
The book is a collection of articles contributed at the symposium on “New Perspectives on Islam and Politics in the Middle East” held at the Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies in 1983. The participants, Muslim and non-Muslim, were from the Middle East, Europe and the USA, and represented the disciplines of theology, political science, history, sociology, anthropology and law.

The brief bio-data of the contributors given at the end of the book show that most of them are experts in their respective fields. For example, the article: “How the Clergy gained Power in Iran” is contributed by Mansour Farhang, a Ph.D. in Political Science, who remained active in Iranian exile politics from 1960 to 1979 and has held various posts in the Iranian Foreign Ministry from 1979 to 1981. Likewise, the article “Islam Finds Itself” is by Habib Chatty, one time Secretary General of the OIC. “The Islamic Critique of the Status Quo of Muslim Society” is by (the late) Imsā'il Rāji al-Fārūqī, author of over 125 publications about the various fields of Islam. Al-Fārūqī studied at al-Azhar and got his Ph.D. from Indiana University, and at the time his assassination in 1986 was Professor of Religion at Temple University and Director of the International Institute of Islamic Thought in Washington, D.C.

The book is divided into two parts. The first, “Secularist Analyses,” of the phenomenon of Islamic resurgence contains 14 articles on a variety of subjects including “The Muslim Fundamentalist Movements. . .” by B.B. Lawrence, “The Concept of Revival and Study of Islam and Politics” by Eric Davis, “Islam and Arab Nationalism” by Bassam Tibi, “The Islamic Movement. . .” by Richard P. Mitchel, “Islamic Responses to the Capitalist Penetration of the Middle East” by Joel Beinin, “Islamic Marxism in Comparative History. . .” by Peter Gran, “Religion and Politics under Nasser and Sadat. . .” by Ibrahim Ibrahim. A.E.H. Dessouki, Associate Professor of Political Science at Cairo University and author of several books on Middle Eastern and Arab politics as well as international affairs has contributed “Official Islam and Political Legitimation in the Arab Countries”, perhaps the shortest article in the collection, while Ergun Özbudun, Professor of Law and Chairman of the Department of Constitutional Law and Comparative Politics at Ankara University Law School and Director of Ankara University’s Institute for Middle Eastern Studies has contributed a very informative paper on “Islam and Politics in Modern Turkey. . .” and has discussed the case of the National Salvation Party in detail.

Mansour Farhang has presented a very penetrating study on the Role of the Clergy in the Iranian Revolution and how they gained power and succeeded in sustaining it despite heavy opposition from the Left and some other sections of the society. The author is of the opinion that the Clergy succeeded because of “the immaturity and incoherence of their political opponents. In fact, they systematically exploited the secularists’ fragmentation and gradually neutralized them.” (P. 169) He concludes: “Indeed, the Iranians can no longer hold the intruding ‘Other’ responsible for what has happened in their country. This could be a priceless lesson for a people who have been conditioned to blame foreigners for their own flaws and failings.” (p. 173)

Richard T. Antoun has contributed an article on “Key Variables Affecting Muslim Local-Level Religious Leadership in Iran and Jordan”, while Iliya Harik, Professor of Political Science and former Director of the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Indiana University, has studied the question of “Communalism and National Cooperation in Lebanon”, giving the genesis of the present
conflict and holding the Palestinians mainly responsible for making the situation uncontrollable. (pp. 194–202) He concludes with a sanguine note: "Lebanon's historical experience over several hundred years shows that Christian-Muslim political co-existence in a single commonwealth is possible, regardless of the way power is distributed." (p. 202)

Similarly, Hanna Batatu, has contributed an interesting article on the question of "Iraq's Shi'a, their Political Role, and the Process of their Integration into Society", According to him "Saddam Husayn . . . went out of the way to recruit Shi'a into the Ba'th Party and to dote them with his regime. . . . At present there are two Shi'a out of a total number of nine members in the Revolutionary Command Council [the highest policy-making body]. Out of the fifteen members of the Ba'th Party Command, however, four are Shi'a." (p. 212)

Part II of the book, "Normative and Reformist Analyses", contains six articles. Besides the articles by Habib Chatty and Ismā'il Rāji al-Fāriqi referred to above, there is an article on "A Search for Islamic Criminal Justice. . . . by M. Cherif Bassiouni, and a very brief study of "The Recent Impact of Islamic Religious Doctrine on Constitutional Law in the Middle East" by Gamal M. Badr, a Legal Adviser to the permanent Mission of Qatar to the UN and Adjunct Professor of Law at New York University.

