

*Review Papers*  
**Reader of the Word**

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**Abstract**

Diese Studie dient zur Betrachtung der Hermeneutik des Wortes, dem verstehenden Lesen des Koran, der Reflexion über einzelne Verse und dem Handeln gemäß dieser Heiligen Schrift. Eine Methodologie des Lesens wird vorgeschlagen, die für den Dialog mit dem Wort Allahs von Bedeutung ist. Dadurch ersucht sie, den Horizont im Hinblick auf das islamische Offenbarungsverständnis zu weiten und angemessene Zugänge zu ihm zu schaffen. Diese Verstehenslehre birgt eine Lebenspraxis, um Menschen für gewaltfrei-hermeneutisches Handeln zu motivieren. Diese Hinführung zu Koran bietet eine fundierte Grundlage der Koranforschung einerseits und der Forschung zum schiitischen Islam, der weitestgehend in der westlichen Welt unbekannt geblieben ist. Diese Studie, die gänzlich aus der Schia-Islam-Perspektive erfolgt sind, vermögen dazu beizutragen, eine „gewaltfreie Hermeneutik“ in der hiesigen Forschungslehre zu etablieren, die einen ebenfalls gewaltfreien Dialog zur Kultur werden lassen könnte.

**Keywords:** Koran, Offenbarung, Mensch, Gott, Ahl-ul-Bait, Wilaya

پژوهشگاه علوم انسانی و مطالعات فرهنگی  
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1. Prof. Dr. Hamid Kasiri (Amin-ul-Islam Mazandarani) is a Muslim theologian of the Shia tradition and a renowned international scholar who, during his studies of Islamic and Christian theology and the Shia and Catholic doctrines - deals with transcultural, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the theology of religion.

*Englische Abstrakt*

Reader of the Word  
Hamid Kasiri

**Abstract**

It is often assumed that the Imamiyah and the Mu'tazila, known as "al-'adlyyah," collaborated closely in their theological development from the outset. Apart from questions of Imamatus and Wilayah, there are purportedly few differences between their theological views. However, historical investigations reveal significant divergences both in content and methodology until the fourth century. From this point onward, they began to approach each other, particularly through the Imamiyah theological school in Baghdad, a convergence that continued into the eighth century with notable influences between the two doctrinal orientations. This article examines the anthropology from the Baghdad school in the fourth century to the Ḥillah school in the eighth century, focusing on how Shi'ite and Mu'tazilite views on human truth influenced each other during this period. Shi'ite thought is believed to have been significantly influenced by Mu'tazilite rationalists. Analysis indicates that Shi'ite theologians in Baghdad were influenced by Abu al-Hudayl and the scholars of Ḥillah by Abu al-Husayn al-Baṣrī. The concept of human truth evolved from a materialistic perspective based on Abu al-Hudayl's theory in the fifth century to another materialistic perspective based on Abu al-Husayn al-Baṣrī's theory in the seventh and eighth centuries.

**Keywords:** human truth, Baghdad school, Ḥillah school, Baṣra Mu'tazila, later Mu'tazila

## Paradigm Change

The man of Islam is not a walking, speaking and reasoning animal only الحيوان الناطق, but he is a “living reader” الحي القاري, who has been created to enable himself to regain his lost heavenly position by reading the word. “*Reader of the Word*” is a study that attempts to offer the worthy readers a nonviolent way of dealing with the Hl. Quran as the “*word of God*” and to show them appropriate approaches to it. It deals with the important topics such as:

1. “Paradigm change: from “listening” to “reading”.
2. “The *shema commandment* of the Hl. Quran: “**Read!**”!
3. “Human being as *reader of the word*”.

This new *anthropological hermeneutics*, or *hermeneutical anthropology* also entails a practice of life and offers new ideas to Quranic and Shiite studies.

“*Reader of the Word*” is an introduction to my Quran commentary, namely: “*Tafsir-ul-Amin*”. This speaks to a paradigm changing, that attempts - as dialogue with the text:

1. to break the culture of silence and to become reader.
2. to enable everyone to read the Quran as the “*Word of God*”.
3. to help people to become “*Reader of the Word*”!

“*Reader of the Word*” implies a new definition of what it means to be human, since man is given the honor of reading the revelation and the word of the sublime Creator not as illiterate but as an educated being. We are on the threshold of a new age for Quranic studies.

