Encyclopedia of *Islam* and the Muslim World

Editor in Chief
Richard C. Martin

Volume 1
A-L

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A

ʿABBAS I, SHAH (1571–1629)

Shah ʿAbbas I, the fifth ruler of the Safavid dynasty, ruled Iran from 1587 until 1629, the year of his death. Shah ʿAbbas came to power at a time when tribal unrest and foreign invasion had greatly reduced Iran's territory. Once on the throne he set out to regain the lands and authority that had been lost by his immediate successors. His defeat of the Uzbeks in the northeast and the peace he made with the Ottoman Empire, Iran's archenemy, enabled Shah ʿAbbas to reform Iran's military and financial system. He diminished the military power of the tribes by creating a standing army composed of slave soldiers who were loyal only to him. These so-called *ghulam*s (military slaves) were mostly Armenians and Georgians captured during raids in the Caucasus. In order to increase the revenue needed for these reforms the shah centralized state control, which included the appointment of *ghulam*s to high administrative positions.

With the same intent he fostered trade by reestablishing road security and by building many caravan series throughout the country. Under Shah ʿAbbas, Isfahan became Iran's capital and most important city, endowed with a new commercial and administrative center grouped around a splendid square that survives today. His genius further manifested itself in his military skills and his astute foreign policy. He halted the eastward expansion of the Ottomans, defeating them and taking Baghdad in 1623. To encourage trade and thus gain treasure, he welcomed European merchants to the Persian Gulf. He also allowed Christian missionaries to settle in his country, hopeful that this might win him allies among European powers in his anti-Ottoman struggle. Famously down to earth, Shah ʿAbbas was a pragmatic ruler who could be cruel as well as generous. Rare among Iranian kings, he is today remembered as a ruler who was concerned about his own people.

A detail from a miniature painting of ʿAbbas I (1571–1629) appears in the volume one color plates.

See also **Empires: Safavid and Qajar.**

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Rudi Matthee

ʿABD AL-BAHAʾ (1844–1921)

ʿAbd al-Bahaʾ ʿAbbas, also known as ʿAbbas Effendi, was the son of Bahaʾallah (Mirza Husayn ʿAli, 1817–1892), the founder of the Bahaʾi religion. In his final will and testament, Bahaʾallah designated him as his successor and authoritative expounder of his teachings. Born in Tehran on 23 May 1844, he grew up in the household of a father committed to the teachings of the Babi movement and consequently shared his father's fate of exile and intermittent imprisonment until the Young Turk revolution of 1909.

As a result, ʿAbd al-Bahaʾ received little formal education and had to manage the affairs of his father's household at a very early age. Despite these setbacks, he demonstrated a natural capacity for leadership and a prodigious knowledge of human history and thought.

ʿAbd al-Bahaʾ corresponded with and enjoyed the respect of a number of the luminaries of his day, including the Russian author Leo Tolstoy and the Muslim reformer Muhammad ʿAbduh. He left behind a small portion of what is a large corpus of still-unexplored writings that include social commentaries, interpretations, and elaborations of his father's works, mystical treatises, and Qurʾanic and biblical exegeses.

Upon his release from house imprisonment in 1909, ʿAbd al-Bahaʾ traveled to North Africa, Europe, and North America advocating a number of reforms for all countries, including the adoption of a universal auxiliary language, global collective security, mandatory education, and full legal and social equality for women and minorities. He also warned of a coming war in Europe and called for a just system of global government and international courts where disputes between nations could be resolved peacefully.

ʿAbd al-Bahaʾ died on 28 November 1921. According to his will and testament, his eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, became the head of the Bahaʾi community and the sole authorized interpreter of his grandfather and great-grandfather's teachings.

See also **Bahaʾallah; Bahaʾi Faith.**

William McCants

ʿABD AL-HAMID IBN BADIS (1889–1940)

ʿAbd al-Hamid Ibn Badis was the leader of the Islamic reformist movement in Algeria and founder of the *Association des Uléma Musulmanes Algériens* (AUMA). He was born in 1889 in Constantine, where he also died in 1940. After receiving a traditional education in his hometown, Ibn Badis (locally referred to as Ben Badis) studied at the Islamic University of Zaytuna, in Tunis, from 1908 to 1912. In the following years he journeyed through the Middle East, particularly in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, where he came into contact with modernist and reformist currents of thought spreading within orthodox Sunni Islam.

Ibn Badis became the most prominent promoter of the Islamic reformist movement in Algeria, first through his preaching at the mosque of Sidi Lahdar in his hometown, and, after 1925, through his intensive journalistic activity. He founded a newspaper, *Al-Muntaqid* (The critic), which closed after a few months. Immediately afterwards, however, he began a new and successful newspaper, *Al-Shihab* (The meteor), which soon became the platform of the reformist thinking in Algeria, until its closure in 1939. Through the pages of *Al-Shihab*, Ibn Badis spread the Salafiyya movement in Algeria, presented his Qurʾanic exegesis, and argued the need for Islamic reform and a rebirth of religion and religious values within a society that, in his view, had been too influenced by French colonial rule. He further argued that the Algerian nation had to be founded on its Muslim culture and its Arab identity, and for this reason he is also considered a precursor of Algerian nationalism. He promoted the free teaching of Arabic language, which had been marginalized during the years of French rule, and the establishment of free schools for adults, where traditional Qurʾanic studies could be taught.

In May 1931 he founded the AUMA (also Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema), which gathered the country's leading Muslim thinkers, initially both reformist and conservative, and subsequently only reformist, and served as its president until his death. Whereas the reformist programs promoted through *Al-Shihab* had managed to reach an audience limited to the elite educated class of the country, the AUMA became the tool for a nationwide campaign to revive Islam, Arabic, and religious studies, as well as a center for direct social and political action. Throughout the country he founded a network of Islamic cultural centers that provided the means for the educational initiatives he advocated and the establishment of Islamic youth groups. He also spearheaded a campaign against Sufi brotherhoods, accusing them of introducing blameworthy innovations to religious practice, and also of cooperating with the colonial administration. He played an important political role in the formation of the Algerian Muslim Congress in 1936, which arose in reaction to the victory of the Popular Front in France, and was active politically in the country until his premature death in 1940. Thanks to his activities as leader of the AUMA and to his writing in *Al-Shihab*, Ibn Badis is considered by some to be the most important figure of the Arab-Islamic cultural revival in Algeria during the 1930s.

See also **Reform: Arab Middle East and North Africa; Salafiyya.**

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Claudia Gazzini

ʿABD AL-HAMID KISHK (SHAYKH) (1933–1996)

A pioneering "cassette preacher" of the 1970s, ʿAbd al-Hamid Kishk was born in the Egyptian Delta village of Shubrakhut, the son of a small merchant. Early on he experienced vision impairment, and lost his sight entirely as a young teen. He memorized the Qurʾan by age twelve, attended religious schools in Alexandria and Cairo, then enrolled at al-Azhar University. He graduated in 1962, first in his class, but rather than an expected nomination to the teaching faculty, he was appointed imam at a Cairo mosque.

B

BABIYYA

The Babi movement began during a period of heightened chiliastic expectation for the return of the Twelfth Imam (or Hidden Imam), who Shiʿite Muslims believe will fill the world with justice. As such, the movement attracted not only students of religion, but members from all strata of society who probably sought change in the existing order.

The initial converts to the Babi movement were mid- to low-level clerics from the Shaykhi school of Twelver Shiʿite Islam. The school, founded upon the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsaʾi, was mainstream with regard to Shiʿite law, Akhbari in its veneration for the utterances ascribed to the twelve imams, and theosophical in its approach to metaphysical matters. Shaykh Ahmad's successor, Sayyed Kazem, developed the eschatological teachings of his predecessor and taught that the advent of the "promised one" was imminent, although he did not specify if this figure was to be an intermediary of the hidden imam or the imam himself.

On 22 May 1844, ʿAli Mohammad, a young merchant who had briefly attended the classes of Sayyed Kazem in Karbala, told a fellow Shaykhi disciple, Mulla Hosayn Boshrui, that he was the "gate" *(bab)* of the Hidden Imam and wrote an extemporaneous commentary on the Qurʾanic Sura of Joseph, the *Qayyum al-asma*ʾ, to substantiate his claim. So impressed was Molla Hosayn and other students of Sayyed Kazem with the eloquence and learning of ʿAli Mohammad and his ability to produce verses (*ayat*) at great speed and with no apparent forethought that they publicly endorsed his claims to be the gate of the Hidden Imam, while privately they believed that his station was much higher. The exact nature of the Bab's claims remained a matter of controversy during the first four years of his seven-year prophetic career. Although he initially made no explicit claim to prophethood, he implicitly claimed to receive revelation by emulating the style of the Qurʾan in the *Qayyum al-asma*ʾ.

After the formation of the first core of believers, who, along with the Bab, were referred to as the first Vahed (Unity), the group dispersed at his instruction to proclaim the advent of the Bab, whose new theophany was to be initiated by his pilgrimage to Mecca, reaching a crescendo with his arrival in the holy cities of Iraq. The Bab instructed Molla Hosayn to disseminate his teachings in Iran and deliver the *Qayyum al-asma*ʾ to the shah and his chief minister. Another disciple was sent to Azerbaijan, while others were instructed to return to their homes to spread the new message. The majority of the Bab's first disciples departed for Iraq, including Molla ʿAli Bastami, who was sent as a representative to the holy cities. There, he preached the new message in public. As a result, both the messenger and the author of the message were condemned as heretics in a joint *fatwa* by prominent Sunni and Shiʿite ulema in Iraq.

Following this episode, the Bab decided not to meet with his followers in Karbala as he had planned so as not to further raise the ire of an already enraged clerical establishment. This led to the disaffection of some of his more militant followers, who were expecting the commencement of a holy war. It also emboldened the Bab's critics, particularly the rival claimants for leadership of the Shaykhi community.

Persecution of the Babis in Iran began in 1845 and the Bab himself was confined to his home in June 1845. During this period he was forced to publicly deny certain claims that had been attributed to him, which he was willing to comply with since his actual claim was much more challenging, as witnessed in his later epistles and public statements, particularly from 1848 onward. By asserting that he was the recipient of revelation and divine authority, whether explicitly or implicitly by emulating the style of the Qurʾan, the Bab challenged the right of the ulema to collect alms on behalf of the Hidden Imam and interpret scripture in his absence. Further, his claim to be the *Qaʿim* (the one who rises at the end of time), made explicit at his public trial in Tabriz, indirectly threatened the stability of the Qajar monarchy of Iran, which held

power as the Shadow of God on earth and depended upon the quiescent Shiʿite clergy for legitimacy.

Despite the hostility of much of the high-ranking clergy, the Bab continued to win converts from among the ulema, including two very prominent personalities: Sayyed Yahya Darabi and Molla Mohammad ʿAli Hojjat al-Islam Zanjani. In 1846, he managed to leave Shiraz and make his way to the home of the governor of Isfahan, Manuchehr Khan Moʿtamad al-Dawla, a Georgian Christian convert to Islam who sympathized with the Bab's cause. There, he enjoyed increasing popularity, which further roused the ulema, who incited the shah against the Bab. Following the death of his patron, he was placed under arrest. From this point on, the charismatic persona of the Bab was removed from the public arena, as he was transferred from prison to prison until his final execution at the hands of government troops on 9 July 1850.

Although the Bab continued to influence the movement from prison through the dissemination of thousands of pages of writing, leadership of the community devolved upon his chief lieutenants, notably Molla Hosayn, Molla Mohammad ʿAli Barforushi (also known as the Qoddus, "the Most Holy"), Qorrat al-ʿAyn, the well-known poetess (also known as Tahereh, "the Pure One"), Darabi, Zanjani, and Mirza Hosayn ʿAli Nuri (later known as Bahaʾallah). The latter, together with Qoddus and Tahereh, presided over a decisive meeting of Babis at Badasht, where a formal break with Islamic law was initiated when Tahereh publicly removed her veil. She was later put to death in 1852 upon the orders of the government, ratified by leading doctors of law. Qoddus would also die at the instigation of some members of the ulema following his capture at the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi, where he, Molla Hosayn, and an embattled group of Babis defended themselves against government troops in the province of Khurasan. Molla Hosayn and most of the fort's defenders lost their lives there. Similarly, Darabi and Zanjani led large groups of Babis in armed resistance to government troops at Nayriz and Zanjan, but ultimately met the same fate as their fellow believers. In 1852, as a result of an assassination attempt on the life of Naser al-Din Shah by some Babis, several hundred to a few thousand of the Bab's followers were brutally executed or imprisoned. Among them was Mirza Husayn ʿAli Nuri, the future Bahaʾallah, who suffered a four-month captivity in a darkened pit (*siyah chal*), followed by exile to Iraq.

Although the demographic makeup of the Babi movement cannot be determined with precision, it is safe to say that it was largely an urban movement with significant concentrations of converts in rural areas. While it initially drew upon Shaykhi ulema, it later attracted followers from a range of social classes, particularly merchants and craftsmen. Finally, preaching and conversion were confined to predominantly Shiʿite areas in Iraq and Iran.

As has been stressed by modern scholars, the Babi movement served as a vehicle of social protest, uniting a number of otherwise inimical heterodox and social classes in opposition to the established order. Despite this shared desire for social change (which still remains to be proven), the Bab's charismatic personality and forceful writing also played a central role in attracting converts and admirers, even in the West. Rather than being an unwitting product of messianic expectation, content to remain within the bounds of traditional Shiʿite notions of the function of the Hidden Imam as the Mahdi and reformer of Islam, the Bab enunciated a supra-Islamic message that included new laws and social teachings designed, by his own admission, to prepare the people for a second theophany: the coming of "Him Whom God will make manifest" (*man yuzhiruhu'llah*).

Although there were a number of claimants to this theophany in the 1850s, most Babis followed the Bab's nominee, Bahaʾallah's half-brother Mirza Yahya (also known as Subh Azal). After Bahaʾallah claimed this station in 1863, however, the majority of Babis recognized him as the fulfillment of the Bab's prophecies concerning the second theophany and subsequently identified themselves as Bahaʾis. The Bab's followers, who continued to owe their allegiance to Subh Azal, became known as Azalis and played an important role in Iran's constitutional revolution in 1906.

See also **Bab, Sayyed ʿAli Muhammad; Bahaʾallah; Bahaʾi Faith.**

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William McCants

BAB, SAYYED ʿALI MUHAMMAD (1819–1850)

Sayyed ʿAli Muhammad, later known as "the Bab," was born on 20 October 1819 in Shiraz, the provincial capital of Fars. A descendent of the prophet Muhammad's family, the Bab traced his lineage from the tribe of Quraysh to his father, Sayyed Muhammad Reza, a merchant in the bazaar of Shiraz. In his early childhood, the Bab's father died and he came under the care of his maternal uncles. During his adolescence and young adulthood, the Bab's uncle Hajji Mirza Sayyed ʿAli was his most stalwart supporter, overseeing his limited education, guiding his early business ventures as a merchant, and later becoming one of the earliest adherents of his nephew's new creed.

The Bab's demure demeanor as a child matured into quiet, religious contemplation, as noted by his contemporaries. His personal piety led him to undertake a pilgrimage to the Shiʿite holy shrines in Iraq between 1840 and 1841. While there, the Bab, an adherent of the Shaykhi school of Twelver Shiʿite Islam, attended a few classes given by the Shaykhi leader Sayyed Kazem Rashti. On 22 May 1844, three years after his return to Shiraz, the Bab advanced his claim to divine authority from God to one of Kazem's students, Mulla Hosayn, and soon after gained a large following among seminarians who in turn made many converts among merchants and even upper-class landowners, including Mirza Husayn ʿAli Nuri, who later founded the Baha'i religion.

Although the Bab couched his claims in abstruse language early in his career, the implications were not lost upon the Shiʿite ulema. In particular, they viewed his assertion to reveal verses in the same manner as Muhammad as a violation of a cardinal tenet of Shiʿite and Sunni Islam—that Muhammad was the last of God's messengers. He was tried by religious judges and condemned to death for heresy. As a result of clerical agitation, he was soon arrested and suffered imprisonment until his execution on 9 July 1850, at the age of thirty.

During his prophetic career, the Bab composed numerous religious texts of varying genres. Some of the more notable titles include the *Qayyum al-asma'* (his earliest, post-declaration doctrinal work), the Persian and Arabic *Bayans* (two separate books detailing the laws of his new religion), and *Dala'il sabʿa* (an apologetic work).

See also **Babiyya; Baha'allah; Baha'i Faith.**

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William McCants

BAGHDAD

"Have you seen in all the length and breadth of the earth

A city such as Baghdad? Indeed it is paradise on earth."

(al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, in Lassner, *Topography*, p. 47)

Thus begins a poem attributed variously to ʿUmara b. ʿAqil al-Khatafi and Mansur al-Namari in praise of Baghdad, the illustrious capital of the Abbasid caliphate in Iraq for close to five centuries. The city was founded by the second Abbasid caliph, Abu Jaʿfar al-Mansur, on the banks of the Tigris River where it most closely approaches the Euphrates. While officially called Dar al-Salam, or the Abode of Peace, which recalls Qur'anic descriptions of Paradise (6:127; 10:25), the name Baghdad itself is reminiscent of a pre-Islamic settlement in the vicinity. However, this metropolis is not to be confused erroneously with the ancient towns of Babylon, Seleucia, and Ctesiphon.

