

About This Issue

For most Americans the emergence of Ayatollah Khomeini and the subsequent holding of U.S. hostages in Iran provided the first media exposure of Shi'i Islam as one of the distinct communities within Islam. In 1981-82, Richard Norton served with United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) as its liaison officer with the local Shi'i populace. Norton was afforded an unprecedented opportunity to come to know the Shi'a on a personal, day-to-day basis. In this issue, Dr. Norton goes behind the headline events to put a human face on a people who too often are viewed only as "religious fanatics" or "suicide bombers."

The latest book by John Esposito, professor of religious studies at Holy Cross College, offers a timely introduction to Muslim faith and practice and a solid overview of its contempo-

rary dynamics, according to Charles Kimball, Middle East director for the National Council of Churches in the United States. Kimball's review of *Islam: The Straight Path* is found on pages 13-14. This and other current books on the Middle East are available from A.M.E.U.; see pages 14-16.

Our Notices section on page 13 includes information on: an educational program dealing with hostage crises, coauthored by Moorhead Kennedy, himself a hostage in 1979 in Iran; audio cassettes on the Middle East featuring Edward Said, Noam Chomsky, et al.; and a special fund to provide medical care here in the United States for young victims of the Palestinian Uprising.

John F. Mahoney,
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Shi'ism Defined

As with all religions, Islam is not just a system of beliefs or a set of ceremonial practices. It has been shaped decisively by historical developments. Thus, in order to gain an appreciation of Islam, and specifically Shi'i Islam, it is appropriate to discuss its early history. But, it needs to be emphasized that the behavior of 20th-century Muslims can no more be explained or predicted with reference to events that took place 1,300 years ago, than the behavior of 20th-century Lutherans could be predicted on the basis of the formidable influence of Martin Luther in the 16th century. Historical background is just that, background. It helps us to understand how a group defined by a religion was shaped by its history, and how that history has been kept alive as a source of inspiration.

Like Christianity and Judaism, Islam is a religion rich in diversity and

tradition. Just as sectarian divisions separate Christians into adherents of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and an array of Protestant denominations, Islam is divided into an admixture of sects, and schools of religious law. The most important division in Islam stems from the 7th and 8th centuries A.D., when the Shi'i Muslims emerged as an organized sect within the *ummah* or the community of Muslims.

The events that gave rise to Shi'ism were the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 A.D. and the debate over succession that followed his death and led to a schism within Islam. Muhammad could not be replaced as a prophet. He was and is viewed by Muslims everywhere as the "Seal of the Prophets," the last and final prophet selected by Allah through the Angel Gabriel in 610 A.D. (Not all readers may realize that Muslims, Jews and Christians all

worship the same God. *Allah* is simply the Arabic word for God. Thus, Arab Christians and Arab Muslims alike worship Allah.)

But, Muhammad was not only a prophet, he was a statesman. He was the head of the nascent Islamic state created in the city of Medina (in present-day Saudi Arabia) and thereby the leader of all Muslims on Earth. At the time of his death, the majority opinion held that the prophet had not designated a successor, therefore leaving the community free to elect a successor to Muhammad. However, some of the Muslims disagreed. They argued that the successor should come from the Ahl al-Beit (the House of the Prophet). Because this minority argued for 'Ali, Muhammad's cousin and the husband of his daughter, Fatima, they were called *Shi'at 'Ali* (literally, the partisans of 'Ali), the derivation of "Shi'a." According to Shi'i accounts, on at least two occasions Muhammad designated 'Ali as his successor. But, the majority did not agree and Abu Bakr, the brother-in-law of Muhammad, was named as the caliph (or successor) to the prophet.

The Shi'a persist in claiming that only members of the Ahl al-Beit were legitimate successors. Thus, the first three caliphs, Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman, are viewed as usurpers of the place that should have rightly gone to 'Ali. In Shi'i terminology, the legitimate successors to the prophet are called *imams* (the noun *imam* means the one who stands in front of a group).

After the first three caliphs had died, Ali was finally named the caliph in 656 A.D. Caliph 'Ali led a Muslim army from Medina against the rival claimant, Mu'awiya, who was the nephew of 'Uthman and the governor of Syria. Although his army held the upper hand on the battlefield, Imam 'Ali—as he is called by the Shi'a—was assassinated by a group of his own followers who were angered at his unwillingness to press his military advantage against Mu'awiya. To the dismay of his killers, Imam 'Ali, who is revered as a man of justice and wisdom, had agreed to arbitration in order to settle the rival leadership

claim between him and Mu'awiya. So ended the last and only time that a member of the Ahl al-Bait was accepted as the leader of the *ummah* (the community of all Muslims everywhere).

Mu'awiya, the successful rival of 'Ali, established the Umayyad dynasty in Damascus, but the Shi'a argued that the rightful successors to 'Ali were his sons, Hasan and Husain. Hasan abdicated the Imamate though, and he died soon thereafter. (The Shi'a claim that he was poisoned, but experts disagree about the cause of his death. Shi'i accounts usually indicate that all of their imams came to a brutal end, emphasizing the persecution that the Shi'a have often suffered throughout their history. The most famous death was that of Imam Husain, who came to the fore after the abdication of his brother Hasan.)

Shi'ism is alive with rich and powerful myths.² The central myth of Shi'ism stems from 680 A.D. when Husain, the grandson of the prophet Muhammad, was martyred on the desolate plain of Karbala, in modern-day Iraq. Imam Husain is a figure of stirring bravery, and in many ways his importance for the Shi'a is only surpassed by Muhammad. In particular, it is the martyrdom of Husain that has captured the imagination of many modern Shi'a.

Husain took to the field with a small force of 72 men to meet the armies of Yazid, who had replaced his father Mu'awiya as the caliph. Husain warned his followers that the likely outcome of their expedition was death. At Karbala they found themselves badly outnumbered, and Husain's prediction proved correct. Surrounded, lacking food and water, and after days of arduous siege, Husain was slaughtered with his followers. Husain's decapitated body was left on the sands, and his severed head was carried in triumph to Yazid in Damascus.

The events at Karbala occurred on the tenth day (*ashura*) of the month of Muharram in the Islamic lunar calendar. 'Ashura lives on in the hearts of many Shi'a who commemorate Husain's martyrdom annually in rit-

ual processions as well as folk dramas (*ta'ziyeh* or *shabih*), which recreate the events. Traditionally, 'Ashura was the occasion for Shi'is to show their piety or to pray for the intercession of Imam Husain, but in recent years it has become a revolutionary statement. Shi'i leaders have used the martyrdom of Husain to remind their followers of the bravery and the sacrifice that is their heritage.

Husain was succeeded by his son 'Ali Zain al-'Abidin, the only son to survive the Karbala massacre. Captured by Yazid's army, he was later allowed to retire to Medina. The majority of the Shi'a, often called "Twelvers," trace the successors of Muhammad through twelve imams, listed in the chart which follows. After the death of the fourth Imam, fissures began to open within Shi'ism. Although this discussion of the Arab Shi'a focuses on the Twelvers, who constitute the mainstream of Shi'ism, short capsules on the other major Shi'i groups are pertinent.

The Twelve Imams

- I. 'Ali
- II. Hasan
- III. Husain
- IV. 'Ali Zain al-'Abidin
- V. Muhammad al-Baqir
- VI. Ja'far al-Sadiq
- VII. Musa al-Kazim
- VIII. 'Ali al-Rida
- IX. Muhammad al-Jawad
- X. 'Ali al-Hadi
- XI. Hasan al-Askari
- XII. Muhammad al-Muntazar (al-Mahdi)

Other Shi'i Groups

An estimated three million Zaidis are found in North Yemen.³ Smaller numbers of Zaidis, located in Saudi Arabia, believe that Husain's grandson Zaid should have been the fifth Imam. Hence, they are sometimes called "Fivers."⁴

The Isma'ilis, concentrated in Pakistan, designated Ismail as the seventh Imam, whereas the Twelvers ignored Ismail and chose his brother Musa Kazim. The Isma'ilis are often called Sevener, or al-Sab'iyya from the Arabic. In turn, the Sevener gave rise to a number of sects, including the Carmathians and the Fatamids, who ruled Egypt in the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries. Another division of the Isma'ilis gave rise to the Nizaris, known to history as the assassins.

