology of Islamic theology "it refers to an infallible individual who has been specifically designated by Allah to assume the primary responsibility of guardianship and authority over the nation and control it, encompassing both religious and worldly affairs." Eventually, this difference between the word and the term, leads to the fact that they cannot be used interchangeably.

3. Principles

The principles of science are all meanings and propositions upon which the investigation of an issue related to a particular science are based. Logic, for example, is based upon either self-evident or certain principles, such as the law of non-contradiction, which states that "a thing cannot be and not-be at the same time" or "equals of equals are equals." The principles of science, in fact, are the source of knowledge that the investigation in discovering and proving its issues relies on (Al-Misri, Ayman, 2023, p. 14).

In the case of lexicography—specifically, in creating a specialized Islamic dictionary that covers important terms such as Imam, Imamate, and Imamiyya—the principles are the Islamic references of Islamic studies. Therefore, the task here is not to investigate the essential accidents or intrinsic properties of the terms in these specific sciences. And this is not because we are dealing with conventional discipline that their subject-matters have no essential accidents, as they applied the eight elements to these as well, as we indicated. But rather, regardless of the subject-matter properties whether essential or accidental, intrinsic or extrinsic, the task is to define or describe the terms without investigating the proofs of their properties that the specialists relied on, and thus, it is not correct to intervene in the scientific investigation. Hence, the method that we follow in creating a specialized dictionary is mainly descriptive.

4. Issues

The issues of science encompass all that is ascertained and demonstrated in a science. Since the subject-matter and principles of lexicography have become clear, it also becomes clear that its issues are not scientific issues in the logical sense. This is not because of the fact that the investigation here is not based on the demonstration which is available in real sciences not conventional sciences, for the fact that specialists applied



the logical rule of being science to all branches of knowledge including the conventional. But this is because of the fact that the investigation here does not fall under either of them. Simply because the investigator here does not prove or deny the possible properties of the subject-matter, regardless of whether they are essential or accidental, intrinsic or extrinsic, but rather he merely defines and describes the scientific terms as they have been investigated by the specialist in the science that they belong to.

Authoring methods

Since the investigator in this kind of investigation does not prove or deny the possible properties of the subject-matter, and then his task is to define or describe the scientific terms as they have been investigated by the specialist in the science that they belong to, and so does not have a right to intervene in the scientific investigation. Therefore, the main question posed by the investigator in the subject of lexicography is "what" not "why," and this represents a sign of the descriptive method. For example, the investigator asks about the term Imam using "what" question, i.e., what does Imam mean in Islamic theology? Or what is the theological meaning of Imam? And the answer, based on the theological sources and references, will be: "it refers to an infallible individual who has been specifically designated by Allah to assume the primary responsibility of guardianship and authority over the nation and control it, encompassing both religious and worldly affairs." However, if the investigator rarely asks using "why" question, as if asking about the infallibility of the Imam in the mentioned example, i.e., why the Imam is infallible? The answer will be in the same context, i.e., describing the evidence provided by theologians, because the investigator is not in the position of proof or denial.

Within the descriptive method as a basic method in the subject of lexicography, it is necessary to rely on both the analytical method and the comparative method. In the analytical method, it is necessary to analyze the texts and quotations that were taken from Islamic sources and references to identify the differences that existed between specialists. Then comes the role of the comparative method, to compare these texts and extract the terminological definition or definitions of the term.

In addition to the method of theoretical study, which is what has been explained so far, creating a specialized dictionary includes practical practice as well. To explain, the practical practice should be done through several steps, which are briefly as follows: Compiling the essential, useful and practical terms. Researching for the synonyms of the terms, which includes two stages (Searching for the linguistic synonym closest to the terminological meaning and comparing the linguistic synonym with what is mentioned in the dictionaries that appeared recently and choosing the



most appropriate one to the linguistic synonym). Researching for and quoting the definitions from the original sources and references. Translating the quotations into English and paraphrasing them—In the case of creating a specialized dictionary in English.

Applied Terminological Analysis

Here is an application of the above elements and the steps to some of the most important terms in Islamic theology, presented in the form of a specialized dictionary:

1. Imam / Divine leader

The term (الإمام) in language, refers to an individual who takes precedence over others, regardless of whether he is worthy of being given precedence and priority over others or not. In theology, it refers to an individual who has been specifically designated by Allah to assume the primary responsibility of guardianship and authority over the Nation and control it, encompassing both religious and worldly affairs.

