3. The Madhhab

As a distinct madhhab, or denomination within Islam, Shi‘ism has a complex set of beliefs and practices that set it apart from Sunnism. This chapter deals with the Shi‘i teachings as they are understood and practiced by Shi‘is in Indonesia and which constitute the religious aspect of their identity. The chapter opens with an explanation of key concepts such as ahl al-bayt and Shi‘a (syi‘ah, Indonesian). There follows a description of the principal concepts of belief in the imamate and the Mahdi. A further section deals with Ja‘fari jurisprudence and specific aspects upheld by Indonesian Shi‘is. This is then followed by a description of some external aspects of Shi‘i devotion. Finally, I examine the Indonesian Shi‘i interpretation of taqiyya and the circumstances of its implementation.

A. The Madhab of Ahl al-Bayt

As a stigmatised minority, the Shi‘is of Indonesia have utilised and popularised Islamic terms and concepts common to all Muslim communities, even though their interpretation such terms is strikingly different from wider Sunni understandings. Instead of the term Shi‘a, ahl al-bayt (the community of the House of the Prophet) or more precisely, the madhhab of ahl al-bayt, is more commonly used by Shi‘is in Indonesia when describing their brand of Islam and the Shi‘is describe themselves as ‘followers’ and sometimes ‘lovers of ahl al-bayt.

The term ahl al-bayt is also used to distinguish Shi‘is and Shi‘ism from Sunnis and the Sunni madhhab, which are known as ahl al-sunna wa al-jama‘a (the community of the good practice of the Prophet). The promotion of the term ahl al-bayt is important, since the term Shi‘a has negative connotations for most Muslims who regard it as a sect that deviates from orthodox teachings. “Shi‘ism will become correct if the term is replaced with ahl al-bayt”, says Jalaluddin Rakhmat. Increasing use of this term is expected to result in Shi‘i beliefs and practices gaining recognition, and for Shi‘ism to become an accepted Islamic madhhab, alongside the madhab of the Sunni majority of Indonesia.

Literally, the term ahl al-bayt means ‘the people of the House’, the Household of the Prophet Muhammad. Like their fellow Shi‘is in other parts of the world, the Shi‘is in Indonesia interpret this concept differently from the Sunnis, who include the Prophet’s wives among his ahl al-bayt. For Shi‘is, the concept of ahl al-bayt is one only of blood relations. It comprises the Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fatima, his cousin and son-in-law ‘Ali and his two grandsons, Hasan.

1 Rakhmat (1999:178).
and Husayn, as mentioned in Hadith al-Kisa’ (the Tradition of the Mantle) when the Prophet publicly demonstrated his House by spreading his cloak over them. These figures are also called ahl al-kisa’ (people of the mantle).3 In several Indonesian Shi’i works we find verses of the Qur’an and Hadith which are used to defend this Shi’i interpretation of ahl al-bayt. The most frequently cited verse is the following: “And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless”.4 This is known as the Tathir (Purification) verse. It is said that before this verse was revealed, the Muhammad took Hasan and Husayn, ‘Ali and Fatima under his striped cloak and stated: “these are my ahl al-bayt”. The story goes on to say that Ummu Salama, one of the Prophet’s wives, asked if she was included in the ahl al-bayt. He replied that she was not.5 Thus, it is clear that unlike the Sunni interpretation, for Shi’is, the wives of the Prophet Muhammad are not considered to be members of his ahl al-bayt.

A second meaning of ahl al-bayt is the same as that of the term ‘itra, a concept which encompasses the line of all twelve Imams from Imam ‘Ali to the Imam Mahdi.6 Shi’is base this interpretation on the Hadith in which the Prophet stated that God had given the world two safeguards, al-thaqalayn, or ‘the two weighty matters’: the Qur’an and the Prophet’s ‘itra or ahl a-bayt. Upholding these safeguards will prevent Muslims from going astray. In the Hadith, the two safeguards are grammatically inseparable. This quotation contradicts the famous Sunni Hadith which cites the Qur’an and the Sunna as guides.7 Shi’i authorities in Indonesia have provided many versions of the Hadith of thaqalayn, including

Verily, I leave you things, which if you keep hold of them, you will never go astray after me, one of which is greater than the other: The Book of Allah is like a rope hanging from heaven to earth and the other is my ‘itra, my Household. These two will never be separated from each other until they encounter me at al-Hawd. Therefore, take care as to how you behave towards my two legacies.8

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4 Qur’an, Surah 33:33.
7 A Sunni version of this Hadith reads: “I leave you two things, so that you will not go astray as long as you uphold them, the Book of God and the Sunna of His Prophet” (‘Ali Umar Al-Habsyi 2002:337). Although this Hadith is widely taught and strongly upheld in the Sunni community, it is not narrated in the six authoritative Sunni collections, al-Sahih of Bukhari, al-Sahih of Muslim, al-Sunan of Abu Da’ud, al-Sunan of Nasa’i, al-Jami’ of Tirmidhi, and al-Sunan of Ibn Majah. In the Sunni tradition, the term Sunna is commonly understood to be the way or deeds of the Prophet Muhammad and is used interchangeably with the term Hadith, collections of sayings, conduct and things approved by the Prophet. Both terms are often translated however as the ‘Traditions of the Prophet’.
8 ‘Ali Umar Al-Habsyi (2002:44). Al-Hawd is the pool in Paradise where Muhammad will meet his community on the day of Resurrection.
This is considered to be one of the most strongly established Hadiths. It is transmitted through various isnads, or chains of transmission and in different versions. Ali Umar Al-Habsyi, a Shi’i ustadh who teaches at YAPI in Bangil, East Java and grandson-in-law of Husein Al-Habsyi, provides a comprehensive account of the numerous isnads and versions of the Hadith of thaqalayn and affirms its validity and authenticity. On the rational proof of the obligation to uphold the Qur’an and the Prophet’s ahl al-bayt, Al-Habsyi writes

The Qur’an and ‘itra are called al-thaqalayn, the two safeguards, because both are the very valuable bequest of the Prophet left by him to his umma. Both are stores of religious knowledge, secrets of God and sources of information for shari’a law. Therefore, the Prophet (Upon Whom be Peace) frequently ordered his umma to take knowledge from them, to uphold the guidance bestowed by them and to make them a mirror in their way of life.9

Besides the Hadith of thaqalayn, there is other textual evidence considered to constitute commands to follow and love the ahl al-bayt. The Hadith of safina, the ark, reads: “My Household among you is like Noah’s Ark. Whosoever embarks in it will be saved and whoever stays behind will drown.”10 The ahl al-bayt provide authoritative interpretations of the Qur’an after the death of the Prophet. For Shi’is, only those who follow their example are the true adherents of Islam and will gain salvation. At times Shi’i figures in Indonesia use the term ‘loving devotion to the ahl al-bayt’ as a strategy to encourage the Sunnis to more readily accept the Shi’i presence. But their meaning remains unchanged: that people should adhere to the teachings of ahl al-bayt.11

Like fellow believers in other parts of the world, the Shi’is of Indonesia uses the term Shi’a in an entirely positive sense. They hold the view that the group called Shi’a (Party, of ‘Ali) has existed since the days of the Prophet, referring to the Hadith in which he said: “O ‘Ali, you and your Shi’a will gain victory”.12 On occasions such as at the revelation of the Qur’anic verse which reads “those who have faith and do righteous deeds – they are the best of creatures”,13 Muhammad is said to have stated that ‘the best of creatures’ in this case are ‘Ali and his party who will be victorious on the day of judgement.14 In early Islamic history, prominent companions of the Prophet such as Salman, Abu Dhar, Miqdad and Ammar were known as ‘Ali’s Shi’a. These four companions are also called al-Arkan al-Arba’a (the Four Pillars).15 Following Muhammad’s

14 Alatas (2002:2).
death, this minority group emerged in response to the historic event in the *Saqifa* (Hall) of Bani Sa’ida in Medina. Abu Bakr was elected first Caliph and successor to the Prophet, without involving any members of his *ahl al-bayt*, who were occupied at the time with the burial rites over the Prophet’s body. After being informed about the election of Abu Bakr, Ali and his followers protested, since they recognised the Prophet’s bequest that ‘Ali succeed him as leader of the *umma*. The events at *Saqifa* are held to be the source of the Sunni-Shi’a schism within the Muslim *umma*, the first of the ‘great temptations’ to destroy Islamic unity. Jalaluddin Rakhmat quotes several historical accounts providing ‘Umar’s response to ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas’ opposition: “By God, I know that ‘Ali is the most appropriate of all to become the Caliph, but because of three reasons we sideline him. First, he is too young; second, he is tied with the descendants of ‘Abd al-Mutt’Ali’ [‘Ali’s and the Prophet’s grandfather] and third, people dislike prophethood and caliphate united in a single family”.

In Islamic history, the followers of ‘Ali - the Shi’is - considered the election of Abu Bakr to be the usurpation of ‘Ali’s right and contrary to Islamic teachings. Such is the religious and political background of the establishment of Shi’ism as a distinct *madhhab*.

By affirming that their adherence to the *ahl al-bayt* and the Imams succeeding the Prophet, the Shi’is of Indonesia reject the Sunni accusation that the origin of their *madhhab* lies with one Abdullah bin Saba’, whom they consider to be a fictitious character. They point to sources that declare the existence of this figure to be invalid. Another argument goes even further, that the Shi’is reject the idea of Abdullah bin Saba’ as the founder of Shi’ism and even curse him. Logic alone would suggest that it is inconceivable that the cursers of a figure are his followers - adherents of any religion or sect naturally praise and side with their founder. The Shi’i intellectual, M. Hashem writes: “The accusation of the Shi’is as adherents of Abdullah bin Saba’ is not at all supported by the history of human experience and is impossible to accept by logical reason.”

Shi’is in Indonesia argue that they maintain the true teachings of Islam, as taught and practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and his *ahl al-bayt*. In Shi’i publications, *da’wa* activities and gatherings, they emphasise their role

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16 Hashem (1994).
17 Rakhmat (1986a:83).
20 Abdullah bin Saba’ was the founder of a sect called the *Saba’iyya*. He was said to have converted from Judaism to Islam. He introduced ideas that tend to be considered *ghuluw* (extremism in matters of doctrine) such as the exaltation of ‘Ali, the divine character of ‘Ali and the denial of ‘Ali’s death. In anti-Shi’i accounts, he is said to be the founder of Shi’ism, who allegedly ignited the early disputes among companions of the Prophet and later divided the Muslim *umma*.
3. The Madhhab

in maintaining the continuity, purity and the eternity of his teachings. For instance, in the commemoration of ‘Ashura in certain cities in Indonesia, they chant slogans about the struggle of Imam Husayn against the corruption of Islamic teachings by Yazid, the second Caliph of the Umayyad dynasty, by the Umayyad regime as a whole and even by several companions of the Prophet. It is believed that when the Prophet lay dying he ordered writing materials to be brought to him, intending to write the confirmation of ‘Ali as his successor. But some of the companions, including ‘Umar, ignored his command. ‘Umar is said to have stated that the Prophet was delirious and that the Qur’an was enough for them. Thus Shi’is believe Sunnism to have been corrupted by most of the Prophet Muhammad’s companions from the time of his death.

