

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SHIITE ISLAM  
POLITICAL IDEAS

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By

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The struggle to find a peaceful coexistence of religious beliefs and political ideas is as old as human civilization itself. Different cultures have approached the solution in different ways, although never to the satisfaction of their whole community. While many Christian-based Western societies have adopted a policy of complete separation of Church and State, the complex history of Islamic culture has kept the two systems intertwined. The history of political thought in the Islamic culture, and how it has evolved over time, is the main topic of study here.

The time period in which this thesis was written, March of 2003, witnessed two major events whose relation to the presented topic could not be ignored. First is the Vernal (Spring) Equinox, March 21, which has special meaning for those Muslims non-Muslims that are descendents of the ancient Persian culture. For these people, March 21<sup>st</sup> represents Nowrooz, the first day of the New Year. In addition to jubilant celebrations, it is believed that this is a day of hope for a prosperous future, the triumph of Ahuramazda (God in ancient Persian religion, Zoroastrian) over Ahriman (Satan in ancient Persian religion, Zoroastrian), and the defeat of darkness by light. Second, an American lead military strike on Iraq coincided with this sacred day, and was declared

the heaviest bombardment of time and given the nickname operation “Shock and Awe”. The irony lies in the fact that Baghdad, which was once the glorious capital of the Abbasid Dynasty (750-1258), and al-Basra, which historically witnessed the rise of the doctrine of free will, were attacked in the name of freedom for the Iraqi people from the tyrannical political regime that currently holds power.

Regardless of their existing political system, the Islamic nations of the world, particularly the Arab countries and Iran, have a long history of Islamic government. Yet none of them have a system of politics that is not under conflicting criticism. Accordingly, the objective of this thesis is to explore and analyze Islamic political thoughts, from its earliest origins to present day, and determine if it offers a viable and practical political system. In addition, if a viable system can exist, what defining characteristics and qualifications should be expected from the ruler with a particular emphasis on Shiite political thought?

The methodology used to research these topics included an extensive review of literature on Islam itself, Islamic government, and Islamic political ideas. This included books, journal reports, historical sources of Islamic religious and political evolution, original publications in Farsi (or their translations into English), and the Holy Book of Quran. In some cases, references that could not be obtained by the author were appropriately referenced as being cited by other authors. The lists of bibliography and references were developed and are included in this paper.

To investigate the development of Islamic political thoughts more clearly, this paper was organized into three chapters, each representing a period of Islamic history



that will show the evolution of Islamic political thoughts over the fifteen centuries that it has existed. Within each chapter, Islamic politics and political ideas are explored in the following four areas:

- (1) The Islamic ruling governments, their characters, and the political evolution that took direction (on the practical side) through the efforts of the rulers.
- (2) The characteristics and contributions of the religious thinkers, and the trend of evolution in Islamic political ideas that was propagated through their efforts.
- (3) The magnificent intellectual environment created by the characters and contributions of the “progressive” thinkers, and the evolution in Islamic political ideas as a result of their efforts.
- (4) The religio-political movements, the ideas they presented, and the direction the evolution in Islamic political ideas followed as a result of their influence or their practical involvement in politics.

The combination of all these influences give a comprehensive overview for how and why Islamic political thoughts evolved the way it did.

Chapter II explores Early Political Islam (610 - 661) by providing a historical background on the rise of the Prophet Muhammad, including the revelations he received during his twenty-three years of prophethood and his Sunnah (the deeds, sayings, and

silent approval of the Prophet), which became the second pillar of the Shari'ah (Islamic Law); the first pillar being the Holy Book of Qur'an. The four Caliphs were elected through ijma (the consensus of opinions), a relatively democratic process that involved the opinion of community leaders, who followed Muhammad as rulers are also covered. This era was marked with its character of respecting religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity, as well as accepting tribal practices as the secondary social and political structure. The maintenance of justice, good will, and righteousness was encouraged, while injustice and tyranny were rejected. Although the Caliphs followed the path of the Prophet, they also used their logical reasoning to deal with particular situations. This period of Islamic history is considered as the Righteous Era and corresponds to a system similar to the Republic where the ruler is a philosopher.

Chapter III covers the Development of Islamic Political Thoughts, starting with the death of the fourth Caliph, Ali, in 661, and continuing through the end of the Qajar Dynasty of Iran (1796-1925). It begins with ascending of the Umayyad Dynasty (661-750), which took shape when Muawiyah, who had led the first civil war in Islam, claimed power after the assassination of the fourth Caliph, Ali. This was a period of great upheaval and held particular importance in that it manifested the political divisions in Islam. The divisions included the rival sects of Sunni (mainstream Islam) and Shiite (followers of Ali). The Sunni sects believe that leaders can be inaugurated through election or selection process, while Shiite belief is that leaders must be descendants of the Prophet and Ali. The Umayyad dynasty saw the first implementation of an Administrative System, borrowed from the conquered Byzantine and Persian Empires, and developed the cornerstone of the Islamic Judicial System.

The reign of the Umayyad Dynasty ended with the uprising of the Shiite Muslims, who held allegiance to al-Abbas of the Bani-Abbas clan of Quraysh tribe (see illustration I), and this brought on the era of the Abbasid Dynasty (750-1258). As stated by Esposito, “under Abbasid rule, the Islamic Empire would lie in the seat of great cultural activity and the flourishing of Islamic culture.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, this time was significant for witnessing three different phenomena:

- (1) The religio-political movements that included the Twelver Shiite (believing in the existence of 12 Imams), the Ismailite Shiite (believing in only 6 Imams), Mutazilah (the first rationalist school in Islam), and Ikhwan al-Safa (the brethren of sincerity).
- (2) The Traditional school, which was affected by the efforts of two prominent Islamic thinkers, al-Ash’ari and al-Ghazali. According to Hitti, “The scholastic shell constructed by al-Ash’ari (d. 935) and al-Ghazali (1058-1111) has held Islam to the present day, but Christendom succeeded in breaking through its scholasticism.”<sup>2</sup>
- (3) The incredible intellectual environment, particularly in Baghdad. This intellectual and philosophical Golden Age was marked by the works of some rational thinkers, including al-Kindi (801-873), al-Farabi (870-950), Ibn-Sina (980-1037), Ibn-Bajjah (d. 1138), and Ibn-Rushd (d. 1198).

Unfortunately, this era of intellectualism did not survive the overthrow of the Abbasid Dynasty by the Mongols in 1258.

After the fall of the Abbasid Dynasty, two important regimes began rule simultaneously: (1) The Sunni based Ottoman Empire, founded around 1300 in Anatolia. Although based on Islamic tradition, where a Caliph must be a member of the Quraysh tribe, Turkish Ottomans, as stated by Halil Inalcik, were able to attain the title through a claimed transfer of title by the last Abbasid Caliph, Mutawakkil, to Sultan Salim I (1512-1520), the Ottoman Emperor.<sup>3</sup> This system endured until 1922, when the Grand National Assembly of Turkey replaced it with a republican regime that continues to date. (2) The kings of the Safavid Dynasty of Iran (1501-1742) encouraged the expansion of Shiite Islam, which eventually became the majority sect in Iran. According to Esposito, during Safavid dynasty, the Ulama accepted Shah Ismail, who started the dynasty, as a representative of the Imam and even called him the “Shadow of God on the Earth.”<sup>4</sup> The Ulama expanded their own power by demanding political authority. Although there was increasing contact between the Shiites and the West during this period, the few secular governments tried after the fall of the Safavid did not survive long enough to make any significant contribution to the development of political and intellectual ideas.

Finally, the Qajar Dynasty (1794-1925) witnessed a few events that finally led to the establishment of the Constitutional Government in 1906. Among these were the negative outcome of two wars with Russia, attempts at modernism by two enlightened statesmen (Amir Kabir and Sipahsalar), and the increase of contact with Western progress and thought.

Chapter IV explores Modern Shiite Political Thought through a careful look at the history and beliefs that form Shiite Islam. The first part covers the emergence of Shiite as a unique sect of Islam that believes only descendants of the Prophet and Ali can be rulers of Islamic society. The second part covers the Shiite Tradition to provide a thorough explanation of the characteristics of Shiite Islam, particularly inherent fallibility of man, esoterism, taqiyyah, martyrdom, and emotionalism as its thematic core. The third section contains a specific look at the role of Shiite in Iran, which is the only Shiite-majority controlled country in the world. It includes explanations for the rise of Shiite Islam, and the effect this has had on the culture and politics of Iran. The final part has a discussion of the two different political ideas in Iran, namely the Traditionalists Idea and the Populist Idea, and how each one incorporates the Governorship of the Ulama.

As stated earlier, the primary goal of this thesis is to evaluate whether Islam offers a viable and practical political system. With the facts, ideas, and opinions presented in Chapters II, III, and IV, an overview of the information needed to make this determination is provided. Chapter V concludes the thesis with a narrative of the opinions and conclusions drawn by the author based on the research done for this paper and existing knowledge as a person born to the Shiite Muslim faith.

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## CHAPTER II

### EARLY POLITICAL ISLAM

#### **Introduction**

The origins of the Islamic faith and the political ideas began around 610 A.D. with the revelations of the Prophet Muhammad. His mission to pass on the teachings of Islam eventually brought Muhammad to power, both spiritually and politically. For a culture that had previously worshipped several different gods and lived as tribal communities, Islam and its world view was a completely new concept.

This chapter will deal with the origins of Islam and its political ideas, starting with the ascent and governance of the Prophet Muhammad and continuing through the rule of the four Caliphs who succeeded Muhammad as leader. It will be shown that this era set the stage for a long period of change and enlightenment that occurred during the dynasties of Islam, which are covered in Chapter 3.

#### **The rise of the Prophet Muhammad and Islam**

On the eve of the ascent of Islam, the Arab peninsula was a tribal, barren environment that possessed no single political conviction. The majority of its

inhabitants were pastoral nomads organized into tribes and clans. As a survival tactic, they would frequently fight one another and attempt conquests for access to valuable resources such as water, herds, and land. Additionally, some Arabs were sedentary and made their living by farming at oases, such as the city of Yathrib (presently known as Madina), while many of the inhabitants of Macca drew their livelihood from trade caravans. Most Arabs worshipped a variety of deities housed in a shrine named Ka'ba in the city of Macca. The economy of Macca at this time was based in part on a flourishing pilgrimage of Arab tribes from surrounding areas. Among those tribes, the Quraysh tribe enjoyed special prestige in Macca for being the custodian of the Ka'ba, and as a result it gained political and economic supremacy in town.

Born in 570 AD, Muhammad a claimed descendent of Ibrahim (who is thought to be the first God-believing man, through whom the kinship of Islam to Judaism, an ancient religion, could be established). A member of the Bani Hashim clan of the Quraysh tribe (see illustration I and II), Muhammad received the first of a series of revelations at the age of forty. These revelations continued for twenty-three years and were later preserved in the Islamic Holy Book, the Qur'an. Muhammad introduced Islam, a monotheistic religion, which swept across the world and became the second largest religion in history. Islam proclaimed itself to be the final monotheistic religion that could provide not only a complete guidance for human life, but could also develop a religio-political movement by making religion an integral part of society and state.

As reflected in the Qur'an, the worldview of the Islamic philosophy is the belief in Allah (the Almighty God) as the absolute power who governs the world. Islam



requires anyone who wishes to adhere to its beliefs to abide by three fundamental principles. The principles and their related clarifications, as stated by Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali (1997) are: (1) *Tawhid* (Islamic Monotheism): the belief that there is only one God as Creator, Organizer, Planner, Sustainer, and the Giver of security; the belief that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah; and the belief in all the qualities of God stated in the Qur'an or revealed by the Prophet Muhammad. All these aspects of Tawhid are included in *La ilaha illallah* (there is no God except Allah). (2) *Shahadah* (confession of a Muslim), which is the testimony that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali interprets *Shahadah* as saying "none has the right to be followed after Allah, but Prophet Muhammad."<sup>2</sup> And (3) *Akhirah* (the Day of Resurrection), which is the phase in which everyone receives the justice of God on the basis of his deeds during the temporal life. Al-Bukhari, in Hadith (written tradition) No. 8, asserts that the righteous deeds for Muslims are those that embrace the intention for Allah's sake only, and are in accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah (deeds, saying, and the silent approval of the Prophet), meaning tradition.<sup>3</sup> Some calls of the Qur'an are the expression of God's promise of forgiveness for the virtuous Muslims: "Say (O Muhammad) to mankind 'if you [really] love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins.'"<sup>4</sup> Muslims, upon their admission to Islam, as explained by Al-Bukhari, should act on five main beliefs (Pillars of Islam), which are: (1) to testify *La ilaha illallah wa anna Muhammad-ur-Rasul-Allah* (none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is a Messenger of Allah); (2) to perform *Al-Salat* (daily Prayer); (3) to pay *Zakat* (the wealth tax -

almsgiving); (4) to perform the *Hajj* (a pilgrimage to the Ka'ba shrine in Macca); and (5) to observe *Saum* (fast) during the month of Ramadan.<sup>5</sup>

According to the Qur'an, throughout history God has sent Messenger-Prophets, including Muhammad, to guide humankind.<sup>6</sup> The Qur'an calls Muhammad the final Messenger (the seal of the prophets) and states, "Muhammad is not the father of any of men, and he is the Messenger and servant of God and the last of the Prophets."<sup>7</sup> The Qur'an is the revelation of God's Will in its absolute form, and concedes to religious plurality in many instances as is reflected in, "Say (O Muslims) we believe in God and revelation has been sent to us, and Ibrahim, Ismail, Ishaq, Yaqub and the offspring of the twelve sons of Yaqub, and that which has been given to Moses and Jesus, and has been given to the Prophets. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we have submitted [in Islam]."<sup>8</sup> The divine guidance that is embodied in the verses of the Qur'an and Sunnah gives rise to the fundamental sources of Islamic Law called Shari'ah, which governs the Muslim's life.

The essential distinction between Islam and other religions remains its extensive involvement in the political sphere of human life. The Qur'an defines the philosophy of governance by proclaiming humans to be the bearer of God's trust, and as the Khalifah (God's representative – vicegerent of God).<sup>9</sup> The concept of Khalifah denotes the position of a human being in relation to God during his temporal life. In other words, the term Khalifah entails man as the vicegerent and guardian of Allah (God) on earth, who should live [rule] in conformity with God's will. According to the Qur'an, the inquiry of how man could follow God's will has been fulfilled by divine

guidance revealed through the institution of the Prophets, which ended with the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, the whole concept of governance is left to establish the supremacy of the divine law through the agency of man as khalifah. Thus, the ultimate objective for a Muslim man is to comply with divine guidance to maintain peace and order in the temporal life, and have salvation on the Day of Resurrection.

At the time of Muhammad's rise, Macca was in the process of transformation from a pastoral and nomadic form of economy to a mercantile type, and was also experiencing sharp social inequality and rampant corruption. When Muhammad first introduced his religion in Macca, not many people were drawn to the idea. The rulers of Macca viewed this new religion, and the egalitarian principles that were attributed to it, as a major threat to their system of aristocracy. They organized against the Prophet and opposed him in different ways to the point that Muhammad and his loyal followers could not survive in Macca. Thus, Muhammad and a group of followers accepted an invitation of delegation from Yathrib to emigrate (i.e. hij'rah) to their city. The hij'rah from Macca to Yathrib, in 621 A.D., was the first major religio-political move attempted by the Prophet and his loyal followers. Hij'rah happened to be the first step towards the establishment of the foremost Islamic community in the city of Yathrib. Subsequently, the city was renamed Madina. Moreover, the hij'rah has been recognized as the beginning of the Islamic calendar, which is still observed by all Muslim states.

### **Governance of the Prophet Muhammad**

Upon arrival in Madina, it became apparent that the new religion could not survive without a reliable base of support. Muhammad attempted to create a new polity in Madina called the Ummah (Islamic community), which primarily embraced the nomadic Arab tribes who accepted Islam and adhered to its rules. To further strengthen the novice community, he united the Ummah and the Jews in terms of security and finance. However, it must be noted that the Jews were not considered part of the Ummah based on religious differences.

Tribal solidarity and individualism manifested the character of nomadic Arab society at that time, and each tribe was an autonomous political entity devoted to supporting and protecting its members. Thus, the primary concern of an Arab tribe member was loyalty to his tribe in terms of shared life and feelings. Indeed, the feeling of revenge was a supreme driving force of individuals and tribes. Dorraj quotes Montgomery Watt by saying that, "these values, norms, and customs were the real religion of the Arab Jahalia (nomadic) society, not the idols they worshipped."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the Prophet attempted to substitute the notion of tribal solidarity and individualism with loyalty to faith and the Ummah; he also sought the preservation of justice as a collective endeavor of the new community. Muhammad's claim of divine authority as reflected in the Qur'an made him the ultimate decision maker in all areas of Islamic polity; he acted as the Supreme Judge, military commander, political and spiritual leader of his community based on his prophetic calling and verses of the Qur'an.<sup>12</sup>

The principles and values manifested in the institution of the Ummah can be seen as partly based on the adaptation as well as on the negation of the dominant custom of Arab paganism. Toshihito Izutsu, observes: "Islam took the major concepts of tribal humanism - generosity, courage, loyalty and veracity - and gave them a new religious content."<sup>13</sup> In early Islamic polity, the concept of *ijma* (the consensus of opinion) was honored and employed by the prophet. This direct and active engagement of the Ummah in the decision-making process resulted in a close relationship between Muhammad as the ruler and his Ummah as the ruled. Undoubtedly from the beginning, Muhammad was both a religious and a political leader; he then amalgamated religion and state together to form a single operative institution. Edward Mortimer argued that, "in most Muslim societies there is not and never had been such a thing as a church. The community of believers founded by Muhammad was virtually from the beginning what we should call a state."<sup>14</sup> Moreover, it is true that the collective interest of the Ummah, and preservation of its unity and social solidarity, has always been the principle part of Islamic ideology. As noted by Enayat, four of the five pillars of Islam (prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and pilgrimage) are suited to promote group solidarity among Muslims. According to Dorraj, "Muhammad considered the oppression of the poor to be immoral. Without caring for its needy, a society could not achieve piety and moral excellence;"<sup>15</sup> in response to this idea, *bait al-mal* (a public fund) was created to finance the needs of the community in general, and to aid the poor in particular. As stated by Fazlur, Muhammad's moral attributes, charisma, and compassion for the poor were surely important factors in preserving and promoting the unity of the Ummah. <sup>16</sup>

The study of guiding principles adopted by early Islamic polity is necessary in revealing the claimed disparity between the communal attributes of the Shari'ah, with the nationalist characteristics of the modern state, since the combination of these two ideas compose the constituents of the Islamic states in existence today. Indeed, such a blend seems to be in total contradiction with the nature and purpose of the polity founded by the Prophet in Madina, and was developed historically within the Muslim communities. Adhering to the guidance of revelation, the Ummah has respected the principle of religious plurality and cultural diversity during the most of its long history. The Medina polity created by Muhammad embraced principles that guaranteed the success of polity and its expansion; its non-discriminatory policy welcomed all individuals from all races, origins, and backgrounds, who declared their allegiance to the Ummah and its values. Until a desired order and framework could be established, the polity also preserved the tribal structure and practice, which was in harmony with the nomadic life of the Arab community, and could act as a secondary social and political structure of the Ummah. It also espoused the principle of religious tolerance by honoring the freedom of belief and practice of religion for all members of society. The verse from the Qur'an called *la-ekraha-fi-ddin* that acknowledges religious plurality also supports such principles of religious tolerance. According to the Hadith, Muhammad declared, "To the Jews who follow us belong help and equality. They shall not be wronged nor shall their enemies be aided". The equal treatment of the Ummah as a universal value, the fundamentality and importance of justice, goodwill, righteousness, and the condemnation of injustice and tyranny formed the foundation of the Islamic community. "The God-conscious believers shall be against the rebellious,

and against those who seek to spread injustice, sin, enmity, or corruption among the believers, the hand of every person shall be against him even if he be the son of one of them,” the Prophet proclaimed.