A bust of Muslim caliph Abu Jaʿfar al-Mansur, in Baghdad, which he founded. AP/Wide World Photos

Following the turbulence and social upheavals of the Abbasid assumption of power from the Umayyads, al-Mansur sought to move his capital to a more secure location in the East. The proclamation of Abu l-ʿAbbas as the first Abbasid caliph in 749 C.E. had irrevocably shifted the locus of imperial power away from Damascus, the Umayyad capital, to a series of successive sites in Iraq. Al-Mansur himself was initially based in al-Hashimiyyah, adjacent to Qasr Ibn Hubayra and close to Kufa. The Rawandiyya uprising of 758 C.E., however, soon exposed the location's vulnerability, and al-Mansur began a thorough investigation of sites from which he could consolidate his rule.

In accordance with the information gathered from scouts, local inhabitants, and personal observation, the minor village of Baghdad was selected as an ideal location for the future Abbasid capital. The area had much to recommend itself in terms of its central location, fertile lands, temperate climate, ease of receiving provisions via the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the convening of caravan routes nearby, and the natural defenses provided by the surrounding canals. Construction of the imperial capital began in the year 762 C.E., though work was halted temporarily that same year while al-Mansur suppressed further uprisings emanating from Medina and Basra. Over one hundred thousand architects, artisans, and laborers from across the empire were employed in the creation of this city, at tremendous financial expense, over a period of four years.

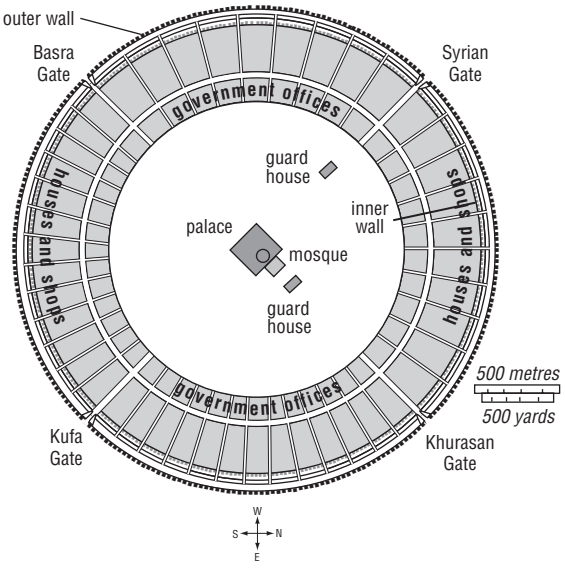
An alternative name for Baghdad, al-Madina al-Mudawwara, or the Round City, reflects the circular layout of al-Mansur's initial foundation. Baghdad was designed as a series of concentric rings, with the caliphal palace, known as Bab al-Dhahab, or the Golden Gate, and the attached grand congregational mosque located in the center, along with separate structures for the commander of the guard and the chief of police. The caliph was thereby equidistant from all points within the city, as well as surrounded by its considerable fortifications. Only the residences of his younger children, those of his servants and slaves, and various government offices shared access onto this inner circle. Four walkways radiated outward from the central courtyard in the directions of northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest, passing through the inner circle of surrounding structures; then an enclosure wall followed by an interval of space; then a residential area followed by another interval; then a large wall of outer defense, a third interval, a second smaller wall; and finally a deep, wide moat surrounding the entire complex.

The Round City initially retained an austere administrative and military character. On the city's outskirts, large land grants at varying distances from the capital were given to members of the Abbasid family, the army, and chiefs of the government agencies. In addition to the initial settlers, comprised of those loyal to the caliph and his new regime, large numbers of laborers, artisans, and merchants migrated to Baghdad in pursuit of the largesse showered upon those necessary to sustain the new imperial capital. What quickly grew to be a thriving market within the walls of the Round City was ultimately perceived to be a security threat and, in 773 C.E., was transferred southwest of Baghdad, to al-Karkh. There, the commercial activities of the Abbasid capital flourished, and Baghdad rapidly developed into an economically vibrant metropolis.

The main markets of Baghdad were subdivided according to their various specialties which included food, fruit, flowers, textiles, clothes, booksellers, goldsmiths, cobblers, reedweavers, soapmakers, and moneychangers that served the populace and government officials. Baghdad exported textiles and items made of cotton and silk, glazed-ware, oils, swords, leather, and paper, to mention only a few, through both local and international trade. The *muhtasib*, a government-appointed regulator, ensured the fair practices of the marketplace as well as supervised the public works of proliferating mosques and bathhouses. The opulence and luxury of court life in Baghdad were legendary, and reflected the vast political and economic power of the Abbasid Empire.

The magnanimity of the Abbasid caliphs and the well-placed inhabitants of Baghdad also extended into encouraging intellectual pursuits, thereby establishing the Abbasid capital as one of the world's most sophisticated and prestigious centers of learning. Renowned Islamic scholars of diverse geographical and ethnic origins held sessions in the mosques and colleges of cosmopolitan Baghdad, attracting innumerable seekers of legal, philological, and spiritual knowledge. Bookshops and the private homes of individual scholars and high government officials, such as the wazir, also served as venues for intellectual discussion and debate. Inns located near the mosques provided lodging to those who had devoted themselves to scholarly pursuits, and accommodations were later made available within the institutions of the *madrasa* (legal college) and *ribat* (Sufi establishment), both of which also offered stipends to affiliated students.

The inner city of Baghdad c. 800



SOURCE: Lunde, Paul. *Islam: Faith, Culture, History*. New York: DK Publishing, Inc., 2002.

The inner city of Baghdad circa 800.

Scientific research in the fields of astronomy, mathematics, medicine, optics, engineering, botany, and pharmacology also prospered within the Abbasid capital. Alongside experimentation and exploration, translation of Hellenic, Indic, and Persian texts received patronage from dignitaries, physicians, and scientists in response to the professional and intellectual demands of an expanding Islamic society. Public libraries, both attached to mosques and as separate institutions, contributed further to the dissemination of knowledge among the populace, while the establishment of hospitals as charitable endowments throughout the city ensured the provision of free medical care to anyone who so required it. Mobile clinics were even dispatched to remote villages on a regular basis, with the aims of offering comprehensive health coverage.

The political fragmentation of the sprawling Abbasid Empire ultimately contributed to a decline in the revenues and hence in the general fortunes of the capital in Baghdad. Increasing civil disturbances in the face of weakened central authority, as well as rife Sunni-Shi'ite conflicts, resulted in the deterioration and destruction of vast segments of the waning metropolis. Nevertheless, Baghdad retained its prestige as the center of the Islamic caliphate and a symbol of Muslim cultural, material, and scholarly achievement. It was therefore with great consternation that news was received of the Mongols's savage invasion and ravaging of the city in 1258 C.E. Hundreds of thousands of Baghdad's inhabitants, including the caliph and his family, leading personalities, and scholars were mercilessly put to death, and the great scientific and literary treasures of Baghdad were burned or drowned in the waters of the Tigris.

Thereafter, Baghdad was transformed into a provincial center within the Mongol Empire, under the control of the Ilkhanids until 1339 C.E. and then the Jalayrids until 1410 C.E. The Karakoyunlu Turkomans and the Akkoyunlu Turkomans ruled Baghdad successively, until the city was conquered by Shah Ismail in 1508 C.E. and incorporated into the Safavid Empire. A subsequent Perso-Ottoman struggle for Baghdad and its symbolic sites resulted in Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent's conquest of the city in 1534 C.E., only to be lost again to the Safavids, and then regained by the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV in 1638 C.E. Baghdad remained the capital of the region's Ottoman province for nearly three centuries, and was occupied by the British in March 1917, during the course of World War I. In 1921, it became the seat of Faysal b. Husayn's kingdom under British Mandate and remained the capital of Iraq throughout its successive developments into an independent constitutional monarchy (1930), federated Hashimite monarchy (1958), and then republic (1958).

See also **Caliphate; Empires: Abbasid; Revolution: Classical Islam; Revolution: Islamic Revolution in Iran; Revolution: Modern.**

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Mona Hassan

BAHA'ALLAH (1817–1892)

"Baha'allah," a title meaning "splendor of God," was the name given to Mirza Husayn 'Ali Nuri, prophet and founder of the Baha'i faith.

Born in Tehran into an elite bureaucratic family, he was converted in 1844 to the Babi religion, the messianic movement begun that year by the Iranian prophet Sayyed 'Ali Muhammad, commonly known as the Bab ("Gate"). He played a significant role in the early Babi community. Imprisoned as a Babi in 1852, he was exiled to Iraq, where he became the de facto leader of the Babis. He was summoned to Istanbul by the Ottoman government in April 1863 and then arrested and exiled again to Edirne in European Turkey. There he made an open claim to prophethood that was eventually accepted by most Babis, though opposed by his younger brother, Subh-e Azal. Alarmed by disputes among the Babi exiles, the Turkish government imprisoned Baha'allah in Acre, Palestine, in 1868, where he lived under gradually improving conditions until his death. His eldest son, 'Abd al-Baha', was recognized by most Baha'is as his successor. His tomb near Acre is now a Baha'i shrine.

Baha'allah wrote extensively, mostly letters to the believers. His works included commentary on scripture, Baha'i law, comments on current affairs, prayers, and theological discussions of all sorts. Though his writings were grounded in the

esoteric Shi'ite thought of the Bab, he was politically sophisticated, and his own religious thought is often best seen in the context of the Westernizing reformers of the nineteenth century Middle East. The social liberalism of the modern Baha'i faith has its roots in Baha'allah's writings.

Baha'allah is considered a "manifestation of God" by Baha'is and is thus a prophet of the rank of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad.

See also **'Abd al-Baha'; Bab, Sayyed 'Ali Muhammad; Baha'i Faith.**

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John Walbridge

BAHA'I FAITH

The Baha'i faith was founded by Baha'allah as an outgrowth of the Babi religion, the messianic movement begun in 1844 by the Iranian prophet Sayyed 'Ali Muhammad, commonly known as the Bab ("Gate").

History

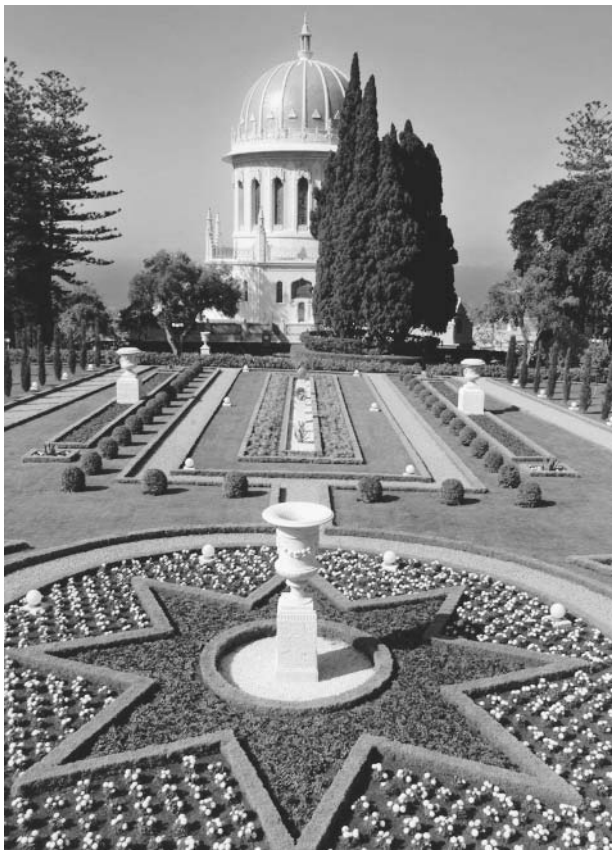
After the execution of the Bab in 1850 and the pogrom following a Babi attempt to assassinate the shah, the Babi movement suffered a crisis of leadership. Its titular leader was Mirza Yahya, known as Subh-e Azal, but from the mid-1860s the effective leader was Azal's elder brother, Baha'allah. Both were exiles in Baghdad. Baha'allah later wrote that he had had mystical experiences while imprisoned in Tehran in 1852, and by the early 1860s he had begun hinting that he was "he whom God shall make manifest," the Babi messiah. On 21 April 1863 he announced this claim to several close associates, an event that Baha'is now consider the beginning of their religion. Baha'allah nonetheless continued to recognize the nominal leadership of Azal. The final break came in 1867 when he wrote to Azal formally claiming prophethood. The Babis then split into three main groups. By the end of the 1870s those who had accepted the claim of Baha'allah were the large majority and came to be known as Baha'is. A smaller number, the Azalis, stayed loyal to Subh-e Azal and vociferously opposed Baha'allah. A few accepted neither claim.

Through his extensive correspondence and meetings with pilgrims during his exile in Acre, Baha'allah organized the new community. He rejected the militancy and esoteric Shi'ite mysticism characteristic of the Babis, instead stressing political neutrality and progressive themes such as international peace, education, and the emancipation of women and slaves. By the time of the death of Baha'allah in 1892, the Iranian community had recovered from the disasters of the Babi period, and small but growing communities, mainly consisting of Iranian émigrés, had been established in many countries of the Middle East, the Russian Empire, and India.

After Baha'allah's death most Baha'is accepted the leadership of his eldest son, 'Abd al-Baha'. In the 1890s small but influential communities of Baha'i converts from Christianity were established in Europe and North America. Despite the turmoil caused by World War I and by revolutions in Iran, Turkey, and Russia, 'Abd al-Baha' was able to establish an institutional structure for most of the major Baha'i communities, increasingly in the form of elected governing committees known as spiritual assemblies. The most important event of his ministry, however, was a series of journeys to Europe and America from 1911 to 1913. These trips were the occasion for an increasing stress on the liberal social teachings of the Baha'i faith.

'Abd al-Baha' was succeeded in 1921 by his grandson, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, whose English education and Western orientation marked a final break with the religion's Islamic roots. Shoghi Effendi was not a charismatic figure like his grandfather and preferred to focus on institution-building and consolidation. The most spectacular achievement of his ministry was a series of "teaching plans," in which Baha'i missionaries settled in scores of new countries and territories, notably in Latin America, Africa, and the Pacific. By the 1950s some of these communities were growing rapidly. Shoghi Effendi wrote extensively and systematically in Persian and English, standardizing Baha'i theological self-understanding and practice. His translations of several volumes of Baha'allah's writings became the standard Baha'i scriptures for Western Baha'is. He also wrote a history of the Babi and Baha'i Faiths and translated a history of the Babi religion. These works also became fundamental for the self-understanding of Western Baha'is. Finally, through his construction of Baha'i shrines and temples in Haifa, Acre, and several Western cities, he made the Baha'i faith more visible and created a Baha'i architectural idiom.

Shoghi Effendi died in 1957, leaving neither an heir nor a will. In 1963, after a six-year interregnum, the various Baha'i national spiritual assemblies elected an international governing body, the Universal House of Justice, which has since been elected every five years. The Universal House of Justice continued Shoghi Effendi's programs of teaching plans and construction. There are now several million Baha'is in the world, most in the developing world, leaving only a small minority in Iran or Islamic countries.



This garden leads to the $250 million Baha'i Shrine of the Bab in Haifa, Israel that was completed in 2001 after ten years of construction. Built by the great grandson of Baha'allah, founder of the Baha'i faith, it is one of many Baha'i shrines and temples throughout the Muslim world and the West. Baha'i is a religion that split from Islam. It emphasizes the unity among all religions, races, and nations. AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Baha'i Theology, Beliefs, and Practices

The theological roots of the Baha'i faith are in the Babi religion, which was essentially an esoteric Shi'ite movement. The fundamental Baha'i theological conception is that of the logos figure of the manifestation of God: the prophet as the perfect mirror of God's attributes. Human beings and all other creatures are lesser mirrors of God's various attributes. The prophet is thus a model and a revealer of God's knowledge and will. God's full plan is revealed gradually by a series of prophets, who guide humanity's emergence into a worldwide spiritual civilization. Baha'allah is of particular significance, since his ministry marks the beginning of human maturity and world unity. Thus, for Baha'is all religions are fundamentally true, having been based on prophecy, though the Baha'i faith is destined to supercede them. The differences among religions are due either to the differing circumstances of the time and place of their revelation or to gradual corruption of the original message.

The characteristic feature of Baha'allah's revelation is its stress on unity, a theme expressed in Baha'i social teachings. Thus, racism, nationalism, religious fanaticism, prejudice of any sort, and the degradation of women are condemned in Baha'i teachings. Likewise, there is no Baha'i clergy, and all believers are considered fundamentally equal. The theme of unity permeates Baha'i thought and practice, giving the community a decidedly egalitarian character.