Through this theorizing, people will rediscover the Holy Quran, and the reader will encounter it and the understanding of its message in a fresher, more lively and dynamic way. An important reason for this phenomenon is the Quranic appeal to read the text and understand its message without prejudice and misunderstanding. In this sense, the exalted Creator says, “*Read!*” So, man becomes a “*reader of the word*” of God.

## The Coronation of Creation (Man) and the Crowning Glory of the Word (Hl. Quran)

The Exalted Creator, Who possesses the most beautiful names and the highest attributes, has sent a message to human beings through the *word* and promised them good in that *word*. In reality, this is the very best distinction that the coronation of creation (man) is given the crowning glory of the *word of God* (the Hl. Quran) for reading. How should one imagine the feelings of one who reads the message of his beloved and becomes a reader of his *love letter*? The excitement is high because through the Quran man rises from *hearing* to *reading* and becomes a “*reader of the word*”: “*Read!*” And because of this God-given ability, one becomes:

- a reader of the book of nature.
- a reader of the book of his self.
- a reader of his behavior book.
- a reader of the book of revelation.

*Reading* the Quran gives the reader a wide horizon, a wide view, through which he can recognize many things and many people and place them under his knowledge. These occurrences give him an enormous experience of transcendence, which is considered a kind of mysticism. Because reading the Quran gives man the power:

- to deepen his knowledge.
- to expand his knowledge.
- to purify his soul.

Moreover, reading motivates the reader:

- to acquire virtues.
- to avoid ugliness.
- to reach perfection.

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To achieve these goals more easily, one needs instructions such as those given by the Prophet Muhammad (s)<sup>2</sup> and his *Ahl-ul-Bait*<sup>3</sup> to their faithful followers.

Reading the Quran is so important that prayer has been prescribed for its sake. In this sense, Imam Ridha (s) said:

*"People have been obligated to read the Quran in prayer,  
so that the Quran is not abandoned, forgotten and unused.*

*So that it is preserved and does not disappear and remain unknown." (Saduq, 2014, p. 310)*

The readers of the Quran will perceive the quality of faith that fills their hearts. This is the higher knowledge that readers have ahead of people who do not engage in reading the *word of God!* Since the Quran is an appearance of the Exalted Creator, the readers of the Quran will notice that they are not alone but are in direct connection with Him. This is the reason why they should not feel weak, humble, passive or forced. They will also be aware that the circumstances and temptations they face are not unique or new.

Man as the "*Reader of the Word*" will witness how the Exalted Creator has honored him - in direct address: "Surely We have honored the children of Adam, and carried them over land and sea, and provided for them good things, and distinguished them - a distinction above those many whom We have created." (Ibid. 17:70.) Since the Hl. Quran is God's *covenant* with His

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<sup>2</sup> Abbreviation for "Salawatollahi alaihi", "Salawatollahi alaiha" and "Salawatollahi alaihim" or "Salaamullahi alaihi", "Salaamullahi alaiha" and "Salaamullahi alaihim": "The peace or blessing of God be with him/her/them".

<sup>3</sup> *Ahl-ul-Bait*: "People of the House" is a technical term for members of the House of the Prophet Muhammad (s) and his direct descendants by his daughter Fatemeh (s) and Imam Ali (s); that is also the eleven other Imams of the Shiites. The *Ahl-ul-Bait*, that is, the Prophet, Fatima, and the twelve Imams, are flawless and free from any sin, as the Purity Verse in the Holy Quran (33:33) makes clear. The Prophet Muhammad (s) said of his *Ahl-ul-Bait*:

- "Do not rush ahead of them, nor do you fall behind, or you will perish, and do not teach them, for they know more than you!"
- "The parable of my *Ahl-ul-Bait* is like the parable of Noah's ship, whoever enters it will be saved, and he who rejects it will drown." (Majlisi, 21982, p. 113; At-Tabarani, 1983, p. 533; Al-Mottaqi Al-Hindi, 1985, p. 94)

servants, the believer should also look into this testament of his Creator, who honored him!