This is, in fact, the general theological meaning of this term. In order to understand all aspects of the term Imam, it is beneficial, before that, to have a good background on the term Imamate, as it serves as the foundation of this term, so that Shia Muslims have concluded several necessary attributes of Imam based on the principle Imamate as one of the five fundamental principles of Islam. The attributes of Imam are as follows:

1. Infallibility of the Imam

Shia Muslims hold the belief that Imam, just like a Prophet, must be infallible from all vices, defects, and sins, whether open or concealed, deliberately or unintentionally, from childhood up to death. Imam as well must be free from inadvertence, error, or unawareness, because the Imams, just like the Prophets, are maintainers of the religious law and they must stand out firm for it. The evidences that Shia have mentioned to prove the infallibility of the Prophets—the rule of grace—are the same as those that they have mentioned to prove the infallibility of the Imams, and the following attributes as well.

2. Knowledge of the Imam

Imam receives all Divine knowledge and laws, as well as information, from either the Prophet or the Imam preceding him. And if a new question arises, he must have knowledge of it through inspiration, which he receives through the power of sacredness that Almighty Allah has placed in him. Therefore, when he pays attention to something and wills to know it in its reality, he will neither miss nor fail to achieve it, without requiring rational evidences or guidance and instructions of mentors. However, the knowledge of Imam can be increased and intensified. And so the Holy



Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) used to pray to Almighty Allah, saying: “O Lord, increase my knowledge” (Qur’an 20:114).

3. Moral attributes of the Imam

Imam, just like a Prophet, must be the best of all mankind in attributes of human perfection, such as courage, generosity, chasteness, truthfulness, justice, fairness, prudence, intellect, wisdom, and morality.

4. Obedience to the Imam

Imam is the man of authority whom Almighty Allah has commanded people to obey. He is the witness over mankind, the gateway leading to Almighty Allah, the pathway leading to Him, the sign pointing to Him, the bearer of His knowledge, the interpreter of His revelation, and the pillar of belief in His oneness. By virtue of this, Imam has been consistently the cause of security for the inhabitants of the earth, as narrated from the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) that he said:

The likeness of my household in this Nation is the Ark of Noah; whoever embarked upon it was saved, but whoever departed from it was drowned.

Since the Imam is the man of authority whom Almighty Allah has commanded people to obey, the commandments of him are verily the commandments of Almighty Allah; the Imam's prohibitions are His prohibitions; to obey Imam is to obey Him; to disobey Imam is to disobey Him; to adhere to Imam is to adhere to Him; and to show enmity towards Imam is to show enmity towards Him.

Pursuant to this, the religious laws commissioned by Almighty Allah must not be derived from any resource other than the Imam's resource; thus, it is invalid to take these laws from sources other than the Imam, and the religious responsibility of any Muslim who refers to sources other than the Imam is not fulfilled. Indeed, such a Muslim must not feel content that he has carried out the duties imposed upon him by Almighty Allah unless he carries them out according to the teachings of the Imam.

Based on what has been mentioned at the beginning that the Imam is an individual who has been specifically designated for the position of Imamate by Allah, as well as the attributes mentioned regarding the Imam, it is a necessary and obligatory duty upon every Muslim to know his or her Imam; rather, it is, among Shia Muslims, just like a Prophet, a rational and necessary duty upon every human being according to the rule of grace. Therefore, those who believe in Imamate investigated the proofs and discovered the individual who is qualified and designated by Allah through the Prophet to be their Imam.

Shia Muslims rely on proofs that demonstrate that the Ahl Al-Bayt (peace be upon them) are the Divine leaders and Imams of Muslims after



the Holy Prophet of Islam. Thus, it is obligatory to refer to them in everything required by people to be guided to the straight path of the religion. The Holy Prophet, in the narration of Al-Thaqalayn, which has been unanimously and frequently narrated by both Sunna and Shia. He said to his followers:

Verily, I am leaving among you something that which shall forever save you from straying off—the straight path of Islam—as long as you hold fast to it. They are the Two Weighty Things (الثقلين), one of which is more significant than the other:

1. the Book of Almighty Allah, which is a rope extending from the heavens to the earth.

2. and my progeny (عتره), the members of my household—Ahl Al-Bayt.

It is certain that they shall never separate from one another until they join me at the Divine Pond on the Day of Resurrection.