A number of political rights such as freedom of belief, freedom of movement from and to Medina, and “compulsion of the Ummah to help” the oppressed people were offered for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The Prophet said, “the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs”, and, “whoever will go out is safe, and whoever will stay in Madina is safe except those who aggrieved others, or committed sin.” Undeniably, the Prophet held absolute power based on his claimed divine authority in ruling his Ummah. As asserted by Dorraj, “Because the example that was set by Muhammad was that of a personal ruler, the Islamic government that followed after him took the same form.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Governance of the Rightly Guided Caliphs**

The Qur’an commands people to obey God, obey the Messenger, and submit to the authority of the *Ul al-amr* (the autonomous jurist leader), although there is no clear or even evocative evidence for how to inaugurate the political authority. The same dispute applied to the Prophet, who left behind no specific directives in this regard. Therefore, neither of the two fundamental sources of Islamic Shari’ah (Qur’an and Sunnah) provided the solution for such a grave problem. One might argue that the

divine silence on this issue could be regarded as the recognition of the human reason and wisdom, which left the decision in the hands of human being.

Unquestionably, the problem of succession was the foremost cause of factions in the early Islamic Ummah. Immediately after the Prophet's death, the leading members of the Ummah and the Prophet's loyal companions selected Abu-Bakr, a senior member and Muhammad's father-in-law, as their first Caliph (632-634) through an ijma (consensus of the opinion) in the Saqifah assembly. According to Esposito, "One of the earliest converts to Islam, Abu-Bakr was a man respected for his piety and political sagacity. Muhammad had appointed him to lead the Friday Communal Prayer during his absence."<sup>18</sup> The process was clearly consensual; however there was controversy over the absence of Ali (the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law) and his supporters among the selection group.

Upon the death of the first Caliph after two years of rule, Umar, another respected member of the Ummah, became the second Caliph (634-644) through appointment by Abu Bakr, obviously a less consensual or democratic process. Eventually he received the allegiance of the Ummah through Bay'ah (declaration of allegiance), which could provide legitimacy to the appointment of the second Caliph. Considering the crisis involved in the hurried election of Abu-Bakr to succeed the Prophet, Umar sought to avoid the same problem for his succession. As stated by Dorraj, while on his deathbed as a result of an assassination attempt, Umar appointed a Shurrah (i.e. election committee) consisting of six highly respected members that were to select a leader from among them. The decree of the second Caliph in terms of



provisions was strong and comprehensive enough to guarantee a positive outcome of the Shurrah. The requirements included in the Caliph's command addressed three main concerns: (1) in case of a tie, *Abd al-Rahman bin Awf* (a member of Shurrah and Uthman's brother-in-law) would have the power to decide the outcome; (2) any member who refused to participate in the Shurrah would be slain; and (3) anyone who was selected but refused to be the new leader would also be killed.<sup>19</sup>

Considering the provisions of Umar's order, it could be implied that after more than thirty years of Islamic rule (under the leadership of the Prophet and his two successors), the fundamental issue of succession still remained unresolved. Uthman, the third Caliph (644-656) came to power through a decision that was made by *Abd al-Rahman bin Awf* in solving the predicament of a tie between Ali and Uthman, which was the outcome of the Shurrah and based on a provision of Umar's diktat. The process appeared to be even less consensual and non democratic considering that the "election committee" itself consisted of non-elected members.

Although Uthman himself acted piously and lived a humble life, his associates and relatives did not. Hitti says "Uthman represented the Umayyad aristocracy as against his two predecessors who represented the Emigrants."<sup>20</sup> The third Caliph was murdered after being in power for twelve years. According to Dorraj, "The most prosperous members of the Bani-Umayyah leaned toward Uthman, whereas the nomads, the Ansar (the early supporters of Muhammad) of Madina, and the Bani-Hashim clan gathered around Ali, looking to him for leadership."<sup>21</sup> Ali, the fourth Caliph (656-661), rose to power through the process of the Shurrah, which was

composed of the leaders of Ansar (those who joined Muhammad in Medina) and Muhajir (the original believers who followed Muhammad's journey from Macca to Madina) in Madina. The perceived virtues, simplicity, and just rule of Ali have been noted by many Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. He is looked at as the legitimate successor of Muhammad by Shiite Muslims. Dorraj states that Shiites viewed the manifestation of a divine authority in Ali as the first of twelve infallible Imams.<sup>22</sup> Ali was murdered by a member of the opposing faction inside the Mosque of Kufa, which paved the path for the leadership of Muawiya, who became the founder of the Umayyad Dynasty (661-750).

In the absence of revelation, the Rightly Guided Caliphs used their reason to establish the desired political authority; however, the subsequent political systems developed in Islamic states left no chance for further development of such rationality. The successors of the Prophet, the Rightly Guided Caliphs, followed the Qur'an as well as the Sunnah. All four of them received the formal allegiance of the Ummah and its leaders. In a way, the four Rightly Guided Caliphs established and ruled a form of government similar to republican. They honored the freedom of faith by allowing non-Muslims to not only proclaim their religion and practice their religious rituals, but also to implement their religious laws. Likewise, the Ummah as a whole respected the concept of religious plurality and cultural diversity by adhering to such principles in which no one can prefer one ideological group over another. As noted by Safi, during the period of the Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs, Muslims played active role in social and political grounds. Thus, government maintained a limited role and a small realm of functions.<sup>23</sup> The model for government had followed mostly the example and

practices of the Prophet. The Caliph, having the most power, exercised political, judicial, military, and fiscal control over the Islamic community.

The administration of this vast society composed of the conquered territories was handled by dividing it into provinces, which were ruled by appointed governors. The governor, as an agent of the Caliph and normally the army commander, oversaw the collection of revenue, enforcement of the Shari'ah, and maintenance of justice. The captured lands and different taxes formed sources of revenue. Taxes were composed of: zakat (the wealth tax - almsgiving), ushr (the land tax), jizya (the poll tax), and kharaj (the tribute from occupied nations), which later became a land tax paid by non-Muslims.<sup>24</sup> The majority of Muslims, excluding Shiites, have held great respect for the Rightly Guided Caliphs, and consider their era to be the righteous golden period of post-prophetic leadership. They were called *Khulafa' al-Rashidun* (i.e. the Great Caliphs), based on the leadership and personal qualities they displayed. Indeed, during the Rightly Guided Caliphs, as observed by Esposito, "the sources of Islamic law, the Qur'an and the inspired leadership of Muhammad, which provided the basic guidance for the community, originated at this time."<sup>25</sup>

In conclusion, the age of the Prophet and the Righteous Caliphs is the exemplary period of Islam. The Islamic community was bounded by a common religious identity supported by the sources of Islamic law, the Qur'an and the inspired leadership and guidance of the Prophet's performance, namely Sunnah. This early practice of Islamic state, particularly the deeds of the Prophet and his immediate companions, formed the

body of tradition that has served as the model for later Muslims and Muslim communities.

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## CHAPTER III

### DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC POLITICAL THOUGHT

#### **Introduction**

When the era of rule by Muhammad and the Caliphs was abruptly halted with the assassination of the fourth Caliph, Ali, a new era of dynasties, empires, and bitter rivalries began. This was a period of philosophical and intellectual enlightenment, as well as a time when different sects of Islam began to appear, causing fractures in the solidarity of the Islamic community.

This chapter will study the different dynasties and empires, tracing the development of Islamic political thoughts through the contributions and transitions that occurred over the centuries. The dynasties and empires covered are the Umayyad Dynasty, the Abbasid Dynasty, the Ottoman Empire, the Safavid Dynasty, and the Qajar Dynasty. The discussion will include the administration, judicial systems, social systems, and religio-political movements of the dynasties, as well as the intellectual and constitutional movements in Iran. It will also cover the early conflicting views that progressively led to the formation of two distinct and powerful sects of Islam, Sunni and Shiite. The Shiite sect will be studied more closely in Chapter 4.



## Umayyad Dynasty

Considering the rule of Muhammad and the Righteous Caliphs as the exemplary period of Islamic faith and politics, the assassination of the fourth Caliph, Ali (first Imam for Shiites,) put an end to this epoch and provided an opportunity for Muawiyah of the Bani-Umayyah clan of the Quraysh tribe (see illustration I) to claim the leadership of the Muslim community. The rise of Muhammad as a member of Bani-Hashim clan had failed to put an end to opposition between the Bani-Umayyah and the Bani-Hashim. The conflict reached its pinnacle when Ali succeeded as fourth Caliph. Muawiyah (661-680), who led Islam's first civil war, was able to secure his leadership after Ali's death and steered the Umayyad era (661-750) to an imperialistic dynasty and Arab Aristocracy.

Muawiyah usurped the power out of the hands of Hassan (the older son of Ali and the second Imam for Shiites), but was able to maintain a relatively peaceful relation with him. Unlike his predecessors, Muawiyah preferred Damascus to Madina as the center for his government. According to Esposito, "Muawiyah moved Islam's capital from Madina to Damascus symbolizing the new imperial age with its permanent shift from the Arabian heartland to an established cosmopolitan city."<sup>1</sup> "Contrary to the practice of Muhammad and the early Caliphs, legitimate succession was made hereditary and was restricted to the Umayyad house."<sup>2</sup>

Although no major apparent opposition amid the followers of Ali and Muawiyah appeared during Muawiyah's rule, later the conflict took an ideological form that transpired between Sunni (i.e. mainstream Islam) and Shiite (i.e. the followers of Ali).

The fundamental difference lingers primarily in their views on the assignment of the leadership for the Ummah, that is, the Shiite doctrine of Imamate versus the Sunni doctrine of Caliphate. Enayat argues that, for Shiites, leadership is vested in the Imam, a direct descendant of the Prophet and Ali. For Sunnis, on the other hand, the inauguration of a Caliph is possible either through the process of election or selection, using the principal of *ijma* (the consensus of opinion). Shiites support the validity of *ijma* if its majority opinion includes the approval of “an infallible” Imam.<sup>3</sup> Thus, with few exceptions, “Sunni theorists believe that the collective wisdom of Ummah renders it immune to error; therefore, it is infallible.”<sup>4</sup> While the Caliph maintains political power, he has a limited religious standing compared to Imam, who is considered to be a divinely inspired religio-political leader.

When Muawiyah’s son, Yazid, succeeded his father and became the second Umayyad Caliph, Husayn (the second son of Ali, the third Imam for Shiites) refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of Yazid’s power. Husayn’s revolt against Yazid resulted in a bloody battle at Karbala, a city close to Baghdad. The small army of Husayn, comprised mostly of family members, was defeated by Yazid’s army. Children and female members of Husayn’s family were captured and transported to Damascus. The martyrdom of Husayn and his army, which included almost all male members of his family, gave rise to a political movement focused on the martyred members of the Prophet’s family, especially Ali and Husayn.<sup>5</sup> This event not only shaped the worldview of Shiite Islam and explicated the division of Islam into Sunni and Shiite, but also has provided the religio-political example and a model of resistance.

## **Administration**

The Umayyad Caliphs inherited and expanded the territories under their control, which included not only Arab territories, but also countries of the more developed Byzantine and Persian Empires. Both Empires already had a long history of administrative institutions, which were adopted by the Umayyads. Hitti argues that in response to the need for a centralized administration, the Umayyads created administrative divisions which corresponded in general to the provinces of the Byzantine and Persian empires.<sup>6</sup> Muawiyah instituted five vice-royalties, each ruled by an autonomous viceroy responsible for political administration, tax collection, and religious leadership. Revenues, however, were always managed by a special official who reported directly to the Caliph.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the Caliph (as the head of state) benefited from the assistance of a bureaucracy composed of ministries that supervised the collection and management of taxes, rents, lands, payments, military expenses, and public projects.<sup>8</sup> According to Yaqubi (1179-1229), the Umayyad system of taxation resembled the income tax of the modern state. Muawiyah's measure of deducting Zakat (i.e. wealth- tax) was about 2.5 percent of the fixed earnings.<sup>9</sup>

## **Judicial System**

The Prophet and early Caliphs administered justice in person, and so did their province governors. In the absence of centralized institutions, maintaining the law and

order became a challenge for the newly-established Umayyad dynasty. The problem became increasingly acute as people of different social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds were incorporated into the rising empire. As a result, the Umayyads created two judicial institutions: (1) the market inspector, adapted from the Byzantine Empire; and (2) the Shari'ah courts, supervised by a qadi (jurist judge).<sup>10</sup> The Department of Market Inspection, however, included an office whose purpose was to determine that Muslims were observing the religious moral teachings of Islam. For the first time the office of qadi was institutionalized and became a distinct division responsible for the enforcement of Islamic law. Although the cornerstone of the Islamic Judicial system, the Shari'ah court, was established.<sup>11</sup> Hitti states that the position of judge (qadi) was always filled with a faqih (jurist learned in Qur'an and Islamic tradition). Judges who served in the provinces were appointed by the respective governors rather than by the Caliph himself.<sup>12</sup> Hitti views that, considering the essential purpose of Islamic law was the equal protection of Ummah, the judiciary system dealt with Muslims only. All non-Muslims were allowed to observe their own religious rules. Scriptural peoples, including Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians who entered into a peace covenant and became dhimmis (the people of the covenant or obligation), were entitled to full religious freedom.<sup>13</sup>

### **Social System**

Religious and ethnic plurality was accepted with certain reservations during the Umayyad. The population was divided into four distinct social classes: the highest

consisted of ruling Arab Muslims; the next, inferior to Arab Muslims, were the neo-Muslims, called Mawali, who submitted to Islam by persuasion; the third, lower than both Arab and neo-Muslims, included members of tolerated, revealed religions, called *ahl al-dhimmah* (i.e. dhimmis); and the last was made up of slaves. As stated by Hitti the canon law forbade the enslavement of Christians, Jews, and Muslims.<sup>14</sup>

The legislation of the Umayyads was, to some extent, affected by Roman law. However, the Islamic Law was related more to religion than legislation. The Qur'an and Islamic tradition provided the foundation for Islamic theology and fiqh (law). One of the jurists of this age who significantly contributed to the collection and dissemination of Sunnah is al-Hassan al-Basri (d. 728). He was believed to have known seventy of Muhammad's closest associates personally. Therefore, according to Hitti, al-Basri was highly esteemed as a transmitter of the prophetic tradition. This made al-Basri a reference point for many religious movements, including the Mutazilites who claimed him as one of their own.<sup>15</sup>

### **Religio-political Movements**

The Umayyad period fostered the rudiments of many religio-political movements which later challenged traditional Islam. One intellectual movement was the Mutazilah School, founded by Wasil ibn-Ata (d.748) in al-Basrah. He was a pupil of the aforementioned al-Hassan al-Basri (d.728). The Mutazilites advocated a rationalist doctrine based on free will to which they added "the denial of the existence

with God of the divine attributes such as power, wisdom, and life on the ground that such conceptions would destroy the unity of God.”<sup>16</sup> Hence, they viewed themselves as “the partisans of justice and unity”.

Of the various political movements, Shiite is the most notable. Shiite is one of two major religio-political factions into which early Islam split based on the issue of the Prophet’s succession. It took a definite form during the Umayyad era and has since continued with its central belief in Ali and his eleven descendants as the only legitimate heirs of the Prophet. This Shiite doctrine is somewhat similar to the relationship between Peter and his successors in the Catholic Church. According to Masudi (d.956) and Shahrestani (d.1153), two famous historians of Islam, Ali and the other Imams were the spiritual and religious leaders as well as secular leaders endowed with a divine power. Moreover, the Shiites never acquiesced to the rule of the Umayyads, nor did they forgive the Umayyads for their treatment of Ali and his son Husayn.<sup>17</sup>

Overtime the dissident Shiites became more active against the Umayyads. They made up the majority of the population in Kufa by attracting dissatisfied Muslim clusters that opposed the Caliph. Among disgruntled groups who supported the Shiites were the non-Arab Muslims in general, and Persian Muslims in particular. Philip Hitti notes that non-Arab Muslims had legitimate reasons for dissatisfaction, since they never enjoyed social and economic equality with Arabs. Instead, their status was reduced to a second class Ummah and they could hardly evade the capitation tax paid by non-Muslims.<sup>18</sup> Some scholars suggest that what provoked the Persians to be more

discontent was the consciousness that they represented a higher culture, a fact even acknowledged by Arabs.

The fall of the Umayyad Dynasty occurred after a coalition took place between Shiites of Khurasan, led by Abu-Muslim, a freed Persian captive, and the Abbasids (the descendants of Abbas, an uncle of the Prophet).

### **Abbasid Dynasty**

The last few decades of the Umayyad Dynasty witnessed a series of earnest oppositions, particularly from Shiite Muslims. The major alliance between the uprising Shiites and al-Abbas of the Abbasid clan (lead by Abu-Muslim Khurasani) finally resulted in the fall of the Umayyad Dynasty. Al-Abbas, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad's uncle, was proclaimed Caliph and established the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258). He relocated the Capital from Damascus to the new city of Baghdad, the city of peace. Baghdad was to serve as the political, economic, and cultural center of the Islamic Empire. As Esposito states, "under Abbasid rule the Islamic empire would be the seat of great cultural activity and the flourishing of Islamic civilization."<sup>19</sup> The Abbasids cleverly based their claim for the Caliphate on a common cause with the Shiites. The Bani-Hashim, to which the Prophet, Ali, and the Abbasids belonged, was their point of focus (see illustration II). Also, the issue of Ali and his son Husayn had a shared concern with the Shiites in their struggle against the Umayyads. The revolt broke out when Abu-Muslim, a freed Persian man, unfurled a black banner symbolizing the

Abbasid emblem. The first Abbasid Caliph was enthroned in 749, when public homage was paid to Abd-al-Abbass in the chief Mosque of Kufa.<sup>20</sup> However, the final day of the Umayyad Dynasty did not occur until April 26, 750, when Damascus was surrendered.

