

**LAWALISI: Law and Learning in Shi'i Islam
ERC Advanced Project**

PI: Robert Gleave, University of Exeter, UK

Project Summary

Understanding the intellectual structure and the operation of the Islamic legal system has emerged as a research priority in the 20th and in 21st centuries. Most Muslim movements include a call for a restoration of the Sharī'a as a key element of their programme of political and religious change. Academic study of Islamic law has made impressive progress in the last thirty years, but the coverage in the field remains patchy and methodologically inconsistent. This project aims to reformulate, in a fundamental way, current academic research on Islamic law and its institutions. Much of the scholarship focuses on the development of thought and practice in Sunni Islam and this project aims to challenge this. This focus has engendered a particular set of working methods in the field: namely, that Sunni law is the norm (sometimes expressed as the orthodox "mainstream") and other Muslim traditions of legal thought are assessed by how they deviate from this norm (being "marginal" or "unorthodox"). The project will challenge this general tendency in the field by producing a series of advanced research publications in which the contribution of one non-Sunni tradition of legal thought, Shi'ite jurisprudence (specifically Imāmī or Twelver Shī'i jurisprudence), is integrated into the general account of the development of Islamic legal thought. This work will continue and extend the work of the PI and others by producing and publishing research which demonstrates that any general account of Islamic legal thought must take seriously the questions posed by Imāmī jurists over time, and examine the interaction between different Muslim legal traditions. The current dominance of sectarian descriptions of Muslim history, both by political actors in the Muslim world and by academics researching the international Muslim community, make it even more important that a more robust, non-ideological account of Muslim intellectual history is provided by researchers.

Project team:

Gleave (PI; 9/16; 60 months: The Imāmī School: Origins, Roles and Prospects)

Research Fellow 1: Legal Theory/Legal Doctrine (3/17; 24 month)

Research Fellow 2: Fatwas and Fiqh (3/17; 24 months)

Research Fellow 3: Marja'iyya and the Educational Institution (4/17; 24 months)

Research Fellow 4: Political Jurisprudence (4/17; 24 months)

2xvisiting Professorial Fellow (various times; 1-3 months)

Project Administrator (9/16; 60 months)