A very interesting article on "Religious Ideology, Women and the Family: The Islamic Paradigm" has been contributed by the editor of the book, Barbara Freyer Stowasser, who is the Chairman of the Arabic Department at Georgetown University.

The last article of the book: "Islam between Ideals and Ideologies. . . ." is contributed by Mahmoud A. Ayoub, a Research Associate at the Centre for Religious Studies at Toronto University. He is an expert on the Qur'an and its exegesis as well as Shi'ism. At present, he is engaged in translating selections from the Islamic exegetical works representing the major schools of thought at various periods in Islamic history, of which the first volume, The Qur'an and Its Interpreters, has already been published in 1984. In this article, Ayoub, after sketching the main outline of the Islamic System from the Qur'an and Sunnah, has examined three major movements "that sought to interiorize [Islam] and apply it in the life of the Muslim society: the Khawārij, the Wahhābis and the Society of the Muslim brothers". The writer has briefly discussed the origin, history and impact of these movements on the Muslim society and the causes of their failure in imparting an everlasting and comprehensive influence on the Muslim society at large.

Ayoub's remarks on the three movements as well as on Shi'ism are:

The Khawārij came and went leaving only Muslim aversion to their extremism. . . . The Wahhābis were also rejected by the Muslim community at large and now exist only in fossilized form in a state that speaks through its wealth rather than the enthusiastic voice of a reformer. The slow death, or perhaps recovery, of the Muslim Brothers and their approach calls for withholding judgement. Shi'i hopes and patient struggle may all be dashed on the rocks of the Islamic revolution in Iran, or perhaps with that revolution may bring forth fruits for all Muslims to enjoy. . . . (p. 317)

Lastly Ayoub has also briefly referred to the influence of the Sūfis who "touched the hearts of millions of Muslims with the fire of love," and concludes: "... it was this latter struggle (jihād of the soul by the Sufis) which won for Islam large populations in India, Indonesia, Africa, and Malaysia. If Islam is to have any real influence in Europe and America, it will again have to be through the efforts of the Sufis." (p. 317)

We end the review with the concluding note of the editor of the book:

... [C]ontemporary Islam, though not a unified and centrally organized plan for action, is a widely shared, transnational mood that is eliciting renewed personal commitment and,
occasionally, political activism on the part of the Muslims in all Islamic countries. This mood's central theme is that Islam was established on earth not to redeem and liberate the individual, but to establish a community living under God's guidance and His law. A renewed commitment to faith and action. . . . is therefore understood by Muslims not only as an act of defense against the decadence and immorality of the modern age, but as a precondition for the building of a strong, united Islam as the only road of salvation for the world. (p. 10)

We hope that the book will elicit the interest of all who wish to know about the modern trends in the Muslim world in various fields of life, particularly politics and religion.

S. Ali Raza Naqvi


This is a collection of the Psalms attributed to Imam 'Ali Ibn Husayn (AH 38–95/CE 658–713), also known as Zayn al-‘Abidin because of his piety and constant occupation with prayers and complete detachment from the worldly pursuits and interests. The fourth Imam of the Ithna’i ‘Ashari (Twelver) Shi‘ah, he was the sole surviving adult male of the Prophet’s (peace be on him) family (ahl al-bayt) from the tragedy of Karbala, in which his father Imam Husayn and the rest of the adult males of his family were massacred. The impact of the shock made him retire from the public life and he spent the rest of his days in complete seclusion busying himself with worship, recitation of the Holy Qur’an, and supplication.

Supplications or prayers form a large part of the Shi‘ite spiritual and religious literature. Various Shi‘ah scholars, during different periods of time, have composed prayers for daily recital, as well as, for particular occasions. These prayers are believed to have come down either from the Prophet (peace be on him) or the Imams. The prayers of the Imams are held in equally high esteem since, according to the Shi‘i belief, they constitute a chain of light issued forth from the “Sun of Prophecy”, peace be on him (A Shi‘ite Anthology, edited and translated by William C. Chittick, Introduction by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Muhammadi Trust, London, 1989, p. 6). Whatever has come down from them is believed, therefore, to have emanated from the divinely inspired wisdom and knowledge. Perhaps the reason for the abundance of supplications in the Shi‘ite literature is that the most of the Imams of the Shi‘ah, particularly the latter one’s, spent almost their entire lives or major parts of them as victims of unending persecution, which predisposed them to concentrate their attention on worship and recitation of supplications or prayers addressed to the Almighty.