The Holy Prophet of Islam emphasized this matter on numerous occasions, describing Ahl Al-Bayt as the ark of salvation, and the security for the inhabitants of the earth, and so on. (Al-Qadi Abd al-Jabbar, 1984, p. 750; Al-Tusi, Nasir al-Din, 1930, p. 426; Al-Hilli, Jamal ad-Din, 1981, p. 12; Al-Muzaffar, Mohammad Rida, 1960, p. 56)

2. Imamate / Divine leadership

Imamate, is one of the important fundamental principles of belief that is disputed among Muslims. In order to understand the detailed meaning of this term, it is necessary to rely on Muslims who believe in Imamate as one of the five fundamental principles of Islam, i.e., Shia Muslims.

In Shia Muslims' belief, Imamate is a divine position of leadership that is intellectually and religiously necessary for all human beings. They confirm several advantages of this belief:

1. Since Imamate is one of the five fundamental principles of belief, one's faith is imperfect without belief in Imamate. Therefore, it is unacceptable to rely on one's fathers, folks, or mentors as regards the belief in Imamate, no matter how great these individuals might be; rather, it is obligatory upon every individual to investigate and evaluate the matter of Imamate as exactly as it is obligatory to investigate the unity of Allah the Almighty and Prophethood. Furthermore, where all religious duties that are undoubtedly imposed by Almighty Allah are not known with certain evidence, it is obligatory upon every Muslim to investigate Imamate to release him or herself from religious duties and obligations depending upon one's belief in Imamate, as it is then obligatory to obey the Imam in the performance of one's religious duties if Imamate is truly a part of Muslims' belief.



2. Imamate, just like Prophethood, is a necessary grace of Almighty Allah, i.e., everything that leads and brings closer to obedience and distances from sins, Almighty Allah must provide Muslims, and indeed every human being, with that thing. As a result, there must be an Imam (leader) in each age to represent the Prophet in his missions of guiding and leading human beings towards the right path so that they might achieve prosperity and pleasure in this world as well as the next.

Accordingly, Imamate is only a continuation of Prophethood, and the reason for which Almighty Allah sends Messengers and Prophets is also the reason why the Prophet must be succeeded by an Imam. In fact, as a difference between Prophethood and Imamate, there must be an Imam in each age and era while there is no necessity to be a Prophet in every period of time.

3. Since Imamate is a continuation of Prophethood and there must be an Imam in each age, therefore it is impossible that any age can be devoid of a divinely commissioned Imam, whether he is present or absent from people's sight. As it is acceptable for the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) to be absent from people's sights, such as his disappearance from view in the cave or in the alleys, it is intellectually acceptable for the Imam to be absent from view, be his occultation long or short. Allah the Almighty has said in the Holy Qur'an: "And there is a guide for every people" (Qur'an 13:7). "There is not a nation, but a warner has passed among them" (Qur'an 35:24).

4. Since the Imam represents the Prophet in his missions of guiding and leading human beings towards the right path, he must also enjoy the same authority enjoyed by the Prophet, such as supreme authority over the people, so that he can manage their affairs and interests, maintain justice among them, and wipe out injustice and oppression.

Furthermore, this divine position of leadership cannot be decided without a commission from Almighty Allah conveyed to people by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) or the previous Imam (peace be upon him). Thus, Imamate is not dependent on selection, choice or decision made by the people, for they are not authorized to nominate anyone to this position if they desire and to depose anyone they do not like from this position, and thus remain without an Imam, because, as it had been narrated uninterruptedly and frequently from the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family):

The individual who dies without recognition of the Imam of his time has in fact died just like the ignorant ones who died before accepting Islam, i.e., indicating the situation of the people in the period before Islam without believing in the Holy Prophet which is called (الجاهلية), so such an individual



will be; Al-Tusi, Nasir al-Din, 1930, p. 426; Al-Hilli, Jamal ad-Din, 1981, p. 12; Al-Muzaffar, Mohammad Rida, 1960, p. 54).

3. Imamyah / Shia

Imamyah is the name of those who adhere to the necessity of Imamate as a divine position of leadership that is impossible to be devoid of in any age. And believed necessarily in the obvious divine text, the infallibility, and the perfection of every Imam.

It is important to note that this meaning is an equivalent to Shia, which applies to more than one of the Islamic sects, such as Ithna Ashariyya, Ismailiyya, Zaidiyya, and so on. However, it is often used to refer to those who believe in the Divine leadership of the twelve Imams, i.e., Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) and the eleven Imam of his progeny.

