

GLOSSARY

ahl al-bayt/al al-bayt – family of the Prophet and his descendants, particularly venerated in all Shi‘a traditions and Sufism.

ahl al-kisa’ – lit. ‘people of the cloak’: according to a *hadith*, Muhammad gathered one morning his daughter Fatima, his cousin and son-in-law ‘Ali and their children Hasan and Husayn under a cloak and referred to them as his *ahl al-bayt*.

ahl-e haqq – lit. ‘people of the truth’: religious group found in western Iran and northeastern Iraq with esoteric teachings and origins in Shi‘a *ghulat* traditions which include the belief in divine incarnation and metempsychosis; also referred to as Yaresan.

akhlaq – Arabic for manners, ethics or morals.

akhund – Persian reference to lower-ranking Shi‘a clerics which is used in Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan and Pakistan; can have derogatory connotations. See also *mullah*.

Alawite/Nusayri – esoteric movement with links to Shi‘ism; present in Syria, Lebanon and Arabic-speaking communities in the Turkish province of Hatay. Not to be confused with Alevis who are of Eastern Anatolian origin.

Alevi – movement with roots dating back to the twelfth century, often esoteric in nature and with links to Shi'ism; today especially strong among Turks and Kurds of Eastern Anatolian origin.

Arba'in – Shi'a religious observance, forty days after the day of 'Ashura', to commemorate the death of Husayn ibn 'Ali (third Shi'a Imam).

ashik – lit. 'lover': term used for lay followers of the Bektashi order.

'Ashura' – festival on the tenth of Muharram (first month of the Islamic calendar) marking the death of Husayn ibn 'Ali (third Shi'a Imam) at the battle of Karbala in 680 CE; a central Shi'a religious observance.

ayatollah – from *ayat allah* (lit. 'sign of God'): title of senior Shi'a cleric who is entitled to perform *ijtihad*.

baba – lit. 'father': denotes the head of a local Bektashi order. The term *dede-baba* (lit. 'grandfather') is used for the highest spiritual authority in the Bektashi order.

Bektashi – a Sufi order with Ottoman roots; marginalised during the mid-nineteenth century Ottoman reforms and banned with other Sufi orders by the Turkish Republic in the 1920s; Bektashi beliefs contain strong Shi'a elements.

Bohra – also Dawoodi Bohra, see Ismaili.

da'wa – Islamic term for missionary or proselytising activities.

dervish – a common term for a Sufi.

du'a al-kumayl – supplication which Shi'ites believe 'Ali ibn Abi Talib dictated to his companion Kumayl ibn Ziyad; usually recited by Shi'ites on Thursday nights.

fiqh – the discipline of Islamic jurisprudence.

ghadir khumm – pond located half way between Mecca and Medina where Prophet Muhammad gave his final sermon after his farewell pilgrimage; Shi'ites believe that at the event of *ghadir khumm* Muhammad appointed 'Ali ibn Abi Talib as his successor.

ghulat – lit. 'extremists' or 'exaggerators': derogatory term used in Shi'a heresiography for all Shi'a groups who exaggerate the status of the Shi'a Imams by assigning divinity to them or holding 'extremist' views such as the belief in metempsychosis that deviate from Twelver Shi'a 'orthodoxy'.

hawza 'ilmiyya – term used in reference to Shi'a seminary institutions for the

training of clerics; the shrine cities of Najaf in Iraq and Qom in Iran host the most important ones.

husayniyya – centre of learning and devotion in Shi‘ism; used in particular for rituals during ‘Ashura’.

ijtihad – independent reasoning, the cleric’s ability to arrive at legal judgments. The license to perform *ijtihad* is central to being a senior Shi‘a cleric, a *mujtahid* or ayatollah.

Ismaili – denomination within Twelver Shi‘ism that follows a different line of succession than Twelver Shi‘ites; Nizari-Ismailis are the largest group with Aga Khan IV (b. 1939) as their forty-ninth and current Imam. Dawoodi Bohras believe the Imam is in occultation and is represented by a designated deputy.

Ja‘fari – in reference to the sixth Shi‘a Imam Ja‘far Al-Sadiq, name of the Twelver Shi‘a school of law (*madhhab*); the term *caferi* is used in modern Turkey to refer to Turkish Twelver Shi‘ites.

kalam – term used for Islamic theology.

Khoja – mercantile community of Gujarati origin with strong presence in East Africa and historically engaged in trade across the Indian Ocean; Khojas can be Ismailis or Twelver Shi‘ites. As part of the Africanisation policies in the early 1970s, many Khojas moved from East Africa to Great Britain and North America.

khums – lit. ‘one fifth’: religious tithe Shi‘ites need to pay to senior clerics, *maraji‘ al-taqlid*, usually 20 per cent on any profit or surplus income to be paid annually.

khutba – sermon given at a mosque, regularly given on the occasion of the Friday midday prayer.

latam – also known in Persian as *sine-zani* or *matam* in South Asia; central Shi‘a ritual including rhythmic breast-beating to express sorrow and grief for the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and the suffering of the *ahl al-bayt* more generally. Usually performed during ‘Ashura’.

maqtal – a narration of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn or other members of the *ahl al-bayt*.

marja‘ al-taqlid (pl. *maraji‘*) – lit. ‘source of emulation’: title of most senior clerics in Twelver Shi‘ism whom lay Shi‘ites must choose to follow. As an institution, also referred to as *marja‘iyya*.

masjid – Arabic for mosque.

maulud – birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. Important holiday in certain Islamic traditions, in particular Sufi and Shi'a, but rejected as heretical practice by modern Salafis.

mujtahid – a cleric who is entitled to perform *ijtihad*; prerequisite to become a *marja' al-taqlid*.

mullah – Persian name of low-ranking cleric.

nesip – level of initiation in the Bektashi order.

Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya – book of supplications attributed to the fourth Imam 'Abi ibn Husayn Zayn Al-'Abidin.

sayyid – also *seyyid*: title of descendant of Prophet Muhammad.

sepoy – Indian soldiers who served under British or other European orders.

takfir – declaring a Muslim to be an unbeliever.

taqiyya – pious dissimulation: the permission, and at times obligation, of Shi'ites to hide their religious identity when facing danger, harm or death.

tariqa – Arabic word for Sufi order.

tawassul – seeking intercession of the Imams on the Day of Judgement.

ta'ziya – in Persian *ta'zieh*, *ta'ziyeh*: passion plays and dramatic performance of the events during 'Ashura' leading to the martyrdom of Imam Husayn.

tekke – a Sufi meeting place (Turkish).

turba – piece of clay made out of soil, preferably from Karbala; used during the ritual prayer by Shi'ites.

turbeh – a small mausoleum built over the grave of a Muslim saint, especially under the Ottomans.

'*ulama*' – plural of Arabic '*alim*': used to refer to the learned class or scholars in Islam.

wakil (pl. *wukala'*) – representative of a *marja' al-taqlid* who communicates between a *marja'* and his followers and collects religious tithes on his behalf.

wilayat al-faqih – in Persian *velayat-e faqih* – lit. 'guardianship of the jurisconsult': term used to denote Ayatollah Khomeini's understanding that only a cleric can be head of an Islamic state. The concept serves as ideological foundation for the political system of the Islamic Republic of Iran after the 1979 revolution.

Zaydi – branch of Shi‘ism following a different line of succession of Imams than Twelver Shi‘ites; in terms of their legal and ritual practices and their views on the Imamate, closer to Sunni Islam.

ziyara – or *ziyarat*: pilgrimage to the shrines of the Twelve Imams or other members of the *ahl al-bayt*.