The Nizaris remained a formidable presence until their fortress-center in Alamut (in present-day Iran) was ravaged. They re-emerged in India in the 19th century under the leadership of the Agha Khan. The current Agha Khan, a widely respected figure, is the 49th in a continuous succession. While the largest number of Nizaris is found in India, there are also communities in Africa, Pakistan, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia. In all there are about three million Nizaris. The Bohras or the Must'aliens, important in business and commerce in Bombay and in Yemen, stem from the Nizaris.

An important offshoot of the Fatamids are the Druze, who view the Fatimid Caliph Hakim (ruled 996-1012 A.D.) as the last incarnate manifestation of Allah. Many Muslims consider this belief heretical, and therefore decline to acknowledge the Druze as Muslims. The Druze, found in Syria, Lebanon and Israel, number less than one half million.

The group which dominates Syria politically is the 'Alawi, sometimes called the Nusairis, after their founder Ibn Nusair, who claimed to be the spiritual light of the tenth Imam, 'Ali Naki al-Hadi. There are about one million 'Alawis in Syria, representing 12 percent of the population. The 'Alawi are also found in Turkey, and, in small numbers, in Lebanon as well. All told, they may number three million.

The Hidden Imam

While the Sunnis believe that revelation stopped with the Prophet, the Shi'a reject this view and say instead

that for every age there is an infallible imam who would establish truth through his interpretation of the word of Allah as embodied in the holy book of Islam, the Quran. If an imam is not present, i.e. he is hidden, the role of independently interpreting religious truth devolves to the learned men of Islam, the "doctors" of law who in Shi'ism are called *mujtahids*.

In contrast, Sunnism has traditionally held that the "gates of *ijtihad* (independent interpretation)" closed in the 10th century, so Sunni religious scholars are constrained to avoid independent deduction or extrapolation. In addition, Sunni Islam emphasizes *ijma* (or consensus), and lacks the clerical hierarchy of Shi'ism. This is one reason that laypersons have played a much more active role in leading Sunni religious movements than in Shi'i movements. In short, the *'ulama* (learned men) of Shi'ism have a more central, essential and directive role than their Sunni counterparts.

All Shi'a sects share a belief in the *Mahdi* (the expected One), who will return before the Day of Judgment. The Mahdi will lead the final battle against the forces of evil, who will be defeated. The earth will then be filled with justice, and the Mahdi will rule for a period of time, numbered in years.

In Twelver Shi'ism the Mahdi will be the twelfth Imam, who did not die, but went into *Ghaiba* (occultation or

the state of being hidden and invisible) in the ninth century. The imams lived under very difficult conditions, and in many cases they were put under virtual house arrest by rulers who feared their potential influence. Shi'i accounts insist that all the imams, except the twelfth (the Imam al-Ghaib), came to violent ends. Thus, it is not hard to understand that the doctrine of occultation evolved as a means of protection. A leading expert on Shi'ism notes:

The occurrence of the occultation is considered to have been due to the hostility of the imam's enemies and the danger to his life. He remains in occultation because of the continuance of this threat. The severance of communication with the hidden imam is not considered to contradict the dictum that the "earth is not left without an imam," for, say the Shi'i writers, the sun still gives light and warmth to the earth even when hidden behind a cloud.³

The pattern of oppression, that has confronted the Shi'a over the ages, helps to explain the development of other doctrinal aspects of the religion as well. For instance, the doctrine of *taqiyya* (which permits a Shi'i, when faced with danger, to dissemble regarding his religious belief, and even to pretend to adhere to another religion) is merely a measure of self-defense.

prayers per day, when possible. However, Shi'ism permits the believer to run together the noon and the afternoon and the evening and the night prayers, making a total of three prayers daily. There are minor variations in the call to prayer, which beckons all believers to pray. In order to pray a Muslim does not have to be in a mosque or any other special place. It is sufficient to attain ritual

purity through a prescribed pattern of ablutions, and to separate oneself from contact with the earth with a piece of paper (even a newspaper will do), a prayer rug or a simple piece of cloth. A major difference is the communal Friday prayer, which has gained in importance over the years, especially among the Shi'a.

Like the Sunni, the Shi'a consider it an article of faith to fast daily during the holy month of Ramadan. During the fast, Muslims abstain from both food and water. Since Islam uses a lunar calendar, Ramadan often falls during the hottest months of the year and can be an impressive test of faith.

The pilgrimage to Mecca is carried out by both sects, but the Shi'a also consider it very commendable to visit shrine sites, especially those shown on the following chart. For poor Shi'a these pilgrimages are less of an economic hardship than an expedition to Mecca, and they may be carried out many times during a Shi'i's lifetime.

Shi'i Shrine Sites

Karbala, Iraq—the site of Husain's martyrdom and his burial place

Najaf, Iraq—the burial place of 'Ali

Kazimayn, Iraq—the tombs of the 7th and 9th Imams

Samarra, Iraq—tombs of the 10th and 11th Imams

Mashhad, Iran—the tomb of the 8th Imam

Qom, Iran—many tombs, including that of Fatima, the wife of 'Ali Rida, the 8th Imam

Medina, Saudi Arabia—tombs of the 2d, 4th, 5th and 6th Imams

Some scholars have noted that the differences between Shi'i religious law are no greater than the differences that divide the four major Sunni schools of religious law. There are, however, some important differences. Due to the strict codes of modest dress being enforced upon women in Iran, there is a tendency to think of Shi'ism as particularly oppressive for women, but this is certainly not true with respect to all facets of Shi'i law. Perhaps because of the key role of Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad,

A Comparison with The Sunni Islam

Although there are some significant variations, it is important to remember that all Muslims share a core set of beliefs. Foremost among these is the belief in the unity of God (*Tawhid*), the belief in prophets (*Nubuwwa*) and the Day of Judgment. To this set of core beliefs, Shi'ism adds a belief in the Imamate, and, by extension, the role of the *mujtahids*.

Sunni Islam prescribes five

the wife of 'Ali and the mother of Hasan and Husain, Shi'i jurisprudence is often said to be more favorable to women. For instance, Shi'i religious law is much more liberal on the issue of women's inheritance rights.⁶ So, it is not unusual, but by no means commonplace, for Sunni Muslims to convert to Shi'ism, especially late in life, in order to preserve a larger portion of their estate for their female heirs.⁷ Divorce is known to be easy for men in Sunnism, and some Shi'i scholars claim divorce under Shi'ism is more favorable to women.

In Shi'ism, religious authorities

play a much more indispensable and influential role than in Sunni Islam. But, in contrast to Shi'i and Sunni clerics elsewhere, the Shi'i clerical establishment in Iran has historically enjoyed an unusual amount of political influence. Their power is not only grounded in the social esteem that flows from their exercise of *ijtihad*, but in financial resources that allow them autonomy from state control. All Muslims accept *zakat* (alms-giving) as a duty, but in Iran the alms were often paid directly to the *mujtahids*, providing Shi'i institutions an independent economic base.

The latest example of this is from occupied Gaza and the West Bank where Palestinian Arab youths, tired of listening to PLO rhetoric, have turned to Islam as a locus of political identity.⁸

This is not to say that the current resurgence of Islam is a novel development. It is only the most recent example of an attempt to arrive at a culturally authentic political formula whose modern origins can be traced to the Islamic revival at the beginning of this century.¹⁰

For example, one of the venerable activist groups is the Muslim Brotherhood, established in 1928. Today, the Brotherhood has branches in Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Europe, the Persian Gulf, and the territories occupied by Israel. Its most recent period of rejuvenation began in Egypt in 1971.

It is a serious error to assume that organizations like the Brotherhood have a natural affinity and friendship for other Muslim groupings; often the groups are as much at odds with one another as they are with the secular authorities. For instance, Husain Musawi, the Lebanese Shi'i extremist linked by many observers to a number of anti-western violent episodes, including the 1982 kidnapping of American University of Beirut President David Dodge, dismisses the Brotherhood as a "deviant organization... tied to America."¹¹

Nevertheless, common Islamic institutions have provided a locus for political action for both Shi'i and Sunnis—especially where the right of free political association has been limited or proscribed by the governing authority. Islamic groups often have been able to organize in the mosque, free from the government's intrusive gaze. In the case of the Shi'i Muslims, the *Husainiyya* (a community religious center, used both for ceremonies and political meetings) is an important rallying point for political action.