The Abbasid Dynasty reached its peak period during the reign of Harun al-Rashid (786–809). Baghdad, which was built in 762 by Caliph al-Mansur (754-775), had grown to be a world center of wealth and international renown. The period was the most significant for intellectual awakening and progression of thought in the history of Islam, due in large measure to foreign influence and marked by translations into Arabic from Greek, Persian, Sanskrit, and Syriac.<sup>21</sup> In less than one hundred years from its founding, Baghdad became a center for the study of the chief philosophical works of Aristotle, Neo-Platonic ideas, and medical writings, as well as of the continuation of the scientific works of the Persians and Indians.

### **Administration**

The Abbasid Caliphs mainly adopted the older Persian system of government. Unlike the early Islamic Caliphs they delegated authority to their appointees. The exercise of civil authority to a Wazir (i.e. a minister), of judicial power to a qadi (judge), and of military function to an amir (i.e. military commander) became the norm, while the Caliph remained the final arbiter of governmental affairs.<sup>22</sup>



Taking advantage of the popular reaction against the rule of the Umayyads, the Abbassids put emphasis on the Islamic character and assumed the religious title of *Khalifat al Allah* (God's Caliphate). The title was first bestowed on al-Mutawakkil (847 – 861) and persisted until the end of the non-Arab Ottoman Caliphate.<sup>23</sup> The hereditary principle of succession instituted by the Umayyad was followed throughout the Abbasid regime. Next to the Caliph stood the Wazir, whose office was influenced by the Persian tradition.<sup>24</sup>

The sources of revenue for the state included Zakat, the only legal tax obligatory on every Muslim. Public income was also obtained through tribute from foreign enemies, truce money, capitation tax from non-Muslims (Jizyah), land tax (kharaj), and tithes levied upon merchandise owned by non-Muslims and imported into the state. All revenue was controlled and managed by the Caliph. According to Mawardi, the Abbassids justified their revenue system by using Qur'anic verse 59:7 saying: "What Allah gave as booty to His messenger (Muhammad) from the people of the townships – it is for Allah, His messenger, the kindred, the orphans, the poor (al-masakin), and the wayfarer in order that it may not become a fortune used by the rich among you....."<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the bureau of taxes, the Abbasid government introduced five more offices including: (1) an audit or account office (divan al Zimam); (2) a correspondence office (diwan al tawqi) for management of official letters and documents; (3) a board for the grievance inspectors; (4) a police department; and (5) a postal institution. The board for grievance inspectors could be considered a form of the "Court of Appeals" or "Supreme Court," which handles the wrongful dispensing of justice in the

administrative and political departments. Hitti asserts that the most significant contribution of the Abbasid government was their development of a postal department.<sup>26</sup>

### **Judicial System**

Unlike the Umayyad period, where judges were usually appointed by governors, judges during the Abbasid time were often assigned by the Caliphs. In observance of the tradition, the position of judge (qadi) was always reserved for a faqih (jurist learned in the Qur'an and Islamic tradition), they also administered the waqf (i.e. religious endowments) for the purpose of taking care of the affairs of orphans and imbeciles.

One of the foremost sciences developed by Muslims was jurisprudence. The Muslims were among the medieval people who independently generated the science of jurisprudence.<sup>27</sup> The Islamic system of fiqh (i.e. law) was primarily based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, through which the Shari'ah (canon law of Islam) was formed and passed on to later generations. The Islamic Shari'ah, besides the Qur'an, includes the Sunnah, which is a collection of the deeds, utterances, and silent approvals of the Prophet. And a Hadith is the written record of a Sunnah. According to Hitti, the number of written Hadiths was fixed during the second century of Islam, but increased thereafter.<sup>28</sup> The political rivalry among different groups provided ample opportunity for the fabrication of Hadiths. As an example, before his execution in 772, ibn-Abd-al-Awja, one of the conveyers of the Sunnah, confessed to having circulated 4000 hadiths of his own invention.<sup>29</sup> Although the Hadiths are a script of Muhammad's tradition and

constitute the second pillar of the Shari'ah, they do not all have the same weight in terms of authenticity or validity. They generally fit into three categories: genuine (Sahih), fair (hasan), and weak (da'if). Any perfect Hadith, should thus consist of text (matn) and a chain of indisputable authorities (asnad) (ibn-Asakir; Ibn-Khaldun, Muqaddamah).<sup>30</sup> The Hadiths are also categorized between the Madinan and Kufan School of Tradition, however, more credit is give to the former than the latter. As stated by ibn Hajar, ibn Qutaybah, ibn Sa'd, and Nawawi), the major transmitters and the number of Hadiths that are assigned to each transmitter are: (1) Abu- Hurayrah, a Companion of the Prophet - 5374 Hadiths; (2) A'ishah, the Prophet's wife - 2210 Hadiths; Anas ibn-Malik - 2286 Hadiths; and Abdullah ibn-Umar, the son of the Second Caliph - 1630 Hadiths.<sup>31</sup>

The expansion of the Islamic territories brought new legal and social issues as well as new knowledges from the conquered people that soon made it apparent that the Shari'ah alone was insufficient to fulfill the growing and changing needs of political, civil, criminal, and financial issues. Speculation provided two other principles: qiyas (i.e. analogical deduction) and ijma (i.e. consensus of opinion) to supplement the Shari'ah. However, this became the major cause of factions in Sunni Islam. In addition, the concept of the ijma could not be accepted by Shiite, based on its worldview that the only sovereign is the infallible Imams rather than the Ummah.

## Sunni Factions

Abu-Hanif (d. 767), the grandson of a Persian slave and leader of the Iraq School of Tradition, insisted on the right of juridical speculation in Islam and the principle of analogical deduction, *qias*. He became the founder of earliest, largest, and most tolerant school of Islam, including almost one half of the Sunnis. In contrast was Malik ibn Anas (715-795), the head of the Madina School of Tradition, who saw the Hadith as having special importance. As the founder of the Malikite faction, he collected some 1700 juridical Hadiths in his *al-Muwatta* (the leveled path) to codify the Sunnah and make it the canon law for the Malikite division. The work is the oldest surviving corpus of Muslim law.<sup>32</sup>

The Shafiite School founded by Muhammad ibn-Idris al-Shafii (767-820), a student of Malik who belonged to the Quraysh family. He accepted speculation with certain reservation. It could be said that this School fits between the liberal Baghdad and conservative Madina Schools of Tradition. The last of four is the Hanbalite rite, founded by Ahmad ibn-Hanbali (d. 855), a student of al-Shafii. Hanbali supported uncompromising adherence to the Hadith. His conservative view served against the Mutazilite rationalist movement in Baghdad.<sup>33</sup> A collection of some 28000 traditions are ascribed to ibn-Hanbali, which is collected in six volumes at Cairo, in 1313. "Today, however, the Hanbalite rite claims no considerable following outside of the Wahhabis."<sup>34</sup>

The expediencies of the changing world encouraged all four Sunni schools of law to embrace the concept of *ijma* (consensus of opinion). This principle made it

possible to make some major decisions, such as: canonizing the text of the Qur'an, approval of the six canonical books of Hadiths, and lithographic production of the Qur'an. After a few centuries, the principle of *ijma* was used in favor of Ottoman Caliphs by dismissing the idea that caliphate belongs to Quraysh (the tribe Muhammad came from). On the other hand, by crystallizing the traditional dogma and doctrine of juridical development, the door of *ijtihad* (i.e. the right for further interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah, or forming a new opinion) was closed to all four schools of the Sunni community. *Ijma*, however, was rejected by Shiism in favor of *ijtihad*. Shiite argued that truth is not necessarily found by the consensus of fallible men. To them consensus on religious matters can sanctify a deviation from the truth. An independent juridical judgment (*ijtihad*), on the other hand, is predicated on the assumption that man is fallible and the truth that is outside of Qur'an or Sunnah is subjective. For Shiite, this juridical independence formalizes not the absoluteness of truth but subjectivity and relativity of the truth.

The Islamic canon law (*Shari'ah*) regulates religious, political, and social life of Muslims. As stated by Hitti, the *Shari'ah* classifies the performance of Muslims under five categories that are: (1) absolute duty (commission or omission of it is rewarded or punished by law); (2) commendable acts (the performance of it is rewarded, but omission is not punished); (3) permissible actions (legally indifferent; either act or don't act); (4) reprehensible actions (disapproved, but not punished); (5) forbidden proceedings - *haram* (doing it calls for punishment).<sup>35</sup>

## Religio-political movements

A movement that evolved into its final form under the Abbasids and played a decisive role in the history of Islam was the Shiite. Despite the fact that Shiites had been an important factor in establishing the Abbasid dynasty, they did not fare any better than under the Umayyad regime. The goodwill of al-Mamun (813-833) was soon replaced with the persecution of Shiites by al-Mutawakkil (847-861) in 850. According to Hitti, such general hostility led Shiites to adopt the principle of taqiyah (the principle of dissimulation).<sup>36</sup> Shahrestani notes that Shiites made taqiyah a fundamental tenet as a measure of protection for themselves and co-religionists, and could survive under the cover of taqiyah with their faithful allegiance to the Imam, a descendent of Ali.<sup>37</sup> Unlike the Sunni Caliph, the Shiite Imam inherited from the Prophet not only temporal sovereignty, but the prerogative of interpreting the Shari'ah. In the Shiite view, religious truths can only be achieved through the instruction of the infallible Imams.

The Twelver faction was not the only Shiite movement. Another notable group who agreed with the principles of the former, but only up to the sixth Imam, Jafar al-Sadiq (700-765), was called the Ismailites. Nowbakhti and Baghdadi, assert that they recognized Jafar's eldest son Ismail (d.760) as their last Imam and hidden Mahdi (messiah),<sup>38</sup> in contrast to mainstream Shiites who accepted his brother, Musa Al-Kazim (d.799), as the seventh Imam. The Ismailites organized one of the most effective means of politico-religious propaganda that the world of Islam ever experienced. According to Hitti, their doctrine known as batinite (esoteric), dictates that the Qur'an should only be interpreted allegorically, and religious truth can be ascertained by the

discovery of batin (the inner meaning), since the zahir (the outer meaning) was but a veil to keep the truths from the eyes of the unqualified.<sup>39</sup>

Strictly as a movement, Mutazilah started in early ninth century with the doctrine that the Qur'an is the word of God and eternal. Later, it developed a rational faction that placed human reason above the Qur'an. As stated by ibn-Khallikan, Caliph al-Mamun, having philosophical interest was attracted by the rationalist idea of Mutazilah. In 827 the Caliph issued a proclamation declaring the dogma of "the creation of Qur'an", in opposition with the orthodox view that the Qur'an in its actual form is Celestial.<sup>40</sup> He took another step by issuing a second edict, in 833, declaring that no qadi (judge) could hold his office if he did not subscribe to the declared view. He also instituted a tribunal for the trial of those who denied his dogma (a copy of Caliph's order can be examined in the work of great historian Tabari). Strangely, the movement that embraced the idea of free will became a catalyst for suppressing thoughts. The main victim, according to Tabari, was Ahmad ibn-Hanbali, the founder of the conservative orthodoxy of Islam.<sup>41</sup>

Caliph al-Mutawakkil (847-861) turned the tables on the Mutazilites in 848 and restored the old dogma by eradicating the rationalist faction. Among the leaders of the Mutazilah's rationalist school was prominent thinker al-Nazzam (d. 845). As appeared in Sharestani and Baghdadi, al-Nazzam leaned toward the Persian dualistic idea, proclaiming that doubt is the first absolute requirement of knowledge. On the conservative (i.e. theological) side, was Abu-al-Hassan Ali al-Asha'ari of Baghdad (d. 935), a man who is credited for his efforts in eradicating the Mutazilah's rationalist

ideas and re-establishing the orthodoxy of Islam, which has made him the heritage of the Sunnis.<sup>42</sup> Al-Asha'ari started as a pupil of the Mutazilah School, but later changed allegiance and used his inside knowledge against his former teachers and colleagues.

The Idea of Al-Asha'ari was followed by Abu-Hamid al-Ghazzali (1058-1111), the great theologian of Islam who was born and died in Khurasan, Iran. Al-Ghazali became the final authority for Sunnite orthodoxy. Through his works, he declared the Shari'ah to be the universal creed of Islam, which were partly translated into Latin before 1150.<sup>43</sup> Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), a great theologian of Christianity, and later Pascal (1623-1662) were indirectly affected by the ideas of al-Ghazali, who (of all Muslim thinkers) came nearest to subscribing to Christian views. "The scholastic shell constructed by al-Asha'ari and al-Ghazali has held Islam to the present day but Christendom succeeded in breaking through its scholasticism particularly at the time of Protestant Revolt."<sup>44</sup> This assertion has been acknowledged by many thinkers as a significant factor in the development of the West and the lack of progress in Muslim society.

Another interesting eclectic school of philosophy that flourished in al-Basrah (about 970) was Ikhwan al Safa (the brethren of sincerity). Ikhwans philosophical orientation tended toward Pythagorean speculations. This appellation is presumably taken from the story of the ringdove in Kalilah wa-Dimnah, a story where a group of animals, by acting as faithful friends (Ikhwan al-Safa) to one another, escaped the snares of the hunter.<sup>45</sup> Ikhwans' belief was based on the idea that man is a social being and therefore can only find his survival and pleasure within society. The Ikhwan in



Baghdad formed not only a philosophical but also a religio-political association with conservative elements of Shiite, possibly Ismailite views. A collection of their epistles, *Rasail* (edited by Khayr-al-Din al-Zirikli, Cairo, 1928), survives in a fifty-two volumes, encyclopedia-type collection. It embodies the knowledge that a cultured man of that age was supposed to acquire.

For Ikhwan, the Prophet, the Imam, and their vicegerent are the only sovereign, and absolute obedience of every Muslim of his leader is the essential duty.<sup>46</sup> “The Brethren (Ikhwan al Safa) show special enthusiasm for Christ and Socrates as examples of moral men, though to the Sunnites Muhammad and to the Shiites Ali are the perfect men.”<sup>47</sup> The writings and ideas of Ikhwan al-Safa were a source of inspiration for al-Ghazali.<sup>48</sup>

### **Intellectual Movements**

The golden age of philosophical ideas in Islam began with the introduction of Greek philosophy, and the work of a few enlightened philosophers made it possible. Of the philosophers who contributed to political Islam, those that made the greatest impact were al-Kindi (801-873), abu-Nasr al-Farabi (870-950), and ibn-Sina (980-1037 - known as Avicenna in the West). Hitti, in *History of Arab*, says, “The harmonization of Greek philosophy with Islam began by al-Kindi, an Arab, was continued by al-Farabi, a Turk (Persian descent), and completed in the East by ibn-Sina, a Persian.”<sup>49</sup> Al-Kindi (801-873) was born in al-Kufah and prospered in Baghdad where he died. He earned

the title of “the philosopher of the Arabs”. As noted by Hitti, in Neo-Platonic fashion, al-Kindi endeavored to combine the views of Plato and Aristotle and regarded the Neo-Pythagorean mathematics as the basis of all sciences.<sup>50</sup>

Muhammad abu-Nasr al-Farabi (870-950) is the highly respected philosopher who was given the title “the Second Teacher” for centuries (Aristotle being the first). Al-Farabi, who was of Persian descent, was born in Farab in Turkistan and educated in Baghdad. He aimed to synthesize philosophy and Sufism, and paved the way for the work of Ibn-Sina. Of Farabi’s 117 known books, 68 are devoted to logic, philosophy, and political science.<sup>51</sup> His philosophy, as revealed by his several treatises on Plato and Aristotle and noted by Hitti, was a syncretism of Platonism, Aristotlism, and Sufism. He also composed various psychological, political, and metaphysical works, which included the *Risalah fi Ara Ahl al-Madina al-Fadila* (epistle on the opinion of the people of the ‘perfect city’), published in Cairo in 1323. In this epistle and *al-Siyasah al-Madaniyah* (political regime), it is evident that al-Farabi was inspired by Plato’s Republic and Aristotle’s Politics. He presented his concept of a model city as a hierarchical organism analogous to the human body. In his ideal city, the object of association is the happiness of its citizens, and the sovereign is a morally and intellectually perfect man.<sup>52</sup> The idea, that clearly resembles the notion of the philosopher king by Plato.

After Farabi is Ibn-Sina (980-1037), who owed his philosophical views to Farabi. Ibn-Khallikan noted that, “no Muslim ever reached in the philosophical sciences the same rank as al-Farabi, and it was by the study of his writings and by the

imitation of his style that Ibn-Sina attained proficiency and rendered his own work so useful.”<sup>53</sup> He also claimed that, through Ibn-Sina, Greek philosophy was rendered able to be incorporated with Islam. His philosophical works became the main targets of al-Ghazali and the traditional Ulama.

Ibn-Bajjah (d. 1138) is considered to be the first Islamic thinker who tried to disseminate the philosophical studies within the Muslim community, particularly in Spain. He was a rational thinker who seriously rejected the ideas set forth by al-Ghazali (1058-1111), and questioned the rationality of those ideas. Al-Fakhuri, Al-Jar says that, Ibn-Bajjah followed the philosophy of al-Farabi by asserting that the ultimate happiness can only be achieved through reason. For him, a government in its complete form leads man to actualization of happiness. Under the rule of such a government, the opinion and thought of every man is always respected and valued. The community that is commanded by law should also include the law abiding citizens who value law and order.<sup>54</sup> The rationalistic views of Ibn-Bajjah that were offered in his work, *Tadbir al-Mutawahhid*, were not welcomed by some Muslims. According to Ibn-Khallikan, “Muslim biographers considered ibn-Bajjah an atheist.”<sup>55</sup>

Ibn-Rushd (d.1198) is another rationalist Muslim philosopher who carefully studied the works of Plato, Aristotle, al-Farabi, Ibn-Sina, and Ibn-Bajjah. He was particularly fascinated with the ideas of Plato and Ibn-Bajjah. He tried to fill the gap between philosophy and religion, and followed the idea that man is a social being and can only have a good life through association with others. Such a distinction requires him to live in a political system. Al-Fakhuri and Al-Jar state that, he preferred a

republic, headed by a Philosopher, as the best system of government (as did Plato). He viewed the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, as the best republic. For him, justice as the cardinal principal of government is the product of true knowledge and reason. Injustice is a product of total ignorance (jahl) and the main element that will demise any government. They further note that Leon Gauthier considered Ibn-Rushd a rational philosopher with a wide scope of vision and a particular type of religious man.<sup>56</sup> For Ibn-Rushd, the religion of a philosopher is reason. Thomas Aquinas, the prominent Christian theologian is one of the philosophers who were influenced by Ibn-Rushd's works. After he studied the works of Ibn-Rushd, Luigi Rinaldi asserted that, it was the works of Islamic thinkers that introduced Greek philosophy to the Christian world; their tremendous effect on the evolution of Christian philosophy is undeniable. Ibn-Rushd holds the highest position among those who translated and disseminated the philosophy of Aristotle, and is well respected by both the Muslim and Christian world.<sup>57</sup>

Regardless of the philosophical and intellectual achievement of this age, the continuation of the Caliphate was closely related to its political power than the claimed status. The weakened military power of Abbasid Caliph al-Mu'tasim paved the path for his overthrow by the Mongols in 1258.