In addition to this, Indonesian Shi’i figures such as Jalaluddin Rakhmat identify Shi’ism as the ‘madhhab of love’, based on a paradigm of love, with Imam ‘Ali as its founder. Rakhmat also calls Shi’ism the ‘madhhab alawi’, a term referring to Imam ‘Ali, while Rakhmat calls Sunnism the ‘madhhab umari’, attributed to the Caliph ‘Umar. Followers of the madhhab alawi believe that all traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, with regard to doctrine, worship and social interaction, must be followed without exception. According to this madhhab, all of the Prophet’s traditions are textual proofs, since the Prophet was totally immune from major and minor sins and mistakes. His life was led wholly in accordance with the will of God. Any stories and interpretations contrary to this principle are rejected in Shi’i Islam. Among the Qur’anic verses that are often cited in support of this position are: “Nor does he [the Prophet Muhammad] say (aught) of (his own) desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him.”

According to Jalaluddin Rakhmat, the madhhab umari, by contrast, follows the traditions of the Prophet only in relation to doctrine and worship and not in contingent worldly aspects. The madhhab umari argues that on several occasions the Prophet made mistakes, was corrected by his companions and then God sent His injunctions to affirm the opinions of his companions. Based on this fundamental difference, Rakhmat provides three characteristics of the madhhab alawi: first, since it accepts all of the traditions of the Prophet, this madhhab does not recognise the separation of religion from worldly matters. Second, as shown by the attitude and actions of Imam ‘Ali, the madhhab alawi emphasises the unity of Muslims. Third, it is the madhhab of love, which characteristic can be found in the sayings, attitudes and actions of the Imams, which stress the significance of the Sufi concept of mahabba (love). Love is also included in Shi’i supplications. “Supplications in the madhhab alawi are filled with love of God. Only in the madhhab alawi does love towards God reach its

23 Qur’an Surah 53:2-3.
culmination”. Related to this attribute is the principle that Shi’is in Indonesia consider Shi’ism to be the madhhab of ‘ukhuwwa Islamiyya’ (the brotherhood of Muslims) because of its great concern for Islamic fraternity. Imam Ali is believed always to have promoted fraternity. His biography provides a complete picture of the realisation of Islamic fraternity in particular and the paradigm of love in general.

Shi’is also generally consider themselves to be ‘the chosen’, in contrast to the Sunni majority. According to Enayat, the ethos of refusing to recognise that the majority opinion is necessarily true has become one of the most important distinguishing features of Shi’ism, alongside its differences in doctrine and jurisprudence. The Indonesian statement, ‘Alhamdulillah kita sudah Syi’ah’ meaning ‘Praise be to God, we are already Shi’i’ is an expression of their high religious status. While they acknowledge that Sunnis are Muslims, the Shi’is regard themselves as true believers. This view is partly derived from the aforementioned statement by Muhammad commanding the faithful to follow his ahl al-bayt, and also the statement that ‘Ali and his followers will be victorious on the day of judgement and will enter paradise. Another argument frequently used by the Shi’i community is that the number of people who uphold the truth is usually small, while the majority of people will follow popular teachings propagated by means of political force, which goes to explain the minority position of the Shi’is in Indonesia and in the wider world.

In short, among the Shi’is in Indonesia, terms such as the ‘madhhab of ahl al-bayt’ and the ‘madhhab alawi’ have been used to denote their denomination in an entirely positive sense. Shi’ism is also built upon fundamentals of religion (usul al-din) and branches of religion (furu’ al-din) containing specific elements that differ from Sunnism.

B. The Imamate

Like the followers of Shi’ism in Iran and other places in the world, Shi’is in Indonesia believe in five fundamental elements of religion, the usul al-din. They do not recognise the concept of rukun iman, the six pillars of faith common to Sunnis in Indonesia and which can be found in most Sunni theological works. The basic tenets of Shi’ism are: tawhid (the oneness of God), ‘adl (the justice of God), nubuwwa (prophethood), imama (the imamate) and ma’ad (resurrection).

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29 Abu Ammar (2002:37). The six pillars of faith are belief in God, His Angels, His Holy Books, His Messengers and the Day of Judgement, and as well in God’s decree known as al-qada and al-qadar (Indonesian, takdir).
Indonesian Shi’is agree with Sunnis on three tenets, namely the unity of God, prophethood and the resurrection of the dead. Shi’is share their belief in the justice of God with the Mu’tazilis, a rationalist theological stream within early Muslim history. From a Shi’i perspective, the first three are called the fundamentals of religion, while the imamate and justice are the fundamentals of the madhhab. To become Muslim, one must believe in the fundamentals of religion, while to become a Shi’i, one must complement this with a belief in the imamate and justice.

Like the Sunnis, Shi’is believe in the oneness of God and His perfect and good attributes. Tawhid, or Divine Unity, is the core of Islamic teachings and for Shi’is it is the basis of their world-view. They also uphold the idea that the prophets were appointed by God and that Muhammad was the Seal and Chief of all prophets. Shi’is believe that he was infallible. They share with Sunnis a belief in the Day of Judgement, a time when each person will be brought to life to receive divine reward or punishment. Unlike the Sunnis, however, Shi’is place great emphasis on one of God’s attributes, ‘adl, or justice. God cannot act in an unjust manner because His nature is just. This tenet also maintains the consistency of ‘aql, or reason with Islam, because ‘aql can judge the justness or unjustness of an act; thus it too receives great emphasis in Shi’i Islam.

Shi’is in Indonesia believe that the Qur’an possessed by Muslims today contains all of God’s words, as revealed through the Prophet Muhammad and that it is a miracle of God granted to the Prophet. It is believed that God protected the originality of the Qur’an so that there could be neither addition nor subtraction made to it. They also believe in the Hadith as a principal source of Islamic teachings, second only to the Qur’an. Included in the Shi’i interpretation of Hadith are sayings of the Imams. Thus, the Hadith are defined as all the acts and sayings of the fourteen infallibles (the Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fatima and the twelve Imams) even though the deeds of the Imams are not considered to be independent of the sayings, conduct and agreement of the Prophet. This is a consequence of the fundamental Shi’i belief in the imamate.

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30 In Indonesia, the greatest contribution to the rational theology of Mu’tazilism was provided by the late Harun Nasution (1919-1998). For an intellectual biography of this figure, see Muzani (1994) and for an examination of his theological thoughts see Martin and Woodward with Atmaja (1997) and Saleh (2001:196-240).
31 Khalid al-Walid, interview, (2/7/2002).
34 Alatas (2002:11). Corresponding to the six collections of Sunni Hadith, there are four authoritative collections of Shi’i Hadith, namely al-Kafi fi ‘ulum al-din (The Sufficient in the Knowledge of Religion) by Muhammad bin Ya’qub al-Kulayni (d. 940), Man la yahduruhu al-faqih (For him not in the Presence of Jurisprudent) by Shaykh al-Saduq Muhammad bin Babuya al-Qummi (d. 991), Tahdhib al-akhkam (Rectification of the Statutes) by Shaykh al-Ta’ifah Muhammad al-Tusi (d. 1068) and al-Ibtisar fi ma ukhtulif fihi min al-akhbar (Reflection upon the Disputed Traditions) also by al-Tusi (Chittick 1989:16).
For Shi‘is the imamate is the essence of religion, without which belief is never complete. It is the fundamental tenet that distinguishes the Shi‘i from the Sunni and is the principal doctrine that divides the Muslim umma into Sunnah and Shi‘iah. Unlike the Sunnis, Shi‘is regard the imamate as a religious matter, which they are obliged to establish. In addition, they believe that the Prophet Muhammad appointed the Imams as his successors: “Imam or leader is the title given to a person who takes the lead in a community in a particular social movement or political ideology or scientific or religious form of thought.”

In Shi‘ism, the title Imam designates a religious, spiritual and political leader who performs the same duties as the prophet. Unlike the Prophet, however, the Imam does not receive divine injunctions, although like prophethood, the imamate is based on divine appointment. Just as the Prophet himself was appointed by God, the Imam must be chosen by God through His Messenger. “Thus, the Prophet is God’s messenger and the Imam is the Prophet’s messenger.”

For Shi‘is, the existence of the Imam is a necessary condition of human existence. Human society is in need of constant guidance. The presence of a leader or ruler is very significant for the continuation of a society. Without a leader, individual rights and duties cannot be realised and order will vanish from society. Thus every man requires a leader, or Imam. From a theological perspective, the philosophy of the creation of man by God is based on the goal of perfection. To achieve this goal, human beings need God’s guidance through His prophets, but prophethood ended with the death of Muhammad. For this reason, Muslims need the Imam to be the guide and authority in matters such as the religious commandments and to provide commentary and interpretation of the Qur’an.

Within Shi‘ism, reason dictates that every Muslim not only needs the Imam but is obliged to recognise the Imam as well. The Shi‘i ustads and intellectuals in Indonesia also provide texts that designate this obligation. The most popular Hadith on the matter is: “Those who die without knowing the Imam of his time, it is as if he dies in the jahiliyya [the time of ignorance before the message of the Prophet Muhammad].” Interpreting Qur‘anic verses and Hadith, they claim that all worship and obedience to God is useless without the recognition of the Imam. Even though someone might believe in the unity of God, His Prophet, the resurrection, divine justice and observe Islamic teachings, “he remains in jahiliyya as long as he does not recognise the Imam of the time.”

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38 Al-Kaff (http://aljawad.tripod.com/arsipbuletin/imamah.htm).
Shi‘is in Indonesia believe that the Imam must be the best of all men; indeed, the Imam is a perfect man. There are at least two qualities to being an Imam: first, to be the most pious man, totally surrendering his life to the will of God. Second, the Imam must be the most knowledgeable man. Only with these qualities can the Imam guide others on the way to achieve perfection. In the Shi‘i faith, like the Prophet, the Imam must be immune from sins or mistakes. Inerrancy (isma) is the power that prevents someone from committing sins or making mistakes.

