

ABSTRACT

The relationship between Shia and Sunna determines how Iraq is perceived from a foreign perspective. The importance of sectarian affiliation represents a central and controversial point in the scientific debate about Iraqi history and its present, and the concept is relied on frequently to explain current political developments. However, this concept is still lacking a convincing theoretical fundament. The planned research project aims at analyzing the sectarianisation regarding Sunna and Shia in Iraq during 2003-2014 as a pervasive element of the societal structure. Inspired by Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration, sectarian conflict is not perceived as a primordial necessity or as a mere surface of social identities, but as constituted by human agency and as the medium of this constitution at the same time, furthermore as being manifested solely in this agency. For the analysis of this phenomenon, two methodological approaches will be applied: Firstly, an empirical description of the societal order which is oriented toward membership in religious entities; secondly a discourse analysis to identify discursive structures and to describe how actors act inside of them. The sources for the empirical approach consist of a wide range of political, statistical, geographical and social materials. The discourse analysis includes the evaluation of collections of interviews compiled by NGO's and think tanks in Iraq over the last decade as well as Iraqi scientific and belletristic literature and media from the same period. By combining the two approaches described above, I try to circumvent the usual understanding of communal relations in the context of political sectarianism as practiced in Lebanon, and to comprehend the meaning of sectarian affiliation on a societal level.