

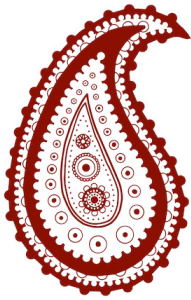
DĀNESH

THE OU UNDERGRADUATE
JOURNAL OF
IRANIAN STUDIES



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA
College of International Studies
Department of International and Area Studies

Volume 2 (2017)



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From the Faculty Advisor

This second volume of *DĀNESH* represents a significant expansion of the journal, both in terms of the scope of topics covered by the published articles, and by the growth of the journal's editorial team. Since its founding in 2016, *DĀNESH* has sought to provide a forum to showcase original research produced by Iranian Studies undergraduate students at the University of Oklahoma. This volume of the journal was produced through the able leadership of **Elizabeth "Libby" Ennenga** (BA, 2017), as the journal's editor-in-chief. Under Libby's editorial leadership *DĀNESH* has continued to thrive as a forum for the study of all aspects of the history, culture, society, and politics of Iran and the Persianate world.

This year also marks the maturing of OU's Iranian Studies program into the newly christened **Farzaneh Family Center for Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies**. As the program has grown, so too has the interest and dedication of OU students in the field of Iranian Studies. The publication of *DĀNESH*, a peer-reviewed journal published under the auspices of OU's Farzaneh Center and the OU College of International Studies, is also dedicated to highlighting the growing undergraduate program in Iranian Studies at the University of Oklahoma.

The name of the journal, *DĀNESH*, comes from the Persian word meaning *knowledge, learning, and wisdom*. We believe this is a fitting name for a journal that seeks to foster deep and compassionate understanding of one of the world's most culturally rich and historically complex civilizations. It is with this in mind that we present the second volume of *DĀNESH*.

Afshin Marashi

Farzaneh Family Chair in Modern Iranian History

Director, Farzaneh Family Center for Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies

From the Editor-in-Chief

I am honored to have been a part of the creation of Volume Two of *DĀNESH*. After an exceptionally successful inaugural edition of the journal, I have been more than impressed to see the quality of this new edition. This journal is made up of outstanding research examining the rich history, numerous religions, complex political climate, and vibrant culture of Iran. I believe in the transformative power of knowledge, and each article published in *DĀNESH* proves the academic dialogue on Iranian Studies is thriving at the University of Oklahoma.

Many students worked diligently to create the second edition of the journal. I would like to acknowledge and thank all of the associate editors who were consistently a positive hardworking team throughout this process. I would also like to recognize the authors of Volume Two; whose distinguished works are the reason the journal is possible. Each author remained professional, involved, and patient throughout the entire process — and for that I thank you. To the University of Oklahoma Libraries and Printing Services, thank you for your necessary assistance to help make *DĀNESH* accessible to readers both digitally and in physical copies.

The quality of work and endless support given to this journal is a direct reflection of the growth of the Iranian Studies Program at the University of Oklahoma. Thank you to the Farzaneh family for their generous donations that have allowed students to continue to pursue their interests in Iranian Studies. Most of all, my sincerest gratitude goes to Dr. Afshin Marashi. Neither this journal, nor the Iranian Studies Program would be possible without your continued support of the students and their work. Your guidance, assistance, and support have made all the difference.

Libby Ennenga (BA 2017)
Editor-in-Chief

Ali Shariati: The Ideologue Who Shaped Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution

Jocelyn Viviani

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Throughout Iranian History, the legitimacy of Iran's political structure and the concept of sovereignty have shaped religious, political, and ideological discourse. From 1953 to 1979, the question of sovereignty and the legitimacy of the Pahlavi Dynasty became a major point of contention and provided fertile ground for revolutionary thought to emerge. The repressive policies of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, as well as the growing influence of the United States in Iranian Politics, gave way to the rise of political dissent and opposition in Iran.¹ Under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a coalition of diverse political and ideological groups overthrew the Shah and established an Islamic Republic. Although Ayatollah Khomeini is credited as a key figure in shaping the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the uprisings would not have materialized as they did without the ideological influence of Iranian sociologist and intellectual Ali Shariati. Even though he died before he could see the culmination of the Islamic Revolution, Ali Shariati provided the ideological framework for opposition efforts to mobilize into a revolutionary force to contest and overthrow the Shah.