### **The Ottoman Empire**

The political power and flourishing civilization of Islam did not stop entirely with the fall of Abbasid Dynasty in 1258. However, the massive territory claimed by

the Abbasids was divided into a few other Islamic states in different regions. The small reformed Abbasid Dynasty survived in northern Africa for a few more centuries. One of the new emerged Islamic states was the Ottoman Empire, established about 1300 A.D. in Anatolia, on the land of the Byzantine Empire and the ruins of the Mamluk power. The conquest by Muhammad II the Conqueror (1451-1481) in 1453 formally created a new super power with one foot in Asia and the other in Europe. According to Hitti, “the inheritance of lands from both East and West had its counterpart in the inheritance of ideas, and the combined heritage is perhaps the most pregnant fact in the history of Ottoman Turkey.”<sup>58</sup> The empire expanded itself, covering territories from northern Africa and southern Europe to the south of the Persian Gulf.

The Ottoman Empire, similar to those of the Umayyad and Abbasid, claimed to be the successor of the Prophet. However, their dynastic regime relied heavily on military power.<sup>59</sup> Sultan (the King), the title of Ottoman rulers at their beginning, was transformed to Caliph no sooner than the sixteenth century in which Sultan Salim I (1512-1520) claimed that the Caliphate was transferred to him by the last Abbasid Caliph Mutawakkil.<sup>60</sup> However, the Sunni Ulama refused to recognize the title of Caliph on the grounds that either it only belongs to the Rightly Guided Caliphs (a view held by the Hanafi Sunni branch) or the Caliph must be a descendent of the Quraysh tribe to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged (a view held by other Sunni branches). However, as compared to Shiites, the Sunni proponents of the theory of the Caliphate displayed much greater flexibility in adapting their ideas to political realities. The great theologian Ibn-Taymiyyah (1328) gave a clear manifestation of the endeavor of Ottomans: “It is obvious that the people cannot be in a sound state except with rulers,

and even if somebody from among unjust kings becomes ruler, this would be better than there being none.”<sup>61</sup> Later, such flexibility in the Sunni religion allowed use of the principle of Ijma to dismiss the necessity of having the Caliphate belong to the Quraysh in favor of the Ottoman Caliphs. Yet until the eighteenth century, the title could not be used officially.<sup>62</sup>

Evidently, the Sunni Ulama did not support any reform movement against the Ottoman rule. As stated by Enayat, very few enlightened souls inside the religious communities of Ottoman Turkey ever attained a commanding position in the national struggle for freedom and the rule of law.<sup>63</sup> Finally, the reign of the Caliphate was concluded in November 1922 when the Grand National Assembly of Turkey replaced the Caliphate with a republican regime. This pronouncement was supported by the Constitutional declaration in January 1921 that “sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the people.”<sup>64</sup>

### **Safavid Dynasty of Iran**

The establishment of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1742) in Iran corresponded with the rule of Ottoman Caliphs. From the outset, the Ottomans were not the fond of the new regime in Iran. Many historians believe that one main reason for Safavid rulers to support and propagate Shiite in Iran stems from the notion that such attempts would generate a strong ideological ground for their challenge against the Sunni Ottoman

Caliphs. However, over two centuries after the rise of Safavids, the Shiites in Iran still held the minority status. Thus the Shiite Ulama at this time were viewed to hold a passive political and social standing, provided that the Ottoman Caliphs claimed to be the successors of the Prophet. The mentality of the Sunni community in Iran thus had to favor the Caliph. Vigorous efforts by the Safavids to convert Sunni to Shiite, particularly by Shah Isma'il who claimed to be the vice-gerent of the Imam, motivated the Shiite Ulama to get involved in social and political affairs. The Shiite Ulama, who were appointed by state, offered their submission to Safavid rulers. According to Esposito, "in practice, Shiite Ulama accepted the Shah (i.e. King) as a representative of the Imam, acquiesced to the royal title "Shadow of God on Earth", and willingly accepted government appointments."<sup>65</sup> Hence the Safavid government was able to skillfully use the Shiite sentiment and support in the fight against their strong enemy, the Ottomans.

In reality, the Shiite Ulama could not forget their fundamental demand for power, and were concerned about such an opportunity. Consequently, after the demise of Shah Isma'il, a few of the Ulama saw a chance to claim their right as the legitimate inherents of the Imams. But what they demanded as the heirs of the Imam still did not include political power as a ruler. The demand for political authority could only be inferred from the writings and narratives of the highest-ranking faqih, Allameh Muhaghigh Karaki (d. 1533).<sup>66</sup> He claimed, "all credible Ulama unanimously agree that at the time of occultation only the just Mujtahid is the legitimate heir of Imam and have the power to act on his behalf."<sup>67</sup> Another faqih of this period who made a similar claim is the high-ranking Mujtahid Mulla Ahmad Ardabili (d.1585), known as Muqaddas (the

pious), claimed that, during the absence of infallible Imam, the affairs of Muslims that are related to the Imam will be assigned to a Mujtahid. According to Ardabili, he is the faqih who inherits all the power and responsibility of the Imam.<sup>68</sup>

This demand by the Ulama soon manifested itself in their cooperation with the Safavid rule to the point that they even became the advisors for government. Esposito, in reference to Ali Shariati (1933-1977), a well-known Shiite thinker, states “Islam had become an establishment religion supporting oppressive governments rather than in continual revolt as it should be.”<sup>69</sup> During this period, the Ulama handled only those affairs that were related to religious tradition and the spiritual aspects of Muslim life. Kadivar, a contemporary Shiite thinker, states that the Safavid kings were able to utilize the Ulama’s religious influence and advice to exercise their political power. As a result of their affiliation with the state, the Ulama gradually gained more power within the circle of government as well as the community.<sup>70</sup> As noted by Keddie in *Roots of Revolution*, some Ulama had even challenged the Safavid kings to establish themselves as the vice-gerent of the Hidden Imam and the only source of the Shari’ah. Moreover, they strove to ascertain a permanent commanding status that could be recognized not only religiously, but officially as well. The status they tried for was not less than taqlid, which marks itself in imitating Shiites of a credible jurist called mujtahid. According to Keddie, “By making taqlid incumbent upon believers, the Ulama extended and strengthened their power in the Shiite community”. Keddie furthers his assertion that such vital improvement assisted the Ulama in their endeavor to institutionalize their charisma and establish themselves as a trustworthy hierarchy.<sup>71</sup> The Ulama’s rise to power was followed by their improved financial status due to the expansion of waqf



(religious endowment) properties. On the other hand, the authority of kings diminished to the point that the last Safavid king, in dealing with group of Afghan invaders, depended more on the Ulama's mysticism rather than effective use of military power.

### **Qajar Dynasty in Iran**

The Sunni Afghans and Nader Shah came to the power after the fall of Safavid in 1742. The Ulama, under Sunni Afghans and Nader Shah, lost most of the power that they gained during the Safavid Dynasty. The Qajar dynasty (1796-1925) that followed the Naderi secular regime provided another opportunity for the Ulama to regain the power and establish a semi-independent organization of the Shiite Ulama.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, it was during this epoch that the reconsideration of the traditional ideas and the notion of political modernism developed in Iran. Political modernism in Iran was considered mainly as a reaction to Western colonial power and the despotic Qajar regime. Since the Safavid era, increasing contacts with West (particularly through the dispatch of students abroad) contributed to the intellectual and progressive ideas in Iran. Furthermore, the devastating outcomes of two wars with Russia (1813, and 1828) encouraged many to re-evaluate the social, intellectual, and political deficiencies of the country. Two aborted modernization attempts by two enlightened statesmen, Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir and Mirza Husayn Khan Mushirud-Dawlah (known as Sipahsalar), are noteworthy to mention. Amir Kabir, as a great modernizing prime-minister, took essential actions for centralizing the judicial

system that was controlled by the Ulama. The establishment of the foremost institution of higher education and the dispatch of students to Europe were part of his efforts. Undeniably, the acquaintance of Iranians with Western culture, politics, and progress in science and industry not only made Iranians realize and identify the deficiencies that existed in different areas, but also energized their ongoing reform movements.

The call for modernization generated a variety of reactions within the Shiite community of Iran, including the Ulama. As stated by Esposito, under the rule of the Qajar, the Ulama reassessed their position regarding religion and state. They saw themselves as guardians, protectors, and defenders of Islam rather than advisors and administrators of government affairs, as they had exercised during the Safavid reign.<sup>73</sup>

The first jurist who claimed the sovereignty of Shiite Ulama during the Qajar Dynasty is Mulla Muhammad Naraghi (d. 1829), a well-respected faqih of the time. He explicitly discussed the notion of Welayat-e-faqih (the absolute sovereignty of the Ulama) and considered it a vital concern of the Islamic Shari'ah. He also provided a collection of intellectual and narrative reasons for his argument, which is reflected in his work *Awayed-al-Ayyam* (the historical outcomes). Here he concludes that, in addition to spiritual issues, the management of the temporal aspect of human life is also the responsibility of the Ulama.<sup>74</sup> Naraghi's voice is recognized as the most blatant claim of political power from a Shiite Alim (the singular form of Ulama). His voice most likely faded or changed direction with the intensification of political movement that was against the absolute power of the Qajar kings.

## Intellectual Movement

In the intellectual arena of the nineteenth century, Jamal-al-Din Afghani (1838-1897) stands out in terms of his intellectual and political influence and his modern political ideas. He favored adopting those Islamic thoughts that would enhance the intellectual, political, and scientific knowledge necessary for the progression of Islamic society. Jamal-al-Din also embraced the concept of adopting Western political institutions that would better serve the Islamic world. As stated by Hitti, Afghani is considered to be the foremost principal agent for the inception of modernism in Islam.<sup>75</sup> His ideas were primarily followed by two prominent Islamic thinkers, Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and Rashid Rida (1865-1935). Abduh, a liberal reformer and student of Afghani, inclined further toward the modernistic aspects of Afghani's political thoughts. According to Hitti, while Afghani advocated political revolution in the Islamic world, Abduh viewed religious awakening to be an effective means for bringing the desired reform to the Islamic nations.<sup>76</sup> More than any other modern Islamic thinkers, both Afghani and Abduh contributed significantly to breaking the scholastic shell which had encapsulated Islam since the medieval period.<sup>77</sup>

According to Hitti, Muhammad Abduh followed ibn-Taymiyah (1263-1328) in the condemnation of superstitions and its spread that had contaminated the faith. He studied and taught at al-Azhar University, and edited (with Afghani) a paper in Paris stressing that basically there was no conflict between Islam and science. Since he believed in the insufficiency of Islamic scholasticism, he attempted to interpret certain verses of the Qur'an rationally, to support his idea.

Conversely, Rashid Rida, a dedicated disciple of Abduh, was adamant in returning to the fundamentals of religion that would induce an intellectual revival necessary for the emergence of new Islamic institutions. As stated by Esposito, following his master, Abduh, Rida believed that Islamic law required restoration and reform to develop a modern Islamic legal system according to the conditions of the time.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, he makes a distinction between the issues that are in the sphere of religion and those of the laws, and claims that Islam consists of both. By using logical terms, he describes the former as Universal (religion) and the latter as Particular (law).<sup>79</sup> According to Enayat, “Rida comes close to the secularists when he states the canonical reasons for the Muslims’ freedom of legislation in non-religious matters.”<sup>80</sup> Still, the essential affair for Islamic state, in his view, is the restoration of the learned and virtuous Caliphate. The political system of such, as he claims, should be based upon the consultation between the Caliph and the Ulama, who are the guardian interpreters of Islamic law.<sup>81</sup>

### **Constitutional Movement in Iran**

One noteworthy age for the Shiite Ulama starts with the constitutional revolution of Iran in 1906. The revolution was a reflection of the national demand for establishing an appropriate government system that could guarantee the sovereignty of people and exercise legal limits for the ruling power (king). Many scholars consent that, for the first time, the Shiite Ulama in general became familiar with the modern political ideas such as the constitution and the separation of powers. The constitutional

movement resulted in two distinct divisions in the community of the Ulama based on their views regarding the government. Following the passive ideas, one faction maintained its association in politics that included such matters as collecting religious dues and supervising the affairs of needy Muslims and orphans. The next division supported the movement with certain reservations. Among those were the high-ranking Ulamas, Muhammad Tabataba'i, Abdullah Behbahani, Muhammad Kazim Khurasani, and Muhammad Husayn Na'ini.

Ayatollah Na'ini (1860-1936) asserted that the constitutional government should include a number of Ulama as part of its legislative branch so that laws could only be legislated with their consent. This would guarantee that the legislative system is in agreement with the Shari'ah.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the assertion of Na'ini was an attempt to incorporate the undisputed spiritual role and claimed political responsibility of the Shiite Ulama with the sovereignty of the people. The idea corresponds to a sort of 'checks and balances' between the legislative branch of a constitutional government and the community of the Ulama. According to Na'ini, the development of democracy or constitutional government is only possible when dictatorship is eradicated. For him, such eradication is achieved by: (1) abolition of public ignorance through the effort of scholars in disseminating knowledge and information; (2) elimination of religious dictatorship that occurs in the form of a partial interpretation of Islamic Teachings in favor of rulers; (3) ending the cultural tendency of worshipping the ruler, since it hinders the intellectual development and progression of society<sup>83</sup> Ayatollah Na'ini's arguments were confirmed by Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Borujerdi (d. 1340/1961), probably the most influential Mujtahid (faqih) of his time. Using intellectual reasoning

for the incorporation of politics and religion, he asserted that it is the responsibility of the Ulama to participate in the management of political and social issues of the Muslim community.<sup>84</sup>

Not unexpectedly, there were some eminent Ulama, such as Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri, who opposed the constitutional movement in Iran. As noted by Ahmad Kasravi, a distinguished Historian, the opponents resorted to some political issues which in their eyes would undermine the superiority of Islam. Using this reasoning those Ulama's major concern included the recognition of equal rights for all citizens irrespective of their religious affiliations, the danger of a free press that could open the door for atheistic ideas, and unacceptability of compulsory education of female Muslims.<sup>85</sup> Finally, Ayatollah Khomeini (1902-1989) not only opposed the constitutional government but was the first faqih who used the term "Islamic government" in his demand for the absolute power of the faqih (welayat-e faqih). Khomeini's argument appeared in some of his books, including *Ketab al Bi'ah* and *Islamic Government*.<sup>86</sup>

The analysis of historical events clearly indicates that the unsettled chain of theoretical arguments by Shiite thinkers on the political role of the Ulama have certainly paved the road for the theory of welayat-e faqih (the absolute power of faqih) and its commencement in Iran. Khomeini applied to this theory some particular political characteristics in order to accommodate a practical Islamic government.<sup>87</sup> Yet, not all Ulama have provided the same answers to the question of Islamic government discernible in welayat-e faqih. The vital question always revolves around the idea of whether any type of government has ever been offered by Shiite Islam and Shiite

Ulama, and if so, what the defining characteristics and qualifications should its ruler exhibit?

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## **CHAPTER IV**

### **MODERN SHIITE POLITICAL THOUGHT**

#### **Introduction**

After Shiite Islam became the majority sect in Iran, and with the intellectual movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, serious rifts began to occur within the Shiite sect itself. While some believed that it was important to embrace and learn from the ideas of the Western world, others held that it was imperative to continue to uphold the traditional views. These divergent ideas have resulted in two extremes of government in Iran within the same century, namely the Western-thought based Pahlavi regime and the current Islamic regime started by the Ayatollah Khomeini after the Revolution of 1979.

This chapter will focus on the rise of Shiite Islam in Iran, and the differing views of Shiite thinkers on Islamic regime in Iran as well as the Shiite Political Ideas, which constitutes the fundamental principles of the Islamic government of Iran. The initial emergence of Shiite will be covered first, which followed by a discussion of the Shiite Islam tradition, the role of Shiite in Iran, and the governance of the Ulama (religious scholars). The chapter concludes with an analysis of the two diverging ideas of Shiite Islam, the Traditionalists Ideas and the Populists Ideas.

### Emergence of Shiite

Political thought has been a lively ingredient of Muslim intellectual life over the past century. The Muslim consciousness has a certain inclination towards politics, which emanates directly from the essence of Islamic precepts. The simple reason for the concern with politics is the realization of a number of “collective duties” of Muslims, of which the most important are enjoining good and forbidding evil (*al-amr bil-ma'ruf wa'n-nahy 'an al-munkar*), and the defense of the territory of Islam.<sup>1</sup> Despite these unifying goals, Muslim history has evolved into an enthralling montage of competing schools, each with a different perception of the foundations of state authority and the limits of individual obedience to the rulers. Such ideological and political clashes were seen immediately after the Prophet's death with a dispute breaking out over the assignment of the successor of the Prophet. One group of Muslims believed that the Prophet had designated his son-in-law and cousin, Ali, as his successor. This group believed that the designation occurred during the Prophet's journey back from his last pilgrimage to Macca, at a place called Ghadir -e- khomm. Different versions of the proclamation have been reported and, according to Soroush (1991), the most popular interpretation is: “He for whom I was the master, should hence have Ali as his master.”<sup>2</sup> The group that believed Ali, as the legitimate successor of the Prophet, came to be known as the Shiites (i.e. the followers of Ali), and the ideology, here, is called Shiite. Conversely, some Muslims held the position that the succession should go to the prophet's uncle, Abbas, on the grounds that if being a close relative of the Prophet is the



decisive qualification, then Abbas could have a greater right by virtue of the Qur'an, which says "kindred by blood are nearer to one another."<sup>3</sup>

The claim of the Shiites is based on their belief that God should not have left the issue of leadership undecided and in the hands of ordinary individuals. They also perceived the succession of Islamic teachings and prophetic tradition to be in Ali, and through him, to his eleven male descendants called the Imams. Using the same intrinsic rationale, Shiites endorse their belief that in the absence of infallible leaders, the Prophet, and the Imams, only the qualified Ulama (i.e. religious scholars) should be appointed for the leadership of the Muslim states. In addition, they believe that the practice of justice is a necessary characteristic of any ruler. The concept is then used by the Ulama not only to set themselves above the ordinary individuals, but also to believe in upholding the qualities of leadership together with justice. At some point, the Shiites included the Imamate (leadership of infallible Imams) and the practice of justice as part of the fundamental principles of Islam. Thus the essential principles of Islam for Shiite Muslims are Tawhid (the believe that there is only one God, Allah), Shahadah (the testimony that Muhammad is the Messenger of God), Akhirah (believing in the Day of Resurrection), Imamate (believing in Ali and his eleven descendents, namely Imam), and justice (believing that the ruler of Muslim community should hold the qualities of justice).