The Baha'i faith is nominally a religion of law, but its religious law, though generally analogous to Islamic law and practice, is usually simpler and less demanding. There is a daily prayer, an annual nineteen-day fast, nine major holy days, and a "feast" every nineteen days on the first day of each month of the Baha'i calendar. Regulations governing marriage, divorce, and funerals are simple. Baha'is are monogamous, and marriage is conditioned on the consent both of the couple and of living parents. In practice, Baha'i communal life often is less concerned with worship than with community administration and particularly the goal of expanding the community.

Baha'i scripture consists of the authenticated writings of Baha'allah and 'Abd al-Baha'. Shoghi Effendi's works are authoritative as interpretation, and writings of the Universal House of Justice are authoritative in legislative and administrative matters. Writings of individuals are considered personal opinion and not binding on others. Because the authoritative writings are so voluminous, Baha'i writers have tended to focus on collection and collation. Most Baha'i theological writing has been polemical rather than speculative in character. There is no developed Baha'i legal tradition. Since the 1970s there has been increasingly vigorous academic and theological study of the Baha'i faith.

See also **'Abd al-Baha'; Babiyya; Baha'allah.**

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BALKANS, ISLAM IN THE

Since the late fourteenth century there have been Muslim communities in southeast Europe. For most of their history they were an important and integral part of the Ottoman Empire. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when ethnic-based nation-states came to power in the Balkans, most of these Muslim communities lost prominence and some disappeared. Recent attempts by certain nationalist

general (most recently Hojjat al-Islam Hassan Nasrallah) and advised by a council (Jihad Council), including Lebanese Shiʿite scholars and military advisors. Since its inception, however, Fadlallah has been the movement's spiritual leader and spokesperson.

With support from Iran, Syria, and private donations, Hizb Allah expanded its activities to include assistance to families of those who have died in war or are imprisoned, medical facilities (hospitals, pharmacies, rehabilitation centers), factories, education (scholarships), social services (including scouting and sports activities), communications (radio and newspapers), as well as infrastructure (including rebuilding sites destroyed in war). Since 1992 it has operated as a political party as well, competing successfully for the Shiʿite vote in parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, Hizb Allah is most widely known for attacks carried out by its militia for covert operations, the Organization of the Islamic Jihad. These attacks have been waged against foreigners in Lebanon, both individuals (assassinations and kidnappings) and groups (such as the bombings of U.S. diplomatic and military installations in 1983 and 1984), as well as Israeli occupation forces in southern Lebanon.

In Iran, the popularity of Hezbollahi rhetoric has waned with the rise in popularity of Mohammed Khatami, who was elected president by a wide margin in 1997 on a campaign stressing the need for reform within Iran rather than opposition to the West. Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 after eighteen years of warfare led by Hizb Allah forces, by contrast, greatly enhanced Hizb Allah's standing in Lebanon and the Arab Middle East.

See also **Political Islam.**

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HOJJAT AL-ISLAM

Hojjat al-Islam literally means "Proof of Islam." *Hojjat al-Islam* began as an honorific title given to high-ranking scholars (ulema) in both Sunni and Shiʿite Islam. Hence al-Ghazali (d. 1111) was given the title *Hojjat al-Islam*, to signify his skill in arguing for the truths of Islam. It appears to have remained a general term of respect for a scholar. In the nineteenth century, the title began to reflect the more hierarchical structure of the Shiʿite seminary system. At first, scholars like Muhammad Baqir al-Shafti (d.1844) were given the titles *mujtahid*, *Ayatollah*, and *Hojjat al-Islam*. Later usage of the term *Hojjat al-Islam* was restricted to scholars of a rank lower than *Ayatollah*. A *Hojjat al-Islam*, since the Islamic revolution in Iran, is an "aspiring *Ayatollah*" who has completed his *bahth-e kharij* (the highest level of formal instruction) and is teaching, but has not yet gained sufficient prestige to be regarded as *Ayatollah*. While both *Ayatollah* and *Hojjat al-Islam* were titles of distinction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the titles have become relatively common in recent years, and this may reflect either a lowering of the qualification threshold, or an improvement in educational techniques in the Shiʿite seminaries of Mashhad, Qum, and the Atabat.

See also **Ayatollah (Ar. Ayatullah); Shiʿa: Imami (Twelver).**

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HOJJATIYYA SOCIETY

The Hojjatiyya (Hojjatieh) Society is an anti-Baha'i group that was established in 1957 by Mahmood-e Halabi, one of the well-known preachers and publicists of Mashad, the religious center of Khorasan province in Iran. (Bahaism is a religious movement that originated in Iran in the nineteenth century.) After the resignation of Reza Shah (1941), who opposed political activity by clerics, Halabi began to criticize the history and doctrine of Bahaism. When Halabi moved to Tehran, after Mohammad Reza Shah's coup d'etat against the national government of Mohammad Mosaddegh at 1953, he found significant support from the conservative clergy, and the leading ulema approved of the Hojjatiyya Society's activities. Hojjatiyya opposed any radical or revolutionary activity, and consequently there were no prohibitions on its social and cultural approach.

After Iran's Islamic revolution in 1978–1979, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who opposed Hojjatiyya's thesis as criticizing and crushing Bahaism as the main agenda of the Islamic Revolution, put some limitation on the activity of this group. Nevertheless Hojjatiyya was successful in closing the Baha'i's public meetings and preventing the dissemination of the movement's ideas. In 1983, Halabi stopped the educational activities of the Hojjatiyya Society, following Khomeini's request that he do so. Hojjatiyya members have since been active in Iran's judiciary, security system, and in offices responsible for staffing Iran's governmental institutions.

See also **Baha'i Faith; Revolution: Islamic Revolution in Iran.**

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HOLY CITIES

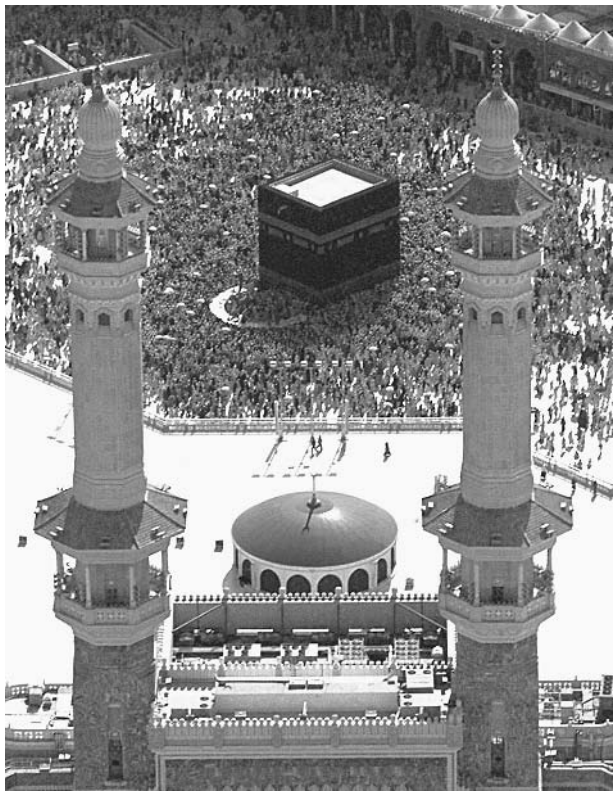
The Prophet of Islam is reported to have said that a Muslim should not embark on a pilgrimage or pious visit to any mosque other than the Holy Sanctuary of Mecca, the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, and the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. This statement in a sense maps out the sacred geography of the Islamic landscape. Muslims revere the cities of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem primarily because of the powerful spiritual symbolism associated with these sanctuaries.

Different religious traditions define sacred space according to different criteria, alluding to the multiplicity of ways in which holiness is conceptualized. Some traditions hold that sacred space is discovered through the manifestation of the divine, while others argue that holiness is created through a process of cultural labor. In the Islamic tradition, the origins and the performance of rituals of worship play an integral part in the sanctification of space. As such, the concept of the holy is more closely linked to the process of cultural labor, whereby space is sanctified due to its function in divine communion and not because of the perceived manifestation of the divine in a certain place. Therefore, the cities of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem are embraced as holy and regarded as sacred centers because of their intimate association with fundamental Islamic ritual practices.

In order to grasp the significance of these holy cities to the Muslim imagination their religious symbolism needs to be emphasized alongside their histories. Foremost among the three centers is Mecca, followed by Medina, and finally Jerusalem.

Mecca

The city of Mecca has been venerated as a holy center since time immemorial. In the pre-Islamic period it served as a center of pilgrimage for the pagan Arabs and was home to their most important idol deities. Muslims, however, view Mecca as the center of monotheism and the city where the Kaʿba, the first house for the exclusive worship of the one true God—Allah—was established. The prophet Abraham is reported to have built the Kaʿba in this barren valley by divine command. Abraham had long before left his son, Ismaʿil, with his mother, Hagar, in this place, also by divine command. Returning many years later, Abraham and his son undertook the construction of the Kaʿba. The Arabs, who are the progeny of Ismaʿil, flourished in the region but deviated from the pure monotheism of their noble ancestors, and at the time of the birth of the prophet Muhammad, Mecca was a center of idol-worship.



At the end of the annual hajj in Mecca in March of 2000, tens of thousands of pilgrims at a time surround the Kaʿba in the Haram al-Sharif or "Noble Sanctuary." Because of the Kaʿba and this annual journey by millions of Muslims commemorating Abraham, Hagar, and Ismaʿil, Mecca is the holiest city in Islam. © AFP/CORBIS

When Muhammad began preaching his message he was severely persecuted by his fellow Meccans and was forced to seek asylum in the nearby city of Medina. With the rise of Islam, the Prophet was finally able to conquer Mecca. He entered the city in 630 C.E., purging it of all its idols and reestablishing the Kaʿba as a symbol of pure monotheism once again. Mecca thus became a center of Muslim pilgrimage (hajj). Even today, Muslims from all over the world congregate in the city annually to perform the hajj, which is one of the five fundamental pillars of Islam.

The Prophet did not choose to remain in Mecca, and settled in Medina instead. Thus, Mecca never became a city of any political significance, and the seat of governance in the Muslim world was always located elsewhere. The only time the city was of political importance was during the brief period after the death of the caliph Muʿawiya. He was succeeded by his son Yazid in 680 C.E., but his rule was contested by ʿAbdallah ibn Zubayr, who was proclaimed

throughout the time: According to this all non-Muslim people are considered infidels (*kuffar*, sing. *kafir*). However there is a basic distinction between the polytheists (*mushrikun*, sing. *mushrik*) on the one hand, with whom social intercourse is forbidden, and who were to be fought until they either converted or were killed or enslaved and the "people of the book" (*ahl al-kitab*) on the other, whose faith was founded on revelation, who were to be granted protection, and with whom social intercourse was allowed. Originally only Jews and Christians were conceived as *ahl al-kitab*; later, however, this term was extended to a sect known as the Sabeans, the Zoroastrians, and, in India, even to Hindus. Concerning the legal status of these "people of the book," Islamic law makes another distinction between the *dhimmi* living as a protected person in Islamic territory, the *harbi* who lives in non-Muslim lands (*dar al-harb*), and the *musta'min* who as a foreigner is granted the temporary right of residence in an Islamic territory. The status of the *dhimmi*s was secured by a legal institution called *dhimma* ("protection"), which guaranteed safety for their life, body, and property, as well as freedom of movement and religious practice on condition of their acknowledging the domination of Islam. This included the payment of various taxes, the most important being the so-called *jizya*, a poll-tax levied on all able-bodied free adult *dhimmi* males of sufficient means.

It is the attitude of the prophet Muhammad who, after the expansion of his authority across Arabia, concluded agreements of submission and protection with Jews and Christians of other localities which serves as precedent for the *dhimma* institution. In the course of the Arab conquests under the "rightly guided" caliphs similar agreements were reached with the non-Muslims of Mesopotamia, Syria, Persia, and North Africa who surrendered their cities to the Arab armies. Muslim jurists later compiled these individual treaties into a coherent, sophisticated legal system conceding to the *dhimmi* communities almost complete autonomy under their respective religious leaders. It has to be pointed out, however, that the doctors of Islamic law tended to draw rather distinct boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims, and to interpret the subjection of *dhimmi*s to Islamic authority as a justification for discriminating and humiliating measures imposed upon them. Thus, according to Islamic law, a Muslim could marry a *dhimmi* woman, but a *dhimmi* could not marry a Muslim woman; a Muslim could own a *dhimmi* slave, although the reverse was not allowed; at the frontier the *dhimmi* merchant would pay double the tariff rate paid by the Muslim (10% and 5%, respectively) and in criminal law it was commonly considered that the blood-wit (*diya*) for a *dhimmi* was less (one-half or two-thirds) than that for a Muslim; finally, the *dhimmi* had to wear distinguishing clothing, in particular the *zunnar* belt, and there were various limitations on the outward expressions of worship such as processions, the use of bells, and the construction and repair of religious buildings. A famous document authorizing many of these restrictions is the so-called "Covenant of ʿUmar," a list of pledges allegedly given to the second "rightly-guided caliph," ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab (634–644), by the Christians of the cities conquered by him.

In the classical centuries of Islam persecution of *dhimmi*s was very rare: One single case has been recorded, that of the Fatimid caliph al-Hakim (r. 996–1021) who in 1009 ordered the destruction of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. In the late Middle Ages, however, there was a general hardening of attitudes against *dhimmi*s in Muslim countries. In the West, the Almohads adopted an intolerant policy, while in the East the government of the Mamluk state could not resist the pressure of jurists, such as Ibn Taymiyya, who insisted on an increasingly vexatious interpretation of the law regarding *dhimmi*s. It was the legal system of the expanding Ottoman Empire that in the sixteenth century restored the classical Islamo-*dhimmi* symbiosis. This lasted until the middle of the nineteenth century, when under strong European pressure the provisions of Islamic law were increasingly replaced by new legislations that were intended to free the non-Muslims from their inferior status of "protected people" and to make them full citizens. Today most written constitutions of Muslim states confirm the principle of equality of all citizens irrespective of religion, sex, and race. Certain militant Islamic groups, however, advocate the reimposition of the *jizya* and the *dhimma* regulations.

See also **Minorities: Offshoots of Islam.**

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OFFSHOOTS OF ISLAM

Defining where the boundaries of Islam can be drawn, and which groups can be placed outside of that boundary, is, of course, a normative procedure. In the history of Islam, a number of scholars and groups have been subjected to *takfir*—the declaration of unbelief—and hence might be classed as offshoots of Islam. If one takes a strict definition of right belief, such as that proposed by Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab, or in the more recent past, by Sayyid Qutb, many of those who call themselves Muslims do not deserve the term. Nonetheless, these groups, religious at base and tracing their origins to Islam, consider themselves Muslim despite the majority community refusing to accept them as such.

The emergence of radical alternatives to the dominant Sunni expression of Islam is normally located (by Sunni scholars at least) in the first civil war (*fitna)*, during the caliphate of ʿAli (r. 656–661). Two alternative views of the nature of the Muslim community emerged at this time. First were the Shiʿites, who themselves later divided into a variety of competing groups. The Shiʿites not only considered ʿAli as the rightful caliph, but also defended the doctrine that only the descendants of ʿAli could be legitimate leaders of the Muslim community. Second were the Kharijites, who withdrew their support for ʿAli following his willingness to negotiate with his opponent Muʿawiya. The Kharijites (literally, "those who withdrew") developed an exclusive view of Islamic identity, declaring all sinners to be non-Muslims. The mainstream of Sunni Islam took a more forgiving attitude toward those who failed to obey the law of Islam in every detail. The strict Kharijite view undoubtedly contributed to the relatively small number of Kharijites in Muslim history. Elements of Kharijite doctrine, however, survive today within the Ibadi community, which is restricted to Oman and small communities in North Africa. Both the Ibadis and the Shiʿites have lived as minorities in Sunni-dominated milieux.

Many offshoots of Islam are centered upon the charismatic authority of a particular individual teacher. This charisma is at times successfully transferred to the leader's successor. Perhaps the most enduring of these offshoots is the Druze religion, which has its roots in the doctrines of Muhammad al-Darazi (d. 1020) concerning the Fatimid (Shiʿite) caliph of the time, al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (d. 996). Darazi, with other Ismaili Shiʿite scholars, made claims of divinity for al-Hakim. This entailed an inevitable break with Islam, which has been maintained ever since. The modern-day Druze form a separate, non-Muslim religious community in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel.

In the modern period, the Ahmadiyya, a community based around the teachings of the Indian leader Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), provide an instructive example of individual charisma within Islam. Ahmad made a number of different claims regarding his theological status, including the assertion that he was the Promised Messiah of the Muslims. Though the community did maintain its unity after his death, it eventually divided in 1914 along theological lines. The different groups, which still exist today, claimed different levels of authority for Ahmad. Some viewed him as a prophet (*nabi*) while others tried to ameliorate the tension with mainstream Islam by calling Ahmad a *mujaddid* (renewer). The Ahmadiyya's minority status as non-Muslims was confirmed in Pakistan by a 1984 decree that prevented them from using Islamic forms of worship and legalized their prosecution.

