



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

History and Development of the Shia

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Lesson: 39

Topic: History of Safavid Dynasty

- After Shahid al-Thani was martyred, ulema moved from Lebanon to Iran where a Shia government known as Safavid had just started, and they had complete freedom.
- Safavid rule started from 907 to 1135 A.H., more than two centuries. Though there were other Shia governments there, this was the most significant turning point in the history of the Shia.
- To better understand the history, studying the Safavid era is a must. There were scholars and scholarships then that still had their influence on the Shia thought process.
- Safavids ruled Iran, including parts of today's Iraq, Azerbaijan, Armenia, parts of Afghanistan, etc.
- There were several wars that took place between Safavid Iran and Ottoman Empire.
- Ottoman Empire was older than Safavid and was established in 698 A.H. and ended in 1341 after WWI.
- Sunni Ottomans started to persecute the Shia in Turkey, Lebanon, and other neighboring areas, and therefore, they moved to Iran, where they were highly welcomed.
- Since Abbasids lost power in Iran, there have been 17 dynasties ruling there; one of the most influential was the Safavid.
- There were also some Shia governments or some governments that did good to the Shia: Buyids, Ghaznavids, Seljuks, Khwarazmids, Ilkhanate, Timurids, Safavid, Afsharid, Zandis, Qajars, Pahlavids, Islamic Revolution.
- Both Safavids and Ottomans used sectarianism to promote nationalism. However, the Shia scholars used the opportunity.
- The battle areas were the Azeri areas of northwestern Iran today and Iraq. When Safavids had control of Iran, they built the shrines.



- The root of Safavids: Shaykh Safi al-Din Ishaq al-Ardabili. In Ardabil, people speak both Azeri and Persian. The Shaykh was Sufi and had a Sufi corner for himself. His fiqh was *Shafi'i*.
- Shaykh Safi's grandson, Khajeh Ali Siyahpush, converted to Shiism. He was very influential and helped in spreading Shi'ism.
- Before the Safavids, there was Timur Lang's rule (a Turkic government). They started to lose power, and the region was divided into weaker groups.
- The Safavid general, Shah Esmail ibn Haidar started his movement and took Azerbaijan, Iraq, Isfahan, and all of Iran. He started Safavid Dynasty in 907 A.H.

They engrave on their coins:

“لا إله إلا الله؛ محمدٌ رسول الله؛ عليٌّ ولي الله”

And other related sentences.

Capitals of the Safavid:

- Under Shah Esmail: Tabriz
- Under Shah Tahmasp I: Qazvin
- Shah Abbas towards the end: Isfahan

- These three are the most powerful Safavid kings among the nine that ruled.
- There were Shias in Iran and Iraq before the Safavids; 14 areas out of 64 in Iran had been Shia (Qom, Kashan, Sabzevar, etc.). The majority of other cities were either Shafi'i or Hanafi. However, the Safavid made all Shias.
- Shah Abbas I, believed in Ahl al-Bayt so much that he walked all the way from Isfahan to Imam al-Rida عليه السلام in Mashhad. He built the golden dome, bought and added surrounding areas to the shrine, and made them *waqf*.
- They highly commemorated the Day of Ashura as it was done in Baghdad during Buyids.
- The intellectual movement grew during the Safavid period, translating books from Arabic to Farsi, encouraging religious studies (establishing hawza), and freedom, inviting scholars from different cities like those in Jabal Amil.



Influential Scholars during the Safavid era:

- Shaykh Ali al-Karaki al-Amili (d.940 A.H.) (invited by Shah, the first to say that fuqaha are general representatives of Imam al-Mahdi (عجل الله فرجه))
- Kamal al-Din Darvish Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, the first to spread the hadiths of the Shia
- Shaykh al-Bahai (d. 1030 A.H.) during Shah Abbas the Great, entitled Shaykh al-Islam, very close to the Shah

Shaykh al-Bahai was a scholar in many fields. He was buried in Mashhad next to Imam al-Rida (عجل الله فرجه). He made a then hi-tech masjid and public bath in Isfahan.

- Allamah Majlisi (the author of *Bihar al-Anwar* and *Mir'at al-Uqul*) (d.1111 A.H.), Shaykh al-Islam during Shah Soleiman
- His father, Muhammad-Taqi Majlisi
- Al-Muqaddas al-Ardabili (d.993 A.H.)/ buried in Najaf/ his story with Shaykh al-Bahai shows his place.
- Mir-Damad (d.1041 A.H.); started a seminary in Isfahan, being the grandson of Shaykh al-Islam al-Muhaqqiq al-Karaki from his mother's side.

The most significant books of the Safavid era:

1. "*Wasail al-Shia*" by Shaykh al-Hurr al-Amili
2. "*al-Wafi*" by Mulla Mohsen Fayz Kashani
3. "*Bihar al-Anwar*" by Allamah Majlisi

This era gave birth to the *Akhbari movement* which occurred between 1030 to 1187 A.H. (until al-Wahid al-Behbahani, who solidified the *Usuli* movement)