Husein Al-Habsyi explains three aspects of inerrancy: first, inerrancy is the peak of piety because a pious man who always behaves according to the Will of God can protect himself from sins and mistakes. The power of inerrancy can protect him even from the desire to commit sins and mistakes. Second, inerrancy is a product of knowledge. Knowledge, by its nature, has the power to protect man from falling into sin and transgression or from being controlled by passion. Third, inerrancy is a consequence of the perfection gained through ma‘rifā, gnosiss, the direct knowledge of God as the source of perfection, allowing one to be open to the power of truth and love. Al-Habsyi believed that piety in itself may produce a mystical knowledge which can uncover the supernatural aspects of man and creatures:

Such absolute perfection, when it is gained by an ‘arif [Sufi] will enflame in his soul the spirit of yearning and loving, encouraging him towards the point at which he does not need anything except God alone. He will seek nothing except obedience to all His commands and prohibitions. He becomes abhorrent of what is contrary to His commands and pleasure and what is bad in His view. At that moment, truly a man (with the perfection he has gained) becomes protected from transgressions, so with it he does not give importance to things other than God’s pleasure alone.

The Prophet and the Imams possess the quality of inerrancy, which guarantees the validity, truthfulness and perfection of Islamic teachings. Shi‘is argue that if the Prophet and Imams were not infallible, people would doubt their mission and guidance. This means that Imams must be followed and obeyed: this obedience is an absolute obligation. Besides human reason, many verses of the Qur‘an and Hadith are cited in support of the Shi‘i view on the inerrancy of the Imams. The previously mentioned verse of the Qur‘an about the purity of ahl al-bayt is understood also to designate the infallibility of the Imams, as is the Hadith of al-thaqalayn. Shi‘is argue that the Qur‘an is protected from distortion and error and that there is no question about the Prophet, who received and

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42 Al-Kaff (http://aljawad.tripod.com/arsipbuletin/imamah.htm).
46 Anis (http://fatimah.org/artikel/masum.htm).
propagated the Holy Book. If the Qur’an is so protected, the *ahl al-bayt* and the Imams are also protected. As the same Hadith also states, neither will ever be separated, until the Day of Judgement.\(^{47}\)

Shi’is believe that it is inconceivable for humankind to choose the Imam, quite simply because they do not have the authority to do so. Only God has the authority to appoint the Imam, through the Prophet,\(^ {48}\) because only He knows who the most pious and knowledgeable among mankind is. In His justice, God pronounces to mankind about the Imams that He appoints.\(^ {49}\) Shi’i *ustadhs* and intellectuals in Indonesia refer to textual proofs of the appointment of Imams by God; for example, one verse of the Qur’an tells how Abraham was appointed an Imam and how he asked God to choose future Imams from his descendants.\(^ {50}\) In addition, they consider there to be many scriptural texts that, beside obedience to God and His Prophet, command Muslims to obey the Imams. The Qur’an reads: “O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you.”\(^ {51}\) In the Shi’i interpretation, the term *uli al-amr* (*ulil amri*, Indonesian) “those charged with authority” refers to the Imams.\(^ {52}\)

Shi’i *ustadhs* and intellectuals also point to ‘Ali as the Imam to succeed the Prophet Muhammad, which they say is specifically stated in the Qur’an and Hadith. One Qur’anic verse reads: “Your (real) friends are (no less than) Allah, His Messenger, and the (Fellowship of) believers – those who establish regular prayers and regular charity, and bow down humbly (in worship).”\(^ {53}\) In their interpretation, the revelation of this verse indicated ‘Ali bin Abi Talib. One source for this interpretation is that Abu Dhar, a companion of the Prophet, told that when he performed the noon-time prayer in the mosque with the Prophet, a person in need entered the mosque asking for help, but no-one gave him anything. ‘Ali, who was in a position of genuflection, raised his finger towards the person, who then took his ring and left. God praised ‘Ali’s conduct and revealed that verse,\(^ {54}\) which is widely known as the verse of *wilaya*, or spiritual investiture. The term *wali* is identical to the term Imam, as the holder of authority and leadership. Both Sunni and Shi’i sources are cited to confirm this interpretation. ‘Ali Umar Al-Habsyi even claims: “books of Sunni Qur’anic exegesis and Hadith are sufficient to prove the truth of the event.”\(^ {55}\)

\(^{47}\) Alatas (2002:76-78).
\(^{48}\) Anis (http://fatimah.org/artikel/masum.htm).
\(^{49}\) Al-Kaff (http://aljawad.tripod.com/arsipbuletin/imamah.htm).
\(^{50}\) Qur’an Surah (2:124).
\(^{51}\) Qur’an Surah (4:59).
\(^{52}\) In Sunnism, the term *ulu al-amr* refers to ‘ulama or temporal leaders. In line with the Sunni understanding of the concept, at a conference in March 1953, a number of NU ‘ulama bestowed on President Soekarno the title *w‘Ali al-amri al-daruri bi al-shawka* (the Ruler who at present is in power) who had to be obeyed according to the Qur’an, verse 4:59 (Boland 1971:133).
\(^{53}\) Qur’an Surah 5:55.
It is also pointed out that the Prophet appointed ‘Ali as his successor on many occasions, from the early days of his prophethood until his death. This is also congruent with the Shi‘i comprehension that the Prophet had great concern for leadership. In each of his military expeditions, he appointed a leader and each time he left the city he appointed a deputy. Thus, Shi‘i’s claim, it is inconceivable that the Prophet passed away without first appointing a successor. This successor would certainly be the most qualified person, with the capability to lead and guide the Muslim community, namely ‘Ali bin Abi Talib. Many Hadith affirm the Prophet’s appointment of ‘Ali, one of them suggesting that this took place at the launch of the Tabuk expedition. He said to ‘Ali: “Are you not satisfied that your position beside me is the same as the position of Aaron beside Moses, except that there will not be another prophet after me?” However, the most famous scriptural text is known as the Hadith of Ghadir Khumm, transmitted through numerous isnads and in different versions. One version, transmitted by Ahmad from Bara’ bin Azib, reads as follows:

We were in the company of the Messenger of God (Upon Him be Peace) on a journey, then we stopped at Ghadir Khumm. Then, we were ordered to gather and a place under two big trees was cleaned, then he performed noontime prayer and afterwards he raised ‘Ali’s hand while saying: “Haven’t you recognised that I indeed have the rightful authority over the faithful more than they themselves do?” They answered: “Yes”. He went on to say: “Don’t you recognise that I indeed have the rightful authority more than each of the faithful himself does?” They replied: “Yes.” Then he said: “Whoever (takes) me as his mawla (master), ‘Ali will be his mawla. Oh God, love whoever takes him master and hinder whoever hinders him.” Bara’ said: “Afterwards, ‘Umar met him and said, ‘Congratulations, Oh son of Abi Talib, you have become the master of all the faithful.’”

The Prophet is believed not only to have appointed ‘Ali as the Imam to succeed him but also to have mentioned the number and names of all the Imams after him. The number is twelve and they hail from the clan of Quraysh and from the Household of Muhammad. This is mentioned in both Sunni and Shi‘i traditions, including the most authoritative Sunni collections of Hadith, al-Sahih of Bukhari and al-Sahih of Muslim. The Shi‘i ustadhs and intellectuals in Indonesia use both Sunni and Shi‘i collections to cite the number of Imams after the Prophet. They quote a Hadith in al-Sahih of Bukhari, transmitted by Jabir bin Samurah, who said that he had listened to the Prophet’s saying that there would be twelve amirs (leaders), all of whom would be of the Quraysh. There is also a Hadith in

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57 Alatas (2002:60).
al-Sahih of Muslim, which states that the affairs of the believers will run well as long as twelve caliphs lead them. So believing in twelve Imams, they are commonly called ‘Twelver Imamiyya’ Shi’is.

For the Shi’is of Indonesia, there are sound Hadith designating that the Prophet publicly announced the names of the twelve Imams and declared each of them his successor. They begin with ‘Ali as the first, followed by his two sons, Hasan and Husayn, followed by the descendants of Husayn until the twelfth Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi, the Awaited One, who went into occultation and remains hidden. The twelve names are: ‘Ali bin Abi Talib al-Murtada (d. 40/661), Hasan bin ‘Ali al-Zaki (d. 49/669), Husayn bin ‘Ali Sayyid al-Shuhada (d. 61/680), ‘Ali bin Husayn Zayn al-Abidin (d. 95/715), Muhammad bin ‘Ali al-Baqir (d. 115/734), Ja’far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (d. 148/766), Musa bin Ja’far al-Kazim (d. 183/800), ‘Ali bin Musa al-Rida (d. 203/819), Muhammad bin ‘Ali al-Jawad (d. 220/836), ‘Ali bin Muhammad al-Hadi (d. 254/869), Hasan bin ‘Ali al-Askari (d. 260/875) and Muhammad bin Hasan al-Mahdi.

Today, Shi’is recognise Muhammad al-Mahdi as their last and twelfth Imam. He is the Awaited (al-Muntazar) whose appearance is expected to establish God’s justice in the world.

Thus the belief in the imamate is the distinguishing feature of Shi’ism. But besides determining Shi’i interpretations of Hadith, it also contributes to Shi’i interpretations of jurisprudence. The complexity of the Shi’i madhhab is apparent in the notion of Imam Mahdi, now to be explained.

C. The Mahdi

Shi’is in Indonesia themselves acknowledge that the belief in the Imam Mahdi is a complicated matter. This belief is shared by all Muslims, both Sunni and Shi’i. Even Judaism and Christianity uphold a belief in the coming Messiah, the saviour of the world. In Indonesia, a similar concept of a Ratu Adil (Just King) promotes the idea of the coming of a figure who will bring justice and prosperity to the land of Java. However, it should be noted that Sunnism and Shi’ism have different interpretations of the belief in the Imam Mahdi. One stark difference concerns his birth. While Sunnis believe that he is not yet born, Shi’is maintain that he is already born and is still alive but that he went into occultation. Shi’is also devote more attention to faith in Imam Mahdi than Sunnis, since it forms part of their general belief system of the imamate. The main tenets concerning the Imam Mahdi are in respect of his existence and his attributes; namely, that

he is the son of the eleventh Imam, Hasan al-Askari, that he is the last Imam chosen by God, that he is infallible and that he has complete knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith. Abu Ammar writes: “If in these matters you are still in doubt... you cannot yet be considered as Shi’i.”

For Shi’is in Indonesia, the Imam Mahdi’s name is synonymous with that of the Prophet Muhammad. It is mentioned in a Hadith which states: “Judgement day will not take place until the time of a man from my Household whose name is the same as mine.” Under the famous title al-Mahdi (the Rightly Guided) he is mentioned in many Hadiths as the twelfth Imam. He is also mentioned with the titles Sahib al-Zaman (the Lord of the Age) and Imam al-Zaman (the Imam of This Time). These epithets refer to the interpretation that Imam Mahdi is the Imam of the present period, in whom all true Muslims must believe. It also follows the obligation for believers to have an Imam. His other titles are al-Khalaf al-Hujja (the Substitute of God’s Proof), al-Qa’im (the One who will arise), al-Muntazar (the Awaited) and al-Tali (the Future).