A similar pattern can be seen in Shiʿite offshoots such as Babism and Bahaʾism. The former, led by ʿAli Muhammad Shirazi ("the Bab," executed in 1850), began in 1844, when Shirazi proclaimed himself the Gate to the Hidden Imam. He proceeded to establish a network of missionaries across Iran, who hoped to persuade the mainly Twelver Shiʿite population to recognize the Bab. The Bab's self-understanding developed further, and in 1848 he declared the advent of a new religion, with a new code of practice (which he controversially termed a *sharīʿa*) to replace that of the prophet Muhammad. It is clear he adopted the role of a prophetic figure, though he was careful not classify himself as a *nabi.*

The Babis instigated a number of uprisings in the late 1840s, culminating in the Bab's execution in 1850. The Bahaʾi faith emerged out of the collapse of Babism. Bahaʾallah Husayn ʿAli Nuri, one of Shirazi's closest companions, promoted himself as a messianic figure who had been foretold by the Bab. His message consisted of a bundle of doctrines, including the unity of all religions, the institution of a new covenant which abrogated Islam, pacifism and the desire for world peace, and the role of himself and his descendants as conduits for revelation, blessed with spiritual insights which were passed to the people through new revelatory texts. Elements of early Bahaʾi doctrine are clearly influenced by Shiʿite Muslim theology and law. However, the Bahaʾis have incorporated Western notions of democracy and human rights into their belief system.

Bahaʾis consider themselves to be quite distinct from their Muslim parent religion. The feeling is mutual, as Bahaʾis are generally regarded as schismatic heretics by Shiʿite Muslims. The success of Bahaʾism as an independent religion has, in the main, rested upon its ability to gain converts in Western Europe and North America. Undoubtedly, Bahaʾis and perhaps even some Babis (called Azalis) continue to exist as minorities in Iran, although their numbers are difficult to estimate because open adherence brings inevitable discrimination and persecution.

Smaller groups, such as the Ahl-e haqq and the Yazidis (sometimes called "Devil-worshippers"), both based in Kurdistan, might also be classified as offshoots of Islam. Their theologies show a certain syncretism of the various mystical elements of the Middle Eastern milieu. The various Afro-American Muslim movements, such as the Nation of Islam, might also be considered as offshoots of Islam. These various offshoots display a variety of attitudes toward Islam, some wishing to be considered Muslims, while others prefer to be regarded as a separate from, and superior to, Islam.

See also **Ahmadiyya; Ahmad, Babiyya; Bab, Sayyed ʿAli Muhammad; Bahaʾallah; Bahaʾi Faith; Kharijites, Khawarij; Minorities: Dhimmis; Mirza Ghulam.**

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Robert Gleave

MIRACLES

Miracles in the Islamic tradition play less of an evidentiary role than in some other religions since the prophet Muhammad's humanity is stressed. The miracles of prophets mentioned in the Qur'an are known there as signs (*ayat*) and include Abraham's not being harmed by the fire he was thrown into (21:69), as well as Jesus' speaking as a baby (19:30–33), bringing birds made of clay to life (3:49, 5:110), and healing powers (3:49). The Qur'an itself is often said to be the main miracle of Muhammad since an untutored or illiterate (*ummi*) person could not have been the source of this most compelling and eloquent message.

The sayings of the Prophet and his biography (*sira*), as they developed provide examples of various miraculous occurrences during the life of the Prophet including the childhood opening of his breast and cleansing of his internal organs by an angel, his night journey from Jerusalem through the seven heavens, his splitting of the moon, multiplication of food, and bestowal of blessings generally.

In later Muslim sources prophetic miracles were termed *mu'jizat*, or "things which render the detractors or opponents incapable or overwhelmed." In other words, acts incapable of being imitated as in the doctrine of the *i'jaz al-Qur'an*—its incomparable eloquence and content. In theological or philosophical discussions the term *kharq al-'ada*—a break in God's customary order of things—is used to indicate the miraculous. In the case of Sufi saints miracles are usually termed *karamat* (gifts or graces). They have the ambiguous role of both confirming spiritual attainments and potentially distracting from the ultimate goal of service of God. Classical authors struggled to differentiate prophetic and saintly miracles, and those who were inclined toward Sufism saw the saintly miracles as emerging and continuing the prophetic legacy. Al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (d. 930) argued that the signs of the prophets emanated from the divine power while the *karamat* of the saints emanated from the divine generosity. Other Sufi commentators differentiated the public nature of prophetic miracles from the secretive aspects of saintly powers. Later Sufis, however, did not hesitate to openly enumerate the graces they received as in the *Lata'if al-minan* of al-Shar'ani or the many accounts of saints performing miracles that led to mass conversions on the frontiers of Islamic expansion. South Asian saints' lives often consecrate chapters to *waqi'at* or "events" of a paranormal nature including mind reading and predicting future events.

More recent reformists and some classical theologians, such as the Mu'tazila, were more skeptical of miracle stories, given their rationalist proclivities, in some cases denying saintly miracles altogether. Debates over the physical reality of prophetic miracles such as the night journey or moon splitting still engage Muslim commentators.

A color plate of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus *appears in the volume two color insert.*

See also **Mi'raj; Muhammad; Prophets.**

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MI'RAJ

Early Islamic sources preserve references to Muhammad's extraordinary journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and/or from the earth to the heavens. The narrative of the night journey (*isra'*) and ascension (*mi'raj*) developed its own unique form in the hadith reports of the eighth and ninth centuries.

The Qur'anic proof-text for the Mi'raj is the elliptic opening verse of Sura 17: "Glorified be the one who caused his servant to journey by night from the sacred prayer-site to the furthest prayer-site whose precincts we have blessed in order to show him some of our signs. . . ." Muslim consensus reads the verse as a reference to Muhammad's miraculous journey from the Ka'ba ("the sacred prayer-site") to either the Temple in Jerusalem or a heavenly temple ("the furthest prayer-site"). The sound hadiths of Bukhari and Muslim show that both the terrestrial and the celestial night journeys were considered potentially authentic by early traditionists.

Early exegetes such as Muqatil b. Sulayman al-Balkhi (d. c. 767) and Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923) collated the "night journey verse" (17:1) with the visionary passage from the beginning of the Sura of the Star (53:1–18). The latter passage describes a pair of visions, one at "a distance of two bows or nearer," the other at "the lote tree of the boundary." Exegetes disagree about whether these verses describe Muhammad's vision of God or of Gabriel, but they generally agree in placing the "lote tree of the boundary" in the heavens and thus in relating the passage to the Mi'raj.

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Touraj Atabaki

PASDARAN

The Pasdaran (Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enghelab-e Eslami, or Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps) was established under a decree issued by the Ayatollah Khomeini, as leader of the Islamic revolution, on 5 May 1979. The corps of Revolutionary Guards were intended to guard the revolution and to assist the ruling clerics in the day-to-day enforcement of the government's Islamic codes and morality. The Pasdaran, as the guardians of the revolution, would counter the threat posed by either the leftist guerrillas or the officers suspected of continued loyalty to the shah. The revolution also needed to rely on a force of its own rather than borrowing the monarchic regime's tainted forces, however disorganized and undertrained such a force might be in the first years of establishment. The Pasdaran, along with its political counterpart, Crusade for Reconstruction, brought a new order to Iran. The Pasdaran and Crusade for Reconstruction had their own separate ministries in the first decade after revolution, but then they were merged with other ministries.

In time, the Pasdaran came to duplicate the police and the judiciary in terms of its functions. It even challenged the performance of the regular armed forces on the battlefield. The Pasdaran was designed as an organization that would be directly subordinate to the ruling clerics. The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran entrusted the regular army with guarding Iran's territorial integrity and political independence. Thus the Revolutionary Guards could only have the responsibility of guarding the revolution. Involvement in politics is a part of the Revolutionary Guards' mission to defend Islamic authority. Despite differences, the Pasdaran and the regular armed forces have cooperated on military matters.

By the end of the war between Iran and Iraq in 1986, the Pasdaran consisted of 400,000 personnel organized in battalion-size units that operated either independently or with units of the regular armed forces. In 1984 the Pasdaran acquired a small navy and elements of an air force. Until 1988, up to three million volunteers were organized under the control of the Revolutionary Guards as the Mobilization (Basij) Corps. Since the end of the war this number has decreased, as those units are used to control the internal situation or to strengthen one political faction above another and battle to quell civil disorder. The Basij allegedly also monitor the activities of citizens, and harass or arrest women and men who violate the dress code.

The Pasdaran have maintained an intelligence branch to monitor the regime's domestic adversaries and to participate in their arrests and trials. Khomeini demonstrated his acceptance of the Revolutionary Guards' involvement in intelligence when he congratulated them on the arrest of Iranian Communist (Tudeh) leaders. Not only did the Pasardan function as an intelligence organization, both within and outside the country, but they also exerted considerable influence on government policies.

The Pasdaran have been quite active in Lebanon. By the summer of 1982, shortly after the second Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Pasdaran had nearly one thousand personnel deployed in the predominantly Shiʿite Biqaʿ Valley. From their headquarters near Baalbek, the Pasdaran have provided consistent support to Islamic Amal, a breakaway faction of the mainstream Amal organization, and then Hizb Allah, which contemplate the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon.

See also **Iran, Islamic Republic of; Revolution: Islamic Revolution in Iran.**

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Majid Mohammadi

PERSIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Persian has historically been, after Arabic, the most prestigious literary language in the Muslim world and a vehicle of cultural expression in Ottoman Turkey, Central Asia, Mogul India and, of course, Persia (greater Iran). The influence of Persian literature and Persicate culture therefore covered a wide region, from the Balkans to Bangladesh, and from the Persian Gulf to north of the Jaxartes River in Central Asia. Today Persian is the official language of Iran and Tajikistan, and one of the two official languages of Afghanistan (along with Pashto). Persian is also spoken by small residual communities in neighboring countries, such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, the Persian Gulf states, and Iraq, as well as in newly established enclaves abroad: Persian-speaking Jewish immigrants to Israel, and the diaspora to North America, Europe, and Australia that resulted from the political upheavals and wars in Iran and Afghanistan during the 1970s and the 1980s.

Note that in recent decades the term "Farsi" has erroneously gained currency in English in place of Persian. Linguistically speaking, the nomenclatures "Farsi," "Dari," and

"Tajiki" denote varieties of Persian spoken in Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan, respectively, just as one might describe English as consisting of American, Australian, and British varieties. Though distinctive regional accents and some differences in vocabulary or even grammar exist, the spoken varieties of Persian are united by a common literary and cultural heritage and are mutually understood by speakers across the Persian linguistic continuum. Nevertheless, Persian literature has been developing in distinctive and even divergent directions in modern Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan since each country became a centralized nation-state. This is especially true of Tajikistan, where the written form of Persian was radically altered in the Soviet period by the adoption first of the Roman (1928) and shortly thereafter the Cyrillic (1940) script in place of the traditional Arabic script, used in Afghanistan and Iran. Tajikistan was therefore oriented toward Russian, as well as Turkic Central Asia, in its recent cultural and linguistic development, whereas Afghanistan has been in the cultural orbit of Pakistan and India, as well as the Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet Union in the last decade of the twentieth century, and of the Taliban in the first years of the twenty-first, along with technological innovations (such as Persian-language programs broadcast by Internet radio and satellite television across the region) have, however, brought increased opportunities for cultural interchange across the Persian speaking countries, and begun to reverse the isolation of previous decades.

Language History

Persian is classified as a member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages. Indeed, it was partly from his knowledge of Persian and its similarity to Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit that Sir William Jones (1746–1794) postulated the existence of an Indo-European proto-language from which the modern languages of Europe, India, and Iran devolved. As such, many modern Persian words (for example, *madar*, *baradar*) share a common root with their modern German (mutter, brüder) or English (mother, brother) equivalents, and the verbal systems exhibit similar features. However, the neighboring Semitic languages, especially Aramaic and Arabic, which functioned in different eras as lingua francas of the Near and Middle East, have made an enormous impact on Persian, in terms not only of vocabulary and script, but also of literary forms.

The Persian language is divided into three historical stages: Old Persian, Middle Persian, and Persian. Old Persian survives chiefly in cuneiform inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings, written in the sixth to fourth centuries B.C.E., but it has bequeathed few if any direct literary traces to the modern language. On the other hand, a large body of literature survives in Middle Persian, much of it subsequently translated or adapted into Arabic or Persian during the Islamic period. Most of this was written in the Sassanian period (226–652 C.E.), though Zoroastrians continued to use it to write new works or compilations of a religious nature until the ninth century C.E. The larger part of surviving Middle Persian literature consists of translations or glosses on Avestan-language Zoroastrian texts, along with other Zoroastrian literature. It also includes "books of counsel" (*pand namak*), or wisdom literature providing moral or ethical precepts and advice, as in the "Wise Maxims of Bozorgmehr." Other texts include a few poems, the versification principles of which have been disputed, and "royal songs" (*srot-i khusravanik*) that were reportedly performed with musical accompaniment by well-known minstrels at the Sassanian court.

The cultural exchange with India was quite strong, as evidenced by a Middle Persian treatise on chess and a number of translations of works of Indian origin, including *Kalila wa Dimna* (from the tales of Bidpai), Barlaam and Josaphat, and the *Sindbad nameh*. The frametale structure is thus borrowed from India, but the bulk of the Middle Persian *Hazar Afsanak* ("Thousand tales"), the main source of stories for the Arabic "Thousand and One Nights" cycle (*Alf Layla wa layla*), seem to be of Persian origin.

Although spoken Persian continued to evolve grammatically into something like what we now recognize as new Persian, Zoroastrian works continued to be composed in Middle Persian until at least the ninth century, by which time the majority of Iranians had become Muslim. Many religious, literary, and scientific works written in Arabic at the same time were penned by men of Iranian, or half-Iranian parentage, including Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 760), translator of *Kalila wa Dimna* from Middle Persian to Arabic; the poet Abu Nuwas (d. 810), who includes a few words of Persian in his poetry; the historian and Qurʾan commentator, Tabari (d. 923); and the physician Rhazes (Zakariyya al-Razi, d. 925). Indeed, many authors of the tenth through twelfth centuries who lived in Persian-speaking milieus and would have had the option to write in Persian nevertheless chose to write their most important works in Arabic. This was the case for, among others, al-Biruni, who was born in Khwarazm in 973 and died in 1051 in Ghazna; Ibn Sina (Avicenna), born near Bukhara in 980, died in Hamadan in 1037; and Mohammad al-Ghazali, of Tus, who lived from 1058 to 1111.

By the tenth century, however, some three hundred years after the Arab conquest of Persia, the spoken Persian language had re-emerged as a language of literary standing in its own right, suitable for use in discussion of science, philosophy, and religion, as well. It was now written in the Arabic alphabet, which was easier to read than the Middle Persian script, and which also derived from a Semitic alphabet, Aramaic.

Persian Poetry

The earliest Persian poetry of the Islamic period is in dialect form (*fahlaviyat*), probably based on accentual or syllable-count meters. Evidence of some prosodic experimentation

and variation is discernible in the earliest recorded specimens of Persian verse, though it seems that the Persian poetry of the ninth century was already following quite different principles of versification from Middle Persian poetry, notably rhyme and quantitative metrics. Some Persian meters are borrowed from Arabic, or at least they are explained according to Arabic models by the Persian manuals of prosody and rhetoric written in the twelfth century. However, Persian poets rarely employed some very common Arabic meters (such as *tawil* and *basit*), whereas some of the frequently occurring meters in Persian poetry (such as *motaqareb* and the *robaʿi* meter) seem quite uncommon in Arabic poetry of the same period. Persian poetry is furthermore fond of including a refrain (*radif*, which can be several syllables in length) after the rhyming syllable. We may conclude, therefore, that in addition to the influence of Arabic, native Persian phonology and prosody also played a distinctive role in shaping the new system of versification.

The privileged literary mode in Persian was poetry, or rhymed and metered "speech." It was composed and performed in a variety of milieus for various social functions, acquiring the greatest prestige and widest publicity through the patronage of the royal court, including sultans/shahs but also wazirs or other men of state, army commanders, and regional governors. It might also be commissioned by the landed gentry, or alternatively, circulated through Sufi networks.

Most dynasties of the Persian-speaking world considered it the duty of a civilized ruler to cultivate science and literature, and doing so increased the ruler's prestige. Some rulers even dabbled in composing poetry of their own, as a literate person was expected to be able to compose some amount of formal verse, lines of which were used as proof texts to illustrate points and conclude arguments in letters, homilies, and in conversation. Not only aspiring poets, but also secretaries and men of letters, were expected to have a huge repertoire of poetry at the tip of their tongues, and were sometimes called upon to compose extemporaneously at court. The work of successful professional poets was circulated in albums dedicated to particular patrons or particular themes. These albums would later be collected into *divans*, though often not by the poet himself. Early poetry *divans* were organized thematically, but from the sixteenth century onward they were usually divided into sections according to verse form (*qasideh*, *ghazal*, *qetʿeh*, strophic poems, and *robaʿi*) and then further organized alphabetically according to the final letter of the rhyme or refrain.