In contrast, the Sunnis, who form the majority of Muslims, held the view that the Prophet had deliberately left the decision of his succession to the community. The Sunni tradition thus adhered to principles rather than personalities. Regardless of the

ideological factions formed after the death of the Prophet, the Sunni view held the majority at the Saquifah assembly, leading finally to the election of Abu-Bakr, a distinguished community member, the Prophet's father in-law, and a close companion of the Prophet, as his successor. Compared with its Shiite counterparts, the Sunni view portrays the theory of the Caliphate with much greater flexibility in adapting their ideas to political realities. "Sunnism can be considered a realistic political ideology," Enayat (1991) asserts, "because of its greater adaptability to changing circumstances, and its inclusion of modifications and revisions carrying the stamp of the theologians' approval."<sup>4</sup> At one point, this flexibility in Sunni Islam, led to the transition from the supreme value being justice to being security and stability. Consequently, priority was given to the ability of a ruler to maintain law and order rather than expecting the character traits of piety and justice. Ibn Taymiyyah, affirmed this viewpoint at the time of Mongol rule in the Islamic states by saying: "It is obvious that the [affair of the] people cannot be in a sound state except with rulers, and even if somebody from among unjust kings becomes ruler, this would be better than there being none. As it is said sixty years with an unjust ruler is better than one night without a ruler."<sup>5</sup>

### **Shiite Islam Tradition**

Considering Shiite to be an opposition movement to Sunni, it is important to study the doctrinal differences and particularities between the two factions which are considered as the decisive measures in formulating their political views. The study

would not only reveal the intellectual history of Islam, but would also show the distinguishing characteristics of Shiite in relation to Sunni that embodies its fundamental principles as well as the historically developed attitudes towards the controversial issues of the Islamic history, society, and dogma.

Perhaps the most interesting characteristic of Shiite is its rejection of majority opinion and its defense of moral excellence.<sup>6</sup> Shiite has always denounced the rule of the first three Rightly Guided Caliphs, and viewed them as illegitimate successors to the Prophet. For Shiite, the immediate rightful heir of Muhammad could only be Ali. Considering the letter of Ali (reflected in his book *Nahj al-Balageh*) to Muawiya asking for his allegiance, Ali clearly accepts the assignment of those Caliphs by stating that, “those who had declared their allegiances to Abu-Bakr, Umar, and Uthman, have also declared allegiance to me; and as inauguration of Caliphs before me depended only on the consensus of the leaders of Madina not the whole Ummah, the same concept applies to my inauguration which also was legitimized through a Shurra including the most pious Muslims of Ansar and Muhajir.”<sup>7</sup> The letter also indicates that Ali, as the foremost figure of Shiite, does not reject the majority concept. However, the theologian Fadl Ibn Shadhan Nayshaburi (d. 902), a Shiite jurist, discredits the Sunnis’ continual support of the majority principle. He argues that the Qur’an, in number of verses, takes a sinister view of the majority and rarely accepts its legitimacy. The Qur’an says: “And if you obey most of those on the earth, they will mislead you far way from Allah’s path, they follow nothing but conjectures, and they do nothing but lie.”<sup>8</sup>

The Shiite negative attitude towards the majority concept was supplemented by two other distinctive practices: (1) the esoteric style of teaching religious truths; and (2) *taqiya*, further defined as the expedient dissimulation. Esoterism is closely entwined with Shiite theosophy, which expatiates the rationale of Shiite as being merely the awareness and guardianship of the secret truth of Islam as well as the communication of its essence. According to the Shiites, the truth of Islam can be partially inferred from Qur'an. Comprehensive inference can be drawn from each aspect of the sacred writing, namely the *zahir* (an 'outer or apparent meaning') and *batin* (an 'inner or secret meaning'). Thus the Shiites, unlike the Sunnis, did not rely solely upon the literal meaning of the Qur'an, which provides a clear interpretation of the verses. As stated by Enayat (1991), historically, "esoterism generated an educational philosophy which related accessible knowledge to the moral integrity as well as the cognitive ability of its recipients."<sup>9</sup>

Al-Ikhwan al-Safa (the Brethren of Sincerity), who clearly affiliated with the Isma'ili Shiite, conveys the essence of esoteric concept through the *Rasa'il* (Epistles) by warning Muslims to allow Epistles to be used only by those who are "free, beneficent, of sound mind, having a sense of purpose, looking for the right path, from among the seekers of knowledge, exercising maximum care in preserving, concealing, revealing, and communicating these Epistles."<sup>10</sup> They justify their view by explaining the paradoxical effects of knowledge based on the nature of the novice, which could be revival or destruction. Some Shiite scholars argue that the same principle is reflected in Mohammed's revelation of religious truths. He had revealed only some of the Islamic truths and left the remaining undeclared. The Prophet, therefore, entrusted the

undeclared teachings to the Imams, and through them to the Mujtahids (the Ulama of highest rank) “so that they would progressively reveal them at appropriate junctures, according to their wisdom.”<sup>11</sup>

Taqiyah denotes the act of guarding oneself by holding to a particular belief opposed to that held by the opposition. Interestingly, the significance of this word can be accounted for by examining the historical aspect of Shiite faith. Shiite Muslims, for the greater part of their history, have been a minority, and as a way of preventing the annihilation of their faith, they avoided open and defiant propagation of their beliefs. The Shiite justification for the taqiyah emanates from three verses of the Qur'an. The first is a warning to the faithful not to associate with infidels: “Let not believers take infidels for their friends rather than believers; who so shall do this has nothing from God- unless, indeed, ye fear a fear from them: But God would have you beware of Himself; for to God ye return.”<sup>12</sup> The second verse excuses from divine punishment those believers who retract their faith under coercion: “Who so, after he hath believed in God denieth him, if he is forced to it and if his heart remain steadfast in the faith shall be guiltless.”<sup>13</sup> Finally, a verse from the story of Moses, when Pharaoh Haman, ordered the execution of the followers of Moses, “a man of the family of Pharaoh who was a believer, but hid faith.”<sup>14</sup> He questioned the wisdom of killing a man for the sake of his faith.

An additional reason for the establishment of taqiyah is best described by Henri Corbin, one of the western proponents of mystico-philosophical schools of Shiite, who asserts that this practice instituted by the Imams was not only meant for their safety,

“but as an attitude called for by the absolute respect for high doctrines: nobody has strictly the right to listen to them except those who are capable of listening to, and comprehending the truth. To act otherwise, is to abandon ignominiously the trust which has been confided in you, and to commit lightly a grave spiritual treachery.”<sup>15</sup>

According to this theory, if the purposeful role of the Imams is the safe keeping of the truth of Shiite religion, then this “sacred trust” of the truth cannot be disseminated through communication. Otherwise their privileged position will be questioned, and the truth itself will be in danger of misrepresentation in the hands of masses. This broad and complicated interpretation of the concept of taqiyah has made a controversial subject that has been the object of much scrutiny by modernist. These critics assert that taqiyah has at times disintegrated into nothing more than an excuse for hypocrisy and cowardice.

Another major concept of Shiite is its conviction that man is inherently fallible, which leads to the illegitimacy of authorities by the Shiite Muslims. Alternatively, the inherent belief in the illegitimacy of authorities paved the path toward the proliferation of avoidant behavior and disinterest in political processes, reserving such goals to a few ambitious individuals. Ivanov (1948) states that by sixteenth century when Shiite dominated the political scene in Iran, “its long period of existence mostly as a scholastic relic had made it insensitive to politics.”<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, the practice of martyrdom presents another aspect of social and political attitude of Shiite thought. Ceremonial martyrdom reflects the drama of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, known as the “Lord of Martyrs”, who was popular during

the Shiite dynasty of the Buyids and has since been the object of passionate annual lamentations. Its political significance lies in two viewpoints. First, Husayn was the only Shiite Imam who died as a result of an armed uprising in his claim against Yazid, the Umayyad Caliph. Second, the element of martyrdom intertwined with such drama draws attraction for all Shiite movements in challenge to establish Islamic order and rule. Khomeini effectively used the memory of Husayn's martyrdom to call upon Iranian Muslims for establishing his programmed Islamic state.

### **Shiite in Iran**

As noted in Chapter III, the expansion of Shiite in Iran began with the ascension of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1736). From their early days, the Safavids were the propagators of Shiite in Iran. By 1772, the minority status of Shiite in Iran was replaced by a majority status. The Safavid monarchs used Shiite messianism and claimed to be either the incarnation of the twelfth Imam (Mahdi) or his vicegerent. However, as Keddie (1981) has noted in *Roots of Revolution*, after the ascent of the weaker kings to the throne, some of the Ulama began challenging the kings and their claim as vicegerent of the Imam and sources of religious authority.<sup>17</sup> Shah Isma'il, the founder of the Safavid dynasty, was a powerful ruler who considered himself to be the incarnation of God. King Tahmasp, who succeeded Isma'il, did not have the same charisma and had no pretence to divine incarnation. Consequently, some Shiite Ulama claimed to be the vicegerent of the Imam. According to Arjomand (1984), King Tahmasp, a devoted Twelver Shiite, issued a Farman (official decree) to designate al-Karaki (a religious

leader, referred to as the Propagator of the Shiite) as the vicegerent of Imam and the guardian of the heritage of the seal of the Prophet.<sup>18</sup>

The Ulama effectively established themselves as the sole source of Islamic jurisprudence, and subsequently of religious authority in Iran. According to Keddie, by making taqlid (the following of the teaching of one Marja'') incumbent upon believers, the Ulama extended and strengthened their power in the Shiite community. These developments helped the Ulama institutionalize their charisma and autonomously establish themselves as a hierarchy.<sup>19</sup> The Ulama were able to present themselves as the divine authority. They used the verses of Qur'an such as "say, O God, possessor of sovereignty, you give sovereignty to whomever you choose and take it from whomever you choose" to support the legitimacy of their claimed power.<sup>20</sup>

The Ulama who enjoyed significant power during the Safavid period were able to gain further power and influence throughout the Qajar Dynasty (1797-1926). As stated by Zubaida, during Qajar rule, "religious magnates formed part of local power structures involving landlords, tribal chieftains, and sometimes wealthy merchants."<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the Shiite has demonstrated a political vitality both in theory and practice in Iran. The main cause for such vitality is its principle of independent ijtihad (the interpretation of Islamic law) by Mujtahid (Shiite jurist worthy of emulation), which is regarded as a supplementary device to the sources of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and a potential of revolutionary bearing in the face of temporal power. The system of ijtihad supports the exercise of free opinion and has manifested great potential for



accommodation of ideas by Shiite. Thus, Ijtihad is considered as the logical and imperative attendant of faith.

An additional factor that empowered the authority of Ulama was the power and the prestige of the office of Marja'-i- taqlid (the source of emulation). This institution has been considered as the highest religious authority whose rulings should be accepted by the Shiite community. The religious institution of the Marja'-i- taqlid was established mid nineteenth century, when jurisprudent Shaykh Murtaza Ansari introduced it in 1864. The office of Marja' (short form of Marja'-i- taqlid) embraces the concept of a centralized leadership in Shiite. The tradition founded by Shaykh Ansari, would vouch for the supremacy of the "most learned" of the Ulama, namely the Marja', as the point of reference and the one that should be imitated by Shiites. Moreover, the Marja' as the spiritual leader would not only espouse the centralized spiritual power, but is also privileged to receive all religious dues including almsgiving, contributions, and khoms (the one fifth of the net annual income or product) through his local and provincial clergy network. He has the sole authority for allocation and direction of the collected wealth, without any external supervision.

Such enormous economical and political power in the hands of the Marja', led a path to the changing role of the Ulama. It could be the result of such concentration of power that in the late nineteenth century, Muhammad Hasan Shirazi (i.e. the Marja') led the first mass movement in Iranian history against European encroachment in what came to be known as the famous Regie Tobacco Crisis of 1890-1892. Enayat says that, the Ulama's opposition to the issues, such as Regie Tobacco Crisis, the Reuter

Concession of 1872, and the Imperial Bank of Persia, increased their political influence within the community.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, most of the Marjas came to the realization that the safest route for them was not to be involved in any political activity. A recent example could be the attitude of Ayatollah Burujirdi (i.e. a grand Marja' - teacher of other Marjas namely Khomeini, Muntazeri and Shari-at Madari) towards the power struggle between the Shah of Iran and his Prime Minister Musaddiq, in which he refused to support the Musaddiq's government in 1953 by condemning the military coup exercised against him.

The beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century witnessed a national awakening among some Muslim states. This, in turn, generated a particular interest in the constitutional movement in Iran, which undoubtedly differed from those of other Muslim states. The constitutional revolution in Iran (1906) is considered to be an attempt toward modernization and adaptation of Western political ideas. This revolution, however, did not affect the areas peripheral to fundamental traditional values, was supported by "freedom-seeking" Ulama. Interestingly, the Shiite Ulama conceived the ideas of constitutionalism and interpreted those notions in terms compatible with Islamic tenets.

Nevertheless, the surge of skepticism about the role of Ulama, in Constitutional Revolution, created a negative outlook among the general populace. Because of this negative attitude, few people gave the Ulama the credit that they deserved in the constitutional movement. Ahmad Kasravi, the author of the History of the Constitutional Revolution states that the Shiite Ulama, by virtue of their belief in the absolute rule of the Imams, have always been opposed to the very notion of secular state

and its political order.<sup>23</sup> Kasravi himself acknowledges the efforts that were made by some Ulama in favor of the constitutional regime in Iran.

The general opinion of intellectuals could not be other than what was explained by Kasravi. Regardless of the positive role asserted by numbers of Ulama, the general opinion of intellectuals conceived the religious community as a whole to be a negative force in the national struggle for modernization. Perhaps the statement of Feridun Adamiyyat, a contemporary historian, best captures the popular view of the era: “the only group which had a clear concept of Constitutionalism was the progressive, educated individuals committed to the western type democracy.”<sup>24</sup>

The despotism and the anarchy that followed the Constitutional Revolution hindered the growth of religio-political thought. This impediment to the voice of the religious circle would not be removed until the years when a new balance of political forces emerged with the collapse of Reza Shah of Pahlavi Dynasty. This newly revived religious thinking revolved most importantly about the themes of *taqiyah* and martyrdom, two of three determinants of political behavior in modern Shiite.

The revival of Shiite political thought since the Second World War has also been spurred by social and political events. It must be noted that throughout its history the Ulama's sustenance was highly dependent on the donations of the faithful individuals. Thus, the Ulama had little or no inclination to steer toward any idea that might offend popular predilections, particularly the class of individuals supporting the Ulama. However, a slow radicalization had occurred that led to the rise of a small, but highly influential and powerful group of religious scholars who were less reliant on

popular contributions. Unlike the traditional Ulama, these thinkers were able to earn their living through teaching, preaching, writing, and publishing. Yet not many upheld such quality of self-reliance, they caused a gap between the traditional Ulama and the people. The trend of society, as a result of the increase in public literacy, growth of student population, and the introduction of mass media have amplified the apparent disparity between the two groups. Nevertheless, these generalizations were certainly not upheld by all Iranians at all times, as shown by the revolution of 1979.

### **Governance of the Ulama**

The significant legacy of the Iranian revolution in 1979 will most likely remain in its introduction of a government based on the principles of Political Shiite Islam. Meanwhile, many Islamic thinkers, including a significant number of Shiite Ulama, are highly critical of the Iranian revolution and its political outcomes. They reject the political system and basic assumptions relied upon by Ayatollah Khomeini and the political doctrine that constitutes the fundamental dogma of the present Iranian regime. The doctrine that has been reflected in Khomeini's well-known works in which he stresses that the divine leadership and sovereignty is with no one except the Ulama. Evidently, there are considerable number of contemporary Shiite Ulama and intellectuals who do not conform to the argument that the Ulama possess the divine and exclusive right to rule the Islamic society.

This part of study attempts to examine the theory of "wilayat al-faqih" presented by Khomeini and the ideas of its proponents. In order to develop an objective point of

view and a thorough understanding of the subject matter, it is also necessary to observe the alternative political thoughts presented by the works of those Ulama and intellectuals that receive considerable support within the intellectuals as well as the Shiite community. For the sake of this thesis, the followers of the objectives presented by Khomeini in his theory of “wilayat al-faqih” are termed Traditionalists, and those offering alternative concepts are categorized as Populists. However, the fundamental disparities within those ideas remain in their conceptions regarding sovereignty. Furthermore, both groups acknowledge the observance of the Islamic values and ascertain a specific role for the Ulama in their political ideas.

### **The Traditionalists Political Ideas**

Islamic history discloses many examples of disparity among Muslims in response to the revealed messages and the historical events. The crux of disputes hardly is anything other than socio-moral corruption of Muslim society; and its solution claimed to be in return to the fundamentals of Islam. Presently, Iran exhibits a unique status, since it embraces the fundamental ideas of wilayat al-faqih (the absolute rule of Ulama) and its established political order. The Traditionalists, as the followers of wilayat al-faqih consider it the essence of the Shiite political thought. The idea is predicated on the assumption that man is incapable of electing the right leaders, due to ignorance. So, the ignorance will lead man to devise unjust political and socio-economic orders.

As the doctrinaire of the governance of Ulama and the founder of Shiite Islam government in Iran, the ideas of Khomeini will receive the most coverage among traditionalists. However the exposure will be supplemented by a touch on the political thoughts of few traditional thinkers.

### **Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini**

Khomeini as a grand Marja' introduced the idea of the absolute rule of Ulama and established the first Shiite Islam government in Iran. Khomeini and Traditionalists believe that God, in His revelations, has directed man to the right rulers whom, other than the Prophet and Imams, can only be found among the Ulama. Thus, the vital claim of Traditionalists is that the political system based on the absolute rule of Ulama is the final answer to the Shiite Muslim political order. Khomeini asserts that the Islamic teachings present the comprehensive rules and guidance for any political concern.<sup>25</sup> Khomeini argued that the jurists inherit the absolute political authority of the Prophet and Imams in its totality and that their authority should include the temporal as well as the spiritual aspects of human life.<sup>26</sup> Khomeini declared that, "the jurists, are the Prophet's amanah (trustees) in all matters associated with his prophethood, the most obvious of which are leadership of the community and dispensing of social justice."<sup>27</sup> Therefore, based on this assumption, his theory of wilayat al-faqih seems to leave no room for either popular sovereignty or human reason.