The readers of the Quran will then perceive that everything in this universe has been created according to certain measure and for certain purpose. In this sense, we read: "We have created everything according to measure." (Ibid. 54:49.) Further, it says: "And there is nothing of which We have not sources; but We send it down only according to appointed measure." (Ibid. 15:21.) Everything will be done according to measure and not only in this world but also in the Hereafter: "And We will set up (exact) scales of justice for the Day of Resurrection, so that no soul will suffer injustice in anything." (Ibid. 21:47.)

He will note that accordingly all creatures both individual and collective are subject to constant laws and regulations: "And there is no creature on (or within) the earth or bird that flies with its wings except (that they are) communities like you. We have not neglected in the register a thing. Then unto their Lord they will be gathered." (Ibid. 6:38.)

None can ever violate this mighty ordinance of God: "But the evil plan only catches its inventor. Do they then expect anything but the trial of the former? But in Allah's procedure thou wilt never find a change; and in Allah's procedure thou wilt never find a shift." (Ibid. 35:43.)

Along the same lines is the fact that the reader of the Quran has already been preceded by the great messengers, prophets, *Ahl-ul-Bait*, honorable saints, reformers and sincere servants who - with their communities - certainly faced worse trials, but who nevertheless remained steadfast until their last breath: "O you who believed, upon you is (responsibility for) yourselves. Those who have gone astray will not harm you when you have been guided. To Allah is your return, of all (of you); then He will inform you of what you used to do." (Ibid. 5:105.)

It further says: "... Some of them were on the right path, but many of them were evil doers." (Ibid. 57:26.) In the light of reading the Quran, human beings and the world are seen as the appearance of the exalted Creator. Therefore, reading the Quran appears as a rendering of the comprehensive understanding of the sensitive results and pure influences on the soul of the believers - and that is from the first moment of reading its verses to the moment when these results and effects take a greater place in their hearts.

In this way, the readers of the Quran are also convinced of the fulfilment of God Almighty's promise to the believers that they will prevail in the end, but they will first have to suffer misfortune and overcome hardships: "Do you think that you will enter heaven even if the same will not happen to you as happened to those before you? Poverty and affliction befell them, and they were violently shaken (awake), so that the Messenger and those who believed with him exclaimed: 'When will Allah's help come there?' Verily, Allah's help is near." (Ibid. 2:214.)

In order to be crystallized or distinguished for believers, they are exposed to temptations: "... Do people think they will be left alone if they merely say, 'We believe', and they will not be put to the test? We did test those who were before them. So, Allah will certainly designate those who are truthful, and certainly He will designate those who are liars." (Ibid. 29:2-3.)

With this again, the readers of the Quran will be reassured and expose themselves to all the worries and trials because they understand that such difficulties are quite common in God's relationship with His believing servants, who are therefore required to stand firm in such situations and consider such difficulties insignificant because they take place for God's sake, and He will generously compensate the truthful: "So wait patiently for the command of thy Lord, for thou art before our eyes," (Ibid. 52:48.) "because neither thirst nor toil nor hunger afflicts them in the way of Allah, nor do they tread a path that angers the disbelievers, nor do they suffer affliction from an enemy for which a meritorious work would not be credited to them. Allah does not cause the reward of those who do good to be lost." (Ibid. 9:120.)

*This knowledge and more can be understood from the Quran if the reading of the Quran is properly established as an art of understanding (i.e. hermeneutics), otherwise there will be no difference between the hearing of the illiterate and the reading of an educated reader!*

There are people who hear the Quran only for a beautiful voice or read it only for the beauty of language: That cannot bring the reader to the threshold of Quranic knowledge and certainly not to the ocean of its secrets! About such people, Prophet Muhammad (s) said: "For my *Ummah*, a time will come when one:

- will only recognize scholars by their beautiful clothes.

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- will only recognize the Quran by a beautiful voice.
- will Allah only serve in the month of Ramadan.

When this comes to pass, Allah will cause rulers to rule over them who have neither knowledge nor longsuffering nor mercy.” (Majlisi, 1982, p. 454)

The Quran is a divine source of knowledge, and reading is meant to pave the way to it so that one:

- quenches one's thirst for truth.
- tastes the life-giving quality of faith.
- comes to experience the presence of God.

Reading of the Quran should lead to the knowledge of the Quran, otherwise reading can only be reading letters - and not reading the Quran. This study paves the way for the achievement of this goal.