Themes were largely conventional, and the poets usually presented a persona rather than a personal biography, though this in no way deterred critics from reading biographical data into the poems. The imagery grew in hyperbole and complexity over the centuries, and technical virtuosity was greatly admired, so that rhetorical ornamentation could become a justification in and of itself. Metaphors, tropes, and symbols (for instance, the rose and nightingale, the bow of the beloved's eyebrow firing the arrows of his or her eyelashes, the ringlets of the beloved's hair as polo sticks sending the lover's heart skittering over the ground, and the like) were repeated from generation to generation, though subtle variation and innovations applied to the conventions have always been greatly admired. The stylistic trends have been described as evolving from heavy rhythms, rhetorical directness, and sparse use of Arabic in the tenth-century poetry, to the more mellifluous and rhetorically ornamented poetry (internal rhyme, play on words, display of Arabic erudition) associated with the flowering of the *ghazal*, and the era of the great classical poets such as Saʿdi (d. 1292), Rumi (d. 1273), Hafez (d. 1390), and Jami (d. 1492). Poetry of the "Indian style" (sixteenth through eighteenth centuries) continued the focus on the *ghazal*, which became conceptually more abstract and philosophical, even *recherché*, with a distinctive taste for the subtle conceit and imagism. The neo-classical "return" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rejected this trend in favor of a simpler more direct prose style, and an imitation of the past masters. This gradually gave way to the influence of European letters in the twentieth century and led to the development of a significantly new, modernist poetic.

Quatrains (*Robaʿiyyat*)

The quatrain (*do-bayti*, *taraneh*, and later *robaʿi*), rhyming according to the pattern *a-a-b-a* and conforming to a special meter of its own, emerged from a popular milieu to become a literary genre unto its own, the *robaʿiyyat*. *Robaʿi*s can treat amorous themes or commemorate a historical occasion (such as the death of a famous person), but most famously deliver a mystical or philosophical apothegm. The eleventh-century "naked" hermit, Baba Taher, sang quatrains of human love and devotion to God in impromptu quatrains, some of which are preserved in their original Hamadani dialect form. Another poet known exclusively for *robaʿi*s is Mahsati of Ganja (fl. 12th century), one of the few classical poets with a uniquely feminine voice, and a far from chaste perspective on love.

The most famous practitioner of this genre is the mathematician and astronomer ʿOmar Khayyam of Nishapur (d. 1121), thanks in no small part to Edward FitzGerald's immensely successful 1859 English translation/adaptation, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. Khayyam acquired a posthumous reputation as a composer of *robaʿiyyat* of a materialist or agnostic temperament, some of them quite blasphemous, although the actual evidence for him as author is rather flimsy. What is clear is that over the centuries, the corpus of quatrains attributed to Khayyam grew suspiciously, so that scholars in the twentieth century sought text-critical principles, to separate the forgeries from the real Khayyam. The *divans* of most subsequent poets include numerous *robaʿi*s; Rumi's, for example, has nearly 2000.

Court Poetry

Panegyrics in Arabic by the great poets had conveyed prestige and authority on the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs, so that Persian princes on the eastern edges of Persia naturally gravitated toward the practice as they began realizing their practical independence from the Abbasids. In cities like Nishapur (near modern Mashhad), Balkh (in modern Afghanistan), Samarkand, and Bukhara (in modern Uzbekistan), panegyrics in Persian were presented to the ruler or men of state on ceremonial occasions: Iranian seasonal festivals like Nawruz or Mehregan, Islamic holy days, royal investitures, victory celebrations, wine drinking parties, and the like. Poems for such occasions typically took the form of a *qasideh*, a long mono-rhyme (*a-a-b-a-c-a-d-a*), usually between 40 and 100 lines, typically beginning with an encomium on the arrival of spring, on the beloved, or on wine. This would then segue into an enumeration of the virtues and glories of the ruler, encouraging him in the process to uphold principles of generosity, forbearance and just governance.

The greatest of the early Persian poets, Rudaki (d. 940), who was also a musician, composed many narrative poems, of which precious little has survived. Many examples of his fine, thoughtful lyric poems (not yet clearly differentiated in form as *ghazal*s or *qasideh*s), in a clear and unornamented style characteristic of early Persian prose and verse, must have been performed at the court in Bukhara, for the Samanid prince Amir Nasr II (r. 914–943). In these poems, Rudaki praised the ruler and his capital, rhapsodized on the process of making wine, or meditated on the decrepitude brought by age. This latter, rather melancholy, idea afforded early poets the occasion to draw the moral that life is short, so live right. This is then interpreted in either ethical terms, to do good works (since your name, good or ill, is all that will live on), or in epicurean terms, to live happy and well (for the opportunities for pleasure are limited). The lack of appeal to the Qurʾan and outwardly religious sentiment may reflect the survival of Persian religion and philosophy.

The classical form of the Persian *qasideh* was created at the court of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (in modern Afghanistan), who gathered a number of great poets to his court in the first half of the eleventh century. Among these were the poet laureate ʿOnsori (d. 1040); Farrokhi (d. 1038), who delighted in the description of spring and the celebration of musical wine soirees; and Manuchehri (d. 1041), famous for his adaptation of classical Arabic *qasideh*s. The rival Seljuk court to the north and west also supported its poets, among them Amir Moʿezzi (d. 1127), "prince of poets" to sultans Malik Shah and Sanjar, and Anvari (1126–c.1189), generally acknowledged as the ultimate *qasideh* poet for his erudite, ornamented yet fluid style. Panegyrical poets were richly rewarded and got to travel with the court, yet the profession could be a hazardous one. Masʿud Saʿd Salman (d. 1121) was imprisoned for long periods on suspicion of treason; Emir Moʿezzi was accidentally shot and seriously wounded by prince Sanjar's arrow; and Adib-e Saber was drowned by the Khwarazm shah as a spy of Sanjar.

Courts in the west of Iran also cultivated Persian poetry. In Azerbaijan, Qatran (d. 1072) wrote for numerous patrons, including a poem on the major earthquake in Tabriz in 1042, and many strophic poems. When Naser Khosrow, a poet from eastern Persia, came to Tabriz in 1046, he wrote in his fascinating travelog that Qatran was a good poet, who, however, did not fully understand Persian. This shows that, though dialectical variation must have existed, Persian was widely spoken and written by the mid-eleventh century. Khaqani of Shirvan (d. 1199) wrote *ghazal*s and panegyrics, but is best known for his elegies on the death of his son and on the ruins of a Sassanian palace. Although a declared follower of Sanaʾi of Ghazna in the religious/didactic themes of his verse, he incorporated Christian themes in his poetry. His mother was a convert from Nestorian Christianity, and his travels brought him into close contact with Christians in Georgia and Constantinople.

Epic Poetry

Ferdausi of Tus (near modern Mashhad) has often been credited with rescuing the Persian language from virtual extinction with his monumental work, the *Shah nameh*, or "Book of kings," begun about 975 and, dedicated in its final form to Mahmud of Ghazna, in about 1010. This hyperbolic view ignores the half-century of court poetry that preceded Ferdausi's work, including some earlier treatments of episodes from the national epic. Ferdausi himself incorporated a thousand lines from the story of Zoroaster as versified by Daqiqi (d. 981 or before) in his own work. Nevertheless, Ferdausi's *Shah nameh* would play a central role not only in Iranian national consciousness, but even in the self-identity of non-Iranian rulers, especially Turks and Mongols, who adopted Persianate culture and traditions of kingship.

Ferdausi alludes to various sources for his account of events, including a learned Zoroastrian priest and a member of the Persian landed gentry. The existence of a tradition of professional reciters orally recounting stories from the Iranian national epic in a popular (sub-literary) context has led to heated scholarly debate about possible oral sources for Ferdausi. However, Ferdausi did have an established written tradition to draw from, and appears to have studied the matter and carefully crafted his tale. Various versions of the Persian "Book of kings" (*Khoday nameh*) were already written down in Middle Persian in the sixth and seventh centuries, and several of these had been translated into Arabic in the eighth and ninth centuries, as part of the discourse of *shuʿubiyya*, or ethnic pride among non-Arabs, especially Iranians. At the initiative of Abu Mansur, a committee had translated the work from Middle Persian to Persian prose in 957.

The poem covers the mythical era of kingship in Iran, during which the rites and ceremonies of kingship were

established, the demons were subdued, cooking and clothing were introduced, cultivation of the soil begun, fire was discovered, metal worked, the social castes created, and the celebration of Nawruz (the spring equinox and Iranian new year) initiated. Death enters this idyllic realm due to the hubris of the king, Jamshid, and Zahhak comes to tyrannize the land. Accursed by Satan's kiss, Zahhak has a snake growing from each of his shoulders, each of which must feed daily on the brain of an Iranian youth. Feridun eventually snatches the throne from Zahhak and restores justice, dividing his realm between his three sons before he dies. The two sons who inherit the lands to the east and west of Iran grow jealous of their brother, who has inherited the realm of Iran. They conspire to murder him, and this engenders generations of internecine conflict between Iran and her eastern neighbor, Turan.

This sets the stage for many sagas and adventures, which revolve thematically around the question of fate and free will, and the tragic forces that impel kings to conflict with their enemies, their sons and the champion warriors to whom they owe their throne. The father-son conflict usually ends poorly for the son (Rostam and Sohrab, Kay Kavus and Siyavash, Goshtasp and Esfandiyar), and the king is far less frequently wise and just (as in the tale of Kei Khosrau, in which the king abdicates and disappears) than tragically flawed or impetuous (as in the case of Kay Kavus).

The *Shah nameh* is not aware of the great Achaemenid kings Cyrus, Darius, and Xerxes, as it takes notice of the historical era only as Iran is about to be conquered by Alexander. It mostly ignores the successors of Alexander, fast-forwarding to the Sassanian rulers, whom it covers in some detail, both historical and legendary. The 50,000-line epic comes to a close with the Arab conquest of Persia, a sad fate indeed, even though Ferdausi writes as a Muslim with Shiʿi loyalties.

The tremendous success of the *Shah nameh* led other authors to elaborate on portions of the epic cycle (transmitted in oral renditions by popular professional reciters) which Ferdausi either passed over in silence or did not fully develop. These focused on elaborating and embellishing the story of various champions, as in the "Book of Garshasp," written in 1066 by Asadi of Tus (also the author of an important early dictionary of Persian), about a hero even more outlandishly strong than Rostam; or the legendary history of the Iranian prophet Zoroaster, told by the Zoroastrian priest Zartosht Bahram Pazhdu in 1278. The influence of Ferdausi is apparent even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in works like the *Shahanshah nameh* (The king of king's book) by Saba (1765–1823), describing a victory by the Qajar king, Fath-ʿAli Shah (r. 1797–1834) over the Russians in the same archaic terms found in the *Shah nameh*; or in the verse history *Shahnameh ye haqiqat*, written by Mojrem (1871–1920) of the leaders of the Ahl-e Haqq sect in Kurdistan. All of these, however, remained quite tangential to the main canon of Persian literature, in contrast to Ferdausi's *Shah nameh*, for which the creation of large, sumptuously illustrated manuscripts in royal ateliers became common during the Mongol period and later. In fact it was almost de rigueur for each successive Safavid monarch to commission such a royal copy, the most famous of which was the copy made for Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524–1576), which was subsequently given as a gift of state to the Ottomans, and eventually found its way to Europe and the art dealer Houghton, but has now been repatriated (at least the surviving illustrated folios) to Iran.

Romance Literature

Also spun-off from the *Shah nameh* are a number of romances, although the Persian narrative verse tradition is also fed by other sources. To have an authoritative or popular source seems to have been an important prerequisite to undertaking a narrative poem of several thousand lines (invariably in the rhyming couplet form of the *mathnavi*), which might either be commissioned by a patron, or presented to one with a dedication in the introduction in hopes of a reward. Trying one's hand at an original imaginative story could be somewhat risky under these circumstances; in any case, there were many classical stories reflecting the glorious culture of pre-Islamic Iran from which to draw inspiration. These include a poem of Parthian origins, *Vis and Ramin*, versified by Fakhr al-Din Gorgani circa 1054 for the governor of Isfahan from a Middle Persian version. It tells the story of Vis, promised in marriage before her birth to King Mobad. The latter's younger brother, Ramin, falls in love at the first sight of her, and eventually wins her over. Through the help of Vis's nurse, the pair escapes from Mobad and are eventually united as king and queen, in a saga not without similarities to that of Tristan.

Other tales of stymied love include "Varqa and Golshah," based upon an Arabic story, and versified in Persian in the *motaqareb* meter during the first decades of the eleventh century by ʿAyyuqi. This pair never unites, except through a chaste ideal love that they take with them to the grave. A similar story, both in its outcome and in its Arab origins, is Nezami's version of the star-crossed lovers Layli and Majnun, in a poem of 4,000 lines written in 1188. This tale was told and retold by subsequent Persian poets (most successfully by Maktabi of Shiraz in 1490), as well as by imitators writing in Turkish and Urdu. The retellings usually resolve the powerful psychological ambiguity in Nezami's work and rarely match his masterful ability with language. In addition to a very fine *divan* of shorter poems, Nezami (d. 1209) also authored four other long narrative *mathnavis*, including an ethico-didactic poem modeled on Sanaʾi, a Persian version of the Alexander romance (*Sikandar Nama*), and two poems set in the Sassanian period. The first of these is *Khosrau and Shirin*, a legend about King Khosrau Parviz (r. 590–628) and

his Armenian bride, Shirin, who is loved devotedly by Farhad, who moves a mountain to attain her, but is tricked by Khosrau into thinking she is dead. The other is *Haft Paykar*, about Bahram (r. 421–439) and the seven beautiful princesses from the seven climes with whom he enjoys a variety of adventures. The five narrative poems by Nezami were often bound together in one volume and frequently illustrated. Such was Nezami's achievement that many later poets tried their hand at composing a similar quintet, following his model. This tended to limit the initiative of later poets in creating new material, but Jami (d. 1492) introduced two new stories to the traditional subjects of romance: the mystical reworking of the Joseph and Zoleikha story (very loosely based on Qurʾan, sura 12), and the story of Salaman and Absal, about a Greek king who has a magician genetically engineer him a perfect son, who, however, is seduced by his beautiful nurse.

Religious and Mystical poetry

The extensive literature of imaginative poetry and prose, as well as commentaries that address various aspects of religion and spirituality is immense. All long poems, from the *Shah nameh* to romances, inevitably begin with a doxology and lines in praise of the prophet Muhammad, as well as frequently a description of his journey to heaven. Though the majority of classical Persian poets were Sunnis of the Hanafi or Shafiʿi school, there are some vociferously Shiʿite poets in the early period, notably Naser Khosrow (1003–1060), an Ismaʿili poet, and Qavami of Rayy (fl. 12th century).

It was the mystics, however, who created the most successful poetry of religious expression, reaching its pinnacle in the mystico-didactic poetry of the *mathnavi* form. Sanaʾi (d. 1135) initiated the genre with his *Hadiqat al-haqiqat*, a compendium of tales, some humorous, that were used to illustrate homilies and moral injunctions, and which focus chiefly upon control of the baser passions and correctly understanding the interior meaning of the Qurʾan. Farid al-Din ʿAttar (d. 1221) perfected the story-telling element of the mystical *mathnavi* genre, juxtaposing within a frame-tale structure various unrelated anecdotes and vignettes of an entertaining or inspiring nature to illustrate an overarching theme (as was also common in the European literature of the period). The best known of these include the *Elahi nameh*, in which a king and father passes life wisdom to his sons, and the *Manteq al-Tayr*, a poem of mystical psychology about a band of birds in search of their spiritual king, the mythical Simorgh, which was completed in 1177.

Modeled on these, but less thematically structured, is the "Spiritual Couplets" of Jalaluddin Rumi (1207–1273), composed piecemeal in six books through the 1260s. Its opening plaint of the reed pipe, severed from its spiritual home, remains the single most influential expression of mystical theology in Persian, perhaps in the entire Islamic world, having been studied and taught throughout the Ottoman domains, across Iran, and into the Indian subcontinent.

The love imagery of the *ghazal*, beginning with Sanaʾi, was also turned into a vehicle of mystical expression. Rumi continued the project of the mystical *ghazal*, conceiving his spiritual mentor Shams (d. after 1247) as the object of love, indeed adopting the voice of his absent master in a huge body of *ghazal*s that almost always point to transcendent significance. Other poets, such as Saʿdi of Shiraz (d. 1292), continued to address *ghazal*s to both amorous and mystical objects of love. This creates room for much ambiguity in the *ghazal*s of Hafez of Shiraz (d. 1390), who intertwined mystical and physical love in a sublime fashion that is difficult to unravel, and is generally regarded as the ultimate achievement in Persian lyrical poetry, though this often fails to come through in English translation, as the translators typically try to reduce him to one thing or the other. Goethe and the German Romantic poets derived much inspiration from Hafez.