The Sahifat al-Sajjadiyyah is a collection of, perhaps, some of the most beautiful and soul-stirring supplications and is held in esteem next only to the Qur’an and the Nahj al-Balaghah in the Shi‘i spiritual literature. These prayers form part of the daily religious life of not only the Shi‘ah’s but also of many Sunnis, since quite a few of these prayers are found in many of the prayer manuals popular among the Sunnis. Some of these prayers have been translated by Constance Padwick in her Muslim Devotions (London: 1961).

The Shi‘ah believe that Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin himself collected the supplications and taught them to his children, especially to Imam Muhammad al-Baqir and Zayd. Subsequently, these prayers were widely circulated among his followers. The Shi‘ah authorities on the Hadith believe that the text of the supplications has been transmitted through an un-broken chain of narrators and its authenticity has never been questioned by the scholars. Fifty-four supplications form the main body of the text while fourteen supplications (including seven prayers for each day of the week) and fifteen munajjat were added later. These latter supplications are said to have been added to the original text.
by Shams al-Din Muhammad Ibn al-Makkî (d. 786/1384), better known as al-Shâhid al-Awwal, the author of the famous work on Shi'âh jurisprudence, al-Lum'at al-Dimishqiyyah.

The original Sahifah does not comprise all the supplications which have come down to us from Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, as at least eight other collections, containing additional supplications, were compiled later by other Shi'âh scholars. The second Sahifah (lithographed in Iran as well as in Bombay: 1311/1893) is equal in size to the original and was compiled in 1053/1643 by Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan al-Hurr al-‘Amîfî (d. 1104/1692), the author of the famous Shi'âh collection of Hadîth, Wasâ‘îl al-Shi‘âh. The third was collected by Mirzá ‘Abd Allâh Ibn Mirzá ‘Isâ Tabarîzî, known as Affandi, a disciple of Majîsî. The fourth was compiled by Mirzá Husayn Ibn Muhammâd Taqi Nûrî (d. 1320/1902) and was published in Iran. The Fifth, and the largest of the published versions was compiled by Muhsin al-‘Amîn, the author of A’yân al-Shi‘âh, a biographical dictionary of the Shi'âh religious authorities. It contains fifty-two extra supplications in addition to those of the previous compilations. Constance Padwick has made use of this fifth collection of Sahifah in her Muslim Devotions. The sixth was compiled by Muhammad Sâ‘îh al-Mâzanardârî al-Hâ’iri. These six collections have been mentioned by Âghâ Bozorg Tehrânî in his al-Dharrî’ah ilâ Tasânîf al-Shi‘âh, under Sahifat al-Sajjdiyyah (vol. 15, pp. 18–21, nos. 95–100). Collections have also been compiled by some contemporary scholars such as Hajj Shâhîy Muhammad Bâqîr Ibn Muhammâd Hasan Birjandî Qâ‘ini. Shâhîy Hâdî Ibn ‘Abbâs Âl-i-Kâshîf al-Ghita’i Najâfî, and Hajj Mirzá ‘Alî Husaynî Mar’âshî Shahrîstânî Hâ’iri (cf. Âghâ Najâfî’s Introduction to the Sahifah.

At least, forty commentaries and glosses have been written on the Sahifah, specially since the Safavî period. Among the famous commentaries of the Safavî period are those written by Shâhîy Bahâ’î, Mir Dâmâd, and the younger Majîsî. The most well-known of the later commentaries is Riyâd al-Sâlikîn by al-Sayyid ‘Alî Khân al-Husaynî al-Hasâni al-Shirâzî (d. 1120/1709).

As regards the contents and subject matter of the Sahifah, the book—a bouquet of the Islamic Garden of Spirituality laden with flowers of variegated colours and rich odours whose fragrance ad hues have all emanated from the divine arch-tree of the Furgân and its chief gardener, the Prophet (peace be on him). The nectar sprinkled on these flowers is the same that springs from “the sparkling fountains” in the orchard of faith. Although a collection of supplications, which are mainly designed to offer sincere prayers with humility and modesty in order to elicit Divine mercy and favour, the Sahifah also sheds light on some other domains of the belief, and stresses some of the innermost dimensions of Islam. It provides the best available summary of the Muslim perceptions of God, the Angels, the Prophets, the Scriptures, the Last Day, and qadâ and qadar (fate and divine decree), which constitute the core of the Islamic world-view. The Sahifah often refers to the domain of Islamic practice, or the Sharî’ah in a broad sense, and emphasises the absolute necessity of following God’s guidelines as set down in the Qur’ân and the Sunnah. It also emphasizes the necessity of establishing justice in the society.