Ali Shariati shaped the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in many ways. First, he redefined Shi'ism as a political ideology that "instructs the believer to

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¹ Afshon Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam: Religion, Politics, and Iran's Revolutionary Guards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 34.

fight for justice, equality, and elimination of poverty.”² Through political Shi‘ism, he believed Iran would move away from Western influence and towards a society and political structure based on original teachings of Shi‘ism. Second, he argued that enlightened intellectuals, rather than the traditional *ulama*, would bring Iranian society and politics back to the original messages of Shi‘ism, or “True Islam.” Third, he critiqued the *ulama* for not upholding the teachings of Shi‘ism, but also for remaining apolitical in a period, which demanded political and social justice for the Iranian people.

This paper will analyze the framework of Ali Shariati’s reinterpretation of Shi‘ism as a political ideology and how this political ideology shaped the Islamic Revolution of 1979. It will provide a brief introduction of Ali Shariati’s life to show the environment that fostered his revolutionary thought. This brief introduction will be followed with a section on the major influences that molded Ali Shariati’s interpretation of Shi‘ism ranging from the writings of anti-colonialism writer Frantz Fanon to the martyrdom story of Imam Hussain. By doing so, it will provide context to better understand the importance of Shi‘ism in Ali Shariati’s political theory. The paper will discuss his reinterpretation of Shi‘ism or what he referred to as “red” Shi‘ism. In the process, it will explain what factors Ali Shariati argued contributed to the continuation of oppression and injustice in Iranian society.

It will then highlight Ali Shariati’s criticism of the clerical establishment and his vision for enlightened intellectuals to take on the role of the *ulama* and establish justice. The shaping of his reinterpretation of Shi‘ism as political ideology lies in the complex relationship between Shariati and the traditional *ulama*. Through the examination of the history of clerical establishment in Iran, it will suggest the *ulama* did not involve itself in politics for two reasons: Political Shi‘ism would weaken its traditional relationship with the monarchy as well as the role of providing *ijtihad* and guidance in the absence of the Hidden Imam. It will also show how Ali Shariati criticized their nonpolitical position within the context of his interpretation of the original teachings of Shi‘ism. Then, it will discuss the importance of enlightened intellectuals in Shariati’s vision of political Shi‘ism and how they had the responsibility instead of the *ulama* to

² Ervand Abrahamian, “Ali Shariati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution,” *MERIP Reports*, no. 102 (1982), 27.

reinstate Shi'ism and justice in Iranian society and politics. Finally, this paper will conclude with a summary of my argument and further emphasize how Ali Shariati provided the ideological structure for opposition groups to mobilize under the common goal of overthrowing the Shah in 1979.

The Beginnings of an Ideologue

Ali Shariati was born on November 24, 1933 in the village of Mazinan— located in Northeastern Iran.³ He was born to Mohammad-Taqi Shariati, a prominent religious teacher in Iran who “took it upon himself to educate those he believed to be the future agents of change in Iran, the young Islamic intellectuals.”⁴ In 1947, his father established ‘The Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truth’s.’ The Centre provided an environment in which new ideas of Shi‘ism could foster and grow. Through education, Mohammad-Taqi Shariati wanted to show Iranian youth how Shi‘ism and Islamic Revelation must be re-interpreted to fit its historic context.⁵ His father’s teachings of Shi‘ism would have a profound impact on Shariati pushing him towards a future of being involved in opposition movements. When discussing his father, Ali Shariati stated, “My father fashioned the early dimensions of my spirit. It was he who first taught me the art of thinking and the art of being human.”⁶

Ali Shariati would then go on to join the Teacher’s Training College and earn a bachelor degree at the University of Mashhad. At the teaching college, Ali Shariati became more involved in opposition efforts and became the leader of their pro-Mossadeq student group. In 1953, Mohammed Mossadeq, Iran’s reformist prime minister, was overthrown with the aid of British and American intelligence for using oil profits of the Anglo-Iranian oil company to fund public work projects. The Mossadeq coup shaped the mind of a young Shariati who began to believe “revolution

³ Nikki R Keddie and Yann Richard, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 200.

⁴ Ali Rahnama, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 11-12.