Prose Genres

Continuing the Sassanian tradition of advice books, the *Qabus nameh*, written in 1082 by Kay Kavus b. Voshmgir, a local prince on the Caspian shore of Iran, provides instruction to his son in the arts of government, social graces, and the enjoyment of life. About the same time Nezam al-Molk (Ar. Nizam al-Mulk; d. 1092), after whom the first university in the Muslim world is named, composed his *Siyasat nameh* to instruct the Seljuk Turks, to whom he served as wazir, in the proper ways of Iranian kingship. Both of these charming books are written in a straightforward prose, whereas Nasr Allah Monshi's version of *Kalilah wa Dimna* (written between 1143 and 1145), which set the prose standard for later authors to match, used animal characters to convey its lessons. This volume requires more work to grasp because of its erudition and its taste for the rhetorical artifices made possible by Arabic morphology. These tales, derived ultimately (via Arabic, via Middle Persian) from the Panchatantra, were brought to then-contemporary style in 1505 by Hosein Vaʿez-e Kashefi (d. 1505) as *Anvar-e Soheili.*

Along with many other such collections of tales in prose or verse, a huge body of prose literature, including the serial adventures of picaresque heroes, manuals for writers, lives of the poets, local and world histories, as well as literary anthologies, mystical disquisitions, and philosophical texts, exists in Persian, much of it delightful to read. The prose work with which Persian literature is preeminently associated is, however, the *Golestan* of Saʿdi, written in 1258 and loosely organized in eight chapters by theme (kingship, dervishes, youth, contentment, and so on). Throughout it one encounters entertaining anecdotes, wittily expressed, that advocate a practical, situational ethics. It weaves together simple, unadorned prose with rhymed prose and verse to create a new, unified literary idiom that set the future standard of emulation. Frequently imitated, the *Golestan* became a textbook of

Persian language and Islamic ethics for Turkish speakers, as the many Turkish commentaries and translations of the sixteenth and subsequent centuries attest. It was also used as a textbook for Persian instruction in India, where Persian, and then Urdu, commentaries were written on it. It was also used for British students of Persian to study the language in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. European translations of the work had been circulating since the mid-seventeenth century and caught the attention of La Fontaine and Voltaire, among others.

Persian in India

It was under the Ghaznavids and their aggressive policy of conquest in South Asia that the first wave of Persian poets moved toward the sub-continent. Masʿud Saʿd Salman (d. 1121) lived in Lahore, and his contemporary, Abu al-Faraj Runi, was born there. Of Indo-Turkic parentage, Emir Khusrow of Delhi (1253–1325) was a competent imitator of the quintet of Nezami and of well-received *ghazal*s. He popularized Persian poetry at the Muslim courts in India, and also among the Sufis. The poetry of Rumi and ʿEraqi (d. 1289) was also popular among South Asian Sufis. Timur enjoyed Persian books and Babur composed Persian poetry of his own. The Moguls made Persian the language of government in 1582, commissioning their court histories in Persian. Akbar (1556–1605) actively enticed a whole series of the best Persian poets of the era to come to Delhi from Iran and also encouraged translations of Hindu works to Persian. Dara Shokuh (1615–1659), son of Shahjahan, and Zib al-Nesa Makhfi (1639–1703), daughter of Aurangzib, both composed excellent Persian poems of mystical and ecumenical bent. Bidel of Patna (d. 1720) was the last major representative of the Indian style, and he remains more appreciated in Afghanistan and India than in Iran.

Urdu eventually replaced Persian as the primary literary language of South Asian Muslims, but some Urdu poets, such as Ghalib (1796–1869), also wrote in Persian, while Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938), the intellectual father of Pakistan, wrote major poems, such as his *Javid Nama*, in Persian, a more widely understood language in the Muslim world.

Modern Literature

The twentieth century saw a sea-change in Persian language and literature, as modernization, revolution, centralization and Marxist-Leninism greatly altered Tajikistan and Iran, in particular. First of all, with the advent of lithography and printing in the nineteenth century, books became more affordable, and more importantly, the appearance of newspapers created a different and wider audience for literature. For various short periods of time, the press became relatively free, and there were a number of journals published in Persian outside Iran, which made it possible to openly advocate reform or political opposition to the crown.

In Afghanistan, Mahmud Tarzi helped to introduce translations of European literature and radically new modern literary forms in his journal *Seraj al-Akhbar* (1911–1918). The Iranian poet-singer ʿAref (1882–1934) turned his back on a court career to compose populist political ballads, *ghazal*s, and song lyrics, which reached a mass audience when he sang them in concert. Reform was urged also from within the aristocratic class, many of whom learned foreign languages or studied abroad, such as Iraj Mirza (1874–1926), who held a post in the Qajar government but was noted for his biting satirical indictment of the custom of veiling of women.

Political agitation did not always turn out well. The poet Mirzadeh ʿEshqi was assassinated after satirically caricaturing Reza Shah in 1924. Abu 'l-Qasem Lahuti was obliged to flee from Tabriz in 1922, after leading an unsuccessful revolt there. He settled in Dushanbe, in the Soviet Union, where he wrote Persian poetry for a Tajiki audience, modernizing classical themes and celebrating the socialist enterprise. The fiction writer Bozorg ʿAlavi also fled Iran for East Germany, as a result of his Communist Party membership. In Tajikistan, authors managed to champion the Central Asian peasants and collectives, as well as the creation of a new society, in artistically successful ways, especially Mirza Torsonzadeh (1911–1977) in poetry and Sadriddin Aini (1878–1954) in fiction.

Poets continued to compose in the traditional forms, but introduced modern themes and imagery, including descriptions of modern inventions, as in some of the poems of the literary scholar and parliamentarian, Mohammad Taqi Bahar (1880–1951). The *monazerat* (debate poems) of Parvin Eʿtesami (1910–1941), the first of three important women poets of the century, championed the cause of the poor and downtrodden. In Afghanistan, Khalil Allah Khalili (b. Kabul, 1909, d. Pakistan, 1987) carried on the classical tradition in a convincing modern voice.

The *ghazal* retained its thematics of love, but became slightly more personal and more modern in its sentiments, tinged with European romanticism, but developing toward a contemporary idiom, as in the poems of Simin Behbehani, who headed the Iranian Writer's Congress. Poets, however, also began to separate poetry from traditional verse. First came an effort to break down the classical meters into their constituent feet and combine these feet in new patterns. The first experiment in this direction came in the early 1920s with *Afsaneh* (Romance) by Nima Yushij (1895–1960), who developed toward free verse in the following decade. Though some poets, such as Mehdi Akhavan-e Sales (1928–1990), continued to compose in both free verse and traditional meters, the most outstanding achievements in the post–World War II era were by poets working in free verse, foremost among whom stands Ahmad Shamlu (1926–2001), whose work demonstrates a commitment and capability to uphold political and

artistic values simultaneously in his best poems. Forugh Farrokhzad (1935–1967) pushed poetry toward inner authenticity by infusing it with personal experience and focusing on everyday topics, such as sexuality, sometimes from an explicitly female point of view. She was rewarded for her sincerity with public condemnation as an "immoral" woman. Her poetry, however, speaks eloquently and profoundly for itself. Meanwhile, painter and nature poet, Sohrab Sepehri (1928–1981) beautifully adapted the mystical perspective of Persian poetry to modern modes of expression.

The modernist literary idiom was entirely secular, and often political, yet allusive enough to elude the censors. Poetry played an important role in creating political symbols of freedom (dawn, day) as opposed to those of oppression (night, winter), and in inspiring revolutionary sentiment against the shah of Iran in the 1970s. Part of this process involved purging Persian poetry from its classical themes and dynamics, and creating believable characters. In prose literature, Mohammad-ʿAli Jamalzadih (1892–1997) forged a new idiom for imaginative prose literature with his short stories, as did Sadeq Hedayat (1903–1951), whose novel *The Blind Owl* (1969) remains the best known modern Persian work abroad, in part because of the author's connections with expressionist and existentialist writers in Europe, and his suicide in Paris. Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923–1969, husband of Simin Daneshvar) wrote short stories and novels, *The School Principal* (1974) being the most interesting, but he is best known in the Muslim world for his 1962 attack on the hegemony of Western culture, *Gharbzadegi*. Several historical novels also deal with the theme of Western, especially British, imperialism in Iran: Sadeq Chubak's *Tangsir* (1963), based on a true event in southern Iran; Simin Daneshvar's *Savushun* (1990), a political love story told from the woman's point of view; and the ten-volume novel *Kelidar* (1978–1983) by Mahmoud Dowlatabadi. In the 1970s and the post-Revolution period, female prose writers have achieved popular and critical success (among them, Mahshid Amirshahi, Goli Taraqqi, and Fattaneh Hajj Sayyed Javadi). Others, like Shahrnush Parsipur and Moniru Ravanipur, succeeded in introducing magical realism to Iran.

An image of a 1650 Persian manuscript appears in the volume two color insert.

See also **Arabic Language; Arabic Literature; Biography and Hagiography; Biruni, al-; Ghazali, al-; Grammar and Lexicography; Hadith; Historical Writing; Ibn Sina; Iqbal, Muhammad; Libraries; Rumi, Jalaluddin; Tabari, al-; Urdu Language, Literature, and Poetry; Vernacular Islam.**

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PHILOSOPHY *See* Ethics and Social Issues; Kalam; Knowledge; Science, Islam and

PILGRIMAGE

HAJJ

The Islamic hajj refers specifically to the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, Arafat, and Mina during the second week of the Dhu l-Hijja, the final month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Called a duty of humankind to Allah in the Qurʾan (3:97), and the fifth of the five pillars of Islam, in recent years the hajj has attracted about two million Muslims annually from approximately 160

declared heretical and ignored, particularly under the current, fundamentalist regime, which advocates traditional interpretations of Muslim law and opposes reform. Since his death, Shangalaji's ideas have fallen into obscurity.

See also **Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlevi; Reform: Iran; Shiʿa: Imami (Twelver).**

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SHAYKH AL-ISLAM

Before the rise to power of the Ottomans and Safavids, *shaykh al-Islam* (pl. *shuyukh al-Islam*) was, in general, an honorific title given to the leading scholar (or at times, spiritual Sufi master) in a particular locality. During the Ottoman and Safavid dynasties, it evolved into an official administrative position. The *shaykh al-Islam* was responsible for government control of education (through the madrasa system) and law (through the courts), and therefore, for the purposes of legitimacy, had to be a legally trained and well-respected scholar. His *fatwa* (opinion), though technically nonbinding on a judge (*qadi*), held the force of government policy. In the Ottoman Empire, the great *shaykh al-Islam* Ebus-Suʿud (Ar. Abu ʾl-Suʿud, d. 1574) acted, not only as a powerful influence over the sultan in terms of policy, but also enforced the primacy of Hanafi legal doctrine within the empire. Ottoman *shuyukh al-Islam* were known as the "*Mufti*" of the empire, and while others were able to give *fatwa*s, it was their legal opinions that (at least officially) were authoritative. Within the Safavid Empire, *shuyukh al-Islam* such as Mohammad Baqer Sabzawari (d. 1679) and Mohammad Baqer Majlesi (d. 1699) were renowned as scholars rather than policy makers, though they too clearly had official responsibilities which included presiding over the coronation ceremony of a new shah. The *shuyukh al-Islam* formed a network of government-appointed figures in Safavid Iran, and functioned as a means of enforcing a legal unity over a diverse and often fractious population.

The post of *shaykh al-Islam* survived in both the Ottoman Empire and Iran into the nineteenth century, though with a reduced significance. The Afshar, Zand, and Qajar dynasties of Iran certainly appointed *shuyukh al-Islam*, though these were rarely major figures within the religious establishment. In Iran, the post seems to have died out in the late nineteenth century. The *shaykh al-Islam* of the Ottoman Porte in Istanbul continued to be appointed, though there too the post was rarely held by renowned or dynamic scholars. It was abolished, as were all the trappings of the Ottoman caliphate, in 1924.

See also **Empires: Ottoman; Empires: Safavid and Qajar.**

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SHAYKHIYYA

Shaykhiyya was a nineteenth-century Iranian, mystical, sectarian movement within Shiʿism that was inspired by Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsaʾi, an eighteenth-century cleric who originally came from the Arabian peninsula. It was more popular with the common people, who found it more accessible and vital than its rival Shiʿite schools, Usulism and Akhbarism. It emphasized gaining gnostic knowledge through the love of God, in addition to the dry, legalistic study of the Qurʾan and hadiths and rigid traditionalism advocated by the other two schools. Shaykhiyya espoused the concept that the twelfth imam (descendant of the prophet Muhammad) of Shiʿite Islam had gone into hiding from humankind and remains in "occultation" until he returns shortly before the end of the world. The "Fourth Principle" of Shaykhiyya (*rokn-e rabiʿ*) envisaged a "perfect Shiʿa," the only person on Earth who could become aware (through mystical intuition) of the Hidden Imam while he was in occultation. Shaykh Ahmad did not claim this role for himself, but the followers of his chief successor, Sayyid Kazim Rashti, believed that Rashti was the perfect Shiʿa of his time. Rashti formed much of the basic organization of Shaykiyya as a school of thought.

Shaykh Ahmad (1753–1826), one of the last great Muslim philosophers before the influx of European thought, was a gentle man of paradox who enjoyed both the patronage of the court of the Qajar Shah in Tehran and the love of the masses, yet refused an official position for fear that he might lose touch with the common people. Originally from Bahrain, he spent the last twenty years of his life in Iran. He considered himself an orthodox Shiʿite who was hostile to Sufism, yet inspired a movement that incorporated many elements of Sufi thought. Shaykh Ahmad emphasized the necessity for a religious leader to combine mystical revelation with traditional jurisprudence. His philosophy, influenced by visions of the prophet Muhammad, numerology, rigorous study of Muslim law, and the religious thought of his native Bahrain, inspired the movement that bore his name after his death. The movement was influenced heavily by its founder's fascination with myth and gnostic thought (*ʿirfan*). Though Ahmad was a mystic, and held many beliefs similar to the Sufis', he attacked them as anti-Shiʿite Sunnis with pantheistic tendencies and criticized them for claiming authority that only the

imams should have, though the ultimate authority belonged to the prophet Muhammad. After Ahmad's death, his followers used the Sufi ideal of the Perfect Person to formulate the concept of the Perfect Shiʿa. This person could be used as an authority because he had received mystical knowledge from God, in addition to his study of Muslim law. In a way, Shaykhiyya later became a form of Sufism untouched by Sunni influence, eventually inspiring Babi and Baha'ism. The Perfect Shiʿa did not take precedence, however, over the imams, who were exalted to a higher degree than in the past. This reflected the chaos in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Shiʿism, caused by external forces, and which created an increased need for tradition and a central authority to follow. Instead, Shaykhiyya, like its founder, attempted to strike a balance between the dry legalism of pure jurisprudence and the uncontrolled (in their eyes) individualistic esotericism of the Sufis, though it did not always succeed. Two branches of Shaykhiyya have survived in Tabriz and Kerman. The activities of the Shaykhis of Kerman were suppressed under the Islamic Republic of Iran.

See also **Shiʿa: Early; Shiʿa: Imami (Twelver).**

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SHIʿA

EARLY

The Shiʿa were originally the "partisans" of ʿAli, cousin of Muhammad's cousin and husband of the Prophet's daughter, Fatima. Today, however, the label designates a number of distinct groups that have arisen over the course of Islamic history and which are united by a belief that the leader (*caliph* or *imam*) of the Muslim community (*umma*) should be a member of the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*). The Shiʿa include the Twelvers, second largest of all the Muslim sects (the largest being the Sunni). Other Shiʿa groups include the Zaydis, Khoja Ismaʿilis, and Bohra Ismaʿilis, who taken together, represent more than ten percent of the world Muslim population.

