

Introduction

In an earlier volume of this anthology, devoted to Shi'ism, (*Shi'ism: Doctrines, Thought and Spirituality*, SUNY, 1988) our attention was focused upon the intellectual and spiritual teachings of this oft misunderstood branch of the Islamic tradition. But Shi'i Islam (which in the context of this work is confined to Twelve-Imam Shi'ism), like other authentic manifestations of religion, also possesses teachings which deal with man's earthly life and has its own historical unfolding. Like Sunni Islam, it addresses itself to the needs of man in both this world and the next and has its own interpretation of the Divine Law (*Shari'ah*) with branches extending to the fields of social life, politics and economics in addition to what concerns man's relation with God through prayer and other acts of religious devotion. Shi'ism also possesses its own vision of history and has had its particular historical development stretching over some fourteen centuries and affecting lands as far apart as North Africa and India.

Recent events in Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan and elsewhere have focused the attention of the larger public in the West upon Shi'ism which until quite recently was a veritable *terra incognita* even for the vast majority of scholars who specialized in Islamic studies. It is, furthermore, mostly the political manifestations of Shi'ism which have attracted so much interest recently. As a result there has come into being a veritable scholarly market for the subject with no shortage of commodities to satisfy the immediately felt need of the general public as well as the educated elite who somehow remained ignorant of Shi'ism until recently. Unfortunately, many works seeking to fulfil this need, even on the level of the most external manifestations of Shi'ism, have failed to penetrate beyond the surface of events and phenomena while few scholars have sought to concern themselves with the rapport between the socio-political upheavals of recent years related to Shi'ism and the deeper forces involved.

We hope to have provided some first hand material and important secondary sources dealing with the basic intellectual and spiritual teachings of Shi'ism in the first volume of his anthology, which serves as background for the present collection dealing with the manifestations of Shi'ism in history

and Shi'ci socio-political teachings. It is hoped that in this volume selections of writings by leading Shi'ci authorities as well as scholars in the field will provide the necessary background for a better understanding of current events related to Shi'cism, and make it easier to relate these events to the intellectual and spiritual teachings of a religious tradition which begins with the foundation of the Islamic religion itself and has had a continuous life for some fourteen hundred years.

Shi'cism is at once a meta-historical reality and a faith possessing a distinct history related to the ever present expectation (*intizar*) of the appearance of the Twelfth Imam or Mahdi with all the millennial and eschatological significance that this belief entails. Shi'cism has been quietistic from a political point of view during most of its history and yet has experienced periods of intense socio-political activity. It has been for the most part the faith of a minority of Muslims and yet became the state religion of Safavid Persia where it has remained the school or *mazhab* of the vast majority of the people while it also constitutes a majority in Iraq and Bahrayn without having the corresponding political power.

Most people identify Shi'cism with Persia and its classical culture, yet Shi'cism began among the Arabs and remains an important religious reality in several Arab countries to this day. Moreover, there are not only Persian and Arab Shi'cis but Turkish, Indian and Pakistani ones as well, not to speak of the important Shi'ci community in East Africa.

The present volume seeks to deal with all these diverse realities beginning with the classical political doctrines which have been challenged during the past two decades by new interpretations and innovations based upon the theory of the direct rule of the jurisprudent (*faqih*), marking a departure from classical theories and signaling a new phase in the political history of Shi'cism. The classical theory is based upon the doctrine of the Imamate which is what distinguishes the Shi'ci world view from that of Sunni Islam with which it shares the primary foundations of the Quran and *Hadith*. The work of the Contemporary Shi'ci Thinker Muhammad Mughniyah on the Imamate as interpreted by Karl Heinrich Göbel and translated from German by Hamid Dabashi constitutes the first chapter in the first section of the anthology dealing with political doctrines and brings out the role of the Imam as not only the source of intellectual and spiritual teachings but also as the ultimate political power in this world and the source of all political legitimacy—past and present. In this exposition the distinction between the Sunni theory of the caliphate which is also sometimes called “imamate” and the Shi'ci theory becomes clear. It is a distinction which is crucial to the understanding of the two groups within Islam to this day, and their respective positions toward political power as such.