Only a fraction of the nascent Islamic associations and movements (more than 100 in the Arab countries by a most conservative count) are led by clerics, and many, particularly Sunni ones, are led by laymen or

Religious Terrorism?

Much of the recent violence in the Middle East has been linked by some observers to the resurgence of Islam that has marked the region since 1967. Certain groups have interpreted Islam in a way that justifies, and even extols violence, just as small numbers of Jews in Israel have claimed a religious basis for their acts of violence against Palestinian Arabs. But most Islamic activists have been no more extreme in their methods and goals than their secularly-inclined political cohorts. The commentary of two distinguished scholars on the subject of "Shi'i Muslim terrorism" is germane:

[There is an] unfortunate stereotype that has emerged recently in the West. In the past several years the word *Shi'i* [emphasis original] has often, especially in the United States, taken on the connotation of "fanatic" or "terrorist," and we are often told that Shi'is have a "martyr complex" that makes them welcome death in pursuit of their cause. In fact, the majority of the world's assassins in the past centuries have been Europeans of Christian background, and with the exception of the medieval "Assassin" sect, which belonged to a different line than today's politicized Shi'is, Shi'is were not known until very recently for either terrorism or special devotion to offensive holy

wars.... Shi'i veneration for martyrs has in the past been used far more as an incitement to mourning ceremonies and an identification with suffering leaders than it has been for political purposes. The recent activist political use of martyrdom traditions is more an example of a worldwide trend to use deeply believed religious, nationalist, and other themes for political purposes, including self-sacrifice, than it is proof that Shi'is intrinsically tend to sacrifice themselves for political and religious causes.⁹

During the past three decades, the dominant secular ideologies—Nasserism, Ba'thism and Arab socialism—all too often seemed only empty slogans on the lips of selfish politicians. As a result, many Arab Muslims reidentified Islam as a culturally authentic refuge and ideology. The return to Islam has occurred in a political environment where charges of repression, corruption and injustice are not merely anti-government mottoes, but are characteristics of widespread political malaise. In contrast to the perceived profligacy of the rulers, Islam offers an austere alternative unblemished by the corruption and failure that has marked political life in the modern era. In short, Islam is a familiar ideology in a region where alternative ideologies have failed.

women]. A fair number are avowedly anti-clerical, reflecting the view that the clerics are mere minions of the government. Many of the new groups draw their membership from the relatively well-educated middle and lower middle classes whose needs are not being met by the government. Although Islamic activists are frequently inspired by religious values and a desire to protect traditional customs against the onslaught of western values and symbols, they are also concerned with who gets what, when and how much. This is the basic political significance for the Islamic resurgence. The Middle East is witnessing a comprehensive form of political action, rather than an esoteric movement of pious Muslims (though many Muslims may indeed be pious in their beliefs.)

It has become popular among western observers to regard the proliferation of extremist Islamic protest movements and dissident groups as an outgrowth of the Iranian revolution. Many of the currently active groups, however, predate the revolution by a significant chronological margin. By presuming that every group is sponsored by Qom or Tehran, the nature of the phenomenon is grossly oversimplified. This is not to deny that Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's success in Iran has provided an exemplar for the dissatisfied—in short, what pious, well-organized Muslims can accomplish in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. Many Islamic groups that do not seek to establish an Islamic state may derive inspiration from the success of their Muslim colleagues in Iran.

Populist Islamic movements among the Shi'i and Sunni Muslims of the Arab states of the Persian Gulf have grown rapidly. They share a basic faith in Islam, a sense of opposition to corrupt and unjust government, commitment to social justice and equal rights, and an antipathy to external meddling in the area. Adherents of both sects take inspiration from Iran as well as from the resistance of the *mujahidin* to the Soviets in Afghanistan.

There is also mutual distrust be-

tween Sunni and Shi'i activists in the Gulf states, evident in September 1983, when Sunni militants in Kuwait set fire to a Shi'i mosque under construction.¹² Recent bombing and sabotage incidents linked to Shi'i citizens of Kuwait have deepened the

mutual suspicions between Shi'i and Sunni citizens of Kuwait. Similar tense relationships between the two sects are apparent in Lebanon, where the long dominant Sunnis now find their position under challenge from politically assertive Shi'is.

The Impact of The Revolution in Iran

The rise of Ayatollah Khomeini and his confederates made Shi'ism suddenly a subject of rapt commentary. If religion, particularly Shi'ism, was not much noticed prior to the revolution, it quickly elbowed its way into the western public's consciousness. Yet as the brouhaha subsided, the peculiar circumstances of Iran became clearer. The revolution was a more unique and unrepeatable event than many had assumed.

Until the advent of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Shi'i clerics did not involve themselves in the tempo-

ral problem of ruling. What Khomeini did was to develop a new interpretation of Shi'ism. Often accused of wanting to turn back the clock, Khomeini has, in fact, developed a new orthodoxy, a new Shi'ism which departs significantly from the historical. In particular, the concept of the *Wilayat al-Faqih* (the rule of the jurist-consult), which is the doctrinal justification for Khomeini's paramount political role in Iran, is a mechanism for clerical rule that is absent in Shi'ism throughout its history.

The Common Denominators

While the appeal of a reenergized Shi'ism is not high among the majority of Muslims (90 percent of whom are Sunnis), the events in Iran had a more profound effect in the Arab Shi'i communities. In descending order, the largest populations of Twelver Shi'a are found in Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. There are also small numbers of Twelvers in Syria and Oman. In addition, small but significant communities of Persian-speaking Shi'is of Iranian origin are also found in Bahrain and Kuwait. Many Persian-speaking Iraqi Shi'is were expelled from Iraq after 1980. Since the establishment of Shi'ism in Safavid Iran, in the 16th century, there have been important links between these Arab communities and Iran. Indeed, religious scholars from Jabal 'Amil (South Lebanon) and Bahrain moved to Iran four cen-

turies ago in order to assist in the installation of Shi'ism.

A number of somewhat related factors have combined to accentuate the salience of religious identity for many Shi'a. As rule of thumb, it is safe to predict that wherever they are found in the Arab world, the Shi'a are likely to be disadvantaged in comparison with non-Shi'a. In fact, outside of Iran there is no country in the world where the Shi'a dominate their political system. Considering the Arab world as a whole, the Shi'a are a decided numerical minority. During the Ottoman empire, the Shi'a, viewed derisively and suspiciously by the rulers, were often denied access to education, military training and government office.

There are certainly a number of Shi'i families, for instance, in Kuwait and Lebanon, who have amassed considerable wealth. But, in general,

the Shi'a occupy a low rung on the ladder of social and economic status, a potent factor to mobilize political action.

Without question, the revolution in Iran has been a source of pride for many Shi'a. The revolution was an object lesson that was taken as evidence that deprivation or second-class citizenship did not have to be passively accepted. It is no accident, therefore, that Shi'a in Lebanon or in Saudi Arabia became much more assertive and demanding in the months following the departure of the Shah.

Intent on seeing its revolution spread, Iran provided considerable support, in terms of material, funds and propaganda, to prompt action by Shi'a in Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. In some cases, like the abortive coup in Bahrain, Iran's hand was a major factor. But, in many instances, like the 1979 demonstrations in Saudi Arabia's Eastern province, Iran's role was less important than the sheer power of accumulated grievances at a moment of heightened political emotion.

Given the nature of the revolution in Iran, Shi'ism did increase in significance, both for the Shi'i and non-Shi'i Muslims. In the Gulf states, for instance, apprehension that the Iranian example would prove infectious, led local governments to clamp down on their Shi'i citizens and residents, by increasing police surveillance, expelling suspected and revealed troublemakers and generally making the heavy hand of the government more obvious for all. In the process, many of the Shi'a became more aware of their sect. Yet, with some exceptions, the Shi'a were not intent on revolution, but in repairing social inequities.

If the sectarian identity the Arab Shi'a shared with their Iranian co-religionists brought them closer to Iran, differences in language (Arabic vs. Persian), ethnicity and even ideology remained. This was nowhere clearer than in Iraq, where the majority of the population adheres to Shi'ism. The Iraqi Shi'a are Arabs, not Persians. Contrary to many predictions, when fighting in the Gulf war began, the Shi'a of Iraq did not sud-

denly succumb to the presumed magnetic appeal of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Throughout the fighting from 1980 to 1988, young Iraqi men, who happened to also be Shi'a, fought as members of the Iraqi army and disproved the pundits and instant experts. In point of fact, government propaganda, which emphasized that an Arab army was confronting a traditional adversary, a Persian army, struck a resonant chord. Of course, Iraq is far from a functioning democracy, and omnipresent *mukhabarat* (secret police) should not be discounted as a controlling factor.