According to Shi’is, the Imam Mahdi was born in Samarra, Iraq, in 256/871. His father, the eleventh Imam, Hasan al-Askari, cared for him until his martyrdom in 260/875. Imam Mahdi succeeded his father after his death, being appointed Imam around the age of five. This is one of the complicated issues in the belief in Imam Mahdi. For Shi’is, his appointment was a miracle granted by God. Jalaluddin Rakhmat cites Muhammad Bagir Sadr’s view that even though Imam Mahdi was only a boy five years old, the political regime attempted to isolate him from his followers and to kill him. “This is evidence that the Imam was very powerful and bright, so that he should be taken into consideration.”

Then, by Divine Command, Imam Mahdi went into occultation (ghayba, Arabic; gaib, Indonesian). The Indonesian term gaib is understood by Shi’is to mean “the absence of the Imam Mahdi among mankind.” Shi’is believe in two parts to this occultation: the first is the minor occultation (ghayba sughra) and the second, the great occultation (ghaybakubra). During the minor occultation, the Imam still made contact with people through his special deputies, for during this occultation, which lasted from 260/875 until 329/942, he is believed to have chosen special deputies through whom he could communicate and provide guidance to the community of believers. There were four deputies, known as Nauwab al-Imam (the Deputies of the Imam) or al-Sufara al-Arba’a (the Four Ambassadors). The first was ‘Uthman bin Sa’id al-Umari. The second, after

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64 Abu Ammar (2000:86).
‘Uthman’s death, was his son, Muhammad bin ‘Uthman al-‘Umari. On his death, Husayn bin Ruh Nawbakhti was appointed, and finally ‘Ali bin Muhammad al-Sammari became the deputy. The minor occultation ended with the death of ‘Ali bin Muhammad al-Sammari in 942. Thereafter followed the great occultation, which “begins and continues as long as God wills”. 68 The above-mentioned Hadith on the Imam Mahdi is used to support the Shi‘i argument for the unknown length of this great occultation. But another popular Hadith, from the Sunni collection of Abu Daud, tells of the long life of Imam Mahdi and his reappearance to fulfil justice in the world: “If there were to remain in the life of the world but one day, God would prolong it until He sends a man from my Household, his name will be the same as mine, he will fill the earth with justice, as it was filled with tyranny.” 69

Logical reasoning is also used by Indonesian Shi‘i leaders to support their belief in the occultation of Imam Mahdi and in his longevity. Gaib (absence) does not mean non-existence, and this becomes the argument for Imam Mahdi’s existence. Gaib may be absolute or relative. The absence of Imam Mahdi is relative, in the sense that he is not absent for exceptional persons, 70 namely those who are trustworthy. Shi‘is argue that God hides Imam Mahdi from his enemies, who try to execute him, even as his followers long for his appearance. They hide him in order to protect him, because he is the last and will be Imam for a long period of time and so the imamate that must exist in all periods continues uninterrupted. 71

Such a long lifetime of Imam Mahdi is considered to be consistent with ideas of Divine injunction. For Shi‘is in Indonesia this is another miracle granted by God to Imam Mahdi. They also cite the Qur‘anic verses, which assert stories of longevity in the past. The Prophet Noah was 950 years old 72 and ‘the People of the Cape’ slept for 309 years. 73 The Qur‘an also states that God rejects the claim that Jesus died on the cross. 74 It is believed that he is still alive and will appear after the appearance of Imam Mahdi to ensure justice in the world. Shi‘is argue that it is impossible to reconcile a belief in the validity of these verses and the existence of longevity, with a rejection of the belief in the long lifetime of Imam Mahdi. 75 To question this matter is to question God as All-Powerful. Abu Ammar writes

…Long life is a matter that is very possible to occur and even has occurred. And the matter is not a problem for God, the Almighty. Allah

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72 Qur’an Surah 29:14.
73 Qur’an Surah 18:25.
74 Qur’an Surah 4:58.
creates all [creatures], certainly He can also look after them. Therefore, whoever doubts this power, he should examine his faith again and see its distance, how far or near it is from the materialists....

Another reason is also given, which is related to the duty of Imam Mahdi to ensure justice and prosperity in the world. He was created to live long, throughout different ages, witnessing and experiencing various events and civilisations. With such a wealth of knowledge and experience, Imam Mahdi can fulfil his duty of solving all the problems of this complex world.

In the matter of Jesus, Shi’is in Indonesia believe that he too is alive, but hidden, and that he will perform prayer under the leadership of Imam Mahdi. This means that Jesus also recognises the imamate of Imam Mahdi. Several Hadiths are used to support their argument, including one, which reads “How do you react when Jesus reappears and his Imam is among you?”

Closely related to belief in the occultation of Imam Mahdi and an unfortunate consequence of it is the emergence of humans claiming to be Imam Mahdi. Shi’i leaders in Indonesia warn their followers about these false Mahdis. One of the latest cases in Jakarta is that of a woman named Lia Aminuddin, the founder of the Salamullah sect, who declared herself to be Imam Mahdi. Her claim has been rejected outright by Indonesian Shi’is because Imam Mahdi must be a man, must have the same name as the Prophet and must be one of his descendants. In the history of Muslim society, there have been a number of others who have been alleged to be the Mahdi. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya sect in Pakistan is regarded as one such false Mahdi. For the Shi’is, aside from the identity of Imam Mahdi, other criteria such as his infallibility, his perfect knowledge of the Qur’an and Hadith and his fulfilment of justice in the world are used to disprove the claims of these false Mahdis.

Another problem related to the occultation of Imam Mahdi is the emergence of a number of Shi’is in Indonesia who claim to have met the Imam or to have been able to communicate with him. This too has become a concern for Shi’i leaders. In the history of Shi’ism, there have been many stories about those who claimed to have met Imam Mahdi. Shi’i figures in Indonesia believe all such claims to be invalid. Khalid Al-Walid, a Shi’i ustadh and Qum alumnus, affirms: “those who claimed to have been able to communicate with Imam Mahdi (Upon Him be Peace) are in general liars.” He bases this judgment on what is said to be a letter from Imam Mahdi himself commanding people to be careful in this matter. Part

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76 Abu Ammar (2000:40).
78 Rakhmat (2001a:6).
79 Rakhmat (2001a:6).
of the letter reads: “Among my Shi’a there emerged persons who claim to be able to witness me. Be careful, those who claim to be able to witness me before the emergence of al-Sufyani, they indeed are liars.” Khalid Al-Walid concludes that matters emerging as a consequence of the occultation of Imam Mahdi, including claims to have met him, are to be considered as tests of faith for Shi’is.82

The letter indicates one of the signs of the return of Imam Mahdi, namely the appearance of al-Sufyani, who will be assassinated by the Mahdi.83 The Shi’is consider there to be a number of signs indicating the imminent appearance of Imam Mahdi. Most of these are based on both Sunni and Shi’i Hadiths. The main sign may be subsumed in the sentence: “the entire world is overwhelmed by tyranny, injustice, disorder, and slaying. The most popular mark proceeding to the appearance of Imam Mahdi is the appearance of the one-eyed Dajjal (the Devil, or Anti-Christ)”. Imam Mahdi is believed to be the one who will kill the Dajjal, as part of his duty to bring justice to the world.84

For Shi’is in Indonesia, waiting for the appearance of Imam Mahdi is very important. This means a belief not only in the existence and imamate of Imam Mahdi but also in his monitoring of all human actions.85 In waiting, believers are obliged to obey all of God’s commands and to protect themselves from all He has prohibited. This is called taqwa, or piety. Believers must also be convinced that Imam Mahdi sees all their actions, because it said in the Qur’an86 that God, His messenger and the faithful see all people’s behaviour.87 In waiting for the Mahdi, believers plead to be included under his leadership and guidance, and for God to hasten his reappearance. “Let us pray in order that we are united with our Imam, the Lord of the Age, al-Mahdi. We hope we are among the followers of Imam Mahdi and finally will be assembled by God in the Hereafter, together with him and his ascendant, the Messenger of God”, says Rakhmat.88

On the longing for the appearance of Imam Mahdi, Jaffar Al-Jufri writes: “Our Imam, the Mahdi, is the one we very much await in the situation of this age, truly there is no figure that we trust except him.”89

Waiting for the return of Imam Mahdi is considered to be an act of obedience, ‘ibadat, to God and is understood as a positive philosophical value. It is not fatalism that makes people simply surrender. If waiting for the return of Imam Mahdi contributes to such a fatalistic attitude, then it is deviating and

83 There are different opinions about who al-Sufyani is. One is that he is a descendant of Abu Sufyan (Ma’awiyah’s father) who will appear and command armies before the advent of Imam Mahdi.
85 Syuaib (1423:2).
86 Qur’an Surah 9:105.
destructive. Pious deeds are also required in order to establish a better life. For Shi‘is, Mahdism, along with martyrdom, becomes the philosophical basis for the establishment of the future Muslim umma. Anguish experienced during such obedience to God is, in reality, motivated by an idealistic world-view, to be witnessed by Imam Mahdi.91

Thus the return of Imam Mahdi is seen as a series of struggles between good and evil. “And the Mahdi is the symbol of victory for the pious and the believers.”92 Shi‘is in Indonesia support their argument with a scriptural text that God has promised this victory.93 The return of Imam Mahdi is understood as a realisation of God’s promise and His gift to the oppressed, who will gain authority and leadership in the world.94

The recognition of the existence of Imam Mahdi and the belief in his return are essential to the Shi‘i madhhab. This belief has a great impact on the entire Shi‘i madhhab, including on Shi‘i jurisprudence, to which we now turn.

D. Ja‘fari Jurisprudence

In addition to usul al-din, or the fundamentals of religion which must be believed by every Shi‘i, there is the concept of furu‘ al-din, or branches of the religion which form the code of conduct for all Shi‘is. This parallels the Sunni concept of rukun Islam, the pillars of Islam.95 Basically, usul al-din come under in the realm of Islamic doctrine, ‘aqida, while furu‘ al-din are part of Islamic jurisprudence, shari‘a. There are seven pillars of furu‘ al-din: prayer, fasting in the month of Ramadan, zakat (alms), khums (the one-fifth tax), Hajj (the great pilgrimage to Mecca), jihad (struggle in the way of God) and amr ma‘ruf nahy munkar (enjoining to do good and exhorting to desist from evil). These seven pillars are called ‘ibadat, or acts of worship and lead to reward by God. All Shi‘is in Indonesia consider these acts of worship to be obligatory.