⁵ John L Esposito, *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 193.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 193.

was the only way to establish justice in Iran.”⁷ He was arrested in 1954 and continued to involve himself in opposition movements. In 1959, Ali Shariati had the opportunity to leave Iran on an academic scholarship. He pursued his doctorate in sociology in Paris, France. While studying in Paris, Ali Shariati was exposed to writers who challenged Western colonialism and Western influence in Non-western countries. These writers, as well as his father’s teachings, had a profound influence on Ali Shariati and formed the base for his reinterpretation of Shi‘ism as a political ideology.

Influences on Ali Shariati’s Political Theory

Ali Shariati’s theory of Shi‘ism as a revolutionary ideology, was influenced by the works of anti-colonialism writers, especially the work of Frantz Fanon. Fanon’s book *The Wretched of the Earth* deeply resonated with Shariati for he saw his beliefs affirmed in the revolutionary language Frantz Fanon so eloquently expressed.⁸ In his book, Fanon advocated for the native people of Third World countries to take a stand against Western colonialism and build their societies detached from the model of Western civilization and not use the West as a benchmark of progress. In return, these societies would experience true freedom without having their trajectories defined by Western influence and authority. According to Afshon Ostovar, Ali Shariati was so incredibly moved by this piece of literature that “he translated *The Wretched of the Earth* into his native language Persian and entitled his translation *Oppressed (mostaz’afin) of the Earth*.”⁹ It is quite telling how much Frantz Fanon’s work influenced Shariati, especially in how he changed the word “Wretched” to “Oppressed,” as if to relate to the political situation in Iran.

In his piece “*Civilization and Modernization*,” Ali Shariati speaks about how Fanon confronts the question of identity under the influence of Western civilization: “They must empty him of personality. They negate the “I” that he feels within himself. And they compel him to believe that he is attached to a weaker civilization, culture, and way of life. He must believe that European civilization, Western civilization, and race are

⁷ Elizabeth Thompson, *Justice Interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional Government in the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 286.

⁸ Rahnema, *An Islamic Utopian*, 126.

⁹ Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 35.

superior.”¹⁰ Ali Shariati saw the West as something that had pervaded all aspects of Iranian society ranging from politics to the Iranian identity. He used Frantz Fanon’s template of decolonization to communicate the effects the West had on Iran’s economy, politics, and culture. By doing so, he argued this model of decolonization could be applied to Iran to challenge the Pahlavi Dynasty and its westernized vision of governance and society in Iran. However, unlike Fanon, Shariati believed tradition was an essential component to revolutionary change. He saw Islam and its traditions as a source of empowerment to Iranians and would help them build a society free from the constraints of Western authority and influence and establish an Islamic government in its place.¹¹ Frantz Fanon’s book *The Wretched of the Earth* gave Ali Shariati’s beliefs the foundation to bloom into a political ideology that would shape the course of Iranian history by awakening an Islamic Revolution.

While Frantz Fanon provided Shariati with a new perspective to reevaluate and challenge the state of Iran society under the Pahlavi dynasty, the martyrdom story of Imam Hussain also played a significant role in reasserting the idea of Shi‘ism as a religion of revolution. The martyrdom of Imam Hussain at Karbala symbolizes the ultimate struggle for justice in the history of Shi‘ism.¹² At Karbala, Imam Hussain was murdered because he challenged and resisted the corruption of Sunni caliphates that went against the teachings of Islam. According to Ervand Abrahamian, “For Shariati, the Muharram Passion plays depicting Hussayn’s martyrdom at Karbala contained one loud and clear message: a Shi‘is, irrespective of time and place, had the sacred duty to oppose, resist, and rebel against contemporary ills.”¹³ Shariati used the example of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain as a way to communicate with Iranian Shi‘ites on a very personal and spiritual level and used this unifying story to bring awareness to this ongoing struggle for justice since the time of Imam Hussain. Ultimately, he used the martyrdom of Imam Hussain as a platform to urge Iranians to rise against institutions and leaders who go

¹⁰ Lloyd V. J. Ridgeon, *Religion and Politics in Modern Iran: A Reader* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 192.

¹¹ Thompson, *Justice Interrupted*, 287.

¹² Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, *Democracy in Iran History and the Quest for Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 70.