To ultimately understand an important, yet varied group like the Arab Shi'a, one must focus on societies, on local conditions in which people live their lives and voice their demands. Social and economic changes do not make nearly as exciting headlines as violence, war and secret diplomacy, but the real drama among the Arab Shi'a has been taking place in the realm of modernization.

Bahrain

The island state of Bahrain has a population of about 350,000. About 60 percent of its citizens are Shi'a, many of Arab origin, although there are some old families of Iranian descent.

Bahrain is dominated politically by Sunnis. Despite their numbers, the Shi'a hold only five minor positions in the government and they have often voiced their resentment at being a dominated majority. During the 20th century there have been periodic clashes between the Sunni and Shi'i inhabitants, notably in 1923, and in 1953 when fighting broke out during 'Ashura. After the fall of the Shah, in August 1979, demonstrations arose to protest the detention of a Shi'i religious leader. The most serious incident though occurred in 1981 when Bahraini authorities arrested dozens of Arab conspirators, nearly all from Bahrain or Arab states of the Gulf, who had smuggled arms onto the island as part of a somewhat hare-brained plot to establish an Islamic Republic of Bahrain. The incident

sent shock waves through the Gulf, especially because Iran seemed to have played a key supporting role.

Kuwait

The rich emirate of Kuwait is the home to some 250,000 Shi'is (19 percent of the population), most of whom are relatively new migrants from Iraq. For security reasons, Kuwait has not hesitated to expel thousands of non-citizen Shi'is, including Lebanese, Iranians, as well as Kuwaitis of Persian origin.

For the most part, Kuwait has responded to the needs of its citizens and Shi'i citizens have shared in Kuwait's bounty from petroleum. There were some restive moments in 1979, but the serious problems came later. The 'Amir of Kuwait, Shaikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah, was nearly killed in a 1985 roadside explosion designed to destroy the limousine in which he was riding. In 1985, 1986 and 1987 there were bombings, some directed at the economic infrastructure. Reportedly, youths from established and respected Shi'i families were involved.

The most notorious acts of violence were the coordinated December 1983 car-bombings. Their targets included the American and French embassies. Among the saboteurs arrested were 17 members of the al-Da'wa party, a Shi'i group, originating in Iraq, which has become closely linked to Iran.

Most observers agree that the violent activities of Shi'i extremists have only increased the resolve of the vast majority of Kuwaiti Shi'a to reject Iran's version of Shi'ism. This resolve has also been buttressed by the ceasefire in the Gulf war, which signals an apparent end of Iran's campaign of violence to export its revolution to the Gulf states. The Kuwaiti Shi'a will, in the main, attempt to make their way within the political system of Kuwait, not against it.

[The United Arab Emirates and Qatar, both with substantial citizen and non-citizen populations of Shi'a, have been able to avoid the problems that have affected their neighbors.]

Saudi Arabia

Population figures for Saudi Arabia are problematic. Although some estimates are much higher, reliable experts usually put the Shi'i population at five percent or more. The Shi'a are concentrated in the oil-rich Eastern province, although there are also small numbers in Medina as well.

The Shi'a face a special problem in Saudi Arabia where the dominant version of Islam Wahhabism traditionally treats Shi'ism as heretical. Many of the Shi'a have prospered as employees of ARAMCO (the Arabian American Oil Company), with the result that many Saudi Shi'is have joined the middle class. However, many others often have been neglected by the Saudi government's economic and social development programs and they have suffered from discrimination in education. Never represented in a ministerial post, Saudi Shi'is report a profound sense of disenfranchisement.¹³

There have been periodic demonstrations, as long ago as 1952, but more recently in 1979 and 1980. In 1979, government troops were prevented from entering Qatif City for three days, during which time twenty-one people were killed. Speaking of the 1979 incident, a resident scholar, who was present at the time, claims the demonstration was spontaneous: "The people felt they had nothing to lose."¹⁴ It was established that Iranian agitation played a role, but local grievances were clearly the proximate cause. [It is noteworthy that thirteen of those arrested in Bahrain in 1981 were from Qatif.]

The complaints of the Saudi Shi'a have grown as they have gained education and income. Some Saudi Shi'is claim that the middle class harbors a deep resentment of the government.¹⁵ The Saudi government has acted to quell the complaints with a delicate combination of force and economic development. It remains to be seen whether the government has found the right formula.

Iraq

Iraq is an interesting case. Even by the most conservative estimates Shi'i

Muslims make up half of the total population, and many experts place the figure at 55 percent. The Shi'a are concentrated in the southern portions of the country, from Baghdad to Basra, which includes some of the richest reserves of petroleum. Most Shi'a are relatively recent converts, having adopted Shi'ism in the last one to two hundred years. There are also small numbers of Shi'a among the Kurds, a distinct ethnic group which is predominantly Sunni. Until the Gulf war, around one percent of the total population were Persian-speaking Shi'is, for the most part recent immigrants from Iran. These people have been largely expelled.

Historically underrepresented in political offices, they have lived under the domination of the Sunnis. During their reign the Ottomans were suspicious of the Shi'a because of their association with the rival Persians, and throughout the empire they often excluded the Shi'a from government offices and education opportunities. The Shi'a have also cooperated with the Sunnis: In the 1920 revolt against the British the Shi'i 'ulama played a leading role.

As elsewhere in the Arab world, when the Shi'a began to move into politics in the 1950's and 1960's, they often joined the parties of the left. Thus, as in Lebanon, the Iraqi Shi'a embraced the Iraqi Communist party in significant numbers. The reformist and radical parties promised to establish governments based on secular principles that would erase the discriminatory impact of being a Shi'i. Moreover, by joining one of these parties, the Shi'i could surmount the status of religious minority. The ruling Ba'th party has recruited Shi'a, so that many of the nominal ruling bodies are in fact manned by a majority of Shi'a.

The Shi'i clergy, numerically and proportionately smaller than its Iranian counterpart, has generally adopted a quietist approach to politics. This attitude is particularly marked in the case of the venerable Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i, who has not accepted Khomeini's concept of the Wilayat al-Faqih. None the less, some of the 'ulama, notably

al-Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and the sons of the late Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim, rejected quietism in favor of activism. Al-Sadr, executed in 1980, urged acceptance of the Wilayat al-Faqih, and was a seminal voice in developing economic theory on the basis of Islamic principles.

Many poor rural Shi'a left their villages and moved to the suburbs, particularly Baghdad, enlarging the numbers of urban poor. Shi'i political movements like al-Da'wa and the Mujahidin have attracted a following in these urban slums.

As the urban masses became a political recruitment pool for militant Shi'i organizations, the Iraqi response to the rise of these groups was swift and brutal. By 1983 most of the militant groups were operating out of Iran, under the umbrella of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution of Iraq.

For many Iraqi Shi'a, Iran's sponsorship of militant groups was hardly a commendable endorsement. While a segment of the Iraqi Shi'a clearly prefer a Shi'i answer to their problems, most seem resigned to living in a Ba'thist Iraq.

The Baghdad government has, at the same time, put an enormous amount of money into the Shi'i areas, including Najaf, Jufa and the suburbs of the capital. For the time being, the carrot and the stick policy does seem to be working rather well.

Lebanon

By focusing on social and economic change, and the disruption associated with it, it is possible to understand the tensions and the pressures that make a group of people available for a range of actions, including political violence and terrorism.¹⁶ A good example is the case of the Shi'i Muslims of Lebanon, who have figured in much of the violence of recent years.¹⁷

Despite a popular impression, it is not accurate to assert that the Shi'a of Lebanon suddenly burst out of their impoverishment during the last four or five years. In fact, the modernization of the Shi'a has been underway since the late 1940's. By the eve of the 1975-1976 civil war in Lebanon, it

was clear that the Shi'a were shaking loose from the inertia and quiescence that had long marked them as a community.