The First *Fitna*

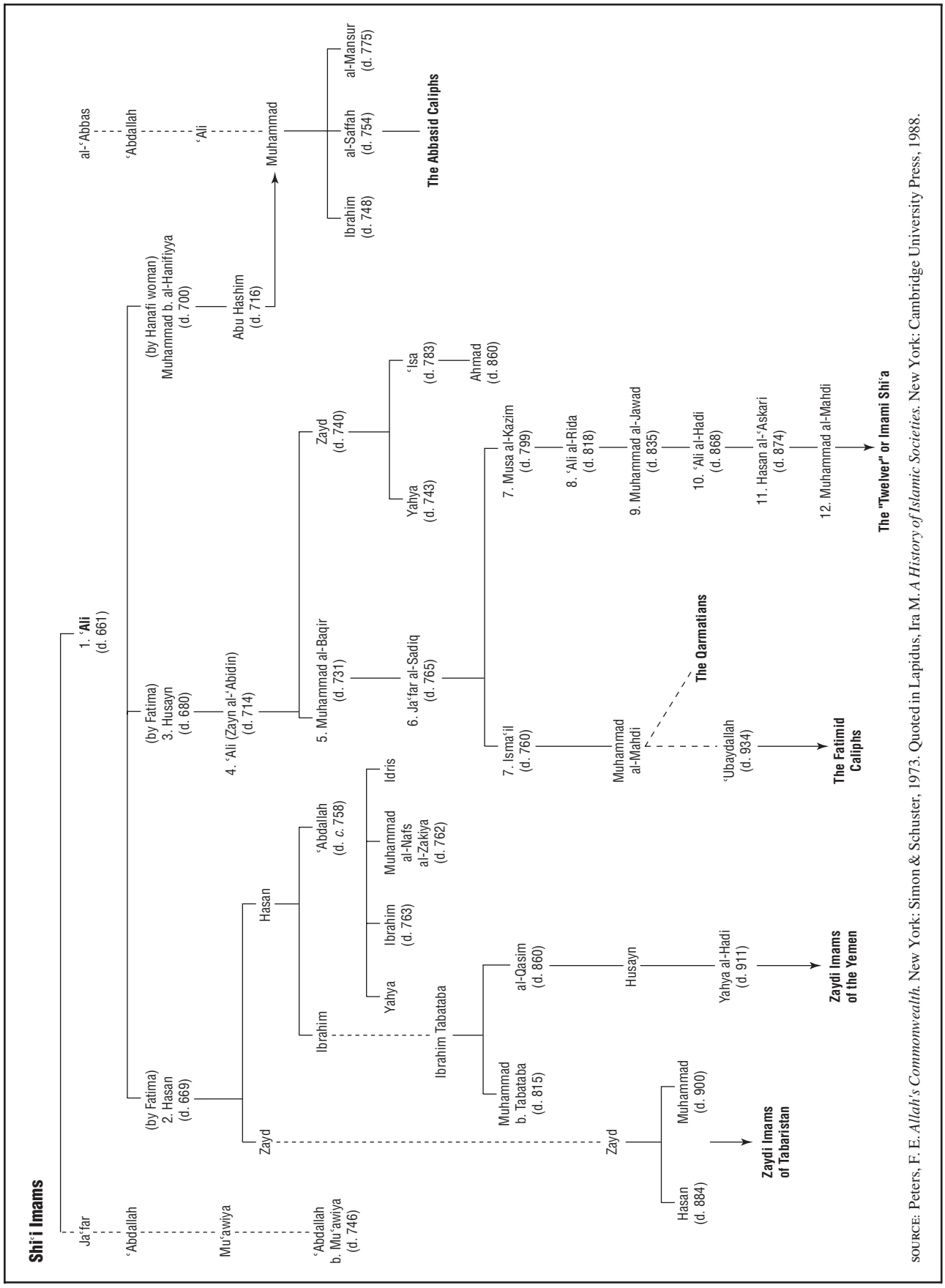
The Shiʿa first formed an identifiable movement in Islamic history during the First Civil War (*fitna*), which tore the Muslim community apart between 656 and 661 C.E. According to Shiʿi doctrine, ʿAli was meant to assume leadership of the community upon the Prophet's death in 632. Tradition holds that the Prophet designated his cousin as heir in a speech made at Ghadir Khumm on the way back from Muhammad's farewell pilgrimage, made shortly before his death. However, the jealousy and ambition of the Prophet's other principal Companions (Abu Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthman) prevented him from assuming that post. Abu Bakr was the first, serving as leader from 632 to 634. He was followed by ʿUmar (634–644), and finally by ʿUthman (644–656).

Shiʿism as a movement, however, burst into full view with the assassination of ʿUthman and the ensuing civil war. ʿUthman, a member of the aristocratic Umayyah clan of Quraysh, had converted to Islam early on, marrying the Prophet's daughters Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum. As caliph, he appointed many of his relatives to lucrative governorships in the newly conquered provinces, and was consequently widely criticized for nepotism. Disgruntled Companions, based primarily in Egypt, conspired against him and succeeded in assassinating him in Medina in 656. At this point, ʿAli was chosen as caliph, but soon met opposition from the Umayyah clan, the Prophet's widow ʿA'isha, the prominent Companions Talhah and al-Zubayr, and others.

ʿUthman's enemies accused him of complicity in ʿUthman's assassination, because he showed little interest in pursuing the conspirators and in fact had close ties with some of them, including his step-son Muhammad b. Abu Bakr. Protest against ʿAli sparked a major war, pitting ʿAli's supporters, who were centered in the garrison town of Kufa, in Iraq, against opposition forces based in Basra and Syria. In 656, ʿAli's forces met those of ʿA'isha and her co-generals, Talha and al-Zubayr, just outside Basra, in what came to be known as the Battle of the Camel, because ʿA'isha joined the fray in an armored palanquin mounted on her camel, ʿAskar.

ʿAli's forces were victorious. Talhah and al-Zubayr were killed, and ʿA'isha was captured and returned to Medina in shame. The tide turned against ʿAli the following year, however, with the battle of Siffin in the Syrian desert. ʿAli lost this battle after his deputy bungled arbitration with the agent of Muʿawiya, the governor of Damascus. A large group of ʿAli's supporters, angered that he had submitted to arbitration, left his cause. Known as the Kharijis "deserters," they became bitter enemies of ʿAli.

ʿAli retreated to Kufa, but rallied sufficiently to defeat a Khariji army at Nahrawan in 658. In 661, ʿAli fell to the blows of a Khariji assassin in Kufa. ʿAli's supporters recognized his eldest son Hasan as their leader, but Hasan soon entered into a truce with Muʿawiya and renounced his claim to the Caliphate. Thus, the First Civil War ended.



SOURCE: Peters, F. E. *Allah's Commonwealth.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973. Quoted in Lapidus, Ira M. *A History of Islamic Societies.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Shiʿa imam lineage.

Shiʿa Under the Umayyads

The Muslim community was united under one regime, for Muʿawiya became caliph of the entire community by default. The capital was moved to Damascus, and when Muʿawiya designated his son Yazid as heir, the Umayyad dynasty (661–750) was established. Doctrinally, however, the Muslim community remained divided into three main groups, ʿAli's supporters (the Shiʿa), enemies of ʿAli who had originally supported him but renounced their allegiance at Siffin (the Kharijis), and the main body of his opponents, the Umayyads and their supporters.

Throughout Umayyad rule, the Shiʿa engaged in periodic uprisings against what they viewed as the illegitimate caliphs, revolting in the name of various members of *ahl al-bayt*. The most famous of these incidents is the revolt of Husayn, ʿAli's second son, upon the death of Muʿawiya and the accession of his son Yazid in the year 680. Husayn was summoned to Kufa to lead a revolt. He set out from Medina with a small contingent, but Umayyad forces halted him in the Iraqi desert, preventing him from reaching his supporters in Kufa. Rather than surrender, Husayn and his followers fought. Most were slaughtered, and Husayn's head was delivered to Yazid in Damascus. The martyrdom of Husayn and his followers is still retold and re-enacted by the Shiʿa on ʿAshura, the tenth day of Muharram, which is the first month of the Islamic calendar.

Four years after Husayn's death, a faction among the Kufan Shiʿa arose in revolt. This group became known as al-Tawwabun (the penitents), a name that reflected their dedication to the cause of Husayn and their regret they had failed to come to his aid. In 686, Mukhtar al-Thaqafi led an initially successful revolt in the name of Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya, a son of ʿAli, holding Kufa in 686–687. In 740, Zayd, a grandson of Husayn, led a new revolt in southern Iraq, but was defeated and killed. ʿAbd Allah b. Muʿawiya, a great-grandson of Muhammad's cousin Jaʿfar, led yet another insurrection (744–747).

Shiʿa and the Abbasids

The Abbasid revolution that toppled the Umayyads in 750 began, in part, as a Shiʿa movement, adopting the slogan *al-rida min al al-bayt* "the acceptable candidate from the family of the Prophet." Upon victory, a descendant of the Prophet's uncle ʿAbbas assumed rule as caliph. In a clear pro-Shiʿa move, the new dynasty established their capital in Iraq, first at Wasit, then at Baghdad, which was founded in 761.

The Abbasids, however, soon turned on their Shiʿa allies, and eventually took over the Umayyads's role as illegitimate rulers and the nemesis of Shiʿa aspirations. Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, "the Pure Soul," led a Shiʿite revolt against the Abbasids as early as 762, and the Abbasid period would witness countless more revolts in the name of various descendants of ʿAli. Attempts at reconciliation were short-lived, the most notable being al-Maʾmun's appointment of ʿAli al-Rida, the eighth Imam of the Twelver Shiʿa line, as his successor in 816.

Shiʿa and Sunni: A Comparison

An untenable distinction is often made between the Sunni caliph, seen as a purely political authority, and the Shiʿa imam, seen as a religious authority. In the early period, the titles imam and caliph referred, at least potentially, to the same office and authority. The goal behind the Shiʿa revolts against the Umayyads and Abbasids was to depose what was considered to be the illegitimate leader of the community and to replace him with a legitimate one. Both for the Shiʿa and their opponents, the Shiʿite Imam was always a potential counter-caliph. Whether chosen from the descendants of ʿAli or from another line, the caliph was held to be both a religious and political authority even by the Sunni, and was called imam as well as *sahib hadha al-amr* ("the one in charge").

In the first Islamic century, there can hardly have been any other identifiable religious authorities; jurists, theologians, and others did not gain influence until later. An indication of the caliphs' religious authority is the fact that their decisions often became enshrined in Islamic law. An example of this can be found in the "Conditions of ʿUmar," restrictions on the *ahl al-dhimma* imposed by the second caliph, ʿUmar b. al-Khattab (or possibly the Umayyad ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAziz). These "Conditions" provide the basis for many of the laws that govern the status of Jews and Christians in Islam.

Another popular misconception is that Sunnism is the original form of Islam, from which the Shiʿa deviated. In the beginning, the opponents of the Shiʿa were not Sunnis, properly speaking, but adherents to what might be termed Umayyad Islam. Sunni Islam is a compromise position between Shiʿite and Umayyad Islam, and could only have come into existence some time after the advent of the Abbasids. This may be seen succinctly in the Sunni phrase *al-khulafaʿ al-rashidun* (lit. the "rightly guided caliphs"), which indicates approval of all the first four caliphs. The Umayyads revered the first three caliphs, but ʿAli was anathema to them. They reportedly instituted a practice of cursing him from the pulpit in Friday prayer. The Shiʿa, however, revered ʿAli but detested or disapproved of the first three caliphs. The Sunni approval of all four could only have developed at a much later date, as an attempt to reconcile the two opposing positions.

Rival Factions within the Shiʿa Community

Conflict over leadership of the Muslim community and over succession among rival Shiʿi claimants to the imamate gave rise to theological doctrines and concepts that would remain important throughout Islamic history. In the course of the eighth century the Shiʿa developed the doctrines of the imam's *ʿisma*, meaning "infallibility" or "divine protection from sin," and *nass*, the explicit and divinely sanctioned designation of the imam by his predecessor. The *ghulat* (extremists) developed more exaggerated forms of reverence for various claimants to the imamate, including beliefs that

the imam did not die but went into occultation (*ghayba*) or that he would return (*rajʿa*) as a messianic figure (*mahdi*) before the apocalypse. Others claimed that the imam shared in prophetic authority, had status equal to that of the Prophet, possessed divine qualities, or manifested divinity through divine infusion (*hulul*). Some of these extreme concepts, particularly occultation, would become standard doctrine in the main divisions of the Shiʿa in later centuries.

A second set of issues had to do with the status of the Prophet's Companions. In order to bolster the legitimacy of ʿAli, the Shiʿites used hadith reports and historical accounts concerning the first three caliphs, ʿA'isha, and many other Companions to impugn their characters, casting them as sinners, incompetent leaders, or outright unbelievers. The Sunnis, used similar accounts to uphold the view that the Companions were all exemplary. The Shiʿite position, while certainly exaggerated over time, readily admits the seriousness of the conflicts that wracked the early Muslim community, while Sunni historiography has often endeavored to cover them up or explain them away.

A seventeenth-century fresco depicting Iman Shah Zaid is represented in the volume two color insert.

See also **Empires: Abbasid; Empires: Umayyad; Shiʿa: Imami (Twelver); Succession.**

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Devin J. Stewart

IMAMI (TWELVER)

The term Ithna ʿAshari ("Twelver") or Imami refers to the denomination of Shiʿism to which the majority of Shiʿas worldwide adhere. Characteristic of Twelver Shiʿism is recognition of the authority of twelve successive imams (spiritual leaders) who were members or descendants of *ahl al-bayt* (the prophet Muhammad's immediate family). Their authority is said to have been transmitted over time via the lineage of Muhammad's daughter Fatima and her husband, ʿAli. Also characteristic of Twelver Shiʿism is an emotional attachment to *ahl al-bayt* that manifests itself in annual rituals commemorating the battlefield death of the imam Husayn, grandson of Muhammad.

Twelver Shiʿism identifies the first imam as Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, ʿAli b. Abi Talib. According to Shiʿa tradition, the Prophet, shortly before his own death, publicly announced the selection of ʿ Ali as his successor. But ʿAli was blocked repeatedly from power. He did not contest the election of the first three caliphs, apparently out of a desire to avoid civil war. Finally, ʿAli did obtain the caliphate and ruled for five years, only to be murdered in 661 C.E.

In Twelver Shiʿism the term *imam* indicates those members of *ahl al-bayt* who are the true spiritual leaders of the Muslim community regardless of any political recognition or lack thereof extended by the Islamic world at large. After ʿ Ali, the imamate passed to his sons, Hasan and Husayn successively.

The martyrdom of the third imam, Husayn, during the second civil war in 680 is the most decisive event in Shiʿite history. At Karbala, near the Euphrates River, he was intercepted and surrounded by forces loyal to the Umayyad caliph, Yazid. During the initial days of the month of Muharram the

imam Husayn and his followers withstood siege by Yazid's army, which hoped to force the small band to surrender. Husayn chose death instead. On ʿAshura, the tenth of Muharram, Husayn was killed, his household taken captive. The train of captives, including Husayn's sister Zaynab and his son ʿAli Zayn al-ʿAbidin, was marched through the desert to Damascus.

Husayn's death at Karbala marks the beginning of the transformation of Shiʿism from a political movement to a distinctive religious tradition within Islam. His death is viewed by devout Shiʿas as a sacrifice that benefits believers. In exchange for the suffering voluntarily undergone by Husayn and the other Karbala martyrs, God has granted them *shafaʿa* (the power of intercession). Intercession is granted especially to those believers who earn *savab* (religious merit) by mourning Husayn during Muharram.

The centuries following Husayn's death saw the gradual emergence of distinctive Shiʿite communities, not only in southern Iraq, the site of the imam's martyrdom, but also in Lebanon, Syria, and parts of South Asia. To this day various localities in India and Pakistan commemorate Husayn's death with an annual "Horse of Karbala" procession. Mourners parade a riderless stallion caparisoned to represent Zuljenah, the horse ridden by Husayn at Karbala. The horse's appearance acts as a stimulus to rituals of lamentation, the performance of which earns participants *savab*.

Twelver Shiʿas recognize as the fifth imam Muhammad al-Baqir (d. c. 735), the son of the fourth imam, ʿ Ali Zayn al-ʿAbidin. Like his father, al-Baqir avoided confrontation with the reigning caliphate. He promulgated the doctrine of *nass* ("designation"): guided by God, each imam designates the person who is to be his successor as spiritual leader of the Muslim community. Thus the imamate is not a matter of human choice or self-assertion. This doctrine countered the activities of al-Baqir's half-brother Zayd b. ʿAli, who attracted the support of militants impatient with al-Baqir's political passivity. Zayd led an uprising against the reigning Umayyad government in Kufa and was killed there in the fighting in 740.

The political engagement characteristic of Zaydi Shiʿism was countered by Jaʿfar al-Sadiq (d. 765), the sixth imam in the Twelver tradition. Like his father al-Baqir, he espoused an accommodationist attitude toward the caliphal authorities. Also like his father, he advocated the doctrine of *nass*, thereby delegitimizing rival claimants to leadership of the Shiʿite community. Some Muslim scholars trace to his imamate the doctrine of *taqiyya* ("dissimulation"), which permits Shiʿas threatened with persecution to conceal their denominational identity as followers of the imams. These teachings fostered in the Imami community a political quietism that furthered their survival as a religious minority under the Sunni caliphs.

Jaʿfar al-Sadiq was also renowned as a scholar of law (for this reason the body of legal lore in Twelver Shiʿism is referred to as the Jaʿfari tradition). Additionally, he is credited with having further defined the qualifications for the imamate in terms of the concept of *ʿilm* (knowledge). The imams are said to be the most knowledgeable of all humankind in matters pertaining to religious law, the principles governing conduct in this life and rewards and punishments in the next, and the realm of the unseen. In particular the imams' knowledge extends to scripture. They understand both the *zahir* (the external or literal meaning) and the *batin* (the hidden significance) of the Qurʾan. The *batin* is accessed via *taʾwil*, an interpretive process that applies allegory and symbolism to the scriptural text.