¹³ Ervand Abrahamian, "Ali Shariati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution," *MERIP Reports* 102 (1982), 26.

against this Shi'a call for justice and do not uphold Islamic truth in their positions of power.¹⁴

Shi'ism as a Political Ideology

Ali Shariati took these powerful messages of justice and resistance to oppressive rule from his father's teachings, Frantz Fanon, and the martyrdom story of Imam Hussain, and established a framework in which Shi'ism not only could take shape as a political ideology, but a political ideology that fights to bring justice back to Iranian society. The first component of Ali Shariati's political thought is the importance of *tawhid*. The Islamic concept of *tawhid* means the oneness of God in that it establishes there is no god but God and is one of the fundamental pillars in Islam. Through *tawhid*, a Muslim finds a form of justice by submitting to God and placing his or her loyalty to only Him.¹⁵ In his book "*On the Sociology of Islam: Lectures*," Ali Shariati argues that *tawhid* should be seen as "regarding the whole universe as a unity" and how this Islamic concept should not be separated between this world and the world in the hereafter.¹⁶ He emphasizes the importance of *tawhid* in the context of freedom and justice and how *tawhid* can be applied to this world: "*Tawhid* bestows man's independence and dignity. Submission to Him alone – the supreme norm of all being – impels man to revolt against all lying powers, all the humiliating fetters of fear and of greed."¹⁷ In this statement, Shariati is using the language of religion to not only justify this need to rise against the monarchy and those in positions of power, but also to communicate with modern Iranians who were disillusioned with the Pahlavi dynasty.

Another key component in building Shi'ism as a political ideology, was the discussion surrounding oppression and abuse of power in Iranian society. Islam, particularly Shi'ism, is meant to liberate people from the ills of society through faith in God. However, according to Shariati, Islam is often misappropriated by those in positions of power and they use Islam to

¹⁴ Shahrough Akhavi, "Islam, Politics and Society in the Thought of Ayatullah Khomeini, Ayatullah Taliqani and Ali Shariati," *Middle Eastern Studies* 4 (1988), 416.

¹⁵ Thompson, *Justice Interrupted*, 288.

¹⁶ Ali Shariati, *On the Sociology of Islam: Lectures*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1979), 82.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.

defend their need for more power and wealth.¹⁸ In his book, “*Hajj*,” Ali Shariati beautifully writes, “Allah promises that He will rescue and liberate the victims of oppression. Furthermore, He renders the pledge of the future leadership of human society. The class of people who were always and everywhere deprived of their human rights will inherit the palaces of power.”¹⁹ In other words, God will give protection to those who fall victim to oppressive regimes and in the future will grant them positions of power in which they will establish justice. In a way, this quote foreshadows what will occur during the Islamic Revolution of 1979. A diverse coalition of Iranian political and ideological groups mobilized under the common objective to overthrow the monarchy and reestablish justice in Iran. Ali Shariati masterfully crafts the language of religion to articulate these messages of rising against oppressive regimes by emulating religious prophets: “You are like Ibrahim! Fight the fire, the fire of oppression and ignorance so that you may save your people. This fire is in the gate of every responsible individual; it is your duty to guide and save your people.”²⁰ Through Shariati’s rhetoric, Shi‘ism becomes an ideology for revolutionary change in which people become the vanguards for establishing justice in Iranian society.

In this mission of reinstating justice, Ali Shariati makes the argument that the “true essence” of Shi‘ism that glorifies martyrdom, justice, and fighting against oppression has been dethroned by Shi‘ism established during the Safavid period. In his essay titled, “*Red Shi‘ism (the religion of martyrdom) vs. Black Shi‘ism (the religion of mourning)*,” Shariati states that “red” Shi‘ism embodies the original teachings of Shi‘ism, which promotes justice, martyrdom, and resistance to oppression, while “black” Shi‘ism aligns itself with oppressive leadership under the shah and the *ulama*.²¹ Since the Safavid period, Shi‘ism has been a state of mourning and unable to return to the original spirit of Islam due to its

¹⁸ Steven R Benson, “Islam and Social Change in the Writings of ‘Ali Shariati: His Hajj as a Mystical Handbook for Revolutionaries,” *The Muslim World* 81 (January 1991) 12.

¹⁹ Ali Shariati, *Hajj*. trans. Somayyah & Yaser (Bedford: Free Islamic Literatures, 1978), 77.

²⁰ Sharaiti, *Hajj*, 149.

²¹ Ali Shariati, “Dr. Ali Shariati: Red Shi‘ism Vs. Black Shi‘ism,”

http://www.iranchamber.com/personalities/ashariati/works/red_black_shiism.php.