They also consider themselves to be followers of Ja‘fari jurisprudence, distinguishing them from the majority of Muslims in the country who follow Shafi‘i jurisprudence. Indonesia’s Shi‘i leaders frequently affirm that, in general, Ja‘fari is very close to Shafi‘i, stating that the difference between Ja‘fari jurisprudence, Shafi‘i and the other three Sunni schools of jurisprudence is

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91 Mulyadi (http://aljawad.tripod.com/arsipbuletin/mahdiisme.htm).
93 Qur’an Surah 24:55.
95 In Sunnism there are five pillars of Islam: the confession of faith, prayer, fasting in the month of Ramadan, religious tithing and the Hajj to Mecca.
smaller than the difference among the four Sunni schools themselves. There are parallels, in almost all aspects of jurisprudence, between the Ja’fari and the four Sunni schools. Although the term Ja’fari jurisprudence originates from the name of the sixth Imam, Ja’far al-Sadiq (d. 148/765), it differs in meaning from the four Sunni schools, which contain sets of jurisprudential opinions, or the products of *ijtihad* by their founders. Umar Shahab writes

The term [Ja’fari] does not totally represent a set of opinions or the product of *ijtihad* of Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq. Because in the Shi’i view, Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq, like the other eleven Imams, namely (from the first Imam until the last) ‘Ali bin Abi T’Alib, Hasan bin ‘Ali, Husayn bin ‘Ali, ‘Ali Zain al-‘Abidin, Muhammad al-Baqir, Ja’far al-Sadiq, Musa al-Kazim, ‘Ali al-Rida, Muhammad al-Jawad, ‘Ali al-Hadi, Hasan al-‘Askari, and Muhammad al-Mahdi, who was not a mujtahid, but an Imam who had authority in establishing or producing law, *tashri’ al-hukm*. What is commonly considered to be the major point of difference between the Ja’fari jurisprudence and the Sunni schools is the fact that in Shi’ism the gate of *ijtihad* is not closed, whilst in Sunnism it has been closed since the 9th century. *Ijtihad* is the scholarly inquiry to formulate legal opinions from the principal sources of Islam, namely the Qur’an and Hadith. Although the gate of *ijtihad* is theoretically open to any Shi’is, the ‘ulama oblige laymen to imitate a chief mujtahid, known as marja or marja’ al-taqlid, a ‘source of emulation’ who has achieved the authority to serve as a reference for the laity. The act of following the fatwa of mujtahid is called *taqlid* and the layman who follows the marja’ is called the muqallid. Thus, in Ja’fari jurisprudence, Muslims are classified as being either mujtahid or muqallid. A mujtahid worthy of emulation must fulfil certain requirements: he must be male and still alive; his product of *ijtihad* must be authorised; he must be just, pious, ascetic, tenacious and free from committing sins. A marja’ al-taqlid usually publishes the result of his *ijtihad* - on subjects ranging from acts of worship to political matters - known as *risala ‘amaltyya*, a ‘tract on practice’, which becomes the religious code for his muqallid. The relationship between marja’ and muqallid is called marja’iyya. Rakhmat explains

In Ja’fari jurisprudence, we may only perform religious practices by following a living marja’, a man of Islamic learning, who publishes his

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96 Adam (2003:44).
97 Bagir (1995:3). The four Sunni schools of law are Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi‘i and Hanbali, after the classical jurists: Abu Hanifa Nu‘man bin Thabit (d. 765), Malik bin Anas (d. 792), Muhammad bin Idris (d. 204/820), and Ahmad bin Hanbal (d. 855).
99 Al-Kaff (http://aljawad.tripod.com/artikel/ijtihad.htm).
jurisprudence in a book. Then, we read his fatwa because in Ja’fari jurisprudence we are obliged to imitate [taqlid]. So the layman must seek his man of learning, whom he must follow. Then, he carries out religious practices according to the fatwa of the imitated man of Islamic learning. [We may say] Ja’fari jurisprudence is outdated […] because it maintains taqlid, or that Ja’fari jurisprudence is progressive; that is, it relies only on someone who has authority, or has specialisation in his field.\(^{102}\)

Besides this reasoning, there is scriptual evidence in support of the obligation of taqlid for the Shi’i laity. The texts are the same as those used to prescribe the obligation of obedience to the Imams. Another common text runs: “If ye realise this not, ask of those who possess the message.”\(^{103}\) An Indonesian Shi’i writer affirms: “It is very clear that this verse designates the obligation of taqlid for the laity who have not achieved the position of mujtahid.”\(^{104}\) Although the terms ulu al-amri and ahl al-dhikr, ‘those who possess the message’ in the Qur’anic texts principally refer to the Imams, the Shi’i view is that during the great occultation, they designate the ‘ulama possessed of a thorough knowledge of the Qur’an and Hadith, namely the wali faqih or marja’ al-taqlid.\(^{105}\) It is believed that, during his occultation, Imam Mahdi instructed the faithful to follow ‘ulama or jurists who are devoted to the field of religion and obedient to all of God’s commands.\(^{106}\) Furthermore, there is a well-known Hadith which states “The ‘ulama are the heirs of the prophets”, which also justifies the compulsion of taqlid upon the laity.

All Shi’is in Indonesia are muqallids. Most take the Grand Ayatollah ‘Ali Khamene’i, the present wali faqih of Iran, to be their marja’.\(^{107}\) A few follow the Grand Ayatollah ‘Ali Sistani of Iraq,\(^{108}\) and yet others emulate the Grand Ayatollah

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\(^{103}\) QS (16:43).
\(^{104}\) Abu Qurba (2003:15).
\(^{105}\) Abu Qurba (2003:16-17).
\(^{107}\) ‘Ali Khamene’i was born in Mashhad, Iran, on 15 July 1939. He studied at the hawza ‘ilmiiyya of Qum. He was a key figure in the Islamic revolution and close confidant of Khomeini. In 1979 he was appointed to the powerful position of Tehran’s Friday Prayer Leader. From 1981 to 1989, he was elected President of Iran and, since Khomeini’s death, became the Supreme Leader, elected by the Assembly of Experts on June 1989 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_Khamenei). In 1994, he was nominated a marja’ al-taqlid. For more information visit the website of the office of Supreme Leader (http://www.leader.ir) and his official website (http://www.khamenei.ir).
\(^{108}\) ‘Ali Husaini Sistani was born on 4 August 1930 in Mashhad, Iran, to a family of religious scholars. After studying in his hometown he moved to Qum, where he studied fiqh, usul al-fiqh and other sciences under the guidance of renowned ayatollahs, including Hujjat Kuhkamari and Allamah Husayn Tabataba’i. He then moved to Najaf, Iraq, to study under, among others, the Grand Ayatollah Khoei (d. 1992) and Muhsin al-Hakim (d. 1970). He was influenced by the prominent quietist scholar Grand Ayatollah Khoei, who made him a marja al-taqlid in the 1960s. Before his death in 1992, Khoei named Sistani as his successor. Since the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, he has played an increasingly political role in Iraq (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_Sistani). Unlike Khomeini, and his successor Khamene’i, Sistani adheres to a quietist tradition
Bahjat Fumani of Iran. A very small number follow the liberal Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah of Lebanon. Efforts have been made, particularly among the Qum alumni ustads, to encourage their followers to imitate Ali Khamene’i. This is seen as advantageous because it combines marja’iyia and wilaya (sovereignty) in one person. The Shi’i writer, Maulana praises God because in Khamene’i, Muslims today are blessed with both a wali faqih and marja’ and whose position is a’lam (most knowledgeable). Moreover, Maulana states that it is obligatory and customary to follow Khamene’i because of his competence and superiority of knowledge. Ahmad Baragbah points out

In Indonesia in particular, we actually do not have any sufficient reason to refer to other maraji’ than ‘Ali Khamene’i. This is exactly our strength and our pride because this exemplary figure is complete…. Thus to me it is very odd if there are still persons who question whether there are others more a’lam than ‘Ali Khamene’i. What are the reasons? The ‘ulama who have obvious commitment in the struggle for Islam and in the interest and benefit of society assert that to choose ‘Ali Khamene’i as marja’ is the most beneficial…. In the meantime, we need legal opinions on actual matters. And this means that we need a marja’ who masters new developments in society. Others say that we need law regarding international matters. Therefore, it seems that nobody is more reasonable or proper than the Grand Ayatollah ‘Ali Khamene’i.

Regardless of the different choices of marja’, there is no difference of opinion among mujtahid in terms of the basic obligatory ritual practices; generally speaking, the outcomes of ijtihad differ only in terms of the details. The central items of Shi’i ‘ibadat (prayers, fasting, zakat and the Hajj) do not differ from the ‘ibadat as understood and observed by the Sunni majority in Indonesia. The following description however deals with some aspects of ‘ibadat and mu’amalat among the Shi’is of Indonesia which do differ from those of Sunni jurisprudence.

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109 Muhammad Taqi Bahjat was born in 1915 in Fuman, Iran and began his religious education in his hometown. In 1929 he went to Qum and moved to Karbala and then to Najaf, Iraq to study under renowned ‘ulama. In 1944 he returned to Qum to study under Ayatollah Burujerdi and Hujjat Kuhkamari. See (http://www.alshia.com/html/eng/ser/ulama/ola-behj_h.htm).

110 Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah was born in Iraq in 1935 and studied in Najaf under renowned ‘ulama, including Grand Ayatollah Khoei and Muhsin al-Hakim. He moved to Lebanon in 1966 and is alleged to be the spiritual leader of Hisbullah (Hisb Allah, Party of God). Several studies on his ideals and role in Lebanon have been conducted. For his theological thought, see Abu-Rabi (1996:220-247). See http://www.bayynat.org.lb (in Arabic, English, and French) which contains his fatwas and thought.


In terms of obligatory prayers, Shi’is in Indonesia share the belief that there are five kinds of Prayers, consisting of 17 raka’at (units of prayer) which must be observed every day: Dawn (Subh), Noon (Zuhr), Afternoon (‘Asr), Evening (Maghrib) and Night (‘Isha). As for the Sunnis, for Shi’is the obligatory prayers are a very important aspect of ‘ibadat not to be abandoned under any circumstances. For the Shi’is, however, it is permissible to run together the Noon, Afternoon, Evening and Night Prayers, which means that Shi’is may complete obligatory prayers on three separate occasions in a day. The goal of consolidating the prayers is to lessen the burden for Muslims, so that prayers are never missed and are seen as more appropriate within the complex life of modern society. In addition, the observance of daily prayers by Shi’is in Indonesia tends to be individual rather than congregational. This also corresponds to the fact that they do not place great importance on the performance of the congregational Friday Prayers at the mosque. Although these, like the daily prayers, are obligatory, their significance is diminished with the occultation of the twelfth Imam, who is considered to be the true leader of the prayers. Shi’i interpretation allows for a choice between observing either the Friday Prayers or the ordinary Noon Prayers. There are numerous recommended Prayers as well, so that the number in a day can total 51 raka’at. Shi’is consider this to be the true teaching of the Prophet on the matter.