Since Lebanon's independence in 1943, access to education had produced a growing pool of individuals who were no longer content to confine their horizons to subsistence farming. Improved transportation eroded the geographic isolation of the community. A rapidly growing communications network, both within and without Lebanon, brought the outside world—with its political ideologies and its "modern" ideas and technologies—into the most remote village.

Modernization of the agricultural sector, including an increasing emphasis on cash crops and farm mechanization, served to produce an underemployed and unemployed mass that was forced to move off the land in order to survive. The resultant migration led to the swelling of Beirut's suburbs by the 1960's. More important, the dearth of economic opportunities within Lebanon was an important factor prompting the movement of many Shi'i men overseas, where the rich opportunities of the Gulf, and especially West Africa, provided a

clear means with which to break the bonds of poverty. Indeed, the fruits of West African labors are readily observable in towns such as Jwayya and Shaqrah in the southern part of Lebanon, where impressive homes stand as testaments to the money that has been earned in Abijan and other African locales. Later, the money earned by Shi'i migrants would play a crucial role in financing the growth of Shi'i political activism with Lebanon.

As the Shi'a began to break the bindings of underdevelopment, their demands became increasingly difficult for the traditional political bosses to meet; there was little incentive for the *za'im* (or political boss) to facilitate the modernization of his formerly pliant clients. Thus, the 1950's, and especially the 1960's and 1970's, saw a growth in alternative social, political and economic organizations. Government-chartered family associations, organized for business purposes, grew at a disproportionately high rate among the Shi'a. The 'Amiliyah Islamic Benevolent Society, mimicking the Maqasid Benevolent Society of the Sunni Muslims, sponsored schools in the Beirut area. Previously grossly underrepresented in the bureaucracy, the Shi'a began to

receive a larger share of senior civil service appointments as the Lebanese government responded to their demands.

Increasingly, the politicized Shi'is began to participate in a wide range of secular political parties. Indeed, the 1960's and the early 1970's marked the ascent of anti-establishment parties like the Ba'th (Arab Renaissance Party), the Communist Party, and the Organization for Communist Labor Action (OCLA), whose ideologies promised radical social, economic and political reform in Lebanon. Even the predominantly Maronite Christian Kata'ib (or Phalangist) Party attracted a modest number of Shi'is as members. Simultaneously, the Palestinian guerrilla organizations drew large numbers of Shi'i recruits who saw in their plight a parallel with that of the Palestinians.

The civil war of 1975-76 provided a measure of the level of Shi'i membership in the revisionist, radical and revolutionary parties (and their militias), when far more Shi'is fell during the civil war of 1975-1976 than members of any other group in Lebanon. The Shi'a were the cannon fodder and the foot soldiers of the war.

The Role of Musa al-Sadr

It must be noted that the secular parties did not enjoy a monopoly on Shi'i members. The political bosses managed to maintain significant, if dwindling, followings. Of greater significance though was the movement that emerged around the charismatic Iranian cleric al-Sayyid Musa al-Sadr (the cousin of the Iraqi cleric, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr). Born in Iran in 1928, al-Sadr returned to his ancestral home of South Lebanon in 1959, where he quickly established himself as a leader of great talent and energy. Within a few years of his arrival, Musa al-Sadr emerged as the most significant rival to the leading Shi'i *za'im* Kamil al-As'ad, a man who came to symbolize—through his per-

sonal life style, his disdain for his co-religionists, and his opportunism—all that was wrong with the old political system.

Musa al-Sadr did not create the Shi'i awakening, but he made skillful use of a ripe political environment created by tumultuous change. By the end of the 1960's he succeeded in shepherding the creation of the Supreme Shi'i Council, a body which put the Shi'a on an equal institutional footing with the Sunni Muslims, and served not incidentally as an important political base for al-Sadr who was elected the first—and to date, the only—President of the Council. In 1970, he was in large measure responsible for the creation of the Majlis al-

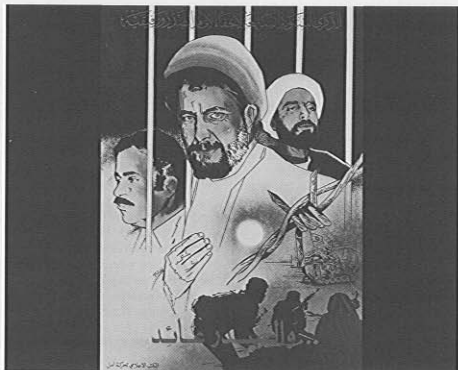
Janub (Council of the South), a body chartered and funded to oversee the development of Southern Lebanon. (Unfortunately, the Council of the South became just another vehicle of political corruption, and it soon fell under the influence of Kamil al-As'ad.)

As Lebanon moved closer to the carnage that began in 1975, nearly all of the country's political movements contained militia components. Thus, al-Sadr's Harakat al-Mahrumin (Movement of the Deprived) included a militia adjunct as well. The militia (which became known in 1975) was named Amal, an acronym for *Afwaj al-Muqawamah al-Lubnaniyah* (Lebanese Resistance Detachments).

Amal was not an impressive militia in 1975. It contained no more than 1,500 poorly trained members, and it is widely remembered for its defeats during this period than for its victories. In fact, the movement seemed to fade into insignificance by 1976, as did Musa al-Sadr, in large measure because of his support for Syria in June 1976, when Syria intervened against the PLO and other erstwhile Amal allies.

Amal was rescued from obscurity by three developments during 1978 and 1979: the disappearance of Musa al-Sadr, the Iranian revolution, and tensions with the PLO.

In August 1978 Musa al-Sadr disappeared while on a visit to Libya. He has not been heard from since and it is likely that he was killed by Muammar al-Qadhafi, or at least as a result of the Libyan strongman's orders.¹⁸ If al-Sadr was a looming personality in life, he achieved heroic proportions as a martyr who came to symbolize the plight of the Shi'a in Lebanon. The mystery surrounding his disappearance was richly evocative of the central myths of Shi'ism, especially the occultation of the twelfth Imam



Poster commemorating the seventh anniversary of the disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr. Shown with him are the two men who accompanied al-Sadr to Libya in 1978.

whose reappearance is expected to usher in the reign of justice on earth. In recent years, vitriolic debate has arisen over which Shi'i leaders are the

legitimate custodians of the memory of the absent Imam Musa (as he came to be called by his followers).

The Iranian Revolution and The Shi'a of Lebanon

The "Islamic Revolution" of 1978-1979 in Iran also had a profound impact on the Lebanese Shi'i community. Events in Iran were a significant spur to action for Amal, which both claimed to be the authentically Shi'i movement as well as a representative of all Lebanon's politically dispossessed.

However, if the Islamic Revolution was an important spur to action, it was not a precise model for action. Certainly during the three or four years preceding the 1982 Israeli invasion, Amal positioned itself as an essentially Lebanese movement that sought reform in the Lebanese political system, rather than the replacement of the existing system with an Iranian style "mullahocracy." In this

connection it is important to note that those who assumed the critical leadership roles in Amal were non-clerics drawn largely from the emerging Shi'i middle class, who saw in Amal a vehicle for establishing their place in an otherwise non-responsive and political system. Although al-Sadr had served as the leader of the Supreme Shi'i Council and as the leader of the Harakat al-Mahrumin, the two roles were split along secular-clerical lines, following his disappearance. In Musa al-Sadr's absence, the senior Shi'i cleric in Lebanon was the Mufti Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din (*mufti* is a religious title which signifies that a cleric is the chief expounder of religious law). Shams al-Din assumed the leadership of the Council,

and Husain al-Husaini, an important member of parliament and close associate of al-Sadr, took over control of Amal. ("Amal" had, by this time, become the name of the entire movement, not just the militia component.) Al-Husaini was then replaced by the present Amal leader, Nabih Berri, in 1980. Berri, incidentally, has traveled to the United States often and, until recently, held an alien resident permit. As leader of Amal, he became something of a fixture on U.S. television news during the 1985 skyjacking of TWA flight 847. Many people will recall that, in that incident, Berri played a constructive role in working for the freedom of the American passengers.

Tensions with the PLO

The third significant factor that helped to foster the rejuvenation of Amal was the steadily growing animosity between the Shi'a and the PLO and its Lebanese allies. By the late 1970's the "natural alliance" between the Shi'a and the PLO was coming apart at the seams. The capricious and oppressive behavior of the PLO toward the Lebanese often left much to be desired. In addition, Israeli strikes against the PLO regularly resulted in Shi'i casualties, thereby earning Shi'a resentment of the PLO for its presence in Lebanon.