Therefore “*Reader of the Word*” is a study that attempts to broaden the horizons of valued readers about the Islamic understanding of revelation and to show them appropriate approaches to it. This is a “*understanding study*” that encompasses further topics. This understanding teaching also brings with it a living practice in order to:

1. arouse the highest nonviolent hermeneutic interest in people.
2. make them aware of their own identity as “*readers of the word*”.
3. show them to the wide *Quranic horizon of revelation*.

The Shiite religious system, based on the Quran, the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (s) and the *Ahl-ul-Bait* (s). It uses its spiritual-rational method to deal with these sources in such a way to:

- a. make these teachings accessible to human beings.
- b. help them to realize them here and now.
- c. make them applicable in people's lives.



So, this study intends to address some burning questions.<sup>4</sup> It aims to answer the question of what the Islamic understanding of revelation is. It therefore contains basic teachings about the Hl. Quran. It also covers topics such as:

- “revelation”.
- “inspiration”.
- “Prophethood and Calling”.
- “Imama<sup>5</sup> and “Wilaya”.

They are important for a better understanding of the Quranic revelation and enable its authentic interpretation. The Quran is one of the most important books in the history of mankind, which is why people have studied it intensively and continue to do so. The intensity with which the Quran is studied today in so many religious and scholarly circles is cause for joy for Islamic communities in general - and for me as a Muslim scholar in particular. At the same time, however, it is a challenge to clarify anew one's own assessments of the Quran and one's position towards it. We can even add to our joy that also in the West many believers - more clearly than ever before - have rediscovered and, as it were, reactivated the commitment to the Hl. Quran as a unique source of faith and guideline for belief.

### Lead-In to “Tafsir-ul-Amin”

The Quranic revelation is not only the content but also the foundation of all religious doctrine and practice. Therefore, the Hl. Quran is listened to and read with reverence both as a revealed scripture and as the foundation of Islamic identity. Thus, Muslims strive every day to *read the Quran* anew as the *Word of God or God's revelation*, because in which God speaks to people

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<sup>4</sup> This text is based on four of my books on Islamic understanding of revelation, were published in 2021 in Vienna and in 2023 in Vienna and Qum by ILogos international Publications:

- *Reader of the Word*.
- *Hermeneutics of the Word*.
- *On the Horizon of the Word*.

<sup>5</sup> The doctrine of the leadership of the Islamic World Community.

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wherever they may be. This Holy Scripture has many names and characteristics, such as the following:

- It is the base for faith.
- It is the word of God.
- It is the language of God.
- It is the book of books.
- It is the source of life.
- It is the integration book.
- It is the light of guidance.
- It is an everlasting miracle.
- ...

These will be described during this study. All Muslims - everywhere and throughout the history of Islam - believed and still believe that God Himself - and not the Prophet Muhammad - is the author of the Quran, which is therefore infallible. This scripture represents the collection of words revealed to the Prophet during the approximately 23 years of his prophetic vocation - between 610 and 632 AD. It consists of 114 Suras (chapters) of varying length. Its shortest comprises only three short verses, the longest 286 verses.

This study can also be called a lead-in to my Quran commentary. I found it plausible to write this series of studies on the important topic of *"Readers of the Word"* before the publication of my Quranic commentary, namely:

*"Tafsir Al-Amin"*.

The Quran and the Sunnah (the way of life) of the Prophet (s) and the *Ahl-ul-Bait* (s) are the most important source of our spirituality. We refer to the Quran, our holy scripture, which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (s) in the 7th century AD, despite all the differences in the concrete proposals in individual ideas and methods of interpretation. So, the Quran shapes not only our thinking and our history, but also our spirituality.

### The Acknowledgment of the University of Isfahan

### Reader of the Word

I am very happy that this book is published not only in Austria but also in Iran and in collaboration with my dear friend professor Asghar Montazer Al-Qaem in Isfahan. He and his colleagues were interested in publishing this research as one of the selected works of the *“International Conference on Quranic and Prophetic life (Sīrah) Studies from the Europeans’ perspective”* which was being held in several meetings at the University of Isfahan. These kind professors wrote an acknowledgment and Appreciation in the name of the University of Isfahan for the *“Reader of the Word”*, as follows:

“All three Abrahamic religions of the world, i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, have their own sources of knowledge and their own collections of knowledge. All prophets are sent to deliver divine messages to humanity to inform believers how to live according to the divine will. The teachings of every prophet throughout history have been the herald of hope and a better future in the shadow of justice. The Holy Quran is a divine revelation that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (s) and was immediately communicated to the believers, was written by some of the Scribes of Revelation has been transmitted to the next generation by the infallible Imams authentically. The religious and scientific grandeur of the Holy Quran led many authors to write uncountable works to confirm or reject it. One of the leading scholars who has made a great contribution to the presentation of Shia Islam to the world is Prof. Dr. Hamid Kasiri (Amin-ul-Islam Mazandarani). He is a Shiite Muslim scholar and theologian who has written and published many books in Persian, Arabic, English, Spanish, French and German, such as the 14-volume about Shia Islam (2. Ed. 2023). One of the new works of Professor Kasiri is the *“Reader of the Word”*. He has lovingly and passionately presented this book to the *“International Conference on Quranic and Prophetic life (Sīrah) Studies from the Europeans perspective”*. This book has been *reviewed* and *accepted* by the reviewers of the conference and was published by the conference: Thanks God! Appreciation and admiration of the endowment members of the congress to Prof. Hamid Kasiri!”

I would like to thank them and their colleagues and wish them continued success in their scientific endeavors. I dedicate the *“Reader of the Word”* to the:

*“Reader of the Book of God and its Interpreter”*

“تَالِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَ تَرَرُمَاتُهُ”

*Al-Imam al-Mahdi (a)*<sup>6</sup>.

And finally, we say to the Lord:

*Non obliviscar sermones tuos!*

*(I do not forget your words)! (Pascal, 1991, p. 74)*

Hamid Kasiri

(Amin-ul-Islam Mazandarani)

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<sup>6</sup> May the Almighty God speed up his reappearance!

## Zusammenfassung in Deutsch

Der Mensch des Islam ist nicht nur ein wandelndes, sprechendes und denkendes Tier الحيوان الناطق, sondern er ist ein "lebender Leser" الحي القاري, der geschaffen wurde, um seine verlorene himmlische Position durch das Lesen des Wortes wiederzuerlangen. *"Leser des Wortes"* ist eine Studie, die versucht, den würdigen Lesern einen gewaltfreien Umgang mit dem Hl. Koran als dem "Wort Gottes" anzubieten und ihnen angemessene Zugänge dazu aufzuzeigen. Es geht um die wichtigen Themen wie: Paradigmenwechsel: vom „Hören“ zum "Lesen", "das Schma Gebot des Hl. Korans: *"Lies!"* und "der Mensch als *Leser des Wortes*". Diese neue *anthropologische Hermeneutik* oder *hermeneutische Anthropologie* bringt auch eine Praxis des Lebens mit sich und bietet dem Koran und der schiitischen Studien folgende Themen: 1. *"Leser des Wortes"*. 2. *Hermeneutik des Wortes*. 3. *Am Horizont des Wortes*. 4. *Die Anwendung des Wortes*. Diese Studie ist eine Hinführung zu meinem Korankommentar, nämlich: *"Tafsir-ul-Amin"*. Dies spricht für einen Paradigmenwechsel, der - als Dialog mit dem Text: 1. die Kultur des Schweigens zu durchbrechen versucht. 2. jedem ermöglichen, den Koran als "Wort Gottes" zu lesen. 3. Menschen hilft, *"Leser des Wortes"* zu werden!

„*Leser des Wortes*“ beinhaltet eine neue Definition des Menschseins, da der Mensch die Ehre bekommt, nicht als Analphabet sondern als ein gebildetes Wesen die Offenbarung und das Wort des erhabenen Schöpfers zu *lesen*. Wir stehen an der Schwelle zu einem neuen Zeitalter für koranische Studien. Durch diese Theoriebildung entdecken die Menschen den Hl. Koran wieder, und er und das Verständnis von seiner Botschaft wird dem Leser (bzw. der Leserin) frischer, lebendiger und dynamischer begegnen. Ein wichtiger Grund für dieses Phänomen ist der koranische Appell, dass man den Text *liest* und seine Botschaft ohne Vorurteile und Missverständnisse versteht. In diesem Sinne sagt der erhabene Schöpfer: „*Lies!*“ Und so wird der Mensch zum „*Leser des Wortes*“ Gottes.