Ayatollah Khomeini and other traditional Ulama argue that it is the divine right of the Ulama to rule the Islamic community. This follows from Ayatollah Khomeini's assertion that the texts clearly indicate that the Prophet and Imams had chosen the

Ulama as their heirs or deputies.<sup>28</sup> According to the Shiite doctrine, the infallible leaders (the Prophet and Imams) held both the power of lawgivers and law interpreters, while the Ulama are only the interpreters of divine law. If necessary, they can derive legal rules for contemporary matters to meet the changing conditions in Islamic society. In pursuance of such a notion, Khomeini rejects the idea of a legislative body or parliament, and instead he recommends a “Planning Council” by asserting that “the Islamic government is not despotic but constitutional, however, it is not constitutional in the well known sense of the word which is represented in the parliamentary system or in the people’s consuls. It is constitutional in the sense that those in charge of affairs observe a number of conditions and rules are underlined in the Qur’an and Sunna.”<sup>29</sup>

Khomeini adds that, “the representatives in popular governments and the kingship, hold the legislative power while in Islam the power of legislation has been codified to God. May He be praised and nobody else has the right to legislate and nobody may rule by that which has not been given power by God. This is why Islam replaces the legislative consul by a Planning Council.”<sup>30</sup> The Planning Council provides required assistance for the jurist leader. Khomeini affirms that the ‘jurist-guardian’ may consult experts, but he is the only one to make the decisions. He alone should hold the knowledge of Islamic law, justice, and authority that are necessary for leadership. He says: “We should make use of those with scientific and technical expertise in the state administration, but as for dispensing justice, providing security, sanctioning equitable matters, and adjudication between people, these are the functions of the jurist alone.”<sup>31</sup>

Khomeini further glorifies the Qur'an and Hadith as the sole sources of legislation by saying that the sources are comprehensive and cover all aspects of human life. He presents his conviction to divinity of law by saying, "before man's birth and until the time he is lowered in his grave, laws have been drawn up to govern him."<sup>32</sup> He openly criticizes the adoption of Western political ideas by condemning the constitutional government of Iran (1906-1979) for its acceptance of the Western political ideas that were used in devising the Constitutional Laws. He elaborates on the inclusion of some Islamic laws in Constitutional law by stating that the purpose of such inclusion was an act of deception, rather than adherence to the Islamic ideas.<sup>33</sup>

Khomeini further asserted that the Prophet not only explained and conveyed the laws, but also implemented the laws; he was the executer of the law, and punished and cut off the hands of a thief, and lashed and stoned and ruled justly. None of the successors of the Prophet should have the responsibility to legislate the law, but only to execute it as did the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>34</sup> It is obvious that the separation of church and state has no opportunity in Traditionalists theory. Khomeini asserts that, "clergy man is a politician but is not the prophet", and confidently claims that the Ulama are well-qualified agents and are capable of ruling the Islamic nation.<sup>35</sup> He makes reference to the Qur'an that calls "O you believers obey god, obey the prophet, obey those in charge among you" to declare that God requires Muslims to obey those who are in charge of Islamic nations, which are the Ulama in the absence of the Imam.<sup>36</sup>

He referred to the political capacity of Islam by saying that Islam has dedicated attention to the political, social, and economic segments of social life. The venerable



Qur'an and the noble Sunnah contain all the rules and regulations to make human beings happy and to lead them toward perfection.<sup>37</sup> Khomeini acknowledges that, the sovereign is God and the survival of man could not be attained without a ruler that is appointed by absolute sovereign God. In his view the ruler assigned by God is either the Imam or his trustee (Ulama).<sup>38</sup>

An additional issue which is signified in the writings and the narratives of Khomeini is devoted to the qualifications of the jurisprudent ruler. Khomeini acknowledged intelligence, maturity, and a good sense of management as the general qualifications for the Shiite ruler, but he further reflected on the significance of knowledge of Islamic law and justice as the supreme qualification. Therefore, the Islamic knowledge of the jurist leader must be superior to the general population and certainly the greatest among the Ulama. Khomeini indirectly makes reference to the history of Iran, mainly identified by monarchy, and asserts that "the jurisprudents are rulers over the kings". Through this statement, he overtly propagates the message that the ultimate leadership is in the hands of the Ulama, and he equates the power of the kings with that of the general population; thus both groups should serve the "sovereign assigned by God".<sup>39</sup> For Khomeini, the Ulama not only have the ruling power in Muslim community, but also have the obligation for disseminating the laws of Islam throughout the world.<sup>40</sup>

According to Khomeini, in the Islamic state the Ulama hold the ultimate governing power supported by the laws of Shari'ah. Ulama, as the successors of the Prophet and Imams, should lead the army, manage the society, defend the nation, and

settle the disputes among people.<sup>41</sup> One main concern of Khomeini's theory of Islamic politics is the Ulama's complete financial control in Islamic society and government. Khomeini says that the collection of taxes, apportioning the funds, and rectifying any existing corruption should remain under the Ulama's control.<sup>42</sup>

Another aspect of Islamic politics which is stressed by Khomeini is the judiciary task of the jurisprudents. In his work *Islamic Government*, Khomeini claims that there is no disagreement on the fact that the position of a judge is exclusively preserved for the just Ulama.<sup>43</sup> On social justice, Khomeini stresses in the strict enforcement of law by perceiving that a just and capable ruler disowns his son if he steals, whips and stones his relative if he commits adultery, and punishes his brother and sister when they engage in trading tons of heroin or smuggling its small quantities.<sup>44</sup> Khomeini generalizes his viewpoint by asserting that, a common Muslim needs the supervision of a [jurist] trustee, such as a child that requires the care of a guardian.<sup>45</sup>

Khomeini's ideas show less favor for religious plurality. He condemns the free establishment of the Christian, Jew, and Bahai missionary centers in Tehran, and considers their existence as a means of deceiving Muslims and leading them away from the teachings and principles of Islam.<sup>46</sup> While he advocates the dissemination of Islam and the Islamic teachings in an international scale.<sup>47</sup> For him, the Islamic Nation is not confined to a certain boundary but rather extends itself to include all Muslims, regardless of nationality.<sup>48</sup> The theory of wilayat al-faqih, which has manifested itself in the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, entails not only the vigorous opponents, but

also a group of proponents such as Reza Davari Ardakani, a professor of philosophy at Tehran University, whose thought we next investigate.

### **Reza Davari Ardakani**

Davari, a fervent follower of the Traditionalists idea, who follows Khomeini's theory and rejects the Western political ideas particularly its model of democracy. His opposition of western ideas is primarily on the basis of its principle of the separation of state and religion. He presents Islam as a distinct ideology capable of offering a viable philosophical alternative to the modern world. For him, a virtuous society is one that is grounded in the truism of guardianship and prophecy.<sup>49</sup>

Davari draws upon the Neo-Platonic ideas of Al-Farabi (878-950), who is considered the founder of political philosophy in Islam. Farabi and a few other Islamic thinkers viewed the prophet as being the true philosopher-king, with the exception that his assignment was based on revelation rather than human intellect. Davari's argument is an indirect support to the concept of welayat-al-faghih and the role of jurist leader. To support the dogmas of welayat-al-faghih, Davari even criticizes those thinkers who attempted to translate and publish Popper's work *Open Society and Its Enemies*. In his view, the book signifies the promotion of "Western Democracy" and rationalist movement within the intellectual network in Iran. He argues that promoting the Popper's idea of "an Open Society" is in fact a clever way of opposing the Islamic revolution, since it clearly is in support of capitalism and liberalism. Davari concludes that the attempt by Iranian intellectuals to reconcile Popper's ideas with Islam goes

against the Shari'ah, and even may lead to divisions within the Muslims, and undermines their obedience of Supreme Creator, God.<sup>50</sup>

Obviously, many Traditionalists particularly those among the ruling Ulama either confer to such ideas as Davari's or advocate the similar thoughts. An example is the reflections of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, an important Shiite jurist among the ruling officials, who asserts that, "believing in equal rights for all citizens is worse than worshipping cows". And on another occasion, he utilizes the contemporary issue of AIDS disease to demonstrate the significance of his point by saying that the idea of "tolerance" is a thousand times more dangerous than AIDS.<sup>51</sup>

### **Ayatollah Kazim al-Ha'iri**

Ayatollah Kazim al-Ha'iri, a contemporary jurist and professor in the Islamic academy at Qum, is another serious promoter of Traditionalists. He asserts that the core message of the Islamic teachings include political issues, since the Prophet not only founded and ruled the Islamic political community, but also equipped Muslims with the Qur'an and his Sunnah as guiding principles in the fulfillment of their personal, social, and political life. Thus, the political order and legitimacy of leadership are divinely ordained and are not contingent on the free will and choices of individuals. He clearly states:

There is no sense in placing legislative power or determination of the type of political system in the hands of the people. They are ignorant for a great deal even concerning themselves, not to mention their profound ignorance of the world and its mysterious workings..... Therefore it is improper for a Muslim to believe in democracy or to practice it.<sup>52</sup>

The Traditionalists idea in modern Shiite spells out that only divinely guided individuals, the Prophet and Imams, are the natural guardians of the people. However, in the absence of the Imam the most pious and knowledgeable jurist among the Ulama should lead the Islamic community. Therefore, in their opinion, the Ulama who preach the words of God are the inheritors of the authority of the Prophet and Imams. Their main role is to safeguard religion and guide the people toward their ultimate destiny.

### **The Populists Political Ideas**

The history of Islam has always witnessed different interpretation of the Islamic texts on political and social matters by different Ulama and intellectuals. The historical evidence reveals that the main concern revolved around either the submission of reason to the doctrine of religion, or the incorporation of reason and religion in dealing with human life. Of those thinkers who support the latter idea, a few will be covered through the examination of their works. Due to the considerable scholarly works of Abdolkarim Soroush, he will receive the most coverage.

### **Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr**

Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, is one of the prominent jurists who advocated the concept of popular sovereignty. He is the founder of the first Shiite political party, Al-

Da'wah; he also presented the theory of wilayat al-faqih well before the rise of Khomeini. For Sadr, popular sovereignty and leadership of the jurist are both integral to Islamic politics. This quality makes it quite distinct from the theory of wilayat al-faqih supported by Khomeini, in which there is no space for popular sovereignty. He became an intellectual leader of the Arab Shiite movement mainly in Iraq, and was executed by the Iraqi regime in Baghdad in 1980.

Sadr bases the popular sovereignty on his interpretation of the story of the creation of man as recited in the Qur'an. According to the Qur'an, God created Adam to live on earth to be superior to all creatures including the angels in heaven. Sadr states that God honored man as His khalifah (vicegerent of God), to be His delegate on earth, which makes him worthy for the angels to bow before him.<sup>53</sup> Sadr acknowledges the divine role of the Prophet and the infallible Imams as the messengers of revelation and being the "witness" guide in the political life of Muslims. He asserts that the Prophet and Imams, although purposely appointed by God, still require the bay'ah (i.e. the allegiance) from members of the Islamic community in order to "accentuate the importance of such public right and to put into practice the theory of khalifah."<sup>54</sup>

Khalifah, according to Sadr, denotes man as an agent of God having freedom to act according to his perception of his divine mission. He furthers that human reason together with divine guidance are two decisive qualities of man which lead him towards perfection. Sadr insists that man belongs only to the God, that he is responsible only to the God and that he is equal to others before the God.<sup>55</sup> Such divine privileges grant man the natural right for progress, equality, and liberty, which is the goal of the

revelation. There remains the status of the Ulama and their probable possession of qualities that allow them to act as the “witness” over man. Sadr proceeds that the Marja’ (i.e. Grand Jurist) of the Shiite hierarchy succeeds the Prophet and Imams as the “witness” and holds the leadership qualities of the Islamic state.

Sadr affirms that, although Islam has laid down certain rules, there exist areas that are in need of legislation. He calls these discretionary areas of Islamic law “manatiq al-furag” (i.e. the hollow sphere of law), and argues that God has deliberately left unlegislated areas for human reason to undertake the required legislation based on the circumstances.<sup>56</sup> The legislative power, for Sadr, is quite different than the modern system of legislation. His proposed legislative power, according to Al-Ha’iri, is vested in “Marja’-iyah” (i.e. the institution of Marja’), a specific institution embracing a group of experts who act as consultants for the Marja’ in making and implementing his decisions.<sup>57</sup> Sadr asserts that such an equitable institution of experts will avert the Marja’ from making arbitrary decisions.<sup>58</sup>

The political theory of Sadr is quite different than traditional Shiite. He vigorously denounces authoritarian rule, and calls his political theory a “modified democracy”. Sadr says: “Islamic political theory rejects monarchy, and indeed dictatorship in any form rather it advocates a system that provides all positive elements of democracy and the characteristics that guard it against corruption.”<sup>59</sup>

### **Ayatollah Muhammad Jawad Maghniyah**

The Islamic Revolution led by Khomeini has established the system of wilayat al-faqih in Iran, which considers the inherent leadership of the jurists as the spirit of its government. Muhammad Jawad Maghniyah, a prominent Shiite jurist in his work *al-Khumayni wa-al-dawlah al-Islamiyah* (Khomeini and the Islamic State) makes an incisive critique of Khomeini's *al-Hukumah al-Islamiyah* (i.e. wilayat al-faqih). He attacked the basic premises of Khomeini's political thought at the height of his success in 1979, when the first edition of his book was published.

Maghniyah employs both rational and jurisprudential argument to refute Khomeini's claim that the Ulama inherit leadership of the Islamic state from the Prophet and Imams. He argues that the Ulama clearly are short of the superior qualities one would expect of divinely chosen individuals. Therefore, the scope of the power of jurists should be narrowed in relation to the degree of their qualifications.<sup>60</sup> For Maghniyah the jurists, like any other human being, are fallible and subject to "forgetting, pride, deception, personal emotion, and influence by the environment".<sup>61</sup>

Maghniyah believes that in the absence of the infallible Imam the sovereignty belongs in general to all people, not only to the jurists.<sup>62</sup> He further argues that most of the functions of the state concern the matters which are not addressed by any religious texts or law.<sup>63</sup> Thus, he concludes that the extrapolation of laws must be left for Urf (i.e. common law) and for the experts to determine in concurrence with general welfare, even if it requires imitating the West, as long as haram (i.e. forbidden matters) is not being legalized or halal (i.e. allowed matters) being prohibited.<sup>64</sup>



Maghniyah cites textual traditions that value the reign of the just non-Muslim ruler, above the unjust Muslim ruler, since in the first instance the people benefit from justice while in the second they suffer from tyranny.<sup>65</sup> To support his argument, he invokes the authority of Ayatollah Shari-at-madari, an Iranian grand Marja' who was a vocal opponent of Khomeini, by quoting him as follows:

The concept of Islamic government is vague, and has given the impression to others of rudeness and dictatorship. What we advocate is that the people govern themselves; that is what an 'Islamic Republic' is. It is not permissible for one individual or one class to rule alone.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, Maghniyah and Shari-at-madari both shared the similar views on Islamic Politics and acknowledged the superiority of popular sovereignty to the stature of the jurists.

### **Ayatollah Muntaziri**

Among the dissenters of Khomeini's political idea of wilayat al-faqih is Ayatollah Muntaziri, once a designated heir of Khomeini, who was placed under house arrest from 1997 until early 2003. Muntaziri, in his *Dirasat fi wilayat al-faqih*, offers a political system in which he defends the "leadership role of Ulama". His proposed political system resembles a representative theocracy with some features of a parliamentary system.<sup>67</sup> Muntaziri explicitly states that, "there is no conclusive proof that the Prophetic traditions demonstrate the designation of the authority of the jurist."<sup>68</sup> He views that in many cases the textual evidences are illegitimately interpreted or are weak in their claim.<sup>69</sup> He concludes that the sound analysis of the prophetic traditions delegate authority to the collective role of the jurists, not to one jurist alone.<sup>70</sup>

Muntaziri argues that God has instructed man to conduct his affairs in consultation with others, to honor his uqud (convictions) and bay'ah (the oath of allegiance). These religious pledges clearly constitute the political foundation of the Islamic state.<sup>71</sup> Thus, for Muntaziri, the popular election of the head of the Islamic state has more religious legitimacy than the divine appointment of the jurist as argued by the Traditionalists. In his view all Muslims should elect only the most qualified jurists as leaders, either by direct participation in election or through their chosen representatives.<sup>72</sup> Muntaziri's political theory supports an Islamic theocracy by granting a leading political role for the jurists. His theory also offers a solution to the problem of plurality of authority in the theory of Khomeini's wilayat al-faqih. This problem arises when the multiplying numbers of qualified jurists claim their rights for leadership authority.

### **Abdolkarim Soroush**

Over two decades of Shiite Islam rule in Iran has stimulated an intellectual climate and serious theoretical challenges, particularly among those educated individuals with religious orientation. Needless to say, the debates are centered on issues related to political ideas, the role of religion, and the position of Ulama. Intellectual debates in the past appeared more in forms of ideological questions rather than search for truth, which could have left less room for the open scholarly deliberates. Far from engaging in esoteric and trivial polemics, the discussions today are indeed intellectually sound, socially relevant, and politically modern.

These deliberations raise serious questions about the compatibility of Islamic political ideas in regard to issues such as modern social and scientific challenges, application of new technology, democracy, nationalism, and particularly secularism. Another focus point is the capability of Islamic political ideas to accommodate and properly deal with those issues in relation to the people's natural and rational demands. In the politically repressive but intellectually flourishing environment of Iran, a set of contradictory answers are given by different thinkers including those with the marks of conservative, moderate, and modern orientations. Even the Ulama are partly divided over these groups.

Among the Iranian intellectuals having religious orientation, few have bestowed as many eminent and prolific contributions as that of Abdolkarim Soroush. Soroush, a former philosophy teacher, gradually emerged as a powerful religious and political thinker as well as an articulate lecturer. After the Islamic revolution in Iran, Soroush, while holding a few offices, was teaching philosophy at universities. As a modern Islamic revivalist, he used a rational and critical approach to finding answers to the problems of political Islam in modern world with the intention of protecting the principles of religion at a time of universal hegemony of modern civilization. His view is said to be a product of an intellectual struggle and the experience he gained as an active member in Islamic Republic of Iran government organizations.