A turning point came in Shiʿite history with the death of Hasan al- ʿAskari, the eleventh imam (d. 874). Skeptics in the Muslim community claimed that Hasan had died without leaving behind a son as leader of the Shiʿas. But Imami doctrine asserts that Hasan did in fact have a son, named Abu al-Qasim Muhammad, and it explains the circumstance that Muhammad was unknown to his contemporaries by invoking the ancient concept of *ghayba* (occultation). To protect the twelfth imam from his persecutors, God concealed the young man from the world at large. The period from 874 to 941 is known as the Lesser Occultation. From concealment this "Hidden Imam" provided guidance to his community through a series of agents, who met with him and conveyed his directives to the world.

The period from 941 to the present day is known as the Greater Occultation. No longer are there agents who confer with the Hidden Imam directly or transmit his instructions to the faithful. Nevertheless he is alive and will return to earth one day as the Mahdi, "the rightly guided by God," when he will purge the earth of all the injustice that has stained it since the time when ʿ Ali, Husayn, and the other members of *ahl al-bayt* were first denied the political recognition to which they were entitled. For this reason the twelfth imam is called al-Muntazar ("the Awaited One"), for Imami Shiʿite belief looks hopefully to the Mahdi's return as the inauguration of the Day of Judgment.

Imami folklore includes tales that indicate that the twelfth imam dwells among us, invisibly present but capable of manifesting himself to individuals in moments of need. Iraqi Shiʿas in the 1990s who had returned from the pilgrimage to Mecca recounted to this author stories of hajj-sightings. Elderly people who had been knocked to the ground and nearly trampled in the pilgrim-crowds told of how they had been rescued by "a tall youthful man of radiant appearance" who subsequently vanished. Surely, they argued, this had been the Hidden Imam.

The net effect of Twelver belief concerning the Mahdi was to strengthen the accommodationist attitude already prevalent among the Imami Shiʿas. Desires for social justice, for radical changes in the worldly order, and for the restoration of the caliphal throne to *ahl al-bayt* were linked to the

concept of *intizar*: "expectation," the passive awaiting of the Mahdi's return at the end of time.

Twelver theology underwent further elaboration with the creation of the Safavid dynasty in Iran beginning in 1501 under Shah Ismaʿil. This monarch established Imami Shiʿism as Iran's state religion. The Safavids clashed frequently with the neighboring empire of the Ottoman Turks, whose sultans arrogated to themselves the title of caliph, with its implications of universal Islamic sovereignty. The settlement of the caliphate in Istanbul from the sixteenth century sharpened Sunni-Shiʿa tensions as a religious expression of international political rivalries.

Theological developments during the Safavid era (sixteenth-eighteenth centuries) reflected the Iranian clergy's desire to heighten adherence to Shiʿite communal identity in lands under the shah's dominion. This is reflected in the writings of the celebrated *ʿalim* (religious scholar) Muhammad Baqir Majlisi (d. 1698). In a work called *Bihar al-anwar* (The oceans of lights) he assembled numerous Shiʿite hadiths so as to justify the linkage of popular ritual practices with a distinctively Imami soteriology. For example, in a chapter of the *Bihar* entitled "The Ways in Which God Informed His Prophets of the Forthcoming Martyrdom of Husayn," Majlisi emphasized the predestinarian quality of the seventh-century events at Karbala.

Majlisi linked Husayn's martyrdom at Karbala with the imam's power to grant intercession in paradise to those who honor Husayn through acts of ritual commemoration. Majlisi also promoted popular veneration of Husayn and the other imams by collecting in the *Bihar* various traditions describing the twelve imams as *maʿsum* (sinless, infallible, and protected from error). In Shiʿite devotion today, the imams, together with the prophet Muhammad and his daughter Fatima, are known collectively as the "fourteen Infallibles." Their sinlessness guarantees their closeness to God in heaven as well as their ability to intercede for those on earth who remember Husayn through acts of lamentation.

Twelver Shiʿism spread in Syria during the rule of the Hamdanid dynasty in the tenth century. Aleppo became an important center of medieval Shiʿism. Another center of Shiʿite learning in the region emerged in Mamluk and Ottoman times in Jabal ʿAmil in present-day Lebanon. A number of Shiʿite scholars emigrated to Iran after the establishment of the Safavid empire, but the Shiʿite community continued its life in the region and constitutes over one-third of the population of Lebanon at present.

Public rituals lamenting the Karbala martyrs are attested as early as the tenth century in Baghdad. The Safavid era, however, witnessed the elaboration of a soteriology that joined ritual mourning with Shiʿite communal identity. This is attested in a work that became increasingly popular during the reign of the Safavids, *Rawdat al-shuhada'* (The garden of the martyrs), which was written by Husayn Waʿiz al-Kashifi (d. 1504). "Paradise is awarded to anyone," argues Kashifi, "who weeps for Husayn for the following reason, that every year, when the month of Muharram comes, a multitude of the lovers of the family of the Prophet renews and makes fresh the tragedy of the martyrs."

"Lovers of the family of the Prophet": Here Kashifi defines the community of believers not in terms of doctrine but in terms of emotional disposition and ritual activity. His description suggests an important aspect of Imami Shiʿite identity. At the popular level, from the premodern era through the twenty-first century, Twelver Shiʿas tend to define themselves as those Muslims who excel beyond all others in their love for the Prophet's family and for the Prophet's descendants, the imams. This affection is expressed annually in the action of *matam* (displays of grief for the Karbala martyrs).

Safavid-era ulema such as Majlisi developed a predestinarian theology of voluntary suffering, ritual commemoration, and intercession as a reward for mourners. They also campaigned vehemently and sometimes violently against Sufi shaykhs and the *tariqat* (mystical associations) that were under the direction of the Sufi masters. Twelver ulema condemned Sufism as heterodox out of a recognition that popular devotion to the shaykhs and visits to the tombs of Sufi saints threatened to compete with the forms of piety administered by the clerical hierarchy, namely, devotion to the twelve imams and pilgrimage to shrines associated with the imams.

Persecution of Sufis, however, did not preclude Sufi influence on Imami Shiʿism. Such influence can be seen in the later Safavid era with the flourishing of the "School of Isfahan," which is associated with Mulla Sadra (d. 1640). The school of Isfahan pursued the study of *Hekmat-e elahi* ("divine wisdom"), a discipline that combined formal training in Qurʾanic studies and related Islamic sciences with rational philosophic inquiry and the cultivation of the direct and unmediated personal experience of divine reality. *Hekmat-e elahi* traces its origin to Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi (d. 1191), who in works such as *Hikmat al-ishraq* (The wisdom of illuminationist dawning) envisioned intellectual studies as the propaedeutic to mystical ascension and encounters with the sacred. In the Twelver tradition this intellectual-mystical approach to learning is linked to the term *ʿirfan* ("gnosis": the seeking after of experiential and participatory knowledge of the patterns governing the cosmos). The term carries political implications. With the decline of centralized governmental authority in the later Safavid and Qajar eras (eighteenth-nineteenth centuries), the ulema acquired ever more temporal power. A spiritual elitism evolved in which at least some clerics were willing to accord the highest rank to the scholar-cum-mystic: the perfected Gnostic, the theosopher-king. This illuminationist strand in Imami theology culminated in the twentieth century with the founding of Iran's Islamic Republic under Ruhollah Khomeini.

The declining power of the Safavid shahs was accompanied by the increasing importance in the public realm of the Usuli form of Shiʿite jurisprudence. One way to understand Usulism is as a refutation of traditional Imami Shiʿite attitudes toward governance. Imami theology argued that since the only legitimate government is that administered by the perfect and sinless imam, during the imam's occultation all forms of earthly government are necessarily imperfect and sinful. Many traditionalist Shiʿas therefore avoided engagement with worldly politics, preferring to await the Hidden Imam's return as the Mahdi. Usuli jurisprudence, however, granted to qualified ulema the latitude to apply *ijtihad* (scripturally based independent reasoning) to every aspect of life, not only religious, but also social and political. Those scholars whose studies qualified them to exercise *ijtihad* were known as *mujtahid*s.

But while elevating the exercise of rational skills among jurisprudents, Usulism restricted religious and intellectual independence among the masses. Usuli clerics insisted that the Shiʿite laity must select a living *mujtahid* as a *marjaʿ al-taqlid* ("reference point for imitation"), a guide that one follows in legal, moral, and ritual issues. The centralizing and authoritarian tendencies implicit in Usulism were resisted by the more conservative Akhbari school of jurisprudence, which argued that Muslims should direct their *taqlid* ("imitation" or devout and unquestioning obedience) only to the imam and not to any earthly *mujtahid*. But by the late eighteenth century Usulism was clearly ascendant. Since the nineteenth century certain of the most prominent Usuli *maraji*ʿ (plural of *marjaʿ al-taqlid*) have received the title *naʾib al-imam* ("the Hidden Imam's deputy"), implying the jurisprudent's right to govern as the lieutenant of the twelfth imam. In recent times *naʾib al-imam* was applied most famously to the Ayatollah Khomeini after the success of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. Khomeini rationalized the imamic deputy's role in society through his doctrine of *velayet-e faqih* ("the rule of the jurisconsult"): In the imam's absence, government should be in the hands of those Muslims who are most versed in Islamic law.

Preparation for the 1979 revolution involved a reinterpretation of many components of the Imami tradition. In the prerevolutionary Iran of Reza Shah Pahlevi's reign, the imam Husayn was typically regarded as a model of patient suffering, whom one lamented during Muharram and to whom one turned for *shafaʿa* (intercession) and personal salvation. Such an image reflected the hierarchic and stratified social relations characteristic of Iran and other traditional Islamic societies. New interpretations in the 1960s and 1970s, however, replaced the image of Husayn-as-savior with Husayn-as-revolutionary exemplar. Such thinking is evident in the writings of ʿAli Shariʿati (d. 1977), a Sorbonne-educated intellectual who advocated the transformation of "Black Shiʿism" (associated with mourning for Husayn and the passive expectation of salvation) into "Red Shiʿism" (whereby Shariʿati invoked the color of blood to call for confrontation, revolution, and self-sacrifice in the service of society).

Not only the imam Husayn but also the revered women of *ahl al-bayt* have been subjected to reinterpretation in recent years. An example is Zaynab bt. ʿAli, Husayn's sister. Present at Karbala, she was taken prisoner by Yazid's soldiers and presented to the triumphant caliph in his Damascus court. Despite her powerlessness, she spoke out defiantly and denounced Yazid as a tyrant. Supporters of Khomeini during his struggle against the Pahlevi regime described Zeinab as a model of political activism worthy of imitation by contemporary Shiʿite women. Writing shortly after the 1979 revolution, Farah Azari, one of the founding members of the Iranian Women's Solidarity Group, stated, "[I]t was Zeinab who came to the forefront to symbolize the ideal of the modern revolutionary Muslim woman in Iran. Those enigmatic young women clad in a black chador bearing machine guns, aspire to follow Zeinab. It is not inappropriate that they have been sometimes referred to as 'the commandos of her holiness Zeinab'" (Azari 1983, p. 26).

Since Khomeini's death in 1989 contemporary Shiʿite thought in Iran has been characterized by increasing diversity and the emergence of a movement for the reformation of Shiʿism. Among recent theological developments in Imami Shiʿism is the advocacy of *taqrib* ("rapprochement"), the easing of religious clashes between Shiʿas and Sunnis. In 1990 Khomeini's successor, Ayatollah Sayyed ʿAli Khameneʾi, founded the *Majmaʿ al-taqrib* ("the rapprochement association"), with the idea of establishing an international league of Sunnis and Shiʿas who would be united as Muslims in the face of perceived opposition from the non-Muslim world at large.

With this goal in mind, Khameneʾi has taken steps to reform a Shiʿite practice frequently denounced by Sunnis: the ritual of *zanjiri-matam*, in which mourners employ knives, razors, and chains in acts of self-flagellation to honor Husayn and the Karbala martyrs. In the 1994 Muharram season Khameneʾi issued a *fatwa* forbidding acts of *matam* performed in public involving the use of weapons to shed one's own blood. Such attempts to curb "bloody" matam have met at most with very limited success. Even before Khameneʾi's *fatwa*, in the 1980s an attempt to forbid Muharram self-flagellation had been made by Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, "spiritual mentor" of the militant Lebanese group Hezbollah. But Hezbollah Shiʿas in Beirut disregarded Fadlallah's prohibition. And in various localities in India and Pakistan, Shiʿa *matami* (lamentation) associations continue to sponsor public *matam*-performances in which many members engage in self-flagellation. When interviewed, these mourners explained their reasons for persisting in this ritual: the wish to honor Husayn and earn religious merit, as well as the desire to assert Shiʿite communal identity in the presence of neighboring

faith communities, whether Hindu, Buddhist, or Sunni Muslim. The Iranian government's program of imposing uniformity worldwide in Shiʿite ritual practice is by no means complete.

One of the most progressive Imami thinkers of the present day is ʿAbd al-Karim Sorush (b. 1945). He offers a postpositivist assessment of modernity's challenge to revealed religion. While religion itself is divine in origin, Sorush argues, all human knowledge of religion is limited, indeterminate, and necessarily subject to change. No interpretation of Qurʾanic scripture can ever be definitive. According to Sorush, every scriptural interpretation, no matter how authoritative the source, is fallible and can offer only an approximation of divine truth. Such indeterminacy should not be viewed with alarm. Rather, this condition is intended by God so as to encourage humans to engage in the ongoing process of *ijtihad*, whereby they exercise the divine gifts of intellect and independent judgment. Because of the challenge to traditional clerical authority implied by such arguments, Sorush has aroused considerable hostility among members of the governing hierarchy in Iran's Islamic Republic.

See also **Taqiyya; Usuliyya.**

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David Pinault

ISMAʿILI

Ismaʿili Shiʿa represent the second most important Shiʿite community after the Twelver (Ithnaʿashari) Shiʿa and are scattered in more than twenty-five countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and North America. The Ismaʿilis have subdivided into a number of factions and groups in the course of their complex history.

The Ismaʿilis recognized a line of imams in the progeny of Ismaʿil, son of Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq (d. 765), hence their designation as Ismaʿili. By the 870s, the Ismaʿilis had organized a revolutionary movement against the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. The aim of this religio-political movement, designated as *al-daʿwa al-hadiya* or the "rightly guiding mission," was to install the Ismaʿili imam belonging to the prophet Muhammad's family to a new caliphate ruling over the entire Muslim community. The message of the movement was disseminated by a network of *daʿi*s or missionaries in many parts of the Muslim world.

The early success of the Ismaʿili movement culminated in the foundation of the Fatimid caliphate in North Africa in 909. ʿAbdallah al-Mahdi (d. 934) and his successors in the Ismaʿili imamate ruled as Fatimid caliphs over an important state that soon grew into an empire stretching from North Africa to Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. The Fatimid period was the "golden age" of Ismaʿilism when Ismaʿili thought and literature attained their summit and Ismaʿilis made important contributions to Islamic civilization, especially after the seat of the Fatimid caliphate was transferred to Cairo, itself founded in 969 by the Fatimids. The early Ismaʿilis developed a distinctive esoteric, gnostic system of religious thought based on a distinction between the exoteric (*zahir*) and esoteric (*batin*) aspects of the sacred scriptures as well as religious commandments and prohibitions. They also developed a cyclical view of religious history and a cosmological doctrine. The early doctrines were more fully elaborated in Fatimid times by Ismaʿili *daʿi*s who were also the scholars and authors of their community. Ismaʿili law was codified through the efforts of al-Qadi al-Nuʿman (d. 974), the foremost jurist of the Fatimid period, and the Fatimid Ismaʿilis developed distinctive institutions of learning.

The early Ismaʿili movement had been rent by a schism in 899 when a faction of the community, designated as Qarmati, refused to acknowledge continuity in the Ismaʿili imamate and retained an earlier belief in the Mahdiship of the seventh Ismaʿili imam, Muhammad ibn Ismaʿil, who was expected to reappear. The Qarmatis, who did not recognize the Fatimid caliphs as their imams, founded a powerful state in Bahrayn, eastern Arabia. The Qarmati state collapsed in 1077.

The Fatimid Ismaʿilis themselves experienced a major schism in 1094, on the death of al-Mustansir (1036–1094), the eighth Fatimid caliph and the eighteenth Ismaʿili imam. Al-Mustansir's succession was disputed by his sons Nizar (d. 1095), the original heir-designate, and al-Mustaʿli (1094–1101), who was installed to the Fatimid throne through the machinations of the Fatimid wazir al-Afdal (d. 1121). As a result, the unified Ismaʿili *daʿwa* and community were split into rival Nizari and Mustaʿli factions. The *daʿwa* organization in Cairo as well as the Ismaʿili communities of Yaman and Gujarat, in western India, supported the claims of al-Mustaʿli. The Ismaʿilis of Iran and adjacent lands, who were then under the leadership of Hasan Sabbah (d. 1124), upheld Nizar's right to the Ismaʿili imamate.

On the death of the Fatimid caliph-imam al-Amir (1101–1130), the Mustaʿli Ismaʿilis themselves subdivided into Hafizi and Tayyibi branches. The Hafizi Ismaʿilis who recognized al-Hafiz (1130–1149) and the later Fatimid caliphs as their imams disappeared completely after the Fatimid

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