The political significance of the Imam differs greatly from the time when he is present in the world and living the life of an "ordinary" mortal and when he is in occultation (*ghaybah*) as happens to be the case today according to Twelve-Imam Shi'is. For the past millennium the last Imam, also called the Mahdi, has been in what Twelve-Imam Shi'ism calls the major occultation (*al-ghaybat al-kubrā*) and Shi'is have lived and died in the expectation of his appearance (*zuhur*), which is nothing short of an event of major eschatological import. In the second chapter 'Allamah Tabataba'i, Jassim Hussain and Abdulaziz Sachedina deal with the figure of the Mahdi, the relation between Mahdism and messianism as understood in Western religious history and the political significance of belief in the Mahdi for Shi'i communities living during the period of the occultation of the Imam.

The suicidal acts of Shi'is in Iran and Lebanon have led the Western mass media to practically identifying Shi'ism with martyrdom while the politization of this important Shi'i ideal has itself had a profound influence within the Shi'i world. In two selections dealing with different aspects of the significance of martyrdom, Sachedina and Hamid Enayat clarify both the religious and political significance of the ideal of *shahadat* or martyrdom which plays such a central role in the ethos of Shi'ism.

Even more popular as a theme identified with Islam in the Occident is *jihad*, usually translated as holy war but meaning actually exertion upon the path of God. The political events of the past decade have resuscitated fears of "Muslim holy war" in the West and the term has been used widely both in the Western press and by a number of Muslim groups possessing very diverse political programs and widely differing attitudes toward Islamic orthodoxy as well as Western inspired ideologies. A single selection by the celebrated 7th/13th century Shi'i scholar, 'Allamah Hilli, discusses the classical Shi'i theory of *jihad* in its social and legal sense. It is against this theory that one can judge the nature of current uses of this powerful idea which is shared by Sunnis and Shi'is alike and which on the highest level means the constant struggle of the soul to remember God and to live according to His Will.

The second section dealing with authority, law and society complements the discussions of the first section on political doctrines and is inextricably tied to it. Shi'ism has its own interpretation of the *Shari'ah* which is often called Ja'fari after Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth Shi'i Imam, who was an outstanding authority on law and the founder of the Shi'i school of the *Shari'ah*. In fact, several times during the history of Islam attempts have been made to unify Sunnism and Shi'ism by considering the Ja'fari school along with the four Sunni schools as the five accepted schools (*mazhab*) of the *Shari'ah*. In chapter five Hossein Modarressi Tabataba'i deals with the

principles of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) from the Shi'ci point of view, elucidating the principles upon which this particular interpretation of the *Shar'cah* is based.

Chapter six, dealing with the ruler and his relation with society, begins with one of the most famous writings on the subject by the son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, who was at once the first Shi'ci Imam and the fourth of the "rightly guided" caliphs of Sunnism. The words of 'Ali have been held in great esteem by both groups and have constituted over the centuries the model for how one should rule and how the ruler should act towards the members of the society in which he has become destined to act as the ruler. This classical work is complemented by the study of Sulayman Kattani on the traditional view of the relation between the ruler and society.

Shi'ci political doctrines have not been always implemented through the centuries of Islamic history during which Shi'cism has functioned in very differing circumstances and conditions. In chapter seven in two essays based on the historical perspective, Ann Lambton and Said Amir Arjomand deal with the relation between Shi'ci political theory and actual practice during diverse periods of history.

The second section of this anthology concludes with a discussion of economic theory and practices. During the past three decades much attention has been paid to Islamic economics both on the theoretical level and in the creation of institutions, especially banks, which seek to base their practices upon Islamic principles. This interest for Islamic economics has not been confined to the Sunni world but has engaged the mind of many of the leading Shi'ci thinkers of this generation. Two selections, one by Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Sadr and the other by Ayatollah Sayyid Mahmud Taliqani make available some of the most influential Shi'ci writings on economic questions to have appeared in recent years.

The third section of the anthology devoted to Shi'cism in history commences with the general study of 'Allamah Tabataba'i on the historical growth of Shi'cism, providing a bird's eye view of the history of Shi'cism whose central arena soon became Persia. In chapter ten Marshall Hodgson discusses Shi'cism in the Buyid period which played such an important role in the later spread of Shi'cism in Persia and Iraq and laid the ground for the consolidation of Shi'cism in the post-Mongol era leading to the establishment of the Safavids.