Accessed January 19, 2017.

institutionalized oppressive state. According to Shariati, “ ‘red’ Shi‘ism is...to be the flame of revolution, the search of freedom, and justice, always inclining towards to the common and fighting relentlessly against oppression, ignorance, and poverty.”²² “Black” Shi‘ism, which was enforced by the monarchy and the *ulama* since the Safavid period, prevented justice from prevailing in Iranian society.²³ Shariati also referred to these two distinctions in Shi‘ism with the title “Alid Shi‘ism” (from Ali, the first Imam) and “Safavid Shi‘ism,” also known as “Pahlavi Shi‘ism.”²⁴ During the Safavid period, “Shi‘ism became an institution, the clergy representing it became active members of the ruling class and defenders of the status quo.”²⁵ The problem with that was that the clergy maintained the status quo by focusing on the interests of the monarchy and neglecting the interests of the people. Shariati believed the *ulama* had abdicated their responsibilities as the custodians of faith in place of the Hidden Imam. They did so by moving away from the original teachings of Shi‘ism and preaching a Shi‘ism that was not “True Islam.”²⁶ “True Islam” was Shi‘ism before it became institutionalized in the Safavid Period. According to Shariati, “Ali Shi‘ism constituted an oppositional force challenging the ruling systems and its repressive institutions.” Instead of challenging authoritarian regimes like the Pahlavi Dynasty, the *ulama* moved away from pre-Safavid Shi‘ism to gain power and to preserve its own interests. Ali Shariati’s reinterpretation of Shi‘ism as a political ideology, also known as “red” Shi‘ism, demonstrated Shariati’s discontent and frustration with the current establishments of authority in Iran, especially the *ulama*, who failed in preserving the purity of Islam and its original teachings.

The *Ulama* and Ali Shariati

During this period in Iranian history where injustice prevailed under an authoritarian regime, the *ulama*’s quietest and non-political position repudiated the very fundamentals of Shi‘ism in which Ali Shariati relentlessly echoed in his writings and lectures. The relationship between the traditional *ulama* and Ali Shariati was complex and should be examined in the context of the history of Shi‘ism. It is important to recognize even though Ali Shariati saw the *ulama*’s apolitical position as a

²² Ibid.

²³ Gheissari and Nasr, *Democracy in Iran History*, 70.

²⁴ Keddie and Richard, *Modern Iran*, 202.

²⁵ Rahnema, *An Islamic Utopian*, 301.

²⁶ Abrahamian, *Ali Shariati*, 27.

subversion to the teachings of “True Islam,” throughout the history of Shi‘ism there is a precedent in which the clerical establishment remained uninvolved in politics. This precedent was founded on the fundamental Shi‘a belief of the Occultation, also known as the *ghaybat* in Arabic, in which the Hidden Imam went into a state of Occultation or hiding and one day will return and establish justice and the “rule of Islam.”²⁷ In other words, the Imam is the central authority in Shi‘ism and only the Imam can establish political authority in society. Until the Hidden Imam returns, the *ulama* is to function as a “representative of the Hidden Imam” by providing legal reasoning, *ijtihad*, as a guidance for the people as well as preserving the purity of Shi‘ism.²⁸ The authority of the *ulama* and the importance of the Occultation in Shi‘ism demonstrate that the clergy’s apolitical position is expected. Without the presence of the Imam, the clergy did not have the legitimacy to act as a direct political authority.²⁹

It is imperative to understand the *ulama*’s role in Shi‘ism and the reasoning behind their apolitical position before examining Ali Shariati’s criticism of their position. The *ulama* took an apolitical position for two reasons. The first being the *ulama* was meant to function as a custodian of Shi‘ism and preserve and promote Shi‘a values until the return of the Hidden Imam.³⁰ They wanted to preserve their role in society in offering *ijtihad* and being a source of guidance for the Iranian people. However, in order to do so, they would have to maintain their relationship with the monarchy that has been in place since the Safavid period. The clergy provided the monarchy with religious and political legitimacy while the Iranian monarchy in return preserved their role in Iranian society.³¹ To appease the monarchy, the clergy remained apolitical and submissive to the Shah’s repressive polices. They feared if Shi‘ism politicalized and became an ideological structure in which revolutionary movements could organize and overthrow the institution of monarchy in Iran, the role of the *ulama* would weaken and lose its credibility. It is clear the *ulama* wanted to

²⁷ Mojtaba Mahdavi, “One Bed and Two Dreams? Contentious Public Religion in the Discourses of Ayatollah Khomeini and Ali Shariati,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 43 (2014), 27.

