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Focus: Shia

PD Dr. Rainer Brunner

"Then I was Guided".

Some Remarks on Inner Islamic Conversions in the 20th and 21st Centuries

While inner Islamic pluralism with regard to the Sunnite schools of law had been regarded as legitimate since classical times, the division between Sunnism and Shiism has proved to be a far more difficult obstacle to Islamic unity. Even in the course of the ecumenical debate in the 20th century, when mutual conversion was encouraged, the issue was

exploited by polemicists who considered it to be unlawful proselytisation. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the accompanying politicisation of Shiism in subsequent decades further aggravated this conflict: on the one hand, a converts' literature – exclusively from Sunnism to Shiism – developed, on the other hand, deliberate attempts at winning over Sunnites to Shiism came to become a serious problem with political implications on an international level.

Shiism, Sunnism, Iran, proselytisation, conversion

Dr. Sajjad H. Rizvi

Shi'ism in Bahrain: Marja'iyya and Politics

The Bahraini political and religious landscape is characterized by the conflict between Sunnites and Shiites. The vast majority of Bahrain's population belongs to the Shia and therefore, several conflict lines and disputes cause sectarian as well as inner-sectarian tensions. Additionally, the regional neighbours of the island, Wahhabi Saudi Arabia and Shi'ite Iran and Iraq after the fall of Saddam Husayn in 2003, are still inexorably influencing the political and religious scene. Thus, Bahrain is like a microcosm of the internal Shi'i divisions in Iraq. Shi'ite politics in Bahrain seems to shift constantly between reconciliation and tension and groups dynamically change their affiliations.

Shiism, Bahrain, Wahhabism, Marja'iyya

Dr. Stefanie Brinkmann

Ein Mangel an Quellen und fehlendes Interesse?

Zum späten Einstieg der deutschen Schia-Forschung

Studies on the Shia are comparatively rare in German scholarship. The article examines reasons for this lack of occupation with Shi'ite topics, concentrating on studies on the Twelver Shia from the 17th to the 19th century. The focus is on the question of source material, namely Shi'ite manuscripts at German libraries and the access to information about Shi'ite texts, set into the context of the development of the academic discipline of Oriental Studies, as well as political constellations.

Shia, Shiism, Germany, studies

Prof. Dr. Reza Hajatpour

Entwicklung der Philosophie im schiitischen Iran seit der Modernisierung

Prof. Dr. Reza Hajatpour describes and analyses in his article the development of the Iranian philosophy since the 19th century. He pointed out two philosophical sides inside the Iranian landscape of philosophy of the last 200 years: On one side the first group is thinking about progress as an obstacle for critical discussion about Western philosophy. Therefore, Hajatpour classified this group as an "imitator within the own traditions";. On the other side critical voices are refusing the Iranian philosophy and its Shiite tradition because of its backwardness. Thus, the Iranian philosophy has become an "imitator of the modern Western philosophy"; as Hajatpour figured out.

Iran, Shiism, philosophy

Dr. Rudolf Schmidt

Afghanistan and its regional role

Two factors have had a strong impact on the region around Afghanistan: Its openness to all directions and, at the same time, the strong connections between its component states. Its openness has made the region an object of the ambitions of outside powers. The present crisis underlines its strategic importance. The geographic and, as a consequence, the economic interconnections, however, should not be ignored by the international community. A stable Afghanistan could become a crucial link for regional cooperation.

Afghanistan, international community, crisis