The 1978 Litani Operation, in which the Israelis invaded Lebanon, was an important watershed. [Editor's note: The Israeli invasion resulted in at least 1,000 civilian casualties and was a response to an earlier PLO raid into Israel, which resulted in 35 civilian deaths.] The Litani Operation signaled a more intensive anti-PLO campaign by Israel, a campaign that persisted until interrupted by a PLO-Israel cease-fire from the Summer of 1981 until the Israeli invasion of June 1982.

The Shi'a had simply had enough and, although the Israel Defense Force (IDF) was often causing much more direct damage than the PLO, it was the PLO that earned the blame for the destruction wrought by Israeli arms, as well as for its own misdeeds. The reciprocal to the declining relationship between the Shi'a and the PLO was the role of Amal as a moderately effective—if loosely organized—anti-PLO home-guard. In an important sense, Amal was less an organization than a motto, a political statement of mind that represented the adamant desire of many Shi'is to control their own fate and throw off the increasingly detested presence of the PLO.

In the 1978-1982 period there was an unbroken pattern of Amal-PLO clashes, the most serious taking place in the five months preceding the June 1982 invasion. It is a fair assertion that the later "War of the Camps" in the Beirut area, and in South Lebanon,

was simply a later chapter in Amal-PLO fighting, a chapter closely connected with the deep animosities generated in the period prior to the Israeli invasion of 1982. Most Shi'is are today staunchly dedicated to the idea that the Palestinian "mini-state" that existed in Lebanon before 1982 must not be allowed to be reerected.

Although rejuvenation of Amal was an interesting development in the 1978-1982 period, the scene was not monopolized by Amal. Active as well was the Hizb al-Da'wa, or Party of the Call, taking inspiration from the brilliant writing of al-Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, a formidable presence in Najaf (Iraq). (The connection between Najaf and the Lebanese Shi'a is a grossly understudied subject.)

As early as 1980, Da'wa dissolved itself to work closely with the new Islamic Republic of Iran. From Iran's perspective, Amal was a defective political movement, because it did not seek to emulate the Islamic revolution in Lebanon. During this same period, Iran seems to have sown the seeds for a number of relationships with Lebanese Shi'is, especially Shi'i clerics. As later events were to show, the seeds began to germinate in the post-1982 period.

In 1982 Damascus, licking its wounds from the war with Israel, needed a counterweight to the Amal movement, which was then actively exploring ties with the United States. Hizballah (The Party of God) was to be the counterweight. [The Lebanese-based party is widely thought to be deeply involved in the kidnapping of westerners in Lebanon.]

A major contributing factor to the upsurge in less moderate Shi'i groups has been the continuing Israeli presence in Lebanon. Especially in Southern Lebanon, many of the Shi'a greeted the invading army cordially. After all, the Israeli army was expelling the PLO. Moreover, they were driving 60-ton tanks, which are always wisely greeted with smiles and waves. Israel's mistake was to stay

too long in Lebanon. Had Israel departed quickly, the story would have been very different; however, Israel chose to stay. As time passed, the Israelis increasingly came to be viewed as an occupation force in Lebanon, and, even today, Israel effectively occupies nearly ten percent of Lebanon's total territory in its so-called "Security Zone."

The Security Zone has come to be an important magnet for resistance attacks by an admixture of forces, ranging from Amal and Hizballah to a variety of secular parties. Most important, so long as Israel remains in control of Lebanese territory, no Lebanese Shi'i leader can avoid the duty of resistance. Many of the attacks are minor shooting or mining incidents, but there have been some sensational operations. Most recently, on October 19, 1988, seven Israeli soldiers died when their convoy was demolished, in Lebanon, by a car bomb driven by a Shi'i affiliated with Hizballah.

It should be emphasized that no religious group enjoys a monopoly on self-destruction. Of the 31 suicide attacks that took place in Lebanon from 1983 to 1986, less than a third were carried out by men or women who were affiliated with "Islamic groups." The perpetrators in the bulk of the cases were members of secular political parties or movements. Israeli analysts claim that Syrian intelligence was actually behind most of the attacks.

It is now known that Hizballah is led by a council which consists of about twelve members, one or two of whom may be Iranians. Iran has funneled considerable support through this council, including war materiel, humanitarian goods and cash.²⁹ Until he returned to Iran to become the Minister of Interior, the Iranian ambassador to Syria, 'Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, was thought to play a major role in coordinating Iran's activities in Lebanon and with Hizballah, and probably served as a member of the council.³⁰

Although Hizballah spokesmen have been keen to dissociate the party from the kidnappings of westerners, it is widely believed that the Islamic

Jihad organization, credited for some of the kidnappings, is merely a label of convenience masking Hizballah involvement.

Much ink has been spilt on the issue of who leads Hizballah, but there appears to be a collegial leadership which subsumes many factions and cliques. Even Iran must cajole and persuade rather than direct and order in such an environment. In other words, despite their links to Iran, it would be erroneous to assert that the cliques within Hizballah lack a considerable freedom of action.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the various Arab Shi'a communities are not a homogeneous whole, but instead represent a diverse assortment of problems, and contexts. In addition, some governments have responded to the demands of indigenous Shi'a more effectively and consistently than other governments. For their part, the Arab Shi'a seem to have responded well to the positive economic programs, and they have shown themselves quite willing—given the chance—to play a fuller role in day-to-day politics.

In the final analysis, the political behavior of the Arab Shi'a is no less explicable than that of any other community in the Middle East.

Notes

1. The transliteration of Arabic words into English often produces an amazing variety of words. In everyday usage, the spellings "Shiite" or "Shia" appear frequently, but it is so easy to use a more accurate style of transliteration that I have avoided these spellings in this article. There are several commonly employed nouns and adjectives used to refer to the Shi'i sect of Islam. Here the following forms of reference are used: "Shi'ism" is a proper noun referring to the Shi'i variant of Islam. "Shi'i" is both a proper noun and an adjectival modifier. In the former usage, a "Shi'i" is an adherent of Shi'ism; in the latter form, we would refer, for instance, to "Shi'i" beliefs. "Shi'a" is a collective noun, as in the "Shi'a of Bahrain." In references to a number of Shi'i persons, "Shi'is" is sometimes preferred to "Shi'a" for the sake of readability, but references to the community as a whole refer to the "Shi'a."

The origin of the term "Shi'a" is "Shi'at Ali," which means simply the party or partisans of 'Ali, referring to Imam 'Ali, who the Shi'a regard as the legitimate successor to the prophet Muhammad.

2. By using the word "myth" it is not meant to imply that an event did not occur, only that an event has been embellished over time.

3. Reliable population figures for the Middle East, especially for minority groups, are sometimes very hard to find. The rough estimates provided are just that.

4. The information on the diverse Shi'i sects and offshoots is drawn from a number of sources, but the splendid book by Momen [Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'a Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985)] is the best source in English.

5. Momen, p. 165.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

7. Several Lebanese informants have described this practice among Lebanese Sunni Muslims.

8. Nikki R. Keddie and Juan R.L. Cole, "Introduction," in *Shi'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 28.

9. This shift of identity has been accompanied by an ethos of independent action that has

been emerging steadily since 1983 and 1984. During those years the Israeli army was regularly pummeled by Lebanese militants, many of whom were Shi'i Muslims. The lesson was not lost on the Palestinians, and one recent official report in Israel indicates that over half of the "incidents" occurring in the occupied territories, even before the beginning of the "intifada" in December 1987, were locally organized. See *Bamahane*, October 21, 1987, p. 6. 10. For valuable analyses see Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, ed., *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982); Nikki R. Keddie, "Iran: Change in Islam, Islam and Change," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11 (July 1980): 527-542; and Edward Mortimer, *Faith and Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982).

11. Quoted in *The Middle East*, October 1983, p. 23.

12. See James A. Bill, "Resurgent Islam in the Persian Gulf," *Foreign Affairs* 63 (Fall 1984): 108-127.

13. Based on personal interviews with Sadi Shi'i; see Cole and Keddie, *Shi'ism and Social Protest*.

14. Based on personal interview.

15. Based on personal interviews. This is not an unusual phenomenon. It is known from modernization experiences elsewhere that people increase their expectations and demands as their level of education and income rise.