The translation of Imam Zayn al-‘Abidîn’s treatise Risalât al-Hujûq (Treatise on Rights), the only work attributed to him apart from the Sahifah and some letters and sayings, constitutes the Appendix.

As regards the quality of this translation, the translator has apparently made every effort to make his translation at once literally accurate, readable and lucid to the English-knowing world. In fact, in view of the esoteric and metaphysical nature of the contents of the book, it can be easily guessed that its translation from Arabic into any European language is an exceedingly difficult task. But Dr. Chittick deserves appreciation for acquitting himself creditably of this task.

The quality of the translation can be appreciated by comparing it with the earlier translations, for example, that of Syyîd Ahmad ‘Ali Mîhâni, (first edition published in Lucknow in 1929–31, the latest, edited by Lâleh Bakhtîâr and Dr. Ziyâ Sâ’adî, published by the Islamic Propagation Organization, Tehran in 1984). The superior quality of the present translation is the result of the experience and skill of the translator in rendering difficult Arabic texts into English. He was the first to edit and

**Islamic Studies, 29:4 (1990)**
translate the major Sufi treatise of Jāmi, Naqd al-Niṣāṣ and some of the major works of Qunyawi. He has also edited and translated A Shi‘ite anthology, referred to earlier, which is a selection of the Shi‘ah Hadith by ‘Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Tabātabā‘ī.

The translator has consulted commentary on Sahifah by Sayyid Ali Khan Shīrāzī, its excellent Persian translation and commentary by ‘Ali Naqī Fāyḍ al-Īslām and the less useful Persian translation by Mīrzā Abū‘l-Qāsim Shīrāzī. He has provided useful notes which, though not exhaustive, are meant to identify the proper names, clarify obscurities and draw attention towards a few of the Qur’ānic references in order to suggest how thoroughly the text is based on the Revealed Book. In some cases, he has mentioned relevant Hadith and discussed the various interpretations offered by the commentators.

It may also be mentioned here that the Arabic text of the Sahifah, the supplications for the days of the week and the munājāt have been copied from the Shīrāzī edition, calligraphed by Sayyid Taḥzīb al-Ḥasan Naqvi, who incidentally belongs to a well-known family of calligraphers from Amroha (India). His father, Sayyid ‘Ayn al-Ḥasan Naqvi, was a famous calligrapher of his time.

We conclude this review by quoting a beautiful passage from the “Introduction” of the book by the translator which will show a glimpse of his inner feelings about the Islamic civilization in general and the mystics in particular:

Islamic civilization as a whole is much like a traditional Muslim city. The outer walls make it appear dull and sombre, and it is not easy to gain access to the world behind the walls. But if one becomes an intimate with the city’s inhabitants, one is shown into delightful courtyards and gardens, full of fragrant flowers, fruits trees, and sparkling foundations. . . . Some of the gardens are opened up through the study of Sufism, art and architecture, poetry, and music. . . . The most traditional and authentic gardens of the city, and the most difficult of access, are the hearts of the greatest representatives of the civilization. It is here that the supplications handed down from the pillars of early Islam can open up a whole new vision of Islam’s animating spirit, since they provide direct access to the types of human attitudes that are the prerequisite for a full flowering of the Islamic ideal. (pp. xlii–xliii).

In short, the translator and the publishers of the book deserve thanks for offering such a beautiful souvenir of spiritual excellence.

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LEGAL SYSTEM OF IRAQ, by S.H. Amin, Royston Publishers, 10 Crown Road North, Glasgow G12 9DH, Scotland, U.K., 1990, Pages 626 (including bibliography and index), Hardcover, Price £96.

The book gives a comprehensive account of the legal system of Iraq as well as its politico-economic structure. A chapter is also devoted to Iraq-Iran war and the concept of jihād in Islam. The last chapter offers a brief analysis of the achievements and failutes of the Ba‘ath socialist regime particularly during the rule of Saddām Husayn.

The author has a very good understanding of Islamic law which is manifest from his discussion of the Sunnah and Qiyāṣ as the sources of Islamic law, the principle of lā darar wa lā dirār, and the law of qisāṣ and diyāh.

The book is a part of the Middle East Legal System Series, and the author is an authority in this field of studies. It provides plentiful information of legal relevance to lawyers, students of comparative law, diplomats, politicians and the businessmen who come into contact with the region.