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## THE CONCEPT OF THE "CALIPH" IN SUNNI AND SHI'A WRITINGS

**Keywords:** *Caliph, Sunni, Shi'a, Islam, caliphate*

The Concept of a Caliph is of great importance in the history of Islam. The formation of the Islamic State, founded after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, was based on the institution of the Caliph. The caliph became the deputy of the apostle, who governed the state according to divine laws.

The concept of caliph caused and causes a great controversy between Muslim and non-Muslim theologians and scholars. Due to the religious division in the history of Islam, two main approaches were formed: Sunni and Shiite. The study discussed the term "Caliph" and its historical development, the history of the formation of the institution of the caliph, the analysis of the historical development of its role and functions, and the Sunni and Shiite concepts that have been formed in Islamic political thought over the centuries.

There are sources for researching the concept of the caliph, such as biographies and historical chronicles, which mainly date from the Abbasside period of the Islamic Caliphate, and we rarely find relevant sources dating from the period of the Prophet Muhammad himself, the first Guided Four Caliphs or the Umayyad. Because of this, there are often different interpretations in the narratives of the sources of later periods. An important source in analyzing the concept of Caliph is Qur'an and the Surah and Ayyat that refer to the Caliph. In the interpretations of the Qur'an, the research relies on the versions of the Sunni commentators of Qur'an: Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Jarir Ibn Yazid al-Tabari and Abu al-Qasim Mahmud Ibn Umar Al-Zamakhshari and the Shiite commentator Nasir al-Din al-Tusi.

Several fundamental works of the modern scholars have been also used in the research. Kennedy (2004) offers a detailed history of the caliphate in the Middle Ages, Arnold (1965) and Gibb (1982) provide an interesting analysis of the theory of the Caliphate, Humphrey's (1991) survey of early historiography is also an important source for analyzing the concept of the caliphate. Also, there are interesting works of Muslim thinkers such as Sayyed Qutb, Hasan al-Banna, and Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi, which are mainly used by radical Islamists to defend their positions.

The term "Caliph" in Georgian means deputy. This term is referred to the representatives of the Prophet Muhammad, who was chosen to rule the Islamic State after the death of the Prophet. The term appears several times in Qur'an. For the first time, it appears in Surah al-Baqarah:

"And when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed I will make upon the earth a successive authority". They said, "Will you place upon it one who causes corruption therein and

sheds blood, while we declare your praise and sanctify you?" Allah said, indeed, I know that which you do not know" (Qur'an, 2:30)

Qur'an commentators interpret the term in different ways. Al-Zamakhshari believes that the caliph is a reference to the appointment of the Prophet Adam and his children. Al-Tabari believes that the caliph refers not only to Adam and his children but also to all those who took his place after Adam in obeying God and governing the people justly. The Shiite commentator of the Qur'an, al-Tusi, explains the 14 verses of the Surah of Yunis about the caliph as follows: the caliph is called the chosen person because he replaces his predecessor and takes over his responsibilities. In the Qur'an we also find plural forms of the term "Caliph" as *khala'if* and *khulafa'*. *Khala'if* is mentioned four times in the Qur'an. According to Al-Tabari, this plural form is used as the concept of *Khilafa* or Caliphate and does not refer to any generation or people. Al-Zamakhshari thought, that the plural form *Khala'if* refers to the followers of the Prophet Muhammad who would replace the previous generations.

The second plural form of *Khalif* or Caliph is *Kulafa'* which appears in the Qur'an three times: twice in the Surah of Al-A'raf and once in the Surah of al-Naml. According to some interpretations, this term refers to Hud, Salih, and Muhammad with their people. This chain ends with the Prophet Muhammad generation. So, this kind of interpretation "justifies" the Sunni perception of dynastic rule of the caliphate. Although this position of the commentators had no such intention, as there is no phrase referring to the dynastic succession of their time in their commentaries.

The Shiite commentator Al-Tunsi confirms the version that this term refers to Adam and his descendants after the jinn, who were appointed before Adam was appointed as the caliph. Al-Tusi also points to another version of the term, noting that the term *Khala'if* refers to the people of the Prophet Muhammad, whom Allah chose to lead other peoples.

The title of caliph has been changing throughout Islamic history. The reign of the Prophet Muhammad and the first four caliphs are considered to be the true caliphate, unlike the reigns of the Umayyad and Abbasids, which are considered to be a different form of monarchy. Umayyad and Abbasid rulers were called *Khalifatu I-Lah* or Caliph of Allah. The third caliph of the Islamic Caliphate, Usman ibn al-Affan was also called Caliph of Allah. In the case of Rashidun or rightly guided caliphs, the term Amir Al-Mu'minin or Commander of the faithful was used. The title caliph of Allah was applied by the Ismailites from the Shiite sect. The fourth caliph Ali ibn abu Talib was also named as Caliph of Allah while the Fatimid dynasty rulers were officially *Khalifatu I-Lah 'ala al-'alamin* or Caliph of Allah in this world.

The article analyses the Sunni and Shiite concept of the Caliph. The Shiite concepts are mainly based on the Shiite sect of Ismailites doctrine. Ismailites, like all Muslims, recognize the Qur'an and the Hadith as the primary source of their legislation. They, like other Shiite sects, are distinguished from Sunnis by the doctrine of Imam. So, according to the Ismailite sect, the Imam is the supreme authority who interprets God's laws.

The Sunni version of the concept of Caliph in the article is based on the Sunni thinkers and commentators of the Qur'an. According to Al-Mawdudi, the Pakistani Muslim thinker, the caliph is responsible for fulfilling God's willing on the earth. The caliph obeys the God and follows his rules.