The main recitations constituting prayer are similar between Sunnism and Shi’ism, but there are differences in terms of recommended utterances and movements. The most marked difference is the position of straight arms during the standing phase. While Shafi’i jurisprudence recommends standing with folded arms, this is forbidden in the Indonesian Shi’i madhhab and is said to invalidate the prayer, except during the practice of taqiyya. Another distinctive Shi’i feature is that during the prostration, Shi’is place their forehead on the earth or on paper, but never on carpet, believing that prostration must be upon things which grow out of the earth, such as wood, leaves or stone. Their preference is for a block of baked mud, taken from the earth of Karbala, known as turba. In their view “the earth of Imam Husayn (Upon Him be Peace) is sublime earth. Therefore, prostration on the earth of Karbala is more excellent than prostration on common earth.”

Another minor difference is found in relation to ablutions, or wudu’ as a requirement for the validity of prayer. Shi’is wipe the upper part of their feet instead of washing the whole. Furthermore, in the call to prayer, the adhan, they include the phrase ‘come to the best of actions’, as part of the original adhan, omitted on the command of the third caliph, ‘Umar. Another phrase
added to the Shi‘i *adhan* is ‘I bear witness that ‘Ali is the Wali Allah’, the Friend of God’. This recommended phrase is follows the declaration ‘I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.’

A specific kind of *‘ibadat* observed by Indonesian Shi‘is is *khums*, the tax of one-fifth of wealth, which is based on a Qur‘anic text.\(^{116}\) It is considered to be an individual obligation, because in any material benefits gained by a person there are the rights of others, as prescribed by God.\(^{117}\) Shi‘is pay *khums* as an annual tax at the end of every year, and like *zakat*, or alms to the poor, *khums* is paid to their own *marja‘ al-taqlid* through his deputies in Indonesia; for example, Jalaluddin Rakhmat and Ahmad Baragbah are representatives of ‘Ali Khamene‘i. Among the duties of these representatives is the collection and distribution of the *zakat* and *khums*. The *khums* is distributed for Islamic *da‘wa* and to orphans, the needy and to Sayyid travellers, who, according to Ja‘fari law, are not allowed to receive *zakat*. It is pertinent to note that *khums* serves a very important function in the development of the Shi‘i community in Indonesia.

In terms of social transactions, the custom of *mut‘a*, or temporary marriage is a specific practice in Shi‘ism and something which has become a matter of controversy in Sunni-Shi‘i relations. Sunnis forbid this kind of marriage, deeming it to be prostitution. For Shi‘is in Indonesia, *mut‘a* is considered permissible, as it was practiced during the Prophet Muhammad’s lifetime. They argue that it was Caliph ‘Umar who prohibited this form of marriage. Yet scriptural text is cited in support of the legitimacy of *mut‘a*. The Qur‘anic verse that most Shi‘is in Indonesia memorise in this regard is: “Seeing that ye derive benefit from them (women), give them their dowers (at least) as prescribed.”\(^{118}\) In addition, rational proofs are also provided. For Shi‘is, the goal of marriage is to permit sexual relations in accordance with God’s commands.

Actually, marriage is no more than the fulfilment of the biological need of a person that, if seen from the side of the living creature (organism), which emerges at a certain age. Islam, as a religion created by the Creator of mankind understands very much that condition and for it Islam establishes quite clear and simple regulations, one of which is *mut‘a*. This is established merely in order for man to get married and desist from fornication. The biological need has existed since the creation of mankind, it is a characteristic along with another characteristic, namely the reluctance to carry a heavy burden.\(^{119}\)

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116 Qur’an Surah 8:41.
117 Turkan (http://aljawad.tripod.com/arsipbuletin/khumus.htm).
118 Qur’an Surah 4:24.
The legitimacy of *mut'a* is also demonstrated by the significance of its teaching. It is seen as the preservation of the vital interests of humankind because while fornication is strongly forbidden in Islam, in certain circumstances a permanent marriage might not satisfy the sexual desires of men, or a permanent marriage cannot be undertaken by certain segments of society. *Mut’a* then becomes the alternative. Jalaluddin Rakhmat provides five significances of *mut’a*: to protect religion (hifz al-din), mind (hifz al-‘aql), wealth (hifz al-mal), soul (hifz al-nafs) and progeny (hifz al-nasl). Rakhmat argues that *mut’a* serves as an alternative way for numerous people, such as students, allowing them to obey all the commandments of Islam and remain free from fornication. According to Rakhmat, children are protected, because a woman married by way of *mut’a* is a legitimate wife. *Mut’a* also protects mankind from mental and physical illness. On the significance of *mut’a* in guarding wealth, Rakhmat points out that *mut’a* ensures that widows will receive material assistance from rich men, who in return fulfil their sexual desires. This significance is reasonable because marriage for economic motivation is permitted in Shi’i Islam.

Although the procedure of *mut’a* is simple, Shi’is in Indonesia consider that a marriage contract performed between a man and woman, with a certain amount of dowry, is valid even if there is no witness and *wali,* or man responsible for the woman’s side in marriage, two things which are required in Sunnism. Due to its permissibility and its simplicity, a number of Shi’is in Indonesia practice this type of marriage alongside their permanent marriage. But the practice is secret because *Mut’a* is not legally recognised by the government or the religious authorities. A few Shi’is criticise those who frequently engage in it for following their sensual impulse while ignoring morality. They argue that while *mut’a* is legitimate, there is no obligation to perform it. It is seen as on a par with divorce, which is also legitimate, but is certainly not obligatory. The legitimising of *mut’a* is claimed as an attempt to preserve the originality of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.

Customs around food are another distinctive aspect of *Ja’fari* jurisprudence observed by Shi’is in Indonesia. Even though, in general, Shi’is and Sunnis share similar views on the lawfulness of plentiful food, there are certain foods that are forbidden to Shi’ism. The first instance is that Shi’is do not eat fish without scales, these being unlawful in *Ja’fari* jurisprudence. Secondly, Shi’is in Indonesia do not eat food that has been touched by non-believers. In *Ja’fari* jurisprudence non-believers, *khawarij* (seceders from ‘Ali’s following) and *nawasib* (those who hate the Prophet’s *ahl al-bayt*) are considered to be impure.

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123 Khalid Al-Walid, interview, (3/7/2002). On *mut’a* and its consequences, see Marcus and Feillard (2000).
or *najis* and everything impure is unlawful. Jalaluddin Rakhmat explained that he, like many Shi‘is, has experienced difficulties living in non-Muslim countries in respect of food.

At the time I was in Germany. I did not want to eat the cooking touched by the hands of unbelievers. At first, I chose fruits. When I saw the fruits taken by hands without gloves, I looked for bread. I thought that bread was made in factories. And at the edge of the station in Frankfurt I saw an unbeliever making bread. His hands — without gloves — moulded loaves to be baked. That day, I experienced hunger.

The aspects of *Ja‘fari* jurisprudence described above indicate features of Shi‘i religious life which are different from those of the Sunnis. By and large, Shi‘is in Indonesia carry out such practices at home or in their own institutions, but most hide them from the public eye. With the teaching of *taqiyya*, this is permissible.

### E. Aspects of Shi‘i Piety

In addition to the features of jurisprudence just mentioned, there are aspects of devotion that are distinguishing features of Shi‘i religious life. Piety is considered to be more than just the formal and legal dimensions of religion. Aspects of Shi‘i devotion are very similar to aspects of devotion in Sunni Sufism. They include daily, weekly and yearly preferred rituals. The daily ritual consists of numerous optional prayers, including those conducted before and after the five sets of obligatory prayers. Other recommended devotions include reciting certain chapters of the Qur’an, uttering *dhikr* (remembrance of God), and *do’a* (supplication). This activity is commonly called *ta’qib* of prayer and is a way of achieving the perfection of obligatory prayer.

*Do’a*, or supplication is strongly recommended and is a feature of religious life in the Shi‘i community of Indonesia. The number of supplications in Shi‘i prayer are far greater than those in Sunni prayer, partly because there are specific *do’a* to each of the ‘fourteen infallibles’ (discussed below). By reciting prayers, the great beauty of Arabic is also emphasised. Also included among numerous Shi‘i prayers are *salawat*, invocations to the Prophet Muhammad and his *ahl al-bayt*. In all Shi‘i gatherings, the *salawat* reverberate. The most common formula is: “O God, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad”. Besides being commended in certain scriptural texts, the recitation of *salawat* is considered to be an expression of love for the Prophet and it is believed that the intensive recitation of *salawat* draws the believer closer to him in the hereafter. It is also

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believed that the Prophet listens to *salawat* being recited and that he is even present among those who recite *salawat*, because his soul is considered ever to be alive.\(^{125}\)

Another kind of Shi‘i prayer is known as the *kumayl* prayer, which is commonly performed on Thursday nights after the Night Prayer. Nearly all Shi‘i institutions in Indonesia organise this weekly activity. It is usually performed in congregation, led by an *ustadh* who also delivers a sermon. The gathering is called *majlis kumayl* (the gathering of *kumayl*) and lasts for several hours. It is considered to be one of the best supplications of the first Imam ‘Ali bin Abi Talib. The prayer is called *kumayl* because it is believed to have been transmitted by Imam ‘Ali’s faithful companion, Kumayl bin Ziyad.\(^{126}\) The importance of the *kumayl* in Shi‘ism is indicated in the belief that Imam ‘Ali told Kumayl bin Ziyad to recite it at least once in his lifetime. It contains praise to God and supplication for forgiveness, lamentations, remorse and admission of sins. Its message is so deep and intense that all those who recite it cannot remain dry-eyed; during the recitation, participants shed tears and cry out collectively.

In addition, there is a prayer called *tawassul*, which is also well known among traditionalist Sunnis in Indonesia. “The *tawassul* prayer is the prayer of supplication to the Almighty God by uttering the names of purified persons on the side of God, or of persons having high positions on the side of God as intermediaries.”\(^{127}\) *Tawassul* is prayer through these intermediaries. A textual proof that is usually cited in support of performing *tawassul* is: “O ye who believe! Do your duty to Allah, seek the means of approach unto him, and strive with might and main in His cause, that ye may prosper.”\(^{128}\) In addition to this verse, many Hadiths are cited in support of the validity of the teaching and practice of *tawassul*, as upheld by the Prophet’s companions. Rakhmat writes

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We perform tawassul to him [the Prophet] and to all pious servants of God by imitating the example of the Prophet (May God Bless Him and Grant Him Salvation).\(^{129}\)
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Unlike the Sunni version of *tawassul*, the *tawassul* prayer in Shi‘ism is directed to the names of the fourteen infallibles: the Prophet, his daughter, Fatima and the twelve Imams. For Shi‘is in Indonesia, making these fourteen infallibles intermediaries in supplication to God is reasonable because no other humans are superior to them in terms of piety, knowledge and in the struggle for the establishment of Islam.\(^{130}\) The *tawassul* prayer can be performed either on

\(^{126}\) Al-Muhdhar (1998:1).
\(^{128}\) Qur’an Surah 5:35.
\(^{129}\) Rakhmat (2001:188).
Tuesday, or as a part of other kinds of Shi’i prayers. In the kumayl gathering, the tawassul prayer is usually uttered before the reciting of the kumayl prayer. In the tawassul prayer, each name of the infallibles is uttered, from the Prophet Muhammad down to the twelfth Imam. Usually, by the time the name of Husayn is uttered, crying and sobbing will have begun in the gathering.