The Safavid period is of special significance in the history of Shi'cism, for during this period for the first time Shi'ci Islam became the official religion of a major Muslim empire. From that moment to the present day Persia has remained the only country where Shi'cism has ruled and constituted the vast majority of the population. The studies of S.H. Nasr, Roger Savory, Said

Amir Arjomand and Albert Hourani clarify different facets of this crucial period of the history of Shi'ism.

In chapter twelve Said Amir Arjomand and Hamid Algar study the significance of Shi'ism in Qajar Persia and especially the relation between religion and the state during this period. Until the Iranian Revolution in 1979, there were few indepth studies of Shi'ism during the Qajar period. It is only during the past decade that the significance of the religious history of that period has been fully realized and scholars have come to see in the relation between the religious and political authorities of that period and also the encounter between Shi'ism and modern ideas, which had entered Persia for the first time during that era, the seeds of powerful ideas and trends which were finally to manifest themselves with the Iranian Revolution.

Finally, in chapter thirteen, the last part of the section dealing with the historical development of Shi'ism in Persia, Shahrough Akhavi and Said Amir Arjomand, turn to the history and life of Shi'ism in the Pahlavi period. They seek to analyze the complex relations between the '*ulama*' and the state during this period of rapid economic development, social transformation and increasing cultural and religious tensions resulting from the sudden changes which society was undergoing. Much research needs to be carried out to clarify the history of Shi'ism during the Pahlavi period, a time which was witness on the one hand to the flowering of Shi'i learning especially in the domain of the intellectual sciences and on the other to the religious alienation which provided the background for the revolution of 1979. The studies of this section provide knowledge of ideas and events which must be known in order to understand the happenings of the past decade that have catapulted Shi'ism into the center of the international political arena.

Shi'ism is not confined to Iran, however, but has had and continues to have millions of followers in many other countries. In fact of over a hundred million Shi'is living today, less than half live in Persia while the majority are scattered in such lands as India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Soviet Azarbaijan and East Africa. The last section of this anthology deals with some of these minorities. In chapter fourteen John Hollister and Annemarie Schimmel provide insights into the vast world of Shi'ism in India and Pakistan.

In chapter fifteen Michel Mazzaoui turns to the study of the popular aspects of Shi'i practice in Lebanon while Helena Cobban deals with more general aspects of Shi'ism in Lebanon today. Then Hanna Batatu analyzes the present reality and significance of Shi'ism in Iraq to conclude the study of Shi'ism in the Arab world where it now plays a crucial social and political role in several countries.

Not all people are aware of the presence of Shi'ism in Turkey and the fact that it was Turkish speaking Shi'is who made possible the establishment of

the Safavids in Persia. Metin And provides a rare glimpse into the manifestation of Shi'ism in Turkey today by describing the ceremonies and rituals of Muharram among the Shi'is of that land.

To conclude this section, Jan Knappert studies Shi'ism in East Africa as both a religious and social reality. He studies the manifestations of Shi'ism through mostly Shi'i immigrants from the Indian sub-continent in the world of Black Africa and the significance that Shi'ism possesses for a better understanding of the role of Islam in general in that region of the world.

Section five turns to Shi'i political ideas in the modern world up to the events and ideas of the past decades. With the establishment of a Shi'i state by the Safavids followed by later Iranian dynasties which continued to be of Shi'i persuasion and to rule over a predominantly Shi'i population, the ground was prepared for the appearance of new currents of Shi'i political thought beginning with the *usuli-akhbari* debate which lasted for some two centuries and which had a profound influence upon the theological and juridical aspects of Shi'i thought as well as on the political power of the *'ulama'* and their relation with the rulers. Mangol Bayat and Ahmad Kazemi Moussavi discuss this important struggle within Shi'ism on the interpretation of the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet and the Imams as well as the role and function of those who carried out these interpretations.