²⁸ Mazlum Uyar, “The Concept of Sovereignty and The Position of The ‘Ulama in Both Constitutions of Iran (1906 and 1979).” *Ekev Academic Review* 11 (2007). 4.

²⁹ Mahdavi, “One Bed and Two Dreams?,” 27.

³⁰ Gheissari and Nasr, *Democracy in Iran History*, 69.

³¹ Uyar, “The Concept of Sovereignty,” 5.

preserve their quietest tradition and keep Shi'ism from experiencing an "Islamic Reformation" which Ali Shariati proposed.³²

While Shariati developed his interpretation of Shi'ism as a political ideology, he took issue with the clergy and their apolitical position. He viewed their position as a reason behind the continuation of injustice as well as an obstruction in the efforts towards Islamic reform in Iranian society. According to Ervand Abrahamian, "Shariati accused the *'ulama'*, of becoming an integral part of the ruling class, of "institutionalizing" revolutionary Shi'ism thereby betraying its original goals."³³ In other words, Shariati criticized the *ulama* for aligning themselves with "black" Shi'ism rather than upholding "red" Shi'ism. Another point to highlight is Shariati's problem with the *ulama's* sole authority or "monopolization of *ijtihad*."³⁴ The *ulama* had enforced their power by proclaiming to have the only authority to interpret Islamic texts. By doing so, Shariati believed the clergy had "prevented the public from gaining access to True Islam."³⁵ The spirit of Shi'ism is articulated through a language of revolution, and if the masses did not have the authority to interpret holy texts themselves, they could never understand its messages. The question of whether the traditional *ulama* had the sole authority in exercising *ijtihad* shaped Ali's Shariati political ideology. Ali Shariati reinterpreted *ijtihad* to support his argument that enlightened individuals rather than the *ulama* were the ones who will bring Iranian society back to the original teachings of Shi'ism and reinstate justice.

Political Shi'ism and the Importance Rushanfekran: Enlightened Thinkers, Intelligentsia

Enlightened individuals, especially Iranian youth, became the driving force behind political Shi'ism and used it to mobilize and challenge the authority of the Shah in 1979. Ali Shariati saw the modern crisis of religion losing "its sentiments, values, and world vision" as the main obstruction of justice based on Islamic truth from being established in the current state of Iranian society.³⁶ The question of who was to establish justice became a serious point of contention. Since the Hidden Imam was in a state of Occultation, the authority of interpreting Islamic texts had been given to

³² Mahdavi, "One Bed and Two Dreams?," 43.

³³ Abrahamian, *Ali Shariati*, 27-28.

³⁴ Akhavi, "Islam, Politics and Society," 412.

³⁵ Abrahamian, *Ali Shariati*, 28.

³⁶ Benson, "Islam and Social Change," 12.

the clerical establishment. Ali Shariati did not agree that the *ulama* were the best qualified to interpret Islamic texts due to their failure of safeguarding and upholding the original teachings of Shi‘ism in their practice. He argued it was the responsibility of the *rushanfekran* (enlightened thinkers, intelligentsia) to enforce Shi’a values and establish justice in society.³⁷ According to Shariati, “The task of the *raushanfikir* was ‘to generate responsibility and awareness, and give intellectual and social direction to the masses’ ” because “only *khud-agahi* [self awareness] transforms corrupt masses into a dynamic centre.”³⁸ In other words, enlightened intellectuals would lead the masses towards justice and bring back the original teachings of Shi‘ism to Iranian society. In regard to *ijtihad*, Shariati believed every individual had the ability to provide reasoning and analysis of Islamic texts.³⁹ This radical statement challenged the clergy who had the sole responsibility to exercise *ijtihad*. Shariati believed enlightened individuals had an obligation to exert legal reasoning of Islamic texts and use such reasoning to bring awareness to masses of the revolutionary nature of Shi‘ism. In other words, Shi‘ism became a vehicle for social change and enlightened intellectuals were the driving force behind it.