16. See Gianfranco Pasquino, "The Theory of Social Mobilization and the Origins of Terrorism" (in Italian), *Politica Internazionale*, December 1986, pp. 5-11.

17. The material in the remainder of this section is drawn from a large body of writing by the author, the most accessible of which may be "Shi'ism and Social Protest in Lebanon," in Cole and Keddie, eds. *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, pp. 156-178. The reader may also wish to consult Augustus R. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

18. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, pp. 52-56.

19. Nora Boustany, "The Benevolent Hand of the Ayatollah," *Financial Times*, July 26-27, 1987.

20. Martin Kramer, ed., *Shi'ism: Resistance and Revolution* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, and Mansell Publishing, LTD, 1987), p. 172.

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Notices

Hostage Crisis

"The problems in the Middle East are very important to my future," stated a ninth grader, after he had participated in the simulation "Hostage Crisis."

"Hostage Crisis" is a role play component, complemented by introductory videotapes, written exercises and a required text—*Terrorism: The New Warfare*, by Terrell E. Arnold and Moorhead Kennedy, Walker and Co., NY, 1988. The role play, in three sessions, includes interactive teams playing the President and his advisors, a committee of terrorists, hostages and TV correspondents. A debriefing session follows. "Hostage

Crisis" can be run in four classroom periods, or in a workshop format. To date, "Hostage Crisis" has had 34 "runs" in schools, colleges, church groups, at educational conferences and in-service teacher training sessions. Cable News Network ran a 2-1/2 minute story about "Hostage Crisis" with viewer reactions reported from as far away as Australia.

For information, write to Martha M. Keys or Moorhead Kennedy, The Myrin Institute, 136 East 64th Street, New York, NY 10021, or call 212-832-2931.

Audio Cassettes

Cassette tapes featuring lectures and interviews with Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, Alexander Cockburn, and others on Middle East topics are

available from radio producer and journalist David Barsamian. Many of these programs have been broadcast on public radio stations around the world. For free catalog, write to: David Barsamian, 1814 Spruce, Boulder, CO 80302.

Medican Fund

A special fund has been set up to cover the medical care of a 17-year-old Palestinian boy who has been brought to New England Deaconess Hospital for a highly experimental intestinal transplant. The boy, Mohammad Abu-Aker, was shot in the stomach by an Israeli soldier. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to: Naim Foundation, the Abu-Aker Fund, 2812 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20008.

Book Views

Islam: The Straight Path

By John L. Esposito

New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, 230 pp., \$9.95.

Reviewed by Charles A. Kimball

For most Westerners, the Islamic religious tradition is perceived as mysterious, backward and threatening. The negative stereotypes, strewn throughout the long history of enmity between Christians and Muslims, have been reinforced during the past decade by sensational TV coverage of violent actions and political upheavals, portrayed as the norm in the Islamic world. Remarkably few Americans exhibit an awareness of the rich history and cultural traditions that shape the lives and behavior of some 800 million Muslims worldwide.

For those who wish to expand their understanding, various introduc-

tions to Islam are available. Most texts, even those which are quite good, are inadequate for a diverse readership.¹ Some are useful for students of religion, but less so for history and political science; few concentrate significantly on the modern period. Happily, John Esposito's new book, *Islam: The Straight Path*, provides both a helpful introduction to Muslim faith and practice and a solid overview of contemporary dynamics. Esposito, professor of religious studies at Holy Cross, developed the text for use in world religion, Middle East history, politics and anthropology courses that require an introductory text as one component. Almost certainly, this fine book will find a large readership well beyond the college classroom.

The first of the book's five chapters concentrates on "Muhammad and the Quran: Messenger and Message."

Esposito sensitively elucidates the manner in which the revealed message of the Quran and the living example of the Prophet have constituted the formative and enduring foundation of faith and belief. The reader is encouraged not only to understand but also to appreciate the richness of the Islamic tradition. After introducing the Quran, for instance, the author conveys its centrality for Muslims today:

Today, crowds fill stadiums and auditoriums throughout the Islamic world for public Quran recitation contests. Chanting (*tajwid*) of the Quran is an art form. Reciters or chanters are held in high esteem comparable to that of opera stars in the West. Memorization of the entire Quran brings great prestige as well as merit. Recordings of the Quran are enjoyed for their aesthetic as well as religious value.

In the second chapter, Esposito surveys "The Muslim Community in History." He guides the reader through the classical early history, explaining how Islamic organizations and institutions were shaped. The diversity within the tradition illustrates how Islam is far from monolithic. Various schools of law, theology and philosophy reflect both the creative debates within the tradition and explain the roots of the contemporary differences among Sunnis, Shi'i groupings and Druze.

The overview of "Religious Life: Belief and Practice," contained in chapter three, highlights the fundamental tenets of Islam as well as key figures and movements (e.g., Sufism, the mystical tradition). With the skill of a seasoned scholar and an engaging writer, Esposito moves deftly from the "pillars of Islam" through issues of custom and law (e.g., divorce, inheritance, veiling and seclusion of women, etc.) to popular religious life. The sensitive reader will discover a rich religious tradition as "divine" and "human" as the Christian, Jewish or Buddhist traditions, inspiring and motivating adherents to their highest good and, at the same time, replete with fourteen centuries of human foibles.

Esposito, a prolific writer and increasingly visible commentator on contemporary events, hits full stride in the final two chapters: "Modern Interpretations of Islam" and "Contemporary Islam." His insightful explanations of developments during the past two centuries dispel the simplistic images and stereotypes rampant in the West.² He guides the reader through the maze of pre-modern revivalist movements, Islamic modernist movements and Islamic societies such as the Muslim Brotherhood. He enables us to appreciate Muslims who sought (and seek) to respond to the challenges of colonialism and modernism.

Islamic revival and reform—frequently, and incorrectly, labelled "Islamic fundamentalism" in the West—is linked to two distinct approaches or attitudes: (1) a traditionalist desire to restore an early Islamic ideal; (2) a reformist call for renova-

tion or reconstruction through Islamic, as distinct from Western, reform. Esposito notes that both approaches emphasize reliance on Islamic sources. The "key difference between traditionalists and reformers," he explains, is their "understanding and use of Islamic history and tradition as well as the nature and degree of change they advocate." The author summarizes his findings with these words:

Contemporary Islamic revivalism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has demonstrated its strength, diversity, and staying power for almost two decades. There has been disillusionment among many Muslims with the abuses or manipulation of religion by some governments and radical organizations. At the same time, revivalism continues to grow as a broad based religio-social (*dawah*) movement, functioning today virtually within every Muslim country and internationally.

As with any introduction, this book occasionally deals a bit too briefly with major issues. At other times, Esposito drops names of individuals and/or groups in a way that presupposes too much of beginning students. Both of these minor criti-

cisms are answered in part by his inclusion of a substantial reference bibliography. A more puzzling matter is his decision to avoid using any diacritical marks. At a time when Islamicists endeavor to standardize transliteration, it seems inadequate to drop all diacriticals on the grounds that they "are confusing for the beginner and tend to underscore the 'foreignness' of materials."

In the end, these are minor points that do not diminish the value of this fine study, which offers a timely and well-written analysis on what is widely agreed to be a most significant area of interest and concern.

Notes

1. The most useful introductions to Islam include the following: *The House of Islam*, by Kenneth Cragg, is a compact, yet thorough volume with an accompanying anthology; *Mohammedanism: An Historical Survey*, by H.A.R. Gibb, although slightly dated and poorly titled, remains valuable for its brevity, scholarship and readability; *Islam* (2nd ed.), by Fazlur Rahman, is the best one-volume text by a prominent Muslim scholar; and *The Venture of Islam* (3 vols.), by Marshall S.G. Hodgson, is the definitive study in English.
2. A more thorough treatment of many of the same themes is found in Esposito's study on *Islam and Politics*.

Charles A. Kimball is the Middle East Director for the National Council of Churches, based in New York.