With the declaration of the *wilayat-i faqih* by Ayatollah Khomeini interest has turned to possible historical antecedents for this idea. Hamid Dabashi turns to this subject by discussing the teachings of the Qajar jurist and theologian Mulla Ahmad Naraqi whom some have claimed as the historical antecedent of Khomeini and reveals the differences as well as similarities in the understanding of the concept of *wilayat-i faqih* among older jurists and the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

A major episode in the participation of Shi'i jurists in political life was the ban on the use of tobacco declared by Hajji Mirza Hasan Shirazi to curtail the power of the British during the Qajar period. Selections by Edward Browne and Nikki Keddie provide an account of this important historical event and bring out its significance for Shi'i political thought.

The most important political activity of the Shi'i *'ulama'* during the Qajar period was their role in the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-06 in Iran, the consequence of which was the establishment of the first elected parliament in a Muslim country. Outstanding figures among the *'ulama'* stood on both sides of the struggle. In the final chapter of this section, Hamid Enayat and Abdul-Hadi Hari analyze the Constitutional Movement as it reflected the religious and political tensions of that period while selections from the writings of two of the most eminent religious authorities of the day, Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Na'ini and Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri provide first-hand

knowledge of Shi'ī religious thought during this important religio-political movement.

The final section of the anthology completes the discussion of Shi'ī political ideas in the modern period by turning to some of the most important religio-political figures of the past few decades. First of all Mangol Bayat and Hamid Enayat discuss the concept of *wilayat-i faqih* so central to the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Their study is followed by selections from the writings of Ayatollah Khomeini himself on *wilayat-i faqih*, a concept which as currently understood owes its inception and birth to him.

After Ayatollah Khomeini, no figure was as influential in the movement leading to the Iranian Revolution as 'Alī Shari'ati who for the first time combined Shi'ism with certain Western revolutionary ideas and transformed it into an ideology in the Western sense of the term. Shahrouh Akhavi and Hamid Dabashi study the thought and impact of Shari'ati in relation to traditional Shi'ī thought and the Iranian society of his day. A selection of the writings of Shari'ati himself provides first-hand knowledge of his ideas and mode of thinking.

The next two chapters are devoted to two of the most influential Shi'ī thinkers of this period, the Iranian philosopher and theologian Ayatollah Mutahhari, and the Iraqi jurist and philosopher Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Sadr. The thought of both men, who are considered among the pillars of the current revolutionary interpretation of Shi'ism, is presented through selections of their own writings.

In conclusion, Fouad Ajami provides a study of the half Arab-half Iranian leader of the Shi'is in Lebanon, Imam Musa Sadr, whose career as well as mysterious disappearance a decade ago left such a profound impact upon Lebanon. He shows the significance of the politically motivated forms of Shi'ism outside of Iran and in a country where until the rise to power of Imam Musa Sadr, the Shi'is enjoyed much less political or economic power as their numbers warranted.

This anthology takes into account both traditional Shi'ism and ideas and events of the past decade which are in a sense too recent to be analyzed objectively in a historical cadre. Major events have taken place recently and are still taking place in the Shi'ī world and even within Shi'ism itself. How the traditional orthodoxy will react in the long run to the transformation of religion into ideology, to the intrusion of Western thought in the garb of Islam into the matrix of Shi'ism, to the politization of the ethos of Shi'ism in a form which has been unprecedented in Islamic history and to the change of the meaning of authority in the religious realm remains to be seen. What is certain is that Shi'ism faces a major challenge and crisis both within and outside its borders, and that certain forces within the world iden-

tified with Shi'ism, whether it be Iran, Lebanon, Iraq or the Shi'i minorities of Pakistan and India, have created and will most likely continue to create critical situations which require a better indepth understanding of the doctrines and history of Shi'ism.

We hope that this work along with its earlier companion volume will be a humble step in providing some knowledge of that background which would make contemporary events more comprehensible. But it is also hoped that this anthology will help to create in the West better understanding based upon the objective appraisal of the thought and beliefs of another religious universe rather than on distorted images of that universe so prevalent today. Finally, it is hoped that these volumes will succeed in creating a deeper comprehension of a major branch of the Islamic religion and the ideas and ideals by which millions of men and women have lived and died over the ages and which still provided meaning for millions of human beings, making possible for them to live according to the Will of God and to fulfill their lives according to the purpose and entelechy for which humanity was created. *Wa'Llahu a'lam*

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