A practice closely related to tawassul is tabarruk, which literally means ‘the taking of blessings’, blessings from the Prophet Muhammad, the Imams and all other pious servants of God. This practice is considered to have a strong basis in Qur’anic texts and Hadiths. One of the Qur’anic verses tells how the Prophet Joseph asked his brothers to cast his shirt over his father’s face. His father, the Prophet Jacob who had blind eyes; when the shirt was removed Jacob could see again.\textsuperscript{131} In addition, many kinds of tabarruk are considered to have been practiced by the Prophet’s companions, including tabarruk by the taking of water, hairs from the Prophet’s head, his dress or the sand of his tomb. In tabarruk using water, for instance, the Prophet’s companions are said to have competed for the remains of the water used by the Prophet in his ablutions.\textsuperscript{132} Tabarruk is believed to give benefits both in this world and in the hereafter. Jalaluddin Rakhmat writes: “The blessings of the Prophet (May God Bless Him and Grant Him Salvation) guide us to gain prosperity in the world and in the hereafter. They can cure physical and psychic illnesses and save us in the hereafter.”\textsuperscript{133} Tabarruk is also considered to be a way of expressing loving devotion to the Prophet Muhammad, the Imams and other pious ones. With tabarruk in mind, Shi’is of Indonesia have attempted to make physical contact with Shi’i ‘ulama from Iran. When Ayatollah ‘Ali Taskhiri finished his religious lecture at the ICC of Al-Huda in Jakarta on 20 February 2004, for example, nearly all those gathered tried to shake hands with him. In addition, I was informed that when Jalaluddin Rakhmat visits the Shi’i group in Makassar, South Sulawesi, his sandals and toothbrush are usually taken by members of the group as a way of acquiring his blessing.

In addition to these practices, there are a number of commemorations conducted by Shi’is in Indonesia. These include commemorations related to important events such as the births and deaths of the fourteen infallibles. In this regard, Shi’is share with Sunnis the annual celebration of mawlid (the Prophet’s birthday).\textsuperscript{134} It is a widely observed celebration, as it is also a national holiday. For the Shi’is, mawlid is another way to express their love and devotion to the

\textsuperscript{131} Qur’an Surah 12:93, 96.  
\textsuperscript{132} Rakhmat (2001:209-224).  
\textsuperscript{133} Rakhmat (2001:225-226).  
\textsuperscript{134} For the origins and early development of the celebration of this Muslim festival, see Kaptein (1994). One of his conclusions is that the celebration of mawlid was originally a Shi’i tradition, first held in the 11th century by a Fatimid caliph in Egypt (Kaptein 1994:28-29).
Prophet. Similarly, the celebration or commemoration of the births and deaths of the other infallibles are also considered to be a way of expressing devotion to them.

The most significant however is the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. Husayn bin ‘Ali, the third Imam, was murdered in battle at Karbala, on 10 Muharram 61 (10 October 680). Its commemoration, known as ‘Ashura, is held on every tenth day of Muharram in the Muslim year. It is held in every city and town in Indonesia with a large population of Shi’is, and since political Reformasi, the commemoration takes place publicly.

‘Ashura is also celebrated among certain Sunni groups throughout Indonesia. However, its pattern differs from the ‘Ashura of the Shi’is. The most noticeable difference is the cooking and offering of bubur sura (‘sura porridge) after fasting, which is recommended in Sunni Islam. Shi’is do not cook bubur sura, nor do they fast. For Sunnis, the Prophet Muhammad teaches that ‘Ashura fasting is thanksgiving for the victory of several prophets of God. For Shi’is, fasting on ‘Ashura is considered to be bid’a (unlawful innovation) and forbidden. They argue that this fast is a product of false teachings by the Umayyad regime. When the Shi’is commemorated the martyrdom of Husayn as a day of mourning and a symbol of their struggle against tyrants, the Umayyads are said to have turned it into a day of thanksgiving, and are even said to have produced Hadiths to justify this change. In the eyes of Indonesian Shi’is, the Sunni version of ‘Ashura fasting is the product of the Umayyad regime.

‘Ashura rituals in Indonesia consist of four main activities: religious lectures, ma’tam (chest-beating), the recitation of the maqtal (story of the massacre of Husayn and his following) and the recitation of the ziyara or visitation prayer. As it is a commemoration of mourning, participants usually wear black clothes. Another attribute is the belief in the firm principle and rightful position of Husayn in his battle for Islam. ‘Ashura banners are carried, reading “Indeed Husayn is the light of guidance and the ark of victory.” Lectures are held, dealing with the struggle of Imam Husayn and its relevance to contemporary conditions of Muslim society. One of the purposes is to encourage the spirit of martyrdom, as modelled by Imam Husayn. Ma’tam is chest-beating in accompaniment

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135 Bubur sura is rice-flour porridge boiled with coconut milk and containing various food-stuffs including vegetables, beans, peanuts, potatoes, corns, fish, meat, and eggs. In Cirebon, West Java, it is distributed to neighbours and close kin (Muhammad 1999:109).
136 The victorious events upheld in Sunnism include God’s granting of His grace to Adam and Eve on requesting repentance after being thrown out of paradise; God’s endowing of Enoch (Idris) with noble rank; Moses’ receiving revelation in the Sinai desert; Moses’ escape from Pharaoh’s chase and Pharaoh’s drowning in the Red Sea; Noah’s arrival on land after the long and severe flood; Abraham’s escape from being burned by King Namrud of Babylon; Joseph being freed from prison and clearing his name of the rape of Zulaikha, the Egyptian king’s wife; Jacob’s recovery from blindness; Jonas’ escape from the belly of a sea monster and David and Solomon gaining the positions of kings and apostles of God (Muhammad 1999:108).
to a mournful hymn, performed by participants under the direction of an ustadh. It is an expression of the sense of sorrow, injustice and readiness to sacrifice. (However, ma’tam is notably absent in the ‘Ashura gatherings held by Jalaluddin Rakmat and his colleagues.) The recitation of the maqtal by an ustadh represents the climax of grief, the shedding of tears and weeping. It is a presentation of classical narratives about the brutal massacre, by thousands of Umayyad soldiers, of Imam Husayn, his family and loyal supporters, numbering about 70 people, including women and children. The main themes of the maqtal are the brutality and inhumanity of the tyrants, in particular, Caliph Yazid and his soldiers, versus the courage and adherence to the rightful principles and martyrdom by Imam Husayn and his following. The recitation of maqtal in sad tones and with full emotional strength produces a very real collective shedding of tears and lamentation. The last part of the ‘Ashura commemoration is the recitation of the ziyara prayer, led by an ustadh and followed by the participants.

Another commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn widely practiced by Shi’is in Indonesia is called arba’in, namely the 40th day after his martyrdom. It is held on the 20 Safar, the second month of Muslim calendar, 40 days after the conclusion of the ‘Ashura rituals. Arba’in is only commemorated by Shi’is. Its pattern is very similar to that of ‘Ashura and includes religious lectures, ma’tam, the recitation of maqtal and the recitation of ziyara. Both rituals clearly have similar aims.

‘Ashura and Arba’in are the two most important Shi’i commemorations held in Indonesia. Shi’is consider the martyrdom of Imam Husayn to be the most significant tragedy, not only of the Muslim umma but also of mankind at large. The tragedy also teaches firm adherence to principles and strong loyalty to leaders

As a tragedy, ‘Ashura is a witness to us about the climax of human tyranny and cruelty of a regime, which have no comparison in history. A grandson whom the Prophet frequently called his son, his beloved and young master of paradise was murdered cruelly under the heat of the barren plain of Karbala. The martyrdom of Imam Husayn and the loyalty of his followers are symbols of the existence of beloved sons in those days, who strongly opposed a tyrannical regime.138

The events of Karbala are seen to contain a noble dimension, namely the struggle to gain a true awareness of the meaning of life. “Struggle for liberating mankind from oppression is the true life, even though the body is buried.”139

In addition, Imam Husayn’s sacrifice is considered to be greater than that of the Prophet Abraham’s, in so far as Abraham was commanded to slaughter

his son, whilst Husayn gave his own life in his struggle.\textsuperscript{140} To follow Husayn’s example of sacrifice for truth and justice is one of the lessons acquired from the commemoration of his martyrdom.\textsuperscript{141} The appeal for sacrifice is usually emphasised and is illustrated by the famous Shi‘i slogan: “Every day is ‘Ashura and every place is Karbala”. It is used to encourage the followers of Shi‘ism to contextualise the struggle of Husayn in Indonesia. Jalaluddin Rakhmat has said “Arise, O followers of Husayn, contribute your body and soul to transform the whole archipelago into Karbala and every day into ‘Ashura.”\textsuperscript{142} Similarly, at the end of another maqtal, he stated

We leave Karbala and return to our present place. They have shed their blood to establish truth and justice. The grandsons of the Messenger of God (Upon Whom be Peace) and the infallibles have sacrificed their life to establish a ‘Muhammadist’ Islam, Islam Muhammadi. Let us resolve to continue their struggle to establish truth and justice. Let us resolve to vow an oath of allegiance to the Messenger of God (Upon Whom be Peace) and his pure House, to establish Islamic teachings based upon the Book of God and the Sunna of His Messenger and transmitted by his infallible House. Let us summon pure tenacity to continue this pure struggle until the last day.\textsuperscript{143}

Thus, the martyrdom of Husayn is held to be the heaviest sacrifice in human history and its commemoration becomes a means of maintaining the spirit of jihad, or struggle in the path of God, which is an act of worship within the Shi‘i tradition. In addition, there is another interesting element to ‘Ashura, which is the establishment and preservation of emotion. The Shi‘is’ love of Husayn and empathy with his sorrow inevitably leads them to shed tears. Weeping itself has become an important feature of devotion, characterising nearly all Shi‘is rituals in Indonesia. Weeping rituals are even publicised. For example, national television has shown a programme of prayer, in the month of Ramadan, in which the participants and their leader - a prominent Shi‘i ustadh - cry collectively. For these adherents, weeping is something strongly encouraged by the Prophet. “The Messenger of God (May God Bless Him and His Family and Grant Him Salvation) instructed us to make crying customary and to fill our religiosity with lamentations.”\textsuperscript{144}

The above rituals and commemorations are the main claims on the piety of Shi‘is in Indonesia. But in fact, their religious life is filled with a great many smaller

\textsuperscript{140} Mahayana (2003:8).
\textsuperscript{141} Al-Kaff (http://aljawad.tripod.com/).
\textsuperscript{142} Rakhmat (2003:3).
\textsuperscript{143} Rakhmat (1999:322).
\textsuperscript{144} Rakhmat (1999:363).
rituals and commemorations which are a means of expressing of their loving devotion to the fourteen infallibles. These, along with the practice of taqiyya, are unique and identifying features of the Indonesian Shi’i madhhab.