Soroush confidently believes that philosophy and knowledge are cosmopolitan, and intellect is tolerant. Thus, age and origin could not be treated as the evaluative means in measuring the exactitude and legitimacy of ideas.<sup>73</sup> Soroush strongly believes

in cultural exchange within intellectuals as well as nations. The reflection of his idea is evident in his proclamation that, he does not believe that a government based on religion, like Islamic Republic of Iran, should have the intention to translate the whole world to Islam and Islamic government. The first priority should be given to promote and respect the religious plurality around the world.<sup>74</sup>

Soroush furthers his justification by saying that Iranians are heir to three cultures: Pre-Islamic Persian, Islamic, and Western influences. According to him, instead of prioritizing these cultural facts, Iranians should attempt to reconcile and recompose all three in an appropriate mode of developing a better understanding of human life and dignity.<sup>75</sup> Having acknowledged that Iranians are carrying western heritage as one of the three pillars of their historical memory, Soroush asserts that Iranians should become more tolerant of their differences. He furthers his view by saying that the ambition to impose only one particular interpretation of religion and its principles are inhumane. The fact is that the interpretations are colorful, and are based on the historical needs.<sup>76</sup> He further stresses that there are numerous interpretations of Islamic tenets worldwide. When Islam emerged in different parts of the world supposedly Egypt, India and Iran, it became Egyptian, Indian or Iranian Islam. Thus, today we face with many different interpretations of Islam.<sup>77</sup>

Soroush has articulated his viewpoints on political Islam and human sciences by presenting "*The Theory of Expansion and Contraction of Shari'a*" in 1988. The effect of his epistemological theory was quite profound on the intellectual and religious society of Iran, a society in which the Ulama play a major role in both the political and

social domains. For Soroush, the basic tenets of his theory are embodied in five principles summarized as: (1) Islamic science is not different from other human sciences. (2) Human sciences are continuously evolving due to new developments, and the same concept should also apply to the science of religion (i.e. understanding of religion). (3) While changes in various domains of human sciences affect each other, they should also influence the human understanding of religion. (4) Religion in its essence is sacred, real, and absolute; however the knowledge of a religious scholar is not celestial but rather temporal. (5) As the understanding of various fields of science could not depend on the conception of a single individual, it rather relies on a collective work and the consensus made by scholars, religious science is not an exception to this general rule. Thus, an individual emulation could not establish a valid and dependable conclusion.<sup>78</sup> According to Soroush, the understanding of religious truth is most likely attainable through a collective affair and does not confine itself to a single individual or a certain religious or intellectual faction.

Following the method of logical reasoning, Soroush claims that as a human science, *feqh* (i.e. Islamic law) by its nature is speculative. Since science and philosophy are evolving continuously, then our comprehension of *Shari'ah* should follow the same pattern. Soroush came to the conclusion that philosophy and the natural sciences are always in quest of perfection and, based on the same concept, jurisprudential theory would be deficient without a revision to accommodate the needs of modern society. He continues his argument that the traditional jurists have, in fact, avoided scientific theories with a claim that these theories undermine the certitude and indisputability of sacred beliefs.

Soroush, further claims that the Islamic jurists have divergent interpretations of the Shari'ah, which is certainly due to their different understanding of nature, and jurisprudence. Using a simple example, he asserts that the fatwas (religious decrees) of two different jurists in two diverse societies differ even on same matters, because each fatwa is the reflection of its respective society and social environment. Thus, the same concept should be applied to make the Shari'ah compatible to the needs of changing circumstances and societies. Soroush's conclusive remark is that the field of tafsir (i.e. interpretation of religious texts) is far from an exact science, and must indeed be approached as an inexact and controversial arena of human inquiry. He further emphasizes that Shari'ah should acquiesce to the support of the natural and social sciences in formulating its reasoning.

Soroush defends the concept of a democratic political system against two groups; the proponents of the secular democratic political system who do not acknowledge an official role for religion in their political domain, and the religious groups who do not easily accept the elements of democracy in a religious state. Soroush states that, the rights of majority should not be the only concern of a democratic state; rather it is the rights of minority that must be honored in order to respect the human rights. However, human rights as explained in modern era could not be accommodated under the rule of religious government. Then, the solution remains in the separation of religion and politics, and it is rational to strive for a secular democratic system.<sup>79</sup>

In dealing with religious groups, Soroush maintains that a religious state could be both democratic and undemocratic, depending upon their use of collective intellect and their respect for human rights as the two fundamental prerequisites of democratic religious rule. He tries to draw a line between religion and state by saying that a [clergy] statesman who has financial interests cannot defend the religious truths. Then, the sedition of those values in favor of financial gains becomes inevitable. He vigorously insists that, religion should remain for religion only, not for financial gains, not political power, not social prestige.<sup>80</sup> It is clear that the idea of Soroush is in support of the theory of secularism; however it separates the politics from religion with the requirement that the religious values be preserved.

For Soroush, the theory of secularism originates in an intellectual movement against those who claim “divine authority”. Soroush asserts that if the religious thoughts are dictatorial, then the political structure will also be despotic. He justifies the theory of secularism by saying that no ruler should claim divinity on earth; he is the servant of God not God himself. Soroush claims that secularism is nothing but a scientific, rational, and social approach to confronting those who claim divinity and legitimacy on earth.<sup>81</sup> Soroush states that, the ruler and ruled, in modern world, should have the duty-bound relations established and supported by law not by using the religious truth.<sup>82</sup>

A brief survey through the writings of Soroush clarifies that his intellectual challenges are focused on human understanding of modern knowledge and the history it entails. He acknowledges that the rights that are demanded and duties that are observed

are the consequences of the scientific progress and its dissemination. Otherwise, humanity would have lingered in the traditional world. He affirms secularism as a precious product of human reason and his progress in social sciences. Soroush stresses that secularism is a conscious effort to distinguish a boundary between religion and the worldly substances; a boundary that allows a genuine government to derive its legitimacy from the consent of the ruled, and to operate within a framework established by law.<sup>83</sup> In any case, secularism succeeded in banishing religion from the realm of politics and placing the right of legislation and government exclusively in the hands of the people.<sup>84</sup> Some rational scholars present the political views that are in support of or similar to the ideas of Soroush. Among those is an intellect jurist, Mojtabeh Shabestari.

Mojtabeh Shabestari is a graduate of the Qum Theological Seminary and a professor of theology at Tehran University. He publicized his ideas through a series of articles, concurrent to Soroush's discourse, in journal entitled *Andisheh-e Eslami* (Islamic Thought). Shabestari, a member of the Iranian Academy of Sciences, raises a similar concern to that of Soroush. In a remarkably straight language Shabestari presents his political notion in a disapproval statement about the educational curriculum of theological seminaries (howzehs) by stating:

The fact that our howzehs have separated their path from that of the social sciences and are minding their own business without any awareness of the developments in these disciplines has brought us to the present condition in which we have no philosophy of civil rights or philosophy of ethics.<sup>85</sup>

Evocative of Popper's assertion that the main question is not "who should rule" but "how to rule," Shabestari maintains that the Qur'an and Sunnah indeed emphasize the "values of government" and not necessarily the "forms of government." Since



managing a society requires knowledge of science and planning, his proposition is that the governing task be entrusted to those who have the required qualifications and are competent particularly in politics and economics. He furthers his argument that the role of Ulama should be concerned with disseminating and promoting the Islamic values derived from the Qur'an within the Muslim community.

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## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

The development of Islamic political thoughts has been a complex struggle over the last fifteen centuries between the power of human reason and the power of religion. Contemporary Islamic governments, however, have developed through the influence of:

- (1) Efforts of the ruling governments and figures.
- (2) Efforts of the traditional thinkers to devise and implement their theocracy, based on religious ideals.
- (3) Efforts of the intellectuals to devise and implement their theocracy, based on human reason and scientific analysis.
- (4) Contributions of various political movements.

The question remains that whether Islam can offer a viable and practical political system and, if so, what the defining characteristics and qualifications should be expected from that system. Answering this question requires an evaluation of the history of Islamic political thought, starting with its earliest beginnings. We can then determine how each stage of development has contributed to the evolution of Islamic political thought into its present day form.

Islam was first introduced to the nomadic Arab people by the Prophet Muhammad, and afforded the first opportunity for different clans and tribes to be united as one community with a systematic view of religion. In the early formative years of Islam, Muhammad set an example for governance that was carried on by his successors, the four Righteous Caliphs. Muhammad's style of ruling was similar to a modified republican system of government and reminiscent of the philosophy of Plato, in which the ruler was a philosopher-king. It included the freedom of belief, freedom of movement, and the responsibility of the Ummah to help oppressed people, whether they were Muslims or not. The primary tasks of the ruler were to promote justice, collect dues, maintain the welfare of the community, and spread the teaching of Islam. Although the four Righteous Caliphs ruled in about the same fashion as Muhammad, the death of the Prophet led to controversy when he left no formal instructions on how to run the government or, especially, how to inaugurate a successor. The "hands-on" form of ruling practiced by Muhammad and the four Righteous Caliphs did not constitute a true system of government and therefore left no viable set of precedents for successors to follow.

The assassination of the fourth Caliph, Ali, moved Islam into a new realm of dynastic governmental rule. Divergent views on how the successors of Ali should be inaugurated had resulted in the formation of two different political factions in Islam: Sunni (mainstream Islam, which believes in the election or selection of leaders) and Shiite (followers of Ali, who believe that the rulers must be the descendants of Muhammad and Ali). The Umayyad Dynasty adopted the belief system of the Sunnis, but, instead of electing leaders, insisted that successors should be members of the

Umayyad house. The dynasty initially maintained the singular style of rule practiced by Muhammad and the Rightly Guided Caliphs, but as the amount of territory under its control was expanded, this personal style of rule was no longer practical. Borrowing from the well-established systems of the Byzantine and Persian Empires, the Umayyads implemented offices of administration and judicial practices and delegated responsibilities to viceroys, who reported directly to the Caliph, thus actually maintaining another form of singular government.

The Abassid Dynasty came to power under the guise that leadership should be confined to members of the Bani-Hashim clan to which Muhammad and Ali had belonged (see illustration I). This arrangement provided somewhat of a political compromise between the Sunni and Shiite views on succession of the ruler. The Abbasid era was marked as a period of enlightenment with movements in the intellectual, rational, and religious (traditional) communities.

It was the efforts of the great Muslim thinkers, the “intellectuals,” that introduced the ethical philosophy of Aristotle and the political philosophy of Plato to both the Arab lands and partly to the West. Among the most influential were al-Kindi, al-Farabi, ibn-Sina, ibn-Bajjah, and ibn-Rushd. After studying the works of ibn-Rushd, Luigi Rinaldi asserted that it was the works of Islamic thinkers that introduced Greek philosophy to the Christian world. There is no doubt that they had some influence on the evolution of Christian philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Coinciding with the contributions of the intellectuals was the “rational movement” led by Mutazilah. The objective of Mutazilah rational movement was to

put the value of human reason above the value of religion so as to provide human beings with the ability to take care of their own affairs, as well as the affairs of their community. The Mutazilites viewed themselves as “the partisans of justice and unity” and claimed that “the denial of the existence with God of the divine attributes such as power, wisdom, and life on the ground that such conceptions would destroy the unity of God.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, they believed that the human beings are those who can encompass such attributes as life, power, and wisdom, which will enable them to manage all their dealings independent of divine guidance. Therefore they asserted that the reason, not religion, should be the basis of the governmental system.

On the opposite end of the spectrum were the traditional/religious scholars and jurists, such as al-Ashari (d. 935) and al-Ghazali (1058-1111), who vehemently opposed the development of rational ideas. Interestingly, the great Christian theologians Thomas Aquinas and Pascal were indirectly affected by the ideas of al-Ghazali who, of all Muslim thinkers, came closest to subscribing to Christian views. Hitti also asserts that, “the scholastic shell constructed by al-Asha’ari and al-Ghazali has held Islam to the present day but Christendom succeeded in breaking through its scholasticism particularly at the time of Protestant Revolt.”<sup>23</sup> This turn of events is considered to be a significant factor in the development of the West and the lack of progress in Muslim society.

Yet, through this entire period of enlightenment, Islam never reverted away from the singular form of government and continued to base the principles of Islamic Law and Order on the Shari’ah, meaning the Quran (the 1<sup>st</sup> Pillar of Shari’ah) and the

Sunnah (the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pillar of Shari'ah). The Hadiths, which are written translations of the Sunnahs, are viewed with some skepticism since they are reliant on the memories and recollections of people. There have been instances of people inventing Hadiths to supplement their status in society. For example, ibn-Abd-al Awja, one of the conveyers of the Sunnah, confessed to circulating 4000 Hadiths of his own invention.<sup>4</sup> In Addition, not all sects of Islam agree on the official number of valid Hadiths in existence. This leads to the conclusion that accepting the Hadiths on faith means human reason is no longer considered.

With the fall of the Abassid Dynasty by the Mongols in 1258, the period of enlightenment in the Islamic community came to an abrupt halt. The Ottoman Empire, established around 1300, witnessed a period of power struggles and lack of intellectual progress. The Ottoman sultans (kings), in order to display a “just Islamic rule” over Muslim communities, claimed that the title of Caliph had been transferred to Sultan Salim (Ottoman king) by the last Abbasid Caliph, Mutawakkil.<sup>6</sup> This claim was tolerated by the Muslims partly because, in the words of ibn-Taymiyyah (a well-known Muslim theologian) “It is obvious that the people cannot be in a sound state except with rulers, and even if somebody from among unjust kings becomes ruler, this would be better than there being none.”<sup>5</sup> Considering the claim of Ottoman Sultan, although many Ulama did not accept the claim until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, yet it proves that after about ten centuries there was still no viable and established Islamic political system. Conversely, during this period of time the branches of government were formed to maintain the rule of different areas, but Islam itself never did adopt this multiple governing system.

While the Ottomans were ruling Arab territory, the Safavid Dynasty was in power in Iran. Conflict between the two empires inevitably arose, and, in order to mobilize their people to fight against the Ottomans, the Safavid rulers made tremendous efforts to convert the majority of Persians from Sunni Islam to Shiite Islam, thus driving a wedge between the two factions of Islam and encouraging opposition. This was the point where Shiite Islam flourished and, for the first time, became the majority religion of a Muslim territory (Iran). In the time between the Safavid and Qajar Dynasties, two movements for establishing secular government were attempted but neither one prevailed nor the struggle between politics and religion was not prevalent.

After the end of the Safavid Dynasty in Iran, the Qajar Dynasty witnessed a divergence of opinions regarding separation of church and state that became more and more widespread. The Constitutional Movement of 1906 aimed to create a government system that guaranteed sovereignty of the people and exercised legal limits for the ruling power. The majority of Ulama conceded Constitutional Government with specific reservations, believing that no tenets of Shiite Islam are in conformity with such system of rule. The Qajar Dynasty also ended with the lack of a substantial government structure, necessary for the progress of Shiite society in Iran.

Even in contemporary time, opposing views of the proper way to combine Islam and politics continue to cause conflict, a fact documented in the published works of various influential people. On the Traditionalist religious end of the spectrum is the Ayatollah Khomeini, who claimed that jurists should have absolute power, with no sovereignty allowed for the people. Interestingly, he contradicted himself by

implementing appropriate adjustments of the government to incorporate modern ideas (such as a house of representatives or a republican form of government). The theories of Khomeini were fully supported by other Traditionalists including Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, an important Shiite jurist who said, “Believing in equal rights for all citizens is worse than worshipping cows.”<sup>7</sup> These ideas paved the way for implementation of the present day system of government that prevails in Iran.

Many thinkers have argued for a more moderate view of Khomeini’s ideas. For example, Sadr, a well known Shiite jurist, supported the rule of the jurists, but also contended that the people should have sovereignty and be allowed to elect their rulers. Muntaziri, a living Marja’, also accepted the collective rule of Ulama and the sovereignty of people, where the people elect a committee of jurists to rule as well as the people’s Representatives to legislate the laws. He stated that, “there is no conclusive proof that the Prophetic traditions demonstrate the designation of the absolute authority of the jurist.”<sup>8</sup>

On the opposite end of the spectrum from Khomeini was Maghniyah, who believed that, in the absence of the infallible Imam, sovereignty should belong to all people, not just the jurists.<sup>9</sup> This opinion was similar to the thoughts of Shari-at Madari, a well-respected grand Marja’, who claimed that Khomeini’s ideas have no basis and actually are against the tenets of Islam. “What we advocate is that the people govern themselves; that is what an ‘Islamic Republic’ is. It is not permissible for one individual or one class to rule alone.”<sup>10</sup>

The intellectual viewpoint is best represented by the works of Soroush, who favored a new interpretation of Islam. He maintained that religion itself cannot be genuine when subject to human interpretation and therefore has no place in the government. Soroush advocates a secular government based on reason, enlightenment, and dissemination of knowledge. “The ambition to impose only one particular interpretation of religion and its principles are inhumane. The fact is that the interpretations are colorful, and is based on the historical needs.”<sup>11</sup>

The most important point to note about the ideas of the traditionalists and intellectuals, are that all of these opposing viewpoints are being argued at the same time. If there were a stable and satisfactory form of Islamic government, it seems that these arguments would not be necessary or common. Therefore, the conclusion seems to be that the lack of progress in Islam can be traced to its refusing to embrace human reason as the basis for a secular-based government and instead continuing to cling to a religion-based government. And, as long as this is the path followed, the Muslim community will continue to lag behind the progress of the Western world, thus making it doubtful that Islam can ever offer a viable and practical political system.



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## APPENDIX A

### CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 570 A.D. | The birth year of the Prophet Muhammad in Macca.  |
| 621      | Migration of Muhammad and his followers from Macca to Madina, the event is called Hijrah which makes the beginning of Islamic calendar.   |
| 610-632  | The start and the end of the Revelation of Qur'an.  |
| 632      | Death of the Prophet Muhammad.  |
| 632-634  | Rule of the first Rightly Guided Caliph, Abu-Bakr, who was elected by using the principle of Ijma (the consensus of opinion).   |
| 634-644  | Rule of the second Rightly Guided Caliph, Umar, who was selected by the first Caliph and inaugurated through Bay'ah (oath of allegiance) of Ummah.  |
| 644-656  | Rule of the third Rightly Guided Caliph, Uthman, who was selected by a Shurah (the selection committee). The Shurah included six respected members of Islamic community which was appointed by the second Caliph, Umar. |

- 656-661 Rule of the fourth Rightly Guided Caliph, Ali, who was selected and inaugurated through the process of Shurah encompassing the leading members of Ummah.
- 661 The assassination of the fourth Rightly Guided Caliph, Ali, which paved the way for Muawiyah of Bani-Umayyah to claim the power.
- 661-680 Rule of Muawiyah, who made the Caliphate hereditary and established Umayyah dynasty.
- 680-683 Rule of Yazid, the son of Muawiyah, who killed Husayn (the son of Ali) and his small army members in a battle in Karbala. The event has become the major annual sermon for Shiite Muslims.
- 661-750 Rule of Umayyad dynasty. The Umayyad dynasty ended by a coalition between Bani-Abbas and Abu-Muslim Khurasani, the leader of Shiite Muslims in Iran.
- 762 Baghdad was built by Caliph al-Mansur (754-775) and became the political, cultural, and intellectual center of the Islamic rule.
- 750-1258 Rule of Abbadid dynasty. The period became the golden era of Islamic rule.
- Early 8<sup>th</sup> century The rationalist movement of Mutazilah was founded by Wasil ibn-Ata in al-Basrah.