„*Leser des Wortes*“ versucht, den werten LeserInnen einen gewaltfreien Umgang mit dem Hl. Koran anzubieten und ihnen angemessene Zugänge zu ihm aufzuzeigen. Das ist ein Verstehenlernen, das auch zur Selbstkenntnis führt, denn im Lichte des Koran entdeckt man sich wieder und nimmt sich als „*Leser des Wortes*“ wahr.

## Reader of the Word

Diese Verstehenslehre bzw. diese neue anthropologische Hermeneutik, die auch eine Lebenspraxis mit sich bringt, will der Koranforschung und den Schia-Studien folgende Themen anbieten:

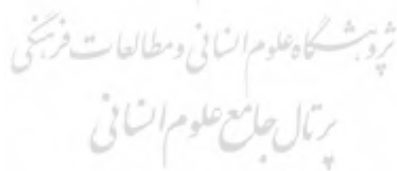
1. „*Leser des Wortes*“.
2. Hermeneutik des Wortes.
3. Am Sinnhorizont des Wortes.
4. Die Applikation des Wortes.

Diese Studie dient zur Betrachtung der Hermeneutik des Wortes, dem verstehenden Lesen des Koran, der Reflexion über einzelne Verse und dem Handeln gemäß dieser Heiligen Schrift. Eine Methodologie des Lesens wird vorgeschlagen, die für den Dialog mit dem Wort Allahs von Bedeutung ist. Dadurch ersucht sie, den Horizont im Hinblick auf das islamische Offenbarungsverständnis zu weiten und angemessene Zugänge zu ihm zu schaffen. Diese Verstehenslehre birgt eine Lebenspraxis, um Menschen für gewaltfrei-hermeneutisches Handeln zu motivieren. Diese Hinführung zu Koran bietet eine fundierte Grundlage der Koranforschung einerseits und der Forschung zum schiitischen Islam, der weitestgehend in der westlichen Welt unbekannt geblieben ist. Diese Studie, die gänzlich aus der Schia-Islam-Perspektive erfolgt sind, vermögen dazu beizutragen, eine „*gewaltfreie Hermeneutik*“ in der hiesigen Forschungslehre zu etablieren, die einen ebenfalls gewaltfreien Dialog zur Kultur werden lassen könnte.

Es ist ein Anlaß zu Freude, dass dieses Buch nicht nur in Österreich, sondern auch im Iran und in Zusammenarbeit mit meinem lieben Freund Professor Asghar Montazer Al-Qaem in Isfahan erscheinen ist. Er und seine Kollegen waren daran interessiert, diese Forschung als eines der ausgewählten Werke der "*International Conference on Quranic and Prophetic life (Sīrah) Studies from the Europeans' perspective*" zu veröffentlichen, die in mehreren Sitzungen an der Universität von Isfahan abgehalten wurde. Ich danke ihm und seinen Kolleginnen und Kollegen und wünsche ihnen weiterhin viel Erfolg bei ihren wissenschaftlichen Bemühungen.

### About author

*Prof. Dr. Hamid Kasiri* (Amin-ul-Islam Mazandarani) is a Muslim theologian of the Shia tradition and a renowned international scholar who, during his studies of Islamic and Christian theology and the Shia and Catholic doctrines - deals with transcultural, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the theology of religion. Born 1964 in Mazandaran/Iran. 1970-1982 Primary and secondary school. 1982-1991 Basic study of philosophy and Islamic theology at the Islamic University in Qum. M. A. Studied clinical psychology at the University of Tehran. 1991-1997 Postgraduate studies of the highest-level jurisprudence and philosophy of jurisprudence, Quranic exegesis and Theognostik (Islamic mysticism). 1997-1999 Research Assistant for Religious Studies. 1997-2004 Doctoral program of Catholic Theology. 2008-2010 Doctoral program of Christian Philosophy. 2009-2013: "Senior Postdoc" Habilitant at the University of Vienna. Project: "Non-Violence Hermeneutics". In 2011 he was recognized for his academic qualities as a "scientific exceptional personality" in Austria. His was also appointed as the "Ambassador of Peace" (2010). His careers include several theories, book series and his monographs on Islamic sciences at universities are now considered as classics. He is the founder and owner of "ILogos International Publications" and "ILogos Chair" in Vienna/Austria.





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