Books To Order

Review Selection

- John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, 230 pp., paperback. Sensitive and comprehensive introduction to Islam by a distinguished professor of religion. Includes overview of tenets and history, as well as contemporary politics of the Muslim world. Excellent college-level text. List price: \$9.95. *Our price: \$7.75. See review on page 13.*

- Abed Al-Samih Abu Omar, *Traditional Palestinian Embroidery and Jewelry*, Jerusalem: Al-Shark Arab Press, 1986, 144 pp., cloth. Beautiful full-color photos of traditional Palestinian dress from a unique

collection. Wedding dresses highlighting embroidery stitches and accessories from each region in Palestine. Accompanied by English/Arabic text full of local history. A perfect gift. List price: \$35.00. *Our price: \$15.50.*

- Uri Avneri, *My Friend, The Enemy*, Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill and Co., 1986, 340 pp., paperback. A long-time Israeli peace activist gives an intimate record of the numerous secret meetings that he and a small group of "Peace Now" Israeli leaders have had with PLO representatives. List price: \$12.95. *Our price: \$8.50.*

- James Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988, 520 pp., cloth. Comprehensive analysis by a leading authority on Iran of flawed U.S. policy towards Iran from the 1940's to the Iran-Contra scandal and the U.S. naval action in the Persian Gulf. List price: \$25.00. Our price: \$16.75.
- Carol J. Birkland, *Unified in Hope: Arabs and Jews Talk About Peace*, New York: Friendship Press, 1988, 160 pp., paperback. Nine Israeli Jews and ten Palestinian Arabs speak with disarming frankness of their fears and hopes for the future. List price: \$8.95. Our price: \$7.25.
- Elias Chacour, *Blood Brothers*, Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1984, 224 pp., cloth. A Palestinian priest known for his humanitarian works in the Galilee tells the story of his search for conciliation between Palestinian and Jewish Israelis. Father Chacour, whose village was deliberately destroyed by the Israeli army on Christmas Day, 1951, speaks of the concerns of Palestinian Christians as they struggle for the survival of their community in Israel. List price: \$9.95. Our price: \$3.95.
- Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land?*, Herts, England: Lion Publishing, 1983, 253 pp., paperback. Outlines the conflicting claims to the Holy Land from the time of the bible on. Discusses the relevance of biblical promises to the modern age. List price: \$7.95. Our price: \$4.95.
- Noam Chomsky, *Pirates and Empires: International Terrorism in the Real World*, Brattleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1986, 174 pp., paperback. An incisive study of the deceptions and double standards to which U.S. and Israeli officials and the media routinely resort in discussing the issue of terrorism. List price: \$8.95. Our price: \$5.75.
- Uri Davis, *Israel: An Apartheid State*, London: Zed Books, 1987, 145 pp., paperback. Concise, well-documented examination of institutionalized racism in Israel by a noted Israeli scholar. Maps and charts. List price: \$10.95. Our price: \$8.25.
- James Ennes, Jr., *Assault on the Liberty*, New York: Random House, 1979, 299 pp., cloth. The author was an officer on the bridge during the prolonged and brutal attack on the USS Liberty by Israeli planes and torpedo boats in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Thirty-four American crewmen were killed, 171 wounded. List price: \$14.95. Our price: \$3.95.
- Thomas Fenton and Mary Helfron, *Middle East: A Directory of Resources*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988, 144 pp., paperback. Annotated entries on organi-
- zations, audiovisual materials, and publications on the Middle East. Essential reference for academics, journalists and political activists/leaders. List price: \$9.95. Our price: \$6.75.
- Elizabeth Fernea and Basima Bezigian, *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1984, 452 pp., paperback. This collection of autobiographical and biographical sketches, spanning 13 centuries, is a superb introduction to the lives of Muslim women. List price: \$12.50. Our price: \$8.25.
- Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1987, 277 pages, paperback. Noted Israeli scholar reconstructs the actual events behind the official myths about Israel's founding. List price: \$8.95. Our price: \$6.50.
- Grace Halsell, *Journey to Jerusalem*, New York: MacMillan, 1982, 193 pp., paperback. Memoirs of an American journalist's personal encounters with a wide array of Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, sensitively written. List price: \$7.95. Our price: \$3.75.
- Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics: Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War*, Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill and Company, 1986, 210 pp., cloth. An exploration of the close relationship between prominent right-wing fundamentalists and Israeli ultra-nationalists. List price: \$14.95. Our price: \$9.25.
- John Hayes, *The Genius of Arab Civilization: Source of Renaissance*, Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1983, 260 pp. This handsome introduction to the classical Arab world highlights the contribution by Arabs to world civilization. Illustrated. List cloth price: \$35.00. Our cloth price: \$21.25. List paperback price: \$12.95. Our paperback price: \$9.25.
- David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*, London: Futura Publications, 1978, reprinted 1983, 367 pages, paperback. Excellent introduction to the Palestinian/Zionist conflict, covering the years from 1880 to 1974. List price: \$7.95. Our price: \$2.95.
- George E. Irani, *The Papacy and the Middle East: The Role of the Holy See in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1962-1984*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986, 218 pp., cloth. This well-researched book is the first major study of the policy of the Catholic Church regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. List price: \$22.95. Our price: \$13.75.
- Ian S. Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord: Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1988, 244 pp., paperback. An insightful and disturbing analysis of the impact of the numerically small Gush Emunim on Israeli politics; shows how Jewish fundamentalists are increasingly successful at blocking all attempts at peace and justice for the Palestinians. List price: \$11.95. Our price: \$8.95.
- Sami Mussalam, *The Palestine Liberation Organization: Its Function and Structure*, Brattleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1988, 70 pp., paperback. Most up-to-date handbook on this complex "government-in-exile." Includes an organizational chart. List price: \$6.95. Our price: \$5.25.
- Donald Neff, *Warriors Against Israel: How Israel Won the Battle to Become America's Ally*, Brattleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1988, 371 pp., cloth. Suspenseful history of the 1973 war by *Time's* former bureau chief in Jerusalem. Concludes acclaimed trilogy on the U.S. role in Israel's three major wars. List price: \$19.95. Our price: \$12.25.
- Donald Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, Brattleboro, VT: Amana Press, 1988, 479 pp., paperback. The Suez war marked the end of empire for France and England, the rise of Israel as the regional power, and the emergence of the U.S. as the superpower arbiter in the Middle East. List price: \$9.95. Our price: \$6.50.
- Donald Neff, *Warriors for Jerusalem*, Brattleboro, VT: Amana Press, 1988, 430 pp., cloth. Relates how Lyndon Johnson wholeheartedly embraced Israel during the June war of 1967, thereby abandoning Eisenhower's policy of cool neutrality. List price: \$9.95. Our price: \$6.50.
- Gregory Orfalea, *Before the Flames: A Quest for the History of Arab Americans*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1988, 354 pp., cloth. The author, searching for his own past, traces a century of Arab-American history in the U.S. More than 100 Arab-Americans reflect on their cultural roots. List price: \$22.50. Our price: \$13.25.
- Alifa Rifaat, *Distant View of a Minaret and Other Stories*, London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1985, 238 pp., paperback. An imaginative and haunting collection of 15 Egyptian short stories. Explores such universal themes as sexuality, marriage, love and death through the eyes of a traditional Muslim woman. List price: \$7.50. Our price: \$5.75.

Livia Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism*, Belmont, MA: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1986, 63 pp., paperback. Examines the diary of Moshe Sharret, prime minister of Israel from 1953-56, and the revelations from it concerning Israel's policy of "sacred terrorism" used to subvert Arab peace initiatives and Arab ties with the U.S. as well as against civilian Palestinian populations. List price: \$5.95. *Our price: \$4.75.*

George Stein, *The Palestinians: Oppression and Resistance of a Disinherited People*, Cologne, West Germany: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, 1988, 154 pp., cloth. Incredibly beautiful full-color photo collection of today's Palestinians under Israeli occupation and in Lebanon. Captures the confidence and spirit of the Uprising as well as

the suffering of the Palestinian people. Short introduction in English, German, French and Spanish outlines the historical development of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. A perfect gift. List price: \$29.95. *Our price: \$19.25.*

Edward Tivnan, *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987, 304 pp., cloth. A former reporter for *Time* magazine, Tivnan has thoroughly researched the history of the Zionist lobby in preparing this lively and cogent attack on AIPAC. He argues that, by dominating U.S. Jewish opinion as well as general American debate on the Middle East issues, AIPAC has damaged prospects for an Arab-Israeli peace. List price: \$19.95. *Our price: \$9.50.*

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