F. Taqiyya

Taqiyya (Latin, reservatio mentalis) literally means “to shield or to guard oneself,” and is one of the most misunderstood teachings of Shi’ism. In general, taqiyya is understood to be a “strategy in the dissimulation of faith before enemies to prevent the occurrence of danger.” The practice of taqiyya is important in Shi’ism and has become a distinguishing feature of the Shi’is in Indonesia. Most Shi’is practice it, while rejecting the widespread perception that it is unique to Shi’ism. They argue that the practice of keeping a precautionary attitude is common among all adherents of religion or madhhabs in Islam, particularly when they are under oppression by an authoritarian faction or regime. However, other Muslim denominations refuse to use the term taqiyya.

Textual evidence is cited in support of the practice of taqiyya. The most common is the Qur’anic text which reads “Let not the believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers rather than believers; if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah; except by way of precaution, that ye may guard yourselves from them. But Allah cautions you (to remember) Himself; for the final goal is Allah.” It is also argued that the practice of taqiyya occurred during the life of the Prophet Muhammad himself. The most famous story is the case of ‘Ammar bin Yasir, one of the close companions of the Prophet and ‘Ali bin Abi Talib. The story tells how the infidels of Mecca imprisoned some Muslims and tortured them, forcing them to leave their new religion and return to the former idolatry. Among these Muslims were ‘Ammar bin Yasir and his father and mother. His parents were killed because of their refusal to obey the infidels. In order to escape from torture, ‘Ammar outwardly declared that that he had left Islam and accepted idol worship. After he was freed, he secretly left for Medina. He recounted the story to the Prophet in a state of distress and regret. The Prophet then comforted ‘Ammar by reciting a verse of the Qur’an. This story is considered to be the historical background to the revelation of the verse which reads “Anyone who, after accepting faith in Allah, utters unbelief

145 Enayat (2005:175). Enayat points out that the standard terms used, ‘dissimulation’ or ‘concealment’ are pejorative and not satisfactory translations of taqiyya into English (Enayat 2005:175).
147 Alatas (2002:144).
except under compulsion, his heart remaining firm in faith – but such as open their breast to unbelievers – on them is wrath from Allah, and theirs will be a dreadful penalty.”

Shi’is in Indonesia also recognise that the practice of taqiyya has its foundations in the history of Muslim society, in which “the Shi’is have been a minority amidst the global Islamic community and have lived mostly under regimes hostile to their creed.” The tyranny and cruelty of the great Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties forced the Imams and their followers to dissimulate their real faith in order to save their existence and to ensure the continuity of Shi’ism. Taqiyya is the only strategy to be implemented by the Shi’is to avoid the tyranny and cruelty of such regimes.

However, taqiyya is implemented by Shi’is in Indonesia not only because of fear, but also for the purpose of establishing Islamic fraternity, or ukhuwwa Islamiyya. Regarding this type of taqiyya, Jalaluddin Rakhmat cited the fatwa of Khomeini “What is meant by taqiyya mudarat is the taqiyya practised in order to unite Muslims by attracting the love of opponents and gaining their affection…” The most popular of Khomeini’s fatwa in this respect is his recommendation that Shi’is perform prayers together with Sunnis. When questioned about the validity of prayers with the Sunni congregation, Khomeini responded that it was not only valid but even recommended. He said that the reward for praying with the Sunni congregation, and in accordance with Sunni jurisprudence, is the same as the reward for worship with the Shi’is and in accordance with Shi’i jurisprudence. Thus, Khomeini recommended the abandonment of Shi’i jurisprudence for the sake of Islamic fraternity and this has become a legitimate foundation for the practice of this kind of taqiyya.

Taqiyya may be understood to be a strategy for maintaining the secrecy of Shi’i identity for various reasons. However, among the Sunni majority of Indonesia, the term has negative connotations and is equated with lying, hypocrisy or cowardice. For this reason Jalaluddin Rakhmat proposed “we can substitute it with the term ‘flexible approach and friendship’…. The best term is probably diplomacy. As strategy or diplomacy, taqiyya is implemented in acts of worship, in da’wa, in conversation and dialogue and in writing.

The choice of vocabulary or terms commonly acceptable to the Sunni majority characterises the implementation of taqiyya in Indonesia. In certain circumstances, Shi’is will avoid giving the impression of emphasising the contrast between

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150 Qur’an Surah (16:106).
151 Enayat (2005:175).
152 Alatas (2002:144).
Sunnism and Shi’ism. “I think our concern is not to become a Shi’i or Sunni. Instead, our concern is Islam,” said Rakhmat on one occasion.\textsuperscript{156} The word ‘Islam’ is a term accepted by both denominations. On another occasion, in his reply to a question about whether he is a Sunni or Shi’i, Jalaluddin Rakhmat said that “people call me Susyi,” namely Sunni-Shi’i.\textsuperscript{157} Similarly, when he was asked whether he was a Shi’i, Haidar Bagir (mentioned in Chapter Two) answered: “I am the same as others, one who longs for the unity of the Muslims.”\textsuperscript{158} In short, simple questions about Shi’i identity are usually responded to with diplomatic answers.

Shi’is in Indonesia also try to suppress or modify information, not only about their own identity and beliefs but also about fellow Shi’is, institutions and their community. For example, with regard to Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Haidar Bagir stated “I do not dare say that he is a Shi’i because he is a person who reads, learns and speaks about both Shi’ism and Sunnism. Jokingly, Pak Jalal once called himself Susyi, meaning Sunni-Shi’i. He is a Muslim open to various ideas, from both Sunnism and Shi’ism.”\textsuperscript{159} Similarly, when questioned about the places where Shi’is in Indonesia gather, Haidar Bagir replied: “As far as I know there are small institutions. I do not know their precise names.”\textsuperscript{160}

With regard to the practice of taqiyya, it is interesting to note that a translation of a personal letter to someone in Iran (name not disclosed) was published in November 1993 in \textit{Aula}, a magazine of the East Java branch of NU, under the title “a Letter to Someone in Iran”. The author of the letter, allegedly Husein Al-Habsyi, used the term “my Master” to address the person in Iran. The central purpose of the letter was to respond to the master’s suggestion that the author should abandon the practice of taqiyya and declare openly that he was a Shi’i. The letter provides several reasons for the author’s maintaining the practice of taqiyya:

First, I thank you for your correct suggestion to me, which has become my consideration for a long time, that is, since the victory of Imam [Khomeini] over the Shah. Although I postponed doing so [to stop practicing taqiyya] I do not doubt at all the validity of \textit{madhhab} of \textit{ahl al-bayt} and this is not because I fear people, or if I am to leave taqiyya it is not to be praised by people. Not at all. However, I now consider my environment. The general Sunni fanaticism is still strong.

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{156} Rakhmat (1998:381).
\item\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Tiras} (24/11/1997:67).
\item\textsuperscript{158} Bagir, interview, \textit{Forum Keadilan} (4/5/2003:57).
\item\textsuperscript{159} Bagir, interview, \textit{Forum Keadilan} (4/5/2003:57).
\item\textsuperscript{160} Bagir, interview, \textit{Forum Keadilan} (4/5/2003:56).
\end{itemize}
To come near to them, I want to appear like a Sunni. Because if I were to show my own belief and respond to attacks from their nawaiṣīb [anti-Shīʿī] ʿulama they would say: a Shiʿī defends Shiʿism. I have succeeded in approaching a significant number of their ʿulama so that they might understand the virtues of the madhhab of ahl al-bayt over others. I think it is a step forward in our struggle. 161

Husein Al-Habsyi was known to have practised taqiyya in his daʿwa, dialogue and writing. He always declared that he was a follower of Sunnism. In a dialogue with a group of students from UGM (Gajah Mada University) and UI (Indonesian Islamic University) in Yogyakarta, which was conducted in Solo, Husein Al-Habsyi consistently used the term ‘we, ahl al-Sunna’. When asked to explain matters related to Shiʿism during the first meeting, he answered “But what a pity, because I am myself not a Shiʿī, so it would be more accurate if you ask these questions to those who declare that they are Shiʿī”. 162

However, in contrast to the widespread practice of taqiyya, some Shiʿīs in Indonesia, particularly the Qum graduate ʿustadhs, are more likely to express their religiosity overtly. Taqiyya is also infrequent among the students and teachers of Pesantren Al-Hadi in Pekalongan, a Shiʿī pesantren headed by Ahmad Baragbah. Similarly, Shiʿīs affiliated to the Al-Jawad Foundation in Bandung, IPABI in Bogor and the Fatimah Foundation in Jakarta do not resort to taqiyya. I observed that when leading the Friday Prayer in the Nurul Falah Mosque, the mosque leader, Husein Al-Kaff, performed it in accordance with Jaʿfari jurisprudence, whilst nearly all members of the jamaʿa were Sunni and followed Sunni jurisprudence. Husein Al-Kaff points out that it is important for Shiʿīs to practice all the teachings of Shiʿism openly, in front of Sunnis, in order that Sunnis might come to acknowledge the real teachings of Shiʿism, the followers of Shiʿism and their institutions, as well as their contributions to the country. 163 This does not mean that these people renounce the permissibility of practicing taqiyya. They see that misperceptions among the Sunnis will not disappear unless Shiʿīs show the true expressions of their rituals and practices.

Some Shiʿī intellectuals like Jalaluddin Rakhmat, however, are of the opinion that the practice of taqiyya should be inspired by the ideals of Islamic fraternity and that strict obedience to Shiʿī jurisprudence has more often than not created tensions between Sunnis and Shiʿīs in Indonesia. He considers the Shiʿī ʿustadhs to have implemented a legal paradigm of fiqh, as opposed to his own paradigm of akhlāq, or ethics. For Rakhmat, piety is not based on obedience to a certain school of jurisprudence but is determined on the basis of noble character. Regarding

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161 Aula (November 1993:60).
taqiyya, he writes “Taqiyya is the observance of jurisprudence practised by the majority people or jurisprudence that is established by the authority, in order to avoid disputes and fractions. Taqiyya means to leave our school of jurisprudence for the sake of maintaining brotherhood among Muslims.”

Thus, taqiyya can be seen as a strategic element of the Shi‘i madhhab with the purpose of defending the existence of the madhhab and its adherents, or for maintaining Islamic fraternity. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that the teaching and practice of taqiyya is instrumental in the spread and development of Shi‘ism in Indonesia.

164 Rakhmat (2002:51).