In his essay “*Intizar, the Religion of Protest*,” Shariati emphasizes the ongoing struggle for justice in the history of Islam and how Islam has been misappropriated as means to perpetuate oppression and maintain power: “We, deprived people who, in pre-Islamic times, were victims of oppression, exploitation, aristocracy, ignorance, and poverty, and who have turned to Islam hoping for liberty, honor, and justice; find ourselves in Islamic times plundered, tortured, hungry, oppressed, and discriminated against.”⁴⁰

Shariati uses this platform to articulate the exploitation of Islam at the hands of those in a position of power and that individuals cannot wait for the Hidden Imam to establish justice and must undo this wrong. Shariati utilizes this wrong to solidify his argument in that enlightened individuals are the heart of Islamic revolution. In his interpretation of political Shi‘ism, the *rushanfekran* have the responsibility to challenge and resist oppressive

³⁷ Abrahamian, *Ali Shariati*, 28.

³⁸ Kingshuk Chatterjee, *Ali Shari'ati and the Shaping of Political Islam in Iran* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 127.

³⁹ Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 36.

⁴⁰ John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito, *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 302.

regimes. In order to exert and apply the original teachings of Shi'ism in modern society, Shariati believed one must return to his or her original self. In his work, "Return to the self, Shariati proposed, 'Islam is what we must return to, not only because it the religion of our society, it gives us shape to our society, the spirit of our culture...and the foundation of our morality and spirituality, but also because it the human "self" of our people.'"⁴¹ By returning to the self based on the original teachings of Shi'ism, enlightened intellectuals would use the language of religion to mobilize the masses to contest and overthrow repressive institutions.

Conclusion

Even though he died in 1977 and did not witness the culmination of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Ali Shariati's works and lectures had a resonating and far-reaching effect on disillusioned Iranian young intellectuals. He provided them with a platform to voice their political discontent and opposition to the Pahlavi Dynasty. These individuals saw political Shi'ism as a framework in which they and other political and ideological groups could mobilize and emerge a revolutionary coalition to contest and overthrow the Shah. Their efforts resulted in the removal of the Pahlavi dynasty and led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranian sociologist and intellectual Ali Shariati shaped the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in the following ways: first, he reinterpreted Shi'ism as a political ideology that urges believers to challenge oppressive regimes and fight for justice and Shi'a values. Second, he argued for the *rushanfekran* (enlightened individuals), instead of the clergy, to take on the responsibility of reestablishing justice and the original teachings in Shi'ism. Third, his criticism of the *ulama's* apolitical position and failure to preserve and uphold Shi'a values shook the very fundamental base of Shi'ism and encouraged the call for Islamic revolution in Iran.

This paper has examined the framework of Ali Shariati's interpretation of political Shi'ism and how it shaped the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. First, it gave brief introduction to Ali Shariati's life and showed how his upbringing and young life had influenced his understanding of Shi'ism. This brief introduction was followed by a section devoted to the influences that shaped his political ideology, emphasizing the impact of Frantz Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth* and the martyrdom story of Imam Hussain on Ali Shariati. Then it focused on Ali Shariati's interpretation of

⁴¹ Chatterjee, *Ali Shari'ati*, 132.

Shi'ism and how he used the history and fundamentals of Shi'ism to justify and promote his call for revolution. After this section, it analyzed the complicated relationship between the *ulama* and Ali Shariati, showing the reasoning behind each sides position in the discourse surrounding the state of Iranian society and why they both felt their positions were justified. The *ulama* took an apolitical position to preserve their traditional role of exerting *ijtihad* and acting as only a stand in for the Hidden Imam, and Ali Shariati didn't agree with their stance in a period, which demanded political reform and justice for the Iranian people. Finally, it discussed Ali Shariati's call for enlightened individuals to take the responsibility of the *ulama* and bring Iranian society back to the original teachings of Shi'ism and establish true justice in Iran.

Ali Shariati is known as the ideologue of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 for a reason. He took these traditional Shia concepts of justice and fighting for religious values and crafted a language and political framework in which a diverse coalition of political and ideological groups could use to voice their political discontent with the Pahlavi dynasty. With the common goal of overthrowing the Pahlavi dynasty, the groups used the influence of Ali Shariati's revolutionary thought to come together and form a revolutionary movement under the banner of Shi'ism. Ali Shariati shaped the Islamic Revolution of 1979 by empowering young Iranian intellectuals to join with other opposition groups, take a stand and overthrow the authoritarian government and reestablish justice in Iranian society.