801-873	al-Kindi a prominent Muslim thinker in Baghdad.
870-950	Muhammad abu-Nasr al-Farabi, the outstanding philosopher of Iranian descent, who was called the Second Teacher (the first being Aristotle).
970 (approx.)	The rise of Ikhwan al Safa (the brethren of sincerity) in Baghdad.
980-1037	Ibn-Sina, the great Philosopher from Iran, who is known as Avicenna in the West.
1058-1111	Abu-Hamid al-Ghazzali the prominent theologian of Islam.
1138	The death of Ibn-Bajjah, a famous Islamic rational thinker in Spain.
1198	The death of Ibn Rushd another rationalist Muslim philosopher.
1300-1922	Ottoman Empire of Turkey, established in Anatolia.
1512-1520	Transfer of the Caliphate title from Abbasid Caliph Al-Mutawakil to Ottoman Sultan (King) Sulayman.
1501-1742	Rule of Safavid dynasty in Iran. Safavids propagated Shiite Islam to a point that it became the majority religion in Iran.
1794-1925	Period of Qajar Dynasty in Iran. The Qajar dynasty witnessed the Constitutional Revolution and finally adhered to it.

1813 and 1828	Wars between Iran and Russia, which concluded with disastrous result for Iran.
1872	Reuter Concession and its cancellation through the efforts of Ulama.
1890-1892	Tobacco Concession and its cancellation through the efforts of Ulama.
1906	Constitutional Revolution of Iran which established a constitutional government. It was in turn replaced by an Islamic rule led by Khomeini in 1979.
1922	Ottoman Empire and the rule of Caliphate were replaced with a republican regime, based on the decision of the general assembly of Turkey.
1902-1989	Ayatollah Rohollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979.
1979	The Islamic revolution succeeded and gave birth to the first Shiite government in Iran.

## APPENDIX B

## GLOSSARY

Ahuramazda	Name for God in Zoroastrian, the ancient Persian religion.
Ahriman	Name for Satan in Zoroastrian, the ancient Persian religion.
Akhirah	Day of Resurrection in Islam, it is the phase in which everyone receives the justice of God on the basis of his deeds during the temporal life.
Alim	A Learned person, in theology of Islam or fig. It is the singular form of Ulama.
Allah	Name for God in Islam.
Amir	A military commander.
Ansar	Muslims, who joined Muhammad immediately after his arrival in Madina (621).
Al-Salat	Daily Prayer that is due for all Muslims and is one of the five pillars of Islam.

Ashura	Drama of martyrdom of Husayn, the son of Ali and third Imam for Shiites, in Karbala.
Asnad	A chain of indisputable authorities of a Hadith.
Ayatollah	A highest religious position among the clergymen.
Bait al-mal	Public fund created to finance the needs of Muslim community in general, and to aid the poor in particular.
Batin	Inner or secret meaning of Quran. Shiite belief is that it can only be revealed by infallibles (Imams).
Batinite	Esoteric
Bay'ah	Declaration of allegiance, which provide legitimacy to the appointment of a Muslim leader.
Caliph	The title of the ruler in Sunni Muslim government as the legitimate successor of the Prophet.
Caliphate	The position of the Caliphs.
Da'if	Lit. weak. A Hadith that is weak either in text, chain of authority, or both.
Dhimmis	The believers of other religions (Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians) who accepted the rule of Islamic government based on certain covenant or obligation towards the Muslim ruler.



Divan al Zimam	Audit or account office, established by Abbasids.
Diwan al tawqi	Correspondence office, established by Abbasids for management of official letters and documents.
Faqih	A learned clergy who possesses the knowledge of Shari'ah (Islamic canon law).
Farman	An official decree issued by a ruler or a high ranking official.
Fatwa	A religious decree or a formal opinion given by a high ranking Muslim jurist, in particular Mujtahid.
Feqh-e puya	The dynamic Shari'ah (jurisprudence), in Shiite Islam.
Feqh-e sonnati	The traditional Shari'ah (jurisprudence), in Shiite Islam.
Ghaybat	The occultation of the twelfth Imam (hidden Imam) in Shiite Islam.
Hadith	A recorded Sunnah (tradition), supported by a text (matn) and a chain of authorities (sanad).
Hajj	A pilgrimage to the Ka'ba shrine in Mecca that is one of the five pillars of Islam.
Halal	Allowed matters for Muslims based on Shari'ah.

Haram	The forbidden matters for Muslims based on Shari'ah. Doing of it, calls for punishment.
Hasan	The fairness of a Hadith either based on text, chain of authorities, or both.
Hijrah	Lit. migration. Used particularly in migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Macca to Madina that became the beginning of the Islamic calendar.
Howzeh	A theological seminary for the education in Islamic teachings.
Ijma	The consensus of opinion. The principle is acknowledged by all Sunnite factions, but not by Shiite.
Ijtihad	The right of Mujtahid (high ranking jurist) for further interpretation of Quran and Sunnah (Shari'ah), or forming a new opinion.
Ikhwan al-Safa	Lit. The brethren of sincerity. Ikhwan who clearly affiliated with the Isma'ili Shiite and conveyed the essence of esoteric concept, was established in al-Basra about 970. Their philosophical orientation tended toward Pythagorean speculations.
Imam	Lit. Leader. In Sunnite Islam it refers to the leaders of the congregational prayers. In the Shiite Islam the term usually

applies to the twelve leaders of Shiite sect, today it is used collectively for both cases by Shiite Muslims.

Imamate	Lit. leadership. Used in particular for the Shiite understanding of the leadership of Imams.
Ismailite Shiite	The Shiite sect that believes in Ali and his descendants up to sixth Imam.
Jahalia	The nomadic society of Arabs. It usually refers to those who lived before or during early Islam.
Jizya	The capitation tax, was due from non-Muslims living under the rule of Muslims.
Ka'ba	The holy shrine in Macca. The pilgrimage of Muslims to the Ka'ba shrine is one of the five principles of Islam.
Khalifah	The term entails man as the vicegerent and guardian of Allah (God) on earth.
Khalifat al Allah	Lit. God's Caliphate. Used by the Abbasid Caliphs.
kharaj	The tribute from occupied nations. Later it became a land tax paid by non-Muslims.
Khoms	The one fifth of net gain of Muslims, in certain areas, belongs to the Muslim leader.

Khulafa' al-Rashidun	The Great Caliphs, the title was used for the Rightly Guided Caliphs.
Macca	A city, in Arab land, in which the shrine of Ka'ba is located.
Marja-i-taqlid	A source of imitation for Shiites, whose rulings should be accepted by the Shiite Muslims.
Matn	The text of Hadith (recorded tradition of the Prophet).
Muhajir	The original believers in Islam who followed Muhammad's journey from Macca to Madina.
Mujtahid	The Ulama of highest rank. The one has the authority of ijtiḥad.
Mutazilah	The first Rationalist School of Thought in Islam that acknowledged the supremacy of reason to religion.
Nowrooz	The first day of New Year in Iran corresponding to 21 <sup>st</sup> March, the exact beginning of Spring.
Populists	Those offering alternative concepts to the objectives presented by Khomeini in his theory of "wilayat al-faqih".
Qadi	The title for a jurist judge in Islam.
Qiyas	The analogical deduction in Islamic.

Qur'an	The Holy Book of Islam that preserves the revelations received by the Prophet Muhammad.
Quraysh	The tribe to which Muhammad, Bani-Hashim, Bani-Abbad, and Bani-Umayyah belonged.
Ramadan	A month in Islamic calendar that is the month of saum (fast) for Muslims.
Sahih	It is called for a Hadith that is genuine (has a text and a chain of indisputable authorities).
Saqifah assembly	The assembly that elected Abu-Bakr, a leading member of Ummah to succeed the Prophet Muhammad.
Saum	Lit. fast. It is due for all adult Muslims to observe fasting during month of Ramadan, and is one of the five pillars of Islam.
Shahadah	Confession of a Muslim, is the testimony that Allah is the Almighty God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.
Shari'ah	The Islamic canon law based on Qur'an and Sunnah.
Shiite	The Muslim who believe in Shiite Islam.
Shiite Islam	The belief in Islam implies that the legitimate successors of the Prophet are only twelve Imams (Ali and his eleven sons).

Shurrah	An election committee composed of the leaders of a Muslim society, for the purpose of making required political decision.
Sunnah	The deeds, sayings, and the silent approvals of the Prophet, also called tradition.
Sunni	The mainstream factions in Islam.
Taqiyah	The idea of dissimulation in Shiite Islam that is a fundamental tenet as a measure of protection. It denotes the act of guarding oneself by holding to a particular belief opposed to that held by the opposition
Taqlid	It is the imitation of Shiite Muslim of a credible jurist, who is a Mujtahid.
Tafsir	The interpretation of religious texts by authorized Shiite Alim namely Mujtahid.
Tawhid	Islamic Monotheism, the belief that there is only one Almighty God as Creator, Organizer, Planner, Sustainer, and the Giver of security.
Tithe	One tenth of merchandise cost levied upon those goods owned by non-Muslims and imported into the Muslim state.

Traditionalists	Here is the followers of the objectives presented by Khomeini in his theory of “wilayat al-faqih”.
Twelver Shiite	The mainstream Shiite sect that believe in Ali and his eleven descendants as the only legitimate successors of the Prophet Muhammad.
Ul al-amr	The autonomous jurist leader in Shiite Islam.
Ulama	The plural form of Alim who refers to the learned persons in the knowledge of Islamic law.
Ummah	Islamic community, generally used in early Islamic periods.
Uqud	The convictions of a Muslim.
Urf	The common law.
Ushr	Lit. One tenth. Used for the land tax.
waqf	The religious endowment.
Wazir	A minister in government adopted from Persians.
Wilayat al-Faqih	The governorship of the jurist – the absolute rule of faqih.
Zahir	The outer or apparent meaning of Qur’an.

**Zakat**

The wealth tax that is due for all Muslims. One main purpose of Zakat is to help the needy people and it is one of the five pillars of Islam.



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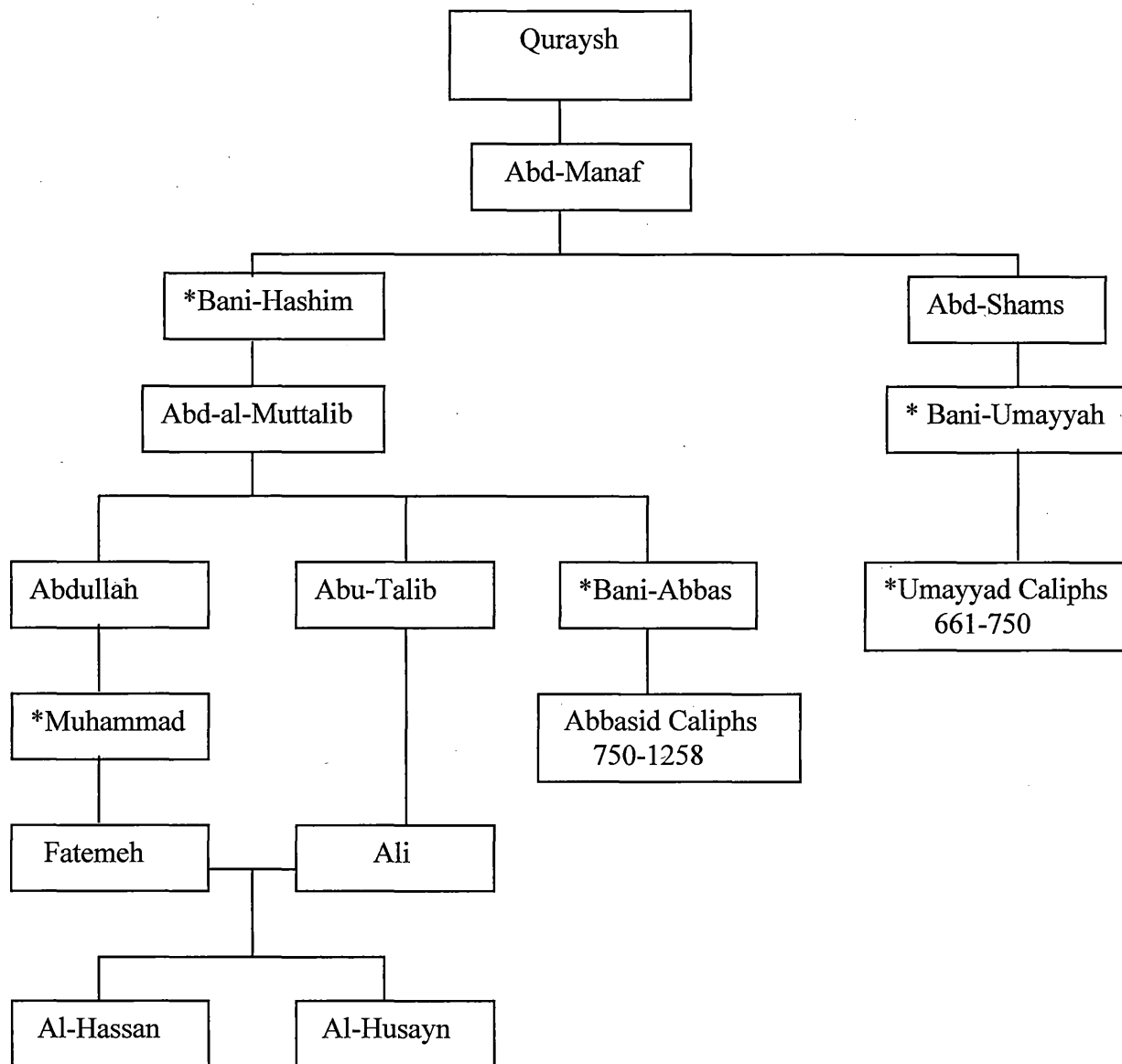
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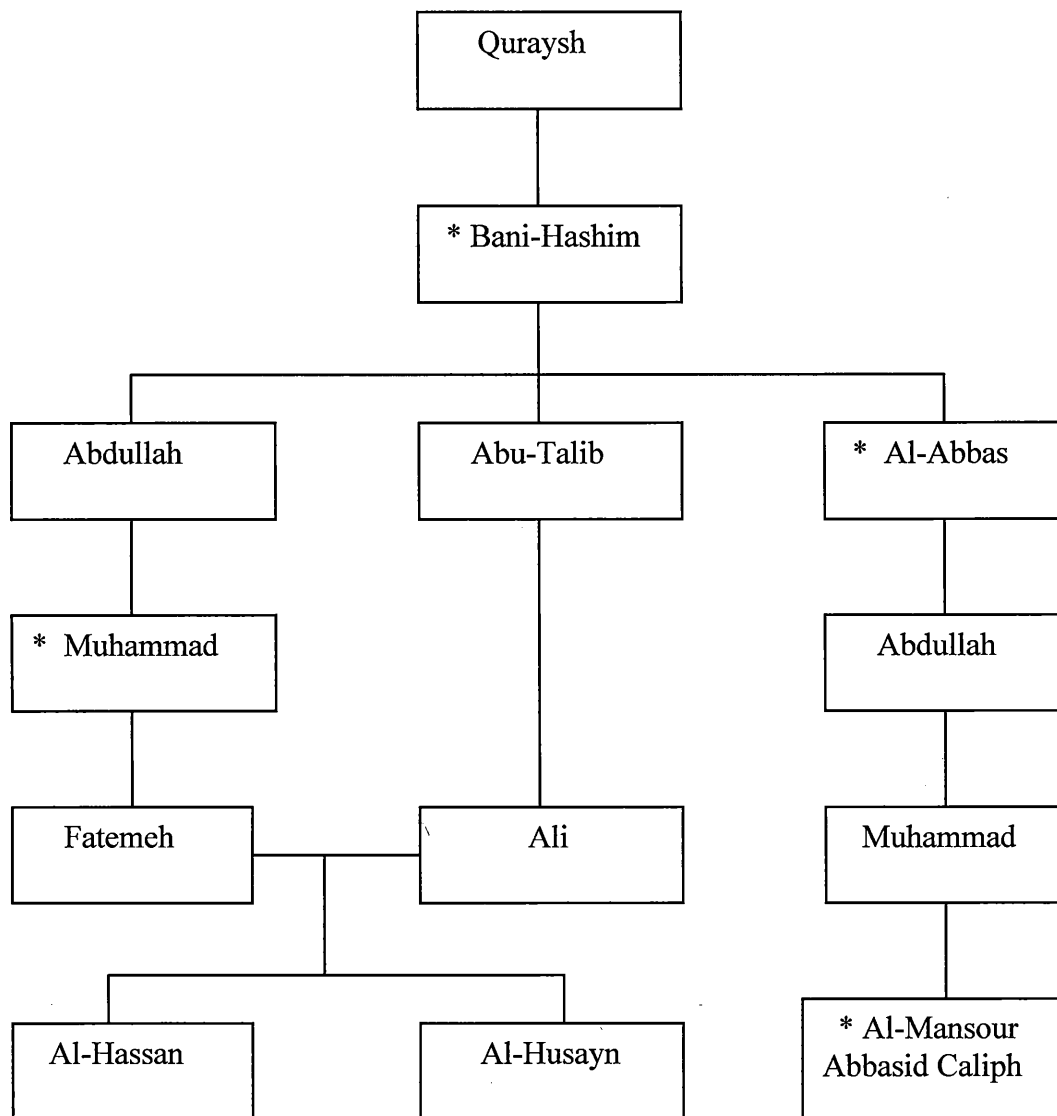
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Illustration I



\* Family relationships among Muhammad,  
Bani-Hashim, Bani-Abbas, and Bani-Umayyah

Illustration II



\* Family relationships between Abbasid  
dynasty and the Prophet Muhammad

## VITA

Reza Rezaee was born in Iran, on September 26, 1939, the son of Shahrbanoo Sadeghi and Muhammad Rezaee. After completing his work at Nezam High School in 1939, he entered Military Academy in Tehran, Iran. Upon graduation, he joined Imperial Iranian Air Force (I.I.A.F.) in 1942 where he accomplished the required technical courses in I.I.A.F. and U.S. Air Force and served as the Radar Operation and Training Officer. He continued his occupation as the I.I.A.F. liaison officer in Randolph Air Force Base (Training Center), Texas, from 1972 to 1975. After return to Iran, he succeeded as the Chief of Foreign Training at Air Force Headquarter, which mainly involved the trainings that were conducted in U.S. at that time. He received the degree of MBA from Iran Center for Management Studies (I.C.M.S), an educational institution affiliated with Harvard Business School, in June 1980. As an Air Force retiree he joined the Textile and Metalwork industry workforce in 1982, and served over a decade as production manager or the managing director. In January 2002, he entered the Graduate School of Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas.

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