This sect of Shia Imamyah believes in specific attributes and advantages mentioned in two terms: Imam and Imamate; therefore, they reject the belief of Extremists (الغلاة) and the Immanentists (الحلوليون) concerning the Imams; hence, Shia Ithna Ashariyya believes that Imams are human beings like other human beings, i.e., they enjoy the same rights that people enjoy and are required to do the same responsibilities that people are required to do. However, they are noble servants of Almighty Allah, Who has granted them special honor and bestowed upon them His authority, because they occupy the highest ranks of human perfection, such as knowledge, piety, courage, nobility, and chastity, as well as all moral standards and nobilities of character, and so no individual is capable of attaining the unique peculiarities that they hold. Consequently, they have been the most deserving of being leaders, guides, and authorities after the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) in providing instructions, interpretations, and explanations of the religious laws and the Holy Qur'an as needed by people.

In this respect, the sixth Imam of Shia Ithna Ashariyya Jafar Al-Sadiq (peace be upon him), says:

Whatever is reported to you about us that is possible for the creatures to hold, while you have had no previous idea about it or have not been able to understand it, then you must not deny it; rather, you must refer it to us. However, if what is reported to you about us is impossible for the creatures to hold, then you must deny it and you must not refer it to us.

As mentioned above, this sect of Shia Imamyah believes that the Imams who are truly worthy of holding the Imamate are twelve, who have been commissioned by Almighty Allah to hold the position of leading the Muslim Nation. The Holy Prophet, Mohammad (peace be upon him and his family), had referred to all of them by name before each Imam declared the



name of the name of the person who would succeed him. They are thus as follows:

1. Abu Al-Hasan, Ali ibn Abi Talib, Al-Murtadha (the Well-Pleased); BH (before Hijrah) 23 - AH (After Hijrah) 40.
2. Abu Mohammad, Al-Hasan ibn Ali, Al-Zaki (the Pure); AH 2 - AH 50.
3. Abu Abdullah, Al-Hussein ibn Ali, Sayyid Al-Shuhada (The Master of Martyrs); AH 3 - AH 61.
4. Abu Mohammad, Ali ibn Al-Hussein, Zayn Al-Abidin (The Adornment of the Worshippers); AH 38 - AH 95.
5. Abu Jafar, Mohammad ibn Ali, Al-Baqir (The Ripper of Knowledge); AH 57 - AH 114.
6. Abu Abdullah, Jafar ibn Mohammad, Al-Sadiq (The Veracious); AH 83 - AH 148.
7. Abu-Ibrahim, Musa ibn Jafar, Al-Kazim (The Suppressor of Rage); AH 128 - AH 183.
8. Abu Al-Hasan, Ali ibn Musa, Al-Ridha (The Amiable); AH 148 - AH 203.
9. Abu Jafar; Mohammad ibn Ali, Al-Jawad (The Magnanimous); AH 195 - AH 220.
10. Abu Al-Hasan, Ali ibn Mohammad, Al-Hadi (The Guide); AH 212 - AH 254.
11. Abu Mohammad, Al-Hasan ibn Ali, Al-Askari (Resident of Askar City); AH 232 - AH 260.
12. Abu Al-Qasim, Mohammad ibn Al-Hasan, Al-Mahdi (The WellGuided); AH 256... -

The twelfth Imam, Al-Mahdi, according to Shia Ithna Ashariyya is still alive; he is the awaited savior who shall reappear (after occultation) to fill the earth with fairness and justice as it is filled with injustice and oppression. This specific belief of the advent of Imam Al-Mahdi is frequently and indisputably reported from the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) by all Muslims who, apart from their various sects and opinions, have recorded and reported his narrations in this regard. Thus, the advent of Imam Al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) during the last period of existence of this globe is not an inventive idea that is embraced by Shia alone due to their being oppressed, as it is claimed by some writers who ascribed this idea to Shia's dreams in justice. Shia Muslims believe that if such belief was not established in the minds of all Muslims, there would not be those who claimed Mahdism in the first century after the advent of Islam, such as the followers of Kaysaniyya, the Abbasids, a group of the Alawiyya, and many others, so that they easily deceived the public and used this belief to grab power and authority (Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, Mohammad



ibn al-Numan, 1984, p. 38-39; Al-Sharif al-Murtadha, Ali, 1969, p. 153; Al-Shaykh al-Tusi, Mohammad, 1963, Vol. 1, p. 66; Al-Muzaffar, Mohammad Rida, 1960, p. 63-65).

Conclusion

This article is a theoretical study that briefly presents a framework for researching specialized terminology, particularly Islamic terminology, relying on Islamic sources and references. It does so by defining and describing these terms—using a descriptive approach—as they are used in the disciplines to which they belong. This framework is then applied to some of the most important terms in Islamic theology: Imam, Imamate, and Imamiyya. This is because these terms faced a major challenge within the Islamic world, which in turn was reflected in the specialized dictionaries compiled by